

Ep #32: Planning Your Schedule Accurately (Time Management Series)



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

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You're listening to *The Less Stressed Lawyer* podcast, Episode 32. We're talking all about planning your schedule accurately. You ready? Let's go.

Welcome to *The Less Stressed Lawyer*, the only podcast that teaches you how to manage your mind so you can live a life with less stress and far more fulfillment. If you're a lawyer who's over the overwhelm and tired of trying to hustle your way to happiness, you're in the right place. Now, here's your host, lawyer turned life coach, Olivia Vizachero.

Hi, my friends. How we doing? I am tuning in live from Nashville. I thought I was going to talk to you, while I was in Italy, a little bit more than I did. But turns out, I was too busy having fun. So, you're coming along with me in the second leg of my trip. I spent a little bit of time in New York. I spent about a week in Italy. And now, I'm in Nashville for the Clio Cloud Conference.

And then, I'll be heading to Charleston to do a little live event reconnaissance. In order to scope out some venues and some great spaces to meet with people, and come together for the next round of *The Less Stressed Lawyer* mastermind. So now, we're on the States side portion of my travels. And I'm so excited to bring you along with me for the ride, and talk to you as I go from spot to spot to spot.

I hope you're doing as well as I am. Things have been busy over here with all the travel, but things are really good. I just got into Nashville tonight. And after, I don't know, like 22 hours of travel, I think... Between going from Positano to Rome, flying from Rome to Atlanta, Atlanta to Nashville, and then getting here, it's been a long day.

But I'm super excited to talk about today's topic. And, I didn't want to keep you guys waiting. So, we're gonna dive right in. Let's do a little recap while we're at it. Okay, so we're talking about time management, and the time management series is part of the three P's, that I'm teaching you guys about; how to overcome people-pleasing, how to overcome perfectionism, and how to overcome procrastination.

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Okay, so as part of that third P, the procrastination part, we've been talking about time management. And we're now into the part of the time management series, where I'm teaching you the three simple steps that you need to follow, in order to manage your time effectively.

And remember, those simple steps are that you need to control, or better yet, reclaim control of your calendar. Step two is that you need to plan your schedule accurately. And step three, is that you need to honor your plan.

So today, we're really going to dive in deep and explore step two of that process. We're going to talk about planning your schedule accurately. Okay? Now, I think out of the three steps, this might be my favorite step. And it's because it's the most numbers-based. For those of you who aren't fans of doing math, we're gonna make a little love to some math in this episode. You're gonna be just fine, you're gonna survive it. I promise, it's going to be okay.

I actually think it's really important to underscore that time management is a math problem. It's numbers-based, right? We're doing the addition, subtraction, and just the simple mathematics, of how a numeric allotment of something works. We have a certain number of minutes, hours in the day, and we get to split them up however we want to.

But we want to be really intentional with how we spend them. I always like to think of it like an allowance that you get through the day. And you want to be intentional with how you budget. I know a lot of people have an emotional response to the term budget, but a budget really is within your control to create. You get to spend your time allowance however you want. But there's definitely a numbers-based aspect to time management; time management is a math problem.

It's just made complicated by an unmanaged mind. So, there's the math part of it. And then, there's the mind drama. And the reason that I think step two, out of the three steps, is the easiest one to tackle is because it's the one that really focuses on the math, not the mind drama.

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When you're talking about reclaiming control of your calendar, you are typically talking about setting boundaries and saying no. There's a lot of mind drama that comes with that. It's very emotional for people, a lot of guilt, a lot of worry.

When you talk about honoring your plan and sticking to your schedule, that's super uncomfortable for people. It requires you to feel confused and get started anyways. To feel overwhelmed and work through it. To feel bored or bothered and get to work, regardless. Those two, the first and the third steps, are so emotionally heavy. Lots of mind drama, lots of resistance.

This second step, I really think is the easiest part, because it really just focuses on the math and there's not a ton of mind drama. That being said, it's not entirely intuitive, which is why I wanted to devote an entire episode to it. Just to really break it down and make it super simple for you guys. But I definitely think it's the easiest part, because it has much less of the mind management component and just focusing on the numbers.

So, with step number two, planning your schedule accurately, what we see here, is really one step that breaks down into two separate components. There's the planning part of this step, and then there's the second part, the accuracy part. So, planning your schedule accurately.

First, we have to plan and then we have to make sure the plan is accurate. We'll focus on the first part, the first component of this step, the planning part. And here's what I tend to see, a couple different ways that people approach planning their schedule.

All right, number one, they don't plan at all. And there's a couple different reasons why people will avoid making a plan entirely. Number one, it's their perfectionism showing, I talked about this, when I discussed perfectionism. That people don't like to make a plan, they don't like to get a game plan together, because if they don't think they're going to stick to it, that really triggers their perfectionism.

