



英语听力练习

小人物播客在[十一月](#)和[十二月](#)的 Monthly Review 提到的听力练习：花一段时间重复听刻意听，把一段5分钟的英文播客完整地听出来，包括生词、词组、表达。分享一些我听的 Transcript。主要来自以下播客：

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0425 Second Cup: Think 168 hours, not 24

when I first to study writing about the time many years ago, I realize something: a lot of people said the phrase 24-7, but no one multiplied it through. I certainly had it. I had to get out of a pen and some paper to do the math. it turns out there are 168 hours in a week. this number is important for a few reasons. first, a week is the cycle of life as we actually live it. this is the smallest unit of time that offers a **representative** picture of life. if I choose a random 24 hours of your life, it would look very different if I choose a Tuesday or Saturday. if I choose a random 168 hours though, the odds are much better than my next pick of 168 hours, we look at least reasonably similar. Second, look at in a week shows us how much time we have. things that appear to consume a lot of time, don't in the context of the week. regular listeners of this podcast will hear me say this **equation** a lot. with 168 hours in a week, if you work a regular full-time job, so 40 hours per week, and sleep 8 hours a night that's 56 hours per week, that leaves 72 hours for other things. if you worked 50 hours you still get 62 hours. this might not be a parent on a Tuesday

when you're in the office from 8 AM to 7 PM. but those 62 hours show up when you put out the whole week. but it's not just about the math. I think 168 hours number is important because it helps us see that things don't have to happen daily, nor do they have to happen at the same time every day. in order to count our lives, I called this belief that things have to happen every day at the same time, the 24-hour trap. I see a most often with wait for it, exercise. you may fall into the trap yourself. people often tell me that they want to exercise more and then I took themselves out of it because there's not a perfect time every single day. you know how these conversations go: I'd love to exercise but I'm not the kind of person you can just leave for an hour every day at lunch, or I'd love to exercise but I have a family I want to see I can't go to the gym for an hour every night after work, or I'd love to exercise but I wake up early enough as it is I can't stomach the thought of waking up at 5 AM every day. so don't wake up at 5 AM every day. stop looking for the perfect time every single day. instead, look at the whole week and see what you can fit it in. maybe one morning you get up early and exercise. if your co-parenting with someone you can trade-off in each of you gets one night off. you could go to the gym then. do something on each of the two weekend days and wow if just exercised four times a week. it didn't happen daily at the same time every day, but it didn't have to. and funny things, because I write about time management, people often want to tell me about their great daily habits. this one of these occupational hazards I didn't foresee, but OK, great, tell me about your great daily habit. and I realize after a while, that the person does this awesome habit Monday through Thursday. but that's not daily, that is 4 times a week. so rather than fall into a 24-hour trap, look at the whole week. I find this is especially helpful when it comes to issues of combining work and the rest of life. people sometimes write to me that their balance is **out of whack** because they had to stay late at work or maybe they travel frequently. so we look at the time logs and we find out, let's see, on average they stay late past the kids' bedtime at work 2 times per week. but that means they're home 5 nights a week. 5 is greater than 2. so rather than look at the 1 night where it appears work and family are pitted against each other and then 2 nights appears work and family are pitted against each other, why not look at the whole week, then we see that we have space for both. people often say to me that they aren't enough hours in the day, I agree. but we don't live our lives in days, we live our lives in weeks. think of 168, not 24 we see that we can build the life we want

0424 Make time to connect

no matter how busy you feel, you do have time to engage meaningfully with people around you, both in-person and virtually. in the long run, I was like these probably matter more than any other demands that feel urgent. people it turns out are a good use of time. I keep track of my time and have for five years now, and so I know exactly how I spent my hours. when I first pull together this episode, February and I've been noticing how long my weekend mornings had become. with kids, in three different schools plus an infant, everyone was on a different schedule. I would be up early feeding the baby. then I had my coffee while the middle schooler was eating his breakfast. so he could head off to his early morning **choir** practice, with my husband usually driving him. the preschooler with wind up in the kitchen at some point after, following by the elementary school kids. I would often be sitting in my kitchen and breakfast mode for 90 minutes. in the original version of this episode, I mentioned that this was a lot of time, but in the grand scheme of things, it wasn't that much of time. I decided to make my peace with it, because these long morning spent over the breakfast table means that I was available for whatever my kids wanted to talk about before they all went their separate ways. fast for two months and these days no one is going much of anywhere. mornings have changed a lot. so have all the other hours. we're connecting quite a bit these days, more than any of us ever thought we would. there are some challenges to this, of course, there are also some upsides. in the past, I was often trying to convince myself that, yes, you have time to connect, you don't have to race off. now that there is nowhere to go, this is even more **apparent**. of course, eventually, life will get back to something approaching normal. if there is any good coming out of all this social isolation, I hope it is a recognition that our connections to others are incredibly precious. I hope this realization will challenge us to see that even in a busy schedule, it's worth looking for times to connect. it's worth realizing times are happening that you don't actually have to rush off to the next thing. this is true for family members, for friends, for colleagues, even for people you don't necessarily consider yourself to be all that close to. someday people will be walking back into their offices. and when you do walk into that office, you can recognize that you have time to say hello to the security guy. you have time to ask your colleague about the baseball game who was so excited about it. you have time to listen to his answer, you have time to look the person behind the lunch counter in the eye and ask her how she's doing and to thank her for sending you your sandwich. we may appreciate this on some level, you know full well that you aren't being efficient by deleting email newsletters on your phone while you're in the lunch line. when life gets back to normal, we'll thrill with humanity for a while and then we will revert to the same bad habits. that's why it helps to keep repeating this phrase: people are a good use of time. indeed, connections can make

us feel like we have more time. from my book, off the clock, I have 900 busy people check their time for a day. I found that the people who spend the most time engaging with family and friends had the most abundant perspective on time. they felt like they had more time than people who spent the quantity of time on TV or social media. when you keep repeating the phrase that "people are a good use of time", it helps to direct you, and that split second photocopier when you decide whether or not to engage with a colleague who wants to tell you about her engagement. when you decide to pick up a call for that elderly relative that would be so easy to dismiss because you're trying to wrap up at work. or when you ran into a neighbor getting off the subway you're about to get on, you can see that there's another train arriving in 3 minutes. so you can talk about the building seasonal decorations, and be fully present knowing that you weren't going to do anything more important in those 3 minutes. truly, you do have time to connect. you'll still get where you need to go, but the journey will be richer and more meaningful along the way

0423 Make time for delight

The point of time management is to build a meaningful, fulfilling life, and part of that is **occasionally** pausing to savor the delightful moments that life offers up. you have time. indeed this moment of delight can make you feel like time is more abundant. I was thinking of this a few months ago during the pre-dinner **bustle** and my 12-year-old son suddenly said, hey check out that sunset. I looked out the window and wow it was indeed **spectacular**. it was still winter then and gray bare trees frame the pink and orange shades of warming light. we paused and stared for a while through the kitchen window, and then out on our cold back watch. this moment of reference didn't take long just a minute or two. but it was a reminder of these planet's rhythms and the **extravagant** beauty is there if you pay attention. we can find delight in all sorts of places if we're open to it. maybe it's an unusual flower in a neighbor's yard. a bright red **cardinal** stopping by a bird feeder, the sound of church bells, or wind chime. winding down, leaning close. even the trees you passed 100 times, might offer up an interesting model patten on its trunk. or if you're looking for mind-made delight, think small. lots of people find tiny things delightful. newborn clothes, dollhouse furniture, supplies for building model airplanes. look for photos of these things online or pull up the tiny onesies that are still in your **attic**. for other delightful ideas, look for a photo book you have a page through in a while. or through photos of previous vacations on your phone. engage all your senses, really enjoy that first bit sip strong coffee. take a deep with of

the **vanilla** extract you use for baking. listen to a recording of an opera, or the string orchestration a movie soundtrack. and of course, put yourself in places where the delight might happen. there are many reasons to build little adventures into life, even in these days of social distancing. whether it's a lunchtime walk or a trip to an international grocery store. but the opportunity for delight is a big one. in any case, the next time you notice something beautiful or unexpected, pause, savor it, don't rush past and your determination to get from one thing to the next. instead, realize that you weren't going to do much profound and those extra 30 seconds anyway. you have time to linger. indeed slowing down naturally stretches out our enjoyment of things. and when we feel like more of our times and joyfully, we feel like we have more time.

0422 Write fast and edit slow

When you're working on a project that requires making something new aim to create first without questioning yourself. then once you got your ideas down, you can be more **disciplined** about turning this something into something better. this **counsel** to "write fast and edit slow" will be familiar to writers who are often encouraged to treat writing and editing a separate process. they require different kinds of thinking, just as we can really multitask by checking email or running a conference call, we were better off writing and editing successfully. rather than authoring between them in one sitting. and her classic book, *Bird by Bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life*, Author Anna Lamott urgent what would-be writers to pen crummy first drafts. crummy isn't the word she uses. but it is what Will uses for his family-friendly show. I'm not very good for first drafts, pave the way she says for good second drafts and **terrific** third drafts. Lamott discourages perfectionism which she writes means that you tried desperately not to leave so much mess to clean up. but avoiding mess may not be advisable according to Lamott. **clutter** is wonderfully **fertile ground**, tightness, she writes suggest something is as good as it's going to get. tightness makes me think of whole breath, or suspended animation. well, writing needs to breathe and move. I love that description. when we write fast and free we give our writing breathing room and space for movement. we don't stifle it with premature criticism. only after we got more ideas on paper are you ready to shift to slow **painstaking** editing. write fast and edit slow could be the mansion for national novel writing month or Nano Raymo. the month-long challenge with hundreds of thousands of people tries to write a 50,000-word manuscript during the month of November. that would suck to an average of 1667 words per day, across of 30 days of the month. you can't write 1667 words per day and do everything else you do. if you stop to **critique** yourself every time you've written 10

words. you have to keep going and save the editing for December and beyond. I read the first draft of my time management fable to explore possibilities do Nano Raymo 2017. yeah, I read an entire draft of a book during November. but the book wasn't published until March 2019. my editor and I have in big chunks of that time more than a year improving the novel. honestly, I think that was about the right pace. the underlying principle of "write fast edit slow" works for other endeavors besides writing and many contacts generating ideas freely allow you and your team to have a lot of content to work with. then you can refine your ideas with rigger and discipline. you're better off generating tons of ideas on how to market your new product and then analyzing what would work. there's analyzing each idea as you come up with it. that's a great way to get bug down. being OK with lots of crummy stuff allows us to sort through the rocks to find the gyms and get those gyms polished to share the world

0421 Reduce chores, don't reschedule them

I read a lot of time management **literature** and over the years I've noticed something: a lot of tips that purport to save time are really just about moving work to some other time. granted, sometimes of the day can be more **phonetic** than others and maybe it's helpful to spread it walk around. but sometimes the so-called common mornings or evenings that these tips promise, come to a high cost of reparation or rest. for instants, meal prepping all afternoon on Sundays may make your weeknights lighter. maybe. but the cost of a big chunk of your weekend. selecting your own and your kid's clothes for the week on Sunday still takes time, even if it's not during the weekday morning rush. it may actually take more time on the weekend since you might be quicker about it in the mornings when you have to look presentable by 8:30 AM. many kids are home from school these days, but when they go back, would you rather pack lunches after your kids go to bed or crow up in front of the fire with your **spouse** and a good book. when you reschedule chores you **wind up** pushing them into it could be leisure time or you decide still have your leisure time after doing the chores and you go to bed too late. **grumpy** mornings are never calm mornings even if you laid out outfits, made lunches and otherwise followed all the questionable advice. rescheduling chores also creates another problem, you might move chores to times when other family members don't see them. you might also wind up doing work that other people could do. and particularly thinking about children here. if kids can't see your hard work well it's like the lunch fairies created the sandwiches with faces on them and decorated the homemade cookies at magically show up in their lunch boxes. it will be nice if they were lunch fairies, they aren't. nor are the fairies who magically clean the kitchen and pick up

the toys every night. let's hope kids don't learn this for the first time when they running their own household. also to be honest sometimes other adults in the household persist in believing in these fairies too. if you do all the meal prep on Sundays, this implies that feeding your household is your job and your job alone, unless your family has a specific agreement on chores with other parties fully responsible for equally time-consuming work, it's unclear why this would be the case. better to reduce chores rather than reschedule them. consider whether all household tasks are worth doing rather than doing meal prep on weekends you can just make simple meals during the week. you can order in want too, to **lower the burden**. rather than making lunches when kids are back in school, you could have them start buying lunch or making their own lunches. you can stream on your clothes and let kids wear what they want. you can recognize that those toys **scattered** all over the living room are just going to come out again the next morning. so there are zero benefits and losing leisure time in order to pick them up. rescheduling chores doesn't save time, reducing them does. so whenever that's an option probably better to go with that.

0420 Consider the opportunity cost

when you're deciding whether to take on a new responsibility or accept an invitation, don't evaluate this option in isolation, instead, consider how the option compares to the next best opportunity that you have to give up to say yes. in a recent episode of the MPR show podcasts planet money economize were asked about the most useful ideas permic economist. Lisa cook named opportunity cost and she's got my vote on this one. as you may remember from your Econ 101 days, the opportunity cost is the principle that the true cost of something is what you have to give up in order to get it. in other words that new car you're considering doesn't just cost 30,000, it's opportunity cost might be the kitchen remuneration that you don't have \$30,000 for if you buy the car. or maybe you're in a job, well, in normal times you can pick up extra shows, the opportunity cost of the car might be the extra day every other week you'll need to work until the car is paid off. or you could invest \$30,000 in 20 years with compound interest have enough saved to retire a year earlier. you get the idea. as is often the case, money and time turn out to be similar. our choices about time turn out to have an opportunity cost too. when you choose to do one thing you were choosing not to do something else. such as life. there are no freebies. but you want to make sure that your choice is both conscious and wise. the key realization here is that when you choose to pull your time with something, the alternative is not nothing. it's doing whatever else you could have done in the same amount of time. so if it takes you three hours to make the **elaborate dessert** you saw on Pinterest, the opportunity cost might be reading

most of that new novel that you keep meeting to pick up. both could occupy the same block of leisure time. or maybe your team has set up a **recurring** meeting at 9 AM on Tuesdays, the opportunity cost might be the other work people could've done at that time, such as powering through big projects without interruption, when people's minds tend to be refresh. or a normal time meeting clients for breakfast. so is the deserve or the recurring meeting worth it? it's entirely possible that the answer is yes, but the issue is that people often decide to take on activities based on whether they're free, not whether these activities are the best use of time. when someone asks to meet on Tuesday at 9 AM, you look at your calendar, see that it's open and say yes. you don't consider that maybe come Tuesday, your biggest client will be asking for a **proposal** by new. or that 8:55 AM on Tuesday, your cousin wants to FaceTime because after a month of quarantining with his significant other, they decided to get engaged. and want to share the celebratory news with you. of course, neither of these new developments may be likely, but you don't know that. when we take on commitments or **lukewarm** about, we may have to turn down things we really want to do. or through our whole schedules and the flutters and create bad feelings in order to make the good stuff happened, better to be more strategic. when you say yes to something that's only a five or six on a 10 point scale, you crowd up space for the eights and nine's. that's the real opportunity cost. don't assume your time will only be filled with zero. so today as you're considering taking things on, ask yourself what else you could do with an equivalent quantity of time. consider how you feel if an opportunity to take on something that was an eight or nine into your life and consider that you can often create opportunities for eight and nine if you're smart and keep your eyes open hopefully Will empower you to turn down the mediocre more confidence

0417 Set goals within a range

set goals within a target range, instead of a specific target number.

This helps us aim high and have opportunities to feel satisfaction and accomplishment, even when life doesn't go entirely as planned. I'm sure that anyone who listens to a productivity podcast knows that we're supposed to set goals that are **specific and measurable**. exercise 4 times per week is more motivated than exercise more. also better able to assess whether we have achieved goals when they are specific and measurable. but specific and measurable goals don't have to include a single target number, instead, they can include a target range. for instance, our exercise goal becomes exercise 3 or 4 times per week. we might aim to write between 500 and 1000 words per day in a novel. a salesperson might aim to

call 8 to 12 **prospects** per day. a few good things happen when we have goals like this. that have a target range rather than a single target number. first, we can set a really challenging upin for the goal. on the outer edge of what we can **sustainably** do. we can **envision** an upper limit that is achievable when things are going really well. having that high upper limit can motivate us to do more than we otherwise would. as for the lower limit, this reflects what's achievable with life being what it is. a world in which stuff goes wrong. the lower limit still means steady progress. no world records but an acceptable outcome. if your goal is to run 3 to 5 miles every Wednesday and you run 3.1 miles, you've attended your goal. you might wonder whether goals with a range then people stop pushing themselves once they passed the lower limit of the range. good question. but the Harvard Business Review sites research on goals etting regarding wave us. they found what they call high low goals lead to more **sustainability** without a reduced amount of weight loss. so no worries that the lower limit to the target range will end up being all you accomplish, instead, having a lower limit allows us to keep going in bad days without feeling like failures. then we can aim high when the stars align. few things in life are exact and we can't protect our inner or outer **circumstances**. we can't **predict** that some days we'll be better than others. so rather than setting goals with a single precise target, instead, try setting with a range, you'll be more likely to achieve them

0416 You have as much time today as you ever will

it's tempting to put tasks side until there's more time for them, but more often than not, the extra time we have seen in the future is just a **mirage**. we're better off being realistic. do you have **a stack of** unread books sitting on your **nightstand**? do you have items on your to-do list that keep getting transferred to tomorrow? how about big home projects you keep thinking you should **tackle**, like repainting the garage. all of us have tasks that may be valuable but unurgent. in the face of more pressing priorities, the tasks get put off again and again. we'll get to them when life calms down. we'll get to them next month, next year, when the kids are older, when life is somehow different. it's understandable and sometimes life will be different in the future. I do imagine that my life will look different in 20 years when I don't have five children under my roof. I imagine it will look different in a few months once stay at home COVID-19 **restrictions** it. but there are two **drawbacks** to kicking tasks forward. the first drawback is that the task may never get done. if there was doing, that's a loss. the second drawback, which is more pernicious, is that the tasks hanging over our heads for days or weeks or months on end. loose ends creating anxiety and consumer mental bend?. we can operate much better in the present when we're not distracted by nagging to do's. so what can we do about this? by recognizing that we have as much time today as we ever will, we'll

able to make more realistic choices about what tasks we choose to take on and what we will let go. in the moment, this may mean recognizing that you are never going to do something and letting it go from your list. if you haven't painted in a decade, you probably aren't going to that virtual workshop on watercolor paintings that your local library is hosting. so toss the flyer. on the other hand, sometimes recognizing that we have as much time today as we ever will, can practice to knock out a task immediately. go ahead and call your doctors office about the billing error, you need to address the issue at some point and there's no reason to think you have more time for that tomorrow. so don't let it **linger**. now to be sure sometimes you may find it hard to let go of tasks that don't weren't doing today, or scheduling for a specific time in the near future. that's the case you might create with David Allen called a Someday Maybe List. as the name suggests, this is a running list of ideas to pursue someday, maybe, you are committing to do them, but you're keeping track of them. so you can cruise the list every now and then and pick up any ideas you suddenly feel strongly about. this list creates some middle ground for stuff that sounds nice but doesn't fit into your life right now. but just know that there's not going to be a magical time in the future when you feel more like calling the doctor's office about the billing issue. when you have so much energy that you can organize the entire garage before breakfast. in the future, you will be pretty much the same as you are now. and maybe that sounds depressing but hopefully, it's liberating. people with tons of time obsessing about stuff that they are never going to do. and that's a waste of time that could be spent enjoying life as it actually is. so the next time something comes up and you said yourself that you'll get to it later after this busy season passes, think again you have as much time today as you ever will and it's wise to be thoughtful and realistic about how you choose to spend it

0415 Beware solutions seeking problems

not every so-called solution will make your life better. some just add to your to-do list and waste your time. then don't get me wrong I love strategies and **tactics** for solving problems and making the most of our time. when we **streamline** tasks that are not important to us, we have more time for what is. but sometimes what's presented as a solution isn't actually solving a problem at all. some **life hacks** are just silly. take one I saw recently, that advise keeping **dishwasher** pods on the **windowsill** to save the time it would take to get them out of the **cabinet**. I'm not sure that the five seconds it takes to **retrieve** a pod from the cabinet right by the dishwasher is such a huge problem, that justifies a solution requiring ugly windowsill **clutter**. or another hack, stretching while drying your hair. stretching well you just waiting for something such as when you got food heading up in the

microwave is one thing. but if I've got time to dry my hair I'm pretty sure I've got time to stretch too. and if I tried both **simultaneously**, I'm pretty sure that I tip over and land down the floor. as for the advice to never leave your room empty-handed, this makes sense and theory, but never leaving the room empty-handed means you're thinking about cleaning up every time you're in the room, which seems like it's adding trouble, rather than taking it away. no one is ever going to achieve a state of **decluttering perfection**, whatever object your cut out, will soon be replaced by another one. if the room is still usable then rule like this, maybe solutions, **chasing** after problems that don't exist. then there are solutions that are helpful for some people but maybe not for you because you don't have the problem they're intended to solve. for example, lots of magazines will tell you that wise home managers meal plan and shop **in bulk**. but if in normal non-social distancing times, you enjoy stopping buy special grocery store on your way home from work and deciding what to cook for dinner based on what looks good. meal planning and bulk shopping what amounts to turning pleasure into a chore. how is that a win? essentially, you want to avoid diverting time to solving a problem that you don't have and considering whether to try a property solution, compare the time invested and the outcome is generated now with what you would expect with the solution. if this so-called solution doesn't require less time, produce better outcomes or both, it's probably not worth it for you. what is the most ridiculous life hacks you've ever heard, have you ever fallen for solutions seeking a problem?

