

Time management strategies that really work

☐ Stress is inevitable, it can even be healthy and manageable but too much negative stress can be detrimental to our physical and mental health. Stress reduction techniques are important, and developing your own toolkit for managing stressors is of vital importance. Another aspect of stress management is **prevention** and one of the most important ways to prevent stress is to have effective time-management strategies. Time management, as we all know too well, is one of those things that may sound easy but can be really difficult to implement; procrastination, blurry priorities and inaccurate estimates of how long things take can be significant obstacles to a well-managed schedule. Below you will find some tips that really do work to help you manage your very valuable time.

Prioritize

Take a look at the tasks ahead of you and rate them according to these four categories:

- Important and urgent
- Important but not urgent
- Urgent but not important
- Neither urgent nor important

People with optimal time management spend most of their time on tasks that are important but not urgent, decreasing the chances that an important task will become urgent and thus more stressful.

Start your day by scheduling your day

At the beginning of the day, take notice of what needs to get done and take a guess at how long it will take. Then, make a schedule for the day according to this list. Stick to your schedule. Taking 30 minutes to do this will actually save you time in the long run.

Learn how long things take

Record how long tasks take. You may find things you thought took a long time actually can be accomplished quite quickly, while tasks you thought you would breeze through indeed take longer than anticipated.

Break correspondence into the four D's

Emails tend to be overwhelming and suck up a lot of time. When you look at your inbox, apply the four D's:

- Delete: Many emails can be deleted immediately, so get rid of them!
- Do: Emails that are urgent and/or have a simple answer can be responded to immediately.
- Delegate: If you are not the right person to field the email, forward it to the person who is.
- Defer: For emails that require more attention and further thought, flag them for later.

Work in short time chunks

When overload hits, it's important to prioritize tasks and manage your time wisely. Rather than working "non-stop" until something is finished, work in short 25 minute chunks with 5-minute breaks in between.

The challenge lies in internalizing the habits of monitoring time and regularly analyzing and revising your time management plan until it works for you.

[Find out more about this technique here.](#)

Schedule "time-wasters"

It is unrealistic to completely eliminate so called "time wasters" like social media and browsing. Instead, work them into your schedule and stick to that schedule.

Leave buffer time

Things won't take exactly how long you think they will. When you schedule your day, leave room for the unexpected by adding five to ten minutes to either side of each task.

Time management requires diligent effort because for most of us, it does not come naturally. These tips are proven to work but only if you actually implement and adhere to them. "It only works if you do it" may seem like an overstatement of simplicity but it is all too easy to do these things for a week and then let them fall away and return to old habits. Move through the growing pains and keep at it, eventually these techniques will replace old habits with new ones and get you ahead of the curve on stress.