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Laughable
*Go about your day with
a lighthearted attitude*

BY ELSA KOK COLOPY
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Ways to manage your time
With your list in hand, you can take the next step in becoming a manager of your own time. Here are some practical ways to get started:

Keep a to-do list. On paper or in an app, write down the tasks from your gemstones list—the ones you need to accomplish each day. Even if you don't get to everything, noting important tasks keeps them from slipping through the cracks.

Set reminders. With your computer or phone, remember important deadlines or events by using a scheduling app or calendar notifications.

Set screen-time limits. Technology can certainly help us be more productive. Ironically, it also has the potential to be an enormous time waster. If you find yourself losing precious hours to social media, streaming, etc., give yourself a daily time limit and then set an actual timer that helps you stick to it. A lot of phones have screen-time features that allow you to set limits on apps, communication, etc.

Prevent procrastination. When planning for a task, consider your personality. Many people will tackle either the hardest item on the list, to get it out of the way, or the easiest one, to help build momentum and confidence. For example, if you hate math homework, you might want to do it right after school. Then give yourself a little reward before moving on to the next, easier assignment. Or start with your creative writing homework, if that's what you like best, to be able to enjoy the process of crossing something off your list. Either way helps you move forward and prevents procrastination.

For bigger assignments, dedicate a little time every day to work through the stages of the project. Then you won't be facing it all at once the night before it's due. Small steps add up to big accomplishments.

Sleep tight. When you're slammed with homework after a long day of school and sports, you might be tempted to stay up extra late to get those assignments done. But making "consistent bedtime" one of your gemstones will help you be a more productive (and happier) person in the long run.

Plan fun and rest. Taking care of yourself is especially important when you're squeezed by endless demands. Don't forget to pencil in some "you" time and some "you and God" time.

When all else fails, make space. If you're still feeling overwhelmed, you might genuinely have too much to do. Instead of rearranging your jar, maybe it's time to remove some sand—or possibly even a gemstone—to make more room in your life.

After taking a hard look at her schedule, praying and talking to her parents and a trusted teacher, Anya made the difficult decision to quit the basketball team. Even though her friends were disappointed, she knew it was important to make space in her life for her most essential gemstones. God has given us 24 hours each day to accomplish all we need to do. With careful thought, creativity and a dose of self-discipline, you can spend those hours wisely.

Jessie Minassian is the "resident big sis" at LifeLoveandGod.com and the author of 14 books, including Backwards Beauty: How to feel ugly in 10 simple steps.

