

From the Heart...

... Life Skills for Today

By Sharon L. Benedict MS, ACC



Time Management—does it still feel like high school?

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Do you remember when you were in high school and just about every minute was already scheduled for you? You jump in Mom or Dad's car, they drop you off around 7:30 am or so, you run to your locker to pick up your textbook for your first class, and race to get in your seat before the bell rings.

The teacher then says, "Get out your books" or "Pop quiz!" And right then you really regret not studying last night and went skateboarding instead with your buddies. You jump from class to class, shove down your lunch, and finish the daylight hours with soccer practice. Then home you go to dinner and the drudgery of homework piled on your bed. You also can't seem to keep your mind on the books when you have that date lined up for Saturday.

Oh, for those days when you knew exactly what you needed to do each minute of the day! And there was someone hovering over you to keep you on track. How is today for you, now that you are out of high school and either at college or a full-time job? Is it any different? Or do you still have someone hovering over you saying..."Remember the deadline tomorrow" or "You need to get to work on time." Whether it's your boss, your spouse, or roommate, does it feel like high school all over again?

Hopefully, you have moved on from those more adolescent years of hearing yourself say, “Oh, Mom, chill out. I’ll get it done!” You sure wouldn’t want to say that to your boss, would you? So, let’s assume we have all grown up, are a little older, and wiser too.

Think about your day, week, month, and year. Do you know where your hours go each day? When we think about time management, we are trying time itself, ourselves, projects, and other people in our lives. No matter how chaotic things seem to get, time can be managed the SMART way. Doing some SMART planning/goal setting, and getting the desired results or outcomes involve the what, why, when, where, with whom, and how of your everyday life. The acronym, SMART, begins with the “S” of SMART.

This means goals should be clearly defined and emphasizes what you want to happen and why. Specifics help you focus on what you are going to do. Use direct action words to describe what you want to do. For example, “I want to lose 10 lbs” is specific, not “I want to lose weight.” In this month’s articles, we will cover the other letters of SMART—“M” for measurable, “A” for attainable/actionable, “R” for realistic/relevant, and “T” for time-oriented/time phased.

As you consider each letter and what they mean for your life and the way you use your time, here are a few tips to get started. Other tips will follow in each article this month.

- ***Stay focused on what is important/not what is seemingly urgent; and know the difference (Now, Later, Never)***
- ***Stay in the moment while seeking mastery and desired outcome***

- ***Commit to defined priorities based on your core values and intrinsic motivators (motivated from the inside out, not solely by external or extrinsic pressures; intrinsic= I want to; extrinsic= I should)***
- ***Schedule time for important matters; get home at a set time—and do not exceed it! Quality time include Quantity time too!***

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From the Heart...

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By Sharon L. Benedict MS, ACC



Time Management, part 2—what is the “M” in SMART?

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In the last article, I asked you to think about your day, week, month, and year. Do you know where your hours go each day? When we think about time management, we are trying to manage time itself, ourselves, projects, and other people in our lives.

No matter how chaotic things seem to get, time can be managed the SMART way. Doing some SMART planning/goal setting, and getting the desired results or outcomes involve the what, why, when, where, with whom, and how of your everyday life. The acronym, SMART, begins with the “S” of SMART.

For “S,” I noted that goals should be clearly defined and emphasize what you want to happen and why. Specifics help you focus on what you are going to do. Use direct action words to describe What you want to do. For example, “I want to lose 10 lbs” is specific, not “I want to lose weight.”

The “M” of SMART means that goals are Measurable. Goals are manageable through a short-term as well as a long-term process. When you can measure your progress, you can then build confidence that shows change has occurred; and continue to stay on track toward reaching your target dates. You may wonder, “How do I

measure my progress in reaching my goals?” Here are a few basics about the process of measuring your progress.

