
NAVIGATING THROUGH THE STORM

Proven Strategies to Get
You Back on Course,
Find Your Mojo
and Reduce
Stress



By
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Navigating Through the Storm



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Your Mojo and
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People. Purpose. Performance.

*Navigating Through the Storm:
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on Course, Find Your Mojo and
Reduce Stress*

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Dedication

This book is dedicated to my partner, Josie Faye. You've taught me what real partnership looks and feels like. I appreciate your commitment to self-care and to our way of living. Thank you.

Additionally, I am thankful to all my wonderful coaching clients, who have made me a better coach and collaborator. Thank you for sharing your lives and allowing me to be a trusted guide. I have learned so much from each of you. I celebrate your achievements and examples.

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Introduction

I appreciate you opening this eBook. Everyone gets stressed and overwhelmed at times. This happens to men and women, young and old; it is universal. We are going to talk about why it happens and how to navigate through it. We might take on a lot of work. We often get overwhelmed – not because we are incompetent, incapable, lazy, or bad people, or not good with time management, simply because, we live among complex and interconnected systems that continually demand more and more of us. If we take our eyes off our own internal values and priority systems for just a second, we can get buried by the demands and expectations of everyone around us.

I am passionate about helping others navigate their way out of their own storms because when I was utterly lost and stressed, I received a helping hand and healthy perspective that helped me to navigate my way out. As a coach, I know that my clients make their best

career and life choices when they are in a state of physical, emotional and mental well-being.

Thirteen years ago, I was emerging out of a failed business startup and going back into the workforce loaded down by debt.

I had to settle for a job that paid \$25,000 less than I had been making before my failed business. Ouch! While the work environment was not a good fit, at least I was doing work that I loved, developing people and improving operations.

I dug in, worked hard for a year and got promoted. While the promotion alleviated some financial stress, it created its own unique headaches and stressors. The additional responsibilities, coupled with working through a divorce and enrolling in graduate school, were pushing my stress levels higher and higher. While I consider myself a good father, the four days on and four days off schedule had me spiraling out of control, and not sleeping well. When I was with my

children, I was overwhelmed. Each time they left, I was relieved for a day and then extremely lonely for the next three. This cycle was causing me anxiety and I was not sleeping well.

I felt as though I was letting everyone down, and I knew I needed help. My first step was calling my doctor to get assistance with sleep. He prescribed a low-dose anti-anxiety aid that gave me the rest I needed. I also connected with a therapist from my company's employee assistance program. The counselor helped me see that something needed to give. It was easy to see that school would have to wait. Just the idea of giving up something relieved so much pressure. I think I needed someone else to give me permission take my foot off the accelerator. I have been fortunate to work with some successful (mostly) female mid-level executives. These are driven people who sometimes want to take on the world by taking on too much all at once. This small book pulls from the lessons of my personal experience, and from the countless books, articles and classes I have taken up to this

point to help my clients navigate their own crises. I know that if you are reading this, you need some permission to be imperfect and some simple solutions. This book is about creating space, freedom and clarity so that you can make good decisions about your time, career and personal life. In the next section, I will give you my advice on how you can best utilize this book to get yourself back on track.

How to use this book

I have given careful thought to this book's organization. Do yourself a favor and read the first two sections first. DON'T SKIP those. They address the physical, emotional and mental states needed to make good decisions. Navigating out of crisis so that you can make good decisions starts with finding your best performance state. I have always been fascinated by sports and how elite athletes perform their best when it seems the pressure is the highest. As part of my master's thesis, I have learned that these athletes mastered the stress and rest cycle.

Elite athletes share a lot of common qualities. The best athletes in the world are obsessed with tuning their bodies, minds and emotions so they can perform in the arena when it matters most. They achieve greatness by prioritizing physical exertion, rest, good nutrition and sleep. You can learn from these great athletes. While you may never kick a winning goal in a big soccer match, you will

have countless big moments in your career each week for which you need to be in your optimal performance state.

The best way to use this book is to focus first on the physical, mental and emotional strategies to get you back on track. These are foundational to your success in getting to a healthy state.

