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COURSE OBJECTIVES

- ♦ **Using Time Management**

- ♦ **Understanding Your Style**

- ♦ **Organizing Methods**

- ♦ **Prioritizing Techniques**

- ♦ **Scheduling Time**

- ♦ **Handling Procrastination, Interruptions and Distractions**

- ♦ **Managing E-mail**

- ♦ **Managing Paperwork**

- ♦ **Self Management and Action Planning**

Time Management

Introduction

Time is finite. We only have so many hours to do what we need to do and what we want to do. When we manage our time effectively and efficiently, we reduce stress and frustration, we become more confident, we produce higher quality work and we feel better.

Time management is a personalized process, unique for each individual. There is no single time management technique that will work for everyone. What each person needs to do is analyze their current time management style, identify what behaviors are time wasters, and choose - from the many strategies available - a combination of tools and techniques that will enhance their ability to meet work requirements and improve their overall work/life balance.

There are many ways to improve time management using the systems and tools we already have in place, such as Groupwise, or the Microsoft applications, such as Outlook. If you are not comfortable with using the computer, you can use a regular calendar.

After you complete the self-assessments and review this material, you will select the strategies that will work best for your situation. As a result, you will feel more confident to manage your time and meet your work-related and personal goals.

Time Management

Special points of interest:

- Organizing
- Prioritizing
- Scheduling Time
- Procrastination
- Interruptions and Distractions
- Managing E-Mail
- Managing Paperwork

Instructions

1. Print this learning packet so you can take notes and utilize the tools.
2. After reading section 1, take from 1-day to 1-week to track your time and identify problem areas, using your own calendar or the template provided for you.
3. Complete the reading. Focus on areas that need development based on the self-assessment.
4. Based on what you have learned about yourself and time management practices, complete the action plan on the last page of this packet.
5. Review the action plan with your supervisor and ask your supervisor to sign.
6. Set a follow-up meeting with your supervisor to discuss the progress you have made and define steps for continuous improvement.

Section 1: Time Management Defined

Time management is about using time effectively to achieve desired results. To be an effective time manager you must first understand how you spend your time now, what works and what wastes time. Then you need to be familiar with the variety of tools and approaches that help you to be more efficient and productive. There is no one right way to manage time. You need to develop a personalized system that works for you that you can use daily.

The core time management principles are:
- Make conscious choices about what to do when
- Plan your days, weeks, months
- Prioritize based on your goals
- Eliminate time wasters

You should also be aware of **the most common time wasters**:
- Procrastination
- Lost paperwork/materials
- Unnecessary meetings
- Interruptions
- Internet surfing
- Non-productive e-mails and poor e-mail management
- Repetitive work/paperwork
- Non-productive socializing in the workplace

To help you determine the behaviors that are getting in the way of you using time most efficiently, you can begin by taking the brief self-assessment in Section 2.

Section 2: Understanding yourself and where time goes

"Unfortunately, most time management books and systems assume that one style fits all. Experience teaches us that this is untrue."

EXERCISE 1:

Before you can manage your time better, you need to understand how you are managing time now, what choices you are making consciously or unconsciously. The best way to build awareness is through self-assessment and analysis.

This will be done in two parts:
1. Complete the self-assessment on page 6. Write down the time management behaviors that are most important to improve.

2. Track your time closely for a period of 2-5 days, using your own calendar or the template on page 7. Make note of your activities, the amount of time you spend on each and what the outcome was for having invested time in each activity. Be very honest, these notes are for you only. Look back on your notes and think about the following questions:
   - Are there activities that had no productive outcome? Possibly time wasters?
   - Is there any kind of pattern to your day or is it haphazard? Why?
   - Do you make time to return phone calls and check e-mail or do you do that on a random basis?
   - Do you tend to do the same type of tasks at certain times of day? If so, do you think that is working for you or did that habit just develop over time?

3. Once you have gone through this process, you will be able to identify practices in this packet that will help you be the most productive.

Section 3: Organizing

One of the top time wasters in business is misplacing things. The average person loses about three hours a week searching for "lost" things. So, if you can access things quickly, you save time. Perhaps the most problematic area at work is your desk.

We each have a desk management style. Do you stack things in organized piles? Do you stuff things wherever there's space? Do you spread things out? Do you sling things – onto the desktop, chairs, filing cabinets, the floors? Do you sort things and store them where they belong?

Whatever your style,

be sure to clean your

desk at the end of

each day. The only

stacks on your desk

should consist of

sorted, essential

things.

These simple suggestions work for most styles:

- Use the top of your desk only for active projects and supplies you use most.

- Keep small supplies in a top drawer. Allow only a few of each essential item on the desk surface.

