

TOPIC 3
HOW TO BE PRODUCTIVE
(PART II)



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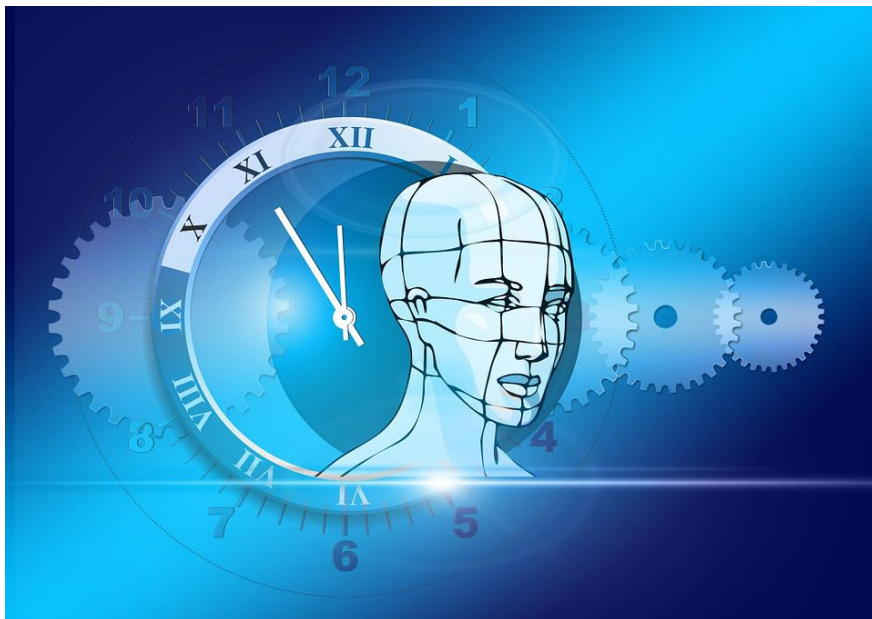
4. TAKE CONTROL

What you do. Why you do it. How you do it. Where and When.

Avoid your mind interfering with what you want to do and reduce your ability to pay attention and reflect, thereby reducing your potential.

Don't let your mind take you somewhere else or to a different activity other than the one you wanted to do in the beginning. Don't blame technology and external stimuli for this...

Avoid getting caught spread thin across several activities, instead **focus and concentrate** on what you are doing.



WHERE DO I START?

1. Every morning, do a **summary in your head**, as fast as you can about **what you're going to do that day**, the most important benchmarks: a job interview, exam, designing the logo, preparing the course, the visit to some clients...

In doing so, you'll prepare your mind for where it needs to go and you'll feel **stronger and more concentrated**...

2. **Before starting a task.**

Figure out why it is important for you and what doing that task contributes to you.

In doing so, you'll measure the degree of importance and you'll prepare to invest more or less time in it.

3. **Avoid as many external distractions** as possible:

- close your e-mail
- turn off notifications and alarms
- have your desk organized
- turn off your cell phone, etc.

4. If necessary,

say out loud the task
you need to do or are doing

5. Remember what your purpose is

6. Continue your **work uninterrupted** with at least a one-hour break and you'll see how your professional growth grows exponentially.

If you have a complicated day, one of those days where you are restless, nervous and your mind is turbulent: a complicated day.

Using the **Pomodoro Technique** will help you to increase your attention capacity.

Tasks are done in 25-minute blocks

Every 25 minutes you take a brief 5 minute rest.

When you've done four 25-minute blocks, you take a 15 minute break

You need a timer and to be strict with these times.

If you want to get informed about this technique, you have many resources on the website:

<http://pomodorotechnique.com/>

2-MINUTE TECHNIQUE TO INCREASE CONCENTRATION AND MEMORY

You need:

A clock with second hands.

To be **relaxed**, keep **your mind clear** and calm

Technique:

Notice the second hands on the clock and visually observe around the entire sphere of the clock.

Concentrate on just the second hand, concentrate on it and free your "mind" from any other thought.

Do it for 2 consecutive minutes.

If you realize you've lost your focus, you have to stop, relax and free your mind and repeat for another two minutes.

