CFAR

TIME MANAGEMENT FOR RESEARCHERS

Monica Gandhi

Definition of the problem

- "Too much to do" described as single biggest stress by early career faculty[1]
- Of 21 workplace "stresses", 40% were time-related
  - Nearly 80% felt stressed by both lack of work-life balance and "too many time pressure"
  - Nearly 70% already concerned about burnout
- Specific concerns
  - Too much paperwork,
  - Not enough time for research and other academic pursuits
  - Lack of control over how time was spent.

Bellini LM. Stresses and workplace resources for academic junior faculty: track and gender comparisons. Acad Med 2001

Principles of the time management problem in early career faculty

- **New problem**: Medical training (for example) very structured and faculty position may be 1ˢᵗ time mentee managing their own time

- **Takes time to gain time**: Learning time management skills from workshop, book may help but takes time and mentor should not expect rapid change

- **Some people don't want to change**: Chaos may be way of life for some, and they can't change

Simply telling someone to be more efficient does not work – Susan Johnson MD, U. of Iowa.

Basic principles

- Our supply of time cannot be expanded,

- We do not have time to do everything in which we are interested

- Thus, how we choose to spend our time is critical to successfully accomplishing our goals.

First step in time management – saying "no"

- Early career faculty often get into trap of saying yes to everything (pause)
- Say "no" to
  - Chapter writing (peer review articles are a better use of time)
  - Joining a committee (that provides no direct career benefit)
  - Being an editor
  - Devoting excessive extra time to patient care activities
  - Collaborating on someone else's grant (when the research is not central to the junior person's focus).

How to say "no"

- Early career faculty find it difficult to say no to senior colleagues, don't know what is in their best interest, fearful of missing opportunities

- Provide a cover story – "My Division Chief won't let me do this"

- CFAR and research mentor should review your activities twice-yearly (IDP) and help take things "off the plate"

When to say yes

- Is it interesting?
- Is it meaningful?
- Is it aligned with the goals of my Department?
- Strategically aligned with my Division
- Will it help me grow, learn?
- Am I the only one or best one to do it?
- Is it worth doing and is it worth doing well? (don't do it if not worth it)
- Are there other things more important to you?

You need both productivity and well being

- Current academic structure demands
  - Constant email contact, no vacations, working long hours, little sleep

Myth: The best way to get more work done is to work longer hours.

- *No single myth is more destructive to employers and employees than this one. The reason is that we're not designed to operate like computers — at high speeds, continuously, for long periods of time.*

- *Instead, human beings are designed to pulse intermittently between spending and renewing energy. Great performers — and enlightened leaders — recognize that it's not the number of hours people work that determines the value they create, but rather the energy they bring to whatever hours they work."*

Schwartz, Tony. HBR Blog Network; Four Destructive Myths Most Companies Still Live By

What your mentor is hopefully modeling for you!

- Be explicit that faculty members will be evaluated based on the outcomes, not on "face time."
- Do they take vacations, nights off, weekends out of the communication loop and encourage others to do the same.
- Do they talk to you about what you do to relax and relieve stress.
- Long hours are sometimes the result of a workplace that is so filled with distractions that work requiring concentration - like writing - can't be done during normal hours. It is OK to close the door or go off site to do intensive work.
- You will burn out if don't refuel, less creativity

Time sink #1: Meetings

- Make sure the meeting is needed,
- Invite only the people who need to be there,
- Circulate an agenda in advance,
- Start and end on time,
- Stay on topic,
- Create explicit next steps at the end,
- Make sure it is clear who is responsible for each step or task, and
- Follow up to be sure these are done
- Send outlook invitations

Time sink #2: Getting email under control

- ☐ 1. **Turn off the notification announcing each email**
  - ☐ Distracts from task you are performing
  - ☐ Try to check email 3 times a day – beginning, middle, end. If need to more frequently, set timer to check every hour
  - ☐ Best practice from national experts, email can interrupt you 11x/15 minutes
- ☐ 2. **Put your contact information in automatic signature**
  - ☐ Encourage rapid phone calls to avoid confusing email chains
- ☐ 3. **Keep your inbox small**
  - ☐ Deal with and delete
  - ☐ Create 3 folders: "Waiting for" (waiting for reply), "Projects" and "Reference"

Getting email under control
 - continued

- Short emails, convey factual information

- Do not convey emotion or discuss political issues (Traceable and best done by phone, person)

- Make subject line informative (not "hi", but "Location of journal club changed to library", "are you available on xx date")

- Think carefully – do you need to "cc" that person?

