Productivity Toolbox

Tips & Tricks for Getting Things Done!

Introductions

Name
Library
#1 Productivity challenge
or - Why did you sign up for this session?

The agenda

- Productivity barriers and solutions
- Time Management
- Break
- Email!
  - Some time for actual email processing
- Break
- Calendars
- To-Do Lists
- Fun tools
- Discussion/Questions

Know thyself

Everyone has different work styles, habits, and tendencies

From http://www.flickr.com/photos/totalaldo/2400635097/

Sound familiar?

- Being overwhelmed by too much to do.
- Too many distractions
- Procrastinating – dreading a task.
- Not wanting to do a task because it's boring or hard.
- Being intimidated by a large project.

- Tools are distracting or tough to use.
- Fiddling with tools instead of doing.
- Other people, making requests, calling, IMing, emailing.
- Meetings.

from http://zenhabits.net/2009/09/done-reduce-task-friction-to-get-to-task-completion/

Break it down!
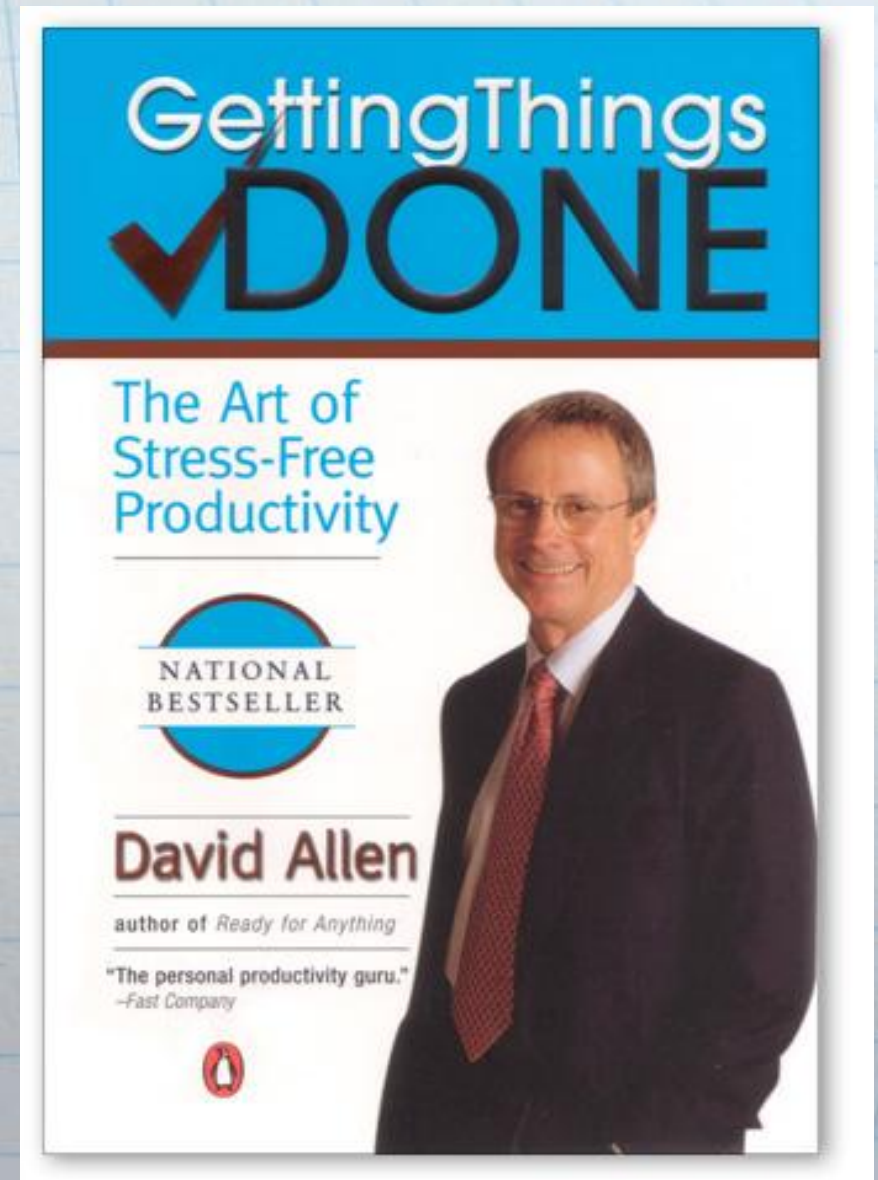
What's stopping you from getting it done?
What are your weaknesses?
What can you do about it?

