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4 Dealing with Stress in HEALTHY Ways

4D LESSON

Appraising Priorities in Healthy Ways



"We don't drift in good directions. We discipline and prioritize ourselves there."

Andy Stanley, author of "The Principle of the Path: How to Get from Where You are to Where You Want to Be." (1958 -)

Understanding healthy ways to appraise our priorities can provide life changing direction. By answering the important questions in this lesson, you will learn how to examine and analyze priorities more carefully, as well as to schedule your time more wisely.

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WHY LEARN MORE ABOUT PRIORITIZING?

Even though life requires an ability to identify, assimilate, and regulate priorities, who doesn't have trouble prioritizing? Understanding how to prioritize well is necessary for intelligently organizing ourselves, and helps us ward-off problems. If a course were offered on *Ways to Avoid Major Consequences*, improving how we prioritize would, no doubt, consume much of the instructor's time.

Dictionaries define *priorities* as actions that help us arrange items or activities in a specific order of importance. Yet, as with many other behavioral life skills, we need to know much more than the definition if we are going to prioritize well. As a crucial activity for effectively managing time, energy, and money, learning enough about prioritizing can provide valuable life-changing direction. In this lesson, you will review the overall purpose for prioritizing and learn helpful steps in determining and implementing your own priorities.

Prioritizing well involves intelligently investigating and determining what deserves attention, and then expeditiously acting upon this knowledge. Through responsible practice and due care, we learn to apply greater effort toward prioritizing safety, health, and harmony. How we prioritize tells others how well we govern ourselves, as well as care for others and our environment. Thus, knowing healthy ways to appraise priorities contributes greatly toward improving self-management, increasing our level of EQ, and saving us much grief.

Prioritizing well demands multi-tasking skills. Those who have learned to prioritize, diligently balance important concerns against desired goals, comforts, and trivial pursuits. If instead, we remain too focused on one task, TV, Internet entertainment, or other interests, we can disregard valuable priorities, such as a healthy diet, meaningful relationships, education, or even safety issues— and thus, endanger our well-being. We can also easily become so wrapped up in reaching professional goals that destructive personal habits go unchecked.

"The only thing worse than being blind is having sight but no vision."

Helen Keller, famous American author, political activist and lecturer who was deaf and blind.

(1880 – *1968*)

It is worth noting that without training for defining priorities, we are often influenced by role models and other people in our close circle. Having seen others ignore certain tasks, we may believe that those tasks are trivial pursuits, when, in fact, such tasks may have great value. This influence may create a distorted view of what is important. Moreover, we may have seen others tackle tasks that really are pertinent, enabling us to make these tasks a priority in our own lives.

Learning more about prioritizing reminds us *of the effect such knowledge can have on our well-being, our relationships, and our environment. We too often learn to prioritize in ways that mirror others in our close circle, which can distort our view of what is most meaningful. Learning how to prioritize more wisely provides valuable life-changing direction. Improving how we prioritize can save us much grief while enhancing health and harmony.*

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UNDERSTANDING THE COMPLEXITIES

Our professional priorities may be regulated by supervisors who understand the needs of the organization. Yet personally, we are the managers who must analyze and be responsible for defining and regulating our own priorities, whether we want to or not— and the criteria we need to consider can be radically different and more complex to grasp than our professional priorities determined by leadership.

Understanding *how* to prioritize wisely and manage our lives well requires tactical command and serious reasoning skill. To prioritize sensibly, we must thoroughly analyze what needs attention among a vast number of considerations. Important factors can be as difficult to identify as what we need to pack and do in preparation for a trip. Unfortunately, there are many subtle considerations in either scenario, making it easy for us to overlook urgent items or tasks.

The first step to prioritizing is to identify and create a thorough list of what needs our attention. Once we have a thorough list, the process becomes somewhat simpler, even though a list in writing can appear rather overwhelming. The second step is to consider how timely each project needs to be accomplished. Then, the third step is to start working through the priorities listed.

Sorting through the complexities of prioritizing is a mentally taxing activity that is not easily motivated. Genuine concern for improving how we prioritize not only tests our wisdom, but also our resilience, often requiring acceptance of certain do's, don'ts, and difficult sacrifices we've been avoiding. Thus, for prioritizing intelligently, we must strive toward accomplishing what is important or even vital, while admittedly preferring to handle easier or more gratifying tasks.

Understanding the complexities of prioritizing reminds us *that we aren't born with a good sense of priorities. With a vast array of considerations to recognize, we can too easily skip over crucial factors. Unlike having supervisors in our professions who are responsible for directing us, we are the managers of our personal lives and must learn to lead ourselves in healthy ways.*

HOW DO WE DISTINGUISH PRIORITIES?

Just being busy does not necessarily mean that we are prioritizing well. When we have an overwhelming schedule, we may not recognize relevant life measures. Prioritizing well requires us to consider our values and responsibilities, as well as our goals. What seems urgent may not be as necessary as we think. There may also be times when other people's priorities can seem more important than our own or may very well be more important. These are among the several cautions we must grasp to distinguish and address personal priorities.

