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Employee Assistance Program

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5 Productivity Strategies

Everyone has a different rhythm, and what's effective for one person may not be for the next.

1.Prioritize professional and personal "non-negotiables".
Non-negotiables are the tasks that need to happen each day to meet essential professional and personal needs. At the start of each day, take a few minutes to identify your "non-negotiables" and then block time to achieve them. For example, if you're working on a major work assignment but frustrated by constant email distractions, turn off your email and block time to focus on a single key deliverable.
Personal non-negotiables are just as important, and prioritizing these are critical to finding work-life balance. If you're a parent, this could mean structuring your workday so you can make your child's soccer game or share a family dinner at home. Determining daily negotiables also brings clarity to which tasks aren't as important but can feel urgent in the moment, making it easier to block time and focus on what really matters.

2.Stick to the same schedule.
Snoozing the alarm clock for 30 minutes and then running out of bed in a panic every morning starts your day on a chaotic tone. Some folks are naturally early risers and others find their peak productivity is mid-afternoon or early evening. Don't try to force yourself to become a morning person if it's never going to happen.

Instead, find the schedule that works for you and stick to it. It may feel best when I'm up early and have time to organize my morning. You may also find that if you fail to prioritize an early bedtime, you may wake up feeling foggy and sleep-deprived, which can throw off my whole day. Sticking to the same general schedule each day keeps your body on a consistent rhythm. Not only will you feel energized throughout the day, but you will also know when you'll be most effective at tasks that require analytic or creative thinking so you can prioritize your time accordingly.

3.Schedule time for personal "odds and ends".
At work, we're part of a team and this accountability structure holds us to deliverable deadlines– there's no hiding if you don't get the job done! At home, however, it's easy to let the little things slide. We put off opening mail, organizing bills, scheduling doctor appointments or updating shared calendars until these tasks reach a critical tipping point and consume an entire Sunday afternoon. A good strategy: set aside 15 minutes one day a week to knock out your personal "odds and ends." This keeps your to-do list from backing up and prevents personal distractions from creeping into your leisure time or spilling over into the office.

4.Find the productivity tool that works for you.
Whether you prefer digital solutions like Wunderlist, Evernote and Google Calendars or a tried-and-true day planner or desk calendar, find a solution that works for you. Sometimes the best productivity tools are the simplest. I experimented with several different tools before settling on Google Calendars since they let me stay in sync with my family's schedule. When choosing a tool, think about your big-picture needs and challenges. Do you frequently forget about smaller tasks? A built-in reminder system can help. Are you juggling multiple schedules for your family? A single shared Google calendar is a simple, free solution for keeping everyone's schedules in sync.

5.Set aside time to declutter. Just like scheduling personal "odds and ends", regular decluttering is a time management essential. Studies show that [visual clutter over-stimulates the brain](#), making it harder to focus. Even though you may feel like you're focused, visual clutter strains your brain's mental resources so you're actually less productive and take longer to complete simple tasks. A disorganized desk space or home office makes it harder to process information and make decisions. It might be helpful to set aside 15 mins. At the end of the day to tidy up your desk so that you start the next day with a sense of order. .