



HEALTHQUEST

A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER FOCUSING ON
MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES AND CONCERNS.

TAKE CONTROL OF YOUR LIFE!

- ▲ Jan and Chris, young professionals climbing the career ladder, recently realized they are losing touch with their friends because they seldom have time to socialize.
- ▲ Lynn, a single parent with two toddlers, devotes all available time and energy to family and job. Lynn was once an accomplished pianist, but now, "Something had to be dropped, so I dropped my music."
- ▲ Jean just had an annual medical checkup. The doctor, concerned about Jean's weight gain and the increase in blood pressure, recommended a fitness program. But Jean's life is too hectic - a demanding job, family responsibilities, and community volunteer work. How can Jean find time to get back into shape?

Although the situations are different, these people all suffer from a common problem. There is little balance in their lives.

In most cases, the loss of balance in our life is due to a loss of control over our life. The symptoms range from not having the time or energy to do the things truly important, to you thinking of yourself as a "victim." Sometimes, you feel as if life is passing you by, when in fact you are passing by life.

There are a number of reasons why we lose control over our life. To begin with, let's say that one person may have so many demands placed on them by others, it is as if those others take total control. Others say, in today's world, there are so many choices that it's hard to decide what is truly important to us. Still others try to juggle

everything but overlook the most important thing of all - our own self.

Sometimes taking care of self has a negative connotation and is viewed as selfish. But as the experts warn, taking care of ourselves is paramount in ensuring both a physical and mental balance in our life. If we forget about self, it could lead to negative stress and eventually burnout.

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO REGAIN CONTROL OVER YOUR LIFE?

ACCEPT WHAT YOU CAN'T CONTROL

Face it - there are things in our life we have to do. As the saying goes, "Give us grace to accept with serenity the things that cannot be changed, courage to change the things that should be changed, and the wisdom to distinguish one from the other."

STOP THE BLAME GAME

It is easy to blame others for a lack of time. In reality, we are the ones who have the ultimate decision on how our time will be spent.

LET GO

Over the years our roles and responsibilities change, and so should our actions. Your sense of responsibility and corresponding actions should be re-evaluated from time-to-time. Are the children old enough to do more themselves? Have you been promoted and still try to hold on to tasks which belong to your previous job? On the other hand, are you accepting a promotion that you know you will have difficulty handling? Do you really need two cars if you take the bus to work, and your spouse works from home?

LEARN TO SAY NO

People who say "Yes" to every demand made on their time by family and friends usually fit into one of two categories. Either they don't have a realistic view of how much they can handle or they are not assertive enough to say "No" when appropriate.

Planning will help the first type determine if they are biting off more than they can chew. The second type just has to learn to say a pleasant, but firm, "No" to family and friends. Otherwise, both types end up working on everyone else's priorities instead of their own.

TAKE TIME TO PLAN BECAUSE YOU CAN'T DO IT ALL

There are only 24 hours in each day. To make the most effective use of that time, plan what you spend your time on. Decide what is most important and what you are willing to trade in order to get it. Your plan should cover all the major areas in your life - home, family, work, leisure, and of course, self.

Remember Jean and the fitness program? Perhaps Jean could trade the hour spent with a second cup of coffee and a newspaper for the time it takes to have a brisk walk each morning.

SCHEDULE TIME FOR YOURSELF

Scheduling appointments for time spent alone, doing something just for your own benefit, must be treated like any other appointment - as a firm commitment.

If Lynn schedules a 20 minute appointment each day to play the piano, in one year, over 120 hours will have been spent doing something important.

SIMPLIFY YOUR LIFE

This principle can be applied to almost any area of your life. From filing systems to wardrobe planning, simplification and getting rid of excess and unnecessary items and/or activities can make any task easier and faster to complete.

RECOGNIZE THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN "NEEDS" AND "WANTS"

The materialism in our society can be a cause of unbalance in our life. Don't sacrifice health, family or work for possessions you may want but not need.

There are situations where you may need to take on a great responsibility. But if there are other situations that you are often quick to volunteer for, accept responsibility, and save everyone and the day, you may consider some professional guidance, if the word "No" isn't usually spoken by you. And, if you haven't realized how much you have taken on, an EAP counsellor can help you take charge of your life.

Are you a person that ignores your own needs for the needs of others? Perhaps after speaking with an EAP counsellor you may learn why you react in this fashion. With your counsellor's help and encouragement, you can learn to control your actions and regain balance, and to show you ways to simplify your life..

Learning to focus on what is important and to take control of your life could mean asking for some assistance from an EAP counsellor. We can show you ways you can start being good to you, and feel good about it!

If you have any questions about this topic, or if you wish to discuss a personal situation you may be experiencing, we invite you to contact your EAP counsellors to arrange a telephone or in-person counselling session.

All contact between you and your counsellor is completely confidential.

English Service: 1-800-387-4765
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