

## SECRET #6 - EVERYDAY LIVING

*“One day, when you wake up you will realize,  
that it is equally important to recognize and fulfill  
your own needs as it is for those of another.”*

*Andreas Simic*

This Secret to Success is not really a secret. In essence a lot of people know what will be discussed here but do not apply it, or have forgotten, that in order to achieve success the basics have to be covered. Here are some of the basics.

**ROUTINE:** It is amazing how we are creatures of routine yet some of us ignore this fact. My father has Parkinson and lives in a nursing home. They have routine down to a science. Dad wakes up generally at around the same time each day, 7:30 a.m. He washes and gets ready for breakfast. Breakfast is served at 8:00 a.m. Breakfast is finished and he receives his medication at 9:00. He reads the newspaper until morning tea at 10:30. After tea he has a nap. Lunch is at 12:00 sharp and at this time he has his next dose of pills. Then it is time for a little TV and an after lunch nap. At 3:30 p.m. it is time for afternoon tea. Then he is off to the exercise class with just a little rest time before dinner at 5:00. After dinner there is the TV room and a little socializing until 8:00 o'clock, when he gets his evening pill. Oh, there is also an evening snack and then bedtime.

Wow, now that is what I call routine. The nursing home has it down to a science. The routine minimizes the amount of stress that an occupant of the home experiences. People with dementia like dad love routine. They love knowing what comes next without having any surprises, which they may not be able to comprehend. How about your routine? Does it minimize stress and surprises? Most people have routines; it may be that we take the same route to and from work or that we fill up at the same gas station? Is your routine working for you? If not, have you consciously looked at what your routine is and what you could do differently to make your life easier? If routine helps run successful nursing homes does it not make sense that routine will help you succeed?

You see a routine is like that cruise control on a car. If you have a routine things happen automatically without your thinking about it. Ever arrive back home after a car trip and not remember the trip itself? Well this is because that journey has been done so many times that it has become routine.

In essence you have seen everything there is to see on the route and unless something is new or different it does not trigger the conscious mind. Routines are like habits. They can be seen as good or bad. Good habits align you with your goals and so do good routines. Review your routines to ensure they are in alignment with where you want to go.

**SYSTEMS:** Having systems is another way in which to make life easier by allowing more time for you to pursue your passions. What is a system? It is a methodology that allows for a consistent result no matter how many times it is used.

A good example is a filing system. Let us assume that you have created a filing system based upon placing files in alphabetical order from a to z based upon the last name of the patient or client. Every time something needs to be filed for that person it goes into a file under their last name. If you ever need something for that person then you would know exactly where to look every time.

So what systems do you have at your house? Do you have a key storage system? Do you hang the keys on a rack by the door and put them there when you are finished using them? Or, do you hunt around the house looking for where you could have possibly left the key the last time you used it? Sometimes you find it quickly, sometimes you take longer and sometimes you do not find them for days or not at all. What a time waster and pain in the neck to replace the key. Do you have spare keys? Is there a backup system in place if they are lost?

The same system requirements can be stated for wallets and purses. Do they have a place where it becomes part of your routine to go to that same place and pick the purse or wallet up on the way out?

Do you have a place for everything so you know where it is at all times?

Let us talk about other systems that you could use in everyday living like the mail. Do you get the mail and accumulate it in one place until bill-paying time occurs each month so that you do not miss paying a bill and don't waste time opening envelopes every day? Or, are you hunting for them throughout the home when month end comes.

Do you have a bill paying system, garbage collection system, and car and house maintenance system? Is there a system for who picks up the kids at school and when?

What about filing systems, for those important papers or tax receipts and forms. It does not have to be elaborate. For a few dollars you can get a bankers box (cardboard carton specially sized to hold file folders) and some folders and you are in business. Label the folders and any time you have a bill or receipt put it in the appropriate folder. At the end of the month or year you have all the things you need in one convenient spot. Another tip is to duplicate important documents, which means if you lose or temporarily miss-place one copy than the other copy is readily available.

The above systems fall under the heading of find a place for everything and everything in its place.

What about phone numbers? Do you have a telephone-listing directory where you have all the phone numbers for emergency services, family, friends, work etc? Is the directory kept in the same place so everyone in the family knows where it is? Is it up to date so you are not looking for scraps of paper with that important number on it? What about business

cards for the accountant, plumber, electrician, appliance repairperson etc, are they all in one easy to find spot. You may want to have a similar system for tracking the dates of birthdays and special event dates.

