

## Time Management

Fall is a busy time. It seems that 2015 is flying by and before we realize it will be Thanksgiving and Christmas. As we plan activities for the fall, how we use our time is important.

Effective time management can help everyone achieve their goals and set everything accomplished they want in the 24 hours available each day. Follow these tips for more effective time management:

- ◆ **Spend time planning and organizing.** Using time to think and plan is time well spent. Organize in a way that makes sense. Colors or pictures in a calendar, planning book, tablet or another type of organizer can help. Some people need to have papers filed away; others get their creative energy from their piles.
- ◆ **Set goals.** Goals give life and time spent direction. Set goals that are specific, measurable, realistic and achievable. Goals can give creative people a much-needed sense of direction.
- ◆ **Prioritize.** Use the 80/20 Rule stated by Italian economist Vilfredo Pareto. He noted 80 percent of a reward comes from 20 percent of the effort. The trick to prioritizing is to isolate and identify the valuable 20 percent. Once identified, prioritize time to concentrate work on those items with the greatest reward. Prioritize by color, number or letter—whichever method makes the most sense. Flagging items with a deadline is another idea to help stick to priorities.
- ◆ **Use a “to do” list.** Some people thrive using a daily “to do” list constructed either by listing things the previous day or first thing in the morning. Such people may combine a “to do” list with a calendar or schedule, while others prefer a “running to do” list that is continuously being updated. Do whatever works best and don’t be afraid to try a new system.
- ◆ **Be flexible.** Allow time for interruptions and distractions. Time management experts often suggest planning for 50 percent or less of one’s time. With just 50 percent of time planned, more flexibility is available to handle interruptions and any unplanned emergency.
- ◆ **Consider your biological prime time,** the time of day for peak performance. Know when you have the most energy and plan to use the time of day for priorities.
- ◆ **Do the right thing right.** Doing the right thing is more important than doing things right. Doing the right this is effectiveness; doing things right is efficiency. Focus first on effectiveness then concentrate on efficiency.
- ◆ **Eliminate the urgent.** Urgent tasks have short-term consequences while important tasks are those with long-term, goal-related implications. Work toward reducing the necessary urgent things to have more time for the important priorities. Flagging or highlighting items on a “to do” list or attaching a deadline to each item may help keep important items from becoming urgent emergencies.
- ◆ **Practice the art of intelligent neglect.** Eliminate trivial tasks or those tasks not having long-term consequences. Delegate or eliminate these tasks from the “to do” list.
- ◆ **Avoid being a perfectionist.** Some things need to be closer to perfect than others, but perfectionism, paying unnecessary attention to detail, can waste time and be a form of procrastination.

- ◆ **Conquer procrastination.** When avoiding something, break it into smaller tasks and just do one of the smaller tasks. Or, set a time and work on the big task for only 15 minutes. By doing a little at a time, eventually a finish point can be reached.
- ◆ **Learn to say no.** Focusing on goals and blocking time for important, but often not scheduled, priorities can help. Once convinced of their importance, saying no to the unimportant things in life gets easier.
- ◆ **Reward yourself.** Even for small successes, celebrate achievement of goals. Plan a personal reward for completing a task or finishing the total job.

Now is the time to stop and take time to plan how you will effectively use your time wisely and have a less stressful fall season.