Do this at least once per day.

It is not as easy as you think to maintain your concentration but if you're able to constantly achieve it, you'll notice the results fast when memorizing and studying.

*A trick you can use at the beginning if you feel that it's too difficult is to mentally count the seconds as the second hands move.

The more you repeat this exercise, the easier it will be. If you repeat it every day, you'll totally master this technique within the first 21 days. Your attention and concentration levels will visibly multiply. Try it and you'll see!

5. HOW TO DO IT

Make **LISTS**. This is based on Berto Pena's system, which is the "**two-list system.**"
An **input and an output list.**

The **input list** is a list to which you will add each **task or idea that comes up**, you simply add it to the list and continue working normally.

It doesn't matter what format you use: paper or digital. The only downside of the paper format is that it is inconvenient when quickly moving the tasks from one list to another, for example. This is much easier on digital formats...

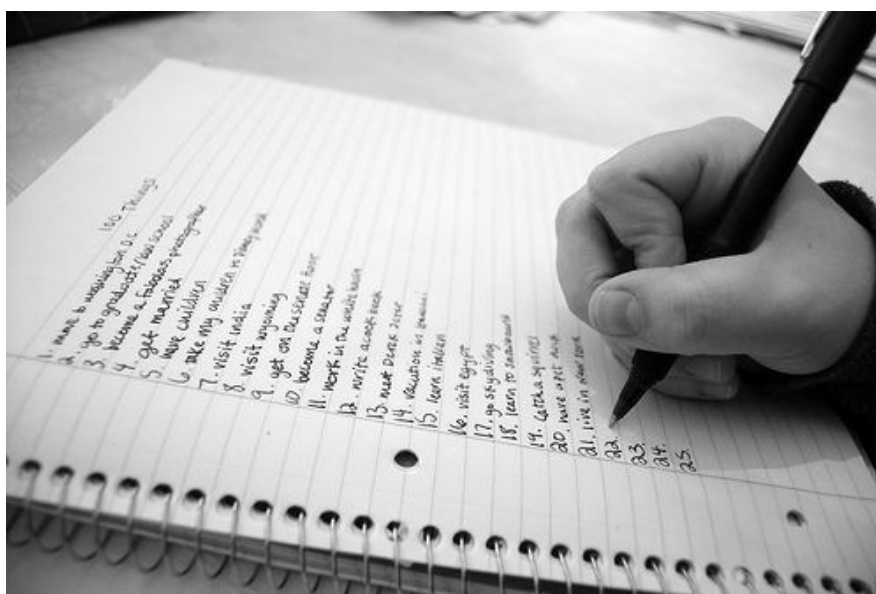
On this input list, you'll only put things that **you should do, but are not a rush.**

The **output list** has the things that **you need to do today** and that require **your full attention.** This list must be made **TODAY.**

Before finishing the work day, check the input list and decide if everything on it should stay there or be moved to the input list for the next day.

Every day before starting the day, check the input list to have a general idea of everything.

It is important to know how to discern the **most productive times** throughout the day in order to do the tasks that require the **most amount of concentration** then. If writing on your blog is better for you in the morning than the afternoon, it will be best to plan that activity for the morning, for example.



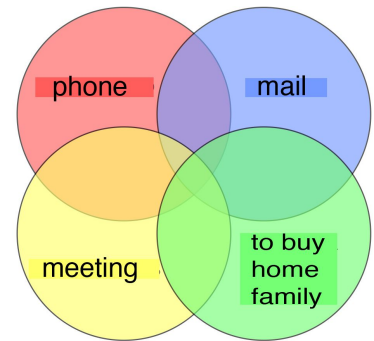
It's recommended to work by **GROUPS OF TASKS**

Try to **put the tasks into groups** and **complete them in blocks**, so that you start and finish them.

Rounds of telephone calls, check the entire day's emails.

Hold all of the meetings on the same day...

Determine the rest of the tasks so that they don't interfere with the important jobs.



DO YOU DISTINGUISH WHAT IS URGENT FROM WHAT IS IMPORTANT?

What is urgent?

It is that which needs to be done or solved as fast or as soon as possible.

