

TOP 10 MOST EFFECTIVE PRODUCTIVITY

# HACKS AND SECRETS

A handbook for a more productive and successful life



Steve Lentini

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# Introduction

**“Productivity is never an accident. It is always the result of a commitment to excellence, intelligent planning, and focused effort.”**

**Paul J. Meyer**

We are living in an age where we get easily distracted by a plethora of mundane things, like social media notifications, text messages from friends, and other things that do not deserve our immediate attention and our precious energy. They take so much of our time that the quality of our work starts to suffer. At this point, things really need to change.

All of us have the same amount of time to get things done. We only have 24 hours each day to finish all the things that we need for our work and our personal lives. Some people are great at managing their time, while some struggle with how to get things done. If you are one of those individuals who are struggling to accomplish their tasks, worry no more because this book will help you from start to finish.

Before you read this book, I want you to have an open mind and ponder deeply about the things that we are going to discuss. I also want you to think about how you can apply those things in your personal life. If you have a highlighter or colored pens with you, I highly encourage you to use them when you read certain things that you find useful. Like a refresher, it would allow you to read the book faster the next time you pick it up.

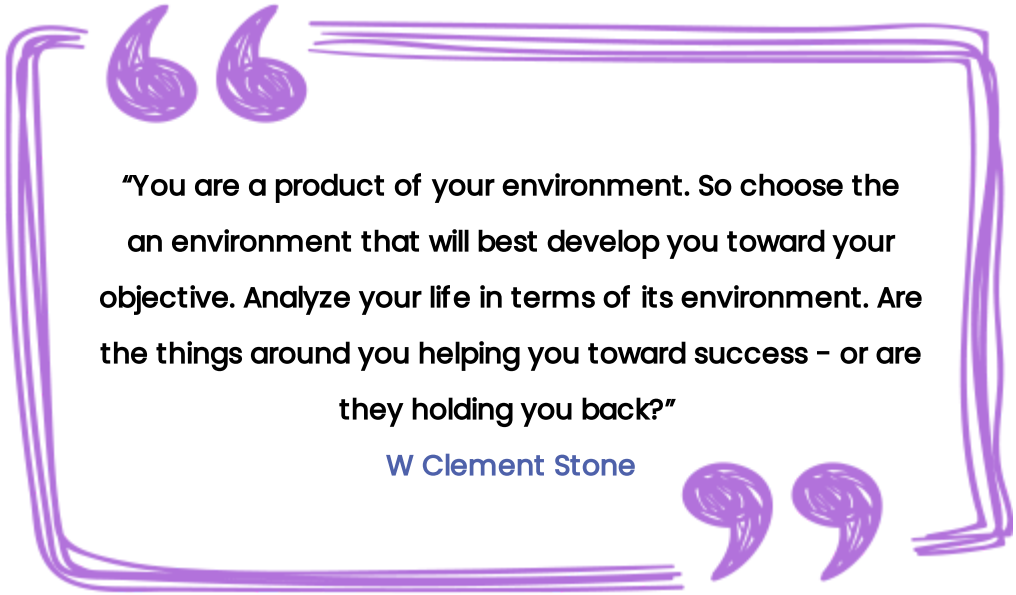
*Finally, I wish you good luck and I hope you find a couple of ideas that would improve your life.*

## Chapter 1:

# CREATE A CONDUCTIVE WORK ENVIRONMENT



# Create a **Conducive** Work Environment



**“You are a product of your environment. So choose the an environment that will best develop you toward your objective. Analyze your life in terms of its environment. Are the things around you helping you toward success - or are they holding you back?”**

**W Clement Stone**

A conducive environment makes us more efficient and more productive when doing our work. It reduces the possible distractions annoying sounds, extremely hot temperatures, and clutter and helps us focus solely on the work at hand.

If you work from home, it is important that your workspace is separate from your bedroom as much as possible. Because when you are working near your bed, your mind somehow thinks that you are there to rest. It associates the pictures of the bed, pillow, and blanket to a place where you can relax and disconnect. Therefore, when you need to work, it makes it hard for you to focus solely on the things that you need to accomplish.

