7 Habits of Highly Effective Investigators*

Marjorie K. Mau, MD, MS
Dept. of Native Hawaiian Health, JABSOM
He Huliau – Diabetes 2004
April 25, 2004 – Turtle Bay, Oahu

* Revised & updated from Presentation by Dr. Kalauokalani, 3/6/03
"Habits"*

- A “habit” is the intersection between knowledge, skill and desire

- “Effectiveness” is a balance between P/PC
  - production (P) of desired results & production capability (PC), the ability
  - “P/PC Balance”

- “Effective Investigators”
  - Engage in habits
  - desired results: grants, publications, new discoveries
  - ability: professional growth, teaching-learning

* Covey SR, The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People, 1990
Habit #1: Focus, focus, focus

• Be proactive in setting personal goals
  – short & long term career/research goals
  – Productive research groups – clear organizational goals
  – People within them - articulate personal goals compatible with organizational ones.

• Guard against setting impossible goals
  – specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, time sensitive.
#1: Focus Your Attention*

Circle of Concern

Circle of Influence

Proactive Focus
(Positive energy enlarges the Circle of Influence)

*Adapted from Covey SR, 1990*
Habit #2: Anticipate Your Destination

• Identify your area of research focus
• Develop a “vision” of your contributions to this/these area(s) of study.
  – Personal leadership: “doing the right thing”
  – Principle-centered: research “seeks truth”
• Know the “rules” to reach your destination
  – Examples: What is required to be NIH-funded? What is needed for promotion?
Habit #3: Manage Your Time Well

• Poor time management = lost productivity
• 5 steps:
  1. Consider your prior plan of goals (short/long)
  2. Learn to say ‘No’ – evaluate every new proposed activity in light of your goals
  3. Leverage your activities – double dipping allowed!
  4. Re-evaluate & re-focus as needed
  5. More important to succeed at a few important tasks than to complete a large number of less important ones.
# Habit #3: Manage Your Time Well

**Specific Strategies: Prioritize!**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I. Important/Urgent</th>
<th>II. Important/Not Urgent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Crises</td>
<td>Prevention, Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pressing Problems</td>
<td>Relationship building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deadline-driven projects</td>
<td>Recognizing new opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Planning, recreation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>III. Not Important/Urgent</th>
<th>IV. Not Important/Not Urgent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interruptions, some calls</td>
<td>Trivia, busy work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some reports, pressing matters</td>
<td>Time wasters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some mail, some meetings</td>
<td>Pleasant activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Popular activities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Habit #3: Manage Your Time Well

**Specific Strategies: Strive to Prioritize!**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I. Important/Urgent</th>
<th>II. Important/Not Urgent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Crises</td>
<td>Prevention, Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pressing Problems</td>
<td>Relationship building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deadline-driven projects</td>
<td>Recognizing new opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Planning, recreation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>III. Not Important/Urgent</th>
<th>IV. Not Important/Not Urgent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interruptions, some calls</td>
<td>Trivia, busy work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some reports, pressing matters</td>
<td>Time wasters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some mail, some meetings</td>
<td>Pleasant activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Popular activities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Habit #3: Manage Your Time Well

Specific Strategies: Value-based Management

• Develop a Schedule: weekly & daily
  – Ensure the proper “mix” of tasks
  – Monitor productivity & re-adjust as needed

• Block/Protect appropriate times for
  – “Creative” thinking
  – Writing Productively

• Allow for down time
  – Interruptions, phone calls, etc.
Habit #3: Manage Your Time Well
Specific Strategies: Conquer Procrastination!

• Research is often a complex multi-step activity
  – Breakdown the tasks into smaller increments
  – The hardest part is getting started
  – Fight the temptation of “inertia”
  – Work with the time available – sometimes 15 minutes is enough.
  – Avoid putting things off until the deadline.

  Daily >> Weekly >> Monthly >> Quarterly >> Annual >> Long range

Changes the structure of the deadlines
Habit #4: Socialize & Network in Research

- Most, if not all, research requires you to work with other experts.
- Go to talks, conferences, seminars
- Read the literature, including papers outside your area of interest.
- Anticipate evolution of the field.
- View networking as part of your job.
- Search for colleagues that share your values, similar work ethic, high standards of quality.
Habit #5: Communicate!

• Understand that research is a highly social & political process of communication, interaction and exchange.
• Become an active listener
• Speak after listening and be calm and kind.
• Re-state the “obvious” and the “not so obvious”.

• Write clearly & concisely
  – Ensure readers/reviewers understand your message.
• Clarify your own thinking
  – evolution of thought, expose faulty reasoning

• “Clear writing is writing that is incapable of being misunderstood” - Quintilian
Habit #6: Grow & Maintain Synergistic Relationships

• People – your most important resource.
  – choose the right person for the job
    • skills, enthusiastic attitude
    • spell out details—quality, deadlines, resources, etc.
  – discuss the plan
    • complex jobs require planning
    • avoid micromanaging/sabotage
    • schedule progress reports/updates
  – seek agreement
    • does person understand assignment?
    • can s/he meet your deadline?
    • assure buy-in for the good job that is needed.
Habit #6: Grow & Maintain Synergistic Relationships

• Delegate wisely
  – delegate tasks to allow more time for you to do something with higher value or that only you can do.
  – don’t hesitate to confront poor performance as soon as you notice it.
    • give helpful feedback and begin constructive action.

• Promote a “kakou” attitude
  – the whole is greater than the sum of its parts
Habit #7: Be Mindful of Lokahi

• Order your life to include time for each significant area.
  – Social/Emotional
    • stress relief, family
  – Spiritual
    • values, commitment
  – Mental/Thinking
    • reading, visualizing, writing, planning
  – Physical
    • exercise, nutrition
Habit #7: Be Mindful of Lokahi

• **On a normal day...**
  – Have a positive attitude
  – Be proactive
  – Accept the things you cannot change & change the things you can
  – Be an active listener
  – Nurture your relationships
  – Be ruthless with time & gracious with people
  – Take time to reflect & renew your spirit.

Mauna Loa from atop Mauna Kea