At Your Best: How to Get Time, Energy, and Priorities Working in Your Favor

I'm a big fan, no, make that a huge fan of thought-leader, author, podcaster Carey Nieuwhof. I read his books and blogs and listen to his podcast. So when he dropped *At Your Best: How to Get Time, Energy, and Priorities Working in Your Favor*, I immediately ordered my Kindle copy. While the book did not 'wow' me with every turn of the page, it is a book that provides a very significant construct about how to leverage not just your time, but yourself. I am both an advocate and practitioner of his model.

Here are a few verbatim quotes that will provide you a snapshot of what you will find:

- As I studied top performers, I realized they moved way past time management and were highly focused on managing not just their time but their energy. Usually they had one thing in common: they did what they were best at when they were at their best. In other words, they worked in their area of principal gifting and passion when their energy was at its highest during the day.
- Too many people build lives they want to escape from.
- Live in a way today that will help you thrive tomorrow.

Check out these **Book Notes** to get a fuller picture of the wisdom you will find in this book.

Chuck Olson
Founder | Lead With Your Life

Title: ***At Your Best:*** *How to Get Time, Energy, and Priorities Working in Your Favor*

Author: Carey Nieuwhof

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Book Description:

Overwhelmed. Overcommitted. Overworked. That's the false script an inordinate number of people adopt to be successful. Does this sound familiar:

- Slammed is normal.
- Distractions are everywhere.
- Life gets reduced to going through the motions.

Tired of living that way? *At Your Best* gives you the strategies you need to win at work and at home by living in a way today that will help you thrive tomorrow.

Influential podcast host and thought leader Carey Nieuwhof understands the challenges of constant pressure. After a season of burnout almost took him out, he discovered how to get time, energy, and priorities working in his favor. This approach freed up more than one thousand productive hours a year for him and can do the

same for you.

At Your Best will help you

- replace chronic exhaustion with deep productivity
- break the pattern of overpromising and never accomplishing enough
- clarify what matters most by restructuring your day
- master the art of saying no, without losing friends or influence
- discover why vacations and sabbaticals don't really solve your problems
- develop a personalized plan to recapture each day so you can break free from the trap of endless to-dos

Start thriving at work and at home as you discover how to be at your best.

Book Quotes:

Here's the truth: you deserve to stop living at an unsustainable pace. What if—instead—you learned how to live at your best, personally and professionally? LOCATION: 117

If you don't declare a finish line to your work, your body will. LOCATION: 226

Don't use the same excuse I did. Seasons, after all, have beginnings and endings. If your busy season has no ending, it's not a season—it's your life. LOCATION: 270

As I studied top performers, I realized they moved way past time management and were highly focused on managing not just their time but their energy. Usually they had one thing in common: they did what they were best at when they were at their best. In other words, they worked in their area of principal gifting and passion when their energy was at its highest during the day. LOCATION: 317

Too many people build lives they want to escape from. LOCATION: 396

Workaholism is the most rewarded addiction in our society. LOCATION: 398

Top performers do what they're best at when they're at their best—they work in their area of principal gifting and passion when their energy is at its highest. LOCATION: 399

Everybody gets three primary assets every day: time, energy, and priorities. LOCATION: 400

Time off won't heal you when the problem is how you spend your time on. It's ludicrous to think that a few days off here or a few months off there are going to resolve the issues created by a perpetually overwhelming life. Taking a day off or a vacation as a solution to feeling chronically overwhelmed is about as strategic as telling an alcoholic that he should stop drinking on Thursdays. LOCATION: 426

Days off, vacations, and even sabbaticals aren't a complete solution for an unsustainable pace. A sustainable pace is the solution for an unsustainable pace. LOCATION: 432

Unleveraged energy springs from failing to cooperate with your personal energy levels as they rise and fall over the course of the day. Not leveraging your energy means you squander your most productive hours, not because you intend to but because you don't know when they happen or how to schedule your life around them. LOCATION: 460

Hijacked priorities happen when you allow other people to determine what you get done. LOCATION: 468

