

PROCRASTINATOR TO PRODUCER

WORKBOOK

(ALL ACTION STEPS)

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MODULE 0: INTRODUCTION

ACTION STEP 1

YOUR PROCRASTINATION FREE FUTURE

This exercise is a bit different than others because you will constantly switch between steps 1 and 2.

Step 1 is about imagining a specific outcome if you had infinite willpower and infinite energy (e.g., waking up and getting out of bed easily and effortlessly in the morning).

Step 2 is about bringing to mind the potential obstacles toward making that outcome happen (e.g., hitting the snooze button or going to bed late).

Here are the detailed instructions for both steps.

Step 1:

Think about your life right now... and ask yourself, what would it look like if I had infinite willpower and infinite energy?

What would various areas of my life look like? For example, what would the following areas of my life look like if I had endless willpower and energy: your health, productivity, career, relationships, leisure time, schedule, or your morning?

Another good question is to imagine how your average day would change if you had endless willpower and energy.

Step 2:

Once you've examined an area of your life, ask yourself: What gets in the way? What obstacles are preventing me from already doing this?

And then write down those obstacles.

When you've imagined an outcome and determined the obstacles, move on to imagine another outcome.

MODULE 1: PROCRASTINATION BASICS

ACTION STEP 2

AFFIRM WHAT'S IMPORTANT TO YOU

Step 1:

Identify 3 core values.

Some thoughts to consider as you're choosing your values:

- Values are a reflection of what you care about. It doesn't matter if you are "good" at that value, or if other people would understand why this is important to you.
- A value can be something that comes naturally to you, or something you would like to develop in yourself.
- It can be an attitude (such as seeing the good in others or having a sense of humor)
- It can be a personal strength (such as courage, tenacity, or creativity)
- It can be an ethical or moral virtue (such as honesty, fairness, or compassion)
- It can be a community you belong to (such as your family or your faith)
- It can be what you would like to experience in life (such as joy, peace, or learning)
- It can be what you would like to share with others (such as kindness or positive influence).

It's best if you come up with your own values, but if you need inspiration, check out the list of values below the instructions.

Come up with at least 3 core values.

Step 2:

Affirm one of your Core Values. Choose one of your values and write about it for ten minutes. Describe why this value is important to you and/or your family or community. You could also write about how you express this value in your everyday life. If there is a difficult experience or decision you are facing, you could write about how this value might guide or support you.

List of common values:

- Authenticity
- Achievement
- Adventure
- Authority
- Autonomy
- Balance
- Beauty
- Boldness
- Compassion
- Challenge
- Citizenship
- Community
- Competency
- Contribution
- Creativity
- Curiosity
- Determination
- Fairness
- Faith
- Fame
- Friendships
- Fun
- Growth
- Happiness
- Honesty
- Humor
- Influence
- Inner Harmony
- Justice
- Kindness
- Knowledge
- Leadership
- Learning
- Love
- Loyalty
- Meaningful Work
- Openness
- Optimism
- Peace
- Pleasure
- Poise
- Popularity
- Recognition
- Religion
- Reputation
- Respect
- Responsibility
- Security
- Self-Respect
- Service
- Spirituality
- Stability
- Success
- Status
- Trustworthiness
- Wealth
- Wisdom

MODULE 2: SETTING UP A PRODUCTIVE ENVIRONMENT

ACTION STEP 3 SETTING UP YOUR COMPUTER

Instructions for setting up your browser:

1. Use Shift + Ctrl + B to hide the bookmark bar.
2. Move add-ons and extensions all the way to the right (see video).
3. Install Empty New Tab Page extension (see video)

Instructions for setting up your desktop:

1. Create a folder called “Desktop” and move all of your shortcuts into that folder (see video). Alternatively, you could declutter your desktop and move everything where it belongs.
2. Delete all icons on your taskbar (see video).

Instructions for blocking websites:

1. Head over to getcoldturkey.com and download the website-blocking application. I recommend the pro version (~\$20) because it allows you to schedule when you want to block which websites. But there's a free version as well.
2. Create one or multiple block lists in Cold Turkey. I personally have two block lists. List one blocks websites that I never want to access on my laptop (e.g., news websites, Facebook, Instagram). These are websites that I'm susceptible to checking throughout the day, and I don't want that. List two blocks websites that I don't want to access at certain points in my day. For example, I block gmail.com in the morning because I don't want to start my morning with email. If you have the pro version, schedule when you're going to block which websites. Personally, I block certain websites (list one) 24/7 and certain websites until around 10am (list two).

ACTION STEP 4

SETTING UP YOUR PHONE

1. Disable all notifications.

If you don't know how to do it, google it. It will take you five minutes and can save you hours every day. Remember, every interruption can lead to hours and hours of procrastination.

2. Delete all of your time-wasting apps.

Be ruthless here. In the past, I've had to delete everything from Facebook to Instagram to BBC to News Apps to Games and so on. If there's an app you spend way too much time on, delete it now.