0414 Get a family uniform

particularly if you're spending a lot of time at home these days, having some sort of **matching outfit** or **accessories** that you share with the people you love can make you feel like you're on the same team. this past Christmas I decided to buy my entire family matching pajamas. my goal at that time was just to take one of those cute Christmas morning pictures people post on Instagram. but since we were expecting another baby soon after Christmas, I elected to buy pajamas that more completely Christmasy so the baby could wear his pair once he was born. the pajamas are just none season-specific festive, a navy blue ?? and red and fuzzy pants with a snowflake pattern. this turned out to be a good choice because my entire family, and include my husband and myself in that statement, have kept wearing these pajamas all winter long and into spring. we don't sit down and decide to wear them on the same night, but it is always fun to see which other family members have chosen them on any particular evening. we nod and smile and note the family jammies. this was fun in January and February, but it's proven particularly nice as we **wound up** in the house together 24-7 starting in early March. if we're going through all this at least we're going through it together, as a family in team **jerseys**. if you're spending a lot of time with your family these days, you might also enjoy having a family uniform. pajamas are great because well let's face it we're spending a lot of time in our pajamas and

it's an easier sell to get people to wear something comfortable. but you can choose a matching family T-shirt or baseball cap. a matching family **fleece** would keep you warm until the night, matching slippers might be fun too and no one's going to see them when you're on zoom calls all day. so you could keep wearing them all day long. even your chosen family such as roommates might want to get in on this. it's fun to feel like a team during tough times with the folks living with. a uniform can also help you establish a connection with far from family too. send grandma the family T-shirt and then everyone wears it as you FaceTime each other. it's not the same as being there in person but reminds you that you're in this together

0413 Celebrate milestones along the way

you don't have to wait for that lifetime achievement award to have a sense of accomplishment. you can identify and celebrate small wins on your way there. this tip comes from Chip and Dan Heath's book *The Power of Moments*. the Heath brothers build on work by Steve Camp, point out how video games do a great job of giving players feelings of progress and accomplishment when they get to a new level. you enjoy playing and want to keep playing because you've experienced success. and I'm not much of a gamer myself, but I know that when my kids have reached new levels in their favorite games, they'd been widespread **rejoicing** in our house and more game playing. because progress is motivating. when you reach the new milestone, you feel fired up and excited to see what you can accomplish next. the Heath point out that the couch to 5K app and the Boy Scouts at their badges do something similar. my favorite example is Fitbits India badge awarded to those who walk 1997 miles which is the links of India. never mind we are those steps were taken and over what period of time. you have a sense of **triumph** and realizing that you've walked as far as India is long. no matter the **occasion** you can celebrate. I've heard about a pacesetter for folks aiming to run a marathon in three hours and 45 minutes, who let his runners in a dance break at every mile marker. I love this idea of adding a little fun and lovely by celebrating each completed mile. and sure finishing mile 26 is more moments than finishing mile 14, but if you don't make a path mile 14 there's not going to be any celebrating at mile 26. marking accomplishments along the way renews runners' motivation to work to their big goal. so how do you recognize and celebrate **incremental milestones** in our own lives? I find it helps to dream up the words that are related to your big goal. for instance, if you're trying to save up for a down payment on your first house, every time the designated savings account crosses say a \$10,000 threshold 10,000 20,000 or 30,000 you could celebrate by buying yourself a decorating magazine to get ideas for your new house. or by driving or walking with your partner around the

neighborhood you hope to live in. there you can talk about your hopes for life in your new home. you don't have to wait until you purchase the house to celebrate, you can also mark the steps along the way. these celebrations are particularly important if the long-term goal is challenging and uncertain. maybe you're trying to find a new job and in this economy, the process is something of **an uphill battle**. you can identify incremental milestones to recognize, like sending out a dozen resumes, getting a telephone interview. then each time you hit one of these milestones, you celebrate. the reward doesn't have to be fancy, you decorate that day's page in your journal with stars and smiling faces. maybe you follow the lead of our marathon pacesetter and have a mini dance party in your living room. why not, these can keep you feeling excited and motivated in the face of **rejection**. we can help kids recognize and celebrate incremental milestones too. maybe every time a child masters a new piano piece, your family gathers around the piano for an after-dinner concert. why wait for the annual **recital**? we could all use some more celebration in our lives. for kids and adults recognizing milestones let's celebrate and **reintegrate** our efforts along the way

0411 Second Cup: Create a List of 100 Dreams

When it comes to time management, a lot of people think it's all about saving bits of time here and there. so the Internet is full of these kinds of tips. I will **confess** that I read these tips like everybody else, hoping I'm gonna find hours in the day that I didn't know existed. but then it's always stuff like clean the shower while you're in it, or one of my favorites which somebody said no serious, is that if you send a lot of emails for the answers OK, you should just type K instead of OK. because I know the only thing keeping me from greatness is typing a letter O in all my emails. right? if you think about it it's kind of silly. we don't build the lives we want to by saving time. we build the life we want and then time saves itself. I think it's so much more effective to think about what we want to spend more time doing. what great things would we like to put into our lives? the best way to answer that question is to make a list. many years ago career coach Caroline's niece Olivia shared an exercise with me that she calls the list of 100 dreams. this is a completely unedited list of anything you want to do or have in life. it can be travel goals or hobbies or things you like to do with your family, maybe professional goals too. you can think of this as a bucket list, but most people's bucket list, don't have 100 items on there. it's actually really hard to get to 100. the first third is pretty easy because most people want to travel more. so they put the 33 countries they wanna visit. after that, it gets more complicated. Random items I put on my list over the years have included visiting the Greek Islands, sympathy on Australia,

building and furnishing a dollhouse with my daughter, writing a collection of sonnets, getting a good rain jacket and singing in a performance of box be minor mass. you'll probably have to come back to this list several times. don't second-guess your answers you're not actually holding yourself to any of this, and you don't have to show it to anyone either. though you can if you want. it's just fun to think about things you want to spend more time doing. you'll learn more about yourself and more about what makes you feel excited and energized. because here's the thing: I promise pretty much everybody has some **discretionary** time in their lives, unfortunately, if you're building a career and raising a family, this free time seldom comes gift wrapped and obvious. it doesn't always look like a day at the spa. instead, here's an hour after the kids go to bed, or when you're waiting for the carport bring them home from soccer practice, or maybe it's a half-day on the weekend with the groceries are bought and swim meet is done. because we think we don't have free time we don't ask what would we like to do with it. so in free time does appear, we spend it in the most effortless way as possible, scrolling around online, watching TV or **puttering** around the house doing housework that doesn't really need to be done. with a list of 100 dreams though, you get ideas. if I've got an open hour, I can write a draft of sonnet, on the weekend afternoon I could find a doll furniture store and go visit. then this time will feel more **rejuvenating**, then if I lose stuff, I don't care about. so some point today, start making your list of 100 dreams. maybe you can get 25 over your lunch break, maybe you can add 15 more tonight or maybe you'll surprise me and get all the way to 100

0410 Know what you're there for

right now with the world lockdown and everyone engaged in social distancing, people are starved for any sort of get together. But in normal times we often wind up with engagements that are not **intrinsically** satisfying. but that connect at a deeper level to what we value. and sometimes this is obvious, I doubt anyone goes to an **elementary school** orchestra concert for the music. we know we are there to support our kids and to connect with them as they do something they afford taught to achieve. These are good enough reason so we're not **agitated** the viola, the violins appear to be playing different pieces. sometimes though when we need to show up, it can take concerted effort to find or create a why to motivate the first performance. we have to figure out what we're therefore. if we do though, we can feel far more effective and happier about this use of time. take a forced family performance. perhaps in normal times your extended family would host an annual Easter egg hunt at your aunt's house. this makes sense when the kids were six

years old but now they are all teenagers. there's a lot of **whining** about why exactly they have to hunt in her bushes for plastic eggs with candy that no one likes anyway. this is when you need to get real about why you're actually there. it's not because the Easter egg hunt will be fun for the children. it won't be. you're there because your aunt really loves the Easter egg hunt and you really love your aunt. you tell yourself and you tell your kids. the main reason you're there is to give your aunt joy. with that clarified people can perform the rules with far more **gusto**. next year when the Easter Egg hunt is back on, don't be surprised if one of your teens **gushes over** your aunt's Easter decorations and another finds ignorance that your aunt has been an egg in the watering can yet again. in actions and words and facial expressions everyone's main aim is to give your aunt Joy. it doesn't matter that would be more fun for most people if everyone just got together for a meal. that isn't the point. your aunt's joy is the point. so ensure that and let everything else go. as you might imagine work offers plenty of opportunities to **refrain** things that we would rather not do: take meetings. people find meetings inefficient, **demoralizing**, boring, fill in the blank with your biggest gripe. we're seeing now in these days of social distancing things that a lot of meetings that people claim could've been emails actually could have been emails. but no doubt when people return to their workplaces, they will still be boring meetings. You will still have to keep showing up. so if you're not gonna quit, you can massively boost your happiness by coming up with a more attractive reason to keep attending. Be a general aversion to getting fired. maybe your office has regular Townhall meetings for you get updates from different departments. you find this Townhall superficial and they are. but why not look beyond the **superficial** goal of receiving information and reframe the Townhall meetings as a chance to catch up with your colleagues. if this is your goal, you can arrive early, place yourself by the door and chat with everyone you know as a violin. you choose a seat there someone you haven't spoken with in a while and use the breaks between presentations to ask about life. now you've connected and now you feel good. it wasn't wasted time at all. for people who are task oriented this explicit reframing from tasks to relationships can be especially important. that's because the world features a lot of inefficiencies. maybe you have business with the neighborhood association that requires your presence, but the meetings appear to be organized by someone with all the time in the world. rather than limited spending three hours trying to solve it should be a very minor issue, you can ask yourself if it's worth it to you, to spend three hours building much stronger relationships with your neighbors. it very much will be. when the neighbor who knows you well, knows that the strange truck parks in front of your house while you're on vacation, should not be there. by viewing the relationship goal as primary, you satisfy yourself that you spent your time well. getting approval to build that shed is just icing on the cake. when you feel you have to do something that you're not excited about, see if you can come up with a different purpose that

does server your goals, or gets that your deeper values. it's easy to spend time analyzing what's wrong with an activity and feeling **grouchy** about having participate. But it is more productive endless aggravating to know what you're there for a deeper level and to keep focused on that goal

0409 Less clickbait. More curation.

to maintain a list of online content you'd like to enjoy because especially in these anxious times we can all benefit from less clickbait and more curation in our electronica reading and viewing. when you need a brain break, it can be fun to read an article or look at other content online. but it is easy to get lost in the black hole of mindless scrolling. you start reading an article that interests you and then you follow one thing after another. much time can pass before you realize that you didn't plan to spend your whole morning looking at **running squats** or catching up on every detail of the British royal families' life. these days, in particular, you were definitely not planning to wallow in the details of how many facemasks the hospital in Laurel Kansas has. this sort of thing that's scary, but that you personally can do nothing about. it's somehow that's exactly what you been doing. so how do we avoid taking the clickbait? in the recent newsletter from CharacterLab, psychologist Dan Willingham suggested creating a list of links of content you really would like to enjoy on the Internet, including webpages, youtube channels, and podcasts. I think this is a great idea. I'd recommend getting a little more **granular** including links, specific articles, specific videos, and specific podcast episodes and so on. just create a simple word document on your hard drive or a Google Doc or you can store the links. another option is to use the notes app on your phone. maybe you can call the document, Worth Reading or something more tricky like Avoiding the Rabbit Hole. then anytime a friend sends a link to an article she thinks she may like, or you see a recipe you want to check out or you here about TEDTalk you wanna watch, just pop the link into your document. when you want some light entertainment you have a ready supply of content that you actually want to prooves. you can steer clear of clickbait and in for content that's truly engaging. you don't need to let algorithms to take your Internet **consumption**. you can curate your own viewing in a thoughtful way. once you use the links, just delete them, so your list is always fresh. right now my list includes ?? songs for comfort project, poems by Tracy K Smith on the poetry foundation website, Emily Astor's TED talk about things parents consider before going back to work, and a New York Times article with riders descriptions of books that bring them comfort. and yes there are some cute photos of royal children. this doesn't all have to be hyper. but if you're aiming to spend less time scrolling mindlessly, you might want to try this too. curate your

Internet use by creating a document of links you really do want to explore. you'll probably be less anxious and more informed too

0408 Now. Here. This.

One way to become more present and focused. when you're starting to feel anxious about the news, or you're distracted by the **myriad** things you need to do, start repeating this **mantra**: Now, Here, This. this tip comes from an interview on Krista Tippett's podcast, *On Being*. ²² Greg Boyle, who wrote *Tattoos On the Heart: The Power of Boundless Compassion*, described using this exact mantra to help keep himself present, Now, Here, This. as soon as I heard these words which also turn out to be the title of an **off-Broadway musical**, I knew I had to borrow the phrase, Now, Here, This. like a lot of people I sometimes feel pulled in the multiple directions, work, family and the rest of life. these days my kids and husband and I are all working and doing school from home, I feel even more like I should always be doing something else. we've developed some routines in our household for creating structure omit the chaos. but it's still when it's Tuesday morning at 10 AM and I'm trying to set up one of my kids on zoom for the class meeting. I've got emails piling up and the clock is ticking before the baby needs to eat again. it's hard to appreciate my kids' joy at seeing her classmates. it's moments like these when I need to remind myself Now, Here, This. if my kids are excited about something or if I've carved out time to play with them, I want to be fully present. it's fine to take 10 minutes to race around the backyard in the middle of the workday. if I've chosen to read an article or a book I wanna read it, and not be constantly leaping over to the news. if I'm recording this podcast, that's not to worry about whether someone is going to bang on the door of my home office in two minutes. if so, well, edit it out. if I'm constantly thinking about it I'll be tense, and my listeners will hear that. Now, Here, This. of course there are lots of mantras you can use to help center yourself and be present, but I find this one particularly **compelling**. it's short it's sweet and it also reminds me that the strange time will before too long be over. at some point we will be looking back on this, trying to reconstruct our memories of this **pivotal** time in this world history. we are living through a time we'll be talking about for many years to calm. and despite the uncertainty about all that is going on in the world, many of us are experiencing some **profound** moments that come from being around at least our media loved ones 24-7. someday soon we won't all be eating family lunches together on Tuesdays. this mantra brings me back to the little faces shoveling and bites of mac and

cheese. Now, Here, This, ultimately the present moment is all we have. we may notice this little jewels update

0407 Take the \$1000 challenge

What could you do to earn an extra \$1000 over the course of the next few days? I'm not saying you actually have to come up with the cash, but annoying how you would can put you in a different mindset about your finances. I'm taking this challenge from my friend Chris Guillebeau's brand new book *the Money Tree*, Chris runs the daily podcast *Side Hustle School* and he's helped countless people figure out how to make some extra money on the side to these things are a little different from the main job. *the Money Tree* is a **fable** about a young man named Jake, who's feeling broke and unhappy until he learns to take charge of his own financial future. I enjoyed reading *the Money Tree* for the story, one of my favorite parts was the challenges that mysterious Gooror helps Jake except for himself. one of those challenges is to come up with \$1000 before the next time they meet. now if you're a custom to earn that salary, is Jake in his cases, magically coming up with an extra \$1000 might seem a little crazy. but as the Gooror tells Jake, if you can figure out how to make \$1000 you can probably figure out how to make more. and figuring out that the first \$1000 can teach you different ways of thinking. so Jake stumbles through a few ideas and figures out that he might resell the textbooks as one way to generate a little bit of extra cash. but regardless of Jake's tentative approaches and they role in this plot, I think this is a good exercise for anyone trying to feel more in control of their lives. I'm not sure it's wise to ever be completely dependent on one employer for a **paycheck**. though I know I may be in the minority feeling that way. when you know you can make more money when you need to, you can be more relaxed in general and operate from a place of abundance. so how could you make an extra \$1000. **in this era of the giggle economy** driving delivery ones for Uber eats or doordash or such places is one approach. and certainly more accessible way to turn time into cash than people had the past. but it's far from the only option. as Chris writes in his books, everyone's an expert at something. one way or another you've acquired a lot of valuable knowledge throughout our life. something you already know about can be turned into cash, you just need to figure out how to do it. for you maybe it's writing or editing, maybe it's design, maybe it's helping curry people's closet, or giving feedback on presentations, maybe it's helping people run online sales or designing **webinars**, maybe it's working with real estate agents to stage yards for open houses, maybe it's time management coaching, or helping high school students with physics, or helping newbie landlord's creed apartment listings. I have no idea what

your skills might be but think about how you can turn an idea into a service that people would pay for. how would you find these people, how could you convince them to give it a word? I'm not saying that you're going to make \$1000 dollars this weekend, indeed right now with much the world on lockdown, it's been a lot harder to do this than other points. but at least think this question through, think how you might try to plan it out, talk about it with friends and give feedback. when you have a reasonable answer, you'll feel differently about life in general. because again, this points out. if you can figure out how to make \$1000, you can figure out how to make more. and then you know that whatever happens at work, whatever happens in this uncertain economy, you'll probably be OK. that's a liberating way approach time and life.

0406 Just make that call

Particularly if you're working at home these days, you can save yourself all sorts of time in frustration and schedule clutter by using the actual telephone feature on your phone. as a bonus as we're all engaged in social distancing, hearing a human voice can be a real mood boost too. once upon a time the only convenient way to communicate with someone who wasn't right in front of you was to call that person on the phone. now they were downsides to this, a ringing phone interrupts whatever the other person is doing right the time you've chosen, whether this is convenient for the other person or not. so **asynchronous** forms of communication seems like great solutions to this problem, as email and text became available, phone calls **fell out of favor**. indeed many people think it might be rude or **presumptuous** to call someone without **explicit** permission like if you sent a calendar invite to talk at 2 PM. this makes sense but the narrow result is that people waste all sorts of time composing emails that go **back-and-forth** 10 times to make a point that could be handled in a two-minute phone call. and maybe the point doesn't get me because it is shockingly easy to misinterpret written communication. even worse when all phone calls require appointments people tend to set them on the hour or half-hour even they will take 3 minutes. if you know you got a call at 3 PM, you stop focusing on deep work a little before that and cycle through headline checks and such after. if you have a little appointments pepper in your schedule all day you might never get really into focused work. the schedule clutter makes you far less effective. lots of things are changing now with the COVID-19 pandemic as many people work from home for the first time. here's something that definitely should change, people need to start just picking up the phone when they need to ask a question or get clarification on something, or in the past, you might've assumed you bump into

your colleagues in the hall, now you won't. you'll need to actually reach out to anyone you want to talk to. since you need to call, it's much more efficient if people just pick up the phone and do so. no twiddling your thumbs until the official 3PM start, no winding up small bits of hard to use the time between appointments on the hour and a half hour. yes it might feel risky to call but if it's convenient the other person will pick up and if not you will try again. but either approach is better than a 12 email chain that accidentally gets forwarded to the wrong person or setting appointments all day long that lead to time stress. and here's another upside to the phone it's really nice to hear people's voices. my social distancing involves five children underfoot, if your house is quieter you might enjoy getting a real chat. if you can't go outside to talk to people that's the next best thing and you can put a real smile on your face. so next time you find yourself sending a long email to ask if you could have a quick chat at 2PM, just pick up the phone and call about the matter instead. if you're managing people, let them know that yes you really do want them to call. you call them to tell them that you get your work done and be on your way

0405 Second Cup: Plan your weeks on Fridays

This will probably not surprise you but I like to plan. I LOVE to plan. there is nothing I like more than sitting down to plan what I'm gonna do with myself, what my family members are going to do with themselves. **shockingly** my family members don't always go along with these plans. imagining that, must be fun to be married to or parents to by me. anyway just because you're planning, doesn't mean you're doing it in the most effective way. a few years ago I made a change in how I planned, that is really made a difference in my life and it might be helpful for you as well. so to start my story a long long time ago, I read Stephen Covey's book, *the 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*. It's really a great book if you haven't read it. he talks about planning your life in weeks. and I think this is really smart. weeks are the cycle of life as we actually live it, not days. I mean, what's the typical day for you? is it Tuesday or is it Saturday? they both occur just as often. they both have the same number of hours. but I'm guessing they look pretty different for you. weeks give you **an accurate picture**. so after reading 7 habits, I started sitting down on Sunday evenings and planning the upcoming week. then a few years after that, I got the chance to interview David Allen. a lot of listeners of this podcast probably know him is the author of *Getting Things Done*. that's also a great book. I mentioned my Sunday planning to him and he told me that a lot of his clients reviewed and planed their weeks on Fridays. so I decided to try Fridays and specifically Friday afternoons. I'm a big fan of the switch. sunny planning is great, but Friday afternoon is even better. here's why. first I don't know about you, but

