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time *management*

GET ORGANIZED HQ | LAURA SMITH



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FINDING THE RIGHT STRATEGY FOR YOU

There is a lot of time management advice out there. Books, podcasts, videos, blog posts — allllll the things telling you how to manage your time. If you're like me, you've probably read and listened and watched, trying to get a handle on how you can cram more into your day. And, if you're like me, all the "expert" advice may have left you feeling a bit flustered and frustrated.

The truth is, no one time management strategy will work for everyone. So, let's dive into some general principles that do underlie a successful approach, then try some different strategies on for size. Together, we'll find the right time management approach to keep things running smoothly for you!

Laura

Time Management Principles

PRINCIPLE #1: THE IMPORTANCE OF PLANNING YOUR DAY



I talk often about the importance of planning your days. After all, real change in your life is going to be made in the day-to-day happenings. Taking a few minutes at the beginning of the day to make a plan for what you will prioritize is, what we'll call, "setting your mind."

What will you prioritize? What will you focus on? Where do you want your time and energy to go today?

Without taking the time to set your mind for the day, 8:00 quickly becomes noon, and noon becomes 3:00, and 3:00 becomes dinnertime. Before you know it, the day is over and you're left wondering what happened to your time. And, in most cases, that breeds shame and guilt.

AVOIDING THE GUILT

Sometimes the guilt comes from realizing you overlooked something you really wanted to get done that day. Other times it's far more vague. If I don't make a plan for my day, I often end the day wondering what I actually got done. It may, in fact, be true that I got a LOT of things done during the day, but the day felt all out of whack because I wasn't ever sure where I was heading.

If going to bed with nagging guilt and uncertainty is a daily struggle for you, start today by setting your mind and planning your day! You don't have to live in default mode, and you can know that you've gotten the best things done. Whether you use a wall calendar, planner, or to-do list, make sure to plan your day!

PRINCIPLE #2: FIND YOUR PRIORITIES, AND KEEP TRACK OF THEM



Here's the catch to getting more done — it's not actually about getting more done. The point is keeping your attention on what matters most so that you know you're getting the most important things done.

You can't do it all, but you can do some.

You know the phrase “Today I’m going to give it my all!” — well a while back I saw one of those memes on Pinterest that said “Today I’m going to give it my some.” It’s funny, but it’s also true! You can’t get everything done in a day that you’d like to, but you can get some of those things done. The number one thing you can do to manage your time is to prioritize what’s most important. When you find yourself with a precious pocket of time to knock some things off your to-do list, is cleaning the garage or making next week’s shopping list most important to you today? Regularly check in with yourself to ensure that you’re placing proper emphasis on each area of your life and to-do list.

CHECKING IN: MENTAL BANDWIDTH

Last night before bed I was rattling off to my husband all the things that are making me feel “overwhelmed” — the dishes aren’t clean, the trash needs taking out, I’ve got a dozen and a half things to do for work, appointments to make, and—on top of all that—I’ve really fallen down on some of the things that I’d like to be part of my daily routine.

It’s easy to think, “If I only had more time, I wouldn’t be so overwhelmed.” Well...maybe. There are certainly times where I’ve been pressed for time and I just can’t get it all done in the amount of time I have. I need to remember to prioritize.

But there’s another thing I believe people run out of before they run out of time: mental bandwidth. Sometimes your brain just can’t process all of the tasks and concerns and thoughts that are constantly coming in. Have you ever sat down and written out a to-do list and already felt less overwhelmed before you’d even marked anything off? Getting thoughts out of my brain and onto paper is one of the best ways I can decrease overwhelm and increase my mental bandwidth.

When everything is just bouncing around in your head, there's a constant worry that something important has been forgotten, and everything becomes a jumble and leads to that anxious, overwhelmed feeling. When you write down the things that are bouncing around in your head, you give your brain permission to let those things go, because they're safely on a piece of paper that you can refer back to later.

MAKE SOME LISTS

If you're feeling overwhelmed, I would encourage you to make these three lists to help prioritize:

1

Mega To-Do list

2

Brain Dump

3

What's Going Well



Let's take a closer look:

1

A Mega To-Do List | Sit down and write out every task that comes to mind that you need to do. Don't limit it by when it needs to be done or how big or small it is — just get all of those “Oh! I need to remember to do that!” thoughts out of your brain and onto paper. After you've made the list you can go through and prioritize what's urgent, and what can stay on the list until another day, but knowing that all of those important tasks are listed out somewhere you can easily reference will take a load off your mind.

2

A Brain Dump | After you've written down all the tasks you can think of, get another sheet of paper and allow yourself to just sit with your thoughts for a few minutes. What comes to mind when you're not directing yourself to think about anything in particular? Maybe you are concerned about the health of loved ones, or anticipating a big life change like a new baby coming or a close friend moving away. Are there worries that come to mind? Are there things you're looking forward to in the future that you can hardly wait to happen? Jot down whatever comes to mind in these quiet moments. You don't have to do anything with the items on this list, but by writing them down, you can give your brain permission to not have to process all of the things all of the time. You've written them down. They're out of your head. And you've cleared up space to focus on what's most important for today.

3

A List of What's Going Well | It's easy to overlook all the good that is happening. Are you getting dinner on the table most nights of the week? Did you wash and fold laundry? Have you gone on a walk recently or listened to music that you enjoyed? Often the things that you're good at become second nature, and you forget that you really are good at those things. Take some time to list out what is working and going well. It can really help to shift your perspective.



PRINCIPLE #3: IT'S ABOUT WHAT YOU FINISH— NOT WHAT YOU START.

