

Perfect days. A benevolent calendar to take back your time

Marc Hassenzahl¹

marc.hassenzahl
@folkwang-uni.de

Dan Buzzo²

daniel.buzzo@uwe.ac.uk

Robin Neuhaus¹

robin.neuhaus
@folkwang-uni.de

¹Folkwang University of
the Arts, Germany

²University of the West of
England, United
Kingdom

Abstract “Time poverty” touches upon a tension between the ever increasing time demands of work and the time needed for people to engage in further, intrinsically meaningful, wellbeing-enhancing activities. At the heart of this drama is the digital calendar. While often only seen as a useful and quite innocent tool, its functionality and representation subtly enforces certain ways of dealing with time. To counter this, we developed the concept of a benevolent calendar: *Perfect Days* explicitly cares about the wellbeing-oriented activities of its user. In a study with five quite busy individuals over three weeks, we found that the majority experienced *Perfect Days* as positive and acknowledged its goal to change time use for the better. After a phase of irritation, participants felt more aware of their personal time use, adopted new wellbeing-enhancing activities, and in part even already internalized these activities.

Keywords Wellbeing, Experience design, Time use, Digital calendar, Productivity tools

Time use, wellbeing, and the digital calendar

Subjective wellbeing is the consequence of having enjoyable and meaningful experiences in everyday life. Such experiences result from engaging in activities (Lyubomirsky, Sheldon, & Schkade, 2005), which fulfill psychological needs (Ryan & Deci, 2000). For this, sufficient time is of essence. Unfortunately, many people suffer from what can be best described as “time poverty”. Feelings that “one’s life has been too rushed” or that “there have not been enough minutes in the day” are common and related to reduced wellbeing (Kasser & Sheldon, 2008). Kroll and Pokutta (2013) used data about how much people enjoy particular day-to-day activities to create a “perfect day”, that is, a scheduling which would maximize wellbeing. It assumes 16 hours (=960 minutes) available per day and recommends to spend, for example, 106 minutes with intimate relations, 82 minutes with socializing, 78 minutes with relaxing, 75 minutes with eating, 73 minutes with praying/meditating and 68 minutes with exercising, but only 36 minutes with working. Wryly, the authors note that “somebody who only works for 36 min each day is of course most likely to have problems making ends meet. [...] Hence, the optimal day schedule may be more realistically applied to a Sunday rather than a Monday” (Kroll & Pokutta, 2013, p. 215). This blatantly points at peoples’ constant need to negotiate between time for work and all the other activities they require to be happy (i.e., maintaining work-life balance). This is not easy, since “busyness” seems to have become a deeply internalized moral value (at least in the USA). At the same time people experience conflicts, anxiety and guilt concerning the way they use their time mostly in favor of work (Leshed & Sengers, 2011).

Our tools of time, clocks and calendars, play an important role in this daily drama, because they heavily influence the way we perceive, use and

experience time (e.g., Lindley, 2015; Leshed & Sengers, 2011, p. 912). Take the lack of representation of free, personal time in work calendars. Currently, in a work calendar, free time is just “unused”, undedicated time. The implication is clear. If a calendar is full, one is a busy, hard-working person; if the calendar is empty, one is not. An empty calendar is a luxury; a full calendar a necessity. The digital calendar not only mirrors societal or economic trends. It also enforces them by shaping our perception and use of time.

Obviously, calendars can take many different forms (Buzzo & Merendino, 2015), each ripe with its own meanings. In the present paper, we empirically explore the idea of a benevolent calendar, designed to support people in taking back (at least some) of their time to increase wellbeing. We place this in the context of designing for wellbeing (e.g., Desmet & Pohlmeier, 2013; Hassenzahl et al., 2013).

