

WISH YOU HAD AN EXTRA DAY IN THE WEEK?

So often we here if only I had more time! When will I find the time for that? *“Don’t say you don’t have enough time. You have exactly the same number of hours per day that were given to Helen Keller, Pasteur, Michelangelo, Mother Teresa, Leonardo da Vinci, Thomas Jefferson and Albert Einstein” H Jackson Brown Jr.* Often it’s not that we don’t have enough time, but rather that we don’t prioritise our time or that we have taken on too many commitments. No one even said on their death beds “I wished I spent more time at work” but we often sacrifice ourselves, our family and friends for work commitments.

Few are fortunate enough to have the means for financial independence so the many of us are working long hours. You add to that the responsibilities as a partner, parent or family member and it doesn’t take much more to feel overwhelmed and stressed out. You can start to make a few simple changes in order to create a healthier balance in your life, which will lead to more satisfaction, better relationships and greater sense of contentment in life. If you make one change per week, by the end of a year you would have created many new habits which support you and your wellbeing.

Start with a time diary

Make a diary in 15 minute or 30 minute sections and write down what task/activity you did during this time. Do this over the space of a week or two to get a clear idea on how you spend your time. Make sure you include meals, exercise and sleep. It may seem laborious to do this but you will be amazed at how many activities you engage in that you would consider to be ‘time wasters’ It also gives you a realistic idea on how long different activities actually take as we often underestimate the time taken to do certain tasks.

Where are your priorities?

Think about the things that are really the most important to you. How often do you do them? Consider how you can make sure you do something related to them every single day. We often prioritise other people’s needs over our own and our health and wellbeing suffers. Work out how you can balance your needs with others and set aside the time you need to function effectively. For example, just as we make a commitment to have the work task done on time or dinner on the table, make a commitment for just 7 days to go to the gym or walk daily and notice how much better you will feel after just one week.

Three D’s of time management

Delay- What are tasks that you can delay? What do you do every day that you can do every second day? What weekly tasks can you do fortnightly? Delaying tasks can free up time for important things like YOU

Delegate- Are there things you can delegate? We often get caught in a mindset that we have to do it all, but this only creates more stress. What tasks can you delegate to family members, colleagues or paid services?

Delete- what activities are really serving no purpose and yet tend to take up your precious time. Think of your time like money, am I spending it and then it’s gone or am I investing my time in a way that will provide returns of a better life?

Achieve more, Do less

Learn when to say NO. We often over-commit and this leads to not having enough time to complete tasks. Learn your limits and tolerate the discomfort of saying no to requests.

Sleep

Although the average amount of sleep is 8 hours it varies from person to person. Determine how much sleep you best function on and how you can change your sleeping habits to ensure you get this amount EVERY night. Feeling rested helps us to deal with the busyness of the day, and we can all relate to how much harder it is to get things done when we are sleep deprived.

Nutrition

How often do you grab a meal on the run because you're too busy to either prepare a nutritious meal or don't have time to eat it? The food we eat is fuel for our body so be aware what you are putting in your mouth. Foods high in saturated fats and refined sugars can give us an instant boost but once the blood sugar drops you feel more fatigued than before. Add more fresh fruit and vegetables to your diet- they contain antioxidants which gobble up the free radicals that get released by stress (a bit like Pac man). Avoid foods that have been highly processed as they have little nutritional value and contain many chemicals. Stimulants like coffee, energy drinks and chocolate can provide a hit to get you through 3.30itits but they also impact on your sleeping so avoid stimulants in the afternoon.

Schedule in leisure time

We sometimes grow up with the idea that relaxing is not productive and is being lazy. The reality is the opposite. Scheduling in time for leisure makes us more productive in the home and workplace. Make a commitment to each day doing something pleasurable, whether that is simply a hot bath or a nice meal. At least once a week set aside time for a social event, hobby or interest. Make this commitment in the same way you commit to work or family responsibilities and stick to it

Take a day off

Make at least one day per week a non work day. With modern technology we can work anywhere at any time. Interestingly enough the bible says that we must rest on the Sabbath, and it wasn't just a suggestion, it was a commandment. Maybe there is something in that?

Turn off the TV, Phone and laptop- REGULARLY

On average we can be interrupted by technology as often as every 9 seconds! Technological advances are awesome, but sometimes all our gadgets simply just serve as a distraction. So turn off the PC after 8pm, set a limit for social networking sites, turn off the TV once the show has finished, and have a clear time frame and focus if you are doing internet research.

Single tasking

Multi-tasking does not lead to more productivity; it only leads to more stress. How often do you sit down to do the banking, open up your email program, reply to a message, click on a link, check facebook, answer the telephone, open the doc for yesterday's meeting and then after 30 minutes wonder why you haven't done the banking? It can take on average 17% longer to finish a task if we have just one interruption! Imagine how much longer it takes when you have multiple interruptions. Focus on one task at a time. Put your phone on silent while you check your emails and then close the program to avoid being distracted by notifications. Set aside specific times of the day time for phone calls and if the person is not available leave a message saying when you are next available. There are times when we need to be flexible with our availability but having a single task focus makes us more effective

Be Mindful

How often have you turned off the alarm, hit the floor running, planned your meeting whilst in the shower, wrote a shopping list in your head while driving, prepared that presentation in a staff meeting and then wondered why you didn't hear about that important change? Our mind naturally plans prepares and organises when we are not fully engaged in an activity. The problem with this is not only that we miss out on that activity (having a shower can be an amazing experience) but we often end up forgetting what the plan was anyway. Using mindfulness slows down an overactive mind and because you are more focused you are less likely to make a mistake, which then creates more work.

Only touch each piece of paper once

So often we double or triple touch tasks and paperwork. Get into the habit of only 'touching' each piece of paper once. If you don't have time to sit down and go through the mail, make a designated time and open it, action and file it. Same goes for emails, open action and delete/file. If there are things you can't action immediately, set up a reminder and or filing system for when that action is due.