Take a minute - write down your top 3 obstacles.

Intro to GTD

*Getting Things Done: the Art of Stress-Free Productivity* by David Allen

GTD in a nutshell

- Capturing anything and everything that has your attention
- Defining actionable things discretely into outcomes and concrete next steps
- Organizing reminders and information in the most streamlined way, in appropriate categories, based on how and when you need to access them
- Keeping current and "on your game" with appropriately frequent reviews of the six horizons of your commitments (purpose, vision, goals, areas of focus, projects, and actions)

...and that means....?

- Processing inboxes to empty
- Capturing ideas and tasks
- Setting up a reference system
- Lists for Actions, Projects,Waiting For, and Someday/Maybe
- Calendar or Tickler file for reminders
- Weekly Review
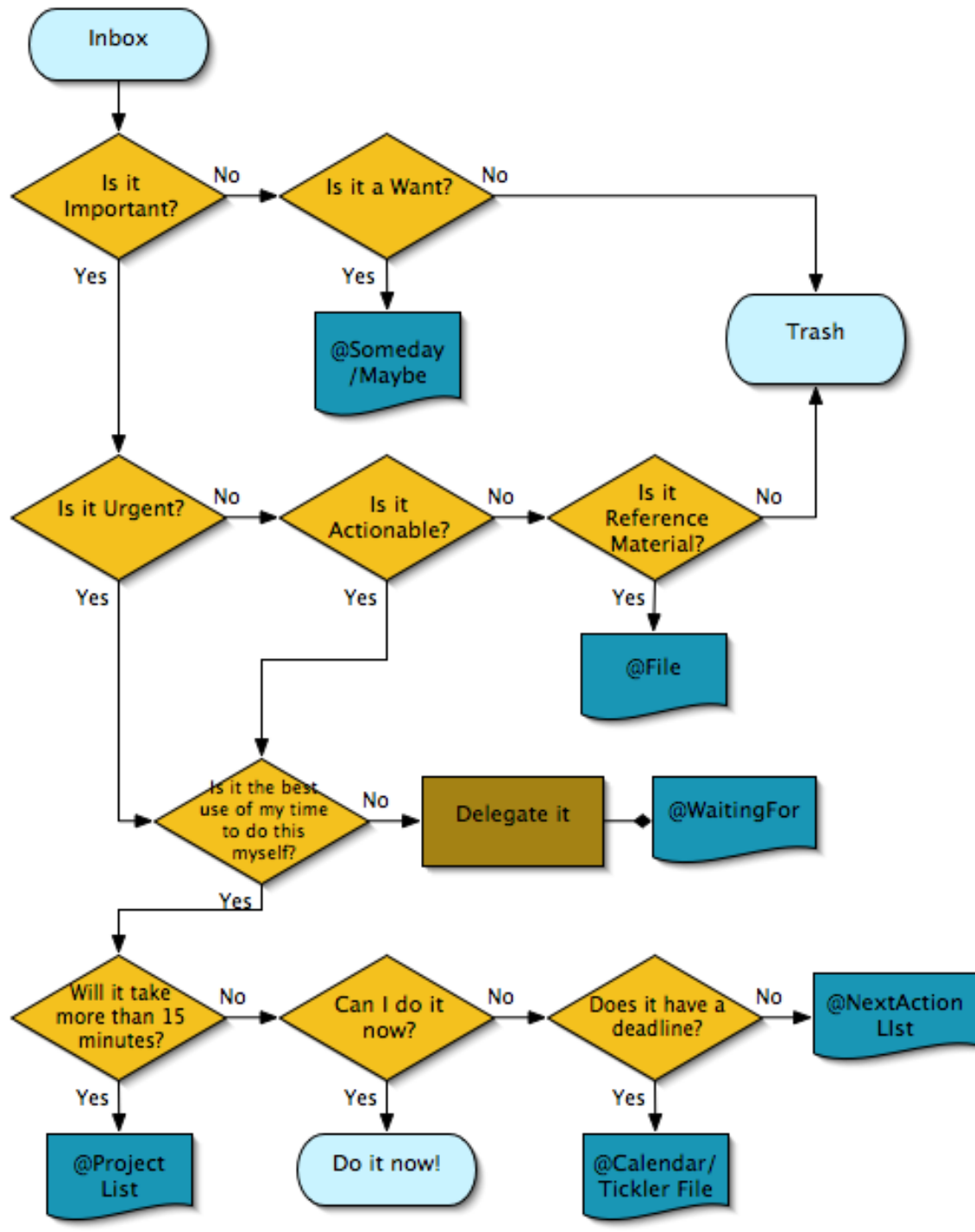
GTD Flowchart

