

## Ep #33: Honoring Your Plan (Time Management Series)



### Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Olivia Vizachero

## Ep #33: Honoring Your Plan (Time Management Series)

You're listening to *The Less Stressed Lawyer* podcast, Episode 33. Today we're talking all about how to honor your plan. 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.

Hey there, how's it going? I hope you are, well. I am coming at ya live, I guess not really live, because this is recorded. But I am recording this late at night from the comfort of my home. I'm actually home again after all of my travels. And, it's so nice, was so amazing to see my cats for the first time in a couple of weeks. Shout out to my amazing cousin, Emily, who was kind enough to stay here with them and take care of them while I was gone.

I'm ready to kick things off and get back into a regular work week, which starts tomorrow. My sleep schedules a little wonky because I've kind of been all over the globe. Like I said in a previous episode, I feel like Carmen Sandiego. But aside from that, hopefully I get back on track, as far as sleep's concerned, this week, but it's good to be home. And it's good to be getting back into my routine, back into the swing of things. So, I hope you're about do the same.

By the time you listen to this on Tuesday, you'll be kind of into your week already. But I hope your routine's going well. And I'll record an episode on that, just on routines in general, because I get a lot of questions about routines. But before we talk about routines, which isn't the subject of today's episode, I want to finish the conversation we've been having about time management.

One of the things that I did while I was traveling, I spoke at Clio Con, and man that couldn't have gone any better. It was so amazing to speak in front of a live audience. I do monthly webinars, and I have an amazing, engaged

## Ep #33: Honoring Your Plan (Time Management Series)

audience, but I never get to see them. So, it was so great to be able to speak in person and be on a stage. I really, really loved it. I had a packed house, in the room that I spoke in, which was so lovely, and a virtual audience, as well.

The whole team at Clio Con was just amazing to work with. And, I was so honored to be a part of that team. When I spoke at Clio Con, I talked about how to make the most of your time and how to manage your time. And, that's what we've been talking about here on the podcast for the past couple of weeks.

We've been talking about the three P's; people-pleasing, perfectionism. and procrastination. And then, kind of dovetailing off of procrastination, I hope I'm using that phrase the correct way, but dovetailing, I'll use it again, off of procrastination, we've been talking about time management. So, we're in this time management series right now.

I've been introducing you to the three steps that you need to follow to manage your time. Step number one is you need to reclaim control of your calendar. Step number two is that you've got to plan your schedule accurately. And step number three, is the subject of today's episode. And step number three, is that you need to honor your plan.

Step number three really is that simple. It's not more complicated than that. You made what I hope would be an accurate plan, after everything I taught you, in the episode about step two. Which was the last episode that I released. So, you know how to plan your schedule accurately, now.

Now, it just comes down to sticking to that schedule, to honoring your plan. So, that's what we're going to talk about today. Now, I'm going to be honest with you, this tends to be everyone's least favorite step. And it's everyone's least favorite step because it's the most uncomfortable. I want to offer you a different way to look at this, a reframe. It might actually be the easiest step; you just have to do what you've already planned to do.

## Ep #33: Honoring Your Plan (Time Management Series)

It's literally just following your plan. There's really no extra thought that goes into it. So, I want to just offer that to you. You can start to think about this as the easiest part of managing your time. But for a lot of people, it's the hardest. Not because it's actually hard, but because it's very uncomfortable to honor your plan, and to do what you said you were going to do, when you said you were going to do it.

And remember, I've talked about this before on the podcast, but you want to be really careful to not conflate ease with comfort. Just because something is easy, doesn't make it comfortable. And, just because something is uncomfortable doesn't make it hard. So, you want to be really good at discerning between the two. And to accurately assess why it is you're avoiding something.

A lot of times we like to say we're avoiding something because it's hard. And, it's not actually hard. So, it's a little bit of a fib that we tell to ourselves. Beyond onto yourself, if you do this. A lot of times, it's actually quite easy to do what we're avoiding, it's just not comfortable. Which is exactly the case with step three, honoring your plan.

