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Conquer Overwhelm-ment by focusing on the Big Picture

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- Having trouble scheduling things you feel you need to do?
- Can't keep up with all the little things that need to be handled?
- Don't have time for what you really want to do?

You're not alone. Why do you think there are so many different types of calendars, schedulers, planners, and books on this topic?

One trick that has helped me, when I feel overwhelmed, is to step back and look at the Big Picture (or 3,000 feet high-level view). In regards to calendar and planners, I identify major categories instead of specific tasks. For instance, you may feel you need to cover many households' chores, outdoor chores, and some amount of administration duties (such as taxes, accounting, budgeting, and incoming mail). You also want to make sure you have time for your family/friends, some volunteering and keep yourself sharp with some self-improvement goals. You may even have specific targets that you want to call out separately. Perhaps you want to improve upon your organizational skills or work on clearing and setting up your office/work space. If that is the case, you might want to create a separate category for "organizational activities". Or if you are an entrepreneur, you may need to also set aside time for marketing, networking, employee or client services. Whatever your goals, it's useful to categorize them into general activities. (See table 2 at the bottom of this article for some examples).

Each general category would contain various detail tasks (see table 2). We'll not go into these details at this time. Right now, it's sufficient at this phase, just to identify the **types** of activities you want to spend your time on.

Once you have your major categories, roughly allocate a specific day/time to those "general" activities. This strategy assures that you deliberately spend a consistent amount of time on the types of activities that you most care about.

For instance:

I may want to allocate 2 hours on Saturday afternoons toward administrative/deskwork activities.

I may want to allocate Saturday morning to my daughter's play time

I may want to allocate a few hours every other week toward specific networking events

I may want to allocate Sunday afternoon toward community service of some type

I may want to allocate a few hours Friday afternoon alternating between career/professional growth and personal/self-growth,

I may want to allocate an hour on Saturday mornings and Tuesday to focus on healthy living habits. I'm not necessarily going to "do" anything – I just want make sure that I think about what healthy activities I do plan to do during the week. I want to schedule time to think and focus on living a healthier lifestyle.

I may want to spend Monday morning on marketing activities like creating my website, or flyers or brochure

I want to alternate a Friday night between family night with the kids and date night with my spouse

I also want to allocate writing time for my book.

Plug in some of these time-blocks in your weekly calendar skeleton (see table 1). As you can see from your below bi-weekly calendar, you don't have all your time blocked out. And you don't have to have the same time blocked out every week. You can switch it up. Play with it. You have plenty of time for other things that normally "get you" during the week. You have plenty of time for other appointments, meetings, errands, etc. But you have deliberately blocked out time for what's important to you.

Table 1

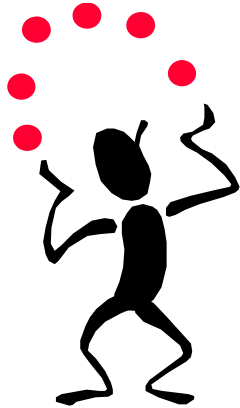
Week 1	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
7-9am		Health, nutrition	House hold chores			Health, nutrition	
9-11am	marketing					Family play	
1-3pm	Write book	Networking					
3-5pm				Outdoor chores	Self-growth	Admin	Community service
7-9pm					Date night		
10-11							

Week 2	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
7-9am		Health, nutrition		Household chores		Health, nutrition	
9-11am	marketing					Family play	
1-3pm	Write articles						
3-5pm			Outdoor chores		Career growth	Admin	Community service
7-9pm					Family night		
10-11							

Once you have your important categories scheduled, you can have fun with which specific activity you want to do that week (see table 2). You can't do everything in every category all at

once, but you can have fun picking which out of those activities do you feel like doing today. For instance, you have on your calendar that you wanted to do some type of “outdoor chore” on Wednesday before dinner and before it gets dark. When Wednesday comes, you can choose to clean out the gutters, or rake the leaves, or check the kids swing set, mow the lawn, or even build the kids a tree house. Whatever you feel needs some attention at this time. You can even make a game of randomly picking the item or just go for what feels best at the time.

Conclusion



The intent of this exercise is not to feel overwhelmed. This is just a tool. If one week we can't find the time to “write my article” – big deal. Because I have it deliberately and consistently scheduled, the wheel will come back around. There is plenty of time to enjoy and do the things you want to do. You just can't do all of them, all the time, or at the same time. Relax in the knowing that with some consistent and deliberate focus, you'll get to everything that you need to get to. The things you don't ever get to, probably really didn't need to get done in the first place.

To assure you get to the things you want to, deliberately and consistently allocate some time for those important categories. Then rotate the different specific activities within the categories' scheduled time. This assures that all your important categories get the amount of attention that you want – AND – you make progress on your specific activities little by little and without stress.

Please contact me for a free 30-minute session on how to successfully use this in your life. I'm an expert in tweaking things to fit your own personality and life style.

Table 2

Categories	Sample activities
House hold chores	Laundry, dishes, house cleaning, cooking,
Outdoor chores, activities	Lawn care, landscaping, car maint., playground maint. Gardening, clearing the gutter, build a playhouse or tree house, setup the basketball court,
Administrative activities	Taxes, bills payment,
Family time	Playtime , movie night, date night, game night, tv time, sports with family,
Community service	Coaching soccer team, church activities, sponsoring fund raisers, facilitating block party, mentoring children, Big Brother/Sister, Literacy program, professional organization volunteering,
Self-growth	Leadership training, self-improvement books, classes, teaching, Toastmasters, speaking engagements, tapes,
Health and well-being	Exercising, marathon or triathlon work, dancing, nutrition activities, yoga, meditation, spiritual activities, artistic endeavors: painting, writing, sculpting, welding, sports
Marketing	Articles, speaking engagements, brochures, flyers, booths, trade shows, radio, tv, magazine, newsletters
Networking	Meetings, events, dinners, parties, radio,
Employee retention activities	Training, vacation scheduling, promotions, rewards, performance reviews,
Company Administration:	payroll, taxes, budgeting
Client services	Correspondence, satisfaction survey, support, suggestion box, reporting of status

About the author

Laura is a certified personal life coach. She is also the Time Management Advisor for National electronic magazine: eXaminer.com. Read more of her time management articles

<http://www.examiner.com/x-16459-Raleigh-Time-Management-Examiner>

She has been in the software and testing industry for over 20 years. She's worked with such companies as IBM, Ericsson, Staples, Fidelity Investments and Sogeti in various client advocacy and project management roles. The techniques she uses in her business coaching and client advocacy work saved these companies both time and money, which resulted in on-time, quality product delivery with higher client satisfaction.

Laura now uses her client focus, project, quality and people management skills in her personal life coaching career. As a personal life coach, she helps people integrate their goals and dreams into their everyday lives. Laura uses creative and practical tools to help her clients realize what really matters to them. They then follow-through with project and time management techniques to create the reality they really want.

Laura authors many articles and workshops on time management and strategic scheduling. She is also the founder of the electronic magazine *the Rose Garden: the Art of Becoming*.