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They feel like they're falling short, and they'd rather not try at all, not make any plan, because if they're going to not stick to it perfectly, it conjures up a sense of inadequacy and imperfection that's very uncomfortable for them. So, you can't fail if you don't make any plan to begin with. That's definitely perfectionism driving, not making any plan.

People also might think that planning is pointless if they really don't have any self-trust, that they're going to stick to the plan that they create. They have a lot of self-doubt that they're going to be capable of sticking to the plan. They won't even make one, because they just think that it's superfluous, there's no point in doing it.

People also tell themselves that they don't have the time to make a plan. And, we want to make the time. All right, I understand if you feel scarce on time, if you feel really overwhelmed, behind, pressured. It's going to be a little bit of a tall order, in the beginning, to set aside a little bit of time.

Not a lot of time, but just a little bit of time to make a plan. Those minutes are going to seem scarce, and you're going to be telling yourself that you could be spending them in some other better way.

Now, sometimes people will plan as a form of procrastination. And you really want to be careful, and be on to yourself here, to make sure you're not doing that. All right, a plan should not take you very long to put together. I would say if you're planning more than five minutes, really, you're taking too long doing it; but definitely more than 15. We don't need any more time devoted to planning than that.

So, you want to make the time, you want to really get out of the mindset that you don't have the time to create a plan. This is going to save you so much time, because you're going to be so much more intentional with how you spend your time. We're going to find some minutes in the day so you can plan.

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And then, people will also not make a plan because they think that they can do this in their head. And there are a lot of different reasons why we don't want to make the plan in our head. Number one, you're much more likely to stick to something if you write it down. Number two, there's a lot of trial and error, and tweaking and learning, that comes from seeing your time visually.

Understanding how it's laid out, and being able to evaluate what worked, what didn't work, what will you do differently. Being able to observe conflicts or see what's really unrealistic that maybe, if it was just in your head, you'd think it was totally doable.

So, you really need to see it mapped out on your calendar, that's very important. We want to make sure that we're making a plan. That's one of the things that I see for the planning part, that people don't make any plan. I will also see people only plan external meetings, where they're meeting with someone else.

I will see people make fantasy plans. So, they're very perfectionistic and they're very ideal, but they're completely detached from reality. There's no way that you'd ever be able to complete the plan. So, very lofty plans, very overwhelming plans, that you're not going to stick to.

That helps perfectionists feel like they've accomplished something amazing, something really miraculous. And, you actually haven't done any of the work, but you got the dopamine hit that comes from that really lavish, extravagant fantasy planning. So, you want to be onto yourself if you do that, as part of your perfectionistic tendencies, creating fantasy plans and then never sticking to them. Okay.

And then, I also see people make the mistake of only planning work. They don't plan any of the stuff that's required for them to be humans and to have a personal life. So, that ends up creating a disaster, as well.

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And if you're doing any of these things; not making a plan, only planning external meetings, creating fantasy plans, or only planning work, you're going to see that each one of those forms of planning really creates a disaster.

Here are some of the consequences I see from doing those things. Number one, you don't prioritize your most important work. So, if you're only planning external meetings, or you're only planning when you meet with other people, that leaves off so much of the important work that you have to do, that's just work that you do alone.

And if you're not factoring that into your schedule, and making it really your top priority, it's going to be an afterthought. It's not going to get the time that is really required for you to do your best work.

You will also see, if you're only planning external meetings, or you're only planning work, that you're really double-booking yourself, a lot of the times. This also happens when you're not making any plan, you're doing the math in your head, and you're probably doing the math wrong. And you're double-booking yourself; you're spending time in your email, and you're not accounting for email.

You're thinking that you'll be using that time to be working on drafting a contract, or writing up a brief, or doing legal research, and you're not factoring in that you're going to have to take a break and go get a coffee throughout the day. So, that counts as double-booking yourself; you're doing both things, and that time has to go somewhere. You're not going to be able to multitask; multitasking is such a myth. So, you're creating double-booking.

This also happens when you think that you're going to be traveling to work or traveling to meet someone, when really, it's going to take you longer to get ready in the morning than you anticipate, because you're not doing the math, right; you're not planning it out. So, you double-book yourself there, between the personal and the professional.

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And ultimately, what happens here, is that you set yourself up for failure. You set yourself up to constantly be behind, to have a schedule that doesn't work for you, because you're doing the math wrong; when you're not planning, not putting things on your calendar, only planning those external meetings, only planning work, creating those fantasy plans that would never work out. ...If you actually focused on doing the math right.

You also never make time for yourself if you're only planning work or only planning things that are external. You never make time for yourself. All of your individual needs end up coming last, and they get left off. Again, if you do end up making time for some of them, you're double-booking yourself. So, then you're creating the problem of being behind.

And the other issue that I see here, is that you leave out things that you are actually doing. This also goes to the whole double-booking concept. If it takes you 10 minutes to get dressed and get out the door, and you're not realizing that it takes you 10 minutes to do that, you're leaving things out that you're not doing. It's going to take you 10 minutes, regardless. You're just going to be behind schedule because you didn't account for those 10 minutes.

