



# TIME MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES FOR ACADEMICIANS

Monica Gandhi MD, MPH  
Professor of Medicine, UCSF



www.LibensonDiaries.com

It's really helped my time management.



# Definition of the problem

- “Too much to do” described as single biggest stress by **early career faculty**<sup>1</sup>
- 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.

# Principles of the time management problem in early career faculty

- **New problem:** Medical training very structured and faculty position, fellowship or post-doc may be 1<sup>st</sup> time mentee is managing their own time
- **Takes time to gain time:** Learning time management skills from workshop, book may help but takes time to learn
- **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.



# Mentor Development Program Management Matrix

		Urgent	Not urgent
Important	<p>(MANAGE)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Crisis</li> <li>▪ Medical emergencies</li> <li>▪ Pressing problems</li> <li>▪ Deadline-driven projects</li> <li>▪ Last-minute preparations for scheduled activities</li> </ul>	<p>(FOCUS)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Preparation/planning</li> <li>▪ Prevention</li> <li>▪ Values clarification</li> <li>▪ Exercise</li> <li>▪ Relationship-building</li> <li>▪ True recreation/relaxation</li> </ul>	
	<p>Quadrant of Necessity</p>	<p>Quadrant of Quality &amp; Personal Leadership</p>	
Not important	<p>(AVOID)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Interruptions, some calls</li> <li>▪ Some mail &amp; reports</li> <li>▪ Some meetings</li> <li>▪ Many "pressing" matters</li> <li>▪ Many popular activities</li> </ul>	<p>(AVOID)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Trivia, busywork</li> <li>▪ Junk mail</li> <li>▪ Some phone messages/email</li> <li>▪ Time wasters</li> <li>▪ Escape activities</li> <li>▪ Viewing mindless TV shows</li> </ul>	
	<p>Quadrant of Deception</p>	<p>Quadrant of Waste</p>	

# Examples for Each?

## Exercise

What % of time do you spend in each Quadrant?

	Urgent	Not Urgent
Important	<b>Quadrant I</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Crises</li><li>• Pressing problems</li><li>• Deadline-driven projects, meetings, reports</li></ul>	<b>Quadrant II</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Preparation</li><li>• Prevention</li><li>• Planning</li><li>• Relationship building</li><li>• Re-creation</li><li>• Values clarification</li></ul>
Not Important	<b>Quadrant III</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Needless interruptions</li><li>• Unnecessary reports</li><li>• Unimportant meetings, phone calls, mail, e-mail</li><li>• Other people's minor issues</li></ul>	<b>Quadrant IV</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Trivia, busywork</li><li>• Irrelevant phone calls, mail, e-mail</li><li>• Time-wasters</li><li>• "Escape" activities</li><li>• Excessive TV, Internet, relaxation</li></ul>

% of time in part depends on your job...

# Ideal proportioning of time

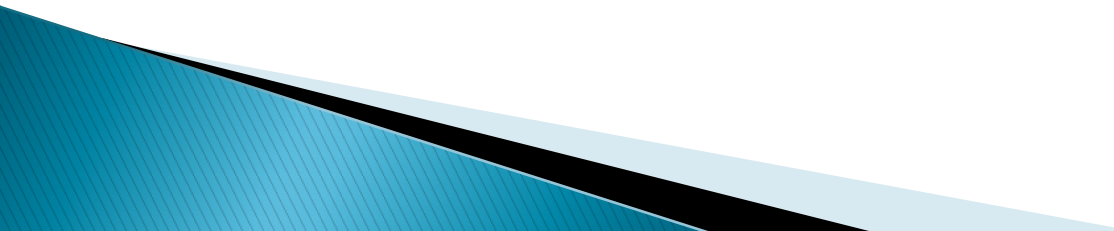
	Urgent	Not Urgent
Important	<b>20-25%</b> 25-30%	<b>65-80%</b> 15%
Not Important	<b>15%</b> 50-60%	<b>Less than 1%</b> 2-3%

Quadrant 2 =  
most  
effective

Other  
quadrants=  
diminished  
ability to  
deliver on  
what's most  
important



# Strategies to Shift Focus and Time

- ▶ Need to shift our time to what is important but not necessarily urgent – Quadrant #2
  - ▶ Key Techniques:
    - 1) Managing ourselves
    - 2) Managing our workloads
    - 3) Managing meetings
    - 4) Managing Emails
- 

