

stamping lifestyle

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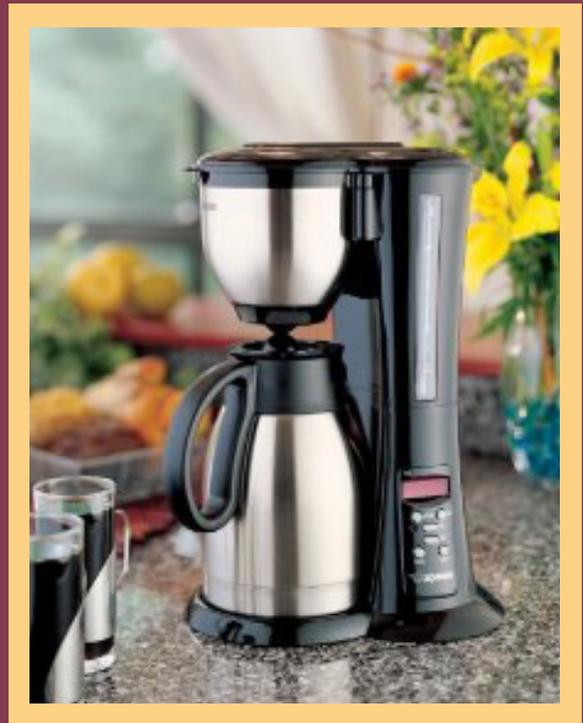
Work Overload: *How to Get Organized!*



MANAGING YOUR TO-DO LIST

Do You Suffer from
IGAD Syndrome?

First Thought of the
Day - Make it Good!



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Arming Against Work Overload

by Lynn Mercurio

As a full-time employed woman, my free time is limited. I'm at work by 7:30 AM, home by 5, and that's when my second job begins – you know those other things that we call life! Cooking, cleaning, laundry, bookkeeping, and shopping, along with deadlines to meet, birthdays to remember, and parties to plan – the duties never end. I don't need to tell you that the list can get mighty long at times. Whether you work full-time outside the home, or are a full-time homemaker, there are demands on your time that require a certain amount of planning and organizing to ensure they all get done on time. Do you find, in spite of all your good intentions, that you hardly make a dent in your list of things to do, even though your day is busy from start to finish? Are you always promising to remember birthdays, but find you have missed another one again? How do you stay on top of these things and still feel like you are in control of your life? There IS a way to arm yourself against the overload of work that you may find facing you from day to day.

Identifying the areas that you want to improve and making a plan of action to get you back on track are the first steps. Life is one big balancing act and we can all lose our equilibrium from time to time, but with a few helpful hints we can help get you started on the road to workload freedom. We aren't promising that you will be able to cross off ALL the items on your to-do list, but by taking those first steps, you will do a better job of staying on top of those necessary evils.

A Wake-up Call

No matter how tired you may be in the morning, get in the habit of setting your alarm for 15 minutes earlier than you expect the rest of the family to arise. This is time just for YOU. Before the mad rush to get out of the house – in those peaceful few moments, spend some time meditating, praying or repeating some positive affirmations to get your day started. A habit of getting in the right frame of mind to begin your day can have an impact on the rest of the day and your attitude towards the day's challenges. Try to remember how your day went the last time you woke up late...the panic, the frustration, how everything seemed to go wrong the entire day. This "rude awakening" put you in a negative space from the start, and those negative feelings fed into other areas as



Wake up to your favorite song with the iLuv- available at Amazon.com

well. Many believe that the subconscious mind accepts as truth the thoughts and words you say to yourself, so begin each day by repeating phrases like these, for example, "I have a lot of energy. I am calm and relaxed in every situation. I radiate love and happiness. I am successful in whatever I do." This process of talking to yourself may feel a bit odd at first, but once you begin to make this a habit, you will see the results manifest themselves in your daily lives. Even if you don't believe that this process works, give it a try with an open mind.

The main point of the early wake-up is to allow yourself a few minutes to reflect and ease into the day, rather than jumping at the sound of the alarm with your feet hitting the floor and running all the day through. That's a frantic way to begin any day.

Make a Plan

While you are waiting for the coffee to brew or as you fix your favorite morning beverage, review your calendar and begin making your to-do list. This list doesn't need to be fancy, but if you're like me, you enjoy looking at something pleasing, so I choose to put my to-do lists on colored paper, which serves two purposes: it's pretty to look at and it's easy to find when I lay it down.



