TIME MANAGEMENT FROM THE INSIDE OUT

The Foolproof System for Taking Control of Your Schedule – and Your Life

JULIE MORGENSTERN

JULIE MORGENSTERN is the founder of Task Masters, a time management consulting firm. As well as being the author of Organizing from the Inside Out, Ms. Morgenstern is a frequent guest on television and a popular speaker. Task Masters’ clients have included American Express, Microsoft and Sony Music.
**Main Idea**

A robust, professional quality time management system is actually an ongoing feedback loop consisting of four steps:

1. **Learn**
2. **Analyze**
3. **Strategize**
4. **Attack**

- **S** - Sort tasks by category.
- **P** - Purge whatever you can.
- **A** - Assign a home to tasks.
- **C** - Containerize – Set time limits.
- **E** - Equalize – Refine your schedule.

The objective of time management from the inside out is to design a scheduling system that fits your needs like a glove. Since every person is unique, there is no definitive “right” or “wrong” way to manage your time. Instead, the ideal time management system for you purely and simply makes you feel good because you feel productive.

The real measure of success in time management isn’t how much you achieve – it’s how you feel about how you’re spending your time. Achieve the right balance and you’ll approach every day with enthusiasm and look back on your life and your career with satisfaction.

**Obstacles to good time management** come in three varieties:

1. Technical errors – the absence of the requisite skills and techniques of time management.
2. External realities – environmental problems beyond your direct control.
3. Psychological obstacles – the hidden, internal habits which can sabotage your attempts.

When you understand the variety of the obstacle you face, the way to move forward will often be obvious.

To develop a customized time management program, you need to identify and articulate four key factors:

1. What works well in your current time management system.
2. Your preferred choices in this field.
3. Your natural energy cycle and sources of personal energy.
4. Your personal big-picture goals.

By knowing these factors, you’ll be better prepared to develop a system that builds on a foundation of personal success rather than taking a stab in the dark.

Armed with your big-picture goals and 12-month activity lists, you can now develop an ideal time schedule and tools to help keep everything on track. To do this:

1. Develop a time map that hits the right balance between your various priorities.
2. Select a daily planner that works for you.

This step focuses on allocating time to the daily tasks that will cumulatively build towards your 12-month activities list.

The final step involves a practical way to put your plans into action while still maintaining control and dealing with the day-to-day realities along the way.

This step uses the S-P-A-C-E formula:

- **S** – Sort potential tasks by category.
- **P** – Purge or eliminate whichever tasks add no value.
- **A** – Assign a home to every task you decide to schedule.
- **C** – Containerize tasks and keep them within the time allotted.
- **E** – Equalize your schedule – refine, maintain and adapt it.
Main Idea
Obstacles to good time management come in three varieties:
1. Technical errors – the absence of the requisite skills and techniques of time management.
2. External realities – environmental problems beyond your direct control.
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Supporting Ideas

Technical Errors
Common technical errors in time management include:
- Tasks that have no specific time assigned to them and thus keep on getting put off for a future date.
- Setting aside the wrong time for specific tasks – for example, attempting to approach a task that requires concentration when your personal energy levels are low.
- Being unrealistic and not allowing enough time.
- Being unable to delegate a task to someone else.
- Approaching a simple task in an overcomplicated way.
- Failing to remember everything you need to do.
- Trying to work in a disorganized physical workspace.

Technical errors are usually easily rectified. In fact, once you realize you’re suffering from a technical problem, the solution will often be just as obvious. Simply put, once you understand a technical problem, make the necessary adjustments and everything is in order. You can then move forward with confidence.

External Realities
Common external realities which can impede the effectiveness of a time management system are:
- Having an unrealistic workload – whether it is self-imposed or assigned by someone else.
- Health problems.
- Being in a transitional situation – personal life changes, moving, starting a new job, etc.
- Being forced to work in an environment where there are plenty of potential interruptions and distractions.
- Having a disorganized partner – professional or personal.

Unlike technical errors, external realities cannot be easily rectified. There are often significant hurdles standing in the way. Also, by definition, external realities are often beyond your direct control in any event.

