



WHY ARE YOU SO BUSY?

It's the beginning of November and while some are excited for Christmas already, you are already stressed. Sarah Blinco decides what's urgent and important, and what can be rescheduled for another day...

It's a lovely morning and you pop out to pick up coffee. In the street you run into a friend and you ask them how they are. "Busy!" they emphasise.

"Busy" is now a standard response. Certainly, there are days when everything seems urgent and time just runs away. The to-do list grows by the hour yet there's been no satisfying crossing off of tasks. It's stressful. Upon closer inspection though, you might be surprised at where your 'busy' hours are running off to. And it's not all on 'urgent' tasks.

There's plenty of evidence to suggest that 'busy-ness' is burning us out. It's not to be underplayed either, because being busy can make us sick. But is this contemporary busy-ness epidemic self-perpetuated?

Jo O'Donovan from workplacereationships.com.au, answers "yes". She works with businesses and coaches individuals on the harm of stress and why doing less is actually more productive.

"There is a perception that work 'should' be hard; words like 'hustle' and 'grit' have created a belief that if you are not working long hours then you are not trying. The idea of being the first in the office and last to leave shows dedication and commitment.

"Couple this with an increased sense of competition to live the 'perfect life'. That is, to keep up with the woman in her late 30s who, according to social media, is eating only organic, has a great career, is a loving parent to her adorable children, works out daily and is a passionate and caring partner.

"Busy-ness is often self-perpetuated. People waste a lot of time and are more overwhelmed by choice than doing the thing that needs doing... It's even like a 'badge of honour' to reply 'busy' when people ask how you are — if you're busy, it's like being important!"

Jo shares a relatable example that may make you laugh, or wince. "Let's say I must organise my mother's 70th birthday party. First, I feel I need to ask my Facebook friends for recommendations. Then I might need to ask a few Facebook groups too and look for Google reviews for everything from cakes, to venues to balloons. I no longer seem to be able to trust my own judgement or go to the local place that is easy for me to logistically pick the stuff

up from. I need to travel to every corner of the city (on top of a normal day) to put together this party, as that somehow proves my love more. Then at the event I spend the entire afternoon sharing my story about how there nearly wasn't a cake because it was a 50km round trip to get it."

Sound familiar?

We've bought into 'always being on', and it's damaging not just our productivity but our health. Everything from skin rashes to weight gain and breathing difficulties is associated with stress — being 'too busy'. Not forgetting, of course, the sharp rise in anxiety and depression that's being reported within the workplace today.

Samantha Taylor is the founder of The Nurture Project (thenurtureproject.com). Sam and her team have helped hundreds of women overcome anxiety by guiding them in the often-neglected life skills of self-care, exercise, nutrition, meditation, and sleep.

Sam agrees with Jo that a lot of our time is wasted, but it's still our time, and it's going somewhere — leading to those extreme feelings of overwhelm and busy-ness. It's incredibly easy to spend an hour on something that should only take 20 minutes. "There is a lot of 'busy-ness'... For example, you may pick up your phone for a reason: to check a text message. The next thing you know, you've checked Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, LinkedIn and your emails, then something else pings and you're going through the whole cycle again. Think how that time adds up when you're doing it several times a day!"

Feeling like we have more time generally means we're calmer, more organised, present and productive. If busy-ness is a mindset, we can shift it — and hence, gain back more time. Both Jo and Sam stress that the only way to get yourself out of a busy-ness mindset is to **analyse where your time is going and make changes accordingly**. Even if you believe there's nothing else you can adjust, give this strategy a go for a few days and see what happens. Prioritise what needs to be done, and of course, what is important to YOU.

"Sometimes my clients realise that some of the things they do each day, like drinking their morning coffee or having lunch with colleagues, are actually nurturing and restorative." Sam explains. "In their busy, time-scarce mode they saw these things as

an obligation rather than for what they can be: positive, enjoyable moments."

Sam also reminds us that it's necessary to say NO — drop the busy-ness and claim back time. "It's this crazy, hyper-connected world we live in now where expectations of ourselves and the others around us are sky-high. But we must ask ourselves how we can gain perspective on our lives: what's important at the end of the day?"

"Being too busy and feeling the need to cram so much in, over-committing and constantly 'achieving' means that we are chronically stressed. The number one indicator that someone will develop anxiety or depression is chronic stress (usually for around 10 months). When you consider that serious cases of anxiety and depression have been rising each year in Australia and throughout the Western world for the past 10 years, it makes you realise that it's our busy-ness that's causing a stress, anxiety and depression epidemic."

No doubt we're coming into a busy period of the year. If you're already panicking about the state of your diary, don't worry, you're not alone! Time to re-frame though. "As much as this time of year can be fun, it's also got a lot of pitfalls. The extra socialising, extra errands and perhaps the forced coming together of family can be stressful. Plus throwing alcohol into the mix, people tend not to take care of themselves and health, both physical and mental, suffers," Sam warns.

We are all busy, yes. However, being aware of a busy-ness mindset takes you a step towards changing it and finding more time for yourself. That's a little miracle, if you ask me.

To help us all regain precious hours in the day, Jo and Sam have shared exclusive resources for *Get it* readers — their blogs will be published on *Get it's* website in November.



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