



Executive Mastery
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Wherever you are, make sure you are there

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My friends are always saying that they admire how my life seems so together. They tell me I'm known for being organized, keeping promises, and being on time (well, mostly).

What came over me this time? Why, I've never done anything like this before!

I remember it distinctly. It was the Wednesday night before Thanksgiving. We were leaving early the next morning to fly to Pennsylvania to be with family. I suddenly realized I had nothing to contribute to the festive meal except my appetite. Mother taught me better. I needed to come up with something.

So, feeling in a holiday mood and a bit like Henrietta Homemaker, I decided to make my world famous pumpkin chocolate chip cookies. "I've got so much work to do," I thought, "but I'm woman-hear-me-roar, so I'll have time to whip up a few dozen of those soft, moist, chewy family favorites before bedtime and still do some other things."

Set the oven, mix the dough, drop them on the cookie sheet, put them in the oven.

I'm a master of multi-tasking. I'll do other chores while cookies are baking. Repeat three times.

Back to the kitchen. Cool cookies, pack them to travel.

Hmm! Doesn't look like five dozen to me. Ok, we ate a few while they were warm. Still lots to take to the family.

Fast forward four weeks.

I'm feeling like Henrietta Homemaker again. Why not fix dinner and surprise Stephen that I can still cook. I'll fix that quick chicken dish.

Preheat oven while I prepare gourmet meal. Oven's ready. (Mmmmm. Sure smells good in here and I haven't even put the chicken in the oven yet).

Open oven door to put chicken dish in.

Yikes! What's that? Can't be. No way. I don't do these kinds of things!

Why it's... it's... it's a sheet of pumpkin chocolate chip cookies! When did I bake those? Oh my gosh. It was a month ago! Thanksgiving. I left those cookies in the oven for a month? No wonder that batch looked so small. Here's the rest of them! Perched on the cookie sheet like little brown hockey pucks!

We're just so busy!

Are you harried? Over scheduled? Overwhelmed? Are you trying to do too much in too short a time? Is your to-do list longer than a child's Christmas wish list? Do you speed up, thinking you can do more? Have your multi-tasking skills gone haywire?

Some call it efficiency. Some call it hurry sickness. Whatever you call it, the fact is, we do so many things without paying attention. We're off somewhere in a zone much of the time. My story is about cookies. Yours may be about reports, meetings, or family. One friend told me that she

took her mother to the grocery store and forgot her there!

We do much of our day on automatic pilot and wonder where the time goes. "I just got up, how can it be time to go to bed," we think. "Did I eat lunch?" "Oh my gosh, here's my driveway and I don't remember driving home!"

Scary, isn't it. We have trouble staying present to the moment. We seem to be living in the past or focusing several steps into the future and we miss so much of what's going on right now.

Ghandi said, "Wherever you are, make sure you are there."

Where are you? Why not look that colleague in the eye when you talk to her, listen fully on the phone instead of doing paper work at the same time, send a hand written note when you think of a person? Hug your child for a full 10 seconds. Put the paper down when your spouse asks you a question. Take the cookies out of the oven when they are finished baking.

It's what leaders do.

©Elizabeth Jeffries, CSP, CPAE Speaker Hall of Fame, works with leaders who want to master their influence and multiply their personal performance. She is a leadership consultant, executive coach, keynote speaker and author of several books, including The Heart of Leadership: How to Inspire, Encourage and Motivate People to Follow You. She can be reached in Louisville, KY at 502-339-1600, online at elizabeth@tweedjeffries.com and on the web at www.tweedjeffries.com.