

## IT'S ABOUT TIME!

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*“Dost thou love life? Then do not squander time,  
for that is the stuff life is made of ”*

*Ben Franklin*

### Objectives

- To learn techniques to reduce stress, fear, and anxiety.
- To learn ways to get life in balance so that participants realize more satisfaction.
- To learn time management techniques that will help participants increase personal happiness.
- To help participants find the time to do things that are important.

What do we call “it”? Time management? Resource management? Balancing work and family? Having it all together? Whatever we call “it,” we know it’s good to have “it.” People who have good management skills are more organized and seem to get more accomplished. Life is better when you are in control of what happens to your “time.” Whether we are rich or poor, young or old, we all get the same amount every day. We all get 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 52 weeks per year. We can’t save extra time from today for tomorrow when we will be busier. You can, however, do things today that will make tomorrow easier. You either use it or lose it!

Since we all have the same amount of time each day, why do some seem to get so much more accomplished in that day? Some will say that time can be managed but in reality it is only ourselves that can be managed. Maybe the best we can expect is to be satisfied with the way we feel about what is going on in our life.

Many things get in the way of being efficient. What “time wasters” are problems to us? Ask yourself these questions. Do you delegate? Do

you think you have to do everything so that it is done right? Do you plan your day or does it just happen? Do you go from one crisis to the next--work on the urgent rather than the important? Are you a procrastinator? Does everyone seem to want a part of your time? Can you say “no” effectively (and guiltlessly) when asked to do things that aren’t important to you and your goals? Do any or all of these “time wasters” describe you?

### Setting Goals -- where are we going?

Have you taken the time to write down your goals and to list the things you want to accomplish in life. How do we know what we want to accomplish? How do we know when we have accomplished it? Most time management authorities would say that planning and setting realistic goals is important. If we don’t know what we want out of life, we won’t know when we get it.

Probably the easiest thing to do is to write down what you want to accomplish--a daily “to do” list. This can be as simple as listing tasks that need to be done. It is usually more helpful to break down tasks to small steps. Instead of writing, “Do spring cleaning,” break the job down to very simple pieces and write down the smaller tasks. These could be clean closet shelf, clean silverware drawer, and other small, manageable tasks that can be done in a short period of time. It’s less painful when you look at unpleasant, large tasks in this way.

When listing these shorter, easily reachable goals that can be accomplished in a short amount of time, you can more quickly mark items off your list showing results. On an especially hectic day, you could scratch off the items with a marker instead of a pencil so that you can **really** see progress on your list.

If you have written down your life goals, can you see a relationship to this “to do” list and the important goals in your life? To be more satisfied you should be doing something to reach your important life goals. If you aren’t, it would be a good idea to reevaluate what you are doing each day and see that some progress is made to help you get closer to your goal. Management expert Peter Drucker says that even though we may be doing things right.. .we may not be doing the right things--those that are important to us. We may not be moving toward our goals.

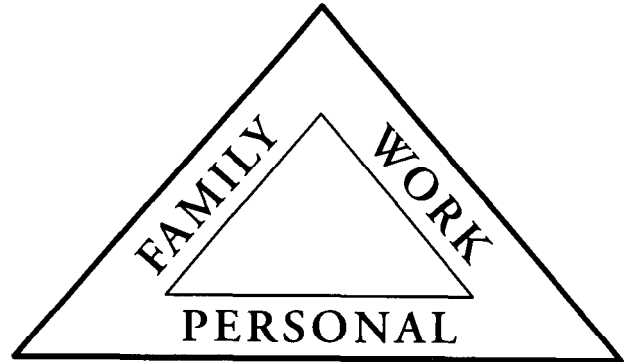
When you are listing goals, it is helpful to include a completion date to help you define the goal more clearly. Without the time commitment, it is not really a measurable goal. If you want to plan a 50th anniversary party for your parents or a countywide workshop, you will have many things to do. Taking the time to sit down and list the things you will have to do will help you get organized. Start with the date for the event and work backward, making some projected dates for completion of tasks. This kind of plan will help keep you on track and alert you when you are getting behind.

