

# Managing Away Your Work Overload



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# Participant Objectives

*By this workshop's end:*

- You will be able to manage your time and effort in your work life and your life in general more efficiently and effectively.
- You will have a systematic plan for taking control of and allocating your time and a list of concrete improvements to make in the way you work and live.

# Workshop Outline

- Guiding Principles
- Exercise #1: Living by the Hour
- Exercise #2: Working by the Hour
- Time and Work Management Tips
- Boice's Moderate/Mindful Approach to Teaching and Writing
- Exercise #3: Active Waiting
- Exercise #4: Changing by the Hour

# Guiding Principles

- Work overload is endemic in academia.
- It is very stressful and unhealthy.
- Rushing and procrastination are stressful and inefficient.
- Your use of time reflects *your values and beliefs about the world*. Managing your time better involves re-examining and changing some values and beliefs.

# Guiding Principles *continued*

- Some things you now do are worth much less of your time, and other things are worth more.
- Focus not on how you spent your time now but on *how you'd prefer to*.
- The difference between the two is excess fat and can be eliminated.

# Guiding Principles *continued*

- You can safely “go with the flow” within pre-set boundaries.
- Controlling the time you give to teaching and students is *key*, and you can do this without jeopardizing your relationship with students.

# Exercise #1:

## **Living by the Hour**

- What did you learn, if anything, about yourself and your life?
- How different is your current allocation of hours per week from “as you’d realistically like to spend them”?

# Exercise #2:

## Working by the Hour

- What areas of your work had you been shortchanging up to now?
- What areas don't seem to fit into the time allocated to or left over for them?

*Let's find more time for these areas.*

# **Boice's Moderate/Mindful Approach to Teaching and Writing**

- 1. Wait actively.**
- 2. Start preparing/writing early.**
- 3. Prepare/speak/write in brief, regular sessions.**
- 4. Stop before you overwork it.**
- 5. Detach yourself from the results.**

# 1. Wait actively.

- Don't rush into class preparation, the next sentence, or prose.
  - Reflect first on *what* to say/do, *how* to say/do. Breathe. Visualize. Meditate.
  - Pause to notice alternatives and simplifications.
  - You can do this anytime, anywhere.
- ≠ Procrastination puts focus on something else.

# Exercise #3:

## Waiting Actively

- Close your eyes and imagine yourself at your work place.
- Focus on something you're in the process of writing or designing.
- Breathe deeply, relax, and visualize or reflect on the next steps.

## 2. Start early

- Before you feel ready or the need to start.
- Outline, concept-map, free-write.
- Give your subconscious time to conceive, organize, and refine ideas.
- Enjoy freedom from stress and pressure.
- You can do this almost anytime, anywhere.

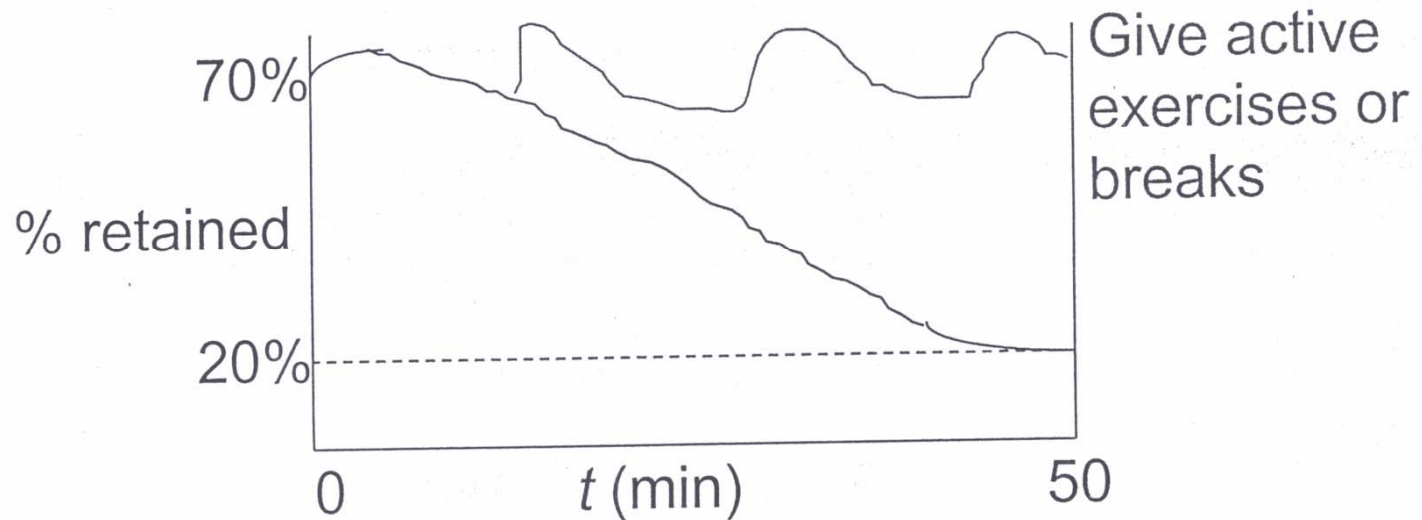
# 3. Prepare/write in brief, regular sessions

- Prepare or write *daily* at least 15 minutes.
  - Tara Gray's workshops on writing, publishing
- You will keep your flow from day to day.
- You will see your progress every day.
- Find a writing buddy or group.
- Don't binge, however euphoric.

# 3. Speak in brief, regular sessions

- Prepare each class around 1, 2, or 3 major points. Less can be more.
- Plan student-active breaks every 15-20 minutes – e.g., problem to solve, question to answer, mini-case to debrief, writing-to-learn exercise (individual, pair, or group).
- Let students summarize major points at end.

Experimental study: Gave 50-minute lecture, tested immediately afterwards. Results:



$t$  = time in lecture when information was presented

# 4. Stop before overwork

- Before returns diminish.
- Avoid overprep for class; keep spontaneity and flexibility.
- Slow the pace of classes and *pause* to let students absorb, process, reflect, note-take.
- Avoid perfectionism and product focus in writing.

# 5. Detach yourself from results

- Be experimental. It's OK if a class activity doesn't work well. Just find out why.
- Stay open to criticism and change.
- Moderate negative and euphoric emotions.

# Exercise #4:

## Changing by the Hour

- Chance to share voluntarily any beliefs you want to bounce off others here.
- How do the costs and countervailing evidence against your beliefs compare to their benefits and evidence in favor?
- To what extent did identifying the source of your beliefs undermine their credibility?