



Susan R. Johnson

srj.susanjohnson@gmail.com

Managing multiple priorities

thriving
a m i d s t c h a o s

www.thrivingamidstchaos.com

Topics



Core tool: An effective to-do system



Core strategy: Engage regularly with MIP's



Core habit: Weekly & daily tactical plans

Topics



Core tool: An effective to-do system



Core strategy: Engage regularly with MIP's



Core habit: Weekly & daily tactical plans

The solution: A effective “distributed cognition system” for storing to-do’s in order to support *prospective memory*:

- ❑ Calendar
- ❑ Lists
- ❑ Physical and recorded reminders



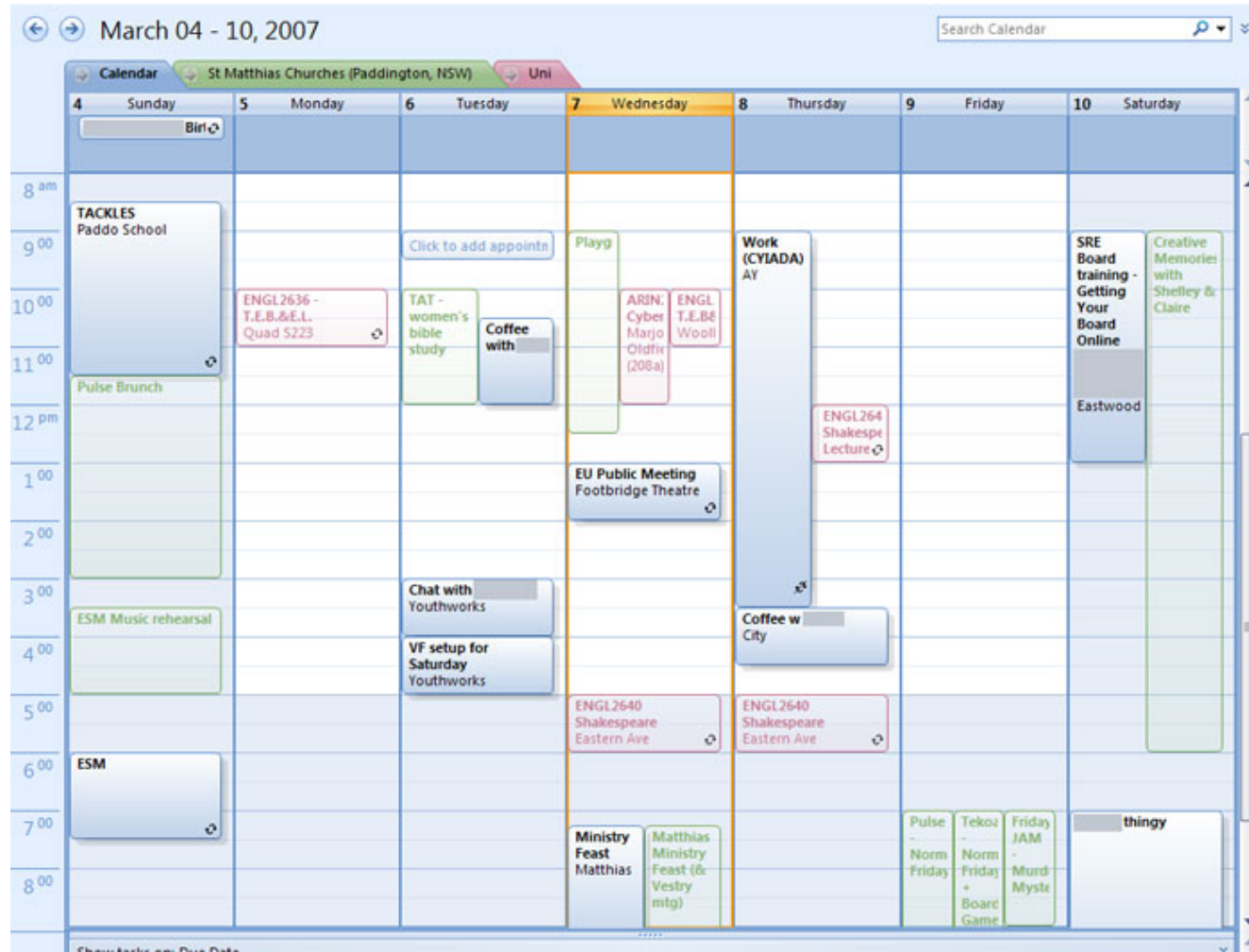
- ❖ ~4 items only
- ❖ Can't prioritize:
 - Later=now
 - Unimportant=important
 - Maybe=for sure
- ❖ The Zeigarnik effect



