

May 2010 - Newsletter

Finding Time for Yourself

By Betty Purkey - This article includes information adapted from Texas AgriLife Extension Service Grandparent Raising Grandchildren resources.

Caring for your grandchildren takes time – sometimes it takes lots of time. And sometimes you felt like you already didn't have enough time for yourself *before* you started caring for your grandchildren.

It is very common when we acquire new responsibilities in our lives that the first place we cut back to find the time for new activities is the time we spend doing things that we enjoy in life – maybe pursuing a favorite hobby, volunteering or just having time to relax and read a book or watch a movie.

One step to regaining that lost time for ourselves can be to learn more about how to be more efficient and effective in how we use our time during the day. Becoming an efficient time user has many payoffs, including increased satisfaction, more relaxation, and much less stress.

Your work or personal habits affect your use of time, and these habits are no harder or easier to change than other habits. Changing habits in order to use time more effectively requires self-discipline. The first step is to begin to identify some problem areas.

Using Your Time More Effectively

To use time wisely, you have to control time wasters. Only through self-discipline will you have the time to do the things that are important to you. Here are some things you can do now to become a more effective time user:

- Establish a plan to help you see all of the tasks and activities you want to accomplish. Set priorities according to what needs to be accomplished in a day, a week, or a month. Break the job into many little tasks.
- Use a to-do list. Write down those things you intend to accomplish during the day, and prioritize the list. This will keep you on track and provide a benchmark for judging the importance of anything else that comes up during the day. Start with the most important item on your list, and stay with the task until you have finished it before moving on to the next item. This will give you a sense of accomplishment because you are now completing the tasks that are most important to you.
- Use your prime time—the time of the day when you are at your highest energy level. Use prime time for jobs requiring the most attention and effort.
- Try delegating tasks. You do not need to do everything yourself. Give some of the tasks to the grandchildren. When delegating, be certain to inform them of their tasks, time limits, and resources.
- Learn to say, “No.” This allows you to exercise control over your life so you can spend time productively on the activities that are most meaningful to you. It can also give you more time for other things. And remember that “no” can be a complete sentence. You don't need to provide long explanations of why.

Here are a few tips to help free up time for yourself:

- Practice the barter system by swapping jobs with family members or others.
- Do two things at once. Identify small tasks you can do with something else, such as unloading the dishwasher while talking on the phone. Or, you could have the grandchildren help with the dishes, making it a time you can spend with the grandchildren.
- Use your waiting time. Keep a list of five- or 10-minute tasks that can be done while you wait for others, like balancing the checkbook while waiting to pick up grandchildren or making a to-do list during practices.
- Clean the clutter. Create a comfortable work area; throw away unnecessary papers; sell or give away unused items, and have a place for everything.

These tips can help you to set some goals for better use of your time. The exact methods you use are less important than recognizing that time is a very valuable resource, and it should be allocated according to a plan that reflects your priorities. Finally, remember you are an important person. Become responsibly selfish. Find time and space to concentrate, and relax by making time for yourself.

For information about education programs and support groups, email caregiver@flash.net and visit www.relativesraisingchildren.net.

Call 2-1-1 or your local area agency on aging or Aging & Disability Resource Center for resources and other services for people age 60 and older and their family caregivers.

**For information about home-delivered meals, help with transportation;
and caregiver services, call
Meals-on-Wheels of Johnson and Ellis Counties
(817) 558-2840, (972) 351-9943,
or email info@mowjec.org**