

VARIETY

# Quit procrastinating with these 7 tips for becoming a 'time realist'

Even if you put the pro in procrastination, you can learn to manage your time more efficiently.

By Jolie Kerr New York Times | OCTOBER 19, 2018 — 5:50PM

Julie Morgenstern, a productivity and time management expert, wasn't born organized. Chronically late, forever losing things, utterly disorganized, Morgenstern lived in a state of chaos.

Then, she had a child. She turned the lessons she learned from taking control of her time into a career as an adviser and coach. Now on her sixth book, "Time to Parent," Morgenstern has identified patterns that can help people understand and improve the way they approach time management.

According to Morgenstern, there are time realists and time optimists. Time realists look at a task and break it down. They're conscious of how long things take, and they factor that in to their plans for the day.

Time optimists are hopeful about things they would like to do. It leads to them to overstuff their days and become frustrated when their list of to-dos doesn't get completed.

Morgenstern believes time optimists can — and should — become time realists. Here's how:

**Pause before committing to anything.** Don't automatically say yes, no matter who is asking. Even if it is your boss, first ask yourself "How I can fit that in?" If, after calculating how long the task will take, considering what else you were going to do in that time against what you could take off your plate, you've decided you don't have enough time, try going back to your boss and saying, "I could do this, but I'd then have to postpone that. Which way do you want me to go?"

**Clean up your e-mail.** (If it's more than a month old, let it go.) If you have 16,942 unread e-mails, start by deleting any that are more than a month old. Then sort what's left by date, moving the most current ones to a separate folder. Set aside regular times in your day where you go to your e-mail: open it up and answer, delete or forward. If anything is going to take you more than five minutes to do, schedule that into your calendar.

**Limit yourself to four communication platforms.** (Yes, that includes Instagram.) Given the proliferation of communication channels — e-mail, text message, messaging on Facebook, Twitter or Instagram, phone calls — we need to learn to limit our use of them. "Time management is about managing your energy and brainpower for peak performance, and so you have to impart control over all this chaos," she said.

**End every day by planning the next day.** Looking ahead allows you to see in advance if you planned your calendar for the next few days well.

**Pick a calendar and stick to it.** Are you a paper or electronic calendar person? According to Morgenstern, if you can remember, "Oh, I wrote that three pages ago in the upper left corner," you're a visual-tactile learner who should use a paper planner. If you think more chronologically — for example if someone gave you a date like April 14, and you think, "Oh, that was a Wednesday" — you're more digital-technical oriented and should use an electronic calendar.



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**Integrate your to-do list and your calendar.** To be efficient, add work and personal obligations to the same calendar and integrate all your different planning systems into one.

**Reclaim your personal time.** Whether it's writing that novel, or crushing a fitness goal, or binge-watching all eight seasons of "Game of Thrones," reclaim your time. Our perception of time is that it's "this ethereal, relative, slippery, conceptual thing. It's not. It's 24-hour cycles, seven days a week. You have 168 hours to work with every week. You have to carve out the time if you really want balance."

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