



SIX WAYS TO STAY FOCUSED

Reclaim a leadership role in your life with these six ways to stay focused from Tiara's Global Leadership Team.



INSPIRED
LEADERSHIP
DEVELOPMENT



POMODORO TECHNIQUE

Dr. Alison Miller

I have been a long-time follower of the **Pomodoro Technique** invented by Francesco Cirillo in early 1990s. As an author, coach, consultant, speaker, mom, wife, and owner of a business dedicated to helping graduate students complete their dissertations, I suffered from feeling overwhelmed, scattered, and unable to focus for any length of time. When I stumbled on the Pomodoro Technique, I was skeptical for sure. Tomatoes? Tomatoes are going to help me focus?

But I was willing to give anything a try. Oddly enough, it totally worked for me. I don't have a direct relationship with the organization, yet I often recommend the Pomodoro Technique to my clients, colleagues, and friends. Many of our clients find it is a key way to increase focus and productivity.

The system is described on the website (www.cirillocompany.de/pages/pomodoro-technique) where you can also purchase the book and expanded systems and certifications for your team.

Here are the basics that underpin the system, which is based on a timer that was shaped like a tomato. The timer was set for one *pomodoro* or tomato, which is a time-period of 25-minutes.

Here's how to work the Pomodoro Technique:

- Choose your task for the next time segment and set an intention for what you want to accomplish.
- Eliminate distractions by closing down email, instant messaging, text, and phone. Go ahead and do this. Shut it all down completely. It's only 25 minutes!
- Set your timer for 25 minutes. There are now many convenient, free online timers you can use like these: www.mytomatoes.com or www.pomodoro-tracker.com
- Work on the task until the timer rings. Record what tasks you completed.
- Take a 5-minute break.
- Repeat if desired until 4 *pomodoros* are complete, then take a longer break.

From a Tiara leadership perspective, the reason why this system works is because you have permission to focus for a set amount of time on one task, setting everything else aside. You put boundaries around your time investment, giving yourself permission to let go of everything else on your list temporarily. The technique also builds breaks and rest periods, which is essential to continued stamina and creativity. Plus calling a period of time a "tomato" makes it somehow seem less serious and more fun – even during demanding, stressful times.



Dr. Alison Miller creates collaborative coaching relationships with her clients and helps them identify important life goals. She promotes the personal growth of all her clients by helping them change beliefs and attitudes, take action, engage in new behaviors, and live their lives according to their own values.



ACCOUNTABILITY PARTNERSHIPS

Andrea Henning

At Tiara International, we use the Kolbe System™ to identify our unique strengths and talents. In receiving the results from my Kolbe A Index™, I was not surprised to see that in the mode called “Quick Start”, I received a very high number, which indicates that I am someone who is naturally focused on the future, ready for a new idea, comfortable in the unknown, and willing to take risks.

We all know that with any strength comes a potential blind spot as well. For someone like me, my challenge is completing tasks. I am naturally onto the next idea as soon as I have it, which can be difficult in terms of staying focused, completing projects, and remaining interested in something that takes awhile to finish.

As I have grown as a leader, I have wanted to acknowledge and foster my strengths, while still being responsible for this particular blind spot. For myself, I have a strategy that works quite well.

I establish **Accountability Partnerships**.

I will have Accountability Partners on specific projects or in certain areas of life. These partners are supportive cheerleaders, but also willing to let me know when I am losing focus of something that I committed to doing. Another gift from an Accountability Partner is that she will also keep me from being too hard on myself, finding creative solutions to accomplish tasks, projects, and goals that have gotten tedious to me.

Here’s how to establish an Accountability Partnership:

- Plan an initial meeting to share your goals and discuss why you’re interested in an Accountability Partnership. These meetings can be in person, over the phone, or over video conference.
- Share the plans or goals that you most want to focus on at this time. Feel free to include personal and professional goals. It’s fine to intermix these, as they are often interrelated.
- Commit to any action items you want to take between now and your next call.
- Keep each other’s sharing in confidence.
- Give each other time to share equally.
- Listen to each other for understanding and ask questions for clarity. Avoid coaching, advising or critiquing, unless asked for that kind of feedback.
- Agree on the logistics for your meetings including the time, length, frequency, and how you’ll connect.
- Connect via email, text or whatever works between calls to provide support.
- Check in with each other proactively to see how it’s going and send each other supportive ideas or resources you come across.