Another system most successful people employ is a budget. A budget is a method of tracking where your expenditures go. Some people think budgets are about constraining the amount of money we spend. Yes, this could be one way of using a budget as it allows you to ensure you are living within your means by spending no more than you earn, however this does not have to be the case. An equally important use of a budget is determining where you spend those funds and determining if this is the most conscious choice for that expenditure. In Secret #12 - Financial Management we have included a sample budget form that you can use.

One cannot talk about systems and routine without talking about clothing. What is your clothing routine? Do select what you are going to wear the next day the night before so that there will be no surprises like that embarrassing stain, lost button, poor fit, or other issue. Do you pre-select what top goes with what pants or skirt or dress or tie. What shoes are you wearing with that outfit you have pre-selected. Do you have a routine around washing i.e. how often and what day of the week or around dry cleaning and what day do we take it there and what day do we pick up the clothes.

What is your system for storing and organizing your clothes? Do you use one drawer for socks and stockings and another for underwear so you will always know exactly where to look? What about your closet, is it arranged by casual wear, work clothes, special event clothes so that you do not have to flip through your entire closet to find the thing you want to wear? Do you sort by tops, dresses, and pants or do you put an entire outfit together on one hanger and have it all available in one location?

What about a system for tracking what needs to be done and when? A simple 'to do' list works well for most of us. Every day you start with a list of things that need to be done for that day, week or year. I usually suggest finding one item on the list that is the priority of the day. This is the one item on the list that absolutely has to be done. I rank the other items in terms of importance and priority, then work my way down to those things that could wait another day, if they had to. Anything not completed today is added to the top of the next day's list. If I find an item is there for several days then I need to consciously ask why it is not getting completed. I then have two choices, make it a priority or delete it from the list.

Do you have a grocery shopping system? First you create a standard shopping list. This list has the items on it that you typically buy during an average visit to the grocery store. As you run out of an item during the week you place a check mark beside that item on the list. All checked items are what you need to buy and in this way you will also know what you have and do not need to buy. As well, leave a few lines at the bottom of your list to add additional recipe items for purchasing that will be seldom buys.

An example of this type of grocery shopping list is provided at the end of this secret. This is a summarized list and your own would be more specific. What this system allows you to do is:

- i) It lets you know what you have so you do not buy multiples of the same thing; and
- ii) It makes sure that you do not leave the grocery store without taking home everything you need and avoids multiple trips for that one item you may have forgotten; and
- iii) It allows you to gauge how much you will potentially spend on each trip.
- iv) It helps you plan better for what you are going to cook;
- v) It prevents you from going back to the store for the forgotten ingredient
- vi) It helps you to eat healthier because you will be less likely to reach for something on impulse
- vii) It will save you money because you will not be so tempted to grab stuff that is not on the list

Stephen R. Covey has produced an excellent book entitled “First Things First.” It contains some excellent ideas and thoughts about how to prioritize the important things in our lives. I highly recommend you read about the numerous roles we all fill on a daily basis and how to co-ordinate those different hats that we wear. It also speaks about differentiating those things that are important versus not important and urgent versus not urgent and how most of us spend too much time working on things that are not important that we make urgent.

All of the above things keep you organized. You can never be too organized. Organization leads to productivity gains. It allows you to get more done in less time so that you can spend your time doing more of the things that will allow you to be successful or to enjoy life more fully.

This brings us to our next topic, **TIME CONSCIOUSNESS**. Are you one of those people who wonder where the day has gone? Odds are that if this is the case you are not time conscious or time aware. Do you start a job or task and say this should take an hour and you are still there three hours later.

Time consciousness means that we use the clock to gauge how well we are doing. If we think we can complete a task in an hour and it takes us a day how much time does it leave us for the rest of the items on our to do list. It is important at the start of the day to look at our list, select the items that have priority and give them a time allocation. If you do this at the start of the day then you will be able to see how many hours of work that you have and if it cannot be completed in one day you will be able to remove items and move them to a subsequent day.

If you are working on a task and it is taking longer than you thought it would, stop at an appropriate time and gauge how well you are doing, and how much longer it will take to finish the task. If it will cut into the time needed for the other tasks on your list evaluate whether this is a conscious or wise choice or whether you should move onto something else and return to the incomplete task at a later time. Add it back to your ‘to do’ list with a new time allocation.

It is very important to have time consciousness. Wear a watch and know where you are time wise throughout the day. If you are consistently running out of time and not able to complete the items on the ‘to do’ list evaluate how accurate your estimations of the length

of time it will take to do things. Add fewer items to the list and defer more to other days later in the week this will allow time for a more relaxed pace with less stress.

