

## ACTION PLAN

ADVICE FROM JEFF DAVIDSON, *At Your Best*  
ADVISOR AND AUTHOR OF *BREATHING SPACE*

### You are NOT a computer!

In general, computers are well-equipped to handle more than one task at a time. Human beings are not.

But chances are, in the last 24 hours you were working at a computer while answering a phone and opening mail and paying attention to someone who stuck their head in your office door. You were attempting to engage in what is known in computer lingo as "multi-tasking." Unlike the computer, you were probably doing a bad job of it.

Even if you don't work with a computer, you probably try multi-tasking every day—reading the paper, watching TV, eating breakfast and tying your kid's shoe. But the fact is, human beings work best when they handle one thing at a time. On some level, you're probably already aware of this—but when was the last time you actually practiced it?

Probably not recently. It's all too easy to fall into the trap that so much is expected of me, I have to double- and triple-up on activities. Now, it's appropriate and fitting at specific times to work more quickly than normal. It's a problem, however, when it becomes standard operating procedure.

Whether at the workplace or at home, attempting to multi-task ensures that you will miss your day, your week—and ultimately your life. I know people who are 40 years old who can't remember where their thirties went, and people who are 50 who can't remember where their forties went. Furthermore, diverting your attention into more than one activity is bound to result in far less than your best effort, and often leads to costly errors not to mention the mental and psychic toll you place on yourself.

Just for today, give yourself the benefit of working on one thing at a time. You may have to switch gears, such as when the boss comes in with an urgent project. But when you switch gears, switch them entirely: give your complete and undivided attention to the pressing issue at hand. All told, it's the most effective way to work—and the most satisfying.

## At Your BEST

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**SPACE AND TIME MANAGEMENT** Jeff Davidson, professional speaker, certified management consultant and author of *Breathing Space* and 17 other books.

**SELF-ESTEEM** Drs. Ron and Mary Hainick, Ph.D., President and Academic Vice-President, University of Santa Monica, on the Advisory Board of the National Council for Self-Esteem.

**STRESS** Dr. Paul Rosch, M.D., President of the American Institute of Stress.

**WORK & PERSONAL LIFE** Dr. Romeo Y. Magio, Ph.D., and Melissa Cookkind, R.H.A., president and executive vice-president of Initiatives, the Center for the Advancement of Work and Family Life—experts in assisting organizations and their employees to balance work and family life, address the issues of an aging workplace and manage workforce diversity.

Dr. Brenda Wade, Ph.D., expert in family stress and communications

Contributors: Sharon Stocker, Marian Wolbers, Janet Bregman-Taney

**PURPOSE:** To provide authoritative, useful, easy-to-understand information that will help our readers reduce stress, be more energetic and balance the demands of home and work.

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