

IMPROVING YOUR TIME MANAGEMENT SKILLS

The Importance of To-Do Lists

1. They are essential to good time-management skills.
2. Provide a guideline for what needs to be completed in a given amount of time.
3. You may want to create a list weekly or daily.
4. Completing a list each day can help you see how much you have gotten done.
5. Place a mark next to high-priority items that you should devote your time to first.

Setting Goals the Right Way

1. So many times we set goals but it doesn't seem to make any difference.
2. We still don't accomplish what we set out to accomplish.
3. This could be because of how we set goals.
4. We don't create a plan of action.
5. These are steps to improving our chances of following through & reaching goals:
 - a. Choose just one goal at a time.
 - b. Make sure your goal is realistic.
 - c. Write down your goal.
 - d. Break down the goal into smaller goals.
 - e. Remind yourself of your goal. (*e-mail, online calendar etc.*)
 - f. Reward yourself for following your plan of action.
6. Goals have little chance of being successful without a plan on how to reach them.
7. Remember: Goals may change as your situation changes.
8. Remain flexible so you can adjust your goals if necessary.

Manage Distractions and Disruptions

1. Distractions are a part of life.
2. Once interrupted, one shifts attention to new item & later returns to original task.
3. It can be difficult to get back on track.
4. The following are tips to help minimize distractions:
 - a. Turn off your phone when at home. Let an answering machine pick up calls.
 - b. While driving, keep cell phone on vibrate, silent or in glove compartment.
 - c. Set aside a specific time to answer phone calls.
 - d. Turn off the television.
 - e. If you need background noise, consider music that will keep you moving.
 - f. Consider a baby-sitter for children if you must get something accomplished.
 - g. Turn off computer to avoid checking e-mail or getting caught in social networks.
 - h. Create routines, which can help you avoid giving in to distractions.
 - i. Once you get in the habit, you can avoid distractions.
5. If you still get distracted, take a break and take a walk outside for ten minutes.
6. Fresh air and exercise will help you focus better when you return to your tasks!

Prioritize Tasks

1. In order to prioritize tasks, you have to clearly understand “priority categories.”
2. E.g. something to be done today stands out from what is to be done by next week.
3. First come up with categories to help you decide what tasks should be done first.
4. Your categories might look something like this:
 - a. **Absolutely Urgent:** Must be done right away or by a deadline.
Important to your job, your family, or to you personally.
 - b. **Urgent:** Important to you, your family, or your job, but don’t have a deadline.
 - c. **Chores:** Things you don’t necessarily *want* to do but have to do anyway.
 - d. **Maybe:** Things you would like to do, but aren’t especially important.
It doesn’t matter if you do them today, tomorrow, or next week.
 - f. **Dreams, Wishes, and Ideas:** Things you might like to do.
They have no immediate importance in your life.
5. Once you can categorize all tasks, it is easier to begin to accomplish them.
6. Now you have a specific order of what to do and when to do it.
7. Using categories such as these may be confusing at first.
8. As you work with them, you will automatically assign categories to new tasks.
9. This helps identify when something should be done immediately or it can wait.
10. Just as important as categorizing tasks, is finding a way to manage the list.
11. Task lists evolve. Tasks may be added, completed, or become not important.
12. Number of tasks on a list can be overwhelming; the following ideas may help:
 - a. If you are a visual person, use a white board to list tasks in order of importance.
 - b. Use the jar approach; five separate jars, one for each category of importance.
 - c. Task-management software is available for your laptop or handheld electronics.
 - d. Notebook: Items that are crossed out help build a sense of accomplishment!
13. Prioritizing tasks is a must for managing deficits in executive functioning.
14. Creating a system that works can help you manage distractions and inattention.
15. Time management is all about focus and consistency.
16. Put these basic skills into practice every day; managing your time will get easier.
17. Pretty soon, you may be so organized that you have too much free time!

Good luck!

Adapted from

The Complete Idiot’s Guide to Adult ADHD by Eileen Bailey and Donald Haupt, M.D.