Nowadays, students are always facing different kinds of pressure in life. Heavy amounts of schoolwork, endless tests and exams, jam-packed extra-curricular activities; these all attribute to students’ high stress level and a dearth of rest. As one of the students living under the exam-based education system, I know exactly how hopeless and depressing it is to bear the enormous workload. Let me walk you through some simple tips in life to improve your productivity and lower your stress level.

If you are able to satisfy one of your dreams, what would it be? Would it be cancelling all examinations in the world? Or you would prefer eradicating the whole education system? Hold on, don’t get too excited yet. Such things won’t happen in real life. However, you don’t have to get disappointed as I can provide you with another trick----stealing time for leisure use. Sounds appealing, right? To start with, you will need a pen and a notebook. As time is limited for all of us, using them wisely by appropriate separation and distribution is extremely crucial. The general time separation principle is ‘URIM’. Now, draw out the following table on the first page of your notebook:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  |  | Urgency |  |
| Importance |  | High | Low |
|  | High | Spending(65%) | Investing(20%) |
|  | Low | Consuming (10%) | Wasting(5%) |

Your daily events should be categorized according to its urgency and importance. In order to maximize your use of time, you can draw out to-do lists in different scales---- daily, weekly and monthly. Then, you may color-code events using the above system. The (%) represents the most effective and ideal way to separate your time each week. By following the above system, you can organize your daily routine in a much efficient and clearer way, thereby helping you to recognize how much time do you actually have and eliminate problems like regretting being lazy or being a “deadline fighter”. Apparently, the time saved by using this methodology will be your leisure time. Imagine having your online games time doubled while maintaining high academic performance in daily life. It seems almost irresistible! So why don’t you try out this system right away?

Some of you might still reckon the above principle too complicated. Don’t worry, I have provided a ‘Plan B’ for you. First, equip your smartphone with two apps---- ‘Be focused’ and ‘Perspective-Daily Journal’. The former is a timing system and the latter is an online bullet journaling system. For the latter, you can simply record goals, to-do lists, and any other habits you want to track in the app. A well-developed goal tracker and habit tracker will be set for you. All you have to do is to stick to the plan, simple and easy. If you are worrying about your self-control, try out the other app. It times you by separating tasks into different working intervals with regular breaks. It has also prepared a bar-chart and a pie chart separately in order to keep records in time usage. With the two apps coping together, you can effectually allocate time and spare playtime from busy life.

The above two tips can both help enhance productivity and establish a less time-consuming working habit. However, apart from adopting helpful systems, creating a comfortable and relaxing working environment is also an essential element. The simplest step to start is to clear your desk and only place the useful materials on it. Psychologists have proved that visual views will directly affect one’s emotion status and incentives to work. A messy environment messes up your thoughts and plans while a tidy one benefits your efficiency. Next, you should eliminate all disturbances in the workplace. For instance, switch off the electrical devices or turn them to the ‘Do not disturb’ mode. This will make sure that you are staying focused during the studying process without any vibrations or alarms that pull you towards the message box. Last but not least, you should take a break regularly. Reading books or playing word puzzles during breaks activates your brain and prepares your body for the following working session. Reading relaxing magazines or answering IQ questions provides the same effects as well. As such, not only your efficiency is improved, your mental state can also be stabilized and will become more stress-resistant in the long run.

After all, the above methods are just generated from my personal experiences. It might not work for all of you, but I hope they can provide a general idea on how to tackle the heavy workload. My final reminder is that if you are really under constant stress, stop working immediately, regardless of its importance and urgency. Take a couple of minutes to stay away from the working environment. Listening to soft music or doing meditation exercises can reduce your tensions during that specific period of time. One thing that you should always remember: your mental health is far more important than any academic task.

Hope all of you can eventually live your lives in the most productive way!