

To Do or NOT to Do...That is the Question!

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**To Do or NOT to Do...That is the Question!**

**By Kathy Paauw**

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A colleague of mine recently shared that she enjoys procrastination so much that she has decided to give herself permission to do it daily. So, once a day she sits down and plans, schemes, and lists anything that comes to mind -- particularly things she knows she "should" do. She said that "it feels delicious constructing those plans with full awareness that I'll probably not carry them out! Who cares? The fun is in the planning!" She reported that since she started allowing this frivolity, she gets it out of her system in one sitting, and she no longer feels the desire to procrastinate. She has cut in half the amount of time she "wastes" in this manner, which has freed her to fill the time more productively. She says, "Since it's going to happen anyway, why not be at choice?"

A few hours after I read my colleague's e-mail about how she plans to procrastinate, Oprah was on TV interviewing life coach Martha Beck about how to de-stress your life. During her interview with Oprah, Martha suggested that instead of making a To Do list, we make a NOT To Do list.

That same week, I came to the realization that I had over committed myself when I agreed to be part of a weekly teleconference meeting over the next eight weeks. As I thought about the topic of the teleconference, I had to laugh. The Teleconference topic -- Balancing Between Work and Life -- hit a nerve. I realized I was getting out of balance myself!

How often do you commit to something that you later regret, and then say to yourself, "Well, I HAVE TO DO IT because I gave my word!" Then you go on your way, grumbling about how over committed and stressed out you are. That's what I used to do, and I am getting better at recognizing when it's in my best interest to renegotiate commitments I have made. In this case, I renegotiated my participation in the teleconference, and by doing so I have freed up several hours a week of my time over the next eight weeks.

I think it is more than coincidence that I was bombarded with similar messages from several different sources, all within the same week. Perhaps the universe was telling me something that I needed to hear...and just in time for March Forth Day and National Procrastination Week, which coincide with

## To Do or NOT to Do...That is the Question!

each other the first week in March.

Last year at this time I wrote an article titled March 4th...Time to March Forth! located at <http://www.orgcoach.net/newsletter/march2001.html> and the year before that my March article was titled Fear Not! – The Perfectionist's Credo — an article about procrastination found at <http://www.orgcoach.net/newsletter/v3issue3.html>. To do or not to do — to march forth or to procrastinate — that is the question. Or IS that the question?

It occurred to me that perhaps the best way to march forth in my life is to NOT do some things, to just say NO! I think that's why my colleague enjoys her procrastination exercise so much, and why Martha Beck has helped so many of her clients reclaim their lives by creating a NOT To Do list. We're all too busy being busy! Meanwhile, life is passing us by.

Several years ago I made a poster that says, "Every time I say YES to someone or something, I am saying NO to someone or something else." (Remember, I'm a recovering workaholic!) This poster has helped me make better decisions about what I say YES and NO to. Given that procrastination means not doing something, perhaps one of the reasons that many of us procrastinate is because our lives are so full of things that deserve to be on our NOT To Do lists. Of course, there are also many other reasons for procrastinating. What is possible once you de-clutter your life of activities and commitments that are not top priority to you? What does your NOT To Do list contain?

Just Say NO!

"It's easy to say 'no!' when there's a deeper 'yes!' burning inside."  
—Stephen Covey

As an organizing consultant, I get calls every week from individuals who suffer from stress, disharmony, and sometimes dysfunction. People call me asking for assistance getting organized. I often ask, "What will getting organized do for you?" These are some of the replies I hear: "If I didn't waste so much time looking for things, I could focus on things that are really important that I just don't have time for now," or "I'd have more time to relax and do things I enjoy."

Although a good storage or filing system and tickler file will help my clients find things quickly and remember important follow-up, there is no organizational system in the world that will fully address the most common concern that I hear from nearly every person who calls me—not enough time. Visit <http://orgcoach.net/find5sec.html> to read more about a remarkable filing system that can help you find ANYTHING in 5 seconds or less. Visit [http://www.orgcoach.net/companystore\\_ickler\\_file.html](http://www.orgcoach.net/companystore_ickler_file.html) to read more about how to set up a tickler file and to view a photo of the accordion part of the customized tickler file system.

