

## Stress Reduction through Time Management

*Good time management leads to work-life balance.*

*And having good work-life balance can lead to less stress.*

*Less stress can leave you with energy for self-care.*

*Increased energy and time for self-care can lead to a life that has more of what you want in it!*

Here are some time management tips. Think about what could work for you and be sure to add your creative ideas to the list.

**Make a plan for your day.** Keep your goals small and include time in your day for interruptions. Set both short and long tasks for the day. That allows you some flexibility and your small tasks can be 'slipped in' when you have a few minutes. (And slip in a few minutes to take a stretch, do a bit of self-care, or take a quick walk.)

**Break up long tasks or projects into smaller chunks.** Those small chunks should be something that could be done in 1-2 hours. Set a deadline for the project, planning some 'wiggle room' in case of delays. Then start by doing one chunk at a time. You'll be surprised at how productive you feel (and give yourself credit for taking action!). Skip the temptation to do too much, and keep with your plan for the deadline. You'll be surprised at how much you can accomplish.

**Set a time period for each task and stick with it.** If you don't finish, set another time in the near future to go back to it. You may find that it's easier and you're more productive if you tackle it later with renewed energy.

**Use a calendar for work and personal tasks, as well as for fun events.** Calendars keep you organized and can give you a quick visual of how your time is balanced. If you use an electronic calendar, be sure to set alert reminders. Alerts can provide support to wrap up and be on time.

**If you lose focus or can't get yourself going,** take a moment for some self-talk. Ask yourself, what's behind the procrastination? Find the emotion behind the behavior. Consider if procrastination really would help or just add more stress on later. Then look for possible solutions and support yourself with constructive self-talk.

**End your work day at a fixed time.** A great idea is to have 2 finishing times. One is for an ideal day, and the other is the latest time that you won't work past.

**Set your focus and block distractions.** Set a time period for your task and mute your phone. Set yourself as 'busy' on instant messaging and turn off your email alerts. If you need to keep the

blocked time short, do so. You can get a lot done in a focused ½ hour. This same tactic works well with setting aside some time for you!

**Recharge yourself** by taking a stretch at your desk, a 3-5 minute walk, or connecting with others. Re-focus by doing one minute of deep breathing or a mini-meditation.

**Be realistic.** If you can't handle more, kindly let others know. Don't blame, but instead use "I" statements such as "I'd like to help but I am on a tight deadline today. Can we discuss this tomorrow?"

**Get help!** Consider asking friends, family and co-workers to help with tasks they enjoy or that may fit in their schedule. With children, have them share in family tasks to help out and learn skills. Would it be enjoyable to include a friend or family member on your task? Make it as fun as possible.

**Prioritize.** Take the time to think through what is essential and what could be let go or done later. Many expectations are a 'should' vs. 'must'. What is behind that should? Think through alternatives if your 'should' is due to high expectations you set for yourself, social pressure, or because 'it's always been done this way'.

**Use constructive problem-solving.** Focus on what you can do vs. what you can't. Don't waste time talking about not having enough time. Put your energy into talking about and planning what you CAN do. Remember, finding time for a small thing that you enjoy or a brief self-care moment can make a big difference in your day.

**Schedule in a "POWER HOUR" once a week.** This will be one hour of time you will devote to getting those undesirable little things done around the house such as going through paperwork or bills, replacing light bulbs, or reorganizing your junk drawer. Getting those small tasks accomplished will lighten your stress some and give you the satisfaction of crossing a few things off your to-do list.

If you'd like more specific information or ideas on any of these topics or for websites, short videos or other handouts, contact your Aurora EAP coach at 800-236-3231.