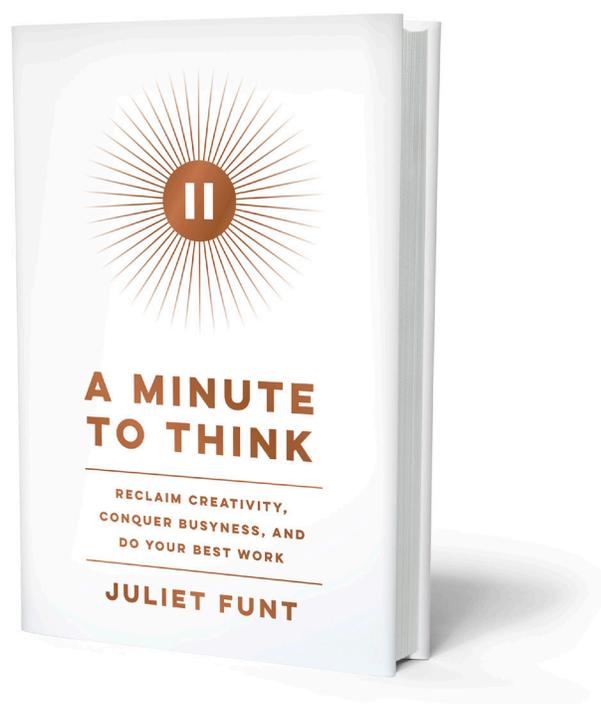


INTRODUCTION TO THE A MINUTE TO THINK BOOK DISCUSSION GUIDE

I'm so happy you have the discussion guide in your hands. Whether you're reading *A Minute to Think* on your own, in a small group with your direct team, or as part of a wider company initiative, here are a few tips for using this guide:

- For individual and small informal groups, decide if you'll read the entire book and then come together for a one-time discussion.
- If you're the discussion leader, review the chapter recaps and questions and choose 10-15 questions you want to focus on. You can always follow the conversation where it goes and make sure you have all the questions handy in case the group spends more time on other topics and chapters.
- For more formal discussion groups that might read and discuss a chapter a week, discussion leaders might send an email with the chapter recaps and questions a few days in advance and you can discuss that topic—and of course you can share as your experiences implementing some of the principles and tools.



A MINUTE TO THINK

RECLAIM CREATIVITY, CONQUER BUSYNESS,
AND DO YOUR BEST WORK

BY JULIET FUNT

(PUBLISHER: HARPER COLLINS BUSINESS)

BOOK OVERVIEW

A Minute to Think introduces a powerful new way to look at the way we work today and offers a path all of us can follow to reclaim control of our time and regain the ability to strategically pause—and think, create, and do our best work.

Do you sometimes feel like you're relentlessly behind the curve, dousing fires everywhere, and your 2 AM insomnia provides the only unscheduled thinking time in the day?

Do you sense you could contribute more—and better—work if there was a little more room in your day? Does busyness deprive you of the oxygen your talents need to really catch fire? Do you wish you could stop the insane pace for a brief moment and just take a minute?

Taking a pause has felt impossible—until now. With razor-sharp instruction and moments of humor, *A Minute to Think* gives us an escape route from the overwhelm of low-value tasks and the daily avalanche of emails, meetings, decks, and reports. Using research, client stories, and core principles to make room for what truly matters, we are given the permission and frameworks we need to overcome busywork and complexity and to reclaim creativity, innovation, and a sense of ease and possibility. Whether you are an individual trying to build a more sane and human flow of daily work, a team looking to develop new levels of efficiency and effectiveness, or an entire organization changing your culture towards thoughtfulness, *A Minute to Think* can lead you there.

ABOUT JULIET FUNT

Featured in *Forbes* and *Fast Company*, Juliet Funt is a global leader in team effectiveness and productivity and a renowned keynote speaker, tough-love advisor to the Fortune 500, and founder and CEO of **[WhiteSpace at Work] [the boutique efficiency firm, The Juliet Funt Group]**, which helps companies defeat busywork, make time to think, and recoup thousands of hours of talent capacity. Working with organizations like Spotify, *National Geographic*, Anthem, Vans, Abbott, Costco, Pepsi, Nike, Wells Fargo, Sephora, Sysco, and ESPN, Funt is on a mission to liberate talent, speed execution, increase productivity, and enhance our sense meaning in our work. Hailed by bestselling authors, leaders, and clients, *A Minute to Think* (HarperCollins) is her first book.