Keep in mind, all of these apps are made to be as addictive as possible. So it's normal to feel a little uneasy when deleting them.

3. Set up your home screen.

I suggest not having any apps on that home screen. But at the very least don't have any tempting apps (e.g., Facebook or Candy Crush) there.

Remember, every app your brain registers (consciously or unconsciously) primes you into some goal or behavior.

4. Disable your default web browser and download Firefox Focus.

Go to your apps manager and either delete your web browser or if you can't, disable it. Then, download Firefox Focus and start using it as your default browser.

Firefox Focus reduces mindless web browsing by not keeping a history, not remembering passwords, and not keeping you logged in.

5. Pick your wallpaper deliberately.

I like to use nature sceneries for background images because they have been shown to reduce stress, boost concentration, and more.

6. (Optional) Download an app usage app.

There are many out there, just pick one. This adds a layer of accountability and makes you a bit more aware and self-conscious.

7. (Optional) Download an app-blocking app.

There are many out there, just pick one. This is optional because you wouldn't need it if you had deleted all time-wasting apps.

That said, if you're still spending too much time on certain apps, you can use an app-blocking app to block that app at certain pre-determined periods of time.

Personally, I used to block Gmail and other apps in the morning. Nowadays, I don't do it anymore because the phone is on airplane mode anyway.

ACTION STEP 5

SETTING UP YOUR WORK AND LIVING SPACES

Unlike other Action Steps, this one doesn't need to get done right now. The reason for this is simple: you might simply not have enough time to do it right now.

What I suggest doing instead is creating an action plan. Determine how you're going to tackle the issue of clutter in your life.

- Do you need help? Maybe your spouse? A friend? Your kids?
- Do you need specific instructions? Maybe a book, article, or course?
- Do you maybe need a professional organizer to help you?
- When can you begin?

Read the basic instructions below and then create your action plan.

Determine if someone will help you. Determine if you need a book or some other resource.

Determine if you need to hire an organizer. Determine when you'll begin.

With that said, here are the basic instructions for this Action Step.

Step 1:

(The good news is there is only one step.) Declutter as many of your environments as you feel comfortable with.

This might include decluttering...

- Your bedroom
- Your living room
- Your garage

- Various closets
- Various drawers

If you need help, you'll find several good resources on decluttering below.

And remember, the less clutter --> the less procrastination, the less stress, the less overwhelm, the more willpower, the more happiness, and so on.

It's worth the effort!

So go ahead and create your action plan now.

Resources:

- [The Quickstart Guide to a Decluttered Home](#) (Super short guide on getting started with decluttering)
- [The Ridiculously Thorough Guide to Decluttering Your Home](#) (Long and very thorough guide on how to declutter your home. Lots of visuals. Highly recommend using this as a step-by-step guide.)
- [The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up](#) by Marie Kondo (Easily the most popular book on decluttering with over 13,000 Amazon reviews.)
- [Uncluttered](#) by Joshua Becker (A premium 12-week course “of guided instruction, community, encouragement, and inspiration to help families declutter their home.” Only open for enrollment 3x per year.)

MODULE 3: GETTING ORGANIZED

ACTION STEP 6

DECIDE WHERE YOUR SYSTEM IS GOING TO LIVE

Decide right now where your 5 lists are going to live. Your options include:

- **Microsoft word.** As you've seen in the previous videos, this is my way of implementing this system. I use one word document for all my lists, and I've found this to be incredibly simple and useful.
- **Digital tools.** There are plenty of them out there, including Evernote, Todoist, Omnifocus, Trello, Asana, Wunderlist, and many others. I've tried such tools before, but I prefer using Word.
- **Pen and paper.** If you like it old school you can just use pen, paper, notebooks, and a physical agenda.

I suggest starting with Microsoft Word (or Google Docs or Dropbox Paper or any other word processing tool).

Simply open a doc, add the 5 lists, and voilà – your organization system is ready to be filled.

The 5 lists are:

- Next Actions
- Inbox
- Waiting On
- Tickler
- Someday/Maybe

If you want to get fancy, separate your lists by work and personal life or by other contexts, such as @work, @home, @calls, and @errands.

ACTION STEP 7

PERFORM A BRAIN DUMP

Make a list of everything that has your attention, large and small, professional and personal, distal and proximal – everything.

All your to-dos, have-tos, projects, things to handle, things to finish – everything.

Keep the following ideas in mind as you go about doing this:

- Write it down whether you think it's important or not (remember, it still occupies brain estate!)
- Don't organize yet (meaning, don't put it where it belongs, don't file it, etc...). for now, just capture it
- An exception: if it's obviously trash, you can toss it right away
- Use a trigger list (see below) to make sure you don't miss anything – that's a list with typical incompletes.

Resources:

- [Trigger list](#) from David Allen's GTD system (PDF)

ACTION STEP 8

PROCESS YOUR INBOX

You should now have a massive list of everything that was stored somewhere in the attics of your mind.

Your job now is to get to the bottom of that list. Getting “in” to empty.

