A Book Summary on

Eat That Frog
21 Great Ways to Stop Procrastinating and Get More Done in Less Time

by Brian Tracy.

According to Brian, eating your frog is about tackling your most important, daunting tasks, and getting them done. The concept is similar to how you eat an elephant...one bite at a time. Brian's main point is that you eat your most ugliest frog first, the next ugliest, and so on, until all your frogs are done. When you "eat your frog," you feel empowered, happier, energized and are more productive, i.e., you get more done.
“Time management is life management, so these principles apply to any aspect of your life, especially your business when you’re just getting started and working on it part time. The idea is to take control over what you do and choose the important tasks over the unimportant. This is a key determinate of success.

Brian Tracy!

Principle 1: Set the Table

This principle is about determining what you want to accomplish. It’s about getting clarity about your goals and objectives. One of the biggest reasons people procrastinate is vagueness and confusion about what they want to do.

Brian introduces his first Rule of Success: Think on paper. Do you know that people who have clear written goals accomplish 5 to 10 times more than people who don’t?
The 7 steps formula for setting and achieving goals

1. Decide exactly what you want to do (one of the worst time wasters is doing something well that doesn’t need to be at all).
2. Write your goal down. Writing your goal down crystallizes and put energy behind it because it becomes real.
3. Set a deadline on your goal. This gives you a sense of urgency with a beginning and end.
4. Make a list of everything you think you need to do to achieve the goal. A visual picture give you a path to follow and increases the likelihood of success.
5. Organize the list into a plan by priority and sequence. You can draw a map of your plan like a flow chart to help you visualize the steps.
6. Take action immediately. “Execution is everything.”
7. Resolve to do something everyday that takes you closer to your goal. Schedule your activities and never miss a day.

Principle 2: Plan Each Day in Advance

This is basically making a to-do list. Just like eating an elephant, you eat a frog one bite at a time. Break your task down into steps. “Thinking and planning unlock your mental powers, trigger you creativity, and increase your mental and physical energies.” The better you plan, the easier to overcome procrastination, to get started, and to keep going.

Brian claims that every minute you spend planning will save as much as ten minutes in execution. So if you spend 10 to 12 minutes planning, you’ll save at least 2 hours (100-120 minutes) in wasted time and effort - very impressive.
The Six P’s Formula for this principle

Proper Prior Planning Prevents Poor Performance.

All you need is paper and pen.
Always work from a list - if something new comes up, add it to the list.
Keep a master list of everything.
Make a list for different purposes.
Keep a monthly list, which you make at the end of each month for the following month.
Keep a weekly list, which you make at the end of the week for the following week.
Keep a daily list, which you make as the end of the day for the following day.

Principle 3: Apply the 80/20 Rule

This principle says that 20% of your activities will account for 80% of your results, even when all your activities take the same amount of time to do. The activities that give you the most return on your investment are your frogs.

Where you focus your time is the difference between being busy and accomplishing something. You want to eliminate or spend less time on your low-value tasks. Your most valuable tasks are the hardest and most complex, but give you the most bang for you time, so ask yourself if the task is a 20% task. Brian’s rule here is "Resist the temptation to clear up small thing first."
"A part of you mind loves to be busy working on significant tasks that can really make a difference. Your job is to feed this part of your mind continually."

**Principle 4: Consider the Consequences**

"The mark of a superior thinker is his or her ability to accurately predict the consequences of doing or not doing anything."

Thinking through the consequences gives you an idea if an activity is important and is a way to determine the significance of a task. Any important task will have long-term potential consequences.
"the long-time perspective is the most accurate single predictor of upward social and economic mobility in America" (a rare trait in our instant gratification world). Your attitude towards time has an impact on your behavior and choices. Thinking about the long-term impact will help you make better decisions"

Dr Edward Banfield, from Harvard University,

thus, one of Brian's rules:

"Long-term thinking improves short-term decision making."

Having a future orientation (5, 10, 20 years out) will allow you to analyze choices and will make your behaviors consistent with the future you want. Ask yourself, "What are the potential consequences of doing or not doing this task?"
"Failures do what is tension-relieving while winners do what is goal achieving."

Dennis Waitley, a motivational speaker

Make important tasks a top priority and start them now. Time is passing anyway, so decide how you will spend it and where you want to end up. Thinking about the consequences of your choices, decisions, and behaviors is the best way to determine your priorities.

Principle 5: Practice the ABCDE Method Continually

The ABCDE method is a priority setting technique to help you be more efficient and effective. The premise behind the technique is that the more you invest in planning and setting priorities, the more important things you will do and do faster once you start.

