

DR. LOIS FRANKEL

Get and keep the job you want.

This month's tips come from the latest addition to the CCI team, Dr. Jeremy Hunter. Jeremy teaches leaders to cultivate self-awareness and develop skills that allow them to work and live at their best. He co-founded the Quality of Life Research Center at the Peter F. Drucker and Masatoshi Ito School of Management with Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, the author of *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*. His topic today is "multi-tasking."

It seems everyone these days prides themselves on being multi-taskers. But where does it get you? According to recent research from the University of Michigan, not very far. David Meyer and his colleagues found that multi-tasking not only makes you *less* efficient and *less* effective, but, over time, stresses and even damages the brain. Splitting attention between two tasks decreases a limited amount of brain power a person can devote to each task. The result? Neither task is done particularly well.

The short-term costs of inefficiency and ineffectiveness are compounded by long-term costs of chronically stressing the brain. This leads to a neuro-chemical cascade that inhibits memory, reduces concentration, impairs decision-making and learning. Chronic stress can lead to depression, anxiety disorders, heart disease, infertility and suppressed immune response. Not a pretty picture.

For the next week spend two days observing your multi-tasking behavior. What do you do? What justifications do you use to support the action? How do you feel when you're doing it? How do you feel afterwards? How would you rate the quality of your work? Did you listen particularly well? Did you understand at a deep level? Do you recall clearly what you were doing and why?

Spend another two days purposely focusing on one thing at a time. Be fully attentive when performing a given task. Respond to these questions: How do you feel when you're doing it? How do you feel afterwards? How would you rate the quality of your work? Did you listen particularly well? Did you understand at a deep level? Do you recall clearly what you were doing and why?

At day 5, compare and contrast the experiences. What did you learn from them?

Coaching Tips for Focusing:

- Turn off the new email chime. It distracts your attention. Same goes for the "downloading progress bar."
- Play a game of limiting your email checking to once or twice a day. (Do you then notice that you're addicted to email?) What is that experience like? What is the underlying emotion involved in email-addiction? Fear? Loneliness?
- Try driving to work without listening to the radio and resting attention in the here-and-now.

Until next month, stay well.

Lois P. Frankel, Ph.D.