

Is it Top of the Hour Yet?

Steven Covey said it best in his book First Things First, when he proclaimed, “effectiveness is a results word; efficiency is a methods word.” In this book, which was co-authored by Roger and Rebecca Merrill, he writes of our inner conscience being either a “clock,” ruled by efficiency or a “compass,” ruled by effectiveness. I for one know exactly where I stand. I am a clock. Being a very impatient person, I have the tendency to want answers then and there, although I make people very annoyed when I ask them more than once. Take my orders to a new duty station as an example. In the military, a member usually goes to a station for 2 to 3 years and at the end of their time there they rotate somewhere else. About 9 months to a year out, a detailer, (someone who helps the member pick available duty stations) will either contact him/her and let them know places available that they can go to next. In my case I waited until my year window (which is the time frame I can start talking to my detailer) to see if he/she was going to contact me. No one ever did. So when I got to my 9-month window I was trying to rush my detailer through the duty station picks to get an answer to where I will be stationed next. I did not take into consideration that my detailers were also helping 300 to 400 other personnel who are closer to leaving their duty station than I was. By trying to rush, I was arguing with my husband, my quality of life was deteriorating, and I was beyond stressed out. Because of this, I had to turn to my “compass.” I had to adjust my

way of thinking to set up time for my husband. At the end of the workweek, just being able to stop worrying about work, the military and other ‘non-priority’ things, I was able to devote my whole attention to my husband—which not only helped improve our relationship, but also helped to decrease my stress levels as well.

If I had only understood Covey’s concepts of the clock and compass, I probably would not be in the military today. Joining the military was a decision that I made because I was so nervous about not knowing what to do when I got out of high school. I had so many options but instead of taking a step back and thinking through all of them thoroughly, I picked the one that seemed good at the time. Although I am proud to be a Sailor, I could have been able to devote all of my energy to being a full-time student instead of a part-time one. By figuring out what was priority in my life and thinking about what I wanted my future to be, going straight to college out of high school would have made more sense. Would I change it now? No, because by joining the military I am still able to go to school, but I am also able to build up my résumé for when I get out of the military and go back to a civilian job. I wonder sometimes if I could only think like my mother-in-law, I wouldn’t rush into things. My mother-in-law, Kay, is someone whom I would consider my role model in a sense. Though a single-mom, she has been able to juggle so many things with grace and poise. Kay has always put her children

first while finishing things at work in a timely manner that are of quality. Kay definitely knows what her priorities are without getting sidetracked, but she also gets her work done. She is well balanced in being efficient and effective. A woman of her stature should be an example for most, if not all, who struggle with the day-to-day battle of balancing work and family and other things which can cause you to lose track of the big picture. The big picture being that you can accomplish so many things while being calm. I aspire to be more like her because if I were, I wouldn't always be stressing out and asking, "Is it top of the hour yet?" I'd be more like "Fugget about it!"