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Multitasking Skills

Based on studies done on the topic of multitasking and time management skills, research has come up with many different strategies. Researchers have come up with new definition of what really is multitasking, and how to use time effectively and productively. A person who manages time successfully can also enjoy the pleasures of life while taking care of the things that are urgent and important.

According to studies on multitasking by Sarah D. Sparks multitasking is possible, but it’s very difficult to do two things at the same time. Because we are humans, not like computers that can do more than one task at the same time, our minds can’t be in two places at once. “Sparks had stated in her article that younger people are more generally better at multitasking than older people, because their working memory tends to be more effective in their early 20s.” However we can’t process two tasks simultaneously, and it would also takes more time to multitask than it would take to do one thing at a time. When a person tries to do two things at once, the cortex part of the brain delays decision making of the second task. People can’t really multitask without being distracted some people find it very hard to multitask efficiently. Studies show that students who answer their phones or read text messages while in an exam are more likely to get fewer answers right than other students that wait until after the exam to answer and reply. Because it brake concentration to read a text, then one have to go back and pick up where they left off on their test paper which sometimes they lose focus. A distraction can slow down our reaction time by a second, in education that delay can cause students to miss important information (Sparks). The “Marshmallow Test” was also mentioned in the Sparks article. In it some 4 year- olds were ask to hold off for 15 minutes eating a marshmallow that they were given in exchange for two. At the end of the wait, less than one third of the four-- year olds had self-control to wait, those that waited also showed academic and social success in the years that followed. But those that didn’t wait and ate their marshmallow immediately did not do as well academically nor in their social success in life. This shows that instant gratification doesn’t always work in our favor. But delaying gratification and practicing self-control gives us reward and success when we learn to wait. The results were similar for the college students who did not respond immediately to the text messages (Sparks).

One day while I was at work working, I remembered that I had an event to go to after work. So while doing my work operating the cash register, I started multitasking by directing my mind into my closet at home. I was matching outfits with the shoes that go with it that I wanted to wear to the event. While I was doing that, I lost my focus, and my concentration on my job, as to what I was doing and what was required of me. I had to quickly change my thinking process and focus on what was more important at hand which my job was. All that time I thought I was multitasking and that I was really good at doing two things at the same time. But based on studies done on multitasking, I was just attention switching, attention switching is when one switches focus from one task to another task. So I really wasn’t giving my work full attention nor thoughtful attention I was mind switching from one task to the other in my mind.

According to the article “Eisenhower’s Urgent/ Important Principle: Using time Effectively Not Just Efficiently” using your time wisely means being effective and efficient. We should spend our time on tasks that are both important and urgent, but always take in consideration to put those tasks that is approaching the due date to do first. To also minimize the stress on your body of getting task done in a rush, avoid procrastination of leaving work that needs to get done for the last minute. It’s also important for one to prioritize and to know what’s important from what’s not important, because sometime not every tasks is important. Make sure to put an urgent and important task first before other tasks that can be done at a later date or time. After you finish doing urgent important then you can do the other tasks that need to get done that are not considered urgent or important. The difference between an urgent activity and an important activity is that, urgent activity demands your urgent attention and most time it’s related to others goals but not to yours. While an important activity does relate to you and can lead to your success in life whether in school or in your everyday life.

I have also learned about Stephen Covey’s time management plan, where he outlines four different quadrants life activities. Quadrant one displays thing that are urgent and important. Quadrant two which is important but not urgent. Quadrant three which is urgent and not important. Quadrant four which is considered not urgent and not important. Based on Covey’s time management matrix I now know the difference between important tasks and urgent tasks. I plan to use this plan for improving my success in college and also in my daily activities. I am going to check my syllabus for assignment due dates so I can start working on them so I don’t have to wait for the last minute to be rushing to get it done. I will also prioritize what is important that needs to get done in my life.

I would prefer seeing myself living in quadrant two of Covey’s time management plan, because living in quadrant two, I don’t have to do urgent tasks only tasks that are important. And it also gives me time for myself to do things that makes me happy other than work to relax and have some fun. I have learned that people don’t really multitask, they just switch focus from one task to another. I don’t believe that human being can multitask, because it would really be confusing to have your mind all over the place at the same time.

Works Cited

# Speaks, Sarah. “*Studies on Multitasking* Highlight Value of Self-Control.” *Education Week* 15 May 2012 <http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2012/05/16/31multitasking\_ep.h31.html?qs=studies+on+multitasking>

”Eisenhower’s urgent/Important Principal: Using Time Effectively Not Just Efficiently.” *Mind Tools*. March 2016 < https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newHTE\_91.htm>.