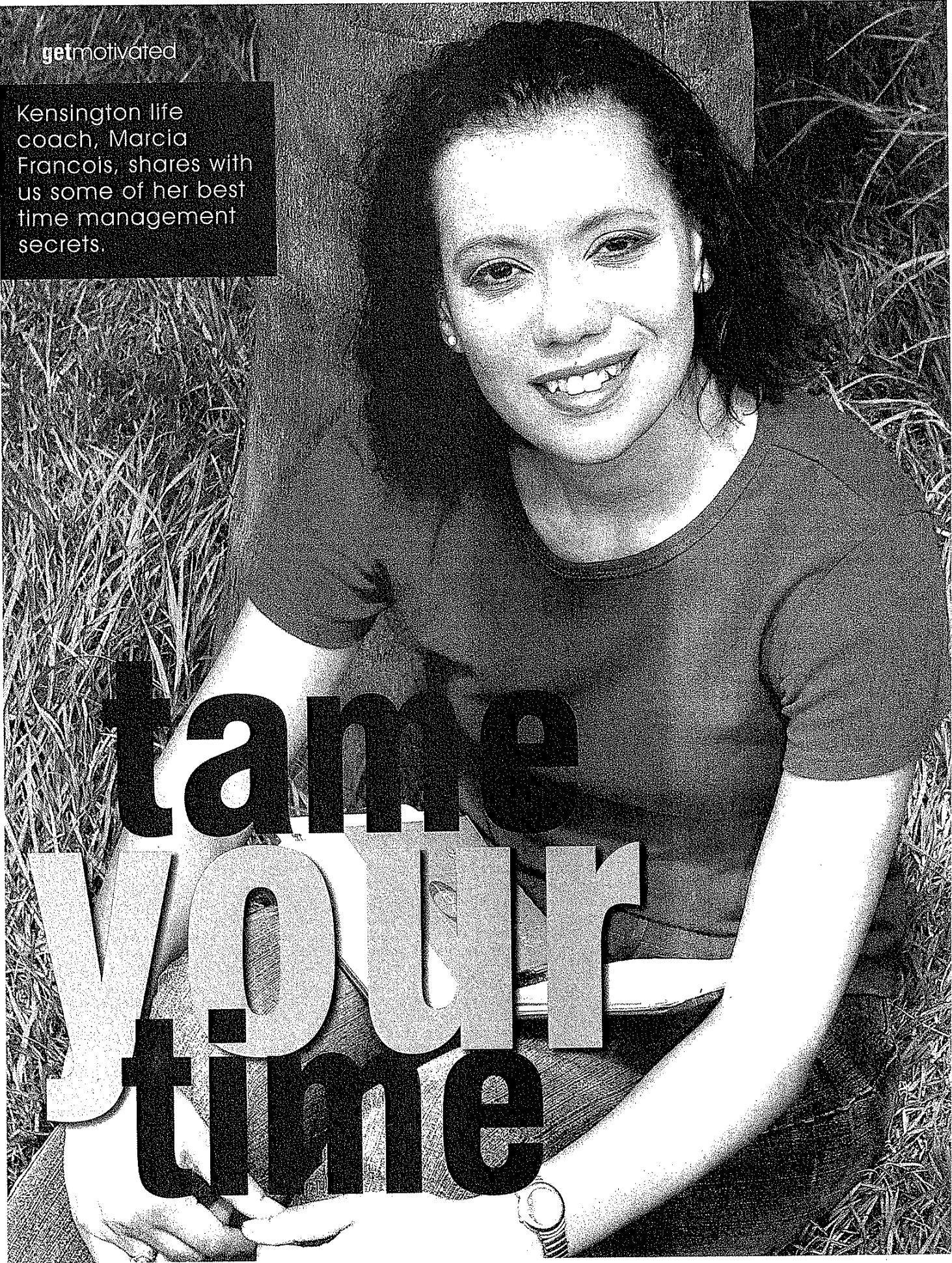


getmotivated

Kensington life coach, Marcia Francois, shares with us some of her best time management secrets.



tame your time

King, queen, politician, street beggar ... we are all given the same number of hours in a day. Time is where real wealth lies. It is the currency of life which once spent, can't be returned. But if you use it wisely, you can build the foundation for an unshakable, prosperous future. "One of the most common goals my clients tell me about, is that they want more time," says Marcia. If you can relate, Marcia has good news for you: "If you put just one of these tips into practice, you will save hours every week."

