

The More or Less of Multitasking

By Stephanie M. Freeman



Speaking on The Power of Never Giving Up after a brain injury to the children of Scottish Rite Hospital in Atlanta GA in July 2015.



Stephanie M. Freeman is a model, a runner, a trainer, and a brain injury survivor from here in the state of Georgia. She is the founder of the non-profit brain trauma organization Share Your Strong with a sole mission to bring health and awareness to brain trauma, while encouraging and inspiring the lives of people going through this silent epidemic. She speaks and helps educate on this injury from 23 years of her own experience. She is a part of the Brain Injury Advisory Council with The Brain Injury Association of America.

I had an interesting conversation on multitasking today with a client I train. She was mentioning to me all the activities she was currently involved in during her school year. As she spoke to me, she spoke in a distressed manner, but sounded very proud she was experiencing all these activities. I listened to her explain to me the wonderful details of each program, then I interrupted and asked, "When do you take your rest days to recover from all this?" She looked at me very puzzled and said, "I don't need any rest," then carried on with her routine I had given her.

After the training session ended I drove back home. I couldn't help but ponder over what this child told me. And I couldn't help but remember doing those same things at her age and thinking it was so empowering and made me so efficient. Today I have such a different outlook based on my experience and from my work not only in the fitness industry but also in somewhat of the brain industry. And I do now see so clearly that multitasking does nothing but rob us of our energy and focus.

I have gathered my own research on multitasking over the past few years with my brain trauma organization. I found that when we multitask, the production of the stress hormone cortisol as well as the



Children of Scottish Rite Hospital in Atlanta GA in July 2015



Speaking on the importance of Health & Fitness to Communities in Schools in Fitzgerald Ga in August of 2015

"fight-or-flight" hormone adrenaline is increased. This can over stimulate our brain and cause a mental fog or lead to scrambled thinking. Every time I multitask now I think of this fact and say to myself is this

really worth it? And when I train any client I always include this piece of advice.

For such a long time I thought multitasking made me more efficient and helpful in my running, training, and work. As

a woman and as a mom, I thought of myself as the "Energizer bunny." I always had to "go, go, go" and thought it was such a good thing to do without rest. Truth be told, I believe the whole world looks at things in this manner. However, research from Stanford University reveals that people who multitask are less efficient and more distracted than those who don't tend to multitask. Studies have also shown that not only does this make us less efficient, it can actually hurt our performance. Since science has already shown that the brain doesn't operate well when focusing on more than one task at a time, the Stanford researchers put high and low multitaskers to the test with three separate activities to see if there was something that gave the high multitaskers a leg up. They looked to see if the multitaskers were better at filtering out useless information, if they were better at storing and organizing information, or if they were better at switching from one task to another. The low multitaskers outperformed the proficient multitaskers on all accounts.

You may think that trying to bite off two or more activities at a time makes you more productive, but next time you have those thoughts think twice and remember this fact: multitasking wreaks havoc on your potential.