The truth is you can't find balance without being willing to work hard at it. In this book, I challenge the concept that "busy" and "exhausted" are badges of honor. The people who find their way out of the shit accept that subtraction — not addition — is the straightforward answer. I am talking about being more focused, doing the work that you are most gifted and trained to do and finding ways to give up the stuff that really keeps you stuck. If that concept is not what you are looking for, I suggest you stop reading now. This book is really for those who are looking to get unstuck and make a shift in how they have been operating. If that is you,

congratulations! I have curated a simple, easy-to-read and efficient book designed to get you out of the shit storm and back to a place where you feel you are in control and making a difference again.

Physical performance strategies

We start with physical strategies because the body is your vehicle. Physical health is foundational to all other the strategies we will discuss. Physical performance strategies are tools you employ to ensure you have the stamina you need to accomplish your most important goals without having to rely on stimulants. Everything I present here will be things that you know already. You have either stopped practicing them, prioritized another area of your life or have lived on a different planet for a few years. Welcome back to Earth.

This book is not about extolling the virtues of working out and eating well. Yes, you need to do those things. You know that already. My simple case for starting here is that research says that we function best when we exert ourselves (stress) —I assume you have that part down— and secondly, rest. That is the part that I want to focus on for just a few moments.

My simple message is, work the other part of

the equation. As a society, we focus on the hard work part, the success equation, exclusively. The truth is elite athletes work extremely hard. What they do better than most of us “corporate athletes” is to prioritize rest. You know intuitively if you need to take more breaks, get more sleep or just turn off the cellphone on the weekend. This section is meant to be a primer and to stir up in you what you already know. Right?

Physical performance strategies

1. Take real breaks and maximize them
2. Eat for stamina
3. Prioritize sleep and rest
4. Recharge your battery

Take real breaks and maximize them

Take real breaks. I am not talking about taking six months off work and going on the mythical restful sabbatical. That would be wonderful. Let's start off by unchaining you from your desk every 50 to 75 minutes.

Research shows that you can only focus effectively for about 50 to 75 minutes. At that point, both the body and mind need a mini-vacation. How long? Ideally 17 minutes, during which you get away from work and connect or decompress. Not only will it recharge you physically, you will become mentally refreshed.

What does this strategy require? Just do it. Pull out your calendar and schedule breaks throughout your day. At least every 90 minutes to start with, take a solid 15-minute break. As a longtime classroom facilitator, I try to make sure I give three breaks in a day-long program. If you started with three breaks (morning, lunch and afternoon) you would see improved stamina and mental sharpness. To be clear, a

break does not mean going somewhere else to work. It means doing something that takes your mind off work for 10 to 17 minutes. That is 51 minutes in an 8-hour day to maximize performance.

Are you willing to give this a try for a few weeks?

Eat for stamina

Eating for stamina also follows the example of elite athletes. This is about paying attention to what works and doesn't for you. For me, when I need to be on top of my game (big meeting or speaking engagement), I know that I need to eat light because my adrenaline will already be firing. If I need to take down the nerves a bit, I know I need to dial back the caffeine. On a larger scale, I knew I had to reduce my weight (I lost 80 pounds over a 4-year period) by cutting back on sugar and simple carbs. That works for me.

Eating for stamina is about taking a step back and reflecting on what is working and not working for you and trying new approaches until you dial in something that gives you the energy and stamina you need to accomplish your important goals.

Prioritize sleep and rest

When I was at my worst, I knew I needed help to sleep. I knew that I had to get a handle on that first. For me, the solution was seeing a medical professional to get support. The impacts of lack of sleep can be devastating to your health. Sleep deprivation can cause memory issues and mood changes, weaken your immunity, impact your focus, cause high blood pressure, lower your sex drive and lead to poor balance.

I suspect there is nothing in that list that you did not know, but my point in sharing is to let you know this is the starting point if you are not sleeping sufficiently. I encourage you to find ways to get support to improve your sleep and rest.

Recharge your battery

While we all need to sleep to function well, how we recharge our batteries mentally and emotionally is unique. Some people recharge by being around people. Some recharge by closing the bedroom and bathroom doors and taking a long bath. For some of you, just taking exercise is energizing. When you are close to burnout, it's because you take on more of what drains you and stop doing things that recharge the spirit.

