

Episode 61 – Master Your Time Minimize Your Stress

“Time is the most valuable coin in your life. You and you alone will determine how that coin will be spent. Be careful that you do not let other people spend it for you.”

— Carl Sandburg

Do you waste time? We all talk about how we wish we had more time yet we all are given the same amount of time. It is about how we allot that time to what's important to us. People like Mother Teresa, Martin Luther King Junior, Michael Jordan, and Albert Einstein all had the same amount of time as you do. It is all about how you chose to use that time to be of service or to better yourselves.

When we think about time, we often think about multitasking how to get more packed into the time that we have. **The truth is - multitasking is a myth.** Think about it when you read and listen to music you are only concentrating on reading or listening to music. You cannot be focused on both the same time. The same holds true for sitting in a business meeting and texting someone. You are actually switching the gears and shifting from one activity to in the next with your attention and focus. This is why we see a huge emergence on the topic of mindfulness. **If you want to master your time, you need to be present in the moment and focus on what you're doing.** It's about really thinking about what you're doing and how you're feeling before you act and determining what are the outcomes you want to achieve.

Time escapes no one. Entrepreneurs, business owners, and executives are confronted with managing their time more effectively and more efficiently all time. They need to be organized and have to have systems in place to be efficient. They have constant demands on their time and resources. You are asked to do more with less on a regular basis. If you work from home, you don't have anyone to hold you accountable and therefore you may stay hidden behind the computer and waste your time more than you think.

There are several strategies that you can use to stay focused and become better organized:

1. **Set regular office hours.** I know that part of having your own business is about being able to be flexible and adaptable with your time. You need to create some structure to your working time so that you can use it most effectively. Often when people work from home family members or friends may think that you're not actually working and available to run errands or grab a cup coffee. Sometimes you can be spontaneous but there will be other times that you will not be because you have commitments and deadlines to meet.

2. **Use your calendar intentionally.** If you don't write things down chances are they're not getting it done. Block off time for self-care, physical activity, and time with family and friends.
3. **Keep a clock or set a timer nearby.** You may want to set the timer on your phone. When you create that sense of urgency, you will stay focused on the amount of time that you have to get things done.
4. **Plan your day the night before.** Too many people take this step for granted. If you plan the night before of what you need to do, you don't have to spend time thinking about it when you're ready to take on your day you move into action.
5. **Organize your files in groupings or categories.** You may want to create files by project or by sales, marketing, finance, or social media as examples. This way when you want to work on that particular topic you can just grab the file. Put some index cards or post-it notes with each file should you need to make notes and it will be readily available.
6. **Turn off pop-up notifications on mobile devices and your desktop.** These notifications are very distracting as you want to know who texted you or who sent you a message. Suddenly it feels like there's something urgent to tend to.
7. **Limit the times you check your e-mail and social media throughout the day.** When you stay focused on the certain times you will find that you are more productive throughout the day.
8. **Batch tasks together.** If you are preparing content for articles or podcast, block off 2 to 3 hours only for that activity. Block off an additional time for coaching and if you have sales calls that need to be made you may dedicate a certain time of day for doing that.
9. **Use the checklist for repetitive tasks in order to reduce error and stay on track.** In Atul Gawande's book, *The Checklist Manifesto*, he talks about how the checklist can help minimize error and ensure that all important activities get done. When things get routine, it is easy to become complacent or assume that things are getting done.
10. **Allow buffer time of 5 to 10 min. in between activities.** Give yourself some time to finish off the task and cleared your mind and your desk so you can move on to the next activity effectively.
11. **Take breaks every 30 minutes.** You may get up for a stretch, a short walk, or a glass of water to give yourself a chance to recharge. Going full tilt all the time is not sustainable and if you don't allow yourself breaks and time off you can burn yourself out. You will not be effective for anyone.
12. **Dress for success.** Although it may be cool to stay in your pajamas all day, dress to impress you. When you dress well you will perform well. Stay on top of your game.

13. **Remember to get enough sleep.** You deal with the stressors of the day more effectively if you are well rested.

When it comes to mastering time and minimizing stress, you need to be able to deal with the interruptions of the day. They're going to happen so you might as well plan for them.

You can put up a “**Do Not Disturb**” sign when you need to stay focused and get something done in order to meet a deadline.

When someone says, “**I just talk to you for a minute.**”, and you know you're busy; let them know what you're working on, and arrange of mutual time for further discussion.

There will be times when someone asks for that minute and you really need to listen and determine what the impact would be if you held it off. **You can choose to be distracted and have your work disrupted or you can choose to be proactive.** You might decide to have a certain time of day set aside when people can come to you with their issues.

There may be times when you look need to **learn to say “No”** and not take on more than you can handle.

The other thing you can do is move to a space where you can do the work totally uninterrupted without distraction. Deadlines are pressing and sometimes you need to have time alone to get what you need to do - done.

The whirlwinds of the world will continue to show up. You need to remember that you are the master of your time and you can minimize the stress that comes with it feels like your time is being stolen. **Be proactive rather than reactive with your time.** Get up early to seize the day! You have 24 hours what are you going to do with?

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Time: 11:38 min

Keywords: time management, timer, organizational strategies, entrepreneur hacks, biz tips, business, professional development, master your time, minimize your stress, how to manage time, dealing with interruptions, time management skills, checklists, planning, time management strategies