Time management for teens and young adults is critical. Let’s face it... you do a lot and you probably feel like there isn’t enough time to do all that you want to do. Well, time management will help you out. Here are a couple of time management/organization tips that you can use today. It might take some practice, but you might find that you suddenly feel a lot less stressed and have a lot more time for the things that really matter to you!

Plan your week

If spending 15 minutes each week doing an activity would save you hours of time and reduce your stress, would you do it? Each Sunday night spend 15 minutes planning your week!

1. First, start by thinking about all the responsibilities you have for the upcoming week and then write them down on a piece of paper or in a journal, notebook, or calendar. This is the stuff you HAVE to do!
   - This might be work, school (homework or tests), athletic practice, work or home projects, family obligations, etc.

2. Next, think about any time you might need to block to prepare for the responsibilities you placed in your calendar and block that time.
   - This might be time to study for a test, pack gear or clothing for an athletic practice, pack a bag for work or school, etc.

3. Finally, think of any social or optional activities and/or events that you need or want to make time for in the upcoming week and write them down in your weekly plan. This is stuff you WANT to do!
   - This might be exercising 3 times a week, watching your favorite show, spending time with family and/or friends, etc.

4. If you find that you do not have time to do all the things you have included in your weekly plan, or if you find that you are regularly unable to complete all the tasks you have planned each day, consider using the exercise on the back of this page, “Find out what matters most to you.”

What do you have to lose?

Consider trying one tip or strategy at a time for a couple of weeks to see how it works for you and keep track of how it is going in your Life Plans booklet.

Having your activities on paper and out of your head is a good thing, it will help you feel prepared, reduce stress, and find time for fun! If you practice this activity in your Life Plans Booklet and find it helps you in school or work, consider making or purchasing a weekly calendar or planner to build on the success!
Knowing what matters most to you is important. If you don’t know what is important, then it is hard to prioritize what to do in your life. Here’s a time management activity for you to do that is good if:

- you forget things like going to practice, completing a project, or a family obligation.
- you have more things you want and need to do in a day than you have time for.

You can use this exercise in two ways:

1. You can set a daily goal to create a “to do” list by writing down all the things you need or want to do each day and then rank the level of importance to help you learn how to work towards accomplishing those things each day. **Commit to trying this for two weeks and keep track of how it is going in your Life Plans booklet or in a notebook or journal.**

2. You can use this ranking exercise to help you prioritize what stays and what goes within your “Weekly plan” if you have too much scheduled or find you cannot complete everything scheduled on one day.

Look at all the activities that you need to do today or on a day where you have a lot scheduled. Now for each activity put an A, B, or C. A is “really important,” B is “less important,” and C is “not important.”

### Activity | Ranking | * | Completed

1. 
2. 
3. 
4. 
5. 

**All done?**

Once you are done, choose your most important “A” task, and set out on doing that until you have completed it. Once you have completed the most important task give it a big checkmark and congratulate yourself that you have done the most important task today. Now move onto the second task and so forth. This is an awesome way to help get things done, and it will help you to manage your school work, work projects, or personal responsibilities.
Strengths and Passions

Strengths

People feel better when they get to do whatever it is they do best. All too often, our natural talents go unused or unvalued. All of our lives, we put more time into fixing our weaknesses than into developing our strengths. To really do well over and over again, we need to identify our natural talents and focus our energy on combining them with knowledge and skills to develop them into real strengths.

Strengths are a combination of talent, knowledge, and skills.

- **Talents** are naturally returning patterns of thought, feelings or behaviors that you can apply to various situations. Usually they come so easily to us that we don’t recognize them as talents and assume everyone can do them.

- **Knowledge** is composed of the facts and lessons you have learned, including facts you have been taught, as well as knowledge gained through experience.

- **Skills** involve the steps you need to get through an activity, and they bring structure to knowledge learned through experience. They will help you to perform and improve, but not necessarily excel in a particular area. Without the natural talent, you may never be great at it.

The key to building a strength is to first identify your main talents, then make them even better with knowledge and skills. To identify your talents, consider the following:

- **Yearnings** – activities that you are drawn to naturally, especially at a young age. You may not follow up with them now because you are busy doing other things, but these activities will keep calling out to you.