I am a big believer in the long weekend or vacation as a method to recharge the batteries, but the reality is these things just don't happen enough to keep you going over a long year. What I am advocating for are a few small activities each week that will give your nervous system a positive jolt. For me, golf, singing loudly, morning writing and spending time with my partner recharge me. What about you? What are you most in need of?

Emotional and mental strategies

One of the techniques that I use with my coaching clients at the start of a session is to stop and have them evaluate their physical, emotional and mental well-being. For me, it is incredibly helpful to assess their true mood and mental clarity. When a client is unfocused or in emotional turmoil, we often go through this process calm mental state to do our work. In some cases, just getting clients to shift their emotional perspectives is what we focus on during the entire session.

Coaching work is all about helping my clients to reach new levels in their leadership or clarity in their careers. Pilots need good visibility or accurate instrumentation to fly safely. Strong emotions, particularly heavy or negative ones, can cloud clarity. The same can be said for a cluttered mind.

I prioritized emotional and mental strategies second because emotional calmness and a quiet mind will help you to make important decisions

that will be an enabler to find your way out of a storm.

Some of us naturally have more passion emotionally or busier minds. I have included strategies that will support all types. What is important is not my finite list of strategies, but rather an attitude and approach to growth. This means a willingness to try something new or to return to strategies that worked previously that you have abandoned.

If you can find one strategy that helps you reduce the noise in your head and makes you feel centered, it will improve effectiveness with your family, friends, clients and co-workers. For many of you, you picked this book up because you were feeling a little lost. It is time to find a way back by getting clear and grounded.

Emotional and mental strategies

1. Find the calm
2. Create a gratitude habit
3. Don't work incongruently
4. Change your scorecard
5. Change your expectations
6. Find a healthy perspective
7. Reject the superhero mythology
8. Take one small step away from perfectionism

Find the calm

Let's start discussing emotional and mental strategies with finding the calm. For some, the calm comes from connecting with the body through yoga or Tai Chi. For others, it is activities like adult coloring, crosswords, or jigsaw puzzles. As for my partner and me, we found calm through ballroom dancing. Neither of us have rhythm, so it requires that we concentrate, count and gaze into each other's eyes, which causes smiles except when I step on her feet.

Another way that I recommend people find calm is through morning writing. This practice is adopted from the book *The Artist Way*. The practice is to write for twenty or thirty minutes to syphon off negative or critical emotions. It is also a way to slow down and be more reflective and calmer.

It does not matter whether you try any of the things that I suggest here. What matters most is to find ways to gain calmness and clarity when you need them the most. To find out what works best for you, you'll need to experiment with different

techniques. If you are at a loss for where to start, I would try sitting quietly and counting to 25.

Create a gratitude habit

Create a gratitude habit every morning. One of the practices in our home is morning gratitude. Some days, this is more bullshit than others, but for the most part, establishing that habit of thinking about what's positive shifts the emotional and mental energies. It does not take long and will positively impact your outlook. Start with a list of five things you are grateful for that day. Play a game with yourself to see how many days you can stay with the practice. We have done this for over 700 days straight now. It really makes a difference.

If you can't get your kids or partner to join you, find 5 minutes to do it alone. It will change your perspective.

Don't work incongruently

This is my fancy way of saying craft your day and work life around your natural abilities and values. Let me give you an example: I shifted from doing work as an insurance adjuster 20 years ago. I had been working incongruently for five years, which negatively impacted my health and mental well-being. The job required me to be organized, detail-oriented and skilled at conflict management. I moved to a role that allowed me to be creative, big-picture oriented and to work with people in a collaborative manner, which aligned with my natural abilities and values.

It may be true that with hard work, motivation and determination you can do anything that you put your mind to – I believe that. What is often not talked about is the price we pay for working incongruently. Many people successfully take on roles that are better suited for someone else. To work congruently requires that you have a good handle on your own strengths, natural abilities and values. Figuring these out requires calmness, mental clarity and time to reflect.

