

## Time Management – Or Life Management?

Time management ... Like work/life balance, it is a term which is frequently quoted and often misunderstood. It is actually kind of a misnomer, as we can't really manage time. We are all given the same number of hours in a day, week, or month, and we cannot change this number. So what we want to manage is not time, but our lives.

On how many days do you start out with a "to-do" list and good intentions to accomplish *all* of the items on the list? On how many evenings do you feel disappointed and discouraged when there are still outstanding items on your list? Do you think to yourself, "I really need to manage my time better"? If so, I understand. I have said that same statement to myself many times and have felt the accompanying dismay and self-criticism for not getting everything done.

I could now launch into a series of tips for getting more done and making better use of your time. But that would be akin to putting a band-aid on a wound. It wouldn't be getting to the heart of the matter regarding time-management and life management.

In my opinion, the first step for managing your time more effectively is to get a really clear picture of your priorities, what matters most to you. The following are a few steps to help you to do that.

First, write down all of the roles in your life. Your roles are basically your areas of responsibility, as well as your key relationships. For example, my roles include wife, friend, family member, life coach, speaker, author, volunteer, and home/financial manager. Other roles which you could have are that of parent, student, employee, musician, athlete, etc. The hobbies in which you engage on a regular basis and the organizations to which you belong should be included among your roles.

Next, take some time to rank your various roles in order of their importance to you. This step can be a bit tricky and may require some deep introspection. Don't worry about having the "right" answers. No one needs to see your list but you, so be honest. Also, remember that your roles – and their level of importance – can change over time. We are looking at your priorities at this point in time; the exercise may need to be repeated down the line as your life evolves and your roles change.

After you have your prioritized list of roles, answer the following questions:

1. How much time do you spend focusing on your highest priorities?
2. Are you *satisfied* with the amount of time you spend in your various roles?
3. Are there some roles which have fallen off your "radar screen"?
4. Are certain roles occupying the majority of your time and energy?

If you have difficulty answering these questions, it might be helpful for you to track all of your activities for a week using a time grid. I did this recently and found it very

enlightening. I learned that I spend a lot more time on certain activities (*such as email, meals and workouts*) than I thought.

As Dr. Phil says, “You can’t change what you don’t acknowledge,” so awareness is the first step toward powerful change in your relationship to time. My next article will continue the topic of time management, moving on to *how* to include your highest priorities in your life on a regular basis.