# 1) Managing Yourself

- ▶ Set aside time to strategically review priorities and accomplishments
- ▶ Work during your most productive times
- ▶ Don't do other people's work
- ▶ Watch tendency for perfection
- ▶ Learn to Say "No"



# Managing Yourself: Don't Multitask

- ▶ “Neurologically impossible to pay attention to two cognitively demanding things at once”
- ▶ Really you’re just shifting attention in rapid succession from one task to the other, causing both to suffer
- ▶ Resource: *Driven to Distraction at Work: How to focus and be more productive*  
Dr. Hallowell author



## 2) Managing Workload – “3Ds”

Drop, Defer, Delegate

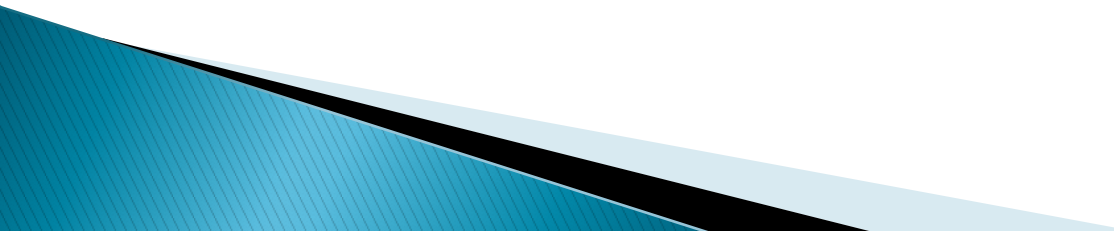
- ▶ What can I DROP?
  - Reports that are no longer required or necessary
  - Meetings that I don't need to attend
  - Reading that is nice to do but not essential
  - Involvement in committees
  - Chapters

# 3) Managing Meetings



Two key things: Is this meeting necessary?  