This process is about moving the items from your inbox onto the other lists. Or, if something takes less than two minutes, do it immediately.

The lists are:

- **Next Actions.** Does the item have a specific next action attached to it? Is it something you want to do in the next days and weeks? Then it belongs to your Next Actions. If it's a project with several next actions, simply add the entire project to the list and add some specific next actions to it. (You can see an example of this in my sample list.)
- **Waiting On.** Is the item on your list something you're waiting for, such as an email, mail order, or text message? Then it belongs to your Waiting On list.
- **Tickler.** Is the item something you want to get reminded on? Decide when you want to get reminded and add the item to the appropriate place in your Tickler list.
- **Someday/Maybe.** Is the item something you may want to do at a future point in time? Is it a dream or an idea? Then it belongs to your someday/maybe list.
- **Reference/Storage System.** Is the item non-actionable? Is it something you need to keep? Is it something you may need at a later time? Then you need to store it somewhere in your reference/storage system.

Depending on the size of your inbox, getting to the bottom of your list will likely take several hours if not days.

In a way, you're paying the prize for not having prioritized being organized in the past. And we all have to pay that prize sooner or later. The good news is: it's well worth it.

Resources:

- [Sample list of Next Actions, Waiting On, Tickler, and Someday/Maybe](#) (PDF)

MODULE 4: OPTIMIZING YOUR SLEEP

ACTION STEP 9

MINDING YOUR CIRCADIAN RHYTHM

Step 1: (Optional)

If you can't get into the sun within 60 minutes of waking up, invest in a bright light device and use it after waking up in the morning to simulate sunlight. This tells your body it's daytime and sets a healthy circadian rhythm.

Here's a light device I can recommend: <https://www.amazon.com/Circadian-Optics-Therapy-Bright-Spectrum/dp/B01IU9MMPI/>

Step 2:

Download Iris Mini (I now prefer this over f.lux) on your computer.

Download Link: <https://iristech.co/iris-mini/>

It's free and lives on your taskbar. It comes with three settings which you can change by left clicking the icon (this blue icon below).

- **Automatic mode:** During the day color temperature will be 5000K and 100% brightness and at night this will change to 3400K and 80% brightness.
- **Manual mode:** Use 3400K and 80% brightness all the time.
- **Paused:** Iris is paused and does not apply color changes.

I suggest using the automatic mode. If you're in a dark room, you can change it to the manual mode. I wouldn't ever switch to the paused mode, or at least not for a long period of time.

Step 3:

Download a phone app that blocks blue light. I use Twilight for Android. There are many good apps for both Android and Apple.

If your phone comes with a built-in night mode or blue-blocking application, I suggest using that.

Personally, I only switch off my Twilight filter when I'm in direct sunlight.

Recommended apps:

- Twilight

Step 4:

Order a pair of blue-blocking glasses. Yes, they look dorky. But they are also the most effective strategy for setting your circadian rhythm, improving your sleep, and waking up with more energy and alertness every morning.

There are many blue-blocking glasses on the market today. Here are two good options:

- The cheap but ugly version: <https://www.amazon.com/Uvex-Blocking-Computer-SCT-Orange-S1933X/dp/B000USRG90/>
- The expensive but stylish version: <https://www.swanwicksleep.com/>

Step 5: (Optional)

Order red light bulbs for use at night. There are special light bulbs that don't emit any blue light that you can plug directly into any outlet. This is really convenient because you can turn off the normal lights at night and just plug these in.

There are versions for use in the US and Canada as well as versions for international use.

The same website offers other blue-blocking products as well.

Here's the link to the light bulbs: <https://lowbluelights.com/product/night-light-combination/>

And here's a link to an overview of all of their products: <https://lowbluelights.com/>

I understand that there are considerable costs involved with some of these recommendations. If you can't afford everything right now don't worry about it. Just do what works for you. Keep in mind, though, that all of the steps listed here have made a big difference for me.

One last thing: it doesn't matter which options you choose to get bright light exposure in the morning or block blue light exposure at night.

In the morning, your options include stepping into sunlight or using a bright light device. Both are good options.

At night, your options include just using the glasses and doing nothing else. The other option is blocking the blue light on all of your devices (TV, laptop, smartphone) and using red light bulbs. I personally do everything: I wear blue-blocking glasses. I block blue light on my devices. And I use red light bulbs.

ACTION STEP 10

ORDER YOUR SLEEP-ENHANCING SUPPLEMENTS

Decide which supplements you are going to try and order them.

I suggest ordering them from iherb because that's where I order most of my supplements. They ship quickly and inexpensively, they ship internationally, and they have a wide range of products.

Here are the supplements we discussed with recommended products and dosing recommendations:

Melatonin

- <https://www.iherb.com/pr/Life-Extension-Melatonin-1-mg-60-Capsules/4385>
- 0.5-2mcg
- 30-60 minutes before bed.

