PE Session 4: Productivity, Time management and Efficiency

The following document contains the notes for our 4th session, that is related to being a more productive individual.

Person to consult for maximum productivity:
https://www.youtube.com/@aliabdaal

The Concept of Time Blocking

Time blocking is a time management technique that involves dividing your day into blocks of time, with each block dedicated to completing a specific task or group of tasks. By scheduling time for every activity, you can ensure that important tasks receive adequate attention, and you minimize time wasted on less important activities.

How to Implement Time Blocking:

1. **Identify Tasks:** List all the tasks you need to complete.
2. **Prioritize:** Rank tasks based on their importance and urgency.

    (Important: *Always prioritize the tasks which are harder, sometimes what happens is that we finish the low quality tasks first and checks the list which builds a false sense of accomplishment.*

    For eg, do the hardest assignment first and then other course videos, which only requires watching them. Otherwise if you will leave the hardest assignment for the last moment, you will often get overwhelmed and submit it incomplete)

3. **Allocate Time:** Assign specific time blocks for each task or group of tasks.
4. **Stick to the Schedule:** Follow the schedule strictly, adjusting only when necessary.

Video by Ali Abdaal(Productivity Guru), on managing time effectively while working a 9-5 job
https://youtu.be/PCtQ6sipdqA?si=gXhDVeXXC_pdPwUm

To-Do Lists:

- **Todoist:** A task management app that helps you create and organize tasks, set priorities, and track progress.

The 80/20 Rule (Pareto Principle)

The **80/20 Rule**, also known as the **Pareto Principle**, states that roughly 80% of results come from 20% of efforts. This principle can be applied to various aspects of life and work to enhance productivity.

For example in case of health, you might have seen that people focus on drinking different fat loss teas, detox waters, eating a lot of salads, drinking a lot of apple cider vinegar, doing a lot of walk and other cardio exercises but still don't loose fat? Why? Because unfortunately they are focusing on the 80% activites that bring only 20% results, If we can only identify what are the 20 % things that would give me the 80 % outcomes, our life will be better.

Application of the 80/20 Rule:

- **Identify Key Tasks:** Focus on the 20% of tasks that contribute to 80% of your desired outcomes.
- **Prioritize High-Impact Activities:** Allocate more time and resources to activities that yield the highest returns.
- **Eliminate Low-Value Tasks:** Minimize or eliminate tasks that contribute little to your goals.

The conclusion for you is, whenever you want to start or achieve any goal, just sit and carefully analyze that what are the 20% things that will bring the 80% outcome. Don't get stuck in the numbers, it could also be a 30-70, 40-60 split, the essence is to figure out the things that are truly important.

https://youtu.be/EAynHZE-lK4?si=R56cvqV_ZSMUtRj3

Task Prioritization (Eisenhower Matrix)

The **Eisenhower Matrix** is a tool for task prioritization, dividing tasks into four categories based on their urgency and importance, this has also been discussed in our Session 3 which was about 7 habits of highly effective people.

https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/7-habits-highly-effective-people-from-my-personal-view-balaguruvan/

If you want to be stress free and wanna live a high quality life, the best thing that you can do is to focus on the things that fall in Quadrant 2, things like working on your relationships, personal development, health, emotional intelligence, these things are not urgent but they are highly important, and if you can manage to get these things done beforehand they can save you from a lot of trouble later in life. One example might be learning about parenting, even though you are not a parent yet, but yes, that was just used for the sake of example, its not a bad idea, but you better start working on something that is predictable in near future, maybe you learn about rules of effective and happy marriage, because you are getting married soon. Learning all these things are definitely not urgent, but are super important.

How to Use the Eisenhower Matrix:

- **List Tasks:** Write down all tasks you need to complete.
- **Categorize:** Place each task in one of the four categories.
- **Prioritize:** Focus first on tasks in the "Urgent and Important" category, then move to "Important but Not Urgent."

  (but if you mostly make time for Quadrant 2 activities, only some of the times Quadrant 1 activities will pop up, because you will already be done with those activities, for example, I am making these notes on Saturday, right now this task is important but not so urgent, I can easily do it on Monday, but that will only give me stress and anxiety especially if something else pops up on Monday which is also urgent and important, so I will be too much stressed. So its always a win-win situation if we can manage to do quadrant 2 activities most of the times)

Deep Work vs. Shallow Work

Deep Work refers to activities performed in a state of focused concentration that push cognitive capabilities to their limit, leading to significant productivity and skill improvement. **Shallow Work** involves tasks that are easy to perform and often done while distracted, contributing little to overall productivity.

Characteristics of Deep Work:

- **High Focus:** Requires intense concentration and is free from distractions.
- **High Value:** Leads to significant progress and skill development.
- **Limited Time:** Can only be sustained for a few hours at a time.

Characteristics of Shallow Work:

- **Low Focus:** Can be performed while distracted or multitasking.
- **Low Value:** Yields minimal progress and often consists of routine tasks.
- **Frequent:** Often consumes a large portion of the workday.

