

# THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



## # 526 How to Deal With Attention Residue

Have you ever heard of “attention residue”? Well, you’ve probably got it. I’m Jerry Roberts and today, we’ll tell you what that is and why something known as GYLIO might be your answer to effectively dealing with it. That’s next on The Extra Point.

We all want to be masters of our schedule and we want to accomplish everything on our to-do list, and we want to slide smoothly in and through our day. We want to avoid stress, enjoy ourselves, be productive, and do all of this with a feeling of general wellbeing.

Why doesn’t it work out that way? We struggle with time and what we want to do with it, so says Elizabeth Emens, author of *The Art of Life Admin*, and a New York-based professor of law at Columbia University.

I’d never focused on the term “life admin” before. In her opinion we’re constantly involved in the administration of life. Figuring out what we just did and accounting for it, then setting our sights on what is to come. Keeping track of all of it.

What results is what is known as “attention residue,” says Sophie Leroy, associate professor of management at the University of Washington. Leroy says that having multiple tasks and obligations on our mind splits our attention in a way that reduces overall performance.

I suppose I should say, “Are you paying attention to me?” Leroy says if we have attention residue, we’re operating with part of our mind busy on something other than what we think we’re focusing on at the moment, and that can have consequences. We might not be as efficient in our work, might not be as good a listener, might make errors, might struggle with decisions, and might be distracted from what we should be focusing on — for instance, like driving.

You know we are impacted by attention residue. We start doing something but we’re still partially occupied with something else. Okay, so what can we do about this?

A number of Australian universities have been helping students tackle this issue through a system known as GYLIO. It stands for Get Your Life In Order. Essentially, GYLIO is about bundling tasks into a single period of time. That might be a “power hour,” a morning, a day, maybe a week in order to clear our mind, get everything done and then totally enjoy our downtime.

GYLIO advocates say it lets a person breathe, refocus, and sets them up to get through their list of things to get done. Of course, you have to take action. If you load up your list with 20 things to do but don’t actually do anything about it, that’s not going to help because your brain is going to keep thinking about those 20 things. GYLIO won’t defeat attention residue unless you get busy.

If you’re wondering if there is a downside to GYLIO, the answer is yes. Having this super to-do list can be a trap if it encourages people to put off tough or distasteful tasks until we have a full list. The bottom line there is that we never want to introduce procrastination into our productivity system.

Need to regain focus in your life. GYLIO to the rescue? It wouldn’t hurt to try.

That’s The Extra Point. Get out there and make something good happen today. For 93.3 and the Ray Gibson Show, I’m Jerry Roberts.

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