

DO YOUR TIME, DON'T LET YOUR TIME DO YOU

Time acts differently here -- anyone who has ever been in one of America's gray, cross bar hotels can attest. Prison is a black hole where time slows and minutes can pass like years or years like minutes. How is it possible that the relative passage of time can seem so different behind these austere walls? Einstein had his theories, but for our purposes it may be better explained by the social science described in Josh Foer's, Moonwalking With Einstein, The Art And Science of Remembering Everything.

In his book, Mr. Foer explains two misunderstood aspects of how time works on a personal level. Firstly, we must define what we mean by time. For this exercise we are referring to time as the mental construct or tempo at which we experience life's passage (i.e. psychological time). Foer writes, "Psychological time is wholly dependent on memory; and memory is constructed through chronological landmarks." I like to use high school as an example. I may remember my first day, a fight, prom, et cetera, but surely not every single day. These significant events construct the timeline of my memory of high school. Now here's the kicker: the more of these moments I have, the longer time feels; the less I have, the less I feel time pass. Hence, the saying, time flies when you're having fun, is strictly speaking, inaccurate. The reality is, time flies when you're bored. (Arguably, not so much in the moment, but in retrospect.)

But why or how, you may ask. Foer elaborates, "Monotony collapses time." Well, this would certainly explain how time in prison seems to fly by; our whole life is built upon monotonous routine where every day bleeds into the next until we feel like we're stuck in the movie, Groundhog Day. Do not despair, there is a way to re-claim your time.

It's important to change routines regularly, have as many new experiences as possible that will serve to anchor our memories. Creating these anchor memories will stretch our psychological time and lengthen our perception of our lives. It is up to each of us to decide to either build routines to help the time pass quickly or force ourselves to learn new things, find opportunities to do something novel and thus, savor life.

Many of us will spend huge chunks of our lives behind these steel bars. It

is understandable that many of us simply want this time to be over, therefore, creating mundane routines to help pass the time quickly may sound like a good idea; but if we are essentially made up of our memories, choosing to live a long life or a short one has very little to do with the actual amount of years we live or where we spend them and everything to do with how we choose to live the years we have. I, for one, am tired of losing things to prison. It is amazing what these walls are capable of taking from a man...if we let them. The choice is entirely ours.

By Leo Cardez (pen name)

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79) PRISON WISDOM

