

Strange CPU usage

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I recently had a hard drive failure, just broke, so re-installed everything on a new 120Gig drive. I am using XP Home SP2 and all updates, 1.8GHz CPU, 1Gb RAM. All was well for a week or so, then programs would freeze, Task Manager showed 2 copies of the program, both marked as "Not responding." Trying to end the task did nothing, and if I tried it 3 or 4 times Task Manager would be listed as "Not responding." At that point the only way out was the power switch. Since I had made an image of C & D (my program are on D) right after the re-build I restored everything. That worked for a couple of days, then I noticed that the start-up time was inordinately slow, 3 or 4 minutes, and I have the leanest start up folder imaginable. If I try to use the machine shortly after the Desktop appeared I'd have to wait maybe a further 2 or 3 minutes before the program would fire up.

Today programs are running oh so slow, each letter I type takes a second or so to appear on the screen. Watching the CPU usage graph in Task Manager it is at 100% at frequent intervals and continuously for a minute or more from time to time. Yet the Processes window doesn't show any process with an excessive CPU usage, although it is hard to follow exactly what is going on with the numbers jumping about. I have only one program running, IE7, plus Zone Alarm Pro V7, AVG antivirus (up to date) and a Wireless LAN. Most of the time the CPU usage graph jumps about between 20% and 60%, with jumps to 100%, but at the same time the System Idle Process hovers between 90% and 98%. This doesn't seem to add up, what am I missing here?

Any suggestions much appreciated.

David

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