BUSY IS A BAD EXCUSE

NOT TO NETWORK OR DO ANYTHING ELSE IMPORTANT!

21 SIMPLE WAYS TO TAKE CONTROL OF YOUR TIME!
Busy can’t last forever

I used to be busy. Very busy. And I loved it. I knew no other way. In one year, I went to 241 networking events, published 4 newspaper columns a week, volunteered for charities, launched my speaking business, which added travel to the mix, and even found time for Friday night drinks with friends.

Then, I had a surgery. It was a simple cyst that turned out to be significant.

I woke up the next day in the hospital with what felt like a serrated-edged knife twisting into my body. Little did I know that pain would be my new companion for my life.

My approach to dealing with pain was to “power-through”. Just keep going and maybe “it” will go away. After my initial adrenaline stores ran out, I collapsed. I was forced to find a better way. My old-school ways of glorifying busy weren’t sustainable for the long haul.

I went from being active for 18 hours a day to being limited to two to five hours a day of working capacity. Intense tasks like speaking for a client would knock me out for days of recovery.

As a business owner, I had no choice but to earn money. If I didn’t work, I didn’t get paid. My writing could be done from bed, but there was no getting around my need to be on the top of my game for my audiences. The only reason I was able to succeed during that tough time is because of the professional network I created.

Professionals constantly tell me they are too busy to do important tasks, like networking. I believe with a few small tweaks to your approach to time management and productivity as you face a never-ending task list - you absolutely will have the time!

During those years, I accomplished more in my limited time availability than I do when I work full, sometimes unfocused days now that my pain is under control. The very ideas I'm sharing with you are the ideas I turn to when I get overwhelmed by everything that needs to be done.

Busy isn't the answer.

Access to fulfillment and productivity are found in the answers below.

This is a super-simple ebook that is focused on giving you some ideas to get more done in less time. I am proof it is possible.

Want more? Check out my online program for streamlined, profitable networking as well as my other publications. Also, I hope you'll think of me next time you're planning a professional development day or conference for your team or with your colleagues.

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You're BUSY! I believe you.

Why do I believe you without any extra convincing? Because if you didn't have lots to do, you wouldn't be a high-achiever.

You may even LOVE being BUSY! (I get that. I do too.)

My hope for you is to make BUSY work FOR YOU; not be an excuse.

The very first keynote I gave to 300 people was December 1st, 2006. During the networking time right before my speech, I was so scared. I plastered a huge smile on my face to try to hide my fear while I practiced my networking techniques. It felt like the logical thing to do seeing as I was about to give a speech on the topic.

One older gentleman told me that he thought networking was a good idea, but that he was too busy to do it consistently.

It was the first time I heard the excuse, it was DEFINITELY not the last.

To really excel in life and in business, one simply MUST be connected.

Not having time for that, well, that makes everything else harder. When something's harder, it takes longer, which means you have even less time. See the circle of busy...
The Risk of a Reputation of Always Being BUSY!

Wearing busy as a badge of honor? Think again.

I asked an audience full of senior managers, "Who's ever felt their leader was too busy for them to go to about an important issue?"

More than half raised their hand.

Busy impacts leadership scores.

A law firm partner was frustrated her team wasn't networking. They misinterpreted her always being busy as meaning the firm was at capacity and didn't need more business. They did.

Busy impacts relationship development.

A client refused to call a real estate agent because he was always saying he was so busy and she felt like she was imposing on him.

When I wore busy as a badge of honor, people would rush conversations with me. Now, I notice there is a more relaxed engagement that makes for better connections.
What if busy wasn't an excuse?

What if?

If you had all the time in the world and weren't caught up in the vortex of stress, what would you do?

Would you spend more time with people you love?

Maybe spend more time with yourself?

Would you do more charity work?

Would you have better relationships with your clients?

Would you go to that weekend retreat you wish you had time for?

ALL of this is available to you, right now, even with your busy status.

You are just a couple of simple tweaks away from taking control of your time!

Choose one or two of the ideas below, test it for a couple weeks, and see how it goes. Then, come back and choose again!
DELETE "BUSY" FROM YOUR VOCABULARY.

They say, if you want something done give it to a busy person.

They don't say, give it to the person who complains the most about being busy!!

Delete the word.

Seriously. Never use it again.

It's not interesting to others when they hear you're busy.

