

# Taking Charge of Your Schedule

by Diane Herbert

As a teenager in the '70s I was required to read Alvin Toffler's book, *Future Shock*, for my sociology class. He forecast that in "three short decades between now and the twenty-first century, millions of ordinary, psychologically normal people will face an abrupt collision with the future." The resulting accelerated pace of life will disturb not only your inner equilibrium but the very experience of life, Toffler said. "Acceleration without translates into acceleration within." His predictions seemingly have come true as most Americans today report feeling frantic, frenetic, and frazzled.

To restore your sense of balance and control in life requires you to reevaluate how life is set up.

Begin first with having a gentler standard for yourself. Women usually take on more commitments than they are realistically able to accomplish. This means learning to say one of the most difficult words in the English language: no. Consider this first before being tempted to sign on for another commitment: For every "yes," there is a "no." If I say yes to a volunteer activity, I am saying no to leisure time. If I say yes to this project, I will have to say no to giving due attention to other projects. Asking what the cost or price is to your life by taking on this added responsibility gives a more realistic assessment of the impact it will have on your schedule.

Realize that energy, like money and time, is limited and varies from person to person. In my early 20s, while I was a highly motivated college student with several jobs and hobbies, a psychological test I took indicated I had low to moder-

ate energy. This came as a total surprise to me considering all I could accomplish in a given day.

It took many years to believe that I wasn't born with unlimited reservoirs of energy like some of my relatives. It wasn't until I shopped til I nearly dropped with my 75-year-old aunt, who later tucked me in her guest bed for a power nap while she left the room with a skip in her step, that I finally got it. While I was recuperating, she was cleaning her bathrooms! She had outdone me, thirty years my senior.

Yet the tests don't lie, and the facts are the facts. She was always a powerhouse of energy whereas my energy ebbs and flows throughout the day, age excluded. I now respect these limitations by exercising, allowing for periodic time outs and power naps, pacing myself, and finally giving up the "Super Woman" persona that society tends to thrust on us.

This requires a major paradigm shift from seeing oneself as a human *being* rather than a human *doing*. If women don't honor time for leisure and relaxation, they feel as if they are spinning their wheels, resulting in inner and outer chaos. The human spirit plummets into melancholy and low-grade despair. Hopelessness sets in with no way out of the rat race maze.

Getting out of the maze begins with some soul searching. Set aside time to assess your schedule and commitments with paper and pen. Reflect on the following: what do you need more of? What do you need less of? Let the range of possibilities go from the necessary to the desirable. Fold the paper in half and title one side More Of, the other side Less Of, and begin writing. Brainstorm freely, allowing ideas to be as broad or as specific as you like.

Examples might include I need More Of: assistance on yard work, bubble baths, time alone, exercise, financial planning, weekly lunch with a girlfriend, etc. Or I need Less Of: midnight snacks, collecting coupons, running errands, impulsive shopping, children bickering, clutter, etc.

In deciding what to add or edit from your life, it's important to allow any possibilities no matter how outlandish or unrealistic they may be as this allows for more creativity and solutions to surface: hire a lawn service, assign one new chore per family member, Do Not Disturb between 8:30-9:00 sign on bedroom door to ensure peace and quiet, join a ballroom dancing class, etc. Then commit to doing three items from each list within a realistic time frame such as a week or month.

Creating the schedule and life of your dreams takes conscious choice and

intentionality. Restoring your sense of equilibrium is ultimately based on two beliefs: believing you are worth it and that you have the power to change.

Once as a little girl, Maya Angelou, the famed poet and author, tartly blurted in response to her mother's demands, "I'm the boss of me." While we might laugh at her precociousness, Maya's comment reflects her early perspective that she was in charge of herself and her life. This is empowerment: taking responsibility for how you want it to be. Step up to the plate and enjoy what begins to unfold as you take back your schedule and life. ■

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