



Reduce workplace stress by managing your time

Part Two



RAE ANNE JAMMER

DO YOU REMEMBER the last time you said to yourself "Where did the day go?" or "I have no time!?" If you've ever caught yourself thinking these things, then you know how much distress poor time management can cause. Since everyone has 24 hours in a day, seven days in a week and 365 days in a year, when you say those things to yourself, you're really saying that you're not managing your time very well. If you could cut just 20 minutes a day of wasted time, you'd gain a whole year by the time you're 70! Here's how to practice good time management:

1. First, name your time wasters. Do you procrastinate? Do you spend too much time on trivial things? Do you hop around from job to job? Write down all your personal time wasters and give them pet names so you can laugh at them later when they start controlling you.
2. Next, prioritize. Divide all your tasks into three categories...A's are absolutely essential to your life goals...B's are important but not essential... and C's are trivial. Then, do the A's first, and put the C's on the back burner.
3. Are you a night owl or a day lily? Pay attention to the time of day you're most alert and creative, and then do all your A priority tasks during whatever time that is. Save the B's for the other parts of the day.
4. Be satisfied with doing a partial job. Did you know that 80 per cent of your best work is done during the first 20 per cent of time you spend on it? Practice forging ahead full steam at your top priorities, and don't be afraid to let some of the smaller tasks fall by the wayside.

5. Stop running late. Set your watch and your alarm clock five minutes fast so you can practice being a little early.
6. Finally, keep yourself in check. Keep a time log of everything you do for one week. Record how much time you spend on sleeping, working, driving, spending time with family and friends, being quiet, having fun...whatever it is. Then, at the end of that week, evaluate how you budgeted your time so you can adjust it to better match your values and goals the next week.

Pacing yourself...

If everyone has 24 hours in a day, seven days in a week, and 365 days in a year, then why is it that some people seem to have plenty of time to get their work done, to play, to visit with friends, to care for their families, and even to relax...while others seem to race around frantically, always playing catch-up? The answer is, people pace themselves differently.

Pacing skills are particularly helpful for times when you feel like your life is out of control, or when you feel a little out of step with yourself. Pacing skills can help prevent you from wasting energy and causing yourself unnecessary distress. Think about your car...every time you slam down the gas pedal or jam on the brakes when you're driving, you waste fuel and wear out your car faster. Similarly, when you work in sudden bursts of frantic activity, you end up wasting energy and causing yourself distress. "Pacing" means taking on no more and no less than you can handle at that moment, and then working on it at a steady, comfortable rate. If you've ever fallen up the stairs...or tripped on something on the sidewalk that just wasn't there... you were probably pushing your body beyond its natural tempo. Here's how to practice pacing:

1. First, try an experiment. Go outside and walk a block at top speed. Then walk a block slowly. Walk another block at top speed again, and then walk it slowly again. Keep doing this until you feel tired out. After you're fully rested, walk back at a comfortable, steady pace and see how much tired you become.
2. Next, schedule your time. Estimate how long each daily task might take, and don't forget to allow room for emergencies that undoubtedly crop up. Then, schedule your day's tasks to fill but not overflow the actual time you have available. In other words, don't plan to do two hours of work into one!
3. Keep up. Don't allow yourself to get behind or ahead of schedule. Practice plodding along within your natural tempo, and see how much more productive you are.
4. Finally, be consistent. Do those things you do to take care of and restore yourself...like eating meals, sleeping and exercising at the same time every day. It will bring order to your life, it'll help prevent you from getting sidetracked and it will allow your body to properly prepare for the demands you're going to place on it. ■

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