Getting email under control - continued (priority management)

1. Complete at least one important task each day *before* you look at e-mail (finish the abstract)

2. Set a limit for the amount time you will spend on e-mail at a session – 10 minutes, 30 minutes, 2 hours. Do not get caught up in a never-ending session

3. Work through your messages one at a time, starting with either the most recent or the oldest– and NO SKIPPING!

Working through email

For each message, do one of the following:

1) delete

2) file (reference or a project file)

3) respond / do the requested task, or

4) defer to a later time (try to minimize deferred)

Priority management- don't let your emails become your priority

- **What's the most important thing to do this week?**
1. For today and for this week?
2. What time of day am I doing my best work?
3. Calendar it in and don't do anything else during that time
4. Usually set this calendar for week on M or F

Decide!

- Delete
- Save needed information
- File
- Move to Optional Reading folder
- Do / reply now (or move to "Waiting for")

~ 90% completed

- ## Defer to later
  - **Ask "Why?" until you come with a plan to deal with**

◢ Johnson OL Training

- 📬 Inbox
- 📝 Drafts
- 📩 Sent Items
- ▷ 🗑 **Deleted Items** (1)

- 📁 @ Optional reading
- ◢ 📁 @ Tickler file
  - 📁 2012.06.10 Professor Smith visit
  - 📁 2012.07.02 NIH Conference call
  - 📁 2012.07.06-09 EWIM Washington DC
- 📁 @ Waiting for
- ◢ 📁 @ Work in progress
  - 📁 Manuscript review due September 30
  - 📁 Paper - Hot flashes in men
  - 📁 Paper - Temperature regulation in the 6th decade
  - 📁 Secretarial hire
  - 📁 Syllabus revision for 2nd year student course
- 📁 @Archived email

Tracking work

① The things you habitually do without needing a written reminder

② **Calendar**

③ **Daily task plan**

Master Project List

All work that is currently in progress, or needs to be started soon.

Ideas for later list

Anything you are planning, or might considering doing, later – keep either on a **list**, or on the **calendar**

Rule 1
Keep *one* calendar that includes *all* your time commitments

Notes

Time grid

8

12

5

8

Rule 2

Use a calendar with a daily view option that includes both a time grid and a "note" section

