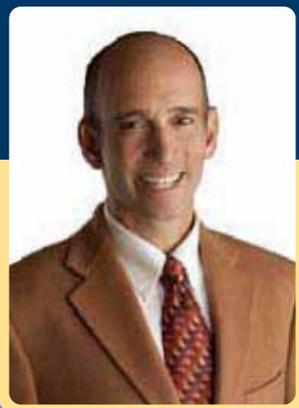


How to Create More Time in Your Life to Do the Things You WANT to Do

DR. MERCOLA



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How to Create More Time in Your Life to Do the Things You WANT to Do!

- Do you feel like life is passing you by while you're busy trying to keep up with your day-to-day responsibilities?
- Do you have a nagging feeling in your gut telling you you're not living your life to your fullest potential?
- Do you keep telling yourself that "someday" you will start that exercise program; start cooking meals from scratch and eat together as a family every night; learn to tango, or use those oil paints before they're dried out?



Is there anything ELSE, other than what you're busy doing every day, that you would like to have the time to do regularly?

If there are dreams that you have not yet fulfilled, then you, like the vast majority of others, need to learn how to "create more time" to do the things you really want to do.

But what, exactly, does "creating time" mean?

There's only 24 hours in each day; it's a finite amount, which is exactly why you have to become a good steward of your time. You can choose to waste it, piddling it away, minutes and hours at a time, on useless tasks and pursuits that add nothing of value to your life and overall happiness.

Or, you can choose to become conscious of HOW you use your time, and decide to use "time" as any other commodity – as something that, when used wisely, can further your personal and professional goals. Creating time is a matter of re-allocating time, from things that offer little value in return, to things that are *worth more*.

It's been said that "*Time is money*," but you could also claim that "*Time is joy*," or "*Time is health*."

Time can be valued in many different ways, and money is not necessarily the thing that will bring the most VALUE to your life.

In fact, the joy of fulfilling a lifelong dream of sailing the Atlantic, or playing tennis well into your 90's without being in pain for days afterwards, those things might be considered most valuable in the end, as you look back on your life.

How do you value your time?

And, if you had more of it, how would you use it? What do you really want to do?

Here you will get many different tips on how to “find” the time you thought you didn't have.

And, you'll also get a roadmap for how to set new goals, which you will now be able to achieve using that freed-up time. Because whether you have a goal or not, you are certain to end up somewhere. It might as well be somewhere in the vicinity of where you would LIKE to be!



Assess Your Productivity

But first, let's begin by looking at how you use your time right now. Assessing your productivity is your first step in figuring out how much time you could potentially free up.¹

Did you know the average person spends less than seven hours of their day productively? The rest of the time is typically wasted, which leads to feeling overwhelmed and stressed out.

Productivity can essentially be described as how much you achieve within a certain amount of time. Learning to get more done in less time is one of your keys to freeing up time to pursue your dreams.



It's very easy to rationalize wasted time. However, at the end of the day, year, or end of your life, those rationalizations will have gotten you nowhere. So, the time to quit making excuses and really taking stock of where your time goes is NOW.

Your answers to these questions can open your eyes to whether or not you're getting the most out of your time.



Ask Yourself These Questions:	Yes	No
Do I plan my days, or do I just “let things happen” as the day goes along?		
Do I spend a large portion of my time “putting out fires”?		
Do I take care of the little things because they’re right in front of me, and leave bigger projects for another day?		
Do I avoid difficult conversations or phone calls, and put off making tough decisions?		
Do I spend a lot of time defending myself or my work?		
Do I spend time daydreaming, playing computer games, or surfing the net, even when I have a full to-do list?		
Do I spend time every day either generating new ideas, or solving problems?		

How did you do?

Do you plan your days, tackle difficult tasks, and solve problems on a regular basis? Or is your time spent mostly avoiding the tougher issues and busying yourself with taking care of endless little annoyances, and real, or imagined, emergencies?

The fact of the matter is that today, our lives are busier than ever. We work more than ever before, yet we get less done, and judging by the skyrocketing prescriptions of antidepressant drugs, we’re more stressed, exhausted, and unhappy than ever.

