

## Where Has the Time Gone?

Have you ever been going about your day and then, all of a sudden, it is 3 hours later than you thought? For educators this may happen when you are in your plan period and then it is time for your students to come back to class within the blink of an eye. For students, this may look like going home to do homework or interacting with friends and then it's already time to get ready for bed. Truth be told, educators and students both struggle with time management. People underestimate the struggles educators and students may be having with time management because "it's what you do every day". So, what are the big issues with time management that people are facing, besides the obvious one of having so much to do?

One reason that people struggle with time management is simply that they have so much to do, it is overwhelming. This is referred to as "loaded" procrastination. Many people struggle with procrastination for different reasons. Sometimes there is so much to do with a specific task, like grading or writing papers, that it is overwhelming and people tend to shut down. A trick to help with "loaded" procrastination is to work on "batches" or only a certain amount of the work in one sitting. For example, if you are overwhelmed by how many papers you have to grade, try grading 1/3 or even half of the assignments one day and then finish the rest the next day. If you have multiple assignments to grade, you could grade one assignment a day, or two, if you are feeling extra motivated.

One way to help students who may be struggling with time management issues during the school day would be to write out what the day will look like for them. This could be written on a whiteboard in front of the whole class, so they all know when and what will happen today, or on a piece of paper and then given to that student to follow along with during the day. Make sure to include breaks in the schedule and maybe even a to do list for the student so they know what will be expected of them that day.

Sometimes a person may have good time management practices that work very well, but then a crisis happens that derails those practices. While there are some events that cannot be planned for, like natural disasters or a death in the family, there are coping skills to help get back on track. One way to handle these derailments is to make a list and prioritize what needs to be done and when it is due. It should be a goal for your weekly schedule to be flexible but to have the top priority items done by midweek if at all possible. Of course, if you have a crisis happen, that may not be possible. In that case, tackle what you can and what is most important to finish first. Again, breaking up what you need to do, one activity at a time, can benefit you by making it less overwhelming. It is very easy to be overwhelmed in these situations, but it is important to stay calm and maybe recruit people, like parents or colleagues, to help with tasks.

The biggest thing that should be planned into your time management routine is to make sure that you have some “you” time. Times have been very stressful lately, for many reasons, and educators and students are both struggling right now. Taking time for yourself should be mandatory so you do not burn out and can provide the best educational experience, not only for the students but for yourself too. Find what you need to do to help you “recharge”. This could be working out, going on a walk, playing with pets or your children, talking with friends, date nights, or reading a chapter of a book a day. Do whatever you need to do to stay at the top of your game and hopefully enjoy it too. You also need to be able to say “no” when you have too much on your plate. Adding one more thing to your list will only make matters worse for you and your mental health. Saying “no” has such a stigma attached to it when someone is asked for help but the bottom line is, no one can do everything. Normalize taking care of yourself and saying no when you need to.

### **References:**

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