This is something that I really need to take to heart more than anyone. I'm pretty good at starting projects. In fact, if having great intentions and starting new projects was the same as actually being productive, I'd probably be the most productive person on the planet.



TIPS FOR GETTING IT DONE

If you struggle with seeing things through to completion, try these approaches:

1

Don't start too many things at once. The best way to avoid completing what you start is to simply start a lot of different things at once. Before you start something new, ask yourself if it's really the best time to start it. Remember, it's better to have 3 finished projects than 10 partially done projects.

2

Finish one thing before you start another. Make sure you've finished one project before starting another — especially when working on things in the same category. Don't try to organize 3 closets at once. Instead, finish one before moving on to the next.

3

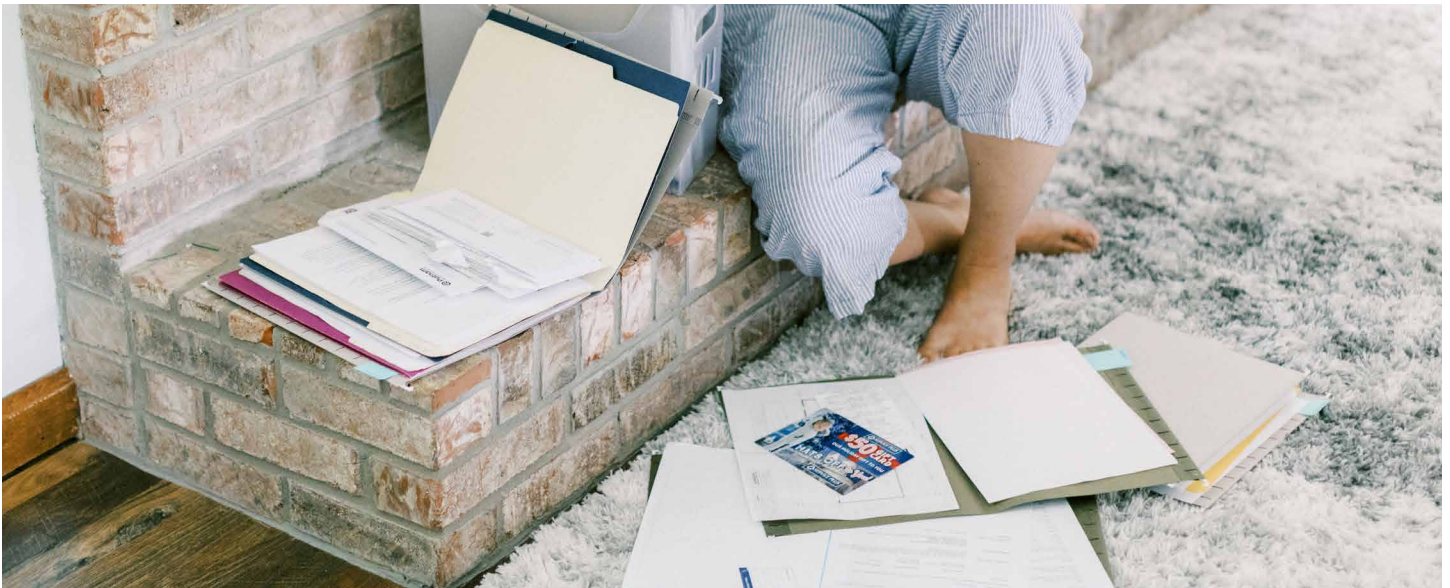
Build your finishing muscle. Finishing things is so rewarding. Simply finishing one project boosts your motivation to finish another project.

Of course, there are times when life happens and you have to start on something new before you've finished the last project. But practice finishing what you start, and I think you'll be amazed at how that boosts your productivity!

PRINCIPLE #4: IT MIGHT BE A BIT MESSY

I heard someone say this week, “We make decisions in the dark, and we live them out in the light.”

In a nutshell, they were explaining how it is impossible for any human to make a truly informed decision. You can research, contemplate, ask advice, and even take courses on whatever it is you are trying to decide about, but until time passes and you have actually lived out your decision, you won't be able to say for sure how things will turn out. You make decisions in the dark — without the benefit of knowing exactly how things will turn out. You live them out in the light and get to see how that decision causes events to unfold.



I'm a former electrical engineer who loves to research every decision I make right down to the color I'm going to paint my living room. If it makes you a little bit uncomfortable to think about all the things you don't know and don't have control over, I'm right there with you!

But I also find it freeing to acknowledge and accept that there is no such thing as a perfect and complete decision. You don't have to make a perfect decision. In fact, you can't! You only need to make a good decision. And that is something you are more than capable of!

REVISITING YOUR PRIORITIES

Good decisions are decisions that align with your priorities. So, if you're facing a big decision (or even a small decision that feels big!) and you're not sure what to do, put your focus on your priorities. What matters more than anything else in the world to you? And, when you view your options through the lens of your priorities, does one side or the other fall more into line with the direction you want your life to go?

BALANCE



Life is about finding balance, and the tricky truth is that living on the extremes is generally easier. I believe that's because the extremes allow us to only focus on one thing at a time.

Take the concept of “work/life balance”. Why is that so difficult to maintain? Well, it's easy enough to focus on work. You throw your energy into your career, you make a plan to climb the corporate ladder, you continue your education. The path up is generally somewhat linear, and you can choose to keep your eyes fixed on that career goal.

Or maybe your career is your stay-at-home mom job. Not just daily dishes, cleaning, laundry, organizing, and decluttering — but the long-term household and yard work duties. That's not to mention the outside commitments that come with it like school volunteering, church work, and other community interests.

It's also easy enough to focus on family — cut back your hours at work, take more vacations, show up to the ball games on Tuesday evenings.

