

5 Steps to Maintaining Rhythm in Your Life – The Juggling Act

By Karin Syren

The bad news is if you've been trying to multi-task, you've probably discovered what organizational psychologists have observed to be decreasing accuracy and productivity in post layoff climates. Multi-tasking is not a sustainable answer to the too much to do and too few to do it problem! The brain's executive control processes, the resource allocators, are overstressed and the result is a measurable time-cost.

The good news is there is a way to get it all done – efficiently and without undue stress on your mental and emotional resources – juggling! The difference between the two is quite simple, and yet critical to your success. Multi-tasking requires multiple items (responsibilities, tasks or deadlines) in hand at the same time. Juggling require only one item (responsibility, task or deadline) in hand at a time, though often briefly and on a recurring basis.

I recently went to a small traveling circus with my grandchildren and was fascinated with the juggling clown. He circled the main tent with one of his fellows, chatting amiably and smiling at the audience, all the while seeming to pay no attention to the 5 balls he was juggling. The result appeared effortless – not once did he falter, lose his rhythm, or drop a ball.

An examination of his secrets will translate to our success.

1. Develop rhythm and flow of motion.

Practice makes perfect. My clown friend did not achieve his flawless rhythm without practice. Achievement comes with time and dedication to the process, and perfection comes with repetition. Work the process and the process will work for you.

2. Rehearse concentration.

Rhythm and flow are not self-generated, nor self-perpetuating, so the juggler must guard against distractions until the process is familiar and routine. (We'll discuss this area in greater depth in an upcoming article.)

3. Keep your perspective clear.

The successful juggler must keep all items peripherally within the field of vision in order to be where he needs to be to catch each as it comes around. Concentrating on what is in hand, the successful juggler must all the while be peripherally aware.

4. Practice giving attention to the moment.

The accomplished juggler practices focusing on the issue, however briefly it is in hand, without sacrificing awareness of the next thing approaching. It is often not the amount of time spent on an issue, but the degree of focus given to it that will make the difference between success and failure.

5. Be confident.

This is the key ingredient to all successful juggling. An accomplished juggler knows her ability. Regardless of the hours of practice and the years of experience, she will never keep it all flowing through her hands if she doesn't think she can.

Practice all of the above and if you drop a ball, and you surely will, don't beat yourself up. Check first to see if you are trying to juggle too much. Peter Drucker, the highly respected management guru, put it perfectly when he observed, "nothing is so useless as doing efficiently what should not have been done at all." Here is where an accountability partner is invaluable – employ their assistance in gaining perspective on your particular juggling act.

If you falter or fumble, check the list and determine where you missed it, make the correction, and start over again. Jugglers are not born; they're made. With determination and practice, you will begin to see the various areas of your life coming into clearer focus; patterns will emerge and balance will be the result.

Begin today to gain, regain, and maintain control of your life by becoming an accomplished juggler and taking your juggling act on the road - see you at the circus!

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