

1.12 Pause And Ask Why

Reconnect with the reasons why you are doing what you're doing.

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Sometimes, you may get too invested in completing tasks (either preplanned or ongoing). This can result in a fake productivity loop that feels very active and gratifying but in reality may be ineffective, not unlike running on a hamster wheel. You may feel quite productive, but you're not necessarily moving in the right direction. The task you're working on might not be relevant anymore, either absolutely or compared to other more important things you could be working on.

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- Spend energy on the activities most important to you.
- Reduce procrastination and busy work.

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- The dopamine rush of completing tasks might lure you toward low-priority activities.
- We are often action driven, with a natural tendency to solve the problems in front of us rather than ask ourselves, "Is this the right problem to solve right now?"
- The highest-priority challenges on your agenda are often more difficult, tempting you to avoid them.

3

On an ongoing basis, while working on your projects, take time to pause and simply ask yourself: "Why am I doing this? Why is this important to me? What will be made possible if this is done?" Give yourself a few seconds to answer (optionally, write it down). This allows you to shift your frame of thinking so that you can see the bigger picture and compare this project with other things you could do with your time or energy.

This doesn't have to be a long process—even a few seconds of thought gives you an opportunity to rise above the automatic level of action and connect with a higher self that's more aware of your priorities. If you want to internalize this habit, you may want to do this regularly, at daily/weekly intervals, or whenever you start a project.

Should you discover conflicts between the priorities of your higher self and the instant gratification sought by your automatic self, you have an opportunity to let the two sides talk it through (see Tool 3.4). Achieving meaningful things usually involves some inescapable difficulty, so you may want to embrace that.

4

Start with Why: How Great Leaders Inspire Everyone to Take Action, <https://amazon.com/Start-Why-Leaders-Inspire-Everyone/dp/1591846447>

