

A few useful strategies – well it started as a few!

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(These are not thought out strategies – rather observations of what has worked in the past.)

Panic early enough to do something about it – make a plan and use it to monitor progress.

Do not leave things to the last minute - this saves preparation under pressure when mistakes are easily made and ensures that if you do need help then it is more likely to be available.

Prepare this evening for tomorrow – this saves preparation under pressure when mistakes are easily made and it interferes with other time-pressured tasks.

Trust other people to do the best they can – micro-management, backseat driving or looking over someone's shoulder waste time and tend to bring out the worst in people who think you don't trust them – and they are right.

Tidy up as you go – it's in your hand and very nearly as quick to put it away as to just drop it but saves you the time it takes to clear up later – also with washing up – do it as you go – it is quicker and easier than later when everything is dried on.

Clear up every evening – your desk, the house whatever. It is not necessary to put everything away, that takes too much time – but “clear the decks” for action next day so you know where everything is.

Have a recognised storage place for things and keep them there – it saves you time looking for them when you need them.

Negotiate and be happy with the agreement – do not seek to re-negotiate unless things change in a big way – it saves time constantly re-negotiating and arguing.

Make friends and use them gently – people like to be asked for help e.g. in child care – this can free valuable time. Build a support network.

Beware of procrastination and diversion – TV, browsing the internet, excessive “communication” chatter that goes nowhere.

If you have something to say it is your responsibility to make it heard – and for others to listen – and for both to confirm understanding by feedback. Clear communication saves time.

Be aware that your view of how things are is only one of 3 versions – yours, theirs and the actual situation. Shared understanding saves time arguing – also be aware that the understanding will never be perfect – so accept small differences in understanding rather than spending time arguing over them.

Develop a sense of urgency, when and how to use it, when not to. The energy released in a state of urgency can enable you to get things done many times faster than otherwise.

Learn to “read” the process quickly when you enter a situation so that you do not obstruct or get hurt and can contribute – ask – what is happening? Can I help? It saves time.

Kids are just kids – “loosing it” hurts everybody and wastes your time.

Keep the “big picture” in mind when detail gets in the way – so you don’t waste inappropriate time on the detail.

Look after yourself physically, emotionally and mentally – at all times, not just for ½ hr a week at the gym – every minute 24/7 – juggle time so you can take time for a walk or whatever when you need it. Learn how to “look after yourself” – this will be different for everyone. You can also slot it into your work or multi-task your self-care.

Multitask - planning one job while doing another, picking up toys when on the way to the toilet or just walking across the room to the TV etc.

Maintain clear work-spaces – this saves you time clearing away before you can do anything.

Arrange storage and work areas with least used and/or tallest items at the back, oriented ready to pick up. Most of us are right handed so work objects tend to go on the left and tools on the right. Just do things “naturally” if you put them away with the hand you use them with, then they will be easy to pick up with the same hand when you need them.

It can be helpful to “clear the underbrush” so you can see the main task more clearly – where time is very limited this may not be possible so deal with the main things and ignore the underbrush – it’s a question of what is appropriate based on experience. Underbrush is the simple small tasks that can easily and quickly be done – small successes early in a project help

to boost morale and clear distractions from the more difficult parts of a project. Remember Parito's 80/20 rule.

Keep a running "to do list" and prioritise.

Distinguish between:

Important + urgent

Important but not urgent

Not important but urgent

Not important + not urgent

Review frequently e.g. on the daily "to do list" otherwise a "not urgent but important" item can easily become urgent without you noticing and become a "panic" item or get missed completely.

Travelling in a group or convoy – the ones in front should maintain awareness of the ones behind so they can slow down/stop/wait for them to catch up if appropriate. The ones at the back can also block other people from passing and interfering with the group. Loose knit groups work in a more casual way but each individual still needs to maintain an awareness of all the others so as to provide support if required.

Learn empathy for mechanical and biological things. Push too hard on a scrubbing brush and you crush the bristles so it becomes nearly useless – they will work best under a limited pressure – similarly with most mechanical things and with people.

Learn about non-verbal communication – visual, physical, whatever – from the action of passively but obviously standing in line of sight to attract the attention of a busy person, to the gentle nudge or tap on the shoulder to say excuse me - from moving easily in a crowd to dancing, martial arts or sex.