

Time Management
For
Busy Parents

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Introduction To Time Management

Have you ever found yourself looking at the clock, realizing it is almost time for your children to come home from school or your spouse to come home from work and realize you didn't get half of the things done that you were planning to do that day?

If you find yourself in that situation more often than you'd like, you may want to start looking at how you manage your time and choosing a few areas that could use a little improvement. By managing your time a bit better, it may almost seem as though you are suddenly gaining several extra hours a day.

What Is Time Management?

We are all familiar with the concept of "time", but when you add the word "management" behind it, things can get a little cloudy. Simply put, time management is the process of managing your time. People can make this more confusing and harder than it has to be when they try to get too technical and start creating "time maps" and flow charts.

When it comes down to it, it is a lot simpler than that. We all have twenty four hours each day. By practicing time management strategies, we are deciding how to use those hours to accomplish all the tasks we have on our to-do lists.

Why Is Time Management Important?

When a person lacks good time management skills, they may have a hard time accomplishing things, whether it be household chores, projects for work, or other duties. Failing to meet deadlines can lead to stress, anxiety, depression, and a general feeling of being overwhelmed. When a person is feeling this way, it can be very hard to enjoy life.

Of course, not every case of bad time management skills will be so dramatic. But each case can cause some type of problem. For instance, imagine a person who is always running ten minutes late. That may not seem so bad, and friends and family may even make jokes about it.

On the other hand, some people may not appreciate interacting with someone who is constantly tardy. Continuously running late could cause friction in relationships, as well as make a bad first impression towards prospective clients and employers.

When a person manages their time well, they are able to accomplish the goals they have set for themselves. Your end goal doesn't have to be something as monumental as constructing a new building; your goal could be to wash three loads of laundry and organize the kitchen cupboards before the kids get home from school.

Since people with good time management skills find it easier to achieve the tasks they need to complete, they do not feel as overwhelmed or "bogged-down". This can lead to a happier life.

Scheduling

The All Important Schedule

Having a schedule is a fundamental part of time management. You can imagine your schedule as a road-map. It provides important information about where you are going and how you can get there.

Without it, you may take a wrong turn somewhere and find yourself lost. Once someone is lost, it may take some time before they get back on track, and they usually arrive to their destination a bit later than they would have liked.

When you have a schedule, you can look at it and see what you need to do each day. You'll know if you are on track, and if you aren't what you need to do to get back on course.

How To Make a Schedule

One of the first things to do when making a schedule is to write down all the things you have to do on a piece of paper. Some people keep

separate work and family schedules, and if you decide that would work best for you, you can divvy those tasks up later. For now, simply write out everything that needs to be done on a monthly, weekly, and daily basis.

Once you have everything written out and in front of you, it's time to start sorting between the common themes. You can do this by assigning a highlighter color to each theme (such as family, work, daily, monthly, weekly) or by taking out another piece of paper and writing those columns on it, and rewriting all the tasks into the appropriate column.

Now that you have all of your tasks sorted out, try to give a time estimate to each one. You may even want to time yourself for a week or two on these tasks, as you may be very surprised at how long some things take.

For instance, you may think it only takes 45 minutes to go to the grocery store, but in reality it could take an hour and 15 minutes. You

may think it only takes 15 minutes to run up to the school and pick up the kids, but may find it actually takes 25 minutes.

In many cases, people underestimate the time it takes to do things, and this is one of the reasons they think they aren't getting enough done. By timing yourself, you will get a visual picture of your time. When you see how long it really takes to accomplish your regular tasks, you will be able to see how many things you can fit into a normal day. You won't constantly be trying to push yourself to do more.

Once you have written down your tasks and estimated the time it takes to accomplish them, you can start planning your schedule. Some people like to have a daily schedule that is very organized with certain tasks assigned to certain times and others prefer to keep a weekly schedule that is more flexible.

How To Keep Track Of Your Schedule

When it comes to keeping track of your schedule, it is very important to find one that fits your needs and personality. If you try to adapt to someone else's scheduling techniques, you may find yourself avoiding the schedule.