Magnesium

- <https://www.iherb.com/pr/Natural-Vitality-Natural-Calm-The-Anti-Stress-Drink-Organic-Orange-Flavor-16-oz-453-g/5123>
- 2tsp
- 30-60 minutes before bed

Valerian Root

- <https://www.iherb.com/pr/Nature-s-Way-Valerian-Root-530-mg-180-Vegetarian-Capsules/2064>

- 3 capsules
- 60 minutes before bed

Glycine

- <https://www.iherb.com/pr/Thorne-Research-Glycine-250-Capsules/18505>
- 2 capsules
- 30-60 minutes before bed

Ginkgo biloba

- <https://www.iherb.com/pr/Doctor-s-Best-Extra-Strength-Ginkgo-120-mg-120-Veggie-Caps/26>
- 1 capsule
- 30-60mins before bed

L-theanine

- <https://www.iherb.com/pr/Now-Foods-L-Theanine-100-mg-90-Veg-Capsules/853>
- 1-2 capsules
- 30-60mins before bed

Lavender

- <https://www.iherb.com/pr/Nature-s-Way-CalmAid-Clinically-Studied-Lavender-30-Softgels/43054>
- 1 capsule
- 30-60mins before bed

5-HTP

- <https://www.iherb.com/pr/Thorne-Research-5-Hydroxytryptophan-90-Capsules/18506>
- 1-2 capsules
- 30-60mins before bed

ACTION STEP 11

SET UP YOUR PERFECT SLEEP CAGE

Let's set up your bedroom to make sure it's as quiet, cool, dark, and low-EMF as possible.

We tackle them one by one.

Instructions – Sleep in a quiet room:

- If noise is an issue for you, order some ear plugs and test them out for a week. Any regular earplugs from Amazon or other retailer will be fine. https://www.amazon.com/s/ref=nb_sb_noss_2?url=search-alias%3Daps&field-keywords=sleep+ear+plugs

Instructions – Sleep in a cool room:

- If you can change the temperature in your room with a thermostat, try putting it to around 67 degrees Fahrenheit.
- If you can't change the temperature in your room, you could order a nifty tool called a "Chilly Pad." This is a cooling mattress pad that also heats. It regulates the surface temperature of your mattress so that you sleep comfortably all night long. While certainly beneficial, this is a quite expensive sleep hack that will cost you a couple hundred dollars. I don't personally own a Chilly Pad, but some people swear by it. Here's the link to their website: <https://www.chilitechnology.com/>
- In general, you want to sleep naked or in light clothing. This is another aspect that plays into your sleep temperature.

Instructions – Sleep in a dark room:

- If the curtains in your bedroom leave in any light, I suggest ordering so-called black-out curtains, which ensure that no light enters from your windows. Here's a product you could order right away from Amazon: <https://www.amazon.com/AMAZLINEN-Blackout-Curtains-Thermal-Insulated/dp/B00WWMY726>
- If you have any blinking lights in your room, use duct tape to cover them.
- If there's still light in your room, use an eye mask, such as this one from Amazon: <https://www.amazon.com/Sleep-Whale-Premium-Comfort-Mask/dp/B077TVB1YB/>

Instructions – Sleep in a low-EMF room:

- Remove as many electronic devices from your bedroom as possible. Or at least move them as far away from your bed as possible.
- Before going to bed, turn off and unplug everything electrical in your sleeping area.
- Before going to bed, turn off your wi-fi.
- Before going to bed, put your phone on airplane mode.

ACTION STEP 12

CREATE YOUR PRE-BED ROUTINE

Step 1:

Determine your bedtime. Ask yourself, “From when till when do I want to sleep? At which time do I want to be asleep?”

If you want to get an average of eight hours of sleep every day, then you may want to sleep from 10pm till 6am. In that case, 10pm would be your bedtime.

Step 2:

Work backwards from your bedtime to create a pre-bed routine. The idea behind this routine is to allow your mind and body to calm down and get ready for sleep. To achieve this, we want to reduce the noise level, light level, and overall stimulation level before going to bed.

Here's an example of what this could look like:

- **7:00** – No more food intake from here on forward.
- **8:00** – Start dimming the lights. Wear blue-blocking glasses.
- **09:15** – Do ten minutes of journaling, such as writing down three wins of the day and three things you're grateful for.
- **09:25** – Brush teeth and get ready for bed.
- **09:45** – Go to bed. Do some light reading until you're tired.
- **10:00** – Put book away, turn off lights, and drift off to sleep.

That's a basic pre-bed routine.

You can go as simple or fancy as you want. You can make this a 30-minute thing or a 2-hour thing. The important factor is to be deliberate about this and to make it a habit and to go to

bed at the same time everyday. That's how your body learns to make you tired at that time and fall asleep at that time.

In the beginning, you may want to use an alarm to make sure you don't forget about it. Yes, you can use an alarm clock at night just like you do in the morning.

Here are some activities you could include in your routine:

- Reading a book
- Taking a hot bath or shower
- Deep breathing
- Yoga
- Visualization
- Listening to relaxing music
- Watching your favorite tv series or a documentary (if you block the blue light!)
- Journaling

Now go ahead and come up with your pre-bed routine.

