

# The Technique



*How to Get Seriously Organized Using Checklists*

by  
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# THE QUALITY OF LIFE MANIFESTO

*Life Quality Examiner* and *Over Fifty and Fit* are sites inspired by an **intention**. That intention is: to help you experience more joy in your daily life – by creating a lifestyle that better matches your unique interests and needs. To express this intention clearly, I've created an easy-to-understand, 3-point manifesto:

## 1. Create Happy Balance with Simplicity

Simplicity does not mean who have to sleep on a straw mat in a bare room; it *does* mean that you'll be most content when you live the simplest version of the particular life you were meant to live.

So whether you're retired and living in a studio apartment, or running your business empire from a 22-story headquarters, the joy and meaning of your modern life will *deepen* when you can simplify both your daily routine and your surroundings.

## 2. Rise Above the Times in which You Live

Contemporary life has many advantages for which you can feel grateful, but be *discerning*. You live in a society that has mass-developed destructive daily habits, many of which you have absorbed into your own routine without realizing it.

Your soul is thirsty and that sugary punch that's coming down the cultural conveyor belt — you don't have to drink it. It will only make you thirstier.

### 3. Give Yourself Time to Make a Positive Difference

The advantage to living the healthiest and longest life possible is that it gives you more energy and time to do things that will benefit or advance the human race.

When you improve your physical, emotional, mental and spiritual health, it adds more years to your life, yes, but more importantly, it *adds more life to your years*.

This can give you the additional time and energy to:

- demonstrate kindness
- embody compassion
- experience joy
- share love
- deepen your relationships
- have a positive impact within the world

It appears that one day, you will have a life-review. But even if you don't believe this, *imagine* that it is true.

During this review, you will be your own jury and bear authentic witness to your Self — and you will finally, viscerally, know how others secretly experienced you and felt around you. Your personality and press-releases will evaporate and what will be left is the entire *truth* of who you were in this life. Even if there has been selfishness up to now, by living longer you will have the chance to increase the genuine goodness in your own life-review. Give yourself that opportunity!

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Dane Findley spent the first 20 years of his career as a professional fitness trainer. Today, his passion in life is to match people with the houses and neighborhoods that will help them live most fully. He is an international relocation specialist who – together with his partner David – helps people buy and sell luxury lifestyle properties in warm-weather climates. Many of Dane and David’s clients are people overseas who want to add a Southern California or Hawaiian home to their real estate portfolio.

In his free time, Dane enjoys writing health articles and has over 200 published online. Dane is also a Pilates enthusiast who holds a masters degree in counseling depth psychology. He enjoys discovering and sharing the latest in evidence-based research on how to live a smarter life – including the newest information on functional fitness, advanced nutrition, social connecting, and improving personal productivity.

## INTRODUCTION: Get Organized!

Energy management and organization form the foundation of extreme health and longevity – because they help us create time for additional self-care protocols, and the increased mental clarity to *habituate* them.

This book will give you what you need to build that solid foundation!

Each person requires different daily rituals because each person is unique. The productivity system outlined in this book will get you started, however – and hopefully will inspire you to improve and fine-tune your own system.

The big idea is to craft a system that you can stick with – which is important, because you want a system that works for you, not a system that you have to work for.

Together we are going to focus your goals and implement an **action plan**. In order to leverage the secrets of this technique, you'll want to print the pages and work through the exercises in the sequence that they're presented.

So let's get started with your new system!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dane". The letters are cursive and fluid.

Dane Findley

## WHAT DO YOU WANT TO ACHIEVE?

The Technique is essentially a new way of approaching your to-do lists.

To get started, we need to determine – consciously – the reasons that you would write a to-do list in the first place. Knowing *why* you want to get organized is an essential first-step to figuring out how to tailor a checklist system that fits your unique needs.

Are you trying to:

- develop your career?
- maintain your household?
- reduce stress?

Take a moment to reflect about what you want. In a sense, this is an opportunity for you to write a list about *the person you'd like to become*.

**What sorts of things are you hoping to achieve by being better organized?**

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Now, looking back at what you just wrote down, can you recognize common elements?

Having a clear focus is important. If you see a common theme or element, try to boil-it-down do its basic essence, and use it to complete this sentence:

I will use The Technique to \_\_\_\_\_.

