



**What do you do all day?
Nurturing your best self
with your daily schedule**

What do you do all day?

- *Do you sometimes get to the end of the day feeling like a worn out, frazzled underachiever?*
- *Do you often envisage doing all kinds of things, but end up doing something completely different that leaves you feeling frustrated and unsatisfied?*
- *Do you ever feel perplexed that—even though you're clear on what your goals are and what you want to achieve—you seem to be taking one step forward and two steps back?*

I do. I start the day full of good intentions about what I'm going to achieve and how I'm going to feel. E.g. I'll be feeling calm and efficient all day as I finish that report, have lunch with Mum and do three client sessions.

The reality is too often very different:

I don't start the report until I've trawled through my emails and responded to those who are shouting loudest (notice it's not the important ones I attend to, just those that are giving me the most trouble). Whilst I'm working on the report, I keep checking and responding to my emails (in knee-jerk fashion). I don't take any breaks because I want to 'just get it finished' and 3 minutes before I'm due to leave for lunch, I take a phone call.

Lunch is a stressed affair as I'm running late and can't find anywhere to park my car. Eventually I calm down enough to enjoy some food and a chat with my mum, but the conversation is centred on how fractured I feel and my mum helpfully says, "I thought being self-employed was supposed to give you more time. Shouldn't you slow down a bit?" Argh!!!

Before my client sessions I take 10 minutes to meditate and get into the 'right space' so I can serve them to my best ability (thank goodness for my clients!).

After working with my yummy clients I go straight back to my desk to work on that report and eventually finish for the day at 8.30pm. As there's no food in the fridge I eat toast and crisps for dinner, washed down with a couple of glasses of wine and some ice cream.

Does any of this resonate with you? Do you ever find yourself being run by your day rather than running it? Do you canon from one activity to another, rushing from appointment to appointment, whilst trying to juggle all your other responsibilities (spouse, children, animals, relatives, friends, shopping, study, etc.)

Life runs at a hectic pace nowadays. The 'always on' culture in which we live can make it nigh on impossible to switch off. Multi-tasking (once seen as an admirable talent) splits our focus, saps our energy and can make us mediocre at everything.

It doesn't have to be this way.

When I plan my day and include plenty of breaks... when I'm realistic about what I will achieve and kind to myself about how I set my expectations... when I remember to breathe and approach things in a calm manner... I actually feel good when my head hits the pillow at the end of the day.

I am an adult. I have choices. I can do what ALL the time management experts suggest and confine my emailing to 2 or 3 fixed times a day — and turn it off outside of those times so I don't see that tempting little envelope in the bottom of my screen. I can take a 20 minute walk in the sunshine. I can leave my desk for 10 minutes to clear my head.

When I'm up against it and I know there's a lot to fit in, I write a plan of my day. I have a list of 14 hours (in 10-minute intervals) and I write in exactly what I'm going to do and when I'm going to do it. I write it in pencil so that if something has to be rescheduled I can juggle it around without making my sheet look messy (yes, I'm a little obsessive).

When I've achieved something I give it a big tick. When I get to the end of the day and I have a page full of ticks I feel AWESOME. Some people like to have a reward at the end of the day or the end of a project so they know they've done well — this is a brilliant idea. Me? I just need a page full of ticks. The sense of achievement is incredible. I don't feel like a worn-out, frazzled under-achiever. I feel like someone who's taken control of their life and has the power to choose and change. Woohoo!

Your assignment:

Firstly, consider what's sapping your time and keeping you from being focussed on your daily goals. Common time-sappers are:

- Constantly checking and replying to email
- Mooching around Facebook
- Doing the household chores
- Chatting to colleagues / friends

What are yours? Write a list — and be brutally honest with yourself.

Yes, these might be things you choose to (or have to) do in your day — be disciplined and schedule in times when it's ok to do these things. Set a time limit and stick to it!

Then, consider what supports you and builds your energy, resilience and creativity. Many people find the following helpful:

- Meditation
- Regular breaks*
- Being out in nature
- Chatting to friends
- Being with animals / children

What are yours? Write a list — and be generous with yourself.

Now schedule those things into your day/week/month. Little things like a walk outside can be scheduled in every day. Bigger things (like 'a spa day with the girls') can be scheduled in once a month / quarter.

If you're thinking this is all a bit too self-indulgent, consider this as an investment. If you invest in looking after yourself and nurturing your ability to be awesome, you will get a good return — you at your most productive, creative and awesome! You're likely to feel more calm and happy, and you'll probably be a nicer person to be around.

Make a list of all the hours in the day that you'd like to plan (I've included my sheet at the end of this document, so you can use this or your own) and start planning! Tick things as you achieve them and consider how you might reward yourself for these achievements (no matter how small they seem).

N.B. Please don't beat yourself up if things go awry despite your best planning efforts. The power and control this kind of planning affords you only extends to those things over which you can have power and control. The weather, the traffic, other people's moods, an earthquake (or other 'acts of God')—the list is long—these things none of us has power or control over. And what to do when these hit is a whole other topic ;-)

** Coach and author, Kate Burton suggests doing a 'PowerHour' — you simply work for 50 minutes and then take a 10 minute break. When she first suggest this to me I said, "I can't have 10 minutes break! I'm FAR too busy!" But then I tried it... and it revolutionised my business and my life. I now look at those 10 minute breaks as being crucial to my day, to my work and to my well-being. During those regular breaks, I do something different (make a cup of tea, put the washing on, do some yoga stretches, etc.) and I find my mind is working quietly in the background. I'm problem-solving and solution-finding in those breaks. My creative brain is let loose and produces little gems of genius. Far from being a 'waste of 10 minutes of working time' I find it's those times that help me think outside the box and be my best self. Please try it and let me know how it works for you.*

Date: _____

Daily Schedule.xlsx

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