- **Establish the fundamental process first.**

- **What** is your goal, short-term and long-term? Choose one goal to focus on so as not to overwhelm you.
- **Why** are you committed to that goal? Your answer will be your motivating drivers for staying on course.
- **When** do you want to achieve part (short-term) and your entire goal (long-term)?
- **Where** do you want to work on your goal? This refers to your physical location—i.e. work, home, fitness center, college/university.
- **With whom** do you want to assist or participate in reaching your goal? You may want to ask a friend, family member, co-worker, an advisor or counselor, a trainer, a life coach.
- **How** are you going to achieve your goals? This refers to specific day to day, week to week, month to month processes that help you stay motivated and reach your goal (i.e. goal=save money; the first week I am going to reduce my dining out by one night a week and place saved money into a separate savings account. I will do this for one month; then reduce my dining out with one more night eating at home; I will then place the saved money into my separate savings account. I will repeat this until I

reach the amount I want to save each month and continue until I reach my savings goal for each following year.)

- **Use the *WHAT, WHY, WHEN, WHERE, WITH WHOM, & HOW* measures above as natural components of the fundamental process day by day.** Don't miss one of these measures since they are the specifics of your desired goal. They become natural parts of the journey that you track.
- **Follow the fundamental process to make the measures valid.** No matter how good our intentions are in setting goals and the means to reach them, we must be committed to the process each day, week, month in order for the measures to provide evidence of our progress toward the goal. But always be flexible with yourself. Life happens and interruptions occur out of our control. Just simply shift one or more of the measures, recalculate, and keep moving forward.
- **Improve the quality of the measures by utilizing available technologies.** Utilize your computer, calendars/day planners, journaling; anything techie that will keep you motivated and on focus throughout the time frame you have established. You will then produce objective results every time.
- **Identify certain trigger points in the process that you can translate into measurable points in time.** This basic part of the measuring process is essential to personally assess where you are in the journey of reaching your goal. These trigger points (i.e. lost 2 lbs the first month; saved \$100 the first month) are giant motivating leaps for you to continue the journey each week and month you travel.

Can you think of anything I may have missed here? If so, feel free to email me. I would love to hear it. I'm sure I probably missed something.

In the next article, "A" for SMART will be covered. Here's one hint: Goals that are most important to you, Attainable and Actionable, say you have begun to figure out ways you can make that goal come true. While you contemplate this part of SMART manage your time and goals, here are some additional tips I promised:

- 1. Take a 15 minute break each day for a quiet moment alone ("pause") to rest your thoughts.**
- 2. Delegate tasks when possible.**
- 3. Avoid procrastination (honestly appraise your own indecisions/delays).**
- 4. Take the stress out of work and home life.**
- 5. Organize home and office space to be more time efficient and user friendly.**

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From the Heart...

... Life Skills for Today

By Sharon L. Benedict MS, ACC



Time Management, part 3—what’s “A” in SMART?

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So far, we have covered the first two acronym letters for “SMART” time management. For “S,” goals should be clearly defined and emphasize what you want to happen and why. Specifics help you focus on what you are going to do. Use direct action words to describe What you want to do. For example, “I want to lose 10 lbs” is specific, not “I want to lose weight.”

The “M” of SMART means that goals are Measurable. Goals are manageable through a short-term as well as a long-term process. When you can measure your progress, you can then build confidence that shows change has occurred; and continue to stay on track toward reaching your target dates.

Today, the “A” for SMART are goals that are most important to you, Attainable and Actionable say you have begun to figure out ways you can make that goal come true. You develop the attitudes, abilities, skills, and financial capacity to reach them. You start to see previously overlooked opportunities for bringing you closer to your goals.

Attainable goals are mastered in bite-size pieces; and not so far out of reach that your motivation and confidence is shaken along the way. Good intentions do count, but

those nagging gremlins will try to tell you that it's too much for you and just forget it. The goal needs to stretch you just enough so you can feel you can do it. You are in direct control of your step-by-step actions. If you seek to lose 20lbs in just one week, we all know that it's not only unattainable but also unrealistic. A goal of losing 1lb every one or two weeks is definitely attainable and realistic in achieving your ultimate goal.

This also holds true if your goal is to increase your savings. When you commit to reducing the number of nights you dine out and put that money in your savings account instead, you establish an attainable goal. Trying to put thousands of dollars in your savings account initially, when your budget doesn't allow for it, is definitely unrealistic. Very soon you will be quickly discouraged when the bills come due or you have a surprise expense you didn't know was coming.

