

# Chiropractic ECONOMICS

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# So much to do, so little time

## How to set personal priorities

By Monica Wofford, CSP

**H**ave you ever been confused on which way to go? Not sure what to do next or which items to do first? Has it ever felt like a tornado in your head?

We all feel similar from time to time, but there is a way to manage the feeling. More importantly, there is a way to prioritize those things that are most important. Some ways you can stay focused include:

- **Knowing the difference between urgent and important.** These terms are used synonymously all the time, yet they don't mean the same thing. Urgent items are based on the value of time — deadlines, time it takes to get to the hospital, etc. — important items are based

- **Managing your mindset.** What you expect of yourself will play a part in what you try to do. Are your expectations accurate? Can you really accomplish your entire list in one day? Or is it time to re-evaluate what you are expecting of yourself.

Not completing a list for your priorities, if you are a maker of lists, will not only bum you out, it will consume you with guilt and a feeling of failure. Keep your charter member card to the workaholics club if you want, but get your mindset into a manageable mode.

Analyze the accuracy of your expectations. Ask yourself if what you are thinking you can do is really doable. In fact, double the time you think each item on your list will take and build in time for “fire drills” that may come up.

If you are consistently beating yourself up for not getting where you want, it may also be time to re-evaluate

## The more you know about what is most important to you the less you will be influenced by others.

on value. The importance of something to you is based on what you value.

When you create a list of priorities or your daily to do list, determine the difference between what is urgent and what is important.

Dr. Stephen R. Covey, author of *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, calls the urgent and important items “quadrant one” activities. Those that are urgent only are “quadrant three” and those that are important only are “quadrant two.”

For prolonged periods of time, a singular focus on the urgent items to the point of exhaustion will lead to burnout (quadrant four).

When you crave becoming one with the couch at the end of every day, you will find you have no energy to do those things that are important but not seemingly urgent — such as preparation, planning, and goal setting.

This can create a feeling of being stuck. Priorities don't move forward, get done, or feel like progress when you are stuck.

where you want to go, when you want to get there, and with what sacrifices. Your attitude will significantly affect your level of success.

- **Play the game.** Sometimes you are too close to your own activities, goals, and priorities to accurately ascertain what the most important one is.

There is a game you can play, much like tournament or championship game brackets in almost any sport.

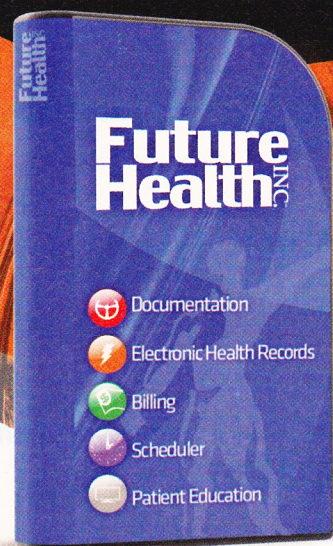
Choose a category such as financial priorities. On the left side of the paper, list the things you want into this category. Begin to compare the first two items. Which is a higher priority?

Write that item to the right of the top two, on a line that is in the middle of those two items. Then compare the third and fourth items.

Repeat writing the higher priority between those two in a column to the right. Continue this until you have half the number of priorities written in column two. Then compare the first two items in column two. Write the “winner,” or higher priority, in column three.

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## personal development

Repeat these steps for other categories such as career priorities, family/social life priorities, material wants, physical/health wants, etc.

Continue to run this tournament with your priorities until you have one winner.

Then take each winner from your separate sheets of paper and run one tournament until you get your single highest priority.

Much like all the teams of a championship game are good and valuable, there can only be one winner.

Discipline yourself to find the highest priority.

• **Get an objective view.** Your tournament exercise does not diminish the importance of any one priority or item on your list; it merely forces you to decide what to work on right here, right now.

It is a good idea to objectively review your tournament on a quarterly basis.

In addition, when you use the discipline to pick one out of two and one out of two again, you will find it is easier to be objective.

Maintain that objectivity and ask yourself, if the world stopped spinning today, what would be the one thing on this list that I would want to make sure happened.

Often you will find that this one thing encompasses many of your other priorities and by getting the most important one done, you will have in fact, achieved many more items on your list.

Priorities are personal. For some, the feeling of "getting it all done" is paramount. For others, it is more important to "get them right," "get appreciated for doing them," or "get along with others in the process." The preference depends on your personality and how you are wired.

Remember, your priorities are yours and are subject to change at your discretion.

The more you know about what is most important to you the less you will be influenced by what others tell you "should" be done.

Stop "shoulding" and get to the task of determining what is most important to you. Sometimes this means you will need more clarity on who you are before you figure out what you want. It's worth the effort, and so are you! ☺



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For an example of a tournament bracket go to  
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