

# **Why Failing to Complete Your To Do List is Key to Your Success**

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**Author Biography:** Dawson Church, PhD, CEHP, is the founder of EFT Universe, one of the largest alternative medicine sites on the web ([EFTuniverse.com](http://EFTuniverse.com)). He has conducted over 20 studies and reviews published in peer-reviewed medical and psychology journals. He founded the non-profit Veterans Stress Project which has worked over 15,000 veterans with PTSD ([StressProject.org](http://StressProject.org)). He has written several books including *The Genie in Your Genes*. His *EFT Mini Manual* has been downloaded by over 300,000 people and you can get it free at [www.DawsonGift.com](http://www.DawsonGift.com).

## Why Failing to Complete Your To Do List is Key to Your Success

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*“Are you crazy, Dawson? How can you tell me that not getting my To Do list done is a good thing? What kind of professional advice is that?”* I’m chuckling as I imagine those thoughts going through your head. Yet in just a few pages, I’m going to change your mind about the value of getting through your whole To Do list, and convince you that it’s a key factor preventing your success.

For most of us, keeping lists is essential to keeping our busy lives in order. We have to balance kids, relationships, home, work, spirituality, money, health, and emotional self-care. Personally I have a whole group of lists on my mobile device, and I feel great when I delete a completed item. Crossing an item off the list can give me as big a sense of accomplishment as the task itself provided.

This is typical of men; I’ll tell you more later about how women differ in this respect. Coming from a generations-long evolutionary line of hunters, we’re programmed to work hard to accomplish our goal of acquiring game to take back to the campfire at night. A successful hunt means that the tribe eats well and we’re the hero. An unsuccessful hunt means that our day was wasted and our children starve. Unconsciously, today, at a genetic level, men are still driven by the satisfaction they receive from accomplishment, and may pursue success even when it’s killing them.

While checking items off a list can feel satisfying, the list itself can easily become a source of tyranny. Though we delete many items each day, we add new ones. The list never seems to get shorter. Our lists can make us feel like we’re on a hamster wheel, endlessly pursuing new goals no matter how many old ones we accomplish.

Even the ancient Greeks understood the phenomenon. Their hero Sisyphus was the archetypal doer. Every day he sweated and struggled to heave a gigantic rock up to the top of a mountain. Every night it rolled back down again, leaving him to start the process again in the morning.

As our level of competence rises, we usually attract even more work. If you’re good at housekeeping, the chances are the other members of your household will expect that of you, and you’ll have more of it. If you’re good with money, others in your family often develop fixed expectations that you’ll always be the provider. If you’re a nurse or doctor, strangers often ask you for medical advice at parties. If you fix computers, friends ask you how to fix theirs. So competence—being good at a task—often multiplies the amount we have to do!

## **Look At Your Lists Through This Lens**

Here's the lens through which to see your To Do list. With this lens, you break the tyranny, and give yourself permission to leave many things undone. In fact, leaving the right things undone is one hallmark of good management.

Look at each item on your list, and ask yourself this question: *How big a potential contribution does this item make to my success?*

All items are not created equal. Some are high-leverage, and contribute greatly to the forward momentum of your life. Others are low-leverage, and take up time and energy with minimal payoff.

You can even score each one using the classic EFT (Emotional Freedom Techniques) scale that ranges from 0 to 10. A score of 0 means that particular item makes no contribution to your success, while 10 indicates that it's essential your success.

## **Your Success List vs. Your To Do List**

Take the example of Jennie Jones, who is a part-time real estate agent. She works from home, has 3 kids, and since her husband lost his high-paying job and had to take a lesser position, Jennie is the main bread-winner in the family. She's also on the board of the local PTA and sings in her church choir.

One of the items on her To Do list is baking cupcakes for the annual PTA fundraiser. Another is phoning an investor with ready cash and describing a new property listing she's just acquired. The phone call scores a 10, while baking scores zero.

Singing in the choir, however, while it seems like a waste of time to her husband and takes Jennie away from her kids, actually gives her a creative outlet and access to a vibrant social circle. These contribute to her emotional and spiritual health, so this activity scores high.

## **Pruning the Undergrowth so the Beauty Can Flourish**

Items that score high are your Success List, and doing them is well worth your while. Those that score low are on your To Do list. If, to accomplish your Success List, you leave most items on your To Do list undone, you will be much more successful than if you burn yourself out trying to do everything just because an item is on the list. A garden that is regularly pruned allows the most beautiful plants to flourish by removing the weeds and undergrowth. If never pruned, the weeds take over and the ornamental plants wither.