Same thing if you have a meeting that, let's say, it starts at 3pm. It takes you five minutes to walk to the meeting. I know this seems really obvious, as I say it to you, it might, but if that's the case, this isn't obvious for everyone.

And, you know, you have to plan into your schedule that it's going to take you the five minutes to walk down the hall, or to change floors, or to get in the elevator. There might be a little bit of a wait for the elevator. Or, that you're going to take the stairs and that that's going to take a few minutes. You have to build all of that into your plan.

And when you don't, you double-book yourself and you end up making yourself behind. If you're someone who's chronically late, I have a lot of clients that really struggle with being timely, with being punctual. It's

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because they're double-booking themselves. They're not paying attention to how long things take. They're not getting the math, right.

Like I said, you end up doing these things, but you're just not planning to do them, so you're always behind. This leads to a lot of unnecessary stress, a lot of unnecessary frustration, a lot of unnecessary guilt, a lot of unnecessary worry and fear. It makes your life much more dramatic, much more chaotic, much more emotional. And that emotional weight can be really exhausting, right.

It's such a distraction that really prevents us from doing our best work, from showing up at the highest level. We want to make sure that we're not doing this, so we can live a much more intentional, calm, grounded life. It's such a gift that you get to give yourself when you really master time management.

I remember I used to think time management wasn't sexy. And then, I finally decided that I wanted to be someone who mastered this, and as I have mastered it, it is sexy to be someone who's calm all the time. It is sexy to be someone who's punctual; who doesn't feel messy or chaotic, who's not scrambling, running around, feeling really frantic; that feels terrible.

It's also how people experience you. I really have changed my thoughts about this, to see that as being kind of sloppy, and unintentional, and unprofessional. And I wanted to become someone who was really polished, really sophisticated, really intentional with everything that they do.

And like I said, I used to kind of think that that was boring, but I don't, now. I think it's something that's really admirable and impressive. So, you want to be careful of how you think about being someone who is scheduled. If you think really negative thoughts about it, you're never going to do it. You want to make sure you're cultivating that mindset, in order to set yourself up for success here.

Now, once you've done that, once you've sold yourself on being someone who plans, being someone who's scheduled, because you're convinced,

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and maybe you have to take my word for it, that's fine. But you're convinced, or at least hopeful, that I might be on to something, that it's a better way to live your life. It's a simpler, calmer, more polished, more professional way to live your life, and that it's something that you want to strive for and achieve.

Once you get yourself there, then we get to undo a lot of these bad habits and start to implement a proper planning strategy. Okay. So, here's what I teach my clients to do. Number one, and I think I've mentioned this already on the podcast, but I'm just going to restate it here.

You want to have one to-do list. And I know you probably love your written to-do lists, but it's got to go. So, you want your to do list to be electronic. And this is why; number one, you can copy and paste, and reorganize things, and delete things.

And you don't have to keep rewriting the same list over and over and over again, because you crossed half of the things off, and then you want to make a fresh list. And now, you've got multiple lists and you can't keep track of your lists. That's so confusing, we don't want that.

You're going to create one electronic to-do list. I use the Notes app in my iPhone because it syncs with my computer. That's what's easiest for me, I want to be able to have access to it on my cell phone. A client of mine recently told me that Microsoft now has a to-do list app, that you can have on your phone, and syncs with Outlook.

So, if you're a Microsoft user, not an Apple user, check into that, look into it, see if that's an option that would work for you. But you want to come up with your one electronic to-do list.

You're also going to have one calendar. I know people also don't love this because we'd love to have everything compartmentalized. I really don't think that works; I think it makes for a really cumbersome process.

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And not all of your calendars end up talking to one another. And it can lead to you getting double-booked. It can lead to some things slipping through the cracks, and a conflict being created when it would have been otherwise avoided, if you had just been using one calendar.

So, I use my work calendar for absolutely everything. My personal dinners with friends go on my work calendar. Everything syncs with my electronic scheduler, my Calendly. So, my availability is always up to date, and I never get double-booked. That's really important to me, to avoid those unnecessary conflicts.

Now we've got one electronic to-do list, one calendar, and here's what you're going to do. In the beginning, we're going to plan day-by-day. And you're going to plan a day in advance. Because you access a different part of your brain when you plan a day in advance.

You use your prefrontal cortex, which is much more logical, much more supportive of your long-term goals; what you want to achieve in the long term. Rather than the primitive part of your brain, which is what you use when you make decisions in the moment.

And that's that primitive part of your brain that's just looking to protect you. It wants to seek pleasure, avoid discomfort, and conserve energy. So, it's really going to set you up to fail, because it's going to do all of the things that are really instant gratification seeking, instead of being aligned with your long-term goals; the long-term success that you want to achieve.