The letters "R" and "T" of SMART will be covered in the next article, with these hints—"R" is for realistic goals that are relevant doable goals. It's not a vertical climb but an achievable slope with the skills needed already available. "T" stands for timely goals set in a time frame that successfully moves you through the short-term and long-term strategies.

While you contemplate this week this SMART acronym, here are four more time management tips to consider:

- 1. Do most important tasks during most productive hours.***
- 2. Simplify, avoid unreasonable deadlines, reduce unnecessary interruptions, monitor telephone time; turn off cell phone for a period of time in each day (while sleeping doesn't count!).***

- 3. Use your calendar to match your core values, goals, with scheduled activities; it is important to make sure you schedule in fun, R&R/personal development.**
- 4. Be a “team” player who knows your own personality style and others; enhance your communication/collaborative skills; willing to give credit where credit is due.**

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From the Heart...

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By Sharon L. Benedict MS, ACC



Time Management, part 4—the rest of SMART

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Throughout this month's articles, the acronym letters for "SMART" time management related to your life goals has been covered. In review, "S" goals should be clearly defined and emphasize what you want to happen and why. Specifics help you focus on what you are going to do. Use direct action words to describe *what* you want to do.

The "M" of SMART means that goals are Measurable. Goals are manageable through a short-term as well as a long-term process. When you can measure your progress, you can then build confidence that shows change has occurred and you are on track toward reaching your target dates. The "A" for SMART are goals that are most important to you. Attainable and Actionable say you have begun to figure out ways you can make that goal come true.

You begin to develop the attitudes, abilities, skills, and financial capacity to reach them. You start to see previously overlooked opportunities for bringing you closer to your goals. Attainable goals are mastered in bite-size pieces; and not so far out of reach that your motivation and confidence is shaken along the way.

To finish out this month's focus on time management, the "R" of SMART says *Realistic* goals are relevant doable goals. It's not a vertical climb but an achievable slope with the skills needed already available. Your overall strategy and goals allow for a gradual progress toward achieving your goal. This strategy stretches you and even pushes you a little but won't break your commitment or ability to keep moving forward. It supports where you are in the moment.

Setting a "never again" goal, whether with eating cake or chocolate, needs to be clarified when setting the specifics. Too difficult of a goal sets you up for feelings of failure. Instead, think about what outcome is best for your own health and wellbeing. What other ways can you state your goal and are more realistic? How about focusing on the positive rather than the negative? It may be more realistic to currently commit to eating an extra piece of fruit per day as you work towards reducing your intake of cakes and cookies. But make sure the goal takes some effort! Set the goal high enough for a satisfying accomplishment.

The "T" of SMART means *Timely* goals are set in a time frame that successfully moves you through the short-term and long-term strategies. For example, you can start with next week, in three months, six months, then two years. Choose whatever supports your specific, measurable, attainable, realistic goal. Don't be too vague; set a time that says this goal is important in your life and has a sense of urgency motivating you to action now with each step.

As you contemplate how to incorporate SMART time management and goal setting into your life, here are some final tips to consider:

- ***Learn to politely say “No.” Sometimes God’s best is “No.”***
- ***Seek excellence, not perfection.***
- ***Garner Quiet Time at Home & Work = “ME” time***
- ***Important but often neglected—Give dedicated time for your spiritual life. Read sacred and meditative books, be active in your church or synagogue; be part of an active home support group.***

It is important to understand that although planning may set the course, it doesn’t always control the outcome. Knowing how to flex with the breeze or twisting gale is one of life’s valuable gifts. Achievements are great, but life is truly lived by the lessons we learn and the relationships we are blessed with. These truths do not make planning irrelevant. Quite the contrary, we have all heard the axiom, ***“People who fail to plan, plan to fail.”***

Strategic planning definitely helps tip the scale more in your favor—for tomorrow, next year, even 30 years from now. Most life goals are built on small daily steps toward a larger goal. Begin to commit your time and dollars to specifically achieve your dreams and goals. Your time and money are intricately involved in the process of goal setting and daily living—where you live, work, utilize services, and every daily routine such as showering, breakfast, reading the paper, and watching your favorite TV program. Take a moment here to think about this statement—*Where ever you spend your money is where you spend your time & life!* Next month’s articles will focus on career & money

management—bringing synergy to your career choice and the way you manage your money with those precious moments given to you each day of your life.

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