

# TIME MANAGEMENT TIP: SCHEDULE TIME FOR INTERRUPTION

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One of the most challenging situations people face when planning their day is how to stick to their schedule when they are constantly being interrupted. Just when your activities are organized, someone else's emergency seems to get in the way. A client has a crisis, co-workers are in a jam, your boss is breathing down your neck, a friend calls, or any of the dozens of other interruptions you face on any given day.

It is extremely simple and equally powerful - **Schedule Time for Interruption**. That's right, just as you would schedule a meeting with a customer or event with your boss, scheduling a specific time in your day for interruptions is a technique that our students nation wide continually tell us is one of the most powerful time management tips they have ever used.

How does this work? There are two components.

**First, as you are planning your day or week, allot a certain amount of time for the sole purpose of dealing with 'other people's emergencies.'** What normally happens when someone calls or comes running into your office with something that they need your immediate help with? You drop whatever you are in the middle of and rush to their attention. Not only is their issue something that may not be of any importance to you, but I recently heard that it takes most people around 20 minutes to return to the level of focus they had before being interrupted. Wonder where those 'lost hours' go each day? Rebounding from all your interruptions!

But we do not want to tell our clients, managers, and co-workers that we aren't there for them - So now you can have the best of both. You have a specific time predetermined in your day that you are available for 'scheduled interruptions.' Instead of denying the requests of others, you can simply plan a time that you will be able to help them.

**The second component is to stick to your schedule and communicate to others when you are available for them and when you are not.** If this seems unrealistic or impractical, that is because you have never tried it! In the long run, your boss will be impressed that you are getting more done, you will have more quality time to prevent most of your clients' crises, and your coworkers will learn that you are not at their beck and call.

A frequent question people ask is, "How much interruption time do I need to schedule and when should I schedule it?" That, of course, is going to vary from person to person, but as a general rule, I say as much as you need and when it is convenient for you. If you are the manager of a large group of people, you are going to have more people knocking on your door for help with their challenges than if you are just getting started with a company. Try out the amount you think will be adequate and you will quickly realize if it's the right amount for your needs. Most people find that right before or after lunch makes sense, as that is an easy breaking time in the middle of the day.