

Being on Time in 2021

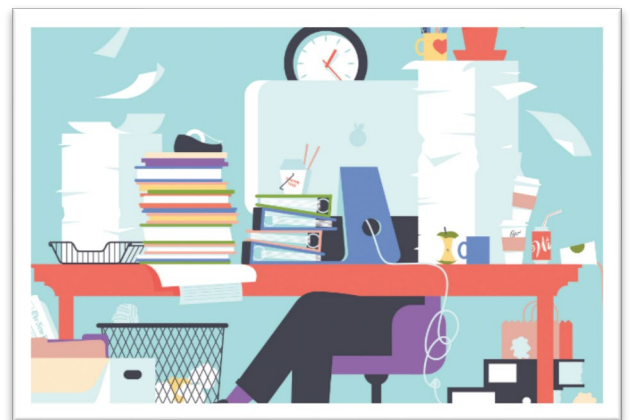
Managing time to do your best and meet your goals

The last year has brought about many changes in the way we live, work and manage our time. For many, the pandemic has affected our life and circumstances. Consider the changes in work schedules, homeschooling children and working from home. We are always juggling to maintain a work/life balance even if current life circumstances and stressors haven't impacted our specific individual circumstances. The perception of time is a funny thing. Do we still have the same amount of time as we used to? Has time been wasted over the past year? Have we used every bit of time to our advantage, even though we have been restricted in participating in our usual activities?

Check out the following tips to get organized and improve the way you manage your time to meet the challenges life has to offer.

Working from HOME?

- 1. Provide structure:** Maintain a separate and organized workstation. This can be the end of a kitchen table, a corner of the living room or an actual home office. If you are in a high traffic area, consider setting up a barrier, such as a portable screen, or face a window. Using a laptop computer? Consider a portable set up. Secure a sturdy storage box and put away your "desk" items (a cup with writing utensils, tray with post-its, writing pads, charging cords and the laptop) at the end of your workday. Participating in the ritual of setting up and breaking down every day will provide structure and set a clear boundary for work life balance.

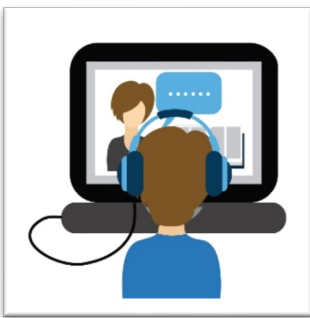


- 2. Begin with the end in mind:** This message from Stephen Covey, author of The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People, reminds us to think about the end goal at the beginning of your day. Take control of your time by planning and identifying the critical tasks you will complete during a specific timeframe. The number of tasks and the timeframe reserved will be determined by the project or assignment. At the end of your day, review what was accomplished and prep your critical task plan for the next day.

3. **Blocks on the calendar:** Reserve blocks of time on your calendar, listing the tasks you will accomplish in each block. Plan to focus for an hour to an hour and a half at a time. Build in breaks while on a home schedule. Stretch, move and walk around. Step outside and breathe. Short breaks will allow you to have a brain break and focus will be revitalized for better use of time in the next block.
4. **Consider Interruptions:** You may not be interrupted by the chatty co-worker, but there are distractions when working at home. Household tasks and responsibilities can be an overt distraction. Structured blocks of time and scheduled 5-minute brain breaks will help you stay on task. Plan for the distractions and build them into your day. If your workday allows for breaks, weave these into your schedule. When you take your break to move and stretch, do so by walking to the mailbox or moving the laundry from the washer to the dryer.

School in the KITCHEN?

1. **Be prepared:** Model the positive benefits of being prepared for your children so they can become effective time managers. Just as you have a work area designed for yourself, your school age children will also benefit from a structured day and schedule where they can manage their own time. Provided the school system offers some structure to the school day, you can add to this structure by scheduling in additional homework time, recreation/break time and snack times. Before the next school day, help your children organize their school station, making sure that all supplies are in place, review the schedule for the next day and build in some "rewards" with break times. Teach your children to plan ahead to make the most of their time and feel good about what they have accomplished.



2. **Timing is everything:** Or is it? With all that structure, you still need to be flexible. Ever hear of eating dessert first? Breakfast for dinner? Sometimes switching it up a bit works wonders to jog the brain and add a little fun. Be willing to change the plan on a given day if that is what it takes to get things done. It shows that you can be spontaneous, and that life is still joyful and interesting.
3. **Dual Planning:** With both your work responsibilities and your school age children to tend to, participate in the same type of structured activities as possible. For example, if the children are participating in a Zoom class and they are fully engaged, use that time for your tasks that need your focused attention. If they are on a break, there will most likely be more activity and noise in the house. Take that time to organize, prep, or gather materials to prepare for your next structured block of time.
4. **Build in rewards:** The best reward is spending time with a parent. Build in check points during the week after certain goals have been accomplished, such as the completion of a project or a test. At each checkpoint, offer a reward such as playing a board game or taking a special nature walk. When working from home and home schooling go hand in hand, there sure can be an abundance of "togetherness". But we have learned in the past year that quantity of time does not always match quality of time.

Working toward GOALS?

TIME to Focus on you: Managing your personal time wisely allows for better self-care and positive self-development. Setting a goal for growth can be accomplished by focusing on SMART goals. The details of setting a SMART goal allow you to be streamlined, determined and will give you the structure necessary to meet that goal. Follow these helpful, detailed steps below:

S- SPECIFIC- Non-Specific goals make it difficult to know what a good job looks like. Instead of a goal such as "I want to feel better" try being more specific. "I'd like increase my movement by walking" is more defined.

M-MEASURABLE- Make sure you set goals that can be measured to show your progress over time. Think about ways you might measure this, such as keeping a journal. "I'd like to increase my movement by walking for 10 minutes, 2x week."

A-ATTAINABLE- Start small and build from there. If you have never exercised before, it's probably not realistic to have a goal to complete a marathon in several weeks. Attainable goals are buildable to something bigger later, and they allow us to build confidence.

R-RELEVANT- Do your goals align with your personal values? Do they make sense for you, or are you setting them because you think it's the right thing to do? Will your goals get you to where YOU want to be?

T-TIME-BASED- Finally, make sure you set goals that have a timeline. This helps us to prioritize and stay motivated. We can set an attainable goal, but if we don't put some thought into a timeline, we are more likely to stray away from it. "I will increase my movement by walking for 10 minutes per day, 2 times a week, for the next month."

Remember, SMART goals may be in place, but they don't have to be set in stone. Since we cannot predict events or challenges that may arise after plans are set, our goals should always be flexible. They're a work in progress, and it's ok to reassess and change them as needed.



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