

TIME MANAGEMENT TIPS THAT WORK

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1. Give some thought to your overall purpose in life. What are you on this planet to do? Having a sense of the bigger picture and how you are contributing to a better world can motivate, inspire and energize you.
2. Remind yourself daily about your purpose. Modify it. Journal about it. Draw about it. Read about it. Learn about it. Picture the results, outcomes and changes that will happen as a result of your contributions. Immerse yourself in it for at least 5 minutes a day.
3. Ensure that your goals are aligned with the larger purpose. Try not to work on more than 3 Big Goals per year. Set monthly and weekly goals that flow from the 3 Big Goals.
4. Know what you're passionate about. Engage with at least one of your passions every day. Maybe use it to reward yourself for managing your time well.
5. Develop clarity on what is most important to you in life and schedule your time accordingly.
6. Learn to say "no" to others and yourself. No one performs well under chronic stress conditions. If it's not a priority don't spend time on it unless and until the priorities are dealt with.
7. Pay attention to internal and external rhythms. Learn how your body responds to different and changing environments. Do your best to accommodate yourself. For example, if you know you're a morning person schedule tasks requiring the most focus in the morning. If you know that your energy drops at 2pm every day, schedule a break at that time. If your creative capacities wane in winter, write that book over the summer months.
8. Pay attention to how your environment makes you feel. Do you enjoy music while you work? Or is it distracting? Do you prefer a messy or neat desk? What about light levels? The view out the window? The décor? Colours? Sounds? Smells? Take charge of your space and arrange it to maximize your productivity and minimize distractions.
9. Allocate time at the end of every day to plan for the next. Decide on your priorities and prepare for them. This makes it easier to get into a work headspace the next day.
10. Get 7-9 hours of sleep a day. If naps refresh you, take them. The most strategic nap is 30 minutes or less. Sleep deprivation significantly impairs the brain's function. Sleep is the time your brain detoxifies, makes new cells and incorporates information into long term memory. It's foundational to any thought process.
11. Power up your mornings by taking a minimum of 5 minutes to breathe deeply, meditate and engage in some type of physical activity. Even a 1-minute stretch makes a big difference to your clarity of mind. Mindfulness has many positive impacts on stress and cognitive function.

12. Spend time in nature. Even fake nature like pictures or sounds will reverse stress and improve cognitive function so that you can enjoy your time.
13. Create workplans. Ideally you can have annual, monthly and weekly plans. Write them down because this emphasizes the commitment in your brain. Refer to them, review and revise periodically.
14. Use calendars, templates and scheduling tools. Many of these can be downloaded for free if necessary. Set reminders and alarms. Studies show they work.
15. If you have a variety of commitments, try to schedule a theme for your day. For example if you're working on a theatre project, going to school and holding down a part-time job try to allocate a whole day to each rather than switching focus within a day.
16. Break down bigger jobs into small bite-sized tasks.
17. Work backwards from your deadlines to schedule tasks.
18. If there aren't externally imposed deadlines set TIGHT deadlines for yourself. Studies show this motivates you because you get a hit of dopamine to your reward/pleasure centre when you accomplish your task on a tight deadline.
19. Keep a To Do list and prioritize it every day.
20. Apply 90:20 cycles in your workday. These correspond to your internal energy bio-rhythms. Focus for 90 minutes and then break for 20.
21. Break strategically: switch your focus **completely** for your break time. Draw on another brain function. If you sit at work DO NOT sit through your breaks. If you do physical work DO NOT stay on your feet for your breaks. If your work requires listening to sad stories, entertain yourself with inspirational stories or comedy on your breaks.
22. Give up multi-tasking. It DOESN'T save time. Multi-tasking looks like stress in the brain.
23. Ensure you enjoy balance in your life: allocate time for yourself, friends and family, work and play.
24. Implement your time management strategies incrementally rather than all at once. Create habits. Pick one change you can make to your life and practice that until it becomes a habit. Then move on to the next change. Studies indicate it only takes 21 days to create a habit.

TIPS for Procrastinators

25. Understand that procrastination is not a cause it's a symptom. Most people who procrastinate have a reason for doing so. Most commonly: they don't enjoy the job or anticipate they won't like the outcome (e.g, it might make someone angry or will take away time from doing something you enjoy). Procrastination is essentially a lack of motivation.
26. Recognize that *some* procrastination can be healthy. It can help you identify emotional triggers and unhealthy addictions (like those to social media). It can also be your sub-consciousness' way of encouraging you to slow down and think thoroughly before you plunge in.
27. Clarify the reason for your procrastination. Feel the feelings that come up. Breathe through those feelings. Develop strategies that motivate you to get the task done.
28. Do not depend on willpower to conquer procrastination. It never works over the long term. Concentrate instead on building habits.
29. If possible, break the job into bite sized pieces that can be done over several days rather than all at once. Allocate a small chunk of time (e.g., 15-30 minutes per day) to the job.
30. Just start. Procrastinators tend to focus on how difficult or distasteful the job is and this keeps them immobilized. But procrastination prolongs negative feelings that create chronic stress. It also allows the problem or task to grow bigger, thereby increasing your stress. Study after study shows that if you just start on a job you've been procrastinating on it takes only about 5 minutes before your stress levels decline. Once you start it doesn't feel as bad as you anticipated and most people find they can continue without significant bother.
31. Know what will likely distract you and structure your space and time to minimize distractions and maximize focus. Most distractions provide you with a hit of dopamine to the reward/pleasure centre of your brain. That's why willpower is not an effective strategy for minimizing procrastination and distraction. Preventing distraction tends to work well for most procrastinators.
32. There is free downloadable software that can keep you from opening social media or your email until the time you have determined for yourself. Use them if they're effective for you.
33. Reward yourself after you have done something you were procrastinating about. Give yourself a *healthy* hit to your pleasure centre when you've completed your task.