



# BalanceWorks® Newsletter

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## Time Management

Having too little time in the day is one of the most common complaints in today's fast paced world. Finding the time to complete all of your projects at work, while spending quality time with your family, and taking some time for yourself can sometimes feel like a daunting and even impossible task. Although no-one can actually increase the amount of hours in each day, developing solid time management skills can increase the amount of free time in your day, which leaves time to get more accomplished and even relax.

Time management is the use of tools and methods to increase efficiency and productivity. Luckily the skills necessary to effectively manage your time are completely learnable and include scheduling, goal setting, prioritizing, planning, and decision making. Good time management skills enable you to take control of your time and your life. The benefits of developing time management skills include:

- Greater work/life balance
- Reduced stress levels
- Increased energy
- Greater productivity
- Easier evaluation of your work and progress
- Greater flexibility in your schedule to respond to unexpected events and new opportunities

### Time Management Tips:

There are a wide variety of tactics and techniques that can be used to help you manage your time. Try a combination of any or all of these and see what works for you.

**Make Lists** – Write down everything that you want to accomplish. Once you can visualize all the tasks that must be completed, you can begin to prioritize. Make an effort to ensure that your lists never become too long or you will feel as though you're not making any progress. Instead, begin to break up your tasks into a few separate

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lists such as: Tasks to Complete Today, Tasks to Complete This Week, and Long Term Goals. This way you can see which tasks are most urgent and focus on them first.

**Use the Right Tools** – It is imperative to keep track of all appointments, deadlines, and events. The most effective way to do this is to place this information on a calendar. You can decide if you prefer to write everything down on a paper calendar or if you prefer an electronic device. The benefit of electronic calendars is that they will often alert you to an appointment just prior to it starting so you have time to prepare and so you do not miss it even if you don't happen to be looking at your calendar right then.

**Place Deadlines on Yourself** – Set personal completion deadlines for projects before they are actually due. This technique will alleviate stress by providing a buffer between your personal deadline and the real deadline to make any last minute changes and check over your work. If you stick to your self-imposed deadlines, you will never be late on an assignment or completing a project again.

**Avoid Procrastination** – When you have a tough or unpleasant task, tackle it head on, instead of saving it for later. All too often we put off the most difficult assignments to focus on something easier, but find ourselves still thinking about the challenging task that is looming over our heads. In this scenario neither priority is accomplished with time being wasted worrying about the project we are avoiding.

**Focus on One Task at a Time** – People work more efficiently when they are able to dedicate their full concentration on a single task. The ability to multi-task is important, but when you need to complete a project, it is much faster and the results are better when you devote all of your attention to it.

**Delegate** – Take the time to realize that you can NOT do everything yourself. It's OK to ask for help and delegate non essential tasks to other capable people. Evaluate your to-do lists both at work and at home and figure out what can be delegated. For example, if you cook dinner every night, delegate the task of preparing the children for bed to your spouse, so that you can have some time to relax. Likewise at work, trust in your team or others in your department to handle the task that you simply don't have the time for. Remember, delegating is not giving up; it is giving you the opportunity to focus on more important projects and to focus on yourself.

**Reward Yourself** – After you finish a major project, complete an entire to-do list, or accomplish a long term goal, treat yourself! Positive reinforcement is a great technique to help people manage their time. Rewards keep you motivated because you have something concrete to look forward to. Treat yourself to a pedicure or a game of pool with your friends on the Fridays that you conquer your entire weekly to-do list.

Once these skills become routine, you will begin to experience an increase in overall available time and your productivity will skyrocket.

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