So, you want to plan a day in advance. All right. Over time, we're going to work on working up to sketching out your week, sketching out your month. But you still want to check your plan for the following day, a day in advance, as you go throughout this planning process.

Now, first things first, you need to plan in how long it's going to take you to just be a human every day. All right. How many hours do you want to sleep on average? You need to start to build in that structure to your schedule;

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start there. How long does your morning routine take on a given day? And, you want to be really honest with yourself about this.

We're going to do some trial and error and gather some data. I'm going to talk about that in a second. But you want to start making a guess and putting in the amount of sleep that you want, how long it takes you to get ready in the morning, what you like to do in the morning. Are you a person that eats lunch? What do you do for dinner? How do you spend your evenings? What time do you go to bed? You want to start to put in these staples throughout your day. And, this is going to give you a better sense of how much time you actually have to devote to work.

I don't want you to look at your to-do list and say, this is what I "need" to get done in a day. And then, everything else is going to be an afterthought. It just doesn't work because you end up doing the humaning things anyways. And then, you set yourself up for failure; you end up being behind. So, we're not going to do it that way.

We're going to plan for your life first, and then we're going to work 'work' into the schedule. Okay. Now, in the past, I did an episode on making decisions ahead of time. That is a great episode, if you haven't listened to it already, to go back and listen to after you finish this episode. Or, to go back and listen to it as a little bit of a refresher.

But this part of your schedule is really ripe for making decisions ahead of time and sticking to them. It's gonna make the planning process so much easier because you don't have to reinvent the wheel every single day. So, you can have kind of a week day protocol, where you've made decisions ahead of time about how you spend your time. You can have every day be the same if that's easier for you.

Planning gets really simple when you make one decision, and you repetitively honor it over and over and over again. And again, it's not boring, I promise. Even if it sounds boring, even if it sounds restrictive. It's not, it is really so freeing to plan your time this way.

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So, let me give you an example of this, of making decisions ahead of time and building them into your process, building them into your game plan for the day. If you're someone who likes to work out, and again, I mentioned on a previous episode, we want to make sure you're planning in alignment with your preferences.

So, if you don't like to work out, and if we're being really honest that you're not going to work out every day, don't build that into the plan. That's a bad plan; you're not going to stick to it. I always like to tell my clients; you want your plan to be something that you think you'll stick to. On a scale of 1 to 10, you want to be at an 8 or higher. Okay, I'm great if it's a 10. And we'll see once we actually implement the plan if you do stick to it at level 10.

In the beginning, you probably won't. There's going to be a little room for error and room for improvement; That's fine, that's normal. Tell your perfectionism to take a chill pill for a second. There's gonna be some imperfection in this process, as you learn to become someone who plans accurately and then sticks to the plan.

But don't make a plan that's far out of alignment with how you prefer to spend your time. So, if you are not someone who works out, don't plan to work out. If you are someone who works out, be really honest, how long does that take? How long does your workout take between getting dressed? Maybe you work out from home?

Or, maybe you have to go to a gym, right? If you go to a gym, how long does that take? You've got to put that in the plan. How long will you be at the gym? From entering the gym to the time you actually work out, to leaving the gym, to getting back in your car. And then, going back home and showering, getting ready for the day, right? You have to build all of that into your schedule. So, we're going to have to figure out how long that takes.

Same thing if you have a particular morning routine. I'm working with a client on this, right now. We're working on creating a morning routine that

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he can stick to. And one of the things that he's on the fence about is do I eat breakfast every day? And I know it can sound a little strict to make that decision every single day right now, for every single day right now. But you want to.

It just doesn't make any sense to me, to be undecided every day about whether you're going to eat breakfast or not eat breakfast, alright? That's something that you can really systematize. Everything becomes easier when you decide that you're a breakfast person or you're not a breakfast person. I'm not a breakfast person. So, I never have to factor that time into my schedule.

If you are a breakfast person, and you decide every day you eat breakfast, think about all of the other decisions that go into making that; what are you going to eat? What time do you eat? When do you eat? How long do you want to devote to the process of eating breakfast? Is there cleanup that you do? Do you grab something on the go as part of your commute? Right?

All of those decisions go into that, and you don't want to be making those decisions in real time. Again, that's how you end up double-booking yourself or planning really inaccurately. It's because you didn't make a plan at all.

Another example of this would be packing, right? When do you pack before a trip? I pack the night before. I don't like to leave it till the morning. I used to leave it till the morning, and now I'm really realistic about how long it takes me to pack. I just don't have that kind of time, normally, in the morning, so I like to pack the night before.

Same thing with grocery shopping, like, when do you do that? How long does that take you? I do a lot of my grocery shopping via the Shipt® app, that makes it super convenient for me. But I want to build that into my routine. There's going to be time devoted every week to that process.

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And if I'm not building that into my plan, I end up double-booking myself. Because in my head, I've allotted that time to doing something else. And then. I end up spending it grocery, shopping on my phone, because I need to have things for the week, right?

