



Tyme Management™

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Keep Your Cool Under Stress

Many people feel that they must be in a constant state of panic, rushing from place to place and stressing from task to task, in order to get things done. The secret to working under pressure, however, is learning how to stay cool, calm and collected. When your mind is calm and focused, you can think clearer and get more accomplished. **Here are suggestions for keeping your cool:**

- ◆ Take a reality check. Remind yourself that being anxious won't help things get done any faster, but will only wear you out. Focus on one task at a time until each is completed.
- ◆ Think before you speak. Avoid reacting to what people say. Instead of saying the first thing that comes to mind, give yourself a moment's reflection.
- ◆ Practice slower movements. Moving faster usually makes your body more tense while saving little time. Walk with a leisurely stride rather than in an agitated charge.
- ◆ Choose confidence. The next time you're late for a meeting, avoid rushing in nervously. Stop yourself outside the door, take a deep breath, and walk in poised and relaxed.

Take a Break to Relieve Stress

The longer the day wears on, the more difficult it seems to stay motivated and productive. The goal for the day often veers from tackling objectives to just surviving until it's time to leave. What's the solution to this daily struggle? To replenish yourself with regular work breaks.

Breaks don't necessarily have to be long to be effective. In fact, some studies support the idea that several short breaks throughout the day work better than a few longer ones. **The following are tips for having a refreshing work break:**

- ▲ *Drink some water.* Even a 1 to 2 percent loss of fluid can make you dehydrated, and breathing and invisible evaporation from your skin can make you lose water. Dehydration causes fatigue, headaches and muscle aches and impairs your thinking and concentration abilities. Thirst is seldom a good predictor that you need more water, so drink it throughout the day even when you don't feel thirsty.
- ▲ *Reverse your focus.* Many workers suffer from the effects of eyestrain, especially when working on computers. If you've been working up close on something, focus your eyes on a distant object, such as the leaves on a tree outside. If you've been looking at something far away, do the opposite. Make sure to blink occasionally if you wear contacts, since concentrating causes you to blink less and can dry out your eyes.



- ▲ *Check your "trigger points."* Press your fingers against the muscle areas at your jaw, neck, shoulders, lower back and the base of your skull. If you notice sensitivity in an area, gently apply pressure to the spot with your hands for six seconds to help relieve tension.
- ▲ *Move around.* Even correct posture isn't good for you if you remain in one position for too long. Get up and move around at least once an hour, and do some stretches for the part of your body that needs it most.
- ▲ *Clear your mind.* If something's bothering you, ask yourself the following: "Is this going to matter in the long run? Is this really an accurate perception? What is the root of the problem? What can I do about this right now?" Resolve what you can for the moment, and then move on.

Have Effective Dinner Meeting

Building business relationships is oftentimes best done in a more relaxed setting outside the corporate environment. Restaurant meetings provide the perfect opportunity to talk business and get to know each other better at the same time. **Here are some suggestions for an effective restaurant meeting:**



- ▲ Go with a plan. Make sure you have a solid objective in mind. Do you want to swap information? Share a prospective idea? Examine a potential client more closely?
- ▲ Choose your guests wisely. Be careful about the number of guests you invite. When more than two people are present, the additional social interaction can complicate attempts to get to know someone on a deeper level.
- ▲ Pick the right location. Select an atmosphere that your guest will appreciate and feel comfortable in. Sometimes people prefer the simple and low-key to the rich and extravagant.
- ▲ Seek space. In many restaurants, tables are placed so closely together that it's often difficult to hear what your dinner companion is saying. Find a restaurant that provides enough room for private conversation.
- ▲ Approach business matters slowly. Begin the meeting with general conversation. Enjoy the process of ordering your meal and engaging in small talk.
- ▲ Forgo token personal inquiries. Some people assume they've been personable if they ask about the other person's family at the beginning of a conversation. Unless such questions are sincere or have a useful purpose, however, avoid them.
- ▲ Communicate your intent. Before meeting, let your guest know that you have something specific that you'd like to talk about. Keep the conversation interesting by waiting longer than expected to divulge the subject.