ACTION STEP 13

YOUR BLUEPRINT FOR POWERFUL SLEEP

Considering everything you've learnt so far, come up with your very own battle plan for getting the most refreshing and rejuvenating sleep possible.

What do you do in the morning to optimize your sleep? What about mid-morning? Afternoon? Early evening? Bedtime? Middle of the night?

Come up with your very own blueprint for getting the best night's sleep you've ever had.

To give you some ideas, here's what my blueprint looks like...

Early Morning

- Because my circadian rhythm is healthy, I wake up refreshed and energized without an alarm clock
- As soon as I wake up, I get out of bed. I don't hit the snooze button because the additional sleep isn't worth the guilt and negative momentum.
- I drink a glass of water first thing after getting up.
- I then spend 20 minutes reading and drinking a cup of coffee in front of a bright light device. This ensures my body knows it's daytime and keeps my circadian rhythm in tact.
- I then perform the rest of my morning routine, which currently includes some form of exercise, a cold shower, and meditation.

Mid Morning

- After my morning routine, I immediately jump into my first deep work block. I get as much done as possible so that I feel a sense of accomplishment and build that all-important positive momentum.
- The rest of the morning involves a deep rest break and then some more deep work.
- I usually get my last cup of coffee between 11am and noon.

Afternoon

- I usually start off my afternoons with a healthy lunch and a post-lunch walk.
- The rest of the afternoon usually involves more work until 5pm comes around and I transition to leisure.

Early Evening

- I try to have dinner as far from bedtime as possible. This is usually between 5pm and 6pm.
- 2-3 hours before bed, I start blocking the blue light. I wear blue-blocking glasses and dim the lights. I also use blue-blocking technology for my phone and laptop.

Bedtime

- My bedtime routine changes frequently and involves one or more of the following: meditation, breathing exercises, journaling, muscle relaxation, and reading.
- The only constant is journaling about three things that went well that day and three things I'm grateful for.

- The other constant is that I read before bed. Sometimes it's for five minutes, other times for 60 minutes. I read in red light. When I read on the Kindle or phone I wear the blue-blocking glasses.

Middle of The Night

- When I wake up in the middle of the night, I put on my blue-blocking glasses and check what time it is before going back to sleep.
- When I need to pee, I turn on my red light bulb, put on my blue-blocking glasses, and use my phone as a flashlight.

Now come up with your own blueprint for the perfect night's sleep.

Make it realistic but don't worry about whether you'll follow it perfectly or not. We want to have something we can aim for and we want to be self-compassionate in case of not living up to our standards.

ACTION STEP 14

YOUR ANTI-SNOOZE REGIMEN

Step 1:

Write down the following implementation intentions:

- “If my alarm goes off in the morning, then I get out of bed immediately – no matter what!”
- “If my alarm goes off and I feel an urge to hit the snooze button, then I get out of bed anyway – immediately – no matter what!”

Read them out loud a couple of times and imagine yourself following them in the morning.

If you want, you can add your own implementation intentions.

Step 2:

Download the Sleep Cycle app and start using it from today moving forward.

You can download it from here: <https://www.sleepcycle.com/>

MODULE 5: PRODUCTIVITY BASICS

ACTION STEP 15

DEFINING YOUR HIGH-VALUE AND LOW-VALUE ACTIVITIES

Step 1:

Create a list of all activities you engage in on a regular basis

Sample list:

- Read and respond to emails
- Read news
- Spend time on social media
- Watch television
- Play Candy Crush
- Read book
- Meditate
- Exercise
- Deep work
- Journaling

Step 2:

Assign a value tag from 1 to 10 for every activity

Sample list with values:

- Read and respond to emails: 2
- Read news: 1
- Spend time on social media: 2
- Watch television: 1
- Play Candy Crush: 1
- Read book: 8
- Meditate: 10
- Exercise: 10
- Deep work: 10
- Journaling: 9

Please don't worry about assigning perfect scores. Don't obsess over whether meditation is a 9 or a 10. That's not the point of this exercise.

ACTION STEP 16

TRACKING YOUR TIME

For the next three days, keep a log of everything you do, and for how long. It doesn't need to be perfect. You don't need to include tiny stuff like going to the toilet. You *can* but don't have to.

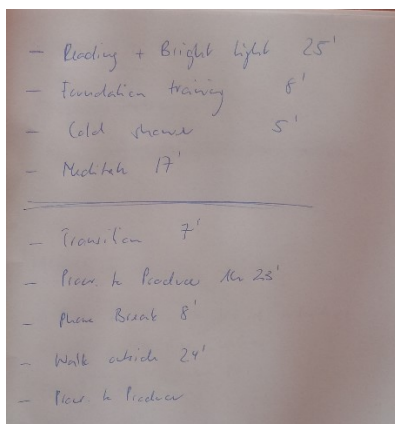
You have two main options for tracking your time:

- **Good ol' pen and paper.** Simply keep pen and paper on your desk or carry it with you in your pocket or bag or whatever. Then, write down what you're doing continuously. Or write down, every hour or so, what you've been doing for the last sixty minutes.
- **Use a time-tracking app, such as [Toggl](#).** This is probably the best way because it's been built specifically to track your time. Every time you start a new activity you simply hit a button and the app starts measuring.

