I'm not very busy.
That's just the way I like it.

Here’s why.

“Busy” myths

There are a lot of myths that exalt being busy.

Years ago, I read The Primal Scream, by Arthur Janov, a well-known psychologist. The premise of his book was his analysis of the cause of deep-seeded pain and his groundbreaking approach to treating it.

Something quite different resonated with me. He described how, prior to treating a patient, he required them to stay alone, in a motel room, with no television or outside stimulation. I was struck by how distracted we are by all of our gadgets (and it’s much worse now). We don’t have time to think, reflect, analyze, engage in pleasurable experiences or nourish relationships.

I didn’t want to be one of those people. I viewed “being busy” not as a badge of success, but rather a reflection of an inability to manage my time.

I wanted a significant portion of my mental bandwidth and my physical activity to be related to things I really enjoy. In my case, that includes my work, but much else as well.

When you’re busy, there’s a tendency to regard work activities as productive and everything else as wasteful. Yet, for most of us, there are many non-work-related experiences we enjoy, ranging from solitary reading and writing to leisure sports.

When I’m engaged in those activities, I don’t relegate them to second-rate status.

Time management

I suffer from “urgency bias.”

One study found that many of us prioritize unimportant tasks over more important ones. That may explain why we are constantly checking our smartphones and tablets, even though whatever we are doing is likely more important than the spam flooding into our devices.

Until I got my urgency bias under control, it was impossible to enjoy my time away from work.

Consider this troubling fact: Consumers look at their phone more than 150 times a day.

Picture being on a serene cruise while neurotically checking your phone 10 times an hour (giving you eight hours to sleep). How much fun would that be?

You would be “busy.” But is it worth it?
Delegate

There’s one thing only you can do if you are a one-person firm: Bring in business. You can outsource just about everything else.

If you try to do everything yourself, you will be very “busy,” but would you be happy or successful?

Plan

I spend a lot of time making short- and long-term plans to be sure I’m not too busy to really enjoy myself. If I’m engaged to speak in a resort location, I extend the trip by three to four days so my wife and I can spend quality time together. Am I really too “busy” to do that?

I like helping advisors who can’t afford our services. I donate consulting time to them. Why? I respect what they’re doing. I want them to succeed. I have the time to devote to them because I’ve planned for it.

Don’t confuse activity with progress. If you’re too “busy” to be in control of your life, consider making some major changes now.

Dan Solin is a New York Times best-selling author of the Smartest series of books. His latest book is The Smartest Sales Book You'll Ever Read. His sales coaching practice includes helping advisors convert prospects into clients and generating leads through videos and other elements of marketing. Dan is not affiliated with any advisory firm.

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