

86,400 SECONDS A DAY

Manage Your Time Down to the Second
to be Productive and Profitable

P. K. POTEAU, PH.D.

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Disclaimer: This book is meant to be a source of valuable information for readers interested in self-improvement. It is not meant as a substitute for the quality of direct expert assistance of therapists, counselors, or coaches.

I dedicate this book to my children, Kensky and Ashley.
The future is so bright before both of you.
Always involve God first in whatever you do,
and everything else will fall into place.
Always be thankful for what you have
Always have a goal. Your goals are your reasons to live.
Always honor your dreams. They are your reasons to live.

Leadership wins your heart and soul;
good management keeps you in constant motion.

– P. K. Poteau, Ph.D.

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PREFACE

As I sit here, rain pours against my window. The day grows old as I reflect on the many things about this book that I had hoped to accomplish and put into words. I looked deep within to ensure this book

would be the right thing to do. There were things I wanted to share, and I felt I had something to say. I realized there was something I could offer—something that would matter to the rest of humanity in the world.

I knew in the beginning it would be an endeavor, but it was my dream to see my words, my story, and my experience—all on the written page. Long before I ever dreamed of writing this book, I could see it being written; a story about to unfold. There was a seed firmly planted when I was a young, full-time soldier who was leading troops safely through two tours in Iraq. In doing so, I used my time management skills and goal setting to impact my life—and many other lives. Over the years, my practical use of time management improved my life and continued to lead me to remain productive and garner great successes. My skills allowed me to complete my schooling and earn multiple degrees, a successful job, an incredible family, excellent health, and staying active over the years through routine workouts and exercise.

I have always been a person who thrives on helping people, and helping you is at the heart of this book. I want to help people who believe they don't have the time or understanding to improve their lives.

I desire to reassure people they have the drive and passion within them and remind them that the key is to dig a little deeper and make time—to improve their lives.

My life has been a journey of many challenges, and over the years, God has shown me that we are all equal in many ways. The one ultimate fact declaring equality for all is that we each only have 86,400 seconds in a day. This fact is an equal share from God to everyone—no less and no more. know who you are.

What we do with our time is essential in experiencing a prosperous life. Knowing this fact, I have written this book to share my organizational skills to help as many people as possible make the best of each day. I feel in my heart this is a rare opportunity and a profound responsibility to help others live the best life possible.

In this book, I share the exact methods of how I accomplished goals in my life. I explain how I went from being a private in the U.S. Army, with three college credit hours, to becoming a captain, and earning both an MBA and a Ph.D. I did all of this despite the adversities and immense obligations surrounding me in my life. I worked diligently and faced challenges to improve my experience and keep pushing forward. My work was completed with the best intentions, interest, and a solemn duty to myself and my family to get things accomplished. The one message I want you to comprehend fully is this: You can do anything you set your mind to do. I want to show you that if I can do it—you can do it, too.

So, I want you to settle in and take a deep breath. Take your time with my words. Explore the possibilities because within these pages are the methods and plans to educate you on how to change your life for the better. You will soon know that you can accomplish anything and everything through the best use of your time and time management. You will discover a new superpower by prioritizing and eliminating distractions to avoid procrastination, which leads to a stagnant and unfulfilled life. My wish is for you to use your mind to discover your possibilities, abilities, to know your heart—and most of all—to who you are.

INTRODUCTION

Here you are. The project in front of you is idyllic, with the potential to be ideal. You are inspired. The project's energy thrives in you. You are ready, and the project seems to be the perfect opportunity to reach success.

The key is to not let time slip through your hands. Time has a way of disappearing quickly. Management of your time is the catalyst between starting a project or coming to a grinding halt. Everyone on the planet has 86,400 seconds a day. How you use these seconds to better your life is up to you and your choices.

From my extensive career in the military, starting as a private, the being promoted to an officer, and eventually obtaining a leadership management role, I acknowledged the importance of time management as the direct method in making use of every second. Time management is an indispensable aspect of obtainable goal setting, achieving consistency in carrying out a plan to meet the goal, and working with mastery to full completion.

This book, 86,400 Seconds a Day addresses issues of time management, goal setting, and facing tasks that move you forward to completion. I've poured my heart into writing this manual to assist you in restructuring your life for true time efficiency. I've taken my vast experience, my successes, and my failures, and used them as the foundation for real-world time management.

This book sets the tone and brings increased value and structure as a time management formula. By learning the importance of making each second count, my hope is this book becomes a helpful guide in discovering unlimited flow and positive change in your life.

From my experience as a military officer to my academic career, I offer real-life methods that let you tackle the enormity of every task in all aspects of your life—from work to play and the many tasks in between. This book was written for every person, from any walk of life. You are the sole reason for writing this book. I want you to reach your goals because I've seen how proper management of time has saved people from desperation and failure.

By adjusting your perception and keeping a positive attitude shift toward management of your time, you will be rewarded with unlimited potential and future success. The smallest of efforts toward a commitment to respect the flow of time can alter your thought process and unlock your vast potential.

You'll find value in this book that you may personalize and use. My goal for you as you read is that you'll take an honest assessment of how you use time and understand the matter of time management. I want you to finish reading this book and have a clear understanding of how you are responsible for your time.

The responsibility is in your hands. People achieve goals through growing into an understanding of how to use time. It is an important lesson that you must learn on your own. As you learn, I want your self-esteem to escalate as you experience personal and professional satisfaction and achieve a level of financial success that matches the desire you have for living life as you want it to be.

The recognition of the use of time in your day will revolutionize your life. It opens opportunities and awakens you to the moment's potential. Seeing how you are able to generate extra time, combat distractions, and reprogram old habits to form new, better ones is within these pages. You can find the right formula for increased production and healthy coping strategies all while obtaining a satisfying balance, or loop, between work and relaxation.

I hope and pray you'll learn to use your own 86,400 seconds every day of your life to live a fruitful, healthy, and prosperous life—the best life, the life you deserve.

