



How to manage yourself

Handout 1/16 from DIY Workshops W5

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Big picture thinking: A planning process for my *life*

1: What do I long to see happen?

2: Why am I here? / 3: What am I aiming to do and for whom?

4: What is the distinctive way I go about things?

5: What is the story of my life so far?

6: What might God do through me?

7: What are the main options open to me?

8: What resources do I have and need?

9: Where do I plan to get to this year?

10: What are the stepping stones towards these points?

11: Where may I get it wrong?

12: Where have I got to?

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Big picture thinking: Using the Ordinal

1: To proclaim the Gospel

2: To baptise new disciples

3: To teach the Scriptures

4: To lead in worship

5: To minister to the world

6: To foster people's gifts

7: To stir up your own gift

8: To accept discipline

9: To order your life



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Big picture thinking: Meditation on time

Here are some statements about time management to consider when you have some, er, time. Ponder each one. Take your time to think about each carefully – there really is no hurry!

- 1 Time is the one commodity we all have in exactly equal measure. You cannot add one second to, or subtract one second from, the 86,400 we have each day.
- 2 But life is fragile and none of us has any idea how many more days we have available to us from this moment on. Several famous achievers died at an early age.
- 3 Time is a gift from God. It is a gift we can use, or one we can squander. Those who realise this most are probably those who have been close to death at some point.
- 4 'Time management' is therefore a meaningless idea. Time is fixed. It is our life or ourselves that we manage within the time that we have.
- 5 Some people have expectations as to what they should achieve that are simply not possible. These lead to feelings of guilt and despair. Jesus Christ said that he had finished the work that God had given him, yet thousands remained untaught, unhealed and unfed.
- 6 Once time has been wasted, it is impossible to replay the DVD. This is a subject more of personal discipline than slick techniques.
- 7 Any group will include those with a wide variety of approaches to life and ability to achieve. We are not necessarily wrong, just different (and, often, married to each other!).
- 8 Your own hyper-efficient life-style (if that could describe you) may depress other people who cannot keep up with you. Your very busyness may be a cause of great trouble to them.
- 9 Your own laid-back approach to time-keeping (if that could describe you) may cause others great difficulty (eg. when you miss a deadline they were depending on).
- 10 Scripture tells Christians to live life within the context of the Second Coming of Jesus Christ in glory. That is the time context for our discipleship.

Matthew 6:27 (see No.1 in the list)

"Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?"

John 17:4 (see No.5)

"I have brought you glory on earth by finishing the work you gave me to do."

Galatians 5:22,23 (see No.6)

But the fruit of the Spirit is self-control.

2 Peter 3:10-13 (see No.10)

...Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives ...



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Handling stress: Stress or distress

Stress is a mechanical word – ‘distress’ is the medical term we often mean. There is nothing wrong in being stressed as such until it becomes distress.

- 1 Some stress is essential for health
- 2 Some stress is creative
- 3 Some stress is not so good. ‘Our inability to cope (and achieve and find satisfaction) with the demands and expectations placed upon us.’
- 4 What is an enjoyable thrill for one person may be real distress for another.

A balanced life requires

- outputs – to expend energy and challenge us (putting us under right stress);
- rest and recovery (sleep and relaxation);
- recreation (physical, enjoyable, intellectual, spiritual - discipleship);
- routines (daily essentials, care for our relationships – both for singles and marrieds)

How might this apply in ministry?

Factors in society that affect levels of distress

- 1 choices (food shopping, liturgical services, etc.);
- 2 change (life used to – we thought – carry on year by year);
- 3 clergy profile (the goldfish bowl in the local community);
- 4 relationships (are far more complicated than once);
- 5 ourselves (personality, experience, relationships, health, mind, spirituality);
- 6 email and social media.

Consider also our partnership with others in the above, our control over each of them, and the timing or multiplicity of such factors.



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Handling stress: Workplace stressors for a Minister

Which of these are dangerous for you just now? Some are clear, others more subtle.

