



A Healthy Outlook!

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Simplify Your Life

Most people say they want to simplify their lives because they feel like they have lost control of their time. They want to have more time to do the things they want to do, both at work and at home. Every few weeks, there is another newspaper or magazine story about how people feel that they aren't spending their time on things they enjoy. A recent poll, for example, found that 65% of people are spending their free time doing things they'd rather not do. Isn't that amazing? It's great if you have created a full and interesting life for yourself, but how frustrating if you don't have the time to enjoy it!

The 80/20 Principle

The 80/20 Principle, first stated by Vilfredo Pareto in 1897, says that 20% of our effort produces 80% of the results. This means that a small number of resources are highly productive—and a large number (80%) are not very productive at all. Here are a few examples:

- * 20% of the things in your house are used 80% of the time.
- * 80% of the things in your house are used 20% of the time.
- * 20% of your activities give you 80% of your satisfaction.
- * 20% of the stocks in an investor's portfolio produce 80% of the results.
- * 20% of the books in a bookstore account for 80% of the sales.

The challenge is to identify those few vital items that produce the greatest value for you. Focus on the activities that result in

satisfaction, such as money, better health, or more free time. At the same time, identify those trivial items that don't lead to things like satisfaction, money, better health, or more free time. These unprofitable activities are taking up 80% of your time. Doesn't it make sense to deemphasize them in favor of the vital 20%?



Making Time Takes Time

The first challenge to simplifying your life is that it takes an investment of time. If you want to discover how to make time for the things you enjoy, you have to examine how you are spending your time now. If you keep living your life the same way you always have, it will stay complicated. For some, the excuse, "I can't slow down because everything is important," is a way to avoid seeing what they don't want to see: a relationship that is no longer fulfilling, a job that no longer satisfies, an emotional distance that has emerged between them and their family members. Some people keep their lives going at a furious pace to avoid seeing what they don't want to see. If you really do want to simplify your life,

you will make the time. You don't have to do anything radical; in fact, it is best to start small. Set aside just 30 minutes each day for a month. During that time, think about a simple question: What are the elements that contribute to my life feeling so complicated? Make a list of the factors in your private journal and write about them. Begin to think about what can be changed or eliminated.

Finding this time is not as impossible as it may seem at first. Perhaps you can take the train instead of driving, or turn off the television and write in your journal instead. Set aside 30 minutes a day for one month, ask yourself some important questions, and be prepared to learn some remarkable things about yourself.

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Fewer Responsibilities

You may think that this sounds too simple. Most people who seek to simplify their lives think that the answer is to get more help. But this probably won't help. In fact, if you hire someone to help you get more done, you will actually have added another complication to your life rather than making it simpler. You probably don't need more help; you probably need fewer responsibilities.

Learn to Say No

If you want a simpler life, you must learn to say no. In *Simplify Your Life: 100 Ways to Slow Down and Enjoy the Things That Really Matter*, author Elaine St. James says that people get into trouble because they agree to do things they really don't have time to do. This leads to a constant state of being overcommitted and frustrated. Our culture makes it difficult for us to say no to requests to attend extra meetings, dinner engagements, or to take on new responsibilities. Many of us feel obligated to always be participating at a high level.



Successful Couples

According to John Gottman, Ph.D., marriage researcher, as long as there is five times as much positive feeling and interaction between husband and wife as there is negative, the marriage is likely to be stable, no matter the style for resolving conflict.

Here are some examples of the different marriage conflict resolving styles—

- ♦ **Validating marriage**—the couple calmly works out their problems to mutual satisfaction
- ♦ **Conflict-avoiding**—the couple agrees to disagree and they rarely confront differences
- ♦ **Volatile marriage**—conflicts erupt and the couple can be loud and seem confrontational

So what are ways that couples can be *positive* towards one another? Gottman suggests the following

- ♦ **Show interest**—Be actively interested in what your partner is saying. This can

We are proud of our high productivity and involvement, but it comes with a high price: a complicated life that leaves no time for you. St. James suggests that you actually schedule time for yourself on your calendar at the beginning of every month; when you are invited to participate in something, turn down the request because you already have a commitment.