If so, how to run it effectively?

# Is this meeting Essential?

- ▶ Non-essential, under your control
  - ▶ Essential, under your control
  - ▶ Essential, not under your control
  - ▶ Non-essential, not under your control
- 

# Effective management of 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.

# 4) Managing email

- 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
- 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”)
- Think carefully – do you need to “cc” that person?
- Unsubscribe - [Unrollme.com](http://Unrollme.com)
- Create drafts as a reminder of what to do
- Try Boomerang – send later

# Getting email under control

## - continued



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:

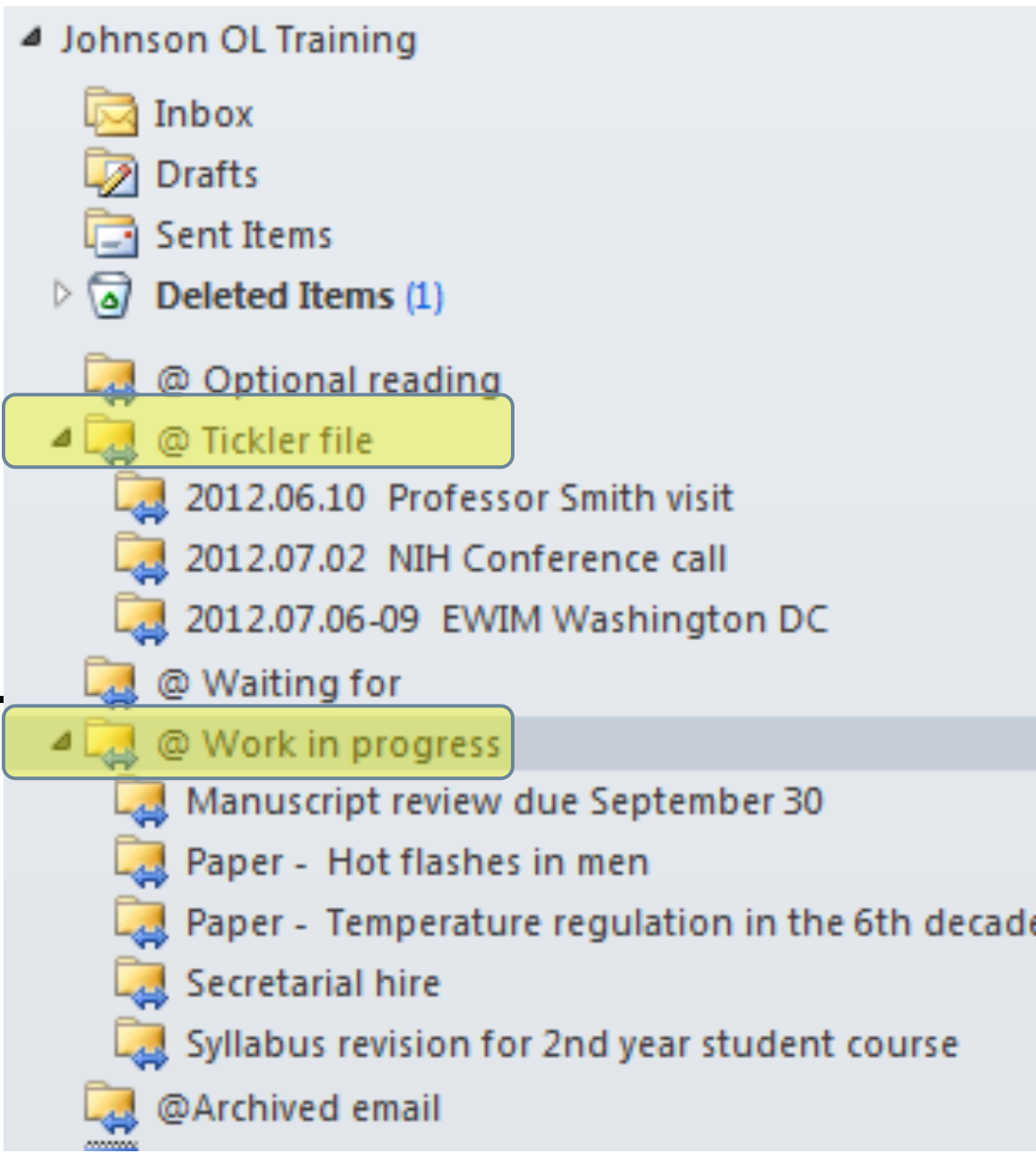
- 1) delete
- 2) file (reference or a project file)
- 3) respond / do the requested task, or
- 4) defer to a later time (**try to minimize deferred**)

