

Nine Ways of Living with Time

Take a close look at yourself. You could be your own worst enemy when it comes to using time.

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The first step in time management is to realize that no one can manage time. Time management is a myth. The truth is we can neither speed up nor slow down the passage of time. There will always be 24 hours in a day. No one has more time than anyone else. *What makes the difference for each one of us is how we view time and manage our behavior around the finite resource called time.*

Tips and gimmicks don't work

When I began conducting time management seminars in the late 1970s, I took a "Hints from Heloise" approach, encouraging people to make to-do lists and clear off their desks at the end of the day. I soon realized, as people began to repeat my seminars, that such generic how-to advice offered quick fixes but produced no lasting results. I turned my attention to why people procrastinate. While workshops on this subject proved to be very popular, many participants still struggled with time issues. About ten years ago, I realized that we can try every time management tool and technique that comes out, but if we lack a sense of purpose about what we are doing, we will still be disorganized and unproductive.

It is impossible to accomplish everything. Without goals and priorities -- knowing what's most valuable and important to us -- we are just treading water. Goal setting gives meaning to life. If we learn to develop goals that are specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and time-related, we have a much better sense of direction and we're less likely to flounder amid increasing demands and challenges. But goal setting is only one of the missing pieces to the puzzle. Not only do we need to know where we're going, we need to understand how we each go about getting there.

Your personality type holds the key

Each of us has a different view of time. What we see as time well spent depends on the filter of our own personality and motivation. For instance, someone who appreciates knowledge considers research time well spent; someone who values relationships will take time to volunteer. Understanding your personality type will help you zero in on the problems that develop around your use of time. You can then begin to manage your behavior in ways that alleviate the blocks to personal and professional productivity.

How would you describe yourself? Do you have high standards? Do you view time as a friend or an enemy? Do you feel a sense of accomplishment when you can check things off a list? Is it important to you to meet everyone's demands? Are you most or least comfortable dealing with routine tasks? It may take some work on your part to accurately identify your personality type. A good starting point is to look at the chart on personality-based time management types. It is based on the Enneagram personality model, which describes nine primary personality types that are motivated by different needs, such as knowledge, success and relationships. While you may want to consult other resources for more comprehensive information, the chart does highlight the key indicators of different personalities and offers basic solutions to various time-related concerns.

What's your number?

The nine personality types (identified by numbers) each perceive reality differently and have their own time consciousness. *Fives*, for example, see time as a series of events from which they can derive wisdom. *Sevens* act as if time is endless and are wildly optimistic about how much they can do. *Nines* experience time in a metronomic way -- each period of time has the same value to them. Each type also has its own time-effective assets and liabilities. *Eights*, for example, have clear goals and a solid game plan, but they often don't solicit input from the people who might enhance the game plan and they lose time mending fences. Because each personality type views time differently and has unique assets and liabilities, each demands a different set of interventions. (This is why a one-size-fits-all approach to time management rarely works.) Since motivation plays such a key role, it is also important to determine what internal messages are most likely to stimulate greater productivity. For example, *ones* have very high standards and don't enjoy their accomplishments because they tend to focus on what still could be done. They have the mind-set: "There is never enough time to get a task done right." This type of thinking needs to give way to: "There is enough time to do a job well if I plan my time well."

There is a sense of empowerment in knowing that life balance is not about managing time but using time and managing ourselves. No longer can we blame outside forces for how much time we waste; instead we must assume responsibility for how we choose to spend our time, knowing that when we do assume responsibility we also gain the power to change.