Sincerely,

P. K. Poteau, Ph.D.

CHAPTER I

The Importance and Benefits of Goal Setting

You already know it is good to set goals. There are many goals you've set and reached, and it's likely you've set goals that were partly reached, never reached, or forgotten. How were you taught to set your goals? What would you like to learn now about how to set and reach goals?

Exactly What is Goal Setting?

'Goal setting' is a phrase that is used quite often, and in my experience, it is not given proper importance in business and life. Not achieving goals is directly related to disappointment from excessive expectations of the outcome of any project. Your ability or inability to weigh a project with lofty expectations is directly correlated to getting tasks accomplished or not. Goals are tasks associated with the time you set and are based on the conclusions you induce as visualized outcomes. By expecting definitive results, you set yourself up for failure. When it comes to time management and goals, many people are guilty of getting in the way of themselves and preventing goals from being met.

I encourage the practical use of time and goal setting. I present the best emphasis and importance of setting obtainable goals. I will share my acquired knowledge of business and how it relates to career success through specific strategies and anecdotal evidence I've gleaned through my journey of distinct life accomplishments.

CHAPTER I

My entire life has been spent following a path of attainable goals—but some were not-so-attainable. It was my good fortune to live an idyllic life in a normal American family. I was the eldest of three brothers and, along with my mom and dad, all of us encountered struggles. My brothers and I made the best of them by setting friendly, brotherly goals and initiating them as challenges through a friendly competition to reach each one of them. Each of us would set a goal to obtain and put an “execution milestone plan” in place. As kids, our goals were simple: getting through elementary school, making good grades, and making the honors list in junior high school. These goals were competitive and pushed each of us toward achieving and setting higher attainable goals. Our mutual goal setting got us each through high school, then college, and on to obtaining masters and doctorate degrees.

We were playful and fierce as we went out for each other to push and achieve those goals as young students. Each of us at turns made the goals harder and more challenging then we strived to push each other further and further. Doing our best was fuel for our goals. After we achieved each goal, we would set the bar higher and build in increased specifics for what each of us set out to do. Each of us went after our goals in direct ways as we moved forward in increments until we achieved success. It seemed we brothers were on a task-and-goal marathon.

What I learned from my brothers is that goals are accomplished one at a time by sharpening a sense of hyper-focus. This means that every step of the way must be planned for and defined. To say it was easy would be an untruth.

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It wasn't. But, if I had not learned to set and manage my goals, I would not be where I am today. I am here to share my experience to aid you in moving your career, life, and/or business forward as you fulfill every goal you want to achieve.

To get started you must know the technical aspects of time management and the definition of effective goal setting. I base the technical descriptions upon a goal-setting theory that addresses the process and the effects of tasks being performed and accomplished through setting specific goals. It has been proven throughout the years that setting specific, attainable, and focused goals are achieved better than broad, less accessible, and lofty types of goals.

Edwin Locke, a researcher, published a scientific paper in 1968 titled, "Toward a Theory of Task Motivation and Incentive." The paper included Locke's groundbreaking Goal Setting Theory. It was an authentic glimpse and blueprint of businesses, big or small, that showed the correlation between goal setting and productivity, and employee engagement. Locke's goal setting theory addressed the idea that setting goals with strategic productivity methods motivated completion of the goal. He concluded that employee engagement was both clear and actionable when outcomes were proved to be achievable.

Locke's work showed me that any workplace challenge is not a bad thing if the goal can be defined and given steps for follow-through. Once I determine a goal and gather the specifics, it aids me in gaining a vision of the result. The real way to establish a goal is to support it with practical action steps. Here are the action steps and principles to follow to make your goals achievable:

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Clarity. The clarity of a goal is determined by how clear, measurable, and achievable the original idea is. A specific goal is attainable by setting a timeline for completion.

Challenge. Any goal worth pursuing must present a degree of difficulty in maintaining motivation. When a goal is presented as a challenge, it will push you to strive harder to achieve that goal.

Commitment. A high level of commitment must be put forth to achieve any goal. Hold yourself accountable by being deliberate in meeting your goals. Find an accountability partner and share the steps you take on the way to it in order to stay on track.

Feedback. Set yourself up to respond and be open to feedback on your pathway to achieving your goal. If, along the way, you find the goal was too lofty to attain, it is best to adjust the goal midway than to quit and not hit your goal.

Task complexity. Be open to the difficulty of the task you have set forth. This is vital. If a goal you have set is complicated, give yourself leniency in the learning curve time frame. If the goal is discovered to be too tough to attain, then adjust, and give yourself time to allow for the best chance in succeeding.

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Purpose of Setting Goals

The way I set my goals with my brothers is a conclusive example of the positive effects of having a definitive plan for your life and how planning is essential in hitting your goals. The key to increasing your advantage and chances of achieving your goals is to define and write down your goals. Having a record of what you want to accomplish in front of you holds you accountable to yourself. Specifying what you're passionate about and writing the plan out in front of you is the key to finding success. Consider these general questions:

- Where do I start?
- What are the things I hope to do?
- What do I most want to achieve?

Then, you resist the temptation to answer, "I don't know." The thing is—you do know. And, for some reason, you resist finding what you know. Maybe someone once let you believe that you didn't have a certain talent, ability, knack, or passion. Maybe you were groomed to grow up and be something that you really did not want to be. Whatever the reason, you have to find a way to discover the truth you've kept in lockdown.

When making important life decisions, it is imperative to be honest and forthcoming with yourself. Don't worry about others and their opinions. You must do what makes you happy, and the rest will fall into place. Once you discover the passion in your life, you can use it to drive the rest of your life toward success.

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Most people do not understand how to take the time to set goals, nor do they even do it. They do not see the value in it and get used to life controlling them instead of being in control of their own lives.

Although discovering your passion can be challenging, it should be the main priority because, without it, you will float aimlessly without direction. Let's look at some of the best reasons to set goals for your life.

