



Creating the “Healthy To-Do List”

Most of us use some form of “to do” list, even if it is only a mental one. Often we become frustrated with our inability to accomplish every single item on the list. In fact, what we may be using is not a “to do” list at all. It may be a wish list, a fantasy list, perhaps an unattainable dream. Marshall Cook, time management expert and author, offers ten ways to create what he calls a “Healthy To-Do List.”

- **Don’t put too much on it.**
This isn’t a dream sheet you’re writing.
- **Put some air in it.**
Overestimate the amount of time it will take to complete a task. Don’t forget to factor in things like waiting in line, traffic delays, etc.
- **List possibilities, not imperatives.**
You are listing things you hope, want, and need to do, but you must maintain a frame of mind that acknowledges some things may not get done.
- **Don’t carve the list on stone tablets.**
Flexibility is the keyword here. Don’t worry about typing a list. I use 3x5 cards I stuff into my pocket. Find a format that works for you.
- **Order creatively.** Do the most important things first before you get to the trivial (though it’s sometimes much easier to do the trivial stuff). Every once in a while, for a change of pace, alternate from difficult to easy, long and short.

- **Break the boulders into pebbles (Or, eat the elephant one bite at a time).**
Make large tasks a series of smaller ones.
- **Schedule breaks, goofs, time-out time, and little rewards.**
Don't schedule rest and fun for last on your list. Mix it in with the hard stuff. Some people refer to this as "white space."
- **Schedule for long-range as well as short-range goals.**
Don't simply focus on what is urgent for today. Make time to work on what is important for your future as well.
- **Be ready to abandon the list.**
Don't allow your list to cause tunnel vision and miss opportunities that present themselves along the way.
- **You don't have to make a list at all.**
If it doesn't work, don't use it.