

THESE MATERIALS WERE USED IN CONJUNCTION WITH

SEMINARS FOR
EXCELLENCE IN
Nonprofit
MANAGEMENT

The ABCs of Sustainable
Time Management

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The ABCs of Sustainable Time Management

I. Context

- A brief history of time management
- Your concerns
- Basic assumption: It's Impossible

II. The ABCs – areas for awareness & action

- Attention – the witness
 - The Pause Button; CDR – Catch, Distribute, Review; “Stay” and “Leave It”
 - Both/And Heartbeat Challenge
 - Basic assumption: Both/And, not Either/Or
- Boundaries – protected and connected
 - Task Close-down – Past, Future, Present
 - Resources – physical, emotional, mental, spiritual
 - Space Invader Challenge
 - Basic assumption: Intrinsic worth
- Choices – in tune with self and others
 - A Page Full of Tips and the 80/20 Rule
 - The True Cost Challenge
 - Basic assumption: Choice happens; why not engage it
- Effort & recovery – the way to sustainability

III. Close-down

- Satisfaction Practice (Past)
- The Next Step (Future)
- Cultivating the seed of change (Present)

Satisfaction practice – good ideas

Note, in 25 words or less, the good ideas that occurred to you in each segment. These ideas stand out from the rest and show you the path to follow.

Context

Attention

Boundaries

Choices

Taking Action

1st half

Entire session

Satisfaction practice – Challenges

Note, in 25 words or less, the challenges you encountered in each exercise. These challenges show where your efforts to change will make the most difference.

What would resolve the situation completely?

What step towards resolution could you actually take now?

Attention: Both/And Heartbeat Challenge

Boundaries: Space Invader Boundary Challenge

Choices: What Do I Give Up To Get What I Want Challenge

A Page Full Of Tips

- ___ Notice patterns of time use for a week
- ___ Pick a pattern; brainstorm what you'd have to give up to change
- ___ When throwing things out ask, 'does it buoy me up or drag me down?'
- ___ Do a time/task analysis for a week, a day
- ___ Use a comprehensive reminder system -- tickler file, lists, appointment book
- ___ Build realism into To-Do lists
- ___ Assign top, middle or low priority to each item on your list
- ___ Schedule restorative activity
- ___ When sorting papers beware of getting off-task; stay present
- ___ Note when energy drains off
- ___ Eliminate advance anxiety; start worrying about something only when you need to
- ___ Carefully consider the worst that can happen
- ___ Have some modular task with you at all times
- ___ Have tasks handy for when you're holding on the phone
- ___ Take responsibility in meetings
- ___ Say what you need
- ___ Consider the need for/use of meetings
- ___ Make sure everyone at the meeting needs to be there
- ___ Schedule challenging tasks during peak performance times
- ___ Radically change a habit, at least for a little while, just to see what happens
- ___ Postpone 'maintenance reading' to odd moments, not prime time
- ___ Before placing a phone call, jot down the goal of the call; keep it before you as you talk
- ___ Arrange workspace so what you use daily is at hand; weekly, within reach; monthly, nearby; less often, out of sight; rarely, archived or gone
- ___ Organize paper according to tasks (reading, filing, action, consideration, etc) and/or time (now, soon, later, whenever)
- ___ Schedule 15 minutes each day for taking stock, sorting, planning
- ___ Observe how others work
- ___ Actively look at difficult situations from the other's point of view
- ___ Look at others' assumptions without judgement
- ___ Encourage others to tell you what they need
- ___ When making a decision, ask 'does it contribute to my life and/or work goals?'
- ___ Allow for people-time, not just task-time
- ___ Take 100% responsibility for communication (receiving as well as sending)
- ___ Be a good example by being both human and productive
- ___ Empower and delegate more
- ___ If a meeting looks like it will run overtime, renegotiate terms
- ___ As much as possible, handle papers twice -- once for initial sort, once for action/disposition
- ___ Identify short- and long-term life goals; contribute to them weekly
- ___ Identify short- and long-term work goals; contribute to them daily
- ___ Turn a recurring crisis into a routine
- ___ Break down complex projects into 20-minute bits
- ___ Do simple tasks during low-energy times
- ___ When you bog down, give it 5 minutes of concentration; if that doesn't work, take a break or change tasks
- ___ Take real breaks
- ___ Capture creative ideas that come in off-hours and odd moments
- ___ Learn to say No (firmly, and gently)
- ___ When you find yourself procrastinating, look for what you gain by putting off the task
- ___ Build in flexibility; realistic time to respond to others
- ___ In a complex project do the most time-consuming tasks as soon as possible
- ___ Change what you can; accept what you cannot
- ___ Avoid putting your time management problems in others' laps
- ___ At the interruption moment, fix a word/picture in your mind so you can get back to where you left off easily (the Pause button)
- ___ Make sure your leisure is revitalizing you
- ___ Take breathing breaks during the day
- ___ Pay attention to your health
- ___ If you can't decide, flip a coin
- ___ Act on a 'soft' decision' then you can see if the decision was right or not
- ___ Be sure your safety net is in place when you take a risk
- ___ When it's not working, instead of trying harder, try something else
- ___ Date-stamp papers whenever you handle them; 3 strikes and it's Out
- ___ Alternate between Eagle view (big picture) and Ant view (at work on the ground)
- ___ End gracefully by allowing a quarter to a third of the total time to close down
- ___ Invoke the 80/20 Rule: 80% of the significance comes from 20% of the stuff