Setting Yourself up For Success

Each of us has the exact amount of time every day of our lives. No more and no less. From the moment you wake up to the time you rest your head, it is up to you to guide what happens to make your life move forward. Having your goals prioritized will set you up for positive outcomes—and great success. When you do not place your goals as a top priority, you lose out on immense opportunities, which could prove to have dramatic effects on your life. Diligently working toward your goals will put you in an incredible position to see massive success in whatever you choose to do.

Having Goals Helps You Define What is Important

Having your goals set will reveal what is truly important in your life. Through your efforts, you will discover who you are and the essential people around you. You will find the meaning of family, work, school, and relationships—and all will start to have a profound purpose.

When you don't go through the process of defining goals in your life, you could begin to feel broken, unfocused, and even experience failure in other efforts in life.

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Experience the Joy in Living

Pursuing your dreams by setting long- and short-term goals will give you a roadmap to achieve success. The only thing stopping you is when you do nothing. Achieving your goals brings a deep satisfaction that is hard to describe. The feeling of accomplishment can bring joy to every aspect of your life. Everything around you will begin to make sense. This joy goes a long way and begins to affect everyone around you in positive ways. Your achievements help your family and friends to see you as strong, capable, and able. Having your family and friends in your corner, believing in you, and supporting you brings great happiness and joy to your life.

Goals are a Roadmap

By setting your goals, you give yourself a pathway to freedom and success. The secret is to draw a line in the sand and pinpoint the main goal you want to achieve. Make this goal your life's destination. Most people do not have a destination in their life. They wander and float through life without meaning or direction. Without the destination, you will veer off your path—and run the risk of never reaching your goals. Use your goals as a compass to direct your life and use your passion to push you to grasp what it is you intend to achieve. The only way to do this is by treating your goals as a top priority and taking these aggressive actions will shape and direct everything in your life.

Goals Bring Hope and Confidence

Following your passions is fulfilling in every way imaginable. When you follow ambitions, your immense effort morphs into a greater sense of dedication and direction within yourself. Goals are your dreams! Goals exist to instill a sense of confidence and, most of all, hope for your future.

CHAPTER I

How to Avoid Distractions and Stay Focused

I spent eight years in the Armed Forces serving as a chemical and operations officer, and six years as an enlisted member. I needed to become adept at working with technology during my years in the military in Iraq. My job relied on time management and leadership, which required me to maintain stringent focus at all times. I discovered during those years that staying on track with my tasks by alleviating distractions was crucial to accomplishing any goal at hand. The reality was and is this: with technology comes significant distraction.

Distraction!

You can't escape it because technology is a double-edged sword. The convenience technology affords for many of today's jobs makes possible that which was not possible not that long ago. And with that convenience comes the propensity to become distracted as it introduces complexity at many levels, which adds to the work. Recapturing and generating focus are a challenge and accomplishment in these modern days of work.

What are the Distractions?

The reality is this: I'm sitting here working to write this book. I'm typing on this computer and to the left of me is a mobile phone where the world is at my fingertips. The urge to "hop on" and check emails, look at the sports scores, and check social media is powerful.

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These types of distractions are not exactly clear. They appear to be a part of normal life—people accept them as routine and not distractions. New information is available and there for the taking—it makes you feel like you have a responsibility to it, that you need it. It cannot be ignored!

The truth is—you must ignore it. It is less important than what you need to do to meet your goals. To maintain the level of productivity to hit your goals, recognizing and reducing your distractions is vital. Have you examined how much time you spend on nonproductive things, leaving your tasks to be delayed or not completed at all? Probably not, because distraction is difficult to measure—unless you realize that you’ve been doing something else and two hours have passed.

To eliminate anything in your life that could be a possible distraction problem, the best route is to determine what the real distractions are. Anything in your world that can take your attention away from the goal at hand could be labeled your “Achilles heel” for getting things done.

What are the distractions in your life? Let’s examine some common ones so you can see how they make you a victim.

Technology

- Computer
- Cell Phone
- Laptop
- Tablet
- Smart Watch

CHAPTER I

TV/Radio

Social Media Outlets

- Facebook
- Twitter
- LinkedIn
- Instagram
- Pinterest
- YouTube
- Tik Tok

Environment

- Family Members
- Co-workers
- Neighbors
- Events

Removing the urge to concentrate on anything other than the task at hand is easier said than done. Social media is a leading cause of distraction today. The curiosity generated with social media is on a different scale when it comes to distractions in the day—these distractions are mental escapism. Social media sites, the email inbox, even grabbing an extra cup of coffee, clutter your mind instead of clearing it for working complexity. The need to reward your brain amidst the hustle of everyday tasks becomes overwhelming. Your brain works overtime in convincing you to stay motivated, and you feel you need a reward to keep going.

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Projects, big or small, with all the pressure involved with deadlines and dates due, require you to fill a different set of needs. The fixation on social media curiosity, for example, is caused by a chemical in your brain. Much like being addicted to cigarettes, drugs, and even food, when you don't have it, your brain releases chemicals telling you that you must get it. Dopamine is the chemical released that creates the good feelings you may get when you connect with social media. The feelings of happiness, satisfaction, and euphoria you experience when viewing or reading social media create strong emotions and sensations that soon make your brain crave more.

The urge to check social media can be labeled as a real addiction, and this addiction is at mass proportion in our society. It is challenging to resist the urge to check social media. It is challenging to resist partaking in other distractions. Sometimes, the urge is more than you can bear or handle and morphs into an addiction. This addiction leads to wasting an immense amount of time and not achieving goals.

Your Brain and Science

Is your brain perhaps in the wrong place at the right time? In looking at it from a scientific standpoint, the Ventral Tegmental Area (VTA) of the brain is the section that craves the dopamine released when you log into social media. This is the area of the brain that demands and needs more dopamine and recognizes the deficiency when you don't have a social media connection. And this works to trigger the "crave" to get on and check it out, causing major distractions when you don't need or want to be distracted.

