

# AN ORGANIZING SYSTEM THAT FREES YOUR MIND

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How much do you have running around in your head right now? There are tasks to remember to do, projects to develop, things to worry about, and the future to anticipate. With so much shuffling around, fighting to gain prominence in your thoughts, how can you prioritize your day?

Marcus Aurelius, the Roman emperor and philosopher, claimed, "A man's life is what his thoughts make of it." That can be pretty scary, if you manage to actually find the time to reflect on the meaning.

One solution is to be sure that you always write down everything. It clears your mind, ensures that you will not overlook a task or deadline, and allows you to prioritize. However, do not create long ToDo lists. Instead write down one thing only on a sheet of paper, and file that in a Daily Action filing system according to the day or upcoming month when you might be able to get to it. It is okay if you have to move it to another day. At least it will not be forgotten, and it frees your mind to focus on the most important activities of the current day instead of keeping one part of your mind constantly trying to recollect all that you have to do after this day's work is completed.

At the end of each day, you can take out the next day's papers listing each of the activities you hope to work on, and you can prioritize the single sheets so that when you start your new day, you immediately know where to begin.

However, you do not always have a full sheet of paper handy. I recommend to my clients that they carry index cards with them at all times. These cards are both sturdier and less expensive than stick-on notes. Any time a thought comes into your head, jot it down on the index card. Remember, only record one item per card.

When you come into your office or home, take the cards out and drop them into your inbox or basket. At the time you process the latest stack of mail from your index, attach the card to a full sheet of paper. You do not want to waste extra time rewriting anything, and you also do not want the small card to be lost in a folder. That full sheet of paper is what gets placed in your Daily Action file.

I call these index cards my "No Brainer" cards. Nothing is ever overlooked because you have taken it out of your mind and placed it into an Action file. Your brain is freed to focus on current activities. Even if there is no specific date that something needs to be worked on, but it is something you want to recall sometime in the future, you can create a "Someday" file. That folder might include a new restaurant you want to try, a book to order in the future, ideas for a new marketing brochure....The key is that it is an item you do not want to forget, even if you cannot anticipate when you might have a chance to pursue the action.

Once you get the hang of carrying these index cards with you and writing everything down, you will find the stress of remembering things is gone. Try it. It's a "no brainer."