Time Machines

If you have ever heard me speak publicly during a training, you have probably heard me rant about time machines. I am firmly against the belief in time machines. I make no apologies. If I can just change one person's mind about how they aren't real, and never will be a real device that you can use, then I will have done a great service for the world.

> *"Remember that man lives only in the present, in this fleeting instant; all the rest of his life is either past and gone, or not yet revealed."*
>
> **— Marcus Aurelius**

Obviously, the time machine is a metaphor for dwelling on the past, complaining about the past, making excuses based on past incidents, and living in the past. I explain that a person who does these things or spends a lot of time talking about "coulda, shoulda, woulda" is engaging in "time machine thinking." I joke that they must believe in time machines, because only a person who believes in time machines would think there is any hope of changing the past.

> *"What benefit is there in reviewing past sufferings, and in being unhappy now, just because once you were unhappy?"*
>
> **— Seneca**

If you can't change a thing, why would you dwell on it, spend mental energy on it, or take the time to talk about it? Those activities are a waste of time, and when you waste time, you are essentially wasting your life. Time cannot be replaced. It is priceless.

> *"It is not that we have a short time to live, but that we waste a lot of it."*
>
> **— Seneca**

The one positive use for thinking about or talking about the past is learning. Learning from past activities to improve your decisions today. When it comes to thinking about the past, I recommend being like a military commander who studies past battles and military history to help plan the upcoming fight. The focus is on the strategy, tactics, and maneuvers which led to victory or defeat. That commander isn't focusing on the horrors of war, the injuries, or the pain. Those things are real and awful, but they're past, and reliving them doesn't contribute to the task at hand. In the same way, you aren't served by reliving that embarrassing moment in middle school or that thing your boss said last week.

I don't like telling you not to do something or telling you that you should "cut out" a negative behavior without giving you something positive that you can do instead.

My long-suffering, supportive, and amazing wife Jennifer has heard my rants about time machines more than anyone else. I practice my presentations and trainings for weeks before presenting (A practice born from learning from past mistakes)

Our living room transforms into a classroom, and she becomes my audience, listening to my material while I work out my delivery, reword things, and practice timing. She provides helpful feedback and suggestions to improve my work.

Through repetition and exposure, she knows what's coming three slides from now and can anticipate when I might miss a point or mispronounce a word. (as I do) Like anyone, she has favorite topics and dislikes, and she enjoys teasing me, so that I'm prepared for debate, pushback, and objections.

One day, during a practice session, I was leading up to my time machine rant. As an attention getter, I like to use a line where I loudly proclaim, "I hate time machines!" Right as I was about to say my line, she revealed her new custom-made T-shirt with the bold letters, "I ❤️ Time Machines." That one threw me. We both had a good laugh about it.

Love is the opposite of hate, and positive is the opposite of negative. Like I said, I want to give you something positive to use in regard to dwelling on the past, and I guess I should take Jennifer's lead here. So, let's do that.

Here's the exercise: What if we loved time machines? What if we acted like they exist and they are a real thing?

What would you do if you had a time machine? What if you were given a do-over? Let's say, like rewinding a movie, you could go back to some point in your life and start again from that point, but with the wisdom and experience that you have today.

(To keep this somewhat realistic and useful, let's say you can't change world events, you can't bet on sports, and you can't invest in Bitcoin when it was $5.00. The only life you are allowed to change is your

own.)

Ok… BOOM! Time travel accomplished. You open your eyes, and you wake up in your past bed, in your past body, in your past life. You have started your do-over. Now, what changes would you make to your behavior?

- How would you respond differently to things?

- What habits would you build?

- What habits would you quit or never start?

- What pursuits would you engage in?

- What skills would you try to learn?

- What risks would you be willing to take?

- Whose opinions would you value and whose would you completely disregard?

- Who would you choose to spend more or less time with? Why?

- What health or fitness practices would you adopt?

- What financial practices would you change?

Make a note of all the things you would do differently and how that would benefit future-you.

Ok… Zap! Let's get back to reality here. Nobody can give you a time machine, because they don't exist. But, I'm happy to tell you that you are going to get a do-over with all the benefits of the experience and wisdom that you currently possess. Tonight when you go to bed, the reset button gets pressed. Tomorrow when you wake up and open your eyes, you will find yourself at the start of a fresh do-over. Make the best of it, and consider all those changes that you would have made to the past, then get to work on them. The future version of you will be happy that you made the best of your time travel experience.

Remember, time only flows in one direction and for best results you should be swimming with the current.

Amor Fati
Sgt. Steve