

THE POWER OF TWENTY

by Cindy Kubica

It's a new day and you're going to get a lot done. Where should you begin? You start by updating your To-do list transferring incomplete items from past lists.



As you review your list you begin to feel frustrated.

You realize that way too many items have been carried over from list to list to list. Then the little 'procrastination poltergeist' begins to whisper in your ear, "You don't have time to finish this task so why start?"

Excuses, no matter how valid, don't make you feel better. For the next 60 seconds you go through a wide range of emotions from self-loathing to the excitement of planning your escape. Your breathing becomes irregular and your heart begins to race—you have set off your 'overwhelm' alarm system!

It's time to take control. *Stop, sit back, close your eyes, relax your shoulders, let your arms dangle, and take several deep breaths—in through the nose and slowly blow it out through your mouth.* Repeat these words, "The solution to my problem is only twenty minutes away."

Yes, you heard me right, "The solution to your problem is only twenty minutes away." In fact, you can get all the things on your list done in just twenty minutes—at a time. How? With a system I call *The Power of Twenty*.

I have found that most people accomplish an amazing amount of work when faced with a deadline. That sense of urgency releases stress hormones that help them focus. That is precisely why I feel it makes sense to start each task with a specific deadline. In this system the deadline is 20 minutes.

This system is so easy you can test it out right now to see if it will work for you. All you need is a timer and 20 minutes. No excuses—you can do it. Most of us waste more than 20 minutes just talking on the phone or chatting with a coworker. Lets get started.

The first step will be the hardest, but you can do it.

1. Tell coworkers, children, your mate, etc., that you are ‘taking twenty’ and please do not disturb—be firm. Have your calls held your calls. Most interruptions can wait 20 minutes. Others will respect your time if you respect your time.
2. Set your timer for 20 minutes.
3. Grab a small stack of papers you’ve been meaning to file, or empty one drawer you’ve been wanting to clean out.
4. File, sort, or organize until all items are put in their proper place.
5. This step is the next hardest step. *When the timer goes off - STOP! Work for twenty minutes only, (no matter were you are in the task). Tomorrow, pick up where you left off. If you continue to work, you will end up in the same place with your list getting longer and longer.*

This system works, if you work it. You owe it to yourself to give it a try. If it doesn’t work—you can go back to what’s not working now.

Get in the habit of starting each day with the power of twenty. Starting your day with an accomplishment makes you feel good and takes a little of the sting out of the times when you feel pulled in 10 different directions and can’t get anything done.

You will discover in no time at all that you can delete a pile of papers from your desk, unpack a box that has been sitting around for months, or clean out your dresser—one drawer at a time. Complete small fragments of a large task and you’ll replace that overwhelmed feeling with a wonderful sense of achievement. You will be amazed at how much you can accomplish—just twenty minutes at a time.