

Penny's Pointers to Finding Time

1. Don't make promises until you thoroughly understand what you have to do, what impact the promise will have on your other commitments, and the importance of the promise to your own goals.
2. Remember that it is not the promise that creates lasting happiness, it is the completion of the action, as expected, that does. Make the words "Let me understand what you want, specifically" second nature when you take on any assignment. Always ask yourself "What can I realistically promise."
3. If you are running late or think you could be late, call and let others know. Try to reduce likelihood of others becoming surprised, disappointed or frustrated.
4. A cushion of comfort pads you in the right place. Always extend your estimate of the time that is required to accomplish your goal. Do this for yourself as your own internal yardstick, and estimate time requirements for all the links in the chain.
5. Learn to say NO to others and YES to yourself! If it is impossible to meet a deadline or fit more work into your schedule, say no or take on what you can accomplish. IT IS OK TO SAY NO – or try one of these statements:
 - I can do it another time
 - If only I had known in advance
 - I will arrange for someone else.
 - I will get back to you once I have had a chance to check my calendar.
 - I am busy that day.
 - I can do some of it.
6. The Top Three Interruptions:
 - Yourself: daydreaming, snacking, nodding off or rewarding yourself before the work is done. Take responsibility of the interrupter and focus on the task at hand.
 - Telephone: use your answering machine or caller ID to screen incoming calls. Outgoing calls are easier to control. Tips to managing the length of a call:
 - schedule outgoing calls for part of your day and make them all at once.
 - call before lunch or late in the day when people prefer short conversations.
 - leave detailed messages for others and ask them to do the same for you.
 - watch being put on hold and only agree if it is vital to talk now
 - develop conversation enders such as
 - What can I do for you?
 - You must be busy so I will let you go.
 - Is there anything else we need to go over?
 - I am sorry for sounding so hurried, but I am working against the clock.
 - Before we hang up...
 - I have got someone in my office...

- Other people: let them know you would like to deal with what they want, that it is important to you too, and that you will specifically make time for it, but not now.
7. Two ways to manage interruptions:
Set time limits
Set an appointment you can control. For example, if you meet with someone in his or her office, you can control when you leave easier than if the meeting occurs in your office.
 8. Recognize that when an interruption occurs, it steals your time. Be kind to yourself, the person on the phone or other intruders, but be firm and keep your schedule.
 9. BE REACHABLE! Being reachable saves time. Things aren't allowed to build up or get too complicated because you weren't there. Strive to call back or contact callers the same day. It lets the caller know that you are available and that they are important. Leaving a detailed schedule how, when, and where you are reachable is important.
 10. Do a TO DO list daily. Don't write a new list everyday, just update the previous list. Prioritize the list. Ask yourself: Are you doing the most important things first? How urgent is this task? How can I get someone else to do the task for me? What is the worst thing that can happen if I don't do this?
 11. Get accustomed to scheduling all of your time. Give your own personal enjoyment a high priority. Plan ahead and schedule it.
 12. Give your mind a break and write everything down. With everything going on in your life, information processing can be done easier by writing it down in your calendar, updating it continuously, and "looking" at it at least three times a day.
 13. It is usually best to make commitments only after you have checked your calendar and other commitments. Begin to respond to requests using the following statements:
 - Let me get back to you today after I have looked at my calendar.
 - I can tentatively set it up. Let me make a note to myself and I will call you later today if my calendar shows a conflict.
 14. Don't agonize – organize!
 15. Do the worst first!
 16. Anticipate waiting time and use it to your advantage. Have paper, pen, book, blank cards, tape recorder, notes, etc. with you at all times to take advantage of waiting time.

