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**Amy Vetter** • Feb. 20, 2018

It's that time of year again: long nights at the office, a seemingly infinite inbox, lunch and sometimes dinner at your desk. It's easy to have an out of body experience when you're sitting at your desk for upwards of 10 hours every day. Remaining present during what is a busy and stressful time is key in order to avoid burnout and ensure quality work. Here's how you can do so.

### **Eliminate Distraction**

Eliminating distraction will help you be ruthlessly efficient during busy season. The constant ding of notifications takes you out of the moment, in fact, research shows that it can take **up to 23 minutes** before you're able to refocus on the work at hand before you were interrupted. There are quite a few Google Chrome extensions that can block specific websites for a set time period so you can remove the temptation to check social media or your emails. You can do this when you have a specific task to complete – setting your work chat apps to do not disturb at the same time. While the prospect of quieting down the noise and focusing may seem daunting at first, you'll quickly realize you don't have to be available to everyone all of the time. In doing so, you can hopefully help minimize the amount of overtime needed.

### **Build Breaks In**

With work piling up, it can be tempting to sit at your desk for endless hours during busy season. This approach simply isn't productive, and it's imperative that you build breaks into your workday throughout the entire year, not just busy season. By taking periodic breaks, you actually get more work done. But what is the ideal break time? **An experiment** that studied the most productive workers revealed that the highest-performing 10 percent employed the 52-17 rule – working for 52 consecutive minutes and then taking a 17-minute break. Use your 17 minutes to get away from the

computer and maybe stretch, catch-up with a coworker or grab a drink of water.

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front of a screen. Find what works for you and stick to it.

## Map Out Your Day

Every day, the odd jobs and emails that pop up without warning detract from the primary tasks we need to complete. By keeping a daily schedule handy, you can remain focused on what you need to accomplish and where your attention is needed. The way you structure your to-do list will depend on you as an individual. Some people write a list every morning and email it to themselves, others block out time in their calendar to complete it, some even write their lists the night before so they start their day knowing what they need to do. There are a variety of apps out there to help keep track of your to-do list including [Evernote](#) and [Trello](#). It's about discovering what works for you and what helps you leave work at the end of the day feeling accomplished.

Tax time will always be jam-packed. But if you remember to take care of yourself and keep organized during this time, you'll find that April 17 rolls around before you know it.

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