10 Habits of Zen to Done (ZTD)

1. Collect: ubiquitous capture
2. Process: don't put off decisions
3. Plan: set tasks for the day & week
4. Do: focus on single tasks
5. Simple System

6. Organize: everything has a place
7. Review: system & goals regularly
8. Simplify: remove nonessential tasks
9. Routine: set & keep routines
10. Find your passion

simple.
productive.

zen
to done

My kryptonite: Time Management

Have to find the trick that works for you:

- Routines
- Rules

Tricks

Work in Bursts
- 50 minutes, 10 minute break

Focus
- reduce interruptions
- Get in "the zone"
- eliminate temptation

18 minute plan
- 5 minutes at beginning of day: plan
- 1 minute review each hour
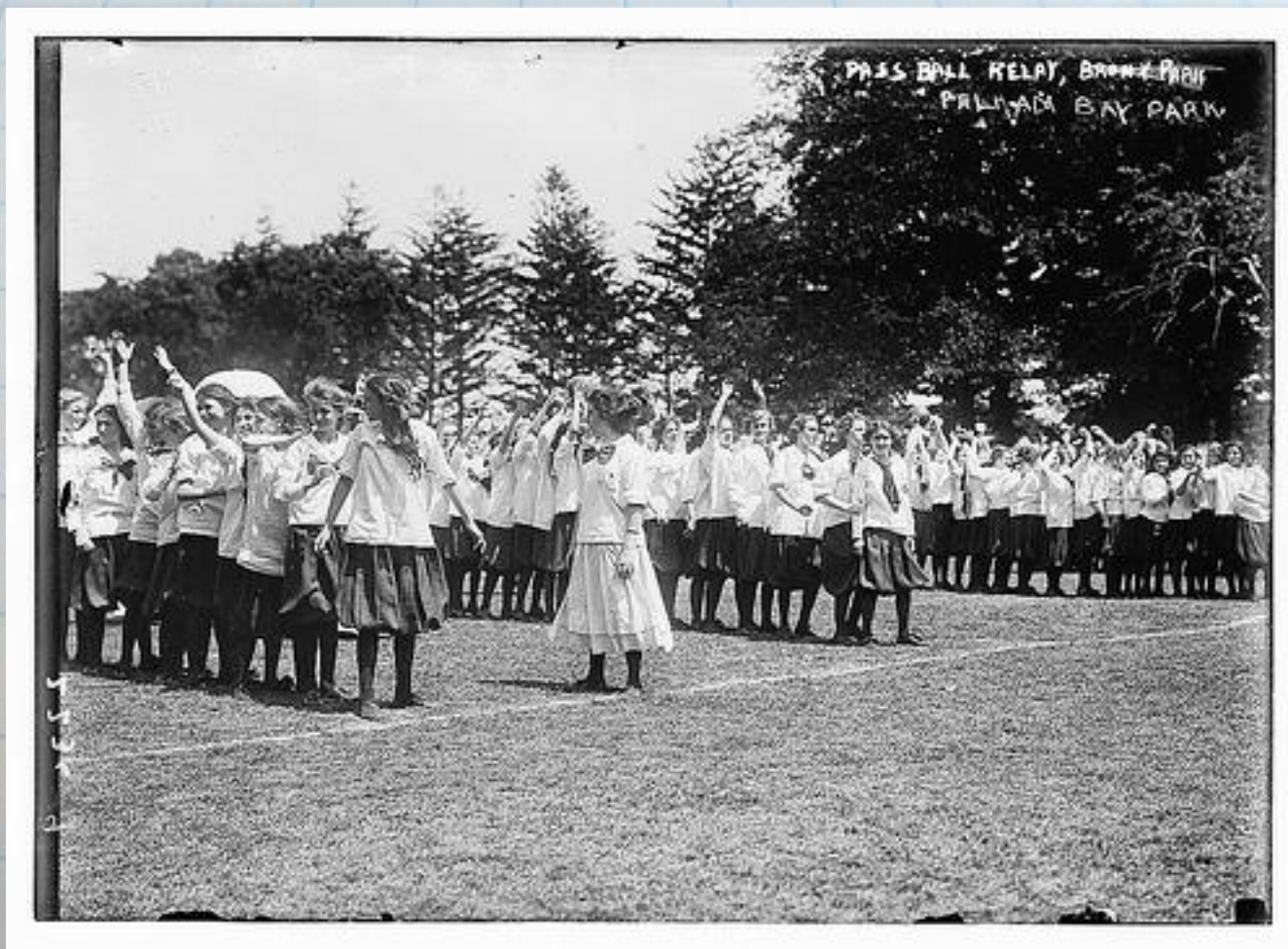- 5 minutes at the end of the day - review

