

Managing Your Time Effectively

Better time management means better stress management

How you manage your time has a huge impact on your day to day life, both at home and at work. Managing your time effectively enables you to achieve a more balanced life.

When it comes to time, we're all equal. Rich or poor, male or female, young or old, manager or employee ... we all have 24 hours in a day. The difference is that some people find their days almost always go smoothly, while others are forever fighting the clock.

If you feel like time controls you instead of the other way around, and you're always being ruled by the events in your life, you can use your objectives and desires to help turn things around.

Managing your time is probably the best thing you can do to make your life easier. Your well-being depends on it, in part, because it's an essential way to reduce stress caused by the ongoing pressure of deadlines.

Become more aware of your time

Everyone wastes a certain amount of time; the important thing is to be aware of it. The first step to managing your time is to identify certain habits that seriously affect your quality of life, often without you even realizing it. Planning your activities helps you think about time in a positive way because it enables you to set guidelines, identify your limits and take control over events.

Identify one benefit

If time management is a skill you've never really mastered, maybe it's because you don't place enough importance to you. For example, the benefit could be having more free time to devote to your family or leisure activities. The benefit you identify should be the driving force that motivates you to change your attitude towards time.

Have an objective

Then set a specific, achievable objective, and determine how many hours a week you would have to save to achieve that objective. Having a vague objective like "I'd really like to have more time" won't get you anywhere. Your motivation will be commensurate with your real desire to save time.

Finally, try to assess what could prevent you from achieving this objective. The questionnaire will help you identify what types of behaviour you might need to change.

Enemy Number 1: Procrastination

Procrastination is the tendency to put off until tomorrow what needs to be done or could be done today. If you suffer from this kind of behaviour, first try to identify what makes you act this way, and then try to develop new habits.

Try to get started on unpleasant tasks right away and you will see immediate progress. The more you put off, the more energy you waste and the more anxious you become.

Enemy Number 2: Being a perfectionist

This character trait is often associated with procrastination because the desire to do a job perfectly is often a reason for putting it off. The pressure mounts as the deadline approaches, and you're not able to do the job "perfectly" because you don't have enough time! The first step is to recognize what's happening: most perfectionists tend to deny it, and confuse professionalism with perfectionism.

If you are a perfectionist, keep in mind that most of time, when you're 90% happy with a job, you don't need to spend the extra time fine-tuning the last 10% that would make you completely satisfied (if that's even possible). The people around you probably tell you this all the time ...

Take time to save time!

Taking a step back to gain perspective counts for a lot when it comes to time management! Don't forget to plan time for rest and relaxation. You'll end up doing a better job, and the tasks will seem easier to carry out and deadlines easier to meet. Sometimes you need to take time to save time!

Evaluating how I lose time

Are you organized?

Circle one - Yes No

- I don't like to delegate because I'm the only person who really knows how to do my work *yes no*
- I'm interested in every new project, and immediately offer to participate *yes no*
- I often do things when I want to do them, without really taking into account their importance or urgency *yes no*
- I often neglect certain tasks because I forgot about them, I don't have time, or I'm not interested *yes no*
- I'm always misplacing documents *yes no*
- I tend to plan the time it takes to do something, but not the time it takes to think about it *yes no*
- I'm very often late, or arrive at the last minute *yes no*
- I often have trouble deciding which task to start first *yes no*

Are you disciplined?

- I never make lists of what to do. I rely on my memory *yes no*
- I don't set objectives. I go day to day *yes no*
- I often have to bring work home to meet deadlines *yes no*
- I enjoy chatting with my co-workers during business hours *yes no*
- I have poor concentration most of the time and I'm easily distracted *yes no*
- I often have a lot of jobs that I've started but none that I've finished *yes no*
- I like to get intensely involved in everything I do *yes no*
- I often have to resolve personal problems during business hours *yes no*

Are you a good communicator?

- I say what I want to say when I say it *yes no*
- I feel like I'm the only person who cares about my job *yes no*
- I feel like everyone around me is only interested in their own problems and they don't understand mine *yes no*
- I find that my requests often go unanswered *yes no*
- The people around me don't seem to understand my priorities and I'm often interrupted *yes no*
- I find it difficult to explain my needs to other people, so most of the time I prefer to just forget it *yes no*
- My boss doesn't understand that I can't do everything he asks me to *yes no*
- I use email almost exclusively to communicate and avoid meeting with people in person *yes no*

Evaluating how I lose time

Do you know how to say no?

- I like to help others because I believe that one good turn deserves another *yes no*
- I like to do things that I like or that make me feel good, even if it's not my job *yes no*
- I don't like to risk hurting someone by not helping them *yes no*
- I'd rather say "yes" than have to explain a "no" *yes no*
- I'm often interrupted by my co-workers when I'm working *yes no*
- I tend to accept deadlines even if I know I can't meet them *yes no*
- I have trouble keeping my conversations short, even when I have a lot of work to do *yes no*
- I tend to put aside what I'm doing to work on other less important tasks *yes no*

For each section add up all your "yes" answers. The section with the highest total is a good place to start changing your behaviour so you can manage your time more effectively and achieve your objectives.

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