

# *Coaching for Success – Handling Interruptions*

*When you hear about coaching, do you usually think of people who coach athletes or actors?*

*The coaching I do is designed to help you solve problems. If you're facing a specific challenge like making the best use of your time, we focus on it together until we find solutions that are right for your situation and personality.*

*We do this through conversation. By asking questions, listening, and reflecting on what you're learning, the answers you're seeking begin to emerge. I strive to listen and observe without judging and see things from your perspective. Thoreau said, "The question is not what you look at but what you see."*

*The story below will give you a glimpse of one client's dilemma, and the solutions that grew out of our conversation.*

## **Lisa Learns to Handle Interruptions – in Two Acts**

When "Lisa" called me to help her deal with a challenging client, she was at her wit's end.

A physician client at the accounting firm where Lisa works as bookkeeper had acquired the habit of marching into her office unannounced, carrying a load of records he proceeded to dump on her desk. He immediately barraged her with questions and comments. He was completely oblivious to what she was doing. He was not aware of whether this was a good time to meet or whether she was even listening to him, and frequently she wasn't.

Lisa didn't know how to deal with him. She was not good at handling interruptions or quickly switching gears from one activity to another. In addition, she was insecure about her abilities as a bookkeeper and afraid to disappoint her boss. When the doctor arrived, she went into a panic, which made it even harder to think clearly. She needed some strategies for how to better work with him.

I began by helping Lisa remember that when she goes to a doctor's office, like most people, she needs to have an appointment and remain in the waiting room for her turn to be seen. (We joked about how long many of us have had to wait to see our physician.) She might consider reminding her physician client that he needed to wait until she was available to meet with him. We discussed how this strategy was really about learning to set boundaries.

Having worked with Lisa before, I knew she was interested in theatre. I wondered whether we could borrow some ideas about how things work in a theatre to help with her predicament.

For example: She could think about preparing for the doctor's visits by having a script that would tell her what to say and do when he came. Using this idea, we developed a list of things Lisa needed to have at hand and the questions she would need to ask in order to be ready for him. We then created a script (template agenda) she could use for his future visits.

Lisa could also consider how, in a play, there is usually an intermission between acts, when sets, costumes, and props are changed while the audience waits. In the same way, when the doctor arrived at the office, she could create a "change of acts." While he waited, she could put things away that she had been working on, and clear her desk and her mind. She could pull out the things she needed for the doctor's unscheduled visit and focus her attention on his work before their meeting.

The result: Having a script has given Lisa the confidence to better control these impromptu meetings with the doctor and accomplish the tasks that need to be done.

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*Lisa and I worked for two hours at her office to complete this session. Coaching sessions can be done in person, over the phone, or a combination. On the phone, they generally last one-half hour depending on the issue and how frequently we work together.*

*Call me for a complimentary half-hour session by phone to discover a solution to one of your challenges.*

Kathie England, Time Management Coach and Certified Professional Organizer®, **Time for Success, Inc.**,  
503-531-9466, [www.TimeforSuccess.net](http://www.TimeforSuccess.net), [Kathie@TimeforSuccess.net](mailto:Kathie@TimeforSuccess.net)