

PsyPAG Quarterly

## Tips on...To Do Lists

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Lists of “things to do” are common to almost all walks of life and are often a sign of good organizational skills. Here are some tips to keep on top of your day-to-day activities.

**Write it down:** Make sure your list of things to do is written down rather than a “mental list” as one or two of those things will be overlooked if you have a really busy day.

**Compile a ‘to do’ list the evening before:** Knowing exactly what you have to do when you go into work is a big help in terms of planning out your day. Preferably write it out just before you stop working for the day so that you have everything on paper.

**Keep on top of deadlines:** Make sure that you know the deadlines for each of the tasks that you have to do. This will help in prioritising what you have to do.

**Don’t confuse ‘urgent’ and ‘important’ tasks:** Know the difference between ‘urgent’ and ‘important’ tasks. Learning to say no to urgent but non-important tasks is critical to good time management. Focus on the tasks on which you will be measured and evaluated.

**Spread out enjoyable and hated tasks:** Make sure that you have tasks that you enjoy interspersed with the tasks you have to do but don’t particularly like. This will aid motivation and help you keep on top of things.

**Break it down:** For really big tasks (like writing a major report), break down the tasks into manageable chunks. For instance, a big report can be broken down into sections so make sure that each section is a separate item on your list.

**Limit the number of daily tasks:** Compile manageable lists that feature what you can reasonably achieve in the given time period. Constant lists of non-completed activities are de-motivating.

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***Tick off things as you do them:*** As you complete each task, tick them off the list. Seeing what you have achieved will give you a boost especially as the list gets smaller.

***Monitor the “not done” activities:*** We all have those activities on our lists that never seem to get done and appear on list after list. Ask yourself why the task is being avoided. This will help determine whether it really needs to be done in the first place – especially if it’s been on your ‘to do’ list for a few weeks.

***Treat time like money:*** In the same way that you plan out your finances to see what you can afford to do, imagine that your day-to-day constant tasks such as meetings and responding to e-mails and telephone calls are like standing orders or direct debits. This gives you an idea of how much time you have left to do other tasks.

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