

BALANCE

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Project Management for Fun and Profit

Do you enjoy organizing, planning and gathering all the necessary parts of a project together and then watching the fruits of your efforts come to life? If you have planned and organized a wedding or a complex family vacation, you have participated in the discipline called ‘project management.’ Every business must participate in project management, and some organizations struggle with it. Learning this discipline can make you worth your weight in gold and could add significantly to your marketing ability. Have some fun with project management and plan or organize something like your vacation this summer by visiting: www.bubbl.us. The website has a free web application for brainstorming online, which is easy-to-use and can give you a taste of more sophisticated tools used by project managers. Have fun planning!

Tackling the Thief of Time

It’s been said, “Procrastination is the thief of time,” but it’s not the task you are avoiding; it’s the magnitude, size or pain linked to the task. Reduce the pain and you will start moving forward. Divide any task into three to five steps. Make the first step small and no longer than five minutes in duration. After you begin, subsequent steps should follow immediately or shortly after. If you procrastinate at step two, apply the formula again beginning with that step.

Intervene Early with Coworker Conflicts

When conflict with a coworker begins, act early to intervene—you could save yourself years of anguish and potentially turn the relationship into a beneficial one. Avoid denying or suppressing your feelings of anger as a coping strategy. As conflict worsens, the chance that you will act irrationally in response to a provocative moment increases. When this happens, management will often hold each of you equally accountable in the conflict and equally responsible for its resolution. To head problems off at the start:

- 1) Let your coworker know you are sensing conflict at the time it occurs;
- 2) Share your feelings in response to an issue or concern and what personal rights you feel are being ignored;
- 3) Call your Employee Assistance Program for assistance.

Remember, managing conflict is a life skill. Success comes by getting the change in behavior that works for you, not by making a coworker feel punished or blamed.



Your First Appointment with a Professional Counselor

If you have made a decision to see a professional counselor, you may be wondering what to say when you get to your first appointment. After completing the necessary paperwork, your counselor will help guide the interview. If you think about the following issues before arrival, you can maximize the time you spend in your first session. Don't worry—you won't have to share your deepest thoughts, fears, hopes and dreams with a stranger during your first session. Your counselor wants to listen a lot at first because you are the expert on your life. The main concern is determining if their skills are a good match for your needs. Knowing what prompted you to come, what difficulties you are facing, what you think caused the problem and what you think might help resolve it are very important. Include what you are currently experiencing, what's bothering you and what things you want to be different in your life. Now you are ready for a great learning experience through professional counseling.

Thirty Days to a New Habit?

Can anyone create a new life improvement habit in 30 days just by repeating the desired behavior each consecutive day without skipping a day? Although this strategy is generally considered a myth, the idea of creating a new habit in 30 days (21 days is also a commonly cited number) has been exhaustively recommended by leaders in self-improvement psychology. If you try it, be sure to include two important factors beyond your desire for success. The desire to be successful is less important than planning and then implementing the repetitive behavior. Wanting the change badly enough is of course important, but action is the key. The other factor is the ability to 'recover' quickly from a setback or a straying from your plan. These two factors in combination predict how successful you will be with the '30 day' strategy. Now get going!

Making Negative Feedback Nicer

Who would you rather get negative feedback from—your boss or coworkers? Many people fear the boss less because supervisors generally follow conventional rules of feedback they have learned, making it easier for the recipients to accept the feedback. Coworkers, on the other hand, may take a 'no holds barred' approach to letting you know what they think. As a group, coworkers can be a convincing force for help and change, even more than a supervisor. Why not adopt some rules of engagement among yourselves that will make giving and taking feedback more effective. Focus on behavior, actions, statements and content when giving feedback to a coworker. For example:

- 1) Be specific. It isn't helpful when you say, "Your presentation wasn't very interesting." Instead, offer details (i.e. "Mary, you need to speak louder and put more energy into your presentation so people feel your passion").
- 2) Say what's working (i.e. "Wow, the case studies you used in your presentation were powerful"). In other words, let your coworker hear that you value him or her despite the constructive criticism.
- 3) Listen calmly to what your coworker has to say in response to your feedback.

Parents: Talk about Prescription Drugs

When talking with your children about the dangers of drug abuse, don't forget to discuss prescription drugs. This often gets the least attention from parents, and it is a rapidly growing type of drug abuse. Only 79 percent of parents discuss drug abuse with their children, and of these, only 32 percent discuss prescription drug abuse.