Calendar

8
Conference call

12
MEETING

3

5

make dinner /spaghetti and meatballs
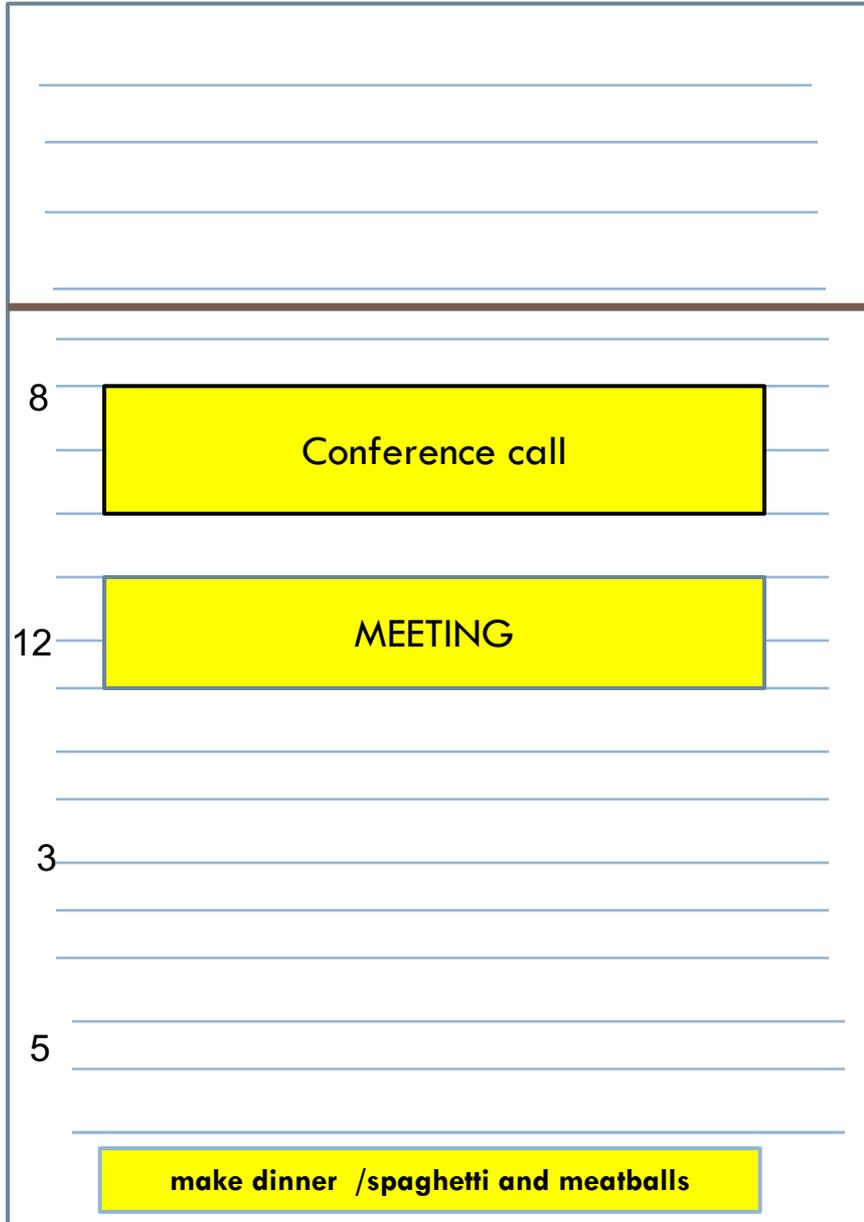
Time grid

