



Self Care Shorts Digital Magazine 004



**Welcome to the fourth edition of the Self Care Shorts digital magazine.**

Even though it's been raining for the last few days I always find my mind drifts towards increased levels of outdoor exercise and healthy salads as the nights get longer and the sun starts to warm our hearts and souls!

While it's important not to overdo the sun (get your sunscreen on!) there are lots of benefits the sun's rays give us and lots of benefits we get just from being outside.

Sunlight is a mood enhancer as it increases levels of serotonin in your brain and serotonin is associated with improved mood.

Getting out into the early morning sun triggers biological processes in your body that end up with a good night's sleep.

Exposure to sunshine is one of the best ways to produce vitamin D – about 15 minutes a day is adequate. Vitamin D supports the body in maintaining calcium so is great for your bones. And vitamin D helps your immune system.

**All of that and more just for getting outside into the sun. Carefully does it. And enjoy!**

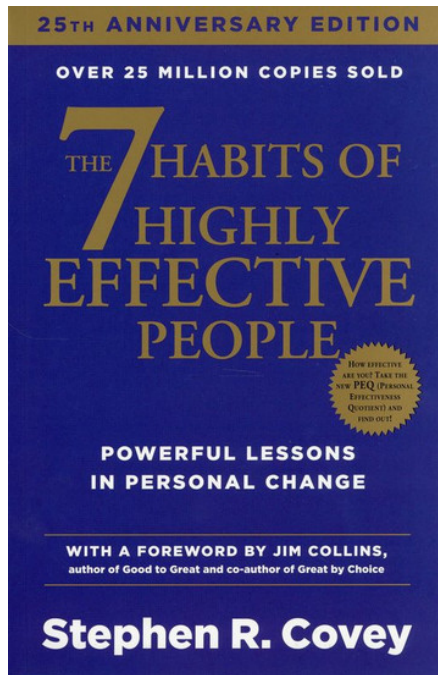
# Exercise



When you exercise can be just as important as what you do?

- Exercise to lose weight in the morning
- Exercise in the morning to boost mood (or at Lunch Break). Exercising at night means you lose the uplift benefits
- Exercising in the morning has been shown to improve adherence to the routine of exercise
- Weight training in the morning helps build muscle
- Exercise late in the afternoon to avoid injury - your body has warmed up by this point
- Exercise in the afternoon to perform at your best - lung function is better and strength peaks (a disproportionate number of Olympic records especially in running and swimming were set in the late afternoon and early evening)
- In the afternoon you are more likely to enjoy the workout





## Must Have Books

### The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People: Stephen R Covey

*This book was originally published in 1989 (and is available in a huge number of different covers! Find a one you like the colour of!)*

*It is still as relevant now as it was then and is a gem. The 7 habits are applicable to all areas of life - I'll recount just a couple of them, so you get a flavour!*

#### **Begin with the end in mind.**

This is one of my personal favourites. If you don't know where you are going how are you going to get there!? I feel you need to spend time thinking about your plan for this week, this month, next month, this year, this life, so you know what you want to achieve and who you want to be. If you don't visualise this, you won't know what to plan for to get there.

#### **Put First Things First**

There is a disconnect between how we talk about the things that we know are good for us – or the things that we want to do – and us doing them! “I wish I'd sorted through more reports, I wish I'd spent more time in the office” – no one ever said. We know what is good for us, but we seem to fail to do it. We allow ourselves to disconnect from the things that really matter and sometimes our organisations make us feel like we must – that's not good. We need to connect with the people we need to connect with, the people that give us the space and security we need, and we need to self-care. Which leads me to.....

#### **Sharpen you Saw.**

If your job was to saw down trees and you didn't periodically step back and sharpen your saw your saw would become blunt and you would become ineffective at sawing down trees. What is your saw that you need to sharpen?



---

"You can't win a race just by running,"  
my mother told me when I was little.  
"You have to talk to yourself". "You  
have to talk to yourself when you are  
running and tell yourself you can win"

---

Assata Shakur (in Assata: an autobiography)

"The man who  
moved a  
mountain was the  
one who began  
carrying away  
small stones."