# 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



# Essential step in time management – saying “no”

- Mentees often get into trap of saying yes to everything
- We can mentor to say “no” to
  - ▣ **Chapter writing** (peer review articles are a better use of time)
  - ▣ Joining a **committee** (that provides no direct career benefit)
  - ▣ Devoting excessive extra time to **patient care** activities (ouch, sorry)
  - ▣ Collaborating on **someone else's grant** (when the research is not central to mentee focus).

A large, bold, red 3D-style text graphic of the word "NO" is positioned on the right side of the slide. The letters are thick and have a slight shadow beneath them, giving them a three-dimensional appearance. The background behind the text is a light blue gradient.

# NO

## How to say no

- Mentees find it difficult to say no to senior colleagues, don't know what is in your best interest, fearful of missing opportunities
- You (as research mentor) and career mentor can be a sounding board to offer advice for each new activity
- Help provide a cover story – “My Division Chief won't let me do this”
- Review mentee activities twice-yearly (**IDP**) and help take things “off the plate”

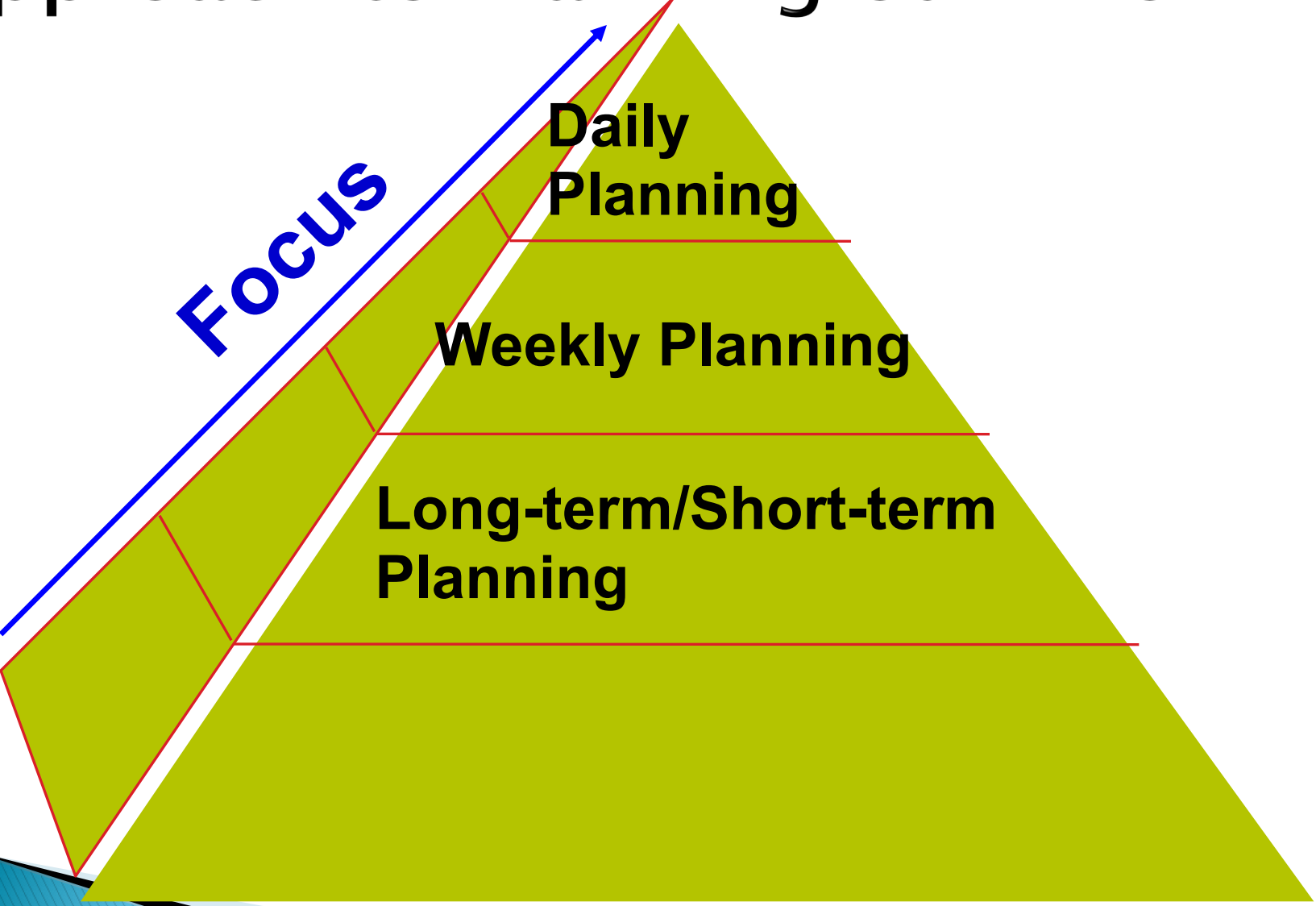
# Mentor should **HOPEFULLY** help create a work environment that promotes both productivity and well being