Friday afternoon is not exactly my **peak** productivity time. I am usually doing nothing of consequence by Friday afternoon. I am sliding into the weekend, I'm not answering my phone, I am hiding out so no one can find me. it is really hard to start anything new on Friday afternoon. but I can usually sum in the energy to think about what future-me should be doing. by taking a few minutes on Friday afternoon to plan the week ahead, I turn the what would be a waste of time into some of my most productive minutes of the week. Friday planning also gives me a better weekend in 2 ways. first, even if you love your job, you can always feel a little bit of **Sunday trepidation**. you know what this is. there's like an **avalanche** of work waiting for you on Monday, but you don't know exactly what, or know how you gonna deal with it. if you make a plan on Sunday night, or you spent much of the weekend **cohabitating** with that **sense of unease**. if you plan Monday morning on Friday though, you've got a plan so you don't have to spend your weekend worrying about it. just as a side note, if this plan involves meeting with people, making your plan on Friday means that you can call or email them. they're probably still at their desks. so they'll respond which might not be the case if you try to get in touch with them on Sunday night. Second, if you haven't thought about your weekend, Friday planning gives you a chance to call friends, make reservations, buy tickets, whatever you need to do. this **vastly** increases the chances that your weekends are awesome rather than forgettable. so if you plan on Fridays and I hope you will, just take a few minutes to think about the week ahead, make yourself a short three-category priority list: career, relationships, self. making a three-category list reminds us that you should put something in all three categories. it is pretty hard to make it three-category list, then leave one of the categories blank. so that right there is going to let you have a more balanced life. but anyway just a shortlist, 2-3 items each. look at the next week, see what they can go, plan them in, just like that, you putting first things first in your life I think Stephen Covey would approve that

0403 The sneaky phrase that tanks your productivity

to accomplish tasks, don't just work on them. because I write about productivity I've seen many people's to-do lists, creating a to-do list is wise. but I've noticed the common floor, the lists often contained items such as work on **proposal** or work on lesson plan or work on novel. it matters how we frame our tasks. these goals to work on things are **nebulous**, I mean what exactly does it mean to work on your taxes, or to work on a blog post, this uncertainty is the enemy of productivity. or better off finding our plans in terms of accomplishments, not what projects we plan to work on without specific **benchmarks**. you can picture how this fuzziness plays out the course of a day. when you plan to spend the time before your next

appointment, working on your blog, what does that mean? you may do some reading on the top of your planning to write about, or you may write or re-write the headline in the opening paragraph until they are perfect, and then your time is up. you don't have much to show for yourself. let's suppose you sit down at your computer with a specific intention of drafting 2 blog posts before your next appointment. you have a discrete achievable goal with that clear goal, you pace yourself to get the work done on schedule. when it's time for that appointment, you'll know whether you've achieved this goal or not. if you have, great; if you haven't written both posts, you need to figure out a time to finish them later and maybe that's not **optimal**, but you'll remain aware of your progress and can make adjustments to stay on schedule. so how do you shift your perspective and attend what you plan to accomplish rather than what you plan to "work on". first and most importantly, build a smarter to-do list with clear **deliverables**. to-do list with nebulous items like "closet" or "a new program recruiting", rarely to progress that's rapid and significant. aim for the to-do list and treat this like this, write two blog posts, box of winter clothes and put them in the attic, identify five organizations that can help recruit people for a new program. these are tasks that you either did or didn't do, you know when you're finished. and if you don't finish, you know how much is left. of course, even clear deliverables can be problematic if they're not realistic. write two chapters in my book is clear, but if you only got two hours **allocated** for this, you still feel overwhelmed. however, the good news is that clear deliverables can help you see quickly if you're being realistic or not. try listing all the specific steps involved and cleaning out your garage and you'll see what I mean. nebulous tasks just let us lie to ourselves. if you'll be guilty of making nebulous to-do lists, it can be hard to change your habits. but I do think it's possible to change your mindset over time. try using this language of clear doable task rather than what you're working on when you're narrating your actions to yourself or anyone else. if someone asks over lunch what you did that morning you can say I posted the listing of a new house for sale. if you have no idea what you did, it happens to all of us. but let that be a nudge to set clear doable intentions in the future don't just plan to "work on" things because that sneaky little phrases just tank our productivity

0402 Imagine a change jar

to inspire you to stick with good habits. we'd all like to make good choices, the trouble is that there's often no immediate benefit. choosing broccoli over potato chips at lunch might have long-term health benefits, but when you're a grown-up, no one is praising you for this choice. but you can come up with ways to praise yourself

or at least picture this individual choice as a meaningful part of a larger journey. that's what before breakfast listener Monica does. she writes that she has created a mental image of a change jar. the change jar she says, is the person I want to be. every time I choose a glass of water over a piece of candy or do some inbox maintenance instead of opening Instagram, I'm contributing to that change jar. it's a small investment into a newer better smarter me. she writes that it's been a powerful **metaphor** and I can see why. research has found a sense of progress is one of the most powerful factors in motivation and engagement. people can be working in **chaotic** organizations, but as long as they since study forward motion and that they are achieving small regular wins, they can be quite content. so wise managers naturally structure work to allow for the small victories. each he celebrated and you'll build toward the next. a metaphorical change jar creates the same sense of progress. you eat an apple with breakfast and another coin goes in. you walk on your lunch break and you hear the click in the jar. if you'd like to stretch this metaphor a little further, you could actually make it literal, get a jar and put it on your desk or your dresser. when you think about the little good choices you've made, you can put in a coin. as the jar fills up, you can see your progress. and of course, if you really put change in a jar you can use it for something fun to reward yourself for all these hundreds of good choices. not a round of drinks or a pizza dinner these days, but maybe some new books or puzzles, those sound great. ultimately good choices have their own intrinsic for rewards. but in the meantime, some external ones can help, whether metaphorical or a literal it's always good to see progress.

0401 A Surprising Lesson from Mr. Rogers

using a transition ritual to get yourself ready for what's next. obviously we all love Mr. Rogers the children's television actor, for what he taught us about kindness and imaging our emotions, things we all need in these anxious times. but we can learn a thing too from him about making intentional transitions too. if you grow up watching Mr. Rogers like I did, you can probably come draw the image of him: walking through the door to his house, taking off a sports coat and putting on a **zippered cardigan**, trading his dress shoes for sneakers, all the while singing an invitation to be his neighbor. the opening sequence hopes to young viewers anticipate a calm hope-filled adventure, we can do something similar in our own lives, even if our neighborhoods are little different from Mr. Rogers'. you may experience multiple transitions in a single day: at the start of the workday or sitting down to dinner, at kids' bedtimes, just to name a few. these are often moments from people feel especially **harried or fanatic**, transition rituals can help

you intentionally in one phase of the day and **inaugurate** the next, preparing and setting the tone for what's ahead. so you can be fully present and keeping anxiety at bay. you may already have some transition rituals. for instance, many people light candles, clean glasses or say grace before eating, particularly nice when we're all eating at home. these rituals kick off a shared meal, they let you know that the bustle of meal prep, evening chores, and arrivals and departures have stopped for a bit. all you need to do now is enjoy each other's company and **consume** your food. sometimes though it's easy to feel the pressure of what's behind us or ahead of us and never really arrive. we all know people who really do like it and respect their colleagues, but back when people were still working at offices they blew past without even smiling because they were so preoccupied with being 30 seconds late to a meeting. or maybe a phone call with a friend doesn't end up being the recipe you hoped for. because the opening exchanger of "how are you busy me too" **unleashes** a litany of complaints. so how can we use transition rituals to be more intentional? for one, the language we use really does matter, it's powerful. instead of the stressed-out chatter better to take a deep breath and say to ourselves: now, I'm here, slow things down. what's ahead now I'm working I'm ready to do good work with my colleagues. your self-talk to help you arrive where you are. as Mr. Rogers showed songs can also be helpful for transitioning. if you've ever been in a preschool class, you've likely heard a song used as a cue shift from one activity to the next. it's amazing to see a dozen three-year-olds church for the cleanup, just because they hear the clean up song. songs can help adults make the transitions too. maybe you have a psycho playlist to build your energy and confidence before a big day at work, or maybe there's a special song you listen to as you make dinner and **unwind**. a morning playlist can provide kids with cues that it's time to brush teeth. Music can let us know where lessy what's ahead. and finally just like Mr. Rogers's change of clothes and shoes physical cues can help the transition. if you wear a lanyard with an ID card, again when people go back to work at the workplace, you can ceremoniously remove it as you leave work. taking off the lanyard means you're just you, not a teacher for the moment. you can narry the wardrobe change to amplify its impact. Dr. Williams has left the hospital you say as a change out of your scrubs. even if you don't have special gill for your profession, changing clothes or shoes at the end of the day can let you know that the workday is over too. as long as you do it mindfully. acknowledge what you're doing as you're trading your shoes for slippers or putting on yoga pants, or taking off your tie. and finally, one last reminder, leave yourself some margin. all the transition rituals in the world can't keep you from feeling **frazzled**. if there's not enough space in your days, transition rituals can help us be present for each phase of the day, but we have to make sure it's actually feasible to give to each phase without drama, for transition rituals to have maximum impact.

0331 Create the syllabus

to direct your own learning. some of you are likely doing this for your kids right now, with widespread homeschooling during the coronavirus pandemic, but you can do it as an adult too. and there's a lot of upsides to doing so. as you can probably imagine as a student, I always look forward to course selection time. anything that combines scheduling with the possibility of learning new things, is a big winner with me, especially love looking at the list of what students would read and study. yep, I'm one of those people who really got into the syllabus. that is the outline of the subjects in a course of study. Times are different now and it's been a long time since I've been in school. but even if you're not an official student anymore, there's a lot to be said for taking a systematic approach to anything you want to learn, just as teachers do, when they create a syllabus. craft an intentional plan, think about what resources make the most sense to help you and you'll be a lot more likely to succeed. this is true for just about any subject, take the example of baking bread: lots of people think this would be fun to learn about, particularly as people have more time at home these days, but for most people, that's about as far as it goes. maybe try it out once when the stars are line but there's nothing systematic about it. if you are wise though you could craft the syllabus for your own course in baking bread. you look through listings of bread books on Amazon and order a few. you look through the books for 30 minutes each night before bed in order to select the recipe to try and learn all you can about it. on your lunch break on Thursday each week you decide to watch YouTube videos about baking the particular brand you've chosen. on Friday you get the ingredients and Saturday afternoon is your weekly baking slot. unless something comes up and in which case Sunday afternoon is your designated backup slot. you evaluate after each loaf comes out of the oven, and list your family to give you feedback, Lucky them. which do you think is more likely to help you become familiar with east and crusts and such. or let's say you're interested in someday writing a memoir about your own crazy childhood. you can vaseline increase chances of writing something worth reading by creating a syllabus on the art of memoir writing. choose 10 books from the list of the best memoirs, including recent books such as [Angela's Ashes](#), [the liars club](#), [the year of magical thinking](#) and classic work such as Ernest Hemingway's [A Movable Feast](#) choose one every week or two making a point to find commentary online on each of them, which you could again, read during your lunch break on Thursday. you could also read some books on craft, such as Mary cars the art memoirs, then you can give yourself a list of assignments such as interviewing a relative by phone, writing a short essay about one of you missed vivid memories and so forth. of course these days there are a lot of ready-made syllabi out there, sometimes looking in interesting places. if you're

thinking of traveling once the world gets back to normal at some point, your lonely planet guild book might have a list of books and movies they give you a window into the history and culture of the place you're going. why not start on these a few months before departure, see you're ready and already in an adventure mindset. whatever your subject you'll be more motivated, if you make your syllabus attractive and easy to follow, go ahead and type it up and post it somewhere prominently. if you like bullet journaling you can make a decorative page there. give yourself a physical space or you can keep all your materials, a designated shelf for baskets for instants that holds all your books. and of course, feel free to enlist friends virtually at least. well, the upside of learning as an adult is that you can be self-directed, doing stuff at your own time and pace, many people find that challenging too. if you wanna friend devices syllabus together you can hold yourself accountable for sticking with it. and you have someone to discuss that crazy memoir with. how fun is that. class may so good even if you're not in school anymore. pursuing a project together can your relationship and help you gain momentum.

0330 Do the best job you can today

for those days when nothing is going right, you're tempted to give up and just try again tomorrow. now it's true that tomorrow can look very different, but you don't need to throw in the towel, you can also decide to take a deep breath and just do the best job you can today. we've all had those days when because of circumstances beyond our control or not is our best, a lot of us are feeling that way right now with anxiety about the coronavirus **epidemic** and so forth. but even in normal times, things can go all right, maybe you're exhausted after being up much of the night with a sick child, maybe your improvising on a call from a random parking lot because the pile up on the interstate kept you from getting to your desk and your notes on schedule. or maybe you lost your planning period to cover for another teacher who's out and you still have to teach your own class without the handouts the planned a photocopy. whatever the situation rather than getting discouraged it's helpful to recognize the best we can do today, may not be our best ever. but we still need to do the best job we can today. there are two insights baked into this tip. the first the most obvious one is that when we were faced with some parts circumstances we can recalibrate our expectations. if you listen to this podcast, my guess is that you find it challenging to be OK with good enough work, but sometimes a B+ will do just fine. lots of people would be happy with a B+, you can learn to be happy too. the second insight into the tip, more profound. on rough days, you best off letting yourself off the hook completely. maybe this is not the

best call you'll ever have, the best lesson you'll ever teach or the best story you'll ever write, but you still need to put in real effort and do a good enough job. this is what it means to be a professional. the athletes we admire most of those committed to helping the team win even on the days they're not sitting scoring records. a reporter containing a decent article whether who's inspired or not, you can be your best self every day. even if you acknowledge that sometimes the best self is less wonderful than the other times. distill the job down to the basics but get the basics done. so if you're feeling off today and worried about the news or on any day ask yourself what the best is that you can master. if it's only sending three emails then send those emails, and then congratulate yourself on a job well done, because three emails is better than nothing

0327 Try a picnic breakfast

In my part of the world, the weather is getting warmer and the flowers are blooming. we are also as I'm writing this, mostly staying around the house, with schools and non-essentially business is closed due to coronavirus concerns. Life feels better when we have adventures but those are some harder to pull off in the current situation. harder but not impossible. one little adventure I've been trying? a picnic breakfast. eating outside is almost always exciting because it's different. but on those real occasions when this does happen, the meal in question tends to be lunch or dinner, no one does a picnic breakfast and so that's a great reason to try it. put your coffee in the thermos insulated cup, grab a blanket or towel, get cut up fruit or bananas for easy portability. you could fry some pancakes and keep them warm in a picnic basket, or just go for something that doesn't require a temperature logistics. pastries work, even toaster pastries could be fun to try. or pack some hard-boiled eggs, cheese and a good loaf of bread work for any meal, with coffee or with butter and jam on the bread, it will feel like breakfast in any case. the good news is that because a picnic breakfast is so out of the ordinary, you don't have to travel far to make the meal feel like an adventure. if you've got a backyard great, go there; an apartment balcony could also work, or visit a nearby park. the whole thing doesn't have to take long. my family has plenty of time these days with no school or activities, but the beauty of breakfast is that it's rarely too long a meal. you can set a timer for 15 minutes and if all you're eating is a hard-boiled egg and a piece of fruit, you still feel like it's been a leisurely experience. then pack up and go back in. at most you need to start your day 20 or 30 minutes earlier or start your usual activities 20 or 30 minutes later and you'll probably feel like you have all the time in the world. so think about your life this week, look at the weather forecast and choose a nice day, see if there's a morning

that might work for a picnic breakfast. I guarantee the experience will remember off

0326 Get ready for bed before bedtime

Get ready for bed a while before you actually intend to go to sleep. This makes it much easier to get into bed on time. it's true time management that everything takes longer than you think it will. this is doubly true with things that occur when you're tired, such as getting ready for bed. and sadly the more tired you are, the easier it is to delay what will actually solve the problem, namely going to sleep. this problem became clear to me a few years ago, when my husband was traveling a lot, and my van toddler age 4th child was popping up at 5 AM every morning. I made sure that my eldest child was in bed with the lights out around 9:45 PM.

theoretically this meant that I could be in bed at 10 PM and in general I do fine with 7 hours of sleep. but night after night, I would find it almost impossible to be asleep before 10:30. somehow taking out my contacts, brushing my teeth, washing my face, getting my pajamas on and so forth with stretch out, probably because I look at my phone while setting my alarm, or look at the mess in my bedroom and start picking it up. it's hard to do anything and focused in an efficient manner when you're tired and this includes getting ready for bed. then I discovered that I didn't actually have to wait until right before bed to get ready for bed. I could change into my pajamas and switch my contacts for my glasses earlier in the evening. since I was completely ready to sleep, I could walk into my bedroom at 9:45 PM and read for 10 minutes without feeling like I was battling the clock. the lights could go off at 10 PM and my morning self would wake up thanking my past self energy. all would be good, except for the screaming toddler's part. now that I've got a newborn again, I've been reminded of the wisdom of this habit. when the baby falls asleep, it's good for me to go to sleep too, if I'm all ready for bed, this is a much quicker process. if you don't have young kids, anyone can fall into the trap of delaying bed because getting ready for bed sounds like a lot of effort. turning off the TV and going upstairs takes energy, hitting next in the Netflix tube does not. so if you feel like you have zero energy which many of us do at night, guess which is more likely to happen. I'm not saying that if you're all ready for bed that watching another show won't still be tempting, but all you have to do is slide under the covers, which lowers the energy requirement significantly. and on the margin that just might tip the balance. so tonight choose sometime when you're not completely exhausted to get ready for bed, then when the exhaustion does hit, you can go to sleep close to immediately and with any luck you wake up bright and chipper and ready to do great things before breakfast.

0325 Nurture your virtual relationship

how to build and maintain close ties with people you mostly see virtually. in the past few weeks, plenty of people have been trying remote work for the first time. it's necessary under the **circumstances**, but I know that for many people there's an assumption that it's a poor substitute for an in-person connection.

Whole industries of business travel have been built around the idea that in order for people to work well and creatively together. they need to spend a lot of time face-to-face. as someone who's been working from home since 2002, I think this is kind of ridiculous. as one example, I co-host my other podcast *Best of Both Worlds* with Sarah Hurt-Unger who's a practicing physician who lives in Florida, I live in Pennsylvania. she and I have seen each other in person just half a dozen times over the last five years. but we've managed to start and run a inner-price together and have quite a bit of fun doing it. these things don't need to be either-or. I'm certainly not saying that you never need to see people in person. but we won't all be engaged and social distancing forever. when we are on the other side of this we can all **recalibrate** what should happen in person, and what really doesn't need to. that saving time and wear entail on our planet. so how do you maintain close virtual relationships? I found that video conferences are a key part of it. Sarah and I use Squadcast to record a podcast, which allows us to see each other and our guests even though we're only recording audio. I have a zoom pro account too, which I use all the time. FaceTime on your phone is good for one on one type of stuff. before there were good video conferencing options it's true that remote work did feel more distant, but now this isn't true at all. unless we're talking about some when you're planning on touching a lot, the human brain has no way of knowing that **interacting** with someone via video is different than **interacting** in person because how wouldn't know this. it's not like **caveman ancestors** would've had a way to see people without them being right there. this is why people who were on television a lot, report that when people see them on the street or in a restaurant they act as they know them as if the relationship is mutual rather than one way. it's kind of funny but you can use that knowledge to your advantage. whenever you possibly can do video calls. yes, this means you need to build in time to brush your hair or shave but so it goes. as a side note, video calls **massively** cut down on the multi-tasking that happens during audio-only calls; they're much more efficient. Second building socializing time into your video calls. I actually think it's wise to build social time for meetings in general. but this is doubly important when you're not going to be able to grab a cup of coffee or go to lunch afterward. I run one monthly video meeting where we usually start with an iceberg question. if the agenda is planned

well, you can still get through everything. and given that any meeting as much about the relationship as the stated agenda, it was a good thing. third, be more systematic about reaching out. the human brain doesn't naturally think of people that we don't see frequently. again that's just the way we built. if someone disappeared from our caveman travel for six months, the goods that person was coming back. so in our modern world, you need a **mechanism** for thinking about the people you'd like to maintain relationships with, even if you're not physically seeing them all that often. some people are kind of funny about this. I get regular emails from people at a certain time every three months, and I know that they probably made it a goal to reach out to the people in the broad networks every quarter. yes kind of humorous but it's also affected I remember these people. frequency of contact makes you feel closer than you might actually be. so build in time to go through lists of your social media connections, old colleagues, people on your Christmas card lists, whatever. if you can come up with a decent reason to send a note, then do so. and of course, take advantage of random opportunities too. subscribe to lots of industry newsletters, and anytime you see someone mentioned that you know, reach out. none of these means that we never need to see people in person. I found these in-person meetings can be relatively infrequent and you can still feel quite close. I have a small mastermind group that runs for a while then I realize that I can count on one hand the number of times I've seen its members in person in the past five years. I would consider all of them my good friends and colleagues, I believe they said the same about me. all the self-isolation doesn't actually have to be isolating. if you're smart about it. I'd love to hear your tips for staying in touch virtually

0324 The joy of killing time

to rediscover some old fashion forms a fun. Many of these were deliberately about filling time or some might say killing time. modern resources often feel we don't have time for such things, but over the past few weeks, we've learned otherwise. the **circumstances** aren't ideal, but the good news is that on the other side of the world's lockdown to slow the spread of the coronavirus will have **expanded our repertoire** a fun. if you read much **literature** written before the advent of radio and television, you've probably noticed something, authors such as Charles Dickens, Jane Austen, or Herman Melville, wrote stories in a slightly less economical fashion than modern authors. the plots take longer, the sentences are more involved, but honestly why not, they weren't competing with cable. people didn't have other things to do to fill the hours after dinner and before bed. so links wasn't a

downside in the way that modern publishers sometimes consider to be. the link was often an upside. anyone listening to this podcast presumably still has access to the Internet, but with school and activities canceled many people have more hours to fill than in the past. screens feel some of it, but even the best shows get boring after a while. so it's time to recall how people used to kill time and realize that many cases, killing time isn't a bad thing at all. one of my favorite hour filling activities is big puzzles. all 200 piece puzzle might fit in a busy day, long days call for big ones, 1000 pieces 1500 pieces, why not, gather the family around a big table and chat as you each work on your sections. I'm also a fan of **giant Lego sets**. over the past few months, my 10-year-old and I have been working on a replica of the Empire State building. we flex star Lego building muscles on a Christmas gingerbread house set. now we are feeling more capable of bigger things. sets that take more time. because taking time is a kind of the point. baking can fill lots of time. my husband's been baking bread, I collected magazines from the 1950s and 1960s some of the recipes an old issues of good housekeeping literally require all day. but if everyone's around the house all day, this might be less of a downside than it seems at first glance. of course, you can really get into the Little House on the pre lifestyle and take-up of sewing or other needlecrafts. every time I read the Laura Ingalls wilder books, a picture of the family sitting in front of the fire, with Paul reading or playing the fiddle and Mazda **stitching** something. so in clothes for a family of six, certainly takes a lot of time. we don't have to make our clothes from scratch these days but **cross-stitch an elaborate pattern** can fill many a happy hour, especially now that no one is supposed to be going out of the house for happy hours. there're really all kinds of old-fashioned the time killing options, crosswords, card games, longboard games like Monopoly or Risk, scrapbooking. when were running around from place to place it's easy to assume we have no time and so we fill the time we do have with the easiest thing available. hence the two hours daily that even people with full-time jobs and kids clock watching TV. if you're trying to work from home while homeschooling your kids are chasing a toddler's all day may not have energy for anything else. I get it. but if you're not in that situation, these long hours present an opportunity to try something else and maybe just maybe when life gets back to normal, we'll remember a great many other projects are possible. what sorts of old-fashioned time-killing fun do you enjoy?