Here is another tip for **EVERYDAY LIVING**. Do you hear yourself saying “Oh I forgot that I wanted to pick up milk on the way home”, or “that is a great idea I will have to remember that” and yet you never do. That million-dollar invention or life saving procedure or world altering idea lost for all time. We all lead busy lives. There are 101 things going on in our minds at any given moment. What this leads to is what I call “brain clutter.” Brain clutter is like a closet with too many things in it, so that when you open the closet door things fall out and you cannot find what you are looking for because there is so much stuff in there it would take you a month of Sundays to find it.

So here is the tip. Write it down. Carry a small pocket sized notebook in your purse or pocket and when you have these brainstorm or need to remember to pick something up on your way home then you will. This is for two reasons.

By performing the act of writing the item down the conscious mind is invoked and the chances of remembering it is much more likely. Secondly, by writing things down you will actually have less brain clutter and are more likely to remember that event, as your mind will be clearer when it has less things roaming around in it.

Thirdly, I suggest that when you do have that brainstorm idea that you first write it in your portable notebook and then transfer the idea onto a more permanent method of storing the idea until you are ready to work with it i.e. on your computer or day timer.

### **EXERCISE: I**

List your routines. Are they working for you? What routines can you put in place to make your life easier and less stressful. Put the routines in writing and introduce these to other family members so that you have compliance from everyone.

List your systems. Do you have a system for emergencies, for picking up the kids at school or bill paying? Do you know of any other systems that you may wish to add to your repertoire?

### **EXERCISE: II**

Create your own ‘to do’ list system. The Activity log below will help. Remember to include recreational and fun things on your ‘to do’ list. Add time lines on the tasks to be performed or when you will be spending time for family, time for yourself and time for your goals and aspirations.



## GROCERY LIST

### DAIRY

- \_\_\_\_\_ Eggs
- \_\_\_\_\_ Milk
- \_\_\_\_\_ Butter
- \_\_\_\_\_ Margarine
- \_\_\_\_\_ Sour Cream
- \_\_\_\_\_ Whipped Cream
- \_\_\_\_\_ Yogurt
- \_\_\_\_\_ Cottage Cheese
- \_\_\_\_\_ Cream Cheese
- \_\_\_\_\_ Parmesan Cheese
- \_\_\_\_\_ Other Cheese
- \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_

### MEAT, FISH & POULTRY

- \_\_\_\_\_ Bacon
- \_\_\_\_\_ Sausage
- \_\_\_\_\_ Deli Meat
- \_\_\_\_\_ Hot Dogs
- \_\_\_\_\_ Chicken
- \_\_\_\_\_ Turkey
- \_\_\_\_\_ Beef
- \_\_\_\_\_ Pork
- \_\_\_\_\_ Ham
- \_\_\_\_\_ Fish
- \_\_\_\_\_ Shellfish
- \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_

### FRUIT

- \_\_\_\_\_ Apples
- \_\_\_\_\_ Bananas
- \_\_\_\_\_ Berries
- \_\_\_\_\_ Grapefruit
- \_\_\_\_\_ Grapes
- \_\_\_\_\_ Lemons
- \_\_\_\_\_ Limes
- \_\_\_\_\_ Melon
- \_\_\_\_\_ Oranges
- \_\_\_\_\_ Pears
- \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_

### BREADS

- \_\_\_\_\_ Bagels
- \_\_\_\_\_ Bread
- \_\_\_\_\_ Buns
- \_\_\_\_\_ English Muffins
- \_\_\_\_\_ Rolls
- \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_

### VEGETABLES

- \_\_\_\_\_ Broccoli
- \_\_\_\_\_ Cabbage
- \_\_\_\_\_ Carrots
- \_\_\_\_\_ Cauliflower
- \_\_\_\_\_ Celery
- \_\_\_\_\_ Cucumbers
- \_\_\_\_\_ Garlic
- \_\_\_\_\_ Lettuce
- \_\_\_\_\_ Mushrooms
- \_\_\_\_\_ Onions
- \_\_\_\_\_ Peppers
- \_\_\_\_\_ Potatoes
- \_\_\_\_\_ Radishes
- \_\_\_\_\_ Spinach
- \_\_\_\_\_ Tomatoes
- \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_