Work/life balance asks you to do both of those things. To have a path in mind for your career while still planning a family vacation. To maintain a clean home while still letting family life run through it. To put in some overtime while still cheering your heart out on the sidelines of little league. It means you have to give up a little bit of both goals and hopefully come out with some amiable mix of the two.

“May you have grace to live in the messy middle.”

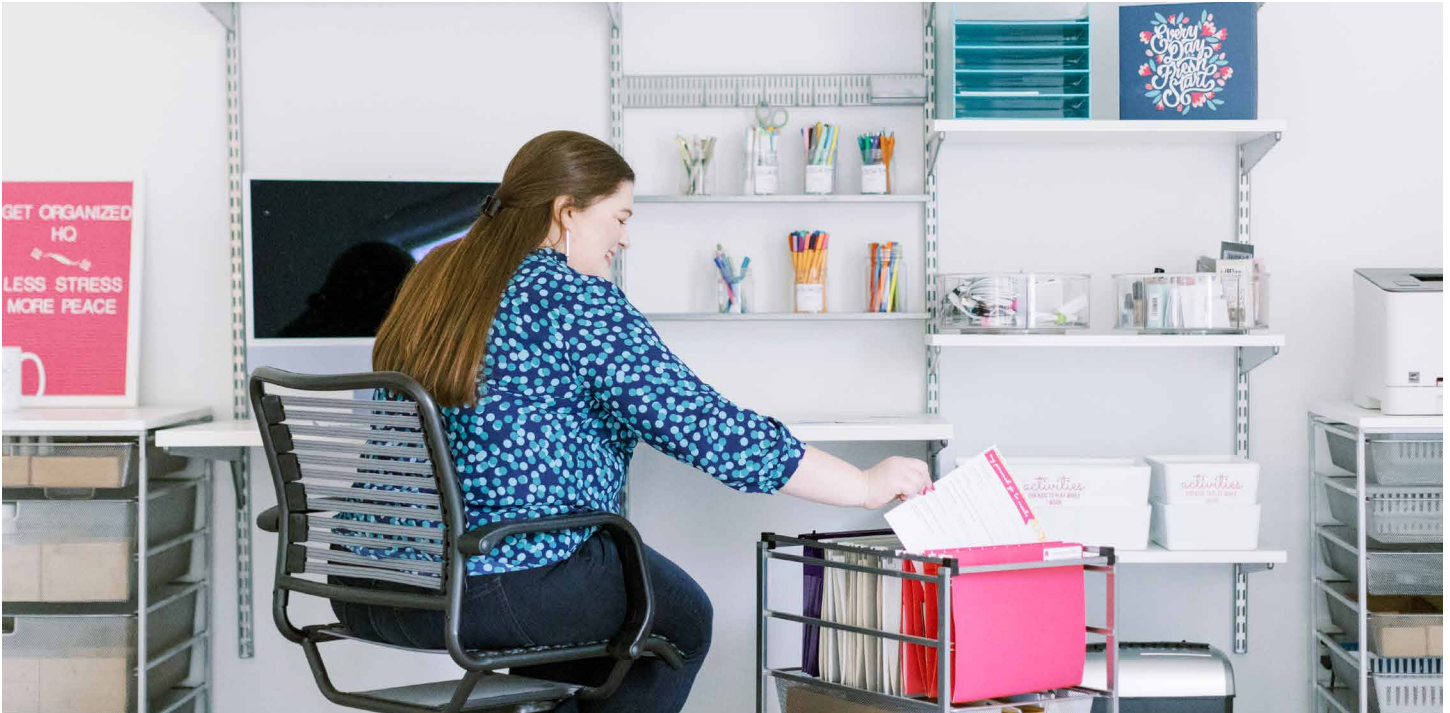
ROOM FOR LIFE

Here's what I'm driving at: life happens in the messy, middle, gray area. If you're anything like me you like answers. Right and wrong. Black and white. But life is not binary. You do not always have to choose one OR the other. Perhaps the answer is both. Perhaps truth lies in the gray area.

Yes, it is messier that way. But it is also likely far more meaningful. May you have grace to live in the messy middle.

CHAPTER 2

Self Management



SELF MANAGEMENT IS KEY

Here's the thing that I've come to understand. Good, effective time management isn't really about managing my time at all. It's actually about managing myself! That's the one thing I can always control.

Don't worry, I do realize that this is what most people mean (myself included) when they talk about "time management" or "productivity," but I still think we could all use the reminder of what it's really all about.

SELF MANAGEMENT PREP

Here are some of my best tips for self management:

1

Prioritize Your Time

2

**Make a Plan +
Set Small Goals**

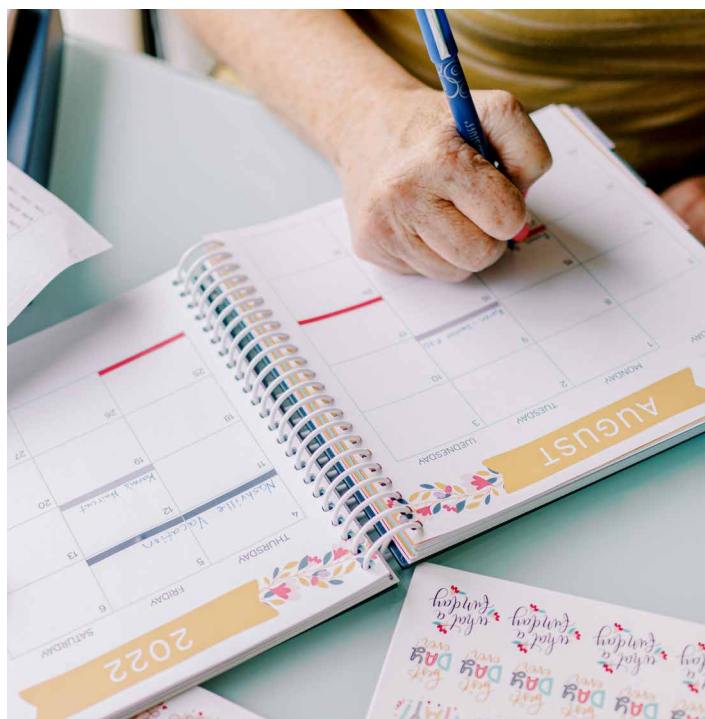
3

**Take Advantage of
Community + Accountability**

Prioritize Your Time | When it comes to time management, there's one key to remember: Your time goes where your values go. Sounds simple, right? So why is it our time so often seems to do just the opposite? It's because we haven't taken the time to identify our values and plan our time.



action step! Think about all the things that take your time in a day and write each one on a sticky note. Now arrange those sticky notes in order of importance. Those sticky notes at the top of your list? Those are the day to day things you should be making time for no matter what.



Make a Plan + Set Small Goals | If you were going to build a house, you'd have to start with a blueprint of some sort. Why do we think it's any different when we are building our lives? In order to get the best things done each day you'll need to plan.



action step! Pick one thing you want to make time for in your days. Maybe it's something you go to bed every night wishing you'd gotten done that day. Maybe it's Bible reading, bullet journaling, exercising, or spending time with a loved one. Pick a time in your schedule tomorrow when you will do that thing — then make an appointment with yourself and stick to it!



Take Advantage of Community + Accountability | The best plan in the world can still fall to bits when you have a bad day. That's why you need to develop a way to regularly check in with someone or a system of tracking that helps you to reflect on your progress. It makes all the difference!

action step! Find a person to be your accountability buddy. Schedule a time during the week when you check in with that person to talk about your progress.



SELF MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

Now that we've done the prep work, it's time to move on to strategizing. Here are three strategies for better time management:

1

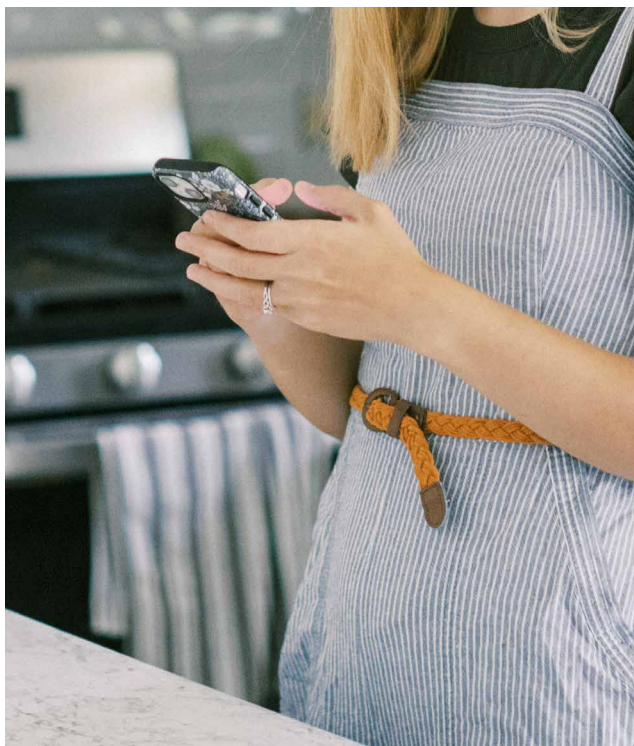
**Schedule Commitment
Reminders**

2

Track Your Time

3

Reflect



Schedule Commitment Reminders | A practical way to stay on top of your time is by scheduling reminders. This can be a reminder on your phone, a note in your planner, or even a sticky note on your desk. Whatever it takes to bring your goals to the forefront of your mind. Pro Tip: If you have a big task coming up that will take some preparation (like going to the grocery store or having friends over for tea), set a reminder for yourself the day before your appointment so you know what's on the horizon.



action step! Refer back to Prep Tip 2. Set up a reminder in your phone or jot it down in your planner so you don't forget to take that action tomorrow.

Track Your Time | Sometimes we don't know where our time is going until we take note of it. When you start to track your time, you may find out you're spending a lot more time on what I call "time wasters" than you thought. When you start tracking your time — either by jotting it down in a planner or using an online timer or time-tracking app — you'll probably find you have a lot more free time than you thought!



action step! Try tracking your time for just one day by keeping a rough count of how much time you spent on your various activities. I think the results will surprise you and give you ideas of where you can find more time in your days.





Reflect | Here's the thing about our lives — they're always changing. A month ago, you may have prioritized gardening, but now that harvest is passed, you need to prioritize canning. Make sure you are regularly checking in with how you are using your time — maybe by revisiting each of these six tips, so that you can go to bed each night knowing you've gotten the best things done.

action step! Schedule a time for reflection after you've implemented some new time management strategies to check in with yourself and your time. Doing this with a friend can make it more fun, and they may even have some ideas you'd never thought of!

SELF MANAGEMENT IN ACTION

You've prepped, you've strategized, and in the next chapter we'll dive deep into some systems that I have come to find extremely helpful in managing my time as well as some things to avoid when productivity is the goal.

Let's Talk Specifics



HOP TO IT METHOD

Sometimes when I go to bed at night I feel literal guilt for not getting more done during the day. I tell myself that I should've prioritized my time better, and I shouldn't have taken so many breaks, and I definitely should've gotten to that thing that's been on my to-do list for three weeks. Have you ever felt that way?

