

TIME MANAGEMENT

Improving Our Work, Play and Life Balance

‘Time management’ could also be called ‘Life Management’ because it refers to your relationship to time and what you do with the time you have. This means time management is about your personal effectiveness, how you prioritise and schedule your time, develop and maintain focus and motivate yourself to get things done.

Good time management requires an important shift in focus from activities to results. Being busy isn’t the same as being effective. Common time-management tools you will know include:

- **An activity log** - noting how you spend your time and looking for pockets of time-wasting
- **To-do lists** - especially those that enable tasks to be prioritized by importance and urgency
- **Action Programmes** – project planning, task lists, delegated roles, time-lines
- **Multi-tasking** – working on several tasks at the same time (see notes below)
- **Time Leverage** – careful preparation, delegating tasks, chunking activities, using technology
- **Biorhythms** – the times of day when you are naturally feeling more alert and focused
- **Technology** – apps and software to help keep you focused and on track (see notes below)

However, when it comes to stress-reduction, time management also requires an important shift in focus from external tools to internal tools. When considering our relationship to time from a ‘life-management’ perspective, we know there is actual time (which is outside of our control), and subjective time (within our control). Often, anxiety and stress arises because the subjective perception is: “I don’t have enough time to get everything done.” We are predicting the future and experiencing stress in the present moment.

To reduce your stress and improve wellbeing, here are some strategies to change your subjective experience of time.

Create and expand a time-line: One way to reduce unwanted mental/emotional stress is to create an internal representation that extends how much time you have. This is known as extending your time-line. Here are the directions for the technique. Try this with a partner by reading aloud the instructions.

Close your eyes. Raise your arm and point to your future. Turn your arm with your palm facing up. Imagine on your palm, a picture or movie on a screen of you undertaking a stressful activity where you have a deadline to get things done. Notice the feeling of anxiety and stress when get when you imagine this future. Now ask yourself, *“how much time do I feel I have between now and that future deadline”?* Represent the amount of time you perceive by bending your arm at the elbow and slowly moving your palm towards your face. Notice your feeling of anxiety and stress when you imagine your deadline getting even closer to you. Now, slowly move your hand away from your face, while taking some deep relaxing breaths. As you see the image getting smaller with distance, state to yourself: *“I have all the time I need”*. When you are ready, open your eyes again. Smile.

Clarify your life management with future mapping

A happy and contented life is generally found through balance, not pushing things to the extreme. This includes devoting too much time to one aspect of your life and neglecting other aspects.

One way to clarify your life management is to see if your **beliefs and values are aligned** to the type of lifestyle you want to have and feel you deserve. Consider your power, control and value beliefs: Do you think you have the power and control to begin to design a more balanced life? What would need to change? Do you believe you are deserving of a more balanced lifestyle? What would need to change? Sometimes we won't let ourselves have what we don't believe we can have. If you were to, just for now, make some declarations of possibility, what would they be?

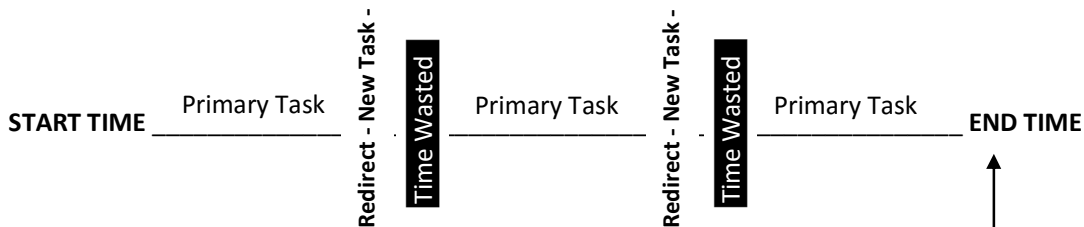
It can be helpful to just hold these questions in your mind for a period of time and allow your **predictive thinking to map out your ideal future**. Dwell on this ideal picture/feeling with as much detail as possible. Make it the most dominant picture in your mind. As you experience your daily life with a dominant ideal, a natural dissatisfaction (dissonance), will arise that will give you the energy, motivation and inspiration to "invent the how". You will begin to move towards and become like, that which you hold most clearly and dearly in your mind. Reducing time-stress could be one of them.