"take urgent measures; make an urgent call; demand urgent answers to the questions asked; we called the doctor because it was an urgent matter."

What is important?

It is that which has importance or relevance for its value, magnitude, influence or other characteristics.

"in the mitochondrial matrix the most important stages of cellular respiration occur; copper is the main mining resource in Chile; water is one of the most important elements for living beings to function properly; the museum dedicates an important space to contemporary artists"

(Wikipedia)

The **most important mistake** of a disorganized person is not **distinguishing** those two concepts and not having the capacity to **separate** what does and doesn't have to be done. It is necessary to reflect well on each action before doing it in order to adequately choose and in order to be able to work effectively with the guidelines we're learning.

Be proactive, be clear about what you want, know how to break down your tasks, isolate what you don't have to do now, free yourself of certain jobs that aren't really necessary...all of that will help you take control. That is, wherever you are, be present in the task you're doing.

FOR EXAMPLE:

I chose two tasks I want to start and finish today.

Throughout the day, other tasks intermix with the job I was going to do.

I have to decide if they are urgent or how I have to manage them or if they are simply matters that can be quickly resolved. For example: respond to an email.

If throughout the day, I can resolve small tasks like this one, but quickly and effectively, without losing focus on my job, I will be saving myself the burden of things accumulating on the list.

Many more tasks will come up during the day: walk the dog, go shopping, house chores, family, web statistics, classify and organize documents, check and reply to comments on your blog and social media, exercise...

THERE IS NO TIME-OUT

This expression doesn't exist for productive people. They always find an **opportune time** to get ahead of the tasks that are remaining and they value their time.



Those small moments may be invested in a personal rest or to get ahead on work: a meeting that finished 10 minutes early and we check email; we needed to have a meeting, but did it on skype instead and all of that time saved I invest in doing things on my output list, etc.

That's it!! If you start a new task, be sure that you can finish it within the time you have and you don't need to leave it for later...



1. List your daily tasks:

Make a list with all of the tasks you need to do during the day for 30 days.

Everything you can write down: blog comments, classify documents, check email, house chores, purchasing, WhatsApp messages, exercise, conversations...

Next to each task, write how much time each one took you...

After 30 days you'll be able to make a map of all of the time you invest: repetitive tasks, occasional tasks, sporadic tasks... You'll realize what was important and what was not...

To this point, you must remember what your objective was in doing everything that you do and prioritize all those activities that positively affect your objective... From now on, your day will start with that important job.

At that time, it would be interesting to redo your daily schedule to eliminate anything unnecessary.

2. Take Advantage of Technology

Only use your computer for work, real work, that matters.

Have a second device on hand, a tablet for example, for comments online, networking, blog entries, scripts for presentations...

It will be this device that you use in those small "free" moments mentioned earlier that you can take advantage of.

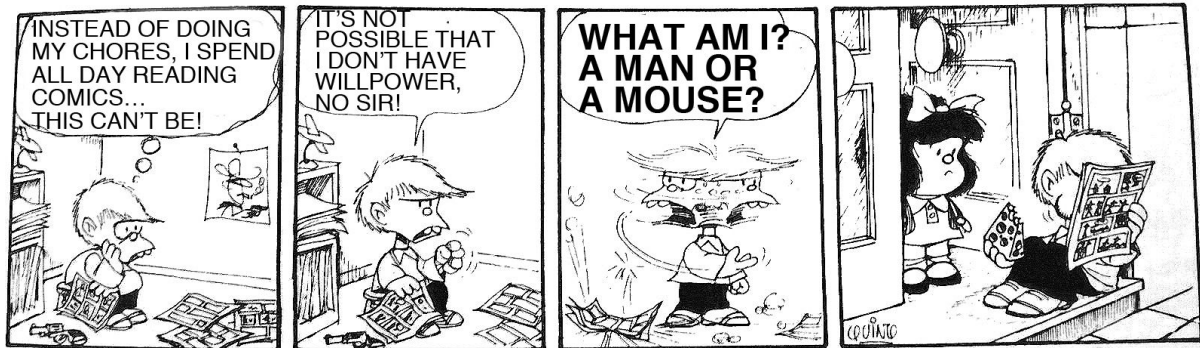
That way, the truly important work is on your computer.