Stress has patterns. So does thriving. The opposite of the Stress Spiral is something we'll call the Thrive Cycle. And at the heart of the Thrive Cycle is the habit of doing what you're best at when you're at your best. LOCATION: 482

The way to be at your best is to focus your time, leverage your energy, and realize your priorities. When those three things work in sync, you move into the Thrive Cycle, a virtuous loop that will carry you far more effectively through the days and decades ahead. Once you start to master the patterns, principles, and strategies in the Thrive Cycle, the result (as you'll soon see) is that dreams get acted on, hope is no longer deferred, and a lot more gets accomplished in less time. LOCATION: 488

Live in a way today that will help you thrive tomorrow. LOCATION: 533

Driven people often excuse having terrible personal lives because they're winning at work. For too long, I bought that lie. I don't anymore. Winning at work while losing at home means you're losing. Period. LOCATION: 541

I regularly evaluate whether I'm thriving in five key areas of my life: spiritual, relational, emotional, financial, and physical. Whenever I do that, what results is margin and greater health in all five aspects of life. LOCATION: 546

Creating margin allows you to take time for yourself. You'll take the time to get to know yourself better and work through your stuff—self-awareness and emotional intelligence are some of the greatest predictors of success in leadership and in life, after all. Most people never find the time to grow personally, and that's a shame. LOCATION: 557

I've got a pretty sweet promise for you. When you start doing what you're best at when you're at your best, there's a solid chance you can gain three productive hours each day. That's right. Three hours daily. LOCATION: 597

Unleveraged energy springs from failing to cooperate with your personal energy levels as they rise and fall over the course of the day. LOCATION: 626

The Thrive Cycle focuses your time, leverages your energy, and realizes your priorities so you can be at your best. It ensures you live in a way today that will help you thrive tomorrow. LOCATION: 628

Calendaring your energy zones, priorities, and key relationships will move everything you've learned from intention to reality. LOCATION: 633

Instead, I was so consumed by the requests coming at me, so distracted by the infinite sea of information that's available to anyone online, and so rattled by regular interruptions that I squandered the day. My time scattered in a million directions. I was so unfocused. I kept falling into the trap we all fall into: spending the most time on what matters least, and the least time on what matters most. I never intended to do that; it's just that's almost always what happens. LOCATION: 687

But the reality I kept bumping up against was the same problem you face: the opportunities available to a capable person always exceed the time available. Get around driven people, and you quickly realize many people also have more ambition than they have capacity. Maybe that describes you. LOCATION: 696

Mental Shift 1: Tell the truth about time. LOCATION: 708

After all, of all the lies we tell, the lies we tell ourselves are most deadly. LOCATION: 728

Stop saying you don't have the time. Start admitting you didn't make the time. LOCATION: 731

Mental Shift 2: Embrace passion (and abandon balance). LOCATION: 767

Most people who accomplish significant things aren't balanced people; they're passionate people. LOCATION: 779

Balanced people don't change the world. Passionate people do. LOCATION: 794

After doing more research and testing this theory with other leaders I've trained, guess what? Most people have only three to five deeply productive hours in a day when their energy is at its peak. That's it. LOCATION: 861

The Green Zone is when your energy is high, your mind is clear, your focus is sharp, and you find it easy to think and to imagine, to contribute and to create. Your mindset is fresh and positive. LOCATION: 931

Contrast how you feel in your Green Zone with a window when your energy is low. When you have low energy, you struggle to pay attention: you zone out easily, you have a hard time following what's going on, and you might not even be listening in meetings. LOCATION: 946

The middle ground is what we'll call the Yellow Zone. When you're in the Yellow Zone, you're neither at your best nor at your worst. You're—no surprise here—in the middle. LOCATION: 958

Your Yellow Zone is not a wasteland. It's a place where a lot of good things can and will get done. Just not your best things. It's also often more than half your waking life, so understanding when you're in it can have an immense payoff. LOCATION: 967

Download your free, customizable Energy Clock at www.AtYourBestToday.com. LOCATION: 979

Here's the point: while most people wouldn't invest their money unthinkingly, so many people do invest their time and energy unthinkingly. LOCATION: 1052

