

How Doctors Can Make Every Second of Free Time Count

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For physicians who often work long hours, making every second of free time count is important. Here are three of my suggestions:

1. Consider paying someone to take care of less enjoyable tasks so that you enjoy more time off. Consider a task you must do every workday when you are not working, such as cleaning your house. Suppose you clean your home for 30 minutes a day, on average, over the course of a week. How much time does that cumulatively require in your working life? If your career is 48 years, at 30 minutes per day every day, you will consume one solid year of your life cleaning your house, doing something that many of you would prefer not to do.

If you don't enjoy cleaning your house and you have the means, consider employing someone to do it for you. That "year" of your life would be better spent doing what you love outside of work. You won't miss the money, but you will appreciate the time you save. Likewise, look at your calendar; any activity that you can delegate to someone else, do so now! Those 30-minute segments have a cumulative impact.

2. Identify ways to meet two or more objectives at once without multi-tasking.

Let's say you want to learn more about a new medical procedure, and you would also like to find a new partner. Look for opportunities to do both. Why not enroll in a seminar, program, or course on the medical procedure you are interested in? Attending the program will not only be educational, it will also be an opportunity to meet peers.

In other aspects of your work as well, often singular activities enable you to meet multiple objectives. Identify them and pursue them.

3. Have a long-term view. Keep up with current trends in healthcare, attend conferences and seminars, read journals, or take classes and reap! While you might not benefit immediately from doing these extra activities and it might seem like a time crunch, you will improve your overall knowledge, and patients will come to recognize your wisdom. Make time for activities that will pay off in the long run.