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**MANAGE YOUR TIME, MANAGE YOUR STRESS:
TIME MANAGEMENT SKILLS FOR LAWYERS**

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Table of Contents

I.	INTRODUCTION	1
II.	GETTING AND STAYING ORGANIZED.....	1
	A. Managing the Deluge: Keeping Up with E-mail, Voicemail, Paper, and Other Information	1
	1. Specific Suggestions Regarding Email.....	2
	2. Specific Suggestions Regarding Voicemail and Telephone Use.....	3
	3. Specific Suggestions Regarding Hard-Copy Documents and Other Paper	4
	B. Creating and Using a Comprehensive Task Management System to Stay In Control	4
III.	TIME MANAGEMENT THROUGHOUT THE DAY.....	9
	A. Keeping Accurate Time Records: Tips, Tricks, and Developing the Habit of Contemporaneous Timekeeping	9
	B. Dealing with Interruptions: How to Juggle Competing Demands for Your Attention ...	9
	1. External Interruptions.....	9
	a. Minimizing the Number of Interruptions	10
	b. Minimizing the Length of Interruptions	10
	c. Minimizing Transition Time to Return to the Work at Hand	10
	2. Internal Interruptions.....	10
	C. How to Multitask Effectively.....	11
	1. Different Types of Multitasking	11
	a. Taskswitching	11
	b. Continuous Partial Attention	11
	c. Background tasking	12
	2. Implications and Effects of Multitasking.....	12
	3. When and How to Multitask.....	14
	4. When and How Not to Multitask	14
	a. Create a Mental Environment Conducive to Concentration.....	14

b.	Create an Internal Physical Environment Conducive to Concentration	15
c.	Create an External Physical Environment Conducive to Concentration	15
d.	Create a Technological Environment Conducive to Concentration ...	15
e.	Plan to Concentrate	16
f.	Improve Your Ability to Maintain Your Concentration	16
g.	Miscellaneous Techniques for Minimizing Multitasking and Increasing Concentration	16
D.	Ideas for Keeping Your Life in Balance	17
E.	Minimizing Procrastination (or, How to Get Things Done Despite Yourself)	18
1.	The Key Technique for Overcoming Chronic Procrastination: Adjusting Your Mindset.....	18
2.	Thirty-One Ways to Attack Procrastination.....	18
IV.	CONCLUSION AND CHALLENGES.....	23

MANAGE YOUR TIME, MANAGE YOUR STRESS: TIME MANAGEMENT SKILLS FOR LAWYERS

by

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I. INTRODUCTION

The goals of time management are:

- Efficiency -- producing output with a minimum of waste, expense, and unnecessary effort; doing things right.
- Effectiveness -- producing the desired effect; doing the right things.
- The ability to maintain effectiveness and efficiency over the long run,

which requires:

- a. satisfaction in your work, and
- b. life balance.

Time management is really self-management with respect to time. Therefore, a key component of time management is the ability to change your attitude and choices about organization and efficiency. There are only two underlying reasons why you use your time in a certain manner: either (1) you have made a conscious choice to use your time to engage in a particular activity in order to achieve a particular outcome, or (2) you have not made a conscious choice about your use of time, and are making your time use decisions by default or "going with the flow," and doing whatever occurs to you at any given moment. The more often you make a conscious choice to engage in activities that you believe will move you efficiently towards your desired outcome, the more efficient and effective you are likely to be.

II. GETTING AND STAYING ORGANIZED

A. Managing the Deluge: Keeping Up with Email, Voicemail, Paper, and Other Information

When dealing with the daily flow of information (whether via paper, email, voicemail, or any other method), your goal should be to handle each item as few times as possible. If it's possible to fully process an item the first time you deal with it, do so. A reasonable principle is this: if you can complete the task associated with the item within two minutes or less, do the task the first time you handle the item (no matter how minor or non-urgent the task). If the task

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would take more than two minutes, add the task to the appropriate list in your to-do system. Then file the item in the appropriate electronic or physical location (case file, working file, "to-read" file, etc.). Modify the "two-minute" duration depending on how busy you are during any given day (i.e., on slower days, complete tasks that take, say, up to five minutes, the first time you handle the item).

1. Specific Suggestions Regarding Email

- Strive to fully process all newly-arrived email: open every non-spam email, and quickly skim it and decide whether to (a) delete it, (b) respond immediately; (c) respond later; or (d) file it (with no further action required).
- Use the two-minute principle for processing email: if you can complete the associated task within two minutes or less, go ahead and respond to the email the first time you open it. If you can't (or don't) complete the associated task, use one of the following techniques to keep track of emails requiring a response.
- To keep track of emails requiring a response, but to which you can't (or don't) respond immediately, use one of the following approaches so that you can locate pending emails quickly when you have time to deal with them. Whichever variation you use, consider these emails to be part of your shorter-term to-do list.
- Keep pending emails open but minimized at the bottom of your screen.
 - a. Or attach a flag to pending emails in your inbox.
 - b. Or save only pending emails in your inbox, making sure to move all other emails from your inbox to the appropriate folder (or to delete them).
 - c. Or save pending emails in an electronic email folder entitled "Action."
- If you use Microsoft Outlook: to consolidate your virtual to-do list consisting of emails awaiting your response (wherever you may keep them) into a real to-do list, consider taking a few seconds to add a task to your Outlook Task list by dragging the email to the Task button in your Outlook Navigation Pane.
 - a. Dragging the email while holding the left-click button creates a new Task with the "re" line of the task in the Subject line of the Task, and copies the text of the entire email into the notes field for the Task. (Take a few moments to rewrite the description of the task if the email's "re" line doesn't clearly reflect your responsive task.)
 - b. Dragging the email while holding the right-click button give you the option of creating a new Task with the "re" line of the email copied into in the subject line of the Task, with the email itself inserted as an attachment to the Task. This option is handy when you want to be able to reply to that specific email again, and/or when the email has an attachment itself. (Again, take a few moments to rewrite the description of the task if the email's "re" line doesn't clearly reflect your responsive task.)
 - c. Note that whether you left-click or right-click, dragging an email to the Task but-

ton does not automatically delete the email.²

- Include in your shorter-term to-do list all follow-up tasks generated by emails you send.
- Save important emails in the document management system.
- Use Outlook rules to filter routine and administrative emails directly into specific email folders. Some prefer this approach; others prefer to have all emails flow through their regular inbox so that they're aware of them.

