

How do we make the sludge of time meaningful? One way is to put boundaries around it. In 2017 a team of researchers invented *The New Calendar* as an upgrade to the timekeeping system of the Gregorian Calendar used around most of the world today. It corrects the inconsistent unit of 'the month' and employs the season of 'Autumn' in addition to 'Fall'. While this might appeal to pattern seekers everywhere, most of us seem content in collectively upholding the fiction of regularity within our civil time systems. Apart from twice a year, perhaps, when the illusion is shattered by the move to daylight savings time and back.

I experience time as elastic, because it is. I am constantly finding ways to synchronize myself to the rhythms of what Michel Foucault might call *the monastery-factory paradigm* to contain it. My relief at getting a job in higher education a decade ago was in large part due to way the entire workplace is oriented around the fabrication of Semester Time. Twice a year I make block-time planners in Microsoft Word that I grey out as I move through them. I devote myself to the timetable adopted by monks to 'establish rhythms, impose particular occupations, regulate the cycles of repetition'¹. Mine work because no one else has access to them, or the ability to add items or move them around. I can picture my weeks once I type activities in there and add space around them. The blank space is often a fantasy.

19 Jan					
26 Jan Teaching week 1 / 27					
2 Feb Week 2 / 28					

Image credit: Kate Liston

¹ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (London: Penguin, 1991), 149.

Dealing with temporal slipperiness is what led Jo Hague and Grace Denton to start *Making Time* - 'an online space for neurodivergent artists, writers and researchers that meets once a week'². Jo and Grace met whilst each was doing a Practice-Based PhD at Northumbria University. Faced with tasks, big and small that could be done whenever, and with an awareness of the ticking clock of a fixed funding duration they began holding Monday morning Zoom meetings from 10am to 12pm. Together they set the format that continues to this day: half an hour for sharing, an hour for doing and an optional half an hour at the end for talking through what each person has done.

I arrive at my first 10am session, lanyard on, from a quiet room at my work, buzzing from coffee and rattling with an overly ambitious 'to do' list. Mid-morning is when I expect to get the first 'relax reminder' from my smart watch. As each person speaks then nominates who should go next, I mentally adjust the tasks I had prepared to share to include an item of health admin that I had been routinely forgetting to do. I did get this done, but looking back at my list from this session I see an item I still haven't done - to claim a refund for a cancelled train. Classic ADHD tax. In the catch up at the end of this session we veer into discussing gossip. Not really divulging it but talking about the joys of sharing. To give a sense of tone, within this conversation someone says 'It's ok to say some disabled people are arseholes'.

In another session someone is disassembling a Christmas tree that had been left up in a spare room until July, a live ASMR unboxing. At the close a different *Making Time* co-worker mentions dreamwork and 'wages for dreamwork!' is declared. This kind of working-alongside doesn't give me in-the-moment dream space but it does create space for dreaming elsewhere if I can clear some tasks. Or the checking in and out can settle my inventoried thinking down enough to set myself up to be ready for dreamtime. When one person returns for the final check-in, they have got into a flow state - perhaps a dreamlike one - to the extent that they opt out of itemising what they have done. To do so would snap them out of their current.

Rubber ducking is using another person as a sounding board, to 'bounce ideas off'. In some ways the chat at the beginning of the Monday *Making Time* sessions could be this. Body doubling goes further than this, using the presence of another person for co-regulation, being motivated by your collective momentum and the intentions you have exchanged. I am not a regular attendee of *Making Time*, but it is clear from the few sessions I have joined that what is shared here isn't simply bouncing or keeping on track. The intimacy is genuine and serious. Heavy things are going on in people's lives. Emoji prayer hands fly up the screen in one Monday session for a regular co-worker who is in hospital. As well as or alongside neurodivergence

² Denton, G., 'About', *Grace Denton* [website], <https://www.gracedenton.co.uk/about> [accessed 21 September 2026]

Making Time creates space and time for those dealing with chronic illness and challenges to mental health.

‘The panopticon works!’ Jo rejoices in one closing section, in ironic homage to Foucault³. How often do big online meetings recall the disciplining surveillance of Jeremy Bentham’s all-seeing prison design? Jo and Grace could have held co-working sessions between the two of them. They could have used existing body doubling apps like *Focusmate* or *Flow Club*, but they have made something different. And they host it with lightness and joy.

Over the past year Jo and Grace have created another kind of space to make time with others. If the 10am Monday sessions are a marker against temporal swampiness, the series of *Making Time* online creative workshops offered punctuations within lived patterns. These workshops are attended by many of the same people who join in on Mondays, alongside others who don’t. The series’ varied activities are framed around creative provocations and speak to challenges faced and shared by numerous neurodivergent artists/ writers/ researchers. These range from budgeting, to creatively working with stims and collectively working towards a guide for dealing with the all-too-familiar experience of rejection in cultural work. Taking place in a different timeframe, 7-9pm, they are outside of conventional work hours. As a parent, in my house they punctured the slippery span of my children’s bedtimes.

Repeating the opening steps of Ashokkumar (Ashok) Mistry’s *Writing Beyond Language* workshop and applying it to this text as I am writing it, I start with this:

‘I am trying to find time to write a response to *Making Time* and reflect the way it generates time for the people who attend it.’