Some people prefer [paper planners](#) and others like electronic ones, whether in the form of a PDA or through their email program, such as Outlook or Google Calendar. A third option would be large dry-erase boards or bulletin boards that you can hang up in your home.

Paper planners come in a variety of sizes and can be found in “one page per day” formats as well as “weekly” formats, where the entire week is spread out between two sheets of the planner. When you open the planner, you are able to see your whole week, spread across the two pages.

When deciding what type of paper planner to choose from, make sure the size will fit your lifestyle. If you are going to carry the planner

with you a lot, find one that will fit inside your purse or bag comfortably. If it doesn't fit well, or is very heavy, it is going to be more of a hassle to tote it around.

On the other hand, if you are going to keep the planner on your desk, you may want to opt for a large 8 1/2" by 11" size. That way, you'll have lots of room to write down any notes. Plus, this size is often divided into 15 minute increments, which can also be a very helpful tool.

An advantage of using a paper planner is that you can use highlighters to help you get a visual image of where your time is going. For instance, you can assign the color blue to all of your personal and family obligations, such as doctor's appointments, gymnastics meets, soccer games, family reunions, and so forth.

Keep choosing colors for the various "parts" of your life. You can decide the categories to best suit your needs. If you have a day job or a home business that you work to earn money, such as a virtual assistant, while you are working on developing your more personal business, you may want to assign both of those different colors. For

instance, the money-earning job can be green and the personal business can be pink or orange.

Once you have decided on what your colors will be, start highlighting activities in your planner that match each colors' category. If you notice one color is dominating your week, you may want to step back and evaluate how you are spending your time.

As technology improves, more and more digital planners can perform similar highlighting functions. You can even find “smart phones”, that combine a cell phone, planner, and even an Mp3 player all in one little package.

If you like the idea of keeping track of your schedule electronically, but don't want to spend a lot of money on a PDA or smart phone, you can use a program such as Outlook or Google Calendar. One of the features of Google Calendar is that you can share your calendar with other users.

This can be helpful if you plan a lot of events (such as pot-luck dinners, game nights, etc) and want to let all of your family and friends know about them easily. You may want to keep that calendar separate from your personal calendar, though. Not everyone needs to know when your next dentist appointment is.

The white board / bulletin board option is great for those that like to have a lot of room to write or who are very visual. One board can be hung in the kitchen to divvy up household chores among family members or to keep track of everyone's appointments, games, and so forth.

Another board can be kept in your home office to keep track of your work, household bills, and other things. If you work on multiple projects, you may want to have several boards, so you can easily see what needs to be done for each project.

Do Your Children Need A Schedule?

You have probably seen images of families on television where the children have their own schedules, full of activities from piano lessons to karate, and where even “play dates” are scheduled weeks in advance.

While most families do not have that type of lifestyle, it is still a good idea to keep your children on a schedule. This is especially true for younger children, as toddlers need routines in order to feel secure in their environment.

If you have a toddler, you may want to start with something simple, such as a night time routine to get your child used to following a schedule. An example would be bathing your child after dinner, putting on pajamas, reading a story, and going to bed.

Once they get the hang of that routine, you can start a morning routine, which could include getting dressed, eating breakfast, and playing with toys and going out to run the day’s errands. When your

child understands that routine, you can move on to an afternoon routine and then a dinner routine.

Your child doesn't need to be a toddler in order to appreciate a routine. Children of all ages can benefit from having some sort of schedule. If you have elementary school age children, you can start establishing a routine of getting home from school, having them eat a snack as you go over any papers that they brought home that day, helping them with their homework, and then having playtime while you make dinner.

If you have kids in middle school or high school, they may need their own planners to help them organize their homework, after school activities, and social life. This is a great time to start teaching them about scheduling, setting goals and defining priorities. These lessons will help them immensely when they get to college.

Managing Your Work Time

Many people feel out of balance when it comes to their working time and their family time. If you have found yourself in this situation, take some time to analyze the situation and think about what the contributing factors could be.