- **Rapid Learning** – an ability to quickly learn a new skill is a clue to a talent’s presence.

- **Satisfaction** – if doing something makes you feel really good or satisfied, it may be a natural talent.

There are some basic areas which, even if they aren’t areas where you have natural talent, may undermine your strengths if you don’t work to get at least a little better in them (like communicating, listening, and organizing your thoughts and actions). It may be important to work on these, as well as your natural strengths.
What topics or activities are you constantly moving towards? What do you love to learn about, talk about, and/or teach others about? These are your passions: activities or causes that hold your interest and attention and are usually closely related to our talents. Doing something you are passionate about will give you the drive, commitment, and energy necessary to keep working toward successfully developing your strengths and reaching your goals.

As much as possible, to identify your passions you need to check in with your heart and physical body, not your head. Does anything “light you up” or get you excited?

*Write your passions here...*

The negative talk in our minds often tries to talk us out of what our hearts are longing to explore. Your passions may seem silly and your mind may try to fight with logic and reason.

*Write your logic and reason here...*
Coping with Anger

1. First, relax and remember that anger is an emotion everyone deals with, then ask yourself, “What is going to be accomplished by getting angry with this person or situation? Will it help anything?”

2. If possible at the time, communicate about your anger. If you are talking, there are two things you aren’t doing: yelling and hitting. If that’s not possible, leave the area and cool down before talking.

3. Listen to music or dance off some of the anger-inspired energy.

4. Write the feelings down on paper (poetry, journaling) or draw the angry feelings.

5. Play a sport, go for a run, or work out to use up some of the energy associated with anger.

6. Learn to meditate or do deep breathing exercises to release the tension. Focusing on breathing can help in controlling your anger.

7. Talk with someone, since it may help to discover other feelings that may be the root of the anger.

Remember: Anger is natural, violence is not.
Coping with Anxiety

Everyone experiences stress and anxiety sometimes, but if it happens frequently, it can have a negative effect on your mind and body. Just like your muscles, you can’t stress the brain all the time and expect it to work well. It needs to relax once in a while to recharge so you can focus more clearly. Below are some activities that can help you become more aware of your body and emotions, calm down, and find emotional and physical release of the tension you feel. If you practice them regularly, they can decrease your anxiety enough so you can think more clearly, focus better, and feel stronger and steadier. Most of these you can do nearly anywhere, without others even knowing.

Calm Breathing

- Sit comfortably and try to relax your body. Pay attention to your breathing and rest your hands on your stomach.
- Slowly inhale so that your belly pushes up on your fingers. Exhale slowly and notice your belly sink back down like a balloon deflating.
- Take an even slower, deeper breath, counting to 4, wait a few seconds, and exhale slowly to the count of 4.
- Repeat this calm, slow breath in and out at least 10 times. The most important thing is to breathe slowly.

Mindfulness Exercises

Being mindful means paying attention to the present moment, exactly as it is, not focusing on the future and all the things that might go wrong, as you do when you are anxious. Here is an example:

Come Back:

When you catch yourself being caught up in worries about the future or guilt and regret about the past, just notice that it is happening and simply and kindly say to yourself, “Come back.” Then take a calming breath and focus on what you are doing right now.
Visualizations

Visualizations involve imagining something powerful in your head for a few minutes that can make you feel better afterwards. Here is an example of a visualization for you to try:

Mental Vacation:

Close your eyes and imagine yourself in a relaxing place. This place is where you feel completely safe because stress and worries hold no power over you. There is no “right” place — it should just feel relaxing and safe to you. Use all of your senses to put yourself there.

Laugh

Laughter is a great stress reliever and helps the body to relax tense muscles. It actually releases chemicals in the body that reduce tension and pain. So watch a funny movie or some hilarious YouTube videos, or call a friend who knows how to make you laugh.

Stay Active

This doesn’t mean that you have to join a sports team, but find something active you like to do. Just 15–30 minutes of activity every day can help you feel less stressed.

