



BALANCE

Employee Assistance Program Newsletter
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The EAP is a professional and confidential counseling service available to you and your family to help resolve personal problems before they affect your health, family or job. There is no cost to you or members of your family for services provided by the EAP.

In those cases where referrals are necessary, they can often be made to prescreened professionals or community organizations whose charges may be covered within the allowances of your health insurance. Call **845-638-8880** to arrange an appointment with an EAP specialist.

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From the Director

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This issue of BALANCE will focus on the importance of effective time management in the coordination of tasks and activities. Proper time management helps us establish a clear path to maximize our efforts, enabling us to get more work done in less time. Benefits of time management include improved work-life balance, greater focus and productivity, and more free time due to less distraction when completing tasks. Effective time management allows us to achieve goals faster, therefore making us more productive.

Setting clear and realistic goals, prioritizing tasks and breaking them down allows us to focus on one thing at a time, avoid distractions, check one's progress and results and adjust plans as needed. Ultimately, effective time management allows us to reduce stress by getting more done with less distractions.

In this issue we've included articles involving the fundamentals of effective time management, organizational skills for one's self, work and home management as well as minimizing procrastination. We hope you enjoy this issue and find useful skills to allow you to reach goals faster and reduce stress for better decision making and more energy for free time.

"Time is the most valuable thing a man can spend"

*Theophrastus, Greek philosopher, colleague
and successor to Aristotle*

Fundamentals of Time Management

Time management is fundamentally the art of organizing and managing priorities, not time. Effective time management enables you to function smarter, not harder, so that you can get more done in less time. Successful time management requires an important shift in focus from action to results, particularly when time is tight and pressure is high. Being busy isn't the same as being productive, in fact, the opposite is often true. Effective time management is the art of receiving the optimal return on the time you have invested.

The following skills are useful for successful time management:

- **Keep a to-do list.** Without a to-do list we can often become unfocused and unreliable. To-do lists should be planned, thoughtful, action oriented lists, rather than a catch-all for unfinished things. Avoid too many entries on the list, as it will make it difficult to use. An effective list ensures that you haven't forgotten anything, and can point out things that were left undone. It's best to allow 10 minutes at the end of the day to organize tasks for the next day. Writing down tasks helps to improve concentration and focus.
- **Set personal goals.** Having a personal vision helps us to understand and establish our priorities. Without this personal vision for our future, we can feel that our actions are without purpose. When you know where you want to be in the future you are better able to prioritize, and manage time and resources wisely. Setting goals helps us decide what is worth spending time on and what can wait.
- **Manage distractions and establish boundaries with others.** Avoiding distractions that take you away from your goals is critical. Many of us lose as much as two hours a day due to distractions. It may be wise to turn off e-mail notifications and/or chat messages when you need to focus your time and inform others if they are distracting you. Similarly, healthy boundaries and setting limits with others is necessary.
- **Minimize Procrastination.** Procrastination interferes with effective time management as urgent tasks are not done in a timely manner. Generally, if it is important and it takes less than 5 minutes, do it now. We can limit procrastination by breaking down larger tasks into smaller ones and/or into blocks. It's okay to start anywhere, because the goal is to simply create momentum. When we procrastinate, instead of working on important things, we often end up performing trivial activities. Procrastination can also lead to guilt, which can then lead us to dread starting the task, potentially derailing us from completing it.
- **Learn to delegate.** Delegating is the art of getting things done the right way, at the right time, by the right people. Delegating can help us transcend our personal limits by harnessing the efforts of others and allows us the opportunity to accomplish more than we could alone. Our ability to concentrate time, energy, and focus is increased. Tasks that require more effort and additional expertise are more easily completed. Avoid common barriers to delegating, which include our belief that we can do it better, quicker, or easier if we do it ourselves.
- **Be aware of multitasking.** Our fast paced world often has us believe that those who multitask are more efficient and effective. The truth is quite different, as it does not make us more productive. The quality of our work often diminishes, costing us valuable time, rather than saving it. Because our minds must re-orient when we multitask, we cannot devote our full concentration and focus to the task. Therefore, quality often suffers, as switching to more complex tasks often leads to a big drop in quality. Additionally, dealing with multiple things at once can cause us to feel overwhelmed, drained, and frazzled, which can further interfere with effective time management.
- **Take breaks.** Taking breaks and recharging is a critical aspect of time management. Avoid dismissing breaks as "wasting time". It is impossible for any of us to organize our time wisely without giving our brains time to recharge. Schedule breaks to remind you to rest for a moment. If necessary, set an alarm, as even 5 minutes every 1-2 hours is helpful. Studies have shown that when workers were reminded to take short breaks they had 13% more accuracy. Going for a short walk, grabbing a beverage, sitting and meditating or practicing deep breathing, all contribute to developing effective time management skills.