Specifically, we first “constructed” a perfect *work* day by prompting people to explicitly allocate time to meaningful personal and social activities on a work day, such as “putting the children to bed”, “playing music”, “exercising”, or “meditating”. Of course, the resulting perfect day was idealized. However, it remained dominated by work, while at the same time people seemed to more consciously consider how much time to spend with work and what to do best in their free time. We then transformed the individual perfect days into a set of daily calendar entries. These were added automatically to the already used calendars. The design rationale was simple: The calendar extension aimed at taking over work time and replacing it with well-being time by using the codes and habits borrowed from work. Undedicated time is now not just free to be filled with more work, but already occupied with personally relevant activities. By confronting its user with their own idealized

behaviour, the calendar was supposed to create friction and to prompt the conscious renegotiation of time and activities (Hassenzahl & Laschke, 2015; Laschke, Diefenbach, & Hassenzahl, 2015). To make the superimposed activities more distinguishable, we gave them unusual labels. They consisted of a verb (i.e., an activity) followed by direct speech related to personal goals (e.g. *sleep – “now off to bed!”* for a person, who has problems in calling it a day and getting enough sleep). We tried to let these activities appear more like time-based suggestions than fixed calendar entries, to signal sympathy for the difficulty of implementing the activities in everyday life. In the following, we report detailed quantitative and qualitative findings from a three week field exploration of Perfect Days with five people.

Perfect Days in the wild

Participants, procedure, and analysis

A convenience sample of five individuals participated in the study (3 female, ages: 27, 35, 40, 41, 45 years). They were recruited by members of the research team. The crucial requirement for being included as a participant was a busy work schedule and the routine use of a digital calendar in everyday (work) life.

Table 1 shows brief characterization of the participants. All were quite busy, with most of them (except P4) feeling not entirely happy with their current use of time. Their relationship with the calendar was mostly bittersweet: It appears to be a necessary, but sometimes harsh master.

The study started with an approximately thirty-minute interview conducted via phone or *Skype* by the third author. Some introductory remarks and a general

conversation about individual time use and the role of the digital calendar served as ice-breaker and provided some background information about the participants (Table 1). The interviewer then asked the participant to reconstruct a *typical* work day by creating prototypical calendar events (e.g., meetings, work, lunch) and placing them on a typical 24-hour grid (Kahneman, Krueger, Schkade, Schwarz, & Stone, 2004). After this, the participants were asked to imagine a *perfect* working day and were prompted to include activities, which would improve their wellbeing, but do not seem to fit into their day. The interviewer proposed thinking about activities from the categories sleep, meals, personal hygiene, social contacts, physical activities, contemplation and maintenance/housekeeping. The resulting personal blueprint of a perfect day was again drawn up on a 24-hour grid.

We then created a *Perfect Day* .ics-file for each participant, which contained *only* the selected personal activities, e.g., “12:00 lunch” (meal) or “20:00 going for a drink with my husband” (social contacts). The .ics was emailed to the participants together with instructions of how to import the file into their main calendar. After the import, the personal perfect day activities became regular entries for the next three weeks.

Participants were instructed to use their calendar as usual. We explicitly told them to adapt perfect day activities to the particular requirements of the day at hand, i.e., to delete the activities, if they did not find the time or to move activities, if done earlier or later etc. We asked them to make sure that for each day the calendar most closely matched what they actually did.

Table 1. Brief characterizations of the participants.