Start tracking from the moment you wake up to the moment you go to bed. And do it for three days. That's all. You don't need to analyze your results or anything. Just do the tracking.

And please don't overcomplicate this. It's about doing it, not about doing it perfectly.

P.S. Here's my sheet from this morning:



ACTION STEP 17

CREATING TIME AND SPACE FOR DEEP WORK

This action step is a bit different from the others. It's more of a summary of the 13 deep work strategies.

Please don't feel like you need to use all the strategies. Just pick the ones that work for you, and move on. Remember, it's not about being perfect, it's about getting better, step-by-step.

1. Disable all notifications.

I highly recommend disabling all notifications on your phone and computer and other tech devices. Or at least, make them silent. We've actually already done that in module two.

2. Remove all distraction triggers from your environment.

We've done this in module two when we talked about priming and setting up your environment. Just as a reminder: You want to remove as many triggers on your desktop, browser, and in your work and living space as possible.

3. Batch your email.

Batching email means you only check your inbox two to three times a day, not all throughout the day. Commit to your email blocks now and give it a fair trial for the next couple of days.

- Email block #1 – 11:00 a.m.
- Email block #2 – 16:00 p.m.

4. Batch low-value activities.

How can you put more low-value activities together and do them at the same time? For example, can you schedule a large block of uninterrupted time for doing the laundry, cleaning, and grocery shopping?

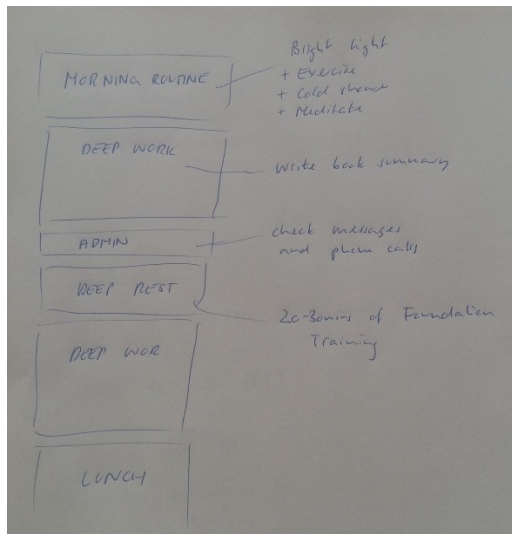
At work, can you dedicate a large block of time to low-value activities? This depends on your job, of course. For me, I like to batch together: answering emails, uploading articles to the website, sending out emails to employees, answering other requests, scheduling stuff for social media, and other administrative activities.

The goal is to get the small, less important tasks out of the way, so that we can dedicate a large amount of time to the more important tasks. For me, that means having 3-4 hours for writing, for example.

5. Use time blocks.

Time blocking means to block a certain amount of time for a certain type of work. For example, we might start the day with a block called morning routine, then a block called commute, then a block of deep work, a block of deep rest, another block of deep work, and then maybe a block of email or other lower value work.

For example, here's an image of how I might time-block my morning:



Time blocking is effective for a few reasons. It forces you to plan your days. It forces you to prioritize. It gives you structure. It forces you to get specific (which we're often reluctant to). And it keeps you accountable.

6. Use a collection bucket.

As a reminder, here's how a collection bucket (or an "In" bucket) works: Let's say you're performing some deep work, and all of a sudden you have a great idea or you remember that you should call back a friend or send an email or whatever. Rather than switch tasks and do it immediately, the collection bucket allows you to write it down and come back to it later.

So, ask yourself: What are you going to use for your collection bucket? Pen and paper? A to-do list app? A word doc?

7. Use a read-it-later app.

If you haven't done it yet, sign up for an app right now. [Instapaper](#) and [Pocket](#) are both great and free to use. Just head over to one of their websites and follow the instructions.

Next time you stumble across an article that sounds super interesting and that you really want to read, just save it for later reading and keep doing whatever you're doing.

8. Silence your phone.

Unless you're expecting a super important call or message, mute your phone and disable vibration. Remember: When you're in a deep work session, you want to get as much done as possible. So, no distractions!

9. Put your phone in airplane mode.

Go a step further and put your phone in airplane mode. That way, when you're looking at your phone, you won't see any new messages or other distractions.

10. Put your phone in another room.

If you put the phone in another room, you won't be unconsciously triggered by its sight and none of the unconscious associations will be activated. You'll also feel less of an urge to constantly check it.

11. Wear earphones.

If you're working in an open office and are in a deep work session, wear earphones. This makes it much less likely that co-workers will come over and interrupt you.