Take this statistic for example: **The average executive has 300 to 400 hours of backlogged reading and projects at home and in the office.**



That was just the average, as higher level executives can have far more. My backlog easily exceeds 10,000 hours of reading and projects. However, it would likely be over 50-100,000 hours of backlogs if I hadn't applied the principles reviewed in this report.



Sobering, don't you think?

The problem is that you are overloaded with both information and tasks, and you try to get *everything* done instead of weeding out the non-important from the essential.

The ability to discriminate between what's important, and what's not, is the difference between being efficient and getting work done with time to spare for other activities, or drowning in the never-ending torrent of to-do's.

Even if you're not a company executive, the bottom line is that you will never be fully "caught up." You will never have time to do *everything*. But the good news is you *can* get more done in less time.

Let's review some simple, practical ways you can make this a reality.

Getting More Done With the 80/20 Principle

The core question of time management is

"What is the most valuable use of your time, right now?"

Once you begin to honestly answer this question – remembering that such things as joy, love and health are as valuable as money -- you can overcome procrastination (which I'll go over in greater detail at the end of this report), and begin to maximize your productivity. Ideally, that is the question that would guide your actions every minute of your day.²

"The things that matter most must never be at the mercy of the things that matter least."

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

Essentially, you have to step out of the torrent of unimportant minutiae, **define your top priorities, work steadily on those, and eliminate everything else.**



The Pareto Principle, better known as the 80/20 rule, is a nearly miraculous tool for doing just that.³ Applying this principle has made an absolutely extraordinary impact in my own life.

It is named after the Italian economist Vilfredo Pareto, who first wrote about his discovery in 1895, after he noticed certain naturally occurring divisions in society, such as 20 percent of the population wielding 80 percent of the wealth and power, while the bottom 80 percent of the people struggled over the remaining 20 percent of the resources.

Since then, the 80/20 principle has stood the test of time, still reiterated today through the business rule of thumb that 80 percent of your sales comes from 20 percent of your clients, for example. This also applies to a variety of more mundane matters. Make some quick estimates and see if these examples hold true for you:



- You wear 20 percent of your favorite clothes about 80 percent of the time.
- You spend 80 percent of your social time with about 20 percent of your friends.
- You use 20 percent of all your kitchen appliances 80 percent of the time.
- 20 percent of your customers or clients create 80 percent of all complaints.
- You spend 80 percent of your time working on 20 percent of your to-do list.

Likewise, **20 percent of your activities will account for 80 percent of your results**; 80 percent of the value of what you do comes from 20 percent of the tasks you perform.

This means that if you have ten items on your to-do list, just two of those items will turn out to be worth as much, or more, than all the other eight tasks put together!

Here's how to put the Pareto Rule into practice to save time, do less, and accomplish more.

Focus on the Greatest Payoff

Many of the tasks on your list may actually take the same or similar amount of time to accomplish. But one or two of those tasks will contribute five or ten times the value as any of the others.

Oftentimes you may even discover that one of the items is worth more than all the other items put together. This is invariably the task you should do first, before you move on to any of the others.

Identify the Most Valuable Task

So how do you decide which tasks have the most value, or the greatest payoff?

As a rule of thumb, it might be helpful to remember that the most valuable tasks you can do each day are often *the hardest and most complex*. The payoff, however, for completing these tasks efficiently can be tremendous. Therefore, develop the habit of refusing to work on tasks in the bottom 80 percent while you still have tasks in the top 20 percent left to be done.

Before you begin your work, always ask yourself, “Is this task in the top 20 percent of my activities, or in the bottom 80 percent?”

Another important aspect to keep in mind is that **you can't expect to find the time to do more of what you want to do, if you continue to give your time away, doing work that accomplishes other people's goals**. When someone asks you to help out, ask yourself these four questions:

“Will this task/project/job advance my goal?”

If not: *“What specific benefit could I get from doing it?”*

If none: *“Who could I delegate it to?”*

If no one: *“What is the best way to say ‘no’?”*

Action Exercises

1. Make a list of all the key goals, activities, projects and responsibilities in your life today
2. Decide which of them are, or could be, in the top 10 to 20 percent of the tasks that represent 80 to 90 percent of your results. Whittle this list down to ten or less
3. Resolve to spend most of your time working in the few areas that can really make a difference in your life and career, and spend less and less time on your lower value activities

How Maximize Your Productivity

As I mentioned before, when you're overloaded with information and tasks, trying to get everything done usually ends up being an exercise in futility. Learning to focus only on the essential things, using the 80/20 rule, and breaking through your mental blocks that lead to procrastination will put you well ahead of the game.

