

Time Management

NORTHWEST HEALTH
CONNECTIONS



What is Time Management?

Time Management is a journey that requires thought, time, and change. We become creatures of habit and what we do and how we do things often becomes a pattern of “how we do things”. We have all heard “old habits are hard to break”. Time management requires looking at what we are doing, how we are doing it, and how we could do it better...both with time and with quality. Time management is a set of principles, practices, skills, tools, and systems working together to help you get more value out of your time, with the aim of improving the quality of your life.



If you don't learn how to manage your time well, you will be far less productive than you could. You will also feel much more stressed and overwhelmed, as you struggle to find time to spend with the people you care about or to do the things you enjoy. Benjamin Franklin said, “Do you love life? Then do not squander time, for that's the stuff that life is made up of.” Effective time management is beneficial to self-esteem, relationships with others, life balance, work, and most other aspects of life. By evaluating various time management tips, one can design an effective, individualized time management system.

There are six truths about time. These truths apply to everyone and we cannot change the facts. What we have been taught about time and how well we organize and spend our time can differ greatly among us. Taking more control of your time allows you more control of your life!

Six Truths About Time

- ◆ **Nobody can manage time.** But you can manage the things that take up your time.
- ◆ **Time is expensive.** As a matter of fact, 80% of our day is spent on those things or people that only bring us 2% of our results.
- ◆ **Time is perishable.** It cannot be saved to be used later.
- ◆ **Time is measurable.** Everybody has the same amount of time, pauper or king. It is not how much time you have; it's how much you use.
- ◆ **Time is irreplaceable.** We never make time back once it is gone.
- ◆ **Time is a priority.** You have enough time for anything in the world, so long as it ranks high enough among your priorities.

What is Time?

Before you can begin to manage time, you must learn what it is. A dictionary defines time as “the point or period at which things occur”. Basically this means: time is when stuff happens. There are two types of time: clock time and real time. In clock time, there are 60 seconds in a minute, 60 minutes in an hour, 24 hours in a day, and 365 days in a year (366 in leap years, of course!). All time passes equally. When someone turns 40, they are exactly 40 years old, no more no less. The specific actions you choose to take each hour, each day, each week, throughout the year, define your life. Your moment-to-moment choices accumulate to determine whether you succeed or fail in accomplishing tasks and goals you have set for yourself.

In real time, all time is relative. Time flies or drags depending on what you are doing. Two hours in the doctor's waiting room can feel like 10 years, but our 10 year-old children/grandchildren seem to have grown in only two hours.

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Disclaimer

The information presented in this home study is intended to provide education and ideas to promote the health and well being of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities; it is in no way meant to replace a doctor's orders or your agency's policies.

The reason time management gadgets and systems don't work is that these systems are designed to manage clock time. Clock time is irrelevant. You don't live in or even have access to clock time. You live in real time, a world in which all time flies when you're having fun or drags when you are sitting in the doctor's office waiting room filled with people ahead of you. Careful planning for events such as the doctor's office wait will allow you to take information or work with you to read, or it can be a time to catch up and revisit your goals, expectations, and planning.

The good news is that real time is mental. It exists between your ears. You create it. Anything you create, you can manage. If your mind can visualize it, you can do it. It is time to remove any self-sabotage or self-limitation you have around "not having enough time," or today not being "the right time" to start a project or manage your current project properly. Skillful management of your time is not superficial but fundamental. Instead of aimlessly allowing external events and pressures control you, make deliberate choices about your use of time. The way to create a life that is consistent with your deepest values and desires is to set priorities, make plans (goals), and follow through with those plans. Time spent planning is never wasted time. Planning carefully will assist you in setting priorities and managing goals. Ask yourself, should I do this myself or can it be delegated? If I don't do it now, will I be sorry later? Do I know what to do first?

Set Goals

Writing goals is a very important piece of time management, as you can write goals for both short and long-term accomplishments and tasks. Writing goals can also be expressed as, "we are writing out our game plan". Write down specific ideas and plans. Spell out intermediate steps. Write down the deadlines. Post your goals where you will readily see them. This will help you remain focused and motivated. Make sure goals are manageable and measurable and not just a "to do" list. Write, "I will review my goals at 8:00am each Monday" instead of "I will review goals weekly". Setting aside specific days and times to accomplish regularly needed reviews will also help you track what you have completed and where you still have work to do. Setting long-term goals will help you turn dreams into reality by allowing yourself to craft a vision for your future. Aim high! Use long-term goals to create concrete, short-range actions that will take you in the direction you wish. Rank those steps so that you can work on the most important items first. If the job is too big, break it into smaller bites. How do you eat an elephant? One bite at a time.

