

# Help Pharmacy Residents Polish Time Management Skills

**Residents may turn to you for help leveling up their time management skills...**especially as workload increases.

**Assess roadblocks.** Encourage residents struggling with time management to track their time and pinpoint contributors...distractions, procrastination, lack of organization, trouble prioritizing, etc.

Debunk the myth that multitasking helps. It's linked to lower productivity and more errors. Plus it can be mentally exhausting.

Watch for maladaptive perfectionism. Fear of imperfection can be paralyzing...leading to longer hours and trouble starting projects.

**Share tips for efficiency.** Encourage residents to focus on one task at a time, when able. And block a set period of time for each task...even if there's only a small window for each one.

Minimize distractions. Encourage silencing phone notifications...or limiting to texts from preceptors or the patient care team. And limit checking email to set times.

Also suggest keeping a notebook or app to jot down mentally distracting "to-dos" and ideas that pop to mind while trying to focus.

Share the Pomodoro Technique. Tell residents to set a timer to work for 25 minutes followed by a 5-minute break, then repeat. This method is linked to improved mood and concentration.

**Emphasize organization.** Recommend triaging tasks by importance and urgency. Be aware, you may need to guide perfectionists...they may see all tasks as equally important.

Also advise residents to clarify deadlines...and NOT assume all requests are immediate.

Share the "Getting Things Done" method. For example, if a task takes less than 2 minutes, recommend completing it right away.

For projects or longitudinal tasks, suggest an online project management tool (*Microsoft Planner*, *Trello*, etc) to help create timelines and break tasks into bite-sized pieces.

Emphasize reaching out early if they are confused about an assignment...so residents don't waste time going down the wrong path.

Encourage transparency about competing priorities...such as longitudinal projects and rotation duties. Sometimes assignment overload, not time management skills, can be the issue.

Get our *Preceptor's Guide* for more teaching and communication tools...and strategies to address burnout and resilience.

## Key References:

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