



What the Tide Knows About Timing: *Lessons I Keep Relearning at the Water's Edge*

By Brandy Trout

Some mornings, and sometimes at sunset, I check the tide charts before I leave the house. Not because I need to, but because I am curious. High tide, low tide, and the in-between hours that do not announce themselves clearly. I like knowing what to expect, even though the beach almost never looks the way I imagine it will.

There is comfort in numbers and predictions; in believing that if I understand the pattern well enough, I can anticipate what is coming. But tide charts do not promise outcomes... they only offer reference points. They remind me that knowing the rhythm does not mean controlling the result. The ocean still decides how it shows up. I can prepare, but I cannot dictate the shape of the day.

There are days I arrive expecting water and find wide open sand instead. On other mornings, the tide has crept so far in that the shoreline feels unfamiliar, as if it has been quietly rearranged overnight. The same beach, different posture. The ocean never apologizes for this. It does not explain why it has pulled back or reassure me that it plans to return. It simply does what tides have always done... advancing and retreating according to a rhythm older than my expectations. Watching it, I am reminded how uncomfortable we have become with anything that looks like waiting.

Pulling back, in most places, is misunderstood. It is seen as hesitation, indecision, or loss of momentum. We are taught to push forward, stay visible, and keep moving; especially when things are going well. Stillness can look suspicious. Space can feel like risk but the ocean values retreat as essential. Low tide is not absence. It is exposure. It reveals what are normally hidden patterns in the sand, shells that were carried in and left behind, edges softened by time and water. There is work happening here, even when it looks quiet.

Exposure is uncomfortable precisely because it removes distraction. At low tide, there is nowhere to hide what has been carried beneath the surface. The same is true in our own lives. When momentum slows, when the noise fades, we are left with what we have been avoiding... questions without quick answers, decisions that require patience instead of action, and truths that do not respond well to pressure. We do not like those moments. We label them as unproductive or stalled, but the ocean treats them as necessary. It reveals before it reshapes.

I have had seasons that felt like low tide. Times when things slowed unexpectedly, when progress did not look the way that I thought it would; when forward motion gave way to reflection. I used to rush through those moments, eager to get back to what felt productive. Now am learning to stay. Timing, I am discovering, is a discipline. It requires restraint. It asks you to resist interfering with what is still forming. To trust that not everything needs to be rushed into clarity. The tide does not hurry because it does not doubt its return.

Walking the shoreline, I have started to notice how often my own impatience and aggravation come from uncertainty rather than urgency. From the discomfort of not knowing what is next. From the fear that if I do not act, something will be lost. The ocean offers a different model... one rooted in confidence rather than control. There is a quiet strength in that.

I notice it most in moments when I am tempted to rush resolution like when a conversation feels unfinished or a decision wants closure before it is ready. The ocean has taught me to pause instead. To listen longer. To resist filling space simply because it is uncomfortable. Timing, I am learning, often does its best work when I stop interfering.

Each day, the beach looks entirely different from the day before. Sandbars shift. Footprints vanish. What felt solid yesterday has softened overnight. And still, the shoreline holds. Change does not threaten it; it shapes it. Anne Morrow Lindbergh wrote in *Gift from the Sea* about the wisdom of listening to the rhythms that govern our lives instead of forcing our own pace upon them. Standing here, watching the tide recede without concern, I understand that wisdom more clearly. The ocean is never behind. It is never early. It arrives exactly when it is meant to.

I have learned that pulling back is not quitting. It is how capacity is rebuilt. Rest creates room. Waiting brings intentional clarity. What feels like pause is often preparation. The tide always comes back, and when it does, it carries with it what has been shaped in the quiet - edges softened, debris cleared, space made for what belongs. There is no rush, no announcement. Just a steady return.

At sunset, the lesson feels even clearer. The back beach glows quietly, the day loosening its grip without ceremony. Nothing rushes to be finished. The tide continues its work, indifferent to the hour, confident in what comes next. By the time I turn back toward the dunes, the water has shifted again. Maybe only slightly. Enough to notice if you are paying attention. Timing rarely shouts; it whispers. It asks for trust rather than proof.

I did not always trust that. I wanted reassurance. Proof. Even a timeline. But the ocean has never offered those things, and it has never failed to return. Watching it now, I am reminded that certainty is not a prerequisite for trust. Presence is.

The ocean knows something we are still learning - that not everything unfolds on demand, and not everything needs to. Some things are better met at the right moment than forced at the wrong one. At the water's edge I am learning to wait without anxiety. To recognize that pulling back can be part of the work. And to trust that what is meant to return will. Exactly when it is ready.

Author Bio

Brandy Trout is a leadership strategist, writer, speaker, and executive coach who works with organizations and leaders in navigating growth, change, and complexity (www.FromGoodToGrace.com). Her writing explores the intersection of inner clarity, steady leadership, and the rhythms that shape how we live and lead. She is often found between Savannah and Tybee Island, where much of her writing takes shape.

The author often walks Tybee's shoreline listening to what the tide has to say.