1 Open-ended opportunities – no neat boundaries

2 High levels of emotion – funerals, up-front, conflict

3 Critics and bullies – the underbelly of congregational life

4 Secular environment – whether inner-city, suburban or rural

5 Solo working – no real team to share with, working from home

6 Long hours with financial pressure – with little escape

7 High expectations – from different groups of people

8 An environment of failure – national pressures, falling numbers

9 Poor management – little real care for many Ministers

10 Sense of inadequacy – colleagues who seem successful

11 The diocese and parish finance – paying share, keeping afloat

12 Building issues – maintenance of historical treasures

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Handling stress: Distress signals

Ten distress signals from our bodies

- ☹ Tension headaches or migraines
- ☹ Dry throat or neck pains
- ☹ Chest tightness
- ☹ Breathlessness / sweating
- ☹ Rapid or erratic or forceful heartbeat
- ☹ Muscle tension / back pain
- ☹ Indigestion / wind
- ☹ Changes in bowel movements
- ☹ Frequent need to pass urine
- ☹ Pins and needles in legs or arms

What about you? What affects you most?
What would you add to this list?

Ten behavioural reactions

- ☹ Feeling tired and drained
- ☹ Not sleeping well
- ☹ Feeling tense, frightened or tearful
- ☹ Irritable or aggressive with mood swings
- ☹ Indecisive and complaining
- ☹ Feelings of failure and unnecessary worry

- ☹ Change in appetite, libido or menstrual pattern
- ☹ Increase in drinking, smoking, use of pills
- ☹ Unable to concentrate for long or low energy
- ☹ Poor work judgement or accident prone

And you, as before?

Five spiritual reactions

- ☹ Lack of desire to pray or read Bible
- ☹ Feelings of worthlessness and sinfulness
- ☹ Feelings of guilt and hypocrisy
- ☹ Wanting to avoid God
- ☹ Wanting to hide from other Christians

NB: None of these symptoms immediately implies distress. And all anxiety produces these appropriate reactions. They become alarm bells if they go over a limit.



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Handling stress: Ideas for reducing distress

- 1 Understand how God has made you; he loves you as you are. Seek him above all else. Study the Psalms.
- 2 Identify your main ministry stressors and seek ways to minimise them. Write out a plan for how you might achieve this.
- 3 Seek medical or Christian help if you are distressed. This is not weakness.
- 4 Seek to keep morale high, avoiding crises and multiple tasks where possible.
- 5 Improve the working environment as far as you can: nature, tidiness, whatever. A day sorting the study/house may have a significant impact on your stress.
- 6 Have a life outside the parish, take time to do what you enjoy which has nothing to do with church.
- 7 Value and use your family and close friends. Do not isolate yourself (in normal times!). Take part in some kind of group activity if you live alone.
- 8 Make time for yourself, both body and mind: diet, exercise, sleep, reading. Fall back on to the Sabbath principle. Take proper time off especially if you cannot afford to.
- 9 Structure your day more tightly with fixed times for certain activities. Take a monastic approach to the day.
- 10 Use the tools we shall discuss in the next section of today's event: a planning retreat, a 'To Do Diary', saying 'no', etc.

Other ideas from your group



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Key tools to set you free: 'Planning retreats'

You cannot do either this kind of big picture thinking (Part 1) or dealing with practical solutions to your stressors (Part 2) while on the job. Most of us need time away from all distractions with time to clear the mind of current concerns. You also need an environment to excite you and take you into God's presence.