Resources

- Aslett, Don, *Clutter's Last Stand* (Writer's Digest Books, 1984). Useful ways to "dejunk."
- Block, Peter, *Stewardship* (Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 1993). A radical approach to reclaiming sovereignty in the workplace through service.
- Brake, David, *Dealing With E-Mail* (Dorling Kindersley Ltd, 2003). Helpful, specific, concise.
- Center for a New American Dream, 6930 Carroll Ave., Suite 900, Tacoma Park, MD 20912; www.newdream.org. The best sustainable living resource.
- DMA Mail (Telephone) Preference Service, PO Box 9008 (9014), Farmingdale, NY 11735-9008 (9014). Write here to get off junk mail (phone) lists.
- Dominguez, Joe, and Vicki Robin, *Your Money or Your Life*, (Penguin, 1993). Also New Road Map Foundation, PO Box 15981, Seattle, WA 98115; www.newroadmap.org.
- Hedrick, Lucy, *Get Organized in the Digital Age*, (New American Library, 2002). Helpful uses for technology.
- Kristan, Pamela, *The Spirit of Getting Organized: 12 Skills to Find Meaning and Power in Your Stuff*, (Red Wheel, 2003). Practical, hands-on skills and deep insights.
- Loehr, Jim, and Tony Schwartz, *The Power of Full Engagement*, (Free Press, 2003). Uses athletic training as a model to build energy capacity; well-written.
- Luhrs, Janet, *The Simple Living Guide*, (Broadway Books, 1997).
- Mendelson, Cheryl, *Home Comforts: The Art and Science of Keeping House* (Scribner, 1999). A comprehensive reference that honors the many benefits of housekeeping.
- Moore, Thomas, *The Re-enchantment of Everyday Life* (Harper Collins, 1996). Brings body and spirit together.
- Needleman, Jacob, *Time and the Soul*, (Currency/Doubleday, 1998), *Money and the Meaning of Life* (1994). Accessible philosophical works that face issues directly.
- Richmond, Lewis, *Work as a Spiritual Practice* (Broadway Books, 1999). Buddhist approach with lots of workplace anecdotes and practices to try.
- St. James, Elaine, *Simplify Your Life: 100 Ways to Slow Down and Enjoy the Things That Really Matter* (Hyperion, 1994). Short and to-the-point.
- Schor, Juliet B., *The Overworked American: The Unexpected Decline of Leisure* (Basic Books, 1992). Facts about rising work hours, with a practical plan to stop the trend.
- Scott, Dru, *How To Put More Time in Your Life* (New American Library, 1981). Uses a practical, philosophical values perspective. Out of print, but worth checking out.
- Stoddard, Alexandra, *The Art of the Possible: The Path from Perfectionism to Balance and Freedom* (William Morrow and Company, Inc. New York, 1995). Wise and compassionate.
- Wurman, Richard Saul, *Information Anxiety* (Doubleday, 1989). Excellent analysis and prescription for information overload.

The Tickler File

A comprehensive, flexible reminder system

One style of tickler file is a set of 17 file folders – one for every month, January through December, and one for every week, 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th.

- When an upcoming deadline, event, or other To-Do comes into your task stream, put a reminder into the folder where you'll need to start in order to make the deadline. For example, for a report due October 15th you may need to start two weeks before, so the reminder goes in September. For a conference, tickle when you need to register, not when the conference occurs.

