

LEISURE TIME MANAGEMENT AND RECREATION



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Jana Kubrická

Věra Janíková

Jan Budňák

PREFACE

In this module you will learn about important time management skills for both your personal and professional life. You will consider setting goals and prioritization and what role your values play in the whole process. In addition, you will get useful tips on planning your time and eliminating time-wasting behaviors. Eventually, adopting time management strategies should help you achieve more, be more concentrated, stay focused and be in control of all your projects and deadlines.

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Your time – Your priority

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WRITER

JANA KUBRICKÁ



CHAPTERS

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01. The value of your time
02. The right mindset
03. Motivation
04. Goal setting

LEARNING OUTCOMES

- » In this chapter, you will learn about the value of time, about the concept of mindset, motivation and goal setting.

Keywords

values, mindset, motivation, goal setting

1.1. THE VALUE OF YOUR TIME

With modern day being extremely hectic, people try to manage their time more efficiently. The trouble is that even though we have many smart gadgets at our disposal, such as telephones or tablets, it seems that we are not getting more free time. Experts say that being busy can make you rich, however, being rich makes you even busier than you were. Nowadays it is the more educated professionals who are more likely to work longer hours and experience more pressure on their performance. And their mobile phones and tablets? They are just constant reminders of the fact that the work is never completely done.

As a result of all this stress and even anxiety caused by our modern lifestyle, many people search for remedy, such as simple techniques or skills that would enable them to perform better. However, in this quest for instant solutions we often forget about the underlying values and beliefs these techniques must be based on. Is achieving a successful and happy life really only a question of techniques and methods? As Stephen Covey points out, management techniques are only the tip of the iceberg, whereas the character is the bulk, the core hidden underwater. If we focus all our energy merely on the tip, i.e. on the development of our personality and mastering techniques for effectivity, we will miss an important part of the process, which is developing the character - our true selves, our beliefs and principles. So perhaps before you assess and improve your skills in time management, you should consider what you actually want to become and how you want to contribute to the world. In other words, it is not only how I want to be better, but also why and what it means to me and others. Most people, if they really want, can mobilize enormous untapped resources of energy (and time) and it is a great waste if they use their energy on meaningless or negative things.

You have probably heard the old saying that time is money. It is certainly good to take this idea into consideration because if we realize that our time is valuable, we are less likely to waste it. On the other hand, managing one's time goes far beyond establishing its monetary value. Personal time has much value – the time we spend with our families and friends or the time we devote to our hobbies is something one cannot put a price-tag on. And if we fail to recognize the value of that time because we fail to prioritize, we might later on find out we are missing something truly important in our lives.



VIDEO

Watch a TED talk by behavioural economist Dan Ariely who argues that it is primarily making constant progress and having a feeling of purpose that motivates us in our work and makes us feel good about it.

http://www.ted.com/talks/dan_ariely_what_makes_us_feel_good_about_our_work



VIDEO

You can also get some advice on hunting for the job of your dreams in this talk by Scott Dinsmore who went on a long quest for his perfect occupational match:

http://www.ted.com/talks/scott_dinsmore_how_to_find_work_you_love



VIDEO

Watch the famous Stephen Covey in his talk on character and personality ethic:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ACukmJ_5HSo



YOUR TURN

If you are trying to adopt time management techniques to achieve better results, you should first consider the following questions:

- » What would I love to do for a living?
- » What skills and knowledge do I need for my dream job?
- » Where do my hobbies come in? Do I want to turn my hobbies into my job? Or do I want to find a job that will provide for my material needs and will allow me spend time doing other things?
- » Do I spend my time in a meaningful way? Or do I spend my time doing things that have no purpose for me?
- » Am I happy with the way my life is unfolding in terms of my education and career?
- » Is there something I wish to do but never find time for? Why is this thing important to me?
- » What is really holding me back from making a change?

Eventually, if you find that you are not happy about your present situation, think about the changes you could make.

1.2 THE RIGHT MINDSET

“The bad news is time flies. The good news is you´re the pilot.”

Michael Altshuler

Our **mindset** is basically our mental attitude. It is shaped by our experience, environment, education and also by the ideas and beliefs we have adopted throughout our lives. You may not always be aware of it, but there is this inner voice inside you that keeps monitoring and afterwards interpreting the events that happen to you or around you. By trying to make some sense of what is going on, we draw on our internal mental map and based on interaction with others around us we modify it. It is claimed that a negative mindset can have a limiting effect on one´s actions, while a positive mindset can be empowering. The point is that your mindset determines your perception of events - if you perceive an event as a positive challenge, rather than a threat, you will be more active and achieve better results. In contrast, if your mindset is negative, you will try to either avoid a problem or you will face it with anxiety which will worsen the situation and its outcomes. A positive time management mindset is not something you are born with. It is said that everyone can acquire a positive mindset when they learn to see their time options and wisely choose among them. Good time decisions make you feel ´on top of things´, in other words, you feel in control of your work.. Psychologist Kelly McGonigal puts forward a theory which says that even stress can have a positive effect on your body if you BELIEVE that it is positive. So the lesson you should learn here is that viewing a task as a challenge rather than as a threat is a healthy strategy.

We can be aware of the fact that it is of no use to get stressed but still, especially under excess pressure, we are likely to compare ourselves unfavorably to others and thus cause a lot of internal stress to ourselves. Here are a few tips how to eliminate irrational thoughts:

1. If you view a situation in black-and-white, or if you are exaggerating things, have a break, do the things you love, talk to a friend and try to regain a sense of perspective. Is the situation really so bad?
2. If you are convinced that you do not perform as well as you should, recall your previous achievements. Aren´t you judging yourself too harshly?
3. Write down the qualities that you have and like about yourself. Has it boosted your self-esteem?



VIDEO

Find out more on the link between positive mindset and health in this TED talk:

http://www.ted.com/talks/kelly_mcgonigal_how_to_make_stress_your_friend



VIDEO

Watch a TED talk by a social psychologist Alison Ledgerwood who gives a presentation on how and why people “get stuck in the negatives” and how we can learn from this knowledge to avoid such mental patterns.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7XFLTDQ4JMk>



VIDEO

If you want to find out how to handle your doubts, worries, self-limiting beliefs, watch a TED talk by a successful businesswoman Carrie Green called Programming your mind for success.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MmfikLimeQ8>



YOUR TURN

Is there an upcoming presentation, deadline or interview that makes you feel anxious? Try to view it as an opportunity to experience something new. Visualise yourself as a confident applicant and have some fun acting the situation out in your mind.

Ask yourself:

1. - What is the best possible scenario? How would the event unfold?
 2. - What is the worst scenario? How would it make you feel?
 3. - What can and should you do to make the best possible scenario come true?
-



1.3 MOTIVATION

A very powerful component of an effective mindset is **motivation**. It is essentially an ability to persevere with one's task even when things are getting tough. It is the precious quality that prevents you from giving up before you reach the finish line. You have probably noticed that the strongest motivation comes from deep within you; it is derived from a sense of purpose. So, if you want to tap into this valuable source of energy and drive, you should contemplate what your values are, what are the things that you find meaningful and worthy and then build your goals on them (see 1.1).

There are many strategies how to boost your morale and stay motivated, among them:

- » Reward yourself for minor achievements
- » If you need a little boost of morale from time to time, think about little incentives that could keep you motivated and full of energy at the same time, e.g. treats such as a minibreak in the countryside, a nice dinner with friends or even just a sleep in after accomplishing a difficult and tedious task.
- » Be inspired by others
- » You do not always need a life coach to get useful advice. Talk to your friends and family about their success, the obstacles they had to overcome and their time management strategies. You can learn from their experience and get a lot of encouragement and support.
- » Enjoy your accomplishments
- » Every time you complete a task, enjoy the moment and use it to boost your confidence in the future. Remember the satisfying feeling and next time there is a difficult task ahead, picture yourself achieving and reaching this goal

Unfortunately, many people have problems staying motivated throughout their studies. Stipek (1988) classified the reasons why students lack motivation to learn as

1. **Cognitive-oriented reasons** – i.e. when you cannot see the present activity as related to the goals that matter to you.
2. **Affective reasons** – i.e. when personal problems such as lack of or excessive confidence interfere with present activities or the present activities are perceived as negative.
3. **Volitionally-oriented reasons** – i.e. when students do not manage their time well, do not prioritize or are not able to delay gratification.
4. **Environmentally-oriented reasons** – i.e. when there extrinsic incentives are low.



YOUR TURN

How would you motivate your students or employees to enroll into an educational course so that they do not give up soon?



READ MORE

Delayed gratification is a concept which describes an ability of a person to postpone pleasure to be able to have something better in the future. The concept was investigated in a famous Stanford experiment.

The Stanford Marshmallow Experiment

“The power of delayed gratification is best known from the Stanford Marshmallow Experiment, a study conducted by Professor Walter Mischel at Stanford University. In this experiment, Mischel studied a group of four to six-year-old children who were given a marshmallow and left in a room for fifteen minutes. They were given the choice of being able to eat the marshmallow now, or if they were to wait the fifteen minutes, they will be able to have two marshmallows. Ultimately, some children were able to wait the fifteen minutes, whilst others were not able to.

The study didn't finish there however. Researchers continued to study the development of the children into adolescents. They found that those children that were able to delay gratification were psychologically better adjusted, more dependable persons, more self-motivated, and as high school students, scored significantly better with grades. With the latest study conducted on these exact same participants in 2011, the research has shown that the characteristic has remained with the individuals for life.

The study shows that delaying gratification is a choice of the individual. You can choose to have something now, or you can choose to have something bigger or better at a later time. Delaying gratification improves your willpower and ultimately helps you reach your longer-term goals faster. “

(adapted from <http://www.startofhappiness.com/power-delayed-gratification/>)



YOUR TURN

Think of delayed gratification and how it relates to you. What is the reward you can get in the long term if you choose to delay gratification and work hard on your goals?

1.4 GOAL SETTING

No matter how ambitious your goals are, motivation is the key to keep you on track until success is reached. Below you can find several tips that can help you stay motivated.

