Myths about Time Management

Before exploring specific time management techniques, consider several common myths which contribute to poor time management, especially undermining your efforts to establish and follow your priorities.

Myth #1: “We can manage time.”
Reality: We cannot manage time. Nor can we save it. We can only control OURSELVES and our CHOICES in what we do! Time ticks away in spite of our efforts to control it. We are provided with 24 hours of time each day to use as we like. The key is in how we use that time. We can use it wisely or waste it, but we can never save it. We get a set amount and at the end of the day, it’s gone.

Myth #2: “My life is completely controlled by external events.”
Reality: You can have some control over many aspects of your life, but only you are responsible for initiating that control. Learn to recognize what you can and can’t control before making your choices. Anticipate the future and clarify the external demands that must be faces. From there, it is easier to determine what can be done, and within what time frame, despite the demands.

Myth #3: “I should meet everyone’s expectations.”
Reality: The needs and demands of others may be inappropriate for you and your lifestyle. They may be poorly times, highly questionable, or simply unattainable. They may be of a different priority than your own. By trying to meet the expectations of others, you may be shortchanging yourself and your needs. First become clear about what your needs are. Once you do this and work toward those needs, stress is reduced and satisfaction increases. Then you can consider what others expect of you.

Myth #4: “I should have no limits.”
Reality: We all have limits...failure to acknowledge this may cause to become perfectionistic in your expectations. Perfectionists are especially prone to procrastination because the perfection they demand is impossible. For example, no paper will ever be perfect in all ways. The immediate consequence of turning in an imperfect paper may be brief, acute anxiety, but the long term consequences of procrastination—e.g., inconveniences, academic or career losses and lingering self-doubts are usually more devastating.
Myth #5: “Time management involved getting more done in less time.”
Reality: Some people may believe that, but effective time management refers to getting done fewer things of greater importance. We cannot possibly do everything we want to do or all the things that there are to do. Proper planning doesn’t even allow us to do it all, neither does multitasking (at least not well!). We must accept that we can’t do it all. When we prioritize what there is to do, and focus on completing the priorities to the exclusion of everything else, we will be more effective (and less stressed!)

Myth #6: “To-do lists help get things done.”
Reality: “To do” lists do nothing to further a project or task. They simply remind us of our intentions. However, putting thought into how much time tasks take and scheduling time in your planner for specific tasks for a specific time frame helps get them done. “To do” lists are intentions; scheduled blocks of time are commitments.

Myth #7: “It’s more efficient to stick to one task until it’s completed.”
Reality: It may be more efficient, but it’s not more effective, for seldom will you have time to finish it. It’s more effective to break large projects into small one or two-hour chunks and work at them for a brief period each day. Working on priorities involved frequent brief sprints, not occasional marathons.