

# Just Say NO To Work-at-Home Stress And Get Organized For Success!

The Program That Gives You Everything You Need To Know  
To Reduce Stress, Increase Productivity And Enjoy Owning  
A Successful Business.



6-week e-course brought to you by:  
Jennifer Hazlett, Business Support Specialist  
Alternate Admin, Virtual Assistant Services  
<http://www.altadmin.ca>

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## LESSON #2

### Managing Time Effectively

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## Manage Time Effectively

Setting your priorities and sticking to them is a great step towards reducing your stress, but it won't help much if you don't have time to finish all the other menial tasks that are involved in running an at-home business. Items like billing, filing, ordering ink for your printer, and a million other little things that pile up over time still need to be done.

Let's look at five methods to help you keep better track of where your time goes, and keep on top of your schedule:

### **Write everything down.**

Famous productivity expert David Allen, author of *Get It Done*, recommends getting your to-dos out of your brain and onto paper. I can attest that this method works! When I'm feeling overwhelmed, I have found one of the greatest ways to de-stress is to sit down and write out everything I have to do that's got my head spinning. Whether those are big projects, little five-minute tasks, or anything, it all goes down on paper as my brain is churning out the words. When I can actually see my thoughts on paper, I can start sorting and prioritizing.

### **Keep track of how long a task takes you.**

It's a common psychological trick we play on ourselves - we overestimate how long it takes to complete unpleasant tasks, and we underestimate how long we spend on pleasant items. Get real by writing down the actual time it takes you to do things like file papers, log receipts, and any other tedious task. Then you have a concrete estimate the next time you think, "Oh, that's going to take all day!"

### **Minimize interruptions.**

Turn off your email alert noise, put your phone ringer on mute, and clear your desktop before you jump into a task that requires concentration. Fewer interruptions and distractions allow you to get in that concentrating "sweet spot" where you're humming along and working at a pleasant clip.

That means you'll get your work done faster and be less stressed. Constant interruptions ultimately result in needing to re-prioritize your day, over and over and over again. You can see how the stress you feel just keeps escalating without minimizing the interruptions each day.

### **Break down large projects.**

Big projects – website overhauls, writing reports, planning marketing campaigns, creating a newsletter – can be overwhelming. When faced with a large project, break it up into tasks you can complete in one sitting, preferably in under 20 minutes. That way, instead of looking for a free afternoon to tackle the project all at once (which you'll never get!), you just need to squeeze in 20 minutes here and there until the project is completed. I don't know anyone who can't find 20 minutes, but ask an entrepreneur to block out 8 hours for a project, and you'll receive in turn a stunned glare.

### **Take advantage of “lost” time.**

Our days are full of five minute breaks between activities. We call these “dead” time. You may be sitting in car-line at your child's school, or in line at the pharmacy, or even waiting for a pot of water to boil. There you are, simply waiting for something to happen. Keep a notebook with a running list of tasks that can be completed in 5 minutes or less. Schedule an appointment, call a friend to set up a lunch date, clean out your voice mail, file your nails – anything that you know you need to do but don't get around to doing.

Now when you have “dead” time, glance down at your notebook with the list of 5 minute tasks and start at the top. Work your way down the list every time you find yourself with a few free minutes. You'll be amazed at how much you accomplish when you're ready to go!

## 5 Key Focus Areas

How you divide up your time will vary from person to person, but it's important to distribute your time amongst the **5 Key Focus Areas** to find a good balance. The 5 Key Focus Areas are Client Work, Business Development, Home Office, Personal and Family.

To help you apply this approach here is a list with examples of some of the items that fall under each category. Remember, if you neglect one area the others will suffer. Revenue generating activities have to be consistent obviously, as well as Personal and Family time, but don't neglect Business Development and Home Office time. You have to incorporate these areas into your week in order to effectively grow your business and prosper.