Focus on the goal

Write your goal down and make sure that you make progress towards the goal. Coaches and other experts often refer to the acronym SMART when talking about goals, meaning that your goals should be

S – Specific

M – Measurable/ Meaningful

A – Attainable

R – Realistic

T – Time-specific

A **specific** goal is more likely to be achieved than a more general one, e.g.

“I will improve my English language skills” is more general than “I will take an English course”.

For a **measurable** goal there are specific criteria by which you can evaluate the progress you have made.

A **meaningful** goal is important to you.

An **attainable** goal should push you a bit out of your comfort zone, however, it should still be achievable.

Similarly, a **realistic** goal is one that you can achieve. That does not necessarily mean that you have to set yourself modest goal, but you should make sure that although the goals might be ambitious you are willing and able to pursue them.

A **time-specific** goal is anchored within a certain time-frame, which allows you to assess your progress.

There also other approaches to goal setting, e.g. the famous book “The One Minute Manager” (Blanchard & Johnson, 2003) recommends these steps:

- » Agree on your goals
- » Write out each of your goals on a single sheet of paper using less than 250 words
- » Read and re-read each goal
- » Take a minute every once in a while out of your day to look at your performance, and
- » See whether or not your behavior matches your goal



QUESTION #1

Assess this goal with those SMART principles in mind:

I will improve my IT skills.

Is it a SMART goal? If not, can you transform it so that it meets the above mentioned criteria?



Check Yourself



VIDEO

What do you think Reggie Rivers means when he says that in order to achieve your goals you should not focus on them?

Find out in this enjoyable TED talk:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MmfikLimeQ8>



QUESTION #2

Consider Tim. He is fifty, he is overweight and not very fit. His goal is to get in shape. What kind of behavior could help him achieve his goal?



Check Yourself

Streamlining your time

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WRITER
JANA KUBRICKÁ



CHAPTERS

Click on the titles to navigate to the content.

01. Get organized
02. Plan your time
03. Get in the zone
04. Delegating
05. Learn how to say “no”
06. Use time-saving technology
07. Personalization

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Learners will

- » In this chapter you will get a few useful tips on how to become more time-efficient.

Keywords

getting organized, scheduling, A list, time-blocking, the zone, delegating, time-saving technology, saying “no”, personalization

Time management is not a gift or something you inherit from your parents in your genes, it is mainly a question of adopting good time-saving habits.

2.1. GET ORGANIZED

An effective time management system requires organization. You may have heard people mention that physical order creates mental order and thus helps you to work better. Perhaps the point here is not that you have to be perfectly neat and your desk must be orderly at all times. Nevertheless, it certainly makes sense to organize your stuff in a way that makes the individual items (whatever they are – anything from documents to clothes) easy and quick to find. Clutter can make you feel frustrated and distracted when searching for items.

2.2. PLAN YOUR TIME WELL

A **scheduling** system will not give you extra time, but at least you will not forget about important tasks and events. Designing and sticking to a plan should also help you accomplish more and make sure you do not fall behind with your work.

Many people who schedule their time report that due to proper planning they feel less stress and more in control of their lives. Having said that, scheduling does not mean that you can fill your day to the minute. You should allow for “me-time” and regular breaks every day in order not to burn out soon.

Zeller (2009) emphasizes the **A-list**, i.e. the list of priority projects that you need to allow time for. The principle can be illustrated on a jar that is to be filled with rocks of various sizes. You can fill the jar with all the objects only if you start with the big rocks first.

Once you have completed a task, cross it off from your list and see if it provides you with a feeling of satisfaction.

It is also vital that you protect your prime time by preventing information overload so make sure you can always work to the max in the time of the day when you feel most productive.

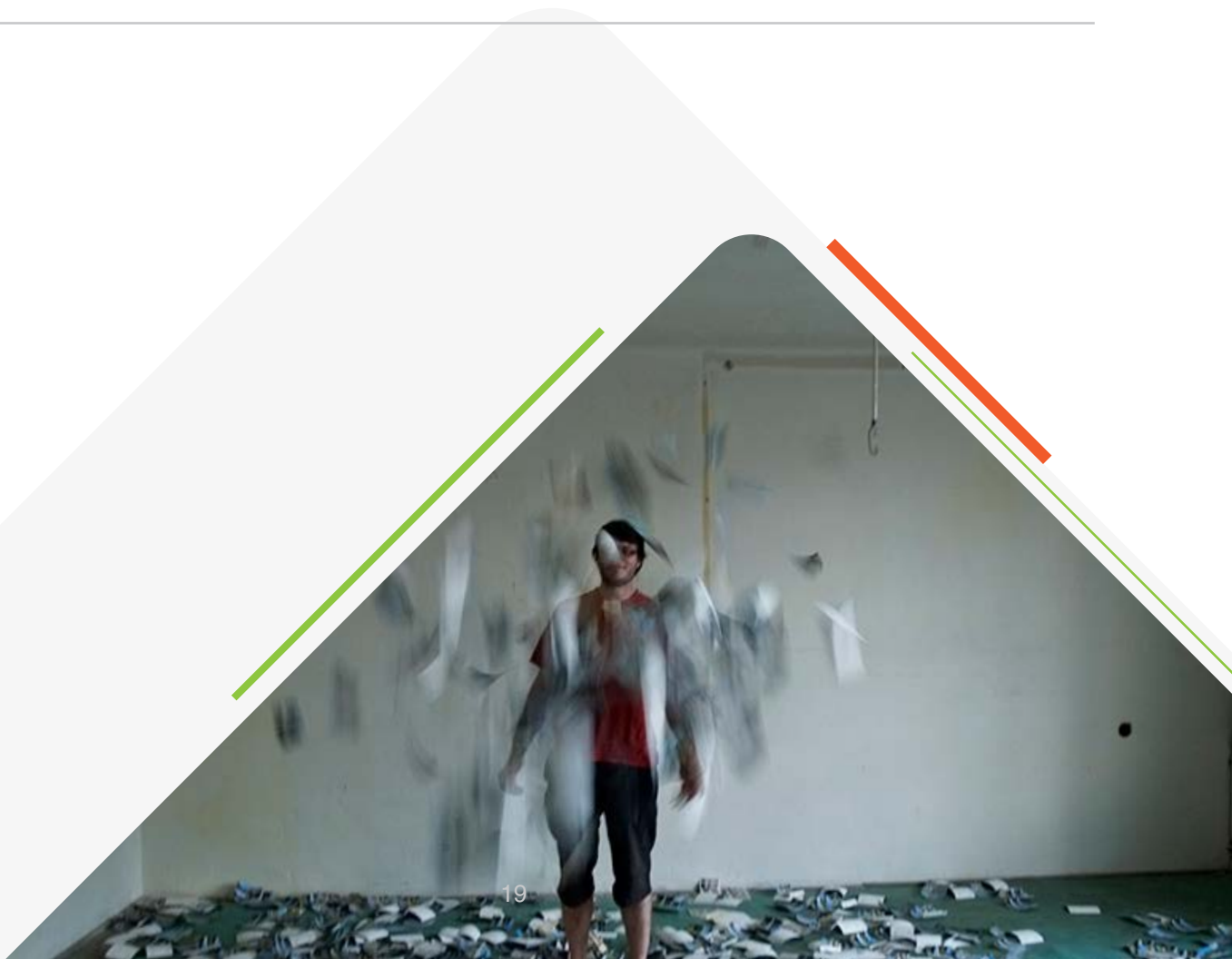
Last but not least there is the trick of **time-blocking**. What it means is that after you identify your priorities, you place them into fixed time slots on your calendar. This system can be fir managing time on daily, weekly, monthly or even yearly basis.



YOUR TURN

How does the metaphor with the jar full of rocks translate to time management?

Can you identify “the biggest rocks” in your schedule?



2.3. GET IN THE ZONE

Athletes nowadays often refer to the zone or the flow, by which they mean a state where they seem to achieve good results effortlessly. The main principle of the flow is focus, however, it is also often associated with positive emotions. To put it simply, when you are in the flow, you do not notice time go by, you are “hooked”, captivated and absorbed by what you are doing. The “magic” of the flow is that your emotions are aligned with the task, they do not hinder your concentration and that is why you can do your best.

To achieve a flow state, three conditions have to be met:

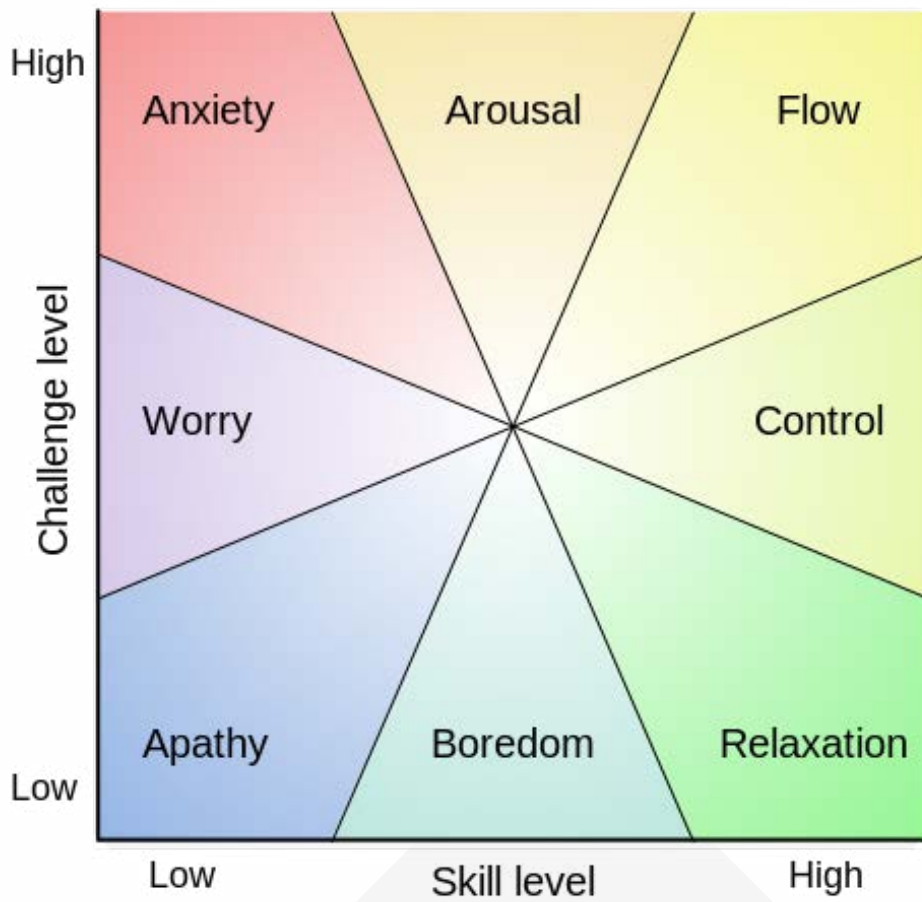
1. One must be involved in an activity with a clear set of **goals** and progress. This adds direction and structure to the task.
2. The task at hand must have clear and immediate **feedback**. This helps the person negotiate any changing demands and allows them to adjust their performance to maintain the flow state.
3. One must have a good balance between the **perceived challenges** of the task at hand and their own **perceived skills** (see the chart below)

