

Time management - spend time on things that matter most

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When looking at our lives and why we don't accomplish our goals, many give the excuse, *"I just don't have enough time."* Those of us who have used that excuse before (most likely all of us) know in our heart that the statement is not true and that we are lying to ourselves because we don't want to take responsibility. Now that we have meaningful goals (for those who completed the forms above), how can we better organize our time to accomplish more and achieve our perfect life (see sidebar above)?

Rather than prioritizing your schedule, try scheduling your priorities. If we can decide on what is most important to us (based on our values, principles, and goals), we can put those into our schedule first and then schedule other less important things around those key goals. Stephen Covey, author of *7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, calls these key goals "big rocks" or putting "first things first." To see a wonderful example of putting first things first, watch this 6 minute video - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cw1_l6oKr1s

"Am I able to say no to the unimportant, no matter how urgent, and yes to the important?" -Stephen Covey

Stephen Covey talks about four quadrants in his time management matrix (see below). Quadrants 1 and 2 are important and quadrants 3 and 4 are unimportant. Likewise, quadrant 1 and 3 are urgent while quadrants 2 and 4 are not urgent. Covey suggests that most of our time is best spent in quadrant 2, the important and not urgent.

This is where planning, relationship building, and personal improvement happen. If we don't take enough time in quadrant 2, soon we'll be very busy in quadrant 1 where the important things have become urgent and turned into deadlines and crises. We should **avoid** unimportant activities, quadrants 3 and 4, whether urgent or not. Unfortunately, most of us spend much of our time in these unimportant quadrants. Quadrant 4 includes time wasters, busy work, trivia, much of our internet surfing or social media, and too much time spent on video games, TV, or other electronics.

Quadrant 3 includes other peoples' priorities, email, phone calls, texts and other urgent activities but that are NOT important to us. Once we cut out most of quadrants 3 and 4, we'll have the time we need for our "big rocks," and to put first things first. The key is to better determine what is important and what is not important so we don't get bogged down in the "thick of thin things."

The time management matrix – activities

	Urgent	Not Urgent
I m p o r t a n t	I ACTIVITIES <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crises • Pressing problems • Deadline-driven projects 	II ACTIVITIES <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prevention, capability improvement • Relationship building • Recognising new opportunities • Planning, recreation
N o t I m p o r t a n t	III ACTIVITIES <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interruptions, some callers • Some mail, some reports • Some meetings • Proximate, pressing matters • Popular activities 	IV ACTIVITIES <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trivia, busy work • Some mail • Some phone calls • Time wasters • Pleasant activities

Based on 7 Habits of Highly Effective People. Stephen Covey

Rather than busying ourselves with the priorities of others, scheduling our big rocks first will allow us to take time to accomplish our priorities so that our actions are congruent with our principles and goals. Some people equate their level of importance with how busy they are; the busier they are, the more important they must be (sound familiar?). "How are you today?" one might ask. We then respond, "Oh, I am so busy. I have..." and we continue with our list of how busy we are, which, of course, indicates our importance, right? But being busy doesn't mean we are important or effective. Few of us stop to think about aligning our values, principles, and goals with our monthly, weekly, and daily planning. We have heard before that "if you fail to plan, you plan to fail." Zig Zigler said, **"If you aim at nothing, you will hit it every time."**

TOO BUSY





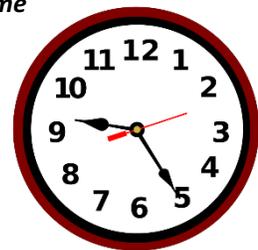
Good, Better, Best

Once we have removed the time wasters and activities that don't contribute to our values, principles, and goals, we turn to prioritizing the good things we do. We need to realize that some activities in our lives are good, some are better, and others are best. Dallin Oaks said, **"We don't want to spend so much of our time on good things that we don't have time for the best things."** What is essential and most important to us? What brings us the most happiness? What makes life fulfilling? What are simple things we can do to make a significant meaningful difference? What are simple ways we can change how we use our time so we are engaged in these fulfilling and meaningful experiences more of the time? You may wish to use the table below to organize your thoughts.

