

BURNOUT AND BOREDOM BUSTER Productive Energy Exercise

Do you ever wake up feeling overwhelmed by the magnitude of 'stuff' on your plate? How often do you feel TIRED from being on that same hamster wheel day-in and day-out? What do you do to alleviate that feeling? Pull the covers over your head and hope it all goes away? Many people make 'to-do' lists or blanket their refrigerator with sticky notes; seeing that montage creates even more stress! Ah, but how good it feels to cross an item off the list or wad up a note and trash it!

That may feel like relief for now, however if 'the pain' and fatigue keeps returning, perhaps it's time to get at the source. This tool can help! By analyzing at a high level how you spend your time and energy you can make intentional choices that maximize both, while increasing your impact and performance. Studies prove performance and outcomes improve when we enjoy what we are doing. How can you increase the percentage of time you spend on activities, tasks or projects that bring you joy? What changes can you make to jump out of bed to embrace the day and all that it offers?! (Maybe that's a bit of a stretch, but why not?!)

While this exercise is designed for a deeper dive to get at the source of what you are feeling, you can repurpose the questions for everyday decisions. For example, should I quit Facebook?! A 'bonus' of continued practice and use is that you can use it to decide whether -- or not-- to take on or prioritize a new activity.

What is it?!!!

This is a self-coach tool centering two key concepts:

- Urgent/importance Matrix - also called the The Eisenhower Matrix, this helps you decide and prioritize tasks by urgency and importance, sorting out those less urgent and important tasks which you should either delegate or not do at all.
- Energy/ Impact Matrix - similarly, this tool helps you to make decisions about which of those important activities identified in the first matrix create the most energy and impact benefiting your personal mission.

There are 7 steps to this exercise which are detailed below. Follow them in order. The outcome of this exercise is a Transition Action plan transporting you from how you spend your time now to a more productive, enjoyable, and beneficial use of the limited hours in a day. Along the way, you will learn more about yourself and what truly makes you tick! This self-knowledge will help you navigate future choices for your integrated life strategies.

This tool is best used with a professional coach who will ask the tough questions and actively listen to keep you honest with yourself. It is a mashup of my own experiences with professional coaching and various other sources including six sigma, positive psychology, positive intelligence, mindtools, ELI energy, etc. Like a 'dot-to-dot' picture, I've created this tool for you to coach yourself until you have an opportunity to work with a professional. At a minimum, you should learn something about yourself!

Let's do this!!

1. Assess time spent on activities

Start with your 'list' or sticky notes of activities and tasks for which you are responsible or expected to complete. If you don't have a list, then do a 'brain dump' to create it. For each activity, estimate the

percentage of your day or week spent to do it. You may need to track your time for a couple days to get this true assessment. (Writing it down will make it 'real' as you can see it rather than just think it.) Each activity should be at a granularity that matters. For example, getting dressed and ready for the day may be enough rather than itemizing brushing your teeth, pulling on your pants, etc. Ideally one-third of your time should be spent sleeping including the process to get to sleep. Calculate percentage for each activity based on 24 hours minus how many hours you spend in a healthy sleep process.

Just completing this step may be eye-opening in terms of how long it takes to do everyday tasks that you take for granted, like preparing and then eating meals, attending team meetings, or working out including any related travel to get there. So, if getting dressed and ready for the day takes 4 hours, you might want to break that down to smaller chunks before doing the rest of the exercise. Do be honest with yourself – even though a task may be small in actual effort, hours spent stressing about it should increase the size of your circle.

2. Place activities in a quadrant on the Urgent/Importance Matrix

a) Draw the matrix design creating four quadrants.

- Urgency (x axis) denotes how soon you believe this activity must be completed
- Importance (y axis) reflects what will happen if you don't do it.

b) Draw circles and label each activity and place in the appropriate quadrant; the size of the circle should depict the percentage of time you spend on it, compared to the other activities.

- High Urgency/High Importance quadrant – These are 'must do' activities as deemed by you or someone who has authority over you. For example, a high visibility work project or caring for a loved one.
- High Urgency/Low importance quadrant – These are 'limited opportunities', e.g. activities like preparing dinner and answering teammates questions where the urgency could be reduced by planning ahead, or training others to not be dependent on you
- Low Urgency/High importance quadrant – These are 'gifts' – activities to schedule and grow for your long-term benefit like spending time with family or learning a new skill
- Low Urgency/low importance quadrant – These are 'drop or delegate' activities, for example binging a TV series or playing video games.

What is consuming most of your time? What makes it urgent – aka something that must be done NOW? And why is it important? What would happen if you didn't do it? For some people, this step is enough. However don't stop there if you want to make a lasting change.

3. Transfer High Urgency/Low importance and Low Urgency/Low importance activities to the Transition Action Plan Template. Ask yourself the following questions and answer honestly:

- How can you reduce the time spent on each of these activities?
- How might you reframe them to be less urgent and more important?
- When you assess time spent, were you surprised at how little or how much time you spent? Could it be that your bully brain made an activity bigger or more important than it really is? Remove that sabotaging thought to reflect what you know to be true in your gut and heart.
- What else can you do to reduce or drop the time spent on these activities?