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The brain's VTA portion is the culprit of significant distraction, and with social media, it is not your friend. There are specific things and solutions you can do to escape the trap and cycle of distraction:

- Working in isolation
- Silencing your phone
- Journaling
- Taking breaks
- Getting a good night's rest
- Having a clean work area

Isolation

For starters, working in isolation by getting away from everyone to a place of comfort is ideal. In today's world, it may be challenging to find a place of solitude away from everyone. Everything from an office cubicle and piles of paper to kids and family responsibilities, becoming centered and free from distractions, is a difficult task. The goal of achieving isolation, in most instances, is to find silence and solitude. An environment free of noise with a peaceful setting is an optimal setup for consistent concentration.

From the time you open your eyes to the time your head hits the pillow you are inundated with noise pollution. Sounds such as notifications from email, social media, text messaging, and the old-fashioned ringing phone are massive distractions that happen hundreds of times a day.

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Quiet time alone to reflect should be scheduled. Make it a priority and set a time for yourself to find a space to be alone and away from all distractions. One way to combat the urge to check social media and other distractions is to monitor the time you spend on all technology. Discipline yourself by keeping notes on time spent online and on social media—or pay attention to the notices you get regarding time spent on your computer or cell phone. Please keep a record of the time and allow yourself only dedicated blocks of time and stick to it. You will find that by tracking your social media exploration, you will spend less time off task and more time working toward your tasks at hand.

Make the most of the quiet times you set for yourself in isolation. Work to focus on relaxation and quieting your mind during these sessions. Find the best place and time that works for you. Everyone is different, and what works for you might not work for others. Some people are more focused in the morning, while other people find themselves focused at night. Mid-afternoon is a time when some people are the most creative. I have even heard that some people are most innovative in the car while driving or on the bus going to and from work. I've talked to people who say their creative ideas come through and flow after they've exercised, even though they are fatigued.

The key is to understand your body and your mind. Test what works best for you and use that quiet alone time to produce ideas. Let it flow. Get to know your biorhythmic work style and stick to a time and place where distraction is not likely to occur. Find your time and place away from noise and people and allow this time to take precedence in your life.

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Journaling

You'll be able to do your journaling after setting up a space for isolation and being in silence. Clarity in thought is achieved primarily by organizing your thoughts to achieve your goals—and you must be able to “hear” your thoughts. Take advantage of achieving clarity of mind by keeping a personal journal. Journaling during your quiet time allows you to achieve a stream-of-consciousness where thoughts you didn't even know existed can come through. These are the thoughts that can reorganize your mind. Journaling generates ideas and assists you in creating your next steps with the goals you want to achieve.

There is great value in stream-of-consciousness writing. Study how to do this in the best way that works for you. Some people close their eyes for a few minutes while focusing on breathing. Some light a candle and watch the flame until they reach an appropriate state of relaxation. Others feel ready to write only when they have the best pen, or blank (as opposed to unlined) paper. Some people write outlines, others write sentences, some write inside bubbles; others write lists and some draw before they write, making illustrations and then giving them captions. There are journals that include writing prompts to open your mind and let you start writing by answering a question or stating a thought.

There is no wrong way to journal. Making lists, defining distractions, and writing about both essential and unessential tasks help you re-shuffle the residue that clogs your mind and hinders your ability to achieve your goals.

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Journaling is a way to gain personal insight, increase awareness, and refine your vocabulary. Capturing your feelings in words leads to enhanced growth of self. Writing in your journal has another benefit: it helps you remember.

To get started with journaling, writing random thoughts without structure is a good way to begin. Freeform writing is without rules. Remember, no one is watching, and it is only you. Write everything that comes to mind—disregard organization. Read it back to yourself to further your thoughts. Doing this exercise will help you define your goals, dreams, and bring to the forefront your original creative work.

Look at journaling as the creation of a roadmap of your ideas that leads and gives direction to your goals, along with an insight into how to implement those ideas. The action of journaling pushes you to define your objectives, fulfill your goals, and keeps notes on hand for reference. Your journal can be a guide used to hold you accountable to yourself to achieve any goal.

Over the course of my life, I wrote in a journal that also functioned as a calendar. It was a convenient way for me to keep track of dates that marked mission accomplishment in my personal life, for military obligations, and for my other work. I also use a task management system that synchs through all my electronic devices that empowers me to create and manage my projects with ease and efficiency. It prevents me from leaving space for procrastination.

CHAPTER I

Take Breaks

Your mind and body need to rest to keep you going at your full potential. Resting is as essential as working or playing—it is not an activity to feel guilty about doing unless it is out of proportion to the other activity your life requires. Relaxing and taking breaks is a catalyst for avoiding distractions and staying on task. When you work toward your goals with clarity and in quiet with consistency, your unrested mind and body will tell you when a break is needed. Listen to your body and mind with compassion and with a greater sense of direction and balance. Take breaks and recharge your inner-self and mind; it is essential to staying productive and healthy. If you feel you are taking too many breaks, there may be an underlying cause for the fatigue, and you must take responsibility to find a solution. Fatigue can be physical, or emotional. Be honest with yourself, ask for and be willing to receive assistance when necessary.

Meditation

Resting your mind and body is essential for staying focused. Meditation is a great method for achieving both rest and focus; it is an excellent form of controlled relaxation. If you are unfamiliar with meditation, you may misunderstand the purpose and the positive benefits associated with it. Meditation is not about getting sleepy or stopping your thought process. It teaches you to quiet your mind at your command. It can be performed anywhere and anytime as needed.

Meditation can take place when you are doing simple acts such as drawing on a notepad or closing your eyes and taking a few deep breaths. It happens when you are just sitting and listening to beautiful music.

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Allow yourself to be immersed in the now of relaxation and release all other pressing thoughts from your mind. Understand there will be times when meditation is needed to clear your thoughts.

The mind, just like the body, needs to breathe. Taking a short walk and even sipping from a cup of water can fuel the function of your brain. Doing these types of meditation activities inspires the pleasure center of the brain to keep working. Resting your mind will make you feel invigorated and energized.