But there are even more ways you can increase your efficiency and save time, so you can spend it on the things you really want to do. Here are eight simple ways to be more productive with less effort:⁴

- 1. First things first. Eliminate everything else** – Once you've decided which 20 percent of your tasks are most likely to bring you the most value, your job is to focus your attention on these tasks **FIRST**, every day. Getting in the habit of crossing off your most essential tasks first thing in the morning, before other "emergencies" have time to consume your time, will make your productivity soar.

Step two: eliminate everything else. Sound scary? Not to worry. Take a look at your list of tasks again. What items on there are not essential? Could you drop it from your schedule completely? Can you delegate it to someone else?

If you can't get rid of it right now, put it on a "less essential" list, and after you've completed your most important tasks, go back and do some of these when you have the time. After a while, you might come to realize that things you thought were necessary weren't really necessities at all.

- 2. Eliminate distractions** – Constant interruptions are productivity's enemy number one. This includes email notifications, IM's, your cell phone, RSS reader, gadgets and widgets and social networking forums. Turn everything off, disconnect yourself from the internet, clear your work space of non-essential papers to increase your concentration and focus on your chosen task.
- 3. Work in 90 Minute Intervals** -- Now here is the key. Arrange your day to have 90 minutes of absolutely uninterrupted time, no phone calls, no email, absolutely no interruptions. Then work on one of these goals for the entire 90 minutes. Stop at 90 minutes. Don't do more without taking a break.

You can continue these 90-minute cycles of uninterrupted work on your top goals as long as your schedule of other responsibilities will allow.

This is a very effective and profoundly powerful strategy that I learned from Tony Schwartz and I would strongly encourage you to pick up his book, [*The Power of Full Engagement*](#).

- 4. Keep it simple** -- Find, and use, the simplest tools to get the job done. Fidgeting with ultra-cool applications that you're not fully familiar with, using complicated, multi-layered calendars and other fancy gadgets can actually eat up more time than they save you. By selecting simple, no-frills tools, you can stop thinking about the tool and focus only on the task at hand.
- 5. Do one thing at a time** –How efficient are you really when you're trying to divide your focus between ten different things? Let's face it. Multi-tasking is usually a waste of time. You're guaranteed to finish a task faster, and with less effort, if you concentrate on doing that one thing, without letting yourself be pulled in multiple directions. This is one of the key Tony Schwartz principles. You need to stop multi-tasking, as it radically decreases your productivity.

However, there are exceptions to this rule. Lumping together similar tasks that are in your bottom 80 percent, or that don't require your full attention can save you time. You could open and sort your mail while talking on the phone, exercise while catching up on your favorite TV show, or listen to an audio book while commuting to work, for example.

- 6. Find quiet time** – Not everyone has the luxury of a quiet working environment, but you need some quiet time each day that you can call your own, where you don't have to work. Reading your RSS feeds or going through your email does not count!

The trick is to get away from the information overload; to unplug and unwind in a place where you can gain daily perspective to see what's important to you. This could be through reading, taking a bath, walking in nature, exercising or meditating.

Watching TV might be relaxing to some, but I'd recommend you at least avoid the news programs. Information comes at you from all angles, all day long. Learning to be selective in what information you let in can boost your productivity immensely. And, to hear your own inner voice, complete disconnect from all information media might at times be necessary.



- 7. Maximize the impact of your work** – Do you finish a great project, or create something fantastic and then move on to the next thing? Then you're short-changing your full potential. Taking the extra time to maximize the impact of the work you just did; promoting it to get attention and the recognition you deserve, is what will lead to more business and new job opportunities.

Once you've created "the next big thing," promote it, show it off; find ways to make it carry you as far as it can take you. This task could be that 20 percent that

gives you 80 percent of the payoff for all the work you just put in.

- 8. Simplify, simplify, simplify** – Once you've simplified your work down to your most important tasks, eliminated everything non-essential, including time-draining distractions, you should now be quite productive with what's left.

However, the minutiae of distractions and the unnecessary have a natural tendency to creep back in if you're not taking the time to pay attention. So, every now and then, review what you're doing and the information you allow in. Then, simplify some more.