Now, like I said, this isn't difficult, this isn't hard, just uncomfortable. I make it even easier for you by breaking this down into another rule of three. And you'll notice I use rule of threes. It's an old trial attorney trick; tell them what you're going to tell them, tell them, and then tell them again; tell them what you told them.

So, I use rule of threes because it makes things really easy to remember. That's why I break time management down under the three simple steps. And then step three, I break down into another rule of three, just to make it even easier for you to follow.

I've seen a lot of time management gurus break things down and you have to discern whether something's important or urgent. And, I find that really unhelpful. I remember when I was practicing, I felt like all of my work was both things all of the time, so it was really hard. And, it also felt really time

## Ep #33: Honoring Your Plan (Time Management Series)

consuming. I was already scarce on time, or thought that I was scarce on time.

So, I didn't really want to give more time into making that determination: Was something urgent? Was something important? Was it non-urgent? Was it an emergency? That just felt like a little too cumbersome in the moment, all day long. So, I don't make you guys do that, I make it really simple.

There are only three things you need to do to honor your plan: You need to start your work on time. You need to work without interruptions. And, you need to end on time. All right? We're gonna just get a little bit more specific about each of those three things, today.

If you do those three things; start on time work, without interruptions, and end on time, you will honor your plan. One just comes with the other. So, if you follow these miniature, micro three steps, the bigger step, step three, is done.

Now, before I get more specific about each of these three micro steps for honoring your plan, I just want to say that this part of time management truly is a masterclass in learning how to embrace discomfort.

If you haven't listened to it, yet, go back and listen to Episode #4, *Uncomfort Entitlement*. That's really what comes up with people when they don't honor their plan. They're entitled to feel uncomfortable, they begin to feel uncomfortable, and then they avoid that discomfort.

So, learning how to honor your plan by; starting on time, working without interruptions, and ending on time, really is a masterclass and learning how to not avoid discomfort, but how to embrace it, instead. Now, with that in mind, we can break this down into these three micro action steps: starting on time, working without interruptions, and ending on time.

## Ep #33: Honoring Your Plan (Time Management Series)

Okay, so you've made your plan for the day, that was step two. So, you should have something on your calendar, and the time should come to start working on it. All right let's just say you decided to work on a brief, you were going to do legal research for four hours, from nine to one. It's 9am, so it's time for you to start working on that brief, and you don't feel like doing it.

Typically, when you don't feel like doing something, you avoid it, you do something else instead. Maybe you procrastinate altogether. You do something that brings you that temporary comfort, instead of honoring your plan.

As we go through each of these three micro steps; start on time, work without interruptions, end on time, what you want to be paying attention to is your reasoning for not doing any of those micro steps. And it's going to be because you're unwilling to feel a negative feeling that comes with doing the micro step.

So, taking the micro step number one, starting on time, I want you to be thinking; what types of discomfort come up for you that cause you to not stick to your plan, to not start on time? For a lot of people, they might be feeling confused because they're thinking; I don't know where to start. And instead of starting on the project, they don't start on the project. They just avoid it.

Now, if you planned your schedule accurately, you should have planned to solve for this confusion. You should know where to start, but confusion might be a reason that you tend to avoid getting started. If that's the case, you just want to be aware of this. You're going to have to allow yourself to feel confused and work through it, instead of avoiding it or reacting to it.

If you're anything like me working on discovery responses, you might feel bored or really bothered, or maybe frustrated or annoyed. Maybe you think the project that you're working on is really pointless or stupid, or there's a better way to do it.

## Ep #33: Honoring Your Plan (Time Management Series)

And when you're thinking those thoughts, you feel those negative emotions; bothered, annoyed, frustrated. Maybe you just think what you're working on is really boring. If you think it's really boring, you will feel bored. And it's going to create so much resistance for you starting that task, right? So instead, you're going to avoid those negative feelings by avoiding the task that you plan to do.

The answer here, is to feel these negative feelings on purpose, and take very intentional action, in spite of and despite them. You're going to feel bored and start the task anyways; you won't die if you feel bored, I promise. You can feel bothered or annoyed and work on what you planned to work on any ways, instead of avoiding it or reacting to it.

