Handout 5.4: Stephen Covey’s time management boxes

When you have a ‘to do’ list a mile long and you’re not sure where to start, simply place each ‘thing to do’ in one of the boxes below. Use box 1 if your ‘thing to do’ is urgent and important, box 2 if it’s important but not urgent, box 3 if it’s urgent but not important and box 4 if it’s not important and not urgent.

At first you may find many of your list will be in box 1 but over time, as you begin to manage your time more efficiently, you will have more action points in box 2. This will relieve your stress and feelings of overwhelm as the urgency is reduced. As more ‘things to do’ come in, you can immediately place them in the relevant box. This is particularly useful to implement on a whiteboard as you can easily update and move the action points to different boxes as and when necessary. This is a very helpful tool for prioritising and keeping you on track that gives you an immediate overview of what is urgent, what is important and what can wait.

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| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **URGENT** | **NOT URGENT** |
| **IMPORTANT** | 1 | 2 |
| **NOT IMPORTANT** | 3 | 4 |