

One critical part of managing stress successfully comes from learning how to manage your time effectively ...

In his book First Things First, Steven Covey suggests that time management is actually personal management – managing ourselves rather than managing time. The essence of time management is to organize and execute around priorities. You can start by making a list of all of your activities, classifying them as either “urgent” or “not urgent,” and then as either “important” or “not important.” List the activities screaming for action as “urgent.” List the activities contributing to your mission, values, or high-priority goals as “important.” Now construct a four quadrant (2 x 2) matrix and put the activities into the quadrants as follows:

- 1) **Quadrant 1** activities are urgent and important – often called problems or crises. Focusing on Quadrant 1 results in it growing bigger and bigger until it dominates your life. Urgency can become “addicting,” since we get a temporary high from solving urgent and important crises. However, effective people spend less time in Quadrant 1 and more time in Quadrant 2.
- 2) **Quadrant 2** activities are important but not urgent. Working in this Quadrant is the heart of personal time management. Activities in these areas are preparation, prevention, planning, relationship-building, intentional recreation, and values clarification.
- 3) **Quadrant 3** activities are urgent and not important, and are often misclassified as Quadrant 1 items. Examples include interruptions, certain phone calls/emails, and any activities that meet others’ priorities/needs but not your own. Time here is often wasted.
- 4) **Quadrant 4** is the escape Quadrant – activities that are neither urgent nor important, such as busy work, excessive TV, etc.

Effective time managers stay out of Quadrants 3 and 4 because they are not important, and shrink Quadrant 1 down to size by spending more time in Quadrant 2. Notice that spending more time in Quadrant 2 will allow you to tackle important issues *before they become crises!*

caps / counseling and
psychological services

Time Management

Brian Burke, PhD
Fort Lewis College

(Dr. Burke is a former Intern at P&CS, and wrote this entry for Muir Words, a weekly newsletter at Muir College)

