

Daily Union Article
Saturday, December 16, 2017
Title: Father Time and Happy Holidays!

Have you run out of room on your December calendar boxes? Is there no place to write or type in another event or celebration? Managing your waking hours each day takes time and energy- and still the dates and deadlines pile up beyond belief.

It is no wonder that this time of year can be very stressful for families. Students are trying to wrap up the semester, small business owners are pushed by holiday purchasing demands, and parents are trying to balance work with family.

If this describes you, my colleagues from the University of Georgia Extension Service, Sue W. Chapman and Michael Rupured have put together a Time Management fact sheet that you might find helpful. I am offering a snapshot of the information from their fact sheet.

Everyone has a limited amount of time. You value the time you have each day and the way you use your time is a reflection of your needs and values. Because time is limited to 24 hours in a day (or 1,440 minutes to be more precise), you have to protect it, use it wisely, and carefully budget it.

Chapman and Rupured identify the following characteristics of people who practice good time management techniques:

- They are more productive.
- They have more energy for things they need to accomplish.
- They feel less stressed.
- They are able to do the things they want.
- They get more things done.
- They relate more positively to others, and...
- They feel better about themselves.

Who wouldn't want to exhibit these characteristics? Finding a time management system that works for you depends on your personality, self-motivation, and self-discipline.

Perhaps you already have time management strategies you use to get you through each day. However, during the holiday season, there are often additional stressors that disrupt our schedules and we slip in our efforts to manage our time. Here's a refresher

for you to help keep time management strategies operating successfully during your busiest of times.

#1 – Know How You Spend Your Time. Much like budgeting your money, you have to know your currently spending habits before you can effectively change them. Keeping a time log is a helpful way to account for your time spent each day.

#2 – Set Priorities. Identify those things that are urgent and those that are important. Just because something is important, that doesn't mean it is urgent. Admittedly sometimes, things come up that are both important and urgent. Without a doubt, those events that share both characteristics must be addressed and done so in a timely fashion.

#3 – Use a Planning Tool. This very much is a personal preference. You can use an online calendar, your phone calendar, pocket diary, wall charts, index cards, a notebook, or a printed calendar. Personally, I use a combination of multiple tools. I have a "bill calendar" that shows when each household bill is due and how much (sometimes estimated) it will be. I also use an online calendar for work and home events. Finally, I print a copy of my work calendar for my family each week. Pick what works best for you and be faithful in using the tool.

#4 – Get Organized. Get rid of the clutter in your work environment, at home, and on your calendar. The fewer obstacles that stand in your way, the more productive you can be.

#5 – Schedules Your Time Appropriately. This begins with you knowing yourself. Using the time journal recommended in #1 can help you with this process. If you have a particularly challenge task to accomplish, plan to tackle it when you have the most energy and sharpest mind. For me, that's in the mornings. In fact, I started working on this article before 6 a.m. in the morning.

#6 – Delegate. Don't assume you can (or should) do everything yourself. Assigning responsibilities to someone else who also benefits from the completion of the task is an effective way to ensure it gets done on time.

#7 – Stop Procrastinating. Admittedly, I struggle with this. I always think I am going to have more time than is realistic. When I was younger, I used to simply sacrifice sleep to accommodate for my procrastination. As I have gotten older, my body just simply can't tolerate long days and short nights like it once did. Break down those big tasks into smaller ones so that you can make steady incremental progress.

#8 – Manage External Time Wasters. An example of a time waster for me is my tendency to chat about things beyond the topic at hand. One suggestion offered by Chapman and Rupured is to stand when you talk on the phone. This encourages you to keep the conversation shorter.

#9 – Avoid Multi-tasking. The mindset that multi-tasking makes you more efficient with your time is grossly inaccurate. Recent studies have disproved this mindset finding that multi-tasking can actually lead to difficulty in concentrating on the task at hand.

#10 – Stay Healthy. I have written many articles about the value of staying healthy. Your health affects every aspect of your life – including time management. When you are healthy, your body and brain can manage time more effectively.

Time is a limited resource that all of us need to manage. Using these strategies is a good place to start and will make your holiday season more enjoyable! To read the fact sheet in full, you can access it on the Geary County K-State Research and Extension website at <http://www.geary.k-state.edu/>. Click on the Health Home and Family tab and you can download the fact sheet. Look for "Time Management: 10 Strategies for Better Time Management. Until next time, keep living resourcefully!