

Choose a Mantra for the Day

first

5

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Do the Hardest Thing First

What do you want out of today? What are the one to three words you want to keep top of mind that will help you create the day you want? Pick some words that embody the attitude you want to have or the way you want to act. Or state a belief you want to guide your day. Here are some examples:

“It’s OK to take a break”

“Courage”

“Do what I can today and nothing more”

“Let go”

“Breathe”

“Patience”

“Be my best self”

“Make today matter”

Find a way (Outlook, post its, set alarm) to repeat your mantra at least once an hour.

“It is not necessary to change.
Survival is not mandatory.”

W. Edwards Deming

What is the one thing on your “to-do” list that if it was done and off the list would give you a sense of relief, satisfaction and control?

Do it, do it **now**.

Do the thing you would ordinarily put off or procrastinate over, such as a tough conversation, a boring report, a lengthy phone call.

At least get it started. If needed, schedule another time on your calendar to get back to it. Then be sure to pat yourself on the back for starting with the hard stuff!

“Don’t be afraid to take a big step.
You can’t cross a chasm in two small jumps.”

David Lloyd George

Listen to Music

Some say there's magic in Music. Download a song and listen to it.

Maybe you need to be calm—find a song that can calm you, maybe something slow and classical.

Or maybe you need to be inspired—what do you listen to when you need encouragement?

Or maybe you need to ramp up your energy level—listen to that one song that never fails to energize you, get you in a good mood, and get you moving.

Whatever mood you want or need now, find a 5 minute song that will help get you there.

“If people are highly successful in their professions, they lose their senses. Sight goes. They have no time to look at pictures. Sound goes. They have no time to listen to music. Speech goes. They have no time for conversation. Humanity goes.”

Virginia Woolf

Create a Not To-do List

Put something on the backburner.

This doesn't mean it's going away and you don't need to do it, but it is something you are intentionally not going to do today.

Park it. Get it off your to-do list, and out of your mind for today. Don't let it consume any of your energy today. Don't clutter your to-do list with things you know you won't get to anyway.

And it's OK if your “backburner” list is longer than today's “to-do” list.

“All of life is but a mass of small choices—practical, emotional, and intellectual—systematically organized for our greatness or grief. --We must never forget that it's not only our big dreams that shape reality.... The small choices bear us irresistibly toward our destiny.”

William James

Savor. Go Slooow.

Find something pleasurable that you normally rush through or you do while you are doing something else.

Drinking coffee, reading the entertainment section of the paper, eating breakfast, reading personal emails, walking into your building, saying goodbye to family in the morning. Do it for twice as long as you typically would.

Pretend it's the last time you get to do it.

“For fast-acting relief, try slowing down.”

Lily Tomlin

Breathe. Relax.

Go somewhere private where you won't be distracted. Even if it's your car.

Breathe and do a deep Relaxation now. Close your eyes.

Let your focus be on the air coming in and out of your nostrils.

Feel your abdomen gently rising with each in-breath, and then falling as you breathe out.

Breathe in to the count of 4, and out to the count of 4.

Keep breathing in and out in this manner for 10 more breaths.

“If a man insisted always on being serious, and never allowed himself a bit of fun and relaxation, he would go mad or become unstable without knowing it.”

Herodotus, 484 BC - 430 BC

List the 5 Things You're Most Grateful For

What is usually going through your head when you start your day? All the things you have to do, how poorly you slept, the things that aren't going well, etc?

Many of us are conditioned to view things with a critical eye, and to focus on what isn't working. Looking at life like this often results in a negative mood for us, which is contagious to those around us. It also makes it difficult to see the possibilities and to enjoy ourselves. Ask yourself, what's good in my life, what do I take for granted? Write down five things and post them somewhere you can see them during the day. Things like:

Hot showers	A close friend
Significant other	Indoor plumbing
Your health	Your dog or cat
A past mentor	High def TV or Tivo
Power steering and keyless entry	Abundant food
Healthy kids	Your favorite teacher
Air conditioning	
Antiperspirant	Add your favorites here!