PROLOGUE

RACING TO NOWHERE

CHAPTER 1

THE MISSING ELEMENT

Our Hidden Yearning for Space

A Minute to Think begins with stories about our work, life, and goals. Often, we're so caught up in the crises, demands, and unrelenting pace—and, yes, overwhelming busyness—that we never take an honest look at our work environment and expectations. We never allow ourselves to see another way. Juliet shares her own journey and then introduces the concept of the “missing element” of white space—short periods of open, unscheduled time that, when inserted back into our days, change the very nature of work. It's the oxygen that allows the sparks of our efforts to catch fire.

EXCERPT

“Without space we can't sustain ourselves. The full fortitude of our professional contributions eludes us. We miss game-changing, breakthrough ideas that fail to grace us with their presence because busyness is barring the door. We miss human moments of serendipity and connection that should occur in the in-between moments of life—because in-between moments no longer exist.”

QUESTIONS AND TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. The book proposes that we are living in an Age of Overload. Do you agree? Where does overload show up the most for you, your team, your organization?
2. Mindy powers through her busyness with peanut butter. Pete uses his training as an emergency responder. Geoff and Jenny rely on passion. How do you push yourself and what would happen if you pushed a bit less? If your team did?
3. Economist Juliet Schor talks about “performative busyness.” Do you feel guilty about your inability to get ahead of everything on your plate? Do you give yourself credit for everything you accomplish? Are these judgments accurate and realistic?

CHAPTER 2

THE FALSE GOD OF BUSYNESS

Why Work Is So Much Work

Chapter 2 gets to the heart of the risks and negative impacts we all face when there isn't a "minute to think." Juliet reports on the pervasive sense of burnout and overwhelm in our workplaces. She identifies three main factors that lead us to the overwork: insatiability, conformity, and waste. And she spells out the measurable, bottom line financial costs of heeding "the false god of busyness"—doing low-value tasks at the expense of our most important, creative, and revenue-generating work.

EXCERPT

"In my colleagues and clients I see folks trying to live out the quantity-focused values they've seen heralded as pride-worthy. They're dedicated and hardworking people committed to make a real contribution, and they believe their endless mountain climbing is necessary and right--that it will lead them to matter, and to be rewarded. Leaders heed the siren call of "more" as they shoot for growth and competitive advantage. And, of course, in the realm of gross revenue and profit, there is nothing we love more than more."

QUESTIONS AND TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. Which "benefits" or "perks" of overwork do you most believe in and seek out? Do you sometimes feel like you're in a competition—a pie-eating contest—to work more or harder?
2. Do you have a big "pet peeve" about busywork and waste?
3. Does your company have an unwritten "policy" or culture about overwork—or rest and time off—and does it align with your values? Where is it helping you or getting in your way?

CHAPTER 3

THE STRATEGIC PAUSE

Making Space a Daily Reality

Science confirms it. Pauses are good for performance. Resting our attention enhances our energy and problem solving. Some organizations have instituted formal pondering time with billion-dollar results from 3M's inventions of masking tape and Post-its to Google AdSense. In our own spheres, we can use strategic pauses in our day to recuperate, reduce, reflect, and construct.

EXCERPT

“The Wedge is a small portion of white space inserted between two activities. Between beginning work and checking email, we take a wedge of white space to plan our morning. Between receiving an unnecessary meeting invite and accepting it without thinking, we take a moment to realize we’re not needed and craft a cordial decline. Between responding to feedback that makes us feel defensive, we take a moment to reconnect with our commitment to growth and then calmly ask for more detail. The Wedge stops us in any moment of life when taking the next action mindlessly would be a mistake.”

QUESTIONS AND TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Take a “sip” of white space right now and let yourself pause. ...
After 1 minute, come back and share your experiences.
2. Can you think of an experience where slowing down and pausing made you and your work better? What made that possible—Your mindset? Your environment? A particular boss?
3. Is there someone you admire who seems to naturally “make space” in their day? How does it impact the way they work?

CHAPTER 4

THE THIEVES OF TIME

Identifying the Forces Against Us

With firmness and a large dose of humbleness, Juliet shows how our greatest strengths can become our biggest liabilities. We are propelled by our Drive (turning to Overdrive); Excellence (turning to Perfectionism); Information (turning to Overload); and Activity (turning to Frenzy). All wonderful and necessary qualities when they are right-sized. But until we see how the Thieves of Time work against us, we can't free ourselves from their downsides.

EXCERPT:

“The thieves keep us constantly tipsy on their thin rewards and rob us of the ability to pause. They make us whiz by freeway exits that could lead to meaningful work and creative insights. The thieves mute our receptivity to the world. When our heads are down, sweating and serving these artificial bosses, we’re less open to both great ideas and the subtle interpersonal cues from those around us.”

