



10

THINGS
YOU CAN DO
RIGHT NOW

*to make your
days less frantic*

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A QUICK WORD ABOUT THESE TIPS

The following ten suggestions (+ one bonus tip!) are things that I have found to work **for me**. In a former life, I used them to create more time in the day for doing more STUFF! (That adage of “*if you want something done, give it to a busy person*” was never truer than for me.) Somewhere along the way I realised that what I REALLY wanted was more time to spend with my husband and children. Oh and I wanted more time for MYSELF!

So that’s what I use the time freed up by these tips for now: **quality time to spend on myself and my family**.

Naturally, not all of the following are going to work for, or be practical for you. But if you can put just two of them into action, that’s going to free up an extra hour or two in your week that you didn’t have before. How cool is that?! Two hours equates to reading the paper with a hot cup of coffee every day, or a great play in the park with your little one, or a relaxed dinner with your partner. These are all things we tend not to prioritise - but we should don’t you think?

1 ADHERE TO THE 1 MINUTE RULE

If something can be done in less than one minute, do it straight away. This covers things like filing a document, putting a plate in the dishwasher, putting the rubbish out, hanging up a shirt in the closet. This may not seem like it will save time in the long run, but if you’ve ever had to set aside an entire day to do six months worth of filing, you’ll be nodding your head here. Remember, that’s a day you could be spending outside enjoying the sunshine!

{This tip courtesy of “The Happiness Project” by Gretchen Rubin}

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DO A TEN MINUTE TIDY EACH NIGHT **2**

We've all been there. It's 10.30pm and you've been lying on the couch for the last two hours relaxing and watching tv. Now it's time for bed but you've just glanced at the kitchen and there is still stuff everywhere from dinner. You can't face doing a clean up now so you think to yourself "I'll take care of it in the morning". The problem with mornings is that they are already rushed and pressured. Having to do the dishes in the morning may mean you have to leave a morning job for when you come home in the afternoon. It might make you snappy at your kids or partner. Worse - when you come home in the afternoon, instead of being able to play outside with your kids for half an hour, you'll be doing that job you didn't do in the morning. Doing a five-ten minute tidy each night means you start each day with a clean slate. Priceless!

3 GET A FULL NIGHT'S SLEEP

I can hear all the parents with little kids rolling their eyes from here but the reality is, unless they are ill, there is no reason for a child older than 12 months to be waking in the night. Parents of young kids seem to think that sleep is a desire, not a need yet we all know that kids behave better and are happier when they get good sleep. Adults are happier, more tolerant and have a better quality of life when **THEY** get good sleep. When everyone in the house is sleeping well there is more time for playing and enjoying each other and less time spent being grouchy, snappy and having to discipline misbehaving kids.

How do you get better sleep? Make it a priority - do whatever you need to do (baby whisperers, adhering to a routine, making them sleep in their own beds) to get your kids to sleep through. Then you can focus on the things **YOU** need to do (go to bed earlier, relax properly before bedtime) to ensure you get a sound night's sleep.

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PUT YOUR CLOTHES OUT THE NIGHT BEFORE **4**

Going for a run in the morning? Going to the gym after work? Regardless of whether you work in an office or in your home, put out/pack ALL the clothes you need for the next day, the night before. Put your kids' clothes out too. This saves HEAPS of time in the morning and stops the frustration of having to locate your running shoes, or a pair of stockings, or remembering at the last moment that little Oliver needs his sports uniform today when you're pressured in the morning. Who knows, it might even **STOP your morning being pressured** and allow you to *gasp* read the paper, or eat breakfast at your leisure. Now wouldn't that be a great start to the day!



5 FOLD TOWELS & SOCKS STRAIGHT OFF THE LINE

Two things that make folding a chore are 1. Seeing a giant basket of clothes that requires your attention and 2. Seeing a giant basket of socks, all the same colour, that is going to take a solid hour and a great deal of mental distress to work through. Folding towels straight off the line is easy, and makes the final pile of laundry look much smaller. Folding socks off the line narrows down the pairing up options significantly and saves a heap of time. I even go so far as to hang socks in pairs to turbo charge the whole process!

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GO TO IKEA FOR DINNER 6

What's that? You don't have an IKEA near you? Well that's ok because this point isn't about being able to feed your family a meal for \$20, it's about having one night off with regard to dinner. Whether you go to McDonalds, or your parents' house or make Monday night 'pot luck' night (every man for himself), just have one night a week where you don't get in from work (this includes you stay-at-home-mums) and head straight for the kitchen. When we have IKEA night in our house, we have a totally chilled dinner at IKEA (yep, less than \$20 for our little family) and then when we get home, can all relax/play for half an hour before doing the whole bath/bottle/bedtime thing. When we go to our parents' house for dinner we get to chill out, read the paper and again, relax because the dinner part of the night has been taken care of. Hooray for parents!

7 GO FOR A 5 MINUTE WALK

Low on energy? Kids or clients driving you mad? Just. Can't. Concentrate? Go for a five minute walk outside. Fresh air will clear your head and just getting away from your desk or the house (ie changing your surroundings) will put a spring in your step and enable you to tackle your tasks with a bit more energy. This of course means they will get done faster.



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MAKE A LIST 8

Some people are list makers and some people aren't. If you are one of those people that aren't, then you probably find yourself being quite reactive or remembering something has to be done when you're in no position to do it. Making a list reduces stress and allows you to think less. It also means that you tackle a given job when it is convenient to you, not just when you happen to remember it. Lists make you more efficient and come with the extra bonus that being able to tick something off as 'done' has a feel good factor attached to it.



9 BE UNCONTACTABLE

Thanks to email and mobile phones, never has it been easier for people to get hold of us. Most people will agree that taking a one minute phone call means you lose five minutes of continuity on whatever task you were working on. Flicking your eyes over just one email has the same effect. Just one phone call and one email in an hour and you've lost 10 minutes of productive time, but no one gets only one email and/or phone call per hour. So this tip boils down to two things - turn off your phone and shut down your email program. Do this for one hour each day. If you're finding it hard to get your head around it, simply pretend that each day, you are going into a meeting for one hour. This should be one of the easiest ways to pick up time in your day!

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DON'T LET THE PERFECT BE THE ENEMY OF THE GOOD

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This is one of Gretchen Rubin's "Secrets of Adulthood" from her book *The Happiness Project*. Don't spend time making something 'perfect' when 'good enough' will do. I can hear all the perfectionists fainting at this thought but take it from a reformed perfectionist, 'good enough' will do the job 99% of the time. Save perfection for when it is really necessary (for example: while doing brain surgery) and use the (considerable) time you pick up to do something you enjoy. I don't think anyone on their deathbed has ever said "if I had my time again, I would spend more time scrubbing the grout in the bathroom".



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BONUS TIP!! LEARN TO SAY NO

Are your weekends always booked up before you even get to them? Are your days filled with play dates and afternoons spent ferrying kids from one sport to another? Do you feel obliged to say yes to every invite because opportunities to catch up with friends are rare? It's awfully hard to say the word 'no', but trust me it gets easier. For instance, our friends and family know we don't do stuff on weeknights. And we also think long and hard before agreeing to a weekend commitment. The more you say yes, the more you'll be expected to say yes. If you make it super clear how much you value family time or even 'you time', the more respectful people will be when you say no.