- **Organize a schedule and set priorities for your time.** Maintaining a schedule on a regular basis, particularly at the start of every week or month, will assist you in organizing your time and understanding achievable goals. Using calendars and organizers, both physical and electronic is quite helpful. Start by identifying time you will have available to address a task, then next write down exactly what must be done to complete it. Include any time that may be needed to communicate with others and when possible, block out contingency time to allow for an unexpected occurrence. Leaving space in your schedule for unpredicted events will give you flexibility to rearrange tasks and adjust as needed.

To review, time management is managing priorities, not time. Actively managing your priorities will pay off in the long run. If you or a loved one could benefit from additional guidance or support regarding time management skills, contact the EAP at 845-638-8880 or EAP@montefiorenyack.org.



Organizing and Managing Your Time

Balancing work, family, and personal life has always been challenging. Few would argue that it's even more challenging today. You may find yourself doing the jobs of many, working overtime or continuing on in an office environment where morale is low. These stresses and others can continue to mount, especially with the current economic and political challenges and uncertainty.

There is no better time than now to begin taking care of your health and well-being, and to make "self-care" a priority. Many of us associate self-care with getting adequate exercise and proper nutrition, but it's more than that. Self-care practices generally take place before or after work, not during. However, being at work does not negate the need for continued self-care. Considering the total number of hours we spend weekly at work, it's important to our well-being to practice good self-care while at work as well as outside of work.



Self-Management

Most importantly, take care of your physical and mental needs first.

1. Eat well. Consider replacing that candy jar with fruit, raisins, almonds, or other healthy snack items.
2. Drink at least 8-oz glasses of water per day.
3. Exercise, even if it's just a short walk before work or during lunch. This not only increases endorphins, but exercise actually helps you sleep better at night.
4. Block out time in your schedule for "personal" time, just as you would block out time for a meeting. This will allow you to think about something other than work or chores for a few moments.
5. Make time for silence. Sometimes sitting in the back yard to watch the squirrels or taking a walk after dinner helps to drain noise of the day from the mind.
6. Practice extreme self-care, especially when you are under additional stress. Culturally we have been taught that being selfish is equal to not being responsible. In actuality, taking care of you first is the foundation of responsibility.

Work Management

1. We all have ways of managing various aspects of our work. Here are some ideas that may be inspiring. As you become more aware of your own unique self-care needs, you may consider expanding this list by adding your own.
2. Set and maintain professional boundaries. Do not extend yourself in areas outside your job title or professional role.
3. Balance your work schedule and life demands so no one day or one week is too much.
4. Make time throughout the work day for intermittent self-care breaks (e.g., lunch or afternoon walk, social time with coworkers, or listening to relaxing music).
5. Create a healthy work space for yourself. Start by organizing your desk or work space.
6. Plan ahead. Develop a short list (2-3 items) of top priorities each day.
7. Minimize procrastination and maximize a sense of control.
8. Before committing to a project, assignment or committee position, etc., first consider your needs and available resources, and whether it will lead to overextending yourself
9. Separate work from your personal life.

Home Management

Strive to achieve a sense of freedom both physically and mentally. This entails releasing yourself from the clutter that builds up in your home.