❑ **Events – everything that you have agreed to "attend"**

Calendar

8	Conference call
	Travel between meetings
12	MEETING
3	
5	
	make dinner /spaghetti and meatballs
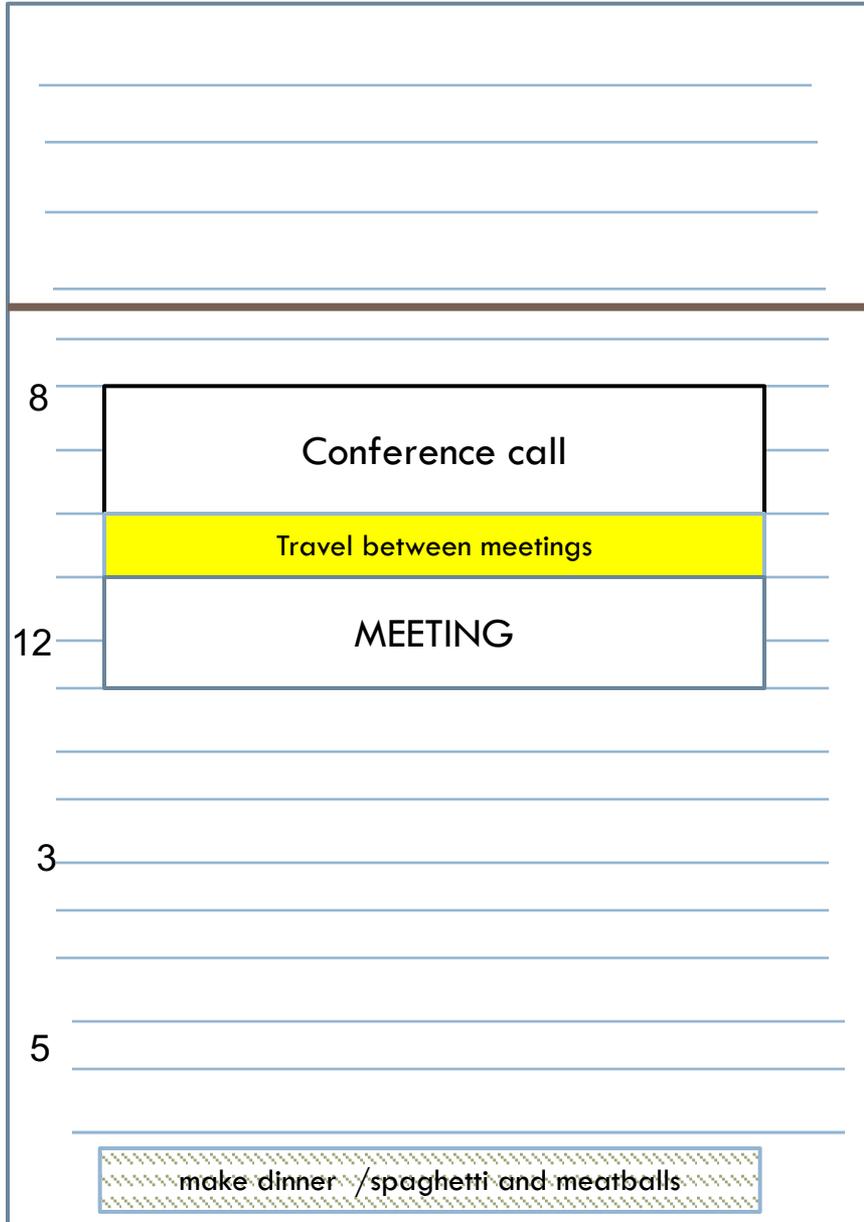
Time grid

