"Stop the World – I Want to Get Off!"

Leslie Bricusse and Anthony Newley

It seems there are a lot of people these days who want to scream that very phrase….

Are you on Information Overload? Do you wish you could just stop the world and get off for a moment to collect your thoughts**?**

A colleague recently put it like this, "our technological advances have created a toxic environment for all of us – and we are suffering because of it on a multitude of levels".

45,276 Ways to Stop It

According to a 2009 study conducted by the University of California, San Diego, Americans consume on average approximately 34 gigabytes of information a day. This translates to about 100,000 words of information in a single 24-hour period.

Our culture, work and media celebrate our unfettered access to music, videogames, television, and websites. But overloading the human brain has negative consequences. Many people worry what this information gluttony is doing to their mental and physical health.

Rates of repetitive stress disorders, such as computer-related eye strain and carpal tunnel syndrome (from excess computer use), are rising, along with rates of Attention Deficit Disorder. Lack of focus is a common complaint. Lack of time is another.

Ironically, of course, an Internet search for things like "info overload cure," reveals an information overload about what to do. Among these thousands of articles is some good advice, but good luck finding it! It's an avalanche of information about information overload.

So let's boil it down to some common sense actions you can take right now to simplify your life and clear your mind.

1. Seek excellence, not perfection

We often crave the "best and most perfect" answer or path. But the sheer number of options paralyzes us. Sociologist Barry Schwartz details this phenomenon in depth in his book, *The Paradox of Choice.*

Studies show that when you give people too many choices, they not only freeze up and have trouble deciding, but they also wind up less satisfied with what they choose. The more choices, the less satisfaction.

Try limiting your choices to the top three to four options. Be sure the options are aligned to your objective, and then let go of the rest. Work with those options to make the most excellent decision (not a perfect decision) and you will get better results more of the time and more quickly.

2. Leverage the "Pareto Principle"– AKA the 80:20 rule

Author Timothy Ferriss (*The 4-Hour Workweek*) writes about the importance of the 80:20 rule, or the Pareto Principle. Essentially, this principle says that 80% of your results come from 20% of your actions..

That being said, it would seem to make sense that 80% of the information that comes into your life every day is relatively useless. Get rid of that excess 80%. Focus on the 20% of information that genuinely adds to your life.

Do routine "80:20" audits of both your information and daily time usage to improve your productivity and clamp down on overload.

3. Use Parkinson's Law

Parkinson's Law essentially states that work will expand or contract to take up the amount of time allotted for it.

In *The 4-Hour Workweek*, Ferriss talks about Parkinson's Law as a companion principle to the 80:20 principle. The idea is that you should give yourself hard to meet (but not impossible) deadlines throughout the day.

For instance, set aside specific times of the day to check, delete and respond to emails. Make a promise to yourself to pick up the phone and call instead of emailing whenever possible– it takes less time and is much more personal.

4. Must Do – Should Do

Create a 'must do' list and 'should do' list for every day of the week – and stick to it. Be brutal about each item that goes on the 'must do' list and get it done. You will be amazed by how much you accomplish in one day and how many things are really not that important.

5. Be Still – Learn to Enjoy Silence

The endless internal monologue that loops in our brains can cause serious problems, including stress, anxiety, and depression. In other words, info overload can rebound to have psychological and even physical manifestations.

Learn to be still. Clear your mind of chatter and stray thoughts. Take time out every day to let the mind settle down and rest in order to restore its focus. Just be quiet for 5 minutes – really quiet – and let your mind rest. You have permission to do this.

6. Turn off the gadgets

How can you retool your life to consume less info, less frequently? Make it a habit to leave the radio off in your car when you drive to work and enjoy the silence. You don't need the TV on to repeat the news talk. Make it a rule never to surf the web, TV, or other "glowing rectangles" after 8 P.M.

8. Reduce your informational needs

You can survive on far less information than you realize. Do you really need to scan the CNN headlines every morning on your cell phone? What is that doing for your life? How is it making you a better person and moving you closer to your goals? Excise what you don't need – and do regular audits.

Tips 9 through 45,276

[Deleted because you've gotten what you need out of this article and you don't need to waste more time consuming information, even if it's about how to stop consuming information!].

ProLaureate Leadership Programs…

A dynamic, powerful and transformational leadership development program for high potential emerging women leaders in business. Strong women… strong companies.

One-on-one coaching to the power of 3… to ignite, inspire and impact your personal and professional achievement and success.

A customized leadership development program for high potential, emerging men and women leaders in business. Turning up the heat on leadership to drive individual and organizational success to extraordinary heights.

440.653.9750
leadership@prolaureate.com
www.prolaureate.com