



From Grind To Grace: Work as a (FUN!) Spiritual Practice

If you're ready to transform the tasks you dread into tasks of delight, this article shows you how.

Business and career success and spiritual fulfillment are complementary aims. Each enriches the other when they are explored in tandem with mindfulness and commitment. The Soul of Business Success is my system for pursuing business success and spiritual fulfillment through one integrated path. This article will support you in one SBS skill: the ability to transform your relationship to any task or project so that if it's "gotta get done," you can design a way to love getting it done. I call the transformation of dreaded tasks in to delightful tasks "From Grind to Grace."

Most people who've been in the work world for more than about five minutes have created a good-sized territory in their work we'll just call "THE GRIND." This is the zone into which we banish any task that has ever seemed less than savory. Some unfortunate tasks are sent to "The Grind" by almost everyone who ever has to do them: Filing. Taxes. Moving offices. Handling employee or vendor challenges. Other categories of business activity are only labeled "Grind" material by some: Marketing. Accounting. Saying "no." Business planning. Whatever the activity, once placed in The Grind Zone, no task has a chance of being enjoyed, appreciated, or loved. It's now part of The Grind. And pity the person who MUST do some of these tasks they've placed in The Grind Zone! They've already decided they're not going to have a good time with these tasks, yet they still must complete them! There's only one escape route: PROCRASTINATION!

"Oh, wait!" You may exclaim. "Procrastination doesn't work for very long... and it's awfully draining in the meantime!" I'll agree with you wholeheartedly. Procrastination only makes The Grind worse! But I've got a true road to freedom from The Grind: learn to transform Grind into Grace.

There are six design changes you can make to any task that will transform it from Grind to Grace. What's a design change? It's a shift you make in how you perceive, plan, and carry out a task. You may think of your tasks as fixed entities: either a task or project is appealing or it is not. But I say each and every task you enjoy is enjoyable because you've designed it to be that way. You shined the light of your creativity on that task and looked for ways to make it a joy to complete. Maybe some of the things you do started out with their own intrinsic fun factor, but you amp up that fun, whether consciously or not, by how you go about doing the task. And that's just what we're going to do, quite deliberately, to your Grind Zone tasks now.

The Six Design Changes from Grind to Grace:

Get Better Support - give your project a chance by setting up systems, experts, and cheerleaders that help you do it well, easily, on time, and thoroughly.

Support might include: different people supporting, more support from the same people, better systems, better tools, a better plan

Build in More Balance - design the whole of your day, week, year, and life so that there's space for everything and all your needs are met. This way, you can *afford* to design tasks gracefully rather than grinding your way through them in survival mode.

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Balance could include: less of this task, more of another task, juxtaposing this task with a more appealing activity, more sleep or rest, better fuel, more spiritual connection, more community connection, more personal time.

Integrate Your Life - place your project in context with the rest of your life and business so that it does not feel or live as a departure from the norm or from the flow, but instead folds in effortlessly.

Integration could include: tying this task to other tasks in other areas of your life, bringing skills you use in other areas into this project, aligning the task with other areas of importance

Insist on More Profit - measure profit as the surplus value created when you invest energy and enjoy the returns it yields. This is not a strictly financial model: think of the surplus joy created from the effort of raising children or of serving others. That joy, when it exceeds the effort of the work, is your profit. When we relegate something to The Grind, we stomp our foot petulantly and say, "Darn! That'll never be profitable!" Instead, I ask that you move into grace, stomp your foot joyfully, and say, "Whee! I invest my energy and creativity here and I **insist** on a positive return!"

Profit could include: better expression of your values, more usefulness for you, more usefulness for other people, lower cost in terms of resources like energy, time, money, brainpower, or attention, more efficient use of resources

Have More Fun - unless you go about life looking for ways to have fun (or experience joy or peace, or however you want to think of elevated states of pleasurable activity), this experience will only come to you sporadically. I want abiding joy for you, and you can create it by designing it into your every activity. Joy, peace, and delight are your birthright. Don't turn your back on them just because April 15 is approaching!