Clear Away Clutter

Get rid of things you don't use. Think of all the stuff you have acquired in the past five or 10 years. Most of it is designed to make life simpler, but in fact most of it brings along its own set of complications. Think of what typically happens when you buy a new electronic gadget. Consider all of the time required to earn the money to pay for it, shop for it, buy it, set it up, learn how to use it, fix the unexpected problems it causes with another gadget, and then the time you spend actually using it. Most of us have rooms in our houses filled with stuff that seemed like a good idea at the time, but ends up sitting on a shelf or in a



drawer, unused. St. James suggests that you go through your house once each year and get rid of everything you haven't used during the previous year.

- ♦ **Be affectionate**—This can be shown in low-key, subtle ways through quiet acts of tenderness (e.g. touching or holding hands while watching TV) or by more obvious expressions of affection like voicing feelings of love or romantic passion.
- ♦ **Show you care**—Small acts of thoughtfulness can be powerful, e.g. buying something at the grocery store just because you remember that your partner likes it.
- ♦ **Be appreciative**—Stoking positive memories and thoughts helps put positive energy into the relationship. Agreeing with your partner's ideas, suggestions or solutions is another form of appreciation.
- ♦ **Show your concern**—If your partner tells you something distressing or troubling, express your concern and be supportive.
- ♦ **Be empathic**—This has to do with

showing that you really understand how your partner feels. This can be done with an expression on your face that matches your partner. Empathy cannot be faked.

Suggested Reading:

Richard Koch, *The 80/20 Principle: The Secret of Achieving More With Less*. New York, NY: Doubleday, 1998.

Elaine St. James, *Simplify Your Life: 100 Ways to Slow Down and Enjoy the Things That Really Matter*. New York, NY: Hyperion, 1994.

Adapted from an article by Elizabeth Handley, MSW, in the Therapists Newsletter. Used with permission. ♦



- ♦ **Be accepting**—Even if you don't agree with your partner, let him/her know how what they are saying makes sense and you respect it.
- ♦ **Joke around**—Playful teasing, silliness and just having fun together are especially nourishing to the relationship.
- ♦ **Share your joy!** When you're feeling delighted, excited or just having a good time, let your partner know it.

Most people do many of these items spontaneously. The most important thing to remember is that an intentional effort to maintain the positive ratio (5:1) is important, particularly during rocky times.

Adapted from Why Marriages Succeed or Fail by John Gottman, Ph.D. ♦

Diabetes

There are 20.8 million children and adults in the U.S. with diabetes; nearly one-third of them do not know it. There are an additional 54 million people in the U.S. who have pre-diabetes.

Definition

Diabetes is a disease in which blood glucose levels are above normal. After a meal, food is broken down into a sugar called glucose, which is carried by the blood to cells throughout the body. Cells use insulin, made in the pancreas, to help process blood glucose into energy.

- ◆ Type 1 diabetes results from the body's failure to produce insulin. It is estimated that 5 to 10 percent of Americans who are diagnosed with diabetes have type 1.
- ◆ Type 2 diabetes results from insulin resistance (a condition in which the body fails to properly use insulin), combined with relative insulin deficiency. Most Americans who are diagnosed with diabetes have type 2. Before people develop type 2, they almost always have pre-diabetes.
- ◆ Pre-diabetes is a condition that occurs when a person's blood glucose level is higher than normal, but not high enough for a diagnosis of type 2 diabetes.
- ◆ Gestational diabetes affects approximately four percent of all pregnant women—about 135,000 cases in the U.S. each year. It goes away after pregnancy.

Symptoms

Symptoms include:

- ◆ Excessive thirst, extreme hunger, unusual weight loss, increased fatigue, irritability, blurry vision, and frequent urination.
- ◆ Skin infections, slow healing of cuts, and tingling or numbness in the extremities can occur.

Complications

- ◆ Two in five people with diabetes have poor cholesterol control. One in three have poor bloodpressure control. One in five have poor glucose control.
- ◆ Adults with diabetes have heart disease rates about two to four times higher.
- ◆ Diabetes is the leading cause of new cases of blindness in adults 20 to 74 years of age.

- ◆ Periodontal disease is more common in people with diabetes.
- ◆ More than 60 percent of nontraumatic lower-limb amputations occur in people with diabetes.
- ◆ The risk for stroke is two to four times higher and the risk of death from stroke is 2.8 times higher among people with diabetes.
- ◆ Diabetes is the leading cause of kidney failure.

Risk Factors

Obesity is the single most important risk factor for type 2 diabetes. Between 80 and 90 percent of people with diabetes are overweight, meaning they weigh at least 20 percent more than the ideal body weight for their height and build.

