

Personal Time Management

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A common complaint heard these days is there are, "not enough hours in the day." Many people feel they do not have the time they need to accomplish all the things they want to do. After a long day at work they are too tired to do anything but go home and prepare for the next workday. And weekends, which are supposed to be for relaxing and spending time with family and friends, become the days when people do the shopping, errands and chores they did not accomplish during the week.

Tips for Time Management

Time management is a difficult skill to master, but there are things you can do, and changes you can make, to increase the amount of free time in your life. Here are some tips you can use to help make the most out of your personal time.

- **Prioritize:** Different things are important to different people, and only you can decide what is most important to you. Make a list of ten things you want to do with your free time and then assign them each a number, with one being assigned to the most essential and ten going to the least significant. Focus on finding time for the most important things, and do the less-important activities when more time becomes available.
- **Keep a family calendar:** Use a monthly calendar to keep track of birthdays, medical appointments, children's sporting events and other activities. Post the calendar on the refrigerator door so you will see it every day. Being constantly reminded of future events makes you less likely to forget them. There will be fewer instances in your life when you find yourself in a panic over an event that slipped your mind.
- **Assign chores:** Give everybody who lives in your house their fair share of the chores to do. If there are four people in your family, and everybody contributes a half-hour of their time, you will not have to spend two hours doing all the work yourself.
- **Do not repeat tasks:** Combining several similar tasks into a single event saves time. For example, do you find yourself making two or three trips to the store each week, and each time you only buy five or six items? To save time, keep a list all week long of the items you need and then make one trip to the store to buy them all. Cutting down the number of times you perform the same chores and errands every week can free up several hours in your weekly schedule.
- **Avoid time-wasting situations:** The minutes you spend waiting in lines, sitting in traffic, on hold on the telephone and waiting for other people to get ready can be collectively described as time-wasting situations. These minutes add up, but if you anticipate these delays you can make the most out of

them. Read a magazine article while you wait for your significant other to get ready for dinner, or check your phone messages while you are in line at the grocery store. If you cannot find the time to read as much as you would like try listening to audiobooks during your daily commute to work.

- **Minimize distractions:** Interruptions are the last thing you want to experience when you are enjoying your free time. Limit the number of distractions and disruptions you experience by turning off your cell phone, beeper, the television and any other devices that are not serving to enhance your personal time.
- **Do not procrastinate:** "Putting off until tomorrow what you can do today" may seem like a way to save time, but you are often making the job you have to do tomorrow larger and more time-consuming. For example, if you spill spaghetti sauce on your stove top you can clean it up right away in a matter of seconds. If you wait until the next day the sauce will have dried and it will take you five minutes of hard scrubbing to remove the mess. In cases like this acting sooner rather than later saves time in the long run.
- **Hire a helper:** If you can afford it, paying somebody to do tasks for you or around your house creates more spare time for you. Hiring a teenager from neighborhood to mow the lawn or rake leaves is a great (and relatively inexpensive) way to free up an hour or two each week. Cleaning and grocery delivery services are other time-saving options.
- **Be aware of your "body clock":** Many people are more productive in the morning than they are at night. Other people do not find themselves functioning at their peak until the afternoon rolls around. Be mindful of your own "body clock" and schedule your most difficult tasks for most productive times of your day. Misusing your peak performance time can disrupt your entire day, and cause you to use your free time to make up for your earlier lack of production.
- **It is alright to say, "No":** If how you spend your free time is important and you already have plans to use it in a certain way, try your best to keep last-minute requests of others from imposing on you. Each day there are many demands made on our time and not enough hours to fit them all in. It is OK to turn down offers or requests that you know you can not fit into your schedule. "I am sorry, but I already have plans," is a simple phrase that will help keep your free time free.

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