You can also simplify your work load and save lots of time by standardizing tasks that you have to do more than once, such as shopping lists, certain business letters, spread sheets and project outlines, for example.

Time Saving Tips at Home

There are plenty of ways you can save time and increase your efficiency with regular tasks you do at home as well. Simply getting up anywhere between 15 minutes to an hour earlier can be your first step to increasing your overall productivity, saving time, reducing unnecessary stress and enjoying your life more. Here are some other quick and easy time saving tips:^{5 6}

Simplify Your Morning Ritual

- Limit the amount of time you spend in the shower to two or three minutes.
- Simplify your work wardrobe to basics that can be mixed and matched without much thought or effort, and plan what you'll be wearing the night before. This way you won't need more than a couple of minutes to get dressed in the morning.
- Pack your lunch the night before, either while cooking or cleaning up after dinner.
- Create routines for your children. This will drastically reduce the amount of time you'll have to spend trying to navigate through the chaos each morning and night.
- Bring your own coffee from home rather than stopping on the way to work. Not only will it save you time, but at the price of latte's these days, it'll save you lots of money too.



Organize Your Family and Home

- Teach your children to clean up after themselves.
- Divide household responsibilities between yourself, your children and your spouse.
- Keep phone numbers and other emergency information in an easy to find spot, such as by your phone, or on your refrigerator.
- On the weekend, plan and get ready for the upcoming week. Make sure you have five or six clean work outfits, shop for necessary work supplies, gifts, et cetera.
- Organize your home based on the function of each area, and create a place for all your essentials. As long as everyone in your household puts things back in their designated area, you've effectively saved all that time you previously spent searching for things.
- When your laundry is done, hang clothing up immediately to minimize the amount of time you'll have to spend ironing.

Plan Your Meals – Reduce Your Stress

- Remember, if you fail to plan you are planning to fail, so plan your weekly menu. Decide what to cook each day of the following week and shop accordingly.
- Limit your grocery shopping to once per week by keeping a shopping list on your refrigerator. When an item starts getting low, write it down, and always shop with your list.

Simplify Your Finances

- Schedule to pay your bills only once or twice per month. Paying all your bills online can save you a lot of time by eliminating the need to write checks and run to the post office.
- Avoid unnecessary trips to your bank by withdrawing enough cash to last until you receive your next paycheck.
- Keep all your bills and receipts in one convenient area. This will cut down the amount of time it will take you to pay your bills and balance your account. There are many convenient file systems available for this



purpose, such as yearly home finance bill keepers, with one labeled pocket per month.

- Throughout the year, collect all tax-related receipts and paperwork (such as receipts for tax deductible donations) in one file, which will eliminate searching for important paper work come tax time.

Increase Your Efficiency by Eliminating Clutter

Getting yourself and your space organized can increase your efficiency, decrease your daily stress and save you lots of time. Just how you organize your space is up to individual preference, but one of your basic rules is to make sure that each area of your home is conveniently set up to accommodate the function of that space.

For example, do you have an entry hallway, but it's cluttered up with everything but a convenient place for your bag, coat and keys?

If you don't have a home office, where do you pay your bills, and do you have everything you need available in that area to get the job done without searching for your checkbook, pen, paper or bills?

Is your closet a mish-mash of everything from winter clothes to summer sandals, to work clothes and evening wear? How much time do you think you could save each morning just by organizing your closet in such a way that all your work clothes are conveniently located together, so you don't have to rummage through your entire wardrobe to find a suitable outfit?

If clutter and disarray is driving you crazy and robbing you of time you could spend doing something you love, it's time to do something about it.

If you find yourself putting it off, go to the end of this report, where I will share tips on how to break through your procrastination. All of them will work equally well when applied to the task of getting organized as to any other job or project. As an example, selecting one very small area and setting an egg timer for just 15 or 30 minutes can help get you started.



Six Simple Steps to an Organized Space

1. **Don't bite off more than you can chew** -- Choose only one SMALL area to work on at a time, starting with the area you use the most, such as your desk or office area, or a portion of your kitchen.

Start as small as you like. Doing just one kitchen drawer is okay. Just make sure you keep going. Do another drawer tomorrow, then work your way up to the cabinets, pantry, and countertops, until you've gone through the entire space.

