Finding Balance in Your Workday
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SYMBOL KEY

Symbols used in this workbook:

Introduction: A brief overview of the session you are about to begin

Learning objectives: A guide to a session’s key points intended to help focus your attention on important elements and essential take-aways

Summary: A quick review of what you have learned in the current session

Personal Action Plan: An opportunity to apply your newly learned skills and knowledge to your specific work environment
Introduction

Do you feel stressed, stretched and overwhelmed at work? Do you feel like you have to multitask so often that nothing is getting done at your personal best? This one-hour audio will highlight valuable strategies and time-saving tools that will have you feeling like you're back in control and making the best of your workday.

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<th>Learning Objectives</th>
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<tr>
<td>List action steps that can relieve stress</td>
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<tr>
<td>Describe how multitasking can be ineffective</td>
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<tr>
<td>Compare methods to avoid interruptions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Explore techniques to become more organized</td>
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<td>Create a plan to use strategies and tools to balance your workday</td>
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One definition of stress is a condition or feeling experienced when a person perceives that “demands exceed the personal and social resources the individual is able to mobilize.” What is unique about this definition of stress lies in the fact that your personal definition may change based on your current life situation or even your tolerance to stress that day.

When stress is not dealt with in an effective manner, it can lead to physical and emotional exhaustion. Eventually, a person begins to experience symptoms of burnout.

**Consider using these 12 action steps to keep your stress under control:**

1. Determine why you are always in a hurry. Don't create stress by rushing unnecessarily or not planning ahead.
2. Identify your support group. If you can vent to someone you trust, it may relieve some of your stress.
3. Figure out how much sleep you need and try to establish a regular sleep routine
4. Eat nutritious food and drink plenty of water
5. Exercise on a regular basis
6. Don't give up on hobbies that are relaxing. Find the time to maintain them even if you have to reduce the amount of time.
7. Focus on one task at a time
8. Use imagery. You can visualize a more calming environment to help take the edge off.
9. Do some deep breathing throughout the day. This helps provide oxygen to your body as well as lower the effects of stress.
10. Seek privacy when possible. Sometimes you just need a break, so take one in a quiet space.
11. Avoid alcohol, tobacco and caffeine
12. Always set aside some “you” time! You need to have some time to yourself with no distractions or outside influences to be able to relax and decompress.
Multitasking Works—Myth or Reality?

Multitasking means doing several tasks at the same time. It’s a buzzword for a “skill” that many people strive to use. But it might surprise you to know that recent research shows that multitasking usually does not save time (which is the basic premise of multitasking).

Because the brain cannot fully focus when multitasking, it takes longer to complete tasks. When people attempt to complete many tasks at one time, or alternate quickly between tasks, errors go way up and it takes much longer—often double the time—to finish the jobs than if they were carried out sequentially. This is largely because the brain must restart and then refocus.

According to the studies:

1. The time it takes to “switch” your mental processes between tasks is time-consuming and inefficient
2. Multitasking can lead to additional stress and irritability
3. Multitasking can lead to disorganization and errors

But in the real world, most people would agree that there are times when multitasking is a necessity.

When you multitask, you can be more efficient by:

1. Multitasking simple tasks
2. Performing those tasks that you do often. They will be easier to carry out due to repetition and familiarity.
How to Eliminate the Big Three Productivity Killers: Procrastination, Poor Planning and Personal Disorganization

You’re on the way to work and mentally planning your day. You’re feeling good because today, no matter what, you will finish that project that has been hanging over your head, tackle those e-mails that you have yet to answer, catch up on your reports and finish the budget that was due yesterday. On your way home that evening, you realize, with a heavy heart, that you only succeeded in answering your e-mails.

If you find you have more days like this than you would like, chances are you’re guilty of the big three productivity killers:

1. **Procrastination**: Procrastinating is so easy to do and so hard to avoid, especially when the task is something you really don’t want to do. When you feel yourself procrastinating, ask yourself, “What am I avoiding?”

