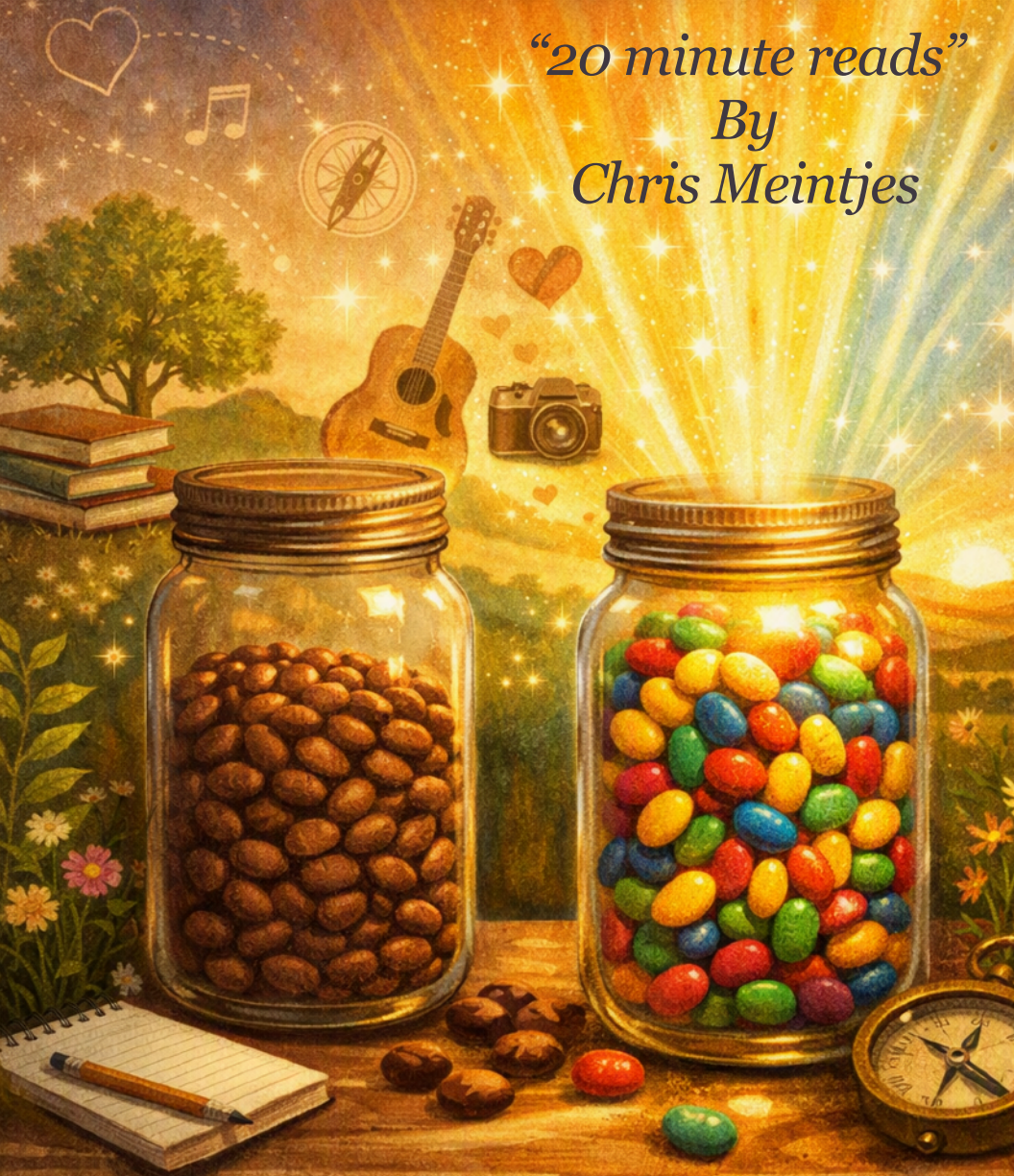


The Hours

Investing Time, Creating Meaning

“20 minute reads”

*By
Chris Meintjes*



The Hours

Chris Meintjes

"Time is more valuable than money. You can get more money, but you cannot get more time."