2. **Clear and Sort** -- Make sure you have three boxes or large containers available. Label them "Keep," "Donate," and "Trash." As you begin clearing the area you've chosen, put each item into one of the three boxes.

If you're agonizing over whether to keep or get rid of an item, asking yourself these questions might help:

"Have I used this item in the last six months to a year?"

"Do I really need it?"

"Do I love it?"

If you don't need it, don't use it regularly, and you don't simply love it, get rid of it.

Clothing that is still in good shape, and items that are not broken and still in operating order can be donated. Put broken items and clothing that is worn out or stained in the Trash bin.

3. **Clean** -- When you're done emptying the area, throw everything in your Trash box away immediately.

Next, clean the now empty area to give you a nice, fresh start.

4. **Focus on function** -- Decide what function your chosen area should fulfill, and put only the things that serve that purpose back.

Ask yourself what you'll be doing in this area. Eating? Studying? Paying bills? Reading and relaxing? Some kind of hobby?

Make sure you have the things related to that activity in that space, so that it can serve its function without you having to move things from one room or area to another.



Even more importantly, organize according to how you actually *do* use your space, not according to how it *should* be used. And, if you end up using something differently than anticipated, or habits change, move it. No organizational system is ever written in stone. If something doesn't work for you, change it.

Once you've put back the items that belong in that space, you may have quite a few things left in your Keep box. That's okay. You'll find a "home" for all of them eventually, but it's important that you focus on the **priority of each area first**. Once you've gone through all of your living spaces you should have selected functional areas for all your priorities. Anything left in your Keep box can then be placed in the most appropriate area.

If needed you can also create one box for each room, and place the items you want to keep but that do not belong in the area you're currently working on into the appropriate box for later.

5. **Prioritize** -- As you're putting things back into their designated area, put some thought into how they're stored. For example, make sure you place lesser used items behind or higher than the items you use more often.

In your closet, store out-of-season clothing in the back, and keep your current items up front. Make sure your work clothes are located in the most convenient and accessible area of your closet.

6. **Complete the functionality of the area** -- To ensure that each area will be functional, make sure you have the right furniture and practical storage available. If not, decide what it is you need, and get it.

But you don't have to spend a fortune organizing your space. You can create wonderful, personalized and fully functional spaces by "thinking out of the box."

An old canning jar can store pens and pencils; a decorative flower pot can serve as a trash can; an empty votive cup can hold paper clips, tacks or rubber bands, and bills can be stored in anything from a fancy bill tracker to a wicker basket or a deep serving tray. An odd chair can double as a side table.

Have fun with it!

Not only will it reflect your personal style, but it might also help motivate you to get the job done, and keep it organized in the future.



Setting New Goals – What do You WANT to Do?

All right. You've assessed your current level of productivity; you've learned how to apply the 80/20 rule to narrow your focus to the things that really matter and bring you the

most value, and simple tips for putting your productivity into turbo drive on and off the job.

You've also gotten many quick and easy time saving tips for various areas of your life, and a crash course on how to organize your space for maximum ease and efficiency. Now it's time to figure out what to do with the extra time you've carved out by implementing those strategies.

By using this freed up time, you can achieve new heights and change your life, one step at a time. So, what do you WANT to do? And, more importantly, how will you get there?

What you need now is a concrete GOAL, and a roadmap that will take you there!

Did you know, less than three percent of adults have clear written goals with plans on how to achieve them? The following summary⁷ will help you be one of those three percent, which will increase your chances of actually realizing your dreams, rather than just thinking about them.

How to Set Goals, and Achieve Them

What is the most important thing to keep in mind when you're setting a new goal?

That your goal is congruent with your current belief system.

If you want to turn your hobby into a part time job, it won't work if your belief system tells you it's "wrong" to charge for that particular service, for example. This is a common pitfall for artists and alternative healers, but it could also apply to any number of activities or dreams.



As long as your desire is in line with your beliefs, your mind has a remarkable ability to steer you toward your intended goal.

Another important tip in developing goals is to always use the word "I," and to write out your goal in the present tense. Your subconscious mind responds only to commands that are personal, positive and in the present tense.

Step 1: Want it!

