

Obstacles of Time Management

Perfectionism

Perfectionism is holding yourself to an unrealistic standard. This can cause frustration, guilt, depression, anxiety, and may hinder your work product. Here are three ways to turn the crippling fear of not measuring up into confident action:

1. **REALITY CHECK** - Lower the stakes of your tasks by asking questions such as: *Is this extra work going to make a noticeable difference? If I make a mistake, will it matter in five years? Is the standard to which I am holding myself realistic?*
2. **CREATE TRIGGER RITUALS** - Choose a song, a poem, or a quote to calm down your anxiety and help you boldly tackle the task.
3. **ELIMINATE "SHOULD"** - Be aware of and eliminate thoughts involving the word "should" such as, "I should never make mistakes" or "I should always be able to..." Replace these thoughts with ones that can be realistically achieved.

Procrastination

Procrastination is delaying what you know you need to do. It wastes time, heightens stress, inhibits effectiveness, and may result in mediocre production. Here are three tools to help you get started on what is important:

1. **IDENTIFY THE DEEPER ISSUE** - Procrastination is often the symptom of a deeper problem, such as fear of failure, lack of perspective, or resentment. Address the real issue in order to proceed with the task.
2. **COMPLETE THE HARDEST TASK FIRST** - Identify your biggest, least pleasant, but critical assignment and finish it before anything else. This will boost your confidence, grant you relief, and generate momentum that will help you conquer other projects.
3. **30 MINUTE CHALLENGE** - Instead of further delaying the start of a major project, commit to working on it for only 30 minutes. This initiates the process and moves you closer to completion in manageable increments.

Distraction

We live in a world of never-ending updates and constant information overload that can distract us from what is important. Here are three steps you can take to improve your focus when it matters most:

1. **CUT OUT THE NOISE** - Consider appropriate times to let your phone go to voicemail, disable your email notifications, or close your door.
2. **MANAGE TIME ROBBERS** - Have a plan in place for when you need to deal with unexpected visitors or long-winded meetings. Set a time limit from the beginning to keep you on track.
3. **USE PARKING LOT LISTS** - Use a note-taking device to jot down off-task thoughts as they come and return to those thoughts after you have completed the task at hand.

Overcommitment

It is easy to take on more than you can handle, but much harder to do everything well once you have committed. Here are three ways to prevent getting overwhelmed with too much:

1. **BE INTENTIONAL WITH YOUR YES** - Only say yes to activities or projects that line up with your values and that you can fully commit to both with your time and energy.
2. **COME TO TERMS WITH NO** - Understand that using your time and energy well may require you to say no. Practice saying no in a kind way. Acknowledge the person's request, explain why you do not have the time or energy and offer to contribute in a way that is more manageable and will not take up too much time.
3. **PRIORITIZE** - If "no" is not an option, sit down with your supervisor and determine which commitments are most important. Use Eisenhower's Matrix to create an action plan on the levels of importance and urgency of each task.