❑ **Events**

❑ **Transition time**

Calendar

8

Conference call

Travel between meetings

MEETING

12

= call john re: tomorrow's meeting

3

5

= take meeting folder home

make dinner /spaghetti and meatballs
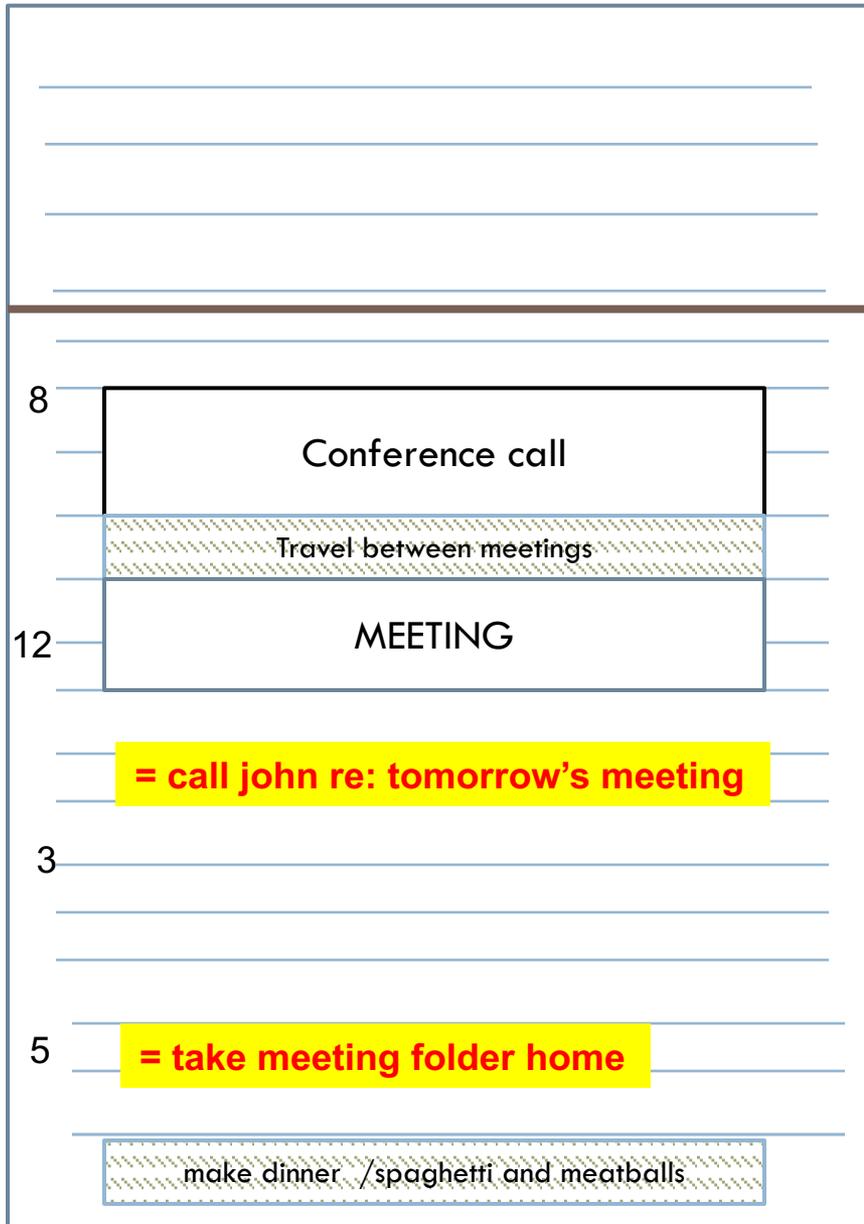
Time grid

❑ **Events**

❑ **Transition time**

❑ **Tasks that must be done at a specific time**

Calendar

8

Conference call

Travel between meetings

MEETING

12

= call john re: tomorrow's meeting

3

Work on first draft division budget

5

= Take meeting folder home

make dinner /spaghetti and meatballs
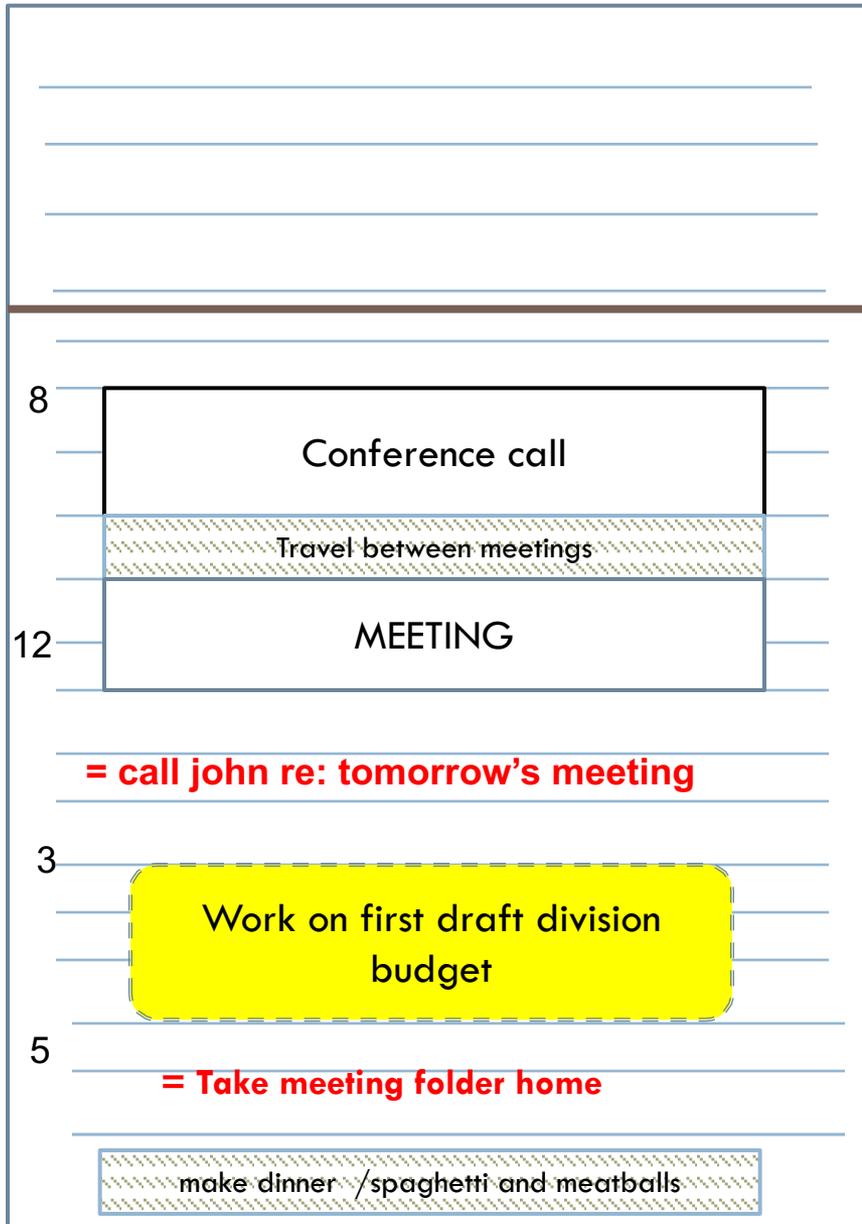
Time grid