We all have 168 hours a week. You say that's not enough? What if you could wave a magic time wand and add an extra day to each week — for a total of 192 hours a week. Would that be enough? I'll bet not! It's the buffet syndrome! Whether we get a smaller plate or a larger plate, most of us will fill it to the rim at an all-you-can-eat buffet!

## To Do or NOT to Do...That is the Question!

I frequently tell my clients that organizing their time and environment without first clarifying their priorities is like rearranging deck chairs on the Titanic. Since more time will not solve the problem, the other alternative is to have less stuff you "gotta do."

### The NOT To Do List

"With so many options and choices nowadays, you will have to start saying no to some of the good things in order to accommodate the best things."

---Harold Taylor

How do you determine what goes on your NOT To Do list? Here are some suggestions:

FIRST, get clear on the big picture. What is most important to you?

\* What do you want to do and who do you want to be during your lifetime?

\* What legacy do you want to leave behind? How will your life have made a difference on this Earth?

NEXT, get clear about what you choose to do with your time. What are YOUR key roles?

\* What do you choose to say YES to? What are you most passionate about? What are you best at doing?

\* What do you choose to say NO to? What are you not passionate about that you are currently involved in? Review your calendar and your regular activities, and ask yourself if what you give your time to is most important to you?

\* How can you best honor your own health and well-being (physical, mental, spiritual, social needs)

\* Does your life feel balanced among all of your key roles? (Example: parent, spouse, friend, volunteer, professional, hobbyist, etc.)

THEN, lighten the load. Free up your time for what matters most.

\* Make lists of the following:

\*\* Commitments you will renegotiate that are not important or are less important to you.

\*\* Activities that simply don't need to get done – things you choose to let go of.

\*\* A "Perhaps List" of things you might do or that you plan to do but choose to defer for later. For more information on a Perhaps list visit: <http://www.orgcoach.net/perhaps.html>

\*\* A Delegation list. If you don't enjoy doing it or are not good at doing it, delegate as much as possible.

## To Do or NOT to Do...That is the Question!

Visit <http://www.orgcoach.net/delegation.html> for tips on delegation.

\* Schedule time for the following:

\*\* Activities that will honor your own health and well-being.

\*\* Activities which are important to you. Build in balance as you consider your key roles. Be aware of your self-talk. This is not about "have to" or "should." It's about what you choose.

\*\* Time to do weekly planning. Keeping a weekly planning appointment with yourself will help you stay more focused on the deeper YES so you can JUST SAY NO to the rest! Visit <http://www.orgcoach.net/sixsteps.html> for more help on weekly planning.

\*\* Time for family meetings. One common theme I hear from my clients is that they want to spend more time with the family. Work, responsibilities, and over committed schedules seem to be the biggest obstacle. The Family Meeting (an article you can view at <http://www.orgcoach.net/familymeetings.html>) provides an important opportunity for communication and planning as a family.

**JUST SAY YES!**

"The key is not to prioritize what's on your schedule, but to schedule your priorities."  
—Stephen Covey

If you're still procrastinating around doing the most important things you want or choose to do, here are ten tips to help get you moving:

1. How do you eat an elephant? One bite at a time! Break larger projects into manageable "bites" and create a reasonable timeline for you to accomplish these smaller tasks.
2. Remember that each project expands to the time allotted to it, so set a limit for yourself: I am going to return all my phone calls in an hour. I will file papers for 30 minutes. I will spend 15 minutes picking up around the house. Set a timer. You will be amazed how much you can get done when you focus your time. My clients report that they are much more efficient and effective when they set a time limit for specific tasks.
3. Check your self-talk. Do you frequently say, "I gotta...", "I should...", or "I have to..."? Replace this self-talk with "I choose to..." and recognize that you are at choice about what you do. If you don't choose to do it, don't do it!
4. Eat a live toad first thing in the morning, and nothing worse will happen to you the rest of the day. Tackle that "toad" – the important task you have been putting off, the one that is hanging over your head — because it will lift an immense load and you will feel much more productive.

## To Do or NOT to Do...That is the Question!

5. Train yourself to trim the F.A.T. <http://www.orgcoach.net/rimthefat.html>. When papers come into your office or home, give yourself these three choices: File, Act, Toss. (Note that "I'll just put it here for now" is not one of the choices.)

