

HANDS FREE Mama

A GUIDE TO PUTTING DOWN the PHONE,
BURNING the TO-DO LIST, and
LETTING GO of PERFECTION to
GRASP WHAT REALLY MATTERS!

Rachel Macy Stafford

THE HANDS FREE PLEDGE



I'm becoming Hands Free.

I want to make memories, not to-do lists.

I want to feel the squeeze of my child's arms, not the pressure of overcommitment.

I want to get lost in conversation with the people I love, not consumed by a sea of unimportant emails.

I want to be overwhelmed by sunsets that give me hope, not by overloaded agendas that steal my joy.

I want the noise of my life to be a mixture of laughter and gratitude, not the intrusive buzz of cell phones and text messages.

I'm letting go of distraction, disconnection, and perfection to live a life that simply, so very simply, consists of what really matters.

I'm becoming Hands Free.

Chapter 1

ACKNOWLEDGE THE COST OF YOUR DISTRACTION

Awareness



One of the most tragic things I know about human nature is that all of us tend to put off living. We are all dreaming of some magical rose garden over the horizon—instead of enjoying the roses that are blooming outside our windows today.

Dale Carnegie

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

What do you consider a valuable use of your time? Does your daily agenda reflect this?

Have your distractions taken an undeserved position on your priority list?

What parts of life do you not want to miss?

What are you going to do to ensure that you are grasping the moments that matter today so you don't live with regret tomorrow?

Chapter 2

MAKE PURPOSEFUL CONNECTION

Connectedness

The most precious gift we can offer others is our presence. When mindfulness embraces those we love, they will bloom like flowers.

Thich Nhat Hanh

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Is there a particular relationship that suffers more than others as a result of your distractions?

What might be the long-term impact on this relationship if you do not curb your distracted ways?

What anxieties or concerns do you have about letting go of your distractions? Could you share them with someone?

What are some of the positive results you've experienced when choosing connection over distraction?

Chapter 3

CHOOSE WHAT MATTERS

Deliberateness



At least three times every day take a moment and ask yourself what is really important. Have the wisdom and the courage to build your life around your answer.

Dr. Lee Jampolsky

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

When you are in situations where you have to wait (stoplights, restaurants, sporting events), do you reach for your device? What factors might you consider before looking at the phone to help you choose human connection instead?

What small moments in the daily routine are you using to engage in human connection instead of digital distraction? What positive differences are you seeing?

Reflect on a time in the past week when you chose to let go of distraction and grasp a moment that mattered. What helped you make that choice?

Chapter 4

RECOGNIZE THE GIFT OF TODAY

Presentness

One day at a time—this is enough. Do not look back and grieve over the past for it is gone; and do not be troubled about the future, for it has not yet come. Live in the present, and make it so beautiful it will be worth remembering.

Ida Scott Taylor

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Do you put off spending time with loved ones or delay doing things you enjoy until certain duties are complete and you have “more time”? Does that ideal moment ever arrive?

What daily or weekly rituals are special to your family? How do they make you feel connected to the sacred parts of your life? What actions will you take this week to protect these rituals or begin new ones?

Chapter 5

TAKE PAUSE

Serenity

There is more to life than simply increasing its speed.

Mahatma Gandhi

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

In what ways does your daily pace interfere with your ability to sit, relax, and be available to the ones you love?

What are some of the positive effects of taking time each day to relax or engage in a leisure activity by yourself or with a family member?

Is it difficult for loved ones to get (and maintain) your undivided attention when they talk to you? Name one practice you plan to implement that will allow you to be more available for meaningful conversations.

Chapter 6

SEE LIFE THROUGH UNDISTRACTED EYES

Clarity

Look at everything as though you were seeing it either for the first or last time. Then your time on earth will be filled with glory.

Betty Smith

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

“It is in the times I least want to be Hands Free that I most *need* to be Hands Free.” What does that statement mean to you?

Are there tasks within your children’s daily routine (such as bedtime, homework, meal preparation, or car pool) that you currently view as an inconvenience that might actually be an opportunity to connect? How might you change your perspective to see the hidden gifts in the midst of monotony or trying times?