Strategies to Increase Deep Work:

- **Schedule Deep Work Sessions:** Allocate specific times in your day for deep work. Preferably the first 3 4 hours of your office time

  (Personally what I do is to schedule the most important stuff till lunch time, and then the shallow work for post lunch time, like making slides, report making or email writing, or any other labor work type of thing which don't require extensive mental resources)

- **Minimize Distractions:** Create an environment conducive to concentration by eliminating distractions.

  (The biggest distraction is your phone, it would be amazing if you can put it aside atleast for the first half of the day, when you are trying to accomplish the most)

- **Set Clear Goals:** Define what you aim to achieve during deep work sessions, How much course videos? How many tasks from the assignment?

The Pomodoro Technique

The **Pomodoro Technique** is a time management method that involves working in short, focused intervals, typically 25 minutes, followed by a 5-minute break. After four intervals, take a longer break of 15-30 minutes. You can also adjust the length of your focus block if 25 min seems less to you, but please make sure not to go below 25 min.

Important:

- When you will start using this technique, Its recommended to put your phone on silent and put it far away. You will constantly feel the urge to look at your phone, but slowly with practice you will be at peace.

- Always keep your diary open with you, there will be a lot of thoughts popping up during your focus block, such as, shit you forgot to call your mother, or maybe oh I forgot to reply to that person, or send money to xyz etc. you will feel the urge to immediately jump in and do the tasks but CONTROL, and write that on your notepad, and do those things in your break.

- Bonus tip ☺ You can also schedule your washroom and water breaks in that 5 min break, it will be a little relief for your spine as well (because of being in sitting position for a long time)

How to Use the Pomodoro Technique:

Use this link for effective time tracking, log in to the app to have a record of your focused work: https://pomofocus.io/

The Two-Minute Rule

The **Two-Minute Rule** suggests that if a task can be completed in two minutes or less, do it immediately. This rule helps in quickly handling small tasks that can otherwise accumulate and become overwhelming.

CONTRADICTION:

Ok so here its written that, do those little tasks immediately, BUT…

This essentially means that don't procrastinate on those tasks, for example if you are already on your phone, and you saw a message from your friend, you might think that ill reply later, and boom you remember this after 4 days…. So the best thing is to respond him right away.
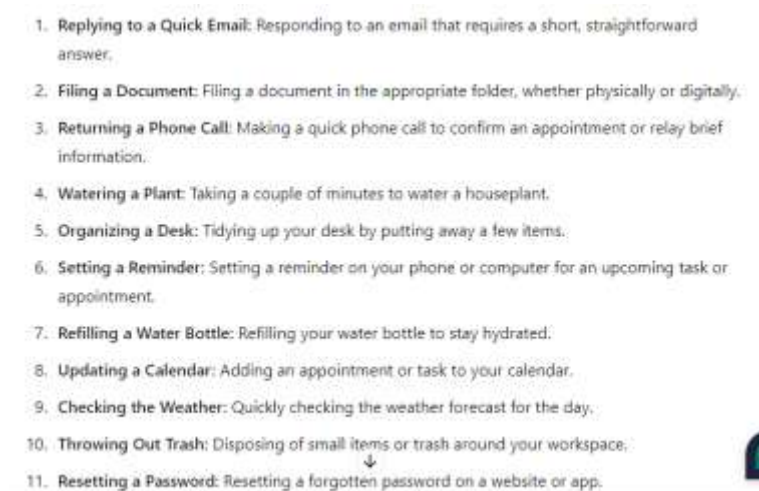
But while you are working in your focus block and something comes up in your mind, don't disrupt your focus and try to that 2 min task immediately, write on page and then do in your break. So here you are essentially improving your focus and managing tasks effectively and not procrastinating unlike the situation described above.

Watch this 2 min video for 2 min rule ☺

https://youtu.be/0CmtDk-joT4?si=VC2MNp6PAC691drY

Benefits of the Two-Minute Rule:

- **Efficiency:** Quickly eliminates small tasks, keeping your to-do list manageable.
- **Momentum:** Provides a sense of accomplishment and momentum to tackle larger tasks.
- **Reduced Procrastination:** Prevents small tasks from becoming procrastination points.

1. Replying to a Quick Email: Responding to an email that requires a short, straightforward answer.
2. Filing a Document: Filing a document in the appropriate folder, whether physically or digitally.
3. Returning a Phone Call: Making a quick phone call to confirm an appointment or relay brief information.
4. Watering a Plant: Taking a couple of minutes to water a houseplant.
5. Organizing a Desk: Tidying up your desk by putting away a few items.
6. Setting a Reminder: Setting a reminder on your phone or computer for an upcoming task or appointment.
7. Refilling a Water Bottle: Refilling your water bottle to stay hydrated.
8. Updating a Calendar: Adding an appointment or task to your calendar.
9. Checking the Weather: Quickly checking the weather forecast for the day.
10. Throwing Out Trash: Disposing of small items or trash around your workspace.
11. Resetting a Password: Resetting a forgotten password on a website or app.

Some insights from GPT about 2 min tasks