

MAKING TIME,  
MAKING CHANGE:  
Toward a Sane  
Productivity

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Everything  
that I did in  
life that was  
worthwhile,  
I caught hell  
for.

Earl Warren

Education is not  
filling a bucket,  
but lighting a fire.

William Butler Yeats  
(1865-1939)

# Judy Brown, “Fire,” from *Teaching with Fire: Poetry that Sustains the Courage to Teach*

What makes a fire burn  
is space between the logs,  
a breathing space.  
Too much of a good thing,  
too many logs  
packed in too tight  
can douse the flames  
almost as surely  
as a pail of water would.

So building fires  
requires attention  
to the spaces in between,  
as much as to the wood.

When we are able to build  
open spaces  
in the same way  
we have learned  
to pile on the logs,  
then we can come to see how  
it is fuel, and absence of the fuel  
together, that make fire possible.

We only need to lay a log  
lightly from time to time.  
A fire  
grows  
simply because the space is there,  
with openings  
in which the flame  
that knows just how it wants to burn  
can find its way.

- Chronic overload is epidemic among postsecondary educators.
- We have far more control over how we use our time than we exercise.
- Six principles from systems science can serve as a framework for eliminating chronic overload.

## OBJECTIVE: Explore Three Propositions

Avoiding overload...

How well do you think that you  
have it worked out?

Really  
CLUELESS

1



to



10

Really  
COOKING

# How sustainable is your current worklife?

I'm dying  
here...

1



to



10

I could go on  
forever...

Insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results.

Albert Einstein



When your horse  
is dead, the  
proper strategy is  
to dismount.

Lakota saying

Right now I'm  
having  
amnesia and  
deja vu at the  
same time. I  
think I've  
forgotten this  
before.

Steven Wright

You can be on the right  
track, but if you don't  
keep moving, you'll get  
run over.

Will Rogers

Faculty  
emails  
about  
overload  
workshop...

“I will not be  
able to attend  
today’s  
workshop  
(sorry—I’m  
overloaded!!)  
but could really  
use some  
assistance in  
this area.”

“If you could  
just give me  
ONE of those  
[coping  
strategies]  
RIGHT NOW,  
then I might  
be able to fit  
this  
[workshop]  
in.”

“Sounds great. Can’t come.  
Too overloaded!!!”

“A long-term quick  
fix, please...and  
make it pronto!”



# CHRONIC OVERLOAD

Why such a  
problem?

# A Changing Higher Education Environment

## A FULL PLATE...getting FULLER

- Assessment
- Strategic planning
- Accreditation
- Compliances
- Curricular reform
- Budget reductions
- Technology

Eisenhauer,  
as President of  
Columbia  
(1948-1953),  
to his Provost:

“The  
university  
should just  
tell the faculty  
what to do.”

Provost:  
“General, the  
faculty are the  
university.”

Traditions of  
faculty autonomy  
and governance:  
***we like to do  
it ourselves***

CHRONIC  
OVERLOAD:  
Pernicious  
Norm?

*An indicator of  
professional  
quality?*

Tending to cause death, serious injury, or great harm; **deadly** or **destructive**.

The standard, usual, or expected state; **typical**.

*A state which is expected of us and which does us great harm.*

Freud was asked  
what a person  
needs to live a  
healthy life, to  
which he replied,

Sane > L. *sanus*,  
healthy

Good work:  
Healthy work:  
Sane work

Our interest:  
***HEALTHY***  
***PRODUCTIVITY***

“To love and to work.”

What's a  
person  
to do?

