



10 **Time** Wasters and **Energy** Drainers

We are surrounded by time- and energy-saving technology, yet find ourselves running late or exhausted. Why? Do we take on too many tasks? Make poor choices on how we spend our time?

“We each have a finite amount of energy, time and resources. Most of us give away and waste our energy daily without even realizing it,” says career coach Renee Trudeau.

Look at how we fritter away our time through:

- lengthy, unfulfilling or unnecessary phone conversations
- endless time online
- watching TV
- tolerating disorganized spaces that cause us to spend hours looking for items
- going to social gatherings or volunteer events that we don't want to attend but feel we should attend

“Not only are these activities unfulfilling—and often draining,” Trudeau says, “but they are zapping our precious energy and resources. And, they're keeping us from spending time on things that truly fuel us—like being with friends, enjoying our children and partners, spending time outdoors, working on creative pursuits or just relaxing into expanses of un-scheduled time.”

Here are 10 unrewarding activities to dodge in the workplace, at home or anywhere.

At work

Meetings. Don't call a meeting when a memo will do. Your co-workers' time is valuable, too.

Difficult people. Corporate management consultant Lisa Anderson tells managers to pay more attention to those who are positive and productive. “You'll find an immediate benefit in terms of time, energy and productivity,” Anderson advises. The same advice applies for individuals—seek out co-workers who won't sap your energy.

E-mails, voice mail. Don't check your e-mail every 30 seconds. It will be there, later.

Prioritize your messages, then set aside time to answer the most important ones. Answer the others when you have another block of downtime.

Executive coach Linda Henman advises people to limit their outgoing e-mails and memos. Send them to primaries only. People have limited reading time available in a day.

Micromanagement. If you've assigned a task, step back and let that person do it. If they fail, you'll deal with that when the time comes.

Electronic resources. Learn how to use technology wisely and well. PDAs and other devices might save you time, money and energy. If not, find the most efficient way to complete the task, no matter how you do it.

Technology can be a boon or a hindrance, says Joseph R. Ferrari, DePaul University professor and author, but it's a tool, at best. Don't blame your failures on faulty printers or computer glitches.

At home

Electronics. You may own a computer, DVD player, digital television, cell phone, programmable alarms and appliances, or even a robot vacuum cleaner. Run them, but don't let them run you.

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Electronics cost money and time to upgrade, repair and use properly. If they don't save you time, maybe low tech is a better choice, says Ferraro. Take the time and energy you would otherwise waste, and use it to accomplish something really important.

The Internet. Avoid mind-numbing Web searching or limitless social networking. While many find value in the information and support they find online, moderation is key. Millions waste hours on social-networking sites, when they could be interacting, face to face, with real people.

Anywhere

The 24/7 life. You can't be on call to everyone, all the time. Set boundaries, and let people know—nicely—when you're available. Turn off your cell phone, unless you're expecting a call.

Psychologist Steven M. Sultanoff tells people to set priorities and accept that they do not have to respond to all requests immediately. Neither do they have to finish every book or movie they begin.

Chaos. Clean up your life and your work space. Prioritize. Chaos is exhausting.

Control. Perhaps the biggest waste of time is worrying about things you can't do anything about. That list includes your friends', co-workers' and the world's problems. Take care of your own life.

Long Island-based public relations professional Lyn Dobrin sums it up: "I think there are 'time wasters' that are beneficial and those that are not. The ones that leave me feeling refreshed are the ones I should continue to do."

It's never too late to switch gears. Take a step back, decide what's most important to you. Then, start tomorrow, today.

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We're not gone; we're just moving back in with our parents!

Over the last few weeks, you may have noticed some changes with Wisdom Worker Solutions™ and My Plan After 50™. In July, we enhanced our services by offering EAP clients access to our holistic life and pre-retirement planning services – My Guide. In the months that followed, we've been integrating our products and services under Wisdom Worker Solutions™, My Plan After 50™ and Workplace Services in order to more effectively provide customer-focused solutions to your most pressing concerns. You'll see less and less of Wisdom Worker Solutions™ and more of Workplace Services and My Plan After 50™.

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