Fun could include: more aesthetically pleasing, more playful, less serious, more companionship, adding light, adding music or pleasant sound, focusing on fun outcome, rewarding yourself with fun afterward or beforehand, adding something fun in tandem

Add More YOU - Many experts will tell you how to go about something, and all our lives we've been either conforming to or rebelling against what we were told to do. You're a big kid now, and the best way to find grace in all your actions is to be yourself while you do them. What does "your way" look like? You won't know until you start experimenting with doing everything your own way!

Adding YOU could include: bringing more of your sense of style to the project or activity, expressing your best self through this task, wearing your favorite clothes or going to your favorite spot or pioneering your own special way of doing this

Reflect on your most Grind-ing tasks. How have you designed them and built them in your mind in opposition to these six principles?

How have you eliminated support? *"I've got to handle this alone."*

How have you gotten out of balance? *"Aww, I'll have fun/get a massage/sleep later! I've got stuff to do now!"*

How have you dis-integrated your activities? *"I can be caring and light when I'm with clients, but when it comes to marketing, I clam up!"*

How have you settled for energetic bankruptcy? *"This is so not worthwhile, but I don't have any alternative."*

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How have you decided this was NOT going to be fun/joyful/peaceful? *"No way could I have the experience I really want while I'm doing THIS!"*

How have you withdrawn your essence from the activity? *"It's not ME to do this; I'm just going to focus on wishing I didn't have to do it."*

Now, using the list of design principles that can restore this task to grace and the examples listed above, find at least 3 ways to transform this task from Grind to Grace. The worksheet on the following page may help.

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From Grind to Grace: A Task Transformation Worksheet

MY TASK OR PROJECT:

In the past, I placed this task in The Grind Zone and thought "I don't want to do this because..."

I DESIGNED this task or project to be a grind in these ways (check those that apply and make a note as to HOW you designed the task into the Grind Zone):

I eliminated support around this task: _____

I got out of balance: _____

I dis-integrated this from other parts of my life: _____

I spent more than I got back: _____

I squandered my inheritance of peace, joy, and fun: _____

I withdrew my essence from the activity: _____

I now REDESIGN this task or project in these ways to be a graceful expression of mySelf (check those that you'll use and make a note as to HOW you will approach the task differently now that you're designing toward Grace):

I will Get Better Support: _____

I will Build in More Balance: _____

I will Integrate this project/task into My Life: _____

I will Insist on More Profit: _____

I will Have More Fun: _____

I will Add More ME: _____

This checklist works for any task or project, professional or personal. You may also notice that anything you undertake, from marketing to grocery shopping, filing to lovemaking, can be made more graceful by refining your design using these design components. No matter how pleasurable the task is or is not at this point, your conscious design can make it into a masterpiece expressing your highest Self in the world.

Go grace-fully! If I may be of assistance, please call 206.729.8497 or e-mail michele@theevolutiongroup.com.

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Recommended Reading to Support Your Transformation From Grind to Grace

"Peace is Every Step" by Thich Nhat Hanh

Thuy (Vietnamese for "teacher") has a clarity, a lightness, and a perspective of mindfulness that elevate this book to life-handbook status!

"It's a Beautiful Life, It Just Takes Practice" by Bo Lozoff

Utne Reader calls Bo one of 10 Spiritual Visionaries for this century and his writing style is so sweet and low-key I'm thrilled to have him as my spiritual teacher through this book. Rather than rejecting the American lifestyle, he encourages readers to integrate their mindfulness and SelfFulness into their modern lives.

"The Bodacious Book of Succulence: Daring to Live Your Succulent Wild Life!" by SARK

SARK taught me everything I was born knowing (but forgot!) about living in a succulent (translate - graceful!) way. We are intrinsically succulent and Susan Ariel Rainbow Kennedy's rainbow-colored, hand-lettered books (East West Bookshop carries a number of her books!) will incite you to live your unique brand of succulence, even if that means meditating in a miniskirt or throwing a filing-and-Belgian-waffles party. She is the queen of authenticity and audacity.

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