By working congruently to your natural abilities and values, you will reduce much of the stress and noise in your life.

Change your scorecard

Changing your scorecard is about making a shift in mindset. It involves consciously changing your evaluation of your own effort and results. How many times have you arrived home at the end of a stressful day and had no earthly idea what you accomplished? To make matters worse, you are feeling guilty because you are later than usual, and it looks like chicken nuggets and mac and cheese again for the kids.

I recommend to my clients who are knee-deep in the stress and guilt cycle to change their scorecards. It really is quite simple and powerful. What you do is pick the three most important tasks. Then, instead of focusing on the results, you focus on your efforts. Let's walk through an example. Let's suppose one of your employees is underperforming. You prioritize having a chat with him about his performance. There is no way you can control the employee's reaction or his short-term behavior. Too often we focus on the wrong part of the equation. Using this technique, you focus on what you did, said or prepared for the conversation.

The key to making this work is to keep it simple – when you are in stress, you need a

simple way to feel good and navigate your way back to solid ground.

Really decide what is most important to you and grade only *your* part of the equation.

Change your expectations

Change your expectations. I got this advice from my first professor in graduate school. She said at the end of the day, you must make school work for you. No one will care what your GPA was in graduate school. So, I was okay with getting B's on some assignments that felt like a waste of my energy.

The mistake of many type-A people make is treating their entire lives like a test that requires a perfect score. This is unrealistic and a dangerous mindset that leads to burnout.

Find a healthy perspective

Finding a healthier perspective is easier said than done. I am not talking about platitudes such as “it will all work out the way is supposed to” or “everything happens for a reason.” Bullshit. Sometimes things just suck. Having said that, there are ways to shift your perspective without ignoring how crappy things might be in the moment.

Let’s walk through a typical example: Let’s assume you are in an incredibly busy and demanding period at work. Let’s also assume you have a manager who is not very understanding about your need for work/life balance. The first perspective sounds like this: “I wish my boss were not such an [insert favorite swear word].” Very true. Yet no matter how true it is, it is probably not making you feel better. A healthier perspective might sound like this: “This project is important. I need to give this my full attention. I will have an honest conversation with my spouse about some

patience and help with my responsibilities around the home until I get clear of this mess.”

A healthy perspective does not change the reality of the situation. It is neither wishful nor victim thinking. At its core, finding a healthy perspective means prioritizing what matters most and getting real about what you can accomplish in this period of time.

Reject the superhero mythology

The biggest lie is that the most successful people are superheroes. OMG. This alone has kept more good people from asking for the support they need than anything else.

Superheroes only exist in comic books or the movies. You can do things better than other people. You already have natural and unique abilities that give you an absolute advantage over others. I am not talking about superpowers. I am talking about *your* gifts. Examples include writing, persuading, fixing, advocating or teaching, to name a few.

Where we go wrong is assuming that we are supposed to be gifted and good at everything. Get a hold of yourself. No one is gifted in all things. The trick is to focus your efforts and energies on those things you naturally do well and find ways to delegate, partner and hire others to do the rest.

Most of you who are reading this have achieved enough success and have the

resources to buy time back. For more on that, look up the outsourcing and automation strategies.

Accept your humanity and embrace that you will do some things better than others and will need help from time to time.

Take one small step away from perfectionism

I will end the emotional and mental strategies section with perfectionism. This is closely related to the mythology of being a superhero.

This is so pervasive in our culture – I would say especially with people like you, who have already achieved success. At the heart of it is feeling as though we are not good enough and have to keep outpacing our last accomplishment to feel like we belong. I know this is getting a little deep for a little eBook.

My perfectionism shows up as procrastination. For others, it is long hours away from your family. It is all fear-based thinking.

Give yourself permission to be less than perfect in just one assignment or part of your life. I guarantee you that the world will not explode if you are less than perfect. You are creative, resourceful and whole, even when you are not perfect. The world will not spin

off its axis if something goes undone at home or at work.

I invite you to try an experiment that takes you one small step away from perfectionism. Go ahead. Try it.

Prioritization strategies

The physical, emotional and mental strategies provided you with your vehicle and the clarity to navigate. Prioritization strategies help you clarify why you are navigating and what your mission is.

