**Kanbans Kan-be Fun**

By Hannah Thomas

Anyone else start this work-from-home process off with the mindset that you were going to get so much done?  Start a long list of home/personal/professional improvement projects?  Now that we are a few weeks into this, are you any closer to getting those projects done?  Personally, with the time saved from long commutes and getting everyone ready in the morning, I want to make sure I am maximizing on these extra hours but, alas, I have been struggling to cross those items off my list.

**Making Work Visible**

I love a good list, and if I am being honest, when there is something that really needs done, I write it on my hand so that it is staring me in the face. Now, I know you are thinking: "Hannah, I cannot walk around all day with my to do list written all over my hands."  I get it, and I agree! So let's talk about another option - the personal kanban.

Creating a kanban board on our pantry door has proven very helpful, for me and my "coworkers".  It helps us all know what we need to work on each day/week.  It also creates a visual reminder of the tasks to be completed and reinforces a level of ownership to complete them, which is something we are always working to improve on at my house.



My "coworker" (pictured left) loves moving the post-it from the "To Do" column over to the "Done" column.  This kanban was modified to two columns because of the age of my "co-workers" to assist with adopting the principles!

**Where to Start**

Start with what you are currently doing.  Ideally, a list of visual reminders should have an order to them.  I have made changes to the way I order my lists now that I am at home.  There are more ideal days and/or times of day for certain projects and I try to structure my list and my "coworkers" lists around those constraints.  On nice days, schoolwork might be done a little later to allow my "coworkers" an opportunity to get outside and play.  Allowing me to focus on more mindful projects, like developing that new training curriculum *hint*hint*.

**One Thing at a Time**

The goal of a kanban is to help us to focus on accomplishing a select few things at a time (ideally no more than 3) instead of multitasking on many projects, which can be highly distracting and overwhelming. Focusing on a few things and not the whole list is why this tool has been so critical for me at home. This concept sounds simple, right? Focus on one thing at a time. In the office, this was not a big issue. I could easily control where my attention was directed; but at home, phew, not so simple! Our attention can easily be pulled in multiple directions which is why it is so vital to have my list next to me reinforcing and reminding me of what I am trying to get done!

Speaking of getting it done, do you see the smile on my "coworker's" face in the picture above? That is the feeling I also get when I am finally able to move a project/task to my "Done" column, drawing a line through it on my list, or putting that checkmark next to the task. This is an important piece of a kanban: celebrating our accomplishments. And right now, we all need to celebrate our accomplishments no matter how big or small.

**Give Yourself Grace**

Last, but probably the most important reminder about all of this, is don't get lost in your "to do's". Stressing out about everything that you are not getting done is not productive. Taking things one day and step at a time is a great way to try to manage what may seem overwhelming or impossible on certain days. There are days when I knock out my projects and there are days when I chip away at them. What is most important is that you take on what you can handle and add self-care to your list. Our customers will not get our best work unless we first take care of ourselves. So if you are a real control freak and have to document everything, put a self-care sticky on your kanban. Add it to your list and make it a point to focus on every day. Click on this link, Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services ,for additional tips and resources about managing stress.

Friends: write it out, make it visible, focus on one thing at a time, and take care of yourself so we can take better care of each other by producing our best work in what may be a less than ideal working environment. If you would like more information on personal kanban, check out this book from our recommended reading list (and while you're at it, feel free to check out our entire recommended reading list here). Stay safe!