

in balance

UNCOMMON WISDOM FROM EXTRAORDINARY MINDS

HOW-TO LIST SERVICE

A to-do list is supposed to function like a life raft in a sea of chaos—yet all too often it makes getting things accomplished harder, not easier. “Mismanaging your list sets you up for trouble,” says Paula Rizzo, founder of *List producer.com*. “If you don’t know how to do it effectively, you end up feeding the frenzy instead of simplifying your life.” Sidestep these common mistakes with Rizzo’s easy fixes.

PROBLEM YOUR HOME AND OFFICE ARE PAPERED WITH POST-ITS.

FIX *Go tree-free*. There are several digital organizers out there, like Wunderlist (*wunderlist.com*) and Remember the Milk (*rememberthemilk.com*), that let you create and prioritize lists of all stripes and access them from anywhere; and Grocery IQ (*groceryiq.com*) makes your shopping list a cinch. ▶▶

Monday 9:30 am
- TIGHT project deadline
- long commute

Tuesday 6 pm
- house a mess - no time to clean
- knee pain won't go away
- over due bills !!

Thursday 8 pm
- Leak in basement
- need to plan anniversary

As seen in the December 2011 issue of

whole living
body+soul in balance

in balance UNCOMMON WISDOM

▶▶ LIST SERVICE CONT'D

PROBLEM YOUR LIST GOES ON AND ON.
FIX Prioritize. There's nothing more overwhelming than a list that grows longer every day, even as you check off tasks. Organize yours by deadline so you don't waste time sifting through things that may not require your immediate attention. To keep your momentum going, create your list at the end of the day when project needs are still fresh in your mind. It'll save you from having to start from scratch tomorrow.

PROBLEM YOU LIST THINGS, NOT ACTIONS.
FIX Use verbs. Writing down "tailor, proposal, gift for Stacy" can lead to confusion. When you say "take dress to tailor, write first draft of proposal, and pick up Sephora gift card for Stacy," you make things crystal clear in your mind and set the course for action. Take the time to be super specific: "Respond to

e-mails" is vague—and never ending. Who do you have to get back to and by when? "E-mail Jen about the job opening" and "RSVP to Bob and Jeff" gives you a finite task to complete.

PROBLEM YOUR NOTES INCLUDE "GET PROMOTED" AND "SAVE FOR A HOUSE."
FIX Separate dreams from to-dos. Seeing your ambitions in black and white makes them feel real and achievable. That doesn't mean, though, that they belong on the same page as "pick up the dry cleaning." Break down a big goal into several focused steps—and pick one to start on. What can actually be done with the resources you have right now? You may not be able to get promoted tomorrow, but you could start drafting a memo to your boss explaining why you deserve to move up.

Food for Thought
 From *Stop Saying You're Fine* by Mel Robbins (Crown, 2011)
 "My grandfather always used to say, when we rode in his boat and I would worry out loud about capsizing or sinking or any number of unlikely scenarios, 'Anything can happen, Mel, but it usually doesn't.'"

CONSCIOUS CONSUMER

How to Shop Smart This Season



H-Gaill/Getty Images

Not much good ever comes from getting caught up in a feverish holiday shopping spree. In his fascinating new book, *Brandwashed: Tricks Companies Use to Manipulate Our Minds and Persuade Us to Buy*, neuromarketing expert Martin Lindstrom gives us a peek under the hood at our purchasing patterns and some strategies for keeping our brains and our wallets in check.

GO ALONE. It may be a lot more fun to shop with a friend, but it can cost you—as much as 40 percent more. Why? Lindstrom cites com-

petition as a cause, but it also may be that you like spending each other's money: It's easy to talk your friend into buying that great pair of jeans or knee-high boots. Likewise, she may convince you that it would be great to buy iPods for your kids.

WAIT 48 HOURS. Don't leap at every great offer at the mall, says Lindstrom; give yourself two full days before you bite the bullet (especially with the more expensive ones). "Believe it or not, when you stop to consider the purchases, you'll buy fewer and spend 20 to 25 percent less than if you sprung for them that day," Lindstrom says.

FOLLOW THROUGH WITH ONLINE PURCHASES. Interestingly, the opposite approach applies in the virtual world. Lindstrom's research shows that if you pause to do something else or get interrupted while loading your online shopping cart, you'll spend 19 to 23 percent more money when you return than if you'd finished up the order in one sitting.

LOOK BEYOND THE FANCY FEATURES. Before you buy that 12-megapixel camera, consider that top-shelf options may offer more than you need. "Unless you're creating a billboard for Times Square, chances are you'll never use the 12-megapixel feature," he says. Don't get caught up in the latest and greatest; focus on what you need a product to do, instead of what it could do, and you'll save yourself some serious cash.

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When it comes to
Healthy Digestion...
 Benefit from some
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