At the core of prioritization strategies are alignment goals, values and your work. This assumes that you have some clarity about what's most important in your role, your family and career.

Prioritization is much more than figuring out how to move all your tasks around the board in a way that they all get done. Good prioritization involves making decisions about what matters and when. There is no right way. As with everything else I have presented to you, I will give you options to consider based on your own style and personality. My advice is to focus on the decision-making part and not the tool.

Prioritization strategies

1. Quit one thing
2. Delegate your weaknesses
3. *Kanban, anyone?*
4. Calendar your “big rocks” first
5. Batch like crazy
6. Practice deep work

Quit one thing

You would not be here and in this pickle if you didn't fail to let something go. Remember my story at the beginning? Because I was in a fog, I was seeing all priorities in my life as equal.

Keeping my job so I could provide for my kids was the priority. I made the decision to give up my desire for an advanced degree to gain some space. The metaphor for prioritization is that your container only holds so many things. Yes, you can jam it full as so many of us do and become a jack of all trades and master of none. The key is to fill your container with just enough to feel full and energized by the challenge and not stressed. You can't look to your partner or a friend for help on this. We each have a container that holds a different volume of stuff. The trick is to be honest with yourself.

If you are feeling stressed, overwhelmed and ineffective in most areas, it means your container is too full and it is time to let something go.

How do you decide? How about eeny, meeny, miny, moe? Yes, I am joking (sorry). Here is my recommendation: Write down all the big tasks, projects and responsibilities you have, including shared tasks on which you end up doing the work because only you can do it correctly. Second, review the list with these two questions in mind: What can I let go of for good, and what I can I postpone for later? Here is what will happen at first. You will probably reflexively say it is all important. Wrong. Take a short break from things. Keep returning to the list until something hits you. If you still can't find something to give up, email me. Better yet, find a friend who is objective and ask her.

Delegate your weaknesses

If you don't do anything else in this prioritization section but give up one thing and delegate your weaknesses, this book would be worth your time and mine. Sarah Blakely, billionaire founder and entrepreneur of Spanx, says, "I encourage people to delegate and hire where you aren't strong."

This strategy requires self-awareness of what you do well and what you don't. Are you starting to spot a theme? You are not superwoman, and you can't do everything well... Okay, I won't repeat that rant. I know my audience, and most of you are in a position in your careers where you are making your own personal decisions. The biggest mistake is hiring someone who is just like you. We do this with skill and personality and end up with weak and imbalanced teams. Take a step back when you have an opportunity to hire someone onto your team or into your organization who complements you where you are weak. What do you find yourself dreading, delaying or doing an average job on despite your best

efforts? This is where you need the support. Your job is to first be honest, and then to delegate the areas of your job that you know are not your core strengths.

What will happen if you do this? At first, it may feel uncomfortable. The more you do it, the easier it will become. You will help to empower other team members and you will become better at the work that suits your core strengths. The result will be more effectiveness, a stronger team and reduced stress.

Kanban, anyone?

I can't pronounce it and I doubt will do it real justice, but I am always up for a challenge. *Kanban* is a way of organizing your work visually that comes from the efficiency experts at Toyota.

In its simplest format, the *kanban* approach divides your work in to three categories: To do, doing and done. By doing this, you get a more realistic view of your work portfolio.

The problem with the traditional to-do list is it's a myopic and flat view of the work and makes everything seem like an equal priority. You tend to lose sight of what's in process and what has been accomplished, which is draining. In my cloud-based and automation tools section, I give an example of an application that allows you to track your *kanban* style called Trello.

Calendar your “big rocks” first

Calendaring your “big rocks” first comes from the work of the late great Stephen Covey. He uses a jar to represent the finite space of time and tasks that you can accomplish. Covey recommended that after you have figured out what the most important tasks are, make sure you accomplish those first. In his famous analogy, he says that if you took a jar and filled it halfway with sand and then put in your big rocks, they would not all fit because your small tasks took up too much space. If you reversed it – put in the big rocks first and then poured in the sand – the sand would fill in the empty spaces around the big rocks and it would all fit.