6. THE DARK SIDE

When we make **good proposals**, it's generally with the healthy intention of doing them and people go about that differently. However, most people are especially enthusiastic in the beginning, **and it decays over time**. Willpower bends before adversity...and our less brilliant side emerges: The dark side... Sound familiar?

**We need face up to our willpower
and self-control everyday.**

Self-control gives you the ability and habit of activating productive principles when you are carrying out those activities that are really important.



SIMPLE TRICKS TO LEARN TO DEVELOP WILLPOWER AND SELF-CONTROL

Motivation, our grand ally

When the motivation that underlines our efforts is autonomous and self-propelled instead of controlled externally, it's more likely to achieve goals

Day-to-day training

We have lots of success resisting temptations but failures stand out more, and make more noise in our brains. Guidelines:

1. Adopt clear standards of self-control.

Have clear **objectives** of self-control. Sometimes we are ambiguous. We generalize and mix up our own limits. This leads us to have difficulties with our willpower, not because we're not capable, but because we're not clear about it. So every time you plan a new objective, formulate it as clearly as possible, even if it's bland.



2. Pay attention and keep records. Have in mind the behavior that you want to control and keeping track of it helps a lot. We love benchmarks! People eat more and drink more when they don't pay attention, when they're distracted. By contrast, when they are on a diet, they keep better records of what they eat and how many calories they consume. Comparing reality with the standard is the key to effective self-control. It has been proven that if you are paying 90% attention, you're not paying attention at all. **100% of our attention is necessary to really be paying attention.** In order for your proposals to succeed, **focus is essential.** Multiplicity makes it so we lose focus and get distracted.

3. Externalize and confide your willpower in somebody. Attention is focused especially on social interactions because it creates a certain tension and pays off immediately when you achieve your results or share them. So sharing your **proposals** with others will help you to increase your **attention levels.** Having extra support is helpful. Find, for example, someone who motivates you to go to the gym or to go with you if that is one of your objectives.

4. Charge the batteries for your willpower. Willpower gets consumed upon use, and we've seen that rest and glucose help overcome that. What a paradox, in order to not eat, one needs willpower, but in order to have willpower, you need to eat (glucose). In order to charge your batteries, take very seriously your **diet, sleep, meditative activity and not doing anything.**

5. Manage your willpower. As we said earlier, we have a limited amount of energy related to self-control. There are many activities that also drain this same energy, like making decisions and conflict resolution. And because of that, willpower can weaken in these situations. So from time to time, it's recommended to rest yourself, and **stop clenching the controls. Rewards and positive reinforcement work.**

6. Look for autonomous motivation. We know that the mechanisms of our self-regulation are favorable when the motivation is autonomous and independent, and that being pressured or controlled externally blocks our willpower over the long term, because it makes it more difficult. Doing this discernment exercise to identify our intrinsic motivations before getting started with an objective is crucial to make it easier for you. And when you don't have any motivation, load your entire artillery to fight possible distractions and difficulties you may self-impose.

7. Turn off auto-pilot. As Baumeister said: "Normal behavior functions on auto-pilot. In order to increase your willpower, you should override the auto-pilot and **take deliberate control.**" As willpower is exercised deliberately, it is interesting that sometimes you get out of a routine and look to do things a different way.

8. Forgive your mistakes. Making mistakes is inevitable and human nature, but your **willpower will be stronger if you are able to overcome them.** The problem is when we get hooked on blaming ourselves, which is very addictive, and we live it as a failure. "Forgiving yourself for errors increases motivation and commitment to your goals," states the sociologist and professor at Stanford University, and expert in self-regulation, Kelly McGonigal.

9. Identify the possible hurdles that may come up when you think of your challenge. Let's be realistic, gaining willpower is uncomfortable. Anticipating that possible discomfort in the way of thinking, emotions or possible distractions helps you to dismantle them, to be aware of them before they can even unexpectedly attack you.