"Setting long-term goals will help you turn dreams into reality..."

Manage Interruptions

There are only three ways to spend time: thoughts, conversations, and actions. Regardless of what is going on in your life, it will be composed of these three items. You may frequently be interrupted or pulled in different directions. While you cannot eliminate interruptions, you can decide how much time to spend on them and how much you will spend on the thoughts, conversations, and actions that will ultimately lead to completing tasks and reaching the goals you have set for yourself. Continually ask yourself, "What is the best use of my time right now?" If it is not important or urgent, don't do it. You can also ask yourself what will happen if you don't accomplish a specific task.

Set Yourself up for Success

Self-discipline is a must. *The difference between successful and unsuccessful people is that successful people do the unpleasant things that need to be done to reach their goals.* Have a positive attitude. People who think they are powerful are. Feed your mind good stuff. Pay more attention to your success than to your temporary failures. Expect the very best from yourself and others. Set yourself up for success.



Zen and the Art of Time Management

Practice the following techniques to become a better master of your own time:

- ◇ Carry a schedule and record all your thoughts, conversations, and activities for a week. This will help you understand how much you can get done during the course of a day and where your precious moments are going. You will see how much time is actually spent producing results and how much time is wasted on unproductive thoughts, conversations, and actions.
- ◇ Any activity or conversation that's important to your success should have a time assigned to it. To-do lists get longer and longer to the point where they're unworkable. Appointment books work. Keep one appointment book for everything rather than one for work, another for home, and another for the organizations to which you belong. Schedule appointments with yourself and create time blocks for high-priority thoughts, conversations, and actions. Schedule when they will begin and end. Have the discipline to keep these appointments and stick to the time frame.
- ◇ Plan to spend at least 50 percent of your time engaged in the thoughts, activities, and conversations that produce most of your results.
- ◇ Schedule time for interruptions. Plan to be pulled away from what you are doing. Other people will want to share, ask questions, and be interested in what you are doing. To be part of "the team", you have to **be part of the team**. Remember, most often you can limit the interruption with, "I'm sorry but I'm in the middle of an important task, can we continue this later?"
- ◇ Take the first 30 minutes of every day to plan your day, and don't do anything else until you complete your time plan. The most important time of your day is the time you schedule for scheduling your time.
- ◇ Take five minutes before every call and task to decide what results you want to accomplish. This will help you know what success looks like before you start, and it will also slow time down. Take five minutes after each call and activity to determine whether you achieved your desired result. If not, what was missing? How do you put what's missing into your next call or activity?
- ◇ Put up a "Do Not Disturb" sign when you absolutely have to get work done.
- ◇ Practice not answering the phone just because it's ringing or emails just because they appear in your inbox. Don't instantly give people your attention unless it's vital that you offer an immediate human response. If possible, schedule a time each day for returning phone calls and answering emails.
- ◇ Block out other distractions that interrupt getting tasks done.
- ◇ Remember that 20% of your thoughts, conversations, and activities typically produce 80% of your results.

(Adapted from <http://www.entrepreneur.com/article/219553>)

Following these techniques will help you free up time and stay on task. You are organizing things in your mind and for the day. Also, keep all your appointments, "to do" lists, and work plans in one location. Get a datebook and use it without exception. Post-It Notes are not good for organizing lists and tasks, since they can fall off or become lost. When you write down a phone number, be sure to write down who that number calls. How many times have you found a number scribbled on a scrap of paper and you can't remember who or what the number was for? Time spent organizing is rarely wasted time.

Some of us believe that to be well-organized and methodical is to be boring—wrong! Many brilliant and creative people work in well-organized spaces and, of course, many brilliant and creative people work well with clutter and disorganization all around them. Find your comfort zone. Keep your desk organized so you can work (this will be different for you than for a coworker).

Organization is important, but some of us organize to avoid working. If you find yourself tidying your desk and filing your papers in order to procrastinate—stop! One sign of an over-organized person is when your idea of fun is spending extravagant amounts of money at office supply stores to be organized.

In conclusion, time management requires change in how we think and how we do things. Be certain the change is **better** and not just *different*. If you have asked yourself the questions throughout this article, you have come up with answers around the area(s) you need to work on. You must manage the changes that you need to make to accomplish your goals, or nothing different happens. Look inside yourself when a change needs to happen. Think positive. A "can" and "will" attitude will help you to make change happen. Face your fears about change and you may very well find that what seems an impossibility is soon a reality. Involve others early if they are going to be part of the process. You need them to believe in the change, and they will if they have a hand in creating the change. Remember that collaboration through change gives you added skills, resources, information, and shared responsibilities. Think about what will not change. There is comfort at times with the familiar. If you are doing tasks effectively, efficiently, and economically then you may be right where you need to be. Looking at how you use and manage your time can improve your quality of work as well as productivity.