Therefore, the key with minimizing the impact of external realities on your time management system is to develop ways to adapt to them. If you approach these problems with the objective of developing a pragmatic solution, you’ll be finding a way to move forward.

Also, cut yourself a little slack. There’s no reason you should take the blame for something which is an external reality. Instead, acknowledge it, find ways to work around it and keep pressing forward.

Psychological Obstacles
The most common mental blocks to achieving more are:
- You have unclear and non-specific goals and priorities – and therefore no basis for rational decisions.
- You enjoy being under pressure, therefore nothing gets done until it is a chaos situation.
- You hate having downtime – and therefore you keep your mind cluttered and your schedule tightly packed.
- You’re so busy trying to help other people you ignore important areas in your own life.
- You’re afraid to fail – therefore, you blame others or your circumstances instead.
- You don’t feel worthy of success.
- You’re afraid of upsetting the status quo.
- You enjoy being involved in a project and feel empty when the project is completed – regardless of the outcome.
- You’re a perfectionist – and can’t tell which tasks are worth loads of effort and which ones aren't.
- You’re afraid that too much structure will stifle your creativity.

With any luck, finding better ways to first deal with technical errors and then external realities will help to diminish some of these psychological factors anyway. Also, just realizing what you’ve been doing and why will also help in dissolving these psychological obstacles.

If these types of issues do continue to be problems, try and identify exactly what the source of these feelings are. If you can do that, the best way to overcome whatever is holding you back will usually be glaringly obvious.

Key Thoughts

“Being organized, whether with your space or time, is all about being ready. It’s about feeling in command so that you are prepared to handle all of the opportunities, distractions and surprises life throws your way. We live in a complex, fast-paced world filled with infinite possibilities and opportunities. When you develop good time management skills, instead of being overwhelmed by it all, you can celebrate it. You know what to choose. You feel clear and focused, ready to take on life.”

– Julie Morgenstern

“Time management from the inside out is about designing a schedule that is a custom fit for you. It’s about identifying what’s important to you and giving those activities a place in your schedule based on your unique personality needs and goals. And it’s about feeling deeply satisfied at the end of each day.”

– Julie Morgenstern

“It is my observation that the single most common obstacle people face in managing their days lies in the way they view time. Most people think of time as intangible. In the journey from chaos to order, it is often easier to organize space than time, because space is something you can actually see. Organizing time really is no different than organizing space. In other words, just as a closet is a limited space into which you must fit a certain number of objects, a schedule is a limited space into which you must fit a number of tasks. Your days are not infinite and endless. When you think of it this way, time is not so intangible and elusive. In fact, each day is simply a container, a storage unit that has a definite capacity you can reach.”

– Julie Morgenstern
Main Idea
To develop a customized time management program, you need to identify and articulate four key factors:
1. What works well in your current time management system.
2. Your preferred choices in this field.
3. Your natural energy cycle and sources of personal energy.
4. Your personal big-picture goals.

By knowing these factors, you’ll be better prepared to develop a system that builds on a foundation of personal success rather than taking a stab in the dark.

Supporting Ideas
Building On What Already Works Well
Your present time management system may leave something (or possibly everything) to be desired, but there will most likely be some parts that are working well for you. If you take the time to write these down, you can begin to think about ways to expand and build on these skills in other areas of your life.

This doesn’t need to be a difficult step. Simply take the time to realistically analyze everything you are doing well at present. Write your answers down, so you can organize your thoughts. Even the trivial things may be worthy of emulation in other, more important areas of your life.

You can also enhance the value of this exercise by doing the converse. Write down everything that doesn’t work about your current time management system. Then start looking carefully and deliberately for activities you need to eliminate to improve your productivity.

Your Time Management Preferences
Since time management is individualized, the ideal system will amplify your personal preferences. Think about whether you prefer:
- Working / relaxing/ exercising individually or with others.
- A crowded schedule or an open, responsive schedule.
- Predictability or spontaneity.
- Tight deadlines or long lead times.
- Working in silence or with background music.
- Working with your head or working with your hands.