10. Recognize and accept your polarity. That pendulum we all have that oscillates between one side of you that wants to be impulsive and the other that wants to be reflective. Describe the desires from your two sides and identify what the impulsive side prefers for instant gratification, the one that complains and the one that always puts off good habits. This exercise will help you recognize when your impulsive side is taking control over your actions in order to interrupt them at the appropriate time.

10 Simple Exercises That Will Strengthen Your Willpower!

<http://www.willpowered.co/learn/strengthen-your-willpower>



ENEMIES OF WILLPOWER AND SELF-CONTROL:

- Discouragement
- Procrastination
- Stress
- Unexpected Events
- Saying "YES" to everything...

- Discouragement

Many times we start actions with lots of excitement to finish them but a time comes when that excitement disappears and we don't want to continue on any more. Plus, there are days when everything seems gray or black and "if something bad can happen, it will happen." So how do you face these moments where motivation fails you and you're also in a tough situation?

We're not going to say it's easy, nor that there is a magic recipe. You simply have to follow the script we've indicated in these two chapters and **TAKE ACTION!**

That is true, from the very first hours in the morning: get up early, eat a good breakfast, have the day's objectives clear, positive attitude and...**DO IT!**

- Procrastination

It's a true "**art**" of **putting off an inevitable activity** and we repeatedly don't do it. The excuses we make are the most complex and for all sorts of reasons. We "do whatever possible" to not "do what we need to do."

Typical sayings: "Tomorrow I'll get up an hour early to do it." "I'll answer a few emails and then I'll do it." "I'm not sufficiently focused, I'll be much more focused tomorrow."

And...we don't say when we have to look for "something" online, something we know that is concrete and concise...something that could take 10 minutes and we take half hour "gossiping" one thousand things we are storing in our favorites...because surely it has "helped" us before...

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Have you thought about why you procrastinate?

Laziness, fear, indecision, bad organization, insecurity, lack of energy, a disease, lack of self-esteem...

- Stress

The pressure to finish tasks creates stress that **encroach upon imagination and inventiveness**. To prevent this:

- **Sleep enough and rest well.** Sleep is sleep.
- **Plan ahead** and apply everything we're talking about.
- What stresses you out? **Identify it** and start little by little and face up to it.

Get your leisure time back: to relax, have fun and laugh

- Unexpected Events

It is something that cannot be avoided, and so the first thing to do is take the unexpected events calmly and later simply **resolve them**.

You need to prevent work from piling up and turn them into multi-tasking, each one has its time, when you finish one, you keep going with the next one.

When unexpected events happen, you need to check your output list

- Saying "YES" to everything

Always saying "Yes" implies that you accept taking on **external tasks** that you need to add to your list. To do this task, each one of your tasks must be delayed or disappear. Remember that the tasks on your lists are those that "you have to do," the external ones are those that maybe "you can" do.

You must think, **who will benefit** by doing the external task: Your company? You? Or the other company?

It's no problem to say no if it's in a nice and polite way.

7. CONCLUSIONS

What We've Seen So Far:

- Each time, one thing at a time, with patience and determination
- Positive and constructive attitude.
- "YES," do speak positively
- Specify, avoid generalizations
- Visualize your achievements
- Do and do more
- Reflect each day
- Vision: that everything you do is what you want to do
- List of productive proposals: objectives to achieve
- Break down each action your going to take
- Concentrate on what you're doing
- Every morning do a mental summary of what you're going to do
- Before starting a task, measure the degree of importance
- Avoid external distractions
- Start by doing one hour uninterrupted everyday.
- For complicated days, use the Pomodoro technique
- 2-minute technique to increase concentration and memory
- Input and Output Lists
- Urgent vs important
- Tricks to train your willpower
- Enemies of willpower (discouragement, procrastination, stress, unexpected events, saying "yes" to everything)

Once we reach that point, we need to **evaluate what we've done, how we've done it and the results we've obtained.**

We are naturally predisposed to indiscipline, disorder and getting off-track and we need to **constantly correct our course.** It also influences our professional environment, internet and technology that are constantly changing.

That's why we need to learn to be **analytical with our productive conduct and behavior.**

WHAT ARE WE GOING TO EVALUATE?