## ENERGY TIPS

We've all written a to-do list before and then done nothing about it. So what? This is a fresh start! And with a fresh start we need a fresh approach. Before I show you the specifics, it's important to first grasp the essential *energy* of the entire system.



### Energy Tip #1: Your List is Your Best Friend

*“Treat your checklist like your best friend.*

*Not your enemy. Your **best friend**.”*

If you were to approach The Technique with a sense of dread, or a sense of oppression, then I promise you it would not work. I'm encouraging you to have a sense of humor about the whole thing. Keep it *light*, that way you'll have fun and stick with it.

## Energy Tip #2: Take a Day or Two Off as Needed

*“If you do not feel like doing your list on a particular day, don’t freakin’ do it!”*

You are the boss of you, and you’re in charge of this whole process.

And, when you **go into The Technique knowing you are in charge** and that you don’t have to do it every single day, it will relieve any of that counter-productive, neurotic pressure we humans sometimes put on ourselves.

## Energy Tip #3: Engage with Your List Every 48 hours

Sure, you can take a break. As mentioned in Energy Tip 2, a day off – even two – will be good for you, but you need to pick it up again by the third day as you’ll start to fall out of the habit (beyond that window, it will become harder to get back into the swing of things).

The process will remain lighter and easier if you avoid taking any break longer than 48 hours (unless you’re on vacation, of course). This is not a hard-and-fast rule, though, and really depends on the circumstances of your life at any given point in time.

## Energy Tip #4: Trust the Process

Don’t resist the technique; just embrace it.

Even if you created a new checklist system for yourself, and then didn’t look at it again for six months, the *process* of creating the system was *still* a useful and valuable experience (any time you are able to spill those worrying thoughts out of your mind and

onto paper, it is healthy for you). So forge ahead through the process, step by step, without angst about what the end game will look like.

Don't stall by imagining new ways to overhaul the system (you can always do that later) or by making a case as for why the system might not work for you. These things don't really matter and you will just tire yourself out with procrastination and decision-fatigue. Save your energy for what matters. Do the steps!



### **Summary**

1. Your list is your best friend forever
2. Take a day off when you feel like it
3. Engage with your list every 48 hours
4. Trust the process

## REDUCING STRESS: Rid Anxiety with Productivity

It seems important to mention one other facet of productivity: that productivity systems are a healthy way to metabolize the anxiety that comes with daily contemporary life.

In these times we live in, a typical day can be chaotic and anxiety-producing.

Even if you think you're the calmest person in the world, modern living can still sometimes grind you down in unexpected ways.

It's the *low-level* stress you have to watch out for, because it starts to feel like your normal baseline after a while, so that you don't even realize it's there – that undercurrent of mild anxiety or tension in the body (too mild to be dramatic, but too unhealthy to be experienced day in and day out).

*“Productivity systems  
are a great way  
to process the low-level stress  
of everyday living”*

Systems help your mind to focus and your heart rate to lower, because they bring order to the chaos -- the brain doesn't have to keep reinventing the wheel every hour, accounting for every variable, storing every bit of data.

Too often, without realizing it, we "handle" the multitude of tiny stresses within our daily lives by: self-medicating them. We use television, sugar, wine – you name it – to help dial-down the chatter of our brains and unwind a bit. I encourage you to use productivity systems instead.

Productivity systems can give you a legitimate sense of calm and control, so that you know you've handled what you can for today, and tomorrow you're poised to hit the ground running, so you don't even have to think about anything else now but *being in the moment* – enjoying your novel, or being emotionally present with your spouse, child or best friend.

# QUOTIDIAN LISTS: Your Everyday Rituals

*Quotidian* is one of my favorite words. What it means is: everyday.

The word *quotidian* has a kind of spiritual quality to it – it’s like: daily rituals of blessing.

Your *quotidian* lists are for daily tasks you will do everyday (not the one-time tasks).

Your *quotidian* lists are the **foundation** on which you’re going to construct increased *success* and *joy*.

There are two *quotidian* lists – one for **Professional**, and one for **Personal** (if you’re a state-of-the-art homemaker or stay-home parent, you can combine those lists if you find that easier).