Take Time for Yourself

If you are feeling stressed with a big deadline, build in some mini-breaks throughout the day, like cuddling with your pet, making a quick call to a friend who moved away, taking a shower, or making yourself a cup of tea or hot chocolate. You will be more productive and less stressed if you take mini-breaks, than if you push through and crash for hours on the weekend.
Self-Talk Strategies

Self-talk is all of the constant chatter inside your head, which is sometimes helpful and sometimes not. What we think has an effect on how we feel, which then affects what we do. When self-talk is negative — “What if I fail this test and don’t pass the class? I’ll never get into college and get the job I want.” — it causes negative feelings, like anxiety. It can affect you physically, too, including tight muscles, stomach ache or headache, or make you lose sleep. It can also take away your focus and concentration, causing you to not do as well on tests or physical competitions, which may feed right back into the negative self-talk — you show yourself that, “I really can’t do this.”

Just as negative self-talk can decrease your chances of success, positive self-talk can improve them. If you engage in negative self-talk, there are steps you can follow to take charge of your thinking and use it to maximize your performance. First you need to stop the thought, and then replace it with something positive.

Thought Stopping involves three steps:

1. **Identify the negative thought.** Pay attention to your thoughts and try to notice when you are starting in a negative direction. It’s natural to have some negative thoughts, but you want to keep yourself from falling into a black hole of negative self-talk.

2. **Stop the thought.** Decide on a signal to use to tell yourself to stop, such as imagining a stop sign, hearing a buzzer, or shaking your head “NO.” Choose the image that works best for you. Any time you realize you are having a negative thought, use your stop signal immediately.

3. **Practice.** As with any skill, to become effective, you must practice. To begin with, imagine yourself in a situation where you would usually engage in negative self-talk and practice thought stopping in your imagination. Continue doing this with different scenarios until the process becomes automatic.

Remember:

Self-talk is a habit and habits are hard to break, so don’t become discouraged if it doesn’t work right away. Try to be supportive of yourself and treat yourself like you would a friend who is trying to change a habit.
Thought Replacement

Thought Replacement provides something that is more productive to think when you’ve stopped the negative comments in your head. Think of alternative thoughts that are positive and realistic. What might you say to encourage a friend in a similar situation? What might a coach say to you? To help figure this out, write down some of the negative thoughts you say to yourself. Beside each one, write down at least one positive and realistic thing you could say.

For example:

- **Negative Thought**
  - “If I make that presentation in front of the class, everyone will think I’m stupid and boring. I’ll forget everything and stutter, then they’ll all laugh at me.”
  - “I’m lousy at math.”

- **Alternative Positive, Realistic Thought**
  - “I know the material and I’ll have my notes, if I need them. I’ll do some deep breathing beforehand to calm myself and do the best I can.”
  - “I’ve improved in a lot of areas through hard work. If I keep at it, I can get better in this class, too.”

Replacing negative thoughts with positive ones can help you stay motivated and refocus your attention on what you need to do now and what is in your control.
Things You Can Do to Get the Best Sleep Possible

1. Wake up and go to bed at about the same time every day (weekdays and weekends). Bedtime and wake time should not differ more than an hour or so from one day to the next.
   - Don’t sleep in on weekends to “catch up” on sleep. This makes it more likely that you will have problems falling asleep at bedtime.

2. If you are very sleepy during the day, nap for 20 to 30 minutes in the early afternoon, but not too long or too late in the afternoon, or you may have difficulty falling asleep at bedtime.

3. Spend time outside every day, especially in the morning, as exposure to sunlight, or bright light, helps to keep your body’s internal clock on track. If you are going to be outside for more than 15 minutes, make sure you use sunscreen.

4. Make sure your bedroom is comfortable, quiet, and dark.
   - Keep your room cool.
   - Use your bed for sleeping only (avoid studying, watching TV, playing video games, and so on).

5. Exercising regularly during the day may help you fall asleep and sleep more deeply (avoid exercising within an hour or two of bedtime).

6. Wind down at night with a warm shower, a book, or other relaxing activities.
   - Avoid stimulating activities — including vigorous exercise, loud music, video games, television, computer use and text messaging — an hour or two before bedtime.

7. Eat regular meals and don’t go to bed hungry. A light snack before bed is a good idea; eating a full meal in the hour before bed is not.

8. Avoid eating or drinking products containing caffeine in the late afternoon and evening — including caffeinated sodas, coffee, tea, and chocolate.

