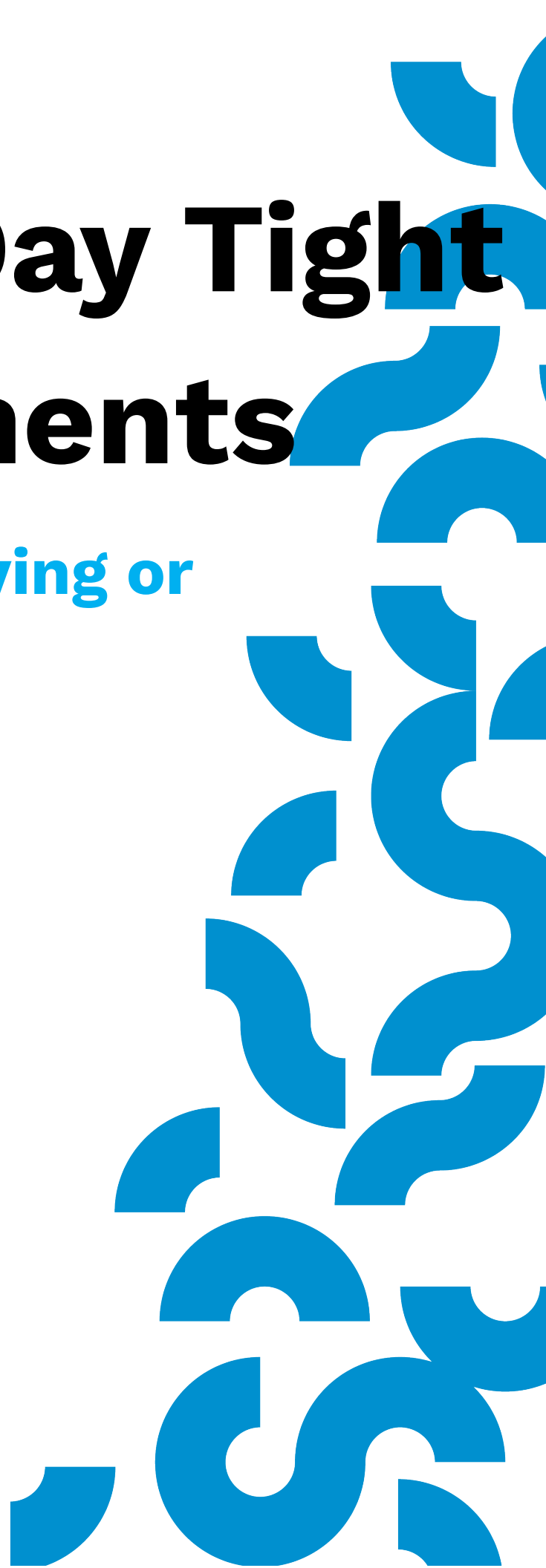


Living in Day Tight Compartments

Are you making a living or
making a life?

By Helena Glaneman



Working from home or working outside the home is difficult. Deadlines and responsibilities loom over all of us. If you work from home, you're rolling out of bed right into your office. If you commute to work, you are rolling out of the driveway or climbing on public transport, wasting precious time stuck in traffic, or listening to someone you don't know babbling about their new handbag while you are trying to get a little nap. There is a lot of talk about work-life balance. How can we achieve it? Dale Carnegie created the principles he wrote about in his book *The Golden Book*.

Here are a few principles that can help with work-life balance.

1. **Live in “day-tight compartments.”** Ships have water-tight compartments to help keep a ship afloat in the event of heavy rain or a leak. Concentrate only on what you can control right now. Tomorrow's issues will be there tomorrow, and yesterday's are old news. This analogy from the world of ocean liners, where the captain (if there is a leak) will just press a button and big, heavy iron doors will close off sections of the ship called bulkheads – creating a watertight compartment – and as long as they are all shut, the ship is very hard to sink. Close off concern to yesterday's issues and tomorrow's tasks, so you can only focus on today.
2. **Rest before you get tired.** Make sure you know the signals your body gives off when you are becoming tired. Fortunately, I can build in a nap time in my day if I notice the ‘tired’ signals. It might result in my working later in the day. That's ok though, because productivity will increase, and my mind will be sharper. If you work outside the home, tiredness can be overcome by standing up and walking around. Changing from one daunting task to an easier one for a while might give you a boost.

Have a chat with your favorite coworker. Drink a glass of water – you would be surprised what water can do!

2. **Learn to relax at work and at home.** At work – avoid talking to coworkers who cause you stress. At Home – have a dedicated work area, if at all possible, not in your bedroom. Don't read emails after a certain time of day. Don't look at your phone 3 hours before bedtime. There's time for work, and there's time for relaxation; prioritizing both at the appropriate time will do wonders for your mental capacity.
3. **Apply these four good working habits:**
 - a. *Clear your desk of all papers except those relating to the immediate problem at hand.* Seeing only the items you need to be working on right now will help you not get stressed out or start thinking about something you are not working on in the present moment
 - b. *Do things in the order of their importance.* Prioritization is key. I have mentioned it a few times now and learning the art or knowing what is important now and what can wait a bit longer will be the make or break of being able to operate in day tight compartments.
 - c. *When you face a problem, solve it then and there if you have the facts necessary to make a decision.* Problems arise all day, every day, but how do we handle them? Do we jump in and try to fix it quickly, or do we take a moment to understand the problem so we can find a well-thought-out solution?

- d. *Learn to organize, deputize, and supervise.* Organization is crucial to living in day-to-day compartments! If we are not organized, we can't know what needs to go in today's compartment and what needs to go in tomorrow's compartment. Take a few minutes a day to make sure all your compartments are filled appropriately. Deputizing means thinking, 'Is this a task I should do, or is there someone else who could do it better?' Passing a task off to someone else does not mean you are lazy; it just means you value quality. Finally, supervise and briefly look back at yesterday's compartment to make sure nothing fell through the cracks, but don't dwell there. If you pass something along to someone else, see how it's going, but don't micro-manage.

Before I took the Dale Carnegie Course, I was working at a busy insurance office. Stress and worry were causing me sleepless nights, unproductivity, and making my husband miserable when we would be together for precious few hours at night. I would have papers and notes all over my desk. I couldn't tell what was most important or needed to be done first. The Agent would have to tell me if I should or should not do certain tasks before I would act. I would reach for the phone whenever it rang, even though there was a receptionist to answer it and direct calls to the appropriate colleague. By living in day-to-day compartments, I have changed the way I live and work, and so can you. What would your life and work look like if you lived like this?