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Take Something Off Your Plate: 3 Tips to Help You Reclaim More of Your Time

POSTED ON DECEMBER 30, 2014 BY DIANE RANDALL



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By Diane Randall

There is something of a paradox that busy people often encounter when they realize that they need to make more personal time for themselves; they find that they're too busy to figure out how!

Do you feel that way yourself? Do you experience overwhelm? Are you having a love affair with your job, but not with your life? Do you lack the freedom to just simply "play"? Are you too busy to figure out how to stop being so busy?

If this sounds like you, then I've got good news! There is hope and I am going to show you how with these simple tips to reclaim more of your own time, when your plate is already full. These tips will help you reprioritize your to-do lists, make time for what is really important and learn how to set – and enforce – personal boundaries. These smart moves will allow you to reclaim more of your time and energy, so that you can learn to embrace your life, each and every day.

1. Make Time

Many people might argue that they just don't have time for their own priorities, but this technically isn't true. Believe it or not, you actually do have time every day for your priorities; it's simply a matter of *what* you have made an actual priority. Think of it this way – most of us put a priority on personal hygiene, so every day we shower and brush our teeth without wondering how we're going to "find the time" to do

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either one. Every day we eat, we go to work, we lock the front door before going to bed – usually without even thinking – because these things are priorities, whether we’re conscious of them or not.

Unfortunately, it seems that we’ve allowed far too many things to become a priority these days. Electronic gadgets create an “on-call” work mentality that takes priority over personal time. With hundreds of cable channels, including so many shows and movies available “on demand,” we often find ourselves spending more and more time in front of the television. Our kids are usually involved in several extracurricular activities at once, necessitating even more of our time and attention.

2. Reprioritize Your To-Do Lists

Saying that you need to “find” time for your priorities is pointless. All the time that you’re ever going to have, you’ve already been given. Scour the calendar all you want, you’re not going to find any 25-hour days in there. So what you need to do is *make* time.



But in order to make more time for your new priorities, you need to figure out where your time is going in the first place. Keep a record of what you do with your time for the next seven days. This includes even the little things, although obviously not every detail such as “spreading butter on my toast ... 20 seconds,” but activities overall, such as “commuting to work ... 20 minutes; the time you spend at work ... 10 hours.” Not to be neglected from this list are things that you might take for granted as never going to

change, such as your commute, ten hours you spend at work per day, or housecleaning? Don’t forget to include the weekend and activities during work, such as “chatting mindlessly with a coworker ... 10 minutes.”

Once you have this list, consider it the “plate” of your life’s activities. It’s never a good idea to add something to an already-full plate, so you need to remove some things first. Take a look at that “plate” and see what you can reassign, rearrange, or simply refuse altogether.

For example, what chores do you continue to do around the house yourself when other people could at least help out, such as cooking, washing dishes, vacuuming? Can your teenager be responsible for his or her own laundry? It may be time for a family meeting to reassign some responsibilities!

Don’t forget that there are also a variety of professionals available to assist. A twice-monthly housekeeper, a college student that could help your child with his or her homework, a dog walker – all of these people may be well worth the few extra dollars they charge.

And if you find yourself around people who are simply a drain on you, mentally and emotionally, consider at least limiting the amount of time you continue to spend together, or closing that chapter altogether.

3. Set and Enforce Your Boundaries

What exactly does it mean to set and enforce boundaries? Well, ask yourself what will you accept from others by way of the demands they make on your time and emotional energy. For most people, when someone asks something of them, their first response is to give in, to set that other persons’ needs ahead of their own. Many of us have been taught from a young age to be “people pleasers.” One of the shortest, yet most difficult words for many people to say is “no.”

But setting boundaries is an important part of the process in reclaiming your own personal time – what difference does it make what your own personal priorities are if you allow other people’s priorities to override them, simply because you can’t tell that person “no” without guilt?

To be able to set and enforce those boundaries, you will need to rely on your intuition. Your intuition often tells you when something being requested of you is not in harmony with your own goals and priorities, but it takes a degree of trust in that intuition to really listen to that voice – and to let it be heard by other people.



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The bottom line is that your intuition and wisdom can be used as a guide for setting boundaries, if you listen to it. Most of the time when people ask us to do something or make a request that negatively impact our own plans, we get a queasy feeling. It feels bad or we know immediately that it is something that we don't want to do. At this point, you really are not factoring in what anybody else says or thinks. With awareness of your internal compass, you can aspire to get to this point with practice.

Remember that reclaiming your time, being true to your own priorities and setting boundaries are all necessary factors in living a healthier, happier high quality life. And you are so worth the effort!



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Diane Randall, MA, CHHC, is a Whole Living Consultant and Workshop Presenter. She travels the world leading workshops, guiding audiences and conducting 1-1 coaching sessions with a common goal in mind: to help more professionals with demanding schedules live healthier lives, while simultaneously creating lifestyles they truly love.

Diane has completed both the Coach University's, Premier Coach Training Program, as well as received her Holistic Health Coaching Certification thru the Institute for Integrative Nutrition. She is a Board Certified Health Practitioner and accredited member of the American Association of Drugless Practitioners (AADP) and holds an MA in Spiritual Psychology.

Diane is the author of Balance & Being: A 7-Step System for Harmonizing Family, Career & Self, a book that focuses on providing self-insight, while offering helpful exercises geared toward those who want and need to find the balance in their own life.

You can find her articles and ideas in publications such as, New York Times, Life Balance Magazine, Consulting Magazine, Women in Technology and others.

For more information, visit her website.

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