Hence the idea of a regular 'planning retreat'. The agenda is to REVIEW the past, PRAY over the present and PLAN for the future. Ideas for this might include:

- A day right away from base six times a year
- A termly 48-hour session including a night away
- An annual few days on your own

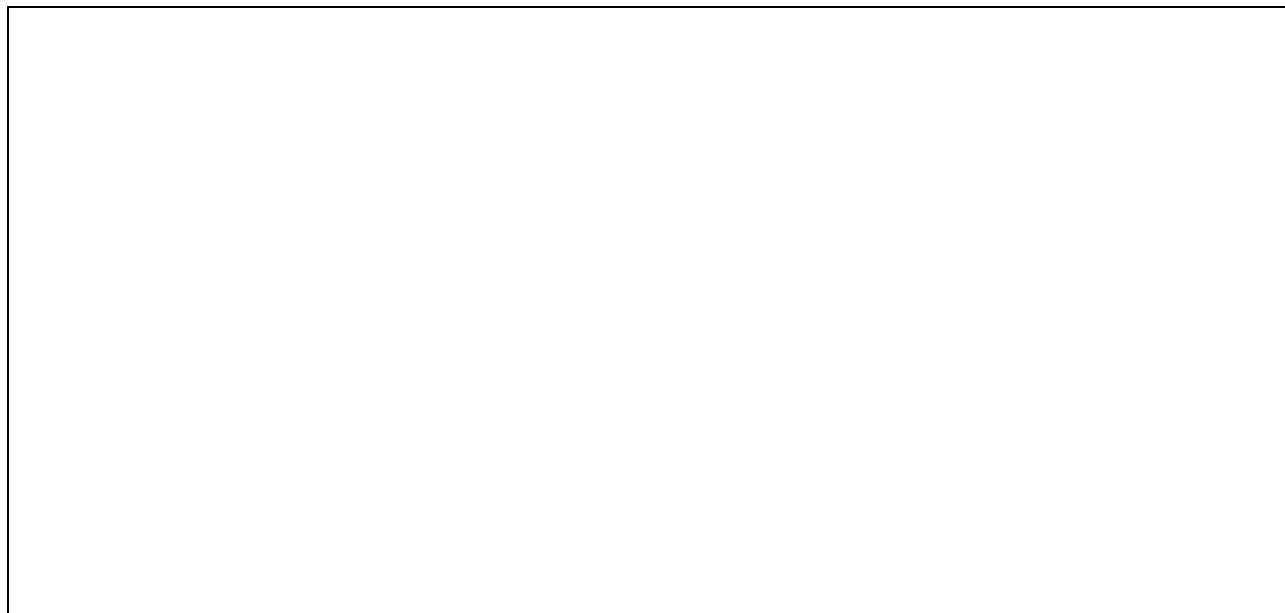
You may want to use

- A friend's house or a cottage somewhere in the country
- A retreat house of any kind
- Just going out for a long walk not too close to home.

If you work best in a team setting, you may want to adjust this idea and go away as a team or with one or two of those you know from your college days. But the key points are that:

- This is neither 'a management session' nor a 'retreat' but a 'planning retreat'!
- It needs to go in the diary early on and not be bullied by more urgent needs.
- You need to go 'away' from your normal environment and from distractions.
- The longer the better – include at least one night away if that is possible.

For further thinking on this, read Training Notes TN54, *Creating space for a Planning Retreat*, on the website.



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Handout 9/16 from DIY Workshops W5

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Key tools to set you free: Saying 'No'

1: Why we find it so hard

2: Assess the request

- Listen carefully
- Ask questions
- Activate the pause button
- Give yourself time and space to pray and ponder
- Consult your 'team'
- Beware agreeing to something in the distant future
- Block off activity time in your diary
- Check out alternatives
- Check out the urgency
- Make suggestions for next time

3: Ask yourself questions of:

- Priority
- Promises
- Time taken
- Completion date
- Enjoyment
- Preventing others
- Hurting others
- Pressure
- Replacement
- Developments

And remember, it is better to say 'No' now
than 'Yes' and fail to deliver.