Andrea Henning’s foundational coaching principles include achieving tangible results, growing consciousness and taking personal responsibility. She knows to create an atmosphere of trust where transformation and growth can happen. It is her vision that when people discover their authenticity and dare to follow their bliss they are happier and more successful in their lives.



WORKING MEETING

Betsy Sobiech

I can get several things done, very quickly and very well – when I set my mind to it. The rest of the time I am the world's best procrastinator. The reason I feel like my procrastination is award-worthy is because I don't feel guilty about it. I know that I get done what needs to be done by the time it truly needs to be completed, no question. A couple more minutes in bed or a longer walk with the dog on a nice day feels awesome, as it should.

However, there are those times when I have some bigger tasks to do that I have put off to the point that it's starting to feel stressful. In these cases, what I need more than anything else, is to clear my calendar of meetings and phone calls that start every hour and schedule a **Working Meeting**.

The Working Meeting is magic for me because I am often more productive in the presence of others than working in my home office. The other reason it works so well is that when facing these larger creative projects, what I need more than anything is to get started.

My formula for the Working Meeting:

- Create a list of colleagues and friends who have flexible work schedules, yet are supportive and committed to productivity.
- Plan a block of 3 hours to work side-by-side, being clear about the intention up front.
- Avoid scheduling any calls or meetings of any kind during this window.
- Arrive at the meeting and know that you'll spend about 30 minutes getting caught up, getting settled, and purchasing a coffee or tea.
- Once you feel connected and ready, the laptops are open, and you're off!
- Share with each other intermittently, but focus on allowing each other to work.
- Take a breather in the middle to share about your projects.
- Keep on going until you do have a scheduled appointment or feel complete.
- Repeat!



Betsy Sobiech is an expert in organization development, human behavior, training, systems thinking, communications, and coaching. She is fully committed to Tiara's mission, which is to challenge and guide women around the world to become the leaders they were meant to be in their lives and at work.



MINDSWEEP/POWER OF THREE

Elizabeth Ruske

My mind is like a computer that has several programs running at one time. I am constantly thinking up new ideas while trying to keep track of all the action items I've promised to complete. There are moments where it feels like I may actually cause my own system to crash!

There are two tools that I use when I'm in this danger zone. The first is the **Mindsweep**, taken from the work of David Allen. The other is the **Power Of Three**, shared with us by Lisa Dietlin. Here's how they work together for me.

How to do a Mindsweep:

- Open a blank document on your computer or get a blank piece of paper. My preference is a very large Post-It note or my journal.
- Start writing down everything you think you must do. Don't worry about organizing it or if anyone else can read it. Just get it out of your head. I think through every aspect of my life; e.g., client commitments, business actions, family obligations, home, friends, all areas of my life.
- Keep going until it really feels like your brain has been emptied, and your mind has been swept clean. It usually takes me about 10-15 minutes of quiet to just let my mind rove around to all these areas.

This is the basic Mindsweep, which works because you no longer feel like you have to keep all those programs open and running in the background. You have captured everything and stored it somewhere you can retrieve it. This allows the mind to relax, at least a little.

Then use the Power Of Three:

- Now that everything is out of your head, you choose a period of time like a day or an afternoon.
- From the list of everything that must be done, choose the three items that if completed, would make the biggest difference to you. The impact might be practical, like getting a deliverable or proposal to a client. The impact might be energetic, like a huge relief to have done something you've put off for too long or were avoiding. Instinctually, you will know which ones need to go on the top three!
- Then do those three first actions.
- Here's a tip, if the action you list is a big task with a lot of smaller tasks, call out the milestones that build to the completion. Then list one of smaller tasks on your list of three.
- My favorite phrase to remember is "If you can't get into it, get out of it, and if you can't get out of it, get into it!" Once you start moving with a clear direction on your tasks, you will feel less overwhelm and more momentum!

You will feel a sense of accomplishment, momentum, and focus if you implement both of these hand-in-hand.



Elizabeth Ruske brings all aspects of her background and expertise to her work. This includes marketing, sales, business development, client services, strategic partnering, coaching, consulting, and leadership development. She is known as a creative strategic thinker who embodies a win-win approach in every situation.



SACRED PAUSE

Franciska Dekker

When I am feeling overly busy, scattered, or overwhelmed, I do something that might feel counter-productive to some people. I stop working all together.

At Tiara, we know that the most beneficial choices come when we are in touch with our inner compass; our inner sense of what is a priority, and our intuition. If I am overly fatigued, anxious, tense, or distracted, I am not in touch with that wisdom. The only way to recover it is by pausing.