2. Specific Suggestions Regarding Voicemail and Telephone Use

- Minimize telephone tag by including in your messages the best times to reach you.
- Make telephone appointments.
- Try calling early in the morning, at lunch time, or towards the end of the day.
- Before initiating a call, write out a phone agenda.
- Return all your non-urgent, non-important calls at the same time. Try 11:30 to 12:00, and/or 4:00 to 4:30 to minimize potentially lengthy calls.
- Keep a spiral notebook by the phone and write information and notes in it rather than on scraps of paper. (This can be very helpful at home too.)
- Leave reminders for yourself on your home answering system.³ For reminders for early-morning meetings, follow up with a sticky note on the bathroom mirror.
- Invest the time to become proficient with the voicemail system. Keep your outgoing message up-to-date, and be sure to include brief directions to allow callers various options, such as bypassing your outgoing message and contacting the operator.
- When you're away from the office for a long period of time, be sure your outgoing message includes your estimated time of return; whether or not you will be checking your messages; and the name and extension of someone who may be of assistance in your absence.
- Avoid extraneous information, such as "I'm either on another line or not at my desk right now," in your outgoing greeting.
- When leaving voicemail messages, include at least the following:
 - your name, telephone number, and day and time of the call;
 - your reason for calling (as confidentiality permits);
 - the times when a return call is most likely to reach you;

² However, right-clicking gives you the option of choosing to move the email to Tasks (instead of simply copying it to Tasks) which does delete the email. (But you can still restore the email by dragging it from the "Deleted Items" file back to your "Inbox" file.)

³ Or invest in a smartphone with software (such as Apple's Siri) that can give you location-specific reminders.

- a fairly slow repetition of your telephone number.

3. Specific Suggestions Regarding Hard-Copy Documents and Other Paper

- Aim to discard (or recycle) unnecessary paper immediately. Don't keep paper to remind you to do a task; insert the task in the appropriate list in your to do system instead.
- Use a physical tickler file to hold paper you want to use again at some future date. Use pre-labeled accordion folders (or have your assistant create folders) labeled January through December and 1 through 31. Write on the item the date you want it to come to your attention. If the "return date" is later in the current month, file it in the appropriate numbered file (since the numbered files are for the days in the current month). If the return date is from next month to twelve months from now, file it in the appropriate monthly file. (In October 2012, for example, the folders for November and December are for those months in 2012, and the folders for January through September are for 2013.) At the beginning of each month, distribute items from that month's folder into the appropriate numbered folders. Every day, remove the items from the numbered folder for that day, and return them to your in-box for processing.
- To manage professional reading, quickly skim all items of professional reading as part of your usual paper processing, in order to decide whether the item is worth reading in depth. Create and maintain a "to read" file to corral hard copies (including printouts) of professional reading that you've decided are worth reading in depth. Grab your "to read" file whenever you think you might have a few minutes of enforced downtime (while waiting for a meeting to start; when commuting; waiting at out-of-office appointments).
- Create and maintain simple subject-matter files (AKA reference files or precedent files) to hold items that don't "fit" into working files for a specific project. Keep these file names simple. When naming files, think of what word or phrase is most likely to occur to you first when you think of the topic. Have your assistant maintain an index of your reference files, updated regularly, and keep a copy of this index close at hand for your own reference.

B. Creating and Using a Comprehensive Task Management System to Stay In Control

A comprehensive, reliable, relatively simple to-do system should be at the core of every lawyer's and legal professional's organizational routine. Having such a system – and using it consistently – will help you control your workload, track deadlines, manage delegated tasks, juggle multiple projects, and allocate adequate time to non-deadline-driven tasks.

A simple approach to organizing your to-do system is to use just two lists: one for tasks you want to work on in the shorter-term, and another for tasks you want to work on (or consider working on) in the longer-term. Here are some specific suggestions for making this approach work for you:

- Define "shorter-term" and "longer-term" in any way that makes sense for you. (One reasonable approach would be to define "shorter-term" as "within the next week or so" and "longer-term" as anything beyond that.)
- Break larger projects down into chunks that you estimate will take no longer than a couple of hours to complete.

- After referring to your calendar (to see how much uncommitted time you have available that day), select no more than a handful of items from your shorter-term list to constitute your daily task list. Prioritize the items on this list, and use this as your (flexible) road-map for the day.
- Review your longer-term task list regularly (at least weekly), and move items to the shorter-term list when appropriate.
- Experiment to find the format(s) that works best for you: handwritten; word-processed; or using the Outlook Task function (or one of the many task-tracking software programs available). (But remember that the format in which you keep your lists is less important than keeping the lists up-to-date and referring to them regularly.)
- To keep track of short-term tasks, and to ensure that nothing "falls through the cracks," take a few minutes every day (or at least whenever you feel that things are getting out of control) to jot down a quick to-do list in some form:
 - a Use a simple, hand-written to-do list. Write "Case X" then jot down the things you need to do (call someone; draft this; review that), leave some blank lines for adding in tasks later, then repeat the same process for "Project Y" and all of your other ongoing cases and projects. Add tasks as you think of them; cross them off when done; rewrite the list when it gets annoyingly messy.
 - b. Or use a simple, word-processed to-do list. Instead of hand-writing your list, use a word-processing program such as Word. Some professionals keep their daily list in the text field in an undated event (titled "To Do") in their Outlook calendar for each day; this list becomes mobile if you sync your Outlook with a handheld device.⁴
 - c. Or use a simple to-do list in your Outlook/handheld Task function if you are -- or want to become -- familiar with that function. Consider using one of the date fields, such as the "due date" field, as the date you want the task to appear on your daily to-do list (i.e., the date you want to do the task or to consider doing the task). Then create a view for all tasks due on or before "today"⁵ to view today's to-do list.
- If you like the immediacy, tangibility, and portability of a handwritten to-do list, you can always print out your Outlook/handheld Task list.
- Whatever format you use for your short-term to-do list, include personal items in your to-do list as well (e.g., file taxes, send birthday card).

⁴ For simplicity's sake, I use the term "handheld" to refer to all BlackBerries, smartphones, iPads, and other mobile devices which may be synced with Outlook.

⁵ Starting in the Outlook Task toolbar, select View / Arrange by / Current View / Define Views / New / then name the new view whatever you want, say "Tasks for Today" / OK / Filter / Advanced / Field / Frequently-used Fields / Due Date / then under "Condition" select "on or before" and under "Value" type "today" / Add to List / OK / OK (again) / Apply View. If you've been using Outlook tasks, you'll see that this view includes completed tasks. To remove them from the view: starting in the Outlook Task toolbar, select View / Current View / Customize Current View / Filter / Advanced / Field / Frequently-used Fields / % Complete / then under "Condition" select "is less than" and under "Value" type "100" / Add to List / OK / OK. (And if you still want to view your completed (but not yet deleted) Tasks, they're still there under the pre-installed view entitled "Completed Tasks".) These instructions will work verbatim in Outlook 2003; other versions may require slightly different steps.

