

[IMAGE]

## The Power of Planning

By Editorial Staff

In our increasingly hectic world, a little planning can go a long way. Start your day without a plan and there's a good chance you'll accomplish far less than you want to; while likely adding to your mental To Do List with a bunch of stuff you could have avoided if you'd done things right the first time. Well, it's time to stress less, streamline more and get things done the easy way – all with the power of planning. Here are some planning tips to keep your day / week / month / year / *life* running smoothly:

*Step 1. Make a List (and Check It Twice):* Start the day without a clear plan of action and you'll wander aimlessly, accomplishing little and becoming increasingly frustrated. Make a daily list of responsibilities that are clear-cut, attainable and prioritized according to their importance. Cross off each task (in your head or on paper) as you complete it. You'll be amazed at how good you feel as task after task drops off the list as your day progresses.

*Step 2. Work Smarter, Not Harder:* It doesn't matter whether your To Do List has 20 items or two; if you don't tackle the list in intelligent fashion, you'll end up doing more damage than good. That means focusing not just on priorities (see step 1), but also how you can group tasks so you accomplish multiple responsibilities at once. Need to hit the grocery store on Fifth and Main? That's only two blocks from your son's 2:00 dentist appointment, and only five blocks from your daughter's ballet lesson at 3 p.m. See if you can take care of all three tasks one after the other, since they're all in the same general location / time frame.

calendar - Copyright © Stock Photo / Register Mark *Step 3. Don't Water the List:* Your daily list is The List – as soon as you alter it, add to it, etc., you're in trouble. Whenever possible, push new to-do's off to tomorrow's list, or at least do some quick rearranging so you're not overwhelmed on any given day. We all know things “come up,” usually when you least expect them – but think before blindly adding them to today's list.

*Step 4. Don't Be Afraid to Change:* If you find your list is consistently unmanageable, with each new day's list longer than the next; or if certain items never seem to make the list in the first place (even though they should), don't be afraid to rethink your priorities, responsibilities and life in general. Sometimes the best

part about planning is the discovery process – discovering how much you can accomplish; how much you can't; and what needs to change in your life to better enable you to get things done and still have time to enjoy yourself. Now *that's* the power of planning.

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