



Free Report No.1

How to create more personal time

Would you like to reclaim 2 hours every day?

It is a fact of modern living today that no-one seems to have enough time to do what needs to be done, or more importantly what they would love to do.

In his brief report I will show you how to reclaim up to 2 hours every day just by adopting some basic strategies around time.

A key factor in time management is knowing where, when and how you are giving time away or not utilising it to its best effect. The main areas that I find people lose precious time are as follows:

- No priorities list
- Lack of a daily plan
- Poor email management/ protocol
- Procrastination

I will take each of these topics in turn and show you how you can turn around the negative impact these are having on your day into a positive outcome and thus reclaim some of your precious time.

Developing a Priorities List

Priorities are often linked with goal setting and a key author in this field is Brian Tracy. Some of what I am about to share with you originated from Brian's fabulous book "Eat that Frog".

Firstly, how do you determine what is a priority and what is not? The initial step in this process is to write down EVERYTHING you need to do. The next step is to get a sheet of paper, or you can create an online document if you wish, and create 5 columns as follows:-

A = Urgent – "Must Do or there will be serious consequences"
B = Important – "Should Do or there will be mild consequences"
C = Nice to do – "no consequences"
D = Delegate - "Pass onto someone else where possible"
E = Eliminate – "Makes no difference – so remove from list"

So now you have a fairly comprehensive list of tasks and how important they are, but you still don't have a plan for which to do first.

The second step is to rationalise your list as follows:
If you have a number of items in each section you then need to consider each of them and how important they are within that group. You can then allocate a level of importance to them as follows:

A1, A2, A3
B1, B2, B3 etc etc

This way, what you are left with is a comprehensive list of tasks, their level of importance and how urgent they are.

This then provides you with the skeleton plan from which to create your Daily or Monthly Plan/ Schedule.

Creating a Daily Plan

A simple tool of creating a daily schedule can give you back at least an hour a day because you don't have to continually think about what you are doing or for how long because it is already done for you.

Please don't think that you have to have the latest personal organiser, Blackberry or other electronic gadget for this to work. **All you need is a pen and paper.** You can take it one stage further to create a Word document or spreadsheet and this way you can highlight and colour code specific topics so that they stand out better for you on the screen.

So, "when am I going to have the time to write this plan or create this fancy colour-coded spreadsheet?" I hear you ask.

Well, let me tell you, that by giving 10 – 15 minutes to this task once a week (last thing on a Friday for the following week or over the weekend), you will save yourself more time Monday to Friday than you ever thought possible.

However, in order to see the benefit of this exercise you need to be aware of how you currently spend your time. So, BEFORE you embark on any schedule, you need to do a basic plan of how you currently use your time each day. This should highlight the areas where there is either "dead" or wasted time. Once you have this THEN you can create your NEW daily planner and just watch all that missing time come flooding back!

Email Management/ Protocol

Nowadays it is hard to remember a time without email – however did we manage?

I still remember my first email account back in 1994 and the feeling of “wow” this is so new and so cool. In fact email has been around since 1971 thanks to its creator Ray Tomlinson.

However, today, email has taken over most of our lives, with one estimate being that there are over 30 Billion emails sent each day. This is huge when you consider the number of spam or unsolicited emails that are included in this figure. A study in 2007 reported that almost 93% of all email was Spam or Unsolicited!

So, how do you manage your daily emails and can you do it better or more effectively or efficiently?

The key to good email management is to set some boundaries around it. That is to say, create some rules that you will adhere to in order not to be distracted by it unnecessarily. Some key hints and tips on how to manage your emails more effectively and thus reclaim some of your valuable time are as follows:

- Limit when you read email
- Limit how long you read/respond to email
- Categorise email
- Prioritise email

Limit when you read email

By setting specific times of day that you will read email, you are automatically gaining time by not being distracted by every message that comes into your in-box. In addition, it also removes the stress to respond to every message as soon as it comes in.

In order that the people sending you messages don't think you are ignoring them, you can set up an automatic response to every email to outline how you now deal with email, for example:

“Thank you for your email which I will respond to as soon as possible. Please note that I read and reply to my emails three

times per day at 9am, 1pm and 5pm, and I guarantee a reply to your message within 24 hours”

People will soon learn that your time is just as precious as theirs and not to expect an immediate response. Thus, when you do read their email you can give it your due consideration rather than firing off an instant response. This way your stress levels are reduced and you don't feel bad about not replying instantly, and this also manages the expectations of the sender - A Win-Win situation.

Limit how long you read/respond to email

You should set a time boundary around how long you will spend on both reading and responding to emails at the times you have now set to do this. As email tends to come in fairly frequently, you can quite easily be responding to email all day if you are not vigilant about your time.