- Maintain a tickler file in the bottom desk drawer. That's a set of 31 folders, one for each day of the month, followed by 11 folders, for the months that follow. Just drop things into the appropriate folder. Then every morning check that day's folder.

- Use three trays, or a filing stand, for prioritizing items (The ABC system is covered below).

- Maintain order in your filing cabinets.

- Maintain your electronic files so they can be easily accessed:
  - Develop a naming convention and stick to it
  - Create folders and sub-folders, as needed
  - Do not let your desktop fill with documents – file them as you would a paper file.

Section 4: Prioritizing: ABCs

If your priorities are unclear in both your work and home life, it will be difficult to achieve goals and make progress. Setting priorities provides direction for how you spend your time.
One option for prioritizing is using the ABC system.
This system is taught by virtually every time management expert and utilized in various forms by all those who have good time management skills.

It is very basic: give each task a value of A, B, or C, as follows:

- **A** = *critical and immediate, must be done soon*. If an A task is left undone by the defined deadline, there would be serious consequences for you, the department or those depending on the task and its relation to other work being done.

- **B** = *important, slightly less time-sensitive*. A B task is not as pressing as an A task but it is still very important. If postponed for too long, a B task can easily rise to an A.

- **C** = *Not time sensitive*. This is a task that can be put off, if necessary, without significant consequences.

This system allows you to be objective about prioritizing tasks. If there are too many tasks with the same priority, make distinctions: for example, A1, A2, A3.

> *Important Note: You must review your priorities with your supervisor/manager on a regular basis to make sure that the two of you agree on what is most important. If you do this in isolation, you run the risk of not meeting deadlines that are critical to the department and organization.*

Remember, time management is different for each individual. There are many ways to apply the ABC approach. You may want to try some of these ideas:

- **Value and fully utilize your organizer** (this can be Groupwise, Outlook or a Day Planner): Make a list of all your tasks and label every task listed as A, B, C. Of course, this recommendation assumes you have some sort of organizer. If you don't, you are going to need to start using one. Labeling your tasks may prompt you to rearrange the order in which you address them.
- **Value your to-do list**: List things to do in random order. Then assign each a letter value. This list should drive your scheduling.
- **Equip your desk, or computer, with a three-tray filing system**. Label the top tray A, the next highest B, and then C. Put each project or other piece of work in a folder and file in the appropriate tray. Every morning, review the A's and B's, moving items up as needed.
- **Use Index Cards or Post-its (variation of a to-do list)** Some people like the flexibility of using index cards or post-its, in addition to their organizer. To do this, write each task on a separate index card/post-it and then place them in order of importance based on the ABCs. This system has some advantages. First, some people like the feeling of flexibility and freedom in working with pieces you can move around. Second, this system is easier to work with in teams. Third, it enables you to see "at a glance" what your next task is rather than rummaging through your desk.

EXERCISE 2:

1. **Look at your desk /office and identify 3 things to change that will improve your time management based on what you have read so far.**

2. **Block time in your schedule to make those changes – you do not have to do them all at once.**

3. **If prioritizing is an issue, schedule a meeting with your supervisor to review your ABC's and make sure the two of you agree on how you spend your time.**

Section 5: Scheduling Time

If you have a good idea of your fixed appointments and important tasks during any given week, it will provide a clear picture of when time is available to work on important goals and projects.

Scheduling Tips:
- Take charge of your time and schedule.
- Create a plan of action for your days, weeks, months. Schedule for the short term and the long term simultaneously.
- Choose your organizational tools (i.e., planner, calendar, Outlook) and use them consistently – keeping your schedule and "to-do" lists in one reliable location.

- Build in a little cushion time to allow for unexpected delays, especially before and after meetings.
- Allow for flexibility as needs and priorities change. Be ready to "let it go" if necessary; not all days go according to plan.

Socialize Intelligently:
Socializing in excess can consume a lot of time. That's a concern for many managers because of the negative impact on productivity. However, a workplace that is 100% work would be very grim. The goals should be to socialize in reasonable amounts so that it doesn't negatively impact your performance.

If your job is task-oriented, you may need breaks for human contact – but keep them brief. If your job is people-oriented, you may need to schedule quiet periods to focus on getting your work done.

On-Going Self-Management
You are the only one that can manage your time, it cannot be done for you.

Keep focused, and remember:
- Time cannot be saved or stored.
- We must manage ourselves in relation to time, not the other way around. It is the way we use time that matters; not how much we have.
- Any bad habits must be changed to better control our use of time.

Section 6: Procrastination

- Procrastination is the postponing of activities, often to an excessive level. It results in wasted time, missed opportunities, low performance and high stress. People procrastinate for many reasons, including: fear of failure, don't know where to start, unpleasant tasks, other distractions, lack of focus.
- Procrastination is a habit that will take time to change. You need to identify what the cause is for you and then use the strategies offered below to fix it. Seek help from your co-workers or supervisor if you need it.