Meditation allows you to focus, stay on task when you get back to task, and helps you accomplish more by being alert, aware, and aggressive in stopping unhealthy distractions.

A Good Night's Sleep

Getting a good night's sleep is an essential ingredient in staying focused and being more productive.

Everyone is guilty of staying up later than necessary at times—by taking one last peek at social media or watching a late-night television program. While it is more acceptable to do on weekends and holidays, I think it embarrassing to be caught daydreaming or nodding off to sleep during an important meeting. I learned early on the delicate balance of getting enough sleep to function throughout the day. The key to addressing work and the pressure of our day is to master a balance of rest and productivity. Quality sleep and relaxation are essential to real productivity, and a well-rested brain has a better command of moods and mental clarity. Being rested allows you to be hyper-focused in performing any task in front of you. Being hyper-focused leads to hitting many goals you have set for yourself.

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Exhaustion leads to being unfocused, inattentive, and unable to be at peak performance. All of this will lead to task of cleaning up failures and leaving goals incomplete. Another critical negative aspect of exhaustion is that it allows your defenses to be lowered, and distractions are given easier access to preventing your forward motion.

Maintaining at least six or eight hours for your night of sleep aids in preventing illness, reducing stress, maintaining a healthy weight, and it slows the aging process. There are additional massive benefits to getting enough rest. I have seen repeatedly the strong correlation between having a quality sleep and a higher productivity rate.

Proper Eating and Exercise

Healthy eating habits that purify your body from chemicals and toxins, along with attention to breathing and moderate exercise, even massage and stretching, are all worth placing into your schedule. Setting aside time to eat well and exercise will help you to accomplish tasks and goals by renewing your energy, rejuvenating your mind for greater problem solving, and thinking. Here are a few ways to rejuvenate and take advantage of what eating healthy, and exercise can do for you to maintain maximum health. Remember, the most precious gift you can possess is health:

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- Eat your last bite several hours before sleep
- Listen to soft or meditation-frequency music
- Clear your bedroom of electronics to avoid EMF waves
- Create an environment for sleep that is natural, filled with plants and organic fabrics
- Set yourself up for morning by listing the next day's tasks before you leave the office
- Leave your work at work and make being home a place of freedom from the day's tasks
- Include exercise, or at least a brisk walk in your day
- Get adequate outdoor sunshine into your day

Be obedient to the call of natural beauty to support what you do for self-care in your life. The more natural things you can incorporate into your life, the closer you'll get to living in an enlightened state of being.

Clean Work Area

This may sound simple and almost elementary but having an excellent organizational flow within your workspace goes a long way towards allowing you to stay focused. When your work area is cluttered, it causes you to feel uncomfortable (even if you don't think it does) and can lead to distraction, anger, confusion, stress, and even anxiety. Messy stacks of paper, food packages, files, and folders can stand between you and getting things done. Having a clean work area will be one of the easiest and quickest ways to avoid distractions, staying focused, and meeting deadlines.

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Some people say that they know how to live with clutter—they are comfortable with it. No judgment: comfort with physical chaos is sometimes baked into a personality. But there is a difference between clutter and filth. Know where that line is for you because the only place for filth (and things you do not need) is the garbage.

The Basics of Right-Time Management Style

As you are in the process of defining and implementing a goal, use this good advice: estimate the amount of time it will take to accomplish the goals. Look at your entire project and do a rough estimate of the duration of time you feel it will take from start to completion of the objective.

You may feel that this is difficult. At one time, so did I. My main goal when I enlisted in the military was to become an officer. Then I learned that to become an officer, I had to be a U.S. citizen, have a college degree, and some other requirements that I did not have at the time. So, to reach that goal, I had to apply total discipline, sacrifice certain things I enjoyed spending time on, and minimize leisure time in order to reach that goal. Instead of focusing on the sacrifices, my personal philosophy became this: “Whatever I accomplish in this moment, and whatever I accomplish today, are all steps to reaching my goal of becoming an officer.” Then, I generated hope, put on a smile, and took the next step.

Let’s say your goal is to save \$1,000.00 by the end of three months. That gives you two facts to work with in terms of visualizing the goal: \$1,000 and the calendar months of March, April, May.

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Start with where you are now, say at \$0 and it's the last day of February. Look ahead and imagine yourself holding \$1,000 in cash—maybe you're dressed in shorts and a t-shirt because it is May 31. Now reel yourself back to \$0 and start taking steps forward, even if your first step is to put a penny in a jar to set on your desk as a reminder that you've set a concrete goal.

The goal and task may require a long or short-term period, which could determine the achievability of the goal. Looking at the mission or goal is essential in the goal's accomplishment. Being open and honest with yourself is the first step in managing the time to make the goal happen. You can estimate your time by doing these suggested things to help you:

- Premeditation
- Realistic expectations of yourself
- Total disciplined commitment

Goals are set in your conscious mind and in your subconscious mind. Your conscious mind sets the goal and 'believes' in it. Your subconscious mind feels the goal and although it is supposed to support your conscious mind, it sometimes undermines the willpower and belief that are necessary to reaching your goal. That is why your devotion to getting the goal accomplished depends on the importance of the goal. It is in your nature to subconsciously file the goal as a priority...or...to place it on the back burner. It is up to you to know that your goal is running on two operating systems and you must keep aware of what's happening. This is why eliminating procrastination is necessary. Remember your overall goal; then focus on the small tasks that will get you there.

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From my experience, tackle the most straightforward task first and then move gradually to the hardest. All this builds momentum and tells your subconscious mind that your goal is achievable.

As you take on the small steps, keep estimating your interest in the goal. When the overall goal doesn't pique your interest any longer, or you've lost the desire in your heart to achieve it, the goal will be left undone. At that point, ask yourself:

- Do I want this to happen?
- Do I care to go through this till the end?