You might be feeling overwhelmed, you just have so much to do. And even though you planned to do this one thing, something else feels more urgent in the moment. You want to get to something else that maybe you didn't have in your plan for the day, but it just came up. You have to sit with feeling worried and anxious, and stick to your plan. Most of us don't do that.

Instead, we avoid feeling worried or we react to it. And we don't follow the plan, we do something else, instead. Maybe we tend to that more urgent task that came in, that we hadn't anticipated. Same thing happens when we avoid feeling guilty, right? Maybe someone asked us to do something, and we had a plan for the day. And instead of honoring our plan, and feeling guilty about sticking to our plan, we avoid feeling guilty.

Or, we react to feeling guilty, and we people-please, instead of honoring what we said we were going to do and starting on time. So, whether it's guilt or worry, if you're not starting tasks on time, you're not feeling these emotions, you're avoiding these feelings. They're uncomfortable, and then you run for the hills. Rather than feeling that discomfort on purpose, and sticking to your plan, and starting on time.

A lot of these emotions are going to be the same, or very similar, for all three micro steps: starting on time, working without interruptions, and

## Ep #33: Honoring Your Plan (Time Management Series)

ending on time. I want you to be on the lookout for them. You're going to probably see trends and themes. The common emotions that you don't like to feel, that you tend to avoid, instead of embrace.

Another big one for people, that will keep them from getting started, their unwillingness to feel it and take action in spite of it, is inadequacy. So, they feel unprepared, or they feel inadequate. Worried that they're not going to do a great job, maybe that they don't have the requisite skill set or the knowledge.

They're not "good enough." I'm using air quotes; you can't see it. But they're not, quote unquote, good enough at doing whatever it is that they're supposed to be doing. They don't like doing it and feeling inadequate, so instead, they avoid, right, they push it off, they put it on the backburner. They do something else that they feel more competent and capable to do, or they just procrastinate altogether.

But either way, they're not sticking to the plan, they're not starting the work that they planned to do on time. So, you want to be on the lookout: Are you avoiding any of these emotions? Do they start to come up for you? And then, do you try and escape them?

The solution is always going to be to feel them on purpose. Now, people ask me this a lot, "Olivia, you say if your thoughts cause your feelings, we should just be able to change our thoughts, and then we won't feel these feelings," totally.

The work that you're going to be doing here is always tandem. So, you want to find the feelings that you're feeling, that are coming up for you. And then, you want to find the thoughts that you're thinking, that are causing you to feel those emotions in the first place. What's making you feel confused? What's making you feel bored or bothered, frustrated, or annoyed? Worried? Guilty? Overwhelmed? Inadequate?

## Ep #33: Honoring Your Plan (Time Management Series)

You want to find those thoughts and ask yourself: Can I choose to think something else? I love debunking a thought by saying; how is this not true? Right? Remember, our thoughts aren't true. They're just statements that our brains serve up to us. They're subjective, they're opinions; they're not true.

So, we can replace them with something else. We can think something else that serves us more. But sometimes our negative thoughts are really sticky. So, you can try and move the dial as much as you possibly can. But if some of that negative thinking still lingers, the negative emotion that is caused by it, is going to linger, too.

And in that case, you're going to try on a more positive thought that maybe makes you feel committed, or determined, or motivated, or certain, or confident, or compelled. Those are great emotions to cultivate with your thinking. So, you're going to try and cultivate those positive emotions, by practicing some positive thoughts.

But then, in tandem, you're also going to allow yourself to experience the lingering negative emotions, okay? They're going to be there, maybe not as strong as they once were, but they're gonna still be lingering. And you just have to allow them to be there and take intentional action, in spite of and despite them.

I always like to use the analogy of driving a manual transmission car, a stick shift. You're doing two things at once; you've got the clutch all the way down, and then you're giving the car a little bit of gas, right? Little less clutch, little more gas. Little less clutch, a little more gas. And you do that in order to start building momentum. And then eventually, you can completely release the clutch and just go down on the gas.

That's what this process looks like, a little positive thought, a little gas, and a little less negative emotion. A little more positive thinking, a little less negative emotion, until you're just off to the races. But most of us, when we're operating based on our default conditioning, and we're avoiding these

## Ep #33: Honoring Your Plan (Time Management Series)

negative emotions, or we're reacting negatively to these negative emotions, we're letting them drive.