- ❑ **Tasks that must be done at a specific time**
- ❑ **Events**
- ❑ **Transition time**
- ❑ **"Appointments with yourself"**

Calendar

Today: Pay visa bill

8

12

3

5

Notes

❑ **Tasks** that **must** be done sometime today

Calendar

Pay visa bill

WF Jane to email back

8

12

3

5

Notes

- [ ] **Tasks** that **must** be done sometime today

- [ ] **WF** people you are *waiting for* responses from today

Calendar

Pay visa bill

WF Jane to email back

DEADLINE paper submission due

8

12

3

5

Notes

- ❑ **Tasks** that **must** be done sometime today

- ❑ **WF** responses you are *waiting for* today

- ❑ **Deadlines**

Calendar

| Pay visa bill |
| WF Jane to email back |
| DEADLINE paper submission |
| Reminder   Submit time sheets   *(weekly)* |

8

12

3

5

Notes

❑ **Tasks** that **must** be done sometime today

❑ **WF** responses you are *waiting for* today

❑ **Deadlines**

❑ **Reminders**

(e.g. daily, weekly, monthly, annual, irregular)

Calendar

Pay visa bill

WF Jane to email back

DEADLINE paper submission

Reminder Submit time sheets *(weekly)*

8

Conference call

Travel between meetings

MEETING

12

= call john re: tomorrow's meeting

3

Work on first draft of division budget

5

= Take meeting folder home

make dinner /spaghetti and meatballs

The hard landscape:

When appointments and tasks are done, *you can go home!*

Master list

Personal

Research new bicycle choices for Harry, an narrow to two choices for his review

~~Send invitations to my family for Labor Day party,~~ *~~by mid-July~~*

… and so on

Work

Create draft of new evaluation system for team to reveiw

Hire new secretary II

Finalize budget for fall speaker program

… and so on

Features:

- All planned work*
- Both work and home
- Items described as results
- "Running" format