1. Palmer H. *The Enneagram: Understanding Yourself and the Others in Your Life*. San Francisco: Harper & Row; 1988.

Descriptions	Standard internal scripts	Assets	Liabilities	Desired internal messages	Key interventions
Ones feel dominated by time. They often resent deadlines because there is always more that can be done on a project to "get it just right." Even after the project is completed, they feel the quality of the work could have been improved if there was "just more time." They rarely experience the satisfaction of a job well done. Ones are highly motivated by principles, values and doing things well.	"If you're not going to do the job right, don't do it at all." "If only I had more time, I would have done a better job."	Are thorough in all they do. Have a good sense of order.	Procrastinate. Pay too much attention to detail. Are often overwhelmed.	"It is better to strive for excellence than for perfection." "There is enough time to do a job well if I plan my time well." "I can see my unsuccessful efforts as tries rather than failures."	Establish deadlines; never accept "ASAP." Find a relationship in which you can get trustworthy feedback about the quality of the job being done and then move on. Learn guilt-free play. Make better use of scheduling by reducing the number of items to be accomplished in one day.
Twos see time as a chance to interact with others. They are quick to respond to the needs of others and are often	"My time is your time." "There is no such thing as no for an	Are aware of people's feelings on issues. Are	Have difficulty saying no. Tend to overextend themselves.	"I can say no more often and still be accepted, loved and valued."	Learn to do effective goal setting and stay committed to the process.

<p>bored if a task demands too much alone time. They are sensitive to the feelings of the persons involved in their immediate world at home or work. Twos are highly motivated by opportunities for personal encounters.</p>	<p>answer."</p>	<p>nurturing.</p>	<p>Seek approval.</p>	<p>"I will remember that the task is often as important as the personal relationships during a project." "It is okay to work alone."</p>	<p>Set priority activities during the week and make them nonnegotiable. Learn to say no. Control interruptions (from significant others).</p>
<p>Threes see time as a continual opportunity to accomplish goals and projects. Time is well spent when they can cross something off their to-do list. They are active and energetic when given a project and assertive when deadlines are involved. They are often frustrated by people who need to have time to think about something or take time for themselves. Threes are highly motivated by feelings of success.</p>	<p>"Hi, ho, it's off to work I go — work, work, work." "More is better."</p>	<p>Are highly productive. Carry tasks to completion without reminders.</p>	<p>Seek quantity first, quality second. Can be impatient with others' work styles.</p>	<p>"More is not necessarily better." "Reflection can be productive." "Other people will not act as quickly as I do, so I need to be patient when working with others."</p>	<p>Schedule for follow-through on projects. Learn alternate ways to say no. Develop better listening skills. Be vigilant about project standards. Control interruptions (especially from people you might want to impress).</p>
<p>Fours experience time very subjectively. They need to feel meaning in what they are doing for time not to drag on unbearably. They tolerate the mundane. They will be early for an appointment if it promises to be meaningful, but will get sidetracked and be late if it holds routine or unexciting tasks. Fours are highly motivated by uniqueness, creativity and beauty.</p>	<p>"Time management is boring." "I'm waiting for the time I am inspired."</p>	<p>See the big picture. Look at problems from different angles.</p>	<p>Put off the ordinary. Have difficulty staying on task.</p>	<p>"Not all activity will provide an emotional high or significant outcome." "I must stop concentrating on the past and focus on the moment to have the most energy for the task at hand." "Mundane activities are a part of life. I can deal with them productively."</p>	<p>Stop procrastinating the mundane. Do, delegate, buy or barter the unpleasant activity away. Implement the "worst first" philosophy. Work in blocks of time. Develop techniques to stay focused on the task at hand. Control interruptions (usually self-induced when something more interesting comes along).</p>
<p>Fives see time as an opportunity to get as</p>	<p>"There is never enough</p>	<p>Make good judgments.</p>	<p>Are slow to act. Can be miserly</p>	<p>"I do not have to do everything</p>	<p>Develop good team-building</p>

