

Stress Management: Managing Your Time

Table of Contents

- Stress Management: Managing Your Time
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Introduction

Time management is a way to find the time for all the things you want and need to do. It helps you decide which things are urgent and which can wait. Learning how to manage your time, activities, and commitments can be hard. But doing so can make your life easier, less stressful, and more meaningful.

- When you manage your time, you decide which tasks and activities are most important to you. Knowing what's important helps you decide how best to spend your time.
- There are three parts to time management: prioritize tasks and activities, control procrastination, and manage commitments.

How can you manage your time?

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You can start managing your time by prioritizing tasks, controlling procrastination, and managing your commitments.

Prioritize tasks

Make a list of all your tasks and activities for the day or week. Then rate these tasks by how important or urgent they are.

- **Urgent** tasks are those that must be done right away to avoid a major problem, such as paying the electric bill **today** because your electricity will be turned off tomorrow. Many people never deal with important things until they become urgent. This approach always leads to stress.
- **Important** tasks are those that are meaningful or important to you, such as spending time with your family, helping friends, or getting exercise. They are also tasks you

must do to avoid a problem, such as paying bills or meeting a deadline at work.

- **Not important** tasks are ones that don't need to be done or that aren't important to you.

After you have your list and have rated the items, think about how you are spending your time. If you take care of important tasks in a timely way, you won't have as many urgent tasks to worry about. For example, if you pay your bills when you get them, you won't have to juggle your finances and hurry to pay bills the day they are due.

Think about how you can redirect your time to activities that are important and meaningful to you. Are you spending a lot of time on things that aren't important or urgent? Maybe there are things that you don't need to do at all.

Control procrastination

The more stressful or unpleasant a task, the more likely you are to put it off. This only increases your stress. You may want to try these tips for controlling procrastination:

- **Structure your time.** Use a day planner or notebook to plan your day or week. Just seeing on paper that there is a time to get your tasks done can help you get to work. For shorter projects, use a timer or alarm clock to help you stick with your plan. You can also find apps to help structure and plan your time. They can be used on your phone or computer.
- **Break up large tasks.** If you know that you won't be able to focus on a project for 3 hours, break up your work into 1-hour blocks over 3 days. It's easier to face an unpleasant task if the time you are giving it is brief.
- **Create short-term deadlines.** Short-term deadlines will help you make a habit of meeting deadlines. It will also force you to get things done. That way, when the long-term deadline does arrive, you won't have as much pressure and work built up.
- **Avoid perfectionism.** If you demand perfection, you might not even start a task because you're worried it won't be perfect. Doing your best is fine. Giving yourself enough time to do your best will reduce stress.

If you find a tip that works for you, stay with it. Over time you'll gain confidence that you can beat the procrastination habit.

You may still slip up sometimes and find yourself putting things off. That's okay. Don't blame yourself. Confidence and positive thinking can help you get back on track.

Manage your commitments

Both too many and too few commitments can lead to stress.

Letting go of a commitment doesn't mean giving up. It means learning what's important to you, recognizing that you have limits, and deciding how you want to spend your time. Here are some tips for letting go:

- Don't commit to things that are not important to you.
- When you want or need to let go of something, imagine tying it to a helium balloon, releasing the balloon, and watching it float away.
- Accept that your life is a "work in progress." You don't have to finish every project or meet every goal in your life by tomorrow or even next week. If one of your goals is less important, you can work on it later in your life.

Making commitments can be just as hard as letting them go. People who are under stress tend to have too many commitments instead of too few. But sometimes stress comes from a lack of commitment. If you need more commitment in your life, think about what is most important to you. When you are ready to commit:

- **Do it.** Give yourself to a new commitment as fully as you can.
- **Be responsible.** Take your commitment seriously. Don't back out of obligations.
- **Open up.** Be open to new ideas and suggestions, and be ready to learn.

Credits for Stress Management: Managing Your Time

By Healthwise Staff

Primary Medical Reviewer Kathleen Romito, MD - Family Medicine

Specialist Medical Reviewer Christine R. Maldonado, PhD - Behavioral Health

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