- 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.***

# Approach to Planning our Work





# Tracking work

## TODAY

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

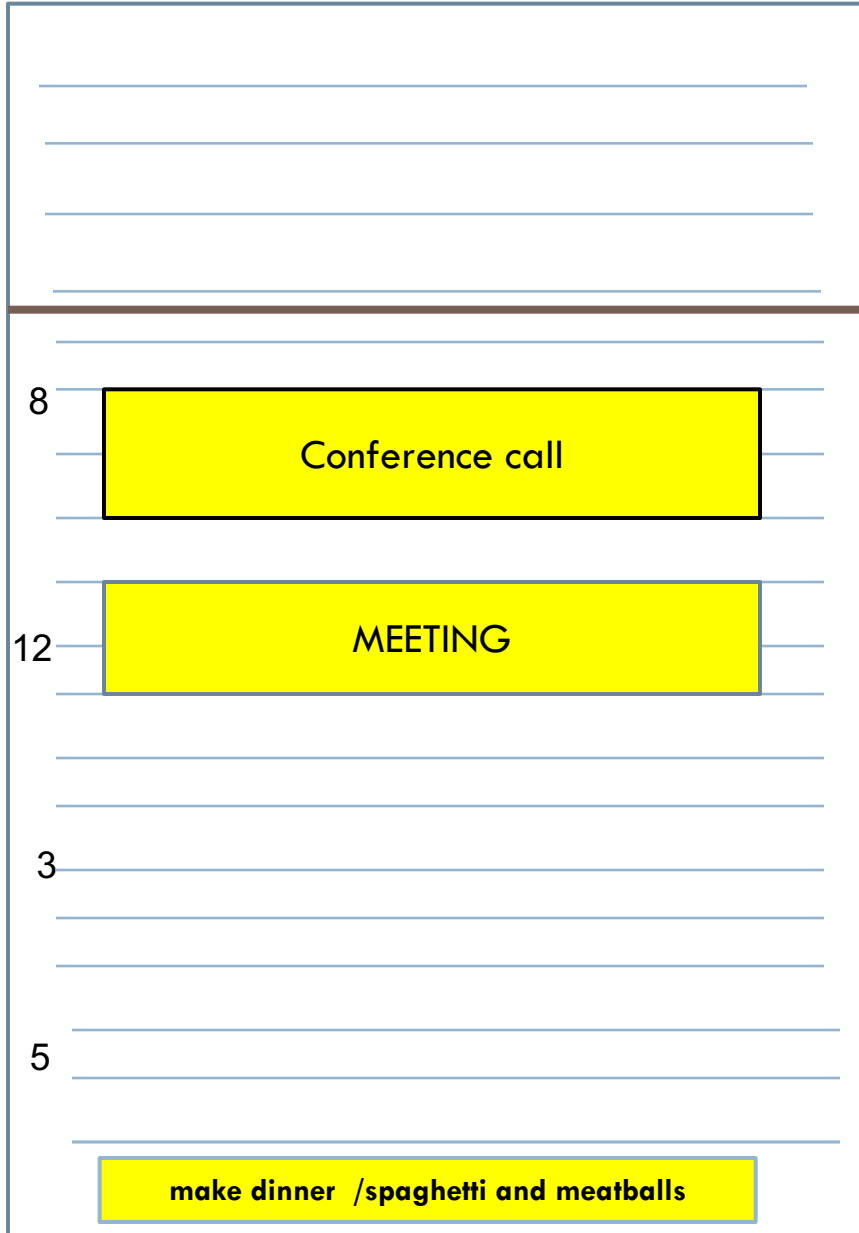
5

8

## Rule 2

**Use a calendar with a daily view option that includes both a time grid and a “note” section**

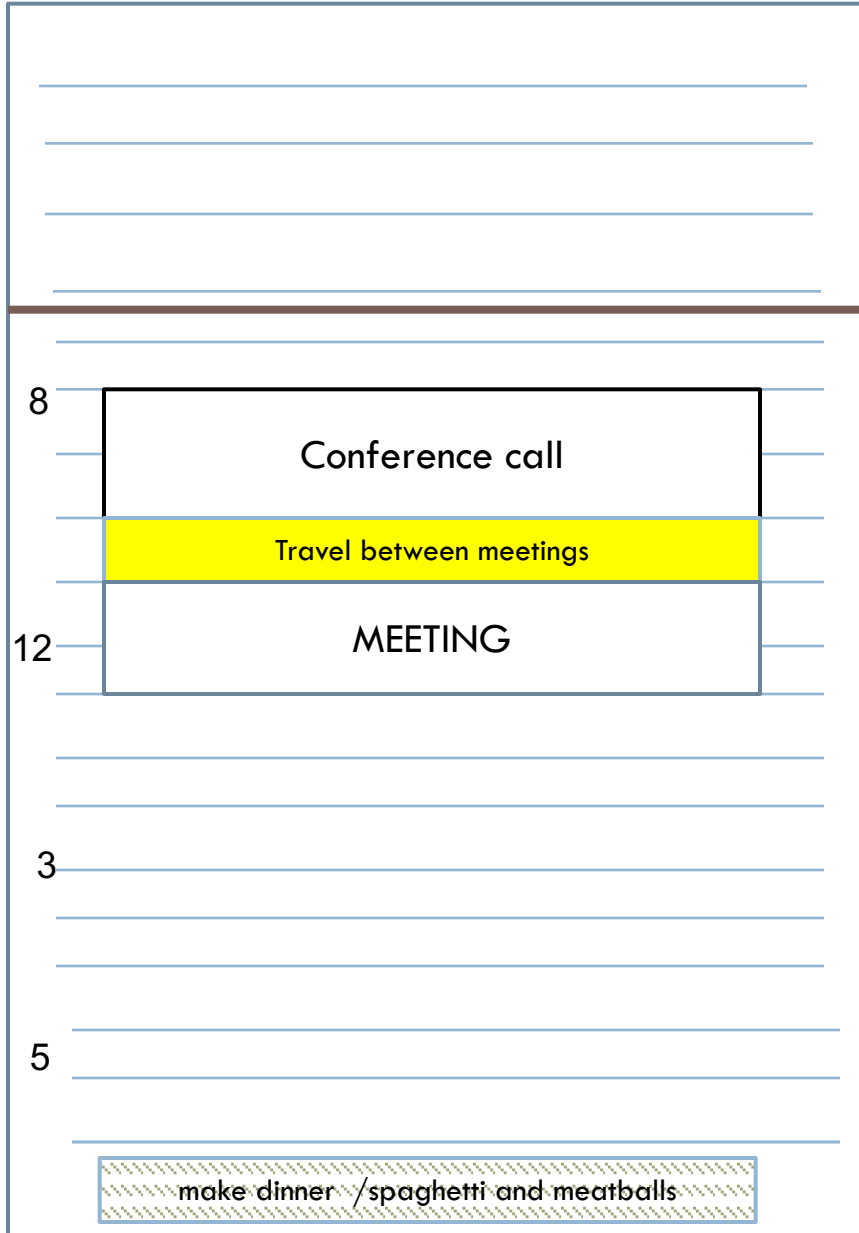