Jim Rohn



This and all my publications are dedicated to the one person I have invested the most time with on my journey through life, Shelby. We have stolen so many moments together and hopefully will continue to do that for many more years to come. Thanks for joining me and bringing the morning sunshine to my world.

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My Story - Why 'The Hours' Matter!



*"The key is in not spending time, but in investing it."
Stephen R. Covey*

As children, the hours of our days feel infinite. They spill over with play, creativity, laughter, and hope. I remember those early years when the weather was kind, the outdoors was my playground, and happiness seemed to arrive effortlessly. Time was abundant, and every hour felt like a gift waiting to be opened.

But as I grew older, I began to notice something unsettling: those hours of joy and freedom became fewer. Responsibilities crept in, and the space for wonder narrowed. I watched my father live this reality. He was a hardworking accountant, devoted to providing for his family. His weekdays were consumed by work and traffic, hours that drained rather than nourished him. Yet on weekends, I

saw a different man — content, absorbed, alive. In the garage, surrounded by wood shavings and broken furniture, he restored old pieces to their former glory. Those were his invested hours, the ones that fed his soul. But they were too few compared to the countless hours spent elsewhere.

That contrast left a deep impression on me. It taught me that not all hours are equal. Some hours sustain us, others deplete us. Some hours are spent, others are invested. And the difference between the two can shape the course of a life.

I chose to seek out the hours that matter most. I have filled my days with sunrises and sunsets, books and plays, meals and laughter, creativity and love. I have tried not to waste time, but to maximise it, to invest it in experiences that bring meaning, purpose, and joy.

This booklet is born from that insight. It is a guide to help you see your own hours clearly, to recognise how precious they are, and to shift from passively spending them to actively investing them. Because time is not just a currency; it is the very fabric of our lives.

Most of us spend nearly 80 % of our hours on what I call *brown beans*, the necessary but draining tasks of work, commuting, chores, and obligations. That leaves less than 20 % for ourselves. And it is within that 20 % that life's magic resides. These are the hours where we learn, love, create, and connect. They are the bright beans that colour our jars, the hours that build purpose, passion, and happiness.

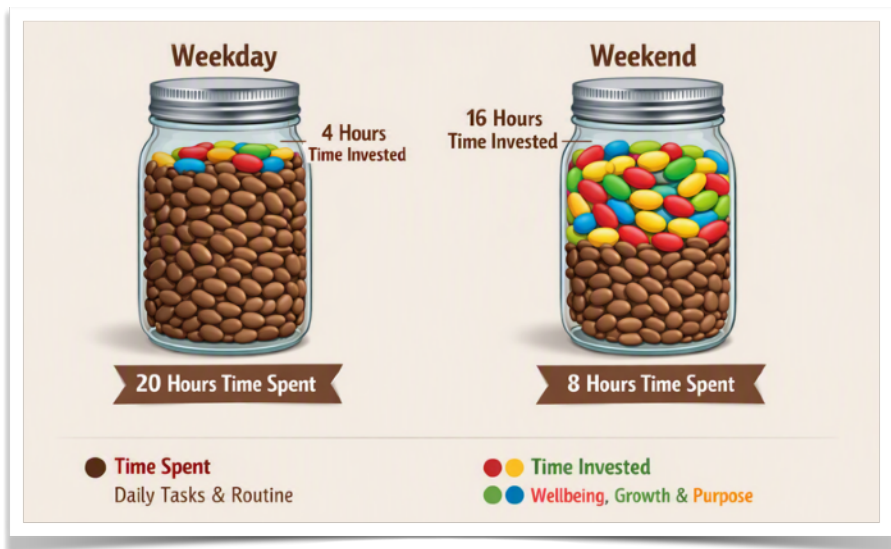
The challenge, and the opportunity, is to protect those hours fiercely. To design your days so that they are not swallowed by routine, but illuminated by meaning. To be aware, to be present, and to choose deliberately how you invest your time.

Because in the end, our lives are not measured by how many hours we had, but by how we used them.