1. **Client Work** - the area in which you perform your revenue generating activities. If yours is not a service business, this area may be Product Sales for example.
2. **Business Development** – generally these are items that would arise from your quarterly objective list i.e. time spent working on your website, preparing marketing materials, proposals, making phone calls, correspondence, attending networking events, planning, meetings, reading/audio/video (resources for business/training), writing (articles, submissions, ezine, blog), social media activity, participating in forums.
3. **Home Office** - tracking business expenses, filing, invoicing, record keeping, managing emails, scheduling.
4. **Personal** - build this into your day to remind you to break away from work, to eat lunch or go for a walk with friends.
5. **Family** - spending time with kids, pets, friends and family activities. This usually comes only at the beginning or end of my work day, but I like to have it showing on my schedule.

Most of the tasks that fall under Business Development and Home Office can be managed by a Virtual Assistant (VA). And if you don't want to

make the time because you dislike these tasks and would rather be doing what you're good at or taking some more personal and family time, then consider outsourcing. You don't have to do it all yourself. Like the saying goes, "Do what you do best, then hire out the rest". We'll be addressing the topic of outsourcing in more detail in a future lesson.

Now let's take a look at how you're spending your time. Over the course of the next week, jot down all the tasks that you do and the time spent on each task. Enter each task in the appropriate category. As a guide, refer back to the previous page for the descriptions of The 5 Key Focus Areas - Client Work, Business Development, Home Office, Personal and Family.

Keep this information handy. It will be valuable later on in the lessons when you start to build your very own customized schedule.

**Write down what you do.**

### **EXAMPLE**

Day of the Week: Monday

|                      |                                                                           |
|----------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Client Work          | Client 'A' – 2 hrs<br>Client 'B' – 2 hrs<br>Client 'C' – 1 hr             |
| Business Development | Social Media – ½ hr                                                       |
| Home Office          | Manage emails – ½ hr                                                      |
| Personal             | Lunch – ½ hr                                                              |
| Family               | Morning routine – 1 hr<br>After school/homework help/dinner prep – 1½ hrs |

**Now it's your turn...**

There are 5 charts, one for each weekday (Monday to Friday). Starting mid-week? No problem. Just complete the charts starting with Wednesday for example, exclude the weekend and finish with Tuesday. Most importantly – BE REALISTIC! Did you spend 2 hours 'Twittering' on Thursday and an hour at the grocery store? Write it down. It's been said that you can't improve what you don't measure. If you really want to reduce the number of times you check email during the day, or the amount of time you spend on social media sites, write it down. A simple notation is all it takes.

## Just Say NO To Work-at-Home Stress program

Day of the Week: \_\_\_\_\_

|                      |  |
|----------------------|--|
| Client Work          |  |
| Business Development |  |
| Home Office          |  |
| Personal             |  |
| Family               |  |

## Just Say NO To Work-at-Home Stress program

Day of the Week: \_\_\_\_\_

|                      |  |
|----------------------|--|
| Client Work          |  |
| Business Development |  |
| Home Office          |  |
| Personal             |  |
| Family               |  |

## Just Say NO To Work-at-Home Stress program

Day of the Week: \_\_\_\_\_

|                      |  |
|----------------------|--|
| Client Work          |  |
| Business Development |  |
| Home Office          |  |
| Personal             |  |
| Family               |  |

## Just Say NO To Work-at-Home Stress program

Day of the Week: \_\_\_\_\_

|                      |  |
|----------------------|--|
| Client Work          |  |
| Business Development |  |
| Home Office          |  |
| Personal             |  |
| Family               |  |

## Just Say NO To Work-at-Home Stress program

Day of the Week: \_\_\_\_\_

|                      |  |
|----------------------|--|
| Client Work          |  |
| Business Development |  |
| Home Office          |  |
| Personal             |  |
| Family               |  |

**Coming Up Next...**

Lesson #3: In the next lesson we'll be covering how to take back control using your expertise to handle almost any situation.