

Ban the busy



FOLLOW THIS SIMPLE ADVICE AND YOU'LL ELIMINATE THAT FEELING OF BEING OVERWHELMED IN FOUR EASY WAYS BY ALISON HILL.

In a world of 24/7 connectivity, the fight for your attention is real.

Couple this with a relentless change environment and the result is higher exhaustion levels and shorter fuses. Busy is the master and we're its faithful servants, turning up full pelt whenever it snaps its fingers. But this is a race with no winners — so it's time to go boss-like on your life.

The quickest way to cut through all the busyness and focus on what matters is to get forensic about where you're actually spending your time. Get curious about where your attention is drawn towards and what it's drawn away from. This will give you a clue about the current behaviours you want to defend and the behaviours that can be shifted.

TAKE ACTION

Take a moment to grab a piece of paper and write down the activities in your week that drain you. What are the things you

feel like you're dragging your heels on? Or what's the stuff that you keep putting off? Write down anything that comes to mind. It doesn't matter if it's having to wash the car versus having to call clients about a project. Whatever it is, as big or as small it is, write it down. The longer the list, the better.

Now review your list through the lens of three actions that will free up time and energy: sort out what you can mitigate, delegate or eliminate.

MITIGATE THE IMPACT

Mitigating tasks means reducing the impact of them. The reduction might be in the impact on your thinking or productivity, or on how you feel. Your focus isn't on stopping doing these tasks but on changing how you do them. For example, rather than have continual interruptions at work, set clear times when you're available. Or instead of having coffee catch-ups that go longer than you anticipated, catch up with a colleague over a walk-and-talk.

Look at your procrastination list and identify the tasks you have to do but could redesign how you do them so they are more engaging.

DELEGATE LIKE A BOSS

Defending your time and focusing on the actions that matter means you have to master the art of delegation. Delegating is hard because others will do the tasks differently from you — they may take longer, they may go down a different path, and they may make mistakes. But handing stuff over is a crucial skill. The people you hold in high regard — whatever their field of expertise — have all mastered it. Not only do they know how to delegate well, but they also have clarity about what to delegate and what tasks fall squarely in their lap.

Take some time to gain clarity about your greatest strengths and where you make the greatest contribution, and find ways to delegate the rest. If all you need to do is oversee the task or you

don't really need to be involved at all, find a way to delegate it — either internally at your work or through outsourcing the task.

ELIMINATE IT, STAT

You can cut some tasks and actions out altogether. Here are three categories to get you started on what you can eliminate:

Eliminate the goals you serially ignore. If you keep writing down certain goals but don't get around to doing them, put these goals to the values-test. Are they really important to you, but you're not getting any traction on them? Use the time you're freeing up to focus on them. If, on the other hand, they are fun but not really connected to the core of who you are, it's time to let them go.

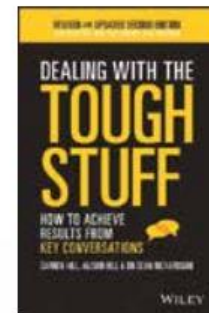
Eliminate any activities that are no longer serving you. Don't keep doing something just because it's the way it's always been done. Instead, get rid of it.

Eliminate people who drain you. Focus on spending time with people who are going to lift you up, who inspire you, and are going to be your champions to moving toward.

Return to your 'what drains you' list and put M for mitigate, D for delegate or E for eliminate against each one. Imagine the time and space you'd have to focus on the stuff that energises you if you were to mitigate, delegate or eliminate these things — because 'busy' doesn't have to be a part of your story. **PL**



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Alison Hill is a psychologist and co-founder of Pragmatic Thinking, a behaviour and motivation strategy company. She is also the bestselling co-author of Dealing with the Tough Stuff, and Stand Out: A Real World Guide to Get Clear, Find Purpose and Become the Boss of Busy (Wiley \$27.95). Check out the Stand Out Life podcast at alisonhill.com.au/standoutlife/

