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Time Management and Where to Start

We all have the same amount of time in a day, it is limited, and we cannot do everything! Are you like me, trying several things, buying all the planners and organizing tools for better time management? I am getting closer and have found a method that works for me, though it continually needs to be tweaked.

However, today, I want us to remember that the purpose of improving time management skills is to make time for the most important things in our lives. It is healthy to look for balance among responsibilities at home and work, and a fun time for yourself and others. Learning to use your time more effectively should increase life satisfaction, not just a longer list of tasks to finish. So let's focus on simple ways to start making the most of your time and living life!

Track Your Time

Just like with money, before you figure out your budget, you first have to see where it all actually goes. The same can be applied for time. You may be surprised to learn how much time you spend doing things that you do not consider a priority. Record what you do in 15-minute intervals for at least a week. Evaluate the results by asking: Did everything I needed to do get done? Which tasks require the most time? What time of day was I most productive? Where do you devote most of your time (i.e. job, family, personal, recreation)?

Having a good sense of the time required for routine tasks can help you be more realistic in planning and estimating how much time is available for other activities. Now you can apply what you learned on your next week's calendar. Plan your most challenging tasks for when you have the most energy. Block out time for your high-priority activities first and protect that time from interruptions.

Manage Your Time Wasters

We all have those items that are important but not urgent and can interrupt our focus. Try these tips for some common time wasters so you can lead with your priorities!

Handheld Devices

- Take advantage of voice-to-text features such as transcribed voicemails or to make notes or draft emails and text messages when you are on the go.

- Take any necessary action immediately following a call.
- Impose screen time limits and regularly monitor your digital wellness
- Schedule breaks from your devices.

Email

- Set aside a specific time to view and respond to an email.
- Turn off notifications for email.
- Handle each item only once when possible.
- Immediately delete or unsubscribe from junk emails.
- Keep address books up-to-date and organized.
- Utilize built-in shortcuts to sort email.

Unexpected Visitors

- Schedule time for face-to-face visits.
- Inform colleagues of your work agenda and set a mutually agreeable time to visit or for new tasks
- When someone comes to the door, stand up and have your meeting standing.

Get Help from Others

Delegating means assigning responsibility for a task to someone else, freeing up your time for tasks that require your expertise. Identify tasks others can do and select the appropriate person to do them. Also consider building support in many areas of life such as enlisting your kids' help with getting dinner on the table, prepare extended family to be back up when the unexpected happens, ask a co-worker for help talking through a tough task.

Take breaks

A key to staying motivated is allowing time for breaks. Be sure to add short, five to ten-minute breaks to help you recharge and refocus.

If you are curious about different time management techniques and what type of person they fit, here is a nice visual from the University of St. Augustine for Health Science:

<https://www.usa.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/top.png>.

Here's to more time for what's most important to you! Today's information is adapted from University of Georgia and K-State Research and Extension's time management publication.

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