The list can go on and on, but if you take the time to identify (and write down) the basic characteristics of a time management system you’ll like the most, you then have a set of parameters to work with rather than something vague and ambiguous.

Your Natural Energy Cycle – And Energy Sources
Some people do their best work early in the day, others later or even late at night. There’s no right or wrong answer, just a personal preference. If you identify when you perform the best, you’ll know when key tasks should be scheduled in your personalized time management system.

Also, think about how you best like to boost your energy level. Some people like to do something physical, others prefer a nap, still others eat a snack or do something else. Specify what works for you, and write it down. Again, a personalized time management system will factor in these types of activities when they’re needed.

Key Thoughts
“Time management is the ultimate in self-improvement, because it is the foundation that will enable you to achieve your goals in every aspect of your life.”

– Julie Morgenstern
Main Idea
Armed with your big-picture goals and 12-month activity lists, you can now develop an ideal time schedule and tools to help keep everything on track. To do this:
1. Develop a time map that hits the right balance between your various priorities.
2. Select a daily planner that works for you.

This step focuses on allocating time to the daily tasks that will cumulatively build towards your 12-month activities list.

Supporting Ideas

**Developing a Time Map**
A time map is simply a written record of where you spend your time. It categorizes how much time you spend on specific tasks. By compiling a time map, you can keep track of the amount of time you spend working towards your yearly activities – which in turn determines the amount of time spent on achieving your own big-picture goals.

To make the best use of a time map:
1. **Find your current starting point.**
   Try keeping an accurate time map for a couple of weeks. Write down how you actually spend your time each hour, or even each 30-minutes if you prefer. At the end of the week, total how much time you’ve actually spent working towards each 12-month activity.
   Note that you may already be doubling up – that is, some of your present activities may count towards two different 12-month activities. If so, that’s great. Ideally, the more you can double up like that, the better. At this point, however, just make certain you have an accurate picture of where your time currently gets applied.

2. **Create your new ideal time map.**
   Start with a blank time map for the next week, and your personal goal chart. What you want to do now is block out time zones where you can be working on tasks that lead towards your 12-month activities. The challenge will then be to gradually and regularly come up with better and better ways to increase the size of those productive activity blocks of time.
   Note that your ideal time map needs to cover all your waking hours. Your objective is to create a balanced time map that allocates time to the tasks you feel are most important, and which will provide the greatest personal value.
   It’s important at this stage to avoid ambiguity. Be specific and concise. Make your ideal time map as full or as loose as you prefer. As usual, there are no rigid guidelines in this. You’re free to do whatever you prefer.
   Once you’ve come up with a time map that accurately reflects your big-picture goals and your personal preferences, try it for a week or two. Then come back and make adjustments. Look for opportunities to multitask or layer two activities simultaneously. That’s a smart approach to managing your time.
   Anticipate that you won’t get this right the first time you attempt it, so be patient. Keep on refining your time map until you arrive at something that makes sense for your specific situation. And don’t forget to schedule the most important activities and tasks at times when your personal energy level is highest.
   Once you develop some expertise in time mapping, you can start to add polish and enhancements. Gradually, you’ll begin to differentiate between “must do” and “nice to do” activities. Over successive generations of time maps, you can gradually work at expanding the amount of time allocated to the “must do” type activities and tasks.

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Selecting a Daily Planner That Works For You

A good daily planner:
- Is an extension of your personality.
- Fits your own preferences.
- Can be customized however you want.
- Becomes the day-to-day centerpiece of your time management system.

There are four types of planners available:
1. Wall or desk calendars.
2. Paper based planners.
3. Computer programs that run on a PC.

Again, there are no hard and fast rules about which type of planner you should use, except it should be the type you feel most comfortable using. There is, however, one important point – you must have just one planner, whatever type you choose. If you try and use more than one planner, everything will get very confused very quickly.

Paper-based planners:
- Don’t require that you learn a software package.
- Allow you to use writing – which is natural and easy.
- Are rugged and don’t require batteries.
- Can be flipped backwards and forwards easily for an overview or comparison.
- Can be stored for future reference easily and permanently.
- Can’t do searches on a keyword or phrase very easily.
- Can be bulky.
- Can’t easily be backed up for security purposes.
- Can’t be accessed by other people (like a secretary) very easily or productively.