In the words of Andrian Layman from his research in 1995, “People who are unhappy with temperature, water quality, lighting and noise conditions in their offices are more likely to say that this affects their concentration at work.” If you want to accomplish more with your limited time, it would be extremely beneficial for you if you avoid these distractions as much as possible.

When you do not have a separate room where you can do your work, you can use a simple space divider like a small cabinet or a plain cloth that would separate your working space and your sleeping area. In your working space, you can place certain objects -- like a calendar, clock, and a planner that would inspire you to work. On your wall, you can also post your favorite quotes from your real-life idols. These things don't cost that much money but it can have a huge impact on your productivity level.

In addition to this, you can also add some indoor plants to your working space. According to Dr. Chris Knight from the University of Exeter, adding at least 1 plant per square meter of space can increase productivity by around 15%. His study on this topic was published in 2014. Not only that, in a separate study from the University of Technology - Sydney in 2010, a group of researchers found out that the introduction of plants in the workplace resulted in a 37% reduction in reported tension and anxiety; a 38% decreased in fatigue; a 44% reduction in anger and hostility; and a 38% decreased in depression.



*Finally, you might want to invest in good quality office lights. The natural light coming from the sun is the best for maximum productivity. However, not all working spaces have access to natural lighting that's why it is important for most people to choose LED lights that mimic the sun's natural lighting. You can achieve this by choosing a light with a color temperature of 5,000 K or higher. Just mention this number to the hardware store of your choice and you'll easily have it. These are the things that you might want to consider when building your office space. You can also play with it all these things to match your preferences.*



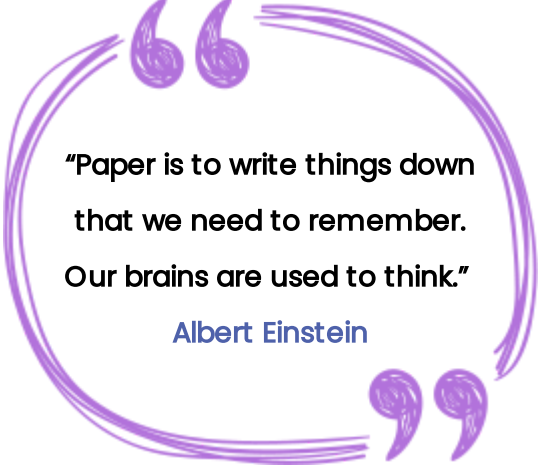
## Chapter 2:

# WRITE THINGS DOWN





# Write Things Down



**"Paper is to write things down  
that we need to remember.  
Our brains are used to think."**

**Albert Einstein**

It might seem obvious, but not everyone likes to jot down their to-do list on a piece of paper. Some individuals prefer to store their to-do list inside their heads, neglecting the idea of getting a pen and a piece of paper, and writing things down. They simply find it unnecessary and wasteful of their time. As a result, they often forget their tasks as they go through their normal routine. Five minutes of their time could have saved them from this trouble.

When you write things down, you are making a promise to yourself. You are creating tangible proof, a contract-like paper that you set for yourself. And through that contract, you are more likely to actually do the things you negotiated with none other than yourself.

*Also, think of your brain like a computer. It can hold only enough information. And after a certain point, it just can't accept more data. It starts to slow down which makes it less functional. So, when you write things down, you are transferring the data from your brain to the piece of paper in front of you. Once the information is transferred, you can now use your remaining brainpower to accomplish the tasks at hand. You are allowing your mind to unload some information and process things effectively.*

Writing things down can also help you remember the tasks that you want to accomplish. It gives your brain a visual reference which helps you remember the tasks more effectively.

Before you sleep at night, it would be better for you to place a pen and sheet of paper near your bed bunk. Write all the things that you want to accomplish the next day, and how you are going to execute the plan. You can use the example below as your reference.