When chasing future goals, you must apply yourself to achieve each goal to see success. If you do not, the task will not get done. The overall goal must motivate you because, over time, your interest may wane, which will leave the goal incomplete. In the beginning, assess your motivation for the project because this way you will save time and energy if it doesn't meet your expectations. It is essential to examine the big picture into what that goal will do for you in the long run. Will it help your career, your family, your finances, and your dreams? Find the motivating factor, ask yourself, and look deep to determine if the motivating factor is important enough to go the distance in accomplishing the goal.

Most significant goals do not happen overnight and take a while to complete. Some projects can take days, weeks, months, and even years. Therefore, it is imperative to understand your entire motivation toward a project.

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By being honest with yourself, and upon discovering the goal does not generate enough interest in you, it is best to define another goal that piques your interest. Attention and devotion will allow you to keep moving forward and doing the work necessary to accomplish the goal.

Let me add that it is best to pace yourself. Marcus Aurelius wrote, “Make haste slowly.” Make a habit of pacing yourself and exercising self-control. Journal and take inventory of your progress and the actual effectiveness of your time toward accomplishing the goals. Self-examine your work and do an accurate assessment of your work progress and quality.

When you have examined your overall goal—let’s go back to the example of saving \$1,000 at the end of three months—and you’ve determined that it is necessary and do-able, it’s time to break it down into steps. This is where you make a plan that takes you from start to finish in a practical way.

You may devise two plans for yourself, like the examples below, and then make a decision as to which is the best one to follow.

Plan A: Re-directing Expenses into Savings

Examine my annual budget.

Determine the best places to cut spending on something to re-direct the money into a savings plan.

Make a commitment to route the money from the eliminated line item of expense to a new line for collecting the money for savings.

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Find an accountability partner to help me reach this goal.
Determine whether or not to continue this practice in the same way (or a different way) once the goal has been reached.

Plan B: Saving from Income Source, Short-term

Examine my monthly budget to determine income.
Work with my bank to create an automatic transfer of funds from checking to savings twice a month when cash comes in—without eliminating specific expenses.

- Pay closer attention to my financial status over the next three months while the savings goal is in place.
- Stop the transfer once the goal has been achieved.
- Since this savings goal was attained, and it felt good, determine whether to continue it at a different level, or plan to do it in a new way (see Plan A).

When you start with your overall plan, you determine its viability and as you think about it, you build it into reality. Then you cross over into actual reality when you plan the steps you need to take to get there. As you can see, there is more than one way to achieve a goal and this is where you expand on your goal by being creative and make the achievement steps feel satisfying.

S.M.A.R.T. Method of Setting Your Goals

The November 1981 issue of Management Review contained a paper by George T. Doran called “There’s a S.M.A.R.T. way to write management’s goals and objectives.” It discussed the importance of objectives and the difficulty of setting them. Here is the meaning of the acronym:

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Specific: target a specific area for improvement

Measurable: quantify or at least suggest an indicator of progress

Assignable: specify who will do it

Realistic: state what results can realistically be achieved, given available resources

Time-related: specify when the result(s) can be achieved

I like, and use this method in my own life, and I encourage others to study it and see how they can best use this wise advice. Here's an example:

My first vehicle in America was a two-door 1997 Ford Probe. When I applied for a loan to buy that vehicle, the loan officer told me they couldn't guarantee the loan because of my credit history. I found that impossible and strange, considering I had never had credit before! The country I'm from didn't have this type of credit system—our only option was to pay with cash. My only option was to save as much as I could to buy the Ford Probe. So that's what I ended up doing, and I was S.M.A.R.T. about it.

S: Buying a car was my **specific goal**; building my credit was a secondary specific goal

M: My **motivation** was to buy the vehicle and save money to do so

A: The **assignment** of buying a car was necessary for my American lifestyle

R: My goal to save money for the purchase was **realistic**—and I made a good plan

T: I chose a date to complete the goal and managed money as **time-sensitive**

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I ended up saving enough to buy the vehicle I wanted and began building a good credit history. A side effect of using the S.M.A.R.T. method was that I realized I could embrace performing any job that would lead to a goal to the best of my ability. I push myself to attain optimal performance within my job and every task I do. It is now in my nature. When I was serving in the military, my job was complex, and I had to be task-plus-goal oriented. It was good training. Using the method of S.M.A.R.T goal setting, I embraced a dedicated focus to perform my job to the potential I had envisioned. I wanted and strived for optimal performance not only for myself but for my fellow workers and the people surrounding me within my job circles. I developed a personal strategic method in determining the achievability of any goal. I also developed a means of keeping track of what I needed to accomplish my goals and exploring the short- and long-term benefits of each. I want to share these with you.

Sensible Work Habits

Goals are reached by the effect of the steps you put into practice, either consciously or subconsciously. Conscious goal setting comes with the need for planning a method into your progression toward the job or task. You may have heard the question: “How do you eat an elephant?” and its answer: “One bite at a time.” Approaching goals in small, achievable steps and allowing your mind to process each step are optimum smart approaches for project work.

As you lay in your steps and perform them, you’ll find out what works and what doesn’t.

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Know that returning to a project after a short or long duration of time allows the possibility of seeing something different that you did not see before. These new ideas could enhance and lessen the difficulty of a task or process. Looking at what you could achieve by defining smaller goals can help the overall focus of the goal remain clear. Plus, focusing on smaller steps will allow you to change, if necessary, any stage to help you make the goal a reality. These small, calculated steps lead to goal success.

Approaches to Determining Goals

Determining goals and establishing the visions of each goal are vital to reaching success. You may plan on accomplishing the goal by defining the deadline as more than just a date but with a summary or list of all that had to happen to reach the conclusion. You may define every aspect of the goal and write every detail in a rough draft or list of the entire goal or project. Either way, utilizing different ways to set your goals is essential. Understanding the type of person that you are, along with knowing your style for accomplishing goals, is critical.

