

Do You Have The Time To Be Reasonable?

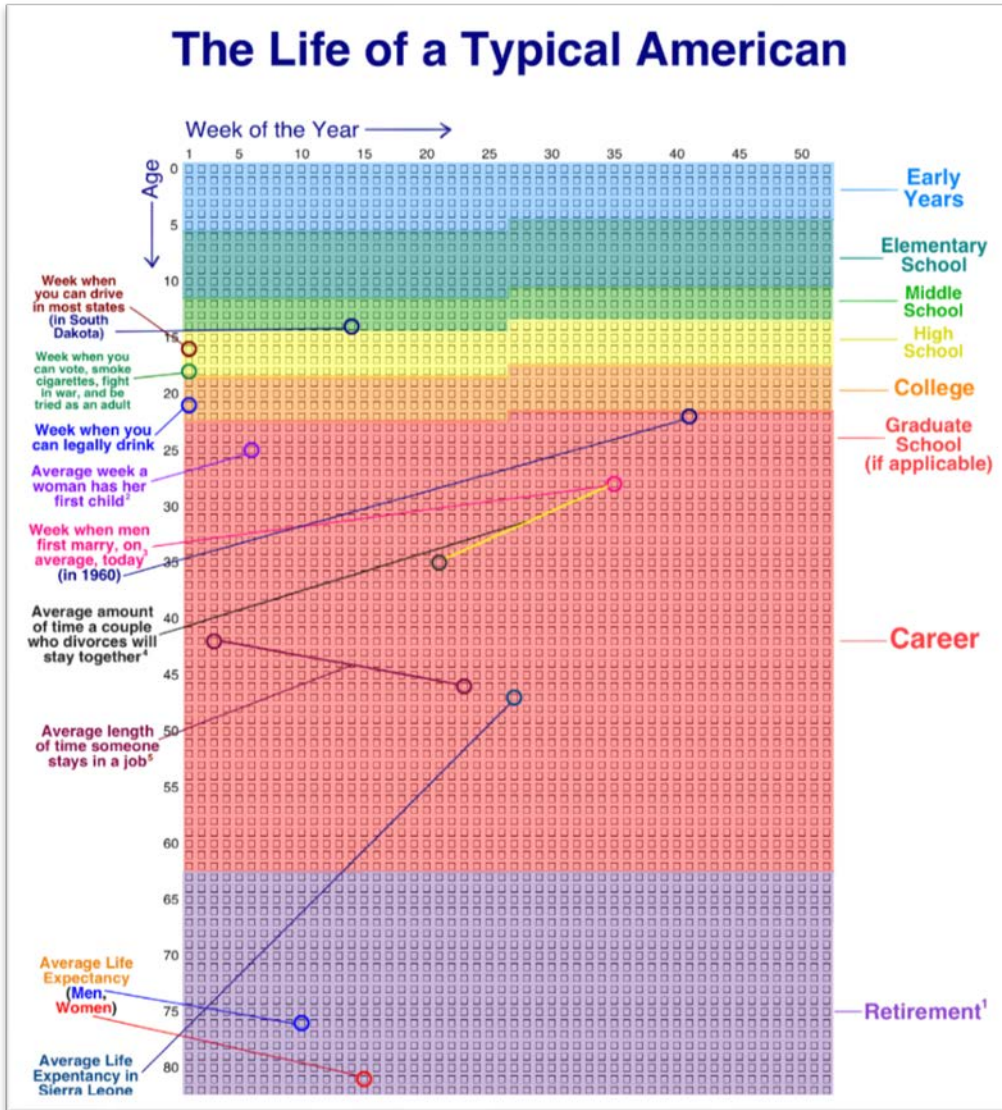


Figure 1:
Example of a
Life Chart
from
waitbutwhy.com

by [Dawn Groves](#)

BIG DREAMS supply the energy to push beyond the reasonable. Inventors, entrepreneurs, writers, people with goals and action plans, all of them use dreams to stoke the fires of determination and single-mindedness. I'm a case in point.

The burning fire of my big dream – a best-selling novel--has driven my determination since I was 16. Until recently.

It seems that my glorious bonfire has begun to die down. It has grown more—for lack of a better word—*contained*.

The sobering reality of dreams and time.

Two months ago I surfed into a website called [Wait But Why](#). It's a playful, somewhat dry take on productivity and time management. One of the authors, [Tim Urban](#), wrote a post sharing three different charts of a 90-year lifespan. Each chart is a table of rows numbered 0 to 90 which are then divided into years, months, and weeks, respectively. (The Weeks chart is also a laminated [Life Calendar](#) on sale for 20 bucks.)