You start by listing everything you have to do for the day and categorize everything into A, B, C, D, or E.
Category: A, B, C, D, E

An "A" is something that is very important that you must do or there will be serious consequences (this is your frog.)
A "B" is something you should do that has mild consequences (Brian calls these your tadpoles). A "C" is something that would be nice to do but there are no consequences.
A "D" is something that you can delegate to someone, which frees up time for you to work your A.
An "E" is something you can eliminate because it makes not difference at all.

Principle 6: Focus on Key Result Areas

This principle is about focusing on what you are working towards. Every job can be broken down into "key result areas," which are results you must achieve and for which you are responsible. For example, the key result areas for management are planning, organizing, staffing, delegating, supervising, measuring, and reporting.
Identify your key result areas and list your responsibilities for each. Then grade yourself on a scale of 1-10 in each result area. Where are you strong? Where are you weak? Are you getting results or underperforming?

Brian's rule for this area is "Your weakest key result area sets the height at which you can use all your other skills and abilities." Essentially, your weakest area limits your overall performance.
Principle 7: Obey the Law of Forced Efficiency

“There is never enough time to do everything, but there is always enough time to do the most important thing.”

Brian’s rule that applies here is “There will never be enough time to do everything you have to do.” (That’s a hard pill to swallow and something we probably subconsciously know but don’t accept.) A fact Brian states in his book is that the average person is working at 110-130% of capacity, which means you will never get caught up. So that means you need to stay on top of your most important responsibilities. People create more stress for themselves when they procrastinate and put themselves under the pressure of a deadline. When you’re up against a deadline, you tend to make more mistakes.

Principle 8: Prepare Thoroughly Before You Begin

This principle means preparing and having everything you need ready before you begin your task. Have everything you need readily available in front of you. Remove everything that’s not going to help you. Create a workspace you’ll enjoy working in.
Principle 9: Do Your Homework

"Learn what you need to learn so that you can do your work in an excellent fashion."

Other reasons for procrastination are feelings of inadequacy, lack of confidence, and lack of competence in a key area of a task. To overcome these issues, work on your development. Professional development is one of the best time savers there is. Brian’s rule here is “Continuous learning is the minimum requirement for success in any field.” Keep on improving your skills.

Principle 10: Leverage Your Special Talents

Identify your unique skills and commit yourself to becoming good in these areas, then apply your knowledge and skills (no one can ever take those away). Ask yourself, “What am I really good at?” “What do I enjoy the most about my work?” “What has been most responsible for my success in the past?” “If I could do any job at all, what job would it be?” Focus on your best energies and abilities.
Principle 11: Identify Your Key Constraints

Limiting factors affect how quickly and how well you get your task done. They are the critical path or choke point to achieving your goal. Identify your limiting factors by asking yourself what is holding you back, then focus on alleviating those factors as much as possible.

Getting rid of those limiting factors usually brings more progress in a shorter time than anything else.

Principle 12: Take it One Oil Barrel at a Time

An saying about tackling anything is "by the yard, it's hard, but inch by inch, it's a cinch." Taking an "one oil barrel at a time" is the same concept. Brian talks about a trip in Algeria through the Sahara Desert. Because of the vastness of the desert and the lack of landmarks, the French had placed empty oil barrels on the road as markers. The barrels were placed 5 kilometers apart, so you could always see the next barrel. So the meaning of this principle is to go as far as you can see, and when you get there, you can see farther. Step out on faith, have confidence, and the next step will become clear.
Principle 13: Put Pressure on Yourself

The intent behind this principle is to take charge of your life before you end up waiting for a rescue that will never come. Be a leader, someone who can work without supervision, which according to Brian is only about 2% of people. Set standards for yourself higher than you would for others and go the extra mile. This is all about self-esteem, which is your reputation of yourself, as defined by psychologist Nathaniel Brandon. Everything you do affects your self-esteem. Push yourself and you'll feel better about you.

Principle 14: Maximize Your Personal Powers

Physical, mental, and emotional energies make up your personal performance and productivity. So guard and nurture your energy level. Rest when you need to. When you're rested, you get much more done. A general rule is that productivity tends to decline after about 8-9 hours. Identify the times you are at your best and use that time to work on your frogs. Take time out to rest, rejuvenate, eat well, and exercise.
**Principle 15: Motivate Yourself Into Action**

This principle is about controlling your thoughts and being your own cheerleader. Coach and encourage yourself. How you talk to yourself determines your emotional response. How you interpret things that happen to you determines how you feel. How you feel can motivate or de-motivate you. Become an optimist and don’t let setbacks and negativity affect your mood.

