

The Life Audit

Take Control of Your Life Now Every Minute Counts

By Caroline Righton

The Big Idea

The world is full of people trying to unravel the mystery of how to make their lives more purposeful, locate the point where they make the wrong decisions, and discover how to make them right. *The Life Audit* offers new ways of thinking about relationship, work, health, and soul.

This innovative self-help book deals with the practical method of assessing and applying a thorough analysis of one's life to fully enlighten one of the ins and outs of one's existence. Caroline Righton came up with the Life Audit concept, not necessarily to give answers to life's biggest questions, but to provide readers an opportunity to find the answers by developing more thought-provoking questions themselves.

Why You Need This Book

The Life Audit proffers humorous and straightforward advice which would be eminently useful for any reader who seeks to transform his or her life. The book features 48 charts intended for life auditing, serving as the basis for The Life Audit programme and equipping every reader to make every minute count.

If you're planning to dump your baggage of worries and doubts and prepare for a new life with a new you, this book will help you find the space and time to make that brand new start.

The First Stage

- This stage establishes who you really are by looking closely at how you spend your time, with whom, and doing what, where, and when. You will examine how you really feel about the things, events and people you are involved with. Timesheets, questionnaires and analysis will help you find the answers.

Below are the essential sections of this stage with the questions that will guide you through the process of starting your life's audit:

1. Personal Information – facts and figures

2. Really Personal Information – ambitions and frustrations

- What do you do in your day-to-day life that makes you grumpy?
- What things in life do you look forward to?
- Is there a theme you keep coming back to when depressed about something you regret?
- When feeling hopeful and optimistic, do you talk about plans you have for the future?
- In terms of a day, a week and a year, what would be your ideal life?

3. **Your Time Spreadsheet – making every minute count**

- Daily Time Log
- Pie Charts
- Day Journal

4. **Your Time Balance Sheet – adding value and making investments**

5. **Stocktake your life – daily logs and double entries**

- Health Stocktake – Physical wealth being, Fitness, Diet and weight loss
- Relationship Stocktake
- Home Stocktake
- Image Stocktake – clothes, grooming, style
- Money Stocktake
- Work Stocktake
- Leisure Stocktake
- Citizenship Stocktake
- Soul Stocktake
- Mortality Stocktake

The first stage's goal is to bring you to your life's entirety in an itemised and annotated manner. By identifying your biggest issues down to the tiniest irritating stuff of your daily life, this stage prepares you for the starting point of making the life you've always dreamed of living.

The Second Stage

- This is all about prioritising and eliminating. You will aim to establish the Breakeven position in all aspects of your life. From the information gathered in the first stage, you will be able to clarify how much time you need to devote to obligations, responsibilities and relationships. Timesaving advice will help you add value to the hours of each day.

The aim of this stage is to help you to maximize and manage your time between the tasks and responsibilities which are 'must-do's', 'must-haves', or 'should-think abouts'.

Here are ways to improve your following stocktakes at Breakeven point:

1. Sleep Breakeven

- Try to reduce the amount of sleep you have by one hour, and see how you feel.
- Note where and how often you need to compensate for the above by repaying any sleep debt.
- Make your bedroom a suitable sanctuary for sleep.
- Buy blackout blinds or line your curtains with blackout material.
- Experiment with different levels of heating and ventilation.

2. Health Breakeven

- Really get to know your health professionals.
- Be informed about the healthcare provision available to you.
- Be methodical, and stay up-to-date with check-ups and routine screening.
- Take responsibility for understanding your condition.
- As you get older, respond to health concerns promptly by seeking advice, and be wise about preventive measures such as flu jabs.

