Editing While Exhausted

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Why is everyone so exhausted?

- More work + fewer people to do it
- So many distractions
- So much to learn
- No privacy
- Around-the-clock/global work environment
So what do we do?

- Exhaustion-proof your editing
  - Be prepared
  - Use checklists and automated tools
- Create the right environment
  - Segment your time
  - Clear your head and clean your desk
- Take care of yourself
  - Stay healthy
  - Know when to say no

Exhaustion-proof your editing

CREATE SAFETY NETS FOR YOUR TIRED BRAIN.
Be prepared

- Style — which one are you using?
- Resources — at the ready
- Formats — online vs. paper

Use checklists

- Make them detailed — but concise
- Print them out
- Follow them religiously
- Check off every item, every time
Edit vertically and horizontally

- **One vertical pass through the entire document**

- **Several horizontal passes:**
  - Headers and footers
  - Exhibit numbers and callouts
  - Section or chapter numbering
  - Heads, decks, and bylines
  - Captions and cutlines
  - etc.

- **Put this all in a checklist!**
Use automated tools

- Proofreading software
- Custom spellcheckers
- Citation list builders
- “Note strippers”
- Indexing software
- Macros

... and other tips and tricks

- **Pick a schedule/shift.** When do you work best?
- **Read aloud.** You’ll hear what needs to be fixed.
- **Print.** Consider a hardcopy second pass.
- **Break it down.** Read 1 page/element at a time.
- **Incentivize.** Plan to edit 50 or 55 minutes, then give yourself a 5- or 10-minute "brain break" (move around, get a snack, step away from the desk).
- **Don’t be an awful-izer.** Just do it.
- **Don’t be a martyr.** Know when to ask for help, an extension, or time off.
Create the right environment

Segment your time

- “Things to do” form
  - Initial check-in: email, phone calls, etc.
  - What really needs to get done today? (goals)
  - Meetings/appointments/deadlines for the day
  - Prepare for the next day and set goals
- Be productive when you’re working. And when you’re not working... don’t work.
Estimating time: manuscripts & reports

- The first step in a reasonable schedule is a reasonable estimate. How to estimate time:
  - Long manuscripts (e.g., books)
  - Complicated, fast-turnarounds (proposals)
- For big projects:
  - Estimate how many hours you’ll need
  - Break that schedule up by day
  - Give yourself a reasonable daily goals
  - Even better, do this estimation before agreeing to the end deadline
  - Put it all on your calendar

Estimating time: newspapers & magazines

- Newspapers
  - The nature of newsroom editing
  - Special projects vs. daily work
  - Hubs/editing for multiple publications
  - Staff reductions/additional responsibilities
- Magazines
  - Slightly longer timeline per publication
  - Possibly more complicated editing process
  - Projects of varying length, both of time and words
“Control the Cubicle in Your Pocket”

— Gretchen Rubin, author of *The Happiness Project* and *Happier at Home*

- Set times when you don’t check email.
- Don’t check email at bedtime.
- Give yourself a quitting time each day. How can you enjoy your leisure if you don’t have any?
- “Technology is a good servant but a bad master.”

Clear your head

- Chair yoga
- Take a walk or a bike
- Do squats or situps or pushups by your desk
- Don’t forget to breathe and relax your shoulders when "speed editing"
- Take vacations — real ones
- What do you do when you absolutely can't get away from your desk?
Clean your desk (and your brain)

- Get dressed
- Listen (or don’t listen)
- Sniff
- Hit the road
- Clean
Take care of yourself

EAT, SLEEP, EXERCISE—AND SET BOUNDARIES

• Eat. Don’t let stress do the food shopping.
• Sleep. Try setting a sleep alarm.
• Be merry. Laugh. It’s not brain surgery.
• Exercise. Improve cognitive function!
• Set boundaries. How much is too much?
• Relax. Meditation, yoga, calming music.
• Listen ... and respond to your body’s signs of stress.

Remember, stress is cumulative.
Tweak it

- *Tweak It: Make What Matters to You Happen Every Day*, Cali Williams Yost

- Ditch “work-life balance” for “work-life fit”:
  - Work + personal life = one big picture.
  - What works for YOU?
  - If what you’re doing doesn’t work for you (if you’re continually exhausted), tweak it!
  - Do a week-by-week self-assessment, adjusting as needed. Life will never be perfect, but it can be better.

Set boundaries; know when to say no

- How much sleep do you need?
- How many days in a row can you work?
- How many projects can you manage at one time before you start to forget things?
- How many outside activities can you do — and at what level of responsibility?
- How many family events can you handle?
- How many style guides you can actually master — again, without forgetting things?
If all else fails ... laugh

If you don't like my changes
I can always edit your face

Thank you!

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References

- PerfectIt. http://www.intelligentediting.com