You might want to use 3x5 cards for reminders instead of flimsy slips of paper. Since the tickler is full-size you can use the conference brochure, the meeting agenda or the tax form itself, rather than a separate reminder.

- When the first of the month comes up, open the month's folder and break down what's in it into weeks. That month's folder then goes to the back of the tickler for next year. Then, on the first day of the week, open that week's folder and break down what's in it into days. You may end up with a stack of specific tasks for specific days, i.e., things to do on Monday, Tuesday, etc., and another stack for tasks that can be done at any time during the week. Empty week folders go to the back of the tickler, ready for the next month's breakdown.
- For recurring tasks, like taxes or monthly reports, once the task is finished, put the tickle into the next month, quarter, week, or wherever appropriate.
- For complex projects, identify major tasks and tickle each segment. Templates for recurring complex projects may be useful as well. (See Project Management handout for details.)

A tickler can be electronic as well as physical. Enter tickles as above and access them as the weeks and months come up. With electronic ticklers you will need to park the actual papers chronologically in a handy physical file.

Five Step Project Management

1) Brainstorm tasks

Make a card or 'sticky' for each task component. Don't worry about time frame, sequence or resources needed. All components should be at a similar level of detail -- not too general, not too specific.

2) Link tasks with resources

Identify resources needed for each task; write them on a 'sticky' or 3x5 card

Time	Total elapsed time from when the task begins to when it is done. Factor in time for people to get back to you, interruptions, other demands, not just actual task-time (e.g., it may take a half-hour to write a press release, but it may take 2 hours from when you begin to when you have it in hand.)
Information	The information needed to complete the task. Be sure to factor in the time it takes to gather information into total elapsed time above.
People	Sign-offs, consultations, buy-in. Factor in other peoples' schedules and preferences for how they like to be approached.

3) Lay out project

Arrange 'stickies' or cards serially (one after another) or in parallel (side-by-side)

serially	where the output of one task is the input of another (e.g., "Prepare Original to Copy" output is the input of "Produce 100 Copies of Report")
in parallel	where tasks can occur within the same time frame (e.g., "Prepare Original to Copy" can occur at the same time as "Assemble Mailing List")

4) Make adjustments

Add up the total elapsed time of the entire project. For parallel tasks, use the time of the task that takes longest. Work backwards from the deadline to determine tentative start date. If your result is not within the schedule get buy-in from self and others to make adjustments. Be creative and cooperative.

5) Incorporate into reminder system

With a workable, bought-in schedule in hand, 'tickle' the beginning of each component into your reminder system. Keep overall project layout for reference.

For a comprehensive schedule, create a similar layout for each project. Incorporate each into the reminder system. Identify crunch times and make further adjustments.

Getting and Staying Organized

Here-and-Now sorting reveals the pattern in the chaos

Stay in the Here-and-Now when sorting. Making associations to other times and places, entertaining endless possibilities, and creative thinking take you off task.

Let the material take its own shape. Expect uncertainty at first. Before long Like-with-Like piles will emerge. When you don't know where it should go, put it in an "I Don't Know What To Do With This" pile. Keep sorting and decide later.

Staging develops the middle ground

With categories in hand, the next question is, where should the stuff go? Use these catchphrases to determine intuitive, appropriate, accommodating places to put your stuff.

Active or Archive -- Have things you use often close at hand, what you use less often farther away. Things rarely used can be out of sight, even out of the room. Bring what's most current into the foreground; let the rest be in the background.

Move It Along -- Move things in the direction they're headed. Things to be mailed might go near the door; things to file might go on top of the file drawer or in the first folder; reading might go by your chair; data entry next to the computer.

Like with Like -- Put like things together, all the car things, all the financial things, all the rubber bands, all the unread magazines, etc. With Active/Archive in mind as well, you may have two places for similar material, one active and one archive.

Staging honors how things actually happen by establishing tools and areas to accommodate stuff in transit between the In-box and the storage file, Outbox, or wastebasket.

Sustaining keeps you organized

All-or-nothing organizing takes a heavy toll -- you're highly organized a small percentage of the time; most of the time you struggle. The trick in staying organized is to spend as much time as you need, but no more. Observe how long/how often you do maintenance tasks. If you spend too much time, propose a step down; if you spend too little time, step up the frequency and/or time spent. Make sure your staging tools are in place.

