

# multi-tasking

the performance of more than one task at the same time



CareGivers  
of America  
Home Healthcare Services

Think you're good at doing several things at once? Reading and listening to music? Driving and talking on the phone (hands-free, of course), or texting while sitting in a meeting? **Think again.**

Research in neuroscience tells us that the brain doesn't actually do tasks simultaneously, as we thought it might. In fact, we just switch tasks quickly. Each time we move from hearing music, to writing a text, or talking to someone, there is a stop/start process that goes on in the brain.

*That start/stop/start process is rough on us.* Rather than saving time, it costs time (even very small micro seconds). It's less efficient, we make more mistakes, and over time, it can sap our energy.

**Multitasking doesn't actually exist. In reality, it's rapidly switching from one task to another, and then back again. And every time you make that switch, you pay a 'tax' on time, focus and your energy. For that reason, it's almost always more efficient to monotask: Focus on one thing and move on when you're done.**

**Myth: Multitasking increases productivity** If you're doing two things at once—even if those things aren't perfectly optimized—aren't you getting more done?

In fact, it's the *opposite*. Recent research shows that even these brief mental blocks that happen as a result of context switching *cost as much as 40% of someone's productive time*. Because it takes mental effort to switch between tasks, multitasking affects your ability to get work done efficiently.

**Truth: Multi-tasking and distractions are close (and toxic) relatives** Research suggests that: An average of 2.1 hours are lost daily as a result of distractions. The average time spent on a task before we get distracted is 11 minutes. The amount of time it takes to return concentration to a task after a disruption is 20-25 minutes.

## So, how to use your time more efficiently?

- \*Schedule time blocks
- \*Use Do Not Disturb features in apps or calendars
- \*Complete your current task before moving on to a new one
- \*Gain a clear understanding of priorities (not all tasks are equal)

It's not easy to stop multitasking, especially if this is a common part of your day to day. But when you stop trying to do multiple things at once and instead focus on one thing at a time, you'll find you're more engaged, productive, and impactful.