

Summer Wellness Challenge



Handling Our “Free” Time Activity for Middle and High School Students

Developing strong time management skills can benefit students during high school and is great preparation for getting a handle on a schedule for life after high school. There are so many competing demands and decisions around filling our time, that it isn't really free. One way to address this is to shift the perspective with time estimating, energy mapping, recharging activities and building a personalized calendar. These activities can be great to complete as a family to help each other be accountable and map out a family routine.

Step 1 – Practice Time Estimating

This allows us to gain insight into our own pace and how long it truly takes us to complete certain tasks such as getting ready for the day, eating breakfast, completing an assignment or chore and assign the appropriate amount of time for those tasks. Start by identifying a few tasks that occur frequently in your daily routine and use the stopwatch feature on your cellphone to accurately time your task completion.

Step 2 – Create an Energy Map

Next, identify your ideal times for work and rest and optimize those timeframes based on your energy levels. If you are struggling to identify your energy levels, this activity can be helpful to do with a family member who can share their observations. If possible, work on your energy map over the course of a week to capture changes that may occur. Ask yourself the following questions: When do you notice you're really motivated? When do you notice you feel sluggish? When do you notice you're able to focus and when do you seem most distracted?

Step 3 – Create a Recharge List

It is just as important to include recharge activities in your schedule for self-care, as it is to include productive activities. Take time to create a list of activities that recharge you and the associated benefits. Some ideas might include virtual time with friends, time alone, time watching a TV show, exercising, reading your favorite genre of book and cooking. Next to each activity, list the associated benefits by asking yourself: What does this activity do for you? How do you feel during and afterwards? Does your mood shift? Does your energy change?

Step 4 – Create a Calendar

Now combine the energy map, time estimates and recharge list into a daily calendar. For example, your energy map may show you have a lot of energy in the morning and a dip in the early afternoon, and a moderate increase in the early evening. To maximize your time based on your energy levels, try to schedule mentally demanding tasks early in the day, planning a specific recharge activity during the energy dip, and scheduling a single task for the end of the day. Choose a task that's meaningful to work on, then practice scheduling in dedicated work time and recharge time.