

Stress & Time Management

Recognizing the Signs of Chronic Stress

2009 ECAC-SIDA Rookie Panel • Avalon, N.J.

One of the biggest effects of poor time management is stress. Not the kind of stress that is easily recognizable, but a more pervasive and insidious type of stress. It sneaks in under the radar and causes long-term damage to your health and your overall happiness. Chronic stress, stress that is the result of long term and pervasive stress, causes significant health problems.

According to WebMD, chronic stress can be the result of a host of irritating hassles or a long-term life condition, such as a difficult job situation. In people who have higher levels of chronic stress, the stress response lasts longer. Over time, chronic stress can have an effect on:

- The immune system
- Muscle pain
- Reproductive organs
- Skin problems
- Cardiovascular disease
- Stomach and intestinal problems
- The lungs
- It also causes mental coping issues to arise

Each of these health issues add up and cause other issues like diabetes, obesity, heart attacks, chronic fatigue, insomnia and so on.

To put it mildly, chronic stress caused by poor time management can shorten your life and significantly detract from your overall quality of life. It's been estimated that as many as 90% of doctor's visits are for symptoms that are at least partially stress-related.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR:

- **Loss of control.** Things can slip through the cracks.
- **Burnout.** Even the most desirable activities can become tiresome when you're doing them 60+ hours a week. Learn to take a break.
- **No joy.** When you spend your days struggling to get it all done, you don't save time for yourself.
- **Work suffers.** Hours and hours spent on tasks that are not important leave only a little bit of time for the projects that really do affect your bottom line.
- **Personal life suffers.** What do you do if something doesn't get accomplished during normal work hours? Do you work on it in the evenings or on weekends when you could be spending time with your friends and family?

WHEN YOU MANAGE YOUR TIME BETTER YOU CAN HAVE:

- **Peace of mind.** Being able to effectively manage your time will result in an amazing peace of mind.
- **A sense of achievement and satisfaction.** When you manage your time effectively, you'll be able to give yourself a pat on the back almost daily.
- **More energy.** You'll get twice as much accomplished in half the time and you'll likely sleep and feel better.
- **More fun.** Time management frees up time in your day for the important things in life.
- **A feeling of being in control over your life.** Accomplishment leads to control, which can and will expand into other areas of your life, too.

12 Tips to Help Manage Your Time

2009 ECAC-SIDA Rookie Panel • Avalon, N.J.

1. Write things down

Using a to-do list to write things down is a great way to take control of your projects and tasks and keep yourself organized.

2. Prioritize your list

Prioritizing your to-do list helps you focus and spend more of your time on the things that really matter to you.

3. Plan your week

Spend some time at the beginning of each week to plan your schedule. Taking the extra time to do this will help increase your productivity.

4. Carry a calendar

Utilize a daily planner or a personal organizer (i.e., Blackberry or Palm Pilot) to keep track of appointments, scheduled games and deadlines.

5. Learn to say NO!

Learn to say no to low priority requests and you will free up time to spend on things that are more important.

6. Think before acting

Before committing to a new task, stop to think about it before you give your answer. This will prevent you from taking on too much work.

7. Continuously improve yourself

Make time in your schedule to learn new things and develop your natural talents and abilities.

8. Identify bad habits

Recognize the bad habits that are stealing your time, sabotaging your goals, and blocking your success.

9. Don't do other people's work

Focus on your own projects and goals, learn to delegate effectively, and teach others how to do their own work.

10. Don't be a perfectionist

Learn to distinguish between tasks that deserve to be done excellently and tasks that just need to be done.

11. Beware of "filler" tasks

Things such as organizing your bookcase or filing papers can wait until you tackle the items that have the highest priority.

12. Avoid "efficiency traps"

Avoid taking on tasks that you can do with efficiency that don't need to be done at all.