“Which hours have mattered most in your life so far? How will you protect the ones that matter most in the future?”



The bean 'Hours Jar' of how we spend or invest time



"How we spend our day is, of course, how we spend our lives."

Maria Popova

Every human life can be imagined as a jar that slowly fills, hour by hour. Each bean we place inside represents one of those hours. Some beans are **brown**, the hours we spend on routine, obligation, and maintenance. They keep life functioning, but they rarely feed the soul. Others are **brightly coloured**, the hours we invest in joy, growth, love, and meaning. These are the beans that make the jar glow.

The jar reminds us of two truths:

- **Time is finite.** Once a bean is placed, it cannot be taken back.
- **Choice is powerful.** We cannot control how many beans we receive, but we can choose how we place them.

On most days, brown beans fill the jar quickly, sleep, commuting, chores, endless tasks. They are necessary, but they leave little space for colour. Yet even a handful of bright beans can transform the whole jar. A single hour of laughter, learning, or love can change the tone of an entire day.

The metaphor is simple but profound:

- A jar filled mostly with brown beans feels heavy, routine, and reactive.
- A jar scattered with bright beans glows with energy, meaning, and joy.

The Bean Jar is not about guilt. It is about awareness. It invites us to pause and ask: *Am I spending my hours, or investing them?*

When we begin to see our lives as jars of beans, we realise that every hour is a choice. And when we choose to protect and multiply the bright beans, our jar becomes not just full of time, but full of life.

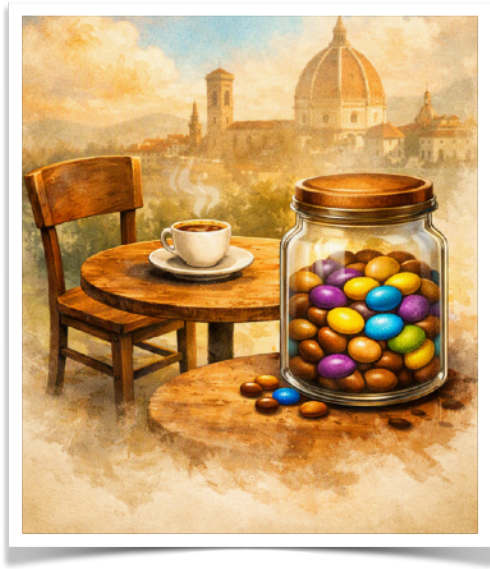
Time is the most valuable resource we have, more precious than money, because it cannot be replenished. Every hour is a choice.

This booklet is all about helping my clients shift from spending time to investing it, a shift that can make a tremendous difference!

"If time were your currency, where would you invest it for the highest return in joy and purpose?"

‘The Hours’

Brown beans keep life moving.



Bright beans make life worth living.

We all have jars filled with hours. But not all beans in the jar are equal. Some are dull, heavy, and routine. Others are vivid, light, and full of meaning.

Each day we have begins with an empty jar of hours and a handful of beans waiting to be placed. Some are **brown**, the ordinary hours that keep life moving. Others are **brightly coloured**, the hours that make life meaningful.

Brown Beans: Time Spent

In every 24-hour day, our jar fills quickly with **brown beans**, the hours that are necessary but not deeply nourishing.

- **Sleep** - essential maintenance, but not chosen investment.
- **Eating** - routine sustenance, often rushed.
- **Travel** - commuting or waiting, time that slips away.
- **Work without resonance** - jobs that drain rather than inspire.

On a weekday, these brown beans may consume **20 hours or more**, leaving only a handful of hours for intentional living.

Brown beans are not “bad” — they are simply **neutral or obligatory**. They keep life functioning, but they rarely build meaning.

Bright Beans: Time Invested

The remaining hours, often just **four on a weekday, sixteen on a weekend** — are the precious space for **brightly coloured beans**. These represent time invested in:

- **Wellbeing** - rest, exercise, reflection, joy.
- **Skill-building** - learning, practicing, growing capacity.
- **Passion** - doing what lights you up.
- **Purpose** - aligning actions with values.
- **Precious relationships** - nurturing family, friends, community.
- **Espresso Moments** - pauses that restore presence.

