



## Time is finite: Spend it on things that bring you joy

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Like many professionals, pediatricians speed through life with calendars as cluttered as their junk drawers. This scheduling messiness can be overwhelming and cause exhaustion and emotional depletion.

In a recent poll of female pediatricians, 90% cited lack of time as their No. 1 obstacle to accomplishing their goals. The hours in the day are as finite as the cupboards in a kitchen, so a methodical approach is needed to declutter and guard against reaccumulating less-than-joyous commitments.

But like the junk drawer, many pediatricians ignore the messiness of their time management. First, many are too busy, and cleaning up an overcommitted schedule is tough personal development work. It's easier to keep saying yes than it is to develop the discipline to reduce the clutter and focus on joy-giving activities.

Second, perfectionism keeps many pediatricians from delegating duties. They get trapped in the mindset that it's easier to do a task themselves than teach someone else to do it. They fear jeopardizing years of education and training if the documentation isn't perfect, the lab isn't followed up on or the parent isn't called back.

Lastly, many pediatricians fall victim to the sunk cost fallacy. Because they have spent so much time or money on something, they are unable to cut their losses and maximize their utility in the present. Some pediatricians stay in unfulfilling positions or continue to serve in roles that no longer bring them joy because they focus on the time or money invested in the project. This is the time equivalent of keeping a previously loved but now too-small dress in hopes it will fit again one day. Old habits and annoying commitments hang around even though they are less appealing than a ninth-grade homecoming dress.

The same principles that can help declutter and organize the messiest cupboard also apply to overbooked schedules. Pediatricians who are stuck in a pattern of overextension should consider adapting the principles of Marie Kondo, a popular organizational expert, to their schedules. Ask these three questions:

1. **Does this commitment reflect my vision of my future self?** If not, appreciate the value you have gleaned from the obligation or task. Then, eliminate it to create time and space for opportunities that align with your mission and vision for your future. Just as you will enjoy new clothes that fit and flatter the current version of you more than old, ill-fitting ones that take up closet real estate, so will you appreciate having space in your day for things that reflect your goals.
2. **Will this request for my time bring me joy rather than annoyance?** If the answer is no, delegate it. There are many ways to delegate tasks to people (or technology) who likely will do the task better than you. Simple examples include turning off notifications on your smart device and unsubscribing from emails. More sophisticated ways of delegating include training a scribe or hiring a public relations firm to handle your social media.
3. **Does it fit in my schedule, and does it have a place in my life?** Everyone has 1,440 minutes a day. Be intentional about things on your calendar. Consider the opportunity cost of the request for your time (i.e., the value of what is given up). Analyze where your minutes are going. If the distribution doesn't align with your vision, work to bring your actions in line with your values.

It's time for pediatricians to clean out the junk drawers in their schedules and focus on what brings them joy. Delegation is a superpower, and it is the key that will unlock the door to a more fulfilling future.

While some pediatricians may feel their vision for the future has faded because of life's busyness, they should remember that the challenges of the last two years have prepared them to tackle many things. Reconnect with your vision and apply some basic principles of tidying up to your life so you can do more of what you love and less of what you don't every day.

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