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Banish Email Anxiety

Productivity pro Jocelyn Glei strategizes ways to help you gain control of your inbox.

How does email actually impede our productivity?
"On average, people spend 30 percent of their week checking and responding to email," says Glei, author of *Unsubscribe: How to Kill Email Anxiety, Avoid Distractions, and Get Real Work Done.* "We're letting our inbox dictate our mood and to-do list. I recommend 'batching,' where you only check your email two to three times a day. For some, that's impractical, but the idea is to avoid multitasking and only dedicate a certain amount of time to email. Studies have shown batchers to be happier, less stressed, and more productive."

But what if you miss something important?
"With Apple Mail, for example, you can designate VIPs—your boss or important clients—so you get a push notification when they send an email."

You recommend an email audit. What is that?
"Take a week to evaluate the kinds of messages you receive, then create an auto-responder or canned template. It's a tactical way to eliminate backlog."

Why is it necessary to set email expectations?
"If you respond within five minutes every time I email you, I start to expect that. If you get an urgent-sounding email but have more important things to attend to, don't ignore it or drop everything to respond. Instead, send a quick expectation-setting email. Let them know you received it, where it falls on your list of priorities, and when you'll respond. Providing context alleviates their fear that it fell into the email black hole."

Any apps you use to manage your inbox?
"My favorite is EasilyDo. It allows you to combine different inboxes, hit 'snooze' and set reply reminders, turn off read receipts, and automatically group messages into categories—like your travel bills and flights all in one folder."