Good	Better	Best

168 Hours in a Week

Everyone has 168 hours per week. The trick is to use each of the 168 hours to its best and highest use. The best and highest use is different for each of us and is based, or should be based, on our values, principles, and goals. Think about the following question: ***Can others tell what is most important to me by how I spend my time?*** Does what you do with your time align with what you say is most important to you? For most of us, we could use some adjustments in how we use our time. For example, for many children the word love is spelled T I M E. Children want our time; not just "quality" time but quantity of time. In other words, it is not enough to spend an hour of quality time per week. What they want is your time every day, doing chores, helping with homework, or doing an activity. Our children can tell what is important to us by how we use our time, especially our discretionary time. If we work a lot and then come home and work more and watch TV but spend little time with them, they hear us loud and clear that they are not that important to us, no matter how often or loud we tell them they are. Again, adjustments may be necessary to align our actions to our words and declarations.



Do you know how you spend your 168 hours per week? Whether your answer is yes or no, I encourage you to complete the activity below.

Time Management Activity

1. Track your time use for 1 week using a daily or weekly calendar to better understand where your time is being spent. Using the information you gathered from tracking your time over 1 week, answer the following questions:

- What and when are your “time leaks?”
- Are there patterns in how you use your time? When are the times during the day and week where you are most effective with your time? Can you schedule important, quadrant 2 activities during these productive times?
- Can you or others tell what is important to you by how you spend your time?

2. Use a weekly calendar to **effectively** plan your week.

- Everyone has 168 hours per week; plan your week by deciding on the number of hours you will spend on your various activities (e.g., exercise, work, sleep, eating, entertainment, etc.). Remember to plan your “big rocks” first to schedule your priorities.

a) Make a list of activities with the amount of time for each for the entire week. The list should add up to 168 hours total

- a. Sleep - 7 nights x 7 hours = 49 hours
- b. Work – 24 hours
- c. Courses – 15 hours
- d. Homework – 30 hours
- e. Etc. up to a total of 168 hours

b) Insert these activities into a new weekly schedule/calendar (remember, this is how you **want** your week to look if you effectively planned it).

- How does this weekly plan differ from how you spent your time during the week you tracked your time use?

3. Using the information you gathered from tracking your time over 1 week, complete the Good, Better, Best table. Insert what you did with your time that was good, was better, and was best (according to your principles, life vision, and goals).

1. What are some **better** and **best** things you **want to do** but cannot find time for?

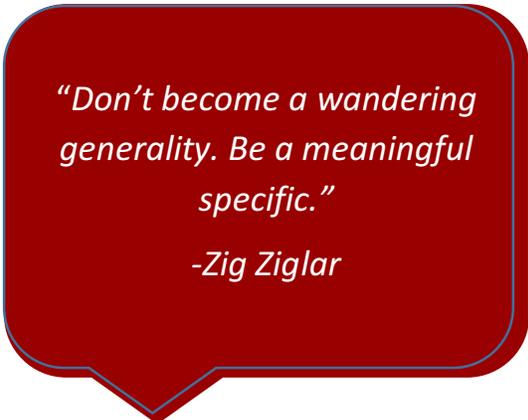
2. What are some **good** things you **do** but could minimize or do without?

3. How can you plan/schedule to make sure you have time for the **better** things and especially the **best** things? In other words, what specific changes will you make so your time is allocated to the area’s most important in your life?



The Bottom Line –

Be intentional with your life. Be intentional in each of your roles. Be intentional in your goals and in your relationships. Rather than wandering through life hoping for the best, take time to figure out what your values and principles are and then set goals to accomplish your desires. Zig Ziglar put it this way, “Don’t become a wandering generality. Be a meaningful specific.” When our actions and behaviors are congruent with our values and principles, we create a meaningful, purposeful life.



*“Don’t become a wandering
generality. Be a meaningful
specific.”*

-Zig Ziglar

Part one on goal setting is about creating the blueprint for a meaningful life - the mental creation. Part two on time management is about putting the blueprint into action – the physical creation. As we complete both the mental and physical steps to a purposeful life, we will become the type of person we want to be. Becoming, rather than thinking, saying, or doing, will bring more peace into our lives and into our relationships and our quality of life will increase.

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