

TAKING TIME

by Rebecca Escott

Extension Home Economist



Pace Yourself! It's Good Advice

When I got married, one of my co-workers shared a valuable piece of advice with his "Best Wishes". His advice — "Pace yourself."

"Pace". Webster defines it as a verb meaning, "to set or regulate the rate of speed". When individuals and families experience changes, pacing is important. (And I don't mean creating nervous traffic back and forth across the living room or bedroom floor.)

Personal energy is exhaustible. Everything will not get done. What can you do?

First, you have a variety of obligations. Don't spend all your time and energy in one area at the expense of the others. You need some energy for work, but you also have to conserve strength for your children, personal interests, and spouse. Young couples with children are hard-pressed to find time for themselves. Try! Farm couples may be able to share some together time during the midday instead of trying to catch a few minutes at the end of the evening.

Second, name your most important tasks. Tackle them when you have the most energy. Early evening is usually a stressful (non-

productive) time! Children are returning from school and may have had nothing to eat for five or six hours. For adults, patience and energy are dwindling.

Third, with every change we need to let some obligations go. "Because we're planning a roadside stand this year, the house may just not get cleaned." "Because we're caring for a new baby, the garden may have to be smaller." "If I'm taking on leadership at church, I can't continue to coordinate our parent group at school." Keep this in mind in relation to aging, too. As your physical energy and skills change, you need to adapt your expectations about the amount and kind of work that can be done.

Make it clear that a few things have priority and devote energy and thought to them. I certainly haven't perfected this to an art. But I'm trying. It's frustrating for me to have things that I care about being squeezed out of a jam-packed schedule.

A lecturer commented on how people try to do too much. She said, "Working full-force seven days a week until you are exhausted at the expense of relationships is not a sign of strength. It is a sign of weakness." Pacing,

finding balance, learning to give and take and being content when you don't have everything is a sign of strength.

It is easy for adults to exhaust themselves physically and mentally so that they are of no use to the people they care about. Parent educator Jean Illsley Clarke shares this caring reminder, "Children deserve parents whose needs are met. We need to remember that when our own needs are met we can then take better care of other people."

It sounds easy, but it is not. For those of you who are struggling, try these suggestions: Start going to bed one-half hour earlier. Your body will take several weeks to adjust to the schedule, but the extra rest will strengthen you.

Think through your needs for the next day. Have lunches packed and clothes selected for you and your children. Keep a running list posted on the refrigerator or bulletin board noting needed grocery items and "to do's".

Build in some quiet times. Get

up and shower before the rest of the household is in full swing or listen to relaxing music while you're driving.

Always keep in mind the ONE most important thing for you to accomplish at work (and if your home is your "work", what's the most pressing task there?), for your child, for your spouse, and for

yourself. If you can do these things during the day, you have done very well.

The pace of life that our society sets is exhausting. It is nearly impossible to maintain. Do yourself and your family a favor, change the timing, choose a new step, and walk at that pace with confidence.

Steps For Homebuyers

WEST CHESTER (Chester Co.)

— Penn State Cooperative Extension presents "Steps for Homebuyers," a three-part series to educate prospective homebuyers or current homeowners. Step One: Finding a House to Fit Your Budget will be held on Monday, March 16, and includes advantages and disadvantages of home-ownership, working with a real estate agent, finding out about financing, and setting realistic expectations. Step Two: Sizing Up the Structure will be held on Monday, March 23, and will address assessing structural quality, checking the electrical, heating and plumbing systems, and testing

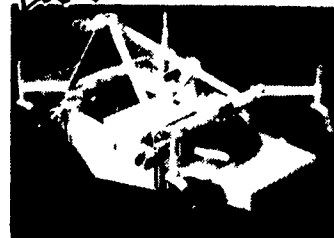
for radon. The series concludes on Monday, March 30, with Step Three: Learning about the Purchase Process, which is making the purchase offer, understanding the paperwork.

"Steps for Homebuyers" will be held at the Chester County Cooperative Extension office, Dague Building (3rd floor), corner of New and Market Streets, 235 W. Market Street, West Chester, from 7:00-9:30 p.m. The cost is \$12 for the entire series; registration is due by March 9. For registration information, contact the Chester County Cooperative Extension at (215) 696-3500.

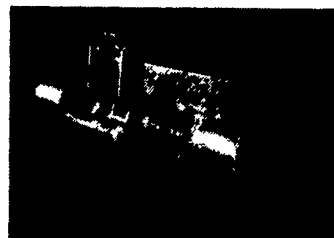


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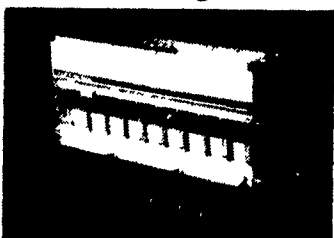
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