- Try to begin each task description with a verb (call, review, email, draft, analyze, etc.) In other words, decide on your next action in connection with the project.
- When writing a task description, be certain to decide on your very next action. Keep asking yourself, "Is there anything I need to do first?" Often, one balks at starting a task because there's really another task that must be done first.
- Keep track of actual deadlines by including the deadline in the description of the task on your short-term to-do list, including whether it's a hard deadline, an internal deadline, a promise to a colleague, etc. (Include deadlines on your Calendar as well.)
- When something occurs to you (or if you receive a task) when you're away from your desk, immediately:
 - a. Capture the idea by inserting it as an event in your handheld calendar; the Outlook event will then serve as a reminder to insert the item on your primary to-do list when you return to your desk.
 - b. Or capture the idea by sending an email to yourself.
 - c. Or capture the idea by leaving a voicemail for yourself.
 - d. Or capture the idea by inserting it directly in your handheld Task list.
 - e. Or capture the idea by writing it down, ideally in one definite place such as a notebook, note pad, 3x5 card, then as soon as you return to your desk, insert the task in your to do list.
- Insert ALL appointments and deadlines in your Outlook/handheld Calendar, and attach reminders with appropriate lead times for all important appointments and deadlines.
- It can be helpful to keep all notes, reminders, and to-do lists in a notebook; essentially a running, chronological day-to-day log of your work. Carry this notebook with you whenever you are away from your desk.⁶ Highlight follow-up tasks that are buried within meeting notes; review your notes frequently; cross out or check off completed tasks; insert events in your Outlook/handheld Calendar; insert tasks in your handwritten list or Outlook/handheld Task list.
- It can be helpful to use one particular notebook for hand writing notes when you're on the phone, rather than trying to take notes on your computer, or taking the time to grab the legal pad you're using for that case, or starting a new legal pad with each call. If any of your notes require follow-up action on your part, either do the task immediately (and indicate this in your notebook in some consistent manner), or insert the task in your short-term or long-term to-do list system (and indicate this in your notebook in some consistent manner as well).
- To indicate that a follow-up task is embedded in handwritten notes, use the "box" technique: while you're taking the notes, draw an empty box in the margin next to the part of the notes that incorporate the follow-up task. At the end of the meeting or conference call, instead of having to read through all of your notes, just look for the empty boxes.

⁶ You can purchase black leather covers for these notebooks; see, e.g., www.levenger.com.

Then:

- a. Put a check mark in the box when you complete the task, or
 - b. Put a horizontal arrow in the box when you move the task to your to do list.
- Use the Outlook/handheld Task (or Calendar) function for follow-up self-reminders. If you're expecting to hear back from someone, or to receive a document by a certain date, insert a task (or event) on the follow-up date to "Contact If Haven't Heard" (CIHH) or "Contact If Haven't Received" (CIHR).
 - Use consistent abbreviations so you can use the search function to locate pending reminders in Outlook or your handheld.
 - Use the Outlook/handheld Task function to remind yourself to follow-up with delegates.
 - a. Begin the description of the task with the name of the case or project so that you can sort your tasks by case or project.
 - b. Use consistent terms that allow you to use the "Look for" function (in Outlook) or the search function (on your handheld) to view certain categories of tasks such as "Delegated", or Delegated - John Smith.
 - c. Create one Outlook/handheld Task to follow up with a particular delegatee, and then each time you follow up with him or her, simply update the Task's due date to the next time you want to remind yourself to follow up.
 - d. Use the Task's text box to list things you want to remember to mention to the delegatee at your next follow-up session.
 - Use an asterisk or ellipses at the end of the Outlook/handheld Task subject line to indicate that there is text in the text box below, so that when you're viewing your tasks in list view, you can tell whether you need to open the Task box to see any further information.
 - Try to consolidate your shorter-term to do list into one format (handwritten, word-processed, or Outlook/handheld Tasks), so you can easily see everything that needs to be done, which makes it easier to prioritize tasks and juggle multiple projects.
 - Use your shorter-term to-do list as your initial game plan each day, but be ready to change it as events unfold throughout the day.
 - Whatever system you use for short-term tasks, also keep track of longer-term tasks (i.e., tasks you are not going to do -- or to consider doing -- for at least a week or so).
 - a. Either maintain a handwritten longer-term task list, or:
 - b. Maintain a simple, word-processed, to-do list. Instead of hand-writing your list, use a word-processing program such as Word. Some professionals like to keep their daily list in the text field in an undated event (titled "To Do") in their Outlook/handheld calendar for each day, or:
 - c. Use the Outlook/handheld Task function for your longer-term task list. The Outlook/handheld task function is ideal for this purpose. Just remember to check

your Outlook/handheld Task function periodically (weekly is ideal), and it becomes the perfect place to park tasks that you don't need to do (or think about) for weeks or even months

- If you use the Outlook/handheld Task function to keep track of your shorter-term tasks, you can easily differentiate between shorter- and longer-term tasks by simply not assigning a due date to longer-term tasks. This way, your daily to-do list won't be cluttered up with longer-term tasks, but they will still be easily accessible within one of the pre-existing views (such as "By Category") in Outlook.
- Review your longer-term task list every week or so. When items from your longer-term task list are ready to go to your shorter-term task list, either:
 - a. re-write them onto your handwritten list, or
 - b. copy-and-paste them from your longer-term list to your shorter-term list, or
 - c. if you use the Outlook/handheld Task function for both your shorter-term and longer-term tasks, simply add a due date for the Outlook/handheld Task.
- Keep "Review Longer-Term Task List" as a continuing task in your shorter-term task list.
- If you use the Outlook/handheld Task function for your shorter-term tasks, each time you review your longer-term task list, simply re-assign the reminder's due date to the following week.
- Use your longer-term task list as a "data dump" for anything and everything that isn't yet ready for your shorter-term task list. For example, if you already know many of the tasks you'll have to do at some point in connection with a particular case or project, include those tasks in your longer-term task list.
 - a. If you use the Outlook/handheld Task function for your longer-term tasks, insert the name of the project in the subject line of the Outlook/handheld Task, and insert the specific task description in the text box below. (This list is, in effect, your project-specific task list.)
 - b. If you use the Outlook/handheld Task function for both your longer- and shorter-term tasks, when a project's specific task is ready to move to your shorter-term Outlook/handheld Task list, simply copy and paste the text into a newly-created Outlook/handheld Task, and assign it a due date.
- You can also use the Outlook/handheld Task function to keep track of things to "keep in mind" but which do not yet require a definite action on your part. Differentiate "keep-in-minds" from tasks to do by prefacing the "keep-in-mind" with "KIM".
- Have weekly planning sessions with yourself during which you review and update your longer-term to-do list (moving items to your shorter-term list as necessary), your calendar for the next few weeks, and any other resources you use to track items tasks. Investing the time to preview your upcoming tasks will help you get and stay on top of your workload, as well as help you identify possible problems and conflicting demands before they become emergencies.

