

AS busy working executives with families, none of us are strangers to the feeling of not having enough time. Not enough time to finish our work, not enough time to spend with our families, not enough time to get all our errands done, not enough time to go on vacation... and the list goes on.

"No time-lah" seems to be such a common catchphrase that we hear it everywhere.

Perhaps this feeling of being time-poor is a result of a hyper-connected world. As technology has advanced, it has also taken over our lives, invaded our private spaces and intruded into time blocks that used to be set aside for non-work related activities.

Thanks to smartphones and increasing connectivity, we seem to be working constantly as the influx of information, communications and requests keeps bombarding us non-stop. Faced with the challenge of being always on, we need to find a strategy to take back our time.

How do we do this? First, let's look at myth vs reality.

The myth is that we can have it all, please everyone and get it all done. The reality is there are only 24 hours in a day, we need to sleep for at least some of them, so we need to prioritise and focus on what is important.

When we think about our priorities, most of us wage-earners are going to respond that one of our highest priorities is work. After all, we have to work for our living. It's a competitive environment out there. Work is definitely a priority. But what about our other priorities? Our health? Taking care of our families? Spending quality time with our families? Taking time for ourselves, pursuing hobbies and other interests, for breaks/vacations?

Yes, these are also priorities. Life would not be worth living if it consisted of nothing but work.

So, how do we juggle all these priorities within the limited amount of time that we have every day, every week, every year?

First of all, by debunking the myth and embracing the reality. Secondly, by improving our time management skills. How do we do this? Give some of these ideas a try. A book entitled "168 Hours" by Laura Vanderkam, recommends that we think in terms of a seven-day week, not a 24-hour day.

Sometimes, a day is not long enough to slot in everything that needs to be done and it also may not give us sufficient perspective. A week could actually be a more realistic block of time to consider.

The book starts by making a activities log of how over a period of not have to be a account (just would

recommends that we simple time-and- we spend our time one week. It does minute-by-minute as well, or else we not have the time to even keep track of our time!).

The idea is to just keep a rough account

of your time and activities carried out during that time. This should give you a fairly clear picture of what your regular activities are on a weekly basis. Using this as a guide, try strategically planning the next week. Take an empty seven-day calendar, slot in all your appointments, and then slot in all your regular activities and to-do's. You'll then notice a few pockets here and there of "unscheduled" time.

Then, create a "to-do" list that includes all the things you should do, or would like to do, but would normally not have the time to get around to. This list should address other priorities which usually get sidelined by your regular activities. With this list in hand, select a few items to slot into any pockets of unscheduled time you see opening up in the week.

With this approach, you'll find that not only do you have better control over your time and a deeper understanding of how your time is actually being spent, you might find yourself making progress in addressing other priorities which have been neglected or shelved altogether. This approach helps us "create" pockets of time here and there which we can fill with useful activities.

Another benefit of this time management approach is that we will find ourselves wasting far less time on unproductive activities such as surfing the Internet endlessly or scrolling through Facebook for hours on end.

Let go of the myth of being able to do it all and embrace the reality of using strategic time management as a tool to improve every aspect of your life. Accounting for your time is an excellent habit to cultivate. The pressure to account for our time helps us increase focus, concentration and productivity. This, in turn, helps us to use time more efficiently to our advantage.

As we create more room in our schedule to address priorities which are beneficial to our health and wellbeing, as well as that of our families, we will achieve the balance that we seek in leading happier, healthier and more fulfilled lives.

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