Here is how a professional basketball player Ben Gordon described how it feels to be in the zone while playing: “You lose track of the time, what quarter it is. You don’t hear the crowd. You don’t know how many points you have. You don’t think. You’re just playing. Everything is instinctive. When the feeling starts going away, it’s terrible. I talk to myself and say, ‘C’mon, you gotta be more aggressive. That’s when you know it’s gone. It’s not instinctive anymore.” (Peterson, 2006, s. 66).

More on flow

Mental state in terms of challenge level and skill level, according to Csikszentmihalyi's **flow** model.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mihaly_Csikszentmihalyi





YOUR TURN

Describe the state of flow referring to the diagram above.



VIDEO

Watch a TED talk by a famous psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi:

http://www.ted.com/talks/mihaly_csikszentmihalyi_on_flow

2.4. DELEGATING

As mentioned before, the key to successful time management is prioritizing, so when you find yourself snowed under too many tasks and you can cope anymore, figure out what the most important tasks are. Draw a list of your priorities and then assign the remaining tasks to other people. It might be tricky to those people who always need to be in charge of everything that is going on. Nevertheless, even if you enjoy being in control, work on your ability to delegate. You will soon find out that being able to focus on what really matters is amazing and you can also establish trust with you and the people you delegate to, so in the end everyone can benefit from the delegating process.

2.5. LEARN HOW TO SAY “NO”

In general, people find it difficult to say “no” when being asked to do something, or when they are invited to an event or even just a party. Perhaps this temptation not to turn down an invitation is caused by the fear of not being liked by others or by being overly polite and lacking assertiveness to decline.

So when you are next asked to do something that you truly do not want to do you should bear in mind that:

- » Everyone has a right to refuse
- » It is not impolite to say “no”, if you say it in a calm voice and explain your reasons
- » Stick to your prior plans and commitments and do not let others easily ruin them

2.6. USE TIME-SAVING TECHNOLOGY

If you are a nerd, you may take advantage of some of the time management tools, such as calendars in cell phones, which allow you to keep track of tasks that need to be completed.



READ MORE

The Independent reviews the best 10 time-saving apps here:

<http://www.independent.co.uk/extras/indybest/gadgets-tech/quick-smart-10-best-time-saving-apps-8989500.html>



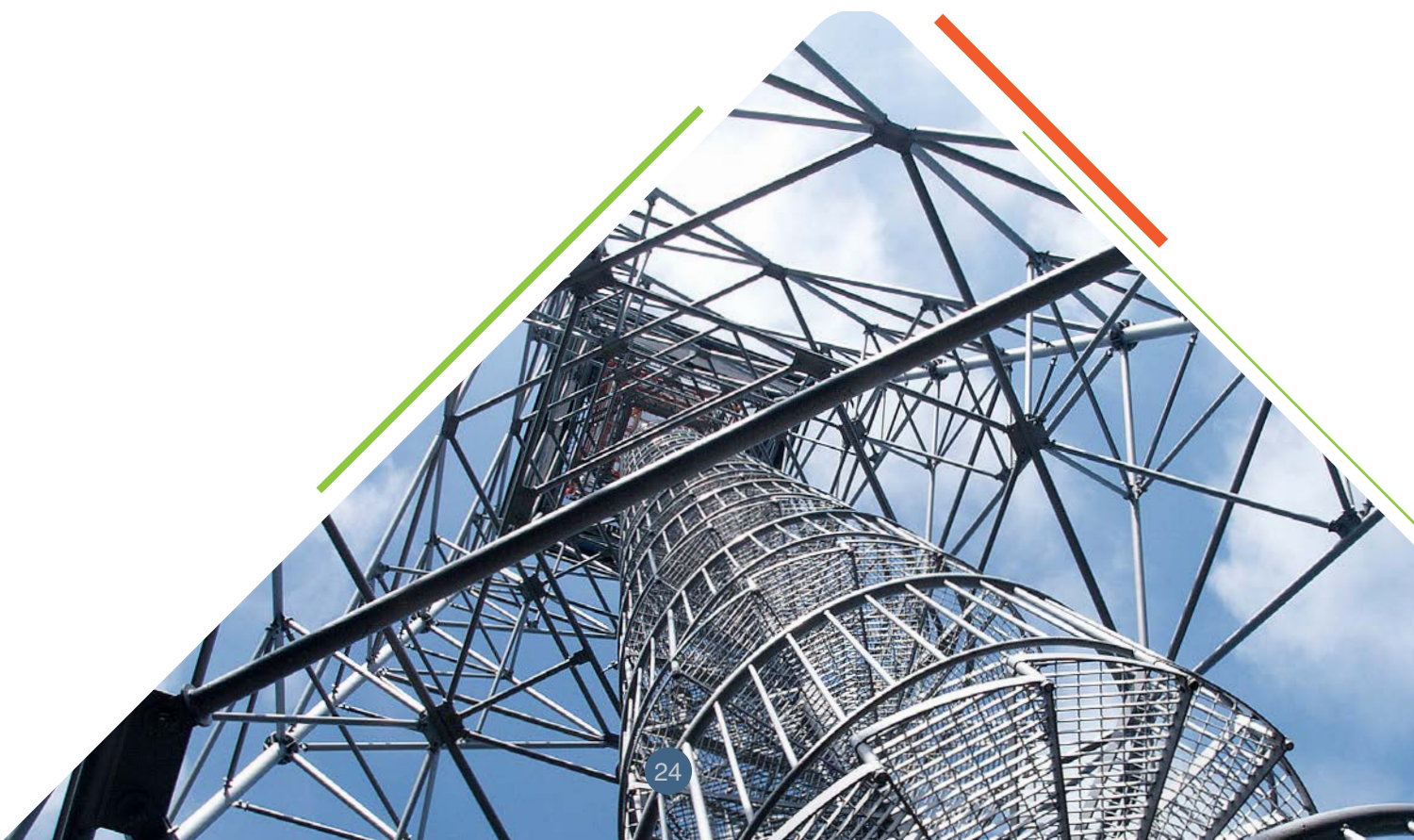
VIDEO

In this TED talk tech columnist David Pogue shares 10 time-saving tips for nerds.

https://www.ted.com/talks/david_pogue_10_top_time_saving_tech_tips

2.7. PERSONALIZATION

Even in time management personalization is crucial. This means that you should always apply the methods that best suit you and your needs, as it is only you who knows best what you need. You can learn a lot from others, but you can always adjust these things to suit you. Don't let others sway you in how to define your goals, what they should be, or how to achieve them. So even if everyone tells you that it is "the early bird that catches the worm", and that is why you should get up really early in the morning if you want to accomplish anything in your life - first of all stop and think. If you know that early hours will simply never be your prime time, then it does not make much sense to force yourself to break all your habits.



A young child wearing a striped shirt, light-colored pants, and a cap is climbing a ladder on a steam train engine. The child is holding onto red handrails. The train has large, spoked wheels and various mechanical parts.

Overcoming obstacles

3

WRITER

JANA KUBRICKÁ



CHAPTERS

Click on the titles to navigate to the content.

01. Procrastination
02. Stress
03. Balancing work and family

LEARNING OUTCOMES

- » In this chapter you will learn how to deal with problems that might arise when trying to apply effective time management.

Keywords

procrastination, saying no, work-life balance

3.1. PROCRASTINATION

Good time management is not an easy task. There are many intervening factors that can get in the way of your success.

The first is the often discussed **procrastination**. It is sometimes defined as the “gap between intention and action” (Mohsen Haghbin).

However, procrastination should not be mistaken for doing things at the last moment, rather than that, it is a voluntary delay of action despite the expectation of negative consequences of such delay. Sometimes, or actually quite often as is the case of many of us, it is very hard to resist various temptations. We then use these interruptions in work as an excuse to postpone certain tasks. It is actually very convenient to have someone to blame for not getting down to business but before you know it, there are other equally good reasons not to start work. What is happening is that you are getting in trouble because you will later be under more pressure as the deadline approaches.

Steel (2007) describes 4 pillars of procrastination. They are:

1. **Low task value:** This basically means that when we find a task uninteresting or unpleasant, we tend to “spice it up” with more enjoyable activities.
2. **Personality:** It probably seems quite obvious that personality type plays a crucial role in task management. Some people are more disciplined, others more impulsive and there is little to be done about it. The good news that although it is difficult to control or change who we are, it is much easier to control our environment. A common tip for those who will always end up cleaning their apartment or baking a cake when they are supposed to be working on that assignment is to go to a quiet place where cleaning or cooking is impossible or really freakish, such as in a library.
3. **Expectations:** It seems that the hardest bit for most people is to simply get down to work. And the more difficult you anticipate it to be, the more likely you are to postpone it. So try to commit a few minutes to trying it out and then you may as well find that it is not as overwhelming as you thought it would be.
4. **Goal failure:** Fear of failure is a big issue for many procrastinators. This pillar has to do with being confident in your abilities.