QUESTIONS AND TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. Can you identify your primary thief? What about your teammates'?
Do you have any ahas! When you think about the thieves that motivate you?
2. Would your partner, best friend, or boss agree with the primary thief you've identified? How does your primary thief show up for them?
3. Is there a primary thief that motivates your team and how you work together?

CHAPTER 5

THE SIMPLIFICATION QUESTIONS

Reclaiming the Best by Removing the Rest

The turning point in taming our thieves comes when we stop trying to do more—more Drive, more Excellence, more Information, more Activity. The key concept is this: When value replaces quantity in our goals, we unleash our potential. In practical terms, this means de-crapifying our day and using the four Simplification Questions to rid ourselves of the unnecessary.

EXCERPT:

“A Reductive Mindset is a way of seeing the world where ridding yourself of the unnecessary becomes second nature. It’s a celebration of the elegant, expansive feeling of “less”—less complexity, less on our to-do lists, less waste, less interrupting, less unnecessary touch points and meetings. How did Michelangelo sculpt the David from a shapeless block of marble? He took a big hunk of stone and removed every piece that was not David.”

QUESTIONS AND TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. If you think about what’s on your plate, how could the four questions help you and your colleagues reduce? (Is there anything I can let go of? Where is “good enough,” good enough? What do I truly need to know? What deserves my attention?)
2. Have you had a boss who gave you the message that you should ease up or doubledown on your efforts? What voices are still in your head?
3. Do you think Tuna changes (big ones) or a Krill changes (micro ones) are better? Why? Can you begin to envision making some changes in your daily workflow?

CHAPTER 6

HALLUCINATED URGENCY

Unhooking from the Culture of Now

As the book explains, all of our efforts to pause and create white space will disappoint us until we learn to unhook from the Culture of Now. The vast majority of the fire drills and insane deadlines we face at work are not true emergencies. They're the product of Hallucinated Urgency, "the altered mental state where the time-sensitivity of tasks is flattened and everyone is in a permanent state of fight or flight." When we calibrate urgency, space will appear—space for thoughtfulness and deliberateness.

EXCERPT:

"Hallucinated urgency causes us to constantly and thoughtlessly interrupt our colleagues. Under pressure, we value our own burning needs more than the time we steal from others. But our theft is short sighted. We ignore a karmic truth that what goes around comes around. Our interrupting makes the behavior more expected and accepted, and therefore causes interruptions to come right back around to us."

QUESTIONS AND TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. Juliet tells the story of the nurses she worked with and how they found small moments to pause and clear their minds. How does their example inspire you?
2. What "benefits" can you imagine from taming your urgency?
How might this also affect your team and colleagues?
3. What time off can you commit to right now—an afternoon, day, weekend, or week off?

CHAPTER 7

THE TOOL THAT TURNED ON US

Defeating the Email Beast

At any moment we can gain “a minute to think” by doing one of these four things: 1) Take a pause. 2) Look for a thief. 3) Ask a question. 4) Verify urgency. Yet with email, we may feel helpless in the face of its power over us. We look at it first thing in the morning and the last thing at night. Our compulsion is fueled by the very addictiveness of our devices. With new tools and habits that encourage us to pause and reduce our time with our email, we can find a better way.

EXCERPT:

“Apart from compulsive tendencies, our urges to check email frequently are amplified by social conformity (everyone around us does it), anticipation (the unwrapped surprise of every good and bad email), and avoidance (resistance to deeper, harder, quiet work). This is a big one. In complex work we are tested, we are vulnerable, and we often are lonely while doing it.”

QUESTIONS AND TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. Are you addicted to your email, devices, or communication apps?
How does this show up in your work and life?
2. The chapter introduces the concept of the email color spectrum (Technicolor to pastel to black and white)?
Have you tried to shift your email setting? What changes?
3. Are you guilty of sending emails that are too long, too unclear, or too frequent?
What might you (and your team) work on?

CHAPTER 8

HOW THE BEST TEAMS TALK

Elevating Our Communication'

We're all taught the lesson to "think before we speak" but it is very hard to do. The strategic pause allows us to control our impulses and choose what we really want to say. In the role of listener, thoughtfulness helps us check what we hear against the intention of what is meant. And when we take a few minutes to plan how, what, and where we're going to communicate, we elevate our effectiveness, clarity, and connection.

EXCERPT:

"No" is a powerful word and it has many counterparts of similar capacity. "I want," "I need," "I'd prefer," and many others. Language is the realm in which our personal goals are made real and our interpersonal issues are either solved or worsened. Talking to each other skillfully and bravely fixes so much. If you don't pause to plan your messages, consider the needs of another, or garner the bravery to say no, you'll never optimize your effectiveness. It's a marvelous circle of benefit. Strategic pauses allow us to communicate better and communicating better makes work easier, creating more time to pause."

