

# Saving Daylight Savings: How To Be More Productive When It's Always Dark Out

Lydia Dishman, Fast Company 11/2/12



The end of Daylight Saving Time gives us another hour to sleep, but the loss of daylight is linked to a lack of productivity. Here's how to keep yourself motivated as the long nights of winter set in.

You know the lament, “There just aren’t enough hours in the day.” This weekend you’re about to get one more. On November 4, residents of most of the U.S., Canada, and countries in Europe, Africa, and South America will turn their clocks back to mark the end of Daylight Saving Time (some already did this last weekend).

For productivity wonks (and sleep enthusiasts) salivating at the prospect of a whole extra 60 minutes, there is a downside. Both “springing ahead” and “falling back” wreak havoc on our bodies’ circadian rhythms, those sleep and alert cycles that keep us humming. While losing an hour in spring is blamed for general grogginess and cyberloafing, a study by the found that fall transitions where we lose an hour of daylight are particularly hard on early risers.

Whether you’re a morning lark who loves to jam through your to-do list before lunch, or a night owl who prefers the productivity of the wee hours, chances are you are probably not getting enough sleep. A Center for Disease Control report estimated that between 50 to 70 million Americans suffer from chronic sleep loss and sleep disorders. According to the National Sleep Foundation, most adults need between seven and nine consecutive hours of sleep each night to feel fully rested.

No wonder Carson Tate, managing partner of Working Simply (the one who encouraged *Fast Company* readers to take an unplugged vacation), like many others, responds to the shorter days with a desire to put on pajamas and go back to bed. But work isn't going to wait, so Tate suggests we view the loss of daylight through a different lens.

Here are Tate's tips for being more productive in the dark--at least we turn the clocks forward again on March 13th.

### **Just Hit "Delete"**

Take a minute and look at your to-do list. Really look at it. Are there tasks or projects that have been on the list for weeks or months? Are you still doing work that is no longer in alignment with your goals and your organization's goals? Delete. Stop doing those tasks. Critically and realistically examine your work and make intentional decisions to delete and stop.

### **Determine To Take Just One Step**

You have probably seen the commercial for an arthritis drug that talks about a body in motion stays in motion and a body at rest stays at rest. This is a simple law of physics that can be applied to your work. Just get started. Take one action step on that project that feels overwhelming. Even as the weather grows cold and dark, keep your inner fire going by just focusing on the immediate next action step for your projects. Action begets more action. Keep your task list moving.

### **Rest**

In our always connected always on world, we have forgotten that there are seasons or rhythms in nature. Think about what happens in nature in the fall and winter: Nature is resting, rejuvenating, and preparing for the growth that occurs in spring and summer. As the days get darker, we are being called to rest and renew and prepare for spring. Carve out 10 minutes a day to just rest and reflect. Embrace the darkening days knowing that this time is preparing and restoring you for your spring and summer.

### **Keep Your Lists Simple**

Keep just one master task list. The holidays are approaching and our already full plates will be filled to capacity. By maintaining one and only one master task list, you have a comprehensive view of everything in your world that requires your attention and action. This one list helps you not only prioritize your tasks, but it also helps you maintain your sanity.

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