Get everything out of your head:

- Reduced stress
- No more reliance on memory
- Attention improves
- Easier to plan, prioritize and prune

❖ A single calendar with all your time commitments



❖ A single* master to-do list

MASTER TO DO LIST

- call John (351-5555) re: Thurs meeting
- Draft introduction for budget report
- Buy 3-hole punch for office
- Start planning Spring break trip
- Purge one file drawer
- read article on strategic planning
- Google Vitamix reviews
- Develop specs for Smith proposal
- Complete Ale's performance review
- order fresh Turkey
- call dentist office for appointment
- investigate new wi-fi plan
- take jacket to tailor for fitting
- place ad in ICPC
- renew Chamber Membership
- email Jane Doe re: her info request
- reorganize The break room
- plan office holiday party

Avoid poorly defined to-do list items:

- **Too vague:** e.g. “call Mary”
 - Instead: “Call Mary (333-4444) to schedule lunch for next Wednesday to discuss new committee”
- **Some items are too big:** e.g. “K-application”
 - Instead: “Spend one hour drafting Aim 1 for K”
 - Consider keeping a separate list of **projects**

Project List

PERSONAL

Plan Dad's 80th birthday party



WORK

Hire research assistant



Task List

☐ Email my sister to check on dates

☐ Draft job description



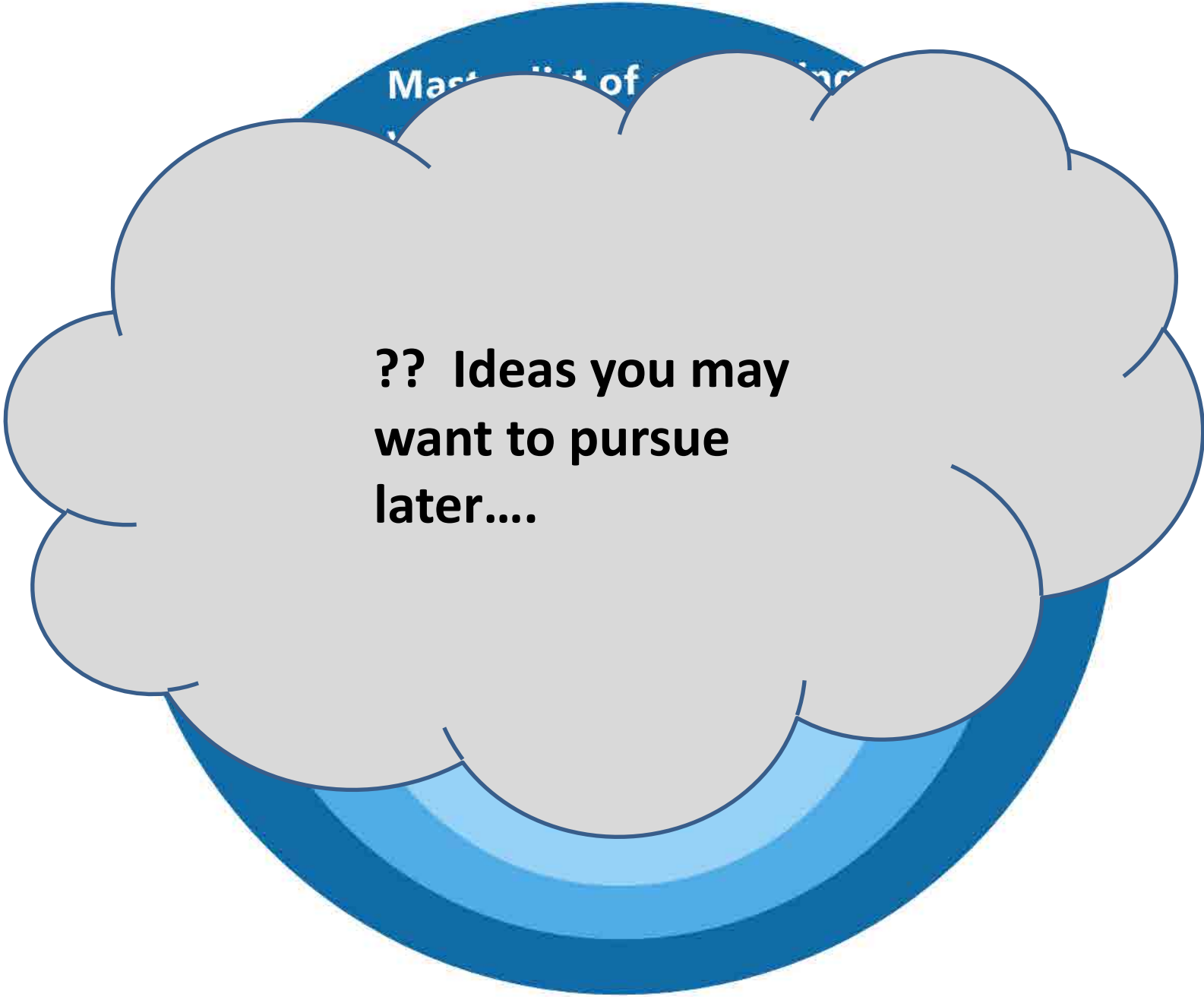
The diagram consists of four concentric circles. The outermost circle is the darkest blue and contains the text 'Master list of everything you intend to do'. The next circle inward is a medium blue and contains the text 'Projects and tasks that are in progress'. The third circle is a lighter blue and contains the text 'Weekly task plan'. The innermost circle is the lightest blue and contains the text 'Daily task plan'.