0323 measure the day by task, not time

As this episode is first airing in late March 2020, lots of people are working from home for the first time, **in an attempt to** slow the spread of COVID-19. some job

cannot be done remotely, it's turning out that many can, which will have all sorts of **ramifications** for when life returns to something approaching normal. that said just because people can work at home, doesn't mean it's easy. I remember when I first started working for my kitchen table full time back in 2002. before that, I always had in-the-office jobs or being in school attending classes. for the first time, I'd wake in the morning and realized that the day in front of me would somewhat dizzily open. when you go to an office, you feel like you've done something just by changing locations and sitting down at your desk. you end the day at 5 or 6 PM because that's what everyone else does. **in the absence of** that, how did I know if I accomplished anything or not. and I use the word dizzily literally here, I actually felt dizzy. but within a few days, I realized the time and location didn't have to be the marker of productivity, but I felt them to be in the past. instead, I can manage my days by tasks, each day I could assign myself a certain number of tasks. if I did them I had a good day, and that is what I've been doing ever since. I started the day with a shortlist of things I definitely want to accomplish. it's short because as you made a badging, stuff comes up. I might decide to take on something that would need to be in by 5 PM that I didn't even know about at 9 AM. in general, I do end up working about 40 hours a week, but that's because I budget in tasks to my weeks that take about 40 hours. not because I'm aiming to lock 40 hours specifically. if you are new to remote work, and especially if you're new to managing remote workers, this focus on tasks rather than time is key. a lot of people are accustomed to feeling like their employees got a good day if everyone looks busy from 9 to 5. we don't think so critically about the exact deliverables but we should. for employees, have regular conversations about exactly what they should be doing, exactly what you'd like them to accomplish each day or each week. ideally, they'll be thinking about this too. so you don't have to just dream it up, they can present a task list to you at whatever frequency you choose, that you can then approve. when they do all these things, then you'll know that they put in good days. this seems straightforward enough, when I've talk to business leaders about this, some **start waxing eloquently about the intangibles**, you want your employees to come up with great ideas, and discuss with them each other, and how can you anticipate this ahead of time, these brilliant insights happen when they're there. and owning you their **mental capacity** for a certain number of hours. if an employee accomplishes the daily tasks assigned to him or her by 12 PM and they're working from home what's to stop them from quitting? my answer, nothing, but so what. if you want people to think through big long-term problems, assigned this as a task, you can totally tell people to dream up 10 big what-if scenarios or think of 8 new clients that your company has never worked with. but might, engaged employees will naturally propose adding some of these more open-ended questions to their task lists. make it clear that you reward such things and they will definitely do them. and also just as I realized I naturally assigned myself about 40 hours worth of

tasks, people who work remotely long-term tend to learn to do this too. when you manage by task, not by time, you could wind up with a 4-hour workweek. but you generally don't. so today especially if you're working remotely, think about what would make the day feel productive, what would you need to do. if you're managing people, get very specific about what tasks make you think that the day went well, everyone will feel far more effective if you're all clear on this as a result.

0322 Second Cup: Make time to read

When I asked people what they want to spend more time doing, exercise always comes up first, don't worry we gonna talk a lot about that in future episodes. but reading is a close second. indeed if you asked me a few years ago what I wanted to spend more time doing, I would've said reading books. I would've told you I was busy and I have very limited time to read. then I tracked my time for a year, a year **incidentally** when I had four children under the age of eight including an **infant** which I thought was a pretty good excuse, my time logs were clear, my problem was not a lack of time to read, I had spent 327 hours reading that first year, which is almost an hour a day. but I couldn't remember any good books I've read. the truth is that I spent the vast majority of those 327 hours reading online new stories and gossip magazines. why? well that's what was easy and available when I had open time, so that is what I read. it makes sense but it's also kind of sad. 327 hours is enough time to read more than 15,000 pages of the real stuff, I could've read *Warren Peace* 10 times. let's just say that did not happen. so I resolve to do better and over the next two years, I didn't spend much more time reading but the quality of my reading material **massively** improved. I actually did read *Warren Peace*, I read *Moby Dick* I read *Middlemarch*, *Infinite Jest*, *Christine Lawrence's Daughter*, *1Q84*, *Ulysses*, a number of other amazing books on my reading bucket list. I did not magically find more time, Laura who had no time to read and Laura who read *Warren peace* were the exact same person, living in the exact same universe. It was just about being more strategic with the time I had. so if you like to be a better reader, you might try to do what I did. first make sure you have really good books to read, readily available. now you might think this sounds backward, I could just hear people yelling at this podcast, Laura they're all these wonderful books, that I have no time to read, this is not my problem. let me ask you this if you were to turn off this podcast, could you be engaged with a book that you really wanted to read in the next 30 seconds? because I know you could be on Instagram in the next 30 seconds. if you don't have that same ability to dive into a book, then this is going to limit your ability to seek time to read. so make a list of the books you'd really like to read, not what you think you should read. you're

not in high school English class anymore, you don't have to read what you don't want to read. even if that **cuts out** some good books, I'll put this out here. I don't like false accusations stories and I don't like the sort of **awkwardness** that's endemic romantic comedies, also I feel like there are enough violence and cruelty in the real world that I just can't stomach too much of mind fiction. even though I know this put some really good books off my list, I do me, you do you. so figure out what you'd like to read, build in 20 minutes a week or so to find book recommendations. I like to check out the modern Mrs. Darcy blog and her podcast, what should I read next. I look at the Wall Street Journal's review section and a magazine for ideas. I welcome your suggestions too, then get your hands on the first handful. physical books are great, but here's the real **breakthrough** for me. I put the kindle app on my phone. this is the Amazon e-reader app. and guess what, I always have my phone with me. since you're listening to a podcast I'm guessing this is the case for you too. putting the Kindle app on my phone mean that I could immediately buy any e-book I thought recommended and I could turn my headline in social media scrolling time, into reading time. people turn out to have a lot of this time, you probably pick up your phone at least 50 times a day. if you wanna check the exact number, just look at the screen time function if you have an iPhone. so you pick up your phone you delete junk email. and then what, you probably look at social media or at headlines. but if you spend six of those five minutes for reading, that's half an hour a day of reading right there. and then the funniest thing happens, when you're really into a book, you starting magically finding more time to read. instead of spending 10 minutes puttering around in the mail pile looking at catalogs, you read; instead of channel surfing, you read; you are the exact same person but time starts to open up. of course, there are ways to build more reading time into your life instructly too. if you got a long commute, definitely put audiobooks into the mix, maybe listen to this podcast for a bit and then listen to a chapter in a book. if you got a 45-minute commute, you're going to spend 7 1/2 hours in the car this week, you're gonna spend 45 hours in the car over the next six weeks anyway, so you might as well listen to Doris Curious Goodwin's *Team of Rivals*, which clocks in and just under 42 hours. Reading is also a great way to **wind down** at night. I try to get ready for bed at least 20 to 30 minutes before lights out time a few days per week, then I can use that time to read. finally one of the most motivating things I did was to start keeping track of what books I read. there're fancy book journals out there, but you don't really need anything like that. just a notebook or a file on your computer or your phone is going to just fine. you can also just start sharing your list of books read with friends. not only will people see what you like, and start recommending titles it's a great way to hold yourself accountable. because I really did enjoy reading *Warren Peace*, I also get a kick out of telling people I read *Warren Peace* I'm guessing you will too

0319 Complete the phrase

A little trick you can use to stay motivated to achieve monthly goals. making progress toward any goals can be challenging, that's why we're always looking for ways to be more **disciplined** and consistent. a few episodes ago we talked about the 10-minute trick, whenever you're resisting doing something, a workout, practicing the piano, writing your novel, and challenging yourself to do it for 10 minutes. if you're still unhappy you can quit. most likely **momentum** will take over and you'll keep going. but even if you don't, 10 minutes is better than nothing. today's tip is about another little trick for making progress. this one comes from before breakfast listener Elizabeth, she writes that she wants to work out five times a week, each month that works out to 20 to 25 times depending on how the days fall. so she says she makes up a phrase with the appropriate number of letters 20 to 25 letters. "each time I work out I own a letter toward that phrase", the month she wrote me about the tip, her rephrase was "you will own this workout" that's 21 letters in case you're counting. each workout brings her one letter closer to completing the phrase. as you can imagine she hates to in the month with the phrase stuck at "you will own this wor..." and so it gives her a little kick to keep going, so she can assign yourself the next letter. I love this idea, you can come up with lots of motivational phrases in the 20 to 25 letter range, that means that this is a perfect match for things you intend to do several times a week, be that exercising, meditating, using the language up, writing in a journal, doing morning pages or another free writing habit. here are a few simple phrases "I am always getting stronger", "the world needs this story" "my mind is calm amid ks". so come up with the phrase, then find a way to physically give yourself a letter for each completed session. you could use those **magnetic** letters that kids play with on refrigerators, each time you look at the fridge you'll see yourself getting a little closer to phrase completion. or write each later on a chalkboard or whiteboard. when you complete the phrase, take a little time to save your accomplishment and then dream up the next phrase. ideally, your goals have their own **intrinsic** rewards, but it never hurts to get a little extra push. do you have a trick that helps you stay motivated I'd love to hear about it

0318 One year anniversary: Laura's favorite tips

Every weekday morning since March 18, 2019, I've been sharing a productivity tip designing to take your day from great to awesome. so today I'll be sharing a few of my favorite tips from the past year. these are tips that I use all the time. so I hope they are helpful for you too. the first one, **plan your weeks on Fridays**. we all

need time to think through our priorities. I take a little time on Friday afternoon to think about the week ahead. I list my top priorities in 3 categories: career, relationships, self. then I think about when those things can happen. simply by doing this, I vastly increase the chances that I make space for what matters to me. why Friday afternoon? well, to be honest, I'm not doing much else then, it's hard to start new projects. but I think about what future me should do, and that turns what might be a waste of time into some of my most productive minutes of the week. the second tip is also about looking forward, **be kind to your future self**. it is so easy to over commit. when we were asked to do something in, say October, we either figure it will never be October or a future self will be so organized and productive that we will be able to take on anything. but sadly come October we will be the same people we have always been. we will be just as busy. only now we'll also have these other commitments that we will **lukewarm about**, squeezed into our calendars. so here's the way to avoid this. whenever you are asked to do something in the future, ask yourself if you would do it tomorrow. sure I know you're busy tomorrow, which is kind of the point, but would you be willing to boo things around, or cancel things to fit this new thing in. if so, awesome, but if not, best to decline. your future self will thank you. since I started doing this, my future self has been thanking me all the time. a third one, **give yourself a bedtime**. Life feels so much more doable when you get enough sleep. since most adults can't sleep in frequently, the best way to sleep in is to go to bed early. and the best way to guarantee that is to give yourself a bedtime. these days I need a really good reason to be a past 10:30 PM, now if there's a good reason, awesome, I won't **turn into a pumpkin**, but if not, time to turn in so I'll be functional in the morning. a fourth, think before you send. whenever I'm writing an email that I need to make sure it's right. I fill in the address last. this gives me a chance to double-check that I'm sending to the right person and that the email says what I mean it to say. it also gives me a chance to pause and ask if the email should be sent at all. it's a simple habit but can **ward off disasters**. and finally, elevate the everyday. sure I'm a big fan of big adventures, but upgrading the little things in life can have a huge effect on your happiness. whatever you do repeatedly should be as pleasant as possible. so spring for the good cleaning supplies, I've made sure all the hand soaps in my house smells fantastic, drink your coffee out of your favorite mug. frankly, all your mugs should be your favorite mug, there is zero reason to drink your morning coffee out of a subpar mug. if you bring your lunch to work, bring good silverware, it just feels different from eating with a plastic fork. I have finally convinced myself to buy good pants. sharing that typical listener inspired me to do these things myself. so that's one-way that before breakfast has helped me take my days from great to awesome. I very much appreciate the email listeners sent me, please know that I do read all of them and I respond to most of them too

0317 How to work from home with kids around

I've worked out of the home offices for years, but my cardinal rule has always been that work is work. and so just as if I were in an office I need childcare for kids who are too young to watch themselves. I make sure to tell people who like to try working from home, that it's actually not a great way to save money on childcare. yes you'll need a few hours if you don't have a commute, but you'll need another caregiver or family member to watch children, or you'll need to enroll them in daycare or mostly use school hours. otherwise, you'll feel pulled in multiple directions and constantly distracted. with many offices is closing these days, due to concerns about the coronavirus, lots of people are trying to work from home. the problem with this is that many schools and daycares are also closed, and so these experiments remote work are going to be far from ideal. that's said it's also just life and we need to deal with it. my kids are home from school for the next few weeks and there are a few ways I found that maybe you can find too to preserve time to focus and spend time with your kids and keep all of you from **going insane**. if you've got young kids and you got a partner who's in the same boat, your best bet is to swap hours. one of you gets up and work from 6 AM to noon, the other works from noon to 6 PM. giving how distracting offices can be, my bet is that if you truly focus during your six-hour shift, you will basically get a full day of work. of course, that assumes that your work can be set for certain windows. if you can't control when video conferences get set, you might compare schedules with your partner, and see whose schedule for meetings a particular times. you can trade-off for the times that you aren't. if both of you have calls simultaneously, that's the time to bring out the iPad or Xbox or pop finding Nemo into the DVD player. there's absolutely nothing wrong with screen time, particularly in these circumstances. but the problem is that if the kids are on it all day, it can lose this magic. if you use it strategically during the times with no adult is available to interact with them, they will find off not to bother. this is harder if one of you is still working on-site, or particularly if one of you is a healthcare worker or government official who's working longer hours these days. if you are on your own with the kids and are trying to work from home, one option is to get up quite early like 5 AM and try to get two hours of solid work done before they get up. then spend the morning doing lots of active play with them. with any luck they'll be tired and somewhat tired of you by lunch. and you can put the little ones down for nap time and give older children quiet time during which they can read or watch screens, you can work from 1 to 3 PM or hopefully to 3:30 or 4, depending on your nap, let's hope for a good nap these days. then you can put in another hour or so after the kids go to bed. and if you've got a toddler and your boss insists on a video call at 10 AM when you have no coverage, well there's not much to be done about

that. you can try special toys that only come out during calls. so they see novel enough to keep them entertained but it might be better to have everyone which agreement that we are all just doing the best we can. if you were a manager being understanding about the situation is going to go a long way. you will buy incredible loyalty from your people. by telling your employees that it's cute when a toddler keeps shoving a potato creation in the parents' face when she's on a video call. it isn't sustainable long-term not by any means. but this will eventually end. the productivity lessons we all learn will stay with us, which is one silver lining, we really need silver linings these days.

0316 Check the news once a day

This is wise for productivity at any point, it is particularly important during times of widespread and excited. I normally take before breakfast episodes a few weeks ahead, that helps me cope with unexpected disruptions to life, and expected events too. like my fifth child arrived in late December. we certainly had more than a few unexpected disruptions now, is my kids out of school for the next few weeks due to emergency measures to prevent the spread of the coronavirus. but I decided to swap in a few last-minute episodes anyway in order to address what everyone is thinking about. like many of us, I spent many hours of the past week or so, looking at headlines, trying to come to grips with what a global pandemic might mean. I also then realized at some point when I was looking at the New York Times homepage yet again, and my beautiful three-month-old baby boy was giggling at his toys, that this was the wrong way to be spending my time. we are controlling what we can control in this household, continuing the kids' education at home, making sure we wash hands, avoiding crowds and not making any rash financial moves. but if reading headlines doesn't do anything, but producing anxiety, then there is no point in spending more time in this than necessary. and so I have a new rule for myself, check the news once per day. back many years ago this is about as often as we would've been able to get the news anyway, in the morning paper perhaps, or watching the evening news. I can remain an informed person by looking at what is going on in the world once, other than that I can help my children with their homeschooling read books, play outside and watch my baby learn new things every day. this is a much more productive use of time. I will admit that this is not easy, anxiety-inducing us to pick up the phone and see what the situation is and see if it has changed, but general mindfulness helps a lot. when I picked up the phone I tried to pause and asked why. if I am just about to check the news again, time to scroll through baby photos or read something on the kindle app. eventually we will be on the other side of this, but I think checking news once a day remains a good rule, indeed I might suggest people try to subscribe a physical newspaper and

building the days news consumption until morning ritual, then you can spend the rest of the day focused on what you need to, and not on things that won't change whether you read about them 10 times a day or once. and maybe you could spend some of the freed-up time looking at things that you do remind you of what is still good in the world, baby giggles and blooming flowers are doing that for me, for those, I am grateful.

0313 Repeat what's successful

Why not follow one win with another? If you're **striving to be innovative** at work and to lead an *instill worth life* at home, you may feel pulled toward trying new things, try new things can be a lot of fun. but you can also be helpful to have a few **sure-fire strategies** in your back pocket to rely on. when you want to direct your time and creativity to other places. so what kind of successes can we repeat? a lot of great managers and HR processes have go-to questions that they ask in pretty much every interview. having standard questions saves you time planning the interview, and it lets you be more present during the interview because you're not rethinking the sequence of questions you planned out. you already know from past experience that it works. asking the same questions also creates consistency across applicants, which is desirable for promoting equity too. similarly, you can have a goal to plan for meetings. the same basic template can work with a range of one on ones and team meetings, greeting in check-in, followed by a quick celebration of recent successes, next to deep dive into top priorities, and finally a recap of who's doing what, when, and a motivating lunch to send people on their way. you can even use similar language from week to week to introduce, and rap up each section of the meeting. repeating what's successful can work in your personal life too. Long time listeners know that my family loves going to the Jersey shore in the summer. in fact, we love going to the same town and the Jersey shore of the year and eating at the same ice cream parlor in that town. some of us even love getting the same flavor of ice cream every time, that would be me, chocolate peanut butter all the way. I've experimented with moonstruck's but it's hard to argue with success. part of our delight comes from nostalgia, each experience calls to mind our past summers at the beach with lots of good memories, but some of the delights also comes from the fact this is a vacation that satisfies our needs and desires. it works for our famine. we could try another beach but well there probably isn't a perfect beach, and this is a perfectly good one. social gatherings offer all kinds of opportunities for repeating successes too. plenty of groups of friends have a standing date, say brunch the first Saturday of every month at the same restaurant or happy hour at the bar around the corner from the office every

Thursday. if you like planning parties that is awesome, but if you enjoy the party itself more than the planning, then feel free to use a given plan more than once. the same menu can work for more than one dinner party, we serve undo or large tenderloin from Costco, those work. even heard of a couple who routinely for the same dinner party two nights in a row, same menu same flowers, same music playing in the background, just a different set of guests on each day. even if you're not up for full-scale reenactments, you can repeat particular successful elements. if you rearrange furniture to make room for more guests at a cocktail party, afterwards you can use your phone to take a two-minute video walking to your house. then you're preparing for your next get together, you know what to do. and let's not forget conversational success, it's a common social icebreaker for everyone to share one fun fact about themselves. so if you shared one fact in the past prove to be a good conversation starter, go ahead and try that one out again. don't get me wrong, novelty has a place in life. since my husband and I tend to take two weeks off during the summer, we can do one beach a week and one new thing pulled from our list of 100 dreams. if you have a favorite coffee shop, well that doesn't mean you should decline if someone suggest me to get a new one. but novelty is not a good in the novel itself. for a while, I felt bad about ordering chocolate peanut butter ice cream and sugar corn every time I went to my favorite ice cream parlor, but if I only going about five times per year, I don't have to choose a flavor I don't like, as much just seem like the kind of person who shakes things up. sometimes I don't need to shake things up and that's perfectly fine. other success you repeat that again and again, could there be more?