Urban suggests using his charts to diagram your life. Shaded blocks of time can be dotted with notable events and experiences. Figure 1 above is an example from Urban's website.

Tim Urban wrote, "It kind of feels like our lives are made up of an infinite number of weeks. But there they are — fully countable—staring you in the face."

It's an interesting idea so I ordered a blank laminated Life Calendar. When the chart arrived, I promptly unrolled it and gazed with wonder at the rows of weeks in front of me. Then I began hyperventilating.

So. I rolled the chart up and stashed it in the closet.

Four weeks later I fished the chart out, grabbed a couple of highlighters, and started dragging long lines of color left to right.

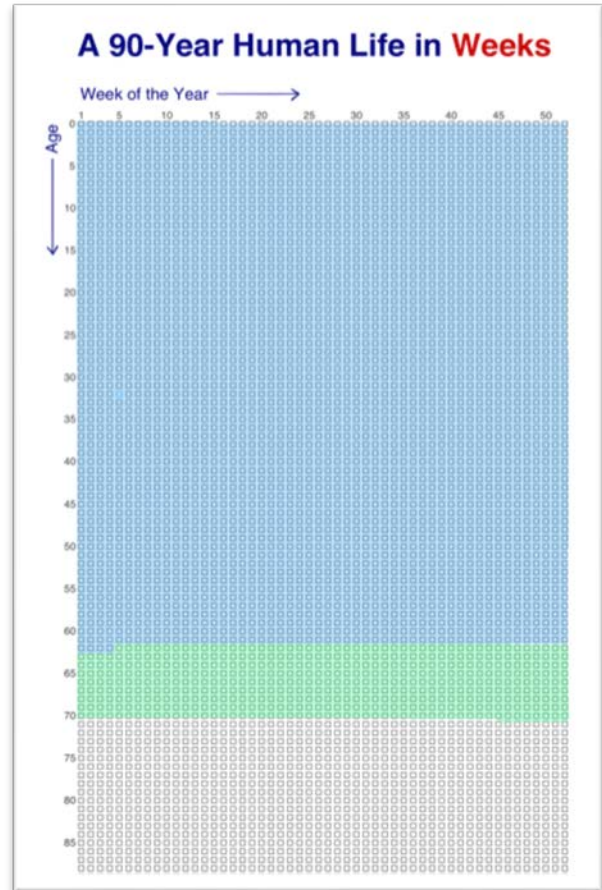


Figure 2: Dawn's Sobering Chart

I kept it simple to start. Weeks/years in the past were blue. Weeks/years in the future became green. (See Figure 2 above.)

The first thing I noticed was the sea of blue covering 2/3rds of the chart. Boy, do I look old on paper. Then I studied the green band of time toward the bottom, AKA my working future. I now refer to it as **green time**.

(I ran out of green ink at row 70 but that's okay because I plan to retire at 70 on proceeds from my best seller. Yes, the one I haven't written yet. Shut up.)

There's always green time.

There was always plenty of green time when I was in my 20's. In my 30's, I dabbled at writing the breakout novel. When the 40's rolled around, I shifted into motherhood—a great

reason not to write. As the kids grew more independent, I started writing again on a part time basis. I was (and still am) an optimist so I knew the book would have its day in the sun. Infinite green time.

Six years ago my husband left home. I was forced to jump back into a variety of full time writing and teaching gigs. It was scary. I drew hard on the energy radiating from my potential best-seller.

These days my priorities are paying bills, staying healthy, and supporting my two daughters through college. I live a reasonable, proactive lifestyle. I feel like I'm 40.

Green time runs out.

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Until I looked at my completed chart, I lived in an ageless haze of procrastination and infinite green time. Now I clearly see that green time has limits and, in fact, mine is looking a bit lean.

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Don't get me wrong. Several alternatives exist that don't require the effort and unreasonable luck of a novel. I don't have to douse my bonfire; just maybe reduce the number of burning logs.

It's a first world problem. Do I have enough time and wherewithal to pursue my dream? When I think about it, I feel a little sheepish. I'm already lucky.

Still, there's a decision to be made. I'm living a real-world example of the classic two-wolves parable.

Two hungry middle-aged wolves live and write in my back yard. One wolf is a recent tenant. She's level-headed, sensible, and upbeat. The other wolf has been writing with me since I was a kid. She bears scars from multiple jumps over fence. She gazes at the moon and howls.

I only have enough food to feed one wolf. The big question is, which should I feed?



Dawn Groves is an author and senior consultant with Einblau & Associates. She distills the latest efficiency research and stress management strategies into action plans that work for individuals as well as teams. She is also a qualified Strength Deployment Inventory facilitator.

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