

## **The Secret to Stress-Less Productivity**

Everyone's heard the adage about working smarter, not harder. But while that's a wise old saying, putting that admonition into practice is more easily said than done in these modern times.

That's because each of us is constantly under pressure to handle more, to accomplish more, and to produce more. All of that pressure tempts us into multitasking, trying to do many things at once. And that leads to lots of increased stress - and in the end, results in even less productivity.

Because the truth is that we're not really designed to work that way.

### **Focus, Grasshopper...**

Multitasking is one of the big buzzwords of our age. And certainly, there are times when we all find it necessary to juggle more than one task at a time. But unless you actually *are* a juggler – you know, the real kind, juggling apples, oranges, tennis balls or flaming torches – trying to keep umpteen balls in the air at once is just a prescription for a worn-out, dejected you.

But if you were to focus on keeping just one ball in the air, you could do that indefinitely. And the same thing goes for all those tasks on your to-do list. Applying single-minded focus to any task can yield amazing results. Just like the sun's rays focused through a lens, focusing your attention upon a single task magnifies your powers of concentration and productivity.

### **Do Less, Stress Less, Produce More**

Though many folks nowadays consider themselves to be multitasking marvels, recent research indicates that they are actually more at risk for losing their marbles. Studies have shown that the increased stress that comes as an unavoidable byproduct of multitasking can lead to physical illnesses *and* mental health problems such as chronic depression and anxiety attacks.

And when you juggle tasks, instead of getting more done in less time, you'll actually achieve the opposite: less done in more time, and with inferior results. That's because the human brain, marvelous machine though it is, is *not* a computer. The brain cannot manage, in parallel, multiple tasks requiring thought and concentration without diminishing the *quality* of thought and attention given to each task.

So when you multitask, here's what you get: more time spent on each task, each task completed with less-than-your-best results, and a heaping helping of extra stress on the side. Not a very good deal!

But you don't really need research to tell you that, do you? Just consider one of the classic examples of multitasking: driving a car while talking on a cell phone.

Who among us hasn't nearly played demolition derby with some distracted driver yakking on the phone? (And if we're going to be really honest about it, who among us hasn't – at least once, and hopefully *just* once - *been* that pseudo-drunken ditzoid with a steering wheel in one hand and a phone in the other?)

Driving requires thought and concentration. Talking on the phone also requires thought and concentration. Ask the brain to do both at the same time, and the inferior results are obvious – and sometimes, even fatal.

### **Pick And Choose**

If you're overloaded with work, expectations and commitments, the best gift you can give yourself is to lighten your load. Each of us can only do so much, and attempting to do more than you're capable of will end badly in the long run. Shed the commitments that aren't absolutely essential if you've got too much on your plate.

But no matter how much you have on your plate of tasks, don't consume it like you would your dinner: a bite of this and a bite of that. Instead, pick one task, and concentrate and focus on that task until it's completed. Then start on the next one. *That's* the secret to stress-less productivity.

Leave the juggling to the circus professionals.