
DISCUSSION GUIDE

Drop the Ball: Doing More of What Matters

By Tiffany Dufu

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Key Takeaways

Let go and achieve more by doing less

No one has unlimited resources. It's difficult to advance your leadership at work while you're doing everything at home. Learn to let some things go so you can do what matters to you most.

Set yourself up for success

Many women pack their daily to-do lists with tasks that add up to more than twenty-four hours. This habit can make you feel overwhelmed and unproductive as you constantly reshuffle tasks. Think about the time demands of a to-do before you add it to the list.

Focus on your priorities

Life is busy, so we tend to focus on getting things off our to-do list instead of focusing on what goes on the list—and where. We often neglect to prioritize our to-dos in any meaningful way or make the distinction between what we should be doing and what others could be doing instead.

Drop the Ball Strategies

Use these strategies to start doing what matters to you most today.

Admit that your current to-do list is unrealistic

Think about everything you need to achieve in an ideal day, then estimate how long it would take to complete the list. When you add it up, it usually becomes clear that there is not enough time to accomplish it all. Do an honest time assessment of your list so you can see this for yourself.

Focus on your highest and best use

Just because you can do something better and faster than other people doesn't mean it's the most efficient use of your time. First, think about what you really want to achieve—not just get done. Then get clear about the difference between the things only you can do and the things that you do very well with little effort. This helps you prioritize what you should be working on and what you should delegate.

Practice patience judo

We quickly grow impatient when things on our to-do list aren't done the way we think they should be. Dropping the ball requires letting go of some control to allow other people to assume responsibility.

Discussion Questions

1. Think about what matters most to you, at home and work. Write these down in the space below. (We've provided some examples to get you started.)

Home

Developing personal relationships

Work

Getting the CEO to notice my project

Are you doing things on a daily basis that ladder up to these goals? Go around your Circle and share one goal and what you're doing to achieve it.

2. Think about your village. Who can you recruit to take on secondary tasks so you can focus on what matters most? Use the space below to list family members, coworkers, neighbors, friends, babysitters. How can they lend their expertise or talent to help you get everything done?

Name and relationship to you

Cara, coworker

Expertise or talent

Can help with next week's data pull

Share this list with your Circle.

3. What are the to-dos in your life you wish would just go away? The ones you do because you think you have to but that feel like such a chore (making homemade bake sale treats, sending meeting recap emails).

To-Dos I want to go away

Share with your Circle three things you want permission to drop the ball on.

Activity

Prioritize Your To-Do List

1. Use the space below to write down your to-do list for this week (or as much as you can fit in the box!). Include everything that is swirling around in your head.

2. Put a circle around all the things you do very well with very little effort.
3. Put a check mark next to all the things that only you can do—that no one else has the skill, the network, or the political savvy to accomplish.
4. Put a star next to anything that ladders up to one of your primary work or home goals.
5. Highlight the things that need to be done but could probably be done just as well by someone else.
6. Highlight the things that would be an incredible learning opportunity for the people on your team.
7. Anything that has a circle and a check mark stays on your list. Items with a star do, too. These represent your highest and best use.

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Activity

8. All the remaining items either need to be delegated or dropped.
9. Write your new list below.

One Action

Looking at your new to-do list, choose one high-priority task. Frame it as a “highest and best use” and decide when you will make time to do it. Share with your Circle.

One of my highest and best uses is _____ (insert task/action).

I will do it _____ (insert time).