# Calendar



## Time grid

- Events – everything that you have agreed to “attend”**

# Calendar

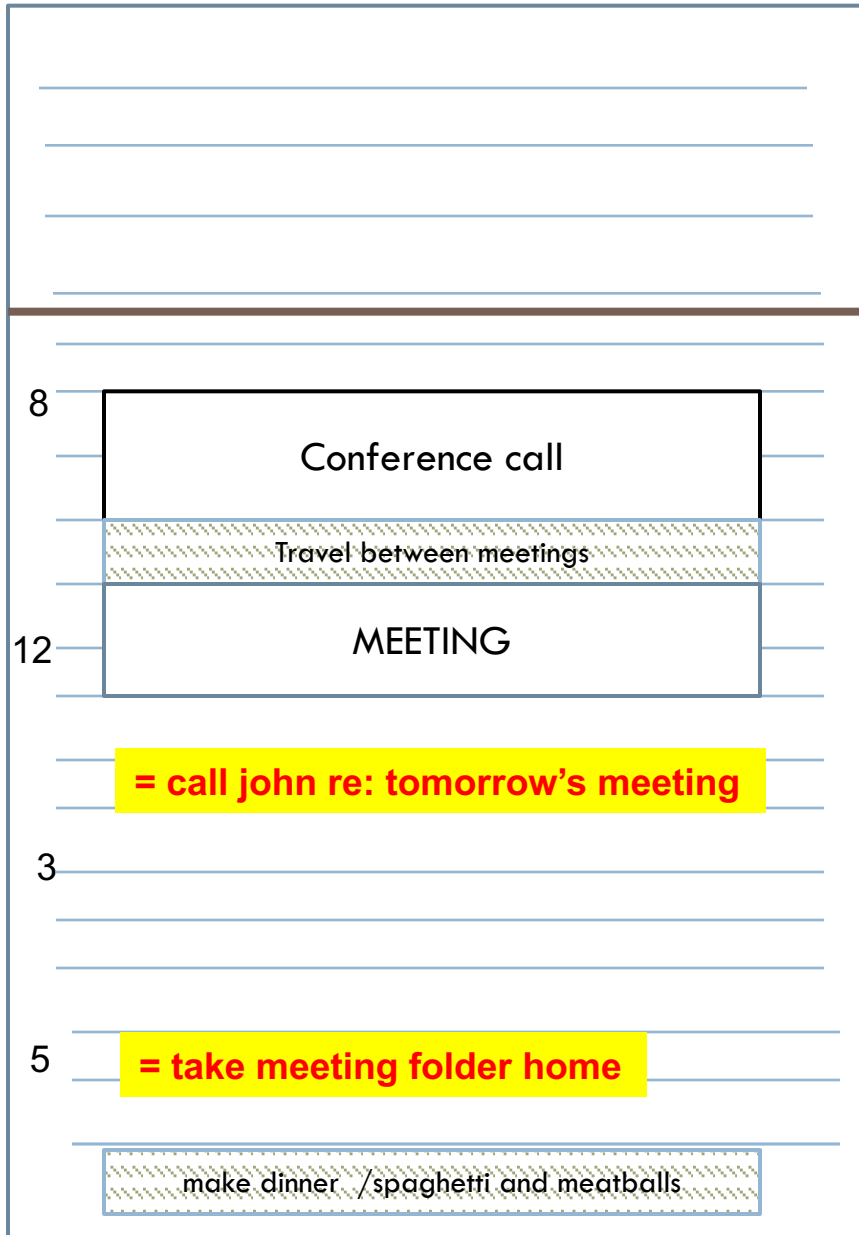


## Time grid

Events

Transition time

# Calendar



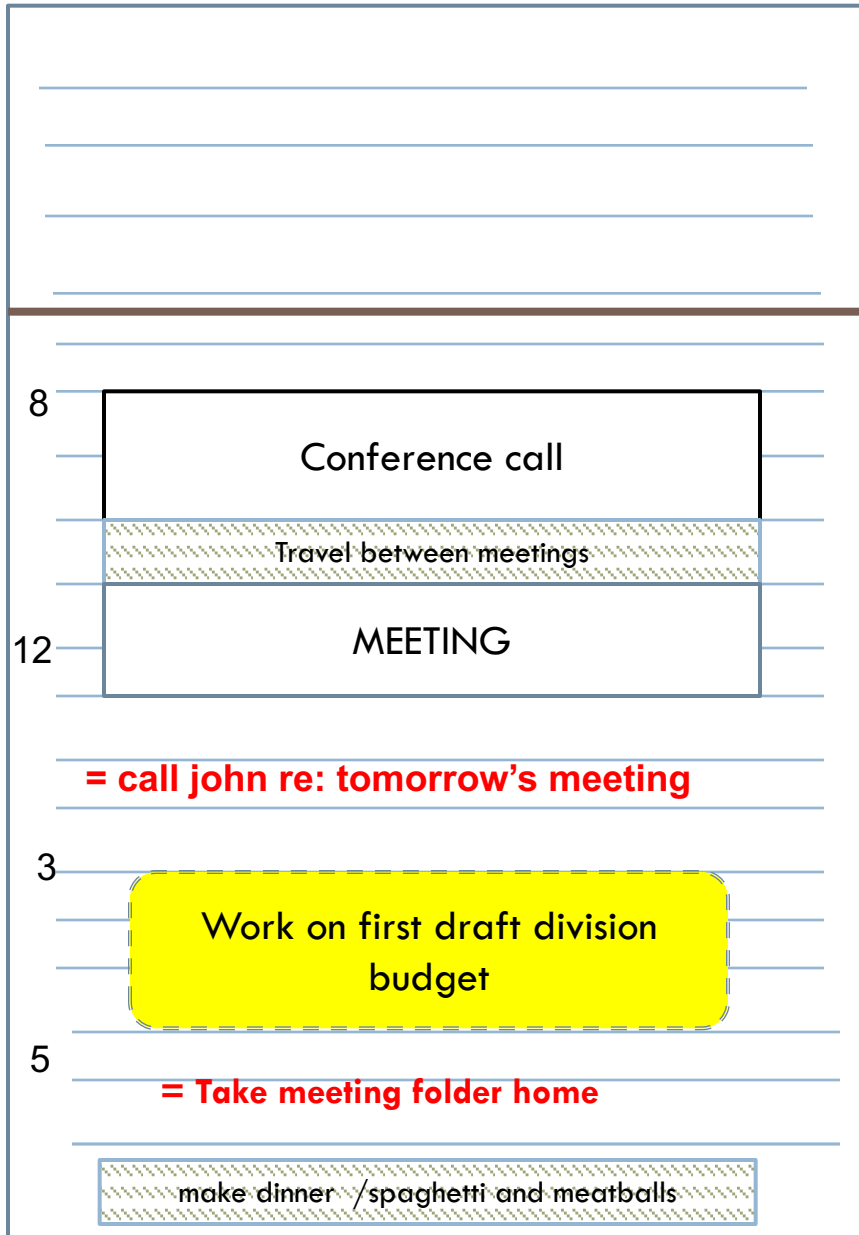
## Time grid

Events

Transition time

Tasks that must be done at a specific time

# Calendar



## Time grid

- Tasks that must be done at a specific time
- Events
- Transition time
- “Appointments with yourself”

# Calendar

**Today: Pay visa bill**

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8

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12

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3

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5

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## 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)*