Think of all the tasks you want to get done everyday, in your business and personal life, and lay it out – one page for each. It might look something like this:

## Personal Quotidian

	M	T	W	TH	F	SA	SU
Start Load of Laundry	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Steep Tea	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Compile Nutritional Supplements	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Blend Green Smoothie	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Empty Dishwasher	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Make Bed	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Meditate	<input type="checkbox"/>						

There is one rule you must follow though:

## It all must fit on *one page*.

You cannot have a two-page Quotidian List. So for example, I have a Professional Quotidian that lists the business activities that I want to do everyday. I have a lot to do and it's tempting to go over, but I will not let it grow beyond *one page*.



You can shrink the font or reformat the margins, that's okay -- but don't let it go to the second page. You'll have a separate page for each list but no more.

Remember, these are the tasks you *want* to do everyday, not the tasks you *already* do everyday. For

instance, you don't need a list to remind you to brush your teeth, right? I mean, you've been doing that everyday for your whole life (hopefully)!

There are some tasks that you might be tempted to forget and *those* are the tasks that need to go into your Quotidian. Think of it as a list of activities for the person you want to be rather than the person you already are.

### Summary

1. Quotidian means everyday rituals
2. You want one quotidian for home and one quotidian for work
3. Each quotidian must not go beyond one page.

## IDEAL DAY: What Do You Want To Happen?

To help you work out what to put on your Quotidian lists, let's think about what you want from an ideal day. Take time to write down what your ideal day would entail. Just go for it and ***don't hold back!***

### Early Morning

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### Morning

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## Afternoon

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## Evening

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Don't worry or feel disheartened if this doesn't look anything like your current day. This is merely a way of understanding your direction of travel, and you just got one step closer to your destination.

Use the following two pages to write up 15 daily tasks you'd like to get done each and everyday at home and at work. If it makes it easier, split your day into morning, afternoon and evening and come up with 5 for each.

# YOUR QUODITION

## PERSONAL QUOTIDIAN

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# ONCE-A-WEEK LIST

These are the tasks that you don't need to do every day, but that you'd like to do at least once a week. This could be:

- Visiting the Farmers' Market
- Yoga class
- Taking your child to an activity

It's a great way to space activities out over the course of the week to make sure you have enough time to do them.

Write up some tasks that you think you will (or would like to) do once a week. You want to spread your weekly tasks across the week to make them more manageable.

Monday	_____	_____	_____
Tuesday	_____	_____	_____
Wednesday	_____	_____	_____
Thursday	_____	_____	_____
Friday	_____	_____	_____
Saturday	_____	_____	_____
Sunday	_____	_____	_____

Here is how my weekly list looks currently (I exercise almost every day, but I build my workouts into my calendar and personal quotidian, so those don't appear on my Weekly):

### Once-a-Week Tasks

MONDAY	Fuel or Wash Prius	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Sterilize Kitchen Sink	<input type="checkbox"/>
TUESDAY	Outdoor Walk	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Ralph's or Trader Joe's	<input type="checkbox"/>
WEDNESDAY	Empty Kitchen Trash or Recycling	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Wash Linens	<input type="checkbox"/>
THURSDAY	Peel & Freeze Bananas	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Laundry	<input type="checkbox"/>
FRIDAY	Farmers' Market	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Grooming Regimen	<input type="checkbox"/>
SATURDAY	Water Indoor Plants	<input type="checkbox"/>
SUNDAY	Sterilize Laptops, iPhones, Glasses	<input type="checkbox"/>

### **Summary**

1. Remember, the list has to fit on *one* page
2. List items you want to do once a week
3. Spread the items out across the week

# ERRANDS LIST

The Errand List is a pre-printed list for when you run errands. I have a list for Trader Joe's (a specialty health store in parts of the US) and then a list for my local farmers' market (I go weekly).

By creating this list you make all the decisions now. Shopping becomes a ritualized event that you'll be able to do on autopilot -- no time or energy wasted.

## Tips

- To save time, list the shopping items in the order items are found in the store. I also shop from the back of the store so I'm going against the usual traffic. That's a good time-saver, too.
- For those items on your list that you don't need every week, just put those in parenthesis and then the items you know you need each week you can use them without parenthesis.
- Make a narrow list so that two can fit on one printed page. That way you can fold the page in half, and if you mark-up one side, then you can still use the other side the following week.