So again, these are things that you can decide ahead of time, and build into your plan to create a lot of structure, to create a lot of routine, and make your life a lot simpler. Okay, I really do think that it's kind of insane, that you would leave this undecided, things like this. The simple everyday things that you do over and over and over again, you really want to make one decision, one time, and stick to it. It makes everything so much easier. Same thing with lunch. Same thing with dinner. You can really build in a lot of structure. And again, this comes back to this mindset component; you really need to become someone who stops believing that there's benefit to living your life in a see-as-I-go manner.

I used to think that being scheduled was really constraining and boring, and that I wanted to be more spontaneous, and just go with the flow, and plan as I go. And that really is not the best way to go through life. That ends up being, again, very chaotic, very messy, pretty frantic.

So, it's not restrictive, to make these decisions ahead of time and stick to them. Do you always have free will to make a change in the moment? Yes, you do. I just don't want that to be the way that you live every minute of your life.

It makes for a really unintentional way that you would go about living every day. And you squander a lot of time, your most precious resource, when you're not being intentional with how you spend your time, with making these decisions ahead of time.

And it creates an ability for you to do a lot more, not less, when you make these decisions. When you create a schedule and plan this way, it allows you to do it with that calm, grounded intention. Okay? I promise, if you're skeptical, give it a try and see how much time you get back, how much time

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you save, how much more you're able to accomplish, how much calmer your life feels when you make plans this way.

All right, so you've got the one calendar, you've got the one schedule. the one to-do list, you're gonna plan your day, a minimum one day in advance, and you're gonna work up to sketching out your week and your month, right? As you start to do this, the rule needs to be everything goes on the calendar, okay? Because you want to get that visual representation of how long things are going to take you.

So, breakfast goes on the calendar. Don't give me, that it's gonna take you too long to do this. You can set up recurring appointments. I do this all the time. So, your days, that structure, that skeleton outline, so to speak, is already set up in advance. If you're someone who does breakfast every day, create a recurring calendar event, so your calendar reflects time for breakfast. So, you don't double-book that time.

You're going to have your main structure, sleep, your human routines. And then, you're going to put those meetings on your calendar, if you have recurring meetings. I love a recurring meeting and creating a calendar event. So, that time is safeguarded and blocked off on your calendar.

And then, you're going to start to see these pockets of time that you're able to do work in. Between those recurring meetings or one-off meetings, all of those go on the schedule. And my rule with those is, that as soon as the need arises to create a calendar event, you create it.

And we do that because it's going to prevent against you being double-booked. It's going to prevent against creating unnecessary conflicts, because you didn't put something on your calendar, and then you forget. Because we're fallible, as humans, and sometimes we don't remember everything that we have planned.

So, you want this to become a process where, before you commit to anything, you're able to go to your calendar, check to see if you're

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available. Or, you're using an electronic scheduler like I do, and your availability is already blocked off. So, people wouldn't even be able to get access to that time slot.

But if you're doing this in real time and you're checking your phone, checking your calendar, to see if you're free or not, that meeting, that conflict would already be there. And then, you would very clearly see that you are not free at that time. So, you would request another time slot.

I used to have a boss who never did this. And he would always just people-please judges, and take whatever court date they gave him. He would create so many unnecessary conflicts, that we would then, at our office, have to spend so much time unworking.

We'd have to ask for a lot of adjournments, you'd have to draft a motion, you'd have to call the prosecutor. It created all of this busy work. you'd have to call the court, in order to request the adjournment, in order to get hearing date for the adjournment, it was such a nightmare.

And it was completely avoidable, such a time suck, completely unnecessary. All he would have had to do, if he followed my system, would be to check his calendar while in court. Say, "Judge, that date doesn't work for me." The judge will not be pissed, they don't care; I promise you.

They don't care. They would much rather you just give them your actual availability, than to give an answer that's inaccurate. Or, for you to show up late because you double-booked yourself, and planned to be in two places at once. That's never going to work, right? So, you would check your schedule, and you would be able to see you're not free at that time. And you'd be able to give a time that you're actually available.

Now, speaking of court hearings, or things like that, if you have out of office meetings or things that require travel, you want to build in that travel time as part of your schedule, too. My hairdresser is an hour away from me; he's a really good friend of mine, and I've gone to him for years now. I need to

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factor into my schedule that it's going to take me at least 45 minutes. If there's traffic it's going to take me longer, I have to build that into my plan.

So, not only do I block out more than enough time for my hair appointment, and I like to do that at the end of the day, so I don't have anything after my hair appointment, just in case it takes longer. But I'm really conservative with how long I estimate that it will take. I normally give myself a lot of time. I also build in that it's going to take me about an hour to get there, just in case there's traffic, and then an hour to get home. So, all of that goes on my calendar, too.

If you have out of office meetings, or meetings that require travel, hearings that require travel, you want to make sure you're putting in that travel time. I just had a conversation with a client of mine, and she realized that she wasn't doing this. It always led to her being behind because people would schedule her back-to-back, people in her office, which goes back to reclaiming control of your calendar.