And come up with this:

‘I am trying to find The Wall. A way to respond to a series of Polly [my cat who walks in circles as if in task paralysis]: a regular work-along virtual ritualised creative-online series. *Making Time* workshops – stay signed in?’

Attending the session with my son (and working with a different starter sentence) we come up with this:

³ See Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*.

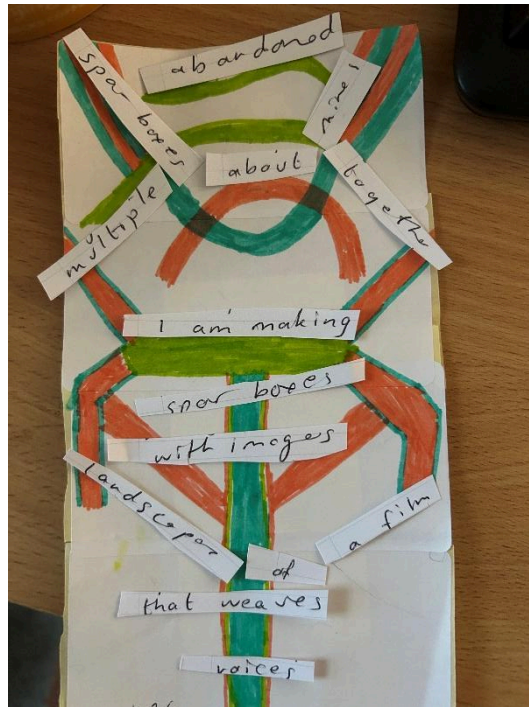


Image credit: Kate Liston

This provocation - to liberate a statement from its words' semantic weight and play with found language - gives insight into Ashok's experience of Aphantasia, a condition that means words don't call images to mind. Instead, he tells us, they have a feel. Writing is the starting point for Ashok's artworks, but not in conventional sense. He shares how it acts as a 'root and a route'⁴ and offers attendees a series of exercises that evoke 'discovery through a route of random mutations of the starting point.'⁵

I get this sense of tactile phrasing through playing with the word 'pillowlace' – taken from a pamphlet about Lead Mining I find on my desk. Turning the word over gives me a glimpse of the pleasure-pain shudder I used to get from eating Caramac (RIP), when its overly sweet caramelly white chocolate would get stuck to the roof of my mouth. More than the combined sensory suggestions of soft pillow and intricate lace, the coarticulation of 'w' and 'l', mean, yes, a lingering of the tongue at the top of the mouth, but also a general sense (for me) of soothing liquidity. More simply, it is easy on the tongue.

This was a workshop I wanted to spend more time with, and I have gone back to these exercises since. During it one attendee struggled with understanding Ashok's instructions and expressed a sense of discouragement with what they were making. Ashok handled this gently. Just as neurotypical expectations of pacing and process

⁴ Ashokkumar Mistry, 'Writing Beyond Language' (workshop, Making Time Creative Workshops, convened by Jo Hague and Grace Denton, 26 April 2026), private YouTube video, published 11 May 2026, accessed 16 September 2026.

⁵ Ibid.

can rub up against neurodivergent communication needs, there can also be friction between different neurodivergent approaches. In this case what makes the difference is empathy for this feeling at odds with what is going on. Something that can be shared across various non-neurotypical experiences.

These creative workshop sessions were harder for me to engage with because of the clash with my children's bedtime and my inability to attend from a space outside of my home. But their intention wasn't to synchronize everyone involved. In my case it allowed space for creativity where it felt like it couldn't exist. During another workshop I had to enact the flexibility I was invited to at the start to leave it part way through take my son to bed. A private YouTube link of the workshop recording offered me a way to catch up another time.



Author's response to an evolving task within Sofia Barton's Mindful Drawing workshop, 27th April 2026. Image credit: Kate Liston

After this series of creative workshops concluded, I joined a Monday session focused on reflections and feedback. The word community is overused, particularly in reference to online spaces, but what came across in this discussion is how *Making Time* functions as a reliable social environment. It creates a routine: weekly demarcated time. Whether someone attends or not, they know it is there. It provides a virtual space to meet and 'do things' with others, whether or not these are tied up with conventional understandings of productivity. Different temporalities can take

place within this single shared hour, it can be for rest, for getting dressed, taking medication, for making a list, for completing tasks. It takes an hour and invites the evolving group who make up this space to make it meaningful.

The idea of 'crip time' offers ways of understanding time differently to the fixed synchronized systems absorbed in bodies through cultural normalization⁶. It requires generative acts of temporal and rhythmic reimagining to deal with fluctuating capacities and unforeseeable needs⁷. *Making Time* makes time for the people who engage with it, but not in the way that I usually hear that phrase, as a kind of self-sacrificing squeezing in. Instead, it shows on a weekly basis how a unit of time can elastically hold multiple unsynchronized rhythms together.

⁶ See Alison Kafer, *Feminist, Queer, Crip* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013).

⁷ See the discussion of how illness and being out of sync with ableist time practices can expand time, for example, through the dreamtime of staring at a ceiling or out of a window from bed in Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha, *The Future Is Disabled: Prophecies, Love Notes and Mourning Songs* (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 2022).