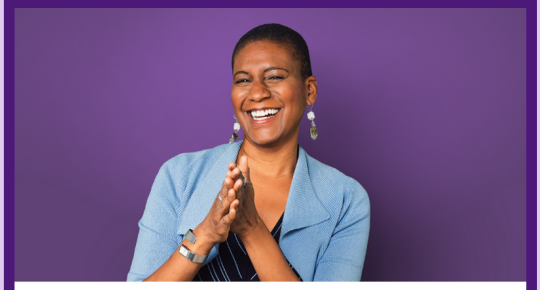
EVERYDAY IS BRING YOURSELF TO WORK DAY! Issue 12 | May 26, 2022

STOP MULTITASKING TO FIND FOCUS



LinkedIn Learning

MANAGE THE TAX OF CONTEXT SWITCHING

Dear Work Therapist

DITCH BUSY! PODCAST

DITCH BUSY

The Costs of Context Switching

One theme in the data from TCU's recent employee engagement survey is feeling overwhelmed. Faculty and staff colleagues describe stress from workload inequities and being understaffed. As a result, many find it hard to prioritize, focus and complete tasks. This got us thinking about "context switching."

Context switching is our tendency to shift from one unrelated task to another. It's the change in our “mental control settings" when we move to a new task. While this has become second nature or a habit in the workplace, switching comes with a cost. Although switch costs may be relatively small, sometimes just a few tenths of a second per switch, they can add up to significant amounts when people repeatedly switch back and forth between tasks.

Multitasking may seem efficient on the surface but may actually take more time in the end and involve more error. Even brief mental blocks created by shifting between tasks can cost as much as 40 percent of someone's productive time!

Read more about the costs of multitasking and context switching: ***Multitasking: Switching Costs***

TALK ABOUT IT

Take time to work as a team to determine better ways to minimize context switching to improve individual and team focus, workload balance and teamwork and build a greater sense of shared purpose for your department’s work.

- How can we promote ***batching*** when doing work individually or as a team? (see page 2)
- What can we do in our space or with our office rhythm to create ***shared focus time***?

PRACTICAL WAYS TO CONTROL CONTEXT SWITCHING

There's plenty of research to support consistent time management habits. Unfortunately for most, it's easier to fly by the seat of one's pants than put these habits into action! If this sounds like you, consider these methods to regain control of your time.

Chunking is the concept of breaking up your day into larger chunks instead of reacting to constant interruptions. The more chunks of time you can devote to specific tasks, the fewer start-up moments you will have, and your efficiency improves.

First Things: At the end of each night, write a list of the first three things you'll focus on and complete in the morning. This can be before you go to work, or the first three things you'll do once you sit at your desk. If your goal is to check things off, make sure you choose tasks, not projects.

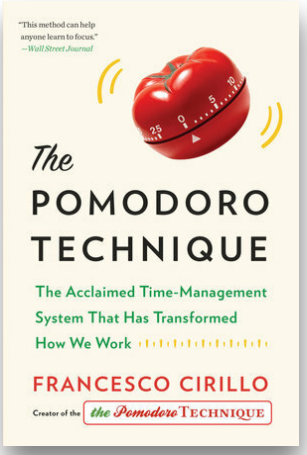
Getting Things Done Method: Some people swear by the **Getting Things Done method** from David Allen. This method encourages practitioners to write down everything they need to do in a given period and then prioritize. Other people love a "top three things to do today" list on a sticky note. No matter how you choose to document your objectives, the key is making them visible. As Allen says, "Your mind is for having ideas, not holding them."

Single Tasking: The opposite of multitasking! Set a timer and focus on performing a single task, ignoring everything else. No excuses, no mind-wandering. Have a notepad next to you. If anything unrelated to the task pops into your mind and starts pulling your brain off the task you're focused on, write it down for later.

Task Batching: Grouping and performing similar tasks together. For example, answering all of your emails at the same time to avoid bouncing back and forth between your work and your inbox all day.

Theming: Some people find it effective to assign themes by days. This means scheduling a day for primary tasks or projects such as focusing only on writing a report, researching software for purchase or designating a day for budgets and administrative work. You might combine this with **time blocking,** a strategy where you schedule out every part—and we mean every part—of your day. With time blocking, you're effectively breaking the work week into bite-sized time slots where you check your email, work on projects, take a break, or even exercise.

THE POMODORO TECHNIQUE



The Pomodoro Technique was developed in the late 1980s by then university student Francesco Cirillo. Cirillo was struggling to focus on his studies and complete assignments. Feeling overwhelmed, he asked himself to commit to just 10 minutes of focused study time. Encouraged by the challenge, he found a tomato (pomodoro in Italian) shaped kitchen timer, and the Pomodoro technique was born. The process underlying this technique includes five stages: planning the day's tasks, tracking your efforts, recording your daily activities, processing what you have done, and visualizing areas for improvement.

TL;DR: https://todoist.com/productivity-methods/pomodoro-technique
Got more time? Read the book: The Pomodoro Technique by Francesco Cirillo

Try Pomodoro for yourself!

The first six people who send a message to HRTraining@tcu.edu with the subject line "Tomato" win a time management timer*

**previous HR giveaway winners are not eligible to win*

TCU HUMAN resources

Questions?
Reach out to us:
hrtraining@tcu.edu