“In study after study, psychologists have determined that ‘optimism’ is the most important quality you can develop for personal and professional success and happiness.”

**Principle 16: Practice Creative Procrastination**

This is a personal performance principle about putting off doing smaller, less ugly frogs. Ultimately, you can’t do everything (remember Principle 7, Obey the Law for Force Efficiency?), so procrastinate on low value activities (bonus: you get to choose which ones). This is a matter of setting priorities, something you do more of and sooner, and setting “posteriorities,” something you do less of and later.

The rule that applies here is "You can set your time and your life under control only to the degree to which you discontinue lower value activities."
Principle 17: Do the Most Difficult Task First

This is the hardest, most difficult principle because you’re “eating your frog.” Brian outlines 7 steps to gain this skill (these steps are a nice summary of the some of the principles we have already covered):

1. At the end of the day/weekend, make a list of everything you have to do the next day.
2. Review the list using the ABCDE method combined with the 80/20 rule.
3. Select your A1 task, the one with the most severe consequences.
4. Gather everything you need to start and finish the task; get it ready to start the next morning.
5. Clear your workspace so you’re only ready to start your A1 task.
6. Discipline yourself to get up, get ready, and start the task without interruptions before you do anything else.
7. Do this for 21 days (creates the habit).

Principle 18: Slice and Dice the Task

This principle is the “salami slice” approach to getting work done. Do one slice of the task at a time. Psychologically, it’s easier to do a smaller piece that to start on the whole job-like eating an elephant. We tend to want to do another slice when we get done with one. People have a deep subconscious need to bring finality to a task, the “urge to completion.” We feel happier and more powerful when we start and finish a task because endorphins are released—the bigger the task, the bigger the sense of accomplishment.

This approach is also known as the “Swiss cheese” method; you punch a hole in the task by spending a specific amount of time on the task.
Principle 19: Create Large Chunks of Time

This principle is about scheduling time to work on large tasks. To make significant progress on your tasks, you need blocks of high-value, high productivity time. The key is to plan your day in advance and schedule fixed blocks of time, especially for things you don’t enjoy doing. Make an appointment with yourself (sounds a lot like Principle 2, Plan Each Day in Advance). Eliminate distractions and work nonstop. “Deliberately and creatively organize the concentrated time periods you need to get your key jobs done well and on schedule.”

Principle 20: Develop a Sense of Urgency

The basis of this principle is to be action-oriented. A sense of urgency is an “inner drive and desire to get on with the job quickly and get it done fast.” Take the time to think, plan, and set priorities, then work them. Create a mental state of “flow,” which is the “highest human state of performance and productivity.”

In the “flow” state, you feel elated, clear, calm, efficient, happy, and accurate. Everything you do seems effortless. You function at a higher plane of clarity, creativity, and competence. You are more sensitive and aware.
Developing a "sense of urgency" triggers the flow state. Race against yourself; develop a "bias for action." Develop a fast tempo which goes hand and hand with success.

**Principle 21: Single Hand Every Task**

This principle is about concentrating single-mindedly on your frog until it's done, which is the key to high level performance and personal productivity. Hard, concentrated work precedes every great achievement. You can reduce the time to finish a task by 50% or more when you concentrate single-mindedly, according to Brian.

Starting and stopping can increase the time to finish a task by an estimated 500% because you have to get reacquainted with the task and overcome inertia to get started again. When you stop, you break the cycle and move backwards. Develop momentum by getting into a "productive work rhythm." "The more you discipline yourself to working non-stop on a single task, the more you move forward along the 'efficiency curve.'" You get more high quality work done in less time.
21 principles for overcoming procrastination so you can "eat your frog."

1. Set the table.
2. Plan every day in advance.
3. Apply the 80/20 rule to everything.
4. Consider the consequences.
5. Practice the ABCDE method continually.
6. Focus on key result areas.
7. Obey the Law of Forced Efficiency.
8. Prepare thoroughly before you begin.
9. Do your homework.
10. Leverage your key special talents.
11. Identify your key restraints.
12. Take it one oil barrel at a time.
13. Put the pressure on yourself.
14. Maximize your personal powers.
15. Motivate yourself into action.
16. Practice creative procrastination.
17. Do the most difficult task first.
18. Slice and dice the task.
19. Create large chunks of time.
20. Develop a sense of urgency.

Eat a Frog Today!