Write down the actions you plan to take and when you plan to take the first step. What have you learned about yourself so far?

4. Place High Urgency/High Importance and Low Urgency High Importance activity circles on the Energy/Impact Matrix

a) Draw the matrix design creating four quadrants.

- Energy (x axis) denotes the degree of excitement and passion you have for the activity

- Impact (y axis) depicts the magnitude of difference this activity will make in what you want for your career, your health, your relationships, your finances, your life, etc.

b) Place the activity circles from the first exercise (size depicting percent of time spent) on the matrix as you feel:

- High energy/High impact – This is the ‘sweet spot’ where you would ideally spend most time
- High energy/low impact – These are activities you might want to rethink or reframe into something that provides more benefits for you in some aspect of your life.
- Low Energy/High impact – These are activities to reconsider; is there one aspect that does give you more energy? What can you do to increase that? Can it be reframed?
- Low Energy/Low impact – Because you identified these as important activities in the previous exercise, how might you renegotiate with whomever is placing this on your plate? Or, could it be some judgement or sabotaging thoughts that make you feel the way you do about this activity?

5. Update your Transition Action Plan Template. Ask yourself the following questions and answer honestly:

- What can you do to increase the time you spend on important high energy/high impact activities, and decrease the time you spend on low urgency/low energy/low impact activities?
- What is it that makes these activities important in the first place? Is it the impact or is it because of who is doing the asking? Or is it your bully brain telling you lies?
- What else have you learned about yourself?

If some of the activities deemed unimportant in the first step truly are activities you love to do, aka generate a lot of internal energy, how can you ‘flip the script’ to increase their impact and long term benefit toward what you want for your life?

6. Review what you have written on your Transition Action Plan; choose ONE next step

- What is ONE Step you can take that will make the most difference in how you feel about what is on your ‘plate’ of activities?

How can you make it S.M.A.R.T.?

- Specific
- Measurable
- Achievable
- Realistic
- Time-bound

Write this down at the bottom of your Transition Action Plan.

7. Choose to hold yourself accountable.

- How will you hold yourself accountable to do this ONE S.M.A.R.T step?
- What could possibly get in your way?
- What support do you need?

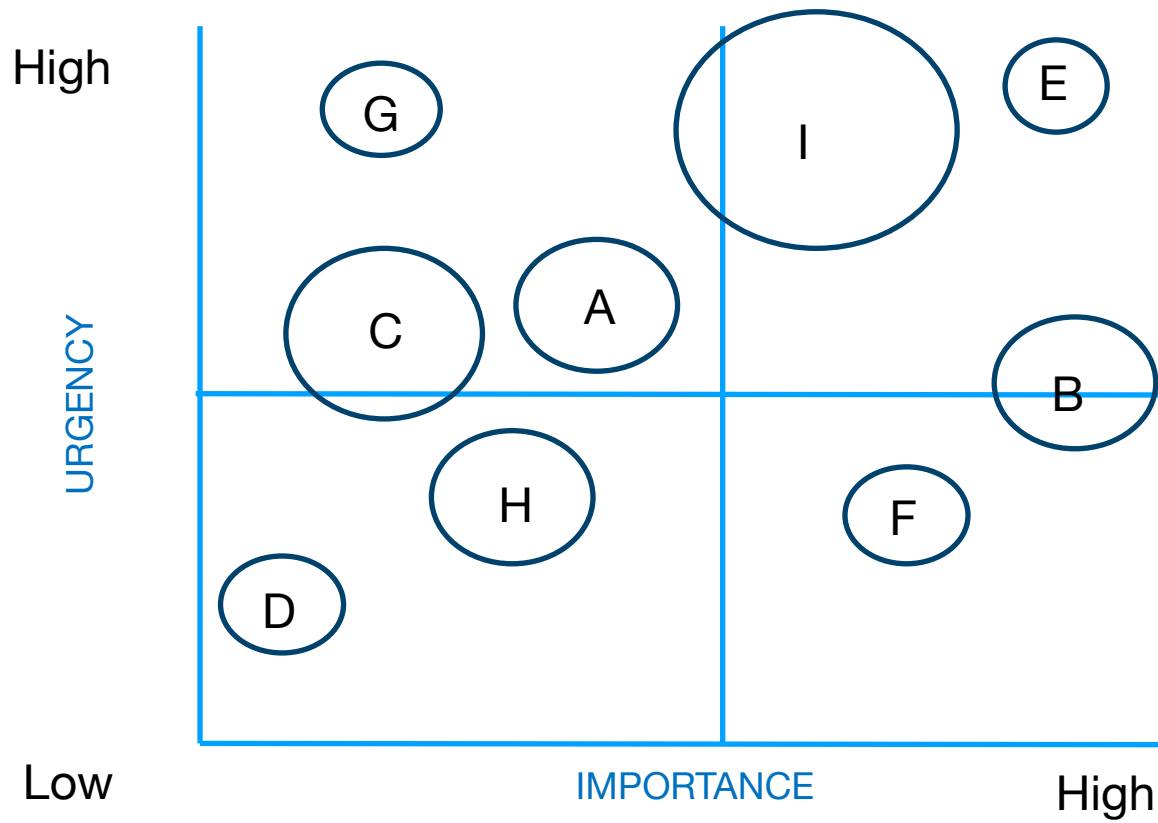
Here are some options to consider:

- Create a calendar reminder
- Entrust an accountability partner to help you (friend, boss, partner)
- Email your Transition Action Plan to yourself for a future date (www.futureme.org)

EXAMPLE

Steps 1 and 2

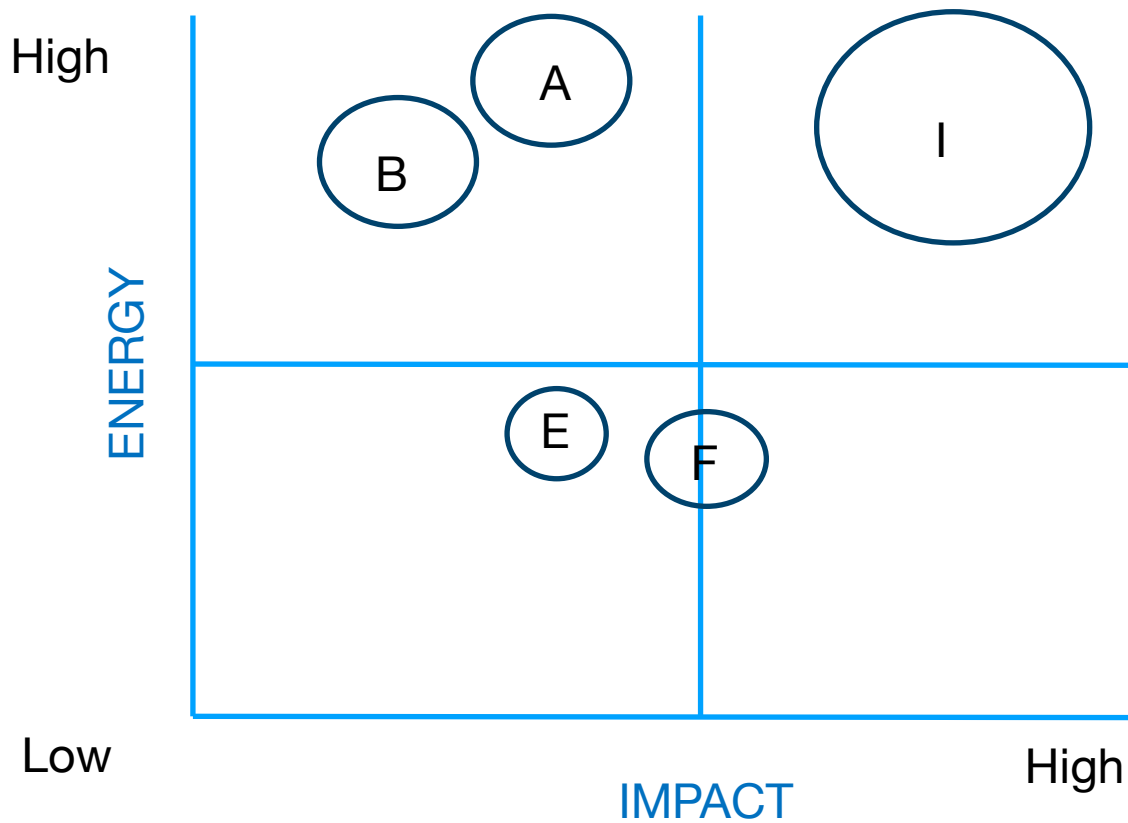
Current: Percentage Time Spent by Activity



EXAMPLE

Step 4

Current: Energy/Impact of Time Spent for Important Activity



EXAMPLE

Steps 3, 5, 6, 7

Transition Action Plan Template

| Activity | Plan to Reduce or Increase | Commitment (will you do the plan) |
|----------|--|-----------------------------------|
| C | Delegate | Med-high (hard to let go) |
| D | Stop | High |
| H | Reframe to be more personally beneficial | High |
| A | Increase scope and effort to get more visibility | High |
| G | Train others to reduce time you spend | Medium |
| B | Restructure to increase energy/passion | Low |
| E | Renegotiate the terms/benefits | Medium |

One S.M.A.R.T action step to make the most difference:

Figure out to whom and how to delegate the work of Activity C to lessen my role (and stress.) After that, modify the scope and approach of Activity A (which I love!) to be more beneficial to my overall success goals.

What I learned about myself in this exercise: Many things I think are really urgent but when I compare to other activities is not. I don't NEED to do it NOW.

How I will hold myself accountable: I will repeat this exercise one month today (on my calendar!)

Ultimate: Productive Energy Spent by Activity