Source: U.S. National Drug Threat Assessment 2008, U.S. Dept. of Justice

Role Overload

Role overload, in a nutshell, is having too much to do in the time available to do it. It can be associated with single parenting, caregiver responsibilities or simply the pressures a person experiences with the combined demands of work and family. While there is nothing new about this complaint, there is growing interest in bringing some relief and work-life balance solutions to those who experience it. Researchers are concerned about the phenomenon of role overload, its implications for burnout, and its effects on personal health, safety, risk management, productivity and child development. Important assessment issues for “overloaders” include the following:

- 1) No matter what you do, the pressures of your responsibilities never allow you to feel caught up.
- 2) You feel isolated—as though you are the only person you know experiencing this type of pressure in your life.
- 3) You have no personal time or place to be alone, not even for a brief period of rest.
- 4) Family relationships are suffering because there is never any time to stop and enjoy them.
- 5) You are constantly angry.
- 6) You regularly experience sleeplessness and worry.
- 7) You have anxiety over facing the demands of each new day.
- 8) Your coping methods have become destructive—overeating, using drugs or alcohol, or even shopping compulsively.

If any of the above is affecting you or a loved one, consider contacting the EAP to devise an intervention or support plan.

Disaster Preparedness

Don't wait until a natural disaster is on the horizon before you prepare your finances and assets—be proactive and do it now. The American Red Cross lists a number of steps you can take:

Protect your property: Find out what kind of natural disaster can hit your area, and then have your property evaluated by an appropriate local utility department or fire department to see what safety improvements could be made.

Take Inventory: Photograph and write a list of all of your household possessions along with model/serial numbers, physical descriptions, and receipts or price estimates. In addition, make copies of all of your important documents and store originals in a rented safe deposit box.

Investigate your Insurance: Make sure your homeowners or renters insurance includes specific natural disaster coverage depending on what natural disasters may occur in your area. If it isn't adequate, upgrade your policy or look for a new one.

Emergency Cash: Financial institutions and ATMs may be inaccessible during a disaster, in which case you need to have cash or traveler's checks on hand. Try to save enough to cover you for at least a few weeks, and keep the bills or checks in small denominations.

Evacuation Box: Purchase a portable, hard-cased, lockable storage box. Inside, keep your safe deposit key, cash and copies of important family and financial records such as insurance cards, insurance policies, financial documents, wills, etc.

Disaster Plan: Meet with family members and develop a plan, which includes a meeting spot, based on the natural disasters your area is most at risk for. Also, ask an out-of-town family member or friend to be a 'family contact' that you can check in with during or after a disaster—make sure all family members have this person's contact information. Go over the disaster plan every 6 months or so, especially with children, and update emergency contacts and phone numbers as appropriate.

This is not an exhaustive list. For more information on disaster preparedness, contact FEMA, your local Red Cross or office of emergency management.



Aging Gracefully

Most people don't like the idea of getting older, but how you respond mentally, physically and spiritually to aging has a tremendous impact on your quality of life. Many studies over the past decade consistently show that happiness actually increases with age. This shouldn't be surprising considering the fact that with age comes wisdom, perspective, a lowering of expectations and a tendency to be more easily content with what you have. Being proactive in living a healthful lifestyle gives you your best chance at preserving your vitality. Get more sleep, exercise, eat right and get annual checkups. Accept and adapt to your limitations. Growing older slows you down, but it doesn't mean giving up activities you love. Try moderating instead. Studies also show that optimists live longer, more satisfying lives. So, be an optimist and vow to make your first thought of the day a positive one. Try new things. It will keep your mind sharp and prevent you from getting into a rut. Don't look back—regret is a destructive emotion. If your life isn't how you imagined it would be, forgive yourself for your mistakes and move forward with what you've learned from them.

Hazards Around the House

Accidental death in the workplace is the key concern of safety professionals. However, did you know that the next most dangerous place for unintentional fatal accidents is in the home? Household members older than 70 and younger than 5 are at the highest risk. People older than 80 are twenty times more at risk. The biggest killer are falls—about 42 percent.

A lot is going on at this time of year—lawn mowing, barbequing, swimming, gardening, and more, in which case, the number of accidents increase accordingly. For tips and checklists on home safety, visit the Home Safety Council's website at: <http://homesafetycouncil.org/mysafehome/index.aspx>

To speak with an EAP professional,
please call: **800.765.0770**

