Where Do You Find Joy?

Can’t remember the last time you did something just because it made you smile? This exercise will help you find room in your overloaded schedule for small but powerful doses of bliss.

Step 1
Map a typical day.

In the circle below, create a pie chart that represents how you spend the 24 hours in an average day. (See sample at bottom of the page.) If you sleep eight hours, draw a slice that occupies one-third of the pie. Then calculate how much time you spend doing other things—working, caretaking, cooking, and so on. No need to be exact; rough estimates will do.

Step 2
List what you love.

Complete each sentence with a different activity. Don’t spend too much time thinking: Jot down the first answers that come to mind because those will typically be the most true.

I could blow an entire rainy afternoon
When I was a kid, I used to love
I've always wanted to become really good at
If I could do one thing every day of my life, it would be
I can lose track of time when I'm
Nothing clears my head like
When I'm feeling drained, all I want to do is
I feel most connected to my body when I'm
In my daydreams, I imagine myself
I get a shot of energy when I
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Step 3

Pencil in fun.

Redraw your time pie, including at least a few activities from your list; some might not be practical on a daily basis, but others may be more doable than you think. Look back at your typical day and identify time spent on unrewarding or unnecessary activities (think Celebrity Apprentice and chores you could be delegating). Then redirect those minutes to activities that make you light up.

Step 4

Tell someone.

Call a trusted friend and share the details of your new schedule. Explain what you intend to do less of and what you aim to do more of, and ask her to check in with you from time to time. Studies have shown that people who share their resolutions are more motivated and more likely to achieve their goals.

This exercise was developed by Alice D. Domar, PhD, a psychologist at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center in Boston and coauthor of Live a Little! (Crown).