# Date: August 27, 2020 (Thursday)

Finish Chapter 3 of the book "How to Win Friends and Influence People"

 Highlight the key ideas and put your comments on the side of the pages



Do a 10-minute cardio exercise

 Perform jumping jacks     Perform high knees     Jog in place

Reply to emails

 Contact to client X and asked why he cancelled his orders

 Set a meeting date with Clients Y and Z for possible partnerships

Prepare for tomorrow's negotiation

 Study persuasion and negotiation techniques from Chris Voss

## Chapter 3:

# FOCUS ON ONE THING AT A TIME



# Focus on one thing at a time

“Do one thing at a Time, and while doing it put your whole Soul into it to the exclusion of all else.”

Swami Vivekananda





Multitasking is counterproductive. A study conducted by Stanford University in 2009 showed that heavy multitaskers tend to have a hard time differentiating relevant from irrelevant details, are much less mentally organized, and struggle at switching from one task to another. Another study done by Bryan College found out that employees who balance more than one task can hinder their performance in the workplace. With that being said, as much as we want to get a lot of things done with the little time we have, it is better to focus on one thing at a time.

Focusing on one task or activity can help you give your 100% effort and can increase the quality of your work. Focusing on one task gives your mind the time to clean up mental clutter and only things that matter at the moment take up mental space – this allows you to arrange your thoughts and be more productive. Taking on one task at a time allows you to reduce anxiety levels which are often high when you are multitasking. The pressure of finishing more than one activity increases our stress and anxiety levels which can result to burn out. Performing only one task at a time can help you make wiser decisions with a clearer and more organized mind.

Focusing on one thing at a time can be challenging for some people who are used to multitasking. For some, it can cause them to do the task slower but according to the Bryan College study, "millennials switch from platform to platform 27 times per hour. Additionally, multitasking lowers IQs by 15 points during cognitive tasks and decreases emotional intelligence and brain density over time." While multitasking gets the job done for some people, observe that the activities one can perform simultaneously do not need a lot of thinking and attention like doing the laundry while mopping the floors.

*Do not be afraid of taking things one at a time. You might find it more time-consuming at first but we humans are wired to adapt techniques or to the environment around us to make us more efficient and comfortable. With the long list of benefits of limiting the activities you do to one at a time, there is no harm in focusing on one thing at a time to be more productive. For the sake of better output, mental, physical, and emotional health, focus on one thing at a time.*



## Chapter 4:

# FOLLOW THE 80/20 RULE





# Follow the 80/20 Rule

“The 80/20 principle, like the truth, can make you free. You can work less. At the same time, you can earn more and enjoy more. The only price is that you need to do some serious 80/20 thinking.”

Richard Koch

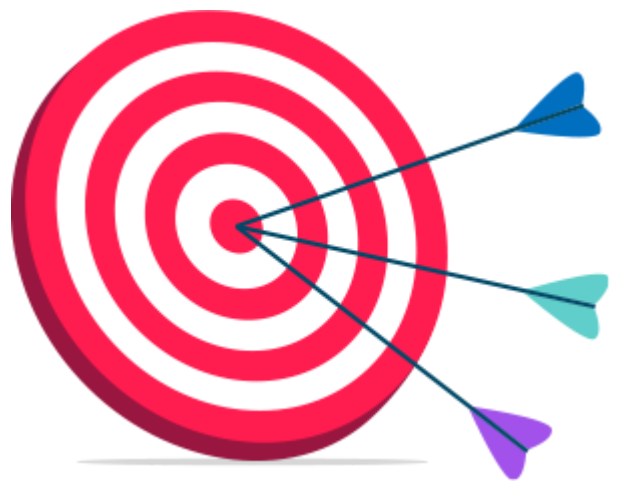


*A lot of people are not familiar with the 80/20 rule. Known as the Pareto Principle, the 80/20 rule states that 80% of the outcome results from 20% of inputs from any given event. The 80/20 rule is meant to make your work more efficient and produce more outputs. But how does one really apply the 80/20 rule in their work-life?*

*According to Bryan Tracy, "The Pareto Principle is a concept that suggests two out of ten items, on any general to-do list, will turn out to be worth more than the other eight items put together." In simpler terms, most people focus on ten small unimportant tasks rather than the two most important tasks that will help them become more productive. To be able to apply the 80/20 rule in your life, if you haven't, follow these tips:*

## **Set smart goals**

Most people set goals but do not differentiate which of those are big and smart goals from small goals. When you set smart goals, get a piece of paper, and start writing when you ask yourself "which thing should I do today that has the most positive impact in my life?" Then, you choose the next most important goal and so on. By identifying and achieving the most important goals first, you have accomplished more than doing 10 small goals.



