

MASTER THE MESSY MIND

Feeling like a headless chicken in addition to all the other symptoms you've had to deal with after cancer just sucks.

This will help. Follow the instructions to make sense of the mess in your mind. Then do a little shimmy celebration in the clarity.

Cheers,

Dr. Jess



HOW TO USE

1. Grab 2-3 sheets of paper.

More if you write big. Grab a pen and 4 different colored markers or pens. Tell everyone you know and love to leave you alone for 30 min or so.

2. Dump the contents of your brain onto paper.

There are several ways to do this, but I love the Guided Mindsweep from David Allen (the OG of clearing your brain walks you through it on the podcast linked here). If you're trying it solo, start with writing the things that come up immediately, then walk through different areas of your life to jog your memory of the things you've encountered, meetings you've had, etc. The key is to just write it all down. Don't try to do anything about the items that come up just yet, just write them down and move on to the next things that come to mind.

3. Once you've exhausted the things on your mind, make sure most of it makes sense.

Start with checking that there are actions attached to each of the things you wrote down. For example- if you wrote "Mother's Day" clarify the action you meant like *pick up Mother's Day card from the grocery store*. If you have something a little more vague, you can take some time to break it down further into actions. For example -

- "Restaurants in Ireland" >>>>>>
 - Make a list of the cities we are stopping in
 - Look up restaurants for those cities
 - Make reservations if available
 - Share reservation information

Nothing sucks more than seeing you wrote something down on paper because you were thinking about it but not being able to remember what the hell you were even referring to.

4. Our next step is to categorize the little buggers.

Our categories are:

- **Need to do, with a due date** (example: paying a bill)
- **Need to do, without a due date** (example: figuring out how to turn on the sprinkler system before the grass burns off)
- **Want to do, with a due date** (example: concert tickets that go on sale on a certain time/day)
- **Want to do, without a due date** (example: try that new recipe for high protein bagels)

(If you're a visual person like me, I included a graphic a few pages down 😊)

Assign each category a color, and start with one color/category.

I start with the need to do, with due dates ones because these are the things that are highest priority. I go through my list and circle all the things that need to be done and have a due date. I find it helpful to jot down the approximate due dates next to the items in this category as I circle them.

Then when I'm done with that color, I do the next and find all the things that are need to do, without a due date and circle with the next color.

Repeat for the other categories.

5. Clean up

Once every item is circled or categorized, then use the worksheet at the end to write down what's in each category in their individual boxes.

Each box represents a different type of task.

6. Voila. Let's see what we created.

The left side of the sheet are the things that have **time pressure**. I typically focus on the needs section, but make sure to also look in the Wants (Lower Left) that are coming up on dates that need attention.

From here the top row is the **NEED row**, this means NOT doing it may be impactful somewhere. Not getting it done may cost you some stress later, or costs you financially, mentally or emotionally until it's done.

Top left corner is the Have-Tos with deadlines aka The **DFUs** (Don't Fuck Ups). Paying bills, work projects, things that have *consequences* attached to them, and if you don't do them will cause you stress. Like paying your bill late = late fee. Not finishing that project on time = having to tell a client you didn't meet expectations.

The lower left corner is the **Bucket Filling** tasks. These are the wants that have some sort of deadline. The consequences may be you don't get the exact experience you want if you miss the deadline, but isn't world ending. These should be the items you enjoy that you have to prioritize to keep your emotional/energy bucket full. This could look like signing up in advance for that workout class that fills up on saturday mornings.

The top right corner are things that are at risk of being a **Needle List**. You know you need to do them, but there isn't any time pressure to complete. Things in this category may not have big rewards associated, or may have a higher effort required for completion. These items just poke you repeatedly until the cost of *not* doing them outweighs the effort required to complete.

The bottom right corner is your **SOUL FUEL**. The things that ended up here are the items that may bring you joy, or make life easier. They aren't NEEDED, and there's no time pressure. But they made it to your list, so they're still taking up brain space. I recommend making one or two of these a priority in between the other things because *you are important too*.

Hint- the items in the **Soul Fuel** section (lower right) may be more of an *idea than an action*. If you're working on something for Soul Fuel that's more *idea*, either set a task within that or set a timer. It's easy to get lost in the dreaming and planning stage for the things our souls love.

Well now what?

Sometimes the generated list can feel so freaking overwhelming.

How do you go about tackling a list like this?

Each day pick **1-2 tasks from the left side**, and **one from the lower right** each day to work on. Only **pick 2 or 3 tasks for a day**. No more. **That's it**. It's overwhelming when you feel like the work doesn't have an end to it, which is when we decide we just can't start. These 2-3 tasks may take 5 minutes, or 30 min. Doesn't matter. **You're done when they're completed**.

Once a week, pick one task in the Needle List (upper right) category. Pick one day a week and schedule 30-60 minutes to do this. Do it, then move on with your day. These things have the potential to hang around forever, but you'll be surprised by how easy some of the tasks are once you stop putting them off.

*You'll find this as a theme in my coaching. Set **reasonable** expectations. Meet expectations. Move on. None of this do everything at once, all work, no play crap.*

Repeat this process when you feel overwhelmed.

Thrivers Trick: if you have way more things on the right side of the paper (ie. things that don't necessarily have a due date) it can be so hard to prioritize.

Steal my idea: I let chance guide me. I assign numbers to task and I roll a digital dice.

This **Master The Messy Mind** worksheet falls under mental health (including cognition) that we work on in my 1:1 coaching for cancer Thrivers. You're not alone, and I'm excited to partner with women ready for a life Better Than Before. Reach out to me through my website www.DrJessGentile.com for more information.

Make sure you follow me on Instagram (@DrJessGentile) and TikTok (@DrJess_cancercoach) for more tips on living a full life as a cancer Thriver.

Love,
Dr. Jess

HAS DUE DATE		NO DUE DATE	
NEEDS	<div>Need + Due Date</div> <div>DFU (Don't Fuck Up)</div> <div>Time pressure with consequences</div>	<div>Need + NO due date</div> <div>Needle List</div> <div>High effort/ Low reward/ No time pressure</div>	WANTS
	<div>Want + Due Date</div> <div>Bucket Filling</div> <div>Prioritized self care items with minor consequences in quality of experience if not completed</div>		

HAS DUE DATE

NO DUE DATE

NEEDS

WANTS
