

FOUR GUIDELINES FOR WHEN SOMETHING GROUNDBREAKING HAPPENS

Sometimes, something happens that overshadows everything else. It rolls in like a dark gray storm and we see our lives in a different, more dramatic light. All the things we had planned to do that were on our agenda at work are still there, but we have a hard time focusing on anything other than what we can call "the Event" with a capital E.

A MOUNTAIN TO CLIMB

It may not have come as a surprise, but one day, it becomes clear that we must engage in this for a while—in addition to everything else we usually do. It may not even be about work but something private, yet it still affects our work in that it requires both time and energy.



THAT'S HOW IT WAS FOR ME A WHILE AGO

Some time ago, it became increasingly clear that my mother, who suffered from dementia, could no longer live at home and had to move to a nursing home. My brother and I then took on the task of selling her house (while also making sure she was well taken care of). Those of you who have gone through this process know how much work it involves and how emotionally draining it can be. Emptying and selling your childhood home, "that has always been there," certainly stirs up many emotions, of all shades.

Of course, this wasn't the first time such a milestone had happened to me, and based on my previous experiences and how stressful and exhausting it had been, four guidelines emerged. I followed them then and in situations like this to help me steadily climb such a mountain of work so that I have the energy and don't have to stress. Perhaps you can also benefit from them, now or in the future.

GUIDELINES TO FOLLOW

The guidelines are:

1. **Say no to new things:** Start as few new things as possible. Be strict. Focus on finishing what you already have going on. The more you complete, the more you can focus on the Event. Even if you tend to come up with new ideas like me, this is not the right time to start them. You need the gaps you have to handle the unforeseen aspects of the event that you don't see now. Park the idea in a



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place where you collect ideas that you may implement one day. For me, it's a section in my to-do list called "Project Holding Bay."

2. **Prioritize with precision:** Prioritize your tasks more strictly than usual. Choose - and write down - the tasks you cannot compromise on and need to do regardless of what happens. Reflect on which tasks are not on that list and that you can let go of (by delegating, for example) if time becomes tight.
3. **Help yourself first:** Say no to helping others more than usual. Even if you could easily pitch in with a "quick thing" someone asks you to do, remember that things often take longer than expected. There's a high risk that you won't have time to finish helping in the short window you had, and before you know it, you have another loose end hanging in the air and causing stress. During this period, you are the one who needs help first and foremost.
4. **The next step is enough:** Work systematically, one step at a time. If the Event is something you haven't experienced before, it may feel overwhelming since you don't have an overview of everything that needs to be done. You understand it's a lot, but you don't see exactly what. Now, especially now, focus on the next step. Trust that you will see the next step after taking the one you're currently on. Have a clear direction, but don't spend unnecessary time creating a detailed plan in advance. There's a high risk that you'll guess what needs to be done wrong, and then you've wasted time planning unnecessarily.

DO THIS

If you also have an Event that overshadows everything right now and my guidelines seem helpful to you, do the following:

1. Look at the big tasks and projects you have going on now and draw a line. No new commitments will come over that line until the Event is handled.
2. List the unconditional tasks that you always have to do. Make a parallel list of regular tasks you can let go of for a while if you don't have time.
3. If someone asks you for help - don't answer immediately. Give yourself time to think it over in peace and quiet - even if it's just a few minutes. Do you really have time? If you have time and want to help, you can easily return to your work once your time is up - even if you're not finished. Put yourself and the Event first.
4. Now, consider the next step. If it's not already there, add it to your list as a to-do task for the Event project.

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EASIER THROUGH IT ALL

If you let guidelines like these help you make space to handle an Event that takes a lot of time and energy for a period, you will have an easier time going through the process without losing your energy and well-being. Instead of getting caught up and prioritizing in a way you'll regret later, you will have an easier time focusing on the extraordinary passage ahead. Eventually, you will get through it and things will return to normal.

HOW ABOUT YOU?

Do you have any other guidelines that you find helpful when faced with a major Event? Please write to me and tell me. I may not see everything I will need in the situation I am currently in, so your experiences are like gold to me. Please write and tell me at david@stiernholm.com.

Thank you for today and see you again after Easter - on Monday, April 8th.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David', with a stylized flourish at the end.



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