



Time is a valuable resource, especially in today's fast-moving world. While self-employed business owners often have flexibility, many still struggle to balance business demands with full lives.

The tips below are meant to be approached one at a time — focus on what feels manageable, and allow each habit to become comfortable before adding another.

Tip #1: Focus on just one item at a time.

This can feel unrealistic in a world where multitasking is normalized. But consider this: imagine standing in a circle of friends while three people talk to you at the same time. How well can you truly listen to any one of them? That's what your brain experiences when you're juggling multiple tasks at once.

Try an experiment for just one day. Do one thing at a time. If you're working on payroll and the phone rings, let it ring. Finish the task in front of you, then return calls once you're done. When your attention is scattered, none of the tasks receive your best effort. Focus. Complete. Then move on to the next thing.

Tip #2: Realize there will always be the ‘one more thing, thing’ (or know when to stop).

Many self-employed people have a natural tendency toward workaholism. At first, this can feel productive – until working becomes the default and rest becomes the exception. As business owners, there is always more that could be done: another phone call to return, an invoice to send, one more task to check off.

The real skill is knowing when to stop. Try telling yourself, “Just for today – or even just for this hour – I’m not going to do anything else for my business.” Creating intentional pauses isn’t laziness; it’s how you protect your energy and make your work sustainable.

Tip #3: Don’t work yourself harder than your employees.

If you don’t have employees, imagine yourself working a traditional job. Would your boss expect you to work at 11 p.m.? Probably not – unless you were being paid overtime. While there may be occasional seasons where longer hours are unavoidable, consistently working 12–16 hour days is a fast way to lose the joy you once had for your business.

And if you do have employees, ask yourself this: would you expect them to work the same hours you do? Holding yourself to a standard you wouldn’t set for others is a sign that something needs to shift.

Tip #4: Get out of scarcity mode.

One important realization I came to was that there will always be more business available. When my pet sitting business began to grow, I had to learn how to say no to new clients until things stabilized – including hiring and training additional staff. Taking on more work before the business was ready didn't increase success; it only created more stress and less time for both myself and my team.

Over time, I also noticed a shift in how the work felt. Income earned during those overwhelmed periods didn't come from enjoyment or purpose – it came from stress. That awareness helped me understand that growth only feels positive when it's supported by capacity, not pressure.

Tip #5: Decide that you are the most important person in your world.

When we own a service-based business, much of our energy goes toward caring for others – both our human clients and the animals we're responsible for. But at some point, it's worth asking: who is taking care of you?

When I began to treat myself as the most important person in my business, something shifted. I became more intentional about creating time away from work, and I started to see that protecting my own well-being wasn't selfish – it was necessary. Valuing myself meant valuing my time, my energy, and the life I wanted alongside my business.

Tip #6 Discover your individualized ideas on freeing up time.

Because every business is run differently, what works well for one person may not work for another. Give yourself permission to explore what actually saves you time. Set aside ten minutes to brainstorm ideas that feel realistic and supportive for your life and business.

1. Let go of problem clients.

If a client consistently causes more stress than the relationship is worth, it's okay to let them go. Protecting your time and energy creates space for better-fitting clients.

2. Raise prices for both new and existing clients.

A thoughtful rate increase can result in a 10–20% raise without adding more work. Some clients may leave, and that's okay. Trust that new clients — ones who respect your time and rates — will take their place.

3. Get clear on why you want more time.

Knowing what you want to do with extra time makes it easier to intentionally create it. For me, that meant more lunches with friends, time outdoors, hobbies, exercise, gardening, and even time to do nothing at all.

4. Hire support when it's time to grow.

When I hired help, I focused on finding people who were responsible, self-managing, and good communicators. Building a team that could work independently was one of the biggest time-savers in my business.