* Except calendared events and daily routine tasks

	Project	Goals	Actions	✓
	ROI	~~Submit STRAND paper~~ ~~Submit NPV TLC paper~~ VOICE abstract IAS Haberer analysis ~~IAVI paper~~ CPQA reports – LPV/r ~~SMARTT concept sheet revision~~ ~~JAIDS NVP Kenya revision~~ Start planning renewal	1. ~~Wait for Al's comments~~ 2. ~~Submit TFV STRAND paper~~ 3. ~~Edit NPV TLC paper from Yong~~ 4. ~~Await input on NVP TLC paper, Peter, Yong~~ 5. ~~Finish NVP TLC paper after Yong's input~~ 6. Write Thai longitudinal paper 7. ~~Analyze maternal hair PROMOTE data~~ 8. Analyze Haberer data 9. CROI 2016 poster- iPrEX OLE 10. iPrEX OLE paper 11. ~~Send in CPQA 2nd revision - TFV~~ 12. ~~Revise and send in NVP CPQA – 1st draft~~ 13. ~~Write progress report~~ 14. ~~SMARTT concept sheet (address site support; power calculations; clarification of duration of exposure studied in hair and covariates analysis)~~	✓
	Clinic director	Customer service campaign for 2016 Staffing	1. ~~PHAST RN interviews~~ 2. ~~Plan December provider meeting~~ 3. ~~Draft 2016 provider meetings~~ 4. Business plans 2016 5. Plan fellows for 2017	✓
	CoE book project	Gere chapter Materowska chapter Cohen chapter Estes chapter Perlman chapter	1. ~~Revise Maternowski and send on~~ 2. Revise Gupta 3. Revise Perlman	✓
	Mentoring grant (R24) with Mallory	~~Write paper with Mallory on first mentoring meeting~~ Move forward work on Peru and Africa papers ~~Write 2nd mentoring meeting paper~~	1. ~~Write David by July 12~~ 2. ~~Talk to David July 12~~ 3. ~~Edit methods/results section next~~ 4. ~~Submit paper~~ 5. ~~Write results/ discussion of SF meeting~~ 6. Draft international mentoring paper 7. Plan South Africa meeting 8. Meet Mallory to start R24 planning	✓
	Talks	~~ID boot camp~~	1. ~~HIV talk for ID boot camp~~	✓
		~~HIV MMA~~	2. ~~Meningitis talk for ID boot camp~~ 3. ~~Single pill combination talk~~ 4. ~~Epi talk for MMA~~ 5. Clinic talk January 7 – etravirine 6. GHS MS talks 1/4/16	
	Cait (mentee)	~~BIRCWH grant~~ ~~Faculty pay plan~~ K23 grant	1. IAS abstract – VOICE 2. K23 planning	
	Personal	Health	1. ~~Submit receipts for Africa meeting~~ 2. Do labs 3. Go to dentist 4. Children vaccinations	✓

R24 plan	ROI	BIRCWH	CoE Book	Clinic	HIV T32 help	Papers	Mentoring meeting	R21	CFAR	Talks	Personal

Getting started with a master list

- Record what is on your mind:
    - What do I need to finish this week?
    - What do I need to finish in the next month or so?
    - What do I need to finish by 3 to 6 months from now?

- Add what is already in your system:
    - Add items from any existing to-do lists
    - Go through your calendar for the next few months

- List each of your areas of responsibility (i.e. "hats") and ask for each, what do I need to do for this "hat"
    - "Hat" Examples: Parent, Partner, Runner, PTA President, Residency Director, Clinician, Division Director, Grant PI

Refining process

For each item:

1. **Is this something I am committed to do?**
2. **Is this the right time to do it?**

List Destination		1st - Committed?		
		Yes	Maybe	Never
2nd - Now?	Yes	Master List	-	Delete!
	No	Ideas for later/ create reminder	Ideas for later	

Paper / document based options

Paper	Document file
Legal pad	**Word document**
3-ring binder	Excel spreadsheet
Index cards	Plain text file
Post its ™ stuck in a single location	

Sample list manager programs /apps

Free, any OS	any OS / web based	iOS only
Remember the Milk	Outlook Tasks	OmniFocus ($$)
Toodledo (premium version $)	Doit.im ($)	Things ($$)
Wunderlist	Nirvana ($)	Reminders

… and numerous others

Questions?