It is not about getting everything done, but rather getting the most important things in your life and career done first. My simple recommendation is entering those important items as calendar entries at the beginning of your week and treating these appointments as must-keep. Chances are you will

underestimate the time it takes on your first few attempts. Evaluate yourself by your effort and not perfection. Give yourself a score and take note of what got in the way. Repeat this process until you get better at doing the most important stuff first.

Batch like crazy

Batching is the process of doing similar tasks during the same time period. The reason it works is that you reduce the time it takes to set up for a task. You do the setup once and then power through similar tasks. An example of this is doing a few expense reports at once rather than doing them one at a time. This takes advantage of how your brain has shifted to left-brain detail work. Batching reduces the loss of time from switching back and forth between different types of thinking.

Practice deep work

Deep work goes against the notion that people are good or should be good at multitasking. I think one of the most destructive myths is that women are good at multitasking and men are not. It sets up a false narrative and expectations for a skill that just does not exist in more than 1% of the general population, male or female. The truth is that switching back and forth from task to task (multitasking) costs valuable time. Research shows that people who multitask end up getting 40% less done than people who practice single-task deep work.

Deep work is the practice of treating your task and work like an appointment with the most important person in the world. Okay, I may be overselling it, but if you had an opportunity to meet someone that you admire for an hour, pick their brain and learn from their experiences, here is what we know. You would be totally focused. You would set up your environment in such a way as to eliminate distractions. You might

tell your staff to hold your calls, and you would probably close the door, put away your phone and really focus on the person before you.

Deep work is the practice of focusing on one thing at a time and reducing or eliminating all distractions. If you remember what we talked about at the beginning, this should not exceed the 50- to 90-minute duration. If you want to get more done at a higher quality, quit multitasking and practice deep work.

Communication strategies

Some of the more important tools in regaining control of your time and priorities are partnering, delegating, and asking for help.

The scariest thing that I have seen is someone who is on the brink of burnout and still saying yes to more work. They fail to negotiate due dates, ask for help or delegate. These are good-hearted and kind people who would rather take on more than give others an opportunity to support them, based on the false notion that if a task is hard for them, it will be harder for their support system. What they fail to realize is the tasks that are difficult, challenging and a pain in the bottom for them may energize others. They fail to realize that delegation is really empowerment. They fail to realize that “no” does not mean “never,” it just means “not now” and “not me.”

In this section, you will learn a few communication strategies that will help you get the support you need. Remember my story in the beginning? Had I not gotten the help I needed, I would have been useless to my children and my employees and would not have

been able to make the meaningful contributions
I have made in my career.

Communication strategies

1. Just say “no”
2. Asking for what you need
3. Asking for help
4. Morning pages

Just say “no”

Saying no is one of the hardest things for successful people. Fear stops successful people from saying no. What’s the fear of? Fear of hurting feelings, fear of missing out, fear of losing opportunities, fear of reputation damage, and fear of admitting limitations.

When you have a clear view of your strengths, weaknesses and your brand, you know where you add and don’t add value. By saying no to work and responsibilities that are not on-brand, you are saying yes to your best work. You are saying yes to having balance in your life. You are saying yes to others developing and doing their best work.

My challenge to you now is to take five minutes and think about opportunities when “no” was the best answer. Did you end up enjoying or regretting saying yes? If you are ready to take back a little bit more control, practice by saying no. Try it. You must practice it. If you are not ready to say no

now, step down to “let me think about it and get back to you.”

Asking for what you need

I separated asking for what you need and asking for help. Asking for what you need entails creating the conditions you need to perform your best. An example could be as simple as asking for a temporary employee to complete a project on time, or asking for the equipment you need to work more efficiently.

A good example of asking for what you need is a recent client of mine. Through our work, she clearly understood what she needed to redesign her job to better align with this stage of her life. Her wish list included reduction in management responsibilities, 100% retention of current salary, and 100% working remotely. She also was clear about what would be progress and what she would accept. She is still negotiating, but so far, she has redesigned her role to include moving back to the work where she thrives and working a four-day week. Is this a closed matter? No, this was only her opening move. She made progress and regained freedom and more time with her

young family. She made progress by partnering with her spouse about her lifestyle and their values. She has a compelling vision of being a great mom and partner and doing work she loves from anywhere in the country she wants to. The key for her taking a huge step in the right direction was to get into a dialog with the people on her shift.

