

They're not your type!

Chronotype that is. Daniel Pink points out in his best-selling book, *When*, that there is substantial evidence that our emotional levels tend to follow a daily pattern. We all know this, right? Who doesn't hit that afternoon lull? We just don't all hit it at exactly the same time. Pink categorizes people into 3 distinct chronotypes. These chronotypes are Owl, Lark, or the normal chronotype which he also refers to as the 3rd bird.

60-80% of people fall into the "3rd bird" category. These people experience a morning peak, an afternoon dip or lull, and an evening rebound. Larks generally follow these same patterns, but they just experience each stage a little sooner in the day than those with a normal chronotype. Owls on the other



hand, tend to peak sometime around 9:00 PM.

You could take a guess at whether you are a Lark, Owl, or 3rd bird. Instead, why not take the chronotype questionnaire at danpink.com/MCTQ ?

So what does this all mean? It means that there is a correct time to complete certain tasks and that your afternoon lull should be left for napping. Sure, you won't always be able catch a 30 minute siesta when the clock strikes 3:00 PM, but you

can allocate this time to tasks that require the least amount of mental processing. Queue the busywork. For larks and those with normal chronotypes, you should reserve your most analytical tasks for the morning peak and go after those creative tasks during your evening rebound.

Owls on the other hand, should shoot for the inverse. Later in the morning is generally a great time for them to attack those creative tasks. Anything analytical should be reserved for the evenings during their 8:30-9:00 PM peak. Again, the afternoon is a great time for owls to nap as well.

Specific to Healthcare, Pink points out that the chance for medical errors increases from 1% at 9:00 AM to 4.2 percent at 4:00 PM afternoon. He continues by referencing studies that point out that hospital staff wash their hands far less consistently in the afternoon than in the morning. 38% less. We all know the role handwashing plays in keeping our patients safe.

Before you add a massive, colorful rug reminiscent of kindergarten naptime to your budget, you may just want to take note of how time of day can affect performance. Take (or offer) an extra break in the afternoon to get up and stretch. Better yet, change your scenery if possible. Just step out the front door, walk down the hall, visit the watercooler, or go to the cafeteria. These have all been proven to reduce the number of mistakes made during the inevitable afternoon lull.

-Scot

Pink, Daniel. *When: The Scientific Secrets of Perfect Timing*. Penguin, 2018.