

Your Personal Relationship with Time

While a lot of people are frustrated with the way they are managing time, each person's specific issues are different. Buried under the chaos of confusion are clues of individual strengths and weaknesses, personality style and preferences, your unique sources of energy and what makes you happy. So we need to begin the process of custom designing a solution that will be a true match for who you are.

Your relationship with time comes under three areas:

- What's working and what's not
- Your time management preferences
- Your energy cycles and sources

What's Working...

First what works - find this out and your confidence will receive a boost and you will discover that you do have a basis of time management skills on which to build. This will also give you clues to what appeals to you and therefore give you information to fix the areas that are not working.

Exercise 1: What's Working?

Fill in as many answers to the following questions as you can think of:

No matter how busy I get I always find time for

My goals are well defined when it comes to.....

I'm pretty clear on how long it takes me to.....

I never procrastinate about.....

I am never late for.....

I have no problem exercising when.....

I have no problem tackling difficult projects when.....

I always build in transition time between.....

Its easy for me to say no

Meeting deadlines is easiest for me when.....

I am at my happiest when I am.....

The things that I delegate easily are.....

Example Answers

“ No matter how busy I get, I always find time to.... *read to my kids at night, clean out my see new clients, get the invoices out, etc*

My goals are well defined when it comes to... *my kids, my work, my marriage etc.*

I am never late for... *client appointments, dinner date, movies doctors etc*

I am pretty clear on how long it takes to... *walk to work, get dressed, shave, cook dinner etc* I never procrastinate about... *paying the mortgage, eating dinner, feeding the baby.*

I have no problem exercising when... *I first wake up, I am on holiday, watching TV.*

I always build in transition time between... *work and home*

It's easy for me to say no... *to requests for volunteering, my mother in law, unreasonable demands*

Meeting deadlines is easy for me when... *some one else sets the deadline I am under pressure, it comes money etc.*

I am at my happiest when... *I am surfing, gardening, dancing etc*

The things that I delegate easily are... *the laundry, data entry, taking out the rubbish etc.*

Now, look over your answers and see what you can learn. Ask yourself why these things are working. Is it because you enjoy them, or because you are skilled in these areas. Is it the time of day, ask yourself why these things work. If you find time to clean your car, ask why it is that you do... You may find a purely physical task therapeutic. If you are mainly involved in mental work then 30 mins a day on physical exercise (non- mental) may be enough to recharge you and heighten your energy.

What's NOT Working...

Exercise 2: What's NOT Working?

Fill in as many answers to the following questions as you can think of:

I never have time to

I spend way too much time on.....

One thing I wish I could do every day is

I don't have well defined goals for.....

I always underestimate how long it takes to.....

I procrastinate whenever I have to.....

I am usually late for.....

It's hard for me to say no to.....

I have a hard time finishing.....

Your answers to this question become your list of everything you want to fix. Now compare it to what is working. If you are having trouble starting and finishing things then you maybe able to isolate the reason why. In some cases it might just mean you need to develop certain skills or apply a skill from one area of your life to another.

You may have no problem delegating at work so you might simply apply the same system at home.

Example Answers

I never have enough time to... *see my friends, relax, follow up calls, prospect new business, etc*

I spend too much time on... *attending meetings, processing mail etc*

I don't have well defined goals for... *my personal life, career etc*

Your Time Management

Some times you struggle with some tasks more then others not because your are lacking a skill but because of individual preferences. Tuning into these natural inclinations can help explain why certain items are landing on your *what's not working* and *what is working* lists. If you thrive on a fast pace you will know how to fill your day with many activities.

Exercise 3: Your Time Management Preferences Circle your preferences:

The majority of the time I prefer.....

| | | |
|-------------------------------|----|----------------------------------|
| Working independently | Vs | Working collaboratively |
| Exercising alone | Vs | Exercising with others |
| Relaxing alone | Vs | Relaxing with others |
| Concentrating in short bursts | Vs | Concentrating for long stretches |
| Focusing on one thing | Vs | Multi tasking |
| A fast busy schedule | Vs | A slow easy schedule |
| Plans and predictability | Vs | Surprises and spontaneity |
| Tight deadlines | Vs | Long deadlines |
| Stewing on things | Vs | Making quick decisions |
| Working in silence | Vs | Working with noise, music |
| Dim Lighting | Vs | Bright lighting |
| Working with my head | Vs | Working with my hands |

In addition to your natural preferences, the ups and downs of your energy can have a profound effect on your to-do list. Energy is power; it enables you to work towards your goals. Once you understand your energy sources and cycles, you can begin to manage them. Since you can't always control when you do certain tasks, the best time managers are tuned in to what activities fuel their energy when it is flagging.

Sometimes a change of pace is all you need to boost your energy levels. If you have been concentrating for hours and your brain needs a break it's a great time to do a task that requires movement and using your muscles.

Identify Your Energy Cycles and Sources

Exercise 4: Identifying Your Energy Cycles and Sources

Part 1: Write down your answers to the following questions

Mornings are the best time for me to

And the worst time for me to.....

Afternoons are the best time for me to.....

And the worst time for me to

Evenings are the best time for me to.....

And the worst time for me to

Late at night is the best time for me to.....

And the worst time for me to.....

Part 2: Circle the answers that are true for you.

Then think about whether there are other answers to this key energy management question.

When my energy is flagging, I can usually recharge by:

- Changing activities
- Exercising
- Stretching
- Playing some music
- Reviewing my goals
- Glancing at a photo of someone I love
- Drinking a glass of water
- Taking a catnap
- Eating a high energy snack
- Taking a brief break
- Planning something fun

The key to Time Management is to build your life around your individual needs and desires. Time management is the ultimate in self-improvement, because it is the foundation to be able to achieve your goals in every aspect of your life.