The pathway to getting what you need starts with reflection, unbiased support and understanding the world from all points of view, not just yours.

My challenge to you is to start asking for what you need most to live and work in a way that honors you and your values.

Asking for help

I separated this from asking for what you need. To me, asking for help means getting the support that you need to live the life you are currently living in a way that you can perform your best.

The help can come from your partner, your peers, or your manager. Ask for help, particularly when you are taking on water and struggling. This is the time to resist perfectionism.

I am still learning how to ask for help. One of the things that has helped me get better at asking for help is seeing the positive responses to my requests for support. People want to help you when they know what you need and how they can support you. One example that comes to mind happened a few years ago. I was collaborating with another facilitator on a coaching training program. I had agreed to complete some deliverables for our next meeting, and I had fallen short of what I had promised. I was overwhelmed with deliverables for different projects. What I needed most from my partner was compassion and understanding. There is was no way she

could give me what I needed I asked. I asked her for patience and compassion. Her response was nothing but gracious and warm; it really moved me and motivated me. I quickly caught up on my work because I was operating guilt-free. We went on to deliver a great program and deepened our partnership.

Morning pages

I included this process in the communication section because it is helpful in getting clear on what you need and want. It comes from the work of Julia Cameron. The process (as I mentioned before) is writing early in the morning when your guard is down, and the demands of the day have not yet weighed you down.

Writing in the morning is a tool to crystallize your thoughts and desires. It is also a powerful tool for sparking creativity. In as little as 20 minutes a morning, you will walk away mentally sharper, more creative and equipped to take on the challenges of your day.

When you have clarity, you become a better communicator and can confidently ask for what you need and deserve.

Outsourcing and automation strategies

Outsourcing and automation is my bonus section. This section is about taking advantage of the services and applications that are available to simplify your life.

The truth is we all can benefit from ways to buy back time to have the freedom we need to live more balanced lives. Whenever we hire someone who is better, faster, and cheaper to do work for us, we buy back time that allows us to focus on things that energize and delight us. Big statement? You better believe it is; it's true!

We live in a time when resources (people, applications and services) are readily available to make our lives less complicated.

In this section, like the others, I will present you with an array of options to get you thinking about how you can buy time for yourself so you can focus on the areas in which you are energized and thrive.

Outsourcing and automation strategies

1. Buy time
2. Hire an intern
3. Rotational assignments
4. Outsource household tasks
5. Move to the cloud
6. Automation tools

Buy time

A good assistant is an invaluable resource. If your organization will not provide you with an assistant, you have a multitude of options.

The first option is to hire a virtual assistant to support you personally and/or professionally. Time etc and Red Butler are organizations that staff virtual assistants. These assistants can do things like arrange travel, create presentations and spreadsheets, and complete research, to name a few tasks. Once you are clear about what you do best and the tasks you disdain, consider hiring a virtual assistant. My recommendation is to start with a few of the providers I mentioned. Short-term monthly fees are available so you can adjust based on budget and effectiveness without long-term commitments. What will you get? You are buying back your time and outsourcing your weaknesses.

Hire an intern

Hire an intern. This is a win-win for you and for the intern. Interns are inexpensive labor. You get an eager young professional who is willing to learn and do the work that you don't want to do. The intern gets an opportunity to learn, grow and build their résumé. My suggestion is to hire for motivation first and for specific skills second. You want someone who is willing to jump in and learn and brings some skills that they are continuously improving without a lot of direct supervision.

Rotational assignments

A rotational assignment is another temporary method to bring support for you and your team for short periods. Much like an intern, you are getting someone from another department who wants to learn more about your group's work. This practice works out best when you can reciprocate by loaning out a staff member when you are not in a crunch. This process takes creativity and communication with peers and supervisors to see if there is an interest. I have made use of this tactic during my time working in organizations. It was a great way to squeeze out more work and stimulate fresh ideas.