III. TIME MANAGEMENT THROUGHOUT THE DAY

A. Keeping Accurate Time Records: Tips, Tricks, and Developing the Habit of Contemporaneous Timekeeping

The only way to keep accurate time records is to keep track of your work "as you go." The most efficient way to do this is to develop the habit of using timers that are contained a time-billing system. In addition, it can be useful to become fluent in various other ways to capture your time contemporaneously: (1) adopt or adapt an simple paper time-log that includes room to write down "start" and "end" times each time you switch activities;⁷ (2) write notes or hatch marks a six-minute increment matrix⁸ when working on fewer, longer tasks; and/or (3) include the date and time whenever you take notes. At the end of the day, consult these sources and calculate the time accumulated for each client-matter number (or have your time log copied for your assistant to use to calculate your billable time each day) and flesh out the descriptions of work performed.

It's worth the effort to develop the habit of consistently using whichever method(s) of contemporaneous timekeeping you find most efficient. This habit takes only seconds and will provide you and your firm with crucial and valuable information that will otherwise be lost forever.

Here are some tips to help you develop the habit of contemporaneous timekeeping:

- As your day progresses, make only cursory notes in whatever timekeeping system you use, and flesh out these notes at the end of the day or early the next morning. Develop a system of abbreviations and codes so you can create these notes quickly.
- Keep a digital clock where you can see it easily at all times.
- Start small: aim to keep track of time contemporaneously only for short periods at first, and then lengthen these periods as you get into the habit.
- Expect lapses, and be prepared with a plan for getting back on track.

B. Dealing with Interruptions: How to Juggle Competing Demands for Your Attention

Define interruptions with reference to your most important goals. Some interruptions are a crucial part of your job. Plan your daily schedule in light of expected interruptions. Take personal responsibility for allowing others to interrupt you.

1. External Interruptions

External interruptions usually involve people, in person or by telephone. Being available for others versus being able to concentrate on work-alone projects requires constant balancing. Maintaining good interpersonal working relationships requires time; dealing with poor interpersonal working relationships also requires time.

⁷ A customizable, Word version of such a time-log can be downloaded (free) from <http://www.timemanagementforlawyers.com/articlesdownloads/>

⁸ A customizable, Word version of such a six-minute increment matrix can be downloaded (free) from <http://www.timemanagementforlawyers.com/articlesdownloads/>

When interruptions occur, triage them quickly, and decide whether changed circumstances warrant changing your daily plan. People are important; the issues they raise may not be important. Be gracious with people but decisive with issues.

Here's a three part strategy for coping with external interruptions:

a. Minimizing the Number of Interruptions

- Set a good example. Be considerate of others. Don't interrupt them; set up appointments for non-emergency matters.
- Let the voicemail system screen your calls. Respond immediately to clients, partners, and emergencies, and discipline yourself to wait until you've finished your self-assigned task before responding to everyone else.
- If possible, take your work to an empty office, conference room, or a remote location in the library or cafeteria.
- Arrange your office furniture so that it is difficult for would-be drop-in visitors to catch your eye.
- Keep a log of interruptions for a few days to diagnose the underlying problems. Pertinent data are: who, when, why, how long, and priority (importance/urgency). See if any patterns exist.

b. Minimizing the Length of Interruptions

- Be up-front with drop-in visitors and unexpected callers: "I'm in the middle of a project right now; is this an emergency or can I get back to you at [specific time]?"
- Stand up when drop-in visitor enters: "Walk me to the coffee machine?"
- Keep track of the length of social phone calls you decide to take as a break; have a pre-determined length in mind. Have a stock of phrases to end a conversation gracefully, such as: "I'll let you get back to work now;" "It's been great speaking with you," and "I wish I had more time to talk right now."

c. Minimizing Transition Time to Return to the Work at Hand

- Use sticky notes to indicate stopping points.
- Stop writing in the middle of a sentence.
- Make a note on your "to do" list.

2. Internal Interruptions

Internal interruptions are those we generate ourselves, such as getting distracted, day-dreaming, worrying.

- Minimize physical clutter to prevent distraction. Try keeping your "in" box on a shelf or credenza.
- Minimize mental clutter: keep your running "to do" list at hand. As ideas, to-do's, etc. as

they come to mind, add them to the list, then forget about them and return to the task at hand.

- Allow time to relax mentally at some point during the day.
- Use problem-solving skills to deal with worry in writing. What would you advise a friend who came to you with the same problem? Consider: can you remember what you were worrying about at this time last year? How much of what you were worrying about came to pass?

All of these suggestions will be easier to implement once you have created a long-term to-do list, and are working from a short-term "to-do" list.

C. How to Multitask Effectively

Originally used to describe the ability of a computer to run multiple programs seemingly simultaneously, the term multitasking is now used to describe "the human attempt to do simultaneously as many things as possible, as quickly as possible, preferably marshalling the power of as many technologies as possible."⁹ However, for the most part, multitasking is a myth, because the human brain simply cannot focus on two different tasks simultaneously. According to MIT neuroscientist Earl Miller, "People can't multitask very well, and when people say they can, they're deluding themselves. The brain is very good at deluding itself. Switching from task to task, you think you're actually paying attention to everything around you at the same time. But you're actually not. You're not paying attention to one or two things simultaneously, but switching between them very rapidly."¹⁰

1. Different Types of Multitasking

When we think we are multitasking, we are really doing one or more of the following: task-switching, paying continuous partial attention, or background tasking.

a. Taskswitching

Taskswitching is when we switch rapidly from one similar task to another, such as tasks that involved speaking, reading, or writing. These tasks use the same part of the brain, so they compete with one another for your attention. "Think about writing an email and talking on the phone at the same time. Those things are nearly impossible to do at the same time," says Miller. "You cannot focus on one while doing the other. That's because of what's called interference between the two tasks. They both involve communicating via speech or the written word, and so there's a lot of conflict between the two of them."¹¹

b. Continuous Partial Attention

Continuous partial attention, a term coined by technology executive and writer Linda Stone, refers to a state in which a person's "attention is on a priority or primary task, while, at the same

⁹ Rosen, Christine. "The Myth of Multitasking." *The New Atlantis: A Journal of Technology and Society*. <<http://www.thenewatlantis.com/publications/the-myth-of-multitasking>> accessed on July 22, 2009.

¹⁰ Hamilton, Jon. "Think You're Multitasking? Think Again." *NPR: Research News*. October 2, 2008. <<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=95256794>> accessed July 22, 2009.