0312 Thank people twice

Good manners require that when someone gives you a gift you put pen to paper, or at least fingers to keyboard to write a thank you note. these notes that people who have shown you generosity, kindness and support, know that they have made a difference. but why stop there? after sending those notes, say thank you again when you're actually using the gift. there's no **obligation** to do this, it could be a lot of fun for you and the person was generous to you in the first place. this works especially well for gifts you don't enjoy until the while after the received. when you're given a bottle of wine or a jar of homemade jam, take a **sharpie** and write the name of the person who gave it to you on the label. then when you're drinking the wine, or enjoying the food, text the giver a photo of the wine and the glasses, or the jam on your toast, they know that you're thinking of them and enjoying the gift. this works for gifts your kids received too, a picture of your kids absorbed in a Lego kit that aunt and uncle sent them, communicate the volumes about how thoughtful and well chosen the gift was. gift cards learn themselves to the double

thank you too. in addition to a note written after the received, it can be found to write another note telling the giver about the delicious dinner their restaurant gift card provided, or to let them know what the retail gift card purchased. this doesn't have to be complicated. you can just text or email a photo of your smiling child with the armload of the target treasure spot with the gift card, or write a note telling them about the day night meal in experience that the giver made possible. it's nice to say thank you twice for an intangible gift too. if your neighbor keeps your kids so that you can get ready to host a birthday party, you surely say thank you when you pick the kids up. but it's also nice to call or send a note after the party, acknowledging your neighbor's role in the party's success. likewise if a colleague introduces you to someone in the network, thank them for the introduction and then say thank you again after you've had your coffee together. if you feels right for the relationship you could text the person a photo of the two of you with your lattes. or if you think the person like public recognition even post the photo on social media with a note expressing thanks. and don't forget thanking people twice for recommendations. that means a text to the college who told you about the crown after you binge watched all of season one and are chewing up season two. or a photo of the pot of soup you made using a recipe recommended to you. or an update to a mentor who coached you on negotiation for a raise, after you find out that you got the raise. it just takes an instant to say thank you again and it can amplify a sense of gratitude, and let the people who are kind to us, know that what they have done matters. people are a good use of time so thinking people twice is time well spent

0311 Make progress on your bucket list

In a previous episode I urged listeners to create something called a list of 100 dreams. this list which was an exercise shared with me by career coach Caroline Sneeze Lavigne is the completely unedited list of anything you'd like to do or have more of in your life. It's basically a bucket list. that is those things you want to do before you kick the bucket. but most people's bucket list is that extensive, 100 items is a lot, the opposite of going all the way to 100 is that you really have to think. you have to come back to the list again and again. and so you come up with dreams that are both big and small. the small ones, some of which could be done this weekend can be incredibly motivating. but today's tip is not about the small ones, today, we gonna talk about the big ones. I recently received an email from the listener who asked exactly how to tackle big addition's goals. let's say that your bucket list involves **renovating** a historical state. well higher ploy ambition. but this is at best a multi year undertaking, maybe it's a decade long undertaking. so how do

you keep from getting discouraged or feeling **scattered**, especially if your list also contains other big items, maybe such as **skipping diving on the great barrier reef** and by the way you're not skip a licensed yet and you should **brush up** on your swimming too, or maybe your list includes writing **an epic historical novel**. it's a good question but I do think it's possible to build some big complicated dreams into life. there's both a **systematic** way to do this and something I'll call the **serendipitous rule**, you can do both. first the systematic. I encourage you to make your list of 100 dreams, separate these dreams into categories. the first is those that are doable in a few hours, if you've always wanted to try SoulCycle or read the Great Gatsby or tend to be a production of lame miss, well basically you need a couple hours on a Saturday. you can do this. the next category is those that will involve a few days or maybe a week or two. most of your travel goals well actually go in here they might require a few of money but in terms of time a week or two is about where they land. even fairly involved once. your bike tour of the valley is not going to take more than two weeks because your legs will be too **sore** to go longer. eating at French laundry will likewise take some time to score your reservation and travel to California, but not that much time. then create a category of those goals that will be far more involved but you do see a way to do. and finally a category that's going to involve factors outside of your control. revisit the list frequently, you can always choose one of the short ones to execute on. but in November or December of each year, think through your next year, and maybe choose one of the more straightforward travel goals for vacation. And finally choose one of your more complicated or nebulous one as a focus for the year. just one. you can really be form to be patient here, because you can accomplish a lot over a long time horizon, if you're listening to this at age 40, you've probably got at least another 35 years for active dream pursuit if you like. wondering the year will get through a lot. but by aiming for one, you can focus and not get discouraged. and even if you're not done with that goal by the time January rolls around again, which you won't be for the longer ones, that's fine, you've built up an enough monument, that you can keep going or starting something else. so for instants let's say that this is the year of the epic historical novel, you aim to write 500 words, 4 days per week, and so you'll have about 100,000 words by the end of the year, this is actually a fairly long book. and maybe you're done. or maybe you've got another 50,000 words to go, but by this point you'll be enough into the story that you can start the project of learning to paint portraits with royal pastels. with the goal of doing an exhibition at the end of that year, and so you spend the first four months of the year, and intense studying with the class on Wednesday nights and Saturdays and then you spend the next eight months producing work as you get feedback from the master painter you've been listed to guide you. you see how this goes. of course you should leave room for **serendipity** too. I faithfully planned out your vacations with my family's list of 100 dreams in mind, that's how we wound up at Yosemite last summer, and

Yellowstone summer before that. but I'm open to other things and this part of that I publish my evolving list of 100 dreams from time to time, I put it up on my website, and then something fascinating happens: people read it and decide to help me. this summer for instance, I'll be giving a speech somewhere that was on my bucket list. precisely because someone read my list and sent an invitation. you really just never know what will happen, so tell friends, family, colleagues and social media followers about your desires that just might help you make more progress than you thought possible.

0310 What to stash in your car

so that all trips or waits are more comfortable. unless you live in a few big cities if you've got a commute or kids or both you probably spent **a fair amount of time** in your car. I used to think I didn't, I work from home and my kids' schools are less than 10 minutes away, but then I started tracking my time and realized, wow, all the short trips, add up. that's one reason I started before breakfast podcast. I wanted to give people something they could get through, on their short trips. Anyway, after my recent episode on using up gift cards, I got a note from a listener named April, she wrote that I kept ending up at Target or CVS or some other store on an errand and realizing I didn't have the gift card. or running home for any now gift card before we made a rare **impromptu** gift cards stop for dinner. so one day last summer I grabbed a credit card wallet I had and put all the gift cards I might use outside the house in it, then put it in my glove compartment. now if a pool needs to stop by target she can just reach in there and grab the card. this got me thinking of all the other things that is wise to keep in the car. I don't think it's a coincidence that my family has gotten sick less frequently since we started keeping bottles of **hand sanitizer** in the cup holders of our cars. we also keep some paper towels for the inevitable messes and a small garbage container in our family minivan. there's a bottle of water too for hydration emergencies, usually some granola bars, sunscreen for sunny days, and an umbrella for raining ones. I keep **a handful of quarters** in case somewhere with **old fashion parking meters**. I thought these were pretty smart ideas then I asked my Twitter followers about their car stashes and I realized I'm pretty much **a rookie level** when it comes to preparedness. the most common out of the box idea people mentioned? a big towel. this is as useful for messes as paper towels, but can also be used for drying off anyone who is wet or putting under anyone who is wet, for whatever reason that wetness has happened. a large towel also enables an impromptu picnic. if you need to be outside, can be wrapped around someone who is cold. a few people mentioned garbage bags, these are useful for the **inevitable garbage** that builds up and that people forget to cart out of the car. but can also make reasonable ponchos for sun

down for, that said actual ponchos are that expensive either might be worth keeping around. a first aid kit or at least Band-Aids is never a bad idea. people with teenagers mention the importance of extra phone chargers. your young passengers might desperately need to restore their batteries so they can text each other across the backseat. of course not all entertainment must be electronic, one person mentioned the book of mad libs, another suggested a book of crossword puzzles, both require a pen so be sure to have that too. either of those are a sticker book for little kids that can provide a lot of entertainment for a small amount of car volume. a few people mentioned frisbees and April who wrote with the gift card hack mentioned that she kept a **deflated** beach ball in the car so she and her family could battle the ball around if they find themselves waiting somewhere, like a sibling sports event with time to kill. now that I'm back in the newborn stage, people reminded me of the importance of extra clothes. an extra sweatshirt should **suffice** and helps with unexpected cold. and finally extra socks, cold feet make people **miserable** and that's the last thing you need on a car trip. as I read through this list I realize that it sounds like a lot of stuff, but the good news is that none of these takes so much space, a small crate in the trunk could crawl it all and then you'll be ready for whatever life on the road throws at you, so what are you keeping your car I'm sure I'm forgetting something brilliant so let me know what it is.

0309 Schedule the next step

When there is something you need to do but can't do it right now, put it on the calendar, so you won't forget it when the right time does roll around. to an extent , I like to get things done rather than on my mind. sometimes though we can know what the next step is, but we can't take that step until later. this happens with all kinds of things, ___ visits, by frustratingly coming example, the provider recommends that you come back in a year but then his or her office system only accepts appointments six months out. you don't want to find yourself next March realizing that you need to visit and then not being able to get a convenient appointment. so best to put a reminder on your calendar for September, so you can make the appointment you want, you schedule the next step. I've done something similar when making reservations for dinner at special restaurants or meals with characters at Disney World, which book out exactly 180 days in advance and fill up fast. I've even made a note of when appointments for a parent teacher conference at my kids elementary school open up. I have a lot of kids, it is a massive time savings to get the appointments back to back. and I'm not going to get them back to back unless they're on the system soon after it opens. and I'm not going to

magically wake up Tuesday morning remembering that the system is open. so the note goes on the calendar to take the next step. as you know to cancel things, if I signed up for a free trial that I'm not intending to keep long-term, well best to cancel before I logged in. this is easy to forget. but not if I schedule the next step on the calendar. scheduling the next step is also important when your next step can't happen until someone else has done their part. if there's a form you need to submit, that is being mailed to you, for example, it can be helpful to write a note in your calendar for when the form should arrive. that way your reminder to follow up if it hasn't arrived. if it hasn't after you request the form again, you want to create a new calendar reminder for the date you're now expecting it. I find that scheduling the next step can be helpful even for vega aspirations or things without exact timeline. my husband and I gave our oldest child tickets to a musical for Christmas, well actually we gave him a note saying he could pick the musical and we bought the tickets. we plan to go in late spring or summer, so I picked a rand of week in late winter to check on his musical choice and to figure out a more conquit plan. if this next step doesn't happen that particular week, it's OK, but the point is to nudge that promise back up to the front of my brain. of course for calendar reminders to be helpful you have to actually look at your calendar. I make sure to study up coming weeks during my weekly Friday planning session. I know that electronic calendars can send you a reminder automatically without you studying the whole calendar, but it doesn't always work, if the reminder is to call a restaurant at 10 AM on May 1, and you don't actively plan that into your model of the week, you might find yourself at that time on May 1 in a place where you can't easley make a phone call, but if you do build calendar service into your life regularly, the notes on the calendar can make you seem like the kind of person who has his or her act together, or at least you'll be the person eating at Cinderella's Royal table at this Disney World, because your request of those reservations right on time

0306 How to have it all

stop thinking of work and life as being an opposition. There's enough space in the 168 hours we all have each week, to devote plenty of time anything that matters. by telling ourselves the story of time abundance, it becomes far more possible to make work and life fit together. Because I write about issues of careers and families, I often use the phrase "work life balance", that's the term that people search for, so it makes sense to use it. But I've really never liked the phrase, the **implication** is that work and life are on **opposite sides of the scale**, hence the balance **metaphor**, for one to go up the other must go down. It seems like a **zero-sum game** but it really isn't, or at least not within the categories that people

usually care about. Here's the **statistic to ponder**, as we celebrate international women's day this weekend, Tandoori studies find that women spend more hours working for pay now than they did in 1965, this makes sense. The entrance of women into the paid **labor force** is one of the major social changes of the last 50 years. But Tandoori studies find that women are also spending more hours **interacting with** their children than they did in 1965. how is this possible, how can women spend more hours working for pay and more hours with their kids? Well it turns out that work in child care is not the only thing that women do, in the 1960s women spent quite a bit of time on housework, this number has fallen as our's devoted to childcare and work havarsen. you can even see this changing inference reflected in the language and then in 1960s people talked about housewives with the emphasis on the house, now we talk about stay at home moms. even the trade-offs involved with big demanding careers are often different than the assumption, a few years ago I wrote a book called *I Know How She Does It*, that look at how successful women spent the time. I click the time diaries from women earning over \$100,000 a year who also raising children, I found these women worked on average about 44 hours a week, the average woman with a full-time job who earns about \$40,000 a year, work somewhere around 37 hours a week. and it turns out to be a huge financial payoffs to considering careers that require a few extra hours per week on the margins. so this seven or so hour gap isn't nothing between about 44 hours and 37 hours, but it didn't require **sacrificing** much time with kids. in general it came out of leisure time. the people in my study watched 4.4 hours of TV a week which is about eight hours less than the average woman with kids and a job. and yes it turns out these hours could be **substituted**. I found about half the women I studied work sometimes after the kids went to bed, that time frame when a lot of people watch TV. **in other words work and family weren't on opposite sides of the scale, work and Netflix were on opposite sides of the scale**, and that's a **trade off** that a lot of people thought was worth making. now none of this is to say that more day to day choices or that nobody faces work-life conflict clori people do, people do all the time. but the bigger issue is that when we tell ourself stories that work and life are naturally in opposition, we start to believe it. We limit the volleyball game missed because of a meeting, but not the volleyball game missed because another child has a swim meet at the exact same time. People look at the first **scenario** and decide they must **dial down** or **scale back**, up doubt, but no one looks at the second hard choice moment and says you need to get rid of the other kid. that's the result of our stories. so today I think about the work and life story you're telling yourself, and figure out how you can **reframe** them so you worked late and missed bedtime on Monday and Tuesday this week. was that horrible? is something miss? perhaps, or you can tell yourself that there are seven days in a week and you were home for five, that sounds fairly

balanced. like you're rocking it at work and at home. When we re-frame our stories ,we see that not only can people have it all? often we already do

0305 Keep small things small

Not everything **warrants** a big response, by keeping small things small, as a same goals, you save your time and energy for things that truly do **warrant** your attention, you'll probably be happier too. if you like most people, you nod out find yourself annoyed when things in life aren't quite right, I know I do. maybe your neighbor lose his garbage bins on the curb for days, or maybe your workplace sends pointless email newsletters that you can't unsubscribe from. if you listen to this podcast, my guess is that you have high standards for yourself. and you try to find solutions to problems that come up in your life, that's generally a good thing. sometimes though our attempts to find a solutions can cost more than the problem that are trying to solve. that's what it pays to keep small things small. the first way to keep small things small is to recognize them as small things. ask yourself, how much does this affect my life as the lives of the people I care about. sometimes the answer will be not much. these are **occasions** to practice patience. you can smile after someone cuts in front of you in line to exit on the highway, maybe the person is follow his jerk, maybe it's a tourist on a rental car but no idea where the exit was. in any case, you know that you will still work on time at your high-paying job or you do challenging meaningful work along side cover colleagues. I mean really what does it matter to you. if you're not sure whether you're dealing with a small thing, try what Richard Carlson, author of *Don't Sweat the Small Stuff*, calls it time work. imagine yourself a year from now, how much does this session matter, most likely you won't remember your commute two days from now, let alone a year from now. or you can ask yourself whose issue is this anyway, it might be nice if your colleague didn't use double exclamation point of his emails, but it hardly reflects upon you. you might prefer that your high school sb look a little less like she is up his cloth, but again, to each own. psychologist windy mogul in her book *The Blessing of a B Minus*, encourages parents to allow themselves to appreciate the kids, as they figure out who they are, even when their tastes or hobbies seems a little odd, she offers an older hyberepair thank you God for varying the creatures. the next time you find yourself about to get annoyed or want to fix something that isn't actually your problem, to say to yourself what a world, plenty of surprises. and leave other people to their exclamation point or **oddball** fashion. sometimes though you may feel like a small thing is having an adverse effect on you or someone else, you feel the urge to address it. even then a little perspective is awise. I find it helpful to imagine how conversation about the issue might unfold. suppose you have a monthly conference call that consistently starts 10 minutes late, you faithfully

logon at the scheduled time, only to spend 10 minutes talking about the weather. as you think about bringing this up with the person who **convince** the call, try to imagine what you would say, try to imagine how he might response, are you feeling to stumped about what you might say that doesn't sound petty about this 10 minutes, every month, or you have to talk about the weather, if so plan for the delay, come up with your best weather jokes, or just dialing yourself. other times though imagining the conversation will help you figure out how to keep a small thing in perspective, or constrively addressing it. suppose you've frequently learn about special programs of your kids school just a few days before, either **scramble to rearrange** your work schedule or you kids will disappointed when you can't be there. at first blush in my thing to respond to the teachers next email with your frustration about this, but that might make a teacher feel guilty and probably doesn't help the long-term goal of a good relationship. so instead you envision another option, when you have a hunch that there's an event coming up, you reach out to your child's teacher to ask if there is something you shouldn't dissipate, hello Mrs. Rogers, with spring break around the corner I wonder if there might be a class party, I am eager to get it on the calendar so I can arrange my schedule to attend. Hopefully that will elicit at least tentative information and maybe even natch the teacher to give a little more notice for special events in the future, you kept the small things small as to the dressing issue that was bothering you.

0304 Work close to the bottom line

when you're faced with multiple priorities, you must determine where to direct your time, focus on the tasks that will bring you revenue, boost profits or otherwise produce immediate benefits. these tasks will buy you space in the future for other things. listeners often tell me that they have trouble figuring out what tasks to work on first. if your boss is giving you a specific assignment and has said that should be your top priority, well, great, but what if your boss is giving you six projects, yes you eventually need to work on all of them, but we never know when emergencies will arise. if your office loses power at 11 AM, you'll be better off having got to some of these tasks versus others. this is the genius of the rule to work close to the bottom line, particularly in a **monetary** context. when you look at your meeting schedule and see that the client wants to meet about follow up work, at

the same time, that you normally have a weekly check-in for an ongoing project. well maybe you can delegate the check-in, the client meeting is more likely to boost revenue. similarly, if you've determined that you are overpaying for supplies, a few calls to **negotiate** that should **take precedence over** cleaning out your inbox. cutting costs boost profits. again the bottom line. and you don't actually need to be pursuing profits per sale to work close to the bottom line. nonprofit organizations need higher revenue and lower costs like anyone else. so the same rules apply. suppose you're a **fundraiser** for a nonprofit and your boss has asked you to write a letter for the donate newsletter and also to submit a grant proposal to a major foundation that recently visited your organization. the grant proposal could result in significant funding for your organization, it's close to the bottom line. is an article for the newsletter valuable? well probably, but its impact is less immediate, unless direct. so unless you've been **given explicit instructions**, otherwise better to handle the grant proposal first. then after that submitted turn your attention to the article. the bottom line isn't always strictly monetary, sometimes it's in the immediately valuable outcome of another source. for example, you might be faced with doing reference checks for an applicant your organization wants to hire. this is the last step before making the offer and bringing the person on board. you may also need to develop goals and the dashboard for **the upcoming quarter**, those are important for sure, but the reference checks **pave the way** for immediate concrete benefits, namely, let a new hire this person that you want to hire, or the goals and dashboard in the **myriad** other tasks on your to-do list or have an impact over time, bring on the new hire and he can help you with those tests, so direct your attention there first. and I know it's satisfying to cross items off a to-do list, but the downside of this is we can get just as big hit from crossing off, order new folders versus call old client whose budget just doubled. but clearly not all tasks are of equal value, when you're deciding what to do, think about dollars and an immediate impact. the sort that will open up space in the future. overtime working close to the bottom line means we make faster progress toward our

own and our organization's goals because we're competition what matters most

0303 Cope with being overwhelmed

By recognizing the exact nature of your overwhelming situation, you can take steps to make life feel more in control. today's tip comes from Bill Burnett and Dave Evans's new book *Designing Your Work Life*. the follow up to design your life, this book teaches you how to use design principles to improve your time at the office. we've probably all been in bad jobs, but in many cases, Bill Burnett writes, people find themselves in jobs they generally like, it's just that **circumstances** are stressful. these stressful circumstances come in different flavors, which Burnett and Evans call the hydra-overwhelm, the happy-overwhelm and the hyper-overwhelm. they require different steps to **mitigate**. the hydra overwhelm takes its name from the multi-head a Greek Monster that crew new heads every time one was chopped off. perhaps this feels a bit like your life, if you work in a place that has been made lean to the point where everybody is doing the equivalent of 2 to 3 jobs, maybe you reported to too many managers or running too many projects **simultaneously**. maybe you're having to pull information from too many sources, or you have to use legacy systems that are **cumbersome** and badly designed. the happy overwhelm is when you just have too much of good things going on, you volunteered for all the cool shiny stuff, you love all of it but you are one person with 24 hours in a day, and it is physically impossible to work for all of them. finally, the hyper overwhelmed happens in start-up situations where there are no organizational norms and very little support. it's not that you're reporting to two different managers, it's that you really aren't sure who your manager is, because you're growing so fast that there's no organization chart. anyway, when you find yourself overwhelmed, ask yourself if it's a hydra, happy or hyper kind of overwhelm, and then you can figure out what to do. if it's hydra, you can either drop tasks or ask permission to drop ones that are hurting your productivity. in the permission conversations, be specific Burnett and Evans write, say that you will be more productive if you could use the 2018 version of software versus the 1998 version that you're **stuck with**, or if you can write a monthly report instead of the weekly one, or if you can split your clients into As and Bs, with the As getting responses in 24 hours and the Bs getting responses in 96 hours. most managers are happy to have people propose solutions to their problems, so you don't need to feel this conversation. as for happy overwhelm, the problem here is that you may have a tough boss - yourself, you've chosen to do all these amazing things and you are now paying the price. the solution here is often to start delegating. figure out which of these tasks you are uniquely qualified to do, and which can be given to someone

else, maybe with you editing or approving. at work, you can ask for more resources people budgets **and so forth**, at home maybe you can hire a cleaning service, send out the laundry or hire a personal assistant. the point is to multiply your existing hours because you were not going to magically get more. finally, for the hyper overwhelmed, Burnett and Evans recommend thinking of the situation as a marathon rather than a **sprint**, run the mile you're in, take care of yourself, making sure that you're non-negotiable like sleep and exercise happen. and finally, change your story rather than I'm **frantic** because I have no idea what I'm doing. you could repeat it's so exciting to be figuring this all out. positive thoughts go a long way. in all of these situations check in a few weeks later to see if the situation seems more under control. Are the steps taking working? if so, Great, if not, figure out what else needs to change. things can be overwhelming for a while, but you don't want them to be overwhelming **permanently**