Gifting + Passion + Impact = Optimal Green Zone Focus. LOCATION: 1074

Your gifting is your sweet spot—what you uniquely do best. Those are the things that others find difficult but you make look easy, the things for which you have natural aptitude. LOCATION: 1078

You're probably passionate about the things you're gifted at, but passion can extend beyond gifting. The key to finding your passion is to look for things that give you energy. LOCATION: 1110

Finally, the best way to use your Green Zone is to leverage it for the biggest impact. Impact refers to those things that, when done, will make the biggest difference, sometimes in the moment but often long term. LOCATION: 1131

So, the question becomes, How can you leverage your gifting and passion to make progress on these most important things during your Green Zone hours? LOCATION: 1141

Malcolm Gladwell explained how world-class performers develop their gifts in Outliers, the book in which he popularized what's become widely known as "the ten-thousand-hour rule." Gladwell argued that becoming world class at something—truly mastering a craft—is a combination of raw gifting and putting in ten thousand hours working on that craft. LOCATION: 1184

Instead, imagine using your most productive hours to develop your gift, not just use it. To really study and improve it until you become the best you can be at what you do. A highly developed skill set is what distinguishes the pros from everyone else. And because you're doing something that as a rule you love to do, those hours become synergistic. You end up more energized, not less. Your energy and passion get renewed daily. LOCATION: 1225

The biggest Red Zone mistake you can make is to leave important decisions or critical tasks for this zone. LOCATION: 1295

A few principles to follow when approaching your boss: Express desires, not demands. Telling someone what you want him or her to do is far less effective than expressing what you'd love to see happen. Ask questions instead of making statements. Phrasing your request as a question rather than a statement almost always helps you go further. Make sure you've done everything you can do. You want to have maximized the factors within your control before you ask your leader about something beyond your control. LOCATION: 1356

Focus on what you can control, not on what you can't. LOCATION: 1405

Nobody will ever ask you to accomplish your top priorities. They will only ask you to accomplish theirs. LOCATION: 1472

When you spend 80 (or 100) percent of your Green Zone on the things that produce 80 percent of your results, your ability to accomplish significant things soars in your life and in your leadership. LOCATION: 1565

Without a strategy for saying no, you default to yes, and your life vaporizes with other people's priorities being realized rather than yours. LOCATION: 1575

Researchers have discovered that it takes the average person almost twenty-five minutes to refocus after a single distraction. LOCATION: 1734

The quality of your work is determined by the quality of your thinking. And high-quality thinking is incompatible with constant output. LOCATION: 1830

Neuroscience increasingly shows that physical activity (walking, running, cycling) allows the subconscious mind to generate better ideas. This is why, stereotypically, you have some of your best ideas in the shower. It's when your mind isn't intentionally engaged that your subconscious spits out the solution to the problem you were trying to solve two days before. LOCATION: 1836

Here's a paradox you might recognize: The people who want your time are rarely the people who should have your time. And the people who should get most of your premium time rarely ask you for it. LOCATION: 1951

The number of relationships people can have is not just a matter of preference or willingness; the limits are cognitive, having to do with the way the brain works. LOCATION: 2149

People are hardwired for three to five close friendships, twelve to fifteen friendships, and 150 personal relationships. LOCATION: 2151

There are four key decisions for you to make when you design your Thrive Calendar: Decide what you will and won't do within each zone. Decide whom you will and won't meet with. Decide when you'll do specific tasks within each zone. Decide where you'll do your work, especially your Green Zone work. LOCATION: 2260

When you see or sense change happening, here are five questions that can help you act as you anticipate: What's about to change? What opportunities and obstacles will the change likely present? What's most likely

to happen to the demands on my time? What's most likely to happen to my energy levels? (Note: Any change that involves loss or triggers sadness will likely reduce your energy levels at least temporarily. The greater the loss, the greater the loss of energy.) What adjustments can I make to my Thrive Calendar now to prepare for the new reality? LOCATION: 2474

It's not just what you accomplish; it's who you're becoming. LOCATION: 2617

In the end, who you're becoming is so much more important than what you're doing. LOCATION: 2683

Note: should you wish to find any quote in its original context, the Kindle "location" is provided after each entry.