¹¹ Id.

time, scanning for other people, activities, or opportunities, and replacing the primary task with something that seems, in this next moment, more important."¹² "Continuous partial attention involves a kind of vigilance that is not characteristic of [simple] multi-tasking. Continuous partial attention is an always on, anywhere, anytime, any place behavior that creates an artificial sense of crisis. We are always in high alert. We are demanding multiple cognitively complex actions from ourselves. We are reaching to keep a top priority in focus, while, at the same time, scanning the periphery to see if we are missing other opportunities. If we are, our very fickle attention shifts focus. What's ringing? Who is it? How many emails? What's on my list? What time is it in Bangalore?"¹³

c. Background tasking

Background tasking occurs when we are doing two tasks, one of which is so habitual for us that we usually do not pay 100% attention to it, and nonetheless accomplish it satisfactorily. For many of us, a classic example of such a task is driving a car to a familiar destination. If you've ever arrived at work or at home along your standard commuting route and found it difficult to recall the details of that particular drive, you've experienced this phenomenon.¹⁴ During such drives, the driver can usually listen to the radio or a CD, or converse with others in the car, and still follow the usual route. In contrast, "[c]onsider how you behave in your car when you get lost. As you focus and try to get your bearings, one of the first things you do is turn down the radio. Why? Because you want to pay single-minded attention to the task of finding your way. The second 'task' of listening to the radio detracts from the attention you can pay to the task of finding your way."¹⁵

2. Implications and Effects of Multitasking

One of the major drawbacks of multitasking -- particularly in its taskswitching and continuous partial attention forms -- is inefficiency. Numerous studies have shown that it takes longer to perform a task when it is performed in spurts interrupted by other activities, than when the task is performed with uninterrupted focus.¹⁶ This is due to the switching costs which "result when people

¹² Stone, Linda. "Beyond Simple Multitasking: Continuous Partial Attention." Blog entry, Nov. 30, 2009. <<http://lindastone.net/2009/11/30/beyond-simple-multi-tasking-continuous-partial-attention/>> accessed November 15, 2010.

¹³ Id.

¹⁴ A person can become so habituated to a specific routine that the mental "auto-pilot" takes over to such an extent that it is possible to lose track of other important commitments. The potential power of this phenomenon cannot be overstated. See Weingarten, Gene. "Fatal Distraction: Forgetting a Child in the Backseat of a Car is a Horrifying Mistake. Is It A Crime?" The Washington Post Magazine (feature story), March 8, 2009. <<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/02/27/AR2009022701549.html>> accessed November 15, 2010.

¹⁵ Edward M. Hallowell, M.D., CrazyBusy: Overstretched, Overbooked, and About to Snap! Strategies for Coping in a World Gone ADD (New York: Ballantine Books, 2006), p. 17.

¹⁶ See, e.g., Kebinger, James. "Current Research in Workplace Interruption Management." (research paper) April 19, 2005. <<http://monkeyatlarge.com/blog/wp-content/interruptionsresearchsurveypaper.pdf>> accessed on July 22, 2009 ("The negative effect of an interruption on productivity is much more than the time spent handling the interruption Even a one minute interruption can easily cost a knowledge worker 10 to 15 minutes of lost productivity due to the time needed to reestablish mental context and reenter the flow state. We take a major productivity hits with each interruption. Quantitative studies of interruption effects note the negative effects on interruption." One "study involving a simple game in which figures jumping from a window had to be caught showed an average 36% decrease in effectiveness between the no-interruption and interrupted trials. The correct handling of the interrupting task decreased 70 % in trials between trials without and with the game running." Another study "found that subjects searching a list of book titles for a particular title or subject were reliably slower in trials with interruptive notifications. The trial also showed that test participants were significantly more likely to request a reminder of the task to be performed in trials with interruptions.")

must go back and review what they've done before they can resume work on a task. The more complicated the task, the longer it will take for you to become fully engaged, and the greater the cost."¹⁷

Multitasking is not only inefficient, it is an invitation to error. Moving back and forth from one task to another, we may inaccurately recall information about the interrupted task, or miss new information that has appeared since we last focused on the task. In addition, the mental act of task-switching is itself demanding, and is a further drain on our limited resources of mental energy. In fact, "[m]ultitasking messes with the brain in several ways. At the most basic level, the mental balancing acts that it requires—the constant switching and pivoting—energize regions of the brain that specialize in visual processing and physical coordination and simultaneously appear to shortchange some of the higher areas related to memory and learning. We concentrate on the act of concentration at the expense of whatever it is that we're supposed to be concentrating on."¹⁸

Multitasking is not only mentally draining, it can be stressful, and therefore harmful in both the short- and long-run. Research has shown that multitasking "contributes to the release of stress hormones and adrenaline, which can cause long-term health problems if not controlled, and contributes to the loss of short-term memory."¹⁹ Even more alarming, "[c]ertain studies find that multitasking boosts the level of stress-related hormones such as cortisol and adrenaline and wears down our systems through biochemical friction, prematurely aging us. In the short term, the confusion, fatigue, and chaos merely hamper our ability to focus and analyze, but in the long term, they may cause it to atrophy."²⁰ It is this reduced ability to concentrate even when you want to that is one of the most insidious effects of multitasking.

Multitasking has another consequence that is of particular concern to lawyers and others who keep track of billable time: "People who engage in switchtasking over a long period of time begin to get a distorted sense of how long things actually take."²¹ A lawyer who is unable to accurately estimate how long tasks should take to accomplish will be at a disadvantage compared to those who have honed their time-estimating skills, particularly as the profession seems to be moving, albeit slowly, away from the billable hour in the direction of value billing and other alternative fee arrangements.

Finally, a frequently-ignored side effect of multitasking is its social consequences. It's not uncommon for people to interpret the multitasking of others -- peering at BlackBerries, etc., during meetings, answering cellphones during meals, checking email during telephone calls -- as saying, in effect, "what I'm doing is more important than paying attention to you."

¹⁷ Time Management: Increase Your Personal Productivity and Effectiveness (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2005), p. 57.

¹⁸ Kirn, Walter. "The Autumn of the Multitaskers." The Atlantic Online, November 2007. <<http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2007/11/the-autumn-of-the-multitaskers/6342/>> accessed July 22, 2009. For a comprehensive discussion of the scientific evidence on how multitasking increases the probability of human error, see Loukia Loukopoulos, R. Key Dismukes, and Immanuel Barshi, The Multitasking Myth: Handling Complexity in Real-World Operations (Surrey, UK: Ashgate, 2009).

¹⁹ Rosen, "The Myth of Multitasking," supra (referencing research of psychologist David Meyer of the University of Michigan).

²⁰ Kirn, "The Autumn of the Multitaskers," supra.

²¹ Dave Crenshaw. The Myth of Multitasking: How "Doing It All" Gets Nothing Done. (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2008), p. 70.

3. When and How to Multitask

Despite the many disadvantages of multitasking, there are a few very limited circumstances when consciously choosing to multitask may be a reasonable strategy. For example, certain desirable or unavoidable activities that can be done almost entirely by habit (such as exercising or chores) are logical candidates for pairing with more palatable or even enjoyable activities such as listening to music or audio entertainment such as radio programs, podcasts, or recorded books.

Another situation in which it makes sense to choose to multitask is to accept its inherent inefficiency in order to stay sufficiently stimulated to get through a boring task. Doing such tasks in short bursts, or listening to upbeat music while working on these tasks makes sense if the alternative is to drag yourself miserably through the task, or even avoid the task entirely.

