

It's About Time:

Manage Your Energy / Manage Your Life

A Workshop in Six Sessions: "Teacher's Edition"

[Note] This book is not for teachers. I'm writing it, however, because I am a teacher and I know that the best way to learn anything is to teach it. It's not a book to be read; it's a book to be used.

As it unfolds you will begin to understand my journey. What started out as a passion for helping teachers deal with stress, slowly became a structure for time management. After I retired from teaching, I came to realize that without the discipline of schedules and bells, I couldn't seem to finish anything. Then one day I realized that it's not about trying to manage stress or time . . . it's about managing energy. Or at least I became aware of the fact that with the life energy we are given – we are also given the ability to choose – moment by moment.

Prologue

The meaning of moments passes us by so gently it barely rustles the leaf of the will.

Robert Penn Warren

For the first 47 years of my life, I never asked the questions “Who Am I” or “Why Am I Here?” I was busy, relatively happy, and never really stopped long enough to really notice what was going on around me. Unfortunately, that's when the unthinkable happened and I lost myself. That sounds strange to me even now, but it's the truth.

The details of that story don't matter, but what's important is that a traumatic event, one that probably isn't particularly uncommon, so rocked my foundations that I lost touch with reality. I mean that literally. In a single moment I lost the “reality” of who I had always assumed myself to be. My life had not been particularly smooth, but whenever something happened that was upsetting, there always seemed to be a good explanation (or perhaps someone else to blame). In short, I was always able to get through it without learning much about myself.

The next three years were difficult, but in time I was able to see that the experience I thought was the end of my world was, in reality, the beginning of a new and exciting chapter. I found myself retired from classroom teaching, living in a different state, and putting a lot of time into reflecting upon where I had been and where I was going.

I knew that when I left the classroom, I was not even close to wanting to leave education. A dear friend suggested that my next steps might be to broaden my horizons and look beyond my own school, even my own district, and begin to learn about what was happening in education “from the 30,000-foot level.” I began attending state and national educational conferences and, as it turned out, my journey took me to a place where even began to think about education at the global level.

I attended my first large national educational convention at the Muscone Center in San Francisco in 1999. There were over 11,000 educators in attendance – mostly superintendents, principals, and curriculum directors. As a recently retired teacher I knew that my perspective was unique. I kept feeling that somehow the system was upside down. These were the people that we euphemistically call “support staff” – but I could easily see why they would come back from these conferences full of new and exciting ideas that only felt like more work for us teachers. I felt sad that the rooms were not filled with teachers – while the administrators were covering their classes back home!

At the end of the weekend, after thousands of the participants had gone home, I attended the closing ceremonies. Tears came to my eyes as I listened to the “Presentainers,” a group of talented administrators from Calgary, Canada end their presentation with a song called **Keeper of the Dream**:

When the lights go down on Friday - crowd has all gone home . . .
You sit there in your classroom - but you never feel alone.
You've got pictures of the children hanging all along the wall.
In some there's smiles, in some there's tears - there's a little of you in all.
And you think of what it could be . . .
Build on what you've seen.
You've got memories and a vision - You're the Keeper of the Dream.

You've seen weak ones getting stronger,
Doubters start to try,
Quitters lasting longer,
And the bitter asking "Why?"
There were times when you would give them room –
and times when you were hard
But every time you were there to see so many come so far.

And you think of what it could be . . .
Build on what you've seen.
You've got memories and a vision - You're the Keeper of the Dream.

At times the road got steeper - you almost couldn't try . . .
But there were kids who need a second chance –
Sometimes teachers need to cry.
It's not something that just happens – there is no magic way.
You put together all these years by doing this day by day.

And you think of what it could be . . .
And you build on what you've seen. . .
You've got memories and a vision - You're the Keeper of the Dream.

John Clarke

I bought the audiotape of their performance and listened to it over and over on the 300-mile drive home. Every time I heard the phrase, "You've got memories and a vision..." the tears would come back. I knew that I had a vision for what education could be – and I certainly had memories – but not enough. I realized that 30 years had slipped by, and I simply had not taken enough time to reflect, to hold on to my own dreams and to help my students hold on to their own.

Several weeks later I took time to write the story of that weekend. As I wrote, I kept thinking about the story of the frog in a pot of water who doesn't notice that it's getting hotter and hotter until it is too late for him to jump out. It occurred to me that's what it almost happened to me. I really didn't realize know how the stress of the job had been building for so many years until I was near the point of burn-out.

Ever the teacher, I felt myself consumed with the idea of helping other teachers avoid my experience. My story seemed to develop into a strategy for spending a few minutes at the end of each day in reflection and intentionally focusing on memories worth keeping and building upon.

I called that program [Dreamkeepers](#) and I'm revisiting it now because it's the basis for this book.

As I worked with *Dreamkeepers*, I realized that if I hoped to maintain some balance in my own life, I was the one who was going to have to change. What started as a stress-management strategy for teachers, grew into a time-management strategy I could use for myself. I'm not really sure when the phrase "*It's About Time!*" popped into my mind, but that's when I realized that our life *energy* fluctuates with the interplay of *stress* and *time*.

Over the next few years *Dreamkeepers* kept evolving until it became a six-session workshop. At some point along the way I no longer focused on workshops and began to think of it as a "do-it-yourself" life coaching program I could use to keep my own life in balance. I called it *It's About Time: Manage Your Energy / Manage Your Life*.

I'm thinking of this website as a "Teacher's Edition" because, like I said before, I know that the best way for me to learn is to teach. The introduction that follows can be used as a lesson plan to get you started offering workshops of your own – or perhaps it will simply help you find some ideas that might help you manage your own stress, time, and energy.