Daily Evaluation. Questions:

- Have I been **productive** today?
- Have I applied the daily guidelines to achieve **productivity**?
- Have I had a **positive attitude**?
- Have I taken into account my **input and output lists**?
- Have I taken into account my **list of tasks**?
- Have I **broken things down**?
- Have I been **disciplined**?
- Did I know how to distinguish **urgent** from **important**?

You have to revise what you've done throughout the entire day and realize if you've been able to resolve the three or four important tasks that you had despite the unexpected events that may have come up.

If this didn't happen and you procrastinated, you should study how and why it happened in order to be able to correct it tomorrow.

Many times just changing the order of things is sufficient. But what is very clear is that if something is more important, you must resolve it before anything else.

Weekly Evaluation. Questions:

- All of the effort that I'm doing to improve my productivity, is it creating results?
Is it paying off in my **professional and personal life**?
- Am I taking it seriously?
- Is it failing? Why? Where can I improve?
- Am I using the **adequate tools and media**?

You need to do an assessment of the weekly results and give your feelings with regard to them. Are they meeting your expectations?

You'll constantly see where you make mistakes, and the pertinent measures to be more cautious.

With the data you obtain, you'll be able to suggest small improvements and constantly improve and learn.

WITHOUT EVALUATIONS, THERE'S NO IMPROVEMENT



EVALUATION

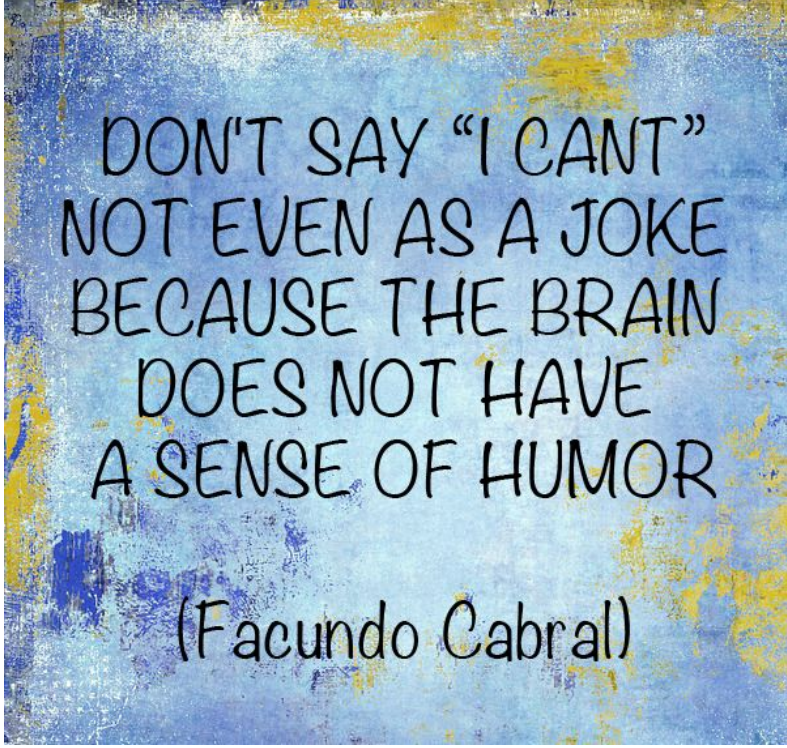
1- List key questions you need to resolve daily and weekly in order to be able to analyze your progress. Everyday, you'll do a **Daily Evaluation**.

2- Decide what **time of day** is best for each action and do it everyday.

At the beginning, it will take you longer but you need to achieve doing it in **5 minutes** with focus and effectiveness: **short, brief and concise**.

The end of the day is generally advised because that way you can analyze the entire day.

3- In a **calm place** so that your **thoughts** flow **reflectively**.



DON'T SAY "I CANT"
NOT EVEN AS A JOKE
BECAUSE THE BRAIN
DOES NOT HAVE
A SENSE OF HUMOR

(Facundo Cabral)



There's a big difference between wanting to change and being willing to change. Nearly everyone wants to change for the better, but very few are willing to take the steps necessary to carry out that change.