## **Start with tasks that has big values**

Most people like to start with the small and easy tasks only to find themselves at the end of the day tired but only so little accomplished. The key to being productive is working smart and when you start with tasks that have a bigger value over the others, you have accomplished more even if you only did two instead of a person who did 10 low-value tasks.

The 80/20 rule might be hard to incorporate with your work ethics at first especially if you are an overthinker who thinks that all tasks are equally high value. But once you stop overthinking and start looking at the bigger picture, you will easily spot which tasks will increase your satisfaction once you finish them.

## Chapter 5:

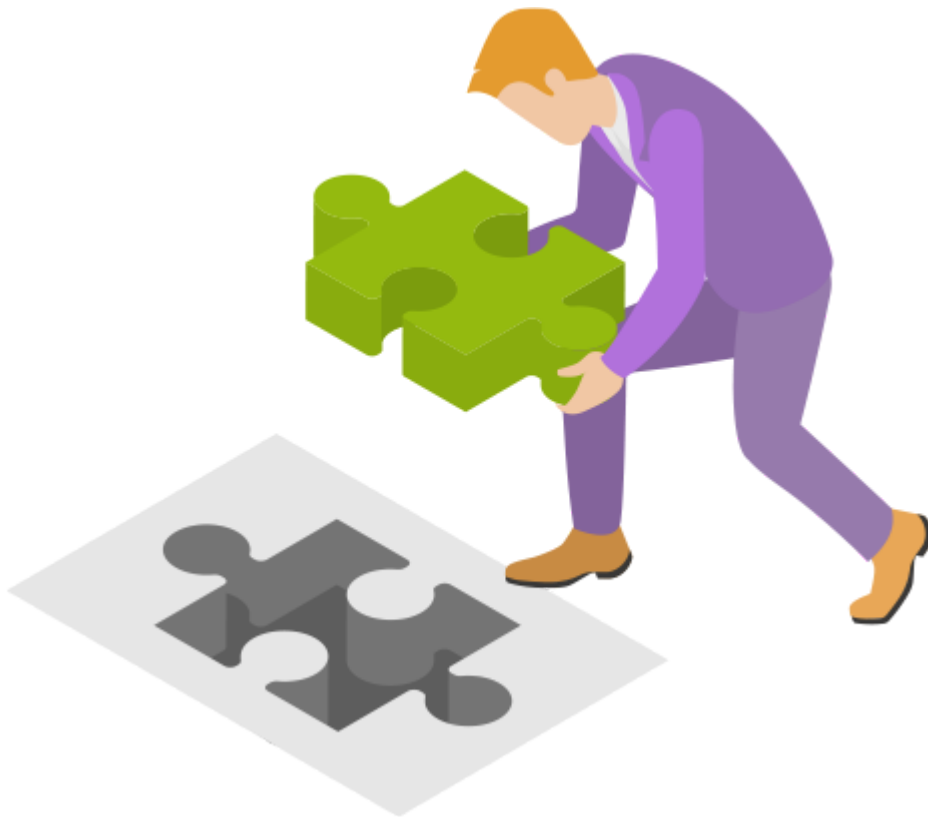
# LET GO OF PERFECTIONISM



# Let Go of Perfectionism

“The worst thing about being a perfectionist.. Everything you do might look amazing in someone else eyes but in your heart never truly satisfied.

Emmie Lee Dean



What is the standard of perfection? Is it getting all A's in class? What would happen if you are no longer confined between the walls of the classroom; how do you define perfection? There is nothing wrong with perfection until it hinders you from doing other things in life.

