

# PEACEFUL



## Ignite! get old-fashion time back

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e go off shopping, off to church, off to a friend, off to eat dinner, off-road, off on an adventure, off for a weekend... but do we ever go off-line? Is going off-line even humanly possible, these days? Can you even conceive of it?

Imagine turning off your phones, faxes, pagers and computers at home or at the office, to take uninterrupted time. Imagine not turning on your computer to answer e-mails for a day. Imagine engaging in your favorite pastime without your cell phone attached at your hip. Well, can you?

What if the school calls because your child is sick? What if your spouse thinks of one more item you needed from the grocery store? What if your friend is in the middle of a life crisis and needs to cry on your shoulder? What if your boss calls to get the one piece of information lacking to land a really big client?

Information today is there in an instant, and we're expected to be there in an instant, too. That's a lot to expect of another human being. Personally, if I don't plan to go off-line, from time to time, I can expect to go off my rocker, eventually. So, how do you do it? How do you manage your life so as to actually plan to go off-line, to be out of communication for even a short while?

**FIRST** : Take a realistic look at the expectations we have allowed people to put on us. By immediately answering a phone or returning a call, we have set the expectations very high. Our contacts know to simply call and interrupt us to get their needs met right away. We, on the other hand get so sidetracked by all the interruptions all day that we don't feel like we get anything accomplished.

"...if I don't plan to go off-line, from time to time, I can expect to go off my rocker, eventually.."

# Ignite! get time back (cont.)

Certainly, technology was invented to help, not hurt us. It was established to make our lives simpler and not more demanding. The trick to using technology as it was intended is to make sure that you are controlling the technology and not allowing it to control you. If we are simply immediately responding to the bells and whistles of technological demands, we are letting technology control us. We can determine when our phone gets answered. We can control how quickly we respond to an email message. We can decide if a call should be answered. Even as I am typing this article on my laptop I am alerted that I have just received a long awaited email. Who is in control? I am, I will read that email after I accomplish my main objective, writing this article.

Imagine what you could get accomplished if you were able to stay focused without allowing interruptions.

**Second:** Proactively block out the off-line time on your calendar. Saying that we will do it “one day” does not establish a time. When is that “one day”? Is it Tuesday or Friday? It is important to literally block out that day and time on our calendars, just as you would do if you had a dentist appointment. For example, our off-line time may be this Tuesday from 9-12:00. Write it down in your calendar. Ok, I hear you; you are going back to those “what if...” questions. Ok, so what if the school calls for my sick child? What if my husband calls with one more grocery item?

**Third:** Determine how important something has to be to interrupt your time. Often we create emergencies out of situations that are far from it. What constitutes an emergency for you? If you were in the dentist’s chair, what emergency would get you up and out of the chair in the middle of your appointment? That is an emergency. Aren’t our sanity breaks just as important as our dentist appointments?

So, if this sounds like a real challenge to you, start by simply setting an off-line “appointment” with a friend to meet for coffee or lunch. Take that one hour as your off-line time (leave your cell phone in the house or car). Share the idea with your friend and challenge each other! Remember the “good ‘ole days” when people had to catch you on your work or home phone, when you were actually at a particular location? Take yourself back in time and give yourself back that peaceful, non-demanding time, even if it is just a few hours a week.



“We CAN determine when our phone gets answered. We CAN control how quickly we respond to an email message. We CAN decide if a call should be answered.”

As a Professional Organizer, Cyndy Ratcliffe works with home and small business owners in organizing their homes, offices and time. She received her bachelor’s degree in Business Administration from Ashland University in Ohio and was a senior level manager for over 20 years before launching Organizing Solutions, Inc.

Currently, Cyndy assists individuals to reduce stress, boost their image, and be more productive through speaking, training and hands-on coaching of organizing techniques.

Cyndy is a founding member and Vice President of The National Association of Professional Organizers, North Carolina Chapter, and a member of the National Study Group on Chronic Disorganization.

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