Phases of Procrastination:

Do any of these seem familiar?

"I've got to start soon"

"I should have started earlier"

"There's still time"

*"Why bother? I can't finish it anyway"*

"I will not do this to myself again"

Strategies: Tasks
- Complete your most unpleasant tasks first, early in the day.
- Break large jobs into smaller pieces.
- Determine a time to make a decision and share the deadline with others.
- Reward your accomplishments.
- Do something – no matter how small.

Strategies: Environment
- Close your door and clean up clutter.
- Remove food, magazines, and other distractions from the workplace.
- Tell your co-workers to try not to disrupt during a block of time you have scheduled to complete a task.
- Put a reminder for you to FOCUS where you can see it.
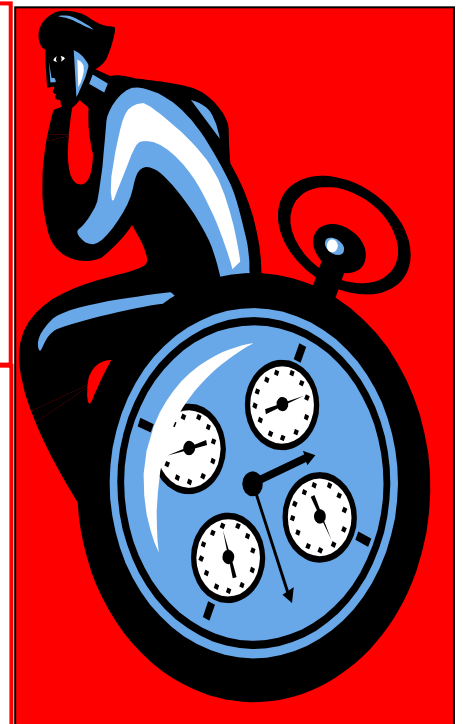
Section 7: Interruptions and Distractions

There are many distractions in the workplace. Among the most common are: people stopping by to visit, phone calls, constant e-mail, office parties/events, hunger, fatigue, anxiety and/or stress. You cannot completely avoid interruptions or distractions but here are some helpful tips to minimize them:

- Inform others of your work and your timelines. This will help in minimizing "drop in" visits.
- When someone asks for your time, suggest a specific time later in the day rather than dropping what you are working on.
- Send calls to voicemail while you are completing a task, let your supervisor and co-workers know that you won't be answering the phone for a period of time and why.
- Stand up when you are ready to end a conversation to signal others that you have to move on.
- Use a reminder that you will see: "Is What I Am Doing Right Now Related to My Goals?"
- Utilize the strategies in Section 5: Procrastination.

Section 8: Managing E-mail

You control your e-mail: when you process it, how you use it, and setting these expectations with others. E-mail can occupy your entire day, so you need to have strategies to deal with it effectively. By checking e-mail only at certain times of day, or upon completion of significant tasks, you may find that you have much more time to get your work done.

E-Mail Productivity Tips:
Minimize the distraction of a pop-up box by shutting it off.

- Take action on each e-mail: delete it, file it, or reply/act.
- Turn e-mails into calendar appointments or tasks: avoid using your inbox as a "to-do" list.
- Create folders for keeping track of important e-mails.
- Write descriptive subject lines with calls to action to catch attention, promote quick response and easy filing.
- Copy only those who need to know to minimize the replies.
- Designate blocks of time in your schedule to check email; start with 3-4 times a day and gradually reduce to 2-3 times.
- Be sure your approach is agreed to by your supervisor and aligns with your job requirements.

Additional Time Savers
- Use a tray on your desk for paper items associated with e-mail you want to send; label accordingly.
- Sort incoming messages by subject or author to process related emails. Unsubscribe or remove your email address from unwanted or unread mailings.
- Delete messages with attachments after you save them. Don't use your e-mail system as a filing cabinet.

EXERCISE 3:

Looking back at the time log you created in your self-assessment, estimate how much time you lose in a day to procrastination and unproductive interruptions. Write down your estimate in hours here: _____

For the remainder of today – or choose

Section 9: Managing Paperwork

Many people feel overwhelmed by paper and it becomes a key factor in slowing people down, making things feel out of control. Someone who manages paper well will be able to find what they need quickly and have it organized so others can find things, if necessary.

There are three steps to the paperwork process:

1) Sort items into categories
- If you are overwhelmed by this in the beginning, start with small chunks.
- Touch each item only once. Make a decision about what to do with it and follow-through.

2) Take action: act/complete, file, or toss!
- If a piece of paper only needs a brief response, do it now.
- If a more thoughtful response is required, schedule a task.
- Ask "How important is this information? Do I already have it electronically?" If possible, toss.

