



## Time management & creating a plan

With hectic work schedules, family responsibilities, social meetings and more, you may feel as if you don't have time to get to everything you need and want to do. You can't always control what needs to be done. But you can control how you approach getting it done. Whether it's finding a few big changes you can make or a lot of little changes, they can all add up to more free time and less stress.

The first step in learning how to manage your time is to develop a general schedule. Your schedule should include time for yourself so you can re-energize during the day.

After you've defined the major elements of your workload, the next step is to prioritize them. What needs to be done today? What needs to be done this week? What can wait until next week?

Setting priorities depends on things like deadlines and whether you'll need to wait for someone else to help or give you information. If you're involved in group projects, be sure to factor in extra time for communication and problem-solving.

By setting up your work and school schedules and identifying your priorities, you've already started down the road to more effective time management. Here are some other suggestions you may find helpful:

- **Enlist support early.** As soon as you realize you can use some help on a task or project, ask for it right away. That can help you give your helper(s) enough lead time to work it into their schedules, too.
- **Start with the most worrisome task.** This will help you breathe easier for the next task and make the rest of your day less stressful.
- **Beat deadlines whenever you can.** Not only will this reduce stress and lighten your work schedule, but it will also give you more self-confidence about managing your schedule.
- **Know your capacity for stress.** When you're hitting overload, take the break you need (even if it's just a short one) when you need it.
- **Stay organized.** Take a few minutes at the end of each day to organize your workspace. Make reminder lists of tasks for the next day or week.
- **Celebrate each success.** As a reward, allow yourself some "downtime" between busy periods to review your schedule and figure out what task comes next.
- **Get physical.** Exercise helps you reduce your stress. Working activity into your routine can give your resilience a natural boost.
- **Have fun.** Be sure to have some fun while working or playing. A good sense of humor can help keep issues in perspective.
- **Get involved in your community.** It can help to get to know your neighbors or others who live in your community. That way you can each have a support system close to home.
- **Build flexibility into your schedule.** Your availability to family and friends depends on the flexibility you build into your schedule.

Keep the big picture in focus

It helps to look at how each part of your life affects all the others. Be as realistic as possible when answering the following questions. And be sure to keep what's most important to you in mind:

- What are your long term goals?
- What are the things you have to do each day? Do these help you move toward your long term goals?
- How long will it take you to reach your goals at your present pace?
- Is there any way you can get there faster? If so, can you work it into your schedule easily or would it add to your stress?
- If it's an option, would giving yourself more time to achieve your goals help reduce your stress?
- How do your goals and timelines affect those closest to you?
- Can others help you more than they're helping now or in different ways?
- Do your personal goals conflict with your business goals? If so, how? Can you find a way to get them on the same page?
- Who's on "Team You" and how can they help you reach your goals?
- Are you making enough time for the important people and events in your life?

Did answering these questions give you any ideas for changes you'd like to try?

Be sure to keep track of what's most helpful for you. If you like your results, you'll be on your way to making each helpful new practice a part of your routine.

### Sticking to the plan

It is a fact that fully functioning human beings can hold in their minds no more than seven pieces of information at any one time. On the other hand, in this age of multi-tasking, the expectation is that we should be able to handle successfully several tasks at once. This can be counter-productive. If we over-tax ourselves mentally, it can cause a ball or two to be dropped, with some tasks never receiving the attention they deserve, and others having to be done over.

The following list of "Dos and Don'ts" may help keep us on track:

**DO** one thing at a time and finish it before moving on to the next item on your list.

**DO** shut your door and either turn off your phone or screen your calls in order to prevent unwelcome interruptions and unscheduled demands on your time.

**DO** formulate a sensible routine and then stick to it.

**DO** break up a large project into a series of smaller, more achievable tasks.

**DON'T** be sidetracked by another task, leaving the first one uncompleted.

**DON'T** procrastinate – either get the job done, or schedule a time to tackle it, with a deadline of when it must be completed.

**DON'T** waste time on a task which you are ill-equipped to tackle. Find someone with the necessary expertise to successfully take it on.

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