In most cases, the root of this type of guilt is coming from two things: a lack of prioritization and writing a to-do list that is really more like a *wish list of what you wish you could accomplish* if you were all energy all the time with zero interruptions.

There are so many things to do on a daily basis, and if you don't prioritize, you'll just be left with a jumble of a to-do list, jumping from one half-finished task to another until it's finally time to sleep so you can wake up tomorrow and do it all again.

It's unreasonable to expect that you'll be able to get every single item checked off your to-do list every day. There's traffic, allergies, and a line at the drive-through. Life happens — honestly, I think it's common to underestimate how long any given task will take. You won't be able to go to bed every night with all the things done, but you can go to bed at night knowing **you got the best things done.**

GETTING THE BEST THINGS DONE

That sounds great and all, but how do you know which things are the best things? I like to use the acronym of “HOP to it!” to help me determine what the best things I can get done each day are.

1

Habits

2

Objectives

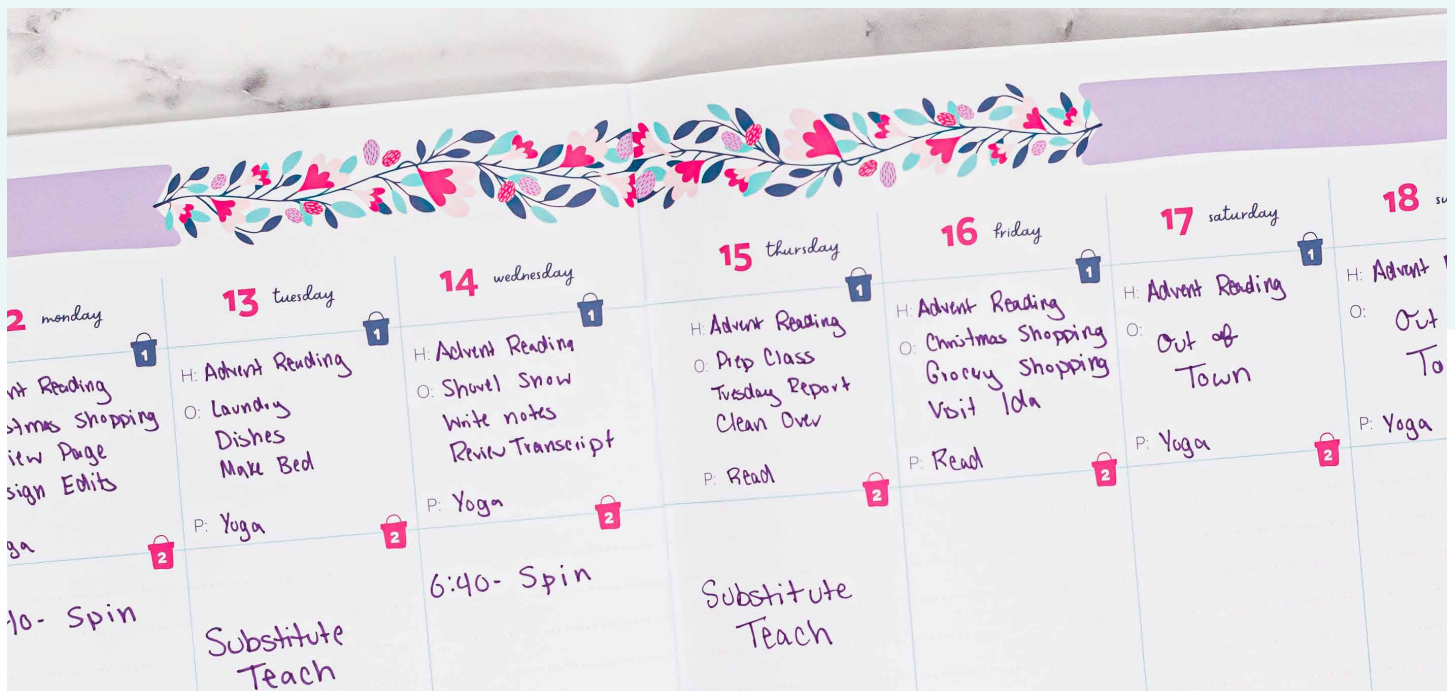
3

Passions

“H” Stands for Habit | I could go on and on about the importance of habits. In short, habits are the only way to get more time back in your day. By putting certain tasks on autopilot you’ll reserve more of your mental energy for the harder stuff.

helpful tip! I recommend working on just one habit for at least a whole month (if not more!). No matter what, do that habit every. single. day. It doesn’t have to be hard or time consuming. It just needs to be something that will make your life easier once your brain truly starts doing that task on autopilot. Maybe your habit is going to be washing the dishes right after dinner or making your bed first thing in the morning. Whatever it may be, I encourage you to pick a habit and stick with it for a month. I think the results will surprise you!





“O” Stands for Objective | If you went to bed tonight and had only gotten three things done on your to-do list, what would you want those three things to be? The answer to that question will give you a pretty good indication of what your main objectives for the day should be. As I stated before, you won’t be able to get everything checked off your to-do list every day, so it’s important to know which items on that list matter the most.

helpful tip! I would strongly suggest not having more than five objectives for any given day. These objectives are the tasks that you are going to prioritize and get done first, so make sure that they’re things you reasonably can get done today!

“P” Stands for Passion | At the end of your life you’ll want to look back and remember that you did more than take out the trash and vacuum the house. Make sure that every day, even if it’s just for ten minutes, you do something you’re passionate about. That may be connecting with a family member, reading a novel, baking a new treat, or doing a craft. It doesn’t have to take long, and there isn’t any right or wrong, but I encourage you to always include something you’ll enjoy in your daily plan.

