

Time Management or Time Mapping-which one is right for you?

Do you want to use your time more wisely? Most people would answer ‘yes’ to this question. Then, the typical response is to suggest improving your time management skills. One deficiency of focusing solely on time management is that it usually places a heavy focus on tasks rather than determining whether you are satisfied with using your time. This article will discuss an activity related to time management called ‘time mapping.’

A key feature of time mapping is the idea of time blocks. Time blocks can be devoted to completing set tasks; however, it is more effective and beneficial if they highlight *how* you devote your time and efforts to important aspects of your life. Common ways to devote our time include family, work, household management and maintenance, recreation, friends, relationship with self, and relationship with partner (dedicated one-on-one time for you to be together without distractions and interruptions). There are others, but these will be used to demonstrate how time mapping works.

Here is a multi-step process that can be used to help facilitate you in developing a time map of your activities:

Step	Description
1.	Determine the time you have available over a given period, e.g., per week, fortnightly, monthly, quarterly, six-monthly, or yearly. Remember: Use the period that best suits your circumstances. You can have multiple time maps reflecting different periods.
2.	Decide what percentage of time you need to allocate to each activity, e.g. 50% work, relationship with partner 20%, relationships with family and friends 20%, relationship with self-10%
3.	Draw a calendar showing the weeks, months, or periods you chose. It does not need to show dates unless you want it to.
4.	First, block time for work and sleep, which will be the largest on your time map. Now you are ready to add the other activities you wish to receive attention, e.g. relationship with partner
5.	A time management plan becomes more effective once you have developed a time map that meets your requirements. That way, tasks from all activity blocks in your life, not just work tasks, are mapped, which is the more common emphasis when discussing time management.

The following is an example of how time can be blocked in a way that aligns with a given person’s desires, needs, and circumstances. This is one example of how it can be done; however, it is vital to find a design that works for you to gain benefit rather than consider it a burden.

SAMPLE TIME MAP - Weekly							
Time	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
6am	Personal Time to prepare for Day and have solitude						
7am							
8am	Family, Friends, and Partner	Work including Travel time	Work including Travel time	Work including Travel time	Work including Travel time	Work including Travel time	Self- Maintenance
9am							
10am							
11am							
12noon							
1pm							
2pm							
3pm							
4pm	Lifestyle Management						Household Management
5pm							
6pm							
7pm						Socialise / Family Time	
8pm		Self - Development		Self- Development			
9pm							
10pm							
11pm							
12midnight							
Point to Note: Using different colours to highlight the distinct categories could be helpful. Time mapping with the use of colour will enable you to determine, first, if you are devoting the required time to the areas of your life that matter to you and, second, how you might integrate other aspects into your schedule.							

When developing your time map(s), you could have four different time maps for each week of the month: Week 1, Week 2, Week 3, Week 4. For months with five weeks, that might be when you factor in treats or bonus activities that are not options in other months.

The example highlights gaps that could provide opportunities to nurture and devote time to other aspects of your life. A time map such as this allows you to see where you can fit in activities you wish to undertake that often get overlooked or passed over because other aspects take over, causing imbalance and potential stress.

If you find using a calendar too regimented and mechanistic, you can use periods, e.g., 3 hours per week for self-nurturing, 2 hours per week on relationships, etc. This is all about finding the method that will best suit your purpose. Research has shown that if you have it documented and refer to it, you are more likely to achieve what you want from your time than if you try to retain it all in your head.

To assist you with your time mapping process, I would ask the following coaching questions to help you determine whether time mapping could be helpful.

Do you find you regularly have difficulties doing everything you want to?

How do you currently track what you must attend to in all areas of your life?

How effective is your current method?

If you did a time map, what might you gain that you do not currently have?

What would be your reason for not doing a time map?

Are you ready to make some productive changes for 2025 and beyond? Then, [contact Carol McGowan, PhD, founder of Strategic Achievement Coaching](#), for practical ways to reach your goals.