Put Your Temp Workers to Work

The following are suggestions for making temps a productive part of your business:

- Prepare the jobs to be done ahead of time. This allows the temp to begin working on them right away.
- Give a tour of the office and building facilities. Point out the location of the copier machine, supply closet, restrooms and exits.
- Explain how to use the equipment for the job. Describe any special procedures for using the telephones, copier machine, or computer system. You may also want to provide a written copy of these instructions as well.
- Clarify the rules. Define what's acceptable and unacceptable in personal conduct. Can employees listen to music while they're working? Can they eat or drink at their desks? Are personal calls allowed?
- Avoid unnecessary details. Try not to confuse temps with names, jargon, or information that isn't essential for getting the job done.
- Inform coworkers. Outline the jobs to be done to other employees so that they can answer questions and handle any problems.

Have Success at Fairs and Conventions

Attending an out-of-town trade fair or convention can be a valuable investment of your time. **Here are some tips for making the most of your time away from the office:**

- ◆ *Arrive early.* Whenever possible, schedule to arrive one or two days before the convention starts. This should allow you enough time to recover from jet lag and become familiar with a new town. You can also use this time for sight-seeing and shopping.
- ◆ *Stay nearby.* Choose a hotel that's close to where the event will be held. If you're within walking distance, you'll be able to sidestep the hassles of commuting and traffic jams.
- ◆ *Secure a hotel room in advance.* Make your hotel arrangements as soon as you decide that you're going. Rooms fill up faster than you might expect, so it's best to find a room at least six months before going to a big convention.
- ◆ *Make restaurant reservations ahead of time.* If you've heard of a great place to eat, call the restaurant before you swing into town. It's likely that other visitors will want to eat there, too.



Keep it Clean

To clean smarter and faster:

- ◆ Begin with the ceiling. Work your way down to floor, since dust will move downward as you go.
- ◆ Carry supplies with you in a container. That way you won't have to keep going back and forth to get them.
- ◆ Pretreat difficult stains. Apply a cleaning product to help loosen the dirt before you work on them.
- ◆ Remove distractions. Let the answering machine handle phone calls, so you can keep working.
- ◆ Focus on cleaning. Avoid the urge to rearrange or redecorate. Leave organizing for another time.
- ◆ Concentrate your efforts on high-traffic areas. Clean less-used rooms only where necessary.
- ◆ Remember the little things. Straighten pillows, magazines and other decorations.
- ◆ Stick to one spot. To motivate you to finish, confine yourself to one room until you're done with it.

Making a Little Extra Money

With spring-cleaning now in the air, you may find that you have several things you no longer need.

Why not have a garage sale with these items? **The following are tips for planning your garage sale:**

- **Advertise in advance.** Publicize your sale in the local newspaper, and stick flyers on community bulletin boards. Tell people you know about it, and try advertising on free Internet sites devoted to garage sales.
- **Check the rules.** Make sure that you comply with any fees or regulations that your neighborhood or city has for garage sales. Also be aware of any restrictions that there may be on posting signs.
- **Make it a group effort.** Ask your neighbors about having a neighborhood garage sale. By working together, you can draw more people with less individual effort and expense.



- **Make signs simple and visible.** Use thick cardboard for your signs, and include the date, time, address, and directions or arrows on them. Drive by your signs to make sure that people can read them as they go by.

- **Present items attractively.** Organize your merchandise so that people can see items easily without having to dig through other things. Display interesting items at the end of the driveway to invite people to stop and look.

- **Put price tags on everything.** If you don't want to label all your wares, make signs that indicate how much all of the items on a particular table or rack cost. In general, price things at roughly one-third of what they would cost new.

- **Keep a supply of small change.** Never leave your money unattended, and avoid taking strangers' checks. Bag items in old grocery sacks, and wrap fragile purchases in newspaper.

Establish Time Effective Routines in the Morning

You may be so rushed in the morning that there seems to be no time for breakfast. But by streamlining your breakfast routine, you can have breakfast in a minimal amount of time. **To simplify your breakfast time:**

- **Use breakfast trays.** Set individual place settings on separate trays the night before. In the morning, people can then take their food to the table and return dirty dishes to the sink all in one trip.
- **Use ready-made breakfast foods.** Fruit, cereals, yogurt, and microwave or toaster foods offer quick alternatives to more traditional breakfast fare. Instant coffee and fruit juices are easy drink options.
- **Conserve your steps.** Think of ways to reduce how often you need to go back and forth between the stove, sink, refrigerator and table. You could put cereals in canisters on the table, for example.
- **Keep pills handy.** Store pills and vitamins where you can get to them easily without forgetting them. Always keep them out of the reach of children.
- **Catch the news another way.** Instead of reading the newspaper, place a small TV or radio in your kitchen, so you can listen while you eat. Or, leave them off, and spend a few minutes talking with your family.
- **Do dishes later.** Run hot water over the dishes, and let them soak. Do them with your other dishes later, or put them in the dishwasher.



