



ACADEMY

STAGE 1: Drowning

Overcommitment: The Problem Productivity Can't Solve

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"A paradox has emerged in this new millennium: people have enhanced quality of life, but at the same time they are adding to their stress levels by taking on more than they have resources to handle."

DAVID ALLEN
Getting Things Done

People become interested in productivity because they want to get their life under control, manage their time better, and get more done. And certainly, we can all learn to manage our lives better. But often we jump into learning techniques that will give us 1–5% efficiency gains without first asking if inefficiency really is our biggest problem.

We are like drowning people attempting to improve our swimming technique instead of casting off the weights that are causing us to sink. Maybe we have simply taken on more than we can handle.

If you are overcommitted, no productivity technique can help you create more time than you have.

In this training, we are going to try and accomplish three things:

1. Convince you that you're probably doing too many things
2. Help you gain visibility on your present commitments
3. Give you the tools & encouragement to simplify

Let's get started!

***"If the devil cannot make us bad,
he will make us busy."***

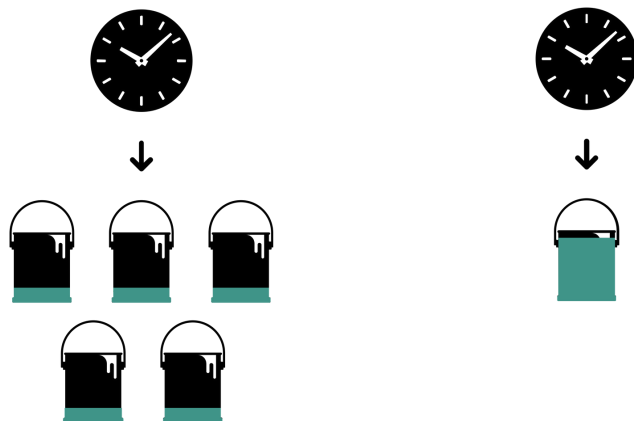
CORRIE TEN BOOM



As Christians our objectives in learning productivity are simple. We want:

- ## The lie of productivity: I can always make more time.

As we talk about overcommitment, are there obligations that jump to mind? Places you know you're spread too thin?



Notes

EXERCISE 1

Track Your Time for One Week

Each week contains 168 hours. But most of us don't actually have data on how we are spending those hours.

This exercise will provide visibility on how you are spending your time. It forces you to question assumptions by actually quantifying where your time is going.

Track Every 15 Minutes

For the next seven days, you are to track your activities in 15-minute chunks.

I've provided two ways to track the time:

- [Download Time Tracking PDF](#)
- [Copy Google Sheet Time Tracker](#)

Time	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
12:00 AM							
12:15 AM							
12:30 AM							
12:45 AM							
1:00 AM							
1:15 AM							
1:30 AM							
1:45 AM							
2:00 AM							
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5:00 AM							
5:15 AM							
5:30 AM							
5:45 AM							
6:00 AM							
6:15 AM							
6:30 AM							
6:45 AM							

Tips for Time Tracking

- Set a recurring reminder on your phone to update the sheet at a minimum every 2 hours during the day so you don't forget what you did.
- Track according to simple categories (e.g. "Sleep," "Reading," "Planning," "Driving," "TV," etc.
- Break working hours into smaller categories (e.g. "Meetings," "Email," "Distraction," "Lunch," etc.)
- Consider printing out the PDF and carrying it around with you. It's easier to forget about a Google Sheet than a giant piece of paper.

Adding It Up

At the end of the week, go back through and add up how much time went to every category.

- What surprised you? Where were you spending more time than you thought? Less?
- What were the biggest time wasters?
- What would be your ideal time allocations for each category?
- What changes are you going to make?

EXERCISE 2

List All Present Commitments

The easiest way to find yourself overwhelmed and overcommitted is by saying "yes" to opportunities without a complete mental list of what you've already said "yes" to.

Most people know to check their calendar before accepting a new obligation, but I suggest also keeping an up-to-date list of all commitments. When a new opportunity presents itself, check both your calendar and this list *before* accepting the new commitment.

Note: For our purposes, we are defining a commitment as any ongoing obligation on your time or attention.

Make your list in a personal notebook, notes app, or computer document.

Prompts

Sometimes it can be hard to think of everything you've committed to. Use the following prompts to help you make as exhaustive a list as possible.

- **Work commitments:** Like projects, responsibilities, deadlines, etc.
- **Family commitments:** Like days you watch the kids, include unstated commitments like "2-hours of TV with my spouse," care for parents, planned visits, etc.
- **Church commitments:** Ministries you participate in, ministries you help with
- **Possession commitments:** House projects, a car that needs fixing, any planned use of your time or attention on things you own.

For a more complete list of prompts **download the Mind Sweep Trigger list** from *Getting Things Done* or use my **Domains of Stewardship worksheet**.

Other Considerations

Let this be a living document. You probably won't remember everything on your first sweep. Keep adding to it as you remember new commitments.

It can be as detailed or high-level as you like. Just remember the purpose is so that YOU have visibility on your current obligations. The goal is that you'd be able to look at this and say, "Yes, I think I can take on another obligation" or "No if I take on this new commitment something from this list will need to go."

This is stewarding your time with your eyes open.



Simplify Your Life

If you were sinking in the water with weights tied to your legs, your first move wouldn't be to try and swim more efficiently. You'd try to cut some of the weights loose, so you could get your head above water.

In the same way, if we determine the commitments we currently have are not manageable, we need to do the hard work of removing some of them.

"Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,"

HEBREWS 12:1

A few principles that can help here:

- Start with the big commitments. What are the obligations that, if removed, would free you up the most to focus on what matters?
- Make 1 decision that makes 1,000 decisions
- Eliminate the little no-brainer distractions TODAY
 - Turn off phone notifications
 - Put screen time restrictions in place

Reflection

What are some areas of your life you know already need to be cut down to make room for focus on what really matters?

Additional Resources

If you struggle with overcommitment, the following books may be useful to you.

Business Made Simple

Donald Miller

Crazy Busy

Kevin DeYoung

Four Thousand Weeks: Time Management for Mortals

Oliver Burkeman

Reset: Living a Grace-Paced Life in a Burnout Culture

David Murray

The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry

John Mark Comer

The ONE Thing

Gary Keller and Jay Papasan

Zeal Without Burnout

Christopher Ash

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