

Make more time - Organize & Prioritize!

Being organized and able to prioritize are useful skills both in the workplace and at home. The person who is able to do both often appears to accomplish tasks effectively, efficiently and effortlessly, whereas those who lack organization and prioritization skills often appear rushed, inefficient, scattered...or worse, incompetent.

Disorganization and a lack of priorities can result in missed deadlines and appointments; trying to get things done at the last minute; loss of important items/needed information; starting many projects, but completing none; and much wasted time. These skill deficits can also cause unnecessary stress.

Misplacing or losing important items and spending time looking for them, rushing, not completing necessary work tasks - all cause stress. And while many stressors are out of your control, being able to find needed items with ease, make deadlines and appointments in a timely manner, and feeling like you have accomplished what you needed to in your day are all within your control.

The problem is, sometimes we just don't know where to start in order to get organized. And, we may have trouble identifying priorities.

Making a task list is great for identifying priorities. Once you have everything listed that needs to be done, you can then reorder the items with the most important at the top of the list ("A" or "1" and so on.) The next step would be to designate the amounts of time that each item on the list will require to complete and then set aside time on your calendar to complete them.

The chart to the side can also help in identifying how you can better manage your time and priorities. This can be tailored with information you place in each box. What tasks are Urgent and Important? What tasks are Not Urgent, but Important? What tasks are Urgent, but Not Important? Which tasks are Not Urgent and Not Important?

The goal would be to keep items in box 1 to a minimum as much as possible. If you take care of items when they are in box 2, that should help lessen the number of tasks that become urgent and important.

Easy tips for getting organized and saving time

- Put things where they belong when you have them in your hand. If the item doesn't have a specific place to go, designate a "home" for it...and that doesn't mean in a pile of other "homeless" items!
- Labeling helps, especially when you're just getting organized. Put labels on places where things go; put labels on the items themselves to identify where they "live."
- Keep a small notebook for writing down all your ideas, phone numbers, reminders and such, that you collect throughout the day and week. In this way, everything you need will be in one spot and not scattered about on miscellaneous pieces of paper that may be hard to find.

1. URGENT - IMPORTANT

- Crises
- Putting out fires
- Deadline-driven projects
- Pressing problems
- Scrapped projects/Major revisions

What is Urgent/Important for you?

2. NOT URGENT - IMPORTANT

- Prevention
- Relationship building
- New opportunities
- Planning/Creation
- Productivity improvements

What is Not Urgent/Important for you?

3. URGENT - NOT IMPORTANT

- Interruptions
- Some meetings
- Some calls/some mail
- Popular activities

What is Urgent/Not Important for you?

4. NOT URGENT - NOT IMPORTANT

- Busy work
- Time wasters
- Some calls/some mail
- Pleasant activities/trivial matters

What is Not Urgent/Not Important for you?

EASE@Work newsletters are for informational purposes only and should not replace the advice of a qualified health professional. If you would like to speak with a professional counselor, call EASE@Work: 216/241-3273 or 800/521-3273... We can help!

Coping with back-to-school anxiety

Children returning to school may be dealing with issues you, as a parent or guardian, are not even aware of. . . and these fears can actually worsen as a child gets older. Kids worry if they will fit in, if they will make the teams they want to be on, if they will be able to keep good grades and more.

Here are some suggestions to help your child with back-to-school anxieties:

Do I fit in?

Encourage your child to participate in extra-curricular activities based in areas of interest. This will allow them to meet like-minded kids.

Remember there are always cliques in school. Let your child know they may not fit in to every group, but they can find a group where they do fit, with people they can call friends.



How do I look?

What kids wear and how they look is very important to them. Fashions, name-brands, hairstyles, make-up etc. . . all give kids an individual and group identity. Set limits, but allow some room for personal expression.

Girls may feel pressured to look prettier or even more sexual. Boys may want to be a certain height or be more muscular. Remember what it was like when you were growing and in your teen years. Talk with your children about what it was like for you; this will open the door to helping them cope with outside pressures.

Am I smart enough?

Academic competition and expectations become more difficult each year of school. Let your child know you are there to help if they need it, including finding a tutor if necessary.

Keep up with what's going on in class. Don't wait to be surprised by grades. Remind your child that one bad grade doesn't ruin their future. Colleges and employers look at a variety of valuable characteristics, even if they didn't get all A's.

Teasing?

