

# Brain management for freelancers\* (\*not just for freelancers) NASW 2023

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Ideas from collective brainstorm about how to deal with various challenges:

## Time management/breaking up big projects/deadlines

- Break intimidating task into comically small mini steps, like 'open email'
- Asana or other project management app
- Google calendar (set lengths of time for tasks and breaks)
- Hourglass + dry-erase marker
- Figure out which time of day you're best at doing certain tasks
- Hide your phone!
- Post-it note with only handful of tasks to focus on for the day/week
- Pomodoro method - set a timer and work for 25 or 50 mins
- Start small to build momentum for big scary tasks
- 1. Write out every single task associated with a project
- 2. group the tasks from most timely/important to least then pick first ones
- set two standards/outlines:
  - 1. minimum required
  - 2. Optimal/everything you want to do
- 1 pre-lunch item
- 1-2 post lunch items
- identify something hard or stressful and do it to lower your stress load

## Distractibility/cannot focus

- Music in a language you don't speak! - Music without lyrics - video game music!
- Forest (screen lock app - if you leave, you kill your little tree)
- Leave home, work somewhere I don't know anyone
- drink something hot coffee tea Etc chai!
- set aside a block of time for one single task one at a time
- find a quicker shorter distraction to let yourself do instead of a more time consuming distraction (EG scrolling Twitter)
- white noise to block out distractions

- if you're working alone, don't shower until you lose focus
- schedule chunks of do-nothing time
- YouTube Pomodoro 'study with me'
- Move to Wyoming or somewhere it's quiet and you can afford no roommates
- except when a quick nap is the correct answer
- combine fresh air breaks with a monotonous task (weeding?) and let your subconscious go to work
- write down the emotion underlying the distraction (I'm bored/hungry/tired)
- walk outside, soak up the sun and try again!
- body double have a friend come over and work side by side
- realize you can only focus for 40 minutes (it's science!) go outside and walk
- morning exercise
- make different playlists for different types of work tasks to get into the right headspace
- if you can't stay on task take a walk or exercise - dopamine hit helps calm the mind sometimes

## Lack of feedback

- peer group
- leaving something for like a week until you can read it like a different person
- bugging your editor
- Network mapping
- reading others work for parallels and ideas
- read out loud to make it feel fresh to yourself
- print it out (I see it differently in a different medium )
- edit someone else's stories, then go back to your own with editor's eye
- writing groups outside my genre for basic feedback
- swap with a peer/colleague/friend

## Procrastination

- productive procrastination
- creating the false deadlines for myself
- block calendar time called complete story
- backup to-do lists for when the first one is too much
- a sticker reward chart for tasks starting and completion
- scheduling my days accepting when I'm usually most and least focused morning equals writing afternoon equals mindless work
- make sure I am fed washed and feeling physically well and just accept I am not getting much work done before that

- post it on monitor that says just write the damn thing seriously bonus if it's on a Stern image of Batman
- set out to only write a crappy draft or outline if progressed if you are procrastinating because you are worried it won't be good
- physically remove the distraction lock phone in other room
- leave a fun podcast or album to listen to to incentivize doing it on a timeline
- just start bullet pointing until the engagement clicks on bullet points information important fact
- I've put on my noise canceling headphones with inspo music I only listen to when I need to focus right
- if you get random thoughts or new tasks while working create a separate brain dump list so you can stay focused
- listen to brain FM to focus
- make it fun! have a chai latte
- avoid a blank page paste in anything or use AI as a bad first draft
- make a cup of tea coffee and create a Home Cafe
- if a task is making me anxious Dart that first no need to finish it
- say your own name Susie you will get X done by next time your brain will listen

## Recommended resources

- Daylio
- Google Calendar
- life.AT.com (or lifeat.com)
- AppBlocker/AppBlock or Freedom.to or stayfocused (chrome extension)
- 20-20-20 timer (for eye strain and keeping track of time)
- Tabs outliner chrome extension
- Airtable. For everything.
- Trello
- Notion (tracking everyone you talk to for things!)
- Stalogy 365 notebooks
- Highlighters in nice colours
- Asana for project management
- Todoist
- The Daily Page Planner and Forest App
- 4 the words (turns writing into a game)
- Passion planner
- Time Block Planner
- *Unmasking Autism*, Devon Price
- Teamgantt.com

## Lack of structure

- Leave home and work at local public library

## Human interaction/accountability

## Task tracking/to-do list

## Asking for help