

Time Management Basics

Everyone gets the same allotment of time. There's no way to bank it, slow it down, or skip over it. Sure, much of your time is controlled by parents, teachers, friends, partners, and employers. And much of your day is regularly devoted to eating, sleeping, grooming, and other activities of daily living.

But, small or large, there is a chunk of time each day that is entirely yours to control. And how you make use of this time determines to a great extent how much you enjoy life, how many important goals you achieve, and whether or not you count life as a success when you look back in later years.

Time management is simply the twofold process of expanding your discretionary time as much as possible by eliminating waste and accomplishing more of what you want with as many minutes of your day as you can.

There are simple guidelines to follow for mastering the art of time management:

- Set clear goals and priorities. You increase the chances you'll lead the life you want when you clarify your personal and career goals and priorities. Using the latest whiz-bang time management tool won't help you if you don't have a clear idea of what you're trying to accomplish.
- Schedule high priorities, both personal and professional, into your life first. If a particular project, family time, or exercise are your priorities, schedule them first and then fill in the meetings, errands, and other to-dos. Say "no" to the rest. The ability to set limits separates effective people from busy ones.
- Stay focused on doing what's most important at any given time.

Use only one calendar or day planner, and carry it with you at all times so it's always at hand and nothing slips between the cracks. Make sure your calendar includes a prioritized daily task list, appointment schedule, and a task list of those things you wish to accomplish that aren't already scheduled for specific dates.

Sounds simple, but if you follow these strategies, you'll become a master of time instead of allowing time to master you.

Time Management Tips

Tip 1—The only thing truly within your control is yourself. Any time other people are involved, you lose control. For example, planning your commute down to the last second is simply inviting frustration and perhaps even road rage. Control those things you can, plan more realistically for the things you can't control, and learn to roll with the punches.

Tip 2—Take time to make time. The most important time of your day may be the 10-15 minutes you set aside to plan the rest of your day. Create solitude at least once a day, and plan.

Tip 3—Figuring out what your major distractions are will help you avoid or minimize them. Distractions prevent us from achieving your goals.

Tip 4—Clean your desk! Clutter saps creativity and energy. Stand next to the wastepaper basket while opening your mail and use it! Clean up before going home in the evenings.

Tip 5—Keep all your commitments, personal and professional, on one calendar so you can remain sensitive to competing priorities.

Making the Most of a Minute

- **Concentrate.** You can accomplish a great deal more when you're not interrupted. That's why it's important to plan your schedule so you can work on several similar or related tasks in a row. Even in the busiest environments you'll want to create a place where you can work for an hour or two a day without interruption.
- **Confirm appointments.** Avoiding just one or two broken or delayed appointments per month will save you much more time than it takes to confirm all the appointments that go off as scheduled.

**This month's
Online Webinar
Discussion:
Maximizing Your Day:
Effective Time
Management**

If time management is so easy to accomplish on one's own, then why do we feel so overwhelmed?

ONLINE SEMINAR
Available on demand
starting September 17th

CARE's Employee Assistance Program can provide guidance, information, and resources to improve your health by staying active!

Visit the website
www.caresworklifesolutions.com

Or Call CARE's WorkLife Solutions
1-866-888-1555

If you are in crisis,
phones are answered 24/7

**Services are Free
& Confidential**

- **Delegate.** Spending more time on your most important activities will make you more productive, even if it costs you extra to delegate some jobs to outside services. Successful delegating involves finding and cultivating a competent delegate, explaining the results you want until your delegate can repeat the goals back to you, and monitoring what your delegate does without over-controlling or doing the work yourself.
- **Do things right the first time.** This is much more efficient than redoing work several times. If you think you don't have time to do it right on the first try, ask yourself where you'll find even more time when you have to do it over.
- **Avoid meetings, except when truly necessary.** You can exchange information via telephone calls, faxes, e-mail, shared documents, and by sending delegates to the meeting in your place.

Doing Two Things at Once

Listen to recorded books while driving in your car. Floss your teeth while surfing the Internet. Talk on the phone while exercising. Read the daily paper while watching prime time TV. These are examples of doing two things at once, or what's commonly known as *multitasking*. You'll find many opportunities to try this technique.

Provided you're not a brain surgeon or a pilot, you'll be able to use it to save a great deal of time during the day. A word of caution, however: People who become good at multitasking often feel over programmed, and may send signals that they don't have time for other people's needs. Remember that balance is usually more important than efficiency.

Buying Extra Time

From one perspective, money is just stored up time and energy. You can convert some of this money back into time through certain kinds of spending. For example, using a computer lets you do math and polish your writing faster than you can without it. Buying one could create extra time for other activities. Similarly, you can walk to work in a hour, or drive there in 15 minutes. Buying a car gives you an extra 45 minutes per trip for other activities. Don't be afraid to buy the help you need to create more time.

Just-in-Time Planning

Some things are best done at the last minute. For example, if you review a report on Monday but don't need to discuss it with your boss until Friday, you'll find yourself looking over the report a second time just before your meeting. Better to review the report only once, just before your meeting with the boss. (Being sure about precisely when you'll need to be up to speed on the report is one big advantage of accurate planning.) Similarly, if you're developing a presentation for a March meeting and you finish it in January, you'll probably have to revise the presentation to reflect the latest developments taking place just before the March meeting.

Article from CARE's WorkLife Solutions Website

CARE

WORKLIFE SOLUTIONS

Life Happens. We Can Help.