<p>much information as possible. They have a strong need to be wise and knowing. They will sit back quietly at times and build a huge mental database on issues or tasks before them. They are sure of their decisions when they finally make them. Fives are highly motivated by knowledge.</p>	<p>time to know everything." "I can't make a decision until I know the complete picture."</p>	<p>See the whole picture.</p>	<p>with their time.</p>	<p>alone." "I can never know all there is to know about something. Therefore, I must choose to act." "I can be more generous with my time and still accomplish high priority activities."</p>	<p>skills, such as brainstorming and shared decision making. Schedule more effectively. (Prepare less and start the execution of the plan sooner.) Share ideas with others, even if the ideas are not completely thought-out in your mind. Implement good project management.</p>
<p>Sixes experience time as authority and a measure of their responsibility to others. There is always much too much to do, but they make sure everything is done on time. They fear being in trouble and want to accommodate the people involved in their personal and work lives. They volunteer for many committees and maintain a loyalty to each group they serve. Sixes are highly motivated by feeling dependable.</p>	<p>"Should I? Shouldn't I? Should I? Shouldn't I?" "Time is boss."</p>	<p>Carry projects through to completion. Meet deadlines and establish priorities.</p>	<p>Try to do too much. Have difficulty saying no.</p>	<p>"My decisions do not have to be determined by outside sources. I can decide what is a good action." "I am losing out on opportunities in my life because of my fear of making a wrong decision."</p>	<p>Learn good decision-making skills. Question the routine and find alternate ways of doing things. Learn alternate ways to say no. Develop a "just do it" philosophy in more situations. Check what is expected during a delegated project — what your responsibility is and what authority you have in the project.</p>
<p>Sevens experience time as a bottomless pit. On almost any day, they are enthusiastic about all the things they will accomplish. They are most energetic at the beginning of a project or new adventure. They love to have a good time, and that usually means they are off experiencing one new idea or activity after another. They love anticipating the event and can visualize the future</p>	<p>"There is never enough time to do all the things I want to do." "The glass is always half-full." "Don't fence me in."</p>	<p>Generate options and alternatives. Enjoy guilt-free play.</p>	<p>Procrastinate on the follow-through of a project. Often approach things superficially.</p>	<p>"Life should be fun, but I need to confront some things that are painful, laborious or conflictive to use my time more productively." "I will be aware of other people's deadlines and schedules."</p>	<p>Schedule for follow-through. Set up a reward system for successful follow-through. Ask for deadlines and checkpoints when receiving delegation. Set priorities. Avoid procrastination: barter, buy, delegate, do.</p>

with great ease. Sevens are highly motivated by the presence of many options, alternatives and opportunities for fun.					
Eights never let time control them; they control it. They are very clear about the goal of a project and how to achieve it. As a result, they do not seek much advice and know instinctively how to get from point A to point B. They need to see some connection between what is going on at the moment and their goals or they become impatient or intolerant. Eights are highly motivated by strength, power and justice.	"JUST DO IT!" "No time to waste time."	Possess a clarity of purpose. Have a good sense of mission.	Lack interdependence. Often need to mend fences. Can be self-righteous.	"I do not have to say no so quickly." "If I'm spending too much time mending fences, I am probably acting without input from my colleagues."	Use team building skills that encourage you to reflect and be open to other ways of doing things. Ask others for help. Set priorities with balance in mind. Listen to others for ideas and input. Delegate more responsibility to others.
Nines have a flatline view of time. No event is really any more significant than another. They are steadfast about whatever they choose to act on. They need schedules and are disconcerted if there is a change in their routine. They respond to crunch times with great perseverance and a cool demeanor. Nines are highly motivated by keeping things even, stable and predictable.	"I can do it later. It won't matter that much."	Are patient. Display good negotiation skills.	Avoid conflict. Lack involvement. Procrastinate stressful decisions.	"I realize that some of my biggest time wasters involve avoiding conflicts." "Routine is comfortable for me, but some routines may be time wasters."	Deal with fear of conflict — what is the worst thing that can happen? Develop scheduling techniques that require a commitment to be on time. Develop a "do it now" attitude about tasks. Take more advantage of "snippets of time."

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