

Time Management

SPEND TIME PLANNING AND ORGANIZING. Using time to think and plan is time well-spent. In fact, if you fail to take time for planning, you are, in effect, planning to fail. Organize in a way that makes sense to you. Use a calendar or planning book. Some people need to have papers filed away; others get their creative energy from their piles. So forget the "shoulds" and organize your way.

PRIORITIZE. Identify and concentrate your work on those items with the greatest reward. Prioritize by whichever method makes the most sense to you. Flagging items with a deadline is another idea for helping you stick to your priorities.

USE A TO DO LIST. Some people thrive using a daily To Do list which they construct either the night before or first thing in the morning. Some people may combine a To Do list with a calendar or schedule. Others prefer a "running" To Do list which is continuously being updated. You may prefer a combination of these. Whatever method works is best for you. Don't be afraid to try a new system — you just might find one that works even better than your present one!

ELIMINATE THE URGENT. Urgent tasks have short-term consequences while important tasks are those with long-term, goal-related implications. Work towards reducing the urgent things you must do so you'll have time for your important priorities. Flagging or highlighting items on your To Do list or attaching a deadline to each item may help keep important items from becoming urgent emergencies.

AVOID BEING A PERFECTIONIST. Perfectionism, paying unnecessary attention to detail, can be a form of procrastination.

Like any management process, time management must be planned, monitored and regularly reviewed to be effective over the long term. It requires little effort, yet it promotes efficient work practices by highlighting wastage and it leads to effective use of time by focusing it on your chosen activities. But these methods alone don't win the struggle against time. In fact, it could be the concept of "struggling against" time that is the problem.

Higher Time Management

We will now enter the "rabbit hole" of time management. At this point, time management becomes a study of the rhythmic systems of living organisms. For instance, consider the activity log exercise above. Traditional time management would have you use this information merely to find and eliminate unproductive activity. However, we had you to also monitor the rise and fall of your energy levels at various times of the day and week (a month's monitoring would really be informative). Professor Frank Brown of Northwestern University said long ago "...all living organisms are rhythmic systems". Rhythm is also a function time (or "timing").

The principle behind accelerated learning and expanded time perception was pioneered in the U.S. by Drs. Linn Cooper and Milton Erickson. It involved special music and paced activity cycles which slowed down body / mind rhythms so that the "beats" are perceived as being slower than they actually were. Because of this slowed-down time perception, "a large number of mental and creative activities can be accomplished in very little clock time, because time itself actually seemed to expand". Recent research has been done on this time distortion principle which showed students could improve various skills in a few hours that might take a semester of classroom work. Author Gay Luce points out, "Studies of time distortion emphasize how limited our cultural view of 'time sense' can be". These findings, applied to accelerated learning and success conditioning regimen have shown astounding results.

Paradigms of Time

Let's consider paradigms of time and how we can negotiate them for our higher self improvement. To quote Dr. Stephen Randall, author of "Results in No Time", he says "Time management is usually done within the struggle with linear time. We make our to-do lists, prioritize, delegate, look at papers only once, and so on -- all while we feel pressure and anxiety about time flowing in the background. Time management doesn't directly address our felt experience of struggling with time." Linguist and cultural anthropologist Dan "Mohawk" Alford says "We [project] what we think time is and generally act as if it is 'really' out there independent of our projections". And further, "all cultures notice and encode in their languages... time. The differences can include whether you assume time linear or cyclical, or whether in linear time you assume that the future is located ahead of or behind you. Every graduation speech reminds us that while our past is now behind us, our future is ahead of us."

Linear time is the paradigm (or mental model) underlying conventional time management. It portrays time as an absolute, flowing physical reality that seems independent of consciousness, beyond our control. Our "addiction" to the linear time paradigm, is a primary cause of our sense of "time pressure". This "felt time" experience is what we refer to when we "have a great time" or when we feel time is a "drag" (like when time seems to "pass slowly" when we are bored). Or when we "lose track of time", we are referring to being "out of sync" with "clock" time. We "look forward" to things, but then have difficulty fully appreciating them.

A qualitatively different paradigm, an alternative to that of linear time can be drawn from literature and research on peak performance. Reports from geniuses and mystics throughout history speak of experiences that refer to what might be called inner time paradigms. In this model, physical time doesn't "flow" (as in accordance with the "motion" of the sun and moon). Richard Bandler, pioneer of NLP says in "Time For a Change: Epilogue", that "We are already in a trance. You might happen to be in one that you're used to... think of your every belief as a post hypnotic suggestion with its own mini-trance".

Inner Time Management

Inner time management explores the range of experience from feeling overwhelmed and pressured, to things flowing so well we're not aware of time passing. The quality, or feeling of time, is the domain of inner time management. The things that we really enjoy and get involved in are "over before we know it" -- this kind of "felt time" is often called "timelessness". When we're completely absorbed by something, totally engaged or preoccupied, there's a sense of being very present with what's at hand, and time doesn't seem to pass in the "standard" way. Timelessness is a kind of "felt time" that doesn't seem to "pass" at all.

As Maslow reported from his research, there is "the frequent report, especially by lovers, of the complete loss of extension in time. It is as if they had, in a way, some place in another world in which time simultaneously stood still and moved with great rapidity." (p. 76, *Toward a Psychology of Being*) And, as described by Linda S. Ackerman, for the peak performer there is "a unified flowing from one moment to the next, in which he is in control of his actions, and in which there is little distinction between self and environment, between stimulus and response, or between past, present, and future." Various meditation techniques have always been reported to evoke a level to timelessness.

Learning and consistently using both traditional time management and "Inner" time management methods is valuable to improve our lives both personally and professionally. Neither by themselves resolves our issues with time. But by combining the discipline of planning and organizing what we do with methods of improving the way we do things, there is no limit to our productivity and well being.