GEMSTONES **SAND**

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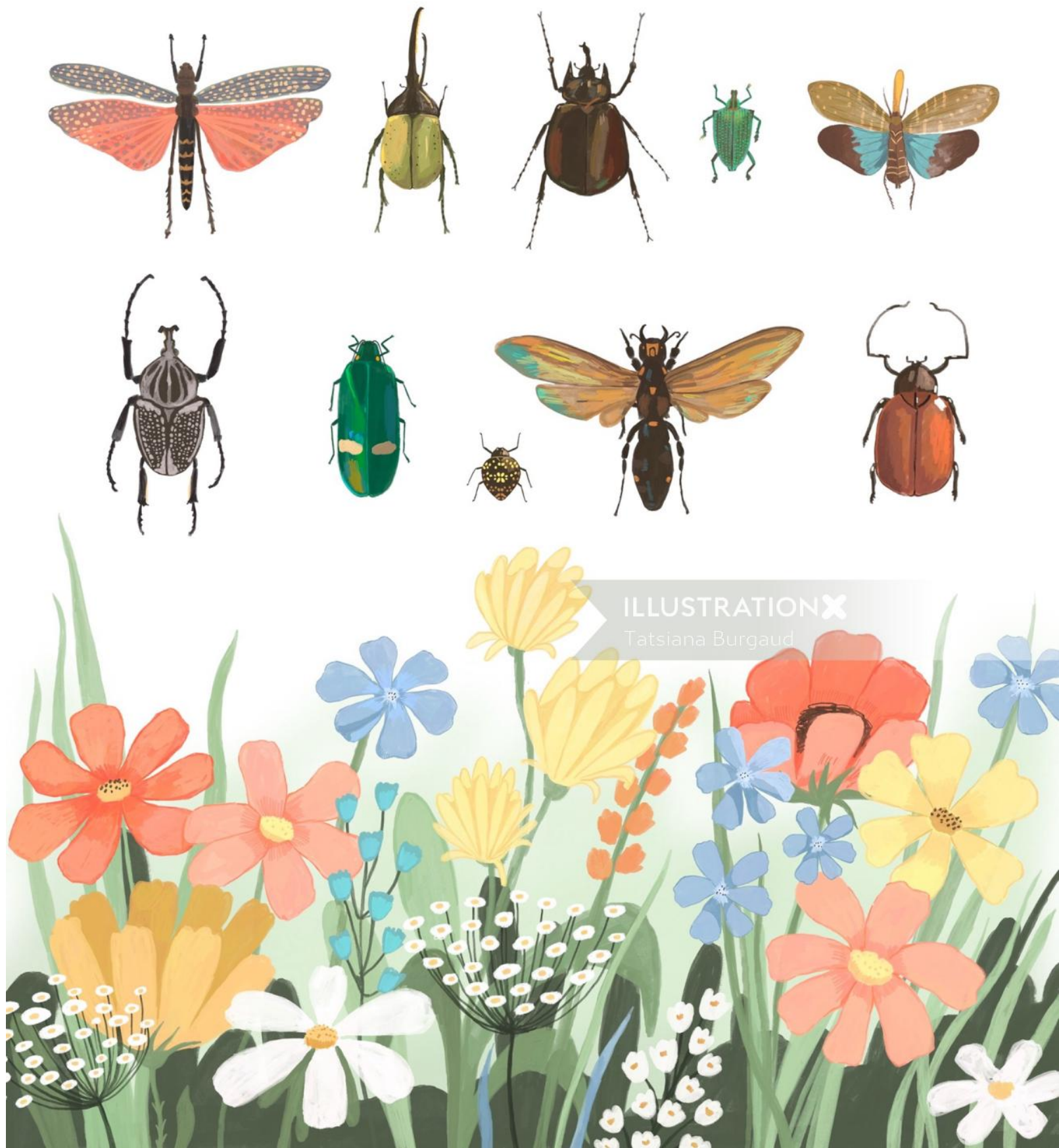
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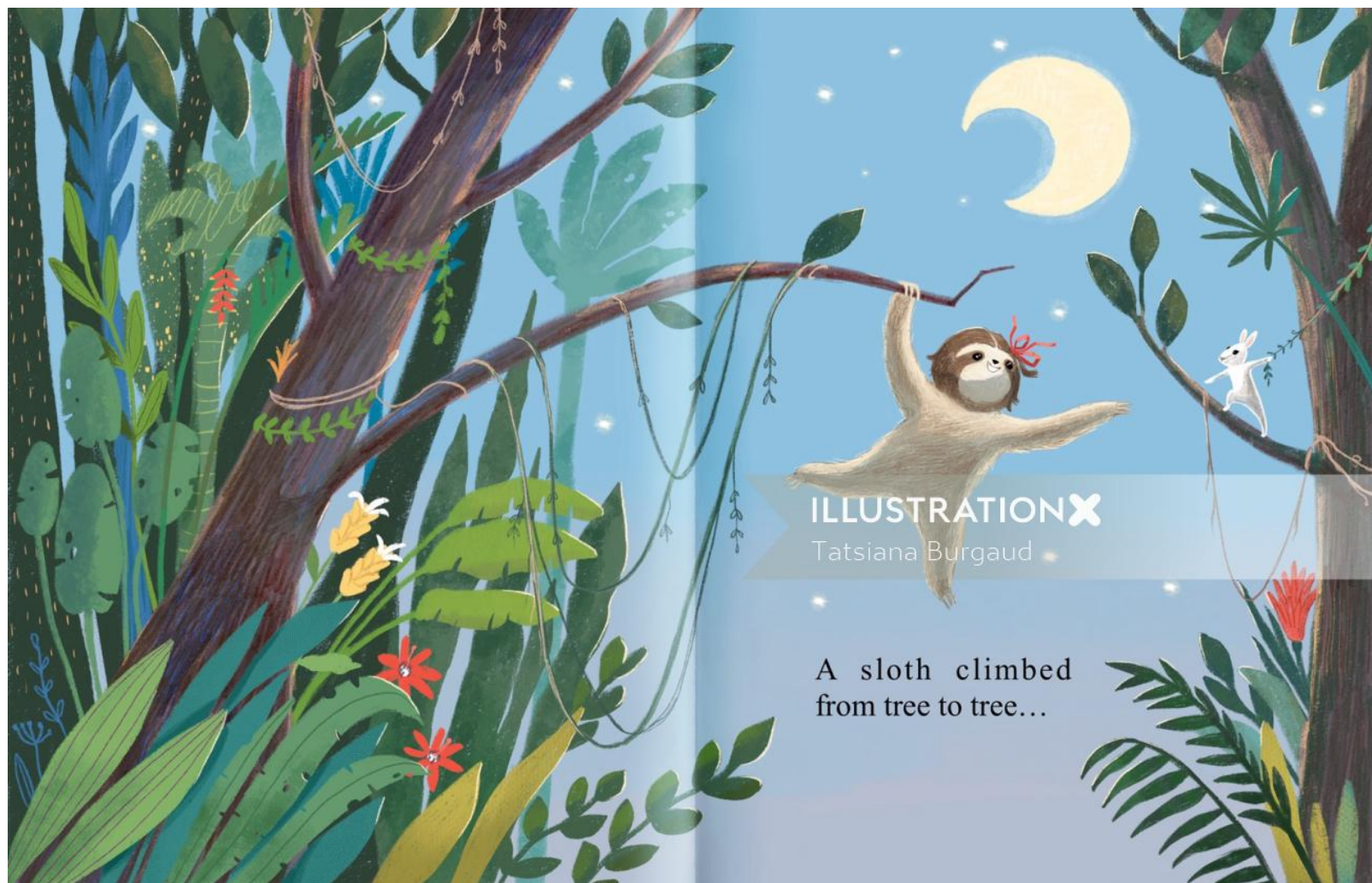
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Breathing Space

