



An Hour of Power

Find 60 extra minutes in your day to do something for yourself

Tune Out The average American watches 18 hours of TV a week. Don't let the television control your life! Reduce the time you spend in front of the TV and use that time to read, take a walk or catch up with friends.

GOOD NEWS! WE'VE FOUND AN extra hour for you today. Now, you tell us: How do you want to spend it? Catching up on laundry? At work? Grocery shopping? Sorry, we won't even allow those. We'll only give you the hour if you agree to spend the time on yourself.

Some might think the idea is frivolous, but doing something for yourself, experts say, is critical to good health.

"Me time is time you dedicate to focusing on yourself," says Allison Schwartz, M.A., a life coach to clients all over the country. "It is an occasion to renew and recharge your physical and mental energy. All too often people tend to forget that their energy is not infinite; it does run out, and for that reason it is important to take care of your body and well-being."

Many of us—women especially—put others first, often neglecting our own needs entirely. But that doesn't necessarily make life any better for us or those around us.

“Putting the needs of others ahead of your own interferes with your ability to take time for yourself,” Schwartz says. “By doing so, you forget that if you do not take care of yourself, you will not be able to take care of others.”

Finding the Time

But even if you agree to spend the hour on yourself, how do you find the time in the first place? Here are seven simple ways.

1. Schedule it. “When you fill up your calendar, take time for you,” says Eve Wood, M.D., clinical associate professor of Medicine at the University of Arizona Program in Integrative Medicine and author of *10 Steps to Take Charge of Your Emotional Life* (2007, Hay House Inc.). Before you schedule meetings and your kids’ dental appointments for the month, schedule a massage or coffee date for yourself—and keep it.

2. Make little things count. Everyone needs different kinds and amounts of me time. When you can’t take long stretches of time, consider maximizing moments. Take 10 minutes every lunch hour to meditate, for example. “Even in those moments when you’re in traffic or folding laundry, you can do cleansing breaths and think about what you’re grateful for,” Wood says. “Or between meetings, do a couple of stretches.”

3. Leave your space. Whether it’s a coffee shop or another city, explore different surroundings. Take a solo lunch hour with a good book or your iPod somewhere your co-workers don’t frequent. Ask your spouse to watch the kids for a few hours while you retreat to the local park for some quiet time—and maybe a nap.

4. Turn off the phone. Sometimes the feeling that your life isn’t your own stems from constant availability via cell phones, laptop computers and BlackBerrys. So, agree to a daily moratorium on cellular gadgets. Even a couple of hours when you aren’t accessible—even if you have tasks to accomplish—can give you the illusion of me time.

5. Take a mental health day. Kids are at school, your spouse is at work. Call in sick—for a mental health day. Get a massage, take an art class, do anything—but don’t clean the house. The next day, you’ll be refreshed and ready to dive back into your work and home life.

6. Just say no. If you keep saying yes—to run the school bake sale or to participate in every charity walk—you’ll very quickly run out of time in your day. Turn down some requests and—voilà!—you’ve discovered time.

7. Take the easy way out sometimes. If you don’t enjoy cooking, don’t make everything from

scratch for Saturday’s dinner party. Buy platters from a restaurant, or make it potluck. Don’t force yourself to write individual notes in every single holiday card this year. (Heck, don’t even send holiday cards at all this year!) Order your groceries online and have them delivered every now and then.

Know When to Stop

There are ways to get the time you need—but first you need to make sure you make yourself a priority. And remember, me time is not about constant self-indulgence.

“Health is about balance,” Wood says. “Can you eat too many desserts? Yes. Can you exercise too much? Sure. Can we overdo just about anything? The answer is yes. If we become too self-preoccupied, then we can get out of balance. A big piece of wellness is balance—giving and taking. If it’s all about taking, that makes for an empty life.”

You know better than anyone that your life is far from empty. It’s quite full. Just make sure one of the things filling it up is you. —Stephanie Conner



Pencil It In

At Message Envy, we want to make sure you have time to take care of yourself—at least once a month. Make a commitment to your well-being by scheduling your next massage now. Visit us at MessageEnvy.com to find contact information for your favorite Message Envy clinic.

