

The mental massacre of multitasking

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To thrive and lead a fulfilling life, I believe we need to nurture the most important relationship in our life - the one we have with our Self! Thus, my intention here is to share with you matters I hope you'll find useful to guide you on your journey to create a loving relationship with yourself and others, and to build a life you desire.

June is here, the sun finally warmed our bones, school is almost over, and we can begin to feel the summer vibes 🍉

Let's begin...

Last month I was working with the fantastic women at the [Women of Impact Leadership Programme \(Лидерска програма за жени со влијание\)](#) and during our session on managing attention and energy, many of them proudly reported how skillful they are at multitasking. When confronted, that this is hurting their attention and mental health, some of them jumped: "but, it is impossible in our working environment to avoid it"!



The fantastic women at the Women of Impact Leadership Programme

Working with many individuals and teams on improving their skills towards effectively managing their states, attention and energy, most of the time the first objection I hear is: **it is impossible for me/us!**

Yes, in today's fast-paced and high-pressure world, multitasking is often regarded as a necessary skill, especially for women leaders who have to prove themselves in male dominated environments. However, recent research has begun to question the efficacy and health implications of multitasking. This edition of the Self-Expedition explores the *complex interplay between multitasking, stress hormones, health, and attention.*

I also used to have my lunch break in front of the computer while doing research, reading email or texting during a meeting (just to realize that I sent the email without an attachment or missed a question directed to me), or talking on the phone while checking a document (and missing part of the conversation). **It is not always easy to stay mindful of our behavior, but luckily there are many tools that we can adopt, to make our lives easier and improve our effectiveness.**

One brain, one task

Multitasking is often perceived as the simultaneous execution of multiple tasks. However, **cognitive science reveals that what we call multitasking is actually task-switching, where the brain rapidly toggles between tasks.** This constant switching can lead to cognitive overload, reducing efficiency and increasing the likelihood of errors.

"Doing several tasks simultaneously may seem like the height of efficiency — and it would be, if a person had more than one brain. In the real world, multitasking actually wastes time and reduces work quality"

- says David Meyer, PhD, a professor of psychology, cognition and perception at the University of Michigan.

Neuroscience tells us that multitasking drains the glucose fuel needed by the brain, thus making the brain less efficient and leaving multitaskers feeling tired. They are less likely to retain information in working memory, because multitasking trains the brain to have a short attention span. This, in turn, **shrinks working memory capacity and can hinder problem solving and creativity.**

A study published in [HBR](#) highlighted that multitasking can reduce productivity by as much as 40%, primarily due to the cognitive load of switching tasks.

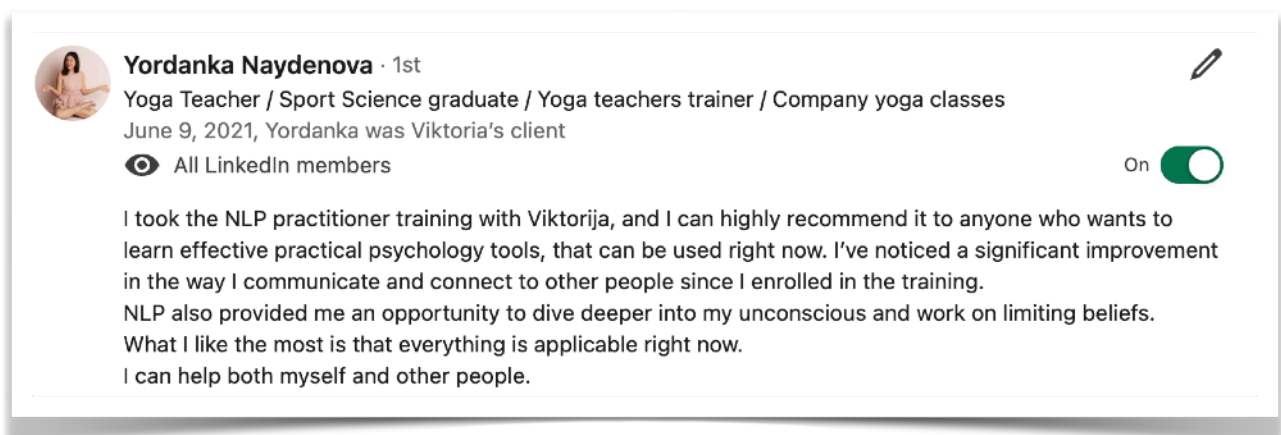
Moreover, constant juggling of different tasks stimulates the secretion of stress hormones cortisol and adrenaline. Vast [research](#) shows that **constant presence of these hormones in our bodies suppress the function of the immune system, making us more susceptible to illnesses.** Burnout, anxiety, depression, headaches, digestive issues, weight gain and cardiovascular diseases - to mention a few. This trend linking stress and illness, especially autoimmune disease among women, is reflected internationally. Interestingly enough, in Denmark, the country ranking 2nd in the [World Happiness Report](#) for many years, there is an increasing incidence of multiple sclerosis in women. *"Danish women's risk of developing MS has more than doubled in twenty-five years, while it has remained virtually unchanged for men,"* reported a recent nationwide [study](#). I don't imply that there is a link here, only that these are interesting results, having in mind that women are more likely to multitask.

