Color Key™

The Color Key™ shows where your time actually goes each week, at a glance.

BOTTOM LINE

A meta-analysis of 158 studies with more than 53,000 people found that time management is linked to better job performance and academic achievement, and even more strongly to wellbeing and life satisfaction, along with lower distress. Research on daily life shows that how people spend their hours is closely tied to how they feel, and a meta-analysis of 138 experiments found that physically recording progress helps people reach their goals. The Color Key™ brings these together in a simple visual weekly record. The tool itself has not been tested in a study, and the research shows associations rather than guaranteed outcomes.

WHAT THE RESEARCH SHOWS

Managing your time is linked to wellbeing

A meta-analysis of 158 studies spanning four decades and more than 53,000 participants found that time management was moderately linked to job performance, academic achievement

and wellbeing, and negatively linked to distress (Aeon et al., 2021). Notably, its link to wellbeing, especially life satisfaction, was stronger than its link to performance. The authors challenge the idea that time management is mainly about productivity.

How you spend your hours shapes how you feel

Using a method in which people reconstructed each episode of the previous day, researchers found that feelings varied widely across daily activities, and that how people spent their time was closely tied to their daily experience (Kahneman et al., 2004). Seeing your week laid out by category gives you the same kind of view of your own days.

Recording your progress helps you reach your goals

A meta-analysis of 138 randomized studies found that monitoring progress helped people reach their goals, with larger effects when progress was physically recorded (Harkin et al., 2016). Coloring each hour is a simple, physical record.

Color helps memory

In a series of experiments, people remembered natural scenes 5–10% better when they saw them in color rather than black and white (Wichmann et al., 2002). This research involved photographs rather than planners, but it supports the idea that color is woven into how we store and recall what we see.

Same season to same season

The Color Key's rule to compare the same season year to year draws on research showing that mood, activity and physiology shift with the seasons. That evidence is summarized in the Kisetsu (Season to Season) research page.

What the research cannot yet show

The Color Key™ has not itself been tested in a study; it applies the findings above. The time management research is mostly correlational, so it shows a link rather than proof that tracking time causes greater wellbeing. The color memory study used images of natural scenes, not color-coded schedules.

DISCLAIMER

This summary is for educational purposes only and is not medical or mental health advice. It describes published research on the principles behind the journal; the Color Key™ itself has not been tested in a clinical study. Talk with a qualified healthcare provider about your individual health needs.

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