How To Take Back Control of Your Time

Opinions expressed by *Entrepreneur* contributors are their own.

Time is infinite and limited. It’s something we want more of when we have less of it, and we don’t know what to do with it when we have too much of it. We grow with it, and we decline with it. It can only move forward, although it’s possible to get stuck in moments within it. You can gain it, lose it, savor it and waste it. But for this article, let’s manage it.

Time is our most versatile asset. We often want to create more time for enjoyment and end up disappointed with the result. Why? Because it’s not realistic to make more of something that exists in its totality with already defined universal governance. You can, however, work within it.

Related: 15 Time Management Tips for Achieving Your Goals

Establish boundaries

Setting boundaries is vital to communicating our needs. Boundaries serve as an instruction to others on acceptable ways of interacting with us. Taking a cue from our boundaries, others can accordingly adjust their behaviors.

To set boundaries, you must be direct with others and clearly articulate your parameters. Having healthy boundaries means holding others accountable when someone oversteps a boundary. Allowing others to step past that line will interfere with free or otherwise engaged time, hindering your time physically or psychologically. It’s essential to have consistency when defining, articulating and affirming your “do’s” and “don’t’s”

to protect your time from being hijacked. Setting boundaries also makes your values more apparent to both you and others.

Overcommunicate

Communication is one of the best tools in any person's arsenal. The broader we communicate, the more interpretation can play a role, and the more exposed we lose time due to the lack of clarity. Specifics are crucial in confirming with others that they understand the status of any given situation. The more information you provide, the more precise you can be in keeping others knowledgeable on your undertakings. This will help reduce the risk of redo a task, proactively avert conflicts, and promote trust.

Work smarter

Working more brilliant means creating the systems necessary to ensure daily functions can occur in a standardized order of operations, utilizing the tools and resources needed to simplify complicated processes. Initially, this requires a commitment to setting up the systems, but the plans pay out dividends of free time in the long run.

Many people in both professional and personal environments engage with systems handed down to them, whether they be learned from a parent or left by a job predecessor. However, just because those systems worked for prior people doesn't mean they'll work for you or even work efficiently. You'll need to prioritize and plan to minimize your time on a task.

Related: **8 Ways to Work Smarter and Improve Productivity**

On transit and in the loop

Two of the best-kept secrets for using "planning time" are on the go and while making a pit stop. Regardless of where you

are, whether on the road or the toilet, you can use that time to organize your day better. Whether reviewing documents, planning for a hang-out, or purchasing a gift, a little use of unconventional time can go a long way. As a CEO, I once revised a dense union collective bargaining agreement with my general manager while on a train ride. We otherwise would've had to undertake this assignment during office hours, which could have taken twice as long.

Give time to gain time

How often would you say you're interrupted from accomplishing a task throughout the day? Whether we like it or not, life throws curveballs in our direction. Given that disruptions are going to happen, time will always be lost.

Giving time to gain it means utilizing free time to work with minimized distraction. This may mean adding additional hours on the front end, but you will likely see a return in the future. For instance, if you work a 9 to 5, this might look like working late on a weekday to ensure you have a weekend free from worry and anxiety on a project due the following Monday.

The tradeoff herein is knowing you must lose some time to gain more of it. But, depending on how, where, and when you give it – and your openness to this method as recurring – you can gain time back in abundance.

Give up an unhealthy habit

Did you know the average cigarette takes between six and seven minutes to smoke? If you're a casual smoker, you may smoke a quarter of a pack daily, typically five cigarettes. That means over a day, you've lost around 35 minutes; by the end of the week, that number grows to over four hours; by month's close, you're now at 16 hours; after the year, you've accumulated

over eight days – that’s a vacation.

Unhealthy habits generally don’t show their hand until too much time has passed. By then, it is often too late as addiction, comfort, or convenience makes it onerous to want to create the change necessary to save time and potentially gain back years of your life. If you can catch yourself indulging in an activity that does not promote wellbeing, leave it in the past and pocket that time for your future.

Related: Bill Gates Says Lazy People Make the Best Employees. But Is Your Laziness Actually Masking a Deeper Issue?

https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/432425