

Always overwhelmed? The problem isn't time

Adaptive module

~20 min

We have never had so many tools to save time, and yet the feeling of being overwhelmed has never been stronger. That's because the problem isn't time but the way we experience it: a mind that races and creates its own urgency. Rather than piling up methods, this module tackles that root cause through a change of perspective—lived time is more elastic than we think—and offers a few simple practices to stop racing.

— LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 01 Understand why the tools that claim to save us time sometimes leave us more overwhelmed.
- 02 Rethink your relationship with time: see lived time as elastic rather than as a straight line to fill endlessly.
- 03 Distinguish what you want to do from what you want done, to assign work better, whether to a colleague or to AI.
- 04 Take back control of your time through timeboxing, conscious breaks, and the art of putting things off without guilt.

— WHO IT'S FOR

Anyone caught in a constant race who ends their days without having done everything they planned.

- **Prerequisite:** none

— HOW THE MODULE WORKS

Self-paced, with practice tailored to each learner.

- 1 **Self-assessment:** on 9 dimensions, to gauge current habits and guide the practice.
- 2 **Expert video:** 10 minutes, with 3 pauses for reflection.
- 3 **Practice scenarios:** the first 2 chosen from the self-assessment, then 16 optional ones. Every answer gets feedback: what it leads to, and one way to improve.
- 4 **Dated commitment:** one action to try, written by the learner or picked from the suggestions.
- 5 **Memo to download:** key takeaways, questions, commitment, personal notes and checklists.

— A SAMPLE PRACTICE SCENARIO

Ousmane, a communications officer, has twenty-three tasks in progress and is sleeping badly. Sixteen were assigned to him by his manager; he added the other seven himself: a press review, reports, tracking spreadsheets. He's seeing his manager on Thursday, for half an hour. How can Ousmane approach this meeting?

— ASSESSMENT AND COMPLETION

Pass mark: 80%

The score takes into account your answers to the practice scenarios, your commitment and, where relevant, any additional learning activities. Passing requires a commitment and a score of at least 80%.

METHODS & MODELS

- Parkinson's law – Cyril Northcote Parkinson, essay published in *The Economist*, 1955
- Afthonios method: "what I want to do vs. what I want to see done" grid, and delegating to a colleague or an AI assistant
- Conscious breathing breaks, 3 × 3 min a day – inspired by mindfulness (Jon Kabat-Zinn)
- Afthonios method: deprioritizing with 2 questions (Is it really important? Can it wait?)

SOURCES & REFERENCES

- Aruna Ranganathan and Xingqi Maggie Ye (UC Berkeley Haas), "AI Doesn't Reduce Work – It Intensifies It," *Harvard Business Review* (2026): companies need to adopt an "AI practice" that includes intentional pauses, sequencing of work, and more human grounding
- Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis, 2025: generative AI users save about 2.2 hours a week on average; 20.5% save at least 4 hours a week
- Microsoft, Work Trend Index, "Breaking down the infinite workday," June 2025: an interruption every 2 minutes (about 275 a day), 48% describe their work as chaotic and fragmented
- Parkinson's law – Cyril Northcote Parkinson, essay published in *The Economist*, 1955