**Master list of everything
you intend to do**

**Projects and tasks that
are in progress**

Weekly task plan

Daily task plan



**?? Ideas you may
want to pursue
later....**

❖ A storage system for ideas to consider *later*

Master list

Work that you
intend to do

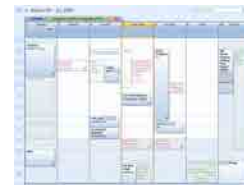


Ideas for later

Work you *might*
do, someday

Storage options:

✱ Reminder?



calendar



list / file/
folder





**Master list of everything
you intend to do**

**Projects and tasks that
are in progress**

Weekly task plan

Daily task plan

**?? IDEAS TO
CONSIDER LATER**

Topics



Core tool: An effective to-do system



Core strategy: Engage regularly with “MIP’s”



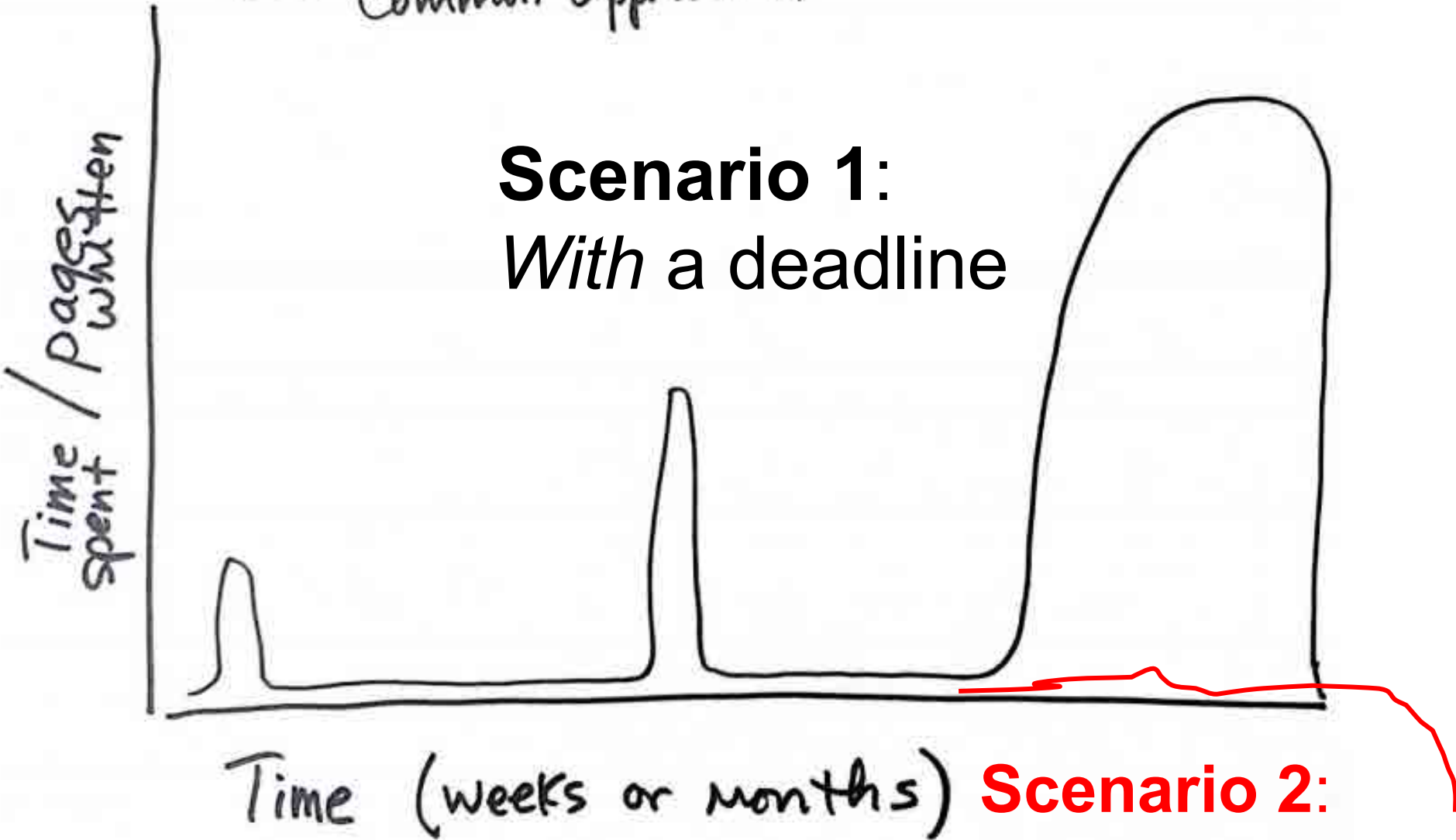
Core habit: Weekly & daily tactical plans