QUESTIONS AND TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. The chapter introduces 2D Vs. 3D Communication. Do you rely on one over the other? What gains could you make in time, efficiency, or effectiveness if you changed your practices?
2. Do you think of yourself as a Yes person or a No person? Could pausing help you make more considered responses? How would that support you and others?
3. Saying the things that are most important to us are often the hardest? Can you think of a conversation you've been avoiding? How might you feel if you had that conversation today?

CHAPTER 9

MEETINGS DONE BETTER

Experiencing the Gains of Getting Together

Meetings—everyone likes to complain about them. We dislike the waste, the inefficiency, the lack of decisions. On the other hand, they are a precious opportunity when done well. They lift us up, and when a meeting is a white space influenced one, there is plenty of time to think, reflect, and pause.

EXCERPT:

“Addressing a global energy group, I asked the audience to take a thoughtful wedge of white space and raise their hands to self-identify into descending categories of meeting waste. ‘Who feels 50 percent of their meeting time is unnecessary?’ Up went a chunk of hands. ‘What about 40 percent? 30 percent? 20 percent?’ At this point we’d seen everyone’s hands raised, except for Carl, who ultimately raised his lone, confident hand in my very last category, reporting zero percent of his meetings were unnecessary. It didn’t take long to find out that he was the person who called them all.”

QUESTIONS AND TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. In response to this chapter, do you have new ideas about the meetings in your organization? Which ones work best? Which are the most frustrating?
2. Have you experienced the feeling of Shouldn’t Be Here (SBH)? What might it look like to reduce waste in your meetings?
3. Thinking of Katy and her meetings with the Dalai Lama, imagine yourself taking a strategic pause before your next meeting and then some “hall time” after. How would you show up differently?

CHAPTER 10

THE WHITE SPACE TEAM

Creating New Norms Together

A Minute to Think presents a new set of principles and tools to escape the beliefs of our culture of insatiability—that we can never do enough and that more is better. But even when we desire and buy into a change, shifts in our own habits, and especially the larger organization, can be frustrating and inconsistent—and it takes patience.

EXCERPT:

“Norms help us make sense of one of the foggiest words at work—culture. It’s not that complicated. If you take all the norms that exist, and put them together, that’s your culture. Norms around communication, urgency, waste, time off, meetings, email, and thoughtfulness. Each area contains norms. Sew them together and you’ve made a quilt of culture. Creating new norms is a process that can happen by accident, but now we can also happen on purpose.”

QUESTIONS AND TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. The thesis of *A Minute to Think* is that thoughtfulness and pausing can lead to our best work. Has the case been made? Have you changed your thinking?
2. Do you speak the language of Finance Folks, People People, or Idea Lovers when you imagine the biggest benefit of white space? What might be one measure of success for you?
3. The book talks about the difference between “fixing the car” (us) and “repairing the road (the company environment and processes).” What practices can you see doing on your own versus collectively with your small team or larger organization?

CHAPTER 11

LIFE BEYOND WORK

Don't Miss the Ride

EPILOGUE

UNDER THE LIMESTONE MOUNTAIN

The challenges we face in our work life carry over to our home life—and so does the need for thoughtfulness. The Age of Overload shows up in our busy, overbooked schedules, high expectations, and the pressures to do more. The missing element of oxygen, when brought home, gives us time in which we can record the tiny, visceral, magnificent details of living. It also a missing element in

EXCERPT:

“The missing element of oxygen, when brought home, gives us time in which we can record the tiny, visceral, magnificent details of living. The shower after a sweaty workout, a belly laugh with a friend, the warmth of fine whiskey, rain on the roof, or a tight and lasting hug. Your white space etches these blessings in memory and helps you relish them. Busy can make you miss it all. Busy keeps you paddling along the surface of the water instead of diving down to see the parrot fish and the fan coral.”

QUESTIONS AND TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. Do you identify with the impact of cultural norms around busyness in your personal and family life? Do you have white space—time with no assignment—in your home life? What do those moments feel like?
2. If you have children, are there new goals or practices you might implement in your role as a parent?
3. Is there a personal or career story you'd like to write for the coming year or even decade? Let yourself dream a bit.

**WHEN YOU NEED TO REFOCUS,
ALWAYS REMEMBER:**

TAKE A PAUSE.

LOOK FOR A THIEF.

ASK A QUESTION.

VERIFY URGENCY.

To stay up to date with the latest advice from Juliet visit JulietFunt.com
and if you haven't already take The Busyness Test at JulietFunt.com/Quiz