4. When and How Not to Multitask

When should you avoid multitasking? In short, almost always (except for the limited situations described above). Multitasking is a bad idea when you want to be efficient, when you want your work to be accurate, and/or when the task requires serious thinking.

It is now beyond controversy that multitasking while driving is life-endangering.²² Even multitasking while walking can be dangerous.²³

How to avoid multitasking? The following smorgasbord of suggestions should give you a variety of ideas for ways to minimize multitasking, at least in the traditional sense. However, it's important to realize that the ultimate goal is not really to avoid multitasking, but to accomplish your tasks efficiently and effectively, ideally by paying full, focused, concentrated attention to one task at a time. Choosing to focus on that task until it is complete -- or until you decide that it is appropriate to change the focus of your attention -- will allow you to complete each task as efficiently and effectively as possible. You will still be able to accomplish multiple tasks each day, even though at any given moment the focus of your attention will be on a single task. This approach to accomplishing multiple tasks seriatim rather than seemingly simultaneously is the most effective way to "multitask."

a. Create a Mental Environment Conducive to Concentration

- Decide that you want to reduce your multitasking and increase your concentration.
- Decide that you don't have to multitask; that it really is a choice, not an unavoidable norm.
- Decide what is important to you..
- Prioritize what's important to you. Accept that you can't do everything you want to do.
- Understand the paradox of labor-saving devices.
- Differentiate between potentially productive distractions and run-of-the-mill distractions.

²² See www.Distracted.gov, the official U.S. Government website for distracted driving.

²³ Richtell, Matt. "Forget Gum. Walking and Using Phone is Risky ." New York Times. January 17, 2010. <<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/01/17/technology/17distracted.html>> accessed November 15, 2010.

b. Create an Internal Physical Environment Conducive to Concentration

- Exercise.²⁴
- Get enough sleep.²⁵
- Stay hydrated.²⁶
- Use caffeine strategically.²⁷
- Eat properly.

c. Create an External Physical Environment Conducive to Concentration

- Reduce or eliminate potential distractions and interruptions.
- If you are in a position to do so, set recurring meetings with your direct reports and any others who frequently interrupt you.
- If you are in a position to do so, experiment with setting clear signals for when you are available and when you are unavailable.

d. Create a Technological Environment Conducive to Concentration

- Understand why today's technology can so easily command your attention.
- Turn off audible and /or visible cues.
- Close unnecessary windows and tabs.

²⁴ Exercise "optimizes your mind-set to improve alertness, attention, and motivation...." John J. Ratey, M.D., Spark: The Revolutionary New Science of Exercise and the Brain (New York: Little Brown and Co., 2008), p. 53. How much to exercise? "If you want a minimum, I would say thirty minutes of aerobic exercise [per day]. It's not a lot of time, especially considering that it will help you focus enough to make the most of the rest of your day. Id. at p. 166.

²⁵ "The research findings are quite clear: Sleep loss is devastating to performance. Here's what happens when you don't get enough sleep: Reduction in cognitive functioning and reaction time, including the following: reduced ability to concentrate...." James B. Maas, Power Sleep: The Revolutionary Program That Prepares Your Mind for Peak Performance (New York: Villard, 1998), pp. 48-50.

²⁶ "Chronic mild dehydration -- a fluid deficit of as little as 1 to 2 percent of body weight -- can cause declines in alertness and the ability to concentrate." Paul Insel, R. Elaine Turner, and Don Ross, Discovering Nutrition, 3d Ed. (Sudbury, MA: Jones & Bartlett Publishers, 2009), p. 403. (A gallon of water weighs 8.35 pounds; a cup of water weighs 8.35 ounces. For a 150-pound person, 1% of body weight is comparable to three cups of water.)

²⁷ "In moderation [caffeine] increases alertness, reduces fatigue, and improves performance on mental tasks that require sustained attention.... [But] the more you use [it], the more you build up a tolerance for [it]. The same amount no longer gives you the same level of boost, so you're drawn to use more to keep getting the same response. Stimulants [such as caffeine] are attractive; but as a habit, it's best to use them at low enough levels so that when you need to tackle a boring job or unusually long hours, you don't have to go to extremes." Lucy Jo Palladino, Ph. D., Find Your Focus Zone: An Effective New Plan to Defeat Distraction and Overload (New York: Simon & Schuster, Inc., 2007), p. 170-171. Dr. Palladino suggests gradually decreasing the amount of caffeine in your coffee by drinking a blend of caffeinated and decaffeinated coffee, and slowly acclimating to the decreased amount of caffeine. Alternatively, "[s]ome people prefer to go cold turkey every so often, to recalibrate their caffeine intake at a lower dose." Id. at 172.

- Turn off your email prompt (or close your email program).
- If you use an IM program, seek one with a "do not disturb" feature.
- Forward your phone to voicemail.
- Manage expectations. For example, consider an outgoing voicemail greeting such as: "Hello, this is Megan Draper. You've reached my voicemail; please feel free to leave a detailed message. I usually check my messages at 11 a.m., 2 p.m., and 5 p.m. If you leave a message, I will get back to you before the day is over. Thank you!"
- Set a timer for when you want to stop working.

e. Plan to Concentrate

- Plan your tasks.
- Do your most challenging tasks during your high-energy periods and your less-demanding tasks during your low-energy periods.
- Take breaks.
- Plan your breaks.
- Work in timed bursts.
- Make chores or otherwise boring tasks into a game.
- Have a plan for how to recover from unintentional, self-initiated, spontaneous lapses in concentration.

f. Improve Your Ability to Maintain Your Concentration

- Focus on your breathing.
- Practice focusing on ANYTHING.
- Meditate.

g. Miscellaneous Techniques for Minimizing Multitasking and Increasing Concentration

- Commit to single-tasking at least three tasks per day.
- Don't respond to texts or emails immediately unless it's really necessary.
- Carve out as much time as possible for focused work.
- Vary your tasks.
- Consider instituting the following rule for yourself: no gadgets at meetings.
- Delegate as much as you can.

- Keep a log of distractions deferred.
- Maintain a comprehensive "to-do" system.
- Be prepared to capture your ideas.
- Have a docking/recharging station for your various gadgets somewhere near the entry of your home, and make it a habit to leave them there whenever you arrive home.
- Hand-write a letter occasionally.
- Slow down.
- Play.
- Establish habits, routines, rituals, and systems that work for you.
- Establish a workable rhythm for your work and your life.
- Keep a record of your progress in your journey from multitasking to mindfulness.

D. Ideas for Keeping Your Life in Balance

A powerful way to improve the balance in your life is to invest the time to plan on a weekly basis. During your weekly planning session:

- Review your long term goals.
- Review your goals for the past week and assess your progress towards making them. Ask yourself what went well, what could stand some improvement, and brainstorm ways of making that improvement. Which goals did you achieve, and why? Which goals didn't you achieve, and why not?
- Review your "sources of work."
- Review anything else you want to keep fresh in your mind, such as your lessons learned.
- Create this week's to-do plan.
- Create this week's time blueprint.