These beans are fewer, often less than 20 % of our hours, but they are the ones that colour life with meaning.

Bright beans are **multipliers**: one hour invested here often returns many hours of future clarity, resilience, or joy.



The Contrast

A jar filled mostly with brown beans feels heavy, routine, and reactive. A jar with bright beans scattered among the brown glows with colour, energy, and meaning. The difference is not in the number of hours we have, it is in the **choice of how we place them**. If you looked at your jar yesterday, how many bright beans did you place? And what colour will you choose for today?

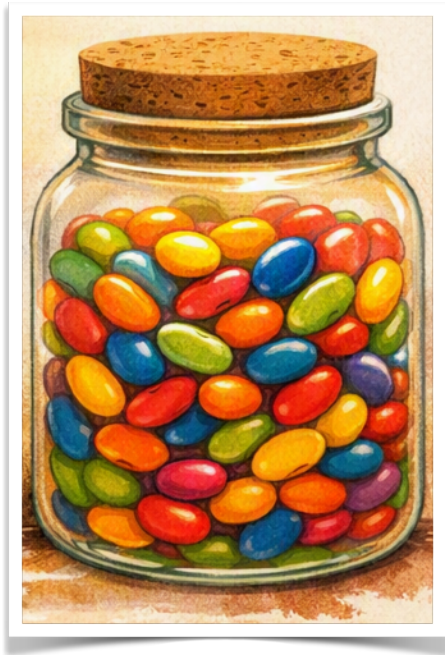
“Which beans fill your jar today, and which ones deserve more space tomorrow?”

Reflection Exercise — Your Jar of Hours

Take a moment to sketch your own jar.

- Fill it with **brown beans** for the hours you spend on obligations.
- Add **bright beans** for the hours that bring joy and meaning.
- Ask yourself: *How much of my jar is colour? How much is dull?*

This exercise is not about guilt. It's about awareness. Once you see your jar clearly, you can begin to protect and expand the bright beans.



Shifting from Spending to Investing

The goal is not to eliminate brown beans, they are part of life. The goal is to **shift your awareness** so that the bright beans are protected, prioritised, and multiplied.

- **Design daily espresso moments** to anchor presence.
- **Reclaim wasted hours** by redesigning meetings and routines.
- **Invest in passions** that align with your values.
- **Plan intentionally** so your jar fills with colour.

Coaching Invitation

Through my coaching, I help clients map their jars, identify wasted hours, and design practices that protect and expand their bright beans. Together, we shift from passive spending to active investing creating lives filled with purpose, passion, and joy.

“Your jar is waiting. Fill it with colour. Protect your bright beans, and let your hours become a story of meaning.”

Bright Bean Colour Framework

Below is a useful way to differentiate between the colours of your bright beans. You do not need to use this colour framework, but it is useful to visualise what bright beans you are investing. You may also have a particular focus, and therefore will be wanting to see more of a single colour appear. Or you are seeking balance, so you want to see more variety in your colours.

Colour	Theme	Examples of Bright Bean Actions
Red	Passion	Painting, writing, cooking with joy, pursuing hobbies, dancing, exploring new ideas.
Yellow	Joy & Connection	Laughing with friends, family meals, celebrations, spontaneous adventures.
Green	Growth & Learning	Reading, studying, skill-building, attending workshops, listening to podcasts.
Blue	Calm & Presence	Meditation, journaling, mindful walks, breathing exercises, quiet reflection.
Purple	Purpose & Spirituality	Volunteering, prayer, spiritual practice, aligning actions with values.
Orange	Energy & Vitality	Exercise, hiking, swimming, yoga, outdoor adventures.
Pink	Love & Relationships	Deep conversations, nurturing family bonds, romantic time, acts of kindness.
Gold	Legacy & Contribution	Mentoring, teaching, storytelling, creating something lasting, guiding others.

The pain of wasted time

“Time is the coin of your life. It is the only coin you have, and only you can determine how it will be spent. Be careful lest you let other people spend it for you.”

