

FEAP NEWSLETTER

A Series of Educational Articles from your Faculty and Employee Assistance Program

Time Management or, The Quest to Be Organized

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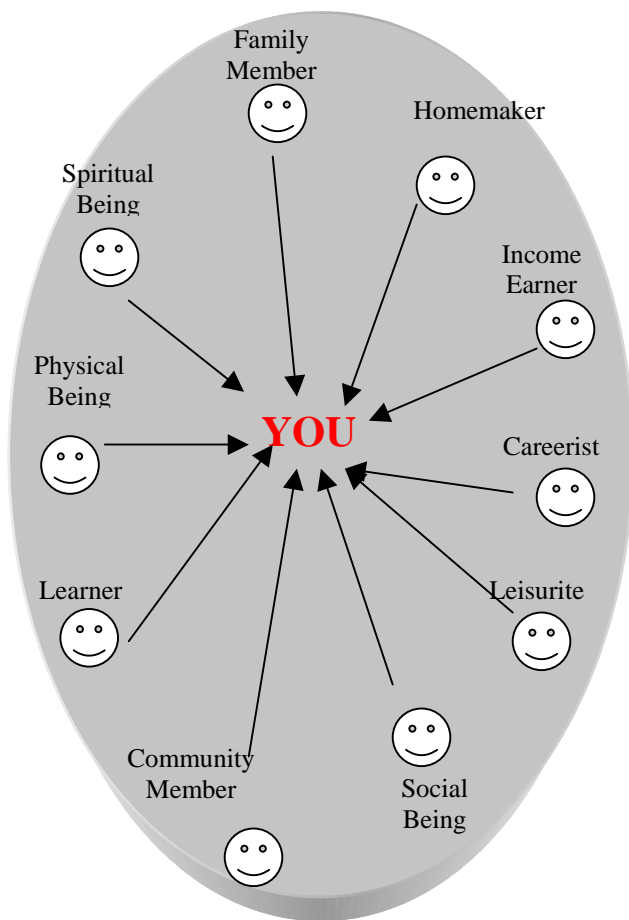
“I need 8 more hours in the day” “Where did the time go?”

Sound familiar? These are common sayings for many of us and for folks who are busy with work, children, other caregiving, exercise, commuting and just life in general there really may not be much “extra” time to squeak out. When looking at *Time Management* as an issue in our lives, it’s important to look at:

- 1) the reality of your situation – how many roles are you juggling;
- 2) what are your psychological barriers to better time management; and
- 3) what are the real priorities for this particular time in your life?

In this article we will explore these further and outline some tips for better time management.

- 1) Let’s look at your time and how it’s spent. Can you identify all the different roles you play? These roles come with commitments and responsibilities. If you are in role or commitment overload, you may have more difficulty getting focused or organized and your time may feel even less within your control. Try consciously thinking about your roles, commitments and responsibilities and see where you can cut back. Beware of playing roles in life that you think you SHOULD have; instead, take on only those responsibilities that mean something to you.



- 2) How does your personality makeup affect your time management? Consider where you fall in on these items:
 - Do you ***over analyze*** things but have trouble taking action? For some people the process of thinking about things, including time management is far more pleasurable than actually taking steps and actions toward an outcome. Do you start a process by identifying the outcome first or does the outcome come along later?
 - Can you ***make decisions*** easily or do you worry, put it off or act impulsively. There is a balance in decision making where one must consider the issue from several angles and/or gather information then make an informed decision and proceed with action. Impulsive decision making is usually a time waster. Unnecessary errors and re-do's are the result of impulsive decisions.
 - What's your level of ***procrastination*** and how comfortable are you with it? If you are comfortable with your level of procrastination and the people in your life are also fine with it, then don't make any changes. BUT, if you are feeling guilty, lazy, less competent or badly about yourself because of procrastination and poor self-discipline, STOP to examine why. Maybe you need professional help: financial counseling, debt counseling, career counseling, mental health counseling, coaching, a learning disability evaluation, or health/fitness training.

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3) So what are the REAL priorities in your life? You have identified your roles, commitments and responsibilities, you've eliminated a few commitments and you understand more about your personality makeup in relation to time and organizing. Consider Stephen Covey's categories to help you prioritize:

Ask yourself if this request, project, task is:

- **Urgent and Important:** (taking a sick child to the doctor, completing a project on time for your manager). We spend many hours responding to the crises around us because they are important and necessary but they may still keep us from our big picture goals.
- **Not Urgent but Important:** (participating in career counseling if unhappy in your line of work, spending time with loved ones, organizing your financial records, making out a will). This is the area in which we usually need to spend more of our time because it includes long range planning or putting systems in place which ultimately save us time. Frequently because they are not urgent, they are easily relegated to a back burner.
- **Urgent but Not Important:** (Fax's, ringing phones, responding to a colleague's immediate need or question) These activities demand attention but aren't necessarily critical. They can eat up a lot of time because they appear urgent but usually can wait until you are ready to attend to them.
- **Not Urgent and Not Important:** (busywork, cleaning house instead of writing a paper). This is procrastinator's heaven – the things we do to avoid attending to more important responsibilities.

More Time and Organizing Tips:

- Use a daily planner of some kind but only use one. Multiple calendars lead to missed appointments and doubling up plus more time spent filling in each one.
- Always designate a date/time for an item on your to-do list to be completed.
- Put the routine things on the to-do list so you can see the whole of what needs to be accomplished that day.
- Always add ½ hour to any doctor, dentist appointment up front. If the appointment is at 2:00, block off 1:30 so you don't have to rush.
- Say "no" to lower priority requests and don't apologize or over-explain your reasons. You just "aren't available."

- Schedule yourself some down time, family time, a nap, your exercise, etc. If it's on your calendar, you are more likely to remember and do it.
- Get started – more time is wasted avoiding projects. Nike has the right idea: "Just Do It."
- Don't overwork something – perfection isn't necessary in most things.
- Review the week's schedule on Sunday – whether it's only your schedule or the whole family together, it helps to look at the upcoming week ahead of time.
- Schedule two times/month to pay bills and one to balance the checkbook.

Credits to:

Tullier, Michelle, [The Complete Idiot's Guide to Overcoming Procrastination](#)
Covey, Stephen, [The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People](#)
Clark, Don, "Big Dog's Leadership Page" www.nwlink.com
Morgenstern, Julie, "Time Management 101" www.momsonline.oxygen.com

Other resources:

www.Heloise.com
www.tipztime.com
www.napo.net – National Association of Professional Organizers

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