

Clockwork Confidence: Balancing Time and Self

by Dr. Jennifer Lares, CFSP

HAVE YOU EVER NOTICED HOW EXCITED YOUR DOG IS TO SEE YOU when you walk through the door? Whether you were gone for five days or five minutes, their undeniable joy remains the same. Unlike other species, humans are aware of passing time, which requires our attention. It also robs us of the sweet oblivion your dog demonstrates.

Within deathcare, we are subject to instability and a lack of control that we find ourselves having to work within and around. It can sometimes feel like we are juggling plates with an arm tied behind our backs. What can we do when faced with conflicting demands and limited time? Let's first describe what we may be doing currently...

Are you procrastinating? Distracting yourself from a task that seems too daunting or is uninteresting? More often, we take on extra work to make someone else happy. Saying "no" can be uncomfortable or impossible depending on who is asking (you can look over at your boss). We can be our own worst enemies when it comes to how we allocate our time, but it's not entirely our fault.

Using Technology for the Better

We are routinely assaulted by images, the prods of our devices, and a lot of "noise" that can grip our attention. At work, we waste time on emails that could have been a text or meetings that could have been an email. Have you ever found yourself in a meeting that had no real agenda and found yourself stuck in a rabbit hole of stories you've heard before? (Don't look over at your boss right now.)

There are ways to address these time vacuums. An organization can find balance in assigning tasks to personnel that make sense based on their roles. Administrative support presents a considerable opportunity to free up busy operational team members and/or sales folks who need to focus on their unique function. This doesn't always

have to be in the form of another person.

Look to technology to simplify activities, populate data to various places after a single entry, and software that can organize input in an easy-to-read way. When you do meet, consider options like Zoom® or TEAMS® to omit wasted travel time for those at other locations.

Shared calendars (Google®, Outlook®) can create unspoken expectations regarding availability within your organization as well as within your family. Your screen time feature on your cell phone can help you identify how much time you are spending in various areas (social, productivity).

Use timers to chisel away on a draining task, so you can break it down into smaller, more manageable chunks. Technology can truly be a valuable tool when applied correctly.

Regaining Structure

Let's switch gears and consider you. As an individual, you can restore a structural order to how you spend your time. It is your responsibility to agree to the right things, avoid the wrong ones, and not get sucked into that "Next Episode" prompt for too long. It is easier said than done, but here are a few ideas and reminders to help:

Evaluate things you can outsource

Though some activities must be completed by you, anyone can perform filing, mowing the lawn, or doing the laundry. The time saved can be well worth the cost of paying someone to do these things for you. Society has embraced convenience without shame, as we purchase dinner kits that hardly

require assembly, and use apps to help pick out our clothes for the week. This is especially applicable to domestic demands, but can also relate to your work. (Think about it: a virtual assistant to help you with a project could be a real treat.)

As more women enter funeral service, the tug of managing their duties at home while working can be especially difficult. Western society has groomed women to keep a tidy house and be the one who leaves work when the school nurse calls. Be kind to yourself and get the support you need from others when you can. (*Your house doesn't need to be perfect either.)

Respectfully say "No": This is a tough one

You have likely heard the saying about "no" being a complete sentence. If you aren't quite ready for that, consider a "not right now". Allow yourself to finish a task before turning to help someone who has popped in with a problem.

Sometimes, when we are deep in thought, an interruption can feel like a train derailment. It's ok to be busy and unavailable sometimes, and I encourage you to check in with yourself before agreeing to do something.

A key consideration is in how we communicate when we are declining something. Respectful, thoughtful word choices are important, as are the mode of delivery. Be careful with text or email, so that it doesn't come across as curt or rude.

Phrases like, "I can help you with that if you can give me (insert time) to wrap up what I am currently doing." Or "I'm sorry but I am not able to help you with that, take on that task, etc., at this time." If someone needs something from you, communicate how long it may take you and be clear on what the deliverable expectation is. "I may be able to help. When do you need it by?"

It can be off-putting in a world where saying “yes” is the expectation. Likewise, it is imperative to respect other people’s time. Being late or expecting people to drop what they are doing for you can be seen as inconsiderate. If you reciprocate your expectations, it fosters mutual respect.

Use tools

There are many apps, planners, etc., that can help you apply a structure of sorts to your time (to yourself, if we are being honest). Disable notifications that really aren’t that serious. Schedule times to check your email. (If it is time sensitive, they can call or text you.) Create windows to catch your breath and build in a moment to reset within your day.

Consider your appointment scheduling

Are you giving yourself enough time with your clients and in between? Do you need to reconsider the time slots in which you see families?

Finally, make yourself a priority

It is not uncommon to get busy at work and reschedule that dental appt. you have needed for the past three months. Taking care of yourself should be an unwavering commitment, even though it is easy to push aside for another time.

Cut Yourself a Break

Managing yourself is not a linear process. There will be times when you feel like you are rocking everything, and others where

you feel like you are drowning. All we can do is our best to accomplish what we can within the constraints of the limited minutes we are given. Give yourself patience, grace, and, above all, give yourself time. ☑



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