1. Learn to say "no"

Saying "no" helps you set strong boundaries. What do you have to say "no" to, so that you can say "yes" to your goals this year?

2. Play to your strengths

As with everything in life, I believe you should play to your strengths.

If you're terrible at cleaning your house, hire a cleaning lady. If you're not great at organising, hire a professional organiser.

3. Learn to prioritise

When you know how to prioritise, even if you only get one or two things done daily, they will always be the right things and not just daily slog.

4. Set up systems

Systems save you space, time, energy, money and stress. Meal planning is a system for organising and preparing meals. Regular computer back-up is another system to keep your computer running smoothly. What kinds of systems can you put in place?

5. Work smarter

Group tasks so that you only do preparation ONCE. Make your client calls all at the same time. You'll be on a roll, get through them a lot faster and save energy because you don't have to get into phone mode more than once. Make your work do double duty. If you type a certain type of email often, make an auto text entry and save the template. If you write a comment on a blog, expand that same comment and write a blog post of your own.

6. Stop multi-tasking

Yes, you read that correctly; When you try and do multiple tasks, your attention is split and you lose focus. The lack of focus means that you end up spending a lot longer completing your task because you're not fully engaged. What happens when you're driving and you get lost? You switch off the radio so you can focus. Next time you have to work on a project, close Outlook

so you're not distracted by incoming email.

7. Write it down

Write down things to buy, things to talk to X about, errands to run, upcoming birthdays, etc. You won't find yourself returning from running errands only to find you forgot to return your library books. You will start being *that* organised person who actually has a birthday present wrapped days before the person's birthday.

8. Declutter and simplify

Did you know that decluttering cuts your cleaning time by 32 percent? If that isn't inspiration to declutter, then I don't know what is! Living a simplified life means you no longer spend hours looking for things. It also means your schedule isn't jam-packed with activities and you actually have time to enjoy your life.

9. Plan your time

When you plan your time, leave enough time to complete the task plus some buffer time. Work expands to fill the available time so don't allow 3 hours for a 1-hour activity because you *will* use the full 3 hours if you do so. If you're not sure how long things take to do, keep a time log for a week or two and see for yourself.

10. Organise your paper and email

Every time I run an organising workshop, I get participants to complete a Time Wasters Assessment. The results differ slightly depending on the type of group, but since 2003, email has crept up the ranks and is now the top time waster! And paper is a close second. Learning to correctly organise your paper and email will save you hours every day. Most business owners spend approximately 2 – 3 hours just attending to email; I spend 15 – 20 minutes. Don't get overwhelmed – work on just one of these tips consistently until it becomes a habit and keep adding another until you have it all mastered. But remember, even by doing just one tip, you will save hours every week! Marcia Francois is a time management and organising coach who teaches small business owners and other busy people how to get at least 5 extra hours every week. Visit <http://organiseyourbusiness.com> for a free copy of Marcia's book, "100 Surefire Ways to Organise your Busy Life".



From top: This Steven R Covey CD tells you how to manage your time effectively. **R189.**

Exclusive Books, Bedford Centre.

• Use smiley-faced stickers and highlighters to make time-management charts fun.

• A diary is an essential asset for anyone wanting to master their time. This one is available from the **CNA for R79,96.** • Write down your daily "to do" on this magnetic notepad "to do" list. **R47, Exclusive Books, Bedford Centre.** • An egg timer is an excellent way to keep track of time. This one is available from **Game** for only **R44.**

If you've allocated yourself a certain amount of time for a task, you can set the time so that the bell goes off when your time is up. As they say, the time required to finish a task expands to fill the amount of time allocated to it.