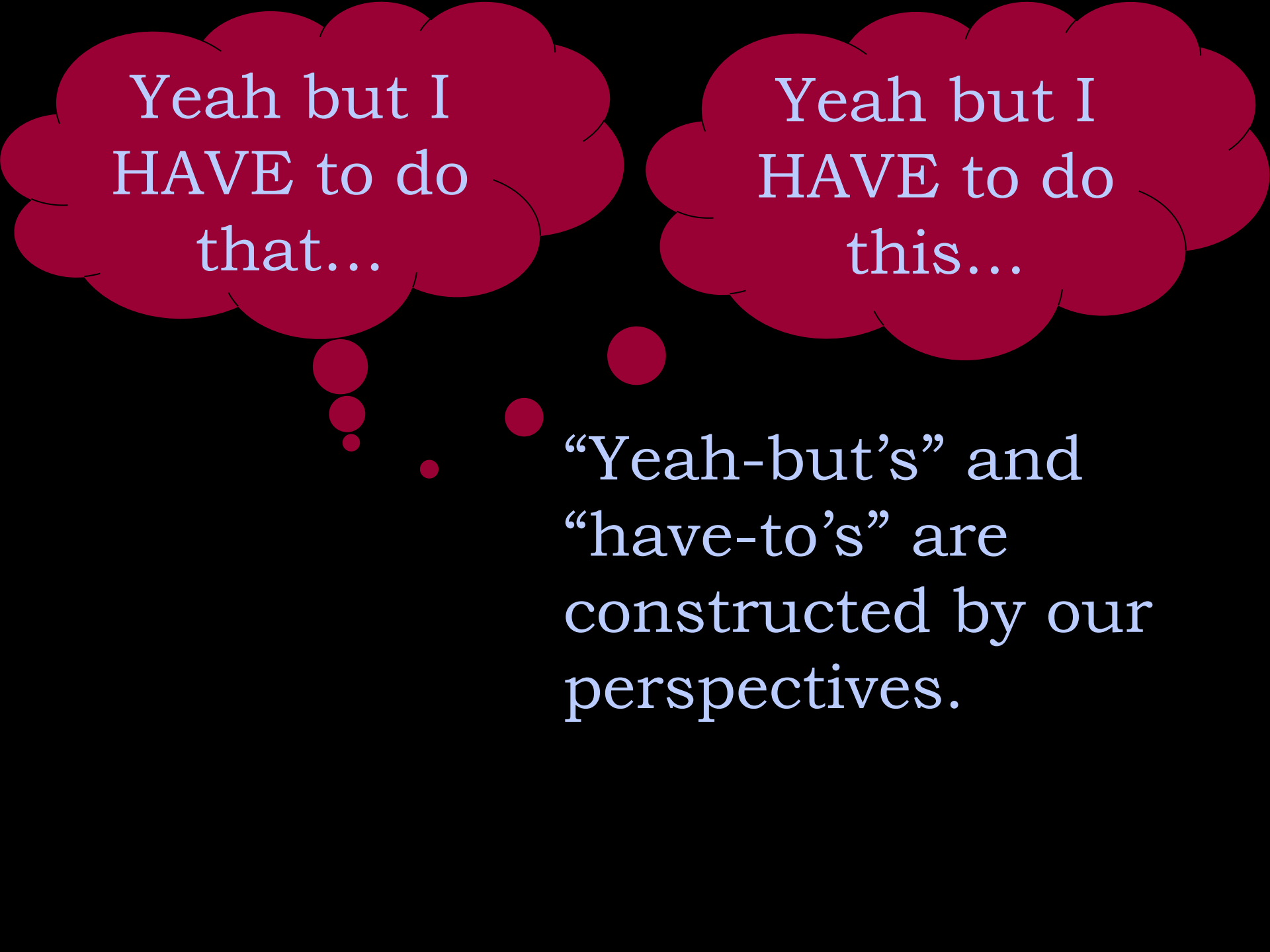
If our perspective on time  
is not working for us,  
**we need to change it.**



The

Trickster

Crazy Yeah-but



Yeah but I  
HAVE to do  
that...

Yeah but I  
HAVE to do  
this...

“Yeah-but’s” and  
“have-to’s” are  
constructed by our  
perspectives.

Life is full  
of obstacle  
illusions.

Grant Frazer

Illusions and such are  
fun ways to see how  
our perspectives  
construct our realities.

Aoccdrnig to a rscheearch at an  
Elingsh uinervtisy, it deosn't  
mttaer in waht oredr the ltteers in  
a wrod are, the olny iprmoetnt  
tihng is taht frist and lsat ltteer is  
at the rghit pclae. The rset can be  
a toatl mses and you can sitll  
raed it wouthit porbelm. Tihs is  
bcuseae we do not raed ervey  
lteter by it slef but the wrod as a  
wlohe. Initsereg!!

You will never find time for  
anything. If you want time  
you must make it.

Charles Buxton

# INTENTIONALITY VALUES

If our perspective on time  
is not working for us,  
**we need to change it.**



Problems  
cannot be  
solved at the  
same level of  
awareness  
that created  
them.

