

# 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 #4

### Setting Boundaries

AND

### Warding Off The Time Vampires

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## Set Boundaries For Family

You've set boundaries for your commitment to your clients. You'll say the words “no” or “wait” to a client when the time constraints of a new assignment don't fit within your agenda. You have now become the boss of your time. Do your friends and family know that?

There you are sitting at your desk in your home office, available to everyone – kids, spouse, neighbours, friends – at a moment's notice. You wanted to work at home so you COULD be available to your family, but what are the limits? When you work from a home office, others may not respect the fact that you have valid work to do and may put unreasonable demands on your time. Are you saying 'yes' to these requests too often? We'll explore the dichotomy of working at home in order to enjoy the flexibility and availability to the ones you love, and working at home in order to create a successful business which requires focused time away from distractions.

One of my favorite parts of working from home is that I don't have an office outside our house to go to. What is one of the most stressful parts of working from home? Yep, you guessed it. I don't have an office outside our house to go to.

While I usually love walking the kids to school and being able to fix myself lunch in my own kitchen on my own schedule, working from home can be very stressful when friends and extended family don't realize that I am not available during normal business hours. When my friends want to call me up to chat or family wants to meet with me on a whim, I find it a little disrespectful.

I've found, though, that with proper training, your friends and family will happily (most of the time) adhere to your work rules, if you follow these suggestions:

### **Make the rules concrete.**

Set specific guidelines. These can be simple to understand guidelines like “You may not come in Mommy's office when the door is closed” which

even the youngest children can understand. You can set a more specific schedule for older children. The more specific your rules, the more readily everyone will abide by them.

### **Reward them for compliance.**

Bribery works! In extreme cases, I will readily agree to play a game or take the kids for ice cream in exchange for an hour of uninterrupted work time. Don't be afraid to reward your family for a job well done. If you have a specific project that you need to get done, remind your family of the rules, and let them know that you appreciate their understanding by giving them something to look forward to. Help them be a success, too!

### **Refuse to break the code.**

No means no, not maybe. If you give in to whining or pleading, you're only training your kids (or spouse) to whine and plead. Not a good thing. Before you give in, ask yourself what you're training your family to believe about your ability to set limits. Then act accordingly. Teaching children to respect the rules, your rules, is a lesson for life.

### **Hold up your side of the bargain.**

If you tell the kids you'll be off the computer at 4 PM to spend some time playing, then you'd better be heading to the park at 4:01. Pushing out the timeline or going back on your agreement is no good. This only sets the stage for an argument. The next time you insist on a specific rule regarding your office time, you will have much less leverage as you try to defend your position. Your word is your bond – keep it.

### **Be available when you're off the clock.**

If you want your family to respect your work time and space, then you need to respect family time. No checking the iPhone at the dinner table. No taking business calls at the park. No sneaking off to your computer to send a few emails when the rest of the family is gathered around the TV on movie night. When you're “away” from the office, make sure you're really away. You set the rules – you need to follow them, too.

## Ward Off The Time Vampires

“Time Vampires” are those seemingly harmless pastimes that end up sucking the life and time right out of your day. You sit down to read a few industry blogs and the next time you look up, your daughter has left for college and your son is shaving.

Not only will these black holes of time cause you stress because you're wasting time, you will also be kicking yourself in the rear end because you'll be filled with regrets. You'll be wondering how you could have been so stupid to sit at the computer, reading about urban legends for the past three hours.

Here are my suggestions for avoiding the time vampires (and none of them involves garlic!):

### **Set a timer.**

If you want to take a quick 10-minute break in the midst of an all-morning project to see what's happening on Facebook, that's fine. Grab the kitchen timer, set it for 10 minutes, and catch up with your friends until the timer goes off. Then get back to work. The same goes for Twitter. Go ahead and check in, but set your timer. It's amazing how fast a half hour will go by when you're enjoying yourself.

### **Schedule down time.**

Let's say you have to go in to have your gall bladder removed. Would you rather be operated on by the emergency room doctor who's been on the clock for 32 hours straight, or by the one who just returned from a nice, 30-minute lunch in the doctors' lounge? I know who I'd choose! Schedule in down-time for yourself so you can have a little non-work fun into your day. It'll refresh you for the tasks ahead. It's when we don't schedule a little escape during the day that we end up crashing and burning sometime later into an unhealthy marathon of some sort.

## Multi-Task.

Most of the time, it's most efficient to focus on one thing at a time while you're trying to be productive. But some tasks are just born for multitasking. Listen to industry-related podcasts while on the treadmill. Check your email while at your daughter's dance class. Instead of sitting on your behind on the phone with your sister, go for a walk while you chat. Layer activities the way you try to layer profits in your business.

## Write down what you do.

A simple notation in your calendar is all it takes. We did this in Lesson #2. Over time you'll notice a positive trajectory when you can clearly see the time you've wasted.

As a small business owner you already have many responsibilities. Set boundaries, get help and honour commitments to yourself and others to satisfy the need for balance and boost your success.

Set 3 'work rules' for family and friends. Implement them this week.

1.

2.

3.

What are your top 3 “Time Vampires”? (Refer back to your answers in Lesson #2.)

1.

2.

3.

This week, set a timer and decrease (or eliminate) the time spent on each of these.

### Coming Up Next...

**BONUS #2:** In this bonus we’ll be covering some simple solutions to controlling the clutter in your home office.