Digital planners:
- Can perform keyword searches easily.
- Allow data to be grouped and rearranged infinitely.
- Can be backed up easily and reliably.
- Can be used on a network if desired so other people (like a secretary) can access and update it.
- Only allow one screen at a time to be viewed – making it difficult to see the larger picture at times.
- Can have only restricted access to information which has been archived.
- Are not as quick as a pen and paper.
- Are difficult to use for people who have a personal preference for visual and tactile things.

In other words, there are advantages and disadvantages to both types of planners. There will also be other external demands to be taken into account in the selection of the best planner system. And even after you make the decision on which type of planner to go with, there will also be a range of options to select from – day-at-a-glance, week-at-a-glance or month-at-a-glance, for example.

Again, the key is to find a system that best suits your needs and preferences, and focus on making that work. Once you decide on a planner format you like, invest some time in learning how the planner works. Learn all the shortcuts and power user tips that most planners will provide.

Also, try customizing your planner. Use the planner in ways that are different from the way others have used it in the past – in other words, be a little creative and imaginative.

To get the most from your planner:
- Make certain you use it for every project, for every phone call, for every appointment, for every person’s contact details and for every list you put together. Don’t make any exceptions – otherwise, your planner will get out of date and of little use.
- If you’re using a paper planner, stick Post-It notes onto pages when tasks are to be completed. That way, you can throw away the Post-It note at the completion of the task – or pull off the note and stick it on a future day’s page.
- Use your planner as a paper management tool. File everything you need to keep and make a note in your planner about what you need to do and when. With a good planner and a few files, you should be able to completely clear your desk.

Key Thoughts

“The final thing to remember in your quest to find a planner that works for you is that none of them is absolutely perfect. You can find one that you love, adore and come to depend on, but I have never met anyone whose planner didn’t have a couple of irritating quirks. Pick a planner you really like, customize it to your heart’s content and then learn to live with its foibles. It will be a supportive, dependable friend for years to come, helping you achieve your goals and live your life to the fullest.”

– Julie Morgenstern

“For paper planners, the brand is largely a matter of aesthetics. Go to a well-stocked office-supply store and actually handle the organizers you’re considering. Choose one with a presentation of time that makes sense to you and fits the way you work. For computer planners, consider whether the user interface presents time in such a way that you can easily work with it.”

– Julie Morgenstern

“We all have so much we want to do, and it’s hard to keep track of time. Achieving balance means dividing your time into the right proportions for you. To make sure you leave enough time for the activities that support your personal big-picture goals, you will need to have a Time Map, that is, a schedule template that helps you achieve your ideal balance. The Time Map is simply a visual diagram of your daily, weekly and monthly schedule.”

– Julie Morgenstern

“Time management is not a stagnant process. It is a constant interaction between you, your goals and the constantly changing rhythms and tempos of life. Life is full of surprises, and the ride can be fun, if you have a plan and a way to react and adapt.”

– Julie Morgenstern

“When you implement the techniques of time management from the inside out, at first it will feel like work. At some point, though, you will notice your time is under control and you are working towards goals that are meaningful to you – and achieving them. You will pick up momentum, and begin to feel full of confidence and in love with your life. This is the true meaning of success, and you should celebrate it.”

– Julie Morgenstern

“Being organized, whether with your space or time, is all about being ready.”

– Julie Morgenstern
Main Idea
The final step involves a practical way to put your plans into action while still maintaining control and dealing with the day-to-day realities along the way.

This step uses the S-P-A-C-E formula:
- S – Sort potential tasks by category
- P – Purge or eliminate whichever tasks add no value
- A – Assign a home to every task you decide to schedule
- C – Containerize tasks and keep them within the time allotted
- E – Equalize your schedule – refine, maintain and adapt it

Supporting Ideas
On a daily basis, everyone faces an overwhelming number of choices of potential things to do. In addition to planned tasks and scheduled activities, distractions can come in the form of:
- Unexpected visitors who drop by.
- Material received on a daily basis by mail or e-mail.
- Telephone calls.
- Web sites.
- Meetings with other people.
- Books and magazines.
- Sudden changes of thought.
- An impulse to procrastinate.
- The need to stretch, get some exercise or eat.