MIPs?

- most important projects**
 - what are yours?**

— Common approach

Scenario 1: *With a deadline*



Scenario 2:
Without a deadline

- 
- “...[make] real progress every single day.”

-- John Kotter (2008). *A Sense of Urgency*

Konosuke Matsushita Professor of Leadership, Emeritus at the Harvard Business School

A brief history of academic writing advice

- Pre- Boice
- 1980s: the Boice data
- Post- Boice:
 - **“write every day in moderate sessions”**
- 2011-2015: the Sword data

Helen Sword (2017).
Air & Light & Time & Space,
Harvard University Press

**“Only 1 in 8
wrote every day.”**

~~“Write every day”~~

- ❖ Word count
- ❖ Recency effect

Write regularly, for long enough to make progress, and frequently enough to stay engaged.

Parameters?

1. Interval between sessions: \leq a week
2. Session length: sufficient to keep on track
(? ~3-5 hours/week = 45-60"/d)

Try:
At the start of the work
day, work on an MIP
before you do anything
else

**Or, find *your*
best time do
it**



Schedule time blocks

Mon
8
12
5
8

○ **Have a goal for the block & a simple action to get started.**

**** Focused Work ****

○ **Plan a starting task for the next session, then stop**







Time Block:

3 different scheduling plan approaches

	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat	Sun	
6:00	Project (same time every day)							
7:00								
8:00					Project (one big chunk per week)			
9:00								
10:00				Project (ad hoc)				
11:00								
12:00								
1:00								
2:00								
3:00	Project (office)		Project (library)					
4:00								
5:00								
6:00								
7:00								
8:00								
9:00								
10:00								

Scheduled time block alternative:

... based on Neil Fiore's "unschedule" method.

	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat	Sun
6:00							
7:00							
8:00							
9:00							
10:00							
11:00							
12:00							
1:00							
2:00							
3:00							
4:00							
5:00							
6:00	Keys: 1- Set an intention to do MIP work at the beginning of the week (or day)						
7:00							
8:00							
9:00	2- Decide exactly what you will do when time is available						
10:00							
11:00							



Write down what you are going to do

25 + 5

25 + 5

25 + 5

25 + 15

Repeat as needed

Manage
interruptions

Francesco Cirillo

<http://www.pomodorotechnique.com/>

the Pomodoro technique

* Check your play store for a Pomodoro phone app

Topics



Core tool: An effective to-do system



Core strategy: Engage regularly with MIP's



Core habit: **Weekly & daily tactical plans**

At the beginning of the week:

- Sketch a plan for overall time use that supports your whole life

Plan work boundaries & personal / social activities

Week of:

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	
0600	<div>Exercise</div>						<div>Calls with family</div>	
0700								
0800							<div>Bike ride</div>	
0900								
1000								
1100								
1200							<div>Lunch</div>	
1300								
1400								
1500								
1600					<div>groceries</div>	<div>Friends birthday party</div>		
1700								
1800			<div>dinner</div>		<div>dinner</div>	<div>dinner</div>	<div>Eat out With friends</div>	
1900	<div>dinner</div>	<div>dinner</div>		<div>dinner</div>				
2000								
2100				<div>Movie</div>				
				<div>PTO night</div>			<div>Day OFF</div>	

At the beginning of the week:

- Review and update your to-do list(s)
- Review your calendar(s) 3+ weeks forward
- Identify at least ONE chunk of MIP work that you want to *complete* in the coming week

At the beginning of the day:

- Ask yourself what you would like to accomplish *in addition to* scheduled and routine work – focus on MIPs

Daily: MIT list

Must* be done today

-
-
- ...

Aim* to do today

- 1.. (highest priority work task)
- 2..
- 3..

* The **deadline** is today

* "It will be so great if I get this done today but nothing bad will happen if it don't."

Productivity Resources: general time management /organization/ productivity

David Allen (2105). *Getting Things Done: The art of stress free productivity, 2nd edition*

A popular, effective, comprehensive workflow and planning system. If you aren't sure about buying the book, go to <https://www.dandywithlens.com/getting-things-done-gtd/> for a brief overview of this system

Michael Hyatt (2019). *Free to Focus*.

This book covers goal setting, planning, and executing to reach those goals and other relevant topics.

NOTE: IMHO, the combo of *Free to Focus* and *Getting Things Done* provides a complete productivity system.

Michael Linenberger. *The One Minute To-do List* (<https://www.michaellinenberger.com/free1MTD.htm>)

You can request a **free** pdf download of this book at the link above. The method is an effective way to create and manage your to-do (task) list, and can be used either as a stand alone, or as a complement to the GTD next action list method

Laura Vanderkam (2015). *I Know How She Does It: How Successful Women Make the Most of Their Time*

Vanderkam is a journalist and author who became interested in how people spend their time, and now writes books about successful strategies. This book focuses on the actual experiences of a group of 100 women who have busy professional careers and children at home, and who kept time diaries for a week. Vanderkam analyzed the diaries and identified strategies these women use to be successful in both spheres. **Not just for women!**

Cal Newport (2012) *So Good They Can't Ignore You: Why Skills Trump Passion in the Quest for Work You Love*

Newport wrote this book as he was finishing his postdoctoral fellowship at MIT, at a time that he was contemplating his own career path as a theoretical computer scientist. He researched the idea that you should "follow your passion," and in this book explains that that is *not* the best approach, and what you should do instead. **Relevant for anyone at the beginning of their career, or for those considering a career change.**



<http://www.asianefficiency.com/>

The Asian Efficiency group offers a wide range of both free and fee based resources (newsletter, podcasts, videos, white papers, courses), and they include most all of the effective systems, trips, and strategies – a **“one stop shopping” resource**

Productivity Resources: Writing

Jensen and Silvia recommend the same core advice: write nearly every day, but each then covers additional issues not included by the other. Between these two books, the topic is covered completely.

Paul J. Silvia (2018, second edition). *How to Write a Lot: A Practical Guide to Productive Academic Writing*.

Silvia is an academic psychologist, and this book is perhaps the most popular in this genre. This second edition reflects the authors new status as a dad with young children (making his advice about finding time to write more realistic). The book has been updated to apply to a wider variety of disciplines, and has a new chapter devoted to **grant and fellowship writing**.

Joli Jensen (2017). *Write No Matter What: Advice for Academics*, The University of Chicago Press

The academic world Jensen describes is that of a liberal arts and sciences university (she is a communications studies professor) but the advice applies equally well to health science faculty and trainees. She sends the same message as Silvia - write nearly every day - but covers some additional reasons for resistance and has different views on some issues. She provides welcome detail on **writing accountability group options, and how to deal with stalled projects**.

Cal Newport (2016). *Deep Work: Rules for Focused Success in a Distracted World*, 2016

- Detailed strategies for planning time to write, with emphasis on time blocking.
- See also, Study Hacks blog: Cal posts about “deep work” and other productivity topics: <http://calnewport.com/blog/>

Gina Hiatt. The Academic Ladder: blog on academic writing <http://academicladder.com/>

Joan Bolker (1998). *Writing your dissertation in fifteen minutes a day*. New York, Henry Holt and Company, 1998

- A short introduction to “writing” every day.

Neil Fiore (2007). *The Now Habit*, 2007

- Practical approaches to procrastination

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