How to free up time for the things that matter most

BY JESSIE MINASSIAN / ILLUSTRATIONS BY TATSIANA BURGAUD

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Something had to give. Just a few weeks into basketball season, Anya could already feel her sanity crumbling. When her friends had begged her to join the basketball team, she worried that it might max out her schedule. But they needed more players—and being on a team with them sounded fun.

Between practices, games, homework, youth group and drama, soon every waking minute was accounted for. The pressure was wearing her down. Had she made a mistake? Should she quit the team? Would quitting disappoint her friends?

Many teens can relate to Anya's dilemma. In fact, when I ask girls what they think is the hardest part of being a teen today, one of the first responses is always "pressure—so much pressure."

One of those pressure points comes from having more things to do than you can get done in a day. The good news is that time-management skills can act like a pressure release valve, giving you breathing space. It's a skill that will serve you well for the rest of your life because, in case you haven't already guessed, adulthood is full of time pressures too.

How you spend your time

Imagine you have a jarful of those shiny, little gemstones you can buy at souvenir shops, some sand and a jar. If you fill the jar with sand first, all the gemstones won't fit. But if you set the

gemstones in first, the sand will fill all the nooks and crannies and—*voilà!*—it appears to magically fit.

Good time management is about dividing the ways you spend your time. Grab a piece of paper and make two columns: *gemstones* and *sand*. Next, write down all the ways you've spent your time this week.

