

a better life



Sarah Wilson

THIS WEEK I... write a perfect list*

There are two schools of thought on to-do lists. The first says they're a necessary dumping ground for shower inspirations and must-do minutiae (Fika realisation notes, "Buy Napalm") - at the noisy gulf that swims unanchored in your head. Ergo, lists are liberating devices that free the mind and help us Finally Get on Top of Things.

The second school says lists are annoying. They stifle the free-flow fun of life. Folx in this camp might point out that prioritised, cross-off lists are not an inevitable part of the human experience. I recently read that they supposedly emerged in the 1920s after the CEO of a steel company held a competition to find a snazzy new way of getting more done in a day. The tick-as-you-go list was the winning tender. (Mind you, a non-list writer probably couldn't share such a factoid, having failed to put it down for later reference in the first place.)

To-do list or not-to-do list? Which is the happier path? It's a question with far more weight than you might think. Indeed, it's a metaphor for contemporary life, or at least for the struggle many of us face in balancing a need to be in control

with a visceral desire to let go. And flow. And trust everything will get done as it needs to.

Me, I've been looking for Perfect List Balance for years. Here's what I've found most list experts (yes, it's a thing - industry agree upon, bullet-pointed for list-y effect).

- The two-minute rule: can it be done in 120 seconds? Don't list it, do it straight away.
- Use concrete to-do language ("Email Sven to book meeting room" instead of "have sales meeting"). Former heroin addict David Allen became a multimillionaire off the back of his list-obsessed blog, Getting Things Done. He says a list is not a depressing reminder of everything you haven't done. State things as an action, and action is what you'll get.
- Bucket and regroup: Allen says dump everything down as the thought occurs. Collect into folders at the end of the day. He works to 43 folders. Which hurts my head to think about.
- "Use email inbox shouldn't be used as a to-do list, because it's not presented in actionable language."
- Write lists at night. Or first thing, before you start the day.
- Have a "mind like mutha" list of easy-to-accomplish tasks for when you can't cope with life and need that organic satisfaction of slashing a line through stuff.

I've tried most list tips and techniques. I've even tried online devices, such as rememberthemilk.com and todoodle.com, for the sake of research. But this week I realised I really stick to one technique. Few of us do, right? Instead we oscillate between control (stringent lists) and flow (letting the day with a vague outline of our aims, trying to find where truth exists, trying to find Perfect List Balance).

We have list fbs, whom we say "I'm Finally Getting on Top of Things", and we buy a nice new Moleskin and glee-y pen and tick things off snugly. But two weeks later, we swoop to PDAs, or fagging-for follow-up in our inbox. Until it all hurts our head because it intuitively feels to be going against nature. We try to contain the garden with fence-to-fence potted plants. Invariably, the hardenbergs creep back in.

So, me, I've given in to the following process, which I won't bullet point, or punctuate, for effect. I dump my shower thoughts etc on random shop-a-dockets, serviettes and so on, which every few days I collate into a list, but sometimes I work with one Post-it note with three things on it because I like the number three and stick it to my phone and then every five days or so I shake out the whole bloody list and find I get more done by just leaving the house and thinking. "Hey, there's the supermarket. I'll buy Napalm."

Because that's how life flows. It needs to be tamed at times, but sometimes it's more fun to be dragged along. If I'm kind to myself, and attuned to where things are sitting right now, this chaotic list balance works a treat.

*Each week I try ways to make life more meaningful, happier, sweeter. It's an experimental journey. For more, visit sarahwilson.com/uk

AT TIMES LIFE
NEEDS TO BE
TAMED BY A LIST.
BUT SOMETIMES
IT'S MORE FUN TO
BE DRAGGED
ALONG.

Photograph
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Things you should know by now ...

KATE DUTINE

HOW TO RESUSCITATE SOMEBODY



Christmas is coming, the guests are getting better please them how to resuscitate someone. Although my ability to rhyme is amazing, having a collapsed house guest is not. Here's how to take charge when someone isn't showing signs of life.

First, try to get a verbal response by asking the person's name. If they are unresponsive, open their mouth and check if something is blocking their airway. If there is, turn them on their side (obscure position) and remove it. Check the breathing - if they're breathing, leave them on their side. If they're not breathing, call 999 immediately, then turn them on to their back and begin resuscitation.

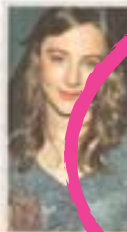
On their head back to open their airway and give her mouth-to-mouth about one second, enough to make their chest rise, mouth to mouth. Again check for signs of life.

If there's still nothing, you'll need to bring out the big gun - CPR. Locate the centre of the chest - roughly between the nipples - and, fingers interlocked and palms down, compress the sternum a third of the chest depth. Then release. Do this 30 times - you're aiming for roughly 100 compressions a minute (or just under half per second). Do two more rescue breaths, then keep alternating 30 compressions and two breaths.

Keep going like this - 30 compressions/rescue breaths - until help arrives or they start breathing. Good luck.

Who, What, Wear

By
WENDY ARMITAGE



GEMMA ATTON
You may remember Gemma Atton from 2007's *Attonment* - but don't worry if you don't, because you're unlikely to forget her ethereal beauty in Peter Jackson's adaptation of the best-selling novel *The Lovely Bones* in Christmas Thursday.



SHARON GILL
'Tis the season to be shopping, but if you're being guilty about all those plastic bags, the SHARON GILL bag may be just the thing. It's compact, it's cloth, it clips to your key ring and it comes in several cute prints. \$5, from envirotrend.com/uk



BRANCHING OUT
This week, Wilson is opening its third national boutique, in Melbourne's DFO, which will debut the Eternal PE 2012 collection. The boutique will also have all that customers can purchase along with their books. See wilsonld.com

Illustration: Wendy Armitage. Photographs by Emily Hooper