



FIRST UNITED CHURCH  
OF OAK PARK

EVOTIONAL

## **Do Less**

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Has anyone ever told you to do less? Did you do it? Was it easy or difficult? For me, doing less is counterintuitive. I am always making extraordinary to-do lists, working on multiple tasks at a time, barely finishing one thing before thinking about the next, always trying to do more, complete more, be productive, be successful. Whether in my personal or professional life, I am what society might call type-A, an overachiever, a perfectionist ... but when these desires to be productive become all-consuming, it is an indication that I am grasping for some kind of control and the result is a tailspin into anxiety and exhaustion.

So, in the spirit of doing less, I am going to let the following article serve as my Evotional for this week. I have included here a slightly paired down version of this article, but I encourage you to read the full article by following this link. <https://zenhabits.net/less/>

### **Do Less: A Short Guide**

By Leo Babauta

Many of us work in an endless stream of tasks ... rushing from one thing to another, never pausing and never ending. Then the day is over, and we are exhausted, and we often have very little to show for it ... Is it really worth it? Is this the best way? Are we losing our lives to busy-ness and distraction?

### **What if we did less instead? ... The Benefits**

I could probably write an entire book on the benefits of doing less, but here's the short version:

1. **You accomplish more.** ... If you do less and focus on the important stuff, you actually achieve better results, more meaningful accomplishments. ...
2. **You have less anxiety.** When you let go of the distractions and the non-essential, you free yourself from the fear that you need to do these things. You learn that your world doesn't fall apart when you let these things go.
3. **You enjoy life more.** Taking time to really focus on an important task, or enjoy the little things, rather than rushing through them, is much more enjoyable.

4. **You create time.** When you do less, all of a sudden you have free time! What can you do with all that time? ... I think you'll discover other benefits as you give this a try.

### **Savor Your Tasks**

When you do a task ... create space around that task. Really pay attention, really pour yourself into it, and enjoy it. Any task can be enjoyable with the savor mindset — yes, even cleaning and doing taxes.

When you do the task, don't rush through it, but be mindful, be present, and smile.

When you're done with the task, savor your accomplishment instead of just looking for what's next. **Breathe between tasks.**

### **Curate Your Tasks**

If you normally do 20-30 things a day (as an example), small and large tasks and meetings, that's great — but are these things important? Are they good enough to make the cut of what should be in your life?

Instead, **think of yourself as a collector.** Each day is limited, our lives are limited, and we can try to cram as many things as we possibly can into these containers, or we can collect just the experiences worthy of being in these limited days.

What would you include in your day if you were culling experiences and tasks down to the best ones? My day, as an example, often contains these things I love: meditation, writing, coffee and reading, spending time with my wife and kids, exercise, eating healthy meals, helping people, going for a walk, more reading, drinking a glass or two of red wine. Not every day has those things, and not in that order, but those are some of the things I find worthy of my day.

### **Creating a Day of Less**

Can you do less today? How would you do it?

The answer is yes, you can do less today, even if you've already started with a rush of small tasks. Here's what I suggest:

1. **Take a breath.** Take a moment to pause in your busy day and breathe. Pay attention to your breath for a minute, then pay attention to your body, how you're sitting, whether your jaw is clenched, what is tense.
2. **Now consider your day.** What have you done already today? What is on the horizon for the rest of the day? Is there anything you can let go of? Can you create spaces between your tasks? Can you cull your tasks, getting rid of the non-essential, just leaving the best?
3. **Learn to know the essential.** It takes time to figure out what tasks give you the most impact on your life, your career, your ability to help others and change

the world. But start learning today — pick what you think is most essential, clear some space, and just work on those things. Savor them.

4. **Reduce distractions.** Consider going on a digital cleanse — take a day or a week off of social media, news, entertainment/gossip sites, the places you usually spend on distractions. What will you do when you feel like some distraction? Meditate, exercise, create.

**Breathe. Enjoy the new space. Savor the beauty of doing less.**

Already I feel better having read this article. We are living in and navigating a strange and stressful time. Maybe our mental health and overall well-being need us to do a little less.

Gracious God, even you modeled for us through Jesus the importance of doing less, taking breaks, and creating time and space for the self. Remind us that self-care is not selfish, that in doing less we may have the ability to enjoy more. Help us to do less, thoughtfully curate our tasks, savor them, and breathe. Amen.

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