GOING TO BED GUILT-FREE

If you’ve found yourself going to bed with that nagging feeling of guilt, I hope this simple framework helps you prioritize your days so that you can go to bed at peace with the day and with yourself. After all, a good night’s rest will only help you to have an even better day tomorrow!

CLOTHESPIN CURRENCY STRATEGY

Comparison is a dangerous game, but you know how it goes. You see someone who homeschools 10 kids, works full time, runs a small side business, and volunteers on the city council and they seem to have it all together. Then you look at yourself and wonder why you can't be like them. After all, you've heard it said, "We all only have 24 hours in the day."

Annnnnnd, let's stop right there.

That statement, "We all only have 24 hours in the day," is my single biggest pet peeve in the time-management-advice-giving-world. So yes, technically speaking, since the beginning of time all days have only ever had 24 hours. That is an objectively true statement.

But it is NOT true that we all have the same resources or the same energy. And by energy, I don't just mean physical energy (although that is certainly a component!) There's also mental energy. What is required of your mind just to carry out your daily activities? This is where my Clothespin Currency comes in.

FINITE MENTAL CAPACITY

You have a finite amount of space in which to hold your mental energy. Let's think of that space like a jar, and let's think of your mental energy like a bunch of clothespins. Now, think through what may be taking up space inside that jar. Maybe you just bought a house, or you're planning renovations on the house you have — that definitely takes a clothespin or two. Maybe you have a mild chronic health problem — that's another clothespin (but if your chronic health problem causes daily pain, that's gonna take two or three more clothespins).

Got kids of any age? That's definitely a clothespin. If one of them needs extra attention right now either from a health problem they're experiencing or simply because you're putting a lot of thought in how to best guide them through life, that'll take another one. Got any big life decisions coming up like wondering if you should quit your job? Add another two or three clothespins. Oh! And the start of a new school year and new routines definitely takes a clothespin.





Look how full the jar has gotten before even getting to some of those “wish list” items like volunteering for city council or always having a tidy home.



And, let me tell you something from experience. If you just try and stuff more clothespins into an already full jar, it's not going to work. Clothespins are going to start falling out the bottom.

Now, on the other hand, perhaps you're in a pretty stable season of life. You're settled in your home, you have no major life decisions coming up, no chronic health problems — well, you probably can add in some of those other things on your wish list.

And that right there explains why different people can get different amounts of things done. If you're playing the comparison game and wondering why you can't “accomplish as much as they do” perhaps you're simply not giving yourself credit for what you actually are accomplishing.

And, to take it a step further, it also explains why there are times in your life when you've been able to juggle a lot of commitments and "extra" things, and times where you've felt like you're barely keeping up.

So, this is great and all, but how does it help in the day-to-day?

PRACTICALLY SPEAKING

Well, for one, just understanding this concept will give you more peace of mind and a helpful framework to use to process the world. When you start viewing the world through the lens of this clothespin currency, you'll be able to give yourself the credit you deserve. When you recognize how much mental energy the things you are juggling right now require from you, you'll also realize that it's unrealistic to expect yourself to be able to add in a bunch more and stay sane. This framework gives you permission to let go of the guilt — because that guilt will quickly start eating up clothespins, and it will in fact work against you and make it even harder to get things gone.

And lastly, there is some benefit in thinking about ways you can remove some clothespins. You might realize that you have some commitments that really aren't worth their space in the jar. If you're able to declutter your time, then definitely do so!

But you may have decluttered your time as much as you possibly can. Think of other ways that you can reduce the amount of energy that some clothespins require. The number one way you can do that is by making your everyday tasks a habit. If you feel like the laundry, the dishes, and keeping the house in order is taking a bunch of energy, focus on making those tasks a daily habit.

FORMING NEW HABITS

It won't happen overnight — forming new habits definitely takes time and daily self-discipline. But as you continue to do it day after day after day (sometimes for 20 days, and sometimes for 200 days!) it eventually becomes second nature. In time, you'll be able to remove clothespins for those habits you formed that are just "what you do" rather than something that takes a lot of mental energy.

I hope this concept has been eye-opening to you! If this framework sounds like something that would be beneficial in your current season of life, be sure to check out the [Get Organized HQ Planner](#)! This planner was designed to help you form good habits so you can save more mental energy for the things that matter most!



TIP #1: POWER HALF HOUR



Even as an entrepreneur who owns my own business, there are days when my to-do list is filled with tasks that I don't want to do. Sometimes they're boring or just plain difficult (like taxes!) and other times I simply don't feel inspired. Enter: The Power Half Hour.

I'm sure you've heard of the five minute trick (you know, if you don't feel like washing your dishes just spend five minutes doing it and then decide if you're going to finish or not.) The Power Half Hour is a similar concept, but for tasks that take a lot more thought work. Five minutes of writing my new ebook isn't going to get me very far. In fact, in five minutes I may not have even written a word!

But when I have a task that I just don't feel like I have the brain power to do, I set an amount of time that I'm going to work with it — a minimum of half an hour, and sometimes as much as two hours. Sometimes I literally set a timer for the amount of time I've set aside to do this task. And then, while the timer is going, I pour my focus into my task.

I think the trick to this Power Half Hour strategy is twofold. First of all, I've often found that the things I'm dreading most aren't as awful as I anticipated. Sometimes that half hour of focused work is actually enough to check the item off my to-do list entirely!

Secondly, it keeps the end in sight. Truth is that there are some things we have to do in life that are long and boring. It's no wonder we drag our feet on getting started! Setting a timer and knowing that I won't have to do this task for the rest of the day keeps me motivated to keep going while that timer is set. It keeps the finish line in sight!

