

Good Times Home

# It's About Time

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TUESDAY, 02 FEBRUARY 2010 15:06 LISA JENSEN [COLUMNS - OPINION](#)



The idea of time-travel has been beloved by sci-fi writers and readers for centuries. In last summer's retooled Star Trek movie, Mr. Spock literally meets himself coming and going on the continuum of time.

Time is one of the most potent of human concepts. Think of all the axioms we've devised to groom and shape the unruly thing into something we can grasp: it flies, it crawls, it marches on. It heals all wounds but waits for no man. It's on our side, it's on our hands, it's of the essence, but where does it go? But all the language we assign to time amounts to the same conclusion: it's progress is inexorable. And inevitable. It's not like we can hop off at any stop for a breathing spell, then catch the next available car. Wherever it may be headed, we ride this train to the end of the line.

It's funny how time changes as we get older. To kids, time can be an eternity, especially the last 15 minutes of algebra class, or the day before Christmas. Of course, it's a scientific fact that time actually has been shrinking, like the polar ice caps, at least since the 1960s, when I was growing up. Just ask anyone who's been around since then. Time used to last a lot longer than it does now.

When we first moved into our house in Live Oak, our next-door neighbors were a retired baker and his wife. Every morning, Eric was up with the sun, rattling around in the little alley between our two houses, hauling the trash bins in (or out), hammering away on his gate, or working on some project in his garage. He was a wonderful neighbor (and an effective alarm clock), so we found his early hours more amusing than bothersome. In our cavalier youth, we just chalked it up to the eccentricities of age.

Now I get it. Most of us don't have the Spock option to bend time to our will; it just keeps on slippin' slippin,' slippin' into the future, and we never know when the gods, the Universe, or the Fickle Finger of Fate will reach down and pluck us out of the timestream forever. The older we get, the more clearly we realize that if there's anything we really need to accomplish in this life, whether repairing that pesky gate or painting a masterpiece, there is, in fact, no time like the present. For all we know, there may be no time BUT the present.

For some, this means multitasking, cluttering up every available nanosecond with as many activities as possible—chores, meals, texting, checking email, business appointments, homework. To someone like moi who can barely mono-task with any efficiency, this is way too exhausting. Most days, I already feel like

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Alice when the Red Queen suddenly tells her to start running for no good reason; after a few breathless minutes, when Alice asks if they've arrived, the Red Queen scoffs, "It takes all the running you can do to stay in the same place. If you want to get somewhere else, you must run at least twice as fast as that!"

Somehow, more hysterical running around just to keep up doesn't seem like the answer. Instead of trying to stretch out time to accommodate more and more of the stuff we think we have to do, maybe we should be trying to unclutter the time we have for things that matter. Not that every waking moment should be spent in Lofty Pursuits—far from it. There ought to be room in any sane life for quality playtime too; "Project Runway," say, or hanging out with friends, or taking an impromptu break with your sweetie to watch a particularly gnarly thunderstorm. Besides, time spent with loved ones can never be wasted.

But now it's Art Boy and me bustling up an hour earlier in the dark, pre-dawn chill to get a jump on the day. I find I get my best work done in the morning hours (as opposed to staying up an extra hour at night and falling asleep in front of another "Seinfeld" rerun.) This came as a big shock to me, having spent most of my formative years staying up till 1 a.m. to watch "The Steve Allen Show" on late-night TV. Who knew? But figuring out who you are and how you operate is a big step toward making better use of your time.

Now, as the new year begins, it ought to be an opportune moment to start weeding out the time bandits in one's life, discarding them like an old, lopsided pair of Nikes. So, of course, I just started a new online fiction project guaranteed to gobble up time like a Sunday dinner at the Simpsons'. Like most fiction these days (especially mine), there's no profit involved, but does that mean I'm wasting my time? If I were just killing time out of boredom, the answer would be "probably." But all I know is the clatter of time's wingéd chariot doesn't sound quite so ominous, somehow, when I manage to make time for something I love to do.

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Take a time-out with [lisajensen@sbcglobal.net](mailto:lisajensen@sbcglobal.net) , or visit [lisajensenonline.com](http://lisajensenonline.com).

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