Conserving time & energy

Set Goals
- Project timelines & objectives
- Plan important tasks by the week
- Schedule enough time for preparation, getting places

Set Monthly Themes
- vaguer than goals, but still useful
- "This month I will improve my email skills"
- Follow your rhythms

Break!

From http://www.flickr.com/photos/library_of_congress/2163520196/

Email!

Don't be a slave

Schedule your email time

- Turn off email notifications
- Set times to check messages
  - 10 minutes every hour
  - 3 times/day
  - whatever works for you
- Just tell yourself no one will die if they don't get an immediate response!

Triage

Medical
- beyond help
- can be helped by *immediate* response
- response can be *delayed*
- *minor* injuries, who need help less urgently

Email
- delete it
- archive it
- defer it for later response
- generate an action from it
- respond to it immediately (2 minute rule)

Folders

The inbox is not your to-do list!
- Archive folders
- Needs Action
- Follow Up
- Read Later
- Not to me

From http://www.flickr.com/photos/nypl/3110130720/

A teacher finds "project" material in the Teachers' Reference Room, 127 East 58th St.

Filters/Rules

Automate some of the work - that's what computers are for!
- Anything with "FW:" in the subject line
- Anything with "fyi" in the body
- Filter by specific sender
- Listservs/committees
- Vendors!

- http://lifehacker.com/software/email/geek-to-live--essential-email-filters-190416.php
- http://support.csp.edu/Outlook_Filters
- http://mail.google.com/support/bin/answer.py?answer=6579
- http://help.yahoo.com/tutorials/cg/mail/cg_filter1.html
- http://email.about.com/cs/hotmailtips/qt/et102101.htm

Searching

Most email clients have search functionality - use it!

