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TAMING YOUR TIME

by Karina J. Butera

In contemporary society, more than any other era, we have constant pressure on us to be 100% effective in every area of our lives. Unfortunately to be the best at all of these things takes TIME. Those who love their paddle sport have even more time pressures because of their commitment to training, which escalates during pre-competition periods. This means a heightened sense of 'tug-of-war' between the various roles played in life and requires exceptional time management skills.

If you are constantly chasing time and want to get a sense of control into your life, read on!

Grab a pen and paper – the time you put into the following reflective exercise has the capacity to save you oodles of time over the busy months ahead. Use the following guidelines to come up with the perfect strategies for your specific lifestyle.

Step One: Decide what a good balance of your time means to you. To make this as easy as possible, we've provided you with a 'Time Management Audit' (see below), which will help you think about each segment of your life. There is no magic formula that tells you how much time you should be putting into each area, so in the first column of the table simply write down how many hours you personally would *like* to spend in each area per week.

Once you have allocated hours to each category, add them up. If your total comes to more than 100, you're trying to do too much and/or to please too many people and will end up burning out. So go back to your time allocation and revise it.

Step Two: Know your reality. Reflect back on the past week and write in the second column how much time you actually put into each of the areas. If you are someone who is particularly challenged time-wise, you might like to keep a strict diary for the next week and record exactly how much time you are spending on each area. This will give you a very reliable reality check on where your time is currently being sucked up.

Step Three: Incorporate it! Now, compare your 'reality' list with your 'ideal' list. Write the discrepancies in the third column. ***Pick out the three main discrepancies*** and plan a strategy for correcting each one. It may mean cutting back in some areas, combining some activities (ie: time with friends and exercise often work well together), it most likely will mean collaborating with others - with partners, family, friends, colleagues, your crew – in order to make sure everyone is aware, and in support of your need to manage your time more effectively.

This really is the tough part, because we tend to get into the mindset that we don't want to burden others with our needs. Our pride won't let us say "no" to things that get in the way of reaching our goals and asking for help reeks with the sense of personal failure. You will be surprised, however, that when you're up front with people about your needs, they tend to be happy to support them.

I remember feeling bogged down with all of my commitments once and feeling like I was getting no support in my family. Instead of asking for help I was trying to do the 'superwoman' thing, rushing home from university, organising play-dates and homework, making dinner and cleaning everything as I went. Then after dinner while everyone else was settled in front of the television, I'd head off to my study to keep working on the project I was on at the time. I was fast burning out, and getting more and more resentful of those around me.

What I didn't realise was that by trying to be so perfect, I was actually becoming a neurotic and incredibly irritable bore! Eventually, my husband confronted me on his concern about my stress levels due to this constant activity, to which I exploded into a self-righteous tirade of "if I didn't do all these things, who would?!" Being a fairly wise and calm man, hubby let me de-steam, then got a pen and paper out and went to work listing what the family could do to help. This was great, but I *still* had trouble with my own inner guilt that when he was cooking, I *should* be – or when I was being forced to relax with the family and watch a video, I had a million thoughts running through my mind of things I *should* be doing. It was near impossible for me to switch off. It took lots and lots of practice (and, in all honesty, it's still a constant challenge) to **allow** myself to let others help free up my time.

By allowing others to help you meet your time commitments ***you will be a more effective and pleasant person***, and will ultimately be doing all these people ***a favour!***

Having sharp time management skills is not rocket science, it simply means knowing exactly how much time you need to commit and where imbalance lays, rearranging priorities when necessary, combining whatever responsibilities and commitments you can and having the courage to rally the support of others. Get a handle on that and you'll go from fighting with time to having the time of your life!

TIME MANAGEMENT AUDIT

Responsibility	Ideal time	Real time	Variance
Career			
Intimate Relationship			
Family			
Training/Health			
Personal Development			
Spirituality			
Friendships			
Leisure			
Community Service			
Other			
TOTAL			