Participant	Time use and calendars
P1, female, 41 married, two children, employed manager	P1 works from home. She feels challenged by balancing time for her work, her family, and herself. For her, time has a negative connotation since the lack of it seems so apparent. On weekdays, nearly 100% of her time has to be planned in a relatively fixed manner. In general, she experiences the calendar as a supportive tool. Now and then, she gets annoyed, since it tends to be too full
P2, female, 35 single, self-employed	P2 works from home. The digital calendar is her most important tool, because structuring time and ensuring productivity is very important to her. She is an “expert” in using her digital calendar with all its available features. For example, she uses the calendar to keep up with social and cultural activities through different calendar subscriptions. Her relationship to the calendar is in general positive. However, now and then she can't keep it updated. The calendar ends up being not representative of how busy she really is and this tempts her to take on even more work and appointments
P3, male, 40 married, two children, university researcher	P3 works in an office. He suffers from lack of time and inflexibility. The day is heavily structured by routines, e.g., taking care of the children. Personal time is mostly in the evening, but he feels too exhausted to do something meaningful then. He describes his relationship to the calendar as a forced marriage. While it plays an important role in planning time at work, the calendar is perceived as dominant. It puts P3 under pressure and “pushes him around”. Because of this he is reluctant to use his calendar for private activities
P4, female, 27 single, doctoral candidate, self-employed	P4 works in an office and from home. Her relationship to time is quite relaxed. It all seems a matter of how to prioritize to make everything fit in. She feels a responsibility to organize her time into clear rhythms and enjoys this. She also looks for “cracks” within these structures to indulge in free time. She has a very positive relationship to her calendar. It contains both business and private activities
P5, male, 47 married, three children, employed manager	P5 works in an office. Time management and the calendar plays an important role in work, but in his private life, P5 doesn't make use of the calendar. He enjoys his works, but admits that his family does not get as much time as he wishes for. Over the years, however, he has improved the balance between his work and private life, e.g., through prioritizing. His relationship to the calendar is neither clearly negative nor positive. The calendar creates pressure, but at the same time P5 is very proficient in making the calendar work in his favour. He, for example, creates “appointments” to block time, he needs to work on a task, important to him

Participant 2 Mo - Fr	Participant 3 Mo, Tue, Thu, Fr	Wed
00:00 - 07:00 Sleep	00:00 - 06:00 Sleep	00:00 - 06:00 Sleep
07:00 - 07:15 Meditation	06:00 - 07:30 Get up & get everyone ready	06:00 - 07:30 Get up & get everyone ready
07:15 - 08:00 Start the day	08:30 - 09:30 Work but no emails yet	08:30 - 09:30 Work but no emails yet
08:00 - 08:30 Read blogs	11:45 - 12:45 Lunch	11:45 - 12:45 Lunch
08:30 - 09:00 Plan the day, start to work	16:30 - 17:30 Plan tomorrow, stop working	16:30 - 17:30 Plan tomorrow, stop working
11:30 - 12:30 Write songs, make music	18:15 - 18:45 Dinner	18:15 - 18:45 Dinner
12:30 - 13:30 Lunch	20:15 - 20:30 Tidy up	20:15 - 20:30 Tidy up
16:00 - 17:00 Practice instruments	20:30 - 22:00 Free time, hobbies	20:30 - 22:00 Work out/Running
17:00 - 17:30 Grocery shopping	22:30 - 00:00 Sleep	22:30 - 00:00 Sleep
17:30 - 18:30 Work out/Running		
18:30 - 19:30 Dinner		
21:00 - 24:00 Meet friends		

Figure 1. Example of perfect day activities and their scheduling.

At the end of the three week period, we asked participants to export the *Perfect Day* calendar and send it back. This enabled us to analyse the difference between the originally envisioned perfect day and real days. A second interview was conducted via phone or *Skype* and took place on the last day of the study phase (plus four days). The second interview was an open conversation (run by the third author) about the three-week period. The participants were prompted to talk about topics, such as how they used the Perfect Day calendar, how well it worked, if the calendar changed some of their routines, if they would like to keep on using this calendar or aspects of it.

The first interview served as introduction for the participants and was used to compile brief characterizations of the participants (Table 1). The interviews were analyzed quantitatively (Section "Findings: Activities"). The second interview was transcribed and submitted to a thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Emerging themes were discussed among authors and further refined (Section "Findings: Eight emerging themes").

Activities

Each participant defined at least one perfect day, some even more (up to three different versions for different days of the week). Of course, days differed in the number of daily activities defined. Figure 1 shows three example days from P2 and P3.