People that work outside the home face different challenges than those that work from home. Below, I have included time management tips for people in both situations.

Time Management Tips For Parents That Work Outside The Home

Parents that work outside the home can use many time management techniques to blend a better harmony between their working life and personal life.

- If you find yourself working long hours in order to complete the amount of work that is piled up on your desk, talk to your

manager about distributing the work between the people in your department.

- Another option is to hire an intern, such as a local high school or college student to help out with the easier work while you concentrate on the more technical parts. In many cases, interns work for free, so your manager won't have to worry about additional salary expenses.
- When possible, collaborate with a team of co-workers. By sharing the responsibility and work load, you will free up some time for yourself.
- Try to think of your commute as more than "a hassle." Find some ways to use your commute productively, or at least enjoy it. Listen to [audio books](#), play your favorite music, or use a digital voice recorder to record an audible to-do list.

- Likewise, try to use your lunch hour in a productive manner. Consider this your “me time” and read a novel, paint your nails, or mediate.
- In many cases, a working parent’s biggest cause of stress is child care issues. If your hours conflict with your daycare provider’s and you have a hard time getting to the daycare at pick-up time, ask your spouse or another family member to pick your child up.

Time Management Tips For Work At Home Parents

Some people mistakenly believe that work at home parents have it easy and that there is no reason why they can’t “get it all done.” These people do not understand the challenges that work at home parents face.

Parents that work outside the home can leave the office and focus on their family, and when they are at the office they can focus on their

work. Work at home parents need to find a way to blend both of those worlds into the same four walls.

Here are some time management tips for work at home parents:

- Define your business hours and let your clients and family know what they are. When you are working, let your family know that you need some quiet time to get your work done. When it is “closing” time, feel free to shut the office door and enjoy your family. Your client can wait until tomorrow for you to return their phone call.
- If you have small children, it is okay to get some childcare help. Enrolling your child in daycare for a few hours a day twice a week doesn’t mean you are a bad parent. You need time to work on your business, and you shouldn’t feel guilty about that. If you don’t want to leave your child at daycare, consider hiring someone to come to the house and watch your children while you work. A young teenager is qualified for this, and will be very affordable.

- Many of your administrative activities can be outsourced to a [virtual assistant](#). This will free up your schedule and allow you to spend more time marketing your business.
- Check your email once in the morning and once in the evening, rather than checking it and responding to mail every half hour or so. This will save you a lot of time throughout your day.
- If you are tempted to start surfing the internet while working on the computer, unplug your internet connection until your work is done. Once you have completed your report or spreadsheet, you can get back online.
- Participating in forums and social networking sites can be a great way to connect with others and gain publicity, but they can also be big time wasters. You don't have to join every single one you find. Choose a few good ones, and limit the amount of time you spend there.

Managing Your Time At Home

It's not just your work outside the home that can take up a big portion of your time, it's also your work around the house. Cleaning the house, washing the clothes, and cooking dinner all take time. The following sections will help you find ways to streamline these activities.

Household Chores

Many people feel that their kitchen is the heart of their home. In many cases, the kitchen table is the place where you gather with your family to eat meals, talk, help your children with homework, and much more. Since so much time is spent in the kitchen, it is not uncommon for most of your cleaning time to also be spent in this room. Here are some tips on cleaning your kitchen quickly and easily:

- If you are the type of person who is prone to tossing mail and other important pieces of paper on the counter, invest in some

containers that you can use to sit on the counter and keep things organized. Once a week, go through your containers and take care of what needs to be taken care of, and throw away the rest.

- There are many new alternatives to brooms and mops that make cleaning the floors easy. The Swiffer brand is a great example. You can come home, put a pot of water on the stove to cook some pasta, and give your floors a quick cleaning before your pasta water has reached a boil.
- Don't waste time scrubbing your pans. Instead, line them with heavy duty foil before you cook your dinner in them. If you forget this step and have a pan that is particularly messy, simply add a few drops of dish soap to it, fill it with hot water and let it sit overnight. The next day, the mess will easily be washed away with little scrubbing.
- Store as many appliances as you can in the cabinets. This will keep your kitchen looking neat and clean.