12. Do not use voicemail.

Don't you just hate it when you come home and have a bunch of unchecked voice messages? There's not much in this world that creates more stress and anxiety for me than voice messages.

Either don't set up a voicemail at all. Or simply say, "I don't use voicemail, email me at nils@nils.com or whatever your email address is."

13. Steal Steve Jobs' focus routine.

Close your door and don't let anyone in. That was Steve Jobs' focus routine, as explained in Walter Isaacson biography of Steve Jobs.

Isaacson writes, "Steve was very, very strict about filtering out what he thought of as distractions. People would come to him with all sorts of problems — legal problems, personnel problems, whatever. And if he didn't want to deal with it, he would not focus on it. He'd give you sort of a blank stare. He would not answer, he wouldn't answer email...He would pick four or five things that were really important for him to focus on and then just filter out — almost brutally — filter out the rest."

ACTION STEP 18

YOUR PERFECT DAY

Grab pen and paper and sketch your perfect day.

You can use the following questions as guidelines:

- What would your perfect day incorporate?
- What elements would have to be included?
- What would NOT be included in that perfect day?
- What would you do first thing in the morning?
- How would the rest of the morning look like?
- How would your lunch break look like?
- How would the afternoon look like?
- What are some activities you could do after work?
- What about dinner?
- And then what would your evening/sleep routine look like?

Don't try to be perfect and don't worry about whether you'll be able to follow through on this plan.

The goal is to get inspired and have a clear idea of what we're working towards.

MODULE 6: TOOLS AND STRATEGIES TO OVERCOME RESISTANCE

ACTION STEP 19 CREATING PRE-DECISIONS

Create at least one implementation intention for each of the four buckets below.

#1 – Getting Started

Pick a cue (a specific time, situation, or thought) and decide you'll get started on your desired behavior as that cue emerges.

Examples:

- If I'm finished with dinner tomorrow, then I'll immediately start writing on my dissertation.
- After I get up in the morning, I drink a glass of water and then start meditating.
- If it's 9:30pm, then I turn off all electronics and start my evening ritual.
- When my alarm clock goes off in the morning, then I immediately get out of bed.
- Today, when it's 6pm, I do my weekly math homework.
- Mondays and Thursday, when I come home from work, then I immediately go for a 20-minute run.
- If I say to myself something like "I'll feel more like doing it tomorrow," then I will just get started on the task.

- If I say to myself “I don’t feel like doing this right now,” then I will just get started on the task.

#2 – Resisting temptations

Between you and your goals are temptations keeping you from doing what you set out to do. Create pre-decisions for how you’ll act in face of your most troublesome temptations.

Examples:

- When I start working on my taxes, then I put my phone on airplane mode
- If I feel an urge to check Facebook during work time, then I will ignore it and keep working
- If I’d rather play video games instead of working, then I’ll just ignore it and start working
- If my friends ask me to come party this weekend, then I will immediately respond by saying, “Thanks, but no. I really need to finish my work project.”

#3 – Lacking Willpower

The automatic nature of implementation intentions help you 1) preserve willpower and 2) act in desired ways in spite of lacking willpower.

Create implementation intentions for times when you might lack willpower.

Examples:

- If it’s time to go to bed, then I write in my gratitude journal for 5 minutes
- If the kids are in bed, then I will go directly to my room and meditate for 15 minutes.
- If I feel like giving up during my workout, then I will just ignore it and keep going
- If I arrive home from work, then I will prepare a healthy dinner
- If it’s 10pm, then I will go to bed – no matter what.

#4 – Overcoming Other Obstacles

What are your personal procrastination-enabling distractions, temptations, and obstacles? What tasks do you usually procrastinate on?

Create plans to overcome these obstacles.

Examples:

- If I get discouraged during writing, then I ignore it and just keep going.
- If I'm in a bad mood and feel like procrastinating, then I just get started on some aspect of the task.
- If I'm in a bad mood and feel like procrastinating, then I ignore it and keep working.
- If I feel overwhelmed by a task, then I just get started on some aspect of the task.
- If I feel overwhelmed by a large project, then I break it down into small, actionable steps and immediately get started on the first step.
- If the alarm clock wakes me up in the morning, then I immediately get out of bed.
- If I feel like hitting the snooze button, then I just ignore the urge and get out of bed immediately.
- If I feel bored or tired, then I will ignore it and keep going.

MODULE 7: EMOTION REGULATION SUPERPOWERS

ACTION STEP 20

TRY THIS GUIDED MINDFULNESS MEDITATION

To get a taste of mindfulness, try this 9-minute guided meditation by Sam Harris:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tw7XBKhZJh4>

Just sit down on a cushion or chair.

Play the video.

And follow the instructions.

ACTION STEP 21

BRINGING INFORMAL MINDFULNESS INTO YOUR LIFE

Our goal is to use mindfulness to help us procrastinate less. To that end, we need to learn to activate the mindfulness mode during everyday activities.