Outsource household tasks

Now that we have killed off the myth of superwoman, hopefully you are more open to buying time at home. Anything you need can be outsourced – housecleaning, laundry services, groceries, dog walking, pool cleaning and lawn services, to name a few. If doing these tasks brings you joy and energizes you, then keep doing them. If you are still doing them because you feel you are supposed to, I invite you to reconsider outdated gender roles and rules that don't apply to the modern leader.

A recent client said that what mattered most to him was creating memories and experiences for his family. I love this! Outsourcing things that drain you is a great way to find time for what matters most.

Move to the cloud

Yes, move your work to the cloud. This is a time-saving way to make sure your most important work is available to you on any device anywhere in the world with internet connection. I am not talking about doing work during your vacations or time with your family, I am talking about being free to work where you want to work.

I did a two-year consulting gig by having my notes and early ideas created on a cloud-based application. I did my master's degree by first writing my papers on the same application. There are a lot of tools and applications designed to save you time and give you the freedom to work across multiple devices. I have listed a few of my favorites in the next section with a brief write-up so you can consider how they might make your life a little easier.

Cloud-based and automation applications

Evernote – This is a cloud-based notes application that you can store your important ideas, thoughts and work products on. It allows you to store attachments and keep an endless list of notes and notebooks that are searchable. Keep track of important things like passwords, ideas and everything in between. The basic application is free. It is the best cloud-based application I have used. OneNote is the Microsoft version.

Google Suite – The most popular application is Google Suite from Gmail, which is the cloud-based email application. Did you know that by having a basic Gmail account, you also have access to a full array of cloud-based applications? You can do word processing, presentations, surveys, and backing up your documents. Google has made its spreadsheet and word processing tools compatible with Microsoft Office, so it is easier to start a document on Google and finish it in Word. With cloud-based storage on Google

Drive, you never have to lose your most important photos or documents again. Move your documents periodically or automatically to the cloud to have peace of mind and freedom.

Calendly – This is my second-favorite cloud-based application. If you have ever wasted time going back and forth when scheduling a meeting with someone outside of your organization, then use Calendly, a free application that integrates with most calendar systems so that others can schedule time when you are free without you having to do the work of sending dates and times. It is a stone-cold time saver. The basic application is also free.

Temi – If you are an extrovert or do better talking out your thoughts instead of writing them, then Temi is a great tool for you. Temi will convert audio or video recordings from in any format into a low-cost, high-quality transcript, saving you valuable writing time. Dictate on your smartphone's audio recording application and upload it to Temi. Within minutes, you will have a transcript back that

accelerates the writing process. I used this tool to create my first draft of this eBook.

Zapier - Zapier is an automation tool designed to stitch together and move data between applications. Zapier acts like a courier, delivering messages between unrelated applications. An example is taking information from a spreadsheet on potential recruiting prospects and having Zapier fire off a standard message with attachments to your prospects without you having to touch it. Zapier.com is loaded with amazing time-saving and automation tips. The basic application is free.

Trello - This application takes the *kanban* method and puts it into a cloud-based application that allows you to work across all your devices. It is like having a personal assistant in the palm your hands who keeps track of your most important work (to do, doing and completed). The best news is it is also free.

About Ron

Ron Ross is a dynamic and engaging speaker and seminar leader with over twenty years of experience. He has an absolute passion for helping others achieve their dreams and express their unique creativity.

He creates a rich, playful, and engaging learning environment that sparks information and idea exchanges among participants. He delivers thoughtful information mixed in with a heavy helping of his trademark enthusiasm and a dash of humor, making his classes a memorable experience. His mission is to create a world where everyone



operates from the fullness of their strengths and natural talents in a way that enriches our collective human experience.

Ron works with entrepreneurs, leaders, and mentors in values-based and socially conscious organizations to drive results by unlocking and igniting the passion in the constituents that they serve.

Prior to his career as a consultant and executive coach, Ron served as a director for a national leader in the home health care industry. He has also acted as a consultant for health care, pharmaceutical, and biotech firms throughout the United States.

To join his community or to learn more, visit him at ronpaulross.com.

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