



MANAGING ALL THE ROLES YOU PLAY IN LIFE

Your life cannot be described with one word. For that matter, you cannot be understood by looking at only one piece of your life. If you take a moment to consider all the things you do, all the commitments you make, all the responsibilities you have, and all the relationships you're in, it doesn't take long to see that your time is claimed in many different ways. Put another way: you perform many roles as you live in the world. There is no changing that. So how do you make the best of it?

Rethink the issue

It used to be the conventional wisdom that juggling multiple roles was an entirely negative thing, because these different responsibilities created too much stress. More recent studies – and the experience of countless people – tell us that the truth is a little different. Our lives are made richer by the many roles we play. In fact, some research suggests that people with more limited roles are at an increased risk of depression. When handled wisely, multiple roles are a gift.

Consider if the role is right for you

In order to tend to the basic needs of life, most of us will constantly have to manage roles such as Family Member, Friend, Neighbor, Employee, Commuter, Diner, Sleeper, and Customer. Yet, even with these, we can make choices to increase or decrease the time and energy required.

And then there are the extra things we choose to do. These include roles such as Student, Volunteer, or Homeowner, as well as involvement in faith groups, community organizations, hobbies, and recreational events. Often, we are also faced with decisions about becoming parents or caring for ailing loved ones. Before you enter into a new role – or decide to increase your involvement in an old one – it is vital to consider three basic questions:

1. Should I do it?
 - Make sure the role fits in with the things you really value.
 - Be certain the benefit justifies the cost and sacrifice involved.
 - Be sure that the new role actually addresses the goal you want to achieve.
 - Determine if you can add this and still be satisfied (maybe even happy!) with your life.
2. Can I do it?
 - Know the time commitment. (How many hours per week? For how long?)
 - Take a look at your motivation. (How bad do you want it?)
 - Gauge your energy level. (Are you already frazzled?)
 - Assess your skills. (Are there new things to learn before you begin?)
 - Review your support system. (Who's on your side? Will anyone be undermining you?)
 - Consider any additional costs (How will it affect your finances, relationships, etc.?)
3. How do I manage the relationships among my different roles?

If you're successfully managing your current responsibilities, perhaps you could take on more. However, if you're already feeling stressed out, don't ignore it. Also, some people are just naturally wired to be more comfortable with juggling many responsibilities and letting the boundaries of their roles blend together (for example, studying for a test on a break at work or making a game out of housework and letting children join in). On the other hand, some people struggle with this; they want the boundaries to be very clear and will focus on one task at a time. This can work, but it may limit what can be accomplished.

Find Your Balance

Your ability to balance multiple roles in your life will be hampered by poorly-considered choices. Either the quality of your work will suffer or you will. Few decisions come with guarantees, but you are more likely to make good choices when you do the following things.

1. Get clear on your values by working through answers to questions such as:
 - What kind of person do I want to be?
 - What things in my life are “non-negotiable”?
 - Where did my values come from?
 - What’s working well in my life?
 - What do I wish were different?
2. Identify your priorities.
 - Simply defined, “priorities” are the things which are most important to you.
 - Understand that priorities should always grow out of your values.
 - Get comfortable with this idea: Saying, “This is not a priority” is not the same as saying, “This is not important.” Many things are truly important but will simply have to be left for another time – or to another person – because other priorities need your attention.
 - Remember that some things may *temporarily* become a *higher* priority due to deadlines or very brief “windows of opportunity.” Reacting to these urgent demands doesn’t mean that your ultimate priorities must change, but this type of flexibility is often necessary.
3. Write down your priorities and how the things in your life that relate to them. Refer to this often and adjust as necessary.
4. Make an honest, realistic assessment of how much time you have available to commit.
5. Talk things over with somebody else and ask them to help you identify any “blind spots.” It’s true what they say about two heads being better than one.

Would you like to learn more?

When you meet with a Counselor at CPCC, you will find someone willing and able to help you explore the many roles you play. You can also discover strategies for making the most of the limited time you have. We would welcome the chance to meet with you. To schedule an appointment, call 704-330-6433.

Keep Your Balance

Book after book has been written about how to find and maintain balance in life, but two major strategies are always discussed: Time Management and Coping Skills.

Time Management involves three basic categories.

1. **Setting priorities:** This includes your “big picture” values, as well as the day-to-day tasks that are required.
2. **Planning ahead:** Many people use calendars or to-do lists, but the tool you use isn’t as important as the process of thinking things through and committing to your choices.
3. **Delegating:** Look for ways to enlist the help of others. Keep in mind that this reduces your control over the outcome of things, but, very often, the trade-off is worth it if it means you end up with more time.

Coping Skills can also be divided into three basic categories.

1. **Stress management:** Find ways to *prevent* and *reduce* worry and frustration.
2. **Social support:** Reach out to family, friends, coworkers, classmates, etc.
3. **Adjust expectations:** Accept that things will change and work at being flexible. Even if your ultimate goals remain the same, you may need to adopt new strategies, accept a new time line for completing things, or be satisfied with results that are good, even if they’re not perfect.