

JANUARY 2016



Thought of the Day:

"For last year's words belong to last year's language, and next year's words await another voice."

T.S. Eliot

5 Easy Time Management Tips to Boost Productivity

Whether your New Year's Resolutions focus on achieving better health, reaching career milestones, or strengthening relationships, they would undoubtedly be easier to accomplish if only you had more time. In a digital world of constant distractions and information overload, most people feel that the days slip away and they are left wondering why they were unable to accomplish more. Embark on the new year with a commitment to optimizing your time in order to fulfill your goals and create a better sense of balance in your life. Here are a few tips:



Crispy Parmesan Cauliflower Bites

Ingredients

- 1 large cauliflower, cut into bite-sized florets
- 1/2 cup flour
- 2 eggs, lightly beaten
- 1 cup panko bread crumbs
- 1 tablespoon creole seasoning
- Oil for frying



Directions

- Working in batches, dredge the cauliflower florets in the flour
- Dip into the eggs and coat in the mixture of the breadcrumbs, parmesan, and creole seasoning
- Fry in oil heated up to medium-high (~350F/180C) until golden brown
- Set them aside on paper towels to drain

Recipe from closetcooking.com

1. Plan your day the night before, making note of the most important tasks and estimating how long each item will take. Schedule time for inevitable interruptions. By creating a roadmap for the day, you gain a sense of how much free time you will have and keep the commitments that cannot be ignored at the forefront of your mind.
2. Refrain from checking email first thing in the morning. The frenzy of people demanding your attention may generate stress and deter you from the productivity plan you have created. Instead, schedule time for checking and answering email at various points throughout the day.
3. When you are working on an important task, silence email and social media alerts on all your devices. Switch your phone to airplane mode and close the door to your office, if you have one.
4. Have a designated end to your work day, and commit to it unless you need to meet a firm deadline. The boundary between work and leisure time can easily become blurred, especially if you work from home. When work assignments are constantly encroaching on your time off, you may become exhausted and less efficient.
5. Schedule time for self-care. When life gets busy, many people allow their own well-being to sink to the bottom of their priority lists. However, neglecting physical or mental wellness by not getting enough sleep, eating unhealthy foods, or allowing stress to dominate your thoughts will catch up with you. If you become ill, you will lose more time than simple preventive measures would have taken.

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New Year's Resolutions for Your Home

The beginning of a new year invites a wave of optimism, with the ritualistic writing of resolutions for self-improvement. As a homeowner, the new year also marks an opportune time to check on the maintenance of your home and ensure that it is safe and healthy. Periodic check-ups are particularly important if your home is for sale or will be soon. Maintenance problems may deter buyers and will surely be revealed by the inspection once the home is under contract, which could lead to delays in closing or even the loss of a sale.

This January, resolve to spot potential maintenance issues before they become costly catastrophes. Here are some ideas:

- Ensure that all smoke detectors are functioning properly. While the batteries in a smoke detector should be replaced at least twice per year, you should also check them occasionally. Most units have a test button that will cause the alarm to sound when pressed. If this does not occur, you either need to replace the batteries or the entire unit. Take the opportunity to verify that your home has smoke detectors in less-trafficked areas, such as the attic, basement, and garage.
- Consider having your home tested for lead and radon. If your home was built before 1978, when the use of lead paint was banned, lead paint testing is a worthwhile investment. A test of a paint chip costs \$50 or less and can detect the toxic substance that causes lead poisoning. Regardless of your home's age, radon may be a threat. Radon gas is released when soil and rock beneath the home naturally deteriorate, and breathing the noxious air that results is the second leading cause of lung cancer. Most hardware stores sell an inexpensive radon test kit.
- Have you noticed a musty smell, or do you suffer from allergy symptoms like watery eyes or congested sinuses? These may be signs that mold growth exists somewhere in your home. If you find mold, remove it to avoid the risk of serious health problems. Mold growth within the walls may be caused by a leaky pipe. Observing your home's water meter should help you determine if any pipes are leaking. When you are sure that no water is running, check the number on the meter and then check it again after a half hour. If the number is different but no water has been run, it is likely that there is a leak somewhere in the home.
- January lies at the peak of fireplace season. Continue to enjoy your fireplace safely by having it swept when necessary. The timing between cleanings can vary, so investigate before you call a chimney sweep. Chimney fires can ignite when creosote, a tar-like substance, accumulates inside the chimney. You can test for creosote build-up by shining a strong flashlight into the chimney and probing the walls with a fireplace poker. Be sure to wear goggles and a dust mask. If the poker scratches a groove that is a quarter-inch thick or more, refrain from using the fireplace until the chimney is cleaned. If the groove is an eighth of an inch thick, the fireplace should still be safe to use, but you will want to schedule a sweep soon.

