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Time management and the power of personal goal-setting

by Katie Jones - Advanced Training Associate

What is time management?

It is about managing your time so that you are able to achieve the important goals in your life – career, family, personal achievement. The question you need to ask yourself is "*What is important in my life?*" The answer to that question will dictate how best to spend your time. The satisfaction that can be yours through goals set and achieved on an ongoing basis is not to be underestimated. Your mind is like a heat-seeking missile, which needs a focus. Provide this powerful part of you with goals to achieve and it will set about ways to do this and opportunities will come your way, seemingly as if by magic that will enable you to reach your goals on a step by step basis. We often fail to recognise that we have already taken steps that lead to those opportunities being presented to us.

Why is it important?

The reason why managing your time is such an important life skill is that it enables you to have balance in your life and to recognise where the imbalance is! Where is your focus – is it just on work and family are put to one side? Do social and leisure activities have a place in your life? Time management is a skill many people have to work hard at, however, it can be learnt, developed and improved on an ongoing basis.

The phrase "*If you want a job doing, ask a busy person*" is confirmation of how important time management is – these are the people who get things done because they know how to organise their time. Ask yourself the question "*Would I like to achieve my full potential?*" If the answer is "Yes", then ask yourself another question "*Are you managing your time and activities to assist you in fulfilling those goals – or are you allowing yourself to drift rather aimlessly and hope that an opportunity 'will come along'?*"

A precious resource!

Time is your most precious resource – you only have one chance on this earth and time once spent, is gone forever. You may think that money falls into the same category – that is not true. When you have spent some money, although that particular amount of money is gone, you still have the ability to earn more to replace that, which enables you to buy other things, so it is replaceable. With time, that is not the case – once gone, it is gone forever – you cannot go back and relive yesterday!

If you are too busy to plan your life, then that's exactly why you need to stop and take stock – so you can do the thinking to establish what is important in your life – and start planning towards achieving those goals.

Setting goals

This is an invaluable technique as it provides focus for your mind in order to start it working out what needs to be done to achieve those goals. The mind is like a heat-seeking missile, which needs something to lock-on to in order for you to achieve your goals in life.

It is far better to prepare a long list of goals and achieve some of those, rather than say there is no point in doing it because it will not happen. The only reason they do not happen is down the lack of focus you are providing for your mind. Without goals, your life will drift aimlessly resulting in a feeling of life 'controlling' you and a certain amount of resentment with such phrases as "*life is unfair*" being common in your vocabulary! If you feel like this, then examine your thinking and attitude towards life and then ask the question "*What can I do to improve my life?*" Everyone has the ability to take hold of life and make things happen.

Motivation and rewards

Setting goals and working towards their achievement gives you a great feeling of satisfaction and motivation, apart from other benefits such as increased confidence and self-esteem. To enhance your motivation to keep going towards your goals, it is an excellent part of the process to decide on rewards you will give yourself as you achieve your goals or stages along the way. Rewards need to be in proportion to the stage or goal that you have achieved.

Benefits

There are many benefits to be gained in all areas of your life – professional, family, social, leisure providing balance and success.

Finally, recognise that good time management is one of the key factors in reducing stress in your life. By planning your life around those goals that are important to you helps you to recognise that you cannot do everything in life – and your 'in-tray' will not be empty on the day you die! Give yourself those opportunities so that when looking back on your life in your 70's or 80's, you can be glad of the things that you did, rather than wishing that you had done this, that or the other.

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