

# TIME MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES FOR MODERN LIFE SYNDROME

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Pay attention...focus...concentrate...prioritize... Easy to say but hard to do when so much is vying for your attention. What makes it so hard to master these basic concepts?

Have you ever stopped to consider how much is fighting for your attention? Just picture for a moment:

- Opening a website page --pop-up dialogs springing into view --boxes of ads and comments lining the sides of the pages --multiple colors screaming out at you
- Driving down the freeway --billboards, high and low, --radio ads interrupting the traffic report --your cellphone ringing
- Watching your favorite television show --Floating announcements advertising other shows - -Information strips scrolling weather updates and political announcements

All of that is before you get to the office. The frenetic pace continues as deadlines loom and you cope with constant interruptions. End results are often that you have to work late, bring work home with you, or come in early. You become tired and stressed, which makes it even more difficult to focus.

I read of one person who would leave the office and go sit in his car when he had papers he needed to absorb and make a decision on. It was simply impossible for him to concentrate in the office.

Almost everyone today is exhibiting symptoms similar to those relating to an ADD diagnosis. Whether you are suffering from Modern Life Syndrome or ADD, you need to employ processes that will limit distractions and increase your productivity. Strategies are similar:

1. **Prioritize** your work before you leave the office each evening. It will eliminate that 20-30 minutes of sorting through stacks before you get started the next day. The morning is most people's prime energy time, and you do not want to waste those blocks of time trying to decide where you should be focusing.
2. **Plan** a solid block of time with limited interruptions. Put this on your calendar so that you will stick to it. Use that time for your most important, focused work.
3. **Track what causes the interruptions.** Do this for two weeks so that you can begin to recognize patterns. Who interrupts you? How often? What times of day? Once you find the routines, you can begin to eliminate some of these distractions.
4. **Do not let email control your day.** It is too easy to become absorbed in your overflowing inbox and lose track of time. Set up specific blocks of time when you will focus on email alone.

If you do not stop now to make changes, the result can be a major overload because of constant stress. Stress is responsible for many of our illnesses, from colds and flu to heart conditions. When you are not willing to step back and make adjustments, you may wind up with a situation over which you no longer have any control. Wouldn't it be nicer to choose your priorities and be more productive in the process, before the ability to choose is taken away from you?