Your children's rooms can also be some of the messiest rooms in the house. Here are some tips on how to streamline the mess in their rooms and get them involved in the cleaning. Remember, the more they do on their own, the less you'll have to do!

If your children are old enough, you may want to consider purchasing them their own laundry hampers, so that they can start learning to sort clothes, and eventually do their own laundry. Of course, this may not be a good idea for small children, as they may end up having more fun throwing their dirty laundry around the room and creating an even bigger mess. Sorting laundry is a great math activity for little ones. So, by getting your kids to sort their own laundry you can kill two birds with one stone.

If your children are too young to read, consider color coding the storage areas in their room. For example, socks can go into the blue dresser drawer and pajamas can go into the yellow drawer.

You don't have to paint the whole drawer a different color. You can look for painter's tape that doesn't stick and just use a portion of the

colored tape on the drawer or perhaps you can find some decorative plastic clings. These come in a variety of colors, shapes and themes and you can stick them right on the dresser drawers. You can also use this method to organize their toys and toy chests.

Another idea is to take a picture of the item that goes into each drawer or toy chest. You can even make it special by having your child pose with the item. For example, have them hold a pair of socks, take a picture, and place that picture on the outside of the sock drawer. If you write the word with the picture you will also be helping your child with their word recognition.

When it is time to put things away, make a fun game out of it by asking your child to find the pajama drawer. They will be more than happy to help you clean up when actually have fun with the process.

Busy parents of young children often find it difficult to clean the house with their children underfoot. While it can be difficult, there are ways to keep your home clean and your children entertained at the same time.

Nap time, of course, is a prime time to get some chores done. Use this time to take care of some quieter tasks, like dusting, sorting through the mail, sorting laundry, and washing dishes.

Instead of trying to get your cleaning done in one big block of time during one day, break it up into fifteen minute increments throughout the week. It will be much easier to keep your children occupied with something else in 15 minute intervals than to try and keep them occupied for a long stretch of time.

Avoiding Clutter “Build Up”

One of the easiest ways to make a big impact on your home’s appearance is to take care of clutter. We all accumulate things, and when they don’t get picked up they can easily take over an area of the house.

Start by going through each room and identifying where extra storage space is needed. After you have figured out where you need storage, you can decide what type of storage pieces to buy.

There are many types of storage solutions to choose from, and you can certainly find some that will fit into your home's décor. You can choose from bookcases, chests, and ottomans for your living room.

When it comes to the bedroom, you can go to your local department store, such as Target, and find all types of closet organizers in that you can fit together to create customized storage solutions.

You can also find pieces that fit under the bed as well as nets that hang from the ceiling. These can be great for storing kids' stuffed animals.

After you have figured out where you are going to put your things, you can start sorting through them. If the task of de-cluttering your home seems overwhelming, focus on one room at a time. And if that seems overwhelming, focus on something small, such as one drawer. When you are finished with that drawer, move on to another drawer or

cabinet. Eventually, you will have made your way through your home.

As you are working, you may find it helpful to make several piles. Put everything you plan to keep in one pile, things you can sell on eBay in another pile, things to give away in a separate pile, and things to throw away in the final pile.

If you tend to be a pack rat, try to break free from your old habits. For the most part, things that you haven't used in the last year can be sold, given away, or thrown out. If you are unsure of whether you will use it or not, put it in storage. If another six months go by and you haven't used it, it is time to let go of it.

Now that you have gone through the trouble of de-cluttering your house, here are a few tips on helping you avoid clutter build-up in the future. It is a lot easier to schedule a 30 clutter cleaning session once a week than to spend several days de-cluttering once every few months.