Therefore, the main challenge of the attack step isn’t to come up with more choices of things to do, but to superimpose your ideal time map on your actual life. In practical terms, that means deciding which tasks to focus on, which tasks to leave aside and how to go about generating some solid achievements aligned with the general direction of your big-picture goals.

You should always keep a copy of your time map close at hand. In fact, ideally, you want it to be visible at all times as a guide. That way, your time map will be a visible reminder of your schedule, your priorities and the ideal balance you’d like to realize. You may find it useful to post your time map on the wall near where you work, or carry it as an index card in your wallet or purse. Find a format for your time map that fits in with the way you work, and use that.

Also, keep in mind that while the attack step uses the S-P-A-C-E formula, in practice you can run through the entire formula very quickly. As you become increasingly familiar with this formula, using it will become almost instantaneous.

“"The most liberating aspect of time management from the inside out is that it is a way of creating a life that nurtures you and makes you feel good. You are the master of your own life, and while you can’t control all the events around you, you can control your reactions to those events. Instead of dwelling on what you haven’t achieved, give yourself credit for what you have been able to do.”

– Julie Morgenstern

For each task on your To-Do list, ask yourself:
1. **Does this fit in with one of my chosen activities?**
   If the task is aligned with an activity, then it is leading to one of your big-picture goals and it should be done. If it’s not aligned with one of your chosen activities, it should be declined quickly and decisively. (You’ll be amazed at how many distractions you suddenly give yourself permission to turn down just by stopping and asking yourself about the value of each task that presents itself).

2. **How long will this take me to do?**
   Most people fail to do this. They also avoid keeping close track of how long things actually take, and then wonder why they aren’t achieving as much as they had expected. This is particularly true when someone else makes a request of you. If you can set some sort of boundary for how long you can spend with them on their request right at the outset, you stand a better chance of getting back on track.

To improve your ability to estimate time:
   - Keep a detailed log for a week or so. Write down how long your tasks actually take, and use those as starting points for future estimates.
   - Track your estimates. Write down the time you estimated something would take beforehand, and then how long it took in reality. Compare your estimates. Do you consistently underestimate by half the time it will take? If so, simply double each estimate you make in the future.
   - Try blocking off a specific period of time (say 30 minutes) and see how far you get on your task in that time. Use that as a rule-of-thumb for projecting what the entire task will require.
   - Talk to someone else who’s done something similar. Ask them how long you should allow.
   - Make a generous allowance for anticipated time wasters that invariably crop up – like travel time, setup time, time to reflect on the work, cleanup time, breaks, etc.

Most people are surprised to learn how long things take in reality. Often, when people start tracking this, they discover part of the reason they’ve been feeling frustrated has been that they’ve been trying to schedule too many tasks into too little a time period. If this happens to you, it should be liberating and invigorating – and a definite invitation to develop your ability to create smart shortcuts, delegate more and master the art of saying no more frequently. In short, you’ll be motivated to become a better time manager.

By the end of the sort phase, you’ll have the assurance every task on your To-Do list fits in with your selected activities and is aligned with your big-picture goals. You’ll also know where each activity should fit on your time map, and how long each task will realistically take.

Now, the next challenge is to cut down on all you have to do by eliminating those tasks which are of only marginal value in favor of the true high-value tasks.

“"You might think that stopping to calculate how long tasks take is going overboard, but the truth is, this is one of the secrets of the best time managers.”

– Julie Morgenstern
For every task on your list, ask yourself:

1. **What will be the consequences if I delete this task altogether?**
   Everyone is familiar with the demands of juggling several roles simultaneously. That means sometimes, tasks which are unimportant get onto your list. The best thing to do with these types of tasks is simply to cross them off your list. If the flow-on effects of avoiding a task altogether are nil or marginal, don’t bother doing it. Simply delete that task and make room for something important.