Albert Einstein

*We need to shift our perspective  
from **SUBJECT (acting from)**  
...to **OBJECT (acting on)**.*

Six principles from a vintage  
synthesis of systems theory  
and research can help us to do  
this.

# SIX ADAPTATIONS TO OVERLOAD

Stanley Milgram  
(1970). The  
experience of living in  
cities. *Science*,  
167(3924), 1461-  
1468.

Influential attempt to  
use systems science  
to understand urban  
life as an adaptation  
to stimulus overload

Has the potential to  
be applied to other  
situations of  
stimulus overload

Boundaries  
Information

APPROACH TO  
OVERLOAD

WHY BOUNDARY  
MANAGEMENT?

# BOUNDARY MANAGEMENT

- When college teaching is viewed as facilitating student learning (in contrast to disseminating knowledge), it becomes an *educational helping relationship*, which is similar to, but different from, other helping relationships such as counseling, psychotherapy, social work, and ministry.
- In an educational helping relationship, avoiding overload depends importantly on boundary management or relationship issues.
- Unlike other helping professions, college teachers generally receive no training regarding boundary management in this helping relationship.

# Principle 1: ***Be able to be efficient in all things.***

Be able to  
take less  
time to do  
the same  
things with  
similar  
quality.

Related overload adaptation:  
“...allocation of less time to each  
input”



Know your  
“lines in  
the sand”  
and state  
them  
clearly,  
early, and  
often.

Interact  
with  
students  
with  
intentional  
time and  
depth.

Principle One: *Be able to be  
efficient in all things*

## **TEACHING APPLICATION**

- Use technological tools in as many aspects of teaching as make sense.

Principle One: *Be able to be  
efficient in all things*

## **TEACHING APPLICATION**

- Digitize  
everything  
that you  
can.

Principle One: *Be able to be  
efficient in all things*

## **TEACHING APPLICATION**

- Use group feedback thoughtfully (e.g., group feedback on reflection papers).

Principle One: *Be able to be  
efficient in all things*

## **TEACHING APPLICATION**

- Do not permit  
handwritten student  
work (reading speeds).

What are some...

HIGH

LOW

NO

TECH

TECH

TECH

practices that save you time?

Your real winners

# Principle 2: ***Express your values in how you use your time.***

Avoiding overload involves values clarification, which is expressed in the setting of priorities.

Develop a framework, explicitly based on your values, for making tough choices in how you will spend your time.



Related overload adaptation:  
“...disregard of low priority  
inputs”

- Corollary: “Principles of selectivity are formulated such that investment of time and energy are reserved for carefully defined inputs....”

You better cut  
the pizza in  
four pieces  
because I'm not  
hungry enough  
to eat six.

Yogi Berra

*No matter how many pieces you cut  
it into, the pizza is still the same  
size, and the day still has the same  
number of hours in it.*

If basic necessities such as commuting and hygiene require 2 hours a day, our week has **98 hours** left for work, meals, family, friends, worship, exercise, recreation, or whatever we choose (14 hours x 7 days).

A week consists of **168 hours** (24 hours X 7 days)  
If we sleep 8 hours a day, a week consists of **112 waking hours** (16 hours X 7 days).

Principal Two: *Express your values in how you use your time*

## **TEACHING APPLICATION**

- Identify the major areas of your life.

Principal Two: *Express your values in how you use your time*  
**TEACHING APPLICATION**

- Identify the major areas of your work.

You have to  
allow a certain  
amount of time  
in which you  
are doing  
nothing in  
order to have  
things occur to  
you, to let your  
mind think.

Mortimer Adler

Principal Two: *Express your values in how you use your time*  
**TEACHING APPLICATION**

- Assign a weight (percentage) to each area and do the math.

# EXAMPLE: 2-2 LOAD

40 hours for work per week

- Teaching and advising: 40% = 16 hours per week
- Service: 10% = 4 hours
- Research: 40% = 16 hours
- Personal administrative/  
discretionary: 10% = 4 hours



Principal Two: *Express your values in how you use your time*  
**TEACHING APPLICATION**

- Keep doing the math.

# QUESTIONS

- How many courses do you have?
- How many courses are separate preparations?
- What are the relative states of development of the courses, ranging from new to well-developed?
- Are you trying a major innovation in one or some of them?
- How many required office hours do you have each week?