- Don't let newspapers and magazines pile up. After you're done reading them, put them in a bin and when it's full, take it to a recycling center. If you are hanging onto it for a specific article, clip the article out and pin it up on a bulletin board. It will take up much less space and will be a visual reminder that you wanted to read it.
- Instead of leaving things out on the counters, put items away when you are done using them.
- Use the time you spend on the phone to wipe down counters, fold laundry, and take care of other quiet chores. You can get a headset for your phone so that you are audible to the person you're speaking to, yet have both hands free to take care of other things.
- If you have a big house, buy a large basket with handles. Each night, start in one room and place the items that do not belong in that room into the basket. Make your way through each

room, putting away things that belong in that room and placing items that belong somewhere else into the basket.

Quick Cooking Tips

Cooking may not be your favorite chore, but it is something that needs to be done every day. Thankfully, there are many time management techniques that you can use to make cooking a faster and easier part of your day.

One of the easiest ways to save time throughout the week is to plan your meals ahead of time. This will free up the time you spend each night trying to decide what to make for dinner, racing to the grocery store, standing in line to pay for your purchases, and then driving back home to cook your meal.

Instead, you'll sit down, write out the meals you'll have during the week, and make one trip to the grocery store. A huge time saver for me has been www.MyOnlineMeals.Picadil.com. I don't even plan out

my dinner menu any more, it is e-mailed to me once a week along with the shopping list.

The following are some more tips to help you save time, but still provide tasty and healthy meals for your family:

- Start using your crockpot! This is a great time saving tool when it comes to cooking. When you get up in the morning, you can throw your meal in and let it simmer all day. When you are ready to eat, your dinner will be hot and ready to eat.
- You may want to consider freezer cooking. With this method of cooking, you'll spend one weekend preparing a month's worth of dinners and then you'll store them in the freezer. At night, you'll take out the next day's dinner and let it thaw in the fridge. When your family is ready to eat, just pop that night's dinner into the oven.
- The casserole was very popular in the 1970's, but it fell out of fashion during the 80's and 90's. They're making a come back among busy families and for good reason. This is a one pot dinner that is quick and easy to make (and easy to clean, since

there is only the one pot plus plates and silverware). You can find some cookbooks on Amazon.com or eBay to give you some inspiration.

- If you don't have time to cook a whole meal, you can opt to have a soup and sandwiches night. You can find some great soup starter mixes in the soup aisle. You simply open the mix, add water, and any fresh ingredients you choose and let it simmer. While that's cooking, you can make up some turkey and cheese sandwiches and cut up some raw veggies and serve those with a side dip. You'll have a very filling and nutritious dinner.
- Short cut cooking is the process of mixing prepared food with fresh ingredients to create a quick meal with homemade taste. For instance, you can purchase a rotisserie chicken from the deli and serve it with some pasta and a side salad that you made at home.
- You can also plan your leftovers in order to create quick and easy meals throughout the week. For instance, using the

chicken from the above example, you can take the leftover chicken meat and use it to make a stir fry or chicken salad sandwiches for the next day's meal.

Saving Time While Running Errands

Running just a few errands a day can take up a big chunk of time. Probably more time than most people realize. It takes time to drive to the bank, post office or dry cleaners, stand in line, and drive back home. The time you spend on all those little trips can really add up! Here are some ways to save time when running errands:

- If possible, try to run all of your errands one or two days per week. You'll spend less time on your errands by taking an hour or two and getting them all done in one block of time.
- Take advantage of having your paychecks deposited directly into your account, rather than receiving paper checks that you have to wait in line at the bank to cash.

- Many banks offer an online bill paying service. You simply log into your bank account online, enter the name and address of the company you want to send money to along with your account number for the company, and enter the payment amount. Once you have entered in your information, you hit the “send” button and your bank will send the company your payment. This is very convenient and you’ll no longer have to spend time buying stamps or mailing paper bills.
- If you send a lot of packages, as in an eBay business, consider using an electronic service such as Stamps.com. You can print your postage at home with your printer, affix it to your package and schedule a time for your mail carrier to pick it up.
- If you have several errands to run in many locations around town, complete the ones that are farthest from your house first. Then, work your way back home, stopping at your errand locations along the way.

