

Learn how to cross **STRESS** off your to-do list

With the pressures of our everyday lives, our to-do lists can spiral out of control rather quickly. Work, family, financial obligations, and the desire to love our one life we're given is pulling us in different directions.

And

It's hard to live in the moment and enjoy making those great memories with our family. It can be almost impossible to sit back, relax and not think about what you have to do next or when the laundry buzzer is going to go off or dance lessons or that work proposal you have to put the final touches on. It's **HARD**.

If you are like me and many others then you can relate to having your cup runneth over. I'd like to share and teach you techniques that will help you cross items off your to-do list and breath a little easier. Plus, the **BEST** part is it will give you more time to spend doing the things you enjoy with people you care about.

I'm a wife, a student, a career-woman, a volunteer, a business owner and a blogger. I wear a lot of hats, which means I have a pretty long to-do list on a daily basis. One day it hit me - I can't actually do it all. No matter how hard I tried, no matter how much I wanted to. I needed help and I need to get my head on straight. This one simple exercise is what I use when my to-do list starts to take control.

Here's what you need:

- A quiet place away from all distractions
- Paper (I recommend grabbing a full sized piece that is blank)
- Writing Utensil (I prefer pen, there is no going back once you get started)
- 5 minutes

Here's a tip before you get started: don't look at your running to-do list. I'll explain why in a bit, but trust me. **Turn over your to-do list, step away and do not peek!**

SILENCE THE DISTRACTIONS.

Silence your phone. Go into the other room away from your spouse and kids. Close your laptop and turn off the tablet. Switch off the TV. Allow yourself a few moments of quiet time with no interruptions.

BRAINDUMP.

Let your brain release everything that is weighing you down. Write down everything that you **have to do, want to do, need to do** or are **being asked to do**. Include your work, your family, your friends, your church, your goals, around the house, grocery shopping - list it all. Spend at least two minutes or longer, if needed, filling your entire piece of paper.

Remember **NO** task is too small. Every commitment, errand, housework that is weighing on your shoulders needs to be included.

This list could include: empty the dishwasher, prep for Sunday brunch, finish the proposal for work, write two new blog posts, setup a new social media page, buy new outfit for your meeting, wash the car, clean the garage, work on your budget with your spouse, teach the dog to sit, drinks with the girls, attend your child's recital, etc.

TAKE A DEEP BREATH.

Everything that you have on your mind is now in one place. This part is important - do not start feeling overwhelmed. You should feel **EMPOWERED** because it's all right there in black and white for you to see. The good. The bad. And the unnecessary.


TAKE A STAND.

Quickly go through your list and cross off items that you do not want to do. Spend less than one minute on going through your list.

Forget the feelings of obligation or guilt that are self manifested in our minds. There is no room for self doubt. You are in a place which allows you the ability to be real and honest with yourself.

NO ONE IS JUDGING YOU. If you don't want to do it then simply cross it off.





If you have on your list bake 100 cookies for your child's class party, but do not have the time or don't enjoy baking then cross that puppy off. Why stress yourself out and dirty your entire kitchen when there is a simple solution - buy the cookies. Buy them! The price of the cookies in a store will be worth the time you save not in the kitchen. Get the picture? Good.

You should have about 20% of your list marked through. Remember when I said using a pen is my preferred method? This step is the exact reason why. There is no going back. No erasing and no whiteout.

You have now skimmed your list and quickly purged the items that you were dreading. Now, go back through it and spend two full minutes taking a harder look at what is left. Get your pen in your hand and cross off the items that you convinced yourself you don't *mind* doing. Really be honest with yourself.

I don't mind creating signs for the school bake sale.

It's not that big of a deal to pick up the dry cleaning instead of having it delivered.

This should knock off another 20% of your list. If hasn't then go back through.

HAPPINESS MEANS LETTING GO.

What items that are left can you delegate? Can you hire any part of it out?

Is this your thought process - *You really don't mind mowing the grass early Saturday morning. You enjoy spending time outside and your allergies don't really bother you.. that bad. You can tolerate having swollen eyes for the rest of the weekend... It's really not that bad.*

See any teenagers on your street? Hire them! They'll love the extra money, their parents will be proud of them and you can sleep in a little extra without having take benadryl all weekend long.

Want to setup a new Twitter page for your blog, but have no idea what you're doing? Then ask someone. I bet you know someone who is crazy tech-obsessed that would just love to help you out.

This step is important because you need to know how valuable your time is. If you are not passionate, don't understand something, or simply have to do it because the city will file complaints against your crazy tall grass then find another alternative. If you can't determine your hourly value then take how much you make in a week divide it by 40 hours. That is your hourly wage at work, my friend. You can use that same amount for outside business hours or

determine another one. If you make \$20 an hour then really scrutinize if that three-hour activity is worth \$60 dollars of your time. I bet it's not.

Delegating is a huge part of knocking items off your list. You should knock out anywhere between 30-40% of your remaining to-do list. Yes 30% to 40%.

WHAT'S LEFT?

You should have about 20% of your starting list left. Meaning you crossed out 80% of the tasks because you simply do not have the desire to spend your precious time on it or you can have someone else help you.

The items left should be what you are passionate about. **These are the tasks you want to spend your time on.** Taking your child to the park. Learning a new photography skill. Having a family BBQ.

You are your own worst critic. I was told once by a friend:

you are not that important. Others are not focusing their time thinking about what you are or aren't doing.

Those were tough words to read, but true. So very, very true. Do not allow yourself to be afraid of what others think because they have their own list they are battling against.

No one is judging you for what's on or not on your to-do list.

You have to ask yourself "**what do I want to spend my time, my energy and my focus on today?**" Then answer yourself - honestly and objectively.

Spend more time with the ones you love doing what you enjoy. You will not remember in 5 years all the items on your list, but you will remember what you're **PASSIONATE** about.

"The things you are passionate about are not random. They are your calling." - Fabienne Fredrickson