So, allocate a fixed time for your email review. For example you could set aside 10 – 15 minutes to scan through your emails so that you can take note of the sender, the title or topic and if any action is required and by when. Once you have done the initial scan, you can respond to the most urgent messages – again allowing a specific time for this. The key here is to ascertain if the level of importance given by the sender is their view on the urgency or the actual level of urgency. This is more difficult to decipher but if you know the sender then you may well have a feel for how much or little they over-state the importance level of actions.

Thus you can save the non-urgent or non-action emails to your end of day slot rather than being distracted by them during the day and potentially interfering with your daily schedule/plan

Categorise Emails

If your email system allows it, create a prioritisation system or just create folders within your in-box – Urgent, Important, Read-Only, Personal. You can then review each folder by allocating time for this either in daily schedule or saving them until the end of the day (e.g. Read-Only and Personal).

This way you will get out of the habit of reading your emails as soon as they arrive in your in-box and hopefully regain some valuable time for other more pressing things.

Procrastination

When you feel that there is so much going on that there is a major sense of overwhelm, our brains tend to protect us by shutting down and saying “Too much going on – I’m out of here!”

Rather than this helping the situation, what this does is to create a snowball effect, i.e. too much going on, feel overwhelmed, don’t know what to do first so do nothing, and then the list of things to do just gets bigger and bigger and then there is eve more to do, more overwhelm etc....

So, how do you break the cycle and put things back into some sort of order and regain that calm feeling?

Procrastination is invariably helped by working out what the priorities are, so following the steps as laid out in the “Creating a Daily Plan/Schedule” and “Developing a Priorities List” sections above will assist in this. So these should be your steps 1 and 2 to aid with procrastination.

Once you have your daily plan/schedule and your list of priorities then you will find that procrastination will become less prevalent.

The other key aspect of procrastination is the avoidance strategy that we all tend to put in place in order NOT to do something that is either not pleasant, is difficult or you just don’t want to do it.

In these circumstances you need to assess why you are avoiding the task. Key things you can do in this instance are:

- Create a list of all the tasks you are avoiding
- Rationalise “why” you are not doing them (you need to be totally honest with yourself on this one)
- Journal your thoughts around the really major stumbling blocks

Once you can see why you are not doing them, then you can put them into perspective. It could be that some are not as important as you initially thought, and some may have been on your list for so long that they are no longer necessary. The remaining tasks that are still important are the ones you now need to use the Prioritisation tasks on.

If you find that you are still having some difficulty in committing to doing one or two of the tasks, then this is the time to start looking a bit deeper into the reasons “Why”.

An excellent tool for working out your thoughts and feelings on subjects that are bothering you is to use a Journal. The act of dumping all your thoughts onto paper (or in an on-line document if you prefer) can be extremely therapeutic. You will find that some of your thoughts don't make total sense, some are just random and others are quite profound. The outcome will be that you will have a clearer idea as to why you have been avoiding things and this can be the starting point to resolving the issue.

It could be that it is not the task but who it is for, or it could be you feel the task is too big for you to do on your own or it could be a number of other different reasons. However, now that you are aware of the reasons, you can then be proactive about doing something about it, whether that be talking to colleagues or friends or someone you trust or even a coach to help you work through your next steps. You will feel much better once you have reached this stage and the whole issue will hopefully be in a much clearer and you will feel more positive about dealing with it.

Sometimes it is just easier to do something rather than continually avoid doing it or ignoring it. This is the essence of Brian Tracy's book “Eat that Frog” whereby he advocates getting the horrible task out of the way first and thus leaving the rest of the day clear for things you would rather do.

Summary

Time is the ultimate dynamic force – we can neither stop it nor turn it back, so we have to work with it and to best effect.

By adopting some or all of the above tactics on how to use your time more effectively, you will again back not only time but also peace of mind and reassurance that you have used it well and wisely and that tomorrow is another day!

A NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR

I hope you found this short report helpful to you.

If you would like to find out more information about regaining personal time, space, energy and self-care then I invite you to visit The Calm Coach website - www.thecalmcoach.com, where you will find more free reports and information to move your life into the calm zone.

To contact me directly:

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Kindest Regards

A handwritten signature in black ink on a light green background. The signature reads "Maureen" in a cursive script, followed by a long horizontal flourish.



ABOUT MAUREEN YORK

Maureen is a caring, sensitive and highly professional coach who has been helping to develop people's careers and lives for over 15 years in a higher education/training environment.

Through *The Calm Coach* she now brings her passion for helping others into a dedicated coaching practice combining life coaching and raw food coaching to help the busy and overwhelmed to once again breathe, thrive and grow.

No matter where you are at in life, Maureen can help you make the changes that are right for you, and help you to once again breathe, relax and feel more joyful as you bring the breathing space back into YOUR world.

The Calm Coach offers a suite of coaching options from one-on-one sessions and packages through to group programmes, workshops and other events.

To discuss what option would be most suitable for you, please contact Maureen directly as follows:

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