Reduce multi-tasking

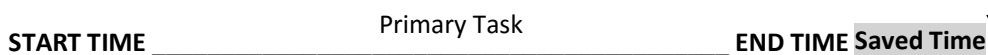
There is a belief that people get more things done when they multi-task. This may be partly true, but it only works when your primary task is automated through experience. The human brain can only take in a small amount of sensory information, consciously, at one time. **When primary tasks are automated, your attention can shift from the primary task to a new task without much distraction.** For example, you can drive the car to work, not consciously noticing everything, while solving some problem at home in your head.

However, when primary activities are not automated – the effort required for your brain to consciously input larger amounts of sensory information through an interrupted workflow causes some wasted time and an increase in stress.

An interrupted workflow through multi-tasking may look like this.



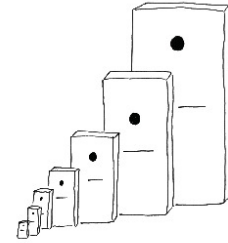
A focused work-flow may look like this.



Tip. When you are working off a to-do list, prioritise the important and urgent tasks first and get them completed one at a time.

Know your 'One Thing' and stay with it.

In their book, *The One Thing*, Gary W. Keller and Jay Papasan suggest that as you look at making changes in your life, (such as improving wellbeing at work), it can be helpful to make decisions about what single most action will yield the biggest results. It is known as the 80/20 principle: 80% results from 20% effort. Ask yourself the question: ***“What is the one thing, that by doing it, everything else will become better or easier?”***



Specify in your mind what things you want to improve within your health, relationships, finances, hobbies, work and home and so on, and choose **just one thing** in each category that is likely to make the biggest difference. Next, **schedule it!** If your WHY is big enough, you will make time for it.

Some research suggests it takes on average, 66 days to change a habit. This will be different, of course, for everyone depending on the task or behavior, but keep it as a loose guide or 'rule-of-thumb'. Two months to automate a new behaviour! This self-care workshop has introduced a range of strategies. **What is your one thing from all your 'one-things' that you will absolutely stay with, no matter what?** Write it in the front cover of your note book!

Slow down and be still more often

Technology was supposed to give us more free time, but instead we have just got busier. Find some stillness in your life. Your subjective perception of time-stress can be improved when you regularly take moments to pause and rest and/or learn a practice of meditation.

When you meditate on a regular basis, not only does it help with general wellbeing, but it modifies your perception of time-stress. Research has shown that regular meditation improves attention, concentration and memory. It also has a raft of physiological benefits.

When you are considering your time-efficiency, these are all helpful attributes for keeping your focus and your cool on the tasks at hand. If you want to learn to meditate regularly as part of a group, google search “Meditation Classes AND [your town]”

Focusing Question: What is the ONE THING you could commit to doing right now, to manage your time, that would make the BIGGEST DIFFERENCE in your life? For example: I will start doing the time-line technique to reduce my internal stress.

My ONE THING to improve my time management now is:

Focusing Question: What inspires you to want to make this change? What is your big WHY? Perhaps a Consequence Stretch might be helpful here?

Make a note in your action pages for ideas you want to use and share with others

Apps to Assist Time Management

Remember the Milk

Mobile friendly app. It helps you to manage your tasks easily and reminds you of them wherever you are.

Focus Booster

It is designed to enhance your focus and remove any anxiety you might have with time. Helps manage distractions, keep time-sheets, reports how you are spending time.

Toggl

This is a great alternative to time-sheets if you need to track how much time you spend on different projects.

Mind 42

Mindmapping is a great creative productivity technique. Mind42 helps you to get more organised by focusing your thoughts, thereby gaining clarity on what needs to be done.

MyLifeOrganized (MLO)

If you find it difficult to manage all your tasks, work with your to-do lists and organise your goals, this app might be helpful. This task management system helps you to target what you should be focusing on to reach your objectives. It automatically generates to-do lists, with priority actions for your immediate attention so that you can track your progress methodically.

Daily Agenda

This app syncs all your calendars to give you an instant overview of your day, how much time until your next meeting, and lists your upcoming meetings.

Focus at Will

This app combines neuroscience and music to improve your attention and boost your productivity. Ideal for those who find it difficult to focus while studying, working or reading.

Timer

Use a timer app that runs on your phone, or in the background on your computer, and lets you track your every minute - giving you an alarm after a specified period of time.

Rescue Time

Learn to understand your daily habits. 'Rescue time' will notify you with weekly reports, showing you how you are spending your workday and on what tasks.

Chrometa

Chrometa is similar to *Rescue Time* in that it automatically tracks everything you do on your computer and neatly categorises it.