

PERSPECTIVE: PART II

ENDLESS SUMMER

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(The following essay is adapted from Dr. Rollman’s June 2018 APS President’s Message.)

“Dost thou love life? Then do not squander time, for that’s the stuff life is made of.”

—Benjamin Franklin, Poor Richard’s Almanack, 1746.

Despite his lack of Internet access or maybe because of it, Benjamin Franklin accomplished much over his lifetime (1705-1790): He was an author, printer, political theorist, statesman, scientist, musician, inventor, civic activist, and one of America’s Founding Fathers. But was Franklin able to manage his time to accomplish all this?

To begin, I recommend reading Franklin’s classic essay “The Way to Wealth.” Summarizing 25 years of Poor Richard’s advice, the essay explores the classic themes of work ethic, frugality, and the search for a healthy life.

If you are fortunate, you will have “protected time” for research. However, you also have competing demands on your time including clinical, teaching, and “citizenship” duties (i.e., journal clubs, reviewing manuscripts, volunteering). When you add to these family and self-care responsibilities, it can be easy to feel burned-out.⁵

The following are concepts I use to achieve my professional goals and enjoy the rest of my life. I hope you may also find them useful:

- 1. Apply the 80/20 Rule.** The Pareto Principle states that 80% of results come from 20% of our efforts.⁴ Thus, focus on creative tasks only you can perform (e.g., identify new projects, write grants and manuscripts, deliver presentations, treat patients).
- 2. Create a prioritized “to-do” list every week.** Spend half or more of your time in the “Important-Not Urgent” Quadrant 2 of Stephen Covey’s Time Management Matrix.³
- 3. Focus.** Try to complete 2-3 Quadrant 2 tasks each week. Refer to your “to-do” list daily, especially when you feel you are slipping into Quadrant 4. Limit Web surfing and other procrastinations.¹
- 4. Preserve “blocks” of uninterrupted time.** Block 3-4 hour slots of your protected time for Quadrant 2

Covey’s Time Management Matrix

	URGENT	NOT URGENT
Important	Quadrant 1 Crises Pressing Problems Projects with Deadlines	Quadrant 2 Relationship Building Planning Recreation
Not Important	Quadrant 3 Interruptions Some Phone Calls Some Mail Some Reports	Quadrant 4 Busy Work Some Phone Calls Some Mail Time Wasters

activities that “drive your economic engine” (e.g., grants, papers, work on co-investigators’ projects that support your funded effort). Do not schedule meetings in those time slots.

- 5. Delegate.** Delegate “6T” tasks to preserve time for Quadrant 2 activities (Tiny, Tedious, Time-Consuming, Teachable, Terrible At, Time Sensitive).²
- 6. Write shorter emails.** Deans and chairs write terse, one-sentence emails. They don’t have time to craft long replies and neither do you. Stuck on a long message thread? Request a call or meeting in your reply.
- 7. Learn when to say “No” to requests for your time.** Do you need to attend that meeting, review another manuscript, or go on NIH study section the same cycle you are trying to submit your own grant application? Avoid becoming overcommitted. Learning to say “No” is a part of success.
- 8. Use “interstitial time” to handle non-urgent tasks.** Waiting for your computer to boot-up in the morn-

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ing? Is your 11 am appointment running late? Stuck on hold? Flight delayed? Clean your desk, update your to-do list, unsubscribe from newsletters. Catch up with professional reading, listen to podcasts for new ideas. Five minutes here, ten there... it adds up!

9. **Organize your work space.** Have two computer monitors to create slide presentations and write manuscripts, but avoid distractions on the second screen that might reduce your focus. Use your speakerphone to get work done on-hold. Turn-off email and social media alerts. Have a stapler, note pad, pens, clips, and trash can all within arms' reach.
10. **Educate yourself on teamwork and personnel issues.** Benjamin Franklin didn't accomplish everything by himself and neither will you. Learn to work through teams to accomplish goals. Empower your research coordinator, provide general directions, monitor progress, communicate daily, remove administrative hurdles, and provide the resources needed to move your projects forward.

Address HR issues early (e.g., hiring, promotion, disciplinary actions). Seek advice from senior colleagues and administrators on potential problems early and before they

become major time-consuming events (e.g., research misconduct by a disgruntled employee). Read books about great teamwork to improve your skills

11. **Hire help at home.** Maximize quality time with your family. If you and your partner have full-time careers, you will benefit from hiring someone to do basic cleaning, yard work, and a nanny for childcare tasks. To quote my oldest brother, "happy wife, happy life".
12. **"Sharpen the saw."** Time management is about living a more fulfilling life. We all like the golden eggs, but it's important to take care of the goose that lays them too! Use time saved at work to spend with friends, doing leisure activities, hobbies, and exercising. I watch Netflix on the elliptical at the gym to since I watch almost no television at home, listen to podcasts on long walks, and exercise while my kids are at soccer practice. I also schedule weekly "date nights" with my wife and children.

Founded in 1942, the American Psychosomatic Society is an international multidisciplinary academic society whose mission is "to advance and integrate the scientific study of biological, psychological, behavioral and social factors in health and dis-

ease." Learn more about the Society at <http://www.psychosomatic.org> and follow us at @connectAPS.

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