3. Fitness Breakeven

- Are any of your friends or family interested in the same activity? If so, could you combine socialising time with fitness time?
- Along the same lines, develop new habits and, instead of meeting friends for lunch or a drink, suggest a walk instead.
- Could your fitness routine be done in the hour you plan to steal from your sleep?
- If your fitness regime involves going out to a gym or to play sport with others, also have a private routine that you can work out to at home on days when time allocated to exercise gets unavoidably reduced.
- Seize all your 'lifestyle' fitness opportunities. Do everything a little faster. Jog on the spot while you are waiting for the kettle to boil. Put a dance track on while you are vacuuming.

4. Weight and Diet Breakeven

- Save time cooking and maximise your nutrient intake by eating vegetables and fruit raw whenever you can.
- Cook vegetables and fruit such as potatoes and apples in their skins to save time and maximise the amount of goodness you get.
- Find taste in what you cook, not how you cook, by buying good-quality meat and fish and serving them simply roast or grilled.
- Stir-frying is another healthy, speedy way to cook.
- Consider consulting a nutritionist or buying a book to learn how your body processes food.

5. Relationship Breakeven

- Ensure you make time to be together.
- Use that time to engage with each other properly, e.g. don't eat while watching TV but use the time to talk.
- If it's your partner, remember the things that attracted you to each other in the first place.
- Remind yourself that you have placed this individual, whether partner, child, parent, best friend or pet, at the centre of your life. These are your most important relationships.
- Don't ignore others' needs in working out your own. You are an interdependent unit.

6. Family Relationship Breakeven

- Work out what sort of contact best reinforces and demonstrates the level of love and support in the relationship.
- Try to erase 'duty' contact by finding a way to be more concerned with and engaged by the person in question.
- Remind yourself why you feel an obligation to stay in contact with a particular member of the family.
- Do they feel a mutual duty to maintain relations?
- Family relationships don't necessarily have to be one-on-one. Family gatherings can be great ways to reinforce these relationships, and a couple of them a year may be happier than individual occasions.

7. Friends Breakeven

- Determine to really treasure the time you are committing to a relationship.
- View your friendship as part of a stable network that has its own dependences and loyalties.
- Don't waste time on relationships that constantly make you feel miserable.
- Consider your friends as hand-picked assets and allies.
- Keep auditing your friendships and adjusting your expectations.

8. Professional and Support Services Breakeven

- Be clear about what you want to see as the end result of a job well done.
- Make sure you have relayed this expectation to the person concerned.
- Consider the timing of any difficult conversation. When is the person in question most likely to be receptive?
- If you have small concerns, explain your overall satisfaction first.
- If you are dissatisfied with the level of service you are getting, have all your reasons ready in order to build your case.

9. Home Contents Breakeven

- Focus on one room at a time.
- Chuck anything that's on permanent display that reminds you of a sad or unhappy time, an unkind person or a failed love affair. Negative waves can just as easily be emitted by objects as by people.
- A place for everything and everything in its place. Having made a conscious decision to keep a household item, ornament or piece of furniture, allocate it the appropriate space.
- Throw out duplicate items.
- If a room still feels overcrowded, re-audit the contents to make sure there is nothing else you can dispense with.

10. Storage Contents Breakeven

- Make sure you aren't making excuses to hang on to things 'just in case' – ask yourself honestly when the last such eventuality happened.
- If it's a shame to hide an item in a cupboard, consider where it would look good out on display.
- Treat your fridge as one of your storage areas and use it efficiently. In general, the more you have in it, the better it will work.
- If you are short of storage spaces consider other possibilities such as the cavities under bench seating, wall-hung containers and pocket organisers on the backs of doors.
- Install shelves inside fitted cupboards to help order behind closed doors. If you know you won't put things away as you use them, introduce a pending basket for a once-a-week tidying session. Then use it!

11. Housework Breakeven

Kitchen

- To speed up the nasty job of oven cleaning, put a bowl of water in the oven while it still hot after cooking.
- Always line your grill pan with foil so you never need to scour off burnt-on food.
- A tiny drop of baby oil or cooking oil rubbed into stainless-steel surfaces with a soft clean cotton cloth will prevent fingerprints and other smears from marking the shine.

