

You are not running out of time

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Mozart composed his first symphony at age 8. Bill Gates was 20 when he started Microsoft. Queen Elizabeth ascended to the throne when she was 25.

Our society is obsessed with the concept of running out of time. We tell our kids they should hurry up and find good volunteer and summer opportunities to round out resumes. University students often feel trapped in majors they don't love because they'll lose too much time if they switch. New employees enter companies eager for promotion, hoping to see significant strides within their first two years.

When we're young the feeling of limited time drives us, and sometimes leads to missed opportunities that don't lie in our direct path — we're too focused on success to take a look around.

In mid-life we still feel like we're running out of time. But, at this stage, the imagined scarcity of time can become a reason not to move forward. We prematurely feel like it's "too late" to change course or try something new. Clients and employees in their late 30s, 40s and 50s often tell me they're "too old" to consider a career move that's off their current path.

So, while we live with this constant anxiety, we wait. We wait for our golden years when we can finally do what we really want to be doing. We wait for our kids to graduate, our mortgages to be paid off, and our spouses to get that next promotion. We feel like it's not our time to make a significant change, that it won't work out, that we are too late to do many of the things we wish we had done.

At Challenge Factory, we call this kind of thinking being trapped by “yeah, buts.” The simple way to move away from this is to flip these thoughts on their head. Instead of saying it's too late to make a career move, why not say your next career move needs to be something that someone with your level of experience is ideally suited for?

Change is hard, and can be unpredictable. It requires the realization that a worst case scenario is something we can handle, and recover from. It demands a long term view, and a shift in thinking.

Luckily, when it comes to productive working years, we have lots of time. The average Canadian will live well into his 80s. His children may well live past 100. There is no rule that says career change can only happen before you turn 40.

Ray Croc started to build the McDonald's empire at age 52. Benjamin Franklin signed the Declaration of Independence at age 70. Nelson Mandela became President of South Africa at age 75.

The reason you're not making a change has nothing to do with time.

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