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*"What's Wrong with Being Average?"* Often the 4-H program gets caught up in competition and we spend a great deal of time praising those few members who go all the way and bring home the top awards. But the 4-H program belongs to all the members and being realistic, not everyone can be number one and more important, not everyone wants to be.

Kris Ehlen, 9-year-old member of the Sugar Creek 4-H asked the question, "What's Wrong with Being Average?" and won the speech contest's elementary division in the process. This is Kris' speech:

I'm an average girl. I get average grades. I'm of average height and I wear an average size shoe. It seems to me that today everyone wants to be a super brain, have super good looks, and be super popular. What ever happened to being average?

Just pick up a magazine and thumb through it. You know what you'll find? Beautiful girls, in beautiful clothes, advertising something to make you beautiful.

In one magazine alone I found 49 advertisements that claimed they could make you more beautiful, 2 even claimed to make you look younger. Who wants to look younger? It seems to me everyone has this big hangup over being number one. Darn if I'm going to get ulcers trying to get straight A's. I like being average and I like my average friends. If I'm happy with my B's and C's, why should I get all frustrated trying to get A's. Maybe we all should try harder at being super human beings. Kindness and consideration of others doesn't take super intelligence.

Everyday we run into people who are having problems. Some of these people need our help. A super human being knows when to give a helping hand to a troubled friend. He knows what to say at the right time. Sometimes saying nothing at all, but just being near is all a troubled friend needs. Don't get me wrong, I'm not knocking the people who have super brains, and are super beautiful. But let's hear it for the average person, who happens to be a super human being.

Seems that if we all listened to Kris and spent a little less time competing and a little more time on becoming super humans, we 'd all be better off. Kindness and consideration are the keys!

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*Another Time Management Idea.* The issue on time management was excellent as it covered most salient aspects of marshalling one's time toward maximizing efforts and results. But there's one facet of time management that needs attention that can save an individual hours, pain, and grief. It's not a complex system of filing, routing, or staff organization. It doesn't focus on biorhythms, delegation, or creativity. It's simply the ability to say "no" rather than "maybe," "perhaps," or "we'll see."

Everyone wants to be liked. Very few people enjoy being considered hard, cold, or ruthless. It's human nature to enjoy having one's ego "stroked" and to bask in the warmth of colleagues' praise, respect, and friendship. Carried to an extreme, however, that desire can destroy one's time management or the ability to use limited time effectively. Rather than hurt someone's feelings, foster ill-will, or appear to be a "bad guy," we often avoid saying "no" to a request or proposal and try to sidestep the issue by offering a nebulous response . . . even when we know that the eventual response will have to be negative.

This approach, in the long run, is disastrous because much like paper shuffling, the issue has to be faced eventually. The person will be back again . . . and again, until an answer is given. And, when the eventual decision is rendered, everyone will have invested much more time and effort than was necessary. Often the very image the decision maker was trying to avoid is placed on him/her. Instead of being regarded as astute, firm, or competent, he/she now becomes weak, indecisive, and wavering.

If this occurs often, the question of competence is quietly raised. The net result isn't only poor time management being forced to deal with the same trouble several times—the very respect the decision maker was trying to develop is called into question. Subordinates don't know when the question they posed is being seriously pondered or whether the decision maker is simply trying to avoid a negative decision. Obviously, morale suffers.

In essence, the ability to say "no" when the situation requires such a response is perhaps the greatest time management tool yet devised. I once served under a chancellor who pragmatically said, "Never ask a question unless you are prepared to hear 'no'." A proper corollary might be, "Never say 'perhaps,' when 'no' will serve your purpose."

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