GO TO BED GUILT-FREE

If you have a task to do that's going to take some serious mental energy, and you just aren't feeling like doing it, try setting a timer for just 30 minutes and getting started. I bet you'll be surprised at how much progress you can make in just a half an hour! And, of course, if you're inspired to keep going when that timer goes off, you certainly can. But also remember that when the timer goes off you're free to end that task for the day guilt-free.

Hopefully this simple strategy helps you tackle some of those difficult and lackluster tasks — we all have to do them! Keep up the good work!

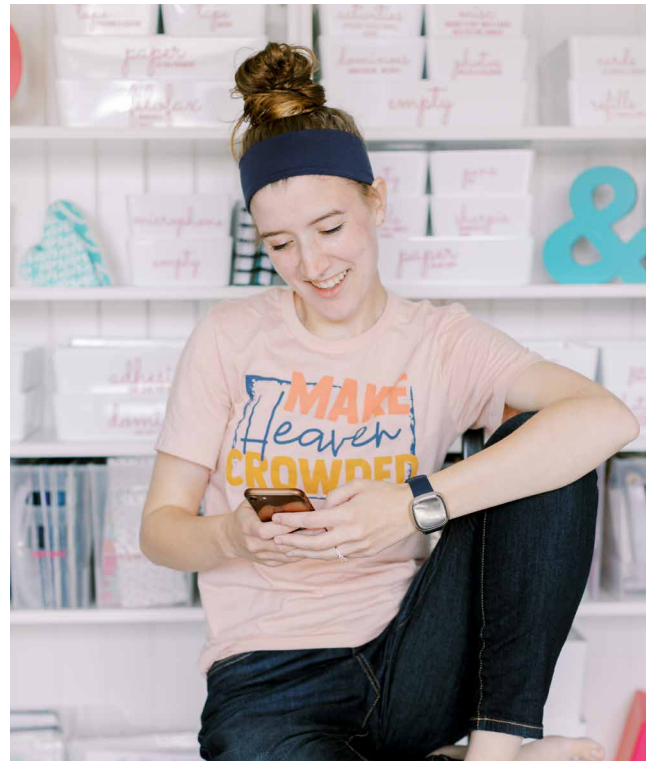
TIP #2: BEST USE OF PHONE REMINDERS

The best way for me to explain this is to give an example. So, let's say I have a subscription I need to cancel. Maybe I signed up for a free trial of some streaming service, but didn't want to continue with the subscription after the trial ended.

What I would do in that case is set a reminder in my phone for the day I need to cancel by. Now, normally when people set reminders for tasks like this they simply say something like “cancel subscription.”

Um — let me tell you — that reminder is going to get snoozed, dismissed, or totally ignored by me real quick.

Sure, it'll jog my memory, but there's no urgency behind it. So instead, I word my reminders like this: “Cancel subscription to xyz OR be charged \$18.00 a month.”



It's a subtle difference in wording, but it's incredibly impactful. By telling myself what will happen if I don't get the task done, I give myself that little extra boost that I need. I'm reminded of the consequence that will come if I don't get this incredibly important task done, and that motivates me to go do the thing, even if it's something I don't want to do.

POSITIVE REINFORCEMENT

Now, if you're one who is more motivated by positive reinforcement (or you simply don't love the idea of your phone bossing you around!) you can also use this the opposite way. You could put in your reminder as: “Go to spin class at 6:00 PM and imagine how great you'll feel when it's done!”

So, pick whichever way is more motivational to you — whether it be reminding yourself of a consequence or reminding yourself of a reward. Whichever you choose, when you set reminders in your phone, make sure you include your WHY behind the reminder. If you start doing this today, I can guarantee your completion rate of daily tasks will skyrocket.

AVOIDING DISTRACTIONS

It may be tempting to take this strategy and start setting reminders for everything — making dinner, unloading the dishwasher, sorting the laundry, and turning out the lights in the office before bed! But let me caution you — if you have reminders popping up all the time, multiple times a day, eventually you're going to start ignoring them. It's that classic principle: if everything is important, then nothing is important.

So, I encourage you to be really selective about which things get to live in your phone as a reminder. I'd recommend not setting reminders for daily routine tasks or for things that aren't all that important. Instead, train yourself so that every time a reminder pops up, you know it's something you need to give your attention to and not ignore.

Another thing that can detract from the power of reminders on your phone is having too many notifications turned on on your phone. I'd encourage you to turn all but the most crucial notifications off. Facebook, Instagram, gaming apps — even some basic utility apps want to send you constant reminders, and you don't need all that added noise in your life.

I only allow notifications for phone calls, text messages, reminders, and alarms. The rest can all wait until later when I have time to intentionally open up my email or social media to check on likes, comments, and messages.

USING ALARMS STRATEGICALLY

Speaking of alarms, they can also be used strategically to help you get important tasks done. The nice thing (or the annoying thing — but annoying in a good way!) about an alarm is that it will. not. stop. buzzing. until you hit the stop button.

This is ideal to use for things that absolutely must happen at an exact time. I have a daily alarm set for picking up my daughter from school. You might think I could just remember what time to pick her up, but it's easy to get lost in my work, and she also has early dismissal one day a week which I could totally see myself overlooking, so every day when it's time to pick her up, my phone starts buzzing. Having an alarm set that won't turn off until I give it attention is a great way to make sure time sensitive tasks get done at the proper time.



TIP #3: HABIT STACKING

“How do I carve out 30 minutes to spend time teaching my kids...?”

I was on a call today where that question came up. Have you ever asked yourself something like that? “How do I carve out time to work out?” “How do I make 30 minutes of meditation fit into my day?” “What do I need to take out of my schedule to make time for reading lessons with my kids?”

