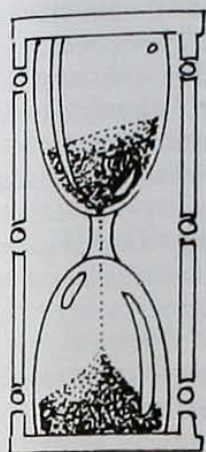


Planning for the best use of your time

by Lera Ryan



If you want something done, ask a busy person. We all recognize this old saying, and often witness a busy person take on another job - and get it done - and done well! How does that person seemingly create extra hours in a day?

Life really is a self-help project. We all have the same number of hours each day, but success really depends on how we manage ourselves and the people and activities around us.

Planning the best use of our time depends largely on knowing our own strengths and weaknesses and deciding where we want to focus our energy and resources. With the wide variety of worthwhile volunteer activities and projects happening in all our communities, opportunities outnumber the time that we have. As well, we each have demands on our time depending on our personal, family and financial situations. Choices must be made; and that is the tough part of time management!

Spend some time deciding what is really important to you; write some short and long-term goals for yourself. (If applicable, discuss these with your

family.) This step makes it much easier to say 'no' without feeling guilty when you are asked to help with yet another good cause.

Begin to manage your time by 'blocking off' in a planning calendar or booklet the commitments that you have and whatever time is needed to prepare for and follow-up after those commitments. This is essential for doing any task well, but is often overlooked. Remember, time for driving to an appointment or a meeting is also committed time.

Prioritize your activities - what must be done; what should be done; what could be done? What are the consequences if it isn't done? Think about your skills in relation to an activity. You might volunteer to chair a banquet because you do that well, but decline to sell tickets because you find that difficult or unenjoyable. Another time you might choose to improve your ability at selling tickets. Being clear about the expectations of a task can eliminate many potential problems.

Procrastination may occur when a person lacks confidence or interest in or knowledge about a task. Select activities carefully to help eliminate those less desirable jobs. If you find yourself rushing to meet a deadline, make a conscientious effort to begin working on a project ahead of time. Sudden bursts of frantic energy can be exhausting for both you and your family.

Here are some simple organizational habits to help you free up a few minutes each day:

- keep your personal calendar by the phone or with you;
- establish a place to open, respond to, and file mail;
- delegate tasks to family or organization members who can do them adequately;
- list and group business and shopping errands;
- bring something to read or write while waiting for an appointment;
- return phone messages at the end of the morning or afternoon;
- keep a notebook or binder for each organization/activity you belong to or volunteer with to minimize losing and maximize organizing information;
- plan meals a week at a time, noting advertised specials;
- schedule time for family activities and for your own personal relaxation;
- and, when you feel too busy, ask yourself - Is this really important? Does this lead me towards my goals?

Really, time is life. Manage your own, your family and your community activities and have the flexibility to do and enjoy what is most important to you and your family.

Lera Ryan is a Family Resource Management Specialist with the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food in Guelph.

Exchanging "news and views"

Dear Editor:

I write on behalf of my fellow members of the Sutton Waldron and Iwerne Minster Women's Institute in Dorset, England.

I visited your Museum at Stoney Creek a few years ago, and was asked on my return to give a talk at our monthly meeting.

We are very keen to have a "link"

overseas. We wondered if it was possible for you to pass on this request to all Branches of the WI in Ontario, and preferably a local one based around the Stoney Creek area for historical reasons.

We would be pleased to exchange news and views, our county newsletter, plus, details of our many and varied activities throughout the year. Our Institute has fifty members of all ages.

With greetings and our good wishes we look forward to a favourable reply.

With grateful thanks,
Miriam Pullen

Note: If your Branch is interested in this kind of exchange, please contact Miriam Pullen, Stonecroft Home Farm, Iwerne Minster, Dorset, England, DT11 8LT.