We're letting the negative feelings dictate what we do, what we accomplish. And we don't want to give our negative emotions the keys to the car, so to speak, and determine where we ultimately end up, where we ultimately go, what we ultimately achieve.

Instead, we want to let those negative feelings just ride shotgun. Okay, so that's what you're going to do. When it comes to starting on time, you're going to be thinking the positive thoughts that you want to think, in order to start on time. So, ask yourself; what do you need to think, in order to start your work on time, in order to stick to your plan? What are those positive thoughts for you?

I thought that I love, is that I don't negotiate with myself. If I plan to do it, it's what I'm going to do. I like to think; this is what I'm doing. Not I might, not I hope to, not I want to do something. I am doing this; I'm doing this when I said I'm going to do it. This is non-negotiable. All right, think about what thoughts you need to think in order to start your work on time.

And then, identify the negative emotions that you have to be willing to feel, and take that action, start on time, in spite of and despite them. You can feel bored, and confused, and bothered, and frustrated, and annoyed, and worried, and guilty, overwhelmed, and inadequate, and start on time anyways. Like I said, this stuff is a masterclass in learning how to feel your negative feelings and take intentional action, in spite of and despite them.

The same thing is gonna be true for the next two micro steps: working without interruptions, and ending on time. Think about when you're in the midst of working on something and you start to get a little bored or fatigued. Maybe you get a little tired or exasperated, or you get stuck, you start to feel confused, and you're not quite sure where to go next.

## Ep #33: Honoring Your Plan (Time Management Series)

That's a big one, for me. Confusion always is a direct route for me to buffer. I know that now, so I'm able to catch myself and bring myself back, and work through the confusion. You want to be onto yourself; what are the emotions that come up for you, that drive you to interrupt yourself? Maybe it's that worry or that guilt?

Someone else is calling you and instead of sticking to what you're doing, you want to answer because you don't want to feel worried, or guilty. Or, you feel bored, so you welcome the distraction, right? Instead of sticking to what you're doing, what you planned to do during that time, and feeling your negative feelings. Instead sticking to the plan in spite of them.

Same thing goes with ending on time. And ending on time is actually, I guess, a little bit different because with ending on time, normally you're coming up against your perfectionism. We will take as long as we give ourselves to complete something, I believe that's Parkinson's Law. As far as time management goes, you will take as long as you give yourself.

So, even if you are planning to do something in an afternoon, if you really have two days to work on something, you'll take the two days. Which is really counterintuitive, because if you could just do it in an afternoon, you would free up so much extra time by doing it in the afternoon, rather than letting it languish and fill up two days' worth of your time, right?

You want to be onto yourself if you have a tendency to do that. It's a natural human tendency. But once you become aware of it, you can guard against it, right. So, that's what we want to do here. When you're indulging in your perfectionist tendencies. And you're overworking something, and you're letting it languish, you're letting it go on and on and on, what you want to do is you want to identify that course of action, and the emotions that are associated with it.

How would you be forced to feel if you forced yourself to stop working on something? How would you be forced to feel, if you constrained to finishing your task in the time that you planned for it? Right? Normally, people have

## Ep #33: Honoring Your Plan (Time Management Series)

to feel imperfect, and that's really uncomfortable. Unfinished, if you think it could just be a little bit better, right?

Maybe you have to feel some fear, or some worry that something bad might happen, because you didn't put that extra little bit of perfection into something. That's what leads us to pour so much more time into tasks that we take on, than what is actually necessary. And a great way to guard against this is to define what a good enough job is.

And then, when you reach that point, you want to make sure it's objective and attainable, when you reach that point, you can stop yourself, right. And if you've planned accurately, you should have given yourself just the right amount of time to be able to do something in a satisfactory manner, not in a perfect manner.

Because, A, that's not attainable to begin with. B, it's also not necessary for doing a, quote unquote, "good enough" job. But you should have given yourself enough time to do a, quote unquote, "good enough" job. And when you reach that point that you're able to easily identify, because of how you've defined it, then you can stop yourself, alright? You can complete the task within the timeframe that you gave yourself to complete it, you can end on time.