On average, the number of activities planned for a single day was 8.4, with substantial variation among participants (6.6 to 12) (Table 2). Of 8.4 activities, participants realized 5.2 per day on average (62%). Since available time on a day is finite, the more events participants planned for the more difficult it should be

to realize the ideal. However, this was not apparent: P5 (6.6 events per day) had about the same realization rate as P2 (12.0 events per day).

We correlated the relative number of realized activities for each day (real/ideal) with the order of day per person to estimate change over time (Table 2, column "change"). The results were mixed. While for P1 and P4 the percentage of realized activities did not change at all over time, P2 revealed a slightly negative, but insignificant trend to realize less activities over time. P3 and P5 revealed a positive trend, with P5 reaching statistical significance. In fact, P5 realized only 55% of activities in the first week, 58% in the second week, but 76% in the final week.

Eight emerging themes

Theme 1: Overall impression is positive

Overall, our *Perfect Day* calendar extension (PD) was received positively (all P's except P4). A prominent explanation for the positive impression was that PD

Table 2. Number of ideal and realized activities for each participant, relative frequency, and change over time.

P	Ideal per day (sum)	Realized per day (sum)	Relative	Change ^a
1	7.0 (105)	3.5 (52)	50%	-.06
2	12.0 (180)	7.7 (115)	64%	-.36
3	8.0 (120)	6.6 (96)	83%	.28
4	8.6 (129)	4.3 (65)	50%	.03
5	6.6 (99)	4.1 (62)	63%	.53*
Mean	8.4	5.2	62%	

Notes: a) Spearman's Rho; *) $p < .05$

helped with gaining control over personal time. P2 explained: “[...] *the best [...] was to experience that it is really not so hard to integrate all the work-unrelated activities, all the activities I really want to do, into everyday life.*” P5 said: “*A valuable support, although I did not slavishly obey.*”

An important precondition of control is insight. P3, for example, reflected that PD made him “*aware of things, about the ‘hooks and eyes’ of daily scheduling.*” It prompted the conscious negotiation of his own needs with those of others: “[...] *there is a need to coordinate with my wife, who does the baby-sitting [...], who already has an appointment? [PD helps] to make a conscious effort to integrate it [perfect day activities]*” (P3). P1 perceived the PD as especially caring. She said: “*I had this feeling, there is somebody worrying about me [laughs]. The calendar is worrying about me and this felt good [...]. A little like saying ‘Be careful to do all the things, you wanted to do’.*” And further: “*If it is in the calendar, I don’t have to choose anymore. This is good.*” Of course, P1 did not slavishly obey the calendar, too, but rather creatively responded to its prompts. However, for her PD became something active, a “thing with attitude”, while the majority of participants still emphasized its tool-like qualities.

P4 was outright negative about PD. She was annoyed, showing “reactance”. While she couldn’t quite explain this, the negative response seems to emerge from the same qualities as the positive experiences described by the others. Reactance (Brehm, 1966) is a response to perceived external restrictions of autonomy. What P1 framed positively as “caring” is experienced by P4 as an unwarranted intervention. A reason for this may be that she perceived herself as already quite thoughtful and successful in managing her time.

Theme 2: Carefully blurring the line between work time and private activities

Some participants felt reluctant to schedule their private time in a similar way to work time (see also Table 1). P4 said that through PD free time “*lost its playful lightness*” (P4). In the same vein, P3 said, while acknowledging the positive powers of PD, that it seems “*stupid to ‘clock’ off-hours, but there seems no way around it*” (P3).

Conceptually, PD tries to take over work time and to replace it with wellbeing time by using the codes and habits borrowed from work. This blurs the line between both. In a way, it spoils peoples’ ideal of free time as something being spontaneously filled with relaxing and stimulating activities. At the same time, P3 acknowledges that this ideal may be hard to attain in everyday life, since free time is likely to be “sucked-up” by contracted time. This is a tension deliberately designed into PD.