## Summary

1. Ritualize your errands to save time and energy.

### Trader Joe's

(jar pomegranate juice, pure)

(supersoft tp)  
(hand soap, pump)

(Pure organic bars, cherry)

row savory thins crackers ("original")

1 dozen free range eggs

(jar creamy almond butter - raw)

3 cans black beans  
(can pinto beans)  
3 cans tomato sauce or diced spicy

(bag gluten-free brownie mix)

1 bag frozen broccoli  
3 bags frozen spinach  
1 bag mixed vegetables  
2 bag frozen mango  
2 bags frozen blueberries  
(bag frozen pineapple)

1 container chocolate-covered almonds

Cucumbers, organic  
Bananas, organic  
Avocados, organic  
Lemons, organic  
1 Bag Raw Pecan Pieces

2 large rice milk  
5 almond milk

(organic oatmeal)

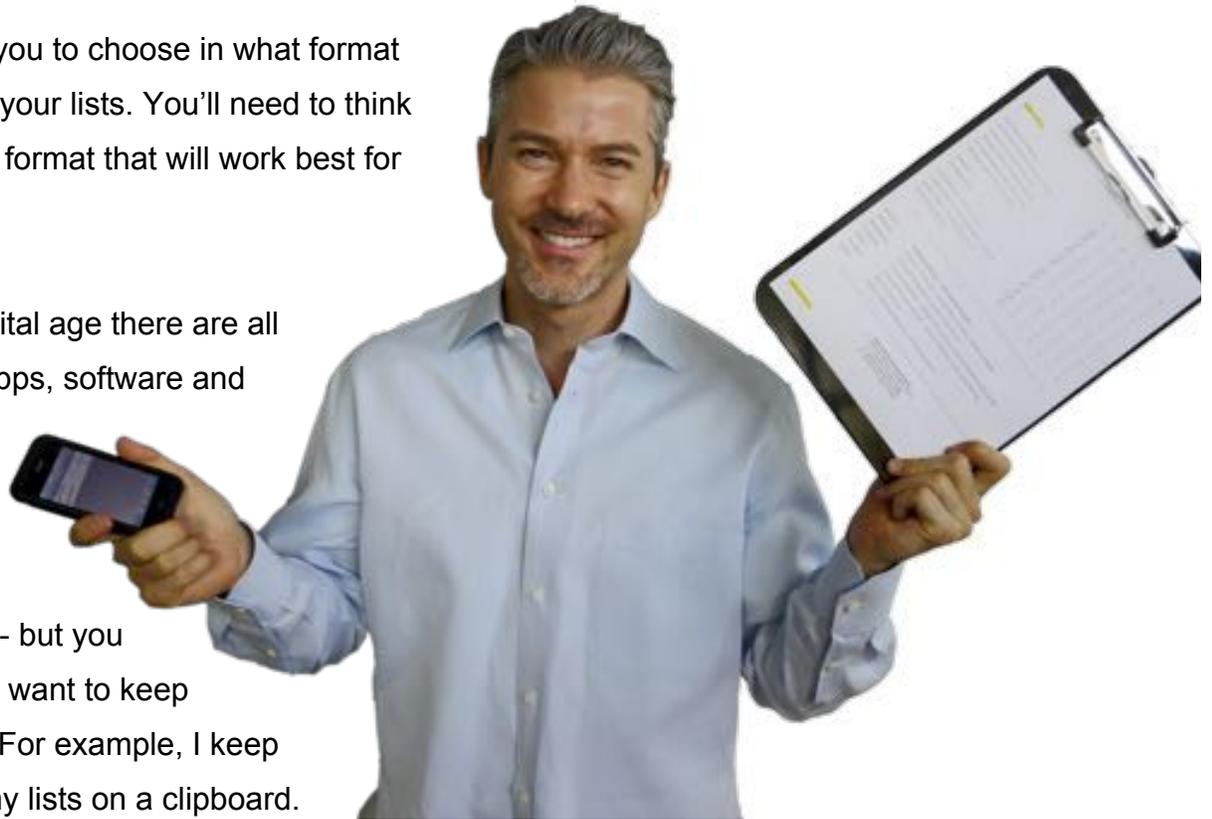
## CHOOSE A FORMAT

It's up to you to choose in what format you want your lists. You'll need to think about the format that will work best for you.

In this digital age there are all sorts of apps, software and web

services at your

disposal -- but you might just want to keep it simple. For example, I keep most of my lists on a clipboard.