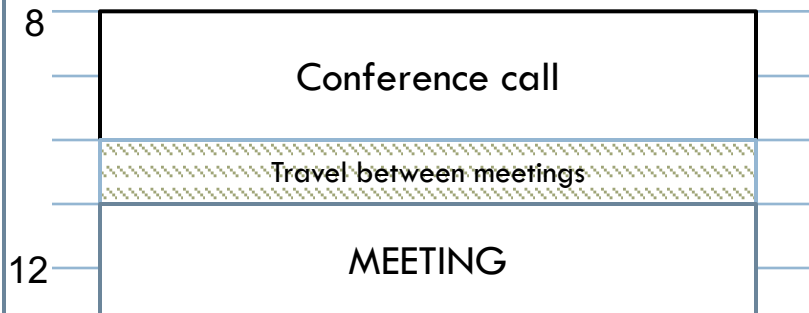
# Calendar

**Pay visa bill**

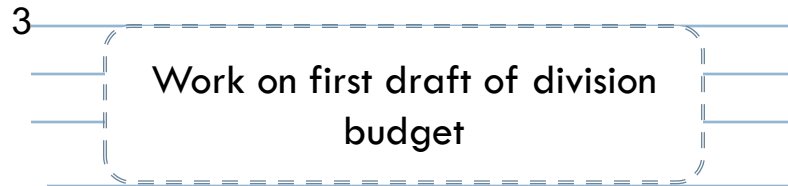
**WF** Jane to email back

**DEADLINE** paper submission

**Reminder** Submit time sheets (weekly)



**= call john re: tomorrow's meeting**



5

**= Take meeting folder home**



**The hard landscape:**

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

# Master list

## Personal

Research new bicycle choices for Harry, and 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 review

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
	Mentoring meeting in October	<del>Plan the meeting</del>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <del>Start agenda</del></li> <li>2. <del>Plan outside speakers</del></li> <li>3. <del>Check registration</del></li> </ol>
	WIHS	Submit revised TFV paper Complete ATV PK paper Complete TB paper	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <del>Finish TFV paper revisions</del></li> <li>2. <del>Look through final models sent by Chengshi</del></li> <li>3. <del>Make final multivariate table and send to group</del></li> <li>4. <del>ATV CROI abstract</del></li> <li>5. <del>Start drafting ATV PG paper</del></li> <li>6. <del>Finish TB paper</del></li> </ol>
	ROI	Submit STRAND paper Submit NPV TLC paper Complete TFV methods paper Maternal hair samples, PROMOTE abstract ASPIRE concept sheet SMARTT concept sheet revision	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <del>Wait for APs comments</del></li> <li>2. <del>Submit TFV STRAND paper</del></li> <li>3. <del>Edit NPV TLC paper from Yong</del></li> <li>4. <del>Await input on NVP TLC paper, Peter, Yong</del></li> <li>5. <del>Finish NVP TLC paper after Yong's input</del></li> <li>6. <del>Write TFV methods paper</del></li> <li>7. <del>Analyze maternal hair PROMOTE data</del></li> <li>8. <del>Write Yong about maternal samples</del></li> <li>9. <del>Write ASPIRE concept sheet</del></li> <li>10. <del>SMARTT concept sheet (address site support; power calculations; clarification of duration of exposure studied in hair and covariates analysis)</del></li> </ol>
	Mentoring grant (R25) for January	Draft specific aims <del>Write paper with Mallory on first mentoring meeting</del> Move forward work on Peru and Africa papers	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <del>Write David by July 12</del></li> <li>2. <del>Talk to David July 12</del></li> <li>3. <del>Edit methods/results section next</del></li> <li>4. <del>Submit paper</del></li> <li>5. <del>Write results/ discussion of SF meeting</del></li> </ol>
	Talks	ID boot camp HIV MMA	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <del>HIV talk for ID boot camp</del></li> <li>2. <del>Meningitis talk for ID boot camp</del></li> <li>3. <del>Single pill combination talk</del></li> <li>4. <del>Epi talk for MMA</del></li> </ol>

# Getting started with a master list for your mentee

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



# Paper / document based options

Paper	Document file
Legal pad	<b>Word document</b>
3-ring binder	Excel spreadsheet
Index cards	Plain text file
Post its <sup>TM</sup> 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

# Ideas from UCSF CFAR mentees

- G-calendar (tasks function)
- “Morning pages” (write 3 pages out in the morning – creative);
- Put phone away
- Amazon Alexa (Alexa, add x to shopping list; add tasks to task list- can do with Siri)
- Shared Google keep ([keep.google.com](https://keep.google.com); shopping lists or shared projects)
- Evernote
- “Managing your energy, not your time” (helps you say yes/no to certain things)
- Fantastical\*- can integrate google calendar and outlook under one calendar (can keep personal/business separate if you want)

# Questions?