And your subconscious hears busy and can react with extra stress and anxiety. The words we choose have POWER.

Create a phrase for yourself that's more empowering.
"I'm controlling my schedule."
"I'm making choices about how I spend my time."
"I'm investing time today in the things that matter to me most."
FIND YOUR RHYTHM

The time of day you do something, significantly influences the ease with which you can do it.

I know they say you should workout in the morning, but for me, that throws off my whole day.

My best thinking, writing and typing time is right when I wake up - rested and before any of the day's distractions.

Figure out your "power time" and notice your "lull" times (we all have them even if we don't want to admit it.)

Match your activities according to your body's rhythms for focus, energy, creativity and chit-chats.

Everything takes less time if we do it during a flow state. Don't take time away from your power time for activities that have less priority.
OWN YOUR NO.

You are not required to say yes to anyone who asks for something from you.

You CHOOSE.

No explanation.

No justification.

No apology.

Try it.

No. No. No.

Now you have room for yes.

YES. YES. YES.

YES TO YOU.
Invest time today to buy back time tomorrow.

Those systems you've been meaning to fix? Fix them.

That annoying item that's always misplaced? Get organized.

Your desk that's always chaotic? Organize it.

Those socks that have holes in them that you keep pulling out of your drawer? Throw them out.

That book you've been meaning to write?

That course you wish you had time to take? TAKE IT!!!

Learning today will help you be more efficient in the future. That's time well invested.

People say they don't have time to network, yet, if they made connections, they'd have so much more access to people, ideas and opportunities, that the time used to network (as long as its been done right) would be invaluable.
15 MINUTES OF PLANNING BUYS BACK HOURS.

Spend 15 minutes planning your week's priorities.

Schedule those top-priority tasks into your calendar FIRST.

Before the BUSY gets added.

You just may find that a lot of what's keeping you busy isn't important.

Being busy is not the same as being productive.

Choose productive.
TRACK WHAT YOU DO!!

This exercise literally blew my mind. It changed my life.

A CEO called me, laughing. "Allison, I wrote it all down just like your book said to. Every task I did today. No wonder I'm busy and stressed. I thought I was good at being focused and delegating. Apparently, I'm not."

Challenge: Write down every task you do in a day for one week and how long it takes you.

Look at the list. What to do next will be obvious. If not, schedule a coaching call with me.
Stop doing things that don't add value to your life, business or relationships.
Define Your Priority Buckets

A coaching client had a tendency to get overwhelmed. Fair enough, she was building something amazing in her biz.

*Go back to the buckets I'd say.*
This is the secret to finding control when you have a lot to do.

Find headers that group like outcomes and put your tasks under each heading. Prioritize the headers and then look at the order of the tasks within the buckets.

Better than a LOOOONNNNGGG LIST!!

My buckets: Happy Clients, Lots of Clients (sales), Thoughtful Marketing, Admin & Personal. You may have HR, Investor Relations, or something else.
BULK TOGETHER SIMILAR TASKS

Let's take a page out of David Allen's book Getting Things Done.

Do similar tasks together.

Check emails. Not whenever they arrive, but when you choose to check, all of them, at once.

Errands. Going to one store, why not go to them all?

Phone calls? You're already dialing, dial another.

It makes a huge difference.
I love to write. Seriously, when I wrote one of my latest books, *Married My Mom, Birthed A Dog: How to Be Resilient When Life Sucks*, I would start in the wee hours of the morning and not stop for HOURS.

Getting interrupted for an appointment sucked.

Appointment days. (Usually includes at least one networking event)  
Client days.  
Creative days.  
Play days.
I was in a new coaching client's office and I kept hearing this chime.

Eventually I asked - what's that noise?

"Oh, that's my email notifications."

WHAT?!?!?! you're stressed and struggling with focus and every time an email arrives (hundreds a day) you get dinged.

Nope, not anymore. 2009 called and it wants its notification system back. All beeps, dings, buzzes OFF!!
"Allison, you want me to close my door so I can focus on my work? Unheard of, I can't do that. What if someone needs me?"

Actually, YES YOU CAN!!

Clients complain about interruptions, A LOT.

It's okay. Set boundaries. People WILL stop interrupting you.

Set the example of focused work time and free your team to do the same.

Productivity skyrockets!!
SHORTEN MEETINGS

Oh meetings. What would we do without so many meetings?