So if you are in the habit of putting your tasks off, keep track of your daily work, monitor the time you spend avoiding the big and important projects and take measures to improve the situation if you need to.

Some of the useful tips how to stop procrastinating are:

- Remove distractions
- Motivate yourself
- Focus on the end goal
- Make your intentions public
- Break the project into smaller, specific tasks not to feel overwhelmed
- Use technology to help you stay focused and minimize distractions



READ MORE

To find out more about online tools to help you stay focused and stop procrastinating, go to:

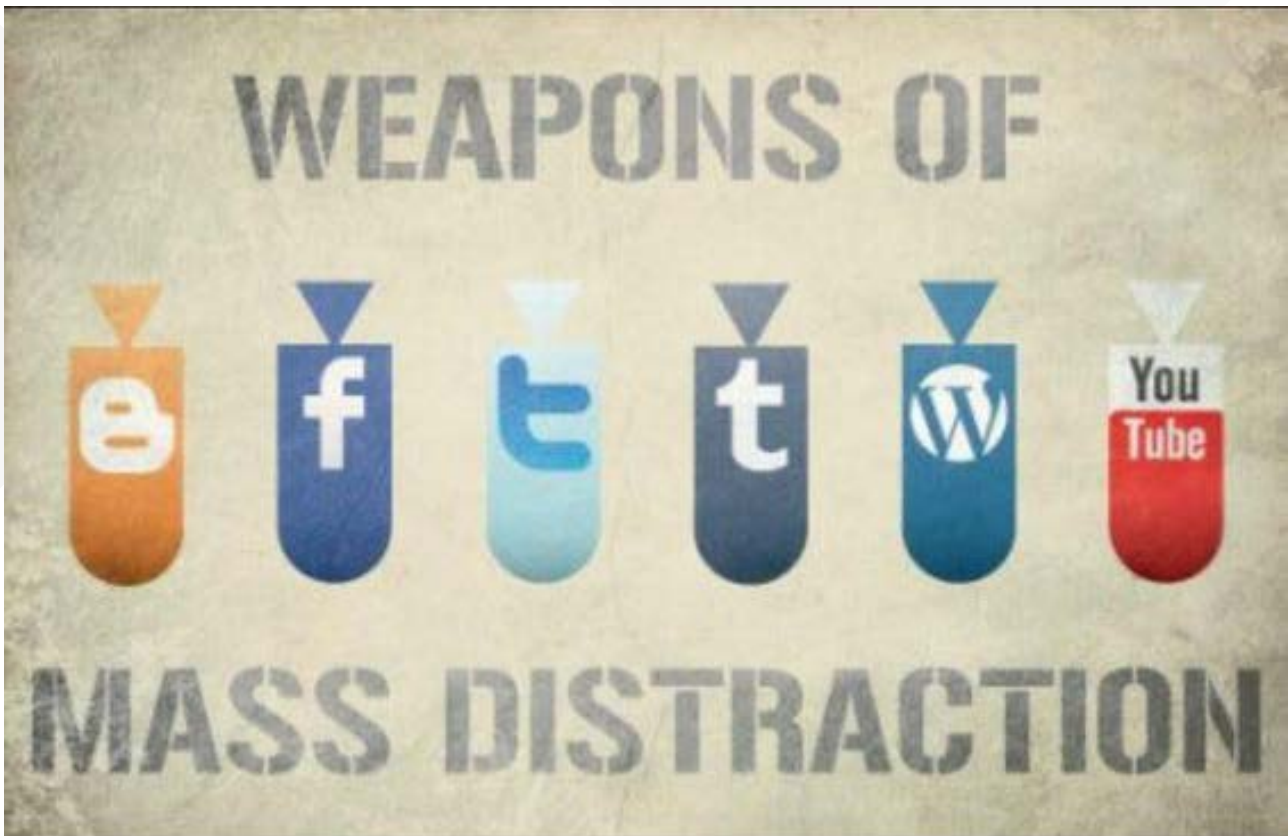
<http://99u.com/articles/6969/10-online-tools-for-better-attention-focus>



YOUR TURN

Are there any distractions that constantly prevent you from focusing on a task?

If so, consider the five tips above – which of them could you put into practice to work more efficiently?



(<http://encognitive.com/node/18369>)

It is ironic that technologies, which are supposed to save our time, are also major distractors. How many times have you checked your e-mail today? And your various other accounts? American statistics show that before there were iPhones, people went online on average five times a day. With a smart phone close at hand, it is 27 times. An average American teenager sends or receives 3500 texts digital messages per month, that is approximately one every seven minutes of the time when they are awake.

What is your daily digital score? Track your digital footprint for a day: how many websites have you checked? How much time did you spend online? How many texts did you send?



VIDEO

If you wish to find out more about procrastination, watch this interesting presentation by Tim Pynchl to college students:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mhFQA998WiA>



VIDEO

There are also a few interesting academic TED talks on procrastination:

e.g. in the context of psychology given by Vik Nithy

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WD440CY2Vs0>





VIDEO

Or, you can watch a TED talk by Michelle Vandepass called Why we procrastinate, whose ideas are rather subversive to the current discourse on procrastination as she calls her talk “In honor of procrastination” and argues that it is even very successful people who blame themselves for not doing enough and that maybe it is not ourselves to blame, maybe it is the society that imposes the “to do, efficiency and accomplishment oriented” imperative on us:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HeXyOJgAaEk>



VIDEO

There is also a similarly provocative TED talk by Carl Honore called In praise of slowness, in which he considers the toll the modern lifestyle takes on our physical and mental health. He praises slowness and questions new concepts such as courses of “fast yoga” and “one minute bedtime story”.

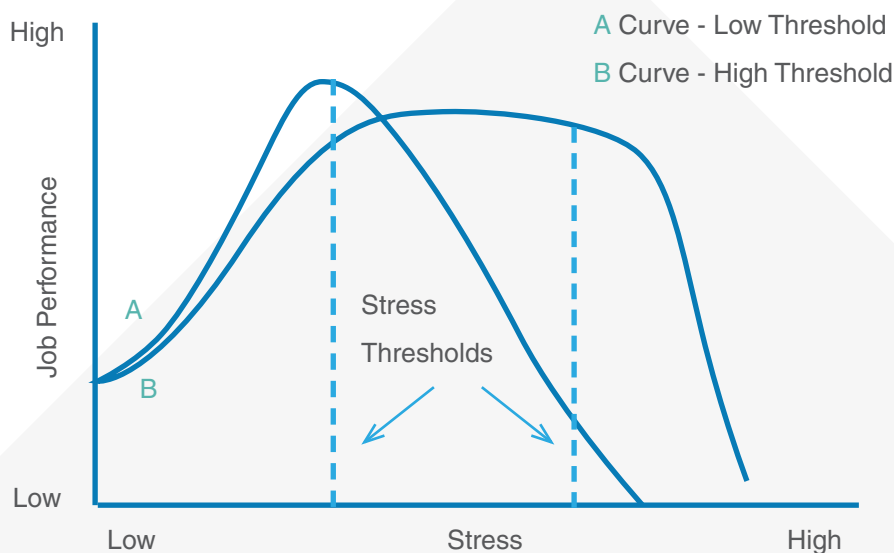
http://www.ted.com/talks/carl_honore_praises_slowness

3.2. STRESS

Stress is a term with primarily negative connotations. The common understanding of “stress” is that it is an experience of excessive pressure. The truth is, however, that even though we talk about stress as a risk factor to our health, it is also an essential component of our life. Because stress gives us fuel in form of hormones such as adrenaline, it also helps us stay motivated, release our energy and face daily challenges.

Some experts distinguish between “eustress” and “distress”. Eustress is the “good stress”, that is the stress that your body can tolerate and that keeps you on the task, challenged and productive. Distress, on the contrary, is the “bad stress”, in other words, this is when the challenge and load becomes too much and you can’t cope with it any more. There is a wide range of symptoms that signal distress, both mental and physical. The physical symptoms include high blood pressure, chest pain, indigestion or asthma; the mental symptoms range from disorders such as insomnia or irritability and headache to anxiety and panic attacks or depression.

It is not simple to determine how much stress is just the right amount. When there is too little of it, life becomes boring and people can feel frustrated or stuck in a dead-end job. On the other hand, when there is too much and you just cannot cope with the stress, your performance drops. Some authors (Brewer, 2003) compare the search for the right balance to tuning a musical instrument. When the strings are too loose, the tune will be ruined; when the strings are too tight, the strings will break. It is only the right tension that gives the instrument its unique sound. As you can see in the graph below, the right amount of stress will also enable you to give your best performance.