- ◆ Diabetes is most common in African Americans, Latinos, Native Americans, Asian Americans, and Pacific Islanders.
- ◆ The risk for type 2 diabetes increases with age. Half of all people diagnosed are over 55.
- ◆ Having one relative with diabetes doubles your chances and having two relatives quadruples your chances of getting it.
- ◆ 40 percent who had gestational diabetes are diagnosed with type 2 diabetes within 15 years.
- ◆ A diet high in fat, calories, and cholesterol increases risk.
- ◆ A woman who gives birth to babies weighing nine pounds or more, even if she does not have gestational diabetes, is more likely to have type 2 diabetes later in life.
- ◆ Studies show that 30 minutes a day of moderate physical activity, coupled with a 5 to 10 percent reduction in body weight produce a 58 percent reduction in type 2 diabetes.

Health Tip from Shady Grove Adventist Hospital. Sources: CDC, American Academy of Family Physicians, National Institute of Diabetes & Digestive & Kidney Diseases, American Diabetes Association, and Washington and Shady Grove Adventist Hospitals. The Health Tip of the Week is for educational purposes only. For additional information, consult your physician. Please feel free to copy and distribute this health resource. ◆

Advice for Supervisors:

Building Trust in Your Staff

According to Perry Pascarrella in an old Industry Week article (February 1993), there are a number of things you can do as a supervisor to win the trust of those with whom you work. They include:

- 1. Show that you have others' interests in mind as well as your own**—do what you can to enhance the success of others.
- 2. Communicate your feelings**—show that you're a person who cares as well as calculates.
- 3. Admit there are things you don't understand**—admitting you don't know about something makes you more believable when you say you do know something.
- 4. Share both good news and bad news**—the more informed your staff is, the better decisions they can make. Also, nothing erodes trust like holding back bad news.
- 5. Show that you can work with upper management/administration**—demonstrating your ability to understand an organizations' top priorities and having the ability to act on them is a powerful builder of trust. ◆

Health Tips on EAP Web Site

Be sure to check out our Web site for Health Tips, which is updated monthly. Recently added is information about Summer Skin Care. Past articles have included information on a wide range of topics such as Memory, Seasonal Affective Disorder, Negative Emotions and Lyme Disease, amongst others. This information is brought to you as part of a joint effort between the MCPS EAP and Shady Grove Adventist Hospital. You can find the Health Tips on our Web site by going to http://www.mcps.k12.md.us/departments/eap/shady_grove_tips/sgindex.shtm. ◆

Quote:

It is not because things are difficult that we do not dare, it is because we do not dare that things are difficult.

—Seneca

Ask the EAP

Q.

I have a problem with drugs and I work in a school. My performance is generally good and my last evaluation was better than average. I'm afraid that if I go to the EAP for help, my principal will find out and my career will be over. Can this happen?

A.

No. Information about your discussions with the EAP cannot be disclosed without your permission. The EAP follows Maryland state laws pertaining to the rules of confidentiality for licensed mental health providers. The only information we can disclose without consent is anything that involves a threat to life. Different rules apply to MCPS staff with a Commercial Drivers License (CDL) due to the safety

sensitive nature of their positions and COMAR (State of Maryland) Regulations. However, even in the case of a CDL holder we don't reveal specific information to anyone without signed permission to do so. It can be said with some certainty that a drug problem is much more likely to threaten your career than going to the EAP ever will, so we would encourage you to call us as soon as possible. ♦

Do you have a question for the EAP? Send us your questions via Outlook or the pony to Jeff Becker



A Healthy Outlook!

To help employees with troubling issues before they become overwhelming.



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Important Notice: Information in *A Healthy Outlook!* is for general information purposes only and is not intended to replace the counsel or advice of a qualified health professional. For further questions or help with specific problems or personal concerns, contact your employee assistance professional.

You may contact us or send your questions and comments to Debra_Tipton@mcpsmd.org

Please note that e-mail is not necessarily confidential.



Upcoming Dates and Events

**October 11
National Depression Screening Day**

The MCPS Employee Assistance Program will be conducting screenings for depression, anxiety disorder, bipolar disorder and post traumatic stress disorder all day. The screenings take less than 30 minutes and are available for you and/or your family members.

Call to schedule an appointment: 240-314-1040.

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