Carl Sandburg



“Don’t count every hour of the day, make sure every hour of your day counts”

“In the end we regret not the things we did, but the things we did not do!”

The Pain of Wasted Beans - Time Lost, Life Unlived

Every bean in your jar represents an hour of your life. Once spent, it can never be reclaimed. The pain of wasted beans is not just about lost time, it's about lost potential, missed sunsets, unspoken words, and unlived dreams.

We all know the feeling: the quiet ache of a day that disappeared into meetings, scrolling, or worry. The regret of hours spent on things that didn't matter. The exhaustion of living reactively instead of intentionally.

Each brown bean that fills your jar without purpose is a small surrender, a moment traded for routine instead of meaning. Over years, those moments accumulate into a life that feels busy but hollow.

The Cost of Wasted Time

- **Lost creativity**, the ideas that never found expression.
- **Missed connection**, the conversations we postponed until it was too late.
- **Unrealised potential**, the skills we never developed.
- **Emotional fatigue**, the burnout that comes from constant doing without being.

The pain of wasted beans is the pain of living without awareness. But awareness is the cure.

The Power of Invested Hours

History is filled with people who understood the value of their hours, who invested time with intention and changed the world.

Person	Investment Focus	Lesson for Us
Leonardo da Vinci	Curiosity and mastery, he invested hours in observation and experimentation.	Every hour spent learning multiplies future creativity.
Marie Curie	Relentless pursuit of discovery ,she devoted her time to purpose, not prestige.	Invest time in what matters, not what impresses.
Nelson Mandela	Reflection and resilience, even in confinement, he invested hours in understanding and forgiveness.	Time invested in inner growth transforms outer impact.
Maya Angelou	Writing and empathy, she turned her hours into words that healed and inspired.	Invest time in expression; it connects you to others.
David Attenborough	Observation and storytelling , decades invested in sharing the beauty of nature.	Invest time in what awakens wonder and responsibility.

These individuals remind us that time invested wisely becomes legacy. So many successful people have mastered ‘the hours’ as drivers of skills development, creativity and fulfilment.

Turning Pain into Purpose

The pain of wasted beans can become the spark for transformation.

- **Reflect** - acknowledge where your hours have gone.
- **Reframe** - see time as capital, not currency.
- **Reinvest** - choose actions that align with meaning.

Every moment of awareness is a reclaimed bean, a chance to fill your jar with colour again.

"Which hours have slipped away unnoticed and what wisdom do they leave behind? And which ones will you choose to protect from now on?"

The Quest

A Journey of Meaning



Sir Ken Robinson once said that fulfilment comes not from chasing goals, but from living a **quest**, a journey that unfolds as we grow, learn, and discover who we are. Goals are destinations; quests are directions. A goal ends when it's achieved. A quest evolves, deepens, and reshapes us along the way.

A quest is not about certainty. It's about curiosity. It's the willingness to follow the thread of what moves you, even when you don't know where it leads. It's the art of investing your hours in exploration rather than repetition. This is an very important distinction and for me a breakthrough to bright beans.

Quests and the Bright Bean Life

In the language of *The Hours*, quests are the **brightest beans** in your jar. They are the hours that sparkle with purpose and possibility.

- **Work quests** - turning your profession into a craft, not just a job.
- **Relationship quests** - learning how to love better, listen deeper, and grow together.
- **Spiritual quests** - seeking stillness, understanding, and connection beyond yourself.
- **Learning quests** - following curiosity wherever it leads.
- **Creative quests** - exploring the edges of imagination and self-expression.

Each quest fills your jar with colour. It transforms ordinary hours into invested ones, hours that teach, heal, and expand your world.

"What quest is calling you right now? What bright beans could you add to your jar if you followed it?"

The Difference Between Goals and Quests

Aspect	Goal	Quest
Focus	Outcome	Journey
Duration	Finite	Lifelong
Emotion	Achievement	Fulfillment
Direction	Straight line	Evolving path
Impact	External success	Inner growth

Goals are useful, they give structure. But quests give **meaning**. They remind us that life is not a checklist; it's a canvas.

