

JUMP START TO GETTING ORGANIZED

Taking Control of Your Tasks

When you are in control of your tasks it means that you generally get things done when you expect to finish them. It means that you accomplish what you see as your priorities and don't feel that you have left a lot undone. It means that you don't always feel that you're working "under the gun." As with your time, be aware that it does not mean you can manage your tasks automatically or without support.

Not being in control of your tasks has far reaching effects. You don't finish what you feel needs to happen. Your self-esteem suffers, you can be losing money, you feel stressed or anxious, and it may harm your reputation.

To a large degree taking control of your tasks is made up of two parts 1) what goes onto your "To Do" or "task" list, and 2) how you actually do those things.

What is a To Do list?

- Your To Do list isn't a dumping ground. Only include the things you really intend to do.
- You can have a master To Do list to use as a high level list without all of the detail.
- To figure out what type of To Do list to use, stop and consider your habits...what are you likely to use, what will you carry with you?

To set your priorities ask yourself the following questions:

- What really needs to be done?
- Why do I want to do this task?
- What would happen if this doesn't get done today? Ever?
- Is this the best use of my time today?
- If there is only one thing I can do today what would it be?
- If I do this what am I not doing?

Break projects up into tasks:

- What is one thing I can do to move this project forward?
- What would I tell someone else to do first?
- Does anything need to happen before I can do this?
- If I can only do one small piece of this, what would it be?

Things to be careful of when deciding to include something on your To Do list:

- Be certain that it is a task and not a project and write down the individual steps.
- Word the task so that it is positive, attractive, and specific and will pull you towards doing it.

Schedule time to do the task:

- Estimate how long the task will take (always add extra time) and schedule time to do the task.
- Decide how long you want to give something as opposed to how long something will take you.
- Consider your energy levels. When are you most alert? When are you tired?
- Consider when you're most likely to be interrupted or distracted. Plan for contingencies.
- Do you need input from other people before you start this task or while you are doing it?

How to use your To Do list:

- Review it regularly.
- You can bring steps from a master list onto your To Do list to move projects along.
- Update it regularly and carry it with you.