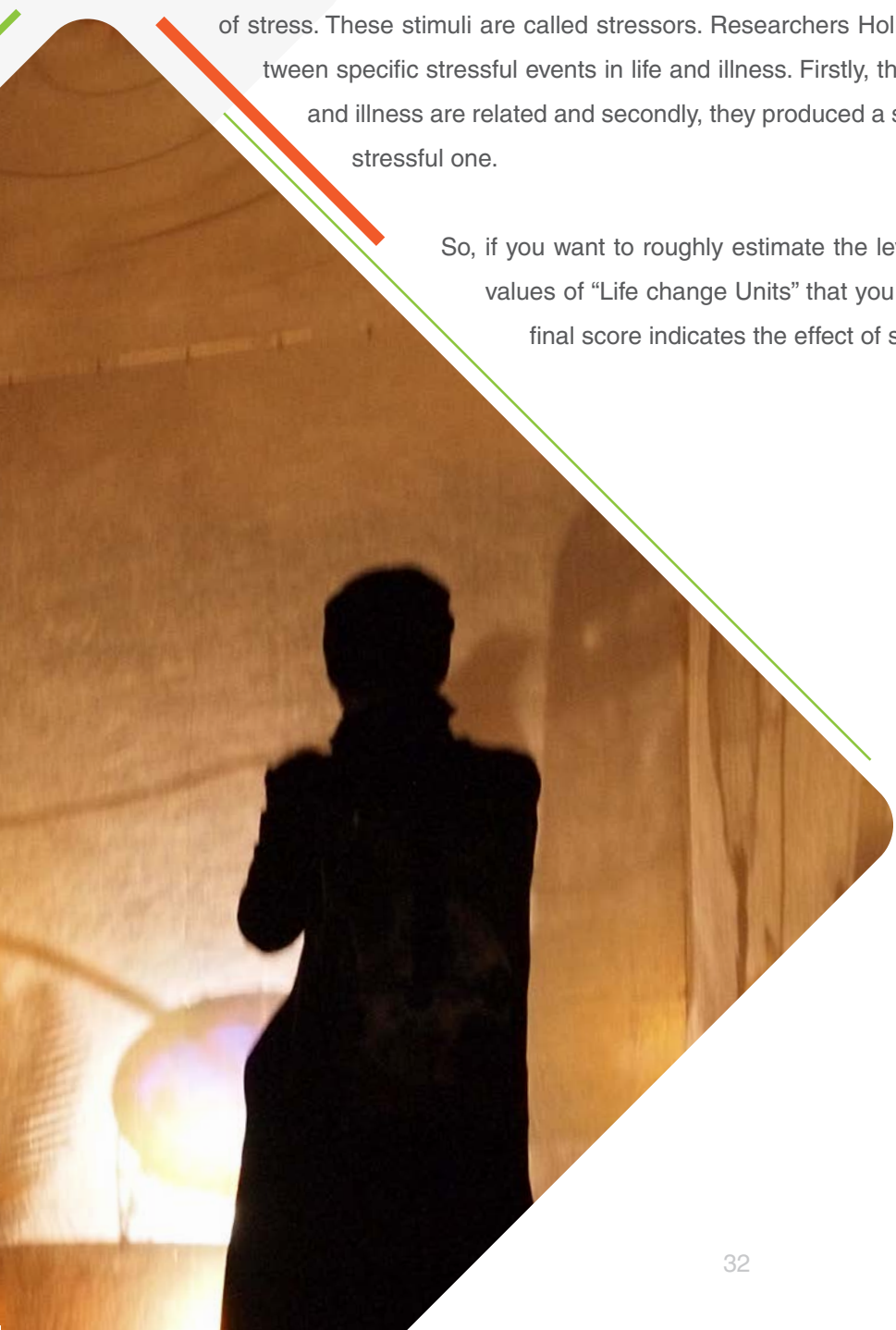
(https://picasaweb.google.com/lh/photo/zIEkWdG_hUsLx0SifWOCUw)

Stress coping is also a question of individual stress tolerance. Different people are comfortable with different stress levels, or we can say that people have difference “stress threshold”. Both stress tolerance and stress threshold refer to the amount of stress we can bear or endure before suffering anxiety and other symptoms. Stress tolerance is influenced by a number of factors, the most significant among them being personality, physique and environment.

Now the question is whether we can raise our stress tolerance. Some authors claim it is possible to become more stress resistant through meditation and relaxation. Others believe that there are people who simply have to choose activities that do not put them under too much stress. So we are back in Unit 1 - prioritize. If the task ahead of you seems overwhelming, first stop and think about if it really is something that you want to do in your life. If you believe that you have made the right decision and you want to take on extra tasks that might be challenging, study the ways to manage stress below.

It is very important to realize that there are many events throughout our lives that cause various amounts of stress. These stimuli are called stressors. Researchers Holmes and Rahe investigated the link between specific stressful events in life and illness. Firstly, they confirmed the hypothesis that stress and illness are related and secondly, they produced a scale of stressors where 100 is the most stressful one.

So, if you want to roughly estimate the level of stress in your life, simply add the values of “Life change Units” that you have experienced in the past year. The final score indicates the effect of stress on your life.



Life event

Life change units

Death of a spouse	100	Change in living conditions	25
Divorce	73	Revision of personal habits	24
Marital separation	65	Trouble with boss	23
Death of a close family member	63	Change in residence	20
Imprisonment	63	Change in schools	20
Personal injury or illness	53	Change in working hours or conditions	20
Marriage	50	Change in church activities	19
Dismissal from work	47	Change in recreation	19
Marital reconciliation	45	Change in social activities	18
Retirement	45	Change in sleeping habits	16
Change in health of family member	44	Change in eating habits	15
Pregnancy	40	Change in number of family reunions	15
Business readjustment	39	Vacation	13
Gain a new family member	39	Major Holiday	12
Sexual difficulties	39	Minor violation of law	11
Change in financial state	38		
Death of a close friend	37		
Change to different line of work	36		
Change in frequency of arguments	35		
Major mortgage	32		
Foreclosure of mortgage or loan	30		
Change in responsibilities at work	29		
Child leaving home	29		
Trouble with in-laws	29		
Outstanding personal achievement	28		
Beginning or end school	26		
Spouse starts or stops work	26		

Score

Score of **300+**: At risk of illness

Score of **150-299**: Risk of illness is moderate (reduced by 30% from the above risk)

Score **< 150**: Only a slight risk of illness

(https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holmes_and_Rahe_stress_scale)

Stress management

Everyone can acquire basic stress management skills but it is particularly relevant to those who have low stress tolerance and so are prone to experiencing high levels of stress (Type A personality). It is not difficult to recognize these people: they are the competitive ones, always struggling to do better, to advance. They also experience a constant sense of urgency. Psychologists claim that the tension and ambition of these people spring from an inner feeling of insecurity and constant need for approval and praise (McLeod, 2014).

In contrast, Type B personalities are self-assured and relaxed. Their motivation may be similar, or even equal to that of Type A, but they proceed more patiently, without panic, stress or hostility. It is important to point out that your behavior patterns can change as you age.

Type A personality traits

- » Schedule more and more into less and less time
- » Constantly work against the clock
- » Deny feeling tired
- » Believe that if you want something done well you have to do it yourself
- » Become impatient watching others do things they feel they could do better or faster
- » Are obsessed with punctuality
- » Are impatient and angry with delays and queues
- » Listen to others impatiently, trying to finish what they are saying
- » Talk a lot, often in an explosive way
- » Frequently drum their fingers or click their pen
- » Always want to win
- » Fail to notice the beauty of the world around them

Type B personality traits

- » Manage time reasonably
- » Never suffer from time urgency
- » Are able to work without agitation
- » Are not bothered by lack of punctuality
- » Delegate tasks to those more suited to them
- » Don't feel they have to impress others with their achievements
- » Listen readily to others, giving them all the time needed to have their say
- » Tend to hold their body in a relaxed manner
- » Are pleasantly competitive – gracious losers

(Brewer, 2003)



YOUR TURN

Can you identify yourself as Type A or B?

It is very likely that you will recognize in yourselves traits from both personality types. Nevertheless, it is quite useful to have an idea whether you are predominantly A or B type. Af you are Type A or have some of the Type A traits, you can benefit from stress coping techniques.

The key to good stress management lies in the right balance between tasks and pressures you can handle and the overload that makes you feel unhappy. As regards “the right balance”, it is not a question of the demands placed on you and your actual capability, but between the way you PERCEIVE these demands in relation to how you think you can handle them.

The first step is to recognize and if possible avoid situations that cause great stress to you, perhaps by means of recording your daily routine and your feelings in a diary for a few weeks.

Once you know what is causing the greatest deal of stress, try making some changes in your life. These changes include:

Assess your lifestyle

It is mainly the choices you make that affect the level of stress you are suffering from. Your lifestyle may not cause stress on its own, but it can prevent your body from getting over it properly

Take exercise

Have you ever noticed elevation in mood after you exercised? The reason for that is the endorphins that are released as a result of exercise and they help you, among others, recover after a stressful day

Get support

Your family, friends and colleagues, who know you and love you, can all provide either moral support, or even more concrete help, e.g. time or money, when you need it. Don't be ashamed to ask for help when you need it.

Change your thinking

Having too much stress in your life can make you feel bad about yourself, it can lead to feelings of insecurity, anxiety and depression.

To deal with negative thinking, you can find out more about effective techniques dealing with these issues:

Cognitive-behaviour therapy - a type of mental therapy that allows you to view various challenging situations in a new light

Problem solving—techniques by means of which appropriate solutions to problems are to be found

Assertive communication – a variety of techniques that allow you to develop and maintain healthy relationships and self-esteem.



VIDEO

For more on cognitive-behaviour therapy, go to:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cognitive_behavioral_therapy



VIDEO

Or watch an introductory video on basics of this therapy:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HoFNs-3r0Go>



VIDEO

For more on problem solving, go to:

https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newTMC_00.htm



VIDEO

For more on assertive communication, go to:

<http://psychology.tools/assertive-communication.html>

There are also other stress-management methods that may seem elementary but they are actually very effective and healthy:

- » Turning off phone during off hours
- » Setting a budget and sticking to it
- » Eating wisely
- » Sleeping well
- » Taking exercise
- » Relaxing

You can read more on relaxation and exercise in Unit 4.



3.3 BALANCING WORK AND FAMILY

People agree that personal relationships are crucial when it comes to life satisfaction and happiness. It is even said that people who are married (let's assume happily married) live longer than those who stay single. That is why we should always consider them first.

We must face it: our days are often filled with activities that might be essential, however, they do not bring much return in the long term.

Especially when raising children, we have to juggle a host of tasks and not all of them are necessarily monumental, entertaining or educational as such. Nevertheless, it is often possible, if you think about it, to include kids (to some extent) in some of the house chores, such as cooking, cleaning or loading the washing machine. First of all, if we do this, we set a good example to children and secondly, the kids feel important and appreciated and are actually learning a lot of things in the process as well.

So if you intend to invest in your relationships, you can e.g. set up family traditions, such as going for long walks on Sunday afternoons, having long breakfast on Saturday mornings or going out on a date with your partner even though you have to arrange for a babysitter once a month. It is certainly worth it, because at the end of the day it is mainly the time shared together that creates a positive memory.

