Ten Tips for More Effective Time Management

1. **Spend Time Planning and Organizing.** Using time to think and plan is time well spent. Organize in a way that makes sense to you. If you need color and pictures, use those on your calendar or planning book. Some people need to have papers filed away; others get their creative energy from their piles. So forget the “shoulds” and organize your way.

2. **Set Goals.** Goals give your life (and the way you spend your time) direction. When asked the secret to amassing such a fortune, one of the famous Hunt brothers from Texas replied: “First you’ve got to decide what you want.” Set goals, which are specific, measurable, realistic, and achievable. Your optimum goals are those which cause you to “stretch” but not “break” as you strive for achievement. Goals can give creative people a much needed sense of direction.

3. **Prioritize.** Use the 80-20 Rule where 80 percent of the reward comes from 20 percent of the effort. The trick to prioritizing is to isolate and identify that valuable top 20 percent. Once identified, prioritize time to concentrate your work on those items with the greatest reward. Flagging items with a deadline is another idea for helping you stick to your priorities.

4. **Use a To Do List.** Some people thrive using a daily To Do list which they construct either the last thing the previous day or first thing in the morning. Such people may combine a To Do list with a calendar or schedule. Others prefer a “running” To Do list, which is continuously being updated. You may prefer a combination of the two. Use whatever method works best for you. Don’t be afraid to try a new system — you just might find one that works even better than your present one!

5. **Be Flexible.** Allow time for interruptions and distractions. Time management experts often suggest planning for just 75 percent or less of one’s time. With only 75 percent of your time planned, you will have the flexibility to handle interruptions and the unplanned “emergency.” When you expect to be interrupted, schedule routine tasks. Save larger blocks of time for your priorities. When interrupted, ask Alan Lakein’s crucial question, “What is the most important thing I can be doing with my time right now?” to help you get back on track fast.

6. **Consider Your Biological Prime Time.** That’s the time of day when you are at your best. Are you a “morning person,” a “night owl,” or a late afternoon “whiz?” Knowing when your best time is and planning to use that time of day for your priorities (if possible) is effective time management.

7. **Do the Right Thing Right.** Noted management expert, Peter Drucker, says “doing the right thing is more important than doing things right.” Doing the right thing is effectiveness; doing things right is efficiency. Focus on effectiveness first (identifying what is the right thing to do), then concentrate on efficiency (doing it right).

8. **Eliminate the Urgent.** Urgent tasks have short-term consequences while important tasks are those with long-term, goal-related implications. Work towards reducing the urgent things you must do, so you’ll have time for your important priorities. Flagging or highlighting items on your To Do list or attaching a deadline to each item may help keep important items from becoming urgent emergencies.

9. **Practice Intelligent Neglect.** Eliminate from your life trivial tasks or those tasks which do not have long term consequences for you. Can you delegate or eliminate any of your To Do list? Work on those tasks which you alone can do.

10. **Avoid Being a Perfectionist.** In the Malaysian culture, only the gods are considered capable of producing anything perfect. Whenever something is made, a flaw is left on purpose so the gods will not be offended. Yes, some things need to be closer to perfect than others, but perfectionism and paying unnecessary attention to detail, can be a form of procrastination.
Everyday Exercise

The easiest part of exercising is coming up with excuses not to do it. Sure, the goal is to exercise every day, but studies show that only 30 minutes of exercise three times a week can make an enormous difference in our physical and mental health. So for those of us who put all of our effort into “I don’t have enough time,” “It’ll be too hard,” or “I’m just not the exercise type,” here are some pointers for making fitness a part of your everyday life at work and at home. It will all add up to a healthier you! Remember, check with your doctor before starting any new exercise program.

At Work

• Pick the worst possible parking space. Look for the space which forces you to walk the greatest distance.
• Take the stairs… instead of the elevator or escalator.
• Walk to your colleague’s desk. Deliver your message or document.
• Go out for lunch… and walk around. Then sit down and eat a healthy lunch.
• Put a pedometer in your pocket. You should be taking 6,000 to 10,000 steps a day.
• Use the restroom on different floor…and take the stairs, naturally.
• Get a phone headset. There’s no reason you can’t walk (and swing your arms) and talk at the same time.
• Set an alarm to ring hourly. Use it as a reminder to get up and move.
• Regularly stretch at your desk. Focus on your arms, wrists, back, neck, and shoulder muscles.

