

# Get it over and done with- the secret to managing tasks we don't like

Submitted by: BlueSky Education

Monday, 17 April 2023

---

Most jobs involve tasks we don't like. But should we complete these tasks in one fell swoop or split them up into bite-sized portions and spread them out over time?

According to new research from Trinity Business School, WHU – Otto Beisheim School of Management and the University of Wuppertal, it is actually a good idea to do the tasks you don't like in one go.

The recently published study shows that on days when you face high work demands, you may want to just push through and do one unpleasant task after the other, instead of frequently switching between pleasant and unpleasant tasks. Interestingly pushing this depletes your mental energy less and allows you to fully engage with your work the next day.

The research was led by co-authors Wladislaw Rivkin (Trinity) by Fabiola H. Gerpott from WHU – Otto Beisheim School of Management and Stefan Diestel (University of Wuppertal).

Dr. Fabiola H. Gerpott, Professor of Leadership at WHU – Otto Beisheim School of Management, explained: "We all know that constantly working in jobs with high demands is draining. But what hasn't been studied yet is what this means for people's actions on specific days. A frequently shared "urban legend" is that it may be a good idea to reward yourself with some easy tasks on highly demanding days. Our research shows that this may actually make the contrast between your easy tasks and the unpleasant tasks more salient."

Dr. Wladislaw Rivkin, Associate Professor in Organizational Behaviour added: "To illustrate, imagine working on a task that is highly tedious at the beginning of your workday. After this, you switch to a task that is very enjoyable. Following these two tasks, you resume the tedious task. On such a day, switching between pleasant and unpleasant tasks triggers a mental comparison between these tasks, making the unpleasant activity worse as you keep on thinking about the fact that you could actually engage in the pleasant activity instead."

Dr. Stefan Diestel, Professor of Work, Organizational and Business Psychology at University of Wuppertal, further outlines for whom this risk is particularly strong: "While our findings generally hold for a broad range of employees, we also found that being chronically exhausted (i.e., burnout) makes employees more vulnerable to higher levels and fluctuating job demands, requiring them to overcome their inner resistances over the course of a workday. This is because their overall resource battery suffers from a "memory effect", thereby providing employees with a chronically impaired capacity to exert self-control."

Although it would of course be great to generally reduce work demands, this is often not possible. According to this research, you still have leeway to manage yourself better on days with high work demands: You should better consistently work on the tasks you really dislike and get them done instead of repeatedly changing between highly and hardly straining demands over the course of your working day.  
/ENDS

For more information, a copy of the research paper, or to speak with the researchers, contact Kate Mowbray at BlueSky PR on [Kate@bluesky-pr.com](mailto:Kate@bluesky-pr.com) or call +44 710022871