Sitting Room

- Don't waste money, time or storage space on spray polishes. A soft cloth will get rid of dust on wood furniture, supplemented by occasional gentle damp wiping over. Use a mist sprayer, available from garden centres, and spray the duster not the furniture.
- If you have an open wood-burning fire only clear the ash once a week – let a good base build up.

Bathroom

- Make cleaning the bath and shower compulsory for everyone after use.
- Encourage other users to add a capful of bubble bath when running their bath, which makes cleaning easier afterwards.

Laundry

- If you can afford it, never hand wash sweaters – take them to the dry cleaners. Washed woollies require time, space and special washing products and are spectacularly easy to ruin.
- Try tumble drying clothes and putting them immediately on hangers to see if you can get away with not ironing them.

Bedroom

- Making the bed instantly makes a room seem tidy even if you haven't touched anything else yet.
- Clothes lying around always make a room look untidy. Don't use a bedroom chair or the floor as a dumping ground.

General time-saving principles

- Always clean from the top down – cobwebs first, carpets last.
- Always dust, change sheets and plump cushions before vacuuming.
- Multi-tasking is the way to save time with housework. Do the ironing or sew on buttons while watching TV.

12. Image Breakeven

Grooming

- Keep your grooming staples in see-through zip bags so you can see things at a glance.
- Make appointments with hairdressers, barbers and beauticians for early in the day, before they fall behind schedule.
- Book your next appointment as you leave each time.

Wardrobe

- Have a relationship with each garment you own. Really love it and cherish it.
- Buying the best quality you can and looking after it will help.
- Hang and store clothes in sensible order, by colour or type.

13. Money Breakeven

- Empty your purse or wallet every day and put receipts on a stationery spike so that when you come to file them all you need to do is push a paper tie through the holes and put them in monthly dated envelope. Then they'll be roughly in date order.
- Submit your bank manager to the same scrutiny you applied to your doctor.
- Check out specialist magazines for comparison price lists and product reviews.
- If there's something useful rather than beautiful on your wish list, keep an eye out in the For Sale columns in your local newspaper for second hand goods in mint condition.
- To make sure you get the most suitable and cost-effective tariff, keep a diary of your line usage before choosing a mobile phone or line provider.
- Consider having a clothes-swapping party with same-size friends.

- Compare the trade-in car price with the suggested book value you could ask for your old car if you sold it privately. There is often a significant difference.
- Christmas is a good time to buy a car; summer is best for jewellery shopping; and spring is best for selling a house.
- If your employer has a travel department, see if there are budget schemes or special corporate arrangements you can take advantage of.
- Make sure you aren't under-insured, or your insurer will discount any claim you make.
- Visiting a local market towards the end of the day will enable you to buy reduced produce, although the variety may also be less.
- If you often go to the cinema or theatre, enquire about season tickets.
- Become a cheeky shopper and always ask for extras to be thrown in or discounts to be given.
- Can a spare bedroom earn money from bed and breakfast or a lodger?

14. Work Breakeven

- Research the options for starting and finishing earlier or later.
- See if you can work straight through breaks and claim the time at the end of the day or let it accumulate towards extra days off.
- Don't forget that work time may be paid-for time but it is still your life.
- Don't ever procrastinate about a task, and always deliver on time.
- Be highly organized, punctual and 'neat' in your presentation of everything from your leave forms to ordering more paper clips.

15. Citizenship Breakeven

- Do you sort your rubbish out and recycle paper, cardboard, plastic bottles, tins and glass?
- How eco-friendly is your car? Do you try to drive smoothly and avoid sharp braking? Is your exhaust as clean as it might be?
- View any community or good citizenship activities as providing you with additional 'wind-down' time, especially if it's hands-on and brain-off.

