Insights from *Getting Things Done* by David Allen

"Reflect for a moment on what it actually might be like if your personal management situation were totally under control, at all levels and at all times. What if you had completely clear mental space, with nothing pulling or pushing on you unproductively? What if you could dedicate fully 100 percent of your attention to whatever was at hand, at your own choosing, with no distraction?" – David Allen

Here's How: Build a trusted system (an external brain), and actively capture, clarify, and remind yourself of whatever you need to do at the time you need to do it. Here is my GTD (Getting Things Done) system and the three habits that allow my GTD system to be successful:

Capture

"There is no reason to ever have the same thought twice, unless you like having that thought…Anything you consider unfinished in any way must be captured in a trusted system outside your mind, or what I call a collection tool, that you know you'll come back to regularly and sort through." - David Allen

Cue	Action
Think of an idea or an action item.	Capture the idea or action item in Evernote by using the Evernote app on your smartphone.

Note: I use Evernote, but you could use any other list-making app on your smartphone. If you don't carry a smartphone, carry a small notepad and pen to capture items. The tool you use doesn't matter. What matters is how fast you can capture items. Capture ideas and actions in their rawest form. You'll decide what to do with the items you capture during the next phase: processing.

Process

"You must clarify exactly what your commitment is and decide what you have to do, if anything, to make progress toward fulfilling it…You must use your mind to get things off your mind." - David Allen

Cue	Action
Receive a daily calendar notification at 4pm.	**1. Open** capture list within Evernote, look at one item at a time (starting from the top), and ask: "Is this useful and do I want to act on this soon?" **2a. If No:** add action to <u>someday/maybe list</u> or idea to a <u>reference folder</u>. If useless, delete it. **2b. If Yes:** convert item to a <u>next physical action</u>, determine the desired outcome, and add desired outcome to the project list if more than one action is required to achieve the desired outcome. Then complete the next action item in **2-minutes or less** OR move it to an appropriate location (see table below).

Where I put my processed items:

Reference List	Someday/Maybe List	Calendar	Follow-up List	Next Action List(s)	Project List
Location: Evernote **Thought process:** "This idea might be useful one day but it's not actionable at this time." I keep all documents and reference files in Evernote with the appropriate tags so I can find them when I need them.	**Location:** Evernote **Thought process:** "I might want to do this, but not now…and I'd like to be reminded of it periodically." Examples: Books to read, recipes to try, movies to rent, weekend trips to take, web sites to surf.	**Location:** Calendar iOS App **Thought process:** "I need to do this at a certain time on a certain day." The calendar is sacred space. ONLY put time specific items in the calendar, otherwise, you'll devalue all items.	**Location:** Email using FollowUpThen.com **Thought process:** "It's out of my hands but I should follow-up on it soon." I use boomerang in Gmail to send an email to myself in the future for all follow-ups.	**Location:** Reminders iOS app **Thought process:** "Not time specific but should get done as soon as possible or when possible (in the right context)." Item format: action - item - detail. Create separate lists for different contexts: @home, @office, @store.	**Location:** Reminders iOS app **Thought Process:** "A next action on my list has an outcome that requires more actions, and I must not forget that." Projects on the 'Project List' are to be completed in 12 months or less.

Note: Never spend more than 2 minutes on any one item; clarify or complete each item in 2 minutes or less.

Review

"The more complete the system is, the more you'll trust it. And the more you trust it, the more you'll be motivated to keep it…(each week) Get clean, clear, current, and complete." – David Allen

Cue	Action
Receive a weekly calendar notification on 3pm each Friday.	**1.** Spend 5 minutes **writing a 3-5 year vision & 1-year goals**: "What do I want a typical day to look like 3-5 years from now? What goals do I need to achieve in the next year to realize my three to five-year vision?" **2. Review project list** – delete completed or unnecessary projects, and then prioritize the top 3. **3. Review next action lists** – delete completed or unnecessary actions, and then prioritize the top 10.