How many meetings do you have today?

by Cathy C. Bonczek

"It is not enough to be busy. So are the ants.
The question is: What are we busy about?" – Henry David Thoreau

Perhaps you have an important client session, several informational, moving-projects-along gatherings, an update encounter with your boss, or a delegation meeting with your support crew-or maybe - all of the above.

Have you scheduled time on the calendar to process and think? I recommend making room for some solo time: to breathe, to assess what's changed in priorities since you arrived this morning, and to decide what meeting(s) you should skip today.

This is a key element of time management , one that I continually struggle with. I grew up in a home where everyone was busy: two working parents, an older sister who had a career in finance, aunts and uncles who worked diligently. I was a latch-key kid and proud of my independence.

When I started working, I figured out that I was fast and accurate. So I leaned in and got more done than others in the same amount of time. I was often rewarded. I realized eventually, that there would always be more work than hours in the day, and there would always be too few colleagues to delegate to.

My first remedy? Stretching the day-use my natural owl tendencies to work long into the night. Cut sleep short and get up. Start early the next day. Shave off part of the weekend in order to stay abreast of everything.

The ability to work this way has some merit: you can advance quickly, see more deals and projects and gain satisfaction in what you accomplish. The downside? It's really hard to learn, later, how to slow down. A slow afternoon will feel like slacking.

I challenge you to sit down with your calendar for the upcoming week. Take a moment and remember your work goals and ambitions. **Look at the meetings you have scheduled and circle the ones that are non-negotiable.** Be honest about that!

Then highlight the ones that will provide growth opportunities and move you closer to your goals. You may want to add a meeting with a coach or a mentor to test your thinking and your choices so you can learn to be even more discerning.

This is not just good management. It is also self care.

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