

*Namo tassa Bhagavato Arahato Sammâ Sambuddhassa!*

# A BUDDHIST APPROACH TO TIME MANAGEMENT<sup>1</sup>

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The importance of **skilful** time management can never be over emphasized. **Skilful** time management gives more time to do the things that are important, thereby reducing levels of stress and increasing levels of happiness. Coupled with scheduling (time-tabling), it gives an insight into how much time there *really* is there for given tasks in a week and allows for the effective ‘budgeting’ of time.

The following steps can be taken when planning/scheduling the week ahead:

1. Identify weekly tasks and attach a priority value to them, e.g. 1-3 or ‘low,’ ‘medium’ or ‘high.’ The priority of a task can be determined in two ways. One is how much value the task adds to one’s life (this is a personal view, but seek the guidance of a **wise person** if in doubt). The higher the value, the higher the priority should be. The other is how much damage/loss would be caused if that task was neglected; again the higher the damage or loss that can be caused by neglecting the task, the higher the priority that should be assigned to it.
2. Based on the priority values for tasks from step (1) determine how much time to allocate to that task in a day or week. Generally the higher the ‘value’ or priority of the task, the greater the amount of time that would be allocated to it.
3. Create a weekly/daily time-table for week days and weekend days and schedule tasks from step (2) to it.

Here is a suggested daily time-table for someone who works full-time:

<b>4:00 AM</b>	<b>Wake up.</b>
4:05 - 6:00	Meditation.
6:00 - 7:00	<i>Dhamma</i> study, especially <i>sutta</i> discourses. <sup>2</sup>
7:00 - 8:00	Getting ready for work, morning <b>offerings to the qualities of Lord Buddha</b> , taking of <b>five precepts</b> ( <i>panca-sila</i> ) and chanting a few important stanzas followed by breakfast.
8:00 - 9:00	Leave for work. There would be approximately one hour of free time while travelling to work (e.g. by train) to read a <i>Dhamma</i> (Buddhist teachings) or other worthwhile book, listen to a <i>Dhamma</i> sermon (e.g. by using an MP3 player) or to do some <i>Dhamma</i> or personal work (e.g. by using a laptop).
9:00 - 1:00	Morning work portion. Plan ahead and effectively perform work duties.
1:00 - 2:00	Lunch. After having lunch, there would be 30 minutes of free time (from a one hour lunch) to read a <i>Dhamma</i> or other worthwhile book, listen to a <i>Dhamma</i> sermon, to do some <i>Dhamma</i> or personal work or to pay bills.
2:00 - 5:30	Afternoon work portion. Plan ahead and effectively perform work duties.
5:30 - 6:30	Going home from work. There would be approximately one hour of free time while travelling home (e.g. by train) to read a <i>Dhamma</i> or other worthwhile book, listen to a <i>Dhamma</i> sermon or to do some <i>Dhamma</i> or personal work.
6:30 - 7:30	Wash, rest and have dinner (if dinner is absolutely required). <sup>3</sup>
7:30 - 9:00	Free time for listen to <i>Dhamma</i> sermons, studying or reading the <i>Dhamma</i> or another worthwhile subject, to do <i>Dhamma</i> or personal work or chores. <sup>4</sup>
9:00 - 9:50	Meditation.
9:50 - 10:00	Contemplation/reflection over the day’s events, planning, <b>problem solving</b> related to personal life. Here one should reflect on one’s skilful behaviour during the day and how it can be further established and also one’s unskilful behaviour during the day and how it can be curbed and avoided in future.
<b>10:00 PM</b>	<b>Sleep.</b>

This time-table can be modified to fit your needs, especially if you are a school or university student.

May you gain the knowledge and skills to effectively manage your time and hasten your journey towards the lasting peace of *Nibbana*!