Furthermore, it is proven by longitudinal studies that if you are more connected to your family and community, you will live longer and you will be healthier and happier than people who lack this connection.



VIDEO

More on happiness and satisfaction from the perspective of a psychiatrist in this TED talk:
http://www.ted.com/talks/robert_waldinger_what_makes_a_good_life_lessons_from_the_longest_study_on_happiness

Recreation

4

WRITER

JANA KUBRICKÁ



CHAPTERS

Click on the titles to navigate to the content.

- 01. Relaxation
- 02. Meditation
- 03. Sport and exercise

LEARNING OUTCOMES

- » In this chapter you will read about basic relaxation and meditation techniques, principles and benefits of exercise and consider several exercise myths.

Keywords

relaxation, meditation, sport, exercise

4.1 RELAXATION

Knowing how to relax is vital for ensuring your health and well-being. If you feel exhausted, or just miss joy and passion in your life, set aside time to relax to restore your vitality.

First try to relax your mind. Let go of all negative thoughts and guilt. Our culture instills the value of hard work deeply but that does not mean that work and stress should interfere with your personal life.

The core of relaxation exercises is breathing. When you feel relaxed, your breathing should be calm and regular, approx. 10-14 breaths per minute. Your whole rib cage and diaphragm will move if you breathe properly.

To help you recognize what normal, gentle breathing feels like:

- » Lie down, make yourself comfortable
- » Rest your hands on the upper part of your chest
- » Breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth
- » Breathe in, hold your breath, then slowly exhale
- » Breathe gently and feel the way your chest rises and drops
- » Focus on when you breathe out
- » Now place your hands on your abdomen and breathe gently to feel your abdomen rise and drop
- » Breathing out should be longer than breathing in

If you need to get rid of negative thoughts imagine that you free yourself of tension and undesirable thoughts with every breath.

Next, you can imagine yourself in a peaceful place. What does it look like? You can visualize this place every time you feel down and use it as your “mental retreat”.

4.2 MEDITATION

Meditation is often used by people who want to understand and better control their own mind. It is certainly not easy, but it gets remarkably better with practice. Also, there is a wide range of meditation techniques (you can read more on <http://liveanddare.com/types-of-meditation>.) so you can choose the kind that works best for you.

Meditation can help you in a number of areas, e.g. it can boost your health, life satisfaction, self-control or even your mental achievement. Many people who practice meditation agree that one of the main benefits of meditation is that it allows you to be in the moment and feel gratitude.

Here are a few tips on what you can do from Leo Babauta:

- » Sit calmly meditating just for two minutes. It might seem too easy but it is tricky for many whose mind is easily distracted.
- » Count your breaths. Counting should help you focus.
- » Come back when you wander. Your mind is likely to stray at the beginning but don't be discouraged or frustrated and just try again.
- » Don't worry too much that you're doing it wrong. The thing about meditation is there is not one correct way to do, so just relax, experiment and see what works for you.
- » Feel good about yourself. Smile at yourself and cherish positive feelings.

(<http://zenhabits.net/meditation-guide>)





VIDEO

More on happiness and satisfaction from the perspective of a psychiatrist in this TED talk:
http://www.ted.com/talks/andy_puddicombe_all_it_takes_is_10_mindful_minutes



YOUR TURN

Do you also spend almost half of your time lost in thought like the majority of people?
If so, take ten minutes a day for the next few days to meditate and live in the moment. If
you need more advice, watch the video linked above.



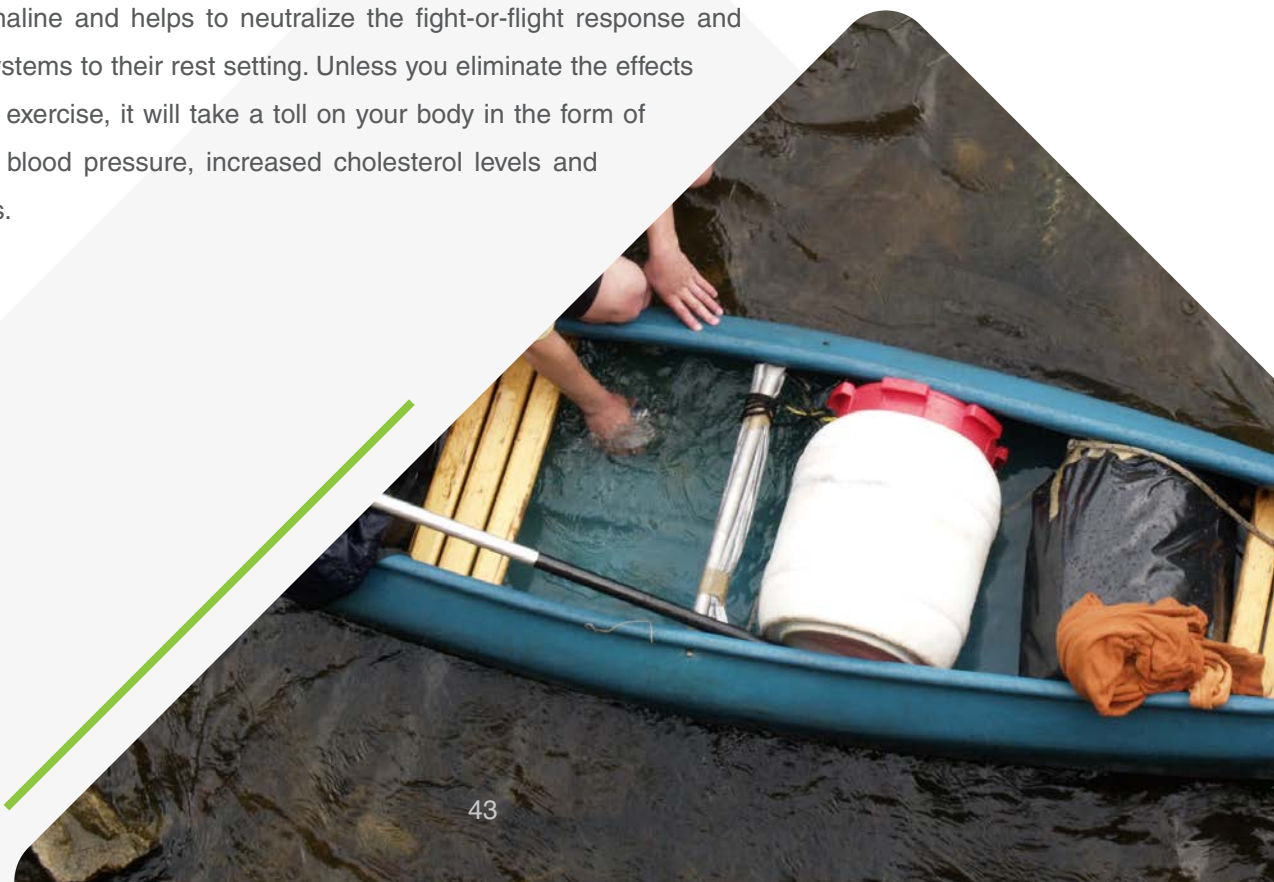
4.3 SPORT AND EXERCISE

They say that all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy. This old saying often arises when we talk about work–life balance and it certainly seems that having no time for friends, family and recreation takes a toll on our lives. It may be demonstrated in your slightly higher blood pressure, insomnia or other ailments which we tend to ignore when we are very busy. However, allocating enough time for yourself outside work can be essential not only for physical, but also for mental health, for your creativity and productivity. So curiously, if you want to be able to work really well and hard, make sure you “play hard”, whatever your “play” might be.

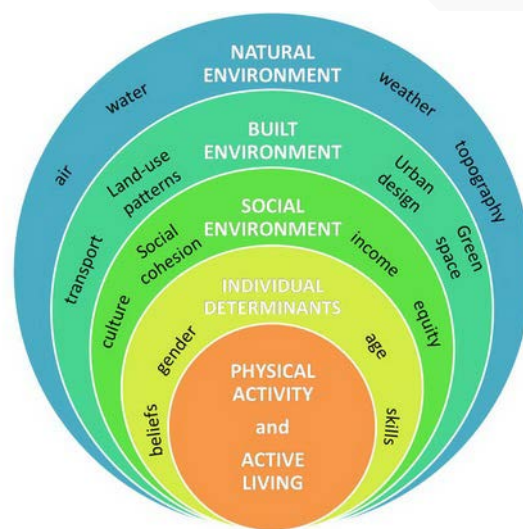
One of the many complaints of people leading busy and sedentary lives is that they feel they lack energy for all their tasks and duties. It is difficult to persuade these people to take up a sport or simply have more exercise as they do not feel up to it. However, there is scientific evidence that exercise stimulates chemicals such as endorphins that send positive thoughts and increased energy to the brain. All of this contributes to enhanced performance. So next time you feel down, stressed and lacking motivation, try exercising for a bit and hopefully you will feel much better afterwards. The good news is that getting your endorphins up by exercise is addictive so when you get over stage one, when the whole body aches terribly after a workout, you feel OK after a few more sessions and before you know, you won't be able to imagine your life without your regular dose of exercise endorphins.

The benefits of exercise are numerous and we may not even have data about all of them. Studies have convincingly demonstrated that regular aerobic exercise, i.e. exercise that uses oxygen to keep muscle groups moving and can be maintained for at least 20 minutes) reduces the risk of death due to heart disease, helps you to maintain healthy weight, live longer and prevents a host of other diseases.

Exercise is also an essential tool in managing your stress. It helps burn the effects of adrenaline and helps to neutralize the fight-or-flight response and return your systems to their rest setting. Unless you eliminate the effects of stress with exercise, it will take a toll on your body in the form of arthritis, high blood pressure, increased cholesterol levels and other ailments.



