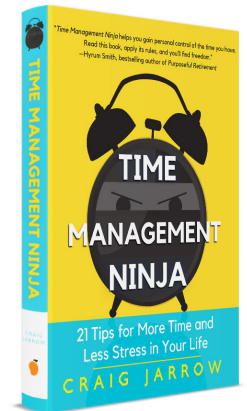


Time Management Ninja

21 Tips for More Time and Less Stress in Your Life

by **Craig Jarrow**



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THE SUMMARY IN BRIEF

In modern life, the world is filled with countless distractions and drains on our time and energy. Whether these come from external factors or our own bad habits, these distractions can leave us constantly feeling like there aren't enough hours in a day. But the truth is that there's plenty of time in the day where we struggle in organizing and optimizing the way we use that time.

Time Management Ninja teaches 21 essential principles for improving time management skills, covering everything from how to make time for what matters and the tools necessary to do it to making time for your passions and letting go of the things you can't change. In the end, you'll find yourself better equipped to take on whatever the day throws at you because you'll have planned and prepared for it all. That's the power of becoming a time management ninja.

IN THIS SUMMARY, YOU WILL LEARN:

- How to manage time more effectively to get more done and be happier doing it.
- How to prioritize tasks, stop procrastinating, and be productive instead of just busy.
- How to clean and declutter your life to make yourself happier and less distracted.
- How to accept the parts of your life you can't change so that you can live your life to the fullest.

Introduction

These days, our lives appear to be an endless marathon of busyness. It feels like there is never enough time to get to what's important, which means we have even less time to do what we actually enjoy.

But it's your time. You don't have to give it up and away. You don't have to let others steal it—you're in control. It's time to do something about the time crisis and the technology takeover. It's time to better manage your life. Inevitably, you will experience less stress as you begin to unplug from the endless stream of distractions.

Time Management Should Make Time, Not Take Time

When it comes to time management, the simplest solution is the best. Common sense and practical tools will make you more successful than a system that takes weeks to learn and years to implement. Managing your time should be quick, effortless, and efficient.

A good rule of thumb is, "If your time management requires a flow chart, it is too complicated." Are you really going to refer to a chart every time you are trying to get organized? It definitely shouldn't take you thirty minutes to prioritize and sort your to-do list into a matrix. A good set of necessary weapons, used with discipline, will beat a complicated system any day of the week.

Four Productivity Weapons You Need

Your productivity depends on four essential weapons. Making sure they're always readily available will help ensure that you're staying on top of your time management needs.

To-Do List

A to-do list is crucial for tracking your tasks and obligations. It helps you remember your tasks so that your mind is free to work on what is immediately in front of you.

Calendar

Your calendar should track your schedule and remind you when and where you need to be. While you're living in the now, your calendar can follow your appointments that are days, weeks, or even years in advance.

Address Book

Having contact information is so imperative for us to be

able to communicate with others and connect. Your address book captures those contact details so you'll have them at your fingertips at all times.

Notebook

A good notebook records your most important information. The idea is that you have one notebook to record your notes so that you're not writing things down in random places or on Post-It notes that can get easily misplaced.

Your To-Do List Should Be Your Best Friend

Your to-do list should track tasks so you can concentrate on your work. Keep one universal list and prioritize it to ensure you work on the most critical tasks first. Capture all tasks, whether big or small, as soon as they arise. Feel free to reorganize your list as necessary. You should also constantly ensure that your list is with you at all times.

The bottom line is that you want to keep your list close and let it fulfill its purpose—tracking all of your tasks. If it's not with you and readily available, you won't be able to capture those fleeting tasks as they pop up.

Make Appointments With Yourself And Your Work

For most people, their schedule is entirely filled with things they need to do for other people. To take back control of your time, you need to take control of your calendar. Always remember, it's your time first. Too often, individuals' calendars are merely lists of other people's priorities and work. Make sure you use your calendar to schedule for yourself and your priorities.

Write It Down Now, So You Don't Have to Remember It Later

Whether you use physical or digital means, taking notes is absolutely essential for keeping your thoughts and ideas organized and accessible. Many people make the incorrect assumption that if an idea is good enough or important enough, they'll just remember it. That's not the case.

Keeping a notebook, even a digital one, is essential. Taking notes also has the dual benefit of improving your own memory. By writing it down or typing it out, you actually increase your chances of remembering the information. And if not, it's still there in your record. Don't limit what you keep in your notebook—anything important has its place.

Planning Is Good, Preparing Is Better

It only takes a few minutes to come up with a plan that can save you hours later—and that's generally all the time it should take. Don't take an hour planning out the next two hours—spend just a few minutes outlining what the following day will look like. You're more likely to stick to that plan.

Once you have a plan—prepare. Preparing for what you know is ahead will help you hit the ground running when the time comes.

Be the Early Bird and Get a Head Start on the World

Being an early bird is a choice, and it's a skill that can be learned. Everyone makes excuses for sleeping in, but the truth is that all it takes is deciding to do it. You'll get better at it much faster than you think.

If you find yourself scrambling for time and battling distractions, you'll be amazed at what you can do while the rest of the world (and its distractions) are still asleep. However, being an early bird requires more than just waking up early. It requires you to have a routine and to be purposeful with your early hours, and also requires you to be smart about your sleep habits. You can't go to sleep at midnight each night and maintain an early bird pattern.