3) Maintain a paperwork routine.
- Keep hanging file tabs on one side of the folder only.
- Block out time for dealing with clutter: 15 minutes a day, one hour a week, etc.
- Use files, containers and other desk accessories for easy organization.
- Schedule a short filing session once a day, week and month.

4) **Avoid loose pieces of paper.**
- Have a notebook with you at all times to minimize scrap pieces of paper.
- File loose pieces of paper/mail as soon as possible.

Section 10: On-Going Self-Management and Action Planning

You are the only one that can manage your time; it cannot be done for you.

Keep focused, positive, and remember:

- Time cannot be saved or stored.

- We must manage ourselves in relation to time, not the other way around.

- It is the way we use time that matters; not how much we have.

EXERCISE 4:

ACTION PLANNING

1. Review the contents of this packet and your notes from exercises 1, 2 and 3.

2. Complete the Action Plan on the final page of this packet.

3. Schedule a meeting with your supervisor to share what you have learned, what actions you plan to take, and what support you need to be successful!

Section 10: Self-Assessment

Survey

Instructions: The purpose of this activity is to help you learn about what you need to be a good time manager and to help you create an action plan to improve your time management skills. Place an X in one of the boxes to the right of each item, depending on how you see yourself today. Please be honest with yourself – do not try to guess the "right answer." Remember, time management is different for everyone.

	Time Management Behaviors	Always	Frequently	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
1	Know my priorities and use them to focus					
2	Schedule my week, noting important tasks					
3	Use the first 5-10 minutes of the day to plan					
4	Use organizational tools effectively					
5	Review my priorities and deadlines with my manager regularly					
6	Have my calendar and tasks easily accessible and up-to-date					
7	Keep a notebook handy to capture requests and information					
8	Take time to listen to coworkers					
9	Am able to say "no" when necessary					
10	Know exactly where my time goes everyday					
11	Accurately estimate how long tasks will take					
12	Have a system of prioritizing					
13	Effectively handle interruptions					
14	Manage paper effectively					
15	Have an organized and orderly workplace					
16	Spend a lot of time on e-mail					
17	Procrastinate on tasks or projects that are difficult					
18	Frequently feel exhausted and stressed					
19	Am often late to meetings and activities					
20	Multitask at work					
21	Eat lunch at my desk more often than not					

Self-Analysis: If you responded "sometimes," "rarely," or "never" to items 1 through 16 AND/OR responded "always," "frequently," or "sometimes" to items 17-21, there are definite improvements you can make to your time management skills / approaches. Write the 2-3 time management areas you need to improve the most below and keep these in mind as you go through the rest of the program.

The time management behaviors I think I need to improve the most are:

1._____

2._____

3._____

Section 10: Self-Assessment

Time Tracker

	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
6:00							
7:00							
8:00							
9:00							
10:00							
11:00							
Noon							
1:00							
2:00							
3:00							
4:00							
5:00							
6:00							
7:00							
8:00							
9:00							
10:00							
11:00							

NOTES:

Section 10: Action Plan

Based on your self-assessment and techniques you have learned, complete the following action plan and review it with your manager. After you both agree on the action plan, set-up a follow-up meeting in 3-4 weeks to discuss if the changes you are making have been effective and what the next steps are. Be sure to ask for regular feedback from your manager on time management skills as well as other areas of performance.

Action Plan for Improved Time Management

1. I commit to engaging in the following three behaviors to improve my time management:
   a. _____
   b. _____
   c. _____

2. I will use the following three tools or techniques to improve my time management:
   a. _____
   b. _____
   c. _____

3. I am setting the following deadlines to incorporate these behaviors and tools into my daily routine:

Deadline Date	Behaviors/Tools	Expected Outcome/ Improvement

We agree to have a follow-up meeting on _____ to review level of improvement in time management based on the above expectations.

Participant Signature: _____ Date: _____

Supervisor's Signature: _____ Date: _____

For completion credit, fax this page and evaluation form to 732-235-9509.

Comments from Follow-Up Meeting:

Self Learning Packet (SLP) Evaluation Form
Fax to 732-235-9509

Course Title: <u>Time Management</u> Completion Date: _____

My Unit/School: _____ Department: _____

Job Title: _____

Please share your opinion of this Self-Learning Packet by indicating the response that best describes your impressions of this course.

	Strongly Agree 5	*Agree* 4	*Neutral* 3	*Disagree* 2	*Strongly Disagree* 1
1 I feel that I will be able to use what I have learned.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2 The content, exercises and activities were appropriate for this topic.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3 This SLP was clear and easily understandable.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4 The program covered the promised objectives.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
5 I know where to go if I have questions.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
6 My supervisor was involved in this process.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
7 I believe other people at University Hospital would benefit from this program.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
8 Overall rating of this SLP.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

<u>Additional Comments:</u>