When you find yourself becoming agitated over minor inconveniences or trivial annoyances, what might you think about or say to yourself to keep things in proper perspective?

Chapter 7

SAY YES TO WHAT MATTERS

Simplification

You can do anything, but not everything.

David Allen

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Is the number of extracurricular commitments in your life a point of contention with a loved one or your own inner voice? Do you feel the concern is justified? Why or why not?

Do you say yes to extracurricular requests and then resent the time you spend doing them? What response could you prepare to say the next time you are asked to do something that does not align with your Life List?

Chapter 8

SILENCE THE INNER CRITIC

Acceptance

Every second that you spend on doubting your worth, every moment that you use to criticize yourself; is a second of your life wasted, is a moment of your life thrown away. It's not like you have forever, so don't waste any of your seconds, don't throw even one of your moments away.

C. JoyBell C.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

How do you measure your self-worth? How might you alter those standards to be less superficial and more focused on what really matters in life?

Is your inner critic more vocal when you are in certain situations or around particular people? What changes might you make to minimize your exposure to those situations or people? How might you dispel those negative thoughts?

Do other people know the real you? Do you attempt to make things in your life seem better than they actually are? What might happen if you were to reveal your true self and your struggles to a trusted friend?

Chapter 9

REVEAL YOUR TRUE SELF

Authenticity

The thing that is really hard, and really amazing, is giving up on being perfect and beginning the work of becoming yourself.

Anna Quindlen

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

How could you adopt a more Come As You Are approach to life? How might this be beneficial to your children, your spouse, and your friends?

Do you pressure your children to look or perform a certain way? What might happen if you adopt the role of Loving Encourager and accept them “as is”? Would you be willing to try it for a month and see what happens?

Chapter 10

LET GO

Forgiveness

The beauty of life is, while we cannot undo what is done, we can see it, understand it, learn from it and change. So that every new moment is spent not in regret, guilt, fear or anger, but in wisdom, understanding and love.

Jennifer Edwards

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Are there certain past mistakes that you continually relive? Is there anything you can do to rectify those mistakes now? If not, what might you say to yourself about the lessons learned from those mistakes as a way of offering yourself grace?

Does your family have a daily ritual in place that brings peace, calm, and connection in the midst of (or at the end of) a challenging day? If not, what daily ritual would you like to establish and how will you implement it?

When you raise your voice at your loved ones, what thoughts go through your head? Is your anger ever misdirected? What might you say to yourself in these moments of stress and frustration to prevent yourself from saying or doing something you might later regret?

Chapter 11

SEIZE THE CALLINGS OF YOUR HEART

Compassion

How do you say “thank you” for sunshine or health . . . for clear days or gentle rains . . . for happiness, joy or love? You say it by sharing what you have. You say it by making the world a better place in which to live.

Thomas D. Willhite

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Do you ever experience the callings of the heart when you see someone in need? How do you respond? What specific distractions and/or reservations prevent you from responding? Describe a time when you acted on an urge to help someone. What was the outcome?

How involved are your children in expressing appreciation to others or helping people in need? Name a few ways you could encourage your children to perform acts of kindness and express appreciation toward others who touch their lives.

We are often bombarded with requests to give of our time, talents, and/or money when it comes to charitable causes. How might your family decide what causes or missions are most important to you? Name a few specific ways you could support the causes you hold dear.

Chapter 12

REMEMBER LIFE IS PRECIOUS

Gratefulness

*Normal day, let me be aware of the treasure you are.
Let me learn from you, love you, bless you before you depart.
Let me not pass you by in quest of some rare and perfect
tomorrow.*

Mary Jean Irion

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Think back to the way you lived before you began your Hands Free journey. How are you different now? How have the interactions with your family changed? How has the atmosphere of your home or your car changed?

Throughout your journey, did you experience feelings of confirmation that led you to believe you are on the right path? In what ways are you grasping what matters more than you did before?

What will be your biggest obstacle in staying committed to your Hands Free way of life? How might you combat that challenge?