Putting First Things First

Priorities make the difference between a merely busy life and a life of purpose. Without them, you may manage to complete your “to do” list and calendar of activities, but you won’t find lasting happiness or meaning in life. **Consider the following suggestions for living your life by your priorities:**

- ❑ View each day as a gift. What if today were the last day of your life? How would you make the most of it? What would you do to make an impact? How would you embrace and enjoy your experiences and the people around you? Appreciate each day, and you’ll adjust your attitude and be more motivated to give your time to what’s important.
- ❑ Make a priority list. This list should include not only your goals about



what you want to do, but also the kind of person you want to be and the people who are important to you. When approached with a decision about whether to do something or not, consult your list. If the activity doesn’t relate directly to one of your priorities, don’t do it.

- ❑ Question yourself. Throughout the day, evaluate whether or not what you’re doing is a good use of your time. Ask yourself, “Is this a worthwhile use of my time? Could it be better spent?” Using your time wisely doesn’t just mean doing things faster and getting faster results, however. Often, the most worthwhile things in life require giving your time away to others and investing a significant amount of it before seeing the results.

Shopping with “Cents”

If you’re not careful, a trip to the store can add more to your closet without giving you anything more to wear. **Here’s how to shop for a wardrobe that you can actually use:**

- Make a list of your needs. Write down the outfits and items that you must add or replace. Then, stick to your list, so you can avoid the expensive consequences of impulse buying.
- Remember your budget. Set a limit to the amount of money you’ll spend before you go.
- Aim for coordination. Choose two colors that look good on you that also go well together. Build your wardrobe around this color scheme, selecting the majority of items in these colors.
- Get the perfect match. When looking for something to match an item that you already have, cut a small piece of fabric from its inner seam, tape it to an index card and take it with you. Always compare fabric colors in natural light to guarantee that it’s a good match.
- Create a fashion notebook. Look through magazines for colors, styles and outfits you like. Collect these pictures to help you know what to look for.
- Schedule sufficient time. Avoid underestimating the amount of time it will take to find what you need. Allow yourself plenty of time to look around, try things on and compare prices. On the other hand, stop before you get too worn out to make a good decision.



Pat Answers

Dear Pat: My boss is very religious and keeps many graphic religious artifacts in her office. We often use her office for meetings with potential clients, as it is the only private location in our building. I have seen the look on people's faces when they walk in; they appear uncomfortable. I think her taste in “art” is hurting business, and I work on commission. I have mentioned it to her, but she believes her artwork isn’t offensive, and that she has the right to decorate her office any way she wants. Any suggestions?

Pat Answers: You’ve told your boss what you think, and she disagrees with you. The fact is, you don’t really know that your clients are offended. But the best way to find out what clients are thinking is to ask them, so I’m a big fan of “satisfaction surveys”. In addition to standard questions about staff courtesy, etc., ask a question that may solicit feedback on the art, such as “How would you rate our office and décor in terms of comfort and attractiveness?” If you’re correct and the surveys indicate that paying customers are put off by your boss’s religious displays, and if she makes no change, you will need to decide if the impact on your commission is so great that you need to look for a position elsewhere. In the meantime, why not meet with the clients off-site, either at their offices or at a nice restaurant? It may be simplest solution to a sticky situation.



Are co-workers driving you crazy? Is your boss out of touch? Complex personnel problems demand Pat Answers! Send questions to: pat@patgrigadean.com. Pat Grigadean is a professional mediator, trainer, and employee-relations specialist. She writes Pat Answers in consultation with Haven Street-Allen, SPHR. © 2007 Pat Grigadean.