Be aware of your child's level of anxiety about school. Initial fears should go away, but if they are anxious after the initial adjustment time, something else may be going on that may require more investigation on your part as the parent/guardian. If your child has previously been the target of bullies or teasing, he/she may be seen as easy prey. Watch for signs of bullying.

Take action if you suspect your child is being harassed/bullied. Federal and state laws demand that schools have written policies and practice good faith efforts to provide students with a safe environment free of harassment. Follow up with teachers and administration.

GET READY - IT'S TIME FOR SCHOOL!

Relieve the stress of heading back to school, or to school for the first time, with this simple checklist for parents/guardians of younger kids.

In August

- If the school is new to your child, schedule a tour.
- Speak to your child's teacher, either in person or by phone.
- If your child needs medication, finalize arrangements with the school nurse.
- Report any allergies your child may have to the school. Don't rely on the forms that may be sent home.

The night before

- Pack your child's backpack with preliminary school supplies.
- Make sure that any summer assignments your child may have had are packed.
- Put your child to bed early. Adequate sleep is essential for a child to be productive at school.

The first day of school

- Wake your child up a little earlier than necessary.
- Give your child a hearty breakfast.
- Pack a nutritious lunch. Include a note for your child – keep it simple, a smiley face or "XO's."
- Drive your child to school or walk out to greet the bus driver and get them on safely.

ENDING "THE CHORE WARS"

- Create a worksheet to organize who is responsible for doing what around your home and develop a strategy for doing chores in the future. You may wish to rotate chores or to permanently assign them.
- To create your worksheet, make columns that list the chore, who is doing it now, when it is done, who will do it from now on and when will they do it. You may wish to break the chores into broad categories, such as food-related chores, housing, pets, clothing, money, children, car etc.
- Post the list where everyone in the household can see it. Re-negotiate chores if needs change or members of the team need to make changes in order to meet schedules, to better match skills and abilities, or just to change duties to avoid boredom.

If you'd like a pre-formatted Household Task Delegation Worksheet, please call our childcare specialist at 800.521.3273 or 216.241.3273 and ask for the "Ending Chore Wars" tip sheet to be sent to you electronically.

Clutter: A serious problem for many seniors

Do you know someone or have an elderly loved one who you consider to be a “pack rat”? They never seem to throw anything away? Every time you visit, there seems to be more?

A recent study of senior hoarders found that:

- **45 percent were unable to use their refrigerators**
- **42 percent were unable to use their kitchen sinks**
- **10 percent could not use their toilets**

- From *Seniors and hoarding: A serious health issue*, www.seniormarketadvisor.com

The topic of hoarding has recently been discovered by popular media, with several successful television drawing large audiences. People are fascinated by the stories of those who obsessively collect and keep personal belongings, making their homes and yards look like landfills and junkyards. And, as interesting as these stories can be, hoarding is a serious problem, and seniors are more prone to hoarding behaviors.

Seniors clutter and hoard for a variety of reasons: fear of loss; anxiety; depression; not knowing how to get rid of something; or having memories tied to a particular item that in reality holds no value.

Hoarding is not the result of poverty, although some experts suspect hoarding may be more prevalent if someone experienced hardship during The Great Depression. More often, hoarding is an emotional disorder with complex causes.

In the book, *Stuff: Compulsive Hoarding and the Meaning of Things*, Randy O. Frost and Gail Steketee say that some theorists believe “people with hoarding tendencies form attachments to possessions instead of people. Erich Fromm claimed that a ‘hoarding orientation’ leads to social withdrawal. Hoarders, he suggested, are remote and suspicious, preferring the company of objects to that of people. Indeed, for some people prone to acute social discomfort, possessions can be stable and comfortable companions.”

Many senior hoarders may neglect themselves and their homes; they may suffer from some form of dementia or Alzheimer’s. The dementia causes them to lose their sense of judgment and sense of self care. Some hoarders may hide important items and then forget where they put them.

For seniors, hoarding can be especially dangerous because hoarding causes clutter and clutter leads to accidents. Objects can fall; people can trip, break bones, or even worse. And then there are problems that are not as obvious, such as bills that can be hidden, forgotten and go unpaid; medications that get misplaced and missed; not to mention rodents and other varmint that can invade the home.

So how can you help a senior loved one who hoards?