- Avoid running your errands during office lunch hours and closing times, such as from 12pm – 1pm from 5pm – 6pm. These are times of the day when there are a lot of cars on the road and traffic can easily get congested.
- Ask others for help with the errands. Perhaps your spouse can pick up the dry cleaning on the way to work or drop the rental movies off at the video store on their way home from work. If you live within walking distance of the post office, ask your middle school aged child to walk over and buy the stamps.
- If you are very busy and cannot seem to find time to run your errands, consider paying a high school or college student to do them for you. If, on average, you earn \$20 per hour, it makes more sense to pay a student \$8 an hour to run your errands for you. You may only have to use their service for two or three hours per week. Your errands will get done, and the student will be happy to earn some spending money.

Holidays & Special Events

Many people stress over holidays and special events, such as their children's birthday parties or family reunions. It can be hard to find the time it takes to get ready for these events when you are already pressed for time on a normal day! Here are some tips to help you streamline this process:

- Start planning for these events early. If your child's birthday is in August, it is okay to start planning the celebration in June. That way, you'll have plenty of time to get things done and you won't feel rushed when the day draws near.
- When you start the planning process, start with the end date and work backwards. If the party is on the 20th, you'll want to send the invitations out by the 2nd, so you'll need to buy them on the 15th of the prior month to make sure you'll have enough time to prepare them. Use this method to plan each aspect of the party.

- Most stores are packed the week before Christmas. Avoid this shopping rush by purchasing your gifts ahead of time. Start shopping in September and October or avoid the stores all together and shop online.
- If you are hosting a party at your house, don't waste time cooking all the food yourself. Instead, make it a pot luck and cook only the main entrée; ask your guests to bring a side dish or dessert to pass. If you are going to hold a large event, you may even want to consider having it catered. This doesn't have to be formal; this can be as simple as getting a large party sub and a few salads from the deli.
- Many times, people will have several small celebrations for one event. For example, a mom-to-be may have a baby shower for her side of the family, another one for her husband's side of the family, and a third one for her friends. If possible, hold one large shower and invite everyone. This will save you lots of time.

- If you work a lot of hours and simply do not have time to plan a party, consider hiring an event planner. They specialize in this and can take the work off your hands, freeing you up to focus on other things.
- If you don't want to worry about cleaning up after your guests, rent a space for your party, such as a conference room in a restaurant or an outdoor area in a park. If you want to hold the party in your home, you can always schedule a maid service to come over the day after the party and take care of the clean-up.

Procrastination

Have you ever found yourself putting off important tasks that you know you need to get done. Some people only procrastinate once in a while, and it doesn't have much effect on their lives. Others procrastinate on almost every task and the procrastination can take a toll on both their personal and professional lives.

People who tend to procrastinate are not "lazy" by nature. In fact, they can work just as hard as anyone else. However, they spend their time on the wrong tasks. This can be because they don't understand the difference between urgent tasks that need to be completed now and tasks that can wait for another day. Instead of taking care of the urgent tasks, they spend too much time "putting out small fires."

Other times, people procrastinate when they are overwhelmed by a task. They may not know where to start and can almost become fearful or paralyzed at the thought of starting the job. Instead of tackling it piece by piece, they avoid it all together by keeping themselves busy with other menial tasks.

It may sound silly, but some people procrastinate because they are afraid to fail, or even to succeed. Perfectionists also tend to procrastinate because they feel they will be unable to do a good enough job.

Someone with a very messy house may actually suffer from one of these extreme types of procrastination. They may be so terrified of tackling the job of cleaning, that they ended up letting the mess get out of control.

It is never easy to overcome a problem, and procrastination is no exception. In order to deal with it, the procrastinator must figure out the reason(s) behind the procrastination.

By being honest with yourself and analyzing how you handle situations, you can recognize when you are starting to procrastinate.

Some signs include:

- When you have a work project due, but instead of working on it, you spend your day doing unimportant tasks that could be completed another day.
- Reading an e-mail or item on your to-do list several times, without starting to work on it.
- When you do sit down to start an important task, you find an excuse to get back up, or you start surfing the net or checking emails.
- You find yourself waiting to be “inspired” or to “get in the mood” to finish your task.