Your To Do list might have 42 items. But only 4 of those might make it to your Success List. Take a look at your To Do list now. Highlight those items that are 10s in one color. Highlight those that are 0s in another color. Delete the zeros. Does that feel hard? Do it

anyway; you will get used to it and you will feel liberated after it becomes a habit. EFT can help; if you tap while hitting delete, you'll also delete the regret that comes from deleting.

Here are some other success list basics that might feel counter-intuitive at first, but will keep you focused on your goals.

### **Success List Basics:**

**1. Write your big goals at the very top of your list.** Those might be life-transforming items like: Make a six figure+ income this year. Find the perfect mate. Make peace with God. Run the Iron Man Triathlon. Clean up all the emotionally traumatic events from my childhood.

Keep these brief. The reason they're at the *top* of your list is so that you can compare every item you write on the list itself against your big goals. If an item is not congruent with them, it should not be on your list at all.

**2. Add small items to your To Do list.** I'm not saying you should create an item on your To Do list for a one-line email. That takes as long as sending the email. But if you need to talk to a colleague or vendor on the phone, and you know, realistically, that those conversations usually take over 15 minutes, write it down. If it's not on your list, don't even think about doing it. Writing it down means that you avoid keeping "shadow lists" in your head, on scraps of paper, or on a different device, and that you prioritize properly.

**3. For every item, ask yourself: Is there a more efficient way?** I have many people every month asking if they can arrange a phone meeting with me that will take "just five minutes." It never does. The conversation accomplishes in 20 minutes what might have been accomplished in a 20 second email. If you can handle it with an email, don't use the phone. If you can handle it on the phone, don't drive across town to have a face-to-face meeting.

The exception is times when personal contact scores a high number on your 0 to 10 scale. One example is Jennie's all-cash investor. And I'm not going to send my wife a brief email instead of taking her to dinner and hearing all about her day. A happy marriage nurtures everyone involved, and the time it takes to maintain one is a level 10 priority. But that doesn't extend to anyone who's sent you an email; trying to make everyone happy is guaranteed to make you unhappy.

**4. Prioritize your list frequently.** This means at the start of every day, as well as re-prioritizing several times within the day. This way, as new opportunities arise, they aren't at the bottom of the list. If they're a 10, they go straight to the top of the list, shoving lesser items to the bottom. We all have down time when we're not as busy, and that's when I look at the lowest items and catch up on ones that still have merit. Never look at your news feed or your email inbox before you've looked at your Success List. Never.

**5. An item being someone else's high priority doesn't make it your high priority.**

Your Success List must reflect *your* priorities, not the priorities of those with whom you're interacting. An item can be a 10 for the person who wants your time but a only a 2 to you. You can't abandon yourself, and have your attention hijacked by someone else's priority.

One of the most extreme examples of mismatched priorities is a publisher and an author. The author has a vital goal, to get her work published by the publisher. The publisher has an empire to run, and dealing with a new potential author is at the very bottom of her priority list.

This obviously doesn't apply if you're an employee, since your boss is going to order your priorities, or if your job is serving clients with needs. But most people think that if someone else is saying that an item is important or urgent, they need to prioritize it. Not so.

Here's a particular way in which a woman's evolutionary roots can also sabotage her happiness. New brain research shows that women tend to derive comfort from connection, rather than primarily from completion like men do. That can be connection with others, with family, with tribe, with community.

That system worked fine for the Bushmen 10,000 years ago when they could count the number of people in their band using their fingers. Now, with 275 new emails flooding into her inbox each day, if Jennie is still defining her happiness in terms of connection, and trying and make all those email correspondents happy, she'll drive herself crazy.

Your email inbox is filled with other people's priorities. When I check very old emails, I'm amazed by how many unanswered ones I can just delete; they were never important—though they seemed so at the time. Your "delete" key should be a default setting for your pointer finger.

**6. Delete stale items.** A stale item is one that's been on your list a long time, and you're basically pretending to yourself that you're going to do it. Keeping it on the list is a marker that you hope will eventually motivate you. But all it does is remind you of failure. And the fact that after weeks or months you haven't done it means your passion isn't aligned with that item. Delete it.

If you remain slave to completing a To Do list, you'll work hard for little forward movement toward your dreams. When you instead shape the activities of each day according to these principles, doing the things on your Success List, you will give them momentum and focus. They will expand, and nurture your success. When, in a few years, you look back at all the petty things you left undone, you won't regret one of them if you catapulted yourself to success.



## My Goal #1 for the Year

Here's an example from my own life. For the last year, I've been crystal clear about the #1 item on my Success List. It's this: *creating automated sales funnels for my online programs*. I call this my Goal One, the top item on my Success List. I may have several items on my list, but there's always going to be just ONE THING at the top.