It's also important to create and maintain a list of goals for your life outside of work. "Sharpen the saw" by making a conscious choice to counter-balance work with regular rest, fun, recreation, and vacations. Set aside one day a week to do no work of any kind. Take an "at-home" vacation once a month by blocking off an entire weekend and making no outside commitments. Develop and indulge regularly in forms of recreation that you truly enjoy. If you find it difficult to relax, consider this kind of rest and relaxation to be a strategic investment of your time that will pay off in greater energy and motivation when you return to work.

E. Minimizing Procrastination (or, How to Get Things Done Despite Yourself)

1. The Key Technique for Overcoming Chronic Procrastination: Adjusting Your Mindset

Procrastination is wily; only you can tell when you're really procrastinating. For serious procrastination, try adjusting your thinking along one or more of these points:²⁸

<u>Unhelpful Mindset</u>	<u>Helpful Mindset</u>
"I must...."	"I choose to...."
"I have to finish."	"When can I start?"
"This project is huge."	"I'll do one small task."
"I have to be perfect."	"I can be human."
"I'll have time for rest, fun, and relaxation when this project is done."	"I must make time for rest, fun, and relaxation no matter how busy I am."

2. Thirty-One Ways to Attack Procrastination

1. Start anywhere. Most work projects have many places to start, each of which is about as good as the other. Yet frequently we deter ourselves from starting at all because we can't decide on the best place to start, and lose sight of the fact that just starting anywhere is better than not starting at all.
2. Start even if you're not in the mood. You don't have to be inspired before you start on something. If you wait for inspiration, you run the risk that it might never show up at all. It's more reliable to train yourself to start to work at a specific time and place, then see if the ideas start to flow.

When inspiration does not come to me, I go halfway to meet it.
-- Sigmund Freud

3. Start imperfectly. The early stage of a project is not the time to worry about getting everything right. If you start in plenty of time, you'll be able to edit, rewrite, and double-check facts and citations. To defeat the paralysis of perfectionism, start with an obvious error, which you will edit out later.
4. Realize that unpleasant tasks don't get any easier over time. If anything, unpleasant tasks become more so when we put them off. Even worse, the worrying and agonizing about not working on a project take at least as much energy as just getting on with the task.

²⁸ This analysis is adapted from Neil Fiore, The Now Habit: A Strategic Program for Overcoming Procrastination and Enjoying Guilt-Free Play (Los Angeles: Jeremy P. Tarcher, Inc., 1989), pp. 61-67.

5. Realize that the only way to quell the anxiety associated with procrastination is to start working on the project. All other methods merely sugar-coat the anxiety.
6. Work no more than fifteen minutes at a time. Set a timer -- a wristwatch alarm is a discreet alternative -- and decide to work full blast on the project for the next fifteen minutes. When the timer goes off, decide immediately whether to stop at that moment, or to reset the timer and work for another fifteen minutes.
7. Schedule a catch-up day. Every month or so, set aside a day devoted entirely to those small tasks you have been putting off.
8. The "drive yourself crazy by doing nothing" approach. Assemble all the materials for the project, arrange them in front of you on your desk, and then sit at your desk and do absolutely nothing for seven minutes (by the clock). Don't even write down any of the ideas that are sure to come to you during this period. By the end of the seven minutes, you'll be itching to start. (Incidentally, the reason for the seven minutes is to make sure you sit there for seven actual minutes. "Five minutes" or "10 minutes" tend to become concepts rather than actual time periods.)

I could never have done what I have done without the habits of punctuality, order and diligence, without the determination to concentrate myself on one subject at a time.
 --Charles Dickens

9. Ways to deal with writer's block:
 - Begin in the middle.
 - Outline after you draft.
 - Write out your analysis stream-of-consciousness style, then organize it.
 - The letter-writing approach: "Dear Mom: Here I am in the office struggling to write this brief. These are the facts of the case:"
10. Make a detailed to-do list of all the different subdivisions of your project. See if there are subtasks that don't sound too horrible -- there may even be some that are fun -- and start with those.
11. Don't try to do it all at once. See how much you can accomplish by chipping away at a project for fifteen or twenty minutes at a time. Appreciate the cumulative value of small chunks of time: fifteen minutes every working day adds up to about 55 hours over the course of a year. This simple math can help us see the value of putting even small amounts of time to good use on a daily basis.
12. Begin with an "instant task" that takes no more than five minutes, but moves you along the path towards completion of a larger project. Examples: finding a file, determining people to contact, looking up telephone numbers, arranging a meeting.
13. The "cut the salami" technique. Cut huge projects down into manageable pieces, then do a little at a time. "The beauty of this kind of approach is that not only are the individual steps easy, but each one actually generates the next."²⁹
14. Start your day with your most difficult task. After that, everything will be a breeze.

²⁹ White, Kate, Why Good Girls Don't Get Ahead . . . But Gutsy Girls Do (New York: Warner Books, 1995), p. 100.

That which we persist in doing becomes easier -- not that the nature of the task has changed, but our ability to do it has increased.

-- Ralph Waldo Emerson

15. Anticipate the pleasure of getting the project done on time. "Once I started using the salami technique, I discovered the amazing serenity and relief that comes from early preparation. There I'd be three days before the deadline and all I'd have to do is tie up a few loose ends. Since then I've learned to conjure up that feeling whenever I'm looking at a project. I let myself think of how good I will feel if I get an early start -- and how pathetically miserable I'll be if I don't. It's a little behavior modification in the hands of an amateur but it has worked beautifully."³⁰

Laziness may appear attractive, but work brings satisfaction.

-- Anne Frank

16. Establish an environment conducive to action. Invest the time to have the necessary materials and tools on hand, and to maintain them in an organized fashion.
17. Give routine matters only the time they deserve. Resist the temptation of trying to finish all those little tasks before turning to your important project. Allow yourself only a predetermined amount of time -- say, 30 to 60 minutes -- to focus on routine matters each day.
18. Ask yourself if you REALLY need to do a particular task. Can you delegate it? Streamline it? Hire a professional to do it? What's the worst that can happen if the task never gets done, or gets done infrequently? Would you prefer dealing with the consequences of not doing the task?
19. Search for -- and then enjoy -- the pleasure in the task. Make tasks as enjoyable as possible: use colorful folders to organize your papers; make your work environment as inviting as possible; make a game out of seeing how quickly and efficiently you can complete routine tasks; listen to music, interesting talk-radio, or books-on-tape while doing household tasks.
20. Do a cost-benefit analysis. Write down the benefits of doing a particular task, as well as the consequences of not doing the task, and decide whether you prefer to enjoy the benefits or deal with the consequences. Picture the benefits as clearly and vividly as you can. Review your list of benefits whenever you need to improve your motivation on the project.