1. To de-clutter properly, you must first empty out the entire drawer, closet, box or whatever you want to work on.
2. Make sure you have large bags or containers for the giveaways and items to be returned to other rooms.
3. Clear off excess from counters and shelves. This will immediately make your room look more organized and give you a feeling of being more in control.
4. Always store items where they will be used.

Doing just a few of these things regularly, to renew your energy, manage your time and revitalize your spirit is essential. If you'd like to speak further about these concerns, feel free to contact us at 845-638-8880 or EAP@montefiorenyack.org.

References:

7 Steps to Better Employee Self Care in the Workplace. Psychology Today. Dana Gionta, PhD

Tips for Organizing and Managing Your Life: Self/Home/Work. Society for Technical Communication. Patti Loverlink

The Clash over Procrastination: Different Strokes for Different Folks

Generally speaking, procrastinators and non-procrastinators clash over when something gets done, because they each assign a certain value to their timing. Task-driven non-procrastinators often do not trust deadline driven procrastinators to get the job done or do it well. Additionally, non-procrastinators may often assume that the procrastinator doesn't care about them "enough" to get something done right away and may even take their actions personally.

There is however, no universal "right way" to do things. Similarly, these differing task accomplishment styles can show up in the workplace and prove challenging when working in a team environment.

One way to deal with these differences is by understanding them. Recognizing that "your" way may not be the "only way." As we attempt to get along better both at home and at work, challenging one's own thinking is the first place to start rather than trying to change someone else.

Check your own style. Do you identify as a procrastinator or non-procrastinator? Then spend some time asking yourself to explore underlying thoughts or beliefs that could be beneficial to know by adding more flexibility and looking at things from another's point of view.

Consider the following questions:

| For Procrastinators: | For Non-Procrastinators: |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What emotions do I have about what I am putting off? • What are the advantages of doing it now? • What are the disadvantages of procrastinating? • Am I making excuses? • Am I putting myself down for procrastinating? • Can I break this task down? • Can I start for 5 minutes? • Am I doing the worst first? • What consequences/rewards can I give myself? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Am I playing the "who's right" and "who's wrong" game? • Am I being aggressive, passive aggressive or assertive in my approach? • Am I demanding to have things done my way? • Am I listening? • Can I be curious about these differences rather than personalizing them? |

If you are having difficulty with your own or someone else's procrastinations style, consider contacting the EAP at 845-638-8880 or email EAP@montefiorenyack.org for confidential counseling and support.

Resources:

Lamia, Mary (PhD) Psychology Today. "Clashing: Procrastinators living with Non-Procrastinators" August 15, 2018.

Sarmiento, Robert F. (adapted from) Reality Check; Twenty Questions to Screw Your Head on Straight, Houston: Bunker Hill Press, 1993.

Time Management at Work

- **Make a "To Do" List Every Day.**

Put things that are most important at the top and do them first. If it's easier, use a planner to track all of your tasks. Don't forget to reward yourself for your accomplishments.

- **Use Spare Minutes Wisely.**

Get some reading done on the bus or train ride home from work, for example, and you'll kill two birds with one stone.

- **Find the Right Time.**

You'll work more efficiently if you determine when you do your best work. For example, if your brain handles accounting or budgeting better in the morning, don't wait to do it until afternoon.

- **Review Your Notes Every Day.**

You'll reinforce what you've learned, therefore, you'll need less time to prepare. You'll be ready and on top of your game, particularly at upcoming meetings.

- **Get a Good Night's Sleep.**

Running on empty makes the day seem longer and your tasks more difficult.

- **Communicate Your Schedule to Others.**

If phone calls are proving to be a distraction, take calls at a specific time. For example, from 2-3 p.m.

- **Don't Waste Time Agonizing.**

Have you ever wasted an entire evening by worrying about something that you're supposed to be doing the following day at work? Instead of agonizing and procrastinating, just do it!

- **Keep Things in Perspective.**

Setting goals that are unrealistic sets you up for failure. While it's good to set high goals for yourself, be sure not to overdo it. Set goals that are challenging yet obtainable.

Should you or a colleague benefit from confidential guidance or time management coaching contact the EAP at 845-638-8880 or email EAP@montefiorenyack.org.