0302 Practice friendship skills

we might think such skills are **neat, but they aren't. just as we can learn to play the piano, we can learn to be more socially engaged people, in both cases, practice really does work, and it's worth building into our lives.** As several other recent episodes, I'm taking these tips from Audrey monkey's book *Happy Campers*. Monkey is a long time camper director and her book looks at why exactly kids find summer camp so fun, how can we take those lessons into our homes and working lives. She knows summer camp is basically a friendship factory, kids report making some of the best friends in the short time attend the camp. you can feel closer to someone you know for three weeks in summer camp than someone you've gone to fifth grade with all year. when you're around people constantly and doing fun things in a positive environment, you wide put all kinds of opportunities to practice your friendship skills. the good news is that some of this can be replicated as well. Monkey breaks down for us. part of being a good friend is showing interest in another person's life, and in part of this is about asking good questions. so the person can share a bit of themselves with you. so before any social situation, bring strong questions you might like to ask the people you'll be around, think about what your friends have going on in their lives, did someone mentioned a new project last time you talked? a big event in the family? can you connect to share a memory of something that the person is dealing with now? Maybe some people are naturally billion conversationalists but a lot of us aren't. brilliance comes through preparation. it also comes from asking good follow-up questions, you can completely kill a conversation by saying, oh that happened to me

once too and trying to talk the story even though that sort of seems to show coming ground. instead try saying tell me more, or asking about details of the other person's story. eventually, the conversation will turn to you, or not. but if so who cares. we all know our own stories and they get boring after a while. friendship also built around share time together and that requires getting together, which certainly tough when you're an adult. Monkey writes about teaching children to make what we called friendship bits. these are low-key invitations, do you want to play basketball during **recess**, can I sit here while we're all on the rock listening to the teacher. as adults, we can look for ways to make friendship bits too. giving how busy everyone is these are often best done to share activities that the other person might need to do anyway. so bring storm ideas and then challenge yourself to make it least a bit or two a week. if I'm trying to deep in a friendship, I might invite the other person to go for a run or walk with me. if we have kids around the same age a play date might be more doable than an adults-only event. At the conference you could invite a person to go to coffee or lunch with a small group. the key thing is to think about how to incorporate people into situations and also to recognize that if the person says no it's not a big deal. indeed that is probably the biggest friendships go practice, staying positive and recognizing that there are lots of opportunities and lots of people. Is the best way to seem like the kind of person others might actually want to be around

0228 Wash the blueberries

To make your resources usable immediately, do whatever prep work is necessary right away so your resources can provide the value you were intending when you sort them out. in other words, wash the blueberries as soon as you get home from the grocery store. Perhaps you've noticed the same phenomenon that I have in my house. if we wash the blueberries as soon as we buy them and put them in an easily accessible bowl, they get eaten. if we just shove them in the fridge fruit drawer, they often wind up spoiled and have to be thrown away. if you think about this doesn't make a whole lot of sense, it doesn't take much time to pull out **a handful of** blueberries from the drawer to wash them, but somehow these extra steps become **barriers** to enjoy. just as a whole carrot, seems much more **intimidating** to wash, **peel** and slice, ?? grabbing a baby carriage or precut carrot instead. so annoying this about ourselves, we can commit to doing a little bit of prep work **upfront** or just spending the cash to have someone else do it, or whatever we are thinking about. with any resources build this prep work into the acquisition step. this does take a bit of extra effort, it can be the difference between a purchase being used and enjoyed or the purchase being completely wasted. there are lots of applications to this tip: when you get new clothes, cut off the tags, wash or iron them if you need to. if there's something that needs to be **altered**, take it to the tailor right away. there is never going to be a better time to do this, indeed once your pants set in closet for a while, they're just going to become part of the scenery. better to consider the trip to the tailor to be part of

the shopping experience. you'll actually get to wear your pants. the same thing goes for service as you seek out. if you upgrade your alarm system so that you can get alerts on the front porch camera has triggered, invest for five minutes to set up the alerts as soon as the insulation is done. if it's worth paying the extra money for the service, it's worth investing the time so that you could actually use it, if you don't the money is wasted. I see this issue all the time with staff and unfortunately, number of organizations are terrible and onboarding new employees. what happens? well you've got a heavy workload so you feel like you urgently need to hire new staff, but once the new people show up at work, the workload feels too heavy for you to spend the time training them, they waste time and you still feel overwhelmed. but if you wash the blueberries in the sentence or actually plan out your new employee's first few days with every hour, give it an objective, in both cases, you actually get the value you were seeking in the first place and that is a huge win. so when would you benefit from a little bit of prep work, what's the small intestine of time can you make today to make life work better?

0227 Don't let criticism sting

how to stop wasting time and mental energy ruminating over useless feedback, in other words how to keep criticism from stinging.

First I wanna say that constructive feedback is a real gift. someone can be mean and nasty, what if that person gives practical suggestions or how to improve something that matters to you, you're best off thank you that person, you don't have to be friends. But you can be grateful. That said not all feedback is constructive. I was thinking of this recently when I got a letter from before breakfast listener who lives in church, this minister lost a close family member shortly before Christmas. it was too late to find someone else to lead on the holiday services, so the minister did so, with deep in grief, then she received a note from the preacher who knew about the death, saying that her holiday preaching was sub-par. Auch! in the situation the listener knew that this criticism wasn't really fair. but she ruminated about it she wondered looking forward if there was a way to spend less mental energy worrying about such criticism. I think this is a good goal, but not just for criticism. we should also spend less mental energy seeking out unhelpful praise. over the years I've had a number of people read my books before publication to see if they flag issues that I can see. I always told them that I love it and I hate it, are equally unhelpful. even if as a human being I 2 prefer hearing the former. instead, I want to know things like I stopped reading in the middle of chapter 2 because these points seem too repetitive, that's good to know. we can control ourselves too much to seek out praise just as we can make shortsighted moves to avoid criticism. better to decouple our self-esteem from both. instead, I think that unhelpful criticism or praise can best be kept in contact by drowning it as a high volume of helpful feedback. the more feedback you get the more you can see that not everyone thinks X, but a lot of people do think Y which you hadn't even considered. you can evaluate all of it, without signing too much weight any one bit of it. you can see which feedback resonates most strongly with you and figure out a way to deal critical feedback in a way that feels authentic. in the minister's case I

suggested identifying a handful and thoughtful church members, who could commit to providing feedback on her sermons every week. I also suggested inviting some skilled retired preachers to visit her church frequently and provide feedback as well. the higher the volume the more the random feedback from **grumpy** people can be taken for what it is. if you find yourself thinking for days about unhelpful criticism, you might think about how you can increase the volume of feedback you received as well. can you show your work to a handful of colleagues? can you list a few mentors to provide advice? if you are public speaking, can you try out new material and find a smaller audiences. the goal is to have your feedback be someone like receiving a gift basket. if someone gives you a box of chocolate-covered cherries as a gift and you hated chocolate-covered cherries, you might be a little bit miffed. But when the cherries are package with popcorn fancy cheeses crackers truffles cookies and a bottle of wine, no big deal, you can find other things that you find **worthwhile** in there

0226 Make a default choice

so you can quickly navigate the problem of having too many choices

I know that having too many choices sounds like **the definition of** a first-world problem, there are plenty of people out there whose lives **are constrained by restrictions** they didn't choose and who struggle to **meet their basic needs**. But I'm guessing this is not the situation face in many listeners in this podcast. We often face in opposite problem, how do we navigate the millions of choices we **encounter** daily without feeling stressed or regretful about our decisions. A choice seems like a good thing, too much of it can **take a toll** and his book *The Paradox of Choice*, psychologist Barry Schwartz explains that people can feel anxious at the **prospect** of making a choice and overwhelmed by all the options, then we can feel regretful of decisions as we recall the options given up. This is all made worse because we feel responsible for the outcome, having made the choice ourselves. So what are we to do, Schwartz recommends **choosing when to choose** as he puts it. Rather than investing time and energy and every decision we face, figure out which one is more thoughtful **deliberations**, for everything else, go as a default option. Maybe this sounds challenging, but it turns out that if you are an upstanding citizen, you've probably already got to follow rules for a lot of things. Schwartz gives the example of wearing a seatbelt or not cheating on your partner. These are in fact choices, but there are good enough reasons not to seriously entertain the alternative. most of us don't spend a whole lot of time thinking about it, it turns out you can also make default decisions on many other things, even if the consequences aren't so died. And lots of people heard about the example of President Obama wearing only green or blue suits by **illuminating insignificant choices**, he can focus on more important things. If the situation calls for him to wear something else but there would have to be a good reason. Likewise, maybe you can set your meal time defaults, turkey sausage fruit for breakfast, a green vegetable in every lunch and dinner, no alcohol during the week. It's also a good idea to have a good two restaurants or two for work lunches and dinners. When someone suggests meeting for a meal you know exactly where to take the person and you know exactly what to order. Of course, if there's a reason to switch from the default you can, if you're entertaining a vegetarian client for

instance, best to go to a restaurant with more than one veggie option. But having a default means you can focus on preparing for the meeting rather than choosing a restaurant and you could focus on the mealtime conversation rather than the menu. Like President Obama, you could also choose default for getting dressed. if you love fashion that's wonderful. But for those of us who just want to look put together and socially appropriate, figure out what works and go with that. For a normal business attire workplace, for example, your default outfit might be a dress shirt, black pants, and black dress shoes, your weekend daytime default might be a sweater, jeans and slip-on loafers or flats. You might only buy black leggings or running shorts so that you don't have to think about whether the color of your bottom half looks ridiculous with your exercise top. Defaults can help with your schedule too. If Friday night is always date night, you could have a babysitter for schedule every week rather than having to find a babysitter each time you decide to go out. And indeed you can have a default for just about anything, I love this example from before breakfast listener Jennifer: I work on a college campus with lots of parking lot she writes, over the years I have needlessly spent time walking around searching for my car at the end of the day. Last year I decided to park in the same parking lot each and every day. This way I don't forget when my car is parked and I don't have to put a reminder on my phone or think of another way to remember where my car is that day. At the end of the day, I walked from wherever I am on campus to my car in my parking lot. It has taken one decision of my list of daily decisions and has limited my inless walking all over campus to find my car. What are the default decisions have you made? Are there areas of your life you might be able to streamline with a default decision?

2025 Use shadow values in your favor

When you understand people's deep and often hidden motivations you can reach good outcomes, situations that might otherwise be fraught. This tip comes from Dr. Jennifer Goldman Wexler's new book [*Optimal Outcomes, Free Yourself from Conflict at Work, at Home, and in Life*](#). And this book, Goldman Wexler explains that shadow values are those things we care about in life, that are hard to admit, even to ourselves. She shows us how shadow values get and keep us stuck in conflict and how we can use them to break free. For instance, many people desire recognition, weather for contributions they make it at work, at home, or in the community. But most of us have also learned from a very young age that asking for recognition directly, isn't socially acceptable. So we are not gonna stand up and announced to our colleagues or spouses that, hey I would really like to be praised for what I did here. So we find other less direct ways to get the recognition we deserve. Goldman Wexler notes that we make self-congratulatory remarks, so we draw attention to our accomplishments in awkward ways, we overlook other people's contributions in favor of shining a spotlight on our own. If you were on the receiving end of someone doing this you might get frustrated and annoyed. As the conflict escalates you might start skimming about ways to confront the other person and get him or her to change. There's a school of thought that such situations called for honest conversations but Goldman Wexler has different advice, stop trying to have that on a conversation. You don't necessarily need to talk about something uncomfortable in order to free yourself in the conflict is producing.

Indeed talking about can be counter-productive because even if you point out the other person's shadow value like hey it looks like you would really like some attention right now, the person might be embarrassed or deny that's what's going on. Instead, do the work inside yourself. Goldman Wexler suggest putting yourself **in the other person's shoes** and imagine what they might really care about but be unable to admit, simply acknowledge that the shadow value may be **driving the other person's behavior**, as Goldman Wexler notes doing this can **drastically** improve your relationship with someone and produce empathy and a way no other practice can. Then once you've knowledge this possibility that my college it's taking all the credit for a project because she really wants recognition and feels like she's being **taken for granted** around here, you can take things to the next level, by asking yourself how you can honor the shadow value, thoughts words or actions. For example, you can simply think to yourself wow maybe being recognized for her contributions is really important to her. This mindset can help you with future interactions or you could choose to honor the shadow value with your words, saying, for example, thank you for all you've done to make this project work, I know it wasn't easy and I appreciate what you did. Or you can choose to honor the shadow value with your actions by, for instance, saying they want to take the person to lunch and appreciation for all her hard work. Now to be sure some people don't like rewarding what seems like **immature** behavior with praise thanks actions or anything else, but the truth is we all have shadow values. I know I do even if I didn't know that's what they were called before recording this episode. Acknowledging other people's shadow values let us deep personalize behavior. We recognize that these annoying frustrating actions, and it's just a part of what means to be human, understanding that in many cases it's not about us, it's about them, can de-escalate conflict and make better outcomes possible. We can be more understanding of ourselves and others. And build the relationships we care about most.

0224 leave an encouraging sticky note

a simple strategy you can use to make the people in your life happier, try leaving encouraging sticky notes where they find them

I'm taking this idea like our recent tip, *Greet People With a Smile*, Audrey monkey's book *Happy Campers*. Monkey is a long term camper director and her book asks the question of why most kids love summer camp so much. One answer the relentlessly positive atmosphere. The good news is that our practical ways to re-create this positive atmosphere at work and at home. That's why monkey proposes what she calls the sticky note solution, you write short positive messages on sticky notes to give the people you care about **a mental boost**. If you've got kids, for instance, they are prime **targets for** sticky notes. Monkey says just thinking about something you appreciate about your kid, let them know that you notice, she says. By mentioning this quality on a sticky note that you put on the bathroom mirror. They know can

say something like your great sense of humor makes my day happier or thank you for doing the dishes without being asked. I appreciate how you help our home runs smoothly. As monkey observed, kids often hear what they're doing wrong, this is a simple way to emphasize what they're doing right. Your spouse might appreciate what he or she is doing right being called us into doing as well. Leave a sticky note with a thank you message or something more romantic on the bathroom mirror or somewhere else you know your spouse will see it, coffee maker, for instance, if he or she is always the one making the morning part, even on his or her steering wheel. Another idea? Pick one of your favorite **inspirational** quotes and put it on a sticky note on your own or your kids' bathroom mirror or the refrigerator, Monkey writes, to gather you can think about a positive thought each time you see the sticky note. Switch the inspirations out from time to time, and encourage your kids to their own favorite quotes. You can deploy the sticky note solution with care at work as well. If you're managing people, you know that you should be generous with your praise and schedule time for **celebratory** feedback., but sometimes it's hard to make the time to sit down to people to celebrate what's going right. In between such celebratory meetings, you could leave the **occasional** sticky note, on return document or printed up note from a happy client, even on the person's desk. Mention how pleased you are, and call up with the person did well. It's easy enough to send an email saying the same thing, but we've got lots of emails, stuff gets buried. An actual note will get noticed. I really like this idea, sticky notes are cheap and physically small, which means that if you wanted to, you couldn't write a novel on there, there's space for just a few words, fortunately, a few words is often all it takes to make someone's day.

0221 Greet people with a smile

to change the mood of everyone around you with a simple strategy. I was reminded of a strategy recently while reading Audrey Monkey's book, *Happy Campers*. Monkey is the director of the Gold Arrow Camp in California, the vast majority of children love summer camp and in the book *Happy Campers*, Monkey explores the reasons for this and how you can transfer those lessons to normal home and work life. A key finding, a good camp has a **relentlessly** positive atmosphere, the **counselors** make every child feel welcome. **Positive peer interactions** are encouraged, and yes the focus is on fun activities, but even when people are making up their bunk beds, the focus is on being a beet. Not all of life can be sunshine and rainbows, Monkey writes in her book that being aware of your moods and

making a commitment to small positive acts can go a long way. I can feel it when I've sucked the fun out of the room for my family members, because of my own bad mood. Monkey writes, **conversely** parents who model positive emotions and interactions the majority of the time have kids to do the same. It starts with a simple smile. Maybe you're not a natural smiler, Monkey says it's OK, you can start the habit by giving your family members the smile at 4 specific times. First, when you greet them in the morning to start the day. Second, when you greet them after school or work or anytime after not seeing them for a while. Third, during at least one conversation when you're looking at them in the eyes and finally at bedtime when you took them in to say good night. 4 smiles a day is not that tough, you can do this with other people in your life too. If you're ordering coffee, you're showing your bus pass to someone every morning, be sure to smile as you're doing so. Any regulars on your commute can be greeted similarly. The receptionist or security guard at your office, deserves a big smile, rather than that hunker down paint looks some people have, as if they're headed into labor in the salt mines for the day. Smile as you say hello to your colleagues, smile when you pay for your lunch in the cafeteria. You don't actually have to be in a good mood this is a two-second investment and limiting the extent of whatever personal raincloud is following you around. And you know what there's always the chance that a two-seconds smile improves for your mood too. there's some interesting research finding that when people are asked to hold a pen or a chopstick in their mouse, in a way that forces their lips into a smile, they actually do feel better. and since the smile cost absolutely nothing there's really no downside to giving it a try.

0220 When to lower your standards

to make a conscious decision to do a just OK job on a few non-critical tasks, you might be surprised how much time and energy you can save

I'm sure most people listening to this podcast of high achieving thoughts, we like to do things right. We pride ourselves **on our high standards**, such **diligence** is **admirable**. A part of wisdom is recognizing that there're only 24 hours in a day and not everything is deserving of our best work. This is common sense, the trick is figuring out WHEN it is OK to lower your standards. When can and should you **drop the ball**. This requires thinking about your time **strategically**. The first thing I'd recommend doing, the first thing I always recommend doing, is tracking your time. Keep track of your time with an app, or a spreadsheet, for a few days, including at least one weekend day or ideally you can track your time for an entire week. After you've got the data, study or log, and ask yourself what activities take more time than you really wish to be **devoted** to them. **Common corporate** include work, housework, errands, and time in transit, particularly commuting. Some of these, unfortunately, are what they are, it's hard to lower your standards on your commute terrier, drive to your kid's school because you need to get from point A to point B somewhere or another. But other categories are more **malleable**. For instance was in the category of work, you might see that you spent quite a bit of time on email, or perhaps you find yourself re-reading a weekly note you sent your colleagues 3 times before you hit send, perhaps you spend more than an hour per slide on presentations that, now you think about it, no one pays close attention to anyway. Know which activities do not have a direct link to your organization's bottom line, know which activities do not **pertain** to your

long-term goals, know which activities won't matter in two days let alone in two years, flag these activities on your timeline log, then explore what it might mean to consciously, decide to give these tasks an 80% effort. 80% is still a B on most grading scales, it's not A+ level, but it's certainly acceptable. Could you cut the time devoted to these tasks by 20%? Or here's a way to think about it. Imagine that something huge came up next week, good or bad, your biggest client showed up in town unexpectedly and wanted to spend the day with you talking about future work, or maybe your office shut down for two days because of an ice storm, what parts of these tasks would you skip? We've all had the experience of **cutting corners** when we had to and sometimes smart time management means cutting corners when we don't have to. I know this is easier said than done, on some things we want to keep our standards as high as possible. With my books, I go through multiple drafts affect check everything, sometimes even hiring other people to affect check everything. I read every word aloud multiple times to make sure my parse sounds right. Being an author is a key part of my identity and I know that the whole point of a book is to create something that will still matter for years into the future, the spread of the moment blog post does not require the same attention to detail. I consciously decide to do one round of editing and then hit post. If something needs to be updated later I can do so. I've been trying to do this on the homefront too. My husband and I welcomed the fifth child in late December and through this newborn week I wondered up my lowering my standards on just about everything else, the Christmas tree stayed up for a long time, the mail pile did not get sorted, the house is a bit **cluttered**. None of this will really matter in the long run, or **frankly** in the short run, either.