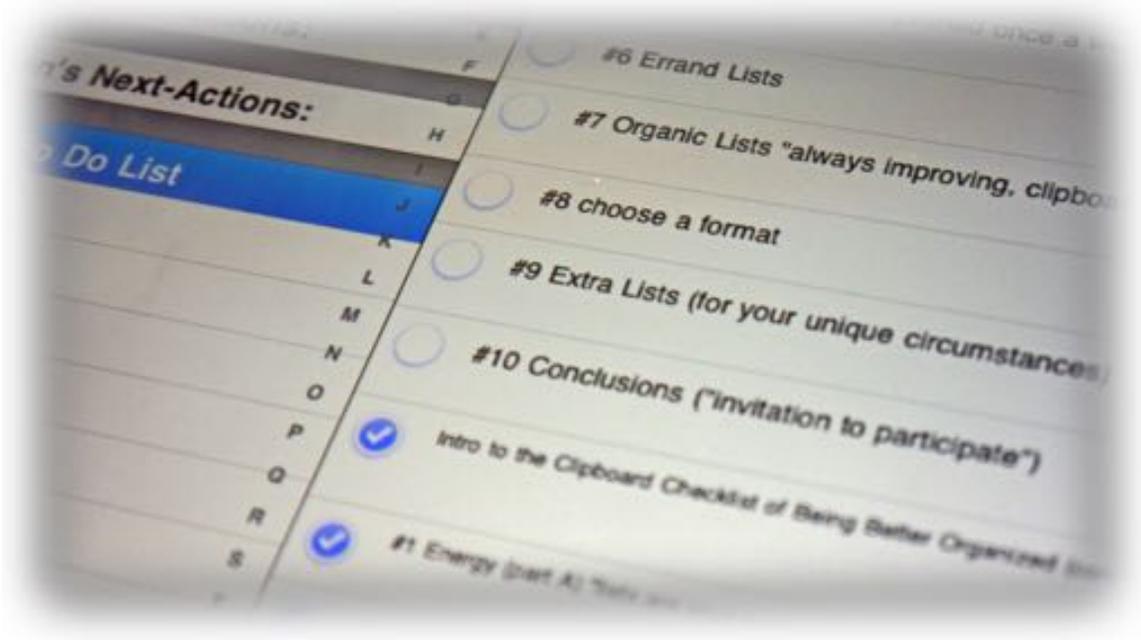


That's how I like it (I kick it old-school!); I enjoy my low-tech clipboards.

What format you will prefer, depends in part on what will complement your ideal day.

- Will clipboards be too cumbersome while outdoors?
- If you are in your car all day then you may want your lists on your smart phone?
- Perhaps a phone app would be surrounded by too many distracting app-toys and you're better off on paper?

For me, the one list I do have digitally is my professional list of tasks and projects that I'm doing once (not part of my quotidian), and for that I use a free app called *Asana* (although, there are several other web-based apps that you can use).



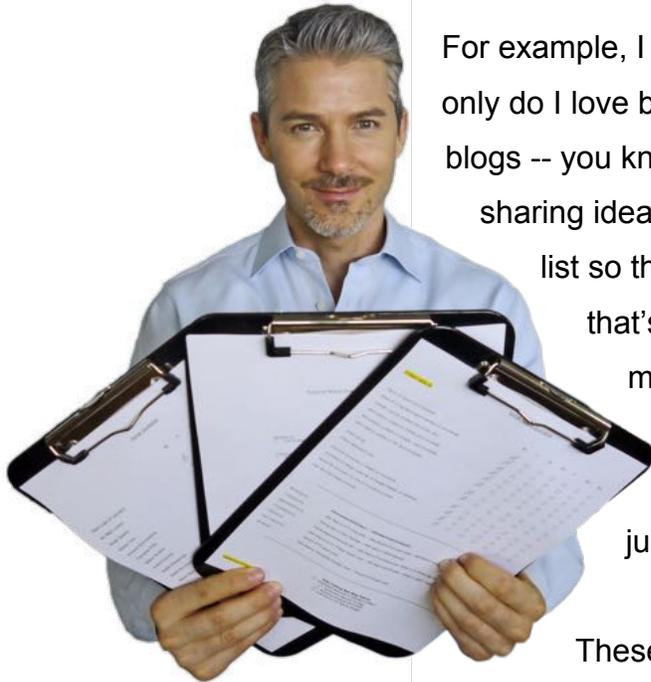
The reason I do that particular list digitally is: *collaboration*. I want my business partners and my staff to be able to access my list and me to be able to access their lists, so that we can collaborate more efficiently throughout the day.