# EXAMPLE

- 16 hours per week for teaching and advising
- Minus 4 office hours per week for advising
- Leaves 12 hours per week for teaching to be divided by a 2-course load
- Which results in 6 hours per week for each course
- Which means for each course, 3 hours per week in class and 3 hours per week for preparation and feedback on student work

Principal Two: *Express your values in how you use your time*

## **TEACHING APPLICATION**

- Be discreet about the details.

# Principle 3: ***Don't hoard responsibility, share it.***

Identify ways for other agents in your environments to do what you do with the same or better result.

Related overload adaptation:  
“...boundaries are redrawn in  
certain social transactions so  
that the overloaded system can  
shift the burden to the other  
party in the exchange”

Principal Three: *Don't hoard  
responsibility, share it*

## **TEACHING APPLICATION**

- Employ NICs and NIFs.

# NIFs (Non-teacher instructional feedback)

- Information from any source other than the teacher that students can use to understand the quality of their learning and, ideally, how to improve that quality
- Some sources of NIFs:
  - Students
    - Short term dyadic or small group exchanges in class (e.g., reflection papers, self evaluations)
    - Enduring work groups that may involve face-to-face meetings outside of class
    - Electronically mediated *agorae*—Gr., gathering places (e.g., lists, Blackboard or discussion boards)
  - Mastery learning programs
  - Outside experts
  - Research



We are  
looking for  
win-win  
solutions:  
those that  
help  
students  
develop  
and mature  
while also  
making  
time for us.

Principal Three: *Don't hoard  
responsibility, share it*

## **TEACHING APPLICATION**

- Require students to download and print course materials.

Notwithstanding our good intentions,  
making things easy may not always serve  
the students' development.

Principal Three: *Don't hoard  
responsibility, share it*

## **TEACHING APPLICATION**

- Require students to monitor their own completion of course assignments.

Giving students responsibility and consequences is part of our responsibility.

Principal Three: *Don't hoard  
responsibility, share it*

## **TEACHING APPLICATION**

- Require students to prepare their own study guides.

Principle 4: ***For every aspect of your life, find a time and place befitting it.***

Be able to block access to yourself completely when necessary.

Related overload adaptation:  
“...reception is blocked off prior  
to entrance into a system...”



## 4: Some Teaching Applications

- For every season, there is a time...  
AND A PLACE...
  - to prepare class
  - to read and comment on papers
  - to do scholarship
  - to meet with students
- Have protected times and places ready for regular use (e.g., for reading, thinking, and writing).

# Be able to block access to you.

- Leave the office.
- Know your campus options.
- Know your community options.

# Principle 5: ***Be short with many so that you may be long with a few.***

Use devices that buffer you from interruption, while preserving the information communicated, thereby allowing you to respond at a time, pace, and intensity of your choosing.

Related overload adaptation:

“...the intensity of inputs is diminished by filtering devices, so that only weak and relatively superficial forms of involvement with others are allowed [unless chosen].”

# QUIZ

- Whenever your telephone rings, do you automatically answer it?
- When that tune plays on your computer signaling the arrival of an email, do you reflexively check to see who sent it and usually open it?
- Are you unable to close your office door and not respond to a knock?
- Does doing any of the above produce massive guilt or anxiety attacks in you?

# GOAL

- We need to develop the ability to do all of these boundary setting behaviors guilt and anxiety free as a matter of routine professional practice.

# Principle 6: ***Stick to your knitting: refer, defer, delegate when possible.***

Use the professional practices of referral and delegation when appropriate.

Related overload adaptation:  
“...specialized institutions are  
created to absorb inputs that  
would otherwise swamp the  
individual.”



- 1: Be able to be efficient in all things.
- 2: Express your values in how you use your time.
- 3: Don't hoard responsibility, share it.
- 4: For every aspect of your life, find a time and place befitting it.
- 5: Be short with many so that you may be long with a few.
- 6: Stick to your knitting: refer, defer, delegate when possible.

Questions, comments?

William Stafford, "The Way It Is," from *Teaching with Fire: Poetry that Sustains the Courage to Teach*

There's a thread you follow. It goes among  
things that change. But it doesn't change.  
People wonder about what you are pursuing.  
You have to explain about the thread.  
But is hard for others to see.  
While you hold it you can't get lost.  
Tragedies happen; people get hurt  
or die; and you suffer and get old.  
Nothing you do can stop time's unfolding.  
You don't ever let go of the thread.

# THANK YOU!

Luck is a  
crossroad where  
preparation and  
opportunity meet.

Good luck!