But people would schedule her, and they wouldn't factor in that she would need travel time in between these two meetings. And then, she would end up being late for things, because she didn't put that travel time on her schedule. So, you want to make sure that you're planning your travel time.

Now as you start to do this, you're going to see these pockets of time start to appear. Between the meetings that you have. Between your regular everyday routines, as part of being a human. You're going to have these uninterrupted pockets of time where you're able to do work. I want you to start to get a sense of how long email takes you. Because this is such an area where people double-book themselves.

They don't realize that they spend three hours a day reading, responding to emails. So, they plan, let's say, after you've created your structured skeleton, you have about seven or eight hours of uninterrupted time where you're able to do focused work, okay.

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And you'll also see if you have a lot of meetings scattered all over the place; can you consolidate that? I've talked about this before, with making decisions ahead of time and constraining when you do things. This is why we want to be doing that. It makes it so much easier for you to have these big chunks of time where you're able to do really deep, focused work, rather than jumping, kind of, in a scattered, frantic manner between one thing and another thing.

Constantly interrupting yourself. Not really allowing yourself, or creating any opportunity, for you to do that really deep, focused uninterrupted work. So, these pockets of time should start to appear to you. And you're going to get a general sense that on a given day, you have a certain number of hours to play with here. For a lot of my clients, it's somewhere around, between six to eight hours, depending about how long you're willing to work.

Now, if you're someone who spends, like I said, close to three hours a day, reading and responding to email, you want to build those three hours into your schedule. Instead of planning eight hours of deep uninterrupted work on projects, on substantive assignments, and then not factoring in any of the three hours that you'd be spending on email, right?

If you plan eight hours of deep, substantive work, and then you also end up spending three hours of time on email, you're either going to be working 11 hours, instead of the eight that you planned. Or, you're going to work the eight hours, but you're only going to get five hours of that deep, focused work done. And you're going to spend the other three hours on email, and then you're going to get to the end of your day and feel really behind. That feels terrible. So, that's really what we're trying to avoid here, by planning.

Now, once you see these pockets of time; you've built in your email, you've planned for that. You're going to see how much time you have left over in the day for those uninterrupted tasks, that deep work, okay. And maybe it's five hours, maybe it's six hours, whatever it is, depending if you have a really heavy meeting day, it might be a lot less than that.

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But what you're going to do, is you're going to take a look at your to-do list, and then you're going to start putting, like puzzle pieces, like little bricks, like Legos®, you're going to start putting those tasks into those free chunks of time on your schedule.

Now, this is where the accurate piece comes in, the second component, the second step, to managing your time, planning your schedule accurately. We want to make sure you're doing this accurately. So, what you're going to do, you're going to look at that to-do list, and you're going to estimate how long things take you. Okay?

And we're not going to use really vague descriptors, like a long time, or a while, or that'll be fast; we're actually going to estimate in the number of minutes or hours, okay? And if you're not sure how long something takes you work on it, you're going to take your best guess.

All right, I really want you to think of your schedule. this part of your schedule, it's like you're working on a puzzle or playing a game of Tetris®, right? We're making these little building blocks fit together. And as you do this, you're really going to start to see, as you estimate, and plan, and take a guess for how long things are going to take you.

And then, you compare it. Because you make your schedule, and then you see how you did for the day. And it's going to be this trial-and-error process for a little bit. You're really going to start to see; A, how much you're double-booking yourself. And you're not actually seeing that right now, because you're not putting things down on your calendar. So, you're going to become acutely aware that you're double-booking yourself.

And you're going to see how inaccurate your math has been, in the past. And it's going to make sense to you; why you feel so behind, why you feel so rushed all the time, why you feel overwhelmed, why you get to the end of your day constantly feeling behind and feeling really unaccomplished, as a result. It's because you've been doing the math wrong.

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So, we're going to start doing the math right. Don't tell me you don't like math; it really is the secret to time management here. So, we've got to make love to the math part.

Now as you start to do this, you're going to take a guess about how long things take you. If you really have no sense of it, or you haven't done something before, you're going to take a guess. I love to tell people to double it, because we're just horrific at understanding how long things take us. This is called the planning fallacy.

One of the things that I see all the time with clients, is that they think that they're the only ones who are bad at this. And I always joke with people, I say, "You know, everyone thinks that they're a unicorn, and that it's only them that struggles with something. That's so, not the case. People are horrifically bad at this. It's just a natural human tendency for us to really underestimate how long it takes for us to accomplish a task."

But you want to be mindful that there is this thing, called the planning fallacy. And that you do tend to underestimate how long something takes you. So, I like to say, if you're really not sure, and you don't have data that you're using to make data-driven decisions about planning your schedule, about how long something will take you, you want to take a guess and then double it.

