How to Create and Maximize To-Do Lists

Presented by:
Kimberly Barajas, B.S. & Katie Ramsey, B.S.
Who We Are

- Group for Organization and Learning Skills (GOALS)
- Clinical psychology doctoral students – Childhood Neurodevelopmental Disorders Lab
- Supervisor: Stephanie Smith, Ph.D.
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<td><strong>Creating to-do lists</strong></td>
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<td>• Effective ways of creating to-do lists</td>
<td>• Prioritizing tasks so that they meet their short- and long-term goals</td>
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Discussion

• How do you currently keep track of to-dos? (section in planner, electronic apps, dry erase board, etc.?)
• How has your system worked for you?
• Have you encountered any challenges with using to-do lists consistently?
Mindfulness Activity: *Do it now!*
Tips for Adding to your Calendar/Planner

- Long-term goals
- Choose a method (handwritten or electronic)
- Record recurring tasks in your planner
  - Examples: Weekly meetings, bill payments, etc.
- Record due dates as soon as you find out about them
- Set aside time to look at the week(s) ahead
Tips for Creating To-Do Lists

- Short-term goals
- Schedule larger blocks of time for tasks that require a great deal of mental effort
- Make use of “time cracks” – Slices of downtime where you can accomplish small tasks
- Ideas of what to do during “time cracks”:
  - Adding to the next day’s to-do list
  - Responding to brief e-mails or making brief phone calls
  - Reading or listening to a podcast
Importance/Urgency Grid

- **URGENT**
  - **1.** DO
  - **2.** PLAN
- **NOT URGENT**
  - **3.** DELEGATE
  - **4.** ELIMINATE
Importance/Urgency Grid

- Important and Urgent – Tasks that have the highest priority
- Important but not Urgent – Longer term assignments
- Not Important but Urgent – Demands that come up frequently throughout the day
- Not Important and not Urgent – Tasks that have the lowest priority and may involve “someday” projects
**Time Awareness**

- Under-estimators – Do not give themselves enough time to complete a given task
  - Add additional “padding” in your schedule
- Over-estimators – Give themselves too much time to complete a given task
  - Give yourself a time limit for activities
- Record how long tasks take vs. the amount of time that you allocated to those tasks
  - Improve time awareness
Maximizing your To-Do Lists

- Consider short- and long-term goals – What are the most important things you need to do to be successful?
- Break large tasks down into smaller and more manageable parts
  - Schedule equivalent time blocks to complete each portion of the larger task
- Use large, uninterrupted periods of time for activities that require a high level of concentration and focus
- Start with something that requires less concentration or is more enjoyable
  - Gets you “warmed up”
  - Gives you a sense of accomplishment before tackling the next challenging task
- Reward yourself!
Create your own to-do list by considering these factors:

1) Deadline/urgency of completing task (Importance/Urgency Grid)
2) Time it takes to complete task vs. how much time you can allocate to it (Time Awareness)
3) Who assigned the task (supervisor/boss vs. self-assigned)
4) What need the task is fulfilling (helping your team/personal goal)
5) How closely it aligns with your job responsibilities (relevance)
Electronic Apps

- Quickly/easily create or add to to-do list
- Have schedule at tip of your fingers
- Share with coworkers or colleagues
- Receive notifications as reminders
30/30 (iOS)

-Free!
-Set sequential countdown timers to walk you through daily tasks
  -Time constraint increases focus
  -Look forward to breaks

Add tasks and set estimates for:
  -How long it should take to complete
  -How long you can afford to spend on it
Todoist (iOS & Android)

- Free!
- Set deadlines and enter recurring due dates
- Map out projects and goals
  - Project sections and sub-tasks
- Color code priority levels
- Review day or week ahead and set weekly goals
- Check off tasks as you go
Priority Matrix (iOS & Android)

- Free trial
- Sort tasks into one of four quadrants:
  - Critical and Immediate
  - Critical but Not Immediate
  - Not Critical but Immediate
  - Uncategorized
- Receive daily reports of what to work on next
Things to Keep in Mind

- Always prioritize activities on your to-do list
- Priorities can change from day to day (or in a moment’s notice)
  - Update your to-do lists every day to reflect those changes
  - Can be done each night or first thing in the morning
- Consider short- and long-term goals – What are the most important things you need to do to be successful?
Thank you!