

Join the “more play, less work” club

by Anne Henderson

How many times over the past few weeks have you said, "I just don't have time!" We all seem to be so "crazy busy" these days - juggling busy careers with family life, a hectic social life & a long to-do list.

Imagine if there was a way to free time so that you could spend more time doing the things you truly love. Guess what, there is! In this article we examine some straight-forward techniques that will help you to **work smarter, not harder**, free up time & get more out of life.

We all seem so busy these days juggling commitments & responsibilities that we don't have time to do the stuff *we really love*. We don't have time to do the stuff that we value most in life & that brings us real happiness. We whizz through life & get to the end of the day/week/month & find that we've not achieved everything that we would have liked to. We cry, "What happened to the time?!" & then we concede defeat..."I didn't have enough time."

*"Don't say you don't have enough time. You have exactly the same number of hours per day that were given to Helen Keller, Pasteur, Michaelangelo, Mother Teresa, Leonardo da Vinci, Thomas Jefferson, and Albert Einstein."
- H. Jackson Brown*

So, if we all have 24 hours in a day & 7 days in a week, how do we use that time most effectively so that we have time for more play & less work?

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1. Get a goal & prioritise

If you want to manage your time effectively you have to know what is important to you & what you want to achieve. Set goals that you want to achieve by the end of the day/week/month/year. This will enable you to identify & focus on tasks which move you closer to your goals. If tasks don't move you closer to your goals, consider whether they are really necessary. If you stopped doing this task, what is the worst thing that could happen?

2. Get smart

We all have different times of the day when we perform most effectively. For example, I'm really productive between 8am - 11 am. So, I perform creative tasks & tasks that require a large amount of energy during this time. Easier tasks are left to between 1pm - 3pm when I work least effectively.

Identify when you are most productive & schedule your toughest tasks for these times. When do things just seem to flow & when does your energy lag?
This small step will instantly boost your productivity.

3. Get focus

How many hours of the day do you spend on time-wasters? Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, personal emails...these activities can really zap your time. Try keeping a diary for a week & identify what you currently spend your time on. *I bet you'll be surprised!*

*"It's not enough to be busy, so are the ants. The question is, what are we busy about?"
- Henry David Thoreau*

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Once you have identified what you spend your time on, consider the following -

- Consolidate. Instead of checking your emails every 5 minutes, set aside specific times of the day when you will check & respond to emails.
- Break down larger tasks into small, manageable chunks & delegate.
- Forget multi-tasking. Schedule time for important tasks and remove all distractions. Close down the email & focus for a specific period of time. You will be amazed at how much more productive you are & how much quicker you get through your work.
- Doodle. Jot down any spontaneous thoughts or ideas you have about a piece of work or project on some paper. This free's up your mind & saves mental energy.
- Deal with it. The adage "handle every piece of paper only once" is unrealistic but once you open & read an email, decide what you are going to do with it. Are you going to deal with it now, delegate it, bin it or schedule time in the diary to deal with it later?

*"Take care of the minutes and the hours will take care of themselves."
- Lord Chesterfield.*

Follow these straight forward techniques & watch your productivity levels rise.

Now, what are you going to do with all that extra time? More play, less work?

*"Time = life; therefore, waste your time and waste your life, or master your time and master your life."
- Alan Lakein.*

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