"Only that day dawns to which we are awake."

Thoreau

Commit to Doing One Number One Thing Today

We all believe we have a set of "priorities." By definition, this means something that should get done PRIOR to other things. But some of these things constantly fall to the bottom of, or even off, our lists.

Create a short list of the tasks you consider priorities. Now, go through your list and identify the one thing that if done will:

- truly advance your organization's goals
- leverage or extend your skills and passions
- involves creative thinking and innovation
- set other quality work in motion
- unlock energy for yourself and others
- allow others to move forward with their goals
- is something you believe in and will make you feel fulfilled

Start that task now or schedule it in today's calendar. Remember it's your number one priority, so take the first step today.

*"Everything should be made as simple as possible,
but not one bit simpler."*

Albert Einstein

Celebrate

Remember that tough assignment you had, the sticky problem you resolved, the overwhelming task that seemed as if it would never end, or that one little thing that you could barely bring yourself to attempt? Because you worked on these tasks they were completed, completed well, and it made a difference.

Now pick one and write it down.

Also write all the things you contributed to it, the insight you applied, the time you put in, the creative twist you put on it, the people you inspired to give their best to the project. You actually did these things; you played a key role in bringing this to fruition.

Write yourself a Congratulations note, or a Thank You note for all you did. Celebrate it. We can't always count on others to recognize all we've done, so it's up to you.

“Happiness lies in the consciousness we have of it.”

George Sand

Schedule “Bank” Time for Yourself

Give yourself permission to take a break, to go to the banks.

Without “bank” time you often end up with nothing in reserve, no energy, no good ideas, no patience, nothing to fight the Current.

Pick at least two times today that you will take at least a 5 minute break. Pick the exact times, put them in your calendar. Treat these as an important meeting—no canceling, no being late, show up prepared, no answering your phone during it. Plan to:

- go for a walk (outside if possible)
- eat lunch away from your desk, or eat with someone
- call a personal friend
- read a stimulating article
- turn off/do not look at email for an hour a day
- take the stairs up and down a few floors
- count 50 slow breaths
- look out the window

“You must learn to be still in the midst of activity,
and be vibrantly alive in repose.”

Indira Gandhi

Change Your Workspace

Do something to at least a part of your work space to make it conducive to calmness, focus, control, efficiency or energy.

Decide on the tone you want, what you want your workspace to promote in you. Maybe this will involve reorganizing or “decorating,” or un-decorating and un-cluttering.

- Recycle, trash, or put in a drawer things within your line of vision that irritate you.
- Put up a picture that reminds you of something pleasant and calming.
- Write a word on a sticky note that keeps your number one goal in the forefront and from getting lost in the details.
- Make sure you set up something, either a visual or electronic prompt, that periodically reminds you to get out of the Current and go to the Bank.
- Make easily accessible things that can be small break activities and put them in ready reach. Music. A joke book. A “fidget.” Pictures. Create your space.

“We spend so much time in our work and in work-related activities that our awareness and our perceptions become narrower and narrower ... we have taken a rainbow and compressed it into a solid, uninteresting beam of light.”

Anne Wilson Schaaf

Cut Yourself Some Slack

Most of us hold ourselves to very high standards, which is often good until we become our harshest critics. Today you will do what you can, but you will recognize when to stop and when you’ve hit the point of diminishing returns. When you feel stuck, or find yourself rethinking or revising something for the fourth time, or wondering if you’ll ever be done with something, STOP. Ask yourself, “Is this good enough?” “Can I put this aside for now?” “Is the standard I’m applying too strict?” “What is the worst that will happen if I stop here?” Give yourself permission to stop, take the pressure off.

“Life is either a daring adventure or nothing.”

Helen Keller

Design Your Own First 5 Here



Write Your Own Next 5 Here

