Stress Less, Achieve More

**BACKGROUND:**
In January 2018, our team attended ‘Stress Less, Achieve More’ workshops run by Think Productive, where they learnt the information that is summarised in this toolkit. Staff are now encouraged to utilise what works/fits for them, and to share tools and systems amongst each other, especially with new team members. Please ask around to find out how others are using these ideas/and what is working, and feel free to share your own ideas!

**KEY WORKSHOP TAKEAWAYS:**
- Learn how to overcome information overload by managing attention, rather than time
- The way to achieve this is to create a ‘second brain’; a system which captures information/lists in a way that will enable you to organise your work effectively.

**CORD Productivity Model:**
The training is based on the CORD Productivity Model – follow this process for maximum effectiveness!
1) **CAPTURE & COLLECT**
- Do this right at the beginning to set up your 2nd brain system
- This is about getting information out of your head and into your 2nd brain system
- Information may be: thoughts and ideas; nags; responses; notes from meetings; emails etc.
- Write these down e.g. as a list, on post-its etc. to get them out of your head!

2) **ORGANISE (create your 2nd Brain)**
- The main aim is to create a system where during your times of being explicitly in ‘Do’ mode, you have the best available info to hand, in the most accessible way possible, to create momentum and encourage a strong action habit
- Organising will help you get as much of the info about projects and actions out of your head, so your mind is freed up to focus on creating and doing. You will distinguish what action can be taken and get clarity about what the successful outcome will be.

Use a tool (e.g. Excel, Trello), which should include the following lists (the Think Productive Excel version can be found [here](#)):
- **Projects** - a list of your projects - this is the overall desired outcome, or bigger picture project goal, e.g. “raise £6 million for the It’s All Academic campaign”; or “roll out Resilience Management learning events for OVPA”
- **Master Actions** - this is the ‘live’ and current inventory of everything you could be doing. You’ll be looking at this regularly when you’re in ‘Do’ mode. Actions are ‘the very next step’, described clearly enough that you can easily picture yourself doing it. *NB see ‘Batch Processing’ at bottom of document to see the most effective way to organise your actions*
- **Waiting For** - reminder list of people/things you are waiting for
- **Agenda** - agendas are created for specific people, e.g. your manager/someone you manage. This list collates a number of queries or discussion points, which is subsequently discussed at an agreed time. This should reduce daily disruptions. Does not apply to anything requiring an urgent response.

3) **REVIEW**
- Reviewing will help you ‘check back in’ with your 2nd Brain; re-focus, re-prioritise, and ensure you remain proactive in your work. The idea is to do both reviews.

Two types of Reviews:
- **Daily**: do this first thing every day: think about what’s in my calendar; what are my priorities for today; what might I be resisting; when will I have the most energy and attention today; are there any dependencies (people, deadlines etc.)
- **Weekly**: set 1.5 hours aside each week: e.g. get inputs back to zero; 2nd brain up-to-date; think ahead; get ready for week ahead.

4) **DO**
- It is not about getting more things done, rather about getting the right things done.

Tips to help with this:
- Batch-processing: Store up tasks such as reading, thinking, emailing etc where possible, so you dedicate a chunk of time to doing similar kinds of tasks, or set time aside to focus on one project without distractions
- Prioritise: 5 important accomplishments a day ('big rocks')

Further information is included in the Think Productive book “How to be a Productivity Ninja”. For a copy of this book, or for any other queries, please get in touch with the People team on [ovpa.people@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:ovpa.people@ucl.ac.uk).