Tips for More Effective Time Management

When daily tasks build up and you feel overwhelmed, it's difficult to know where to begin. To make things more complicated, you may find yourself easily distracted by activities that are more fun or help you avoid doing what must be done. You may also be struggling to focus on completing one task at a time, instead trying to accomplish too much all at once, which can prevent you from succeeding.

There are many fast and easy ways to help you reorganize, prioritize, and start being productive. If you incorporate even a few of the recommendations below into your attempts to better manage your time, you'll start creating small successes that lead to big changes and even more time to spend on the things you enjoy most!

For better time management:

- Create a list of priorities on a daily, weekly, and/or monthly basis.
- Be sure your list is organized so that the most important and time pressing items will be completed first. For example, before you decide to do a task, think to yourself, "What should I be doing right now?" Let that thought be your guide as you look for which task to do next.
- If you're having trouble getting started, pick an easy task and when you're done, check it off your list. After one or two of these, you will begin to feel the accomplishment that comes with completing a task and will have the motivation to approach the more difficult items.
- Arrange your workday so that you can keep interruptions to a minimum. Try to turn on your voicemail at certain times to avoid getting off task.
- Schedule a specific time to check and reply to emails to avoid frequent interruptions.
- Set deadlines and create a daily/hourly workflow schedule to ensure your task will be completed before that deadline.
- Be realistic about your daily energy patterns. Complete important tasks when your energy is at its peak, and then save more routine tasks for when your energy is lower.

Factors that can hinder productivity:

- Don't be too much of a perfectionist as you move through tasks. Focus on getting the task done, rather than always getting it done perfectly.
- Don't take on everything yourself; delegate duties to appropriate coworkers or people in your life, when possible.
- Don't get off track. Learn to say "no" instead of sacrificing valuable time.
- Don't spend too much time on minor decisions. Save nit-picking for bigger things.
- Don't burn yourself out. Take breaks and go for a quick walk, talk to a friend, eat a nice lunch, etc. Giving your brain a rest and rejuvenating your body will make you more productive in the long run.

Try out the tips and see which ones help you most. Do you recognize any that have helped before? Mix and match or add your own; either way, it's time to increase your productivity, knock those items off your to-do list, and let go of unnecessary stress.