First, you have to develop a strong desire, which is completely personal and comes from within. Your actions are mainly based on either fear or desire. However, you cannot grow (which is the effect of desire) if you are in a protective mode (which stems

from fear). If you're busy being fearful you might fail, you won't be able to leap when necessary, to grow.

Fear is a powerful force, but it shuts you down, and keeps you from greatness. Desire, on the other hand, is an active burning that comes from within, which has the power to change your very nature and core.

Step 2: Believe it!

If there is any doubt in your mind that you may not be able to achieve something, you won't give it your all. In fact, if you don't believe you can achieve it, you might as well just set it aside. In order to fully achieve anything, you must believe it is possible at a deep, core level. Make your goal, whatever it is, obtainable.

However, you also want to make sure your goal is challenging enough to require some effort on your part.

Step 3: Write it down

A goal is not a goal unless you put it in writing. Until you put it in writing, it is a fantasy. Once your goal is in writing, it is concrete. I would encourage you to write out your goal in two ways.



First, write out your goal in great detail.

Be specific on what your life will be like when you have met this goal. Let your imagination run wild. Don't forget to include how you will feel, both while you're working on getting there, and once you've accomplished your goal. *Feeling* is a powerful force that can fuel your desire, which I mentioned in step one.

Put this description in an envelope. Read it again whenever you need encouragement and motivation.

Next, write down your goal in one sentence that represents your goal in its entirety. Write this sentence on several post-it notes and place them in your car, in your office, on your bathroom mirror, and by your bed. Several times a day, especially before going to bed for the night, read your sentence a few times, and spend a couple of minutes visualizing it as if you've already achieved it.

Where are you? What are you doing? What does it feel like?

Step 4: List the benefits

This is similar to the recommendation above, but here you will focus all your attention on the benefits you can reap from achieving your goal. List everything you can possibly think of, including mental, emotional, physical, spiritual, financial, material and relational benefits.

Reviewing these benefits on a regular basis will help keep you motivated.

Step 5: Analyze your starting point

Write down where you are right now. This is your starting point, your baseline, to measure your progress as you go along. You'll be surprised to see how far you've come when you look back at this notation.

Step 6: Set a deadline

If your goal is a tangible one, such as obtaining a certain weight, or learning to play a certain number of guitar chords by heart, set a deadline. Setting a deadline for a tangible goal programs your intention into your cells to achieve that goal by a certain time, if not sooner. If it is a large goal, break it down into smaller sub-deadlines and write them down in order.

However, if your goal is an intangible goal, such as optimizing your health, or demonstrating unconditional love toward yourself and others, then do NOT set a deadline. Why? Because in this case, the date you set will be the first date your cells are programmed to actually start demonstrating that intangible quality.

If you do set a deadline and fail to reach it, don't despair. Set another deadline.

Step 7: List your obstacles

After listing all the possible obstacles that you can think of, re-list them in order of difficulty to overcome, from the easiest to the most difficult.

The obstacles you list may be both internal and external.

An internal obstacle would be a belief that you have about yourself, or an attitude such as "This is too difficult," or "I'm not smart enough to do this." An external obstacle is something outside of yourself such as a lack of money, or a spouse who is unsupportive of your endeavor.



Step 8: Empower yourself with the information you need

There are multiple resources available on many subjects. If there is an area you are pursuing, research it and empower yourself with all of the information you can. Successful people are those who obtain and have information. So do your research. Setting a goal and going after it without knowing what it entails is a sure-fire way of stopping short of your goal once you realize there's more to it than you thought.

Step 9: Determine whose help and cooperation you will require

This list may include family, friends, co-workers, your doctor or teacher, and whomever else you deem appropriate. You will require the help and encouragement of others in achieving almost any goal. However, be careful in your selection, choosing only those who you know will support and encourage you in the fullest.

Unfortunately, there are people out there who seem to sabotage others, sometimes without consciously deciding to do so. Educate the people you select on the reasons you are working toward your goal. If you present it well, they may even decide to join you and then you will be really supported and held accountable!

Step 10: Make a plan

Now it's time to write out, in detail, your entire plan: what you want, when you want it, why you want it, from where you are starting, and the steps you're going to go through to get there. List the obstacles to overcome, the information you will need, and the people you need to help you. Use steps 1-9 as your guide.

Step 11: Take action. NOW!

