

Ep #261: Throw Away Your To-Do List



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With Your Host

Brooke Castillo

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Welcome to *The Life Coach School Podcast*, where it's all about real clients, real problems and real coaching. And now your host, Master Coach Instructor, Brooke Castillo.

Well hello, my friends. I'm excited for today, for you all, to listen to a webinar I recorded several months ago on throwing away your to-do list. I just listened to it again to make sure I loved it and was so excited to share it with you all. It has all of the content that you need in order to be much more productive in your life and create the results you want. So please, enjoy this webinar on how to throw away your to-do list.

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Are you ready to throw away – and I mean really throw away – your to-do list? Some of you guys love your to-do lists though. They're so pretty. They have little check marks. I'm going to show you how to rip it up today.

Alright, here's what I want to talk about. First, let's talk about the problems that you guys are struggling with, that we're all struggling with. There is this sense – I was just talking about this with one of my friends – that as I get more successful in my business, as I create more success all around me in the amount of money that we make, the number of employees that we have, the business that we have, I feel like more often, people project onto me this idea of busy-ness.

And so, they'll say things to me like, oh I know you're so busy, or I know you must be so busy and I don't want to interrupt you and I know it will be hard for me to get on your calendar. And the truth is, I'm not busy. I don't have so much going on that I can't have a conversation with you, that I can't be present with you. And I do take two days off a week where I don't have appointments and I don't work on most weeks. And that's during the week. Those are Tuesdays and Fridays.

So, I feel like this idea that the more money we make or the more things we do the more busy we are – and I have some friends who are in very important positions. And one of the things that I feel like they do is they kind

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of add this business to their persona. Like, oh well if you're the CEO of a corporation, you have to be busy. You have to appear busy. You have to seem like you have a lot going on. And it's almost become like this badge, "Oh I've just got so much going on all the time."

And what I want to encourage you guys to think about is that that is not something to brag about. When I go to mastermind meetings with other entrepreneurs and they tell me that they work until seven, eight, nine o'clock at night, I tell them it's because you're sloppy. It's not because you're dedicated. It's not because you're committed, it's because you're sloppy in your time management.

They do not like it when I tell them that. I don't know why. But that's the truth. So when I start teaching this material to people, a lot of times, what they'll say to me is, I don't want to be so structured. I don't want to be so limited by having everything on my calendar. And I always laugh about that because planning your life and planning your day and being in charge of your to-do list creates freedom. It takes away the busy feeling. It takes away the overwhelm and it really just creates this sense of, I know exactly when I'll have time off, I know exactly when I'll get stuff done, I'm not in reactive mode.

And that is the main thesis of what I'm going to teach you here. I have taken all of the information that I have learned from studying the brain and from knowing that we have kind of two parts to our brain. We have the primitive part that is very interested in instant gratification and in the now and in getting pleasure and avoiding pain.

Any primitive animal can relate to that. The privilege of being a human being is that we have a prefrontal cortex that we can use to plan things ahead of time and make decisions ahead of time. And that is one of the reasons, and delayed gratification, and to know that there will be more gratification later if we delay the gratification now. There is no other species than the human that can anticipate and create that. And yet, so many of us are still only using that primitive part of our brain, reacting to the present moment and just doing whatever gives us the most instant gratification

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now. And ultimately, that ends up giving us a net negative on the backend of our lives, where we end up not having created or even enjoyed our life as much as we wanted to.

So, the way that I see this showing up with people is they say that they're busy. They say that they're overwhelmed, they say that they're frazzled. They're always procrastinating. They're never honoring their commitments to themselves and they're never getting as much done as they want.

Now, if you are ever someone that tells me that you don't have enough time, you're lying. We all have enough time. We all have plenty of time. And when you start believing that, that's when you will create the exact life that you want. When you tell yourself that there's not enough time, you're lying because enough, of course, is subjective. You're the one that decides what is enough.

And so I'm going to go through this process with you. And what I want to tell you is that this is a practice. There are two full months in Scholars where we focus on this practice because it's so important. We have one month that's called How to Get It Done, and it's all about accomplishing tasks and projects and goals that we have for ourselves. And the other one is Time Management, that teaches you how to manage your time in a way that serves you instead of wasting so much time.

I'm going to take you through the whole process of that, but it's really important that you understand that you are accessing on purpose your human brain. The most sophisticated part of your brain, you will need to utilize that in order to overcome your primitive brain, okay. Your primitive brain means well. It really does want you to survive. And it's important that we have it, right?

But right on top of it is a much more sophisticated brain that can actually be used to supervise the primitive brain, because the primitive brain always thinks that you're going to die and that you should stay in the cave. And the prefrontal cortex helps you plan beyond your instincts, to be able to create the exact life that you want.

