

Planning the day makes the to-do list go away

By Mandy Kendall

Is failing to plan just planning to fail?

When I was growing up my mother was always writing lists. Lists for shopping, lists for things to do today, even lists of lists. I used to think she was a little obsessed with lists, but now I realize she was just a very good planner.



Mandy
Kendall

It always amazed me how much she could accomplish in a day. I've come to realize her lists were a big part of that success.

I'm getting better at lists, and now realize that if I don't plan out the day, then all of a sudden the day is over and I really haven't accomplished much.

There's a law that explains this. It's called Parkinson's Law and it says that, "Work expands to fill the time available for its completion." So, if you have all day to do a load of laundry and go to the post office then that's probably how long it will take to do those tasks. Conversely, think how much you can get done when there is a deadline at work or if it's the day before you go on vacation.

Planning can focus your mind and prioritize things to make the

best use of your time. Planning helps you assign time to a particular activity and highlights where you might need help in advance. Planning can stop you from waking up in the middle of the night worrying about all you have to do the next day and whether you can get it all done or not.

But how well do we plan? When planning a wedding, some people spend a year organizing that one day. But would you spend even one day organizing a whole year? Everyone seems to be talking about setting goals these days, but why should we?

You could think about not setting goals as like getting in boat, pulling up the sails but not putting the rudder in the water, or getting on a train without looking at its destination, and just hoping that the wind, or the train, will end up taking you where you want to go. Not the most effective way to guide your life, perhaps?

So here are a few *Qwik-e* (quick and easy) tips to help you plan:

- **Plan your day on paper:** spend 5 minutes, before you go to sleep, writing down the things you need to achieve the next day. Assign each task a time in which to complete it. (Also the list will be handy should you wake during the night having remembered something else you need to do.) Then during the day have a bit of fun and compete with the clock to see if you can do it more quickly than you thought.
- **Eat the frog:** Do your least preferred task first. There's an old saying, "If the first thing you do when you wake up in the morning is eat a live frog, then nothing worse can happen for the rest of the day." Brian Tracy, world renowned life coach, says that your "frog" should be the most difficult item on your things to do list, the one you're most likely to procrastinate on; because, if you eat that first, it'll give you energy and momentum for the rest of the day. But, if you don't, and let him sit there on the plate and stare at you

while you do a hundred unimportant things, it can drain your energy and you won't even know it.

- **Avoid time wasting activities:** We all know there are certain activities that should only take a few minutes but end up pulling us into a time wasting vortex. For example, if you must check email first thing in the morning give yourself an allotted time to answer the important ones and leave the rest until all your to do list is completed. Focus on the tasks that are going to help you have the most successful day first and leave those not so important tasks until the end of the day.

- **Plan for contingencies:** Add a little buffer time in your day for those unexpected things, like a delayed appointment. If your day goes smoothly, you will have a little spare time as an extra bonus.

- **Plan to play:** All work and no play makes us all dull and, frankly, not very happy people. Build in some time just for you, even if it's to walk the dog, chat with a friend or have a soak in the bath. If it's on your schedule, chances are there will be time for it.

- **Refocus during the day:** Review your list regularly throughout the day and see if you are on track. If not, then reprioritize and carry on. Manage the day, don't let it manage you.

- **Recap at the end of the day:** Before you write tomorrow's plan, see where you might improve your time management. If there are any tasks left undone decide if they need to be top priority tomorrow or if they didn't get done because they really weren't that important or didn't serve your best interests in the first place.

Until next time!

Mandy Kendall operates Health Connective in South Lake Tahoe.

If you have any questions, feel free to drop me an email at healthconnective@gmail.com, visit us on Facebook, or keep an eye out on Lake Tahoe News for regular Qwik-e tips on how to make healthy changes one Quick and Easy step at a time.