The time to implement your plan is right now. Take action immediately on first priority of your plan. Then, do something every day that moves you toward the attainment of your next sub-goal or final goal.

Step 12: Visualize your achievement

Visualization is extremely powerful. What you see and feel is what you get. Visualize yourself participating in activities related to your goal. Visualize the benefits you determined earlier.

Make yourself *feel* all of it.

Take time each day for this. As recommended in step 3, do this at night before retiring while reading the sentence you created.



Step 13: Decide that you will never, ever give up

As they said in Apollo 13, when the lives of the entire crew were at stake:

"Failure is not an option."

Make the decision that your goal, and all related benefits, is so worthy and valuable that failure is simply not an option. Surround yourself with those who care enough about you to hold you accountable. We all have days, or weeks, where we slip. The important thing is that you realize it, admit it, and get back to your plan.

Clarity is Everything

Focusing on the essentials can not only raise your productivity, save you time and decrease your stress, but it is this *clarity* that accounts for probably 80 percent of your success and happiness as well.

Lack of clarity – which is a common by-product of mismanaged use of time and unfocused running around trying to catch up -- is responsible for more frustration and underachievement than any other single factor.

You could say that the three keys to achieving your goals are "Clarity, Clarity, Clarity."

Your success in life will be largely determined by how clear you are about what it is you really, really want. The more you write and rewrite your goals, and the more you think about them, the clearer you will become about them. And the clearer you are about what you want, the more likely you are to do more and more of the things that are consistent with achieving them. At the same time, you will also do less of the things that don't help you get the things you really want.

Sometimes, however, the hardest part of doing a task is getting started in the first place.

About 20 percent of people consider themselves chronic procrastinators, and even more folks struggle with procrastination from time to time.⁸ If you're one of these people, I've reserved this last section just for you. You CAN beat procrastination, and here's how.

How to Beat Procrastination

What Kind of Procrastinator are You?

According to experts, the top cause for procrastination is FEAR. Fear of failing. Fear of disappointment. Fear of criticism. Even fear of success, with all the potential responsibilities (whether real or imagined) that comes with it.

But that's not the only reason for procrastination. Dr. Joseph Ferrari, Ph.D., associate professor of psychology at De Paul University in Chicago, and one of the world's leading experts on procrastination, has identified three basic types of procrastinators:

1. **Arousal types**, or thrill-seekers, who wait to the last minute to experience a euphoric rush.
2. **Avoiders**, who may be avoiding fear of failure or even fear of success. In either case, avoiders are very concerned with what others think of them, and would rather be considered lazy, than lacking in ability.



3. **Decisional procrastinators**, who simply will not make a decision, because not making a decision absolves him or her of responsibility for the outcome of events.

Regardless of which type of procrastinator you are, ending procrastination in large part begins with putting a stop to your negative thought patterns, and ends with creating new, empowering thought patterns instead.⁹ This means:

- Silencing the negative voices inside your head that make you feel worried, discouraged, or self-doubting.
- Recognizing and addressing fear, and transforming that energy into motivation instead.
- Giving yourself permission to make mistakes.
- Learning how to effectively clear your mind, achieve concentration and focus, and letting go of stress.
- Recognizing your tasks as something you *choose* to do, not something you have to do.
- Looking at your work as small manageable pieces, rather than one large and unconquerable task.

Hypnosis¹⁰ can be helpful in this “reprogramming process,” as can energy psychology tools such as the Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT), prayer, meditation, and various biofeedback techniques.

Here are some other helpful tips by Steve Pavlina on overcoming your procrastination, which, if left unchecked, can sabotage both your personal and professional life, and keep you from accomplishing the things you really want to do.¹¹

Replace “I Have to” With “I Want to”

Whenever you think you absolutely *have to* do something, you’re a prime candidate for procrastination. “I have to” implies that you’re being forced to do something, which automatically leads to a feeling of resentment, and oftentimes rebellion in the form of procrastination.

The obvious solution is to realize that you don’t have to do anything you don’t want to do. Even though there may be serious consequences, you are always free to choose what and when to do it. Once you know that you are choosing to do something of your own free will, for whatever reason, procrastination becomes less likely.

