

- Strategies to Reduce Time Pressures -

Handout created by Sarah Arnold, Psy.D., Psychologist
Strategies are adapted from Allan & Scheidt (1996)

We live in a fast-paced society where many people are feeling time pressures constantly, leading to increased stress and tension. Since high levels of stress can affect physical, cognitive, emotional, and social functioning, it is important to positively manage one's stress, including finding ways to reduce time pressures. The following are tips to reduce time pressures.

- 1. Practice walking, talking, and eating more slowly.**
If you are constantly in high gear, this strategy will provide a calmer, less tension-filled feedback from the body to the brain, which helps to reduce feelings of time pressure.
- 2. Practice thinking about and doing one thing at a time.**
While you may be a skilled multitasker, this strategy reduces time pressure, enhances feelings of control, and also helps to restore the ability to focus and concentrate on one thing, which will help to slow a racing mind.
- 3. Practice listening without interrupting.**
This strategy teaches patience and listening skills. It also helps develop interest in others' thoughts and ideas and allows for better communications. Consider practicing this strategy further by completely listening to the other person instead of thinking about what you want to say next.
- 4. Linger at the table after eating.**
Some of the best family communication happens at a dinner table. This strategy enhances interpersonal relationships and patience.
- 5. Create gaps in your daily schedule to allow for unexpected events or to give you free time.**
If you frequently feel overscheduled, this strategy counteracts the tendency to overschedule and helps facilitate a more relaxed pace during daily activities.
- 6. Routinely practiced a relaxation or mediation exercise.**
This strategy helps to develop a relaxation response, which can be called on in times of increased stress.
- 7. Try to schedule your morning before work so it is not rushed.**
If your mornings are typically rushed, this strategy will allow the day to start with a more relaxed pace, which can often influence the pace of the day. This strategy also allows for feelings of control, because rushing often makes one feel out of control.
- 8. Take small breaks during long periods of work.**
Oftentimes, people think they need to keep working without breaks to accomplish more. However, the above strategy allows for more effective management of pace and tension of work. Since this strategy also encourages mental rest and refreshes one's energy level, you can be more productive when you return to a task after you take a break.
- 9. Refrain from placing your time urgency on others.**
Even though we know that sending the message that we are very busy won't actually make us less busy, many people routinely inform others of their time urgency, either verbally or nonverbally. The above strategy helps you to develop an internal monitor. It encourages awareness of the impact of one's behavior on others while helping to reduce your own time pressures.
- 10. Leave off your watch once in a while, especially on vacations.**
Time pressures have us looking at the time habitually. This strategy curbs the habitual attention to time, which reduces the feeling of being controlled by time. Leaving off your watch can help you to feel more relaxed during the day. (If you feel you need to wear a watch, consider keeping it in a pocket or purse, so it is available, but with some extra effort.)