Activities and responsibilities you *have* to do or *really want* to do go under gemstones. Anya's would be: homework, chores, youth group and the spring musical (she *loves* drama). The less important or more flexible activities go under sand. Anya might write: texting friends, watching YouTube videos, basketball, extra-credit assignments and reading for fun. Understanding these two categories of essential tasks and optional tasks can help you prioritize your time. >



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My most embarrassing moment as a high schooler started innocently enough. One weekend after I'd twisted my ankle, the doctor equipped me with a shiny pair of crutches and a fat bandage. I had to hobble my way through the halls at school on Monday. I couldn't believe how long it took me to get from one class to another. As the days progressed, so did my speed. Pretty soon, I was flying by my healthy peers, placing the ends of my crutches far ahead of my body and leaping through the air to land smoothly on my healthy ankle—laughing as I flew past. And then the fall came, magnificent in its glory, in the most crowded of hallways. My crutch slipped, and I flew up in the air. I was a thing of beauty as I tumbled, all grace and arms and bandaged ankle at precarious angles. But my landing was hard. On my bum. The air was sucked from my lungs as I lay on the floor.

The chattering stopped. Everyone stared—some wide-eyed. Me, on my bum, with tears in my eyes because it hurt so bad. I only had a moment to turn this tragedy to my favor. I looked up at the crowd and grabbed an air microphone. "And due to the degree of difficulty and that incredible hard-to-stick landing, we give Eba a 9.5 out of 10!" I pumped my arms in the air and began to hum. "We are the champions, we are the champions..." The silence changed into warm laughter as a few friends came over to help me up and ask if I was OK. Red-faced, I smiled and got to my feet. While I wasn't always successful in turning my mishaps into humorous moments as a high schooler, I had enough practice to discover a few secrets to keeping a smile on my face.

Don't take yourself too seriously
Embarrassing moments are a banana peel away. They can come as quickly as a wardrobe malfunction or an accidental social media pic post. Sometimes, these situations are out of your control. When that happens, roll with it. Be quick to laugh at yourself so you free up others to laugh with you. The beauty of being able to laugh at your own mistakes is that you'll help others know it's OK to mess up as well. If they see you laugh through a hard moment, you have the ability to laugh at one self and give them hope.

Look for the humor
Life is hard. Life is painful. But life is funny too. If you look for the odd, funny and ridiculous in situations, you'll find opportunities to laugh. You can pray for a good sense of humor. Proverbs 17:22 calls a cheerful heart "good medicine," so feel free to ask God to give you eyes to see moments worthy of a good laugh. Not only have I found that laughter helps heal my embarrassment in the moment, but it also keeps me from becoming arrogant or thinking I'm too cool to enjoy life. Reacting to something funny can cause a contagious laughter too. Others might need a good laugh.

Find what is funny
If you don't find ways to laugh in your day to day, try going to these potentially humor-filled resources:
Movies. There are plenty of funny movies. Rent a good one and sit with your family or friends to watch it. Even when there's tension in family relationships, humor has a way of melting that away as you laugh together at something outside of yourself.

Knock, knock.
Who's there?
Little Of Lady,
Little Of Lady, who?
Whoa, I didn't know you could yodel!

Stories. Go ahead and ask: "What's the most embarrassing thing that's ever happened to you?" You don't know what your friends (or your parents) have been through! Take turns sharing the moments that made your face redden, sank your social standing or mortified you in front of someone you wanted to impress. You'll realize that not a single one of us gets through life without something worthy of a hearty chuckle.

Be endearing
I love to be around people who make me laugh. You probably do too. Becoming that type of person means intentionally injecting more humor into your everyday life. Getting there means laughing easily at your own humanity and seeing humor in God's creation and in the creativity of others. While faith and love and service are incredible virtues to pursue, never lose sight of a good sense of humor. Just take a look at the aardvark, the sloth or the blobfish, and you'll know our God has a sense of humor. He fashioned this world with a smile on His face and a twinkle in His eye, simply for our pleasure. And He delights in our celebration of it. #

Eba Kik Kokoy is an author and a speaker. She and her husband, Brian, are parents to eight amazing children.

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