A problem or two may arise in how you measure goal completion. Expect this; don't get discouraged. The type of measurement system you use should match your goal. For example, measuring for your savings goal will likely be done by money management software, or a bank. If you were to measure your savings by using an abacus, a coin purse, or some other inappropriate tool, the path to your goal may not be smooth. The key is to set up an actual method to measure the achievement of goals and make it fit with your style. You can use different techniques such as calendars, a tracking app on your computer, planners, organizers, charts, or dedicate a journal for writing about your goal and the progress you are making. Find what works best for both the goal and you and your personality.

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Some Goal Types for Success

Specific goals: Be specific in what you want to accomplish.

Brainstorm to break down the goal. What is it about the goal that defines its meaning and makes you aspire to achieve it? What is the specific detail that will keep you engaged? Find the heartbeat of the goal that keeps you driving toward it by being specific. Do you want to “lose weight,” or “lose 30 pounds?” Do you want to “lift weights” or “bench press 300 pounds?” Do you want to “save money” or “save \$1,000 pounds...or dollars?”

Measurable goals: Keeping your goals attainable is essential in reaching any goal’s potential success. As a human, you have the nature to dream big, but often, you can get caught in imagining too big and making the goal unattainable. If you cannot reach a goal within a specific time frame, that goal should be revised with a changed duration of time. Change your goal as it proceeds and follow your intuition as it develops and evolves.

The word “change” might scare you. But when you see it as freeing, healing, and unavoidable, and the more favorably you welcome it as a constant, the more positive it turns. It’s best to adopt this truth and remain optimistic about its effects.

Attainable goals: Define your goals as feasible by keeping them within reach of your pace and working style. By going at your pace, reaching an achievable goal gives you a real sense of completeness. Chasing a goal outside of your style, one that is not attainable, will place your efforts on a perpetual delay. Make sure your goal is achievable by performing small steps and tackling the most manageable tasks first. This will open the details of the larger tasks ahead and prime you for the more complex and substantive material.

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Here's a good example set by Joe. He wanted to lose 30 pounds, so he signed up for a gym membership. He regularly went to the gym to exercise and took time to also monitor his diet. He saw positive change bit-by-bit every day. All small steps he took got him closer to his goal—and then, when he reached it, he kept going which made him happy.

Compared to Joe, Sam's goal was off the rails even as it began. His goal was to be able fly. Not as a pilot, but literally—like a bird with wings. This goal was absolutely impossible and unattainable—there is no way he'll be able to grow wings and fly like a real bird! Pursuing a goal like that not only unattainable, but also can harm him if he ever attempts to practice it. Although this is a radical example, the fun makes it easy to fit into an example.

Relevance: Is your goal relevant? Ask yourself if reaching your goal is relevant to you. Do you want to attain this goal, and will it help in your life? Will the goal uplift you toward increased finances, enhanced family life, better relationships, or business success? Examine the reasons in which you want to reach the goal. What is the primary objective, and the benefits attained once the goal is reached?

Time: length of goals to attain. Looking at the duration it will take to reach a goal is one of the key elements in meeting any successful deadline. Keeping the timeframe in the front of your mind will drive you each day to ensure you hit the mark. It is essential to plan. You can modify your schedule to adjust to unexpected things in your life. Do your best to keep modifications and extensions to a minimum. This will help you stay on track with time and with your goals.

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I remember when I was getting ready for my first bodybuilding competition in 2015. My short-term goal was to be conditioned and well-defined to have a better chance to win the contest. To look conditioned and well-defined on stage, it takes time to prepare. The contest was in June, I had to start conditioning 90 days prior to the show by strictly controlling diet, training, and posing practices. I have to admit that I got tempted many times to eat a 'cheat' meal. But when I remembered the purpose of my conditioning, I resisted that temptation by reminding myself that it was temporary—just a few days—then I knew I'd be able to enjoy a large pizza with lots of cheese. So, it was a sacrifice that I had to make until I could gain the rewards: a good show at the contest, and a large, meaty, cheesy pizza!

Keep Your Goals from Spreading

I have stressed the importance of keeping your goals at the forefront of your life and pursuing them each day. Sometimes you have to assess them moment-by-moment because your conscious mind is always at play with your subconsciousness. For example, every day when Jane wakes up, she goes through a list of short-and long-term goals before she performs them. They are: Getting to work on time, finishing a report by close of business, picking up a package at the post office, spending 45 minutes at the gym, cooking soup for dinner, and her long-term goals of saving \$1,000 in three months, planning a vacation, painting the dining room, and buying a car. At certain moments in her day, she pauses to think, perhaps plan, and then prepare to take whatever small step each goal requires. Sometimes she's distracted: "Maybe I'll skip lunch to finish this report a few hours before close of business," or "It is fun using this new financial journal as I'm working out my savings plan," or,

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“Do I really want to paint the dining room? I’m not sure...maybe that can wait until next month,” or, “I’ll ask Tom to pick up that package at the post office; I don’t need to do that task.”

This is how Jane lives with her goals...how she carries them with her on to-do lists and how she really carries them in the imaginary suitcases of her conscious and subconscious mind. As long as Jane keeps her goals on topic, she’s on a good track. If Jane were to ditch the new financial journal, push the limits of her deadline to finish the report, or go to the and then the coffee shop and then the grocery store and then the post office (only to find it closed for the day)...her goals would have spread themselves too thin to accomplish. You probably have a better example of what happens when you plan workarounds that affect your goals.

Often, you might verbalize your goals out loud. This is dangerous territory and puts you on rocky ground. Let me explain. When an intention is verbalized, it is out in the open. In the open, others hear what you are doing, and you also listen to yourself talking about what you are doing. When a goal is spoken about over and over, the importance of the goal begins to diminish. When this happens, it is in your nature to start seeing the goal as already being accomplished. Your goal loses steam, and you believe it is finished. When your mind adheres to the thought the goal is complete, focus on another goal steps in and takes over. This leaves the initial goal not being completed. When you talk about your goals, you risk sabotaging your efforts. When a goal is spoken, it could be filed in your mind as something you have inadvertently accomplished.