Delaying gratification is a process of scheduling the pain and pleasure in life in such a way as to enhance the pleasure by meeting and experiencing the pain first and getting it over with. It is the only decent way to live.

-- M. Scott Peck

21. Make it a game to see how much you can accomplish in exactly one hour.

³⁰ Id. at 101.

22. Don't assume a task will take as long as you think it will.

I once worked with a group of highly educated, bright, young, service technicians from a large company in Denmark. I went to one of their desks and noticed a large machine on the corner and asked about it. "That's a bit of bad conscience. I received it from a customer a month ago to repair It could take me two days to fix it, and my schedule is so tight I haven't been able to devote the time to it."

I said, "Do it now."

"I can't do it now," he argued. "I have a meeting at 2:00 o'clock."

"Okay, just do it now, and let's see how far you get," I suggested.

Well, off he went into the repair area with the machine, muttering to himself. Fifteen minutes later he came back.

"Oh, no," I thought, "this could be trouble."

He looked at me and said, "It's done."

"Done?" I echoed.

"Yes, done," he said. "But it could have taken two days."

Kerry Gleeson³¹

23. Keep a log of your excuses/reasons for procrastinating. Soon you'll discover that "it's always something" -- that you're endlessly creative in coming up with some reason or another for not doing what you know you should be doing. Strive to become as creative in getting down to work as you are about procrastinating.

Treachery, unrequited love, bereavement, toothache, bad food, poverty, etc. must count for nothing the moment one picks up one's notebook.

-- W.H. Auden

24. Keep a list of your enjoyable procrastination techniques, (reading the newspaper, having another cup of coffee, doing "fun" work) and indulge in them as rewards for having finished a segment of your primary project.
25. Develop the compulsion to completion. Stick with one task long enough to finish it, or to come to a natural stopping point, instead of turning to a new task as soon as it catches your eye.

There is nothing so fatiguing as the eternal hanging on of an uncompleted task.

-- William James

26. Develop decisiveness in decisionmaking. Realize that beyond a certain point, the time you take to make a decision does not improve the chances that the decision will be correct. Accept the fact despite your best efforts, a certain percentage of your decisions will turn out to be wrong. Give decisions only the time they are worth. Realize that procrastinating on a decision "should be viewed as a decision by default. It's a decision *not* to decide."³²

³¹ Gleeson, Kerry, The Personal Efficiency Program: How to Get Organized to Do More Work in Less Time (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1994), p. 22.

³² Mackenzie, R. Alec, The Time Trap: How to Get More Done in Less Time (New York: AMACOM, 1972), p. 116

27. Make a commitment to yourself to stop working at 6:00 p.m. Consider it no longer acceptable to stay late in order to catch up on tasks you procrastinated on during the day. See how creative you can become at getting things done before quitting time.
28. Honor your leisure time. Paradoxical though it may sound, making sure you have a reasonable amount of time for rest, relaxation, and just plain fun is one of the best ways to deal with procrastination. It's all too easy to adopt the mindset that we will let ourselves play only after we have finished all our work. However, "work before play" is best applied in a daily or weekly context, not over the course of months or years. Forcing yourself to work all of your waking hours for weeks on end -- or feeling as if you should be keeping up that pace -- leads to inefficiency, stress, depression, and burnout. You can be more productive over the long run if you treat your work-life as a marathon rather than a sprint, and pace yourself accordingly. Knowing that you have only a limited amount of time to work, as well as having something fun to look forward to, will help you to be more efficient during the time you have allotted to work. (Remember how much you managed to get done on the day before your last vacation?)
29. Attain and maintain a high energy level by investing the time to take care of yourself by following the timeless principles of good health (nutrition, exercise, rest).
30. Set SMART goals:
 - Specific -- know exactly what you want to accomplish
 - Measurable -- so you can tell for sure when you've reached your goal
 - Activity-oriented -- focus on what you can do, rather than on external circumstances
 - Reasonable -- your goals should encourage you, not overwhelm you
 - Time-limited -- since work tends to expand to fill the time available.
31. Use an Unschedule to plan all non-work activities, and to record after-the-fact the time you spend actually working on your primary project (i.e., the project you're procrastinating on). (Use a Weekly Planning Grid such as the one available on the Articles and Downloads page at www.TimeManagementForLawyers.com.) Some guidelines: (1) fill in your unschedule only after you have completed at least 30 minutes of uninterrupted work on your primary project; (2) take a reward break after each work period; (3) keep track of the number of hours you worked on your primary project; (4) be sure to schedule enough time for rest, recreation, and life maintenance activities; and (5) shoot for 30 quality minutes of work before heading off to a recreational or social event.

B.F. Skinner, the founder of modern behaviorism, had a time clock connected to his chair. Whenever he sat down to work, he "punched in." Whenever he left his chair the clock stopped, as if he were "punching out." This very prolific writer used a time clock! He maintained flow charts that amounted to giving himself a gold star every time he completed a small segment of work! This amazed me. I said to myself, "If B.F. Skinner has to use a system, then so do I."

-- Neil Fiore

IV. CONCLUSION AND CHALLENGES

There are no shortcuts to effective time management, but now you know the basic paths. Focus on improving one time management habit at a time. When you've successfully incorporated that habit, start to work on another. Aim for slow, steady, continuous improvement over the long term.

To enjoy life is to enjoy time. For time is the stuff life is made of.

Benjamin Franklin

SPEAKER BIOGRAPHY

Margaret Spencer Dixon is a lawyer/consultant specializing in time management, project management, and stress management training for lawyers and legal professionals.

Meg came to the field of organization and time management by way of a career in law, during which she practiced in the litigation and energy groups of the law firm formerly known as Shaw Pittman in Washington, D.C. She received her undergraduate degree, cum laude in economics, from Princeton University in 1982, and got her law degree from Stanford Law School in 1985. After law school she clerked for Judge Cecil F. Poole of the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit in San Francisco. In 1992, Meg left the practice of law to found Spencer Consulting (www.TimeManagementForLawyers.com), and since then has provided customized seminars and one-on-one coaching on time management, project management, and stress management for hundreds of law firms, corporate law departments, government agencies, and CLE providers throughout the United States and Canada.

Her writings include articles entitled, "Yes, You Can Learn to Keep Your Desk Clutter-Free," "Time Management Habits: How to Develop Good Ones and Kick Bad Ones," and "Overcoming Procrastination: How to Get Things Done Despite Yourself." She has been chair of the Time Management Interest Group of the American Bar Association's Law Practice Management Section, authored the chapter on time management in the ABA's book, "Living with the Law: Strategies to Avoid Burnout and Create Balance," and has recorded a variety of audio and video programs on time management, project management, and related subjects.

Known as the time-management-for-lawyers guru, she has shared her time-tested techniques to help thousands of lawyers and professionals provide better client service while becoming more productive, less stressed, and more satisfied with their careers and their lives.