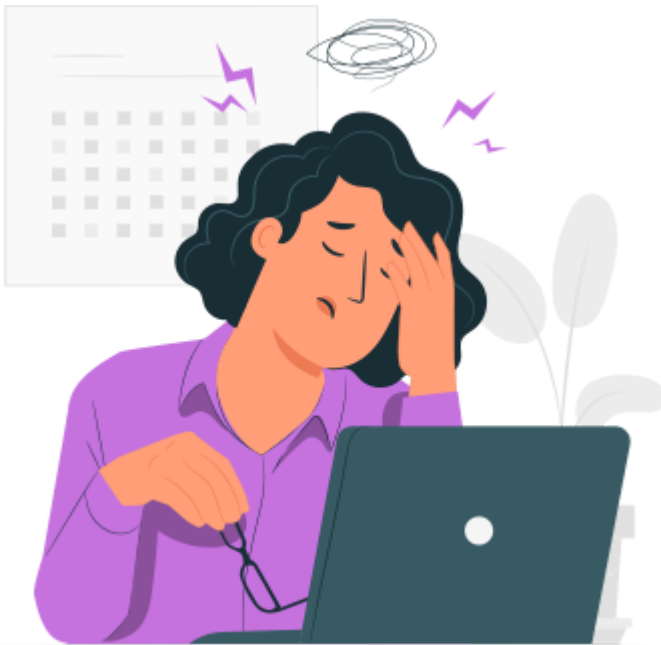
Oftentimes, people strive for perfection without actually knowing what perfection looks like even if it is already looking them in the eyes. There are people we know who never moved forward because they got stuck in a place where they constantly try to achieve perfection but when they did, it still did not look like perfection to them.

Nobody is born to be the perfect person. Successful people in life do not succeed because of their “perfect streak” but because they strive for excellence. There is a difference between being excellent and being perfect and you would be surprised to hear that being excellent does not automatically mean that you have to be perfect. Perfect based on dictionary definition is “having all the required or desirable elements, qualities, or characteristics; as good as it is possible to be”. Clearly, no one is perfect but someone can be excellent.

*Perfection does not give room for mistakes which means there is little room for growth. Excellent people, on the other hand, have dealt with waves upon waves of challenges throughout their lives but they still strive to achieve the best version of themselves. Excellent people have failed in life and through mistakes and failures, they are given room for growth and discovering more about themselves.*



According to psychologists, people who strive for perfectionism never find contentment. There are a few sparks of happiness from time to time but they are often discontent and stressed about making everything “perfect”. People who strive for perfectionism do not also like to take risks in life. The fear of the unknown is bigger than their cravings for adventure. Perfectionists are trapped in their self-made bubble only moving in a very familiar environment that sometimes feels too familiar that they want to escape it but cannot because they are afraid to go out of their comfort zones.



Psychologists also say that although generally speaking, “perfect” is positive, for people who are obsessed with it, negative habits are developed. Procrastination, toxic comparison, to mental health problems like depression and even suicidal thoughts plague people who strive for perfection.

If you are a perfectionist, change your mindset from being perfect to being excellent. Being excellent means that you are allowing yourself to make mistakes because it is human nature. Do not fall into the trap of never moving forward with your life because a small detail of it is too stubborn to be “perfect”.

# Chapter 6:

# AUTOMATE





# Automate

“Our life is frittered away by detail...Simplify, simplify.”

Henry David Thoreau

The twenty-first century has given us the gift of making our lives and work more bearable than before. In the early days, you got to ground your own coffee but now, with just a click of a button, you are powered through the day.



According to technologist, CM Smith, automating your life can help you organize and increase your productiveness. Basic tools like planners, your cellphone, to more advanced systems like Siri or Alexa are designed to make humans' lives easier. Integrating manual and robot technology in your life right is at arms-reach. One can still make the choice not to integrate technology into their lives but today, it is impossible not to.

When you spend more time trying to get a system together that does not involve technology or tools that can ease the process, you are wasting the time you could have used to get things done rather than planning to get things done.

Creating a personal systematic workflow that includes tools that can help you push through your day without overlooking or forgetting anything is the new normal. Companies and technologists have produced tools and materials that give us more time to be productive than wither our time away planning to be productive.

But of course, automation is only effective when you understand the system. You do not buy a computer and expect things to get done by just the computer itself. Understanding how the tools aim to help increase your productivity is important to maximize its use and benefits.

