

Time on Your Side

An organized approach to slowing down and managing time

By Sara Pedersen

Rush, rush, rush. We hurry out of the house to get in our cars to zip along the freeway to our jobs. As we run errands on the way home, we tap our feet impatiently as the person in front of us takes too long. We hastily prepare dinner, eat in ten minutes flat, and get the dishes in the dishwasher. We hurry through the evening activities and fall into bed.

We are so busy rushing through life that we forget to slow down to enjoy it! While it is important to schedule time to get things done, it is equally important to take time to simply appreciate life. Take a moment to reflect on the things that you usually rush through each day. Take a walk. Spend time talking (and really listening) to family and friends. Connect with nature by bringing nature inside: a window sill herb garden, fresh-cut flowers from your garden or farmers' market, a babbling fountain, a fresh breeze, or some nature music on CD. Try to live in the current

moment instead of always worrying about the future. Rejoice in the gifts you have and make the most of today. And accept that you and others around you are not perfect. Adopt a new attitude by deliberately choosing how you will spend your time!

Being your best time master

With our to-do lists ever-growing, assigning tasks to our calendars can be a simple way to manage time and reduce stress. The simple act of writing down the things we need to do releases us from having to remember it all "upstairs". Below are some tips to help you successfully manage your tasks and calendar.

- Be realistic about how long each task will take.
- Learn to say "no".
- Delegate: when you authorize others to take over some of your activities, you free yourself to focus on where you can make your best contribution.
- For those little things that take only a minute or two (such as

putting your dirty dishes away or signing a permission slip), sometimes it's best to just do them right away.

- However, if the task will take 15 minutes or more, choose a specific time in which to do it. Schedule an appointment with yourself. You may need to communicate to your coworkers or family that you are unavailable due to scheduled work.

- Without a place to "assign" tasks, you'll always be in a reactive mode. Use your calendar diligently. Do things on your time, when you are ready. You are in command.

- Don't double-book yourself or plan your appointments too close together. Planning for delays will keep you calm and allow you to enjoy the current moment. Forget about multitasking for a while; simply enjoy the pleasures of each task you do.

Keeping time with children

Adults aren't the only ones who need help with time management. Children of all ages need routines

and schedules, as well as downtime. Follow these simple tips to help life flow smoothly:

- Set out the breakfast dishes each evening so you have a few extra minutes to languish over breakfast treats and conversation with your family in the morning. Also, gather book bags and double check that permission slips, sports equipment, and lunch money are ready to go. Lay out tomorrow's clothing to avoid hassles.

- Throughout the year, maintain routines for bedtime, mealtime, chores, etc. Allow some flexibility to take advantage of new opportunities as they arise.

- Slow down and unplug to enjoy and appreciate life. Turn off the TV and computer and head outside to take in the sights, sounds, and smells of nature. Set aside some special time - a weekend morning is great - to cuddle on the couch and talk about the week's events.

Take a moment today to be mindful of how you spend your time - the good, the bad, and the ugly - and organize your new schedule accordingly. You'll feel stress-free, productive, and happy the whole year through! 🌟

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