

“The Mindful 21st Century College Student”

*Developing a Framework for
Effective Creativity in a World of Distraction*

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- 6,000 tweets are published per second (206 million per hour)
- 204 million emails are sent every minute
- The average office worker received 90 emails and composes 40 per day
- The average iPhone user received 32 push notifications per day.

The Problem

Overwhelm and distraction prevent the mindfulness we need for the kind of focus academic and creative work requires.



My Areas of Responsibility

- **Personal**

- relationship with Christ
- my marriage
- my children
- my health
- church involvement
- home, finances, cars, tech
- family relationships
- personal growth (reading, podcasts, etc.)

- **Professional**

- academic publishing
- courses I teach
- ensembles I direct
- prospective recruiting & program development
- advising/counseling students
- student organizations I advise
- service to the field: ACDA, TnMEA, etc. activities
- University committees on which I serve
- side work “in the field” (conducting, writing, web design, etc.)

Common Areas of Responsibility for a Student

- **Personal**

- your spiritual growth
- your health
- your finances
- living logistics
- your part-time job
- family relationships
- personal growth (reading, podcasts, etc.)

- **Academic**

- daily assignments/readings in all courses
- long-term research/writing assignments
- continual exam prep
- personal practice/application
- extracurriculars
- grad school applications

- **Pre-Professional**

- internships/practicums
- attending conferences
- developing job search materials
- developing a portfolio
- networking with mentors
- other volunteer work in your field

“There’s just too much to do.”

–Every Trevecca student, ever.

The Solution

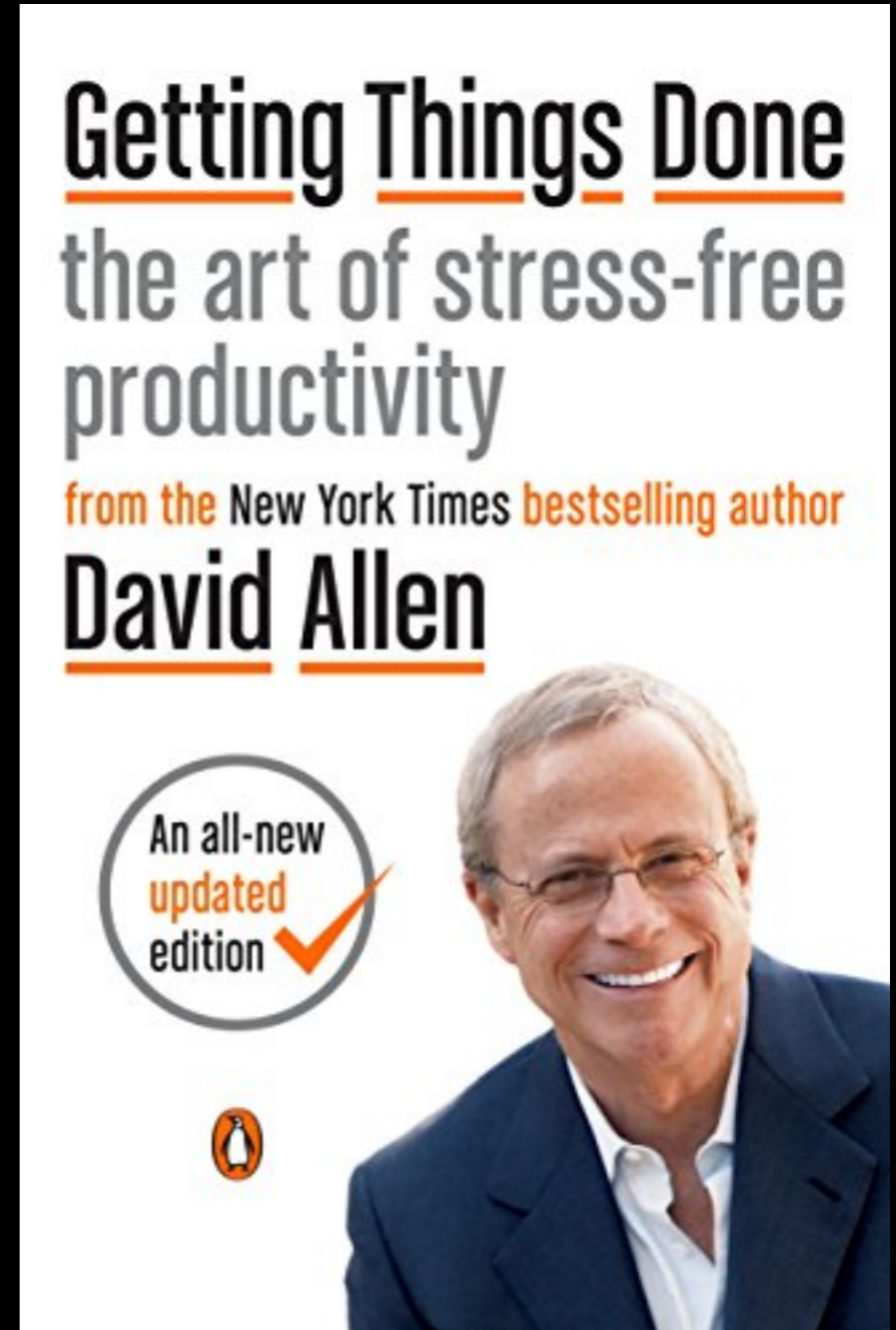
- Adopting a framework to capture, process, and complete commitments, projects, next actions.
- Assessing our areas of responsibility and evaluating what can and should be eliminated.
- Incorporating (and eliminating!) technology in conjunction with some best practices to help with our workload.