### When you want to integrate automation in your life, you must be able to do the following:



*Identify which activities you can automate*



*Understand what automated system you need to use. Also, take note of automated systems that can process multiple activities to save you time and money.*



*Give yourself the time to familiarize yourself with the system – not just how it works but when it breaks, you know how to fix it and you do not waste time waiting for someone to fix it for you.*



*Always be on the lookout for systems that fits your work style. Do not give up when you have tried and tested a handful of systems and you cannot find the right one that works for you. Finding the right system really takes time and effort but once you find the one that works for you, life will be a breeze.*

*For some people – especially the older ones, the fear of integrating technology into their life is dreadful. But once they get the hang of an automated system and realize how much work gets done faster and how much more effort and attention they can give to a task that actually requires more of it, they begin to appreciate the technological advancements in this century.*

# Chapter 7:

# DELEGATE



# Delegate

**“Don’t tell people how to do things, tell them what to do and let them surprise you with their results.”**

**George S. Patton**



One of the things that hinder someone’s productivity especially when working in groups is when they have a vision for a project but do not trust that other people in the group can deliver their vision. I hate to break it to you but if you have multiple tasks that need to be done and one is more important than the other, it is best to call for help or delegate tasks. Delegating tasks can lighten your workload but that is not all, according to Dr. Scott Williams, it is an opportunity for people to learn new skills and knowledge. Delegating tasks also trains teammates to be responsible and helps them exercise their creativity.

Of course, if you are the person who struggles in delegating tasks since you really want your vision realized down to the last detail, you will struggle in trusting that others can deliver. But according to Dr. Williams, "delegation can also be a clear sign that you respect your subordinates' abilities and that you trust their discretion. Employees who feel that they are trusted and respected tend to have a higher level of commitment to their work, their organization, and, especially, their managers."

Going back to chapter five, in order to be more productive, you need to let go of perfectionism and a lot of leaders or managers dislike delegating tasks because of this reason. Well, aren't you here to learn about becoming more productive? If you are the perfectionist type of leader or manager, this is the time to loosen the reins and let your team grow to their fullest potentials. It is not impossible that the other members of your team have better ideas or can execute the task better. Of course, if they struggle, you will be there to guide them. The point of delegating tasks is to finish multiple tasks and lighten workloads.



## Here are some tips on how you can effectively delegate tasks:

### *Find the right person for the job*

If you are struggling to delegate tasks, assigning someone you trust and you know is hardworking can make it easier. When you have someone whom you know has proven through time that they can get the job done with great results and minimal supervision, assign them to take the lead. These people are most likely leaders in the making and giving them the opportunity to shine can build their confidence and will most likely not let you down.



### *Explain to your team why you are delegating tasks*



Delegating tasks can both be good and bad. Some people are happy to help you while there are those who will see it as just passing the job to another person. If you properly explain why you are delegating tasks with valid reasons, your team will be more open to doing the task. It is also best to assess if your team is working on a lot of tasks at the moment and think if it is right to give them more tasks to do. Nobody likes being overworked and it is important to keep a healthy workplace.



### *Provide instructions, necessary tools, and training*

Of course, when you delegate tasks, it does not mean that your workers or teammates are on their own. As a leader, do your best to help ease the task-making process. Provide your team with clear instructions so they do not get confused or create a different output. Provide the necessary tools that will help lighten the workload and train them so they know what to do especially when the task at hand is challenging.



No successful person made it to the top on his own - he always has someone supporting him. To succeed in a task, learn how to work well with the people around you. Delegating tasks does add extra work but when you make the environment light, fun, and happy, even if the task at hand is stressful, it will be easier for you and your team to work together.



## Chapter 8:

# SAY NO TO MOST THINGS



# Say No to Most Things

“Let today mark a new beginning for you. Give yourself permission to say NO without feeling guilty, mean, or selfish. Anybody who gets upset or expects you to say yes all of the time clearly doesn’t have your best interest at heart. Always remember: You have a right to say no without having to explain yourself. Be at peace with your decisions.”