6. Relieve yourself of the stress caused by all of the clutter in your home and office by setting up some systems to manage the paper in your life. A good filing system and a tickler file system are essential elements. A good system will make a huge difference in your ability to effectively manage paper and prevent important activities from slipping through the cracks.

7. Make a weekly appointment with yourself to plan your coming week. During your planning session, schedule important activities and tasks so you have a concrete plan for following through with your intentions.

8. When planning your time, include both urgent (time-sensitive) and non-urgent but important activities in your plan. An example of an urgent activity might be a meeting or a project with an upcoming deadline. A non-urgent activity might be exercise or relationship-building – something important but not time-sensitive or deadline-driven.

9. Make appointments with yourself to get administrative work done, such as paying bills or catching up with your reading. Treat this time as you would an appointment with someone else.

10. Take 15 minutes at the end of each day to put things away and look at the calendar for the next day. Gather what you need ahead of time so you will be prepared for tomorrow.

March 3–9 is National Procrastination Week. If you're ready to get unstuck and March Forth, I'd be

delighted to assist you in the process. Email me at <mailto:orgcoach@gte.net> to request your complimentary coaching session.

Kathy Paauw, is a certified business/personal coach and organizing consultant. She works with individuals who are dedicated to moving their lives forward in powerful ways by helping them declutter their schedules, spaces and minds. Contact her at <mailto:orgcoach@gte.net> Visit <http://www.orgcoach.net> to learn how you can Find ANYTHING in 5 Seconds – guaranteed! Subscribe to her free monthly PaauperTools ezine <http://www.orgcoach.net/newsletter/freenews.html>.

### **The Immediacy of the Child's World**

**By Susan Dunn**

I've written before about this quiz circling the Internet and the answers my six year old friend gave.

One of the questions is "What would be your idea of a fun day?"

What would you put for that? Something in the future? Certain requirements? A special place? Couldn't

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happen without this person?

The Little One's response was "Today."

Just for your enjoyment, here are some more of her responses ... life seen through the eyes of child. Consider how you would answer these questions, and why. And how much better it might be to get back in touch with life as seen through a child's eyes.

QUESTION

WHAT BOOK ARE YOU READING RIGHT NOW?

RESPONSE

"None"

QUESTION

LIVING ARRANGEMENTS?

RESPONSE

"Mother, Father, Nina (sister), Fluffy (cat) and Max (dog)."

QUESTION

FAVORITE SOUND?

RESPONSE

"Doorbell ringing"

QUESTION

WORST FEELING IN THE WORLD?

RESPONSE

"Bug bite."

QUESTION

IF YOU COULD HAVE ANY JOB WHAT WOULD IT BE?

RESPONSE

I would work at XX Department Store (where her mother works)

QUESTION

IS THE GLASS HALF EMPTY OR HALF FULL?

RESPONSE

Half full.

QUESTION

WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME YOU LAUGHED TILL YOUR STOMACH HURT AND YOU CRIED

RESPONSE

Not any time

QUESTION

WHO HAS BEEN A STRONG INFLUENCE IN YOUR LIFE?

RESPONSE

Dad!

QUESTION

FAVORITE SPORT TO WATCH

RESPONSE

When I was a little baby I liked to watch baseball.

QUESTION

WHO INSPIRES YOU?

RESPONSE

Granny

QUESTION

IF YOU COULD TRAVEL ANYWHERE IN THE WORLD, WHERE WOULD YOU GO?

RESPONSE

I would go to Rancho Santa Fe. (Where her other grandmother lives.)

QUESTION

FINISH THIS SENTENCE: IF YOU DO THAT ONE MORE TIME, I'LL JUST HAVE TO ...

RESPONSE

Run away

QUESTION

WHAT IS COMFORTING?

RESPONSE

Flowers comfort me

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The Immediacy of the Child's World

Handling Questions with Authority

Business Writing Tip: Question & Answer Format

"...what Makes You Better?"

How I Broke Myself from Asking "What Are You Thinking?"

Success Secrets

Tame Your Personal Computer

DOS Made Easy

Instant Split Commissions

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