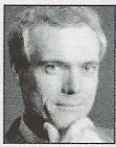


Start a 'Stop Doing' List

Make your life a creative work of art.



by Jim Collins

EACH TIME I SIT DOWN TO DO my annual resolutions, I reflect on a lesson taught me by a remarkable teacher. In my mid-20s, I took a course on *creativity and innovation* from Rochelle Myers and Michael Ray at the Stanford Graduate School of Business, and I kept in touch with them.

One day, Rochelle pointed to my ferocious work pace and said, "I notice, Jim, that you're a rather *undisciplined person*."

I was stunned and confused. After all, I was the type of person who carefully laid out my *big hairy audacious goals*, *top three objectives*, and *priority activities* at the start of each year. I prided myself on the ability to work relentlessly toward those objectives, applying the energy I'd inherited from my prairie-stock grandmother. "Your genetic energy level enables your lack of discipline," Rochelle continued. "Instead of leading a *disciplined life*, you lead a *busy life*."

She then gave me the 20-10 assignment. Suppose you woke up tomorrow and received two phone calls. The first phone call tells you that you've inherited \$20 million, no strings attached. The second tells you that you have an incurable and terminal disease, and you have no more than 10 years to live. What would you do differently, and, in particular, what would you stop doing?

That assignment became a turning point in my life, and the *stop doing* list became an enduring cornerstone of my annual resolutions—a mechanism for disciplined thought about how to allocate the most precious resource: time.

Rochelle's challenge forced me to see that I'd been energetic, but on the *wrong things*. Indeed, I was on the *wrong path*. After graduate school, I'd taken a job at Hewlett-Packard. I loved the company, but hated the job. I had to stop doing my career, so that I could find my real work. I quit HP, migrated to the Stanford Business School faculty and became—with some good luck—a self-employed professor, happily toiling away on my research and writing.

Rochelle's lesson came back to me while puzzling over the research data on 11 companies that turned from good to great. In cataloguing the steps that ignited the transformations, I was struck by how many of the big decisions were

not what to do, but *what to stop doing*.

Start a stop doing list. Clarify your three circles, mirroring at a personal level these three questions: 1) What are you deeply passionate about? 2) What are you genetically encoded for—what activities do you feel just made to do? 3) What makes economic sense—what can you make a living at? Those fortunate enough to find or create a practical intersection of the three circles have the basis for a great work life.

Think of the three circles as a *personal guidance mechanism*. As you navigate the twists and turns of a chaotic world, it acts like a compass. Am I on target? Do I need to adjust? If you make an inventory of your activities today, what percentage of your time falls outside the three circles? If it's more than 50 percent, the *stop doing list* might be your

most important tool. The question is: Will you accept *good* as *good enough*, or do you have the courage to stop the activity?

I now see Rochelle Myers as one who leads a *great life*, while doing *great work*. This stems largely from her remarkable simplicity. A simple home. A simple schedule. A simple frame for her work.

Rochelle spoke to me repeatedly about the idea of "making your life a creative work of art." A great piece of art is composed not just of what's *in* the final piece, but what is *not*. It is the discipline to discard what does not fit—to cut out what might have already cost days or even years of effort—that distinguishes the truly exceptional artist and marks an ideal piece of work or an ideal life. **PE**

Jim Collins is author of *Good to Great* and co-author of *Built to Last*. © 2003 Jim Collins. All rights reserved.

ACTION: Start your own "stop doing" list.

PROFESSIONAL • SUCCESS

Success and Sanity

It replaces work/life balance.



by Susan Davis-Ali

ARE YOU SEARCHING IN vain for the illusive ideal of work/life balance?

This ideal does not reflect reality for most people. It's what many hope for, but few achieve. The quest leaves them feeling *frustrated*, *exhausted*, *inadequate*.

Work/life balance implies equity of time, energy, passion or attention to work and life. Rarely can you achieve such equity.

However, you can achieve *success and sanity*. This concept recognizes and celebrates the off-balanced lifestyle, reduces the stress and pressure, creates an environment where you no longer berate yourself for not achieving *balance*, and encourages you to find happiness in your own unique way.

I define *success* as the ability to achieve career goals, and *sanity* as the ability to enjoy life. Success and sanity are interdependent, intersecting pathways. When both run smoothly, life is good. When one falls apart, the other follows.

The concepts of *success and sanity* put your goals and life circumstances at the center of the equation. *Success and sanity* must be defined through your eyes.

I use an assessment tool that looks at four dimensions of success and four of sanity and helps you evaluate how your *current reality* matches your goals.

The four components of *success* are:

1. **Job** includes everything from specific daily responsibilities to job title.

2. **Organization** includes the reputation, culture, and work relationships.

3. **Financial rewards** include salary, bonuses, and benefits.

4. **Recognition** includes leadership, challenge, and recognition.

The four components of *sanity* are:

1. **Time** includes having time for family, friends, activities, and hobbies.

2. **Energy** includes having the physical and emotional energy to pursue non-career goals.

3. **Financial** includes having money to pay bills and do things you enjoy.

4. **Relationships** include all relationships—spouse, partner, children, friends, family.

Sanity looks different to each person. To you, sanity means participating in your chosen roles in a rewarding, meaningful way. Sanity is not achieving *balance* but making peace with the *juggling act* in your life and embracing a unique pathway that works for you.

Success and sanity are a measure of what you *have* versus what you *want*. Gaps can be positive, negative, or neutral. A *positive gap* happens when your reality surpasses your goals. *Negative gaps* (*points of pain*) reflect unmet goals.

When you're frustrated with your efforts to achieve *balance*, you tend to *burn out and bail out*. Moving beyond *balance*, you can create a life that embraces and supports *success and sanity*. **PE**

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ACTION: Seek success and sanity.