

How to Organize Your Life, Do Less and Have More Time



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Many of us have an action plan, or to-do list, to keep ourselves organized - at the beginning of the day we write down everything that we have to do, and then the day is filled with the victorious crossing off of items from the list. But what happens when you get to the end of the day, and too often there are a lot of things left?

We're left with a feeling like the work is never done, but perhaps the problem isn't so much that there's so much that needs to get done, but the fact that we're putting everything on one long to-do list.

You can actually organize your thinking, and organize your time, just by changing your to-do list.

Having a detailed daily action plan can help you stay focused - it's called the catalyst. In science, a catalyst is a substance that increases the rate of a chemical reaction without being consumed in the process. For you, your catalyst is an action that dramatically increases the rate at which you achieve your vision without it consuming you.

The CATA-list action plan is divided into 4 categories:

- Catalysts
- Achievements
- Tasks
- Avoidances

The catalyst: To find your catalyst, ask yourself: What is the one thing I can do that will have the greatest impact on my vision? The guiding principle for your catalyst is that you know this one item would do the most to get you to your goal. For example, let's say you're trying to lose 50 pounds. A catalyst might be to go running, or give up sugar. Your catalyst is that one thing that's most important for you to do to manifest your desired outcome.

Achievements: These are the actions you classify as highly important. They might not have the transformational effect of your one catalyst, but they're the achievements that matter on a day-to-day basis. It's your daily actions, priorities, projects and deadlines.

Tasks: This category is for the actions you like to take, but can't justify as truly critical, at least not in terms of your priorities and goals. Tasks are typically big time consumers. These are the long meetings that need to be scheduled, networking events, or maybe they're things you like to do only after the more valuable action items are taken care of.

Avoidances: These are the actions that have actually very little return. Often times, scrolling through social media feeds falls into this category. Surfing through our emails, unuseful conversations are avoidances that actually take up the time we need for more important priorities in our lives. By creating a catalyst you have organized now your to-do list in an efficient way in an organized order of value for your time.

By creating a catalyst you have organized your list of action items in an efficient way, and in an organized order of value for your time. When you see your catalyst through, you free yourself of the daily to-do list, and organize your list of action items according to your priorities – and, ultimately, achieve your vision.

For more resources on time management, work-life balance and other leadership coaching materials, see Joelle's [recent books and articles](#), and [resources for women leaders](#).

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