What led me to this particular Goal One of creating automated sales funnels? If I achieve it, my life becomes easier and happier. My online programs like Tapping Deep Intimacy (relationship skills), Skinny Genes (weight loss) and the Peak Performance Symposium (life performance) are of enormous help to people. They also finance my organization. Helping people is my mission in life. The more money I bring in, the more people I can help. When I create effective automated sales funnels, I meet the twin goals of helping people and funding the organization.

If the amount of money my online programs bring in increases by \$100,000 a year, I can help more people, I can reduce my working hours and have more leisure time to support my health, my marriage, and my meditation practice, and I can drop other time-consuming projects that are less financially productive.

Once I wrote "automated sales funnels" as Goal One at the top of my success list, I then looked at every other activity I could perform. I asked, "Does this support my #1 priority?" If it did not, I gave it a low priority or dropped it from the list completely.

That decision led me to quit speaking at so many psychology conferences. I quit traveling so much. I turned down opportunity after opportunity that was not congruent with Goal One. I quit even attempting to read all the emails in my inbox, let alone respond to them.

For the Peak Performance program, I also had the privilege of picking the brains of 33 of the most brilliant minds of our time. In recorded audio interviews, I asked them about secrets they'd discovered to cultivating maximum focus, productivity and outstanding performance over the course of their careers. Often the answers were secrets that had taken them a lifetime to master.

I talked to geniuses like Malcolm Gladwell, whose best-selling books like *The Tipping Point*, *Blink*, and *David and Goliath* have seeded ideas that have changed the direction of Western culture. Like Bruce Lipton, whose pioneering work in epigenetics has contributed to a paradigm change in science. Like John Gray, whose *Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus* is the best-selling relationship book of all time. Like Pam Grout, whose surprise best-seller *E-squared* provided millions of people with practical experiments they could perform to illustrate the power of manifestation in their own daily lives.

I packaged the Peak Performance program into a series of one-hour interviews plus the transcripts of those interviews, and set them up as a 33 day online learning course with (ta-daaa!) an automated sales funnel (TappingPeakPerformance.com).

That laser-like focus on Goal One paid off. After a year, and many mis-steps, those automated sales funnels substantially increased the income from my online programs. The second year of focus on Goal One, and making a whole new batch of mistakes, our online income exceeded seven figures. This allowed me to hire a manager to run my organization so I could work less and play more, made my wife Christine even more outrageously happy, provided us with the financial security to retire any time we choose, and earned me glowing testimonials from the thousands of new people whose lives were transformed by my programs. Accomplishing Goal One simultaneously accomplished all those other goals. That's the power of focus!

### **Writing Your Own Success List**

Your goal might be completely different from mine. I have a vibrant spiritual life with a daily meditation practice, so I didn't need that on my list. But it might be your Goal One. I have a marriage so nurturing and love-filled that it blows my mind every day. But a great relationship might be your Goal One.

You may know right now what your Goal One is. Or you might not. Here's an easy way to identify it: *What ONE THING, if it happened, would make your entire life very much better, and make everything else on your list easier or unnecessary?* That's the goal that needs to be at the very top of your Success List, and everything below needs to support it.

For instance, I am adept at creating new products. The trouble is, that doesn't get the old ones marketed. So accomplishing my Goal One of automated sales funnels meant that I had to deliberately choose not to create any new products for a year. Maximizing the income from the old products made creating new products unnecessary.

Now it's time for you to take action. Write down the Goal One that should be at the top of your Success List. If that thing happened, your life would be very much better. Everything else on your list would be easier or unnecessary.

### **Identifying Your Personal Goal One**

In this space, write down Goal One from your Success List:

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Paste this goal at the top of your To Do list. Look at it every day. Write it in your personal journal. Write it on a Stickie and post it on your bathroom mirror, on your computer monitor, on the dashboard of your car, and on your fridge. Make it part of the fabric of your consciousness. Memorize it, because it has the power to change your life completely.

If you feel resistance to your Goal One, use EFT Tapping to overcome it. To find out how, download my free e-book *The EFT Mini-Manual* at [www.DawsonGift.com](http://www.DawsonGift.com). It will have you releasing those blocks quickly and easily.

When you commit to Goal One, something mysterious happens: Goal One commits to you. You begin to notice synchronicities occurring, and elements needed to realize your goal mysteriously find their way to you. You meet important people seemingly by chance. Aligned with Goal One, you're drawn to other people and events that are consistent with your goal. Before you know it, your goal is all around you. Goal One has become the sea in which you swim.

Thank you for making the commitment to your success that comes from reading this report and taking action to define your Goal One. As you experience its manifestation, please share your stories with me on my Facebook page. This will inspire other people and keep you on track.

To your success!

Dawson

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