

AUGUST 2024 MONTHLY BLOG/ 164

COPING WITH MULTI-PRESSURES



Head Spinning © Vector Art 2024

This BLOG records my super-busy time in May/June/July 2024 and my tactic for coping. Before departing for a mini-break in western Ireland, followed by the annual ISECS-EC meeting¹ - this year in Maynooth, near Dublin - every research task that I had ever placed in the 'Futures' pipeline came to fruition simultaneously and unexpectedly. My head span. I was psychologically upset.

By temperament, I am what is known as a 'Taskie' ('Tasky?'), as opposed to a 'Multi-tasker'. I really like to focus upon one job at a time. How then to cope with half a dozen large tasks, as well as lots of little ones, all of these being authentically urgent at the same time?

My first instinct was to take to my bed. I was exhausted in advance and wanted only to sleep. But every time I awoke, I felt even more agitated. The tasks still needed urgent attention ... and the time for delivery had been shortened. I did not even try taking to the bottle, because I knew that recovering after a bout of heavy drinking would only make me feel much, much worse.

Well, there was only one thing for it. I had to compile a super-list, in which I ruthlessly prioritised all these tasks. I then sub-divided the list into groups, and dealt with one group at a time. The rule was then, whilst doing one group, not to think or worry about the others.² And, within each group, then to complete the tasks in the specified order. Otherwise, there's an ever-present risk that the easy things get done and the trickier ones get endlessly postponed.

Once one group of tasks is done, then a short breather is allowed - before getting into the next group. It's like climbing a mountain range by looking constantly at the intermediate peaks - and not staring all the time at the summit of Mount Everest.

In a nutshell, it's compartmentalise - concentrate - complete ... and, dear readers, I managed to finish all my urgent tasks before taking a break in Ireland. The weather was not brilliant but the lifting of multi-pressures, plus the glorious Irish greenery and unbeatable Irish hospitality, certainly was!

Roll on the next work crisis, if the finale is as pleasant ... Do I really mean that?? I thought that retirement was supposed to be a period of calm and relaxation. Nevertheless, I seem to get busier and busier day by day. Oh well! Let's make a list, compartmentalise ... and look forward to the next big breather.

ENDNOTES:

¹ For the International Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies/ Société Internationale, see https://oraprdnt.uqtr.quebec.ca/portail/gscw031?owa_no_site=304.

² Having written this BLOG, I then checked on the web, under the heading of too-many-things-to-do-all-at-once, and discover that this method of grouping tasks together is called 'Chunking'. Glad to know that others are playing in the same ball-park. For a more elaborate version, see <https://www.tonyrobbins.com/blog/power-of-chunking> (viewed 30/7/2024). 'Chunking' is also used as a technique for improving human memory: see [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chunking_\(psychology\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chunking_(psychology)) (viewed 30/7/2024).