There is no quick or easy solution. You cannot simply clean out the stuff and think the problem is fixed; they will only accumulate more again. The best approach seems to be to make regular visits and monitor the situation, establish trust, and make simple offers of assistance. Be prepared for this process to take time and be prepared for a struggle. Hoarders do not want to give up their stuff, even when they do really want to make a change. If personal safety is an issue, you may need help from other relatives, a senior service or health care agency; your role may become one of helping the senior with new care options, such as an assisted living or other group care facility.

Top tips for decluttering a senior’s residence

1. Focus on fall prevention. Create pathways free of debris, loose cords or slippery rugs.
2. Focus on fire prevention. Make sure there is a working smoke alarm and test it monthly. Check that flammables are not stored near sources of heat or open flames.
3. Motivate your loved one with realism. Some people will only declutter if they are told they may have to move or cannot go home after a hospitalization. Gentle, but firm, pressure is sometimes appropriate.
4. Listen to your loved one’s ideas and plans for their belongings, even if unrealistic. Then, help them to move toward donating or selling items.
5. Plan for on-going maintenance and supervision to maintain a decluttered environment.

Finally, consider relocating your loved one if clutter is the result of a physical problem or dementia-related issue.

Ease@Work has eldercare specialists who can help you navigate through the stresses and information overload associated with caring for an elderly loved one.

Make Ease@Work your partner in eldercare ...

216.241.3273 or 800.521.3273.

ORGANIZING YOUR PERSONAL GOALS

Re-evaluating your life in terms of personal and career goals is a good thing to do from time to time. This allows you to clearly see if you are truly living your life in the way that you want.

Take time to sit down and really think about the goals you want to achieve today, this month, this year, within five years, 10 years... in your lifetime.

If you start with what you want to achieve in the larger view – your lifetime – that will give you the overall perspective needed to help shape your decision-making.

Consider some of the following categories for goal-setting – some may be more important to you and others may not be important at all:

CAREER – What level of achievement do you want to reach?

FAMILY – Do you want a life partner? Do you want to be a parent?

EDUCATION – What are you interested in? Is education necessary to achieve your career goals?

FINANCIAL – How much do you want to earn? How much do you want to save? Do you want to own a home?

ESTABLISH YOUR FINANCIAL PRIORITIES

Ever think to yourself, “Where does all my money go?” It’s easy to rattle off a quick answer about all the bills you have to pay, but what about the little things that could be “nickel and diming” your budget to debt?

For one week, keep track of every penny you spend – even the pop from the vending machine at work. On a sheet of paper or small notebook:

- *List the item - Example: Can of pop*
- *Record the cost - \$1.25*
- *Note why you bought the item – Needed to get away from my desk/thirsty*
- *Determine whether you really needed the item - No, could have had water or brought pop from home*

Use this information to help plan your monthly budget and become more aware of your spending habits. Small changes, such as bringing pop to work instead of purchasing it from a vending machine, can really add up!

Once you know exactly where your money is going, it’s easier to develop a budget and spending plan. A successful plan lies in knowing where you are now, where you want to go in the future and charting how you will accomplish your goal.

You may have to make some difficult decisions, including:

- *Having a family discussion about future goals.*
- *Deciding what each person needs to do in order to achieve those goals.*
- *Revising or re-establishing allowances tied to responsibilities for children.*
- *Making agreements within the family to give up certain items in order to achieve goals.*
- *Learning and practicing good decision-making and shopping skills to get the most for your money.*
- *Making it a habit to save a small amount from every paycheck.*
- *Learning to live within your income and keep credit under control.*

And remember one very important lesson... money and material things do not make you – you make you. Money is a tool in your life. Learning how to use that tool wisely can allow you to take care of what’s really important – like the long-term health and happiness of your family.

PHYSICAL – Do you have athletic goals? Are you interested in preserving your health as you age?

SPIRITUAL – How do you perceive your relationship with God, nature, the universe or other spiritual motivator?

PLEASURE – How do you want to enjoy yourself?

ATTITUDE – What is your attitude? Is it serving you well or do you need to make adjustments?

ARTISTIC – Do you have any artistic goals?

PUBLIC SERVICE – Do you want to make the world a better place? If so, how?

Once you have established your goals, prioritize them. Then work backward – set a 25-year plan, 10-year plan, five-year plan, one-year, six-month and one-month plans of progressively smaller goals. By doing this, you are charting your plan to meet your larger goals.