Stephanie Lahart

According to a psychologist, Dr. Christine Carter, saying “yes” when we mean “no” is a recipe for overwhelm and exhaustion. Indeed, we often find ourselves with our plates filled to the top but we still cannot force ourselves to say “no” to the point of burnout. For some people, the sign of fatigue is good because it means that they are being productive but when you look at the bigger picture, the quality of work is not up to standard and they are just going from one task to another until they get tired.

Being productive does not always equate to getting a lot of things done. Being productive can also mean saying “no” to tasks that are not your job or tasks that are presented as “simple favors”. Being productive is getting work done with great quality and having time for yourself to do things that you like. Saying “no” can be a challenge especially if it is your boss that is asking for more of your time. But remember that humans also run on battery and if we do not get time to recharge, it will be easier for us to tire and eventually give up.

## So how does one say “no” especially to superiors?



### *Find other ways to say "no"*

If you are struggling to delegate tasks, assigning someone you trust and you know is hardworking can make it easier. When you have someone whom you know has proven through time that they can get the job done with great results and minimal supervision, assign them to take the lead. These people are most likely leaders in the making and giving them the opportunity to shine can build their confidence and will most likely not let you down. Another way to say no is "I wouldn't be able to say yes to that and I would be able to say yes to xxxxx" "Does that work for you?"



### *Do not instantly say "yes" when put on the spot*

The secret of most people who cannot instantly say "no" is that they buy time to say "no". Let us say that you are swamped with tasks for the week and your team wants to head out to party in the middle of the week. Since you are in the same workplace as them, you will be pressured to say "yes" but instead, answer "I will think about it." Deferring to say "yes" on the spot can sometimes annoy friends or co-workers but if you also properly explain why you need to think about it, they will surely understand.



### *Start your answer with a "thank you" then proceed to explain why you can't*



One of the most polite ways to turn someone down is by considering their offer by saying "thank you" first. This shows that you are genuine even if you are going to deliver some bad news when you decline.

The art of saying "no" can be presented in a positive way. Do not bend your back doing jobs that will hinder your productivity and tire you out because at the end of the day, you also need to rest and when you continuously say "yes", you will never get it.

## Chapter 9:

# EXERCISE



# Exercise

“Exercise in any form can act as a stress reliever. Being active can boost your feel-good endorphins and distract you from daily worries.”

Mayo Clinic



Believe it or not, exercise improves your productivity and thinking skills. In a study conducted by researchers, Coulson, McKenna, and Field in 2008, they found out that exercising does not only improve a person's well-being but it also improves time management and increases efficiency in performing tasks. Some people would easily think about how can they squeeze in a workout when their day is already full. Well, there are exercises you can do in the office even while sitting down. In fact, studies have shown that people who only find themselves sitting down at work are less productive than those who are active.

## Here are some exercises recommended by [snacknation.com](https://www.snacknation.com) that you can do in the office that is work space friendly:



### *Tricep dips*

Find a chair that is stationary. Scoot to the front of the chair, with both hands facing forward. Place palms flat on the chair, bend your elbows straight back, and lower yourself straight down several inches, keeping your back as close to the chair as possible. Then straighten your arms to rise back to start. Complete 20 dips.



### *Arm pulses*

Stand up at your desk with arms by your sides and palms facing behind. Pulse the arms backward for 20 seconds, keeping arms as long and straight as possible.



### *Arm circles*

Stand with feet shoulder-width apart, arms extended straight out to sides at shoulder height. Move your arms in a small backward circle. Do 20 times in this direction, switch directions, and repeat.



### *Desk pushups*

Place your hands on your desk, shoulder-width apart. Lower yourself down toward your desk, keeping your core tight. Then push back up until arms are straight but not locked. Perform 20 reps.



### *Wall pushups*

Stand a few steps from a wall and lean toward it, placing your hands flat and wider than your shoulders. Lower yourself down toward the wall, keeping your abs tight to maintain a straight line from your head to your toes, then push back up until your arms are straight (but not locked).