Tips for Time Management

1. Count all your time as time to be used and make every attempt to get satisfaction out of every moment.
2. Find something to enjoy in whatever you do.
3. Try to be an optimist and seek out the good in your life.
4. Find ways to build on your successes.
5. Stop regretting your failures and start learning from your mistakes.
6. Remind yourself, "There is always enough time for the important things." If it's important, you should be able to make time to do it.
7. Continually look at ways of freeing up your time.
8. Examine your old habits and search for ways to change or eliminate them.
9. Try to use waiting time---review notes or do practice problems.
10. Keep paper or a calendar with you to jot down the things you have to do or notes to yourself.
11. Examine and revise your lifetime goals on a monthly basis and be sure to include progress towards those goals on a daily basis.
12. Put up reminders in your home or office about your goals.
13. Always keep those long term goals in mind.
14. Plan your day each morning or the night before and set priorities for yourself.
15. Maintain and develop a list of specific things to be done each day, set your priorities and get the most important ones done as soon in the day as you can. Evaluate your progress at the end of the day briefly.
16. Look ahead in your month and try and anticipate what is going to happen so you can better schedule your time.
17. Try rewarding yourself when you get things done as you had planned, especially the important ones.
18. Do first things first.
19. Have confidence in yourself and in your judgment of priorities and stick to them no matter what.
20. When you catch yourself procrastinating-ask yourself, "What am I avoiding?"
21. Start with the most difficult parts of projects, then either the worst is done or you may find you don't have to do all the other small tasks.
22. Catch yourself when you are involved in unproductive projects and stop as soon as you can.
23. Find time to concentrate on high priority items or activities.
24. Concentrate on one thing at a time.
25. Put your efforts in areas that provide long term benefits.
26. Push yourself and be persistent, especially when you know you are doing well.
27. Think on paper when possible-it makes it easier to review and revise.
28. Be sure and set deadlines for yourself whenever possible.
29. Delegate responsibilities whenever possible.
30. Ask for advice when needed.

Time Management Test

Name: _____ Title: _____

Agency: _____ Date: _____

Please provide contact information (email address, fax number, or mailing address) where you would like your certificate to be sent:

Please answer the following questions and return this test to Northwest Health Connections.

For questions 1—3, circle the best answer.

1. Taking more control of your time allows more control of your life. True False
2. Self-discipline is not important when practicing time management. True False
3. Organizing can lead to not using time wisely if organization becomes more important than accomplishing tasks. True False

Fill in the blank with the best answer.

4. One should set both long and short-term _____.
5. In three sentences, tell how important time management is to you.

You must submit your completed test, with at least a score of 80%, along with your completed evaluation, to receive 1 hour of training credit for this course.

To submit via fax, please fax this page to 814-728-8887.

To submit via email, please send an email to training@northwesthc.org. Please put “Time Management Test” in the subject line, and the numbers 1—5, along with your answers, in the body of the email.

To submit via mail, send to NWHC, 247 Hospital Drive, Warren, PA 16365, ATTN: Lynn.

NORTHWEST HEALTH CONNECTIONS
A DIVISION OF MILESTONE CENTERS, INC.
EVALUATION OF TRAINING

Training Title: Time Management

Please check the box that best describes your role:

Date: _____

Direct Support Professional Provider Administrator/Supervisor

Program Specialist Provider Clinical Staff

Consumer/Self-Advocate Family Member

Support Coordinator Support Coordinator Supervisor

PCH Staff/Administrator FLP/LSP County MH/MR/IDD

Other (please list): _____

Please circle your PRIMARY reason for completing this home-study training:

It's mandatory

interested in subject matter

need training hours

convenience

Please circle the best response to each question.

5 = Strongly Agree

4 = Agree

3 = Undecided

2 = Disagree

1 = Strongly Disagree

- | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. As a result of this training, I have increased my knowledge. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 2. I learned something I can use in my own situation. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 3. This training provided needed information. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 4. The training material was helpful and effective. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 5. Overall, I am satisfied with this training. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 6. I am glad I completed this training. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

Suggestions for improvement: _____

Additional information I feel should have been included in this training: _____

I would like to see these topics/conditions developed into home-study trainings: _____