4: How to say 'No'

- 1 Say something positive first
- 2 Say the actual word 'No'
- 3 Smile
- 4 Never lie but do not give too much away
- 5 Don't over-apologise or feel guilty



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Handout 10/16 from DIY Workshops W5

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Key tools to set you free: The 'To Do Diary' 1

Key principles

- 1 You keep your engagements and your desk work together on the same page, listing **everything** you need to do even if just reminders or minor actions.
- 2 You have three page sections to each diary day: **Timed Engagements** (TE), **Main Tasks** (MT) and **Quick Actions** (QA). You expect MTs to take 45 minutes or more, and QA to take up to 30 minutes but often just 5 minutes.
- 3 In any one day the time taken by TE + MT + QA must be **less than the hours available to you**. If a day is already full and you are expected to add an additional TE (a suddenly called staff meeting for example), then MT and/or QA must be reduced.
- 4 In fact you want to leave timed space in each day for **interruptions** and unexpected items. The amount that it is wise to leave will vary person to person.
- 5 You expect to **move things** around a bit from day to day.
- 6 When not on a TE, you tackle your MTs and QAs. You **celebrate each achievement** by ticking the list or whatever.
- 7 At the end of the day you deal with **each item not ticked**: by transferring them to another page within issues of urgency and importance, or dropping them altogether.
- 8 You then draw a line through the whole page and go to bed with **NOTHING OUTSTANDING**.

This can work on a digital diary system but, I dare to say, is better if used with pen and paper diary, such as an A5 page to a day office diary.





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Key tools to set you free: The 'To Do Diary' 2

Examples of Timed Engagements (TE)

Examples of Main Tasks (MT)

Examples of Quick Actions (QA)

Remember: everything goes in the diary, unless you can do it now and it will take no more than two minutes.

The importance of pack/unpack time

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Tools to set you free: A monthly calendar

Think 'aims' for the year – specific projects: group examples

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Then add dated events throughout the year: group examples

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Then create a monthly list without specific dates

January	February	March
April	May	June
July	August	September
October	November	December

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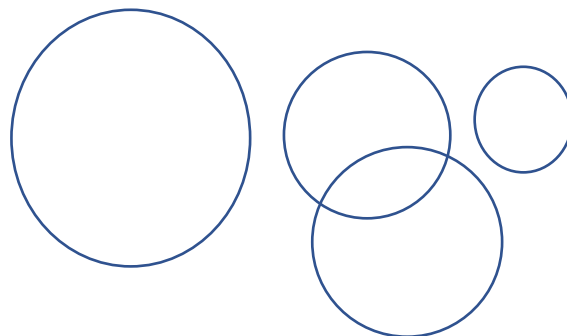


Exercises (1 of 3)

Exercise 1

We start with four circles. Label them

- **Your life** (yourself, your history, your family and friends)
- **Your ministry** (as a priest/Minister)
- **Your discipleship** (as a follower of Jesus Christ)
- **Your employment** (only add a fourth circle if you *also* have a paid job as SSM or other major responsibility outside your main Christian ministry)



Your task is to draw three (or four) circles in a space to represent each of these, choosing appropriate sizes for the circles and an appropriate layout where the circles exist separately, overlap, or fit within each other in some way. What exactly the circles you draw represent is entirely up to you. This is an issue of how you perceive yourself and there is no right answer as such. You might like to return to this at the end of these sessions today.

The pictures below are of an Ordnance Survey map and a road atlas. Most of us default to living in the detail of today's or this week's agenda. We have meetings to attend, talks to prepare, people to serve, services to plan. That is like an Ordnance Survey map showing roads, footpaths, contours, wooded areas, churches with spires or towers, etc.

That enables us to go for walks on holiday but in its detail fails to show us how to get to that holiday destination. For that we need a road atlas (if we are driving there) – not much detail but a helpful overview of the whole route.

To know you are on the correct holiday you need the road atlas, the big picture approach. If you plan the detail first you run the risk of planning the wrong holiday.

You cannot control your ministry and your life if you have no clear context in which you are working. First, others will control it for you. Secondly, you will have no criteria to enable you to plan the detail. On the following pages we look at two possible approaches to determining a personal 'big picture', one for your life, one for your ministry.



Exercise 2

Pairs or small groups discuss which one or two (no more) of the 12 questions on Handout 1 does each person feel they most need to ask of themselves now? And why?