2. **Poor planning**: Many people simply don’t plan ahead. But this is a vital step in using your time wisely. It’s also important that your planning be realistic! Don’t set yourself up for failure by making unreasonable expectations for yourself.

3. **Personal disorganization**: Disorganization is a huge time waster. In addition, disorganization adds greatly to your stress level, which leads to further disorganization, which leads to more stress, etc.

The secret productivity killer

**Indifference**: You may believe that there really isn’t anything that can be done to improve your productivity. This is the way it is and others around you have the same crazy schedules, so it must be normal. You try to improve, but you think it takes too much effort and only yields small differences.

The good news is, that is simply not true.

- There are a lot of **proven tools and techniques** that can improve your productivity
- You have to be willing to **put in the initial effort** to find and implement them
- You can’t give up if something doesn’t work the first time
Three Proven Methods for Keeping Interruptions From Wreaking Havoc on Your Priorities

They always seem to happen on the day you have a thousand things to do—interruption after interruption after interruption. Most people allow others to interrupt them because they don’t want to seem rude. But the fact is that sometimes you simply must put your work schedule first and refuse to let interruptions sabotage your productivity.

**Try these methods:**

1. Announce a time limit. “I only have five minutes.”

2. Use the “walk-talk” method. “I was just on my way to a meeting. Let’s talk while we walk.”

3. Get to the point assertively. “Meagan, what can I do to help you?”

Deadlines: How to Tell the Real From the Fake

“I love deadlines. I like the whooshing sound they make as they fly by.”

– Douglas Adams

- A real deadline is based on outside factors:
  - The new software must be installed by the end of the month in order for accounting to meet payroll demands
- A fake deadline is an arbitrary deadline set without justifiable reason:
  - There’s no reason my team can’t churn this out in under two weeks

People often make assumptions about deadlines. For example: When your manager asks you to get something done, you assume it has a high priority or he or she wouldn’t be asking.

By not clarifying urgency, your day becomes about “fighting fires” instead of completing your plan. If you don’t work on changing fake deadlines into real deadlines, prioritizing won’t help manage your time.
How do you change them?

Use questions to clarify the priority when someone else is giving you a deadline.

- When do you need this by?
- Which task do you want me to complete first?
- Is it okay to push back the task I am working on now?
- Is there any room for flexibility if issues come up?
- Is it okay if I assign this to my staff?
- Have you made a time commitment to someone else? This question is useful when they have committed to a deadline or deliverable date and they are “delegating” the task to you.

Remedies for “Hurry Sickness”

Have you ever been in such a hurry that it took you twice as long to accomplish the simplest of tasks? Or have you ever felt so overwhelmed that you didn’t even know where to begin? These types of feelings are what lead to “hurry sickness,” a feeling that you have to always be in a rush.

*Continuous partial attention* is that state of mind most of us enter while we’re in front of a computer screen, or checking out at the grocery store with a cell phone pressed to an ear, or blogging the proceedings of a conference. We’re aware of several things at once, shifting our attention to whatever’s most urgent—perhaps the chime of incoming e-mail or the beep that indicates the cell phone is low on juice. It’s not a reflective state.

**Slow down and be more productive:**

- Recognize that rushing creates more mistakes and more work
- Keep a prioritized list and focus on one task at a time
- Elicit help from others when appropriate
- Celebrate closure of tasks
- Lose the watch: Learn and use relaxation techniques that work for you
- Look at the big picture in your life: Work to live, don’t live to work
Your personal effectiveness is how well you do what you do. It’s important to understand that everything in your life begins with you—how you work, how you react, how you view the world—and reflects on your personal effectiveness.

