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## EC5587 Managing Time Instead of Letting it Manage You

Mildred Weigley Wood

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U. of N. Agr. College & U. S. Dept. of Agr. Cooperating  
W. H. Brokaw, Director, Lincoln

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### MANAGING TIME INSTEAD OF LETTING IT MANAGE YOU

Adapted from a talk given by

Mrs. Mildred Weigley Wood

There is a certain philosophy about the management of time, whether we be efficient or inefficient.

Someone has said, "The only thing that is equal in this democracy of ours is time". But do we all have the same amount of time? Some people have to get more done in 24 hours than others. Does the woman with three children have as much time as the woman without any children?

"Busy" people are not always the busiest. Stevenson has said, "I dislike people who are always surrounded with "business". Effective management eliminates a lot of this. There is a vast difference between efficiency and effectiveness. A certain high strung woman thought she was tremendously efficient. It was three months before she realized her efficiency lasted but three hours of the day and the rest of the day she was worn out. Slow movements got her farther. Deliver me from an efficient woman, but not from an effective woman!

We cannot discuss the question of time adequately if we do not recognize that every business has an overhead cost. In homemaking woman power is the definite overhead cost. How is it recognized? If the homemaker is ill her power, if replaced, is done so in most homes at a very definite cash cost. Now, in any business, a manager strives to save on the overhead cost. Is it not important then that a homemaker consider how her time is to be used?

How is she going to decide how to use her time? To consider the needs of her family is the important thing. The needs are different at different times. It is almost impossible to find two families whose needs are similar. There is a great variation.

I knew one family who always interested me very much. I called them the "cobweb" family, because they had an unusual number of cobwebs in evidence. There were five children and the father was recuperating from a long illness and studying law while doing so. Because of his illness their income was extremely limited. The mother had much to do to get everything into a day and to keep her husband from feeling worried. She could not be blamed for having a few cobwebs. I happened in one day and had occasion to go upstairs. She apologized for the condition of the stairway, but she had been making fruit cake. To her the joy of her family in the Christmas fruit cake meant more than dirty stairs and she hadn't time for both and had to choose. She had to let her work go and read to her husband from a book in which he was interested and which his eyes could not stand the strain of reading. She considered the needs of her

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family in the use of her time. She had to choose whether to clean the house at a time when something else was of more importance. Her decision was based on the needs of her family.

#### Scheduling of Work

In managing time, there are two things to consider - planning for use of time and executing the plan. It might be called scheduling and dispatching.

Some people hesitate to schedule their time. They say it makes them feel pressed and they cannot make it work. It is true that a schedule shows up one's inefficiency, but the schedule is to the homemaker what a time table is to the railroad office. It is a means of preventing unwise delays on the way to a destination. A schedule is of no value unless it is made for one's particular family. A homemaker cannot make any other schedule work but the one that is adapted to the individual needs of her own particular family. She has to remember what are the difficulties of getting the work done, then make a schedule to fit these.

There are both necessary and unnecessary interruptions. Borrowing neighbors cannot be controlled, but one can help her telephone calls by suggesting to friends and business people that she is more free to talk over the phone at some certain time in the day than at any other time. She might plan her time for the neighbors to come in the afternoon so that she could make them feel comfortable and not that she was pressed for time. Oftentimes our schedules do not work because we do not plan for such interruptions. We try to put too much into a day. We plan a day's work when we feel good in the morning and then we do not keep up our speed as the day progresses. Another reason we cannot keep on schedule is because we spend our time on non-essentials. I had a very busy day planned one day having invited friends in to dinner. I found myself, in the midst of my work, scraping the paper off of the baking powder can.

#### Dispatching of Work

The effect of a real incentive is interesting. Have you ever found yourself after a sudden invitation to dinner or some similar inspiration doing a day's work in a half day? We should be able to create our own incentives. One woman uses detective stories for this purpose. She promises herself a half hour of reading after her work is done and she can turn out an enormous amount of work by that inspiration.

Some people like to see how they can reduce the amount of time it takes to accomplish tasks. A homemaker should, if possible, reduce the number of processes required for performing any task, because the removal of even one process from each of the day's tasks makes a great difference in the time required for the day's work. One woman told of her experience with the placing of dishes. She was able to lessen the time for getting a meal by placing the dishes where they were most conveniently used. She kept the serving dishes in the kitchen instead of in the dining room.



One should plan to work at the time of least fatigue. Oftentimes by taking off fifteen minutes for rest one can do the same task in half the time. We are very careful that our children do not work when over-fatigued, but we do not use half as much judgment about ourselves.

#### Maintaining a Reasonable Standard

In so many instances we are maintaining a standard which is not based on what effect it has on the health and financial status of our families. A standard may be unreasonably low or unreasonably high. For instance, sometimes people use many more dishes in serving a meal than it is necessary for them to use. The time will come when young men and young women, in managing their homes, will sit down and determine what are reasonable standards with reference to many things besides money alone.

#### Teaching Children to be Independent

Rural people do not have the problem that city people have with reference to children going into the street. It takes time to train them not to do this, but it saves time in the end. Whenever one has made a child independent so that he washes his hands and hangs up his clothes, she has saved herself time. We are a little too much inclined to make martyrs of ourselves rather than to let other people help us save our time.

#### Standardizing Tasks

When we do a thing over and over we ought to be studying the processes we use to find out the least possible time in which that thing might be done. For instance, we might standardize bed making so as to use the least possible number of motions.

#### Obtaining Help from Other Members of the Family

Homemakers should plan to get more help from other members of their families. They do too much themselves because they do not want to spend enough time in teaching other people to help. However, this would save much time in the end. The late Anna Richardson used to say she wished homemakers would realize the significance of their job as teachers. Whether a homemaker has been through a university or not, she must make up her mind she is going to be a Teacher when she becomes a Mother.

#### Use of Odds and Ends of Time

There is an old English saying to the effect that the use of the "odds and ends of time" is more important than the use of one's regular time. There are times when we are waiting for others that we could save much time. One woman does her dusting in odds and ends of time. Another has a lot of needles threaded and her mending near which she picks up while waiting for a meal to cook or waiting for someone to come, etc.

If one is going to save time, she must take time to save it. Analyze the time problem to cut time corners. Get away from the traditional way of doing things and form reasonable standards to fit the family needs.