## Notes

1. The latest version of this document can be found in **HTML** format here <http://www.vihara.org.au/go?to=timeman> and in **PDF** format here <http://www.vihara.org.au/go?to=timemanp>
2. There are online *sutta* discourse resources available here <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/> here <http://metta.lk/tipitaka/> and here <http://what-buddha-said.net/> (top right of page).
3. The Lord Buddha has talked of the benefits of not eating at night to Venerable monks (this can be applied to lay people too) in *Majjhima Nikaya* 70, *Kitagiri Sutta*, *At Kitagiri*:

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was wandering on a tour of Kasi with a large community of monks. There he addressed the monks: "I abstain from the night-time meal. As I am abstaining from the night-time meal, I sense next-to-no illness, next-to-no affliction, lightness, strength, & a comfortable abiding. Come now. You too abstain from the night-time meal. As you are abstaining from the night-time meal, you, too, will sense next-to-no illness, next-to-no affliction, lightness, strength, & a comfortable abiding."

For better health, greater physical ease and comfort as well as better management of physical weight, it is best to eat a good breakfast and lunch and skip dinner altogether if this is possible. If this is not possible then something *light* can be consumed at night, e.g. soup, a light sandwich, a healthy food drink, fruit juice, or yoghurt/curd (good for the stomach). This is the secret to losing/maintaining physical weight without exercise! Even though the norm is to eat a light or no breakfast, a medium lunch and a heavy dinner; this is yet another instance of where conventional society has got it wrong *en masse*! The proof of the unskilfulness of this kind of approach is widely reported with statistics of health related issues such as obesity, heart conditions, pressure, diabetes and other such conditions on the rise.

4. Consider cutting down on or completely giving up television viewing as most of the content is empty and offers little real value.

## Related *Suttas* (Discourses)

1. *Digha Nikaya* 31, *Sigalovada Sutta*, *The Discourse to Sigala*, *The Layperson's Code of Discipline* see <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/dn/dn.31.0.nara.html>
2. *Majjhima Nikaya* 70, *Kitagiri Sutta*, *At Kitagiri* see <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.070.than.html>

## Related *Dhamma* Articles

1. *Offerings* - On making offering to the Lord Buddha's supreme qualities, see <http://www.vihara.org.au/go?to=offerings>
2. *Daily Dana* - On giving and generosity, see <http://www.vihara.org.au/go?to=dailydana>
3. *Five Precepts* - Developing virtue through the five precepts, see <http://www.vihara.org.au/go?to=pansil>
4. *Work Stress* - An analysis of stress in the work-place, see <http://www.vihara.org.au/go?to=workstress>
5. *An Introduction to Buddhist Meditation* - Basic instructions for doing the meditations of loving kindness (*metta*), awareness of breath (*ana-pana-sati*) and foulness of the body (*asubha*), see <http://www.vihara.org.au/go?to=intromed>
6. *Equanimity* - Dealing with the eight characteristics of life, see <http://www.vihara.org.au/go?to=equanimity>
7. *Metta Meditation* - Easy to follow instructions for doing the meditation on loving-kindness, see <http://www.vihara.org.au/go?to=mettamed>
8. *A Buddhist Approach to Problem Solving* - Problem solving through the development of wisdom (*panna*), see <http://www.vihara.org.au/go?to=probsolv>
9. *A Buddhist Approach to Mental Health* - A Buddhist perspective and approach to mental health, see <http://www.vihara.org.au/go?to=mentalhealth>
10. *One Hour of Unsatisfactoriness* - The unsatisfactoriness that can be felt within the space of an hour, see

<http://www.vihara.org.au/go?to=onehour>

11. *Four Noble Truths* - The essence of Buddhism, see <http://www.vihara.org.au/go?to=fourtruths>

12. *Noble Eightfold Path* - The path for ending stress and suffering, see <http://www.vihara.org.au/go?to=noblepath>

## **Online Resources**

1. *AccessToInsight.org* here <http://www.accesstoinsight.org>

2. *Metta.lk* here <http://www.metta.lk>

3. *What-Buddha-Said.net* here <http://what-buddha-said.net>

4. *What-Buddha-Taught.net* here <http://what-buddha-taught.net>

5. *SuttaReadings.net* here <http://www.suttareadings.net>

6. *Buddhanet.net* here <http://www.buddhanet.net>