Welcome to the motivational articles section of my web site. I continue to write these articles based on the vast experience I have accumulated over the past 30 years in commercial industry, government and academia in computer science/IT. It is always a learning process and a work in progress. However, over the years I have learnt to manage time and get the maximum out of the little time we have. Furthermore, as one hits 50, it’s a different story. You cannot afford to do all the things you did in your 20s, 30s or even 40s. For example, at 42 I used to be able to travel from say Tokyo to San Francisco and take the connection from San Francisco to London all in coach class. Now, I find it difficult to travel coach even from Boston to London. Furthermore, one can work effectively only if one is healthy both physically and mentally. Therefore, I take a holistic approach to work and living. Work is part of a way of life. So here is my story – how I manage the 24 hours in a day and get the maximum out of it.

Most important in my life now is sleep. Back in my 30s and 40s I used to get by with 4 hours of sleep a night. But over the years, I have abused my body doing that and now I try and get 8 hrs of sleep at least. I have to do damage control. So my first advice, whether you are 30, 40, 50 or 60 please get your 8 hours. So I set my alarm to 7am and get a cup of tea and rest in bed for 15 minutes while sipping my tea and plan a list for the day. Then after some morning activities, it’s time for 60 minutes of Yoga. I do this with Maritsa’s DVD – 20 minutes of Yoga, 20 minutes of body scan and 20 minutes of meditation. At 8:30, I do some serious reading/studying for an hour. This could be some important research paper or a book chapter. It takes me about 30 minutes to get ready, have a quick breakfast – typically a banana, a fat free yogurt and a cup of tea. I make sure I wear a suit to work every day. As a female professor, I believe it is very important to look professional without overdoing to set an example for female students – that computer scientists are not geeks. It takes me 20 minutes to drive to work.

I am now at work at 10:30am. I spend half hour checking emails, going through plans with my admin asst. and catching up with my team of 3 professors. Then from 11 to 12, it is continuation of the serious reading. At 12 I have a quick lunch - usually a piece of chicken and an apple. I drink lots of water – about 3 bottles while at work. Then in the afternoons on Monday and Wednesday, I have classes. In the Fall, I teach 2 courses and Spring, I teach 1. In between, classes I read professional magazines and have office hours. On Tuesday and Thursday, I write papers/proposals and meet with students and my team of 3 professors instead of teaching. We discuss progress on prototypes/systems we develop, papers we have written as well as new ideas for fundamental research. Fridays are more relaxing and we have department and school meetings that day. I also set up meetings with local industry on Fridays. I leave work around
5:30pm. I may stop by the grocery store or pharmacy to get some milk or other essentials, but usually try and do all that during the weekends. I am home by 6 or latest by 6:30 and finish dinner by 7. Dinner is usually a TV dinner with lots of boiled vegetables. I read/study for an hour after dinner. I am in the gym at 8 and workout for about 50 minutes with about 10 minute break. I am home at 9. Then after some night activities, I do some more technical reading, the more complex the subject is the more tired I get. It’s now 10:30. I have my cereal – all bran – watch a little of the night show comedies for about 15 minutes. I am in bed by 11 these days.

Now the days I travel, the routine is completely different. I have done extensive travel in the past, but now I have cut back quite a bit. I am planning to cut back even more in January 2010 and beyond. However, when I travel, I still try to meditate for 20 minutes (without the DVD of course) and try and workout in the hotel gym for about 30 minutes as my work is usually from 8 to 5 when on travel. Also, in the summer months the schedule varies slightly as I usually do not teach. So I do a lot of the book writing as well as catch up on reading technical books during the summer.

Weekends are more relaxing. My routine until 8:30am is the same for both weekdays and weekends. Then on Saturdays, I plan the shopping list for the week, and then go shopping, go to Starbucks with my husband for tea, spend time at Barnes and Noble, etc. until noon. Then in the afternoon I spend a few hours doing consulting work if I have any. In the evening, we may go out to dinner. I workout at home for about 30 minutes to an exercise video. Then around 8:30pm, we watch a movie. Sunday morning after meditation, it is “Meet the Press” and then British comedy for about an hour. In the afternoon, some consulting work, do some book writing, workout at home, and also prepare for the week’s lecture.

I must confess that while I try my best to follow this routine, there are days when I slip. I love milk chocolates and vanilla ice cream. So I indulge a bit, often more than I should. There might be an interesting movie or a news show on TV that I may watch off and on. I don’t punish myself when I get out of the routine. I look at it as part of life and then move on.

So on a good week, on average I work about 60 hours, no longer the crazy 70-80 hours per week. The routine I have tried to follow keeps me very motivated, but still very calm. There are only 24 hours in a day. Therefore, as I get older, it’s important to keep that in mind, get plenty of rest, drink lots of water and eat healthily. It is crucial that I do everything I can do to reduce stress.

My career has transitioned from Industry to Government to Academia. I would say a day in the life of a computer science professor is least stressful. This is because I create my own stress. In addition to teaching I also conduct research, write books and travel to give keynote talks. This is one of the greatest advantages of being in academia. However, Government and Industry also have their unique advantages. Being in the Government, one can shape the research directions of the future. Being in Industry, one can develop useful products. Again my story is to take maximum advantage of the opportunities and make the most of the 24 hours you have in a day.