9. Drinking alcohol disrupts sleep and may cause you to wake up throughout the night. Smoking also disturbs sleep, so you shouldn’t smoke for at least an hour before bedtime — and, preferably, not at all.
Ways to Decrease Stress

1. Learn relaxation exercises (abdominal breathing and muscle relaxation techniques) and take breaks from stressful situations. Activities like listening to music, talking to a friend, drawing, writing, or spending time with a pet can reduce stress. Building a network of friends who can help you cope with life's challenges in a positive way can also help.

2. If you are feeling too busy, consider cutting out an activity or two, or choosing just the ones that are most important to you. Also, don't try to be perfect — no one is. If you need help on something, ask for it.

3. Learn practical coping skills, such as breaking a large task into smaller, more attainable tasks.

4. Rehearse and practice how to respond to situations that cause stress, such as taking a speech class, if talking in front of a class makes you anxious. It might also be useful to develop assertiveness skills, such as stating feelings in polite, firm, but not overly aggressive or passive ways.

5. Decrease negative self-talk: challenge negative thoughts about yourself with alternative neutral or positive thoughts. “My life will never get better” can be transformed into “I may feel hopeless now, but my life will probably get better if I work at it and get some help.” Also learn to feel good about doing a competent or “good enough” job, rather than demanding perfection from yourself and others, if that is an issue.

6. Get a good night’s sleep to give your mind and body enough time to rest and prepare for another day. This helps to get you ready to deal with any negative stresses the day may bring.

7. Take care of your body by exercising and eating healthy foods regularly; avoiding excess caffeine intake, which can increase feelings of anxiety and agitation; and avoiding illegal drugs, alcohol, and tobacco.
Ways to Get and Stay Physically Active

Being physically active may help you increase flexibility and balance, prevent weight gain, decrease your stress level, and improve your mood. Besides, it can also be a lot of fun! Here are some hints to help you decide how to get active, and then stay active.

1. Aim for 30-60 minutes of activity each day, but not necessarily all at once. For instance, walking or biking 10 minutes to the store and 10 minutes back, dancing for 20 minutes, and shooting hoops for 20 minutes adds up to 60 minutes.

2. For more fun, be active with friends or family members. You might even make some new friends when you join active clubs or go to a gym or community center.

3. Support your friends and challenge them to be healthy with you. You could even sign up with them for fun, lively events, like charity walks, fun runs, or scavenger hunts.

4. Keep things interesting by doing different activities each day so you won’t get bored. They might include sports or active games, or even walking with a friend around the mall.

5. To help with motivation, get an activity “buddy.” Having someone to be active with can help both people keep exercising, especially on those days when you don’t feel like it.

6. Limit “screen time” (sitting around watching TV, surfing the web, talking on the phone or texting, or playing video games) to increase your physical activity.

7. On cold or wet days, screen time is not the only option. There are many ways to be active indoors, such as dancing to favorite music (alone or with friends), going to an indoor gym or recreation center, or, if you have a gaming system, choosing active dance and sports games.
Healthy Eating

(Adapted from Taking Charge of Your Health, National Institutes of Health)

Healthy eating involves watching how much and what types of food you eat. Think of food as energy to charge up your battery for the day. Throughout the day, you use energy from the battery to think and move, so you need to eat regularly to keep powered up. This is called “energy balance” because you need to balance food — energy you take in — with activity — energy you spend. Here are some ways you can eat better:

**Have regular meals throughout the day to keep your body and mind charged up.**
- Eating breakfast gets your body going and improves memory, focus, and mood.
- Planning ahead and packing a lunch and snacks to take with you can also help control the portions and make sure they’re healthy.
- Skipping meals can actually make you so hungry that you end up eating even more than you would have if you’d eaten your meal in the first place!

**A portion is the amount of food eaten at one time. Many people eat larger portions than they need, especially when eating out.**
- When eating out, order something small, just eat half of the meal and take the rest home, or split it with a friend.
- At home, use small plates and avoid eating in front of the TV or while you are busy with other activities. It is easy to lose track of how much you are eating if you eat while doing other things.
- Eat slowly and take small bites so your brain can get the message that your stomach is full. Your brain needs about 20 minutes before it gets the message.
Avoid or limit foods with a lot of added sugar, unhealthy fats, and salt. You don’t have to stop eating these things altogether, but they should be occasional treats, not daily staples. Healthy eating is about balance.

