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## NF94-173 Making Time for Your Time Demands

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## Making Time for Your Time Demands

*Kathy Prochaska-Cue, Extension Family Economics Specialist*

What kinds of demands do you have on your time? Probably they could be put into one of seven groups: personal, couple, family, home/yard/car, job, friends, and community. Depending on your personal situation, you may or may not have demands in each of these categories. What are some ways you may be able to make better use of each type of time?

**PERSONAL TIME.** Find time for yourself by getting up a half-hour earlier or going to bed later than others. Enjoy some quiet "thinking" time or use that time for reading, exercise or some other personally satisfying activity. Spend less personal time for activities which are not satisfying such as shopping (do more through mail order). Learn to say "no" effectively. Practice separating your activities, for example, leave work at work so you can concentrate on home and family when you are at home. Take short breaks (5-30 minutes) throughout your day to help you maintain the balance between work and play/rest/relaxation.

**COUPLE TIME.** Have two set appointments with your spouse or other partner each week. The first is to discuss mundane "business" such as who's going to take the car in for servicing or the dog to the vet for shots or deciding what to do about that investment opportunity. The second set appointment is a social "date" for just the two of you. Or find time for you as a couple by putting children to bed early (good luck!) and then having your Friday or Saturday evening meal at 10 p.m. by candlelight. Use a "do not disturb" sign on Saturday mornings. Or exchange overnights with another couple so each couple has an occasional child-free overnight.

**FAMILY TIME.** Set a family meeting once a week to coordinate calendars, plan activities and events, and make decisions. Set appointments with each family member weekly for "one on one" time with each person. Have a set family "fun time" each week – maybe that's Sunday afternoons or Friday nights or Tuesday evenings. Try to have at least one meal as a family each day; if the evening meal doesn't work, how about breakfast?

**HOME/YARD/CAR TIME.** Hire someone else to do some of the work such as a junior high student to wash windows or pay someone in the household to clean the garage. Develop a cleaning schedule rigid enough to get the job done, but flexible enough that if the dusting does not get done on time, the world does not fall apart. Learn to live with comfortable clutter; a spotless home may be a sign of a misspent

life (McGee-Cooper, 1983). Read instruction booklets and use and care information to get the most out of your equipment and appliances.

Develop and use a rotating menu system of entire menus or just main dishes. Photocopy a master shopping list so you can just check needed items. Make each person responsible for doing their own laundry, dishes, sack lunches, etc. Develop and use a flexible cleaning schedule so every cleaning chore does eventually get done. Clean the tub/shower while you're still in it. Make the bed before you get out of it. Use throw rugs in high traffic areas. Use multiple baskets or hampers marked with clothes washing machine settings to sort laundry as it goes into the "holding area."

Simplify landscaping. Consolidate flower beds. Schedule the next car maintenance appointment when you pay for the current one. Designate a "morning launching pad" where backpacks, briefcases, lunches, money, notes, etc. are collected.

Do routine shopping for items such as underwear, bedding, footwear, etc. by mail or telephone. Shop at one store as much as possible. Duplicate gifts, cards, etc. whenever possible. Organize the filing system for taking care of important records and papers.

Group medical/dental/haircut appointments for household members as much as possible. If you need an answer for a household management question or problem, ask someone who knows or has more information than you do. Find "backup" child care and pet care before you need it.

**JOB TIME.** Before you leave, plan your next work day. Plan for "transition time" – that's the first 20 or 30 minutes after the job when you make the transition back to home. Arrange for everyone to have that important time, including children who need to make the transition from school or child care center to home. For households with two adults, alternate picking up children and fixing the evening meal. As much as possible, avoid taking work home. If you have an office with a door on it, realize it's okay to close that door to get concentrated work done. Arrive at work earlier or leave later to find important quiet time. Group work activities such as returning telephone calls at two specific times each day, 11:30 and 4:30 for example. Schedule routine tasks when you expect interruptions. Keep only one calendar, but be sure you block time for your priority activities, personal as well as job.

**FRIENDS TIME.** As with family, schedule time with friends. A set lunch or coffee appointment once or twice a month can help you maintain a friendship, especially when other time demands are high. Friends are also important for helping you maintain balance between work and play in your life.

**COMMUNITY TIME.** When you give time to your community by volunteering, know why you do what you do. Do you really enjoy this particular activity? Does it help you meet personal goals? If not, learn to say "no" and limit your community time to those activities with special significance for you.

Find more time for your time demands by going back over this fact sheet and circling those suggestions you want to try. Then put this sheet where you'll see it at least once a week to remind you to keep trying to find time management tips which work for you.

## **Resource**

McGee-Cooper, Ann. Time Management for Unmanageable People. Dallas, TX: Ann McGee-Cooper & Associates. 1983.

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