Templates
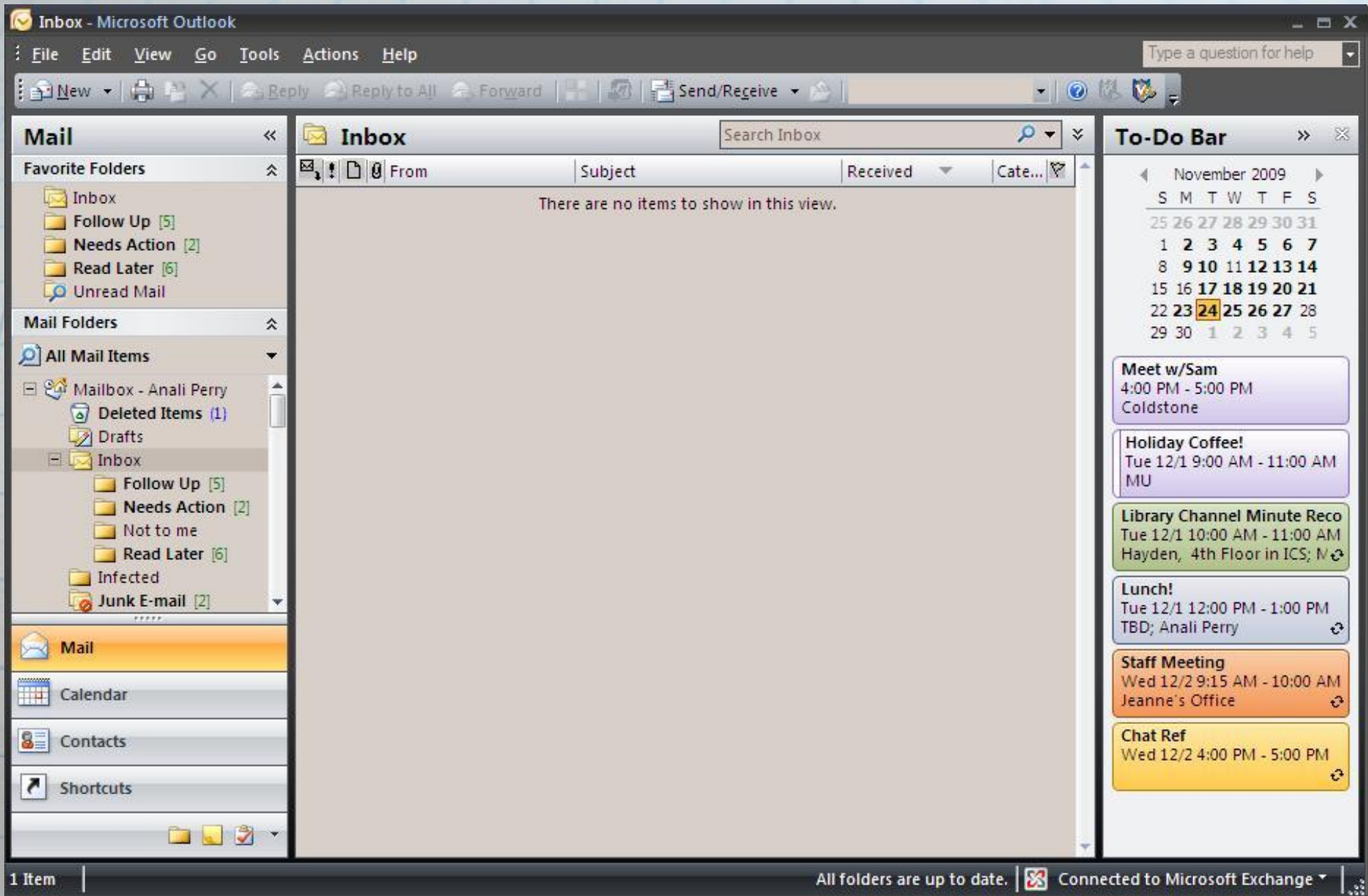
Don't type out the same messages over and over
- Quick Parts in Outlook
- Lots of other tools: http://lifehacker.com/software/feature/save-time-with-text-substitution-162484.php

Delete!

Yes, really. I totally give you permission.

Inbox Zero!

Email Exercise!

Make a plan for *ruthlessly* processing the backlog:
- Schedule time chunks: 1 hour/day
- Reduce by half & repeat
- Fresh Start: chuck the whole thing in a DMZ Folder
- Archive or delete anything more than 30 days old. Be honest - are you ever going to respond to that? We all know the answer is no.

Fun help: http://www.43folders.com/2006/03/27/process-to-zero

Break 2!

From http://www.flickr.com/photos/library_of_congress/2162899861/

Calendars

- Keep it current and relevant
- Schedule stuff!
  - Deadlines
  - Recurring tasks
  - "Me" time (or a "no-fly zone" if you want to sound less selfish)
  - Reminders
- Keep it with you (sync w/phone, pda, or paper)
- The calendar is your friend!