Re-evaluate your goals and plans from time to time, celebrating successes and making adjustments as needed.

Records to keep and when to get rid of of them

Keep forever

Marriage licenses - Birth certificates
Wills - Adoption papers - Death certificates
Records of paid mortgages

Hold while active

Contracts - Insurance documents
Stock certificates - Stock records
Property records - Records of pensions and retirement plans - Property tax records of disputed bills - Home improvement records
(for three years after the due date for the tax return it was on)

Keep for 7 years

Records of satisfied loans

Keep for 3 years

Income tax returns - Medical bills and cancelled insurance policies - Records of selling a house - Records of selling a stock
Receipts, cancelled checks and other documents that support income or a deduction on your income tax return
Annual investment statement

Keep for 1 year

Paycheck stubs - Utility bills
Cancelled checks *(unless needed for tax purposes and then keep for 3 years)*
Credit card receipts *(unless needed for tax purposes and then keep for 3 years)*
Bank statements *(unless needed for tax purposes and then keep for 3 years)*
Quarterly investment statements

Keep for 1 month

ATM printouts *(until you balance your checkbook)*

Keep until warranty expires or you no longer can return or exchange

Sales receipts *(unless needed for tax purposes and then keep for 3 years)*

FitTips } Tone and @Work } Relax with

yoga {noun} A form of exercise based on the belief that the body and breath are intimately connected with the mind *[from yogaforbeginners.com]*

Yoga combines a physical workout with meditation and breathing.

Stretching, toning, and relaxation are just some of the many benefits of yoga. An easy way to begin exploring yoga is to take a class or rent a video.

Beginners should consider hatha yoga. Try the mountain pose, a simple move to promote better posture. Stand tall with feet shoulder-width apart, arms by sides, palms facing forward. Hold for 30 seconds as you breathe.

Learn more stretching exercises for flexibility, toning and relaxation by contacting a FitIn@Work fitness coach.



Chillin' Tuna & Bean Salad

1 can (5 oz.) drained tuna - 1 garlic clove - 1 Tbsp. lemon juice - 2 Tbsp. olive oil - ½ Tbsp. lemon zest (or sprinkle of lemon juice)

1 can (16 oz.) cannellini beans, drained and rinsed - ½ red pepper chopped - ¼ cup chopped red onion - Fresh basil, chopped, amount to taste

Salt and pepper, to taste

Mince garlic and mash into paste. Mix the garlic paste with lemon juice, salt, pepper, and whisk in olive oil. Toss red pepper, onion and beans together. Break apart tuna and combine with pepper, onion and bean mixture. Add dressing and toss well. Add basil just before serving.

Can be served at room temperature or chilled. Try serving on a bed of lettuce or sliced tomatoes.

Makes four servings.

DINING OUT?

EATING HEALTHY IS EASY...IF YOU HAVE A PLAN

You've planned a fun night out at a great restaurant with friends, but do you have a plan? Good times and good food can derail the best intentions of eating healthy. Have a plan!

Before you go out, review the menu if you can. Many restaurants, even those that are local, non-chain-types, often have their menus on-line. Do your research beforehand and decide what you are going to order ahead of time. This will help lessen the chance of making a compulsive food choice that you may regret later.

If you know a restaurant is known for their large portions, ask for a box with your meal and immediately save half to take home. Another option would be to share a meal with a friend. Don't overeat just because you're out.

Other tips:

- Avoid (or go easy on) sauces, dips and fried foods.
- Order the smallest portion size – for example a cup of soup instead of a bowl.
- Avoid breads, crackers, tortilla chips etc., while waiting for your meal.
- Salads are good choices, but watch what is added to the salad. Ask that higher calorie items be left off or served on the side – especially dressings.
- Order meats broiled, steamed, grilled, or poached. Ask that grilled or broiled items be prepared without added oils or fats. If fried food is your only choice – have a smaller portion and remove the breading and skin.
- Desserts... skip them or share them. Fresh fruits and lighter items, such as sorbet or fruit ice, are the best choices.

Remember portion sizes:

- Serving of meat – the palm of your hand
- Serving of salad – an open cupped hand
- Serving of fruit or vegetable – a closed cupped hand
- Serving of baked potato – your fist
- Serving of cheese – your pointer and index fingers together
- Serving of chips or pretzels – two handfuls
- Serving of salad dressing – your thumb