Choosing to Learn Better

Learning is a continuous process in all areas of life. At work, learning is essential to maintain proficiency and attain excellence in a given field. Doing this successfully requires learning *how* to learn rather than just trying to retain an ever-increasing body of facts and figures. **Here's how you can begin learning to learn better:**

- ❖ Identify the structure of organization. Learn the overall structure of the topic before diving into the details. This enables you to connect pieces of information together, so you can understand and retain it, instead of getting bogged down in memorizing a myriad of unrelated facts.
- ❖ Seek simplicity. Applying what you learn will only work if you know how to simplify – not complicate – information. You'll know you truly understand something when you're able to explain it simply. Find the main ideas in a body of information, and then use them to organize the details.
- ❖ Create analogies. Analogies allow you to grasp new information by relating it to information you already know. Look for attributes of the new concept that are similar to a concept you've already mastered. Or, ask someone who understands the concept to make an analogy for you. Cartoons are another good tool for illustrating points memorably.
- ❖ Take notes. Be an active learner when reading, listening to tapes and attending lectures. Write down key points, and review them later to organize information into important categories and to reinforce what you've learned. Always try to connect details to a larger concept, listing them in bullets under main ideas to describe and elaborate on these ideas.
- ❖ Set goals. The more you learn about something, the easier it becomes, and



the easier it is to get bored with it and stop learning. Challenge yourself by setting goals to learn increasing levels of difficulty in your subject.

- ❖ Ask yourself questions. Probe for the value and benefit of the material learned. Relate it to your experience. Ask yourself, "Why is this information important? Why is it useful? How can I use it?"
- ❖ Make it concrete. When approaching abstract concepts, think of specific examples of the concept in action. Visualize it with concrete pictures.
- ❖ Draw. Represent the information in a chart or map that depicts how the main ideas are associated. Try making a flow chart, diagram, or other organizational map.
- ❖ Give a lecture to yourself. Restate what you've learned in your own words. Say it out loud to yourself, explaining and summarizing the material as if someone were listening.
- ❖ Test yourself. Take a study or sample test, or make up your own. Write a list of questions about the material and then answer them. Refer back to your test periodically to review what you've learned.

Get a Grip on Perfectionism

Although it may seem commendable, striving to do one's best can make you susceptible to the ills of perfectionism. **The following are tips for dealing with perfectionism in your life:**

- ◆ Just do it. Instead of worrying about what might go wrong or what you can't do, just start.
- ◆ Dare yourself. Give yourself the freedom to fail. Allow yourself to have blemishes and to make mistakes. You can learn a lot from your scrapes and falls.
- ◆ Set goals. Make yourself small, interim goals that are measurable



and realistic. Instead of wishing all your errands were done, outline what you can do each day until they're completed.

- ◆ Take it one step at a time. Instead of getting overwhelmed by everything that has to be done, focus on one thing at a time until it's all completed.
- ◆ Encourage yourself. Tell yourself, "Hey, it might not turn out well, but I can still try anyway." Avoid being your worst critic.
- ◆ Aim for excellence. Recognize the difference between excellence and perfection.
- ◆ Enjoy the process. Seek to grow and appreciate each stage along the way rather than just the final destination or product.

Find Relief from the Rut

Boredom is sickening. People who are bored with their jobs aren't only dissatisfied and unfulfilled, but they're also stressed out. In fact, people with dull, repetitive jobs can be at more risk for stress-related illnesses than those with challenging and demanding ones. One study by the Institute of Social Research at the University of Michigan found that assembly line workers exhibited far more stress-related disorders than doctors who worked long, hard hours.

Is boredom a stressor in your life? **Ask yourself the following questions to see whether you're in a rut at work:**

- ▲ Do you get up more than once each morning to get a cup of coffee or a can of soda?
- ▲ Do you frequently make phone calls or write E-mails that you don't really need to?
- ▲ Do you spend a lot of time keeping your desk clean?
- ▲ Do you go the bathroom more than necessary?
- ▲ Do you find it difficult to motivate yourself to do your work?
- ▲ Do you find it hard to concentrate?

People ailing from boredom may also vent their stress in their relationships at work and at home, and they can feel exceptionally lethargic. Overworked people can be susceptible to boredom, too, because work dominates so much of their life that it lacks variety.