To make this more bearable, we employed a particular way of presenting activities to distinguish them from the work related entries: short funny, slightly ironic labels, which could be understood as comments made by the calendar itself. All participants experienced this as positive. P1 pointed out that “*it made very clear that this [a PD activity] is not a work appointment*”

(P1). To her, it was important that the communication was “*friendly and not lecturing*” (P1). She said: “*[PD] is just there and nicely says ‘That’s enough now’*” (P1). P2 also perceived a difference between PD activities and work entries: “*[They appear] definitely not like a meeting*” (P2). She also liked the motivational nature of the phrasing. P5 summarized: “*It stood out. I found it charming. [...] It’s a different way of thinking. The colour and the linguistic distinction helped to perceive, it [PD activities] as something different*” (P5).

By making the events slightly strange, participants were better able to grasp the difference between PD and their “normal” calendar, while using the same technology. However, this still might have been too subtle for some participants and future work should explore additional strategies.

Theme 3: Being overwhelmed by the large number of additional activities

Conceptually, we chose to overlay the existing calendars with the self-selected, wellbeing oriented activities. This overlay was meant to induce friction, a certain tension between how time use is, and how it could or should be. Of course, an average of 8.4 additional fixed activities per day can be quite overwhelming and invasive.

In fact, feeling overwhelmed was a common theme. P1 said: “*I felt stressed out the first two days, because of all the events in my calendar [...] I thought: ‘Oh wow, I can’t manage this’*” (P1). P2 explained: “*The first thought crossing my mind was: Goodbye to that, you can’t use that anyway*” (P2). She filled her perfect day with activities she would like to do, but confronted with it, it dawned upon her that she still “*had to work [...] super unrealistic [...] I had only four to five hours left for work*” (P2). P3 was overwhelmed as well, but immediately understood the denseness of his calendar as an “*impulse for certain things [changes]*” (P3). P5 did not feel overwhelmed, since he knew that “*everything that is yellow [the PD activities] has a low priority anyway, to be honest. But it is a hoped-for reminder [...]*” (P5).

Theme 4: Playing with time

The friction induced by superimposing real days with perfect days can only be productive if participants resolve the tension, that is, start to actually “work” or “experiment” with their schedule. P1 started to approach her calendar a little more “creatively” after a while. She now “juggled” and tried for a fresh start by reconsidering each activity: “[...] *because of the calendar, I discovered that it is better for me not to exercise midday, but rather in the afternoon or early evening*” (P1). Likewise, P2 consciously adapted PD to her needs: “*And then I restructured the calendar a little, some events got shortened and then I used it*” (P2). She also coped with the pressure by re-framing her notion of the private activities: “*It became totally easy, because I just cancelled [deleted] events, I could not fit in in a day. Tomorrow is just another day*” (P2). She lowered her expectations and simply tried to fit in as much private activities as feasible. In fact, while PD uses the same element (i.e., an event) as the work calendar, activities (i.e., appointments) are better seen

as suggestions. They could be treated a little more generously: “[...] priority was not so high that I had to slavishly obey. I took a look, acknowledged the suggestion, and tried my best” (P5). This is basically what participants discovered: to take their free time seriously, but not being too strict with themselves. To work with their schedule every day, rather than to blindly submit themselves to it.

Theme 5: Day or week?

A concrete problem that emerged already in the first interview was the unit (here: days) we chose. People have different notions of a perfect day for different days of the week. P3 said that he is not planning the “perfect day, but [...] his week” (P3). In fact, a number of participants insisted on defining two or three perfect days. At the heart of this is their desire to actually spend a day as closely to the ideal as possible. However, without further differentiation this seems impossible. Most activities have “rhythms”. For example, P1 put “seeing friends” in her PD, but later said that it is of course unrealistic to go out every night. A week as a unit seems to stand a better chance to serve as a realistic blueprint compared to a day.