The trouble is that not everyone is committed to regular exercising as time is precious and the tasks are many. Experts recommend doing vigorous exercises for 20 or 30 minutes five times a week. However, don't feel bad about yourself if exercising is not a part of your weekly routine. Instead, if you are not a big fan of the gym, try to incorporate exercise into your day in enjoyable ways, e.g. getting off the bus one stop earlier to take a walk to work, dance in the kitchen when there is a good song on the radio or take the stairs instead of the elevator from time to time. One thing is for sure – if you enjoy your exercise, you are much more likely to stick to it for longer.



Factors influencing physical activity in communities (Adapted from Dahlgren and Whitehead, 1991).

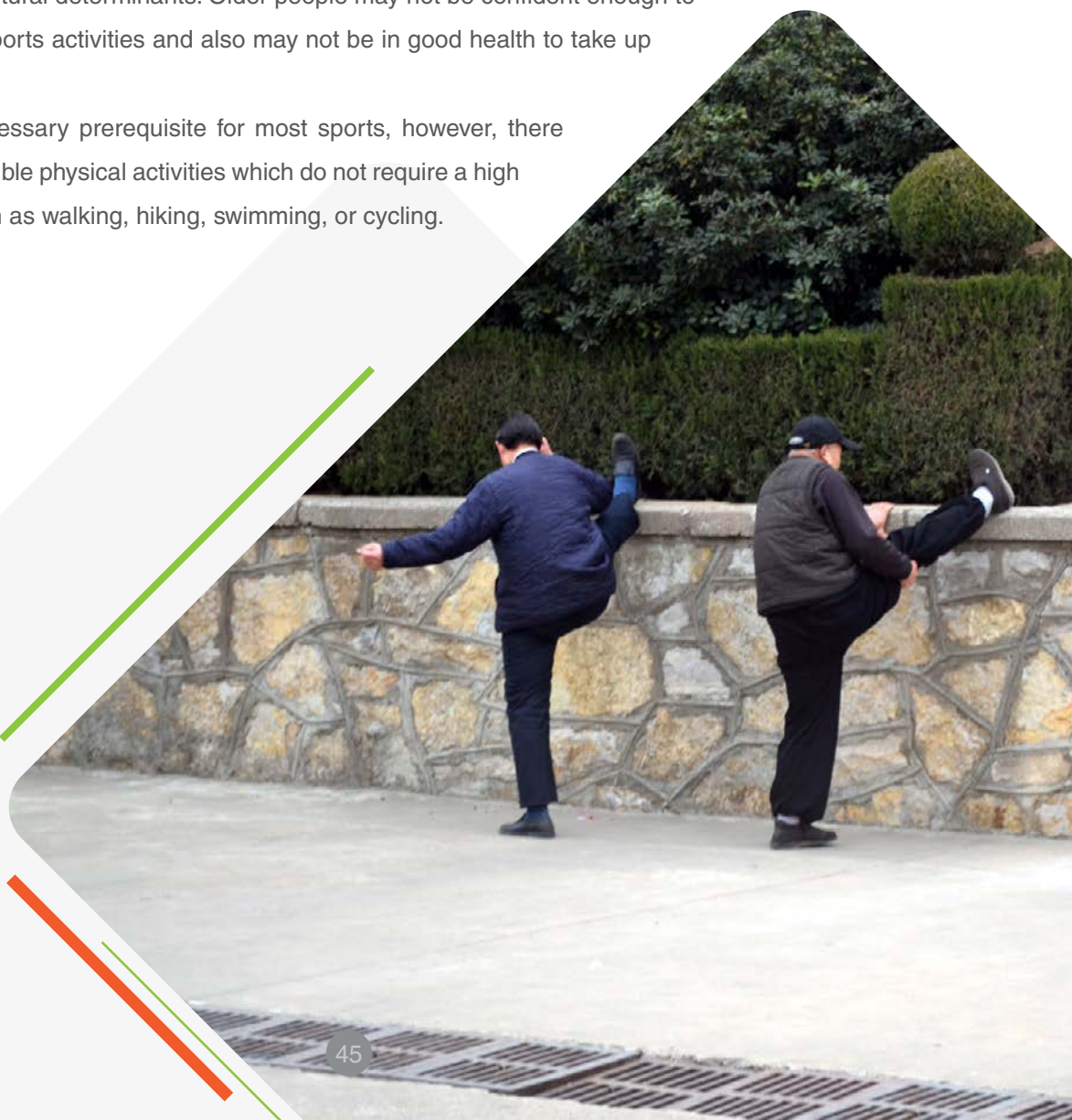
<http://www.intechopen.com/books/advances-in-landscape-architecture/designing-landscapes-for-child-health>

Let's now turn our attention to the factors that enhance physical activity. Apart from the above mentioned "fun" as one of the obvious, yet most important factors which help you stick to your exercise plan, there are a few others. Study the diagram below and consider the role of other determinants.

1. Individual determinants

In this category there are beliefs, gender, age and skills.

- » **Beliefs** can be associated with the psychological concept of self-efficacy, that is one's confidence in his/her ability to perform specific behaviors in particular situations. To illustrate this point in the context of exercising, an older person might have a high level self-efficacy as concerns walking, but may be too cautious or not sufficiently confident as regards jogging or cycling. The low level of self-efficacy may interfere with one's exercise plan because these people avoid certain types of exercise or sports.
- » **Gender** is also a factor in exercising. For instance, there are some cultures in which there are specific expectations about which types of sports are congruent with cultural norms.
- » **Age** obviously plays a very important role in exercising and is intertwined with other individual and cultural determinants. Older people may not be confident enough to get involved in sports activities and also may not be in good health to take up sports.
- » **Skills** are a necessary prerequisite for most sports, however, there are many accessible physical activities which do not require a high level of skill, such as walking, hiking, swimming, or cycling.



2. Social environment

- » **Culture** determines both the type and amount of physical activity that we have. For example in Europe it is perfectly normal for people of all ages to go jogging in the streets while a few decades ago it would have been a very rare sight, especially in the post-communist countries.
- » **Social cohesion** is a set of features that help keep a group stay together. What does it mean in terms of physical activity and exercise? If there are people around you with similar values, norms and lifestyle, it will encourage you and help you sustain your behaviour.
- » **Income** is another variable influencing the level of one's physical activity. It seems that even though you do not need gym membership to be active, there is a correlation between one's engagement in sports and their income. The richer we are, the more we care, or are able to care about around fitness.

3. Built environment

The factors in this category refer to the man-made physical environment, that is transport, urban design or green spaces, which all can positively or negatively influence the level of physical activity.

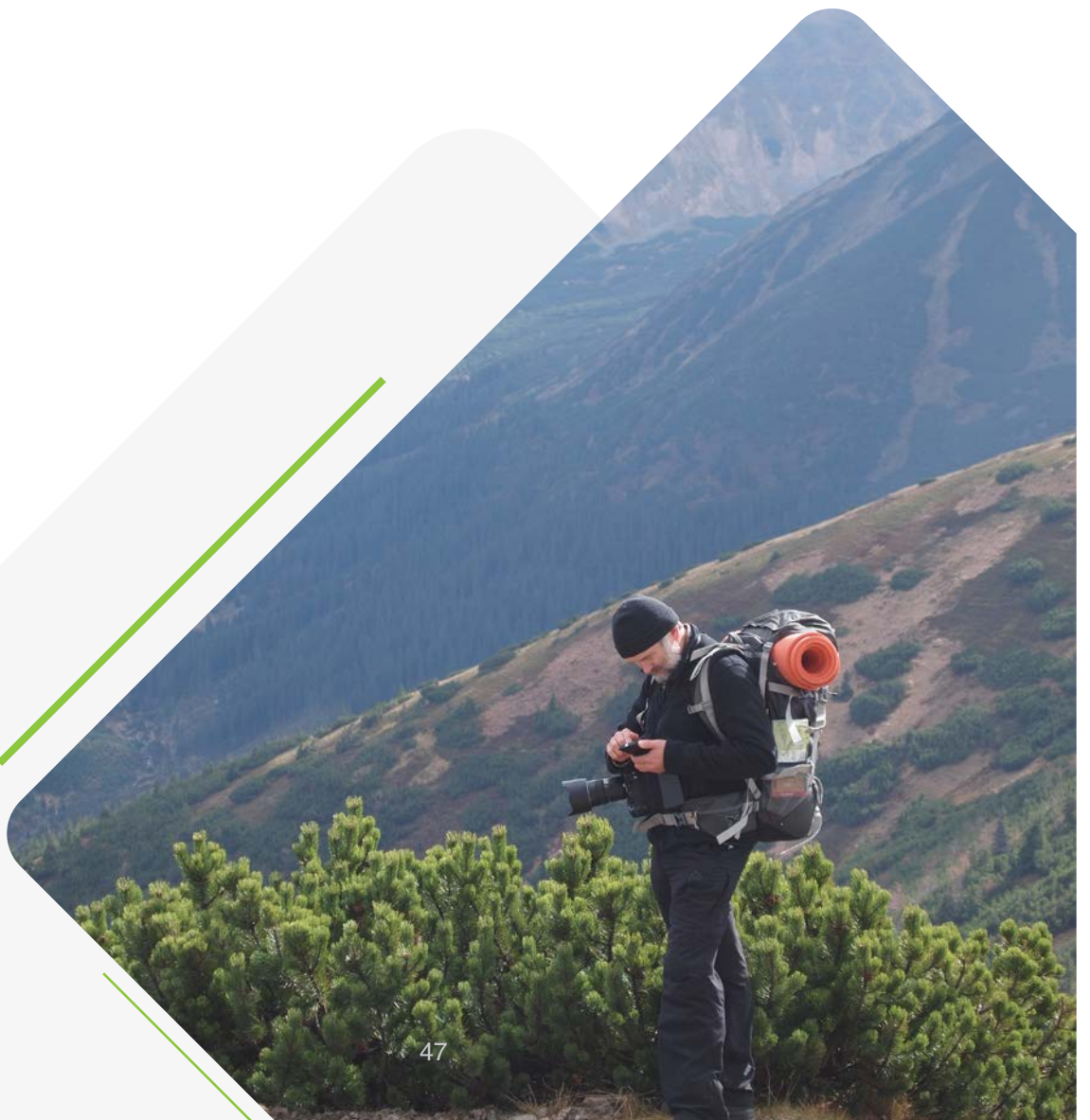
Consider the opportunities for physical activity in your city – are there parks or spaces where you can go and exercise? Do you commute to places where there is reliable public transport so that you can use it and walk instead of driving? Do you think the municipality is doing everything within their powers to provide and maintain spaces for outdoor sports?



