Every human being has exactly 24 hours in every day, but how we spend those hours is our choice. Our responsibilities can range from work to family to everything in between, and without time management, it can seem as if we all have too much demand and not enough supply. Time management can help you prioritize your waking hours to increase efficiency and productivity. At some point or another, every individual has to consider how he or she can best manage the minutes in his or her day.

**TIME MANAGEMENT TIPS**

- **Take notes** – Consider making a time log for a typical day or week. Record the time you expend on thoughts, conversations, and activities to gain a greater understanding of where and when you are productive or wasteful.

- **Schedule tasks** – Schedule an “appointment” with yourself to accomplish tasks. Set a specific start and end time so you can look forward to stopping if it’s an unpleasant task.

- **Define goals** – Clearly define the desired outcome for a conversation or activity. This allows you to gauge success, and you can find small ways to reward yourself when you’ve met your goal.

- **Remove distractions** – Eliminate or minimize social media and other distractions while working. If your work allows you small breaks to peruse the Internet, get a snack, or take a walk, then schedule those times rather than using them to interrupt your work or procrastinate.

Ultimately, time management is an art form, and the quality of our end-results outweighs the quantity. We all have the same 24 hours in a day, so how will you spend yours?
Stress is one of our brain and body’s responses to change that is demanding. It ranges from something as simple as rush hour traffic to events as difficult as the death of a loved one. Our bodies aren't built to deal with activating this stress response all the time. Without occasional breaks from stress, people can experience high blood pressure, diabetes, and heart disease, as well as depression or anxiety.

We don't always have control over stressful events in our lives, but we can control how we respond to them. Resilience is defined as the ability to recover well over time in response to stressful events.

STRESS STRATEGIES:

• Pay attention to your body – If you're drinking more than you should, are having trouble sleeping, lacking energy, or experiencing symptoms of depression or anxiety, then treat them as warning signs.

• Practice saying no – It’s important to know your limits and values. Do your best not to take on more than your mind, emotions, and physical health can withstand.

• Focus on the positive – Be proud of what you’ve accomplished rather than beating yourself up for the tasks you didn’t finish. If you struggle with negative thinking, then consider seeing a counselor.

• Ask for help if you need it – You should especially see your physician or a mental health professional if you are experiencing physical symptoms of stress, are abusing substances in order to cope, or have thoughts of suicide.

• Practice gratitude – Writing down things for which you are grateful or writing a thank you note to someone important to you can help remind you what really matters in life.

When a person is codependent, they are unable to define and meet their own needs in a relationship. This individual "loses" their sense of self because they are completely absorbed in the needs of the other person. This intense focus on the other person can jeopardize your health, safety, and success in life.

CHARACTERISTICS OF CODEPENDENT PEOPLE

There are many emotional characteristics of codependent people. They often experience low self-esteem and constantly compare themselves to others. They might have an overblown sense of responsibility for other people and fear abandonment. Often a person who is codependent finds it difficult to set and maintain boundaries in a relationship, and they also have a difficult time expressing their own personal goals or values as an individual.

HELP FOR THE CODEPENDENT PERSON

The following tips can help you or someone you know move from codependence to healthier relationships.

• Identity – Embrace your own needs and emotions. Saying “no” to a loved one doesn’t mean you don’t care for them, and it’s healthy to set these boundaries. Tough love is sometimes the most loving thing you can do.

• Self-reliant – What are some ways you could be more independent? When can you take responsibility for your own emotions and actions? Encourage others around you to do the same.

• Stop “fixing” – It is not your responsibility to solve all your loved one’s problems. You can still support and love them without trying to “fix” their lives. Give them space to take personal responsibility for their actions and future.

• Relax – Relieve stress, tension, and anxiety by practicing relaxation techniques. Yoga, enjoyable music, mindfulness, and activities you love are all things you can do to help dial down worry and guilt.

If you or your loved one is struggling with codependency, be courageous and seek help. A licensed counselor or therapist can help you explore how you began to act this way. Together, you can establish a plan to change your life’s direction and move from a codependent relationship to a mutually satisfying one.
Financial skills are necessary for a successful life, but oftentimes people don't start to learn them until they reach adulthood. Kids need to be taught about finances to prepare them for independence. Parents should guide their young ones in sound money management, as they are often the biggest influence on their children's financial practices.

Kids learn by doing. Research has indicated that children as young as three can understand the concept of saving and spending, and that children's money habits are formed by age seven. Therefore, it is never too early to begin teaching your children about money.

**LESSONS THROUGH THE AGES:**

**Preschool Age Lessons:**
- **Separate** – Help your preschool child divide up birthday or chore money between what is saved, shared, and spent. For example, consider labeling three jars, “save,” “share,” and “spend.” This also serves as a visual aid, since little ones can easily see the money separated between jars.

