



CENTERSTONE

Wellness Program

Five Principles of Productive People

Do you feel like you are always busy but never get anything done? Many of us lead hectic and often stressful lives. There is always something to accomplish. Some days we are ready to complete a long to-do list. Other days we would rather spend hours on the couch.

Productivity takes effort, and it is well worth it in the long run. Follow these tips to simplify your life while improving productivity.

Be Aware: Busy Does Not Equal Productive

Sometimes multi-tasking can destroy productivity. Being busy, or trying to maintain an appearance of being busy, has nothing to do with productivity or authentic accomplishment. Just because you're getting something done doesn't mean it matters. Focus on the purpose of your tasks, one task at a time. Productivity is about meeting your goals, not just scratching things off your to-do list.

We often believe that completing tasks will make us happy, but the constant desire to finish things can actually produce feelings of anxiety. Remember that life is about the journey. Enjoy the challenge of the path. Break the multitasking habit by practicing mindfulness.

Be Specific: Identify Goals vs. Tasks

It's easy to confuse goals and tasks, and that confusion can lead to feelings of overwhelming pressure. It is vital to have a doable to do list. It's easy to get stuck if everything on your to-do list seems daunting. The purpose of a list is to capture actionable items or pre-defined tasks that you will accomplish. Tasks are small steps that lead you closer to meeting your goals.

Perhaps your goal is to lose two pounds this week. Tasks will help you achieve that goal. Developing a meal plan, visiting the grocery store and exercising each day are all tasks that will help you accomplish your objective. Break down large problems by focusing on small steps that will help you reach your goal. Focus on tasks that give you the most return on your time investment and you will become more productive. Goals are very important, but having too many may cause you to lose focus, and you'll end up not accomplishing any of them.

Be Smart: Organize and Prioritize

To be organized you must be aware of where your time is going. Create a time log and use it to analyze and summarize all your daily activities for a given week. Once you know the gaps in your productivity, you can build a new daily routine.

Categorize and prioritize your tasks. List your pre-planned activities in order of importance. These are the tasks you would complete in a day without interruptions. Next, list all unplanned tasks. This list includes incoming calls, instant messages and requests from others. Unplanned tasks are usually part of most days and need to be processed on an ongoing basis.

Be Intentional: Procrastination Robs Your Power

What tasks are you thinking of putting off until tomorrow? What projects have you started but can't seem to finish? Are there items on your to do list that roll over week after week? Procrastination is one of our biggest energy drainers. It's easy to convince ourselves that life is more pleasant when we avoid things we don't want to do. But instead it adds stress, disorganization, failure and guilt.

Procrastination can also cause: missed deadlines, lost opportunities, tardiness, unnecessary expenses and even health and medical problems. By overcoming procrastination habits you'll gain a sense of energy and enthusiasm triggered by completing tasks.

Be Truthful: Admit Your Excuses

Evaluate what else is wasting your time. Self-generated time wasters include: disorganization, the inability to say no, gossiping, perfectionism, lack of delegation and what is commonly known as the "paralysis of analysis."

Sometimes we think too much about the same issue. Progress is delayed because we are thinking about the same thing over and over again. There are better ways to use your energy. Don't waste time and energy repetitively thinking about something without finding a real solution.

Lastly, there can be such a thing as too much time management. Like laundry, a to-do list will never be completely done. The key is to be satisfied by your accomplishments of the day, even though you will never fully complete your to do lists.

"The key is not to prioritize what's on your schedule, but to schedule your priorities." —Stephen R. Covey

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About Centerstone

Centerstone (www.centerstone.org), a not-for-profit organization is the nation's largest provider of community-based behavioral healthcare. With a history that spans over fifty years, Centerstone provides a full range of behavioral health and related educational services to more than 69,000 individuals of all ages and their families annually. Children, adolescents, adults, seniors, and families all receive help from a multitude of different programs in more than 120 facilities and 150 partnership locations in Tennessee and Indiana. Centerstone is accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF) in Tennessee and The Joint Commission in Indiana. For more information about Centerstone, please call toll free at (888) 291-4357.

About Susan Gillpatrick, MEd, LPC, CTS

Susan Gillpatrick, Centerstone Crisis Management Specialist, primarily works in the field with clients in critical incident response situations, and in Centerstone's wellness trainings and presentations. She is also responsible for planning and implementing marketing and growth strategies for Centerstone's Crisis Management Strategies.

In recent years, Ms. Gillpatrick worked for the Shelby County Government Victims Assistance Center in Memphis. There, she co-developed a model program for the state of Tennessee entitled, "Homicide Response." Her work in this area received the 2000 Achievement Award from the National Association of Counties.

Ms. Gillpatrick is a Licensed Professional Counselor, Certified Trauma Specialist, Certified Workplace Conflict Mediator, and Mental Health Service Provider in the state of Tennessee and a National Certified Counselor. She is also a member the American Counseling Association, the Association of Traumatic Stress Specialists, the Tennessee Mental Health Counseling Association, and the Middle Tennessee Employee Assistance Professionals Association. She is a frequent presenter at local and national conferences, and has had numerous articles published. She received her Master of Education degree in Human Development Counseling from Peabody College at Vanderbilt University.