### DRY GOODS

- \_\_\_\_\_ Cereal
- \_\_\_\_\_ Oatmeal
- \_\_\_\_\_ Cookies
- \_\_\_\_\_ Crackers
- \_\_\_\_\_ Pasta/Noodles
- \_\_\_\_\_ Beans/Lentils/Peas
- \_\_\_\_\_ Rice
- \_\_\_\_\_ Bread Crumbs
- \_\_\_\_\_ Flour
- \_\_\_\_\_ Sugar
- \_\_\_\_\_ Cake Mix
- \_\_\_\_\_ Pancake Mix
- \_\_\_\_\_ Gelatin
- \_\_\_\_\_ Potato Chips
- \_\_\_\_\_ Tortilla Chips
- \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_

### BEVERAGES

- \_\_\_\_\_ Cocoa
- \_\_\_\_\_ Coffee
- \_\_\_\_\_ Tea
- \_\_\_\_\_ Fruit Juice
- \_\_\_\_\_ Soft Drinks
- \_\_\_\_\_ Mineral Water
- \_\_\_\_\_ Beer
- \_\_\_\_\_ Wine
- \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_

### CANNED GOODS

- \_\_\_\_\_ Baby Food
- \_\_\_\_\_ Applesauce
- \_\_\_\_\_ Fruit
- \_\_\_\_\_ Chili
- \_\_\_\_\_ Mushrooms
- \_\_\_\_\_ Soup
- \_\_\_\_\_ Spaghetti Sauce
- \_\_\_\_\_ Stewed Tomatoes
- \_\_\_\_\_ Tomato Paste
- \_\_\_\_\_ Tomato Sauce
- \_\_\_\_\_ Tuna
- \_\_\_\_\_ Vegetables
- \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_

### FROZEN FOODS

- \_\_\_\_\_ Apple Juice
- \_\_\_\_\_ Orange Juice
- \_\_\_\_\_ Ice Cream
- \_\_\_\_\_ Potatoes
- \_\_\_\_\_ Vegetables
- \_\_\_\_\_ Frozen Dinners
- \_\_\_\_\_ Frozen Pizza
- \_\_\_\_\_ Frozen Waffles
- \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_

### BAKING GOODS

- \_\_\_\_\_ Baking Soda
- \_\_\_\_\_ Baking Powder
- \_\_\_\_\_ Corn Starch
- \_\_\_\_\_ Salt
- \_\_\_\_\_ Pepper
- \_\_\_\_\_ Chocolate Chips
- \_\_\_\_\_ Nuts
- \_\_\_\_\_ Raisins
- \_\_\_\_\_ Vanilla
- \_\_\_\_\_ Dried Herbs
- \_\_\_\_\_ Spices
- \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_

### PAPER PRODUCTS

- \_\_\_\_\_ Facial Tissue
- \_\_\_\_\_ Toilet Tissue
- \_\_\_\_\_ Napkins
- \_\_\_\_\_ Paper Towels
- \_\_\_\_\_ Aluminum Foil
- \_\_\_\_\_ Plastic Wrap
- \_\_\_\_\_ Lunch Bags
- \_\_\_\_\_ Sandwich Bags
- \_\_\_\_\_ Garbage Bags
- \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_

### CONDIMENTS

- \_\_\_ Oil
- \_\_\_ Vinegar
- \_\_\_ Ketchup
- \_\_\_ Mayonnaise
- \_\_\_ Mustard
- \_\_\_ Olives
- \_\_\_ Pickles
- \_\_\_ Relish
- \_\_\_ Salsa
- \_\_\_ Salad Dressing
- \_\_\_ Shortening
- \_\_\_ Soy Sauce
- \_\_\_ Honey
- \_\_\_ Jelly/Jam
- \_\_\_ Peanut Butter
- \_\_\_ Syrup

### LAUNDRY

- \_\_\_ Bleach
- \_\_\_ Detergent
- \_\_\_ Fabric Softener
- \_\_\_ Stain Remover
- \_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_

### KITCHEN

- \_\_\_ All Purpose Cleaner
- \_\_\_ Dish Detergent
- \_\_\_ Dishwasher Soap
- \_\_\_ Floor Cleaner
- \_\_\_ Furniture Polish
- \_\_\_ Glass Cleaner
- \_\_\_ Steel Wool Pads
- \_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_

### BATHROOM

- \_\_\_ Bath Soap
- \_\_\_ Deodorant
- \_\_\_ Lotion
- \_\_\_ Razors
- \_\_\_ Shaving Cream
- \_\_\_ Shampoo
- \_\_\_ Toothpaste
- \_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_

### MISCELLANEOUS

- \_\_\_ Bandages
- \_\_\_ Batteries
- \_\_\_ Candles
- \_\_\_ Light Bulbs
- \_\_\_ Paper Plates
- \_\_\_ Pet Food
- \_\_\_ Stamps
- \_\_\_ Vitamins
- \_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_