I know, be less busy.

How about 15 minute meetings as your default time?
How about 30 minute meetings when they are generally an hour?
How about fewer meetings with the same people?
How about cutting a meeting short if the purpose is complete.

How about embracing technology instead of doing everything in person.
MULTI-TASKING

Multi-tasking has been proven to not work.

I know, you are really good at it.

Yes, me too.

Except, our brains don't work that way.

Our brains work in a way that tells us we're good at multi-tasking even when we're not, so that we don't have to feel bad about the fact that we really suck at multi-tasking.
Set an alarm, Then do the work

Call a friend. Not just any friend. An accountability friend.

Set a timer, commit to each other that you will ONLY focus on X for the next 25, 45 or 75 minutes. Absolutely all distractions are off until the alarm sounds and you reconnect to confirm success.

Most of my projects have been accomplished this way. So grateful for amazing professionals in my life who hold me accountable and vice-versa.

A business coach is also good for that....hmm, I wonder who's an amazing business coach....
MAKE IT EASY TO SET CALLS AND MEETINGS

Remember the days when you had to go back and forth a dozen times to find a date and time to meet?

If you are still living that reality - let technology be your friend.

There are so many calendar tools these days that people can use.

I've used an online booking system for years, and, knock on wood, no one has ever taken advantage of it. Why? I suspect because the people who want to talk with me are "busy." :)
Ever found yourself scrolling social media for hours? It's like you wake from a trance and are like - wow, did I ever get sucked in. (and boy were those animal videos hilarious.)

The addiction to our phones and screens is real.

I used to fight that. Now I acknowledge my scrolling discipline shortcomings.

There are phone settings and apps that can block your activity after a set time.

How can you honestly say you're busy when you spend 2 to 7 hours a day watching Netflix and/or social feeds?
Find better, faster ways to do routine tasks.

Did you take the same route to work today as you did yesterday? Likely.

Most of what you do is rooted in habit.

Maybe, just maybe there's a faster, more efficient way to do what's needed.

Bring awareness to your routines. Is there a better way?

Ask the question. Be open to another way, a better technology or letting go of old, outdated steps in a process.

I bet you will find more time. Email me and let me know: Allison@allisongraham.co
I heard about this from a couple of 20-somethings. They are apparently up on all the cool things.

Binaural Beats are tones that can help your brain focus or achieve a state of relaxation.

There are lots of apps to try. The one I like looks like this: (Only works with headphones)

If you're having trouble getting focused - a key ingredient in getting more done in less time - then pop on some headphones and turn the app to FOCUS.
So Now What?

Each of these ideas will help you be more efficient and productive.

Choose what works for you, test it. Run an experiment. What gives you control over your busy?

Talking about how to overcome feelings of being overwhelmed and gaining control of your time, is just one step on our journey together.

I hope this is not the end. You have options to continue our journey together - I hope you will! You can choose coaching, books, online training and there's lots of free resources online too!
Best bet: start with this online training

The first course I recommend you take, is the **most comprehensive program on the planet to learn how to network and grow professional relationships.**

This is everything you have ever wanted to know about how to become the go-to person in your community and industry.

This content has catapulted and revived the career of thousands of professionals. It walks you through absolutely everything you need to know to get connected and makes it so easy you'll love networking!

From learning to love small talk, to answers on why the elevator pitch doesn't work and what to do instead to the strategy to meet the right people for you to grow your business - it's ALL there!

"**Allison's message launched my professional life. She taught me how to network the right way and inspired me to love sales!**"
- Justine Zavitz, Vice-President, Advisor
  Zavitz Insurance Group

"**Allison is a dynamic speaker who brings context to what it takes to build profitable relationships and earn new sales in today's market!**"
- Steve Bolton, Head Coach, President and CEO
  Libro Financial Group

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About the Author

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Since 2006, Allison has been inspiring professionals to step out of their comfort zone and step into their brilliance. Her concepts on networking, business development and mastering that inner critic, have been featured in the media and embraced by her clients (which include some very cool companies, associations and businesses!) and have been the catalyst for millions of dollars in new business for her clients.

Allison offers online training programs, is the host of the Resiliency Ninja podcast and coaches super-stars-to-be to step into their brilliance. Companies, large and small, hire her to speak for conferences and for professional development days on the topics of networking and resilience.