Coaching Insight

In my coaching, I help clients uncover their quests, the deeper journeys beneath their goals. When we design our hours around quests, we stop measuring life by outcomes and start experiencing it through growth, connection, and wonder.

*“Don’t just chase goals.
Begin your quest. Fill your
jar with hours that teach,
transform, and illuminate.”*

Quests are the heartbeat of fulfilment. They differ from goals because they evolve; they are journeys of discovery rather than destinations.

Identify your quest, professional, relational, or spiritual. Link each quest to bright beans, guiding how invested hours can create growth and transformation for you.

“What quest is calling you right now, and how might it colour your jar with new meaning?”

Be a time thief, steal bright bean hours for yourself, make your life count!

To be a “master time thief” is to reclaim hours from distraction and invest them in joy. It’s a mindset of gratitude and deliberate living.

Try and identify one “stolen hour” each day, a reclaimed moment for reflection, creativity, or connection. Over time, these stolen hours become the architecture of fulfilment.

“If you could steal one hour back today, how would you invest it?”

Guided Reflection 1: Filling Your Jar with Colour

Bean Jar Reflection Worksheet



Step 1: Observe

Take a quiet moment to reflect on your day:



Brown Beans (Spent): _____, hours

Bright Beans (Invested): _____, hours

Brown beans: Routine & Obligation



Step 1 – Observe

Take a quiet moment at the end of your day. Picture your jar.

- How many **brown beans** filled it today, the hours spent on routine, obligation, or maintenance?
- How many **bright beans** did you place, the hours invested in wellbeing, growth, or connection?

Write down your estimate:

Brown Beans (Spent): _____ hours

Bright Beans (Invested): _____ hours

Step 2 – Reflect

Ask yourself:

- Which brown-bean activities could be lightened or shortened tomorrow?
- Where could one bright bean be added, even a small act of intention?
- What colour would that bean be, and what does that colour represent for you?

(Example: a green bean for learning, a red bean for passion, a blue bean for calm.)

Step 3 – Reframe

Choose one brown-bean activity and reframe it into an investment.
For instance:

- Turn a commute into a **learning moment** by listening to an inspiring podcast.
- Transform meal preparation into **mindful time** with family.
- Shift routine work into **purposeful contribution** by noticing its impact.

Step 4 – Commit

Write a short intention for tomorrow: *"Tomorrow I will place at least one bright bean of _____ colour by _____ activity."*

Step 5 – Review Weekly

At week's end, look at your pattern.

- Are bright beans increasing?
- Which colours dominate your jar?
- What does that reveal about your current season of life?

Your Jar of Hours 2 - Reflection & Design

Step 1: See Your Hours Clearly

Before you can change how you invest time, you must first see where it goes. Draw two jars side by side, one for **Brown Beans** and one for **Bright Beans**.

- In the **Brown Beans jar**, fill in the hours you spend on work, chores, commuting, and obligations.
- In the **Bright Beans jar**, add the hours that bring joy, creativity, love, and purpose.

Ask yourself:

- Which jar feels heavier?
- Which jar feels alive?
- What colours are missing from your week?

Step 2: Map Your 24 Hours

Use this simple breakdown to visualise your day:

Category	Typical Hours	Bean Type	Feeling
Work & Meetings	8 – 10 h	Brown	Productive / Draining
Sleep & Recovery	6 – 8 h	Brown	Restful / Unaware
Chores & Logistics	2 – 3 h	Brown	Necessary / Routine
Family & Relationships	2 – 3 h	Bright	Connected / Loved
Passions & Learning	1 – 2 h	Bright	Inspired / Alive
Espresso Moments	15 – 30 min	Bright	Present / Peaceful

Now total your **Bright Bean hours**. If they’re less than 20 % of your day, it’s time to redesign your jar.

Step 3: Reclaim & Reinvest

Identify one area where you can reclaim time this week:

- **Reduce meeting overload**, shorten or combine sessions.
- **Limit digital distractions**, set boundaries for email and social media.
- **Create micro-pauses**, five-minute espresso moments between tasks.
- **Prioritise passions**, schedule what feeds your energy first.