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I think one of the biggest tragedies that we have, in America especially, is in the education system that we do not teach our children how to utilize their brains in order to create what they want in their lives, right? We teach them what we want them to learn so they can regurgitate it. We teach them to program their brain with what we tell them to do. We don't necessarily teach our children how to utilize their brain to plan for the things that they most ultimately want.

Okay, so I think that it's really important that you understand, right now, and everybody think about this right now, what is it in your life that you are struggling with that prevents you from getting what you want done? And here's what I want you to think about it. The way that I want you to think about it is I want you to think about if you always kept your word to yourself, if you always did what you said you were going to do, if you always followed through on your best-laid plans, if you always were disciplined in the actions that you wanted to take, how would your life be different than it is now?

Isn't that amazing to think about? How would your life be different if you always honored your plans? Now, some of you don't even make plans. You know that you won't honor your plans, so you don't even make plans. And I want to tell you that that brain that you have, as a human, is the only brain on the planet that can make plans. That prefrontal cortex, we can make plans for tomorrow, for next week, for 10 years from now.

I know, for sure, that my dogs are not making plans. They're not thinking about five years from now. They're not thinking about 10 years from now. They are waiting for me to stop talking to you so they can go on their walk. I promise you, that is it. They are not making plans for any moment other than the next walk and the next food.

But you have the privilege to make a plan and to supervise your primitive brain to enforce the plan. And if you follow this process, you can become one of those people who always honors their commitment to themselves and always follows through on the actions that you say you're going to take.

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Now, one of the reasons why some of us as humans don't utilize that privileged part of our brain is because we're constantly letting ourselves down. So we make plans and then we don't follow through on those plans, and so then we just think making plans is a waste of our time and we stop doing it and we live our life in default mode.

Now, if you're not living your life in default mode, you can look around you and see that other people are. So many, many, many of my students come up with so many, many, many excuses as to why they can't honor their plans. And their excuses are very, very weak. And you want to think about that as we're going through this process is why do we justify not following through? Why do we give up on making plans for ourselves?

And I'm going to tell you that one of the reasons why is because of the perceived effort. It takes much more effort to overcome our primitive brain than it does to live on default, to just keep doing what you've always done. It's so much easier to just keep doing what you've always done.

I described this to one of my employees one time and she really liked the way I described it, so I'm going to describe it to you. It's that it's kind of like we're on a bike and we're pedaling frantically and we're really good at riding the bike and we're really good at going fast and we know how to do it and we don't want to stop the bike because we're making progress and we don't have time to stop the bike. But if we would stop the bike, then we could put the bike down and we could get in the car and we could program the GPS and we would get there 10 times faster.

But because the stopping feels like a slowdown, because the getting in the car feels like a slowdown, because programming the GPS feels like a slowdown, we don't ever take the time to do that. So we just keep peddling and peddling and burning ourselves out and exhausting ourselves. And that's what we do when we don't utilize the program that we can put into our own brain, because it requires, or seems to require, more effort than just living in instant gratification and default mode.

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Okay, so as I introduce this to you, I'm going to help you overcome all the obstacles that will present themselves through this process. And of course, this is a daily practice. I'm going to teach you the concepts here, but I really want you to join Scholars so you can practice them daily, because that's how you will create a new default mode for yourself. You'll become a person who would never consider not honoring a commitment or not following through on something that they said they would do.

Do you want to be a person who when you put something on your to-do list, who when you put something on your calendar, when you say you're going to do something, you can trust yourself to do it? Think about that for a minute. Not only does it mean that you get to do all the things that you want to do in your life, you get to create the results you want in your life, but the self-confidence that you get because you can trust yourself, because you know you'll follow through, that you would never make a promise to yourself and then back out on it, your relationship with yourself becomes so much more solid and your self-confidence goes through the roof.

I remember when I first started being a coach and I started setting big goals for myself and my husband came to me one day and he's like, "You know, it's so crazy what you do." I'm like, "What do you mean?" He's like, "You just say you're going to do something and then you just do it. it's wild to me."

Now, I want you guys to think about that. Why is that so wild? Why is that so surprising? Why are some people just talk? I don't think it's because they mean to be, I just think they don't know how to follow through with themselves.

So the first thing that I want to tell you is that in order to overcome your primitive brain, which will be the loudest brain in your brain, is you have to plan ahead. You have to consciously and deliberately supervise the primitive brain. Now, what does the primitive brain like to do? It likes to get pleasure immediately. That means resting, that means overeating, that means candy, that means alcohol, that means drugs if they're available;

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anything to get a little short hit of pleasure is what that primitive brain has evolved to do for us.

Now, it's completely misguided and it doesn't serve us in our current life, but we have to know that about our brain. We kind of know that about toddlers. Toddlers are totally into instant gratification. They want what they want and they want it now. And if you have to like take a minute to wash something off before you hand it back to them, they will lose their shit because they want it right this second.