To-Do lists

To-Do Lists, like email, can get out of control
- Keep it Do-able
  - Give yourself orders: What's the next step?
  - Use specific, active words
- Keep it simple
  - Easy to remember and track
  - Daily/Weekly/Someday
- Keep it tiny
  - 3 Most Important Tasks (MITs)
- Keep it moving

Prioritizing

- Assign priorities!
- What NOT to do.
  - Eliminate tasks that are sucking time & energy

From http://webworkerdaily.com/2009/05/25/not-a-gtd-disciple-dont-worry-about-it/
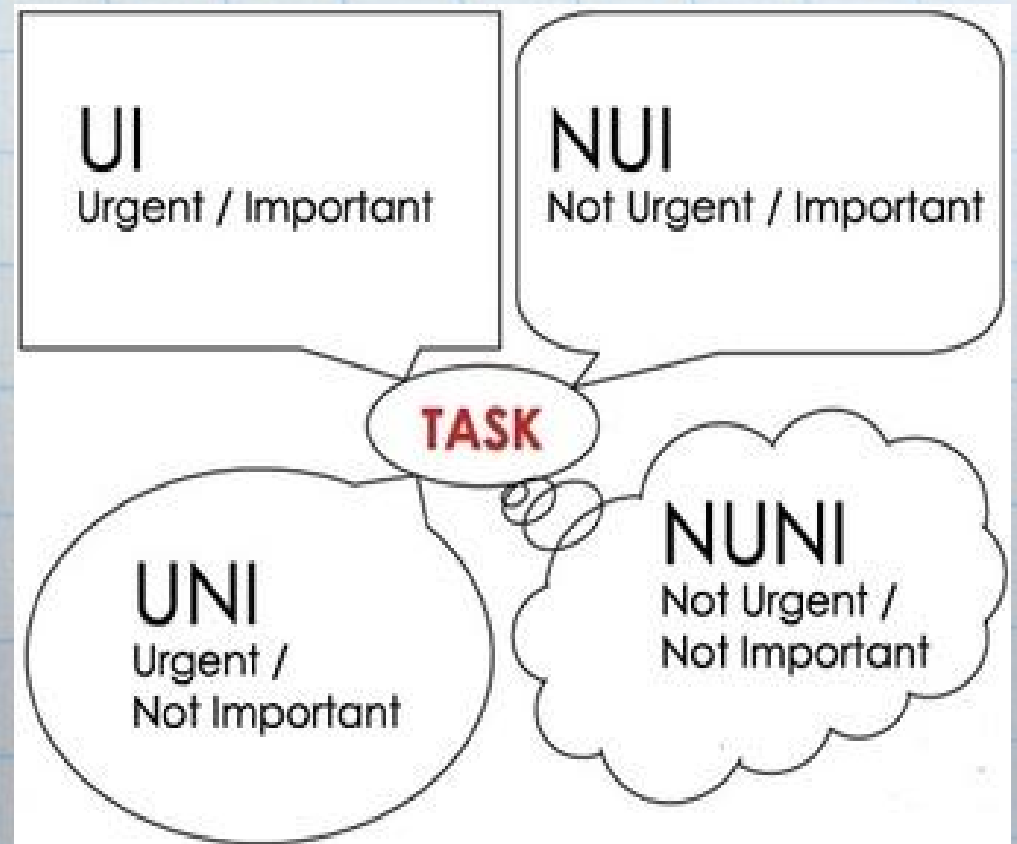
Reminders

Automate what you can
- Calendars
- To-do Lists
- Ticklers

Weekly Review

- Email: Review and prune Hold and Follow Up email folders. Bump up anything that's been languishing in Follow Up for too long on to-do list.
- To-do list: Read over current task list; prune stuff that doesn't matter any more; re-prioritize items to work on next week.
- Projects: Move any "next actions" for each project to the to-do list; Revise and prune the project list to reflect current status.
- Calendar: Check out next week's appointments and meetings; add any necessary prep work to to-do list.

Tools

- Remember the Milk: http://www.rememberthemilk.com
- Outlook
- Pen & Paper
- ReQall: http://www.reqall.com/
- Jott: http://www.jott.com/
- Evernote: http://www.evernote.com
- Gmail Tasks: http://www.gmail.com

Other tools

- Netvibes: http://www.netvibes.com
- iGoogle: http://www.google.com/ig
- Dropbox: http://www.dropbox.com
- KeePass: http://keepass.info/
- Springpad: http://springpadit.com/
- Todoist: http://todoist.com/

What are your suggestions?

From http://www.flickr.com/photos/statelibraryofnsw/2960116125/

Questions?

Here's mine - what did you find the MOST helpful about today's session?

Thanks!

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