Same thing goes if you've planned things back-to-back, to back, to back, right. So, in order to start one thing on time, you need to have ended the thing that you were working on before that on time, as well. This is how it goes all together; you need to start on time, work without interruptions, and end on time.

Now, if you start on time and work without interruptions, ending on time gets a lot easier. You're really just battling that last part, that perfectionism, or you didn't plan enough time. And if that's the case, you're just going to take note of that and do better next time. I'm going to talk about that in a second.

## Ep #33: Honoring Your Plan (Time Management Series)

But if you've done the first two micro steps; started on time and worked without interruptions, ending on time should not be that much of a challenge. But for that perfectionism. Now, let's talk about not letting your perfectionism be the enemy of completing step three of honoring your plan, okay?

This is where people really struggle with time management. They make a plan, and then when it comes time to honor it, they don't stick to it. And they get really frustrated, and they give up. They throw in the towel, they want to be good at this immediately, they want to see a night and day difference, and get a lot of traction instantaneously.

I promise you, that's very, very unlikely. You're working with time in an entirely different way than you have most of your life, or all of your life, right. So, this probably is not going to be a night and day change, overnight. It's going to take some time. There's going to be a lot of trial and error.

And you just have to accept that, make peace with it. You don't need to make it a problem because it isn't one. And instead, you just want to embrace this learning process. You're going to make a plan in step two, and then you are going to practice honoring it. Every single day you get a new opportunity to do this. And every day, at the end of your day, you're going to evaluate.

I'm going to do a whole episode on time management evaluations, so you really know how to do this. But you're just going to figure out; what worked, what didn't work? What do I need to do differently tomorrow? And you're going to learn; why did I not stick to my plan? It's only one of three reasons: Either you didn't start on time. You didn't work without interruptions. Or, you didn't end on time.

If you do either of those three things, or any of those three things, you just want to ask yourself, why? Or, if it's a combination of those three things.

## Ep #33: Honoring Your Plan (Time Management Series)

For each one, identify what specifically you didn't do; you either didn't start on time, you didn't work without interruptions, or you didn't end on time.

And you just want to ask yourself, why? Why didn't you do those things? What happened instead? Remember, this is a masterclass in feeling uncomfortable feelings on purpose. So, you can always start with; what were the negative emotions I was unwilling to feel? What kinds of comfort was I feeling entitled to, instead?

Then, your work just becomes to practice feeling your negative feelings, and sticking to your plan, in spite of them. This will get easier, and easier, and easier, over time. And again, in tandem, you want to be working on these two things; feeling your feelings, and cultivating the positive thoughts, the positive mindset that get you to stick to your plan.

So, what are the positive thoughts that you need to be thinking about your work, about individual tasks, about your to-do list, that would make you stick to your plan? How would you need to feel to stick to your plan? What are those positive one-word emotions that would drive you to do that?

To recap: Three micro steps; start on time, work without interruptions, and end on time. For each one, be identifying the negative emotions that you have to be willing to feel. And then, think about the positive thoughts you want to be thinking, you want to be practicing, in order to stick to your plan.

And then, just practice. Get a little bit better, like 1% better, at this every single day. Take action, audit the action that you took, and then adapt. Fix what's not working and try again the next day. I promise, over time, you will get better and better and better at honoring your plan. And remember, it doesn't have to be hard, it's just probably not going to be comfortable; that's okay. You can honor your plan anyways.

All right, my friends. Those are those three simple steps to managing your time: You've got to reclaim control of your calendar. Plan your schedule accurately. And, honor your plan. To honor your plan, you just take those

## Ep #33: Honoring Your Plan (Time Management Series)

three micro steps; start on time, work without interruptions, and end on time.

I'm going to do a whole episode, like I said just a second ago, on how to do a time management evaluation. So, you're able to get the most out of your evaluations, in order to make the most progress. In order to improve as quickly as you can with this act, audit, adapt process. That's for a different episode, though.

So, in the meantime, have a beautiful week. I will talk to you in the next episode.

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](http://www.TheLessStressedLawyer.com).