Ending helps you disengage from organizing gracefully

People often don't start organizing because they fear that if they start they'll never stop. Before you start, figure out how you'll stop. Choose how long to work, then set a timer with 1/4 to 1/3 of the total time remaining to close down the work. Three steps of close-down are: acknowledge progress thus far; identify the bridging step to the next session, move things along to their appropriate staging areas. Disengage from organizing so you can go on to something else with a sense of accomplishment, a clear idea of what's next, and an inviting workspace.

Dealing with Others

Meetings

Meetings can take up an enormous amount of time, so it's wise to do them well. Every person attending has some power in determining how a meeting goes, not just the convenor. If we use our power well, everyone benefits.

- Articulate the goals of the meeting for yourself. Some goals may not be on the agenda, such as cementing a relationship, reconciling after a difficult episode, building trust.
- Establish clear time boundaries. Start and end on time if at all possible. If the meeting looks like it will run over, renegotiate the end time; if it starts late, renegotiate the agenda. Get buy-in for an on-time start/end next time, and then do it – regardless! Consider designating a 'gatekeeper' to get latecomers up to speed before joining the meeting.
- Have an agenda. Best is an agenda in hand before the meeting, with an opportunity for input. Next best is an agenda handed out at the meeting, again with an opportunity for input, or an agenda-building time at the beginning. Note proposed times for each agenda item.
- Make sure those who need to be there are there and those who don't need to be there aren't. You might attend only part of the meeting if appropriate. If you don't think you need attend, ask the convenor for 'leave'; s/he might have unstated goals not apparent to you. If you don't go, arrange to get whatever information might have circulated, formally or informally.

Communication Styles

We often assume that because people have functioning ears and mouths that they listen and talk as we do. Not so! Some people want just the facts, others want the whole context. Some want to know how things affect everyone, others just want results. Here are a few tips:

- The fact that you've given a message doesn't mean it's been received. Ask questions to make sure you're understood. ("This is how it looks to me. How does it look to you?" or "I've got the deadline down for the end of the month. What do you have in your calendar?")
- Observe how others talk, then use *their* style, rather than your own. Then you'll be more easily understood.
- Be up front; say what you need. Make it easy for others to tell you what they need.
- Remember that 70% of communication is tone of voice and body language. If you bark, smirk, sigh, fidget, or look away, your actions speak louder than any words.

Delegation and Empowerment

The best way to do something might be not to do it at all. Delegation empowers our colleagues and builds team effort.

- Analyze the task into reasonable chunks. Intermediate goals are helpful.
- Tailor the job to the person.
- Let the person know when, how and what kind of check-ins to expect.
- Be as flexible in terms of style, timing, and quality as you possibly can.

Priority Play

Provide a framework

Rate the priority of each task as it enters your work stream, top (A), middle (B), or low (C)

- _____ your priority
- _____ those above you
- _____ those below you
- _____ those around you
- _____ the organization/mission

Identify resources needed:

- information _____
- physical resources _____
- buy-ins, consultations, sign-offs _____

Place the task within the overall schedule, including deadlines and milestones

When priorities shift

Disengage from old priority configuration:

Identify tasks whose priority has been bumped. Communicate to those above, below, and around you, based on the new rating. Park bumped tasks, project when to revisit them, and set a reminder to do so.

Meet the challenge creatively:

Call on additional resources -- colleagues, outside help. Devise alternate scenarios. Be willing to do things in a different way. Be flexible.

Acknowledge the new reality:

Revise timetable and renegotiate if necessary. Consider the quality level. Whenever possible, put in effort commensurate with return, i.e., give less time to tasks that give minimal return. Make the tough decisions and make peace with them.

DECISION SIEVE

Here is a no-brainer way to reveal your preferences when faced with a decision. Just go through the steps mindlessly and see what happens. If all else fails, flip a coin.

Step 1: Assign each possibility a number. Then compare each possibility one at a time to every other possibility using the grid below. Circle the possibility you prefer in each pair.

1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
		3	3	3	3	3	3	3
		4	5	6	7	8	9	
			4	4	4	4	4	4
			5	6	7	8	9	
				5	5	5	5	5
				6	7	8	9	
					6	6	6	6
					7	8	9	
						7	7	7
						8	9	
							8	8
								9

Step 2: Count how many times you circled each number; enter the number for each below

1: ___ 2: ___ 3: ___ 4: ___ 5: ___ 6: ___ 7: ___ 8: ___ 9: ___

Step 3: Arrange possibilities in order of the most 'votes'

1st choice: ___	4th choice: ___	7th choice: ___
2nd choice: ___	5th choice: ___	8th choice: ___
3rd choice: ___	6th choice: ___	9th choice: ___