



## Principles for Gaining Control of Your Day and Your Life

At various times of life we can lose our daily structure. It can happen when we are self-employed, change jobs or retire. Making sure your daily focus matches your heart and passions – and values – can have an amazing effect on your day. This is not about efficiency but effectiveness.

1. First, find the focus you will love. Doing a values exercise can help this. Also a personality style profile can reveal the styles (and activities) we prefer and give us insight how to find resources to support our weaknesses (and I say this from my own personal experience!) Once you know your desired outcomes – focus on those!
2. Don't say there isn't enough time. Whether you make \$50,000 or a million dollars a year – we all have 24 hours in the day. It's how we use them that adds to our success and happiness or detracts from it. We always have enough time to do the important things. What are those things – only you know. Maybe you need a daily time schedule for maximum productivity. When I was going to law school from 1996-2000 we found very early on that there was no way for me to do everything without a timed schedule. Tight scheduling is not my normal style but the first week of school – which was orientation – I had the first panic attack of my life. My business partner and I realized there were barely enough waking hours to go to classes, do 2 hours of reading for each 1 hour class (the school suggested 3) and spend 30 hours a week counseling clients. I also was in the gym every morning at 5:30 and I left the law school study rooms around 9 each night to go home to sleep. Time was so tight I didn't have time to get a haircut (no beauty parlor was open that early or late) or do laundry more than once a month (luckily Kmart was open late so I acquired a lot of underwear!)
3. Spend your prime time on your focus activities. What are they? Again, this is something you know. In my case they include:
  - a. Research in the tax legal and financial areas to help clients maintain their financial success
  - b. Reviewing client goals and objectives to see if all is on time

- c. Creating activities and events to improve understanding of unique personality and experiential strengths and challenges
- d. Delivering A class solutions
- e. Deepening client relationships (I'm in a people business and I work with people I really like – even love – so those relationships are dear to me!)
- f. Meeting with associates who handle critical parts of the practice.
- g. Networking and teaching. People only find us by that or by referral.
- h. Staying fit by eating healthy (green smoothies), yoga and Tai Chi.

Consider keeping a time log, outsourcing and delegation. Make sure your activities match up with your values and abilities. For example no one in the office allows me to touch the technology. I don't change printer cartridges, handle computer problems (thank God for Barbara), or update our website. Don't multitask. I've done it – and thought I had to – but the best result happens when I focus (and when I pray). It is amazing what power we have when each action has 100% of our attention. Time blocking is powerful. You can Google a free time blocking form or contact us for one. One basic truth that keeps us from our happiness (doing the things we love) is busy work will expand to fill the time available. Often the things we plan take more time than we think. I break down the key functions in the practice into activities – kin of like eating the elephant one bite at a time? So the new catch-phrase is uni-task.

4. Write down your most important things and make sure you do them daily. Each night take a sticky-note and write down the important things for tomorrow. Not too many. These things can come from your master "to do list" or can be based on the things you accomplished that day. Prioritize the tasks and tomorrow do the most important first. Make sure your tasks line up with your life mission and the activities associated with it. What are your top 5 activities? Write them down!

If you need some help getting started consider Laurie Beth Jones's book The Path to help you develop your mission and vision - available for a song from Amazon used. If you want a great values exercise give me a call. You may be surprised (as I was) when you complete it that your strongest values are not necessarily the ones you think they are!

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