McCombs Career Webinar

Thursday, February 13
Accomplishing more *without* Adding Stress

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Productivity without Stress

Feeling Stressed?

Are you tired of working so hard but feel you have too much to do?

The good news is...you are not alone and you can be productive with less stress.
Stress

When we add goals, we tend to add stress.

- When we are stressed, we are not productive
  - Procrastination
  - Overwhelm
  - Physical Exhaustion
  - Distractions

- Being stressed out is costly
  - Mental confusion/overwhelm
  - Physical exhaustion
  - Quality of life and relationships
Stress, Creativity and Productivity

- **Stress**
  - Stress and the experience of stress
  - Too many ideas, too little time
- **Good stress vs. bad stress**
  - Lack of good stress = boredom
  - Too much bad stress = stress effects

Initially feeling stress is a positive response that enables us to complete tasks quickly and efficiently. Stress build-up, however, takes its toll on our physical body and can cause discomfort.
Stress, Creativity and Productivity

- Creativity as a natural state
  - Humans are naturally creative
  - Positive experiences

- Creativity and Productivity
  - Working in “the zone”
  - Focused, concentrated state

How we view what’s happening in our life plays a big part in how we react both emotionally and physically. Stress is a filter that makes us feel overwhelmed or out of control.
Creativity and Productivity

- Ways to have creativity in life
  - In daily work
  - Hobbies, interests, etc.

- Creativity vs. Productivity
  - Myth that creative projects are something you do when retire
  - Belief that mental exhaustion and physical exhaustion are a sign of being productive

What if you could get everything taken care of without adding stress?
Achieving with Ease

In the book *Getting Things Done*, David Allen says it is impossible for a person to have an overwhelming number of things to do and still function productively with a clear head and a positive sense of relaxed control.

In my experience, the biggest mistakes people make when trying to accomplish goals are:

- Holding their ‘to do’ list in their head
- Not having a compelling reason for achieving projects
- Misaligning energy with tasks
Reducing Stress By Letting Go

One way to feel a sense of control is to write out everything that’s in your head. This type of activity not only gives you clarity but lessens overwhelm.

- Holding it all in your head creates stress
  - We worry we will forget “to do” something
- Our conscious mind can only process +/- 7 things at a time

- Constant processing creates mental fatigue
- Repetitive loops play even when we are tired
Reducing Stress by Organizing Thoughts

Once all the information is out of your head, organizing the list items is a great way to note how many “projects” you are doing.

Tips for categorizing tasks:

- **Project Level**
  - Sequential steps
  - Common activity

- **Context(s)**
  - Place (home office, office, etc.)
  - Person (spouse, boss, etc.)
  - Tool (phone, computer, etc.)
Reducing Stress: Projects

The projects we tend to enjoy and get done with seemingly less effort are those aligned with our natural skills, capabilities and vision/purpose.

Projects that seem to be put on the back burner are often times less compelling or misaligned with our end goal.

Is your project compelling?
- What do you want?
- And when ____________ is achieved what do you get?
Once we know we want to do a project it’s easier to prioritize the next steps and commit time to it. Commitment is the secret to staying on track. Have you ever been committed to something so strongly nothing steered you from doing it?

How do you trust you are on track?

▪ There are many ways you can track your tasks and projects: paper, electronic, software
▪ The key is to have only one “system” in place. For example, have only one list not seven. Have only one spreadsheet, not three.
Once you have a “system” in place, performing regular reviews helps maintain and track the progress being made. You can trust that everything is being handled. As you get more of your basic tasks and smaller projects handled, more room naturally opens up for you to do more creative work.

Some examples of reviews:
- Weekly
- Quarterly
- Yearly/Vision
Using the Right Energy

Applying the right energy at the right time reduces stress and feels amazing! When you are tuned in, you know when you should/shouldn’t work on particular things.

- **High Energy**
  - Tasks/actions that require higher mental, physical and/or emotional engagement
    - Creative solutions
    - Interactions with others

- **Low Energy**
  - Tasks/actions that don’t require a lot of mental energy
    - Unconscious competence
    - Limited or no interaction with others
Conclusion

- We’ve covered a lot today! Playing with tasks and projects this way gives you relaxed control over the “doing” so downtime is enjoyable.
- Even more encouraging is the insight you get about what causes you stress. Einstein noticed you can’t solve a problem with the same thinking that created it.

People who have implemented this system normally find they:

- Tended to Procrastinate
- Had more stress than they realized
- Did more busy work than they thought
What’s Next?

If you are ready to leave stress behind and take control of your life, there are many ways to join our community:

- **Accomplishing More without Adding Stress**
  3 hour workshop on Feb 22\textsuperscript{nd}:
  
  [http://www.bizencenter.com/accomplishing_more.html](http://www.bizencenter.com/accomplishing_more.html)

- Weekly Productivity Calls every Monday
- Business Mindset Meetup (BizMindset) every third Tuesday evening
- Individual Sessions (procrastination, stress, overwhelm)

[www.bizencenter.com](http://www.bizencenter.com)
Thank You!

- The recording of today’s presentation, along with the PowerPoint slides, will be available on our Career Resources web page by early next week:

  http://www.mccombs.utexas.edu/Alumni/Career.aspx