



## **Professional Development**

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### **The Basics of Time and Stress Management**

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The role of leader can be very stressful. Management studies have suggested that this role can include a wide mix of activities, most of which cannot always be controlled or even predicted. New managers and supervisors are often overwhelmed with the demands of the job. They were likely promoted to be in charge of people, mostly because of their success in a previous role that was focused on developing a particular product or service. Suddenly, they're faced with being in charge of people, which is much less predictable and has less control. Consequently, the ability to manage time and stress is absolutely critical.

#### **Myths About Stress and Time Management**

Myth #1: All stress is bad. No, there's good and bad stress. Good stress is excitement, thrill, etc. The goal is to recognize personal signs of bad stress and deal with them immediately.

Myth #2: Planning time takes more time. Actually, research shows just the opposite.

Myth #3: More gets done when caffeine, sugar, alcohol and nicotine are used wisely. Wrong! Research shows that the body has to "come down" and when it does, you can't always be more effective than after the boost.

Myth #4: A time management problem means that there's not enough time to get done what needs to get done. No, a time management problem is not using your time to your fullest advantage to get done what you want to get done.

Myth #5: The busier I am, the better I'm using my time. Look out! You may only be doing what's urgent, and not what's important.

Myth #6: I feel harried, so I must have a time management problem. Not necessarily. You should verify that you have a time management problem. This requires knowing what you want to get done and whether it is actually getting done.

Myth #7: I feel OK, so I must not be stressed. In reality, many adults don't know when they're

really stressed until their bodies tell them so. They miss the early warning signs such as headaches, backaches, mood changes, etc.

### **Major Causes of Workplace Stress**

1. Not knowing what you want or if you're getting it.
2. The feeling that there's too much to do.
3. Not enjoying your job.
4. Conflicting demands on the job.
5. Insufficient resources to do the job.
6. Not feeling appreciated.

### **Biggest Time Wasters**

1. Interruptions. How interruptions are handled is what wastes time.
2. Hopelessness. People "give in", "numb out" and "march through the day".
3. Lack of delegation. This involves not sharing work with others.

### **Symptoms of Poor Stress and Time Management**

1. Irritability.
2. Fatigue.
3. Difficulty concentrating.
4. Forgetfulness.
5. Sleeplessness.
6. Physical disorders --headaches, rashes, tics, etc.
7. Withdrawal and depression.

### **Simple Techniques for Managing Stress**

There are lots of things you can do to minimize stress, you just have to do it. Some suggestions for managing stress include:

1. Talk to someone. They don't have to fix the stress, just listen.
2. Relax your mind and body through massage, meditation, yoga, etc.
3. Ask your boss if you're doing OK. A little reassurance can put you at ease.
4. Delegate your overload.
5. Cut down on caffeine and sweets. Take a walk instead.
6. Monitor the number of hours you work to achieve a balance in your life.
7. Spend time with pets.
8. Spend time with friends, family or someone that is nonjudgmental.
9. Volunteer or do something you can feel good about.

### **Simple Techniques for Managing Time**

As a manager, there never seems to be enough time. The goal of time management should not be to find more time but to devote a reasonable amount of time to managing and then use that time wisely.

1. Analyze how you spend your time. Log your time in 30-minute intervals for a week. Then review the results to see where your time goes.
2. Make a "to do" list at the end of each day to complete the next day. Prioritize items as A, B, and C and assign time requirements for completion.
3. Minimize interruptions by putting your phone on hold and email on auto reply for select periods of time. Hang a Do Not Disturb Sign on your door.

4. At the end of the day, spend five minutes cleaning up your workspace and organizing your desk top. This will give you a clean start the next day.
5. Learn the difference between "Where can I help?" and "Where am I needed?" Experienced leaders learn that the later question is more important than the former.
6. Learn what does and does not need to be done to ensure your time is spent productively on tasks that produce results.
7. Delegate those tasks, or portions of tasks, that can be done by others.
8. Sort your mail into three categories: "read now", "handle now" and "read later". You'll notice that much of what you think you need to read is not important after all..
9. Have a place for everything and put everything in its place.
10. Take periodic breaks to clear your head, plan and organize.
11. Use good meeting management techniques.

### **Role of "Gumption"**

Everything good usually starts with gumption. It's picking yourself up, deciding that you could be happier, that you want to be happier - and then doing the right things to get you started and keep you going. Boredom and blame are the opposite of gumption. Stress and time management start with gumption. It's the trying that counts. Poor time and stress management often comes from doing the same thing harder, rather than smarter.

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*Excerpt from the [Field Guide to Leadership and Supervision](#) by Carter McNamara, MBA, PhD, Authenticity Consulting, LLC.*