Write down one commitment:

This week, I will reclaim ____ hours and invest them in ____.

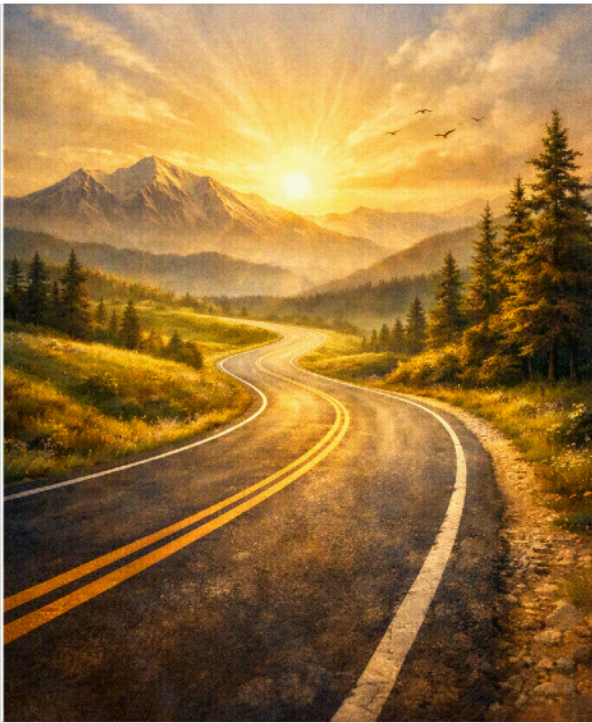
Step 4: Protect the Bright Beans

Design rituals that keep your bright beans safe:

- **Morning clarity**: one espresso moment before the day begins.
- **Midday reset**: a walk, breath, or reflection break.
- **Evening gratitude**: note one bright bean you invested well.

Over time, these small shifts compound into a life of intentional hours, a jar that glows with colour and meaning.

*“Your hours are your life.
Invest them wisely. Fill
your jar with colour.”*



‘Protect those bright beans’



Bright beans are so fragile, easily lost to distraction and obligation. Protecting them is an act of self-leadership. Think of it also as the most important time you can invest!

I can help you design rituals that safeguard your bright beans: morning clarity, midday resets, evening gratitude. These micro-practices build resilience and intentional living.

Through my coaching, I help clients turn awareness into action, mapping their jars, redesigning their routines, and protecting their bright beans. Together, we transform hours into purpose.

Visit <https://time4lifecoaching.com> to set up a free session, it could make a difference to your life!

*“What boundary or ritual could
you create to protect your
brightest beans this week?”*



The Hours - A Poem

The jar is never empty.
Hours arrive, one by one,
slipping into place as brown beans —
the routines, the obligations,
the weight of what must be done.
But colour waits.
In a pause, in a breath,
in the small act of choosing.
A bright bean placed with intention
turns the whole jar radiant.
Espresso moments are not luxuries.
They are sparks of health,
anchors of focus,
currents of wellbeing,
and the quiet joy of being alive.
To invest an hour is to multiply it.
To claim a moment is to reclaim yourself.
And to fill your jar with colour
is to live not just by time,
but by meaning.
"The jar will always fill.
The choice is yours:
brown or bright,
spent or invested,
routine or resonance.

*“If your life were a jar of hours,
what colours would your poem
hold?”*

About the Author



My name is Chris and I am a master time thief. I have been alive more than half a century, but I have stolen as much time as I can to experience this amazing world and this challenging life we lead. The road I have travelled is most probably the road less travelled but it has in my case made all the difference. My life is made up of many moments and I think that I have discovered how rich these moments can be and how they can feed a life that is full, rich, meaningful. I do not have money but I feel very rich and fulfilled. I steal these espresso moments every day. I hope I can share what I have learned with you, it is not rocket science, it is just a few simple principles that can carry you towards a life of purpose and meaning. I look forward to meeting you and sharing what I have learned. Come and journey with me towards a happier life.

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