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What We're Reading ... Productivity and Time Management

April 1, 2022

Series #1: *Getting Things Done: The Art of Stress-Free Productivity*

By David Allen

Less stress! I hear so many people mentioning this. In today's fast paced world, we have many obligations and different details to handle at once. Many people struggle with balancing those commitments. In his book, *Getting Things Done: The Art of Stress-Free Productivity*, David Allen addresses this issue. Written in 2001 and revised in 2015, it remains a good handbook for a successful, happy life in our increasingly busy world.

Clarity for Productivity

Allen takes the position that creativity is unleashed when the mind is clear. This is when we are the most productive and free to have the "aha" moment. It's what athletes describe as "being in the zone." We think of solutions that people call out of the box, we work efficiently and relationships with coworkers, family and friends work smoothly. We can control the details, gain clarity of mind, unclutter the work environment and unleash mental creativity.

In order to achieve these lofty goals regularly, Allen suggests following an easy, step-by-step process. It takes slowing down, focusing and making a commitment to do what are sometimes very simple actions. The process involves taking each detail one at a time, analyzing its purpose, importance and meaning, then organizing all the results. When things are clear, we are free to choose where to focus our attention and which detail to work on. Allen outlines his system clearly and gives concrete examples of how people have benefited from it.

The Natural Flow of Time Management

He also encourages readers to be kind to themselves when creating these new habits. The idea is that there is a natural flow of finally getting things organized, events that can happen to disrupt our flow and the inevitable re-organization that must occur. He concludes with a warning that life is moving increasingly faster and that using this system provides tools to gain peace of mind.

My one criticism is that Part 1 focuses too much on theory. A new reader might want to skim through it and focus on the action steps outlined in Part 2, which is the heart of the book. This section is the most practical, as the steps are easy to follow and doing this work can produce results quickly. Part 1 and the future planning described in Part 3, can be investigated in depth later.

"Your head is for having ideas, not for holding them."