Theme 6: Irritation, sensitization, and internalization

Only three out of the five participants, P1, P2, P5, explicitly reflected on different phases in their relationship to PD. In general, using PD started out negatively (see Theme 3). P1 felt “irritated” in the first two days. P5 tried to “ignore” PD in the beginning. P2 was a little more positive by pointing out that the first week required “working with the calendar, in the sense of experimenting with what fits when” (P2) (see Theme 4). P2 further said: “I tried to carefully avoid irritation, which worked out and there were many days I deleted a lot and I moved around events” (P2).

This “working with time” led to sensitization. P5 explained: “I have a sensitization, I feel it. It can’t express it in numbers, but I intensely thought about, how to actually spend my free time” (P5) and further: “The calendar made me aware of certain elements in my daily routines” (P5). P1 feels more “well-arranged.”

Finally, participants reported a certain internalisation. P1 said: “In the third week, I haven’t thought much about it [the perfect day activities], but moved, deleted, tried to make it happen [...] it was already in my head, somehow” (P1). P2 explained: “At the beginning, I spent more time looking at the calendar. I needed it. [...] in the last week, it was like I already knew all the things important to me, such as writing songs. I did not need to look at the calendar. It was already in my head. I learned: ‘Hey, it is supercool, I can use breaks throughout the day to write a song’” (P2).

Theme 7: What is in a day?

Of course, change differed from participant to participant in terms of content. P1 said that she “still engaged in more or less the same activities, but on different times” (P1). Since she worked from home and mixed private (especially exercise) with work activities throughout the day, her perceived major problem had been “disrupted” days. PD helped with the transition

from work to free time: “[When MPD showed the first private event] I said to myself: ‘Okay, this had been eight or nine hours, now I stop, and just have a look what the calendar offers’” (P1). She also worked late less often, because “we [she and her partner] had to go out [laughs]” (P1) the calendar told her so. In addition, she felt as if she used “the free time [...] really for the activities, I’ve put in [PD]. I don’t hang about and ask myself: ‘What are you actually doing right now?’” (P1). PD helped P1 to establish a better separation between work and private time (both at home) and to be more conscious about the activities, she cares about.

For P2 it was all about establishing rhythms and routines. For example, she defined a morning meditation as an element of her perfect day, an activity she rarely got around to do. Prompted by PD she said to herself: “Okay! I need to set the alarm, to get up, and to just do it. [...] I found it really great and pulled through. [...] a great example of how to build a habit” (P2). For another precious activity, namely writing music, being prompted by and working with PD helped her to identify breaks throughout the day to fit it in: “It [PD] helped me to play music more often” (P2).

Although cautious about the changes instilled by PD, P3 was able to identify two concrete situations. Similarly to P1, PD helped him with the transition from work to private time: “What was good, was the event which prompted me to wrap-up work, to have a last look at the to-do list and to call it a day” (P3). Another transition was going to sleep: “[...] in the evening, ‘It’s time for bed’ at least it was a reminder to wrest myself free [of whatever I was doing] to get seven hours of sleep” (P3).

P5 explained that there are many obstacles in realizing a perfect day. He engaged in the suggested activities only if there hadn’t been “catastrophes at home” or other “duties.” He pointed out that PD cannot actually remove obstacles, but supports him by reminding “that I actually wanted to do something different” (P5). In fact, PD helped him: “Yes, I even exercised. Maybe not the sports I wanted to do, but at least some sports” (P5). The most important suggested activity (“100% super”) was putting the children to bed.