So spend some time today thinking about how you spend your time, where could you settle for a B- level effort. Feel free to keep doing A+ work on anything that truly matters to you. when it doesn't, you can **free up** all kinds of time by doing just an OK job

0219 Take your optimal work environment with you

Because our environments shape our experiences, today's tip is to take your optimal work environment with you

There's no reason to **lose out on** productivity or comfort when a few items can make a big difference. I travel a lot and I'm generally a good packer, but recently I **was kicking myself for** forgetting a sweater and headphones on a long flight. It wasn't easy to work, even read a novel because I **was distracted by** the cold and the rather loud group of folks sitting behind me who were flying to **a bachelor party**. Had I've been better prepared, the flight time would've been much more pleasant. The solution? Think about whatever will help you be your best, and make sure those things are always in your bag, or that you can get them there **in short order**. For many people being able to control the surrounding sound is **a big factor in productivity**, I don't understand why many public places from airports to waiting rooms feature blaring televisions. To me, the default should be silent but sadly I don't make the rules. And also sometimes even places where silent should be the default, such as the Amtrak quiet car, some people feel that the rules don't apply to them, so headphones need to be a default part of the **armor**. Then after packing your headphones, think about what sort of sound would best support your goals. If I'm hoping to distract

myself, funny podcasts are great, so make sure to download a few. Instrumental music and movies soundtracks tend to put me in a more **cerebral space** where I can think, since I'm not singing along in my mind. Some people **swear by** white noise. If you can't ignore the bachelor party stories that you really had to be there, though appreciate in the sound of rain is the great thing to pipe into your ears. I'd also for those of us who are more **introverted**, headphones tend to signal that you're absorbed in what you're doing, so people are less likely to **strike up** a conversation. I also put a plugin here for, **earplugs**. I travel with max pillows off your plugins, you never know what the sound level in a hotel will be. You also don't know if the hotel room will be dark with lights from various like Tronics, the television spoke to detectors and clocks. Put on the eye mask and they all disappear. as the light peeking around the drapes. If you've got a big day ahead, best to control what you can control.

I also find that the temperature can be a huge variable in my comfort and productivity. I spend a lot of time in hotel conference rooms, where the temperature of appears to be just a few degrees above freezing. If I'm on stage giving a 45-minute speech I may just need to bring a sweater to wear over my dress, deal with my legs being cold. I've learned if I'm going to be in a conference all day, it might be wise to wear dress legs than dress boots in tailor jacket. if your office is freezing, you could consider also changing your **wardrobe**, or possibly **investing in** a small space heater if you'll be able to pull that off. Someone questions the space heater, that could be a good opportunity to **raise the issue** of why the building is so freezing that you can't focus. of course, productivity isn't just about to share physical comfort, it's also about being able to seece time for productive pursuits. even if you aren't at your desk. One reason I bought the particular perse I use is that it's **tote bag size** so it can easily accommodate my MacBook Pro laptop. I've definitely written before breakfast scripts and a doctor's waiting room because I brought my laptop with me. I also like to travel with a good pen, and a small notebook with a hardcover, so I have a place to capture notes. Some folks travel with a clipboard and paper for the same reason. And of course, it helps to have reading material along for the ride. save links to articles you like to read later in a file on your phone, that way you can make sure that those 15 minutes spent waiting for the hotel shuttle don't turn into 15 minutes spent scrolling around Twitter. Unless of course, it's really truly what you'd like to do. How do you take your optimal work environment with you? What is your favorite tool?

0218 Start by starting

to make big goals seems less overwhelming

You can't make **elaborate** plans, but sometimes you just want to start by starting. I've seen the advice to start by starting attributed to various people in collections of **coots** on the Internet, whatever the original source it's a good counsel. All too often, people invest a lot of time and energy developing elaborate plans, and there is nothing wrong with this. I love planning. Developing a thoughtful plan for making a change or reaching a goal can be smart. When I write books, I set many deadlines for chapter drafts and workout targets for each week. From **training for a race**, I schedule each week's workouts and backups a lot for anything that has to happen, trust me I am not anti-planning. However, I have noticed in life that sometimes we don't implement our plans or we abandon them. Because the idea of

making a huge life change or doing something every day according to a formal schedule forever seems **daunting**. But the good news is that we don't always need a universal lifelong solution. You can also just position yourself toward your destination and start walking. If you want to exercise more you don't need to buy books on a 30-day challenge, sign up for a 90-day boot camp. You don't even need to think about tomorrow, instead, forget all the expectations of baggage, just try going for a walk after work today, whatever happens the rest of your life that walk will be energizing. Tomorrow can deal with itself. If you want to build relationships with your neighbors and you know they've made a standing invitation to join them for neighborhood drinks on Fridays, why not show up this Friday. It doesn't really matter if Fridays is a generally good day for you or not, one of your kids is about to start an activity that will meet on future Fridays or whatever. If this Friday works, go, see what happens. Some people really enjoy developing 5-year career plans and it's not a bad idea to talk with your manager about your goals. But if you think you might like to be in management someday, you can also just read some books and articles on management, and take notes on the major points. You start by starting and figure out the rest of the equation? later. As you look ahead to the rest of the year, what are your hopes, who do you want to be when 2021 **rose around?**, what do you want your life to look? In this book *Atomic Habits*, author James writes, decide the type of person you want to be and then it continues, prove it to yourself with small wins. Those small wins of the things like the walk after work today, the visit with your neighbors this Friday or reading a book on management. And yes the steps are small, but they are something, that almost always better than nothing. So start by starting, and don't make it any more complicated than that.

0217 Don't just drop hints - make your expectations and needs explicit

We've all found ourselves disappointed because someone didn't live up to our expectations, only to realize later that the other person had not actually understood our expectations, or realized that we needed help. Whether it's assuming that your team member will let you know in advance if he's not gonna meet an important deadline, or your partner will send flowers on your anniversary. We're taking a risk, if we have strongly held expectations for someone's behavior but don't let the person know about them. Other people simply cannot read our minds, and we waste all kinds of time behaving as though they can. And then recovering from the disappointment, or dropped balls, it turns out they can't. The only solution to this is to stop dropping hints. When you want something, everyone **is better off?** if you just say it. It's easier said than done, of course, sometimes people feel awkward asking for help, or stating their hopes or expectations directly. Does it sound pushy? Is it **insulting** to suggest someone wouldn't know that you like meetings to start on time? Or that you expect the person who finishes the paper towel roll will replace it. But if we **beat around the bush** and drop hints, other people may misunderstand what we mean, and the results may not be what we intend.

So here are some ways to raise issues directly, think clear, **collaborative, congenial**. That means using direct language, assuming that you and the other person are **mutually** focused on good outcomes, and keeping the tone positive and friendly. **For instance**, on a deadline

you could say I'm counting on being able to review your report Monday afternoon, that's the time I've **carved out** to work on this, because I'm attending a conference later in the week. If you **foresee** a problem getting the report to me by lunchtime on Monday, please let me know in advance. For household expectations, I would really appreciate it if you **change the sheets** and **took out the trash** the last day your house sitting because we'll be getting home late. Would that be doable? Or when you're asking for **affection** and support from family and friends. Next Tuesday is my birthday, I'd love to celebrate it with you, I was thinking a small group of us would have lunch at the sushi place near my office but I'm open to other suggestions. The general approach should be to share the hope, expectation or need and then invite the other person to give a **thumbs up**, or _____. That way you're not assuming anything, instead, you sharing your expectations in a way that gives the other person the chance to confirm that these expectations are shared, or it's just a different plan. That's not pushy, instead, this approach greatly increases the chances that your needs are met. It's hard to see the downside in that. So today if you find yourself hoping that someone will do something, why not stop and ask the person directly. Save the mind-reading for **chronicles** and everyone will be better off

0214 Little ways to say "I love you"

The rose industry always does a booming business spread around February 14, Valentine's Day, those places that celebrate this holiday of romantic love. Certainly, a big bunch of roses can send your romantic message. Though, my husband and I joke that because, our anniversary of meeting and also getting engaged a year later as February 15, we can conveniently show our love with **heavily discounted Valentine's Day merchandise**. But there are lots of creative ways to show love and not just on Valentine's Day but through the year. Many of us are on our phones all day anyway, **a quick affectionate text** to your partner or kids can turn your phone and their's to something more than just **a source of stress**. Or you can write a real note if your words on a sticky note, put on the bathroom mirror, can bring a smile to someone's face. Flowers on Valentine's Day might be expected, but flowers on your average Tuesday are not. So pick up a small **bouquet** at the grocery store or even the gas station and add a little beauty to the next time you say hello. Other little gifts can work too, like picking up a book at the library that you know the person would enjoy. Part of saying hello is actually saying hello. Increasingly I believe that one of the best gifts we can give people is the gift of full-focus. So put the phone away for a while, ask someone a question, and really listen to the answer. You can also show your love by allowing the other person to listen to you saying something nice. Pretty much everyone loves being **complimented** in front of other people. And this is great when you're in a multi-person conversation, but I think it's even nicer if the person accidentally overhears you. Say a kid or you talking on the phone with grandma, or your **spouse** when you're on the phone with a friend. Since the person doesn't know for sure if you know they're listening, he comes across some more authentic?. Sometimes the best gift you can give is letting someone **off the hook**. If you know the other person is really dreading in an event or a particular chore, like calling customer service, offer to take this off the plate?. You'll attend a family event, you'll call to **file the complaint**. Lots of couples of young kids split who wakes up early with them on weekends, but if you've not mainly explicit split, offer to do it someday and let

your partner know ahead of time. So here she can relish the becoming rest. When I read about some of these ideas in the past, I've often heard from readers or listeners who remind me about Gary Chapman's book *The 5 Love Languages*, and you know we can assign too much stock to straight frameworks, but it is true that certain ways to show love register more with some people than others. Some people get excited about **fancily wrapped gifts** and some people are more **physically affectionate**, for someone else, vacuuming out the car is **the equivalent of** a dozen roses. So it might be worth noting how your partner tries to express love to you. Because that might hold clues about how he or she would like you to express love. But in any case, when you study the research on human happiness, it's pretty clear that a bunch of little things often are ways won big things. We get used too much and the glow from a big present may **fade to baseline over a while**. But learning again and again how much you are loved makes every day seem like a gift.

0213 Thought Experiment -- Rejecting Your Intuitive Solution

The goal of this thinking experience is not output a new way of working, or something that you do every single day, instead it supposed to exercise a different way of considering the world around you, a different way of seeing things. What you reuse this thinking experiment again in the future, it's really up to you. This is intended to be a principle of thinking but rather a different angle.

I'm going to pose a thinking experiment, a thought experiment for you to try in your work, day to day, or maybe your journaling, try that point, with the goal of flexing your lateral thinking muscles.

... Take a problem that you have either in counter recently or a problem that you expect to face, preferably the problem that you haven't sold yet, or haven't taken action on yet, but one that you might have a clear idea of HOW you might take action. The simple experiment that I want you to do is to reject your own idea, you don't have to come up with a reason for why you're rejecting it, just imagine that you are not keepable? or you're not allowed for some reason to execute. Whatever your proposed solution was, you were forced to come up with a different solution. When you're coming up with a solution, guide you with some questions. The first question is: What exactly are you solving?

Don't think about a solution as an answer to the problem, instead, think about the problem and its cause?. This process likely requires you to reword the question, or maybe dig a little bit deeper on the question. You might ask why to preceding questions, or find an underlying problem deeper than the question itself. Very often the questions that we try to answer with solutions have already framed the solution as a part of the question, so we need to widen our frame. It's also very likely that whatever your default solution or your fast? solution was, require that you make a lot of assumptions. Because, the speed of the solutions we typically give is only possible if we make assumptions.

I have a love-hate relationship with assumptions on the show. The love part of our relationship with assumptions that, very often assumptions are very useful. We don't make bad assumptions all of the time and they can really help us avoid overthinking or avoid

solving the same problems that someone else has already solved. We can make useful assumptions about the world around us and usually they help us operator better. But the heat part of our relationship with assumptions is, they(our assumptions) make us box in a very narrow frame of solution making. You'll notice in both of these kinds of widening? questions, the word, frame and there's an important reason for that. When we approach a problem with a particular frame, in other words, a particular perspective or a constraint picture of the world and we **cut out** vast maturity of other options that are available to us. If we widen? the frame then we have to consider more, the more that fits in the frame, the more there is to consider and so it seems to our benefit to tighten the frame, to zoom in into an area that we feel has the solution. Especially if we solve the problem in the past before and the present problem looks a lot like that previous problem, we're likely to zoom in where we found the answer to last time. Sometimes there's a better answer in that wider frame, that is the thought experiment to widen your frame by immersion rejecting your first solution. This can be a very useful exercise to do as a team, as a manager, as a designer, encourage you to try this just to see how your brain operates under these false constraints of forcing yourself to reject your first solutions.

0212 Plan a great weekend for free

After the holidays and with **a clean slate of** the new year **brushing up against** tax time, lots of people **pledge to** be smarter about their finances, when common approaches to drastically cut spending. Sometimes people even to clear a spending freeze and sometimes that's whys and it can be fun as a challenge. But if you're not careful, it can also lead to feeling, like life is no fun, and the no fun life is not sustainable. I think **moderation** is often wise, but the good news is that if you spend some time thinking through options and making plans, it is quite possible to **dream up** really fun free weekends. Here's what you do.

First, you need to do some research. Many communities have free events going on that people don't know about, because they don't bother to think ahead or look beyond their own TVs. **Carve out** some time, maybe on Wednesday, to pick up an arts or events newspaper, or **screw to** online Facebook groups of local news sites, flag a few events looks most promising, when will they be happening, make yourself a game plan.

Now think about who might like to spend time over the weekend with you, socializing is one of the most fun things people do, and even **introverts** like myself, generally like to see one or two close friends here and there. By **proactively** inviting people to your free events, you don't put yourself in the position of having to say no when other people invite you to more expensive things, you might also take the **initiative** to invite people over for cheap get together's, **a potluck cost** almost nothing if you pull your contributions together for ones already in the house, assigned food and drink options to your friends, and you'll have a grand party basically nothing going up the door. As you plan ahead, you might also think of how you can be of service. Volunteering is a great way to do something purposeful and socialize, and of course, since you're volunteering your time, you're generally not paying to do so. Done right this can even get you into things you might normally pay for. Such as ushering for a community concert that you can then see for free. Exercise is a great new booster. Running or walking tends to be free. Organize people to go for a hike together on

a local trail. Bring your own snacks and water so you're not tempted to **load up**. Or you gonna bring a picnic to make it a bigger vacation. You might also make this the weekend to cash in on any coupons, gift certificates, or IOUs you happen to have. Use that Starbucks gift card you got in your stocking, or a coupon for a pedicure you wanted a silent auction?.

Call in a favor from the neighbor you babysat for last week.

Finally, think about free ways to spend your downtime. If you've got a library card, go to the library and satisfy any shopping ___? by selecting a huge hall of books or DVDs. If there's no convenient time to drop by, see if your local library is **plugged into** the Internet? so you can borrow e-books for free. When you got something really interesting to fill your downtime, you will be less likely to surf the web, or those ads for online shopping opportunities console? easily find you. Then at the end of your free weekend, spent some time reflecting, what did you like most, what didn't work out? You don't need to try a spending freeze every weekend. But with a little bit of force, you could have a ton of fun without spending a lot. And that means more cash **suck away?** for fun in the future too. What's your favorite fun weekend activity, that you can do for free?

0211 Make a first decision

if you are feeling stuck ruminating on the box of interconnected choices, this one step can help you escape from **spinning your wheels**. We've all been in the position where we have lots of decisions to make, but we can't seem to get anywhere because the options all depend on each other. I know so many college seniors feel this way heading into a sprint, they need to make decisions about what jobs or advanced degrees to pursue, where to live, how to navigate romantic relationships. But much like navigating a maze, each decision is influenced by the outcomes of all the others. A lot of **expectant parents** feel overwhelmed by interconnected choices too. Do we move to **shorten our commute** so we have more time with the baby? But housing is more expensive for searching? our jobs, so then do we move to? a smaller place and then what we do if we decide to have a second baby, and need more room. It's gonna happen on much more Monday and skills? too, we've all had dining companions to get absorbed navigating the menu to make sure that they love their choices of appetizer or entree and wine, and they all fit together. Sadly Analysis paralysis can in soup?

How do you get unstuck? To be sure you can outline what choices you need to make and gather information on factors influencing your decisions about each. You can set aside time to journal or talk with a sympathetic friend. If you're making the decision with someone else, you can set aside plenty of time for mutual reflection. Then eventually it's time to make the first decision and indeed I'd suggest simply committing to do that, make a first decision.

Take one chunk of your decision tree that you feel strongly about, go with that, and then let the other pieces fall into place. There are never perfect choices, but deliberating too long can cut off choices, sometimes means decisions are made for us.

While choosing by not choosing can be a choice, make sure you're making that choice on purpose. So maybe our college senior prioritize going to the top lot? school she gets into. She decides to figure out her housing situation and whether to attempt a long-distance relationship after that. Maybe a family navigating a do a job search? decides that once one partner gets a great job offer they'll put their house on the market and the other partner will start looking for

jobs only in the area of the first partner got her offer. Your dinner companion could decide that he knows he'll enjoy the salmon any bills the rest of his menu around that. Often times once we've made that first decision, other decisions seem a lot easier and this saves time and energy. I'm certainly trying to remind myself of this upside. Long time listeners may remember the whole saga of my housing situation, as I tried to figure out the best option for my growing family. We welcomed our fifth child in late December, the little guy is small now, he won't be small forever, so we've been wearing? our options. We've considered moving to a new house, finishing the basement on the attic of our current house at bedrooms, or just squeezing kids into existing bedrooms and kicking the question on the road. We went to several open houses and spent some time imagining different scenarios, each option seems to bring with it a host of new questions related to cost timing and logistics. If we renovate, can we live with the house of a renovation plus the newborn, if we buy a bigger house, it would require some fixing too and so we probably keep living in our current one for a while. But how long would we be willing to be a two-house family? When would we need to put our existing house on the market? Should we meet with builders about doing a new construction project? Eventually, though we just made a first decision. We decided to have plans drawn up for renovating our current house. But plans and hand we can decide whether or not that's the way to go, in the meantime, the kids are sharing rooms. With the first decision made, there's a reasonable amount of peace, as much peace as it could be. In a household with five children including a newborn.

0210 Stay motivated when progress is slow

how to stay motivated in long-term projects when progress is slow

This episode is first running in mid-February, which several weeks into the New Year. Many people resolved to get in shape around January 1, but as life intervenes, many people **fall off the wagon**. When the gym chain went so far as to analyze their customer data and declare a fitness cliff which is right around February 9 or so. If tucked in? past episodes about the challenges with New Year's resolutions, one of these is that people fail to account for the realities of their lives. I think another major one is that progress on any project can be slow. I am not a big fan of the common resolution to lose weight, in my mind better to focus on healthy habits and let the scale go what goes. However if you have chosen this as a resolution, even if you do everything right, it's hard to sustain a healthy weight loss of more than about half a pound a week. People naturally cycle up and down through the day, women often cycle up and down through the month. These swings? can easily be 4 to 5 pounds in normal healthy people. So if you do the math, it seems that responsible weight loss can look like nothing, for at least the first month or two. No wonder people's motivation flags. But there are ways to avoid falling off the motivation cliff?

The first is to celebrate other wins?. Whether you're losing weight or not a good work-out feels, good, to celebrate that Endorphin rush as an extra moment of healthy happiness added to your life. Maybe you made a new friend at the gym, celebrate that there's no someone else in your life whose name you know and who you care about. If you can lift a little heavier, or run a little faster, make a note of this. You may be able to see progress here, a lot faster than other sorts of progress, so keep a detailed log, that you can study anytime you're feeling like not much is changing. You can also think more in terms of identity than results. I maintain that anything you do 3 times a week is a habit. So celebrate any steps to your goal that you manage to do 3 times

a week. If you're trying to write a book, 3-hour long writing sessions during the week is an accomplishment, so treat it as such, now you're a writer. Talk about this referred to yourself this way, and finally, it might help to do some mental time travel. Progress is slow and seems negligible now, but soon what you're seeing now will disappear in the rearview mirror. Losing half a pound a week seems like nothing at first, but a few months in the future, even at that pace you'll be outside the regular swings?. You may only have a few thousand words in your novel now, but those words to accumulate and someday you have tens of thousands of words. So picture your future self, celebrating these wins?. You could even write a letter to your future self, talking about what you're doing now to achieve these wins. and as soon as you do start to see real progress, thank your past self for making these choices. If these all feel a little silly, acknowledgment goes a long way. and hopefully, that will keep you going to the gym past mid-February

0207 Plan a greet staycation

Travel can be awesome but sometimes it's not the best solution for your vacation days. Maybe you've been traveling a lot for world and you have 0 desire to set on a plan ? plate ? again, maybe your budget is scratch ? , maybe you live somewhere amazing and it's own right ? or there could be other considerations. My family didn't travel over Christmas this year because of our new baby's impending arrival in January. In any case, a staycation can be a ton of fun.

The key is to make sure that it actually feels like a vacation, which like most things, involves a bit of planning ahead. The first step is to figure out your main intentions of the staycation. Is it to spend time with your family? to explore your own city? to relax? If it's to get caught up annoy? your house projects from the past year, well best acknowledge that and be honest about it. You can want to do all these things, but they may suggest different approaches. If you've got small kids for instants, taking a few days off work and then staying home with them, gives your life that stays at home parents experience all the time. Most of them don't describe this as relaxing. So if relaxation is your goal for your staycation, you'll need to trade off with your partner or use whatever child care you've got for some of the time. As with any vacation, I also suggest planning one ankle event per day. This is something pleasurable or adventurous that gives the day a bit of structure. Over Christmas, our goal was to spend a lot of family time together before our family became bigger, so we get? tickets for one event per day that we could all go to. Such as the light show at the zoo, or else we plan to go to one party or event. This made us feel like we were celebrating the season and seeing the major attractions in our area. It's ?plenty of downtimes. As for that downtime, the problem of staying in your house on a staycation is that your to-dos can follow you around. Indeed, they can expand to fill the available space. If you're at work and the floor

is dirty in the middle of the day you don't see it. if you're at home, you do. So you spend more time cleaning. This is why some people actually rent an Airbnb in their hometown or stay in a hotel, all they aren't going to let you clean the kitchen. But I don't think you have to be this extreme, the key is to compress and minimize all have to-dos. Give yourself half an hour to check email, give yourself one hour for any chores or errands. If it doesn't happen at that time, it isn't that important. You can spend the rest of your time in vacation mode. If you plan to get through to bigger house projects, make a list and pledge to tackle a reasonable number, say 3 in the course of the week. If you've got more time and you've got more energy. Limiting your ambitions will keep you from feeling like you're pulled in multiple directions. When you'd like to watch a movie with your family but you could, theoretically, be cleaning out the garage. Finally, if you do want to be a hometown tourist, it might help to get in the right frame of mind. Check out a guide book from the library, or proves? a local travel site. There are all kinds of things that we don't even know exist. The upside of travel is that it can expand your mind, and so can a staycation. But you might have to go looking or at least some adventures.

