



are you living a 'life less frantic'?

We have become masters at packing activity into our daily lives. But no one can survive this frantic pace purely on adrenalin, no matter how exciting, challenging or stimulating is his or her life or career.

Mastery of time is an essential ingredient to achieving a sense of wellbeing and balance. If we do not learn to master time then inevitably, it masters us.

strategies to reclaim balance

What can we do about better managing our frantic lives? Here are some strategies to help:

The 'Focus' strategy

The 'Focus' Strategy relies on our ability to prioritise what's important in our lives. It follows three simple steps:

- Step 1** – define what's important – these are the longer-term ambitions and aspirations that drive our lives.
- Step 2** – prioritise what's important – setting priorities helps us to navigate the constant choices and changes we experience.
- Step 3** – action our priorities – make sure you change your behaviours to align with your priorities.

A well-known Buddhist teaching is this – if you want to fill a beaker with rocks and sand then it is best if you place the rocks in first. The rocks represent our priorities, or what's most important to us, and the sand represents everything else.

The 'Control' strategy

Many people think of stress as a loss of a sense of control over life's challenges. Coping is central to controlling the way we respond to life and there are five disciplines that can work very effectively to assist:

- Rule 1** – plan 'block-out' time in our day. Use this time to consider new challenges and issues (before they get out of control) and to plan our actions. Don't use this time as a reserve for others – it's our time, let's use it wisely.
- Rule 2** – control the 'incoming'. In wartime, 'incoming' often meant bombs; these days it means phone calls and emails. Limit their free flow to a level you control.
- Rule 3** – master one thing at a time. It's tempting to do several things at once but that's the trap of the frantic life.
- Rule 4** – find simple pleasures. Our lives have increasingly relied on 'retail therapy' and commercial stimulation for relaxation. Yet we are surrounded with life's simple pleasures that thankfully come at no price. Simple pleasures give us control and time to enjoy ourselves and escape from our complicated lives.
- Rule 5** – say 'no' more often. Don't overload your life just to please others. Map out your priorities for time and allow plenty of space in your days.

The 'Relaxation Response' Strategy

The well documented 'relaxation response' (see especially 'The Relaxation Response' by Dr. Herbert Benson of the Harvard Medical School) can help to clear away mental clutter and improve our ability to concentrate, so that our performance and skills in such areas as solving problems may improve.

continued on reverse...



The two components to perfecting the relaxation response are:

Deep breathing – practise breathing deeply using your diaphragm for 10 minutes twice a day. Slowly inhale and hold your breath for 30 seconds. Slowly exhale and relax. Repeat this procedure and stay focused on how your body responds. The deeper your concentration, the better the relaxation response.

Progressive Muscle Relaxation – lie on the floor, in a comfortable position and relax completely for one minute. Now tense all muscles in your head and neck and hold the tension for ten seconds, then gradually relax the tension until your head and neck are perfectly relaxed. Repeat this procedure once or twice for each major muscle group moving from head to feet. At the completion of the process, lie still and concentrate on the sense of relaxation of all muscles. This procedure re-trains your body to relax, over time, and reinforces the automated relaxation response you want, longer-term.

Whatever our strategy, the key is to secure our own sense of control over our time and convert to a 'life less frantic', a life with less stress and more meaning.

is money the cause of your stress?

If financial issues are a major stress in your life then it helps to unload them, get advice and regain control by making the right choices. Very often with money issues, we spiral out of control by making unwise choices simply to avoid the immediate pain we face. But that process of short-term decisions is counterproductive to building long-term wealth and peace of mind.

Good financial advice can make a major contribution to your ability to regain control of this key factor in your life.

For more information contact your financial adviser or visit www.ipac.com.au/lifedirections.