If you find that those estimates still really fall short of how long it actually takes you to complete a task, quadruple it. I have a couple clients that do that, because they just find that they really, horrifically, underestimate how long things take. So, if you have to times it by four, take a guess and then times it by four.

But you're gonna go through, with your to-do list, and estimate how long everything takes you. And then, you're going to see what you can accomplish in a given period of time. And you're going to place those items, from your to-do list, into your schedule for the day.

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If you have five hours of uninterrupted time to work on things, you're going to find five hours, or really even better, like four and a half hours. Because you might take a break, you might have an interruption. I teach my clients to build in a little flex time into their schedule in the afternoons.

Just in case something unplanned arises, it doesn't screw up your schedule for the day. But if you've got about five hours of extra room to work with, you want to plan about four and a half hours' worth of tasks. And then, you build those in. Put them on your calendar; that's your game plan for the day. That's how this works.

Now initially, you're going to be really underwhelmed with what you can accomplish in a given day. I remember when I started to practice planning my schedule this way, I was really disappointed at first, with how little I could accomplish in a given day. I wanted to be able to do, essentially, like three times as much as I could actually get done.

But you have to make peace with time. I tell people all the time, they're really mad at time and the reality of what they can accomplish in a given time period. So, we've got to make peace with this. We've got to come to terms that it's a little underwhelming what we can accomplish in a 24-hour period.

Now the best way to get the most done, is to plan in the way that I'm teaching you to plan. It's going to set you up to get the most accomplished, to be the most efficient, to be the most productive. But you also, may still be a little underwhelmed.

I have people tell me all the time they make these fantasy plans. And they're like, I have to get all of this stuff done. And I always tell them, do you know how I know that's not true? Because you just planned like 20 hours' worth of work, and you're probably only going to work for eight hours, today. So, 12 hours of it isn't actually going to get done today.

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You're lying to yourself, saying it needs to get done today. But it doesn't actually need to get done, because it's not going to get done if we're being really realistic. So, again, that goes back to that concept of rating your game plan on a scale of 1 to 10; how likely are you to actually accomplish it? If it's not an eight or higher, it's a bad plan.

Now, a couple episodes ago, I talked about the three skills that I really wanted you to cultivate, to access, to bring with you, as we work through these three P's. I taught you that I want you to be resourceful, patient, and coachable. Those are really the qualities that you need to exhibit, as we work on solving and remedying these bad tendencies; the people-pleasing, the perfectionism, and the procrastination, to bad time management skills.

Because this isn't going to be an overnight switch, right? There's going to be some trial and error. So, I really want you to tap in to those three qualities. As you go about learning this second step, in managing your time and planning your schedule accurately, they're gonna come in big time here.

It's going to be really easy for you to throw your hands up in the air and say, "Olivia, I don't know how long something takes me. This is too hard, it's too hard to figure out." We're not going to do that. You're gonna tap into your resourcefulness, you're going to take a guess. And you're gonna use whatever data you have available to you, to make an educated guess as to how long something takes you.

And again, as we start to make these plans, and then implement them and evaluate, your accuracy is going to increase. Your planning is going to get so much better, so much more accurate. So much more realistic and reliable. But there's going to be a little bit of trial and error.

That's where that patience is going to come in. Where you just have to be willing to go through this learning process. It's not going to be an overnight process. It doesn't need to be it's okay. You're also going to tap into your resourcefulness when you're taking a guess.

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Like I said, everything takes longer than you think. If you don't know, double it or times it by four, just to be really conservative. And also, use context clues. If you've done things that are similar to the task at hand, but this is the first time you're doing something, again, make that educated guess.

Now, you're gonna want to fight me on some of the things that I'm telling you in this episode. I want you to tap in to that coachability. Really show up to doing this work with me in a very coachable manner. Don't fight me on the things that I'm telling you in this episode. I get that it's a new way of doing things for you. I get that that might be a little bit uncomfortable.

But you guys, I have dedicated years and years and years to figuring this out. I used to be so bad at it. And I am so good at it, now. I've dedicated so much time to solving this time management problem, to really understanding why people struggle with it, why I used to struggle with it, and figuring out a system that actually works. Okay?

It is simplistic. It's not complicated, but it's not completely intuitive. There's going to be some trial and error here. So, I want you to not fight me. I want you to tap into your coachability. Trust me, keep an open mind. I know what I'm talking about. I follow this exact same structure, and I teach my clients this every day. It works; I promise you. So, be resourceful, be patient, and be coachable.

Now, as you do this; you've created a plan, you've taken your to-do list, you've found the remaining time that you have left over. After the humaning, after those external meetings, after those planned items on your schedule. And you've planned in that to-do list item; one after another, one after another, one after another, until you filled up your schedule.

Okay, now you've got to plan for the day. You're going to do this every day. I have explained it in a very drawn-out manner, to be very specific and give you everything I possibly can, to set you up for success. It will not actually

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take you this long. This episode is a lot longer than the planning process will take you.