Boredom may be unpleasant, but it is treatable. **Try the following if you find yourself bored with your job:**

- ▲ Add variety to your job. You don't have to do a wide range



of tasks to have variety. Try doing the same tasks at different times, in different sequences, or at a different pace. Examine each activity you do, and look for ways to do it differently. For example, choose different locations for routine meetings with coworkers and clients, or do a task in stages instead of all at once.

- ▲ Find more balance in your life as a whole. If your life is consumed by work, start giving other parts of your life more priority. Pursue a new interest, and develop the social, mental, physical and spiritual areas of your life.
- ▲ Change jobs. It doesn't necessarily have to be your dream job, just a different one. Even if the new job is comparable to your old one, the change in people and environment can be refreshing. In addition, getting a new job will bolster your self-confidence, broaden your range of experience and contacts, and most likely improve your future prospects.

Steer Clear of Common Decision-Making Mistakes

Decision making is a necessary life skill. Most people have no formal training in how to make good decisions, and they tend to make the same mistakes time and time again. **Here are some of the most common decision-making mistakes:**

- ◆ **Presuming.** When you're overconfident in your assessment of the situation, you'll forgo gathering and analyzing all the information you need to make a comprehensive decision. Avoid assuming you know it all or that you already have the right answer.
- ◆ **Misperceiving.** If you fail to recognize all aspects of a problem, you'll see an incomplete picture of it. You may disregard the best solutions or attempt to solve the wrong problem. Make sure you're not looking at the problem in only one way. Ask others for their input, but don't accept their opinions without asking them to explain their reasoning.



- ◆ **Acting rashly.** The information at hand may be convenient, but it may also be inaccurate or incomplete. It's worth waiting for thorough information from good sources. Even when everything can't be known, you can usually get a reasonable estimate on the variables that are unknown.
- ◆ **Neglecting method.** Relying on your memory is risky at best. You need a systematic approach to evaluating the information once it's gathered. Use an objective, consistent procedure to choose from among the best courses of action. Include only relevant information in your final analysis.
- ◆ **Dismissing feedback.** Acknowledge the evidence of past mistakes, and learn from them. Keep a written record of your decisions so you can follow up on the resulting successes or failures.

Making a “Big” Deal Out of “Small” Talk

Not all speech is created equal. Keynote addresses, press conferences, sermons, lectures and gossip – they definitely don’t evoke the same response. While the higher profile forms of communication make all the headlines, avoid underestimating the potential of small talk. Just because it’s small doesn’t mean it can’t have big impact. More and more, those seemingly insignificant discussions on golf courses, at cafeterias and around copy machines are making their way into boardrooms and executive suites.

Small talk can be a simple yet effective means of building rapport and trust with coworkers as well as clients and prospects, and it can reap big rewards for those who know how to seize the opportunity. What you say when you’re “just standing around” may be the most important thing you articulate all day. **Here’s how to take advantage of small talk:**

Choose the right person. Not everyone is a candidate for small talk. Some people dislike any involvement or contact with others at all. They see it not as an opportunity for rapport building, but as an infringement and inconvenience. Engaging them may not only irritate them, but may also cause future complications for you.

Others may welcome an idle word or two, seeing conversation as a way of making business and the office more personal. Fellow attendees at a workshop, collaborators on a project, or employees at a year-end party can all make good small talk companions.

Choosing the right person can mean the difference between five wasted minutes and a partnership that could last for years. Knowing whom to approach isn’t difficult. Simply read the body language signals, and respect their wishes.

Choose the right time. When thinking of entering into small talk, be sensitive to other people’s moods and circumstances. What may be a coffee break for you could be a pressing deadline for someone else.

On an airplane, when your seatmate is obviously preoccupied, leave the person alone. Neither would you try to engage someone in small talk when the person is dashing down the hallway to a meeting.

If the CEO has unexpectedly called you in for a “little chat,” this is neither the time nor the place to take the lead. Let him or her dictate the topic and pace with which you get down to business.

Choose the right medium. If timing is everything, then selecting the right medium ranks a close second.

Each means of communication, be it in person or via modern technology, has its own strengths and weaknesses. Marshall McLuhan, the mass media guru of the 1960s, contended that the medium was the message – that each had its own dynamics and, therefore, effects. Knowing the uniqueness of each will help you use them more effectively.