**Improve your personal effectiveness:**

- Make the most of your unscheduled time. Be sure you ALWAYS allow time for yourself. This will reduce stress and ultimately increase your effectiveness.
- Be results-oriented. To do this, you MUST set goals. Without them, you don’t know where you’re going, how to get there or if you have arrived.
- Focus on one or two tasks at a time. Focusing on more than one or two tasks can lead to confusion, shoddy work and frustration since nothing ever seems to get finished.
- Identify your challenges and work to overcome them. Be committed to learning new skills, gaining knowledge and increasing your abilities.
- Mentally prepare

**Self-defeating activities that contribute to negativity and impact your effectiveness:**

- Being a workaholic—Spending all of your time at work but making little progress
- Lack of goals—Provides an excuse for not taking charge
- Being a perfectionist—Setting unrealistic goals that no one can meet, including you. The goal should be excellence, not perfection.
Is finding something on your desktop like finding a needle in a haystack? Then it’s time to dig in and get organized. Organization seems to come more naturally to some people than others. If you’re not fortunate enough to be one of those people (and you can’t even see your desktop), it’s time to use the divide and conquer method of organization:

1. Break the process into small increments
   - “This morning, I will spend 20 minutes filing that stack of reports.”
   - “This afternoon, I will spend 10 minutes re-shelving my research material.”

2. Do the task you dread the most first
   - “I hate going through two weeks of accumulated mail. But I’ll do it first since it will be a huge relief to have it done.”

3. Promise yourself a reward with each increment of organization accomplished
   - “As soon as I get these e-mails answered, I will go to lunch.”
**Personal Action Plan—Finding Balance in Your Workday**

It’s difficult to maintain balance while trying to meet demanding expectations. This audio seminar has provided many strategies and tools to save you time and make your day more productive. Use this opportunity to put your personal plan into action.

Make a list of five tasks that you will have to complete tomorrow.

**Things you should consider:**

- What will take the most time?
- What will take the least time? Remember to account for interruptions.
- Which have the closest deadlines?
- Which have the biggest payoffs?
- What can I delegate?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task to complete</th>
<th>Strategy or tool I will use to save time or keep organized</th>
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Review your plan by the end of tomorrow to see what you have accomplished. Analyze how the day went and think about what you will need to do differently the next day.

This unique audio conference has provided strategies and tools to begin to get a grip on your workday. While time management and organizational skills may be difficult to implement, you have gained the knowledge and tools to make it happen. Keep your workday balanced and productive by implementing your new knowledge and tools.
Hire your e-mail program as your new “electronic assistant”

Almost everyone has a powerful but under-utilized assistant right at their fingertips. Your e-mail program is capable of carrying out many activities an assistant would do and can be customized to your particular needs. If you aren’t familiar with the variety of features your e-mail program provides, take time to read the on-line help section. It will save you time in the long-run.

Most e-mail programs allow you to:

- **Set up meetings**: This is much quicker than making phone calls
- **Schedule reminders**: This can be a vital help in your busy day, reminding you of meetings, tasks, activities, phone calls, etc. Set your e-mail program’s calendar to “remind you” at a specific time.
- **Keep track of tasks**: The tasks feature can help you keep track of your tasks and their progress
- **Use folders**: Use folders to organize your e-mail messages and locate them quickly
- **Create filters**: A filter is an easy way to view only those items or files stored in folders that meet conditions you specify
- **Apply rules**: Use rules to tell your program what to do with e-mail when it arrives, e.g., moving all mail from John into a specific folder
- **Color-code your calendar**: This helps you tell at a glance what type of activities you have scheduled
- **Keep copies of sent e-mail**: Always a good idea since you may need to refer back to an e-mail you sent
- **Use an automatic signature**: This feature saves you time by automatically typing your name, title, company, phone number, etc., on each e-mail you send. You can set up more than one signature.
- **Set recurring appointments**: Use this feature to set recurring appointments without having to add the appointment to each date
- **View others’ schedules**: This can help you schedule meetings by seeing when others are available
- **Create multiple calendars**: Set up a second calendar for non-work items and set reminders
- **Make a to-do list**: Use your program’s To-Do List feature to keep track of tasks
- **Auto-reply when you’re away from the office**: Use the Out of Office Assistant to let others know that you are gone
The 10 “Golden Rules” of Time Management

These 10 Golden Rules can help you learn how to best manage your time. In doing so, you will be able to free up precious time to spend on the truly important tasks and projects on your plate. Use these rules and watch your productivity grow.