## Summary

1. Pick a format that works for you.

## EXTRA LISTS

Okay so finally, we are at the point when you get to decide what extra lists you need to meet your unique circumstances.



For example, I have a blogging-comments list, because not only do I love blogging but I enjoy reading other people's blogs -- you know: reading comments, asking questions, sharing ideas -- and I have all my favorite blogs on one list so that I can move through them quickly. So that's an example of a unique list that I use that maybe not everyone would need. I have other unique lists, too. What lists are *you* going to need that are "extra" and tailor-made just for you?

These lists can be mentioned in your Daily Quotidian to remind you to refer to them. Simply add a task that reads "refer to grooming list," or "refer to blogs list," or "refer to workouts list," etc. After you've cross-referenced (switched temporarily to the other list), you can check off the task.

### Summary

1. You can have extra lists as long as they don't go over one page.
2. You can reference these lists in your main work/home quodidians.

## LISTS THAT BREATHE

One of the things you'll want to think about is how to **tailor your lists to meet your own needs**.

I like to imagine my lists as living, breathing entities that I'm always fine-tuning, always improving. They are organic (not cold and dead). That's part of the fun, to see how well you can *align* the list to your circumstances.

## APPLYING THE POMODORO TECHNIQUE

When working on your various tasks throughout the day, how do you know how to block your time? It's easy to write "exercise" or "reading" into your quotidian, but what we now need is a way to *measure* how much time you want to spend on things. Because, how you budget your time will determine whether or not you have a foundation solid enough on which to build outrageous success. For this reason, I integrate principles of Pomodoro into The Dane Technique.

Pomodoro is a productivity trick that can help you strengthen your focus — with just a kitchen timer, a sheet of paper, and a pencil.

The first step of Pomodoro is pretty standard to all productivity systems: you write up a list of the tasks you want to get done, then prioritize which ones you want to complete by placing them at the top of the list.

The second step of Pomodoro, however, is where things get really interesting: you set the kitchen timer to 25 minutes and spend that time concentrating on your task. You do nothing else but this task until the timer rings.

When the timer rings, check off your task on the list — and reward yourself with a 5-minute break.

Every four Pomodoro sessions, you can take a longer break. Maybe get some fresh air, grab a green smoothie, or post a tweet celebrating your productivity.

For tasks that take more than one Pomodoro, just keep making a checkmark on the paper for every 25-minute interval (be sure to take those 5 minutes breaks between each) until the task is complete. This will help you track and process how long things take.

The technique was developed by Francesco Cirillo in the 1980s while he was a university student. He named the technique after the tomato shaped kitchen timer he had when he first developed the system (you can learn more at [pomodorotechnique.com](http://pomodorotechnique.com)).

Pomodoro is an effective way to manage those one-off tasks that come up. You can also apply Pomodoro to The Technique in this book. Decide how many 25-minute blocks you want to spend on something every day, and write it into your quotidian.

	M	T	W	TH	F	SA	SU
Exercise (2 pomodoros)	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Reading (1 pomodoro)	<input type="checkbox"/>						

### Summary

1. You can integrate Pomodoro with The Technique.
2. It's a great way to maintain concentration.
3. Use it to monitor your time and decide when a task is done, and ready to be checked off.

# WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

## Getting Started

Okay, now it's time for you to go through your checklists that you filled out in this workbook, refine them a bit, and... try it for a week.

You're bound to find out which tasks work and which don't. Once you've tried for a week you can craft a new and improved list and get to it (I'm always refining my own lists – they just work better and better with time). As I said, write the list with a mindset toward the person you want to become -- both business and personal.

Aligning with a productivity and time-management system like **The Technique** can be life-changing. Just forming the lists for the first time will give you perspective on what activities are time-wasters and what activities are priorities that need proper attention.

The process of thinking about your priorities can be, in itself, a transformative experience... and I'm sure you'll enjoy experimenting with your quotidian!

## Next Actions:

- write up your Quotidian List
- utilize it for a week
- adjust your new list, and repeat
- subscribe to the [free Quality of Life updates](#)
- send Dane a message, let him know how it's going!

*[Life Quality Examiner](#) and [Over Fifty and Fit](#) offer entertaining features about living smarter – providing clever solutions for extreme health and joy, including the latest info on organizing, lifestyle properties, superfoods, and functional fitness.*