4. *Natural environment*

The influence of the weather on outdoor physical activity cannot be underrated, however, it seems that once people get used to doing sports and their regular doses of endorphins, the weather does not matter anymore. As they say – there is no bad weather, there is just bad outdoor gear!

The quality of air is quite a different matter. In areas where the air is very polluted, people naturally avoid outdoor activities - and quite rightly so, as during air athletes breathe in much more air (and pollutants) than their sedentary peers. The particles in the polluted air do pose a risk to our health, nevertheless, most experts argue, that breathing in polluted air is still much safer than smoking. On top of that, the advantages of exercising for your health far outweigh the health risks associated with pollution. So as usual, use your reason and do sports on paths as far away from traffic as possible. In every case, air pollution should be used as an excuse to cut back physical activity!



BRING IT ON!

Starting an exercise programme is daunting for many people and that is why you should start off slow. A very common beginner's mistake is to launch straight into a jogging programme with the vision of running a marathon within a few weeks. Remember, that the main principle of training is "the progressive overload", which basically means that once you achieve a reasonable level of fitness, you can and should do more, if you want to improve. How intensively and how quickly to increase the load is a difficult questions and there are many variables to consider. Among them:

- » **your age**
- » **your fitness level**
- » **the state of your health**
- » **previous injuries**
- » **individual preferences**
- » **availability of facilities, such as gyms and pools in your neighbourhood**

If you are lost and cannot estimate the right amount, intensity or type of exercise, consult an expert. You should also make sure you have a health check before you start, especially if you are over 50. The golden rule is that your level of exercise should be strenuous enough to work up a slight sweat and to make you slightly breathless. Make sure you always **warm up** first with a few simple bends and stretches, and **cool down** afterwards, e.g. by walking slowly for a few minutes. You should also remember that you mustn't go through pain. So every time it hurts – stop. Seek medical advice if you feel any pain in your chest, feel dizzy or become so breathless that you can't speak.



YOUR TURN

Are you determined to get involved in sports activities? Explore your goals for physical fitness first.

What is it mainly that you would like to change about your fitness?

Consider the following and make a list of your fitness issues:

- » Do you primarily want to change the way you feel? Do you think you need more energy to cope with everyday tasks?
- » Do you want to develop any of the fitness components, i.e. strength, endurance or flexibility?
- » Are concerned about weight? Do you want to lose weight or just gain in lean body mass?
- » Do you want to improve your skills and specific techniques?

With these goals in mind, consider the options for the activities you could take up.



YOUR TURN

Next, you should determine your readiness to participate in physical activity

Complete the following questionnaire (from the Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology 1994) to help you determine your readiness to begin or intensify physical activity program.

PAR Physical Activity Readiness – A questionnaire for people aged 15 to 69

If you are planning to become much more physically active than you are now, start by answering the seven questions in the box below. Common sense is the best guide when answering.

Read the questions and answer each of them YES or NO.

1. Has your doctor ever said that you have a heart condition and that you should only do physical activity recommended by a doctor?
 2. Do you feel pain in your chest when you do physical activity?
 3. In the past month, have you had chest pain when you were not doing physical activity?
 4. Do you lose your balance because of dizziness or do you ever lose your consciousness?
 5. Do you have a bone or joint problem that could be made worse by a change in your physical activity?
 6. Is your doctor currently prescribing drugs (e.g. water pills) for your blood pressure or heart condition?
 7. Do you know of any other reason why you should not do physical activity?
-

ANSWERS

If you answered **YES** to one or more questions:

Talk to your doctor **BEFORE** you start becoming more physically active.

NO to all questions:

You can be reasonably sure that you can start becoming more physically active – begin slowly and build up gradually. Also, take part in fitness appraisal – this is an excellent way to determine your basic fitness so that you can plan the best way for you to live actively.





QUESTION #3

There are still many myths perpetuated about exercising. Can you match each of the myths with a statement that debunks it?

Exercise Myth 1. You Will Burn More Fat If You Exercise Longer at a Lower Intensity.

Exercise Myth 2. If You're Not Going to Work Out Hard and Often, Exercise Is a Waste of Time.

Exercise Myth 3. If You Exercise Long and Hard Enough, You Will Always Get the Results You Want.

Exercise Myth 4. Exercise Is One Sure Way to Lose All the Weight You Desire.

Exercise Myth 5. Water Fitness Programs Are Primarily for Older People or Exercisers With Injuries.

Exercise Myth 6. The Health and Fitness Benefits of Mind-Body Exercise Like Tai Chi and Yoga Are Questionable.

Exercise Myth 7. Overweight People Are Unlikely to Benefit Much From Exercise.

Exercise Myth 8. Home Workouts Are Fine, But Going to a Gym Is the Best Way to Get Fit.

ANSWERS

A) In fact, research showing the benefits of these exercises continues to grow. Tai chi, for example, has been shown to help treat low-back pain and fibromyalgia. Improved flexibility, balance, coordination, posture, strength and stress management are just some of the potential results of mind-body exercise.

B) Research has shown that some people find it easier to stick to a home-based fitness program. In spite of all the hype on trendy exercise programs and facilities, the “best” program for you is the one you will participate in consistently.

C) This kind of thinking keeps a lot of people from maintaining or even starting an exercise program. Research continues to show that any exercise is better than none. For example, regular walking or gardening for as little as an hour a week has been shown to reduce the risk of heart disease.

D) Studies show that obese people who participate in regular exercise programs have a lower risk of all-cause mortality than sedentary individuals, regardless of weight. Both men and women of all sizes and fitness levels can improve their health with modest increases in activity.

E) In reality, genetics plays an important role in how people respond to exercise. Studies have shown a wide variation in how different exercisers respond to the same training program. Your development of strength, speed and endurance may be very different from that of other people you know.

F) As with all responses to exercise, weight gain or loss is impacted by many



ANSWERS

factors, including dietary intake and genetics. All individuals will not lose the same amount of weight on the same exercise program. It is possible to be active and overweight. However, although exercise alone cannot guarantee your ideal weight, regular physical activity is one of the most important factors for successful long-term weight management.

G) Recent research has shown that water fitness programs can be highly challenging and effective for both improving fitness and losing weight. Even top athletes integrate water fitness workouts into their training programs.

H) The most important focus in exercise and fat weight control is not the percentage of exercise energy coming from fat but the total energy cost, or how many calories are burned during the activity. The faster you walk, step or run, for example, the more calories you use per minute. However, high-intensity exercise is difficult to sustain if you are just beginning or returning to exercise, so you may not exercise very long at this level. It is safer, and more practical, to start out at a lower intensity and work your way up gradually.

(adapted from <http://www.idealife.com/fitness-library/10-exercise-myths>)

✓ Check Yourself





VIDEO

Sports psychology

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yG7v4y_xwzQ

Watch this TED talk called “Sport psychology - Inside the mind of champion athletes” by Martin Hagger. The research scientist introduces sports psychology, explains its role in sports training and provides an overview of effective techniques used by champions. You can use some of the techniques not only in sports, but also in your professional life.



VIDEO

Successful dieting

https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=alisa+anokhina

In this insightful talk Alisa Anokhina puts forward a number of solutions to the problems that we encounter when dieting and sets the topic of dieting in the context of psychology. Why can't humans stick to a simple programme of reducing calorie intake and exercising? What are the recommended steps you should take if you aim for lasting and sustainable results? Listen to find out!



VIDEO

Why dieting doesn't usually work

http://www.ted.com/talks/sandra_aamodt_why_dieting_doesn_t_usually_work

Sandra Aamodt is a neuroscientist, so if you want to lose weight in a smart way, you shouldn't miss out on this TED talk! You can learn about the way your brain regulates bodily functions and thus interferes with your effort to lose weight. But don't worry, the message of the talk is not that we should suppress the internal cues of the body. Quite the contrary – it seems that by listening to the signals the body sends you, like hunger and satiety, you can eat more mindfully and subsequently get healthier and slim.



YOUR TURN



http://www.sciencecodex.com/study_finds_taking_the_stairs_raking_leaves_may_have_same_health_benefits_as_a_trip_to_the_gym-105840

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<http://zenhabits.net/meditation-guide/>

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www.topachievement.com

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<http://www.wikihow.com/Stop-Procrastinating>

<http://www.unstuck.com/how-we-procrastinate.html>

<http://www.economist.com/news/christmas-specials/21636612-time-poverty-problem-partly-perception-and-partly-distribution-why>

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/basics/meditation>

<https://blog.bidsketch.com/save-time/stop-procrastinating>

<http://www.startofhappiness.com/power-delayed-gratification>

MORE VIDEOS:

Stephen Covey on character and personality ethic

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ACukmJ_5HSo

Stress management

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZSwNsMTZtFk>

How to sleep better

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3eLfn7Ewx_s

The science of social connection – Emma Seppala

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jlXJnlmAXt0&feature=c4-verview&list=UUzno-z2lWDjrjU9J3Xd-L3Q>

CHECK YOURSELF



ANSWER #1

The goal “I will improve my IT skills“ is not perfectly “SMART” as it primarily does not meet the criteria of being specific and time-specific (let us assume the goal is meaningful, realistic and attainable for the person).

A “SMARTER” goal would be: “I will improve my skills in EXCEL so that by the end of this month I´ll be able to use macros efficiently.”

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ANSWER #2

Tim might be inspired by other athletes of his age, or he could join an online support group to share his joys and sorrows of regaining fitness. He could also reward himself for minor achievements and celebrate every improvement to boost his morale.

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ANSWER #3

1H, 2C, 3E, 4F, 5G, 6A, 7D, 8B

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