

Time Management for Dads: Prioritizing what matters and finding balance.

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As a separated father of three biological children who is now blending a family with a fourth child, AND expecting a new baby in April (yep, a fifth child getting added to the mix), I know firsthand how challenging it can be to manage time effectively. It's been a big personal challenge trying to balance the demands of work, family time, my health, community involvement and my spiritual life, all while trying to ensure that my children, new relationship and evolving household was running smoothly. To say that life has been demanding the last few years would be an understatement.

As I've gone through this season of life, I've learned important lessons that have helped me prioritize what matters most.

Like me, you may want to be present for your kids, provide for your family, have a strong relationship and be as healthy as possible. It might also feel like there is never enough time in the day for all that's on your list. You may even constantly feel stressed and guilty for not being able to give enough attention to the parts of life that are important to you.

If that's you, then it's time to take a step back and evaluate what's truly important and make a plan to allocate your time accordingly.

Here are five guidelines for how to prioritize what matters to you and find balance in your life.

Set Clear Priorities

One of the most important things that dads can do to manage their time effectively is to set clear priorities. This means taking a step back and evaluating what is truly important to them, both in their personal and professional lives, and then making a plan to allocate their time accordingly. Like me, many dads may find that they need to re-evaluate their priorities in order to find a balance that works for them. A study by Harvard Business Review, revealed that people who prioritize their time based on their values, goals and objectives report higher levels of job satisfaction and well-being than those who don't (HBR, 2018).

How do you prioritize? You identify your values. For me, I have five "F's" that guide how I allocate my time. Faith, Family, Finances, Fitness, and Finishing. These five areas are where I set specific goals, and then build them into my daily schedule. Daily scheduling of your most important priorities first commits that time, and shows you where you have room for other, less important priorities – if at all.

Learn Adaptability

Another key aspect of effective time management for dads is to be flexible and adaptable. Life is unpredictable and things can change quickly, so dads need to be able to adjust their schedules and priorities as needed. This might mean rearranging plans or delegating tasks to others in order to free up time for more important things. A personal example, I had to adapt my schedule when my new partner and her daughter moved in with me. This required me to be more flexible with my work schedule and shift some of the home responsibilities around. A study by the American Psychological Association (APA, 2020) revealed that people who are more adaptable and flexible in their approach to time management are more likely to achieve their goals and report higher levels of well-being.

While my experience is anecdotal, I can say the transition to a blended family has forced flexibility on us all, and it is helping us all grow and become more adaptable.

Plan and Organize Effectively

Effective time management also requires good organization and planning. Learning to organize our days and prioritize tasks based on importance and urgency is critical as the demands of life increase. Tools like calendars, reminders, and alarms can also be valuable aids to help stay on track and on schedule.

If you find it hard to plan and organize your tasks and the demands seem to be swallowing you up, John Maxwell has a great system to help classify tasks that can help any dad manage their time better. He says the following about your urgent vs important tasks:

- **High Importance & High Urgency** – do this first
- **High Importance & Low Urgency** – set deadlines to get these done and find ways to put them into your daily routine
- **Low Importance & High Urgency** – find quick, efficient ways to get these done with minimal personal involvement and time. If possible, delegate to someone else
- **Low Importance and Low Urgency** – if these items can be removed, then get rid of them. If delegated, then find someone to do them. If you must do them, then schedule a one-hour block every week and chip away at them. Never schedule them during your best or most productive hours.

Ineffective leaders jump on the urgent tasks without thinking. Effective leaders weigh both factors (important and urgent) for each task and act accordingly. Use the above classification system as a cheat sheet. If you'd like to learn more ways to manage your priorities as a dad, then register for [Fatherhood Fundamentals](#), our free e-course that goes deeper on this topic of how to plan, organize and prioritize.

Take Care of Your Health

In addition to managing their time, dads also need to take care of their physical and mental health. This includes getting enough sleep, eating well, and engaging in regular physical activity. Dads should also make time for themselves, whether it be through hobbies, reading, or simply relaxing. I find exercise is one of the most important activities that helps me feel good, especially when the pressure of life increases. It's also the one that I often drop from my schedule when the demands crank up. So, this is one I have to work really hard at keeping in my schedule. Sometimes that means going to the gym late at night, early in the morning, or getting a short but intense

home workout in before bed. I'll even turn play time with the kids into a fun workout opportunity, which helps me hit two important priorities at one time!



Invest in Community

Finally, dads see benefits when they can make time for community involvement and spiritual practices. This can include volunteering, attending church or religious services, cultural events/practices or participating in other social activities that involve community. These activities not only help to strengthen the community but also can provide a sense of purpose and fulfillment in life.

Research has consistently shown that community involvement and spiritual practices can have a positive impact on overall well-being. A [study by the Corporation for National and Community Service \(CNCS, 2017\)](#) found that individuals who volunteer regularly report higher levels of life satisfaction and a greater sense of purpose in life. Additionally, a study by the American Journal of Health Promotion (AJHP, 2015) found that people who engage in spiritual practices, such as prayer or meditation, have lower levels of stress and better mental health outcomes

Moreover, a study published by Journal of Positive Psychology (JPP, 2016) found that people who engage in volunteer work or other forms of community involvement, experience greater feelings of happiness and contentment. The study also notes that people who feel connected to a community or a larger purpose are better equipped to cope with stress and adversity.

In short, making time for community involvement and spiritual practices can not only benefit the community and society, but also improve the overall well-being of dads and their families.

I'm sure if you're still reading you agree that effective time management is crucial for dads. By setting clear priorities, being flexible, organizing and planning, taking care of our physical and mental health, and making time for community involvement and spiritual practices, we can successfully manage our time and lead a fulfilling life. I hope this article gave you one idea you can start using today.

For specific resources connect with Dad Central. Download a free resource, read [additional blogs](#), enroll in our [fatherhood fundamentals course](#), or just email us at info@dadcentral.ca.

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