Do Tasks Until Done

This is a fairly simple concept, but it can be challenging in execution. It's human nature to try and multitask, or to avoid the mentally taxing job of actually finishing a task. But humans are actually quite poor at multitasking, and you'll get more done if you stay with a task until it's finished. Undone tasks can incur penalties and other life consequences and multitasking often leads to more work started at lesser quality.

Put It Away Now, and You'll Know Where It Is Later

Everyone with a rational brain knows that clutter doesn't happen all at once. It builds up, sometimes quickly, as a result of individual decisions. You decide not to put away a certain item. Then the next. Before you know it, your office, bedroom, or entire home is an array of items that are distracting and intruding on your ability to focus.

Putting things away when you're done with them, saves time looking for them later. Your possessions need to have

a place to call home, so you'll always know where to find them. In this role, containers can be a very effective way to store supplies, kits, and more.

The ABC Method of Cleaning

In the world of cleaning, the ABC method stands for 'Always Be Cleaning.' This might sound like misery for some, but hear us out. Always Be Cleaning simply means that you find small, fifteen-minute messes or decluttering tasks you can complete on a regular basis. This helps avoid having to clean-up ninety-minute monster messes. Tackle small jobs every day of the year and you'll never have to devote entire days or weeks to massive cleaning tasks.

One Extra Task a Day Keeps Procrastination Away

Designate one task each day that you have been avoiding or were probably going to push off. Do that one extra task today and give it utmost priority. Doing it earlier in your day will motivate you and prevent a more significant disruption of your activities. Follow this powerful nugget of wisdom and you'll finally be able to trim your task backlog, one task at a time. This means you can address tasks that may not be urgent now, but will become urgent if ignored.

Never Confuse Busy with Productive

Busyness doesn't necessarily mean you're actually getting things done. You can do less and still accomplish more when you focus on real priorities. Remember—haste doesn't produce results. Focusing priorities delivers real value and real results.

You Can't Finish If You Don't Start

It's vital to keep in mind that you'll never accomplish goals that you never begin. Someday never comes along unless you make it today. Talking about goals doesn't move them forward—your goals need deadlines, or else they'll remain just dreams. A small step forward each day is progress.

Realize You Are Stronger Than You Think

External factors don't determine your abilities or performance—your internal beliefs do. Only by exceeding limits set for yourself can you then set new and more rewarding ones. But to do that, you have to become comfortable leaving your comfort zone. Ask yourself which areas in your life have limits that need to be tested. Ask whether you're too comfortable with the current status quo, and whether that's left you feeling unsatisfied? Then, take action.

Know You Are What You Do Every Day

When we're procrastinating or avoiding our goals, we tell ourselves that one day doesn't matter. That's true—every day matters. Good habits, repeated day after day, build you up. Bad habits are self-destructive. Those habits are made a day at a time, and a routine ensures that you consistently practice your habits. You truly are defined by the things you do every day, for better and for worse. Make it for better.

Use Your Tech for Good, Not Evil

Technology can be a recipe for distraction or a tool for productivity and focus. Make sure it's the latter. Always remember that tech is for your convenience, not to make it easier for the world to pull you in a hundred different directions. Don't let gadgets run your life—turn off interruptions, beeps, and ringers when you're focusing. Prioritize people (and yourself) over your technology.

Make Choices or Life Will Make Them For You

The ability to make a choice is the greatest gift and a most precious right. If you don't make choices, the river of life will make them for you. Think about what you want and make choices that lead you in that direction. Don't wait for a perfect time—make those choices now. There's also never a perfect choice, so don't get paralyzed by the need to make perfect decisions and actions.

Passion Makes You More Productive

Research is clear—when you're doing things you truly care about, you're much more likely to be productive and focused. That doesn't just apply in the moment—when your free time is filled with enriching and engaging habits and

hobbies, you're more likely to be driven and focused during your work time. Carve out time for your hobbies and passions. It won't just make your life happier, it will make you more productive when you work.

Let It Be (You Can't Do It All)

Despite all of these productivity improvements you're set to make in your life, you'll still have to accept that certain things won't get done. Don't overcompensate by taking on others' responsibilities, and don't drop your tasks or pick up unneeded ones. Saying no sometimes will give you a renewed sense of self-worth.

Don't Create Your Own Life Friction

The world has plenty of its own stressors and slow-downs without you adding them yourself. Many problems aren't really problems, just tasks that need to be addressed. There are very few true emergencies in life, and many of the things you worry about can be safely ignored. Reduce unnecessary friction wherever you can, and unavoidable friction will seem more manageable.

Live Your Life Or You Won't Have One

What's the point of all this time you've saved yourself if you don't use it to live life to the fullest? Live in the present, note the past, and plan for the future. When you do save time, don't use that saved time to fill it with unnecessary tasks. Focus on what matters most, and you'll become a true time management ninja.



Craig Jarrow is the author of *Time Management Ninja* - the blog rated one of the top 3 “most influential in productivity today” by Biz 3.0. While widely accepted as one of the best business blogs for information on time management, productivity, technology, and goal-setting, Craig's conversational style coupled with his easily implemented tips make him a favorite for anyone who wants to “Win the battle against wasted time, disorganization, and all other things evil...”

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