0206 Why not throw money at the problem

consider whether some creative budgeting to make a big irritation disappear, in other words, consider the wisdom of just throwing money at the problem.

I'm naturally a frugal person, honestly, I think the correct word here is cheap. I am forever trying to avoid spending money. Some of this I just except as my personality. I am sitting on a desk chair right now, that has a giant hole in the apostroy?. I could replace it but I am probably not going to. It still works. Anyone who gets invited into my home office already knows my crocs?. It will be OK. But other cheap decisions have been more problematic. I resisted investing money in my business in the past which is pretty short-sighted. In any case, I'm sure some people are naturally spending.

But I'm addressing this episode to people like me. People who do not automatically think about using money as a tool. We all have irritations in our lives. it's possible that throwing money at the problem could infect make it go away. Sometimes it even involved less money than we might think. We can start thinking this way, at some point during a break today, make a list of the things that have irritated you over the past few days. Maybe, your car seems constantly dirty, maybe you feel that making dinner falls on your plate too frequently, maybe you get annoyed running errands or maybe you keep telling yourself that you're going to paint the bathroom at your house that's a really ugly shade of gray, but you don't. Get a specific as possible, then ask yourself if by spending

money you could reduce this irritation or even make it go away. It's possible the answer is NO. But maybe you start? bringing to have your car detailed frequently enough, that you no longer fear? finding French fries under the seats, maybe you create a standing delivery order from your favorite relatively healthy restaurant twice a week. Dinner is now more expensive but you're cooking it much less frequently. You could abandon the fantasy that the bathroom painting job will be a do-it-yourself sort of thing, just pay a pro and get it over with. Sometimes even issues that seem like they might be deeper and more contentious can be solved by throwing money at the problem. I know a lot of couples fight about housework. But rather than having a knock-down argument every weekend about why party A doesn't vacuum and is it because party A has outdated beliefs? about domestic responsibilities, or doesn't value party B's time. However you argue this, you decide that neither of you will do it. you pay a cleaning service to come in once a week instead.

Now obviously none of this works if money is really tight and I get that. But sometimes creative budgeting can make things possible. I've realized in my life that I'd rather buy time and household harmony, than things like an office chair. On the other hand, somebody who's really irritated by bad seating might make a different choice, and prioritize that. But the point is that all of us can consciously choose to use what money we have at our disposal, to build lives that maximize the good stuff and minimize the bad. This is very much a work in progress for me, but I do like to think that I'm making progress. Have you ever thrown money at a problem and actually had it go away?

0205 Engineering Your Habits Like Interfaces

What are the outcomes that you are expecting your day-to-day life?

A lot of the time on the show, we talk about mental models are metaphors ways of thinking outside of code that apply to the way that we can strive software. But in today's episode, we're going to take things kind of the opposite direction. We're going to talk about this idea of interfaces. Some kind of expected way of interacting with a piece of code, whether it's a class, or a definition of a function. We can think about interfaces as we expect. We can consume code, then in a way that doesn't really care about the internals, implementation details, only care about the contract that is signed with the piece of code, the interface. Of course, we can talk about having a public interface, a private interface, or public functions and private functions. Some of this may be a little bit foreign to you depending on what your programming background, but suffice it to say that these are all concepts that way you can apply a code that allows you too H some kind of process and the

output of the process any input too to that process if there are any can be well document. it is how you can have things like API and documentation because you have some reliable interface. But very often in our lives, when we structure our days or our activities, we don't think about it in a similarly structured fashion. Instead, much of our lives are unstructured. We don't have specific outputs that we're looking for. We don't consider specific inputs we might need, to be able to accomplish, whatever it is, that we need to accomplish. For example, imagine that you were packing for a trip and it makes sense for you to identify what inputs do you really need for this particular trip, to make it successful. And most people do this explicitly, that they list out the things they need, based on the number of days they're gone, and sometimes they'll forget something. They take note of it and in the future when they're packing. Because of the pain? they experienced they might have a better recollection or a better heuristics for what to pack this time. But being explicit about what we're packing or explicit about what we need to make this particular event successful. It's kind of rare?weird? and most of the time we don't really need to write down a list of everything we need to make our afternoon hanging out at house successful. That seems like overkill, but it might make sense to imagine each day as it's own function. Imagine the kinds of outputs that you want from today and the kinds of things that you might need as input. It might not just be for today, you might look weekends in advance, or months or a year in advance, because some of the inputs that you have for today, might be inputs for things you care about for outputs that you care about, that you won't have for a long time. But the inputs are necessary to even get the ball rolling. Some of the outputs that you have from today will carry forward as inputs to another process. ... Of course, we should think about our outputs from one day as inputs to the next day. But very often we don't need our own goals because we don't take the time to think about the input and output. Instead, which is mindlessly run the same functions, time passes by and the outputs that we're striving after we never really achieve? because we didn't identify the necessary inputs. And we may be surprised by outputs that we didn't necessarily specify. So here's how I recommend you think about this, the way of practice. If you're looking for a particular output, imagine what might create that output. Can you be explicit about the specific thing, or is this something you want to optimize for overtime, you have a never-ending soft requirement for this output. Once again since we're using a metaphor that might be something like a recurring crown job. These process are good for you even though you don't have a necessarily specific output you're looking for. So you might set

those up, you might review them on a regular basis. These are called habits, if we have a recurring habit over time that produces some kinds of positive outputs, even though they don't necessarily produce the same output, each time we do them, those habits can have a major effect on our lives. So we might set up a habit, initially because it produces some positive effect, but over time that positive effect may change, because our environment changes, our bodies change, our team situation might change, the family situation might change relationships. So it makes sense to review those habits, make sense to review those crown jobs, that we set up for ourselves. Additionally, doing mindless things, or assuming that's our normal everyday patterns, not just our habits, but the tasks that we take on, or the attitudes we present in a giving meeting, assuming that they're going to produce outcomes that we want, assume that we have decided with those outcomes are, and that we have kind of optimizing all of those activities, and we already have an implicit input system. so backing out once again, imagine this for starting at one day, what kind of outputs do you want from today, if you can define this a day in advance, or even early in the morning, defined the kind of outputs that you hoped for from today, and of course, you need to bundle these, you can't imagine that today you want and output that you can't achieve today. but imagine a single output that you know you can achieve and what do you need to make that possible. working backward from this solution, helps you prioritize and helps you understand what inputs and specifically how your time will input towards the output you care about

0204 [A Virus's Journey Across China](#)

15:35 From everything we've learned about China and its authoritarian government, it seems like it controls every aspect of citizens' lives and it surveils every aspect of citizens' lives. And you've just walked us through how they were able to essentially suddenly drop a wall around Wuhan. So, shouldn't China's government have been able to identify and control this outbreak before it got out of hand? You think that, because the government is so well known for being able to pull off these massive displays of citizen mobilization, it's been known to be able to pull off these technological feats. But at the same time, there's a flip side of this coin, which is that China's authoritarian culture, in many ways, set the stage for this crisis.

What do you mean?

For decades, China has built this ruthless system in which if you are an official in the Communist Party, you are expected to be almost perfect. If anything goes bad, you are the one who is going to take responsibility. You are the one who is going to fall. And this has created an incentive system where local officials fear saying anything about bad news. They worry that if they are found to have done something wrong, that they will lose their power. So in a situation like this, the incentive is to cover up, is to conceal, is to delay, is to try to get a handle on these problems on your own, hoping that perhaps nobody will ever hear about it.

So by the time, a medical crisis gets really big, it may be too late for the local officials who have been trying to contain it themselves and keep it from Beijing. Exactly. These kinds of dynamics played a huge role in the scale of the SARS outbreak. It was clear in this case that local officials knew exactly what was going on. They knew that people were dying of this illness. But for months and months, they didn't want to report it up the chain. Instead, they tried to cover it up. They tried to see if they could perhaps deal with it secretly, and maybe nobody would ever find out about it. They hoped that Beijing would know about it. But eventually it broke.

So did China learn from that experience with SARS, that dynamic that led to that breakdown, that cover-up?

China said it would make a lot of changes to its system after the SARS crisis. It said that it would expand its disease reporting system so that these kinds of reports from the local provinces would come to the central government in a more timely fashion. They promised to be more transparent in the release of data and other things. But what they didn't change was this authoritarian culture, where people fear bringing bad news. And so that has actually gotten worse under President Xi.

He has made himself out to be the most powerful leader since Mao. He is somebody who's always speaking about this great ascendant moment for China in which China is going to be this superpower. And anything that goes against Xi's vision of this harmonious, resurgent China is going to be seen as a problem. And the people who are creating that problem will pay the consequences. And when I was there in Wuhan, I could sense the fear just rippling across all parts of the society. There were people like the ambulance doctor, who was afraid of challenging the official statistics. There were hospitals that seemed to be paralyzed, that didn't want to test patients for fear of knowing the results. They didn't want to be seen as speaking out or telling the truth or bringing this unsavory story into public view.

So that had trickled down all the way to the frontline health care workers, who are supposed to be treating this and sounding the alarm.

Right. They're fearful of being seen as responsible for this crisis. They don't want to stand out. And when you think about where this virus might be headed next, to other provinces, to other cities, you have to wonder if these same dynamics would be playing out again. If people will stay silent, if they will not report official cases, because they fear for their jobs and they fear for their livelihoods.

So it seems like whatever reforms the Chinese government made after the failures of SARS, in the end, none of them really matter, because it hasn't changed the problem that's at the root of this.

At the root of this is a sense of fear, that is both the Communist Party's strength, but it's also a huge weakness. They can mobilize entire cities to be on lockdown.

They can convince people to stay indoors. They can scrub social media of information that counters their narrative. That's all very effective when you're trying to get the public behind your policies. But at the end of the day, the fear is also a huge vulnerability. It creates this system where people are unwilling to speak out, unwilling to bring problems that are really important and that affect people's lives.

Right. For the Chinese leadership, that works until it doesn't, right? Until you very much need for people to stop being afraid and to speak out about something like a public health crisis.

Exactly. And so when you look at the culture, you wonder whether China can actually contain these viruses, whether we will continue to live in a world where the internal politics of the party are going to put lives around the world in danger.



0203 [Batch your weekend chores](#)

After years of writing and talking about time management, I realize that I hear some of the same complaints over and over again: at work, people learn that they spent so much time dealing with their inboxes, that they never have time for deep

work or strategic thinking. At home, people feel like they spend their entire weekends, trying to get caught up with chores and so they never have time for fun. Well, these complaints seem different, I eventually realized that they were getting in exact same issue. Some activities expand to fill all available space. Just as you will never get and stay at inbox 0, you will never arrive at a perfectly clean house that won't fall prey to toys, junk meals, and dirty dishes. Email and housework will both take any amount of time you give them. That means that any hacks design to listen impact are going to be off-limited use? And yes you could write shorter emails, you probably should. You could even write K instead of OK in your emails. And yes, you can develop a system for emptying the dishwasher that makes it takes 5 minutes instead of 7 minutes. Awesome! But fundamentally, the only way to make these activities take less time is to choose to give them the last time.

The good news is that this approach does work. When I've managed to convince people to limit themselves to 3 to 4 email checks per day, done at certain times, they do in fact spend less time on email. And I think chores are best to approach the same way. Batch them and designate certain times. When chores aren't always options, you can enjoy the rest of your time, without feeling guilty.

Here's how this can work. Spend some time today, thinking about the chores and errands you normally do over the weekend, be judicious, what truly needs to happen and what's not critical. You might need clean clothes for the week, you probably don't need to wax your floors. You might need to go grocery shopping, you don't need to cook all your meals for the week ahead of time. Choose to make a simple meal that you can whip up in 15 to 20 minutes on weeknights instead. Now estimate how long these tests will take and what can overlap. If all household members participate, how much time would it take to get through these things? Perhaps one party could switch clothes from the washer to the dryer, and run the vacuum, while someone else goes to the grocery store and drops off the dry cleaning. Once you figured out a rough window, designate a block of time in which you will do almost all of these things.

For instants maybe you just said that from 10 to 12 on Saturday morning, you will do the book of these weekend activities. Make sure this is the time everyone can participate, make a game plan, then assess what things will need to happen outside the window. I delay not too much. If you've got a reasonable size family you'll still

need to do some dishes and empty the dishwasher on Sunday, even if Saturday from 10 to 12 is the official chores and errands time. Perhaps the laundry that was washed Saturday during this window is still in the dryer, outside the window, and might need to be put away. But make sure to prevent scope creep. If one party is assigned to pick up and vacuum the basement playroom from 10 to 12 on Saturday. Do not go redo it on Sunday, just because there are toys out. Of course, there are toys out, it's a playroom. That's what happens. But so what, no one is going to come around at 11 PM Sunday night, to give you demerit of having toys on the floor. So just let it be and relax and have a glass of wine instead. There was a time for picking up the playroom, and now it's not that time. If you start thinking this way, I promise your weekends will start feeling much better.



0202 Build in reflective time

Today's tip is about why and how you should build reflective time into your schedule

WHY: I define reflective time as consciously chosen moments when you pause and think about your life. You think about what you've done with your time and what you'd like to do with your time. And sure, people wind up ruminating unintentionally, those moments at 2 AM, when your thoughts are spinning about something regretted or dreaded. But I'm talking about something more intentional, which generally involves planning, journaling, or for those of the most spiritual bent, meditating or praying. In my research, I found that choosing to carve out these moments is associated with feeling like you have more time. For my book *Off the Clock*, I have 900 busy people check their times for a day. I asked questions about how they felt about their time. I found that the people with the most abundant perspective on time all highly likely to engage in these reflective activities, while the people who felt most starve for the time all likely to never engage in these activities. And by the way, it's not that the former group had more leisure time. The rushed and hurry source? actually watched more TV and spent more time online. But if you think about it, time keeps passing whether we think about how we spend it or not. We're all on continues in the middle of a Russian River. Unless you pull yourself over to a calm spot, it's really hard to figure out how to direct our crafts? through the current. Reflective moments give us a chance to do that, and

so it turns out that spending discretionary time reflecting on life makes time feel moral calm than using the same quantity of time to say Peru's Twitter.

So that's the why. Now let's get to the HOW

HOW:

The first approach and what will work best for most people is structural. Reflection doesn't need to take a ton of time. But we do need cues to remind us to do it or else we just flip from one thing to the next. Long time listeners know that I like to plan my weeks on Friday afternoons. I think this is a great time in general, to think about the week that just passed and the seven days or so to come. What needs to happen, what would I like to see happen? Until you get in the habit, it might help to set an alarm for a certain time, say 3 PM on Friday. If that doesn't work because you're still stuck in a meeting, set a backup time. But spending in the mirror 10 to 15 minutes on this weekly planning will absolutely change your life. Then you can build in smaller structural moments for reflection. I like to think through the next day as I'm ending the day before. You can do this before you leave work or at night before bed. Think about what went right and wrong in the previous day, and what would you like to see happen in the coming 24 hours, when can those things happen. Some people might prefer to start the days and reflective mode. If that's you set your alarm for 10 minutes before you have to be up and use this time to read something uplifting, or set your intentions for the day. Between a weekly reflective time and smaller daily reflective times, you can start to feel a lot more calm?. And then if you'd like to take things up a level, you can try to find other reflective opportunities. Some people pray or meditate in the shower. Its time or mind tends to wander anyway. so why not direct that wandering? You can count your blessings while stuck in traffic. And any bit of found time like while you're waiting for a phone call to start could be good for writing in a journal. The good news is that as you build in these reflective moments, your relationship with time will start to change. You'll start making more positive choices, you'll feel more like you are directing time rather than it directing you. You'll probably feel less rushed and hurried. These are pretty amazing outcomes, for what amounts to less than 5 to 10 minutes a day. So why not give it a shot. Today, think about when you can build in reflective moments into your schedule, hold yourself accountable for today and then do it again tomorrow. I'm betting on that payoff will soon have you hooked.



0201 Get back on track

Today's tip is how to get back on track if you've had a setback in the course of pursuing a new goal. This episode is first airing in January and lots of people particularly those who listen to productivity podcasts, love to set New Year's resolutions. However if you believe the headlines, many people have fallen off the wagon of their good intentions by the end of the month.

And studying how people spend their time, I have seen that these setbacks usually stem from something out of the ordinary happening. These disruptions can be good or bad. You've gotten into a rhythm going to a particular class at your gym, but then your company announces that you're getting promoted. How exciting. You get sent to Houston for a week for training. You don't go to your regular exercise class during this time of course. But when you return home, you've got a lot of new stuff on your plate to deal with. And it's back to old habits. Or maybe you or someone in your family comes down with the flu, the routine gets disrupted. You feel like you're just hanging on, trying to make up the work you've missed. So going to the gym falls to the bottom of the todo list. Next thing you know, it's been two weeks. The first thing is to recognize that some setbacks can be avoided by setting resolutions more strategically. I would never recommend setting a goal to go to a particular exercise class, at a particular gym, three times a week. There's always going to be some reason that can't happen consistently. Instead, maybe you could decide that you're going to exercise for at least 20 minutes, three times a week. If that means going to your favorite class that's offered Monday, Wednesday and Friday evenings. Awesome! But if you're in Houston for training, you can still get up 45 minutes earlier than you would if? and hit the hotel treadmill and fulfill your intention. If you're caring for an ill family member, you might still be able to do some push-ups and sit-ups at your house. Or if you were the one who sick, you might be able to do a slow 20-minute walk after a few days recuperating. By making the goal doable, even when life goes wrong, you increase the chances that your intention goes right.

So if your original goal seems too specific and too demanding, go ahead and change it. You can change the resolution in late January. Going to the gym three times a

week is not good enough itself?. The point of the resolution is the health benefit. So feel free to switch to whatever will give you that. Then just do something small until you feel like scaling up again. Something is often better than nothing. If you do find yourself having trouble getting remote of it? though, there is one surprisingly effective thing you can do. Try telling yourself that you haven't quit, you've just paused. We pause all kinds of things in life. I'm guessing that you get yourself up and get ready for work on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday. You don't do this on Saturday and Sunday. But then you get up and go again on Monday, without a huge existential crisis. Your two days off wasn't assigned a failure, it was just a pause. Same thing with any new habit, you didn't stop, you just change the rhythm for it?. Now after the change, you go right back in. And you may pause again in the future, but that doesn't mean that you stopped for good. So if you've had a setback with your New Year's resolutions, try changing the resolution or just acknowledging your pause. you may just find yourself motivated to keep going.

0209 Skip the feedback sandwich

skip the sandwich method of giving feedback and try something a little more effective and authentic

Giving feedback to employees or colleagues can be challenging. No one really likes having difficult conversations even with something definitely needs to change. Consequently, organizations often train new managers to give what is known as the feedback sandwich. You start with something positive about the person, then you share the negative feedback, then you end up with something positive again. This approach has its merits. Sometimes, hard news is easier to swallow in the middle of compliments. But the approach can feel inauthentic, especially if the person know something unpleasant is coming. The compliments can totally get lost in the sense of dread, or occasionally though, much less often. This approach is completely ineffective if someone who isn't terribly self-aware. Here's the complements and decides that the negative feedback is just one note of many, as opposed to the reason for the conversation.

In any case, I recently read about another strategy, which I think comes across as far more authentic. Jamie Hammond, a social media manager, wrote a post for Medium recently, describing what she calls the TACOS approach to give difficult feedback. We are ditching sandwiches for tacos. TACOS is an acronym for Thank, Acknowledge, Cause, Orient, and Support. Here is what each step in tails?. First, you thank the person for something, Hammond says, even if it's just showing up. Then you acknowledge the problem head-on, Hammond says. There's no point **beating around the bush** if you and the other person both know the reason you called this meeting, pretending otherwise can just be insulting. You're both adults, so let's acknowledge what the problem is. The C stands for Cause, which Hammond says, means explaining other issues that the problem is causing. You

want to give the person context for why **the issue really needs to be addressed**. O stands for Orient, you need to orient the other person toward the behavior you want instead. This can be the most constructive part of the conversation. Sometimes people know that something has **gone awry** but they have no idea what they should be doing differently. So come into these conversations with practical solutions. Finally, and probably the most important part, the S stands for Support. Remind the person that you support him or her, says Hammond, you can do this by thanking the person again, asking them what you can do to support them, or asking them if something is going on that is preventing them from achieving the new solution. Handled right this emphasis on support can actually make your relationship stronger, going forward. If you do intend to keep working together, well that is the best possible outcome.

So that's the feedback TACOS approach: thanking, acknowledging the problem, talking about the problems the issues causing, orienting the person toward new behavior and **reiterating support**. If you need to get tough feedback in the next few days, you might consider trying this and seeing how it goes.