When we talk about hormones, let me add that multitasking also stimulates the release of the reward neurotransmitter dopamine. **Our brains love dopamine!** So, this switching between small mini-tasks, feeling the accomplishment and the dopamine kick giving us instant gratification, creates a similar feedback loop to addiction. As Tim Elmore writes in his article "[The Unintended Consequences of Multi-Tasking](#)" for Psychology Today:

"we tend to pursue more short-term tasks that give us this dopamine shot, and soon we're caught up in quantity over quality. We actually work harder, not smarter. And we don't really focus. We assume we're doing more and better, but in reality we trade in value for speed and volume."

Before I continue, two very important announcements...

1. You already know by now that I not only teach the methodology and tools of Neuro-Linguistic Programming, but I also embody it in my daily life. It has helped me overcome childhood traumas and present day challenges with grace and easiness. The graduates of the **NLP Practitioner** program report **greater life satisfaction, improved relationships, better ability to manage themselves and overall bigger success in their careers.**



The image shows a screenshot of a LinkedIn post by Yordanka Naydenova. The post includes her profile picture, name, and title 'Yordanka Naydenova · 1st Yoga Teacher / Sport Science graduate / Yoga teachers trainer / Company yoga classes'. It also shows a date 'June 9, 2021, Yordanka was Viktorija's client' and a privacy setting 'All LinkedIn members' with a toggle switch turned 'On'. The main text of the post reads: 'I took the NLP practitioner training with Viktorija, and I can highly recommend it to anyone who wants to learn effective practical psychology tools, that can be used right now. I've noticed a significant improvement in the way I communicate and connect to other people since I enrolled in the training. NLP also provided me an opportunity to dive deeper into my unconscious and work on limiting beliefs. What I like the most is that everything is applicable right now. I can help both myself and other people.'

The program is certified by **ITCA** and the co-creator of NLP, Dr. John Grinder, assuring you the highest quality in NLP education.

Join us in **September in Vienna** or in **October in Skopje**, and experience NLP for yourself ❤️ You'll benefit from learning not only the Classic Code of NLP, but also the

miracles of the **New Code** - the most advanced neuro-tools to help you reach **new heights in your life.**



For your greater clarity, I offer an introduction to NLP and a Q&A session on the 25th June. Click [HERE](#) to register, or **reach out to me directly to get the benefits of early registration.**

2. If you are **a woman and in need of a supportive community** (and who isn't?), I invite you to join the [Women Lead Community](#). An online space that is more than just a place for networking and career advancement. It is a place where we come together to support, empower, encourage one another, and benefit from each other's perspectives and experiences.

And now, some solutions...

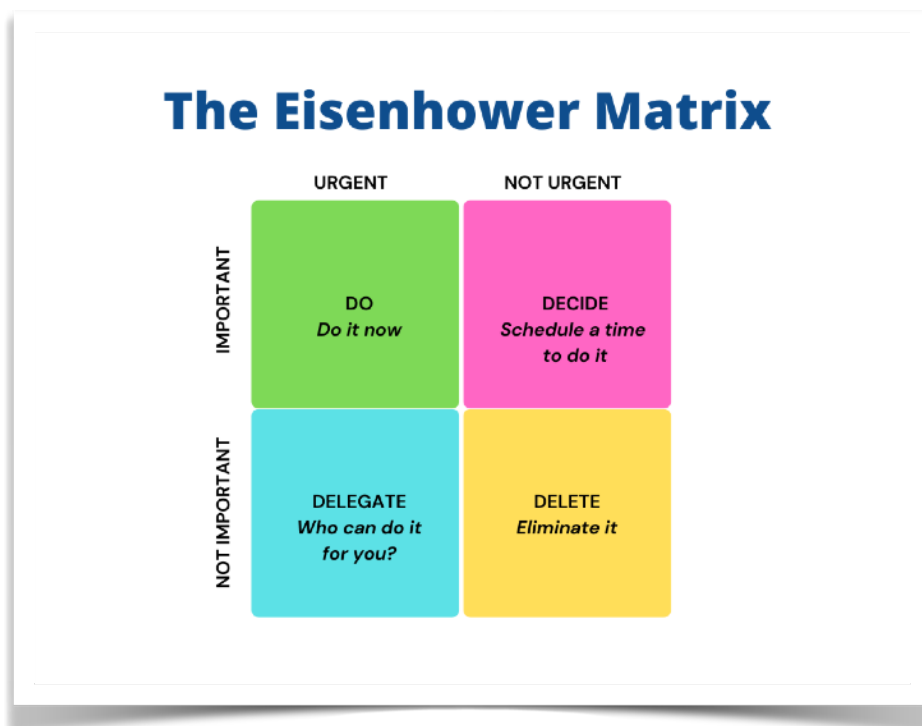
Mono-tasking and other strategies

Focusing on a single task at a time has helped me and many others improve focus, attention and productivity. I set blocks in my calendar for different tasks and keep most of

my work days with a similar work schedule. This way, I give my brain the familiarity it desires.

