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Instructor

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Date

Finding Control in the Details: Time Management and the Quest for Self-Fulfillment

Time management is, first and foremost, an act of control. Control is a precious commodity in a world where so much of what happens around us is beyond our control. But the concept of time management offers beleaguered people, from corporate executives to soccer moms, the ability to gain and maintain a measure of control over how much time they allot to each task and activity in their lives. By ordering the hours of the day and how these will be spent, people can gauge the amount of time they will devote to specific tasks and determine when these will be completed. The ultimate aim of time management is to achieve, through improved efficiency and productivity, any number of objectives, including professional advancement, academic improvement, reclaiming time with family and a general feeling of self-improvement and empowerment. Control is the ultimate aim of any of these achievements.

None of it would be sustainable without the ability to set and then accomplish objectives. This is why time management is so important. It provides the means by which one may achieve goals that show others – an employer, professor or potential spouse – that one is organized, reliable and goal-oriented. Time management skills can help immeasurably in acquiring and embodying these modern “virtues,” through establishing attainable goals and then utilizing time management skills to make them come true (Mancini 56 &57). “Successful

people set goals that are ambitious yet realistic” (Ibid). Goal-setting has long been essential to the concept of time management, which in the early years of the 20th century was used to optimize worker productivity. In 1911, Frederick Winslow Taylor published *The Principles of Scientific Management*, which revealed that workers could be trained to alter the motions they used to complete tasks so that their productivity could be improved. This minute study of time and task utilization and the subsequent application of what became known as “Taylorism” proved that the goal of increasing worker productivity could be achieved.

Professor Nancy Hyer from Vanderbilt University examined the planning aspect of time management. In her 1995 article “From Ph.D. to JOB: Time management tips,” Hyer uses her own life as an example. She discusses her use of a Franklin Planner system for identifying tasks, methodically planning details and allotting the time to be spent on each one. For Hyer, time management is an active, not a passive, undertaking. Rather than simply recording dates, times and details for meetings and tasks, she determines which activities are truly necessary and feasible within the available time frame before committing them to her planner. Hyer “weeds out” appointments, or requests for appointments, if they are not necessary, or if they can be projected for a later date (1995). In this way, her planning becomes purposeful and empowers her to be results-oriented in the short term, and strategic in the long term.

Hyer proposes periodically reviewing the status of long-term goals. This enables one to assess and, if necessary, realign planning methodology and tactics employed to reach objectives. One particularly useful suggestion is to avoid expecting one’s time management plans to proceed

perfectly. Flexibility is important. Most importantly, one must bear in mind that time management is one of many life-skill tools, albeit a useful one. By maintaining reasonable expectations, the effective self-organizer will avoid falling into the trap whereby time management becomes the ends, rather than the means, of achieving personal fulfillment.

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Works cited

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