

Time Management

“Dost thou love life? Then do not squander time for that is the stuff life is made of.” —Benjamin Franklin

Sometimes it may feel like time management is an illusive goal in which we never quite feel like we are successful. We live in a culture of multi-tasking which may only fuel the feeling of never having enough time to accomplish our goals and responsibilities. However, there are things you can do to better manage the time you have and, at the same time, feel a sense of accomplishment:

Identify goals: Write down your short-term (six month) and long-term or lifetime goals. Encourage every family member to develop their own list and share them with each other. You may also want to compile goals for the family. Afterwards, post the lists in a visible location for a reminder of what you are working toward, and when you feel like there is too much on your plate, it makes it easier to reprioritize when comparing your to-do list with your goals.

Make a list: At the beginning of your day, write a list of the things you want to accomplish for that day only and keep it with you. When we break items down to a manageable level, it provides more motivation since it doesn't necessarily feel overwhelming and it also offers a sense of accomplishment at the end of the day.

Say ‘No’: With so many competing interests, sometimes it can be impossible to take on what everyone asks of us in which case it is very important to learn to say ‘No’. Remember what is important to you and use those values to help you determine what to put on the back burner, or not take on at all, when you find yourself with more than you can handle.

Manage distractions and procrastination: We all can be distracted or procrastinate—some of us more than others. First, identify those things that lead you to procrastinate or be distracted—for example, do you become distracted by the TV? Does the thought of balancing your checkbook cause you to put it off for tomorrow? Then take proactive measures to manage your distractions and procrastinations such as moving the TV to a different room or getting rid of it all together. Try swapping the duty of balancing the checkbook with your spouse or partner for a chore they do, or try balancing it at the end of every day so that it doesn't become such a large undertaking at the end of the week or month.

Organize: If you can never find your keys, or if you feel you are always running late to appointments, etc., reorganizing yourself, your workspace and/or your home, could work wonders. Organizing generally refers to cleaning out what you don't need and putting what you do need in a specific spot. You might try designating one day a month for only reorganizing—clear out what you don't need or want, and start fresh.

Despite these suggestions, time management may be a lot easier said than done. The EAP can help you find sources for defining priorities, acquiring assertiveness skills, making tough decisions, or even identifying family goals that you want to pursue so you can look back and say, “I did it.”

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