Chinese Proverb



# Finding Harmony



**In a Podcast I listened to recently on LinkedIn Tanya Dalton, CEO of Inkwell Press Productivity Co, gave a great analogy about setting realistic expectations in all areas of our lives so that we constantly feel we are moving forward and not going around in circles.**

She was talking about the idea of work-life balance.

**This is one of those myths that I endeavour to lay to rest.** You are never going to balance your work (the things you get paid for), and your life (the bit where you do everything else) because it's an unfair battle. You have 24 hours in the day. You should be asleep for eight of them and for about eight of them (if you're lucky) you will be at work. You are meant to do everything else in the other eight and on a weekend. This will prove impossible. When we think of work-life balance it's always going to feel like we're giving more to work because we are. Then we have to give much of the other eight hours over to mundane tasks and other people. We get precious little for ourselves. The problem in trying to balance these things psychologically is that we can end up resenting the work part because we just want to get it out of the way so we can get at the life part. I usually talk about having a balanced life. Dalton turned this on its head and made me rethink.

**Dalton said that we shouldn't be striving for a balanced life but a life where everything is in harmony.** She used the analogy of riding a bike. She said that in order to move forward we must balance. That's how riding a bike works. But inevitably sometimes we will need to change direction. Something in our life will be more demanding of our attention. It might be work, it might be a family commitment like a sick relative, or it might be that we have found ourselves enthused by a new hobby that we want to invest time in. All of these are things that happen and things that we need to attend to. When one of these things happens we need to maintain harmony because we can't maintain balance because the one thing *is* going to demand more time. That's how life is. So, as you will know if you have ever ridden a bike, you

can make the bike turn without turning the handlebars by leaning into the direction you need to go. Dalton says this is like life. Sometimes we need to lean into work, or a hobby, or our family because that thing genuinely, out of necessity, demands more of our time at this moment. These things we need to lean into will occur throughout our lives so finding harmony is more important than balance. Her word of caution is this though. Don't lean into one thing for too long or you'll end up going around in circles. Leaning into one thing and not sometimes returning to the other things will lead to disharmony and unhappiness.

**We have a problem then when a workplace culture demands constant availability from you, or consistently long hours, or pressures you to be a way that doesn't fit with your values.**

Environment, as well as personal responsibility, plays a strong role in mental well-being. We can't simply measure ourselves by our productivity if we are simply defining productivity as the work we do at work. Our self-worth is bound up in so much more, but it *is* bound up in a significant way in what we do at work, that's why focusing on well-being at work is so important. Interestingly there is research that shows people often describe stress as being rooted in the workplace but site the solution to it outside of the workplace. This is not as it should be. We need to attend to our well-being through self-care throughout the day wherever we are. Self-care is not indulgence, it is necessity. Time taken out to self-care when at work will be 'paid back' in more efficient work when you are working. Self-care needs to be non-negotiable in the workplace and at home with our families and friends. We need to find a balance between meaningful activity and meaningful rest. The best way to achieve that is through having a plan so we can attend to each task at the right time in the right place mindfully focused on it to the exclusion of other things. This is called Flow.



**Caroline Webb in her book 'How to Have a Good Day' talks about having Pit Strategies.**

Things we can do throughout the day and in our leisure time when we 'come in' for a pit stop. We need a strategy for micro breaks. Something we can do

when we have 5-minutes. Maybe some breathing exercises, maybe some mind-wandering, maybe a walk around the building we are in, or mindfully making a cuppa. Our day should be peppered with these micro rests. We then need 'medium rests'. The crucial medium rest is your lunch break. Taking a lunch break restores our ability to pay attention in the afternoon. And then you can get at your pit strategy for those macro rests. What can you do when you have an hour or more. These are all important rests that we need to take. So, take them, plan for them, make time for them.



Sp Adobe Spark

**Read more at [www.selfcareshorts.com](http://www.selfcareshorts.com)**





from the Self Care Shorts Blog [www.selcareshorts.com](http://www.selcareshorts.com)

## Applying the 2-minute rule in practice - a beginner's guide!

Every time I ask people to feed back to me after the sessions I do about self-care and productivity about what they found most helpful they always mention the 2-minute rule. So... I always talk about it

**It's basically this.** If you look at a task and you think it's going to take less than two minutes to complete, then simply do it. Don't delay, don't put it off until later, just do it. You can actually achieve a lot more in two minutes than you think you can. If you have the time, sit quietly now for two minutes. It feels like forever! You could get a lot of small tasks done in that time!