Theme 8: Scaffolding for a more well-being oriented use of time

P1, P2, P3 and P5 reflected about whether they would be willing to continue using PD or not. P1 would like to use PD further, but mainly because it removes choice: “To let [PD] decide [...] If it is in the calendar, I do not need to make a choice” (P1). P5 just plans to keep important private activities in the work calendar, such as putting the children to bed. For P2 and P3 it was more about keeping up newly established practices. P2 was curious about the future, since she did not plan “to put anything [private] into the calendar.” She stated: “[I] hope that my new routines are so strong already that I just do it” (P2). However, if she felt like “relapsing,” she “would put it [important activities] back into the calendar” (P2). To prevent

relapse may also be the reason for P5 to keep important PD activities in the calendar. P3 plans to further engage in subtle rearrangements of his schedule. He mentions the transition from work to free time in the afternoon, and concentrating work a little more in the morning to have more free time. Similar to P2, he worries about his ability to maintain his newly acquired routines and would use PD in the case of relapse: “[PD] relates to one’s ‘weaker self,’ which is made conscious and which needs to be eliminated [laughs]” (P2). In this sense, PD is understood by the participants as “scaffolding technology” (e.g., Fritz, Huang, Murphy, & Zimmermann, 2014). It provides insight, structure, and motivation for those who feel incapable of implementing their intentions.

Summary and conclusion

For most of our participants the benevolent calendar was a worthwhile, wellbeing-enhancing experience (Theme 1). It prompted rethinking personal time use and promoted the integration of wellbeing-oriented activities into everyday life (Theme 6, 7). Participants reported sensitization towards personal time use and a certain internalization (Theme 6). Already at the end of the three week period, the perfect day calendar became a “scaffolding technology” – a means to prevent relapsing into old habits (Theme 8).

Of course, our findings are limited since they mostly reflect how participants subjectively experienced the perfect day calendar. While an average of 5.2 realized wellbeing-oriented activities per day seems promising, this number is not easy to interpret, since we neither had a control group in the study nor individual baseline measurements. In other words, we neither know how many wellbeing-oriented activities per day are normal nor how many activities each of our participants had before they used the calendar. The change over time within the three weeks was rather mixed. While two participants increased their number of wellbeing-oriented activities over time, for two no change was apparent, and one even decreased the number. Future studies will create a more complete picture. Nevertheless, at least the study shows, that “productivity tools” can play the role of a Trojan horse in wellbeing-oriented design.

From our point of view, *Perfect Days* is already a viable conceptual design. Thought of as a product-service-system, a “wellbeing coach” could explore time use with an individual in a “counselling interview”. In dialogue with the participant, the coach could construct a perfect week (see Theme 5). To lower irritation (Theme 6), only a fixed number of wellbeing-oriented activities (e.g., 4) should be allowed – at least in the beginning (Theme 3). The friction created by the superimposed activities needs to be apparent, but bearable. The coach can now prepare a “calendar extension” and ask the participant to import it into her or his calendar, similar to what we did. The activities themselves should be clearly distinguishable from typical work entries (Theme 2), yet occupy the same space to create bearable irritation and then sensitization. A fruitful strategy to distinguish wellbeing-oriented activities from work activities was humour and a little irony. Most participants found the

slightly strange labelling of the wellbeing-oriented activities “charming”. In general, we assume that humour and irony can make necessary friction more bearable (Hassenzahl & Laschke, 2015). Another important aspect is being understanding (Hassenzahl & Laschke, 2015). In the present case, this could be achieved by framing the activities as suggestions rather than fixed appointments and by stimulating people to play around with the activities and to gradually adapt their perfect week to their individual interests and abilities (Theme 7). Of course, the conceptual knowledge gained through the present case can also be used to create a more self-contained version of our benevolent calendar, where, for example, the conversation with a coach is replaced by a prompted self-analysis. In this respect, *Perfect Days* is a conceptual design inviting many different concrete materialisations.

All in all, the present study shows that a mere “productivity tool”, such as a digital calendar, can be transformed into a caring technology, which is just – as one of our participants expressed it – “there and nicely says ‘That’s enough now!’”. This, however, requires explicit rethinking of our all too ubiquitous, innocent, and supposedly “useful” tools in terms of the impact they currently have and could have on psychological wellbeing.

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