



## **Monday, August 30, 2021**

### **The Weekly Meeting**

We've spent a lot of time helping people to create their [strategic plans](#) for the semester. We academics are great at making a list of goals, but without a doubt, it's challenging to connect those writing goals to our day-to-day, especially given the ongoing precarity we're all experiencing.

With the strategic plan, you can set yourself up to hit your writing goals if you outline how they will be accomplished and commit time each day to do the work (even a half hour can go a long way). You can use the strategic plan on a weekly basis as the foundation for planning out your week. One of the simplest and most transformative strategies that we have seen graduate students, post-doctoral researchers, and faculty put into practice is what we call "The Weekly Meeting." As with all strategies, you may want to try it out for a few weeks to see how it works for you.

The Weekly Meeting is simple. All you have to do is devote 30 minutes of time (ideally at the beginning of each week) to planning the rest of your week. Many of the people we've worked with begin preparations for the week on Sunday night. Regardless of when you hold your weekly meeting, you'll notice that having your plan in place before your week begins will make a difference. You're less likely to get derailed by seemingly urgent (but low-priority) tasks throughout the week if you have your writings tasks pinned to a calendar. During your weekly meeting time, try the following five steps (use a physical or online calendar, your choice):

#### **Step #1: Create Your Skeleton (5 Minutes)**

Start your weekly meeting by blocking out all of your commitments for the week, including research and writing time, classes, office hours, meetings, etc. We know that your "real-life commitments," especially childcare and other family-related activities, will be hard to pin down, but to the best of your ability, account for these as well on your calendar. If you haven't tried it yet, try scheduling your writing time first thing in the morning (or if you can't, try to make sure you schedule it in before you check e-mail or Facebook, prep for classes, and/or respond to everyone else's needs in your workplace). Your commitments form the skeleton of your week because everything else has to be fleshed out on top of them.

## Step #2: Brain Dump (10 Minutes)

Write out all your to-do items for the week including the short-term tasks you need to get done, including the strategic tasks associated with your long-term research agenda. These should already be listed by week in your [strategic plan](#). The purpose of this step is to: 1) reconnect you with your strategic plan on a weekly basis, 2) get everything out of your head and onto paper, and 3) put you in a position to control your week (instead of your week controlling you). Many new faculty members we've worked with categorize their to-do items under the headings "teaching," "service," "research," and "personal" so that they can quickly assess the relative length of their tasks and to determine whether their lists are aligned with how they will be evaluated for promotion and tenure. The brain dump often causes relief or anxiety, but no matter how you feel about it at the moment, go on to the next step.

## Step #3: Introduce Your Tasks to Your Calendar (15 Minutes)

Here's where it can get difficult. Turn back to your calendar for this week and assign each of your to-do items to a *specific block of time*. This will require you to estimate how long your tasks will take, prioritize what's most important, and commit to actually doing specific work at specific times this week. Inevitably, you will have the same devastating realization each week -- you don't have enough time to complete all the tasks on your to-do list. Breathe deeply. Having more tasks than time is the perfectly normal reality of academic life. No matter how frustrating it is, it's far better to deal with that reality at the beginning of the week than to walk blindly into that realization at the end of the week.

## Step #4: Decide What to Do With Everything That Doesn't Fit

Acknowledging that you have more tasks than time, consciously choose how you will spend your time this week. You may need to prioritize the tasks on your list. And for the tasks that don't fit, consider the different options you have for dealing with them. You can:

- Delegate
- Lower your standards (especially for non-critical tasks)
- Compromise
- Re-negotiate deadlines
- Ask for help
- Let some things go

## Step #5: Commit to Executing The Plan

Of course, the best-laid plans can be thrown into disarray by unexpected circumstances and daily chaos but having a clear plan and genuinely committing to its execution is essential to making progress on your long-term goals each week. Your commitment to your plan will also help you to easily say "no" to additional requests during the week and will assist you in being far more productive than you would be operating on crisis management each day.

## The Weekly Encouragement

This week, we want to encourage you to do the following:

Take 30 minutes and hold a Weekly Meeting. If you want to spend a bit more time to walk through the process step-by-step, view our core curriculum webinar by [clicking here](#).

If you still don't have a calendar, get yourself a physical planner or using an online one. Trust us, you won't be able to keep all the commitments in your head, especially as the term unfolds.

Gently acknowledge that having more tasks than time is perfectly normal for academic life. It is not an individual shortcoming or personal flaw.

Review your calendar and tasks before saying "yes" to any new commitments this week.

Recommit yourself to *at least* 30 minutes each day (Monday - Friday) for your writing.

Consider creating your [strategic plan](#) if you haven't already completed it; it's not too late.

We hope this week brings you the willingness to try a Weekly Meeting, comfort in knowing that you are not alone in having more tasks than time, and the creativity to make conscious decisions that are in line with your priorities.

Warmly,

Kerry Ann Rockquemore, PhD  
Founder, [NCFDD](#)

Anthony Ocampo, PhD  
Academic Director, [NCFDD](#)



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