**At a session recently though someone suggested that the application of the two-minute rule was in contradiction to my view that when immersed in Deep Work we should do it to the exclusion of all other tasks.** “Surely the two-minute rule contradicts this as if you come across something to do then you are suggesting I just do it”, the person said (I'm paraphrasing – but that was the gist of it I think). I answered something to the effect that the two-minute rule was effective for emails and planning tasks and working through small tasks but not when engaged in deep work. I wasn't satisfied with my explanation. I didn't feel it was clear enough, so I thought I'd write about it.

***There are times, like anything, when the application of an idea is helpful and times when it is unhelpful. The two-minute rule falls into that category. I thought the best way to explain when to use it and when not to use it would be to take you through a typical day of mine and explore the application of this 'rule'.***

### Start-up strategy

**We all have a start-up strategy. Yes?** This is the process that gets you going when you get to work. Just like a computer you need to be powered on and have your software loaded and get yourself ready for the day. My start-up strategy goes like this.

**8.30 Open notebook to new page and write the date at the top then Open calendar.** Work through the day visualising myself undertaking each task. In doing so I am connecting with the task and checking that I have everything to hand that I need for each task. This is a perfect opportunity to *apply the two-minute rule*. If I find I haven't got something I need for a task, maybe I haven't created a Teams Meeting link or printed off some lecture notes or found a phone number I need, I apply the two-minute rule and do it there and then. Anything else that's longer than two minutes gets put in a time slot in my calendar (this doesn't happen very often, if at all, as my planning strategy means that the big things required are all done)



**9.00 Open Emails and work on getting my Inbox to empty.** I work through my emails methodically one by one using the Do It, Delegate It, Defer It, Delete It process ([see this link for more on this strategy](#)). The Do It part relies exclusively on *the two-minute rule*. Can I deal with this email in less than two minutes? If I can it gets done there and then. If it's going to take longer than two minutes it gets deferred into my trusted system.



## Working day

**9.30 Clearing up and small jobs.** This is a good slot for anything that might have fallen out of my diary scan and my emails. If something needed doing urgently I will have put it into this time slot. No two-minute rule things here I'd imagine because this will be a longer task or tasks that needs doing

**10.00 Deliver lecture.** Off I go to do what I do. This is in many ways Deep Work. I'll explain. Deep Work in the productivity literature is usually a job that needs you to be completely focussed to the exclusion of everything else and is usually best undertaken in glorious isolation – distraction free. Now that doesn't define lecturing as you do it in front of people, but I feel it is still a Deep Work task as it requires me to be completely in the moment to the exclusion of everything else. So no two minute rule activities going on here.

**12.00 At the end of the lecture a student asks me for a tutorial.** Yes indeed! Let's plan that now. I have my calendar on my phone. *Two-minute rule* applied tutorial booked. I could have said I'll get back to you later with sometimes, but no, there and then – let's get this sorted – done and forgotten about – my calendar will remind me of what I need to know.



**13.00 Lecture Preparation** (after lunch of course as a lunch break is so important – [have a look here](#)). This is Deep Work. I need to be in a quiet place, and I need to be not distracted. I won't be applying the two minute rule here because i will have switched my phone and emails to silent and I'll be getting on with the task.

**But disaster – there is a problem here.** Our minds just don't stay focussed on the thing we are doing no matter how hard we try. The more we do Deep Work and the more we train ourselves towards mindful behaviour the better we get at it but nevertheless sometimes

something pops into our heads! This is what I refer to as a boundary moment. A point where we have a choice to make about how to proceed! What do we do! *My brain has just reminded me that I was asked by my manager to email them the contact details of someone.*

**Now, that could be achieved using the two-minute rule because it will take me less than two minutes to do that.** But there's a problem here because opening my emails and sending the information will only take that time up but I might see other emails that interest me – our minds are terrible like that – and I might end up replying because – well – I could do it in two minutes. We become trapped in our emails and the Deep Work gets interrupted and then, when we go back to the Deep Work, it takes (as an experiment conducted by Microsoft found out) 10 to 15 minutes to get back up to speed on the Deep Work task. ***So that's not a good idea!***

**I could still decide to go and apply the two-minute rule and get the email sent.** It might be something really urgent and therefore the interruption may be necessary. I might have to accept the productivity dip.



