

forum

Dorothy Ruzicki
Instructor
Educational Services Dept.
Sacred Heart Medical Center
Spokane, Washington

Time Management: Another Viewpoint. Time management and stress have been the subjects of recent *Journal* articles (Sept./Oct., 1976, and May/June, 1980). Both topics are timely and widely discussed, the consensus being that wise time management fosters optimal health by eliminating stress. The absurdity of this logic became evident to me during a time management exercise for a graduate seminar in adult education.

As a health professional, I objected to the emphasis on time management skills. Skills would alleviate symptoms of stressful living, but, ultimately, they would mask the root cause—the life stressors forcing us to manage our time. Moreover, time management techniques can actually be destructive for certain personalities. The premise that time management eliminates stress and thus is good for everyone needs to be examined.

My own three-day time analysis validated my concerns. In evaluating my lifestyle, I found that I'm a very effective time manager. I'm a compulsive list maker, priority setter, goal setter, and deadline keeper. But, the exercise's formal time management techniques made me more preoccupied with deadlines, and I found that I wanted to make certain that I accomplished my goals. I also had a tendency to try to achieve more than usual in the same time span.

During the three-day exercise I was more aware of getting things done, and of time and its passage. I also found that the periods I relaxed or visited couldn't be programmed into my schedule. To equalize the tensions in my life, these periods had to be spontaneous—when I needed them most.

The time management exercise seemed to exacerbate my own tendency to pile on pressure. For compulsive "Type A" personalities, characterized by highly competitive drives, a sense of time urgency, and the continual threat of deadlines,¹ time management emphasis might actually augment the existing stressors.

We live in a society enamored of efficiency and productivity, one that rewards "Type A" behavior and is preoccupied with goals as opposed to the process of appreciating and enjoying

daily existence. Our incredible drive toward larger horizons, our continual quest for more, and the pressure we feel to better ourselves mandate that we plan our time to fit in all our desires. Time management techniques seem to be tools we can use to "make every minute count" and "never waste a moment's time," thereby allowing us to get ahead by more efficiently using time. With time management, we can program ourselves to be human computers to accomplish x number of tasks.

But herein lies the problem. Time management won't eliminate the stressors. For some people, time management might make the stressors more tolerable; for other people, time management will allow them to add more stressors to their lives. The solution lies not in finding ways to manage our time, but to look at our underlying philosophy about time and learn new ways of coping with stress. The ultimate outcome would be healthier, happier lifestyles and a healthier society—mentally and physically.

Footnote

1. K. R. Pelletier, *Mind as Healer, Mind as Slayer* (New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1977).

The Forum is a place for **Journal** readers to express their feelings on any topic they think is important to Extension. Don't make it longer than 600 words.