We need a framework to free our minds:

- for deep thinking.
- to allow ourselves to spend long periods of focused, uninterrupted work on a single task.
- for creativity.
- for our mental health and to maintain correct priorities

Getting Things Done

- Getting Things Done (or GTD) - 1st ed 2001/2nd ed 2015
- Originally written to help CEOs manage their corporations
- Googling “GTD” netted 19.3 million results for me in 0.44 seconds
- The conceptual framework for knowledge work in the 21st century
- “Getting Things Done for Teens” published in 2018 due the number of people saying, “I wish I had this when I was in school.”



“Your mind is for *having* ideas, not *holding* them.”

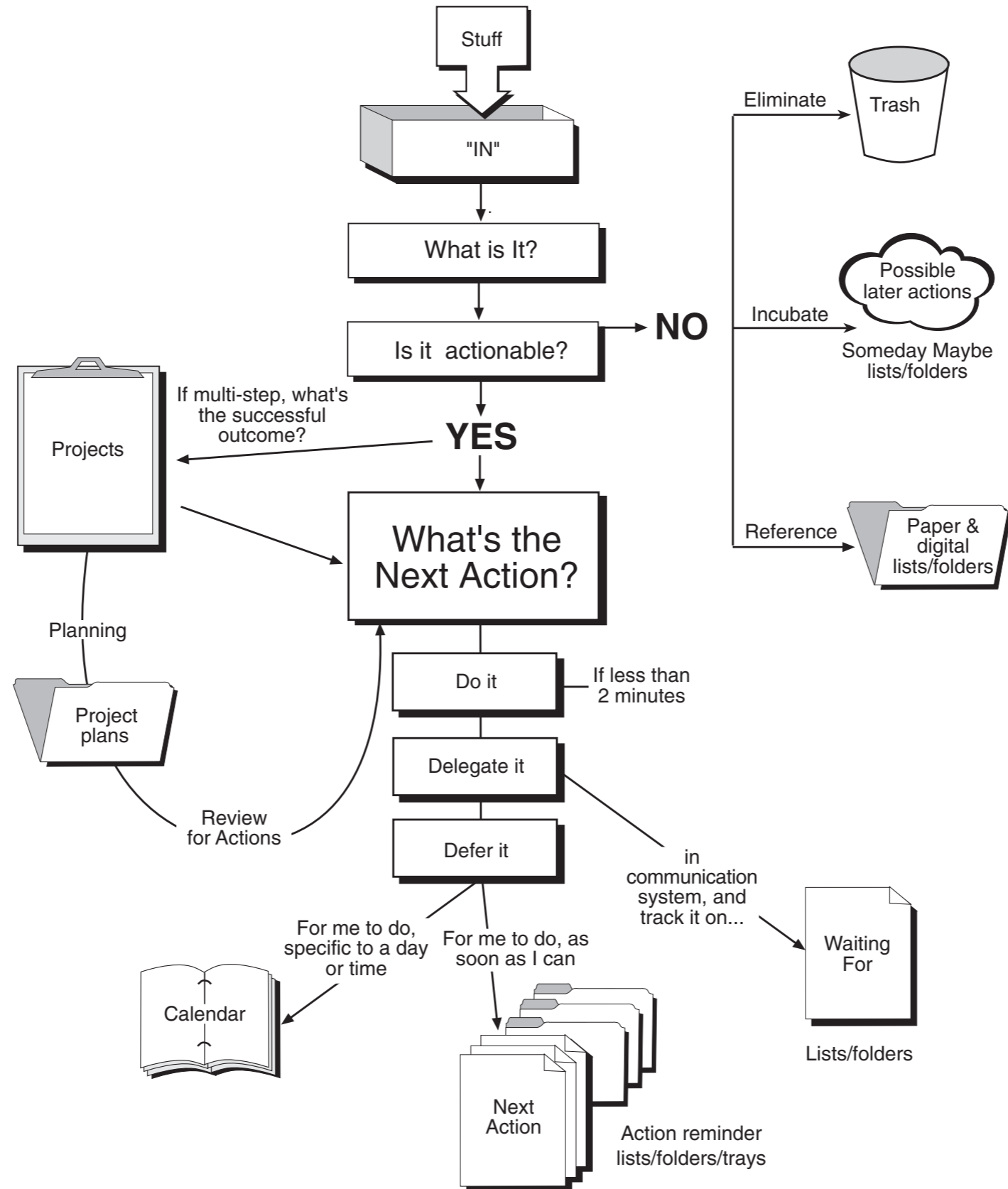
–David Allen (“*Getting Things Done*”)