2. **Is there some way I can streamline this task?**
   This is particularly good for routine and repetitive tasks. By investing a few hours in streamlining and developing shortcuts today, you can save significant amounts of time in the future.
   How can you streamline tasks?
   - Find steps that can be eliminated.
   - Create checklists for repetitive tasks.
   - Develop simple routines.
   - Prepare a workspace with everything close at hand.
   - Set up automatic payments.
   - Create templates and guides.
   - Hire someone else to do tasks for you.
   - Simplify your filing system.

3. **Can I realistically delegate this task to someone else?**
   The more you can delegate, the better. Being able to delegate effectively is a key time management skill. Anything that is non-creative, repetitive, carried out on a regular basis or better done by someone else is an ideal candidate for delegating.
   You can delegate a task to an expert, to an equal or to someone who is just starting out and who would benefit from the experience. Good delegation occurs at the high end (when you bring in an expert with specialist skills) and at the low end (when you bring in a low-cost temp to free up the time of skilled people).
   To delegate successfully:
   - **Present the job accurately.**
     Make certain the person to whom you’re delegating understands exactly what the overall objective is. You may specify they can use their own initiative so long as that objective is realized.
   - **Be available while the job is underway.**
     That way, if guidance is required along the way, you can keep them on track. This can be in the form of regularly scheduled updates or casual meetings whenever required.
   - **Review and evaluate the result.**
     Once the task is completed, review how the result matches your original objective. Don’t worry about the marginal issues, or areas in which you would have done things differently personally. Focus instead on how much time and effort you’ve just saved.

Ideally, by the time you complete the purge phase, you will have eliminated all the marginal value tasks. Your time will then be spent in areas where you add the most value.

For each task left on your To-Do list, ask yourself:

1. **When am I going to do this task?**
   Take out your planner and your time map and make a decision what time block will be assigned to which task. At first this will feel a little unnatural, and you may feel that everything should be done before you forget about it. Gradually, however, as you gain confidence in your ability to keep track of an expanding number of tasks, you’ll get better and better at this part of time management.
   Again, how you actually approach this will be a matter of personal preference. Some people plan their time right down to 15-minute increments, while others block out a period of time within which a number of similar tasks are completed. Experiment a little and find what feels most effective for you.
   If you do like to group tasks together, try grouping them:
   - By urgency – so that you’ll get the highest priority tasks completed first and the less important tasks completed only if there’s enough time available. That builds a tremendous sense of accomplishment.
   - By the duration of the task – with those that can be accomplished quickly first and the longer tasks later. That increases the sense of getting through a long list.
   - By energy or interest level – doing the difficult things while you feel best and the routine things later. That allows you to get the unpleasant tasks out of the way so you can have some fun.
   - By geography – so you can layer as many tasks together as efficiently as possible.

If you’re not sure of the best way to group your own tasks, experiment a little. You may come across some ideas that work exceptionally well for you.

2. **Where am I going to do this task?**
   As well as assigning a time to each task, assign a space for each. You’ll be pleasantly surprised how much more you’ll accomplish simply by having every item in its place.
   By the time you complete the assign phase, you’ve put loads of thought into what you want to accomplish and when. You’re now starting to get a strong framework built around which your personal and professional achievements can be built. Now you just need a way to manage any interruptions and stick to your schedule.

   “While your time map can be flexible, I strongly encourage you to think of the time you’ve blocked out for your to-dos as if they were appointments with important business clients. That means not rushing to cancel them when something else comes up. Tell people, ‘Sorry, I have an appointment’. They don’t have to know it’s an appointment with yourself to indulge in your hobby for two hours. Similarly, at work, you need to communicate clearly when you are unavailable due to work scheduled. If you like, you can tell people that two to three is your time to catch up on paperwork, but sometimes the less said the better – you shouldn’t have to defend the way you have structured your time.”
   — Julie Morgenstern

   “Doing things on your time, when you are ready, almost always saves time, because you are prepared and can get right to what’s important.”
   — Julie Morgenstern
To “containerize” means to keep tasks within the time allotted to each. Once you master this skill, you’ll soon find yourself getting through your To-Do list in record time – generating a large daily dose of personal satisfaction.