In the business environment today, which is quite fast-paced, this can be a challenge. We are juggling personal priorities, time zone, work deadlines, relationships, and more, all within one day. Can you find time to pause and still "get it all done"? Maybe not. Yet, what you will "get done" will be the most important items from the list, and you will have more wellbeing, fulfillment, pride, confidence, and health because of this key practice.

Here is how I take the Sacred Pause:

- Notice that I am feeling out of sorts: stressed, tired, irritable, or something else.
- First take three deep breaths, which is a mini-pause, in that moment.
- Remind myself that the most powerful and effective way to tackle a huge problem or long To Do List is with intuition, positive energy, and flow.
- Determine how long of a pause I need. Is it a 20-minute walk? An hour with a cup of tea? A night with a good rest? A weekend away?
- Send any communications I need to folks who may be expecting something from me to adjust a timeline or expectation.
- Without getting sucked into a wormhole, do any small tasks that would "clear the desk".
- Then I take my pause.
- Allow myself to fight the pause at the beginning. Assure myself that the pause is okay.
- Use my Nourishing Practices from my True Leadership Plan to help me refresh myself.
- Settle into the pause, letting go of all the items weighing on me.
- Interact only with those who will support the pause.
- Then, when my schedule time is up, choose a mindset for reconnecting with work that is energizing and supportive.
- Open my computer, my notebook, and my calendar and create a new prioritized list of what's most important, which is often quite shorter than what it would have been before my pause!



Franciska Dekker is a systems thinker, both a pragmatic person and idealist. She is an expert in leadership development, personal strategy, executive coaching, women's leadership, and leadership development through travel experiences. What makes her tick is leading a full and authentic life sourced from inspiration and supporting others in doing the same.



UNINTERRUPTED TIME

Peg Rowe

When I have a tasks and projects I have collected on my Action Item list, what helps me the most is to set aside an uninterrupted block of time. This is trickier said than done, especially when I might get a text message from my daughter or an email from a client at any time of day that seems to require my attention.

During the weekdays, I am very responsive to both personal and business requests throughout the day. This reflects how I want to be as a trusted advisor, consultant, coach, and community member. As I grow in influence as a leader, the number of inquiries that come in have increased, which is a good thing!

Yet, the weight of the unfinished list of tasks starts to feel very heavy, and I find myself feeling anxious and less present in my meetings and conversations. When this starts to happen, I choose to create a block of **Uninterrupted Time**. For me, it's quite basic, and it's starts with scheduling the time in my calendar.

Here's my secret to claiming Uninterrupted Time:

- Look at my calendar and see where I have over 2 hours of time without any conflicts. Because of my attention to client and business needs, I choose to look for this Uninterrupted Time on evenings and weekends as well as Friday afternoons.
- Once I have selected a timeframe that feels good to me, I put it into my calendar. That way it's blocked off in my schedule, and I mentally know when I'm going to get to my items.
- Then I keep the date with myself. In very rare occasions, I will move it if something comes up. However, I honor it, just like I would a meeting with a colleague or client. It's a window of time that I'm counting on using, and I need to trust myself to keep that date. I know for many this is easier said than done, and it has taken me years to refine this practice.
- When I sit down to use that time, I prioritize my list, and do what needs to be done. Hopefully at the end of the window of time, I feel relieved and proud of what I've accomplished. Of course, there may be a time when something didn't go as planned or took quite a bit longer than I anticipated. In those cases, I need to graciously acknowledge myself for the attention I've invested as well as accept any feelings of frustration or disappointment I might have. Then I look for my next block of Uninterrupted Time.



Through her business experience, **Peg Rowe** brings knowledge, wisdom and unique perspective on building high performance teams, creating a collaborative culture, developing leaders, and delivering exceptional results. She works seamlessly with all levels of management, across groups or in one-on-one settings.





Tiara International LLC believes that we are all leaders.

We know that at the beginning and ending of each day, we are the ones responsible for leading our lives.

At Tiara, we support you at any stage of leadership development and offer programs and services to individuals and organizations.



Corporate

Strategic programs that unlock real change. Leadership Development, Executive Coaching, Mentorship, Inclusion & Diversity.



Professional

An integrated leadership system for women who are becoming influential in their careers. Group and Individual Leadership Development.



Individual

Designed to help any woman in transition navigate the choices she is making from a sense of inner purpose. Life Leadership



Virtual

Inspiring, practical, quality leadership development that is accessible, affordable and available when needed in our Resource Circle.

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