



Being Complete With Your Incompletions



David Allen

PRODUCTIVITY PRINCIPLE #33

You don't have to think about your stuff as much as you're afraid you might.

(Corollary to Principle #32 – You have to think about your stuff more than you think.)

(COMMENTARY)

A little bit of thinking about something (“What’s my intention? What’s my next action?”) creates relaxed focus and control. But most people resist thinking at all about many things, because their minds are so quick and sophisticated, they glance at the situation and freak themselves out with all the intricate details of what they’re afraid they’d have to think about, if they thought about it. So they don’t think about it at all. And it then has a piece of them, psychologically. Decide the outcome and the action step, put reminders of those somewhere your brain trusts you’ll see at the right time. And listen to your brain breathe easier. “Ahhhh... Done. For now.”

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

“BEING COMPLETE WITH YOUR INCOMPLETIONS”

In seminars I often show people all my projects (about sixty at this writing) and next actions to do about them (about 150) on the screen, and often someone will say, “How do you keep from being totally overwhelmed and discouraged when you constantly look at all those things to do?!” (Underneath they’re saying, “I don’t want to have to do that!”)

This probably stems from their innate desire (which we all have) for some internal peace, balance, and at-one-ness with their world and themselves. Reminding themselves of all the “open loops” of their life, all their “work,” seems to most people antithetical and disturbing to the tranquility of just Being.

But it’s not. As a matter of fact, it makes for a fuller expression of that harmony. You just need to be complete with your incompletions.

There is a paradox at play here, for sure. If you consciously capture, track, review and renegotiate all your commitments to yourself and others, they are, in a sense, done. There is no residue, no distraction, no pervasive angst from having attached your energies to unseen and unremembered agreements. You look at them all in the light of day (and the light of your conscious awareness) and say, “well, I previously said I would do this, and I still want to do it as soon as I can, but NOT AT THIS MOMENT.”

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QUOTES

"Making the simple complicated is commonplace; making the complicated simple, awesomely simple, that's creativity."
— Charles Mingus

TIP

Have walking meetings. [Email from a Swiss friend of ours, Marcel Bernet:] "A friend of mine, very successful jeweler in the Boston area, has so many meetings that he decided to convert some of them into walking meetings. I tried the idea in Zurich and I am delighted: your mind is open, you are less limited in opening or accepting new options. I still have to find the "perfect" route. For the walking one-on-one meetings I use your leather case [the Notetaker Wallet]: it's the smallest thing to carry along and to take a note in these meetings if needed (usually you can sum it up back at your desk)."

FOOD FOR THOUGHT (Continued from Pg.1)

The people who think my lists of things to accomplish are burdensome to look at have a lot of work they just don't want to look at. And what they resist, they're stuck with. I consistently come back to the awareness that I'm not my work, because I've objectified and reviewed it. I think they still have a hard time telling the difference.

Truly being "at one with the universe" frankly has very little to do with keeping lists or not, being productive or not, or even having a clear mind, balanced emotions, or vibrant body. If you're good at it, you can be "at one" with confusion, stress, the flu, and negative cash flow. You can surrender up the burdens and attachments of your life at any moment to that which you relate to as the higher power at work, and go free in consciousness. But if you ineffectively manage your incompletions, you'll probably be forced to transcend more negative experiences than you might like.

I don't teach how to be spiritual. I teach how to clear and manage focus so the energy you have is most efficiently used, to get what that energy can produce.

"The chains that bind us most closely are the ones we have broken." — Antonio Porchia

"A man is rich in proportion to the number of things which he can afford to let alone." — Henry David Thoreau