At Home

• Establish a routine…and make it part of a daily pattern.
• Walk when you get home or after dinner. Even a leisurely, 15-minute walk will be beneficial. A brisk 30-minute walk will give you a good cardiovascular workout. If you’re more ambitious, try speed walking, or head for the hills.
• Use the stairs… but “up the ante.” Running up and down stairs inside or outside your home for 10 to 20 minutes will lead to terrific results.
• Leave the car at home. For nearby errands, walk or ride a bike.
• After shopping, lift those grocery bags. Take the handles with both hands and lift the full bag directly in front of you up to your chin 10 times.
• Garden to your heart’s content. Mowing with a push mower, weeding, pruning, transplanting and raking can make for a real workout.
• Make the most of housework. Put some music on and move it. Do stretches while vacuuming, leg lifts while folding laundry, and rise onto the balls of your feet-then lower-while doing dishes.
• Go dancing instead of out to dinner. Cardio Salsa for a date night, anyone?
• Use the copier (or printer, or fax machine) as mechanical inspiration. While standing, stretch your legs and entire body, focusing on your hips, thighs, and hamstrings.
• Put an exercise ball behind your desk. Sitting on it rather than a chair will work your abdominal muscles, strengthen your back and help your posture.
• Create an office workout. Bring bands for resistance, ankle weights and even dumbbells (or full bottles of water) and incorporate a workout into your daily schedule. (Someone at your local gym, fitness center or health club can give you ideas for specific exercises and stretches, or search the Internet.)
• Enlist your boss and co-workers. Find people to join you in your activities, and get the support of management. Perhaps a local gym will be able to provide discounts, or arrange fitness seminars at the workplace.
Stress can cause physical, emotional, and behavioral disorders that can affect your health, vitality, and peace-of-mind, as well as personal and professional relationships. Too much stress can cause relatively minor illnesses like insomnia, backaches, or headaches, and can contribute to potentially life-threatening diseases like high blood pressure, heart disease, or diabetes. Stress is sometimes unavoidable and will affect most of us at some point in our lives, so it is important to identify your stressors and develop tools to help you manage your stress. The following list of symptoms contains the most typical reactions to stress. Note any symptoms you have noticed lately in yourself, as this is the first step towards successfully managing your stress:

**PHYSICAL:** Headaches, pounding heart, fatigue, teeth grinding, insomnia, restlessness, weight change, increased alcohol consumption, colds, drug and/or tobacco use, digestive upset, neck & shoulder ache

**MENTAL / EMOTIONAL:** Forgetfulness, confusion, dull senses, lethargy, poor concentration, lack of new ideas, low productivity, boredom, negative attitude easily discouraged, anxiety, irritability, the “blues”, depression, mood swings, nervous laugh, bad temper, worrying

Think about your stress symptoms. Which symptoms cause you the most concern? Are you always aware when they are happening to you? Can you stop them from happening? Do you see a pattern in your symptoms? Answering these questions may help you in directing your stress management program.

**What can I do?**

**Plan Ahead** - Whatever you do, there is no way to completely eliminate stress. Your goal should be to reduce the amount of stress and to keep it under control. This requires a definite personal commitment, but the rewards are worth it: better health and improved relationships with people around you.

- Some stress can be relieved by scheduling your time realistically. Don’t try to squeeze more into a day than you can actually complete.
- Leave room in your schedule for the unexpected.
- For many, learning to say no to others’ requests is the most difficult task.
- Remember to take occasional short breaks.
- When dealing with a major problem, break it down into smaller parts. After completing one task, pick out another, and so on.
- Plan the week or month ahead so you can anticipate peak times of stress and plan accordingly.

**Exercise** - Experts agree that exercise is one of the best remedies for stress. Exercise stimulates the release of endorphins, which relieve pain and induce feelings of wellbeing and relaxation, and also helps to lower cortisol and other stress hormone levels in the body. Exercise can help distract you from other tasks and can improve your sleep quality. Exercise makes you healthier and better prepared to deal with both physical and mental demands and being in shape will make you feel and function better overall. Suitable exercise includes walking, jogging, swimming, biking, aerobics, and dancing.