I absolutely love the answer that was given on my call today: You don't.

You don't "carve out" 30 minutes. You don't "take out" of your schedule. Can't you just hear in that vocabulary how your own self talk is working against you? Instead of looking for what to take out of your schedule, first shift your perspective and look for where you can "add in". You probably already brush your teeth twice a day. What if every time you brush your teeth you did 10 push-ups as well? If you want to read with your kids, read them a story every time you give them a bath. This is called habit stacking. It's a simple but powerful strategy where you attach a new habit that you want to form to a habit you're already doing every day.

Don't get me wrong, there is certainly a time and place for rearranging your schedule and pulling out dedicated chunks of time for important tasks. But diving in the deep end with 30 minute reading lessons every day is the surest way to burnout. Start with small steps that build up to big results!

So, what can you start doing while you brush your teeth that will move you closer to your goals?

TIP #4: TOP THREE PRODUCTIVITY KILLERS

1

**Too Many
Notifications**

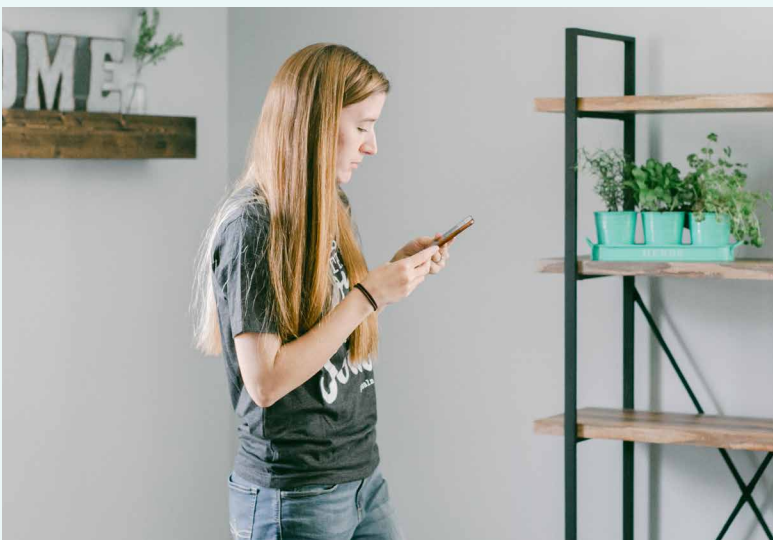
2

**Too Much
Multitasking**

3

Perfectionism

TOO MANY NOTIFICATIONS



Having notifications buzzing on your phone or computer all the time will drastically decrease your productivity. Every time you hear a notification, it breaks your concentration and takes time away from what you are trying to accomplish. Often, the notifications are for something unimportant that easily could have waited. I suggest taking a couple minutes to set up your phone and computer so you only hear notifications for phone calls and texts or those important reminders and alarms we mentioned earlier. You probably don't need to be notified immediately for anything else.

TOO MUCH MULTITASKING



Multitasking is one of those things that masquerades as a productivity booster but often has the opposite effect. When you are working on a task that requires concentration, multitasking will only cause you to be distracted and will probably cause the tasks to take longer. It also increases the risk of mistakes. It's probably fine to fold your laundry while chatting on the phone, but it's not such a good idea to pay your bills while chatting. Try single-tasking whenever possible and see how much more you can accomplish.

PERFECTIONISM

Perfectionism is another thing that masquerades as something helpful when, in fact, it can be quite detrimental. Being too careful and tedious about things that don't really matter can really slow you down. Does it really matter if the towels are folded perfectly or all aligned in the same direction? Or, you might be tempted to let things pile up because there's no time to thoroughly clean an area. Instead of focusing on doing everything perfectly, use those little bits of time that pop up to quickly get something done, even if it's not absolutely perfect — it will really make a difference!

TIP #5: HOW TO DO SOMETHING YOU DON'T WANT TO DO

Here are three things to remember when you have to do something you don't want to do:

1

Anticipation is (almost always) worse than reality.

2

Do it first.

3

Start even if you can't finish.

1. **Anticipation is (almost always) worse than reality.** | The dread of doing something you don't enjoy is often worse than actually doing it. I find this to be especially true with common household tasks like dishes and laundry. They seem like such a chore, but once you actually get started, it's typically pretty satisfying, and even sometimes almost enjoyable, especially if you put on your favorite podcast or music.
2. **Do it first.** | Sometimes the anticipation isn't overblown, and whatever it is that you have to do really isn't any fun at all. But anticipating it longer won't make it any easier. Putting off doing something that's hard and that you know you're going to have to do eventually is really putting off your ability to move on. If you do the hard thing first thing in the morning, you'll be able to enjoy the rest of your day without that shadow hanging over you.
3. **Start even if you can't finish.** | Maybe you're facing a project that is so big you don't even know where to start. Imagine a kitchen so full of dishes that it would take hours to get them all washed. It's easy to give up before you ever even start, but progress is always progress. Maybe you only have it in you to wash five dishes, but that's five dishes you won't have to wash later! A friend of mine once said, "It always does good to do good." So even if you can't do it all, do something — and that's enough for today.

TAKING CONTROL OF YOUR TIME



“Your time management strategies
are working in conjunction with your
beautifully busy life, not against it.”

Remember, time management will always be a fluid thing. There's no one right way to manage your time, and even the best planned days can get side-tracked. Sick days happen, family emergencies happen, last minute girls' nights happen. But realize that your time management strategies are working in conjunction with your beautifully busy life, not against it. My hope is that by implementing these tactics and strategies, you'll find that you have more and more control of your time day by day.