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Exercises (2 of 3)

Exercise 3

Groups or pairs discuss which of the points on Handout 2 they feel they most need to work on now. And why?

You might also discuss the order of the numbered points. What would you change in the order to give a more accurate understanding of the responsibilities of ministry? Would No. 9 be better as No. 1? Or would the list be better seen as a circle so that No. 9 takes you back to No. 1 again?

Exercise 4

Groups or pairs discuss which of the points on Handout 5 do you feel most apply to you as of now? And why? What are the triggers for these?

Where might the idea of spiritual warfare fit or not fit into this study? What does this look like as opposed to signs of distress?

Exercise 5

Groups or pairs discuss which of the points in Handout 6 do you feel most apply to you as of now? And why? What are the triggers for these?

Exercise 6

As a group together, which of the ideas for reduction are most helpful for you, and what other ideas would you want to add that you have found effective?

Exercise 7

Consider the Gospels. What were the particular stressors that Jesus was living under during his three years of ministry? And what can we learn from how he handled these? OR study St Paul's attitude to stressors in 2 Corinthians chapters 4 and 11 (and other chapters too).

Exercise 8

The time to plan your first Planning Retreat is now. If you fail to do this now you will quickly get lost in the daily detail of stress and it simply will not happen.

But if you are taking part in this workshop as a group, this would be a good opportunity to help each other clear time in the diary for such an event, and hold each other to decisions made now.

Common thoughts before such an event are likely to be 'I have not got time for this – there is too much pressing business'. Common thoughts afterwards are, 'Thank God I made the time for this. It was so worthwhile.'

So the issues to decide are what might be possible in my situation regarding time away from base? Where might I be able to go for this time? How might I divide up my sessions for review, planning, prayer and, perhaps, reading.

As a group together share experiences of those who have done something like this in the past, and help each other find a way of enabling this within the next month or two.

Let the group decide to share experiences through a Zoom meeting at a given future date or through a 'WhatsApp' group.

As part of this exercise it would be worth reading Training Notes TN54 in the Resources section of this website, *Creating space for a Planning Retreat*.

Note that this tool needs little explanation but a considerable amount of decisive action!



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Exercises (3 of 3)

Exercise 9

As a group come up with a number of reasons why most of us find it difficult to say 'No' when we know we should. Fill in the box on Handout 9.

Exercise 10

List some real, live examples from group members of Timed Engagements, Main Tasks and Quick Actions.

When is it helpful to make a Main Task a Timed Engagement and when might this be dangerous if overdone?

Exercise 11

List some real, live examples from group members of one or two of their aims for the current year. Then list some group examples of major dated events.

Now create a list of these by month – see Handout 12.

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Resources

WEBSITE RESOURCES

Here is a range of resources on the website all relating to self-management in some form. Much of the material in this DIY training aid has come from some of these.

<https://www.john-truscott.co.uk/Resources>

Articles

- A4 Twelve questions to help you plan* *
- A25 Working from home – boundaries, discipline and space
- A27 Reliability in ministry – for administrators and leaders
- A36/37 Sorting out your study – the space and the stuff in the room
- A50 The 'To Do Diary' guide – how to use this simple tool* *

Training Notes

- TN6 The Minister's role in larger churches
- TN7 Ideas for how to make time for life
- TN11 Keeping a time log
- TN23 How to do 'To Do' lists* *
- TN40 Appointing a Church Administrator
- TN43 Did Jesus use an iPhone? – *essential reading to back up all this material*
- TN54 Creating space for a Planning Retreat* *
- TN57 Clear your clutter!
- TN62 Know what distracts you* *
- TN67 Stress and the Christian worker* *
- TN70 Do's and don'ts for a new leader
- TN78 The role of a church leader* *
- TN84 How to say 'No' when you should* *
- TN106 Talk about taking time 'off'* *
- TN112 Set my leaders free!
- TN157 The value of review

* *Materials used, or adapted for use, in this workshop