The more often we activate mindfulness in everyday life, the more likely we are to use it when it really matters.

Therefore, this exercise involves bringing informal mindfulness practice into your regular day-to-day life.

1) Bringing mindfulness into your morning routine

Pick an activity that is part of your daily morning routine, such as shaving, brushing your teeth, or taking a shower. When you do it, fully focus on what you are doing. Focus on the five senses: taste, touch, smell, sight, and sound.

For example, when you're in the shower, notice the temperature of the water, and how it feels in your hair, and on your shoulders, and running down your legs. Notice the sounds of the water.

Notice the smell of the shampoo. Notice the sight of the water droplets as they hit your skin.

Notice your bodily sensations as you make movements.

When thoughts arise, acknowledge them, watch them, let them be there, and bring your attention back to the shower.

2) Bring mindfulness into chores

Pick a chore you regularly need to get done, such as washing dishes, vacuuming floors, ironing clothes, or cooking dinner. Give the chore your full attention and pay attention to your five senses while you're doing it.

For example, when you're cooking, notice the different colors of the foods. Notice the shapes and forms of food. Notice their subtle smells. Notice how your hands feel when touching the food. Feel the heat when water is boiling.

When boredom arises, welcome it, accept it, and bring your attention back to the task.

When thoughts arise, welcome them as well, acknowledge them, and bring your attention back to the task.

3) Now commit to practicing mindfulness during various day-to-day activities.

Examples:

- During my morning routine, I will practice mindfulness while brushing my teeth.
- When I'm under the shower, then I practice mindfulness.
- When I'm doing the laundry, then I do it mindfully.
- When I'm waiting in queues or at traffic lights, then I practice mindfulness (e.g., of my impatience).
- Whenever I'm eating, I take the first bite mindfully.

ACTION STEP 22

TREATING YOURSELF LIKE A FRIEND

Please take out a sheet of paper and answer the following questions:

- **First, think about times when a close friend feels really bad about him or herself or is really struggling in some way.** How would you respond to your friend in this situation (especially when you're at your best)? Please write down what you typically do, what you say, and note the tone in which you typically talk to your friends.
- **Now think about times when you feel bad about yourself or are struggling.** How do you typically respond to yourself in these situations? Please write down what you typically do, what you say, and note the tone in which you talk to yourself.
- **Did you notice a difference?** If so, ask yourself why. What factors or fears come into play that lead you to treat yourself and others so differently?
- **Please write down how you think things might change** if you responded to yourself in the same way you typically respond to a close friend when you're suffering.

Why not try treat yourself like a good friend and see what happens?

(Note: This exercise is from leading self-compassion researcher Kristin Neff. You find it on here [website here.](#))

ACTION STEP 23

THE SELF-COMPASSION BREAK

Think of a situation in your life that is difficult, that is causing you stress. Call the situation to mind, and see if you can actually feel the stress and emotional discomfort in your body.

Now, say to yourself the following three things:

1. This is a moment of suffering

That's mindfulness. Other options include:

- This hurts.
- Ouch.
- This is stress.

2. Suffering is a part of life

That's common humanity. Other options include:

- Other people feel this way.
- I'm not alone.
- We all struggle in our lives.

Now, put your hands over your heart, feel the warmth of your hands and the gentle touch of your hands on your chest. Or adopt the soothing touch you discovered felt right for you.

3. May I be kind to myself

You can also ask yourself, “What do I need to hear right now to express kindness to myself?” Is there a phrase that speaks to you in your particular situation, such as:

- May I give myself the compassion that I need
- May I learn to accept myself as I am
- May I forgive myself
- May I be strong.
- May I be patient

This practice can be used any time of day or night, and will help you remember to evoke the three aspects of self-compassion when you need it most.

(Note: This exercise is from leading self-compassion researcher Kristin Neff. You find it on here [website here.](#))

ACTION STEP 24

SWITCHING YOUR SOURCE OF MOTIVATION FROM CRITICISM TO COMPASSION

This exercise has three steps:

1. **Think about the ways that you use self-criticism as a motivator.** Is there any personal trait that you criticize yourself for having (too overweight, too lazy, too impulsive, etc.) because you think being hard on yourself will help you change? If so, first try to get in touch with the emotional pain that your self-criticism causes, giving yourself compassion for the experience of feeling so judged.
2. **Next, see if you can think of a kinder, more caring way to motivate yourself to make a change if needed.** What language would a wise and nurturing friend, parent, teacher, or mentor use to gently point out how your behavior is unproductive, while simultaneously encouraging you to do something different. What is the most supportive message you can think of that's in line with your underlying wish to be healthy and happy?
3. **Every time you catch yourself being judgmental about your unwanted trait in the future,** first notice the pain of your self-judgment and give yourself compassion. Then try to reframe your inner dialogue so that it is more encouraging and supportive. Remember that if you really want to motivate yourself, love is more powerful than fear.

(Note: This exercise is from leading self-compassion researcher Kristin Neff. You find it on here [website here.](#))