16. Soul Breakeven

- Don't underestimate the importance of looking after your soul.
- Look back over your blessings counted and make a note of at least ten things that bring you joy. Put the list in your wallet or handbag.
- Pray – even if you are not sure to whom or what. If you're not comfortable with the concept of prayer, try meditation.

17. Mortality Breakeven

- Do you need to spend more time thinking about your mortality?
- Can you think about your fear rationally? Do you think there is anything else you can do?

As you have unwearingly figured out the must-dos in your daily life and eliminated those that don't require much of your major concern, this stage should be able to guide you in recalculating the Balance Sheet and adjust respectively to that *final figure: the number of hours you have left to do something with.*

But after finding your best Breakeven position, the bigger question is – what will you be doing with it?

The Third Stage

- The final stage shows you how to move your dreams forward now that you have time to take positive action, as well as how to understand the commitments and priorities that are currently immovable or non-negotiable. It enables you to open the investment accounts to realise your dreams, helps you

prevent your new-found focus from being deflected, and tells you where to find information and support. Now you will learn how to make the Life Audit an ongoing part of your life.

Margins for Growth – spot your potential

- Whoever you are and whatever your age, now, with the prospect of new challenges, you need to reinforce what you have to offer as core strengths in order to spot and realise your full potential.

Investment Opportunities – planning a better future

- Your dream may not come true overnight, your life issue may not be instantly resolved – but an advancement towards resolution, however slight, will feel fantastic.

Trading Adjustments – making informed changes

- Realising that dream, and the actions that it will require, are items that are about to join the rest of your commitments as a fact of life. So before you proceed you need to make those adjustments to your life Balance Sheet, fully informed about the effects on other areas of your life, the time your plan is going to take and when you are going to be carrying it out.

Reconciliation – facing up to facts

- Regrets are things you either have to make better or let go. What you can't do is continue to let them blight your life. What's past is past. If you are struggling with regrets and don't see how you can go back and make things better, or find closure, then you could try a process that works in reverse to the system you have used with your wishes.

Become a Life Entrepreneur – now you've got real, be brave

- Don't despair – be brave. Whatever your dream or ambition, you must explore what it would take to try to make it happen. You've got all the tools to help you make the right decisions, so go on – now you've got real, be brave!

Takeover Target – live life on your terms and don't be ambushed

- There's a tiny downside to the lovely contented and confident life you should now be embracing. Be prepared for some other people not to feel so jolly about your new-found focus!
- Encourage them too to carry out the Life Audit, so that they can profit from the experience themselves and understand the progression you've been through.
- Distract them by getting them to redirect their interest in your plans towards themselves and their own dreams and ambitions.
- Help them, support them, do whatever you know (because you do now know) that the relationship needs or warrants. Just don't let them ambush you!

Profit and Loss – keep assessing this new life and this new you

- Be as honest with yourself as you can.
- Be knowledgeable about your strengths and weaknesses.
- Be real about the 'must-haves' and 'must-dos'. Make sure you have them and do them, and only then move forward.
- Make sure you keep on reassessing and re-evaluating the resulting you from the profit and loss of your life actions.

I adapted the exercise for my life audit, and added several rounds of analysis along the way. The first step is simple: take 100 post-its and write a single wish on every one. These can be any kind of wish or goal you'd like: no wish is too big or too small. At the end of my life audit, having a community of creative collaborators and inspiring, motivated minds to meld with was the area that felt weakest. Having moved to San Francisco less than a year ago, perhaps this shouldn't have surprised me. AboutSee all. Contact The Life Audit on Messenger. www.thelifeaudit.com. Community. The Life Audit. 12 March 2013. Blogging today about The Dead Eyes of Politics at www.thelifeaudit.com. [thelifeaudit.com](http://www.thelifeaudit.com). <http://www.thelifeaudit.com/>. The Life Audit. 2 March 2013. "Steady the Buffs and Peeling Oranges" See today's blog about family sayings at www.thelifeaudit.com.