

One genetics and more about routines and habits.

[Art & Culture](#), [Artists](#)



One of the things I've lamented is how much of my life I've wasted living a life of obligation rather than a life of intention. If you don't plan your day, someone will plan it for you. Let me take it a step further.

.. if you don't write your life script, someone will write it for you. You will either choose your life, or you will live a life that is chosen and defined by others. Change your routines, change your life. People who manage to get a lot accomplished each day aren't superhuman; they've just grasped and implemented a few simple routines and habits. There is a lot of research that would suggest that the greatest performers have the greatest routines. What makes genius is less about genetics and more about routines and habits.

Having routines and rituals in your life provides a steady framework in which creative advances often transpire. They open up time and space for recovery and renewal. The sustaining power of routines and rituals comes from the reality that they protect and preserve their energy.

We must add routines to our (personal and professional) life, which reduces the amount of (limited) determination necessary in order to preserve a state of uninterrupted attention. As journalist Mason Currey, who researched and catalogued over many years the routines and habits of famous writers, thinkers, and creatives said: "There is a popular notion that artists work from inspiration – that there is some strike or bolt or bubbling up of creative mojo from who knows where...but I hope my work makes clear that waiting for inspiration to strike is a terrible, terrible plan. In fact, perhaps the single best piece of advice I can offer to anyone trying to do creative work is to ignore inspiration." I read recently that David Brooks, in a New York Times column on

the topic of crafting systems, habits and routines, summarized this more candidly: “ Great minds think like artists but work like accountants.

” Be your best, eliminate the rest Data and thought leaders of our day would say that the high-performers of our day go a step further. They let go of things that are working if they are NOT the best things. What that simply means is that they are able to let go of things that take up a lot of energy, time, and resources that may be good, and even profitable, but are keeping them from the best things. Even good things can be the enemy of the best things. The reality is that you probably won’t let go of old things and embrace the new, best things if you stay attached to what has been hijacking your energy. Consider a child who has to get rid of the tricycle if he wants to ride a two-wheeler.

Consider the snake that sheds its skin to make room for the new one. You can’t have both, the old and new, because beneath the old is a bright and glistening new, ready, and waiting. I’m reminded of the story of Steve Jobs, after coming back as CEO of Apple. During his time away, Microsoft had taken over the world. Apple barely had a pulse. But Steve Jobs comes back. He finds out that Apple had manufactured dozens of different Macintosh desktops, laptops, and servers in a dizzying collection of variations, as well as many other ancillary items, few of which made a profit. He keeps asking the same question over and over again, “ if I want to have my nephew buy something, which one does he buy?” Ultimately, Jobs axed more than 70 percent of Apple’s hardware and software products.

Jobs wiped the slate clean. Jobs brings all his senior leaders into a room after assessing the landscape of Apple. He goes up to a big white board and draws a two-by-two matrix. Four quadrants. Across the top he writes personal / professional, and across the side he writes desktop / portable. He proclaims that “ if it doesn’t fit into these quadrants, then we are going to cut it out.

” Focus on what you are going to be the best at, and eliminate the rest. Produce high-quality work Prolific writer Adam Grant uses the following equation that drives a law of productivity. High-Quality Work Produced = (Time Spent) x (Intensity of Focus) In essence, he groups his work into a focused and uninterrupted rhythm; where he maximizes his concentration and intensity when he works, and he capitalizes on the results he produces per unit of time spent working. The type of work generating the results you want in your life requires enhancing your performance by relentless focused work. As an aside, doing less shouldn’t be translated as being lazy. Don’t give in to a cultural pitfall that values personal sacrifice over personal productivity.

There’s a big difference between being productive and being busy. Instead of measuring the quantity of work you do, measure results in terms of the amount of time that yields the greatest return. Eliminate work for work’s sake. The deception of multitasking You can’t multitask.

We believe we can multitask. The most common ways that we multitask:

- Watching a football game while your kids are trying to talk with you
- Meeting with colleagues while responding to emails
- Being on a date

with your significant other and checking social media on your phone You can't multitask. Let me say it, again.

You cannot multitask. Neuroscience shows us that you're incapable of multitasking. Multitasking means you're doing more than one thing, and you're not.

What you're doing are one or two things with less efficiency than if you were doing one thing at a time. I'm not busy; it's just not a priority. Busy isn't busy. Busy is a lack of priority.

We can become addicted to busy. Busy is a DECISION. If you want to do something really badly, you MAKE the time. If you are saying you are too busy, see where your time is being allocated.

Are you too busy watching Netflix and binge-watching shows? Are you spending too much time putting around with frivolous stuff? Busy is many times a proxy for productivity. Without clear criteria or indicators of what it means to be productive, we associate busy with productivity. In other words, doing lots of stuff in a visible manner. Say "no" to many small things to say "yes" to a few big things. The barrier to a meaningful life is not a lack of commitment, but over-commitment. Just because you're busy doesn't mean you're doing the right things.

Just because you can do something does not mean you should do something. Conversely, you also need to not do the things everyone else is doing. Do the things that give you the highest return on investment of your time and energy. Energy is especially important to manage well. Your energy is

indiscriminate; it will be allocated wherever you put it. The reality is that energy is a finite resource that is rarely managed well. Some would say that your energy is your most precious commodity. Regardless of who you are, you have only a finite amount of it.

In reality, managing energy, not time, is the fundamental currency for high performers. Your performance is grounded in the management of your energy. People tend to do lots and lots of busywork to avoid the difficult and critical stuff. A better strategy is to do the difficult stuff right away and eliminate everything else. “Doing something unimportant well does not make it important, neither does the fact that it takes a long time.

“~ Tim Ferriss Chances are if you aren't doing something, it's not a priority. Be honest with yourself. Try this exercise: Next time you want to use the words “I'm too busy,” instead, insert the words “it's just not a priority.” The next time your son wants to play catch up with you, say, “Sorry, it's not a priority right now for me to play catch” or to your daughter the next time she asks for you to spend time with her, “Sorry honey, it's just not a priority right now.” See how that feels for a moment. See how your priorities quickly shift. Prioritize what is important.

Don't use busy as the default crutch in your life. Mary Jean Arian wrote, “Gift from a Hair Dryer,” and somehow, it kind of captures what a precious thing life is and to prioritize the people that are important to me: “Comb and dry. Comb and dry.

‘ Soon, I won’t be able to do this anymore,’ you say to yourself knowing that the little straight bob must inevitably yield to grown up coiffures and ugly curlers. What will she be like at 14? Where will her hair be blowing then—at 16 and 18? Do you suppose boys will love to watch her hair blow as you do now? And some of them will feel it on their faces. And one of them will marry her and her hair will be spread under the veil, and then, spread out on his pillow. “ And oh, you hate him a little and wonder where he is at this moment, whether he’ll be good to her. They will grow old together. And the gold-brown hair will be gray. And you will be gone.

And then, she will be gone—this very hair, that now your fingers smooth. And all the tears of the world swim for a second in your eyes as you snatch the plug out of the socket suddenly, and gather her into your arms, burying your face in the warm hair, as if you could seal this moment against all time.”?

Schedule your values. Prioritize what is most important to you. Good time management doesn’t mean you do more; it means you do more of what really matters most. The difference between the values you hold and the life you live equals, or matches, the frustration you experience. Identify and hold fast to your non-negotiables, which means they go on the calendar first.

Invest your best in what matters most.