Just as I begin my work day, first I focus on the "**less than 2 minute**" tasks. A concept from David Allen's workflow management method called [Getting Things Done \(GTD\)](#). If a task takes less than 2 minutes, I first do those and circle them as "done" on my list. This gives me the needed dopamine kick to get motivated for what follows. Some people like to finish the day with these tasks. Both approaches are useful.

Then, follows a period of **high focus**. I turn off all the notifications on my phone and computer (you can also use the "focus mode" on your devices), and play classical music in the background. These are blocks of 30 minutes, with 10 minutes breaks in between. Here I focus on the **high priority, high urgency tasks**. To decide which are these tasks, I use the Eisenhower Matrix below :



Many years ago, when I started my [NLP](#) journey I learned about the functions of the unconscious brain. Among others, it is **extremely good with time**. So, I always set a **time frame** (how much time you will dedicate to a task?) and also, a clear **outcome frame** (what do you want to accomplish in the specific time frame?) for each activity. And, every time it surprises me when I finish the task just in time. This works amazingly for meetings, too. Before you enter a meeting set the time frame and the agenda for the meeting (this is the outcome frame) and allow yourself to be surprised with the results. **The unconscious**

is very lazy, and it likes to be tasked. Then, it works miraculously effective towards accomplishing the given task.

I also set specific time frames in the day when I give my full attention to the world, whether this is a coaching session with a client, a meeting with partners or clients, talks with my friends or social media. Few years ago a friend showed me how to put a time limit on my phone for social media. My daily limit is 60 minutes, so I make sure I use this limit productively, not only for scrolling, but also for posting, commenting and connecting with people.

Additionally, check the [23 AI Productivity Tools to Revolutionize Your Workflow](#).

What else? Share in the comments the strategies you use, maybe they will help someone improve their life ✨

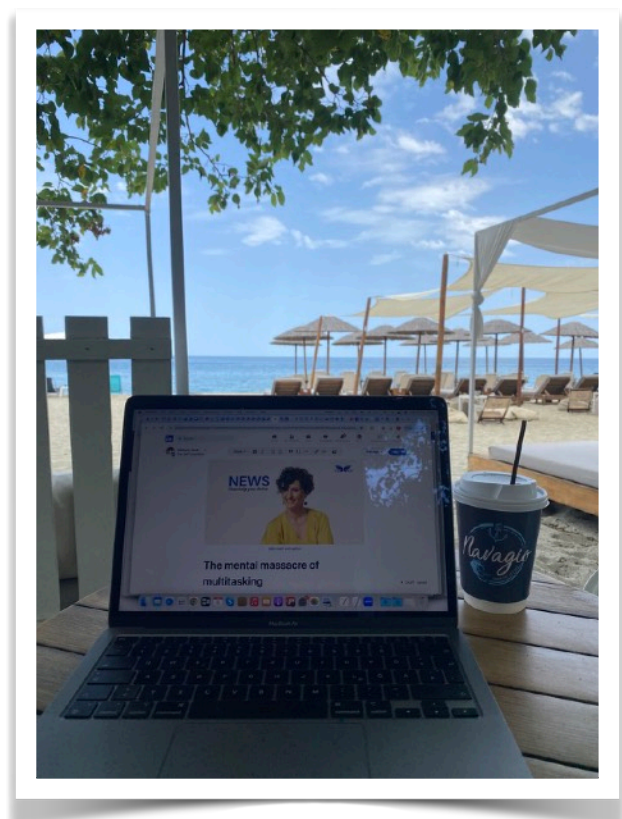
Finally, **none of us is perfect!** It will happen that you are distracted and sometimes you will multitask. The idea is that you implement strategies that work for you and help you optimize your energy and time. So, I invite you to try out different approaches and see for yourself what works for you.

And, please note, **the more consistent you are, the better results you will see.**

To finish,

My message for the month of June is:

*Pay attention to your attention...
and give yourself a little break.*



A suggestion for your further reading:

[On recharging, intentions and perceptions](#) - a past Self-Expedition newsletter.

[Personal Editing - a beautiful technique to be practiced daily](#) - an article describing an NLP technique to help you create your future self and add choice to your life.

Inspiration and Information Sources:

I'm reading and listening to:

[The Myth of Normal: Trauma, Illness, and Healing in a Toxic Culture](#), the new book of Gabor Maté MD and his son, Daniel Maté

[Dr. Natalie Crawford: Female Hormone Health, Fertility & Vitality](#) - a podcast episode on Huberman Lab

[Aneta George](#) - her music calms my soul. A Macedonian composer, singer, pianist, and a dear friend.