



## **Intraspectus Learning Series**

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### **Routines Are Not just For Kids**

Lets face it, years of schooling and years of work on a time table set by others has conditioned us into creatures of routine. Routine can be a negative word in some circles but the reality of the situation is that some routine is good. It always comes down to a balance, so remember that absolute rigidity when it comes to schedules can be problematic. If you find yourself going cold turkey from a routine (recent lay off, retirement, maternity leave, just graduated, etc..), you can find yourself on a downward tailspin not certain what it is that bothers you so much. Hours of doing nothing sounds wonderful but can truly have you floundering. To live a more unstructured existence, take time and adjust into that lifestyle gradually. Most of us, however, can benefit from more routine in our free time. Lack of structure can lead to getting stuck in front of the tube, and greater feelings of unproductivity and depression.

### **What to do?**

As the wise saying goes: "In all things moderation (even moderation)." The danger of setting a routine is that you go overboard and schedule every minute of the day, don't get to half of it, then feel worse since you didn't accomplish anything. Again, take it slow, make it reasonable (determined against what your previous level of activity has been for the past two weeks), and stick to it while being flexible. If life looks like one giant uphill battle, break down one activity into multiple steps. For one person, calling three places about a job may be an easy task to accomplish in a morning. For another person, that may be too big -- translated -- not gonna happen! In such a case, break the activity into multiple steps so you can see some progress from your time -- instead of three calls unmade. The first step may be to turn on the computer or open the newspaper. Step two may be to read through all the related job openings. Step three might be select the ones most interesting/relevant. Perhaps you take a break and congratulate yourself for accomplishing your tasks and then outline a few more until you have made a call -- which may be on day two. Again, make it reasonable so you can see some progress. Progress should only be defined

based on your level of functioning within the past two weeks. It is not reasonable for you to say: "Well when I was working regularly, I could do all this in five minutes." While that is great, it isn't helpful and is more likely to interfere with your making the needed steps. Way too often, we are our own worst critics and enemies so watch out for any negative self talk.