*Italian Leather Personal Planner
by Generic- available at
Amazon.com*

Now it's time to divide and conquer. Once you have compiled your list, put the high priority things at the top of your list with the lower priority items toward the bottom and work from the top of your list. You may even find it helpful to sort your list into categories such as personal tasks, household tasks, this child, that child, etc. Mark everything down that you want and need to accomplish. This means writing down every commitment, even if you think you will remember because distracting events can rob the memory of anyone.

By all means, make your list realistic for "today". It's helpful to schedule tasks based on time, such as today, this week, this month, and so forth. Your to-do list for the day should be taken from your monthly to-do lists that you

created at the beginning of the month. Being realistic about what you can and have time to accomplish today will help you feel less stressed over a massively long list of chores. Just keep in mind that your goal isn't necessary to get all of your tasks accomplished, but to have a plan of action from which to work.

Execute your Plan

Realize that any great plan can get sidetracked by unforeseen events, so be aware that the best laid plans can and will be pushed down and delayed. Being aware of this fact will relieve you of a lot of stress when these roadblocks occur. Just know that Murphy's Law, "Anything that can go wrong, will go wrong" is hard at work! An easy way to combat these "Murphy" events is to leave a little wiggle room in your schedule for these unexpected delays. Fifteen minutes here or 30 minutes there will usually put enough buffers in your day to handle most delays.

On those days when life rolls on normally, it's important to designate a specific amount of time for each project on your list. It's easy to get consumed with stripping the wall paper from your bathroom and forget that you have a PTA meeting after school. Beginning and making progress on a project is the important thing, especially on projects that cannot easily be completed in one spurt.

As an example, going through your closets and removing summer clothes for the season and replacing them with your winter wardrobe can be a time consuming project, so tell yourself that you are going to work on this project for 25 minutes. Set a timer and when the time is up, put the clothes out back in the closet, and move on to another project on your list. While you may not have completely marked this item off your to-do list, you have made progress. Remember – slow and steady wins the race, and gets the job done eventually.

Another way to make sure that you execute your plan is to stay focused. Most of us have caller ID, and just because the phone rings, doesn't mean that we HAVE to answer it, especially if we are in the middle of a task. Let those non-emergency phone calls go to voice mail, and return calls later.

The same goes for e-mail and the internet. We have ALL been sucked in by a great card, or interesting discussion thread, but there is no bigger time-killer than the computer. Technology is a wonderful thing, but not when you need to "get 'er done", so while you are focused on completing a task, turn the PC off or disable your e-mail notification sound. If you are really serious about marking tasks off of your to-do list, this will save you a lot of time. You can always schedule time in your day if needed to check in on the "outside world", but don't let it control you. Just think how pleased you will be when you can check off from your list that nagging project that's been causing you anxiety.



*Can-do Colossal Long Ring Timer
from Amazon.com*

One last issue that should be addressed is the IGAD syndrome. This syndrome can be quite paralyzing and is experienced by just about everyone at one time or another, so being aware is the first step in avoiding this syndrome. The IGAD syndrome (I Got All Day) can be first ingrained in our subconscious and manifests itself throughout the day as we postpone tasks because, after all IGAD, right? WRONG! The first time you say or think IGAD it's morning and the next thing you know the day is over and nothing has been done. Don't succumb to the dreaded IGAD syndrome because there is no vaccination; make up your mind to be determined to get started on your day without any hesitation.

Acknowledge Results

Another important aspect of your to-do list is to acknowledge your accomplishments. Use a red pen to cross off completed tasks from your list. Some days your list will be filled with red lines, other days – not so much. But as you look at your list you will see that you HAVE accomplished tasks that would have been forgotten or not even started if it weren't for your list and plan of action. Having a plan of action will, in the end, leave you with more time to do the things you want to do and that bring you joy. The time spent in a panic because you forgot to do something will be no more, and you will once again feel like you are more in control of your life, rather than life controlling you.



*Magnetic List Pad
from Amazon.com*

Tips to Remember:

- ◆ Wake up in the right frame of mind
- ◆ Start the day with a game plan
- ◆ Don't try to do it all at once
- ◆ Cross things off your list as
- ◆ Some days you will accomplish a lot
- ◆ Some days you will accomplish a little
- ◆ Small successes are still successes