"Sometimes things happen in life that allow us to understand our priorities very clearly. You can see those as gifts."

Mariska Hargitay, American actress best known for her role in the NBC drama series, Law and Order. (1964 -)

In the previous Lesson 4C Activities, one of the projects you were asked to perform was creating a *TIME LOG*, wherein you would note how you were spending your time throughout each day for at least two weeks. By reviewing and analyzing the time you spent on the different activities in your time log, you should have a better grasp of how productive you currently are at managing existing priorities, what interferes with such productivity, as well as ways you could be spending your time and energy more judiciously. Hopefully, you paid close attention to the amount of time you spent entertaining yourself and attending to personal responsibilities, including communicating with friends and family.

This lesson's activities provide more comprehensive analytical tools to assist you in investigating and determining priorities, as well as working through them. These tools may reveal a number of tasks that you have not considered, yet need to be added to your *To Do* list.

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Knowing how to distinguish priorities reminds us *of the life changing direction such knowledge can provide. Being busy does not necessarily mean that we are prioritizing well. Sometimes an overwhelming schedule makes it easier for us to miss important life measures. Nonetheless, with the help of valuable resources, we can distinguish our priorities more clearly than otherwise possible. Learning how to prioritize well, no doubt, improves our peace of mind.*

HOW EASILY DO WE DISREGARD PRIORITIES?

We all set goals and focus on achieving them, but let's be clear, priorities are often very different from goals we've set for ourselves. Goals can require so much focus that we may easily disregard other meaningful matters, without even realizing that we are exhibiting careless disregard. Thus, as we set goals, we must remember that the mind is susceptible to skipping over that which can be very important for our health and well-being.

You have been reminded throughout these lessons that emotions can quite easily influence behavior inappropriately, convincing you to do what you don't necessarily need to be concerned about or need to do right away. Please familiarize yourself with the list below:

15 Ways we can disregard important priorities

1. Overvalue trivial activities, while denying or discounting the value of important matters.
2. Assume that we are prioritizing wisely, yet a more in-depth inquiry would show the contrary.
3. Lack interest or incentive to do what we know needs our attention.
4. Become overwhelmed and decide to ignore important matters.
5. Think that worthwhile is more about pleasure, joy, or comfort than difficult or necessary.
6. Reduce efforts too quickly.
7. Feel agitated, temperamental, or indifferent about prioritizing.
8. Deceive ourselves regarding priorities, instead of questioning our thinking.
9. Do well at starting activities, but have trouble finishing them.
10. Have a belief system that discounts priorities that actually are important.
11. Fail to recognize warning signs.
12. Try not to think about priorities that we just don't want to do.
13. Fail to consider whether we are doing our fair share.
14. Become too self-centered to recognize priorities that have to do with others.
15. Don't have access to resources that would help us sort through related complexities.

Actions express priorities.

Mahatma Gandhi, an Indian lawyer, politician, social activist, and writer who was internationally esteemed for his doctrine on non-violent protest to achieve political and social progress. (1869 - 1948)

Unfortunately, prioritizing in healthy ways is far from an easy task and requires us to follow helpful rules and guidelines, as well as be cautious of natural susceptibilities that would cause us to disregard important tasks.

Knowing how easily we can disregard priorities reminds us *to watch for such influences. Emotions can inappropriately distort priorities, causing us to disregard and avoid important matters. Sometimes we also miss significant priorities because we lack necessary time and resources that would help us sort through the complexities involved.*

IN CONCLUSION: Using helpful prioritizing resources

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Identifying our priorities requires us to consider what is most meaningful and necessary. We must realize that, even though we receive little training for distinguishing priorities, we are still responsible for identifying and taking care of what really matters— or we suffer the consequences.

Unfortunately, we do not possess sophisticated electronic tools for clearly tracking priorities. Nevertheless, with well thought out direction and strategies, we are capable of intelligently investigating priorities, and more easily recognizing the value of each concern. Overall, prioritizing well improves how we structure our lives and provides a healthy peace of mind.

This lesson's activities and comprehensive supplements will help in searching for obscure priorities, so that you can eventually create a healthy *TO DO* list for scheduling your action. Please realize that explaining the steps of the process is easy. Analyzing and implementing requires much greater thought and energy. EII is confident that the resources in this lesson will assist immensely in improving how you prioritize.

If you prefer following a desire to wait, relevant tasks could remain undone, indefinitely. This lesson activities and other supplements are designed to furnish you with knowledge and tools for defining very meaningful priorities, but the fuel to energize your efforts must be supplied by you alone.

"What's measured, improves."

Peter F. Drucker, an Austrian born American Management Consultant, educator, and author who helped determine the practical and philosophical foundations of modern business.

(1909 – 2005)

NOTES



There is a big difference between thinking I can't and it just isn't a high priority.

Anonymous

