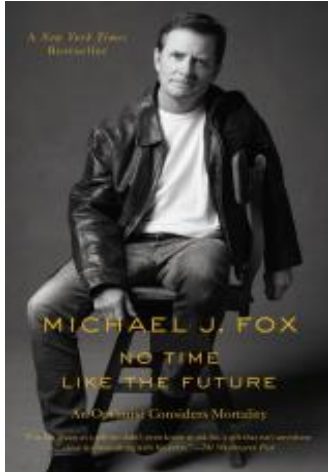


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# No Time Like the Future: An Optimist Considers Mortality

by Michael J. Fox

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## About the Book

**A moving account of resilience, hope, fear and mortality, and how these things resonate in our lives, by actor and advocate Michael J. Fox.**

The entire world knows Michael J. Fox as Marty McFly, the teenage sidekick of Doc Brown in *Back to the Future*; as Alex P. Keaton in *Family Ties*; as Mike Flaherty in *Spin City*; and through numerous other movie roles and guest appearances on shows such as *The Good Wife* and *Curb Your Enthusiasm*. Diagnosed at age 29, Fox is equally engaged in Parkinson's advocacy work, raising global awareness of the disease and helping find a cure through The Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson's Research, the world's leading non-profit funder of PD science. His two previous bestselling memoirs, *LUCKY MAN* and *ALWAYS LOOKING UP*, dealt with how he came to terms with the illness, all the while exhibiting his iconic optimism. His new memoir reassesses this outlook, as events in the past decade presented additional challenges.

In *NO TIME LIKE THE FUTURE: An Optimist Considers Mortality*, Michael shares personal stories and observations about illness and health, aging, the strength of family and friends, and how our perceptions about time affect the way we approach mortality. Thoughtful and moving, but with Fox's trademark sense of humor, his book provides a vehicle for reflection about our lives, our loves and our losses.

Running through the narrative is the drama of the medical madness Fox recently experienced, which included his daily negotiations with the Parkinson's disease he's had since 1991 and a spinal cord issue that necessitated immediate surgery. His challenge to learn how to walk again, only to suffer a devastating fall, nearly caused him to ditch his trademark optimism and "get out of the lemonade business altogether."

Does he make it all the way back? Read the book.

## Discussion Guide

1. Actor/activist Michael J. Fox was diagnosed with young-onset Parkinson's in 1991 at age 29. How much did you know about the disease before reading *NO TIME LIKE THE FUTURE*? Were you aware that someone so young could get this disease?
2. The subtitle of the book is "An Optimist Considers Mortality." Were you surprised at how candid Fox was about his diminishing optimism? How would you describe your own mindset? Are you an optimist or a pessimist? Did this change as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic? How did your optimism or pessimism affect your response to the events of 2020-2021?
3. Fox's father-in-law, Stephen Pollan, taught him the maxim "With gratitude, optimism becomes sustainable." How does gratitude play into your outlook?
4. 2018 was Fox's "annus horribilis" or "horrible year," due to his spinal surgery and other injuries, in addition to his Parkinson's. Many readers have experienced 2020 as a "horrible year" of their own. How did you deal with it? Did anything positive come out of it?
5. Have you ever known someone with Parkinson's, or are you living with the disease yourself? Did you learn more about it after reading *NO TIME LIKE THE FUTURE*? Have you read any of Fox's earlier titles: *LUCKY MAN*, *ALWAYS LOOKING UP*, or *A FUNNY THING HAPPENED ON THE WAY TO THE FUTURE*?
6. Fox writes about his gratitude for the support of his wife, Tracy Pollan, and their four children. Having supportive people around can make a big difference when dealing with chronic disease. Have you ever been the support system for someone living with an illness? Or have you relied on someone close to you during an illness of your own? What key attributes are essential to provide support?
7. What was your impression of Fox before reading this book? What's your impression now?
8. After his fall in August 2018, on the heels of his spinal surgery and recovery, Fox thought, "Make lemons into lemonade? Screw it --- I'm out of the lemonade business." Have you ever had your optimism tested as he did? What did you do to regain a positive attitude?
9. The Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson's Research was founded in 2000 and has raised more than \$1 billion in funding for research. How do you think his charitable work with the foundation has affected his attitude toward his disease? How do you think our service to others helps us get through our own life challenges?
10. In the wake of his mobility issues, Fox decided to take up golf in his 40s. Why do you think challenging himself with a new sport was something he needed to do?
11. Fox had to shift his perspective on his acting career as his disease progressed, choosing smaller, more supportive roles instead of being the leading man. He has said that he "[doesn't] miss being the leading man. I think of that

Hollywood truism that explains the difference between a short actor and a short movie star: to appear taller in a shot, a short actor stands on a box, while a short movie star makes everyone else stand in a ditch. I had discovered the simple pleasures of the ditch, where vanity has no value. While most of us are not movie stars, how do you think Fox's insight about the simple pleasures of the ditch relates to everyday people?

12. Have you seen Fox's more recent roles on "The Good Fight" or "Rescue Me"? How do you think he handled the transition to being a character actor?

13. Despite the numerous and arduous challenges that Fox has endured, he found his way back to his optimistic nature. Did you ever doubt he would get there?

14. What is your biggest takeaway after reading NO TIME LIKE THE FUTURE?

## Author Bio

Michael J. Fox gained fame by playing Alex P. Keaton on the sitcom "Family Ties." His blockbuster movies include *Back to the Future*, *The Secret of My Success*, *Doc Hollywood*, *Casualties of War* and *The American President*. He returned to television in his award-winning lead role as Deputy Mayor Mike Flaherty on "Spin City," followed by guest appearances in series like "Rescue Me," "Curb Your Enthusiasm" and "The Good Wife." His many awards include five Emmys, four Golden Globes, one Grammy, two Screen Actors Guild awards, the People's Choice award, and *GQ* Man of the Year. In 2000, he launched the Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson's Research, which is now the leading Parkinson's organization in the world. He is the author of three *New York Times* bestselling books: LUCKY MAN, ALWAYS LOOKING UP and A FUNNY THING HAPPENED ON THE WAY TO THE FUTURE. Michael lives with his family in New York City.

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