

Hey, everyone,

Welcome to the Productivity Tip for Week Four.

This week we've been talking about the importance of establishing clear priorities. In the lesson video, I mentioned the book *Paradox of Choice*, by Barry Schwartz, which makes a strong case that having too many choices leads to decreased productivity and unhappiness.

So your Productivity Tip for this week is to reduce the number of decisions that you make in your day.

If you have a closet full of outfits with fifty ties and ten pairs of shoes, it requires a relatively high amount of psychological energy just to get dressed every day. That is energy you could use on something else.

Maybe this is why a high percentage of highly successful people adopt a “uniform” of sorts—a simple selection of clothing that they wear every single day. President Obama wears the same gray or blue suit every day. When he was asked about this, he said, “I’m trying to pare down decisions. I don’t want to make decisions about what I’m eating or wearing, because I have too many other decisions to make.” He even referred to research showing that the simple act of making decisions degrades one’s ability to make further decisions.

But Obama isn’t alone in this. Steve Jobs wore his signature black turtleneck with jeans and sneakers every day—even during Apple keynote events that were being livestreamed to millions around the world.

Mark Zuckerberg typically wears a gray t-shirt with a black hoodie and jeans when seen in public. Albert Einstein reportedly bought several variations of the same gray suit so he wouldn’t have to waste time deciding what to wear each morning.

While I haven’t gone this far in my own life, I have a pretty simple wardrobe. I tend to rotate between three and four outfits throughout the week or month. If you’ve seen videos of me wearing the same shirt in TV appearances or presenting at conferences, now you know why!

Food is another place where you could lessen the number of decisions you make. If you have to face the “what’s for lunch” and “what’s for dinner” decision day after day, that drains a certain amount of energy. You can save time and energy by setting a meal plan once every week or two weeks, and rotating between a few nutritious meals. (As a side note, eating the same thing day in and day out can be a powerful tool for weight loss. We’ll talk more about this in the full course.)

What other draining decisions do you face daily that you could avoid by making the decision one time in advance and then sticking to the routine? Here are some examples:

Should I work out today? (Solution: set a schedule in advance.)

Should I do this boring but necessary, regular busy work on Tuesday or Wednesday this week?
(Solution: schedule it into your calendar in advance.)

Should I take time off on Sunday this week? (Solution: set a free day each week where you don't do any work. We'll talk about this in a future tip.)

Reducing the burden of choice is also an important tool to offer your patients to help them with compliance. If your patients have to decide every day what to eat and what not to eat, what supplements to take or not take, how to exercise or whether to at all, etc., they will become easily overwhelmed. Part of your job as a clinician is to give them clear guidance and reduce the number of decisions they need to make.

Okay, that's it for now. See you next time!