There are key three things you do to containerize time:

1. **Minimize interruptions and their impact.**
   If you respond immediately to interruptions, you end up neglecting your own plans and being pulled in many different directions. Therefore, before doing anything, at least postpone your response while you think through your options.

   To minimize interruptions:
   - Organize your workspace in a way which avoids eye contact with potential interruptions.
   - Establish visiting hours for people you work with.
   - Set aside a regular time to handle phone calls, e-mails and voice mails.
   - Develop joint progress reports that are circulated to everyone involved in a project.
   - Keep your planner close at hand so you can jot down ideas as they occur to you.
   - Plan ahead for breaks – preparing snacks or having something completely different you can do for 10-minutes to clear your mind.

2. **Conquer procrastination.**
   Hopefully, by the time you’ve developed your big-picture goals, 12-month activities and time maps, your level of personal motivation will be so high procrastination won’t be an issue. If it is, try and think through the reason why. For example:
   - Are you simply delaying making a decision?
   - Are you genuinely unprepared?
   - Do you feel a little overwhelmed by the goals you’ve set?
   - Do you loath the tasks you need to do?
   - Is this just a bad time for you?
   - Do you work better with pressure, or without it?

   Often, when you take the time to accurately identify the reason for your procrastination, the solution will become equally obvious.

3. **Overcome perfectionism.**
   The best way to overcome the need to do everything perfectly is to schedule another task right after it. That way, you create a deadline, forcing you to make quicker decisions and limiting any tendency to endlessly refine things.

   As you become better and better at time mapping, you’ll get to know just how much time something reasonably should take in fine detail.

   By the time you master the art of containerizing tasks, you’re starting to get more accomplished than ever before.

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Time management is a dynamic rather than a static process. In other words, it will evolve over time as your personal preferences and priorities change. To “equalize” means to monitor your situation and make ongoing adjustments and enhancements.

To keep your time management system aligned with your professional and personal life:

1. **Monitor how you’re doing each day.**
   Review your planner at least twice each day – normally at the beginning and the end of each day. Update your time map, reprioritize your To-Do list and check your progress. Be brutally honest with yourself and improve your ability to forecast how long specific tasks are likely to take.

2. **Have a tune-up every two months.**
   Goals, priorities and interests change all the time. Your time map needs to change to reflect that. The best way to achieve that is to put aside some time every couple of months to rethink all your big-picture goals, 12-month activities and time map. Similarly, if you’ve just gone through a major life or career change, take the time to realign your time management system with the new realities. Remember, it’s your personal system, so you don’t need anyone else’s permission to change it to your heart’s content.

3. **Adjust to the times of crisis that will arise.**
   If you’re faced with a crisis, take a moment to think through how best to respond. Run through the S-P-A-C-E formula, and start putting some structure into all the new tasks that will suddenly confront you. Decide which routine tasks will be postponed while you deal with the crisis, and focus on the immediate challenges at hand. Without exception, you’ll be better prepared to respond to a crisis if you’ve developed the discipline of a good time management system than you would be in other circumstances.

4. **Forgive yourself when you fail.**
   If you’re setting yourself some challenging 12-month activities, you’re not going to accomplish everything you had hoped for. But that’s okay – it’s just part of life. Don’t dwell on what you have not achieved. Give yourself credit for everything you did do, and move onwards from there. Good time management is a process, not a destination.

5. **Celebrate your successes.**
   Don’t gloss over the chance to celebrate when you pull off something spectacular. Relish the feeling. Do something notable with the people you most like to be with. Have some fun. Not only will that bolster your self-esteem but it will also generate a huge amount of motivation.

   “Time management from the inside out is an extraordinary way of making the most of the life you have been given, and enjoying every step along the way. So don’t hold back on the sidelines any longer. Get out on the dance floor and dance! Give yourself permission to be who you are and go after your dreams. A wonderful, gratifying life awaits you.”
   — Julie Morgenstern