Drink water, low-fat milk, or fat-free milk, and avoid high-sugar drinks. Soda, energy drinks, and some juices are the main sources of added sugars in our diets.

Unhealthy fats are fats that are solid at room temperature, like butter, stick margarine, shortening, and lard. Take it easy on foods like cakes, cookies, pizza, and fries, which often have a lot of this fat.

Not all fats are unhealthy! Eat moderate amounts of foods that have unsaturated fats: olive, canola, safflower, sunflower, corn, and soybean oils; nuts like walnuts, almonds, peanuts, and pecans; fish like tuna, salmon, and trout.

Processed foods (canned, frozen, or packaged) often have a lot of salt. Fresh foods do not, but may cost more. Rinse canned vegetables to remove excess salt.

Try to eat meals that include fruits, vegetables, low-fat protein, and dairy.
Finding Happiness and Meaning

Happier people are more likely to live longer and tend to be healthier, more successful, and are better connected to friends and family than people who describe themselves as less happy. How is happiness defined? People who study it say happiness is a combination of being satisfied with your life and having more positive emotions than negative emotions.

One researcher describes it as having three parts:

- **Pleasure** is the “feel good” part of happiness.
- **Engagement** refers to living a “good life” of school, work, family, friends, and hobbies.
- **Meaning** refers to using our strengths to contribute to a larger purpose.

All three of these are important, but of the three, engagement and meaning make the most difference to living a happy life.

There are three basic sources of happiness:

- Genetics, including temperament and personality.
- Life circumstances, such as wealth and health.
- The choices we make.

We tend to overestimate the importance of our life circumstances in how happy we are and think that if only we had more money, a better job, were thinner or prettier, or fell in love, that we would be happier. We often underestimate how much control we have over our own happiness.
We have a great deal of control over how happy we are.

- Positive emotions, such as gratitude, serenity, joy, interest, hope, pride, inspiration, amusement, and love, help people find meaning in ordinary and difficult events.

- Positive emotions also “undo” some of the physical effects of stress, such as increased heart rate, and put us in a better state of mind when dealing with stressful times.

- It’s easy for people to think that they’ll be happy once something they want happens. This is usually not the case, however. Happier people are ones who tend to enjoy the process of getting to what they want, working on relationships and positive emotions along the way.

- People often believe that if they just had more money, they would be happy. As long as people have enough money to meet their basic needs and stay out of poverty, however, wealth and income don’t make as much of a difference in how happy people are as you might think.

- To increase the joy in your life, take time to pay attention when something good happens. Keep a log and write down three positive things that happen each day to help convince yourself that good things actually happen all the time.

- The happiest people celebrate success with others, so find ways to share your positive times with others.
Relationships

Even though it takes two people to have a relationship, you’re the only person you can change in the relationship. If you find yourself wishing the other person would change, think to yourself, “What in this situation do I have control over?” The answer will often be COMMUNICATION.

Communication is Key

In any and every relationship, communication is key for keeping yourself and the person — a romantic partner, adult caregiver, or friend — you’re in a relationship with happy and healthy. Some simple tips and tricks you can try to make your communication calmer and more caring even in the toughest talks include:

- Show respect and attention with your words and your body language (no name-calling or eye-rolling).
- Confront the issue in the relationship, rather than avoiding conflict with the person.
- Pump up the positivity! For every 1 criticism you make of the other person — if it really needs to be made at all — try to give them 5 compliments.

Building Trust

You can love a person no matter what they do or say — but trust is earned. People who are trustworthy do what they say they’ll do and support you when you need it. What would it take for someone to earn your trust? Communication is key.

Your Best Self

Even the healthiest relationships take work — on communication, on trust, on everything. But remember, the best relationships bring out your “best self.” If your current relationship is not doing that for you, or if you are wondering how to help a friend with an unhealthy relationship, talk to someone you trust, like a parent/guardian, your family doctor, or your Life Planning coach.