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Now, I am not saying you should keep every goal a secret. It is fine to discuss your goals with friends and family. Tread carefully when you allow the goal to become completed in your mind. Talking about your goals enables the sensation of less pressure to reach for the goal. Keep them inside; keep them in the front of your brain. This method allows you to keep reaching to accomplish your goals. Plus, you can focus and devote every second you have to the goal. Keep your leading goals in front of you and let nothing interfere, including yourself, in making things happen. Keep moving forward until you have hit the mark. Once you hit the mark and achieve the goal, you will see the difference in your life. Do your best to develop systems that work in your life to keep your focus; do not get lost in translation by verbalizing your overall goals and detouring your plans of finishing the goal in entirety.

Steer Clear of Perfectionism

You can connect procrastination and perfectionism in two different roles as you move toward your goals. They can be misunderstood as being almost the same, but they are different in astronomical ways. Being a perfectionist is an admirable trait and is the drive that most people use to push forward toward goals. But perfectionism can have a negative effect. Chasing after perfectionism can make you slow down and even come to a stop with your goals. When you strive to get everything perfect, the progress you are making slows down, and you allow yourself to not place the goal as high in importance. Perfectionism can be confusing because you don't know how to make something work in the way you desire. This hinders you from reaching your goal. As a perfectionist, you get it in your head that the goal is not reachable because you can't line it up perfectly.

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The fine line between perfectionism and procrastination is that to be perfect requires extra time, you feel that you cannot make the extra time, and then you slow down, and procrastinate. You put off achieving the goal because it cannot be done the exact way you imagine. Perfectionism leads to procrastination, and you must be careful to avoid both. Head off procrastination by being more flexible and open to change. Ask yourself if you are a perfectionist. Is it in your nature that everything must be as you want it, or you stop and call it quits? Does it have to be your way or the highway? If this is you, the good news is that the act of recognizing this about yourself is the first step in making sure your perfectionism trait does not hold you back in achieving your goals.

Understanding you are not perfect, and nothing you will do will be perfect, is essential. The only perfect one is God. And you and I are not God. We are humans with faults, and no one or anything is perfect, nor ever will be. Take this idea and place it next to your focus on your goals. This idea should ease any pressure you place upon yourself. I want you to take this to heart. No one, and nothing is exactly perfect.

Since none of us are absolute, the best answer is to do the very best you can with anything you do—and be proud of what you accomplished. The moment you recognize you have done the very best you can without worrying about being perfect, you will find it rewarding and easier moving forward with achieving your goal.

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If you aren't careful, perfectionism can be dangerous to relationships and can alienate you from your friends and family. If you find yourself being a perfectionist, there are some questions you need to ask yourself that may help you in understanding your nature.

Understanding the intricacies of perfectionism will help you to overcome the perfectionism trap, keep your motivation level high, and continue moving you towards your goals.

Sometimes, humor can soften a strict situation—a little. An example: I was raised in a culture where education was considered as the only way to achieve success. Since my father grew up in that same environment when he was child, his only focus was for his children to never stop going to school. I am convinced that if he were still alive, he would want me to have more than one doctorate degree. Back then, there was shame upon me if I was mediocre—and the standard of mediocre for my family was bringing home all A grades on our report cards. My haircut and clothing and demeanor had to be formal at all times for my parents. If I failed at any element, there was shame put on me. As the firstborn in my family, my other brothers followed everything I did, and if they did or acted in a wrong way, my dad would punish me because I set the wrong example. I was responsible for their actions—as well as my own. It seems harsh, but my brothers and I turned it into a good situation by challenging one another to achieve our goals.

When it comes to education, I guess I am almost the same as my dad was with me. I made my children believe and abide by this report card rule:

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A = Awesome

B = Bad

C = Catastrophic

D = Dead (huge problem)

F = F**k no!

Do you know the difference between excellence and being perfect? Are you a perfectionist, or do you strive for excellence? Excellence and perfectionism are two different things, but to the naked eye, they seem to be the same. Both traits are similar but are on two different sides of the spectrum. They are far apart. In realistic terms, achieving excellence is not found by pursuing perfectionism.

The way I describe the pursuit of excellence is doing the right thing and focusing on the “reason” for any task to be completed, along with keeping the focus on results that are achieved. I describe the pursuit of perfectionism as being the opposite. Perfectionism is the primary intent on doing the exact right thing but with the focus on how things “appear” along with the concern on how others view your goal and if it is completed.

Being a perfectionist can rob you of your time and drain your energy for completing a goal or task. It can beat you up inside and have damaging effects by not living up to the outcome you set to achieve. Thinking in this manner boils down to you believing that nothing you do is any good. This leaves you feeling down and kills your motivation to see things through. Perfectionism is a mirage and does not exist. Being perfect is something beyond your reach or anyone else’s scope. The answer is to train yourself to relax, do the best you can, and try not to make everything perfect.

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Perfection won't happen. Assure yourself by knowing you have done your best, and no one else's opinion of your accomplishment matters. Only your opinion matters.

Remember that for some people's goals, perfectionism is necessary. Think of the people who make parts for airplanes, or brakes for automobiles. Think of the parents who have a duty to protect their children from harm. These folks have to ensure that there is a level of "perfect" in the jobs they must do.

Some goals require extra time and effort for a payoff that rewards yourself and others. Then there are other goals that are less-well-defined and as long as they get done, all is well.

Here's a simple chart to consider the levels of striving in terms of short-term goals. Also, what is the primary goal that is baked into the success of any endeavor? I think it is efficiency. Do you know how to strive for efficiency when making progress on a goal? Keep to the goal! Don't succumb to distractions!

For example, let me take you back to the goal of saving \$1,000 in three months. As you're working towards that goal, you happen to receive some unexpected cash as a refund from a utility company. Do you use that cash to buy a new shirt, or do you use that cash to add to your accumulated savings? What is the most efficient choice? Some will say to put the unexpected money towards the savings goal. Some will say to keep on the track of saving on the plan and use the money to replace the shirt with a hole in it.

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