Collect

- Write down/type out anything and everything that has your attention in “buckets” you can come back to (paper, notebooks, note-taking apps, voice memos, etc)
- Have as few of these collection sites as you can but as many as you need.
 - Notes/collected reference material - in your “bag” or on your “homebase” desk
 - Task lists
 - Email and other communication tools
- Empty them regularly (daily!) >> PROCESS

Process (Clarify)

- Process all that you've collected in these buckets



Organize

- Organize all these items into four categories
 - Calendar: actions to be done on a specific day or time
 - Projects: actions you've committed to finish
 - Next Actions: actions to be done ASAP
 - Waiting-For: actions others are supposed to be doing that you may need to follow up on



The Two-Minute Rule

If something can be done in 2 minutes, do it now.
You'll be surprised how much can get done in 2 minutes.

Review (Reflect)

- Do a “weekly review” to clean up, update, maintain your system. I recommend Friday afternoon, Saturday, or Sunday night.
- Review the contents of your calendar (deadlines), your various next action lists, and create a plan of 3 “full focus” things you can do each day next week to move you ahead on all your projects.
- Review your bigger picture goals as often as necessary to keep your list of projects complete and current.

Do

- Make choices about what to do next based upon your context — how much time you have, energy level, level of priority
- Stay flexible by maintaining a life system to create work-life balance.
- Tackle the 3 things you planned for each week day as early in the day as possible.

**This just seems like
common sense...**

**Knowing the framework for
common sense helps you
identify how to get unstuck.**

- If you know in your mind there are items not on your to-do list, you don't trust that list to be an accurate reflection of all your commitments. You have a capture problem.
- If you're a pro at capturing every task in writing, but looking at your inbox or list gives you so much anxiety you just give up, you have a process/clarify problem.
- If you don't have a clear picture of all your commitments so you know the best action to take next, you'll spend your days only putting out fires and not doing meaningful work that moves you toward achieving your goals. You have a review problem.

“You were designed to be a human being, not a human doing.”

**Need a creative outlet?
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Next Steps...

- Check out the digital tools I recommend to make academic life easier at thomaslerew.com/tools
- This presentation will be available at thomaslerew.com/gtdframework in the next 48 hours.
- I hope to offer more “chats” on this topic in greater depth in the future. Email me at telerew@trevecca.edu if you’d like to know for when and where they get scheduled.



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