If you are procrastinating because you are working on a task that you don't enjoy, delegate it to someone or hire someone to do it for you.

If that isn't possible, you will have to find a way to get over your procrastination and get the job done. Here are some tips:

- Motivate yourself with a reward. If you are working on a large project, treat yourself to a movie when you are finished. To be effective, you cannot give yourself any lee way. Don't allow yourself to go until the work is done.
- Find an accountability partner who will check in with you to see how you are progressing. If you know you have to be accountable to someone, you will be more motivated to get the work done.
- Think about the things that will happen if you do not get the work done. If you don't get your child's birthday presents wrapped before the party, they will be disappointed. If you don't get work done for a client, you may lose future work from this client in the future.

Learn To Say “No”

Many people take on too much. This is usually because they are afraid to say “no” when someone asks them to do something. They may feel afraid of hurting someone else’s feelings or think the person will be mad at them.

Some people feel guilty when they say “no.” Here are some ways to start saying “no” without feeling guilty about it:

- If your child’s teacher asks you to organize the school bake sale, tell them you would love to, but your schedule is full. You don’t need to give any further explanation.
- If Mondays are the day you and your family have game night, and your boss asks you to work late that night, simply say “I have another commitment.” Your boss doesn’t need to know that you’re playing Candyland with your three year old.

- If you're working on something and your child wants you to run them across town and drop them off at the movies, it is okay to say "no." Your child probably has plenty of video games and DVDs to keep them occupied.
- It is okay to turn off the computer, turn off your cell phone and enjoy some peace and quiet.

Don't Be Afraid to Ask for Help

You are not the only one in your household who is responsible for getting things done. If you are a two-parent household, let your spouse or significant other help out with some things. Your children can also take on some age-appropriate chores.

Don't feel that asking for help is a sign of weakness. Everyone needs help from time to time. When your family or friends let you know that they need help with something, you are probably the first to

volunteer. Let someone help you for a change. They will more than likely be very happy to lend a hand.

Avoiding Time Traps

We face many different time traps each day. It can be easy, and sometimes a lot of fun, to fall into these traps and waste time.

However, that isn't the most proactive way to spend your day. Here are some tips on avoiding these time traps:

- Maintain your focus by sticking to the fifteen minute rule.
When you focus on a whole project, it can be very overwhelming. Instead, focus on working for fifteen minutes. You'll be surprised by how much you can accomplish in that time frame.
- On the other hand, when it comes to surfing the net or checking email, limit yourself to fifteen minutes. You will be able to find the information you are looking for or respond to your

important emails. When your fifteen minutes is up, get back to the tasks on your to-do list.

- Thanks to technology such as [DVRs and Tivo](#), we no longer have to set our schedules around our favorite shows. Simply record the shows you would like to watch throughout the week and watch them when you have time. The bonus is that you get to fast forward through all the commercials.

Miscellaneous Tips

The following are some miscellaneous tips to help you save even more time:

- Getting your kids ready for school in the morning can be hectic. To help speed things up, try to get the majority of work done at night. Lay out the kids clothes, make sure their homework is done, and hang their backpacks by the door.

- If your children take their lunch to school, pack as much of it as possible the night before.

Instead of driving to the video store to rent movies, sign up for an online rental service such as Netflix.

If you have a doctor's appointment, call about a half hour before leaving to make sure the doctor is running on time. The nurse may tell you upfront that the appointments are running a half hour late. You can use this half hour to do something more productive than sitting in your doctor's waiting room.

Conclusion

As you can see from these tips, time management isn't just about planners and schedules. Time management is about thinking of time in a whole new way.

When you begin to take on good time management skills, you create a new attitude towards time. You begin to become more conscious of time and how long it takes to complete specific tasks.

You will be able to easily decide which tasks are more important than others and will not feel guilty about delegating certain tasks to others or asking for help.

You will be able to pick the important things to spend your time on and will be able to say "no" to the things that aren't worth your time.

It won't happen overnight and it may not be easy, but there will be a time when you feel more balanced and less stress.