Replace “Finish it” With “Begin it”

Thinking of a task as one large project looming ahead of you is a surefire way to ensure you’ll put it off. It can seem virtually impossible to imagine finishing a task when you can’t even envision what it will take to get you there. Feeling overwhelmed is not conducive to efficient productivity.



To stay out of this mental trap, begin by thinking about one small piece of the task, rather than focusing on the fact that you’ll have to finish the whole thing.

*How do you swallow an elephant?
One piece at a time*

By replacing "How am I going to finish this?" with "What small step can I begin right now?" you can turn a large project into more manageable “bite-size” pieces that you can easily complete one at a time.

List each small step, and complete another small step each day. Remember, if you simply do enough small tasks, you will eventually finish the whole thing.

Replace Perfectionism With Permission to Be Human

Perfectionism is another line of thinking that produces procrastination. Oftentimes, thinking you have to do the job perfectly on the first try will prevent you from jumping in and getting started. If you don’t have a specific deadline, perfectionism can bench the project indefinitely. But if a deadline does loom, waiting until the last minute can also get you off the hook by giving yourself the excuse that “it could have been perfect if only you’d had more time.”

The solution to perfectionism is to grant yourself permission to simply be human. Have you ever used a software program that you consider to be perfect in every single way? Probably not, because every programmer has to consider their job “good enough” at some point or they will never be able to release their product.

It might also help to realize that an imperfect job completed today is going to be far superior to a perfect job that is delayed indefinitely.

Perfectionists also tend to cling to the vision of their task as one big whole. If you replace that one, big, perfectly executed task with one small imperfect first step, you can be on your way. It doesn't matter how rough your first draft or your first try is. You can always go back and revise as many times as you need to, and have time for, later.

Say NO to Deprivation, and YES to Fun!

Associating deprivation with a task is another mental block that can easily lead to procrastination. Do you believe that taking on a project means putting the rest of your life on hold; secluding yourself, working long hours, never seeing your family or having any time for fun? That kind of mindset will suck the motivation right out of you, for sure.



What's the solution?

Doing the exact opposite. Plan out the fun parts of your life first, and then schedule your work around them. Even though this may sound counterproductive, this kind of reverse psychology can work extremely well.

In fact, many peak performers in any field of work actually take more vacation time, and work shorter hours than the workaholics, simply because they've mastered their minds, and learned how to work effectively and efficiently – getting more done in less time.

It's been shown that the optimal amount of work for most people is 40 to 45 hours per week. Working longer hours than this actually has the adverse effect of diminished return, meaning less and less real work gets done in the long run.

I strongly recommend you take at least one full day off every week to recharge. When every day is a potential work day, work becomes never-ending, and procrastination is far more likely to creep in as a way to try to squeeze a little bit of pleasure into your life.

Decrease Your Resistance With Planned Rewards

To get you started on a project you've been putting off for a while, here's another trick. Start by selecting a very small piece of the task that you can work on for as little as 30 minutes. Then choose a reward that you will get immediately afterwards. Your reward could be watching your favorite TV show; going to a movie; having lunch with a friend; anything you would find pleasurable.

Your reward should be guaranteed if you simply put in the time, and not be dependent on any meaningful accomplishment. Because the designated time is so short, and your desired reward is guaranteed, it doesn't matter how unpleasant your task may be. You can get through 30 minutes of just about anything. And, interestingly enough, once you get started you may find that you actually want to keep going, and work on it longer than initially planned.



Knowing that your reward is right there waiting and that you're allowed to stop whenever you want to, will shift your focus away from worrying about finishing the whole project, to finishing the current piece that now has your undivided attention.

When you decide to stop working, enjoy your reward to the fullest. Then schedule another session with another reward. Essentially, you're reprogramming yourself to associate difficult work with pleasurable rewards, rather than

thinking you have to lock yourself up in your office and never see the light of day until everything is done.

Keep in mind that working toward immediate, short-term rewards is far more motivating than laboring for uncertain long-term rewards somewhere in the distant future.

* * *

I truly hope this guide has provided you the information and knowledge needed to assist you in your journey toward creating the life you choose. Learning to save time by being efficient; cutting out tasks and responsibilities that are unimportant and bring little value, and redirecting your energy to setting goals that matter, can change your life.

May you be blessed with courage, love and wisdom as you go about creating more time in your life to do the things you really want to do!

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