And if you're doing this day in and day out, you're going to start to, again, create that skeleton structure, create that routine. You're going to get in that habit of having all those external meetings on your schedule. So, these pockets of time are just going to become filled in. So, your planning process is going to get shorter and shorter and shorter, every single day. Which is such a treat you get to give yourself.

And ultimately, what you'll end up working up to, is really just a system where you're able to plan a little bit every day, those free pockets of time, based on your to-do list. And then, I like to, once a week, do a little bit of a review. I look at the week ahead. And, I resolve conflicts.

I like to do this on Sunday. I see my seven days ahead of me, that are coming up. And, I just review for conflicts. Are there any double bookings that I need to resolve? There shouldn't be, but I like to just do a quick review. All right.

Now, once you've got your plan, then it's time to implement it. You're going to implement every single day. And in the beginning, for a couple months at least... Because we're making a 1% improvement every day. That's really our goal here. What you're going to do, is you're going to put the plan into action, you're going to implement it.

And then, you're going to audit, you're going to evaluate, and you're going to adapt. So, we're collecting data here, right? You make a plan, you implement it, and then you see how the plan goes. What worked? What didn't work? And, what will you do differently?

This is going to be such an important part of the time management improvement process. You've got to collect some data and evaluate, and make tweaks and changes, in order to get more accurate, in order to plan better day in and day out.

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A 1% improvement, every day, is going to put you in a wildly different position; it is going to be life changing. But it's going to require that patience that I talked about, okay? Eventually, you will master planning accurately.

But as you go through this evaluation process, and I'm going to do just a whole separate episode on evaluating your time. Because I think it's so helpful, I think it's so informative. I really want to spend a whole episode just diving into the different things that you would notice when you're doing a time evaluation.

But as you do this, you're going to make these incremental, slow improvements. And, you're going to make more informed decisions each time you plan anew, moving forward. It's going to be revolutionary over time, right?

Now, like I said, with planning, you need to be accounting for everything that you do; the humaning, the work, your personal stuff that you do day in and day out; you want to build that all into the plan.

Another good rule of thumb here, is that I think it's really helpful to work backwards. I also think it's very helpful to break down a list, that goes into accomplishing one task. So, when I said earlier, working out, break down all of the individual steps that go into that.

If you're talking about eating dinner, what goes into that? If you're ordering food, you're going to have to look up the food on DoorDash®. Then you're going to order, and then you're going to have to wait for it to get delivered. And then, you're actually going to have to eat; all of that takes time.

All right, when I do social media marketing, I plan in how long it's going to take me to write the post. and then I have to post the post, and then I want to engage with the comments that I get. I build all of that in. When I do webinars, I know how long it's going to take me to write the webinar.

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And then, I do a flip chart. So, I have to put the flip chart together, and then I know how long it's going to take me to actually prepare. As far as like, getting myself ready, shower, makeup, hair; all of that stuff getting dressed for the webinar. All of that has to go into my game plan.

Same thing with getting ready in the morning, there's so many different individual tasks; how long does it take you to shower? How long does it take you to brush your teeth? How long does it take you to do your makeup or shave? How long does it take you to pick out what you wear? And then, to get dressed? To make coffee? You want to factor all of that in.

This may sound onerous or daunting, it's not. It's just making really informed, data-driven decisions, which is ultimately, what you want to be doing to plan your schedule very accurately.

And like I said, we're just going to make a plan, implement it, see how things go, and evaluate, and make constant tweaks and changes, until you're able to do this really accurately.

Alright, that's what I've got for you in this week's episode. You might have to listen to this one a couple of times; that's okay, go back. And also, like I said earlier, go check out the constraint episodes and the episode on making decisions ahead of time. It really ties in to this concept of planning your schedule accurately.

But you're going to work on making the plan. And then, you're going to work on getting really clear on the math, in order to plan accurately. And we're just going to keep making tweaks and changes, and get 1% better, a little bit more each day.

Over time, you will be in a wildly different place with time management. You're going to become someone who's really punctual, really accurate with how they plan their time. And that is going to be such a gift that you give yourself and everyone else that you interact with.

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Because it's so lovely to be someone who's punctual. To be someone who can stick to a schedule, to be someone who isn't constantly late or constantly frantically running from one thing to the next. You're going to be someone whose word really means something. And that's so professional, it's so polished, it's so responsible.

And again, if you haven't thought that that's sexy in the past, you really want to make sure you change your mind set on that, because if you don't, you're not going to be someone who does this. You're not going to want to stick to it, because it's going to leave a bad taste in your mouth. You're going to think that it's a little unpalatable.

Alright, that's what I've got for you guys this week. I can't wait to talk to you about the third and final step, in next week's episode. In the meantime, have a beautiful week.

Thanks for listening to *The Less Stressed Lawyer* podcast. If you want more info about Olivia Vizachero or the show's notes and resources from today's episode, visit www.TheLessStressedLawyer.com.