**Elementary School Age Lessons:**
- **Make decisions** – Have your child help with a family financial decision. Allow your child to pick out some items at the grocery store. Share the cost differences between things like name brand and generic, and individual items versus buying in bulk. Give them a few dollars, and the choice is theirs.

**Middle School Age Lessons:**
- **Teach compound interest** – Teach your child about how to make money work for you. Practice the math of compound interest with them, and you can use online tools to assist with more difficult math.

**High School Age Lessons:**
- **Compare** – Show your child the differences between college costs and help them compare educational options. Teach them education is a worthwhile investment into the future by comparing salaries of someone with a high school diploma versus a college degree.

Teaching your children about money is necessary, but it can also be fun. One of the best ways to help them learn is to engage them in the financial decision-making activities in your household. Simply lecturing about good money principles is not nearly as successful as hands-on experience. As an added bonus, you might learn something to help your own financial plans for the future.

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**COUNTY FOCUS**

**Vacation... or Stay-cation?**

Some of you may have had the quintessential vacation in Hawaii, Mexico or Europe and posted your adventures on Facebook. If you were among those fortunate enough to experience a grand getaway, congratulations. But what if you did not have the budget for a vacation this year? Did you take any time off and enjoy a staycation instead? We hope so.

Scheduling downtime to recharge your batteries is a necessary part of enjoying life. We need to quiet our minds, de-stress, have some fun and maybe just do NOTHING. It is a scientific truth.

We humans need mental relief from our daily demands. Think of it this way—rats in a cage without a wheel develop ulcers and die young. Give them a change of scenery with a maze and you extend their lives nearly twice as long. You can’t afford not to take a vacation. What is that statement people say on their deathbeds? “I wish I spent more time at the office!” I don’t think so.

Vacations don’t have to be expensive. In fact, a few mini-vacations can make a world of difference. Day trips with backpacks on the beach or in San Francisco can calm you and rejuvenate your spirit just as well as the big budget adventure. Think about a couple of three-day vacations with no hotel bills, no airports and no need for a dog sitter.

We pay a high price to call the Bay Area our home, so we may as well enjoy it. Use your personal leave and take mental health breaks (mid-week when the crowds aren’t so big is even better). You are the executive of your own life; do what you want to do, not what you need to do. Here are a few suggestions:

- **UNPLUG** and switch off. Information overload is a major source of stress.
- **Read** a book all the way through. Avoid the sound bites of the internet.
- **Reconnect** with friends. People are more important than things.

- **Take** a Segway tour through Golden Gate Park in San Francisco. You will feel like a kid again.
- **Have** a bowl of Cioppino at Phil’s in Moss Landing. Take your dog along, listen to the ocean all day, then drive home and sleep in your own bed. No hotel needed.
- **Hug** a few Redwood trees at Mt. Madonna Park and go for a leisurely hike.
- **Taste** some California wine or homemade beer at Jack London Square in Oakland. Bring your bike and pedal around.

If you find yourself unable to put yourself first and create some down time, call EAP. The therapists here will help you prioritize, improve your self-care and find your way towards emotional health. Remember, your life has an expiration date. So get out and start living!
Communication is all around us. Whether we are actively engaged in conversation, listening intently for a newborn’s cry, or rolling our eyes in exasperation, messages are being sent, received, and processed every moment. While communication is somewhat instinctive, effective communication is a learned skill.

Mastering the skills of communication may improve relationships at home and work, aid in decision-making, and streamline problem solving. Additionally, strong communication is beneficial when difficult or potentially controversial messages are necessary. There are many strategies for sharpening your communication skills. Consider these principles to help guide your speaking skills.

**IMPROVING COMMUNICATION**

- **Be assertive** – Being assertive eliminates bullying and may even decrease stress. A clear response allows you to say “no” when needed and avoid too many commitments.

- **Focus on facts** – Begin your conversation by describing what you see or hear in a situation. Be specific and avoid exaggerations and generalizations because smooth talking will not replace general knowledge.

- **Avoid trigger words** – There are certain words it is helpful to avoid. For example, it is much easier to exaggerate when emotional, so eliminating “always” and “never” will help to decrease the emotion behind those statements.

- **Stay present** – When you are participating in a conversation, be aware of your distractions and watch your body language. If you are constantly checking your phone or watch, you are no longer communicating your attention.

There are many benefits to improving your communication skills. Being able to clearly articulate thoughts, feelings, and needs demonstrates a level of self-worth. You also might notice a genuine enjoyment for your job or other roles in life with improved communication skills. Improving and fine-tuning effective communication skills can be hard work, but the results are worth the effort.