



NAILD: Distractions

Why is it that, so often, we end the day with a stack of tasks left untouched? The litany of reasons is endless.

Some of the reasons are blatantly obvious, but we simply don't see them. Yet, even though we aren't consciously aware of these seemingly innocuous time-wasters, we are in control of them and we are, therefore, responsible! Three common "distractions" are reviewed below.

MULTI-TASKING: *simultaneously working on more than one task at the same time.*

A significant draw back to multi-tasking is that the human brain is not able to effectively "focus" on multiple tasks at one time. Julie Morgenstern, a "time management" consultant and author, claims that it can take 4 times longer to do things when they are stopped and restarted. Her research shows replacing multi-tasking with "single focused" work effort can save up to 2 hours/day.

Antidote: Work on one project at a time.

PROCRASTINATION: *postponing or setting aside something that should be done.*

Procrastination is a common reaction when confronted with a task we're not mentally or emotionally prepared to address.

According to the authors of a HARVARD BUSINESS ESSENTIALS book entitled *Time Management* there are 3 principal causes of procrastination: 1) Unpleasant or uninteresting tasks, 2) Fear of failure and 3) Not knowing where to begin.

- 1) The potential confrontation, for example, is not an experience normally seen as pleasant. One's reaction is frequently to delay, avoid or hope that the encounter never happens. If the reason for the task is important, proactively addressing the issue, now, is essential.

Antidote: Do it and move on!

- 2) When facing a difficult or unfamiliar task, we may reluctantly admit that fear has disabled our ability to make any progress. This distraction typically occurs when we're unsure of our own ability to "do the job". **Antidote:** Admit your apprehension. Then, on paper, scope out what has to be done, based on what you now know. Activate your plan and seek assistance/guidance, along the way.
- 3) The obvious solution to "not knowing where to start" is to ask. But, for several reasons, this option may not work or even be available.

Antidote: When there is no apparent beginning point, then simply start where you feel most comfortable. The "next steps" will slowly become apparent.



OVER COMMITMENT: *taking on more than you can reasonably do*

Because of fear, pride or friendship, we occasionally accept tasks, knowing that we don't have time to do them. This may lead to failure, disappointment or embarrassment.

Antidote: Just say NO!

Other time wasters: telephone, inadequate preparation, email, disorganization, ineffective meetings,

The resolutions assigned to each of the distractions shown above may appear to be oversimplified; but they are not. Confounding or complex issues are often satisfied with common sense, perseverance and patience.

Take-aways:

- Multi-tasking doesn't work
- Each day, review what's left undone. Determine why (i.e. distractions). Apply an antidote.
- Just say NO!

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