The greatest danger regarding media involves those that aren’t face-to-face: most notably, the telephone. Since you’re not present to read their signals or note their feedback, you have no way to gauge their interest or availability. You’re basically operating without a net.

Know where you’re going with the call, and be prepared to get there. If the other person sends you a cue that small talk is in order, you can always change course and take on a lighter mood. Avoid assuming that people expect or welcome chitchat before you begin business.

Choose the right topic. The “what” of your small talk can be as crucial as the “who,” “where,” “when” and “why.”

General topics like vacations, hobbies, current projects and sports are both interesting and conversational. They deal with more personal, friendly concerns. Other safe areas include the other person’s area of expertise or your own, the day’s news, or the latest movie you’ve seen.

For example, “I’ve always been interested in sailing, but have never tried it. Can you tell me more about it?” or “Have you spent your entire career in the communications industry?” or “Everyone’s talking about the latest Spielberg movie. Have you seen it?”

On the other hand, controversial topics like religion, politics and race relations aren’t as appropriate for small talk and are better left to CNN or Meet the Press. Remember, your goal is to build rapport, not solve a world crisis. You may very well win an argument, but lose an opportunity.

Small talk means having a little loose change in your pocket. Like quarters at a pay phone or dollars at a tollbooth, it’ll come in handy when you least expect it. The trick is knowing when to jiggle it, spend it, or save it.



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TIMESAVERS

Gas Efficiency Tips

The following are suggestions for improving the fuel economy of your vehicle:

- ◆ Drive slower. For each mile of speed you drive under 65 mph, you can increase your fuel economy by roughly 2 percent. Going just 10 mph under 65 can use up to 17 percent less gas.
- ◆ Keep up on maintenance. A tune-up can boost fuel economy by 6 to 9 percent, while dirty filters can use up to 10 percent more gas.
- ◆ Moderate your air conditioner use. Your engine may use between 10 to 15 percent more fuel in order to power its compressor.
- ◆ Capitalize on cruise control. Maintaining a regular speed can help your gas mileage.
- ◆ Check your tires. You can lose 1 to 2 percent in fuel economy for each pound that your tires are underinflated.
- ◆ Turn your engine off when waiting. It takes less fuel for you to start your car than it does to let it idle for longer than a minute.
- ◆ Clean out your car. Being organized is energy efficient! Extra weight in your back seat and trunk can reduce your gas mileage.

Tuning in to Your Intuition

Many people consider their intuition inferior to their reason when it comes to making decisions. Timely decision-making, however, is best done when it takes intuition into account as well. The intuitive right side of your brain can make leaps forward in thinking in far less time than the step-by-step computation of the logical left side of the brain.

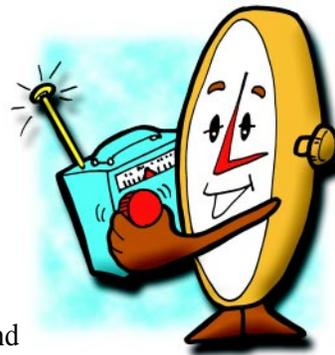
Intuition is often quieter than your reasoning and requires a calm state of mind to tune into it. You can more readily get a clear reception if you relax and don't pressure yourself to have an immediate and brilliant answer.

The following are situations in which to take advantage of your intuition:

- ▲ *Estimating* – Many times your gut feeling can provide a good assessment of a situation without having to tabulate the exact facts and figures.
- ▲ *Planning* – Sometimes even when a certain course of action seems the most logical, you may not be able to stop a nagging sense that it's not the right move. Before you forge ahead, stop

and consider exactly what's making you uneasy.

- ▲ *Creative thinking* – When your reason has left you at a dead end, leave that train of thought entirely. Try going in a completely different direction to give your intuition a chance to become inspired.



- ▲ *Interviewing* – Make note of your first impressions of the people you meet. Analyze these notes alongside the facts and logical information that you obtain from the interview when making your evaluation.

- ▲ *Problem solving* – If you're inundated with all the facts, brainstorm. Allow your intuition to jump laterally from subject to subject in order to find new connections and combinations between information.

- ▲ *Inventing* – Your intuition can make you more attuned to interesting things that others have overlooked. Alexander Fleming discovered *penicillin* in 1928 when he observed mold growing on a culture dish accidentally left by an open window.