**But if it's not urgent I should resist the urge to send the email now and continue with the Deep Work.**

**But problem number two raises itself!** Every time I try to get on with the Deep Work task I keep thinking I mustn't forget to send that email! Argh! David Allen calls these Open Loops. They just go round and round in your head taking up vital psychological capacity and distract you from the task in hand. Here's what to do. Externalise your memory and make a note of what needs to be done in your note book that sits next to you all the time with today's date at the top of the page. You sorted this out at 8.30 this morning during your Start Up strategy! *Note: Send email to manager with contact details for Dave.* This gets it out of your head into your trusted system so that you will be reminded to do it later. It does create a pause, it does create a shifting of attention, but you have minimised it as best you can. We can't help these thoughts encroaching but we can decide how to manage them for the best.

**15.00 Team Meeting.** I class this as a Deep Work task as well. The meeting needs my attention so no two-minute rule opportunities here. The same rules apply that we utilised when we were doing lecture prep Deep Work. As you go through the meeting take notes about things you need to do so we can move them into our trusted system later.

## Shut down strategy

**16.00 Emails.** This is the same process that we undertook at 9 a.m. Open up those emails work through them and get that Inbox to empty!

**16.30 Planning.** Getting in to empty is not just about that Inbox it's also about that note book and all of the entries you've made as the day has gone on. You work your way methodically down the list and use the same Do It, Delegate It, Defer It, Delete It process that you used for emails. *Note: Send email to manager with contact details for Dave. Two-minute rule application!* This is where that deferred task gets done in two minutes having caused the minimum of disruptions to your Deep Work. Then, go through the other tasks that you've noted in the same way. They either get done, get deleted, get delegated to others for more information, or get moved into your trusted system as entries in your calendar. Cross them out as you go – it's soooo satisfying! **Finally plan tomorrow.** Have you got everything you need for everything you need to do? Get all of your ducks in a row.

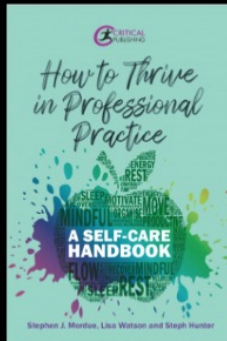
**17.00 Reflect on the day.** *What didn't go so well.* Could you have controlled something better or could you not have foreseen what went wrong. If you could have done something better jot down what you could have done. This helps consolidate your thinking. If you couldn't have predicted what went wrong, then let it go. It is what it is. *Then think about the things that went well, and the things you got done.* This is especially important if you have had a stressful day (...there are other sorts of days I hear you say!) When we are stressed we tend to take a micro view of our day, homing in on small details and this can lead to negative thinking. Get your wide angled lens on and take a birds eye view of the day and enjoy the things that went well.... and then **Shutdown Complete.**

***Like any technique it only works in the right circumstances. The two minute rule needs to be used when it is appropriate and not used indiscriminately when it will interrupt your Deep Work. Unless of course the thing that popped into your head is so important that you should interrupt what you are doing and get it done!***

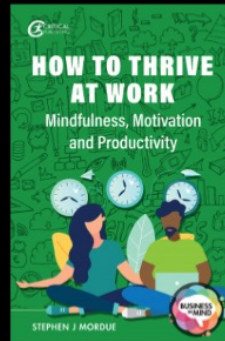
Over to you!



## Two versions of the same book– one purpose to enhance your well-being and productivity



This version is aimed at social workers



This version is aimed at everyone

Available at <https://www.criticalpublishing.com/stephen-mordue>

Or Amazon

# www.selfcareshorts.com



@SelfCareShortsSJM



@sjmordue



Self Care Shorts



sjmordue