*Feel free to add simple workouts that you can do with the available space that you have. Allot at least ten minutes a day to stretch and exercise. It will help you keep healthy and boost your productivity. If you have time before or after work, a full workout is highly recommended. Exercising might seem a luxury when you are busy. But keep in mind that aside from increasing your output at work, when you move around, you are also keeping your body in shape and your blood flowing.*

## Chapter 10:

# TAKE A BREAK





# Take A Break

“Each person deserves a day away in which no problems are confronted, no solutions searched for. Each of us needs to withdraw from the cares which will not withdraw from us.”

Maya Angelou



*Work, most of the time, even if we enjoy it can be draining. Humans on a day-to-day basis, search for solutions for a problem, solve it, and move on to a new problem. The cycle of human life is eating, work, sleep, and repeat. Once in a while, we also deserve a break.*

For some people, breaks are no good since you could be spending time working and earning money instead of lying down in bed but have you observed that more productive people take as many breaks as much as they can? Employees always look forward to filing leaves and holidays so they can reassess, recharge, and refuel. Humans are not robots and even robots break down when overused. As a human, it is our right to hit pause once in a while because when we are tired, our outputs' quality is affected, our mind does not make creative juices flow, we become zombies addicted to work.

## At this point, if you are **thinking of taking a break**, here are some reasons why you should take a rest:



*Improve your physical and emotional health by taking "movement breaks"*

In the office, you might find it hard to squeeze in time to stop and drop everything but you can always take small breaks through moving to help improve your physical and emotional health. Just by doing 5 minutes of walking, stretching, or if you can, do small exercises, you will find yourself refreshed and you get an instant boost when you go back to doing your tasks.



*Breaks can help restore motivation*

There will be times where we will be given projects that would be long-term and we would often find ourselves demotivated to do it. When you take a break, you are giving your mind a break and giving it the opportunity to declutter and organize. When you stay away from a task for a while, new ideas start to flow and you get excited to get back to work. You find a new source of motivation to continue and finish your tasks.



*Taking breaks increases flow of creativity and productivity*

The main reason why you take breaks when you are tired is to recharge but an underlying reason is that you feel mentally drained. When you take a break, your brain recharges and helps you focus better. Ideas flow better and you get a jolt of energy after taking a short break.

*Breaks might seem like a luxury only the courageous ones can afford especially if you have terror bosses. But do not be afraid to hit pause for a while especially if you are no longer productive. Taking breaks can lead to breakthroughs so do not overwork and exhaust yourself.*

# Conclusion

**"My goal is no longer to get more done, but rather to have less to do."**

**Francine Jay, Author**

Our life is an endless series of to-do lists. We wake up each day and dedicate hours doing work and tasks, and go to bed only to wake up the next day to do more. Before, people stuck to routines and did not have the advancements we have today to increase productivity. But with the technological advancements that we have now, we increased the number of things we can do leaving us with little time to ourselves. We think of productivity as getting more things done and not getting things done with superb quality. In this ebook, we laid out some of the top hacks and secrets on how to increase productivity in the school, workplace, or life in general.



We, humans, are only living on borrowed time and what makes it more challenging is that we are not gifted with infinite amounts of energy and creativity to go through long and tedious workdays. With ten different chapters, we hope you have learned a lot on how to increase your productivity without overworking yourself. A hardworking person does not always mean that he gets all the job done but it means that he gets the job done efficiently.

If you ever find yourself losing motivation and productivity is decreasing, go back to each chapter and take what you need. Remember to create a conducive work environment that inspires and lets you relax. Write things down to see what things you need done by the end of the day and to not overlook the small important things too. Always stick to the 80/20 rule so your time is well managed and you get to focus on only one thing at a time.

Let go of perfectionism and make room for mistakes because when you never learn anything new, someone with more experience with the ups and downs of life can get ahead of you. Do not also be afraid to automate and delegate. No one survives on his own and once in a while, it is okay to seek out help from others too. Lastly, when you learn to say “no” to most things, you are giving yourself time to take a break or do things you have been longing to do like exercise or try out a new hobby.

*Remember, productivity does not only mean getting tasks done but it also means that you are accomplishing things with better physical and mental health while getting to enjoy the things you love about life.*

# THANK YOU



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