Another problem can be that we have just too many tasks to accomplish in a reasonable time. Are we being realistic? One way to handle this overload is to set priorities. You can look at your list and group them in three categories.

- A - top priority
- B - moderately important
- C - when I get around to it

If you find that you don’t get to all your Cs and maybe even your Bs, it’s OK. You are working on “A” priority items. In other words, you are dealing with the things you have determined as important to you.

In their book *LifeBalance*, Richard and Linda Eyre recommended that no matter how busy you are, it is most important to feel like you are in control and not to shortchange areas of your life--personal, professional, or family. Think about your life as a triangle, with the three sides representing Family,



Work, and Personal. After you make your list of things to do today, and you are ready to determine your priorities, you probably will be more satisfied with how your life is going if you select one priority goal from each of these three areas. It may have more to do with guilt. But you aren’t losing sight of parts of your life. You won’t feel like you are shortchanging your family when things get hectic at work. It’s also important to take time for yourself.

After making your list of activities you should look at them to see what can be delegated to someone else or eliminated. What you don’t do is as important as what you do do. You can eliminate some tasks that don’t help you reach your goals. Learn to say “no” without feeling guilty.

Reduce the clutter in your life--one box, one drawer at a time. Sort things into three containers. Avoid the temptation to get up and take each item to where it belongs. When you do this, chances are that you will stop and do something else and miss the task at hand. Label the boxes “put away,” “give away,” and “throw away.” If you find this kind of cleaning unpleasant, set yourself a reasonable time to work, set a timer, and finish up when the timer goes off.

Deal with your boxes. Throw away, give away, and put away the things in the three boxes. You set a goal to work one hour and you did it! You may not have gotten your house in order but you will be one hour closer to that goal. Do this every few days and soon you will reach your goal.

## Summary

Self-management ideas: (List others)

- ☞ Organize and execute around priorities.
- ☞ Focus on important but not urgent ideas.
- ☞ Learn to say “no” and don’t feel guilty.
- ☞ Make and keep self-commitments.
- ☞ Identify roles and goals.
- ☞ Maintain balance among roles.
- ☞ Increase peace of mind.
- ☞ Deal with the clutter in your life.
- ☞ Delegate to others. Learn to live with the way they do the task.
- ☞ Believe in the possibility of doing things differently.
- ☞
- ☞
- ☞

## Suggested Program Activities

- Have participants write down their life goals. Make sure they include a time statement with each goal.
- Ask members to discuss ideas they have for dealing with clutter.
- Give participants a chance to list three things they will do to be better time managers. Have them report at the next meeting how they are doing.
- Use the reading “The Station” to close your program. Have participants sit back, relax, and close their eyes while you thoughtfully read. You could play some soft, restful music as you read if you’d like.

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## THE STATION

Tucked away in our subconscious is an idyllic vision.  
We see ourselves on a long trip, traveling by train.  
Through the windows, we drink the passing scene of  
flatlands and valleys, of mountains and rolling hillsides,  
of city skylines and village halls.

But uppermost in our minds is the final destination.  
On a certain day at a certain hour we will pull into the station.  
Bands will be playing, flags will be waving.  
Once we get there, the pieces of our lives  
will fit together like a completed jigsaw puzzle.  
How restlessly we pace the aisles,  
waiting, waiting, waiting for the station.

“When we reach the station, that will be it!” we cry.  
“When I’m 18.” “When I buy a new Mercedes!”  
“When I put my last child through college.”  
“When I reach the age of retirement . . .  
I shall live happily ever after!”

Sooner or later we must realize that there is no station,  
no one place to arrive at, once and for all.  
The true joy of life is the trip.  
The station is only a dream.  
It constantly outdistances us.  
“Relish the moment” is a good motto.  
It isn’t the burdens of today that drive men mad.  
It is the regrets over yesterday  
and the fear of tomorrow.  
Regret and fear are the twin thieves who rob us of today.

So, stop pacing the aisles and counting the miles.  
Instead,  
climb more mountains,  
eat more ice cream,  
go barefoot more often,  
swim more rivers,  
watch more sunsets,  
laugh more, cry less.  
Life must be lived as we go along.  
The station will come soon enough.

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