1. Know how you currently spend your time. In order to manage your time, you must first know how you spend it. You may wish to keep a log for a week to see the ways you use your time.

2. Identify your “prime time.” Some people work better first thing in the morning while others tend to “wake up” later in the day. Identify your best time and use it to carry out your most important or difficult tasks.

3. Do tomorrow’s planning tonight. This allows you to start off working first thing the next morning without having to decide what to do first.

4. Ask yourself “Why am I doing what I’m doing right now?” While this may seem like a silly question, it is, in fact, a valid one. It’s easy to get sidetracked on less vital issues. Asking yourself this question can help you refocus your attention where it is most beneficial.

5. Continually look at ways of freeing up time

6. Plan your work, but work your plan. Don’t spend your time making a plan unless you actually intend to put it to use.

7. Delegate whenever possible. Don’t fall into the trap of feeling you have to do everything since no one else can do it as well as you do. Not only is this not true, you’re causing yourself additional stress by trying to do it all.

8. Delegate wisely. It’s poor planning—and unfair to your employees—to delegate tasks to them that they don’t have the skills, time, authority or resources to do.

9. Identify your high-payoff items. Spend most of your time and energy on those items with the biggest return.

10. Concentrate on results, not on being busy. While you may work hard and go home exhausted after a long day at work, at the end of the day, consider what you actually accomplished.
Strategies for Taking Control of Phone Calls and Voice Mails

Responding to phone calls as you receive them:

- Just because the phone is ringing does not mean that you have to answer it. (Disclaimer: This obviously depends on your job; for example, it would not apply to a customer service representative.)
- If allowed, screen your calls and return them at a designated time. If you have Caller ID, this can help you determine the urgency of picking up the call.
- Put your phone on “Do Not Disturb” if possible when you are concentrating on a specific task to avoid interruptions. If that is not an available option, turn the ringer volume down.

Making and returning calls:

- Block certain times of the day to make outgoing calls or return messages
- Be sure you call at the best time to catch the person you need to speak to. If you do leave a message, be brief and to the point.
- Offer your e-mail address as an option to respond instead of calling you back
- If you are unable to reach someone, try calling first thing in the morning, over lunch or after hours. A lot of companies have an “after-hours” system that allows you to enter a person’s extension directly.
- Don’t call during “peak” meeting times, typically from 9:00 – 11:00 a.m. or 1:00 – 3:00 p.m.
- Plan ahead so you know everything you need to say or ask. When checking your voice mail, take good notes.

Sometimes a phone call may not be the best way to reach someone. Always consider if the information can be relayed in an e-mail. As with voice mail, keep your e-mails brief and to the point and provide a time frame of when you need the information.
# Vacation Checklist

*Use this tool to make your vacation truly a vacation.*

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<th>Task:</th>
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<td>☐ Leave an Out-of-Office e-mail reply</td>
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<td>☐ Leave an Out-of-Office voice message</td>
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<td>☐ Arrange for someone to water plants</td>
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<td>☐ Make necessary arrangements to allow others access to your computer and calendar</td>
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<td>☐ Place files needed by others on the shared drive</td>
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<td>☐ Leave office/desk key with someone</td>
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<td>☐ Leave a phone number where you can be reached in case of an emergency</td>
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*If you have a temp fill in for you:*

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<th>Task:</th>
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<tr>
<td>☐ Spell out daily responsibilities</td>
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<td>☐ Leave list of important phone numbers</td>
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<td>☐ Let the temp know whom to contact with questions/concerns</td>
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<td>☐ Ask someone to show the temp where restrooms, vending machines, copiers, printers, fax machine are located</td>
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<td>☐ Other:</td>
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This handy checklist will keep you proactive in maintaining a healthy computer.

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