And we know, and we understand that that's what the toddler wants. That is what our brain is doing too. Our brain is so demanding and it's well-intended, it's just leading us off the track of what we want. So the best skills that we have, and we all have them, we all have this brain – this is what I think is so amazing; the most expensive thing that there could ever be, the most valuable thing that there can ever be on the planet is your brain. Nobody has a brain that is more powerful than your brain. We all have the most powerful brains.

Some of us just aren't using our brains for what we want our brains to be able to provide us. It's like you've gotten this amazing package of software in the mail and you've just left it in the box. That's how some of us are using that higher portion of our brain. So I want to teach you how to use it.

So the first thing that I want you to do – and this is a practice, and this is the first thing, and I want you to kind of think about this as a workshop that you're going to do and that I highly recommend that you do. And you can do this at any time, but when I recommend that you do it is Monday morning first thing before you even start your week. We do what we call a to-do download. It's like a thought download, but it's a to-do download.

You sit down with a blank piece of paper like this. And I prefer it be written instead of on the computer. I think there's something about the hand and the eye and the fingers and getting it out of your brain and onto a piece of paper where you can see it as a physical thing. So you're going to sit down in the morning on a Monday, or you can do this right now, or you can do

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this whenever. And you just write down every single thing that you want to do and that you have to do.

You pour it out of your brain. What is it you want to do? What is it that you have to do? What is it that you need to do? And what would it be awesome if you did? What would you wish that you would do?

Now, as you start writing, more and more things will come. Just keep writing. Just keep writing. Just keep writing. Now, you may get a list and then you may feel like you're done. You're not done. Ask yourself, what else? What else? Clean it all out. What else is on your brain? You want to be able to fill up as much of this paper as you can. Get every little niggly naggy thing that you think you can get done, any unfinished business, that closet that needs to be cleaned out, the car that needs to be taken to the wash, the Christmas decorations that need to be repaired; all your unfinished business, all the stuff. Download it out.

Get it out of your head because some of you have all these unfinished to-dos in your brain and you don't realize that having to think about them over and over again and the feelings that they bring up of incompleteness, you don't realize how much that's affecting you. So it's really important to empty it out onto a piece of paper. For some of you, you could probably write for 10 minutes. It's totally fine.

Step one, ask yourself, what else? What else? What else? Work things, personal things, family things, future things, vacation things, all of it. All of it, just put it all in one big mass on a piece of paper. Now, for some of you, you will want to look at that paper and get overwhelmed. That's fine. I just want you to get it out of your brain.

The practice of doing that is so powerful. Now, some of you already have a to-do list written, like maybe you have one that's ongoing. I recommend that you never have an ongoing to-do list, and I'm going to tell you why. You always throw the old to-do list away before you do this process. So maybe you take some things off of it, throw the other one away, then you

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have this huge to-do list with all of the unfinished business of your life basically on it.

And for me, this is a huge relief when I do this because it gets everything out of my brain and onto paper, because when you're trying to keep that stuff in your brain and you're trying to think and you're trying to function and you're trying to take care of the kids and drive the car and you've got all of this stuff, and then, if you're anything like me and you're over 40, you're like, wait, what's my name? You'll forget everything that you said you were going to do.

But the feeling will still be there. Do you guys know what I'm talking about? Do you ever get the feeling like you haven't done your homework but you forget what your homework is and you're 46 years old? That's me. I'm like, wait, what didn't I finish? I can't remember what it is I didn't finish because it was in my brain and now it's gone because I don't have any memory, but I still feel the need to do it, but I don't even know what it is, to make myself feel better.

Okay, so, put everything down; the long-term stuff, the future stuff, all of it, every single thing, write, write, write. That is step one. Then you're going to put your pencil down and you're going to take a breath maybe you have a little drink of water, okay. Then you want to write – continue on with that list, maybe a new page – all of the obstacles that are in the way of achieving all those things on there.

So, maybe one of the things that you really want to do is set up a new website for your business. But one of the obstacles is that you don't know how to set up a website. You've got to learn how to set up a website. You've got to hire the guy to come clean the windows. You've got to find the new carwash. You've got to get the number of the friend. You've got to figure – this is one of mine, I have to figure out how do you put contact paper in shelves? I don't really want to learn how to do that, but then I've got to find the people that know how to do that so I can hire those people to come in and do that for me. And I want it to be perfect. Do you know what I'm talking about? Like the X-ACTO Knife. I want it like perfect in there and

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I want it to lay flat. You know what I'm saying. These are the things that are going on in my brain right now.

So, I need to find the person that can do that, put that down on the list, I need to hire the person that can do that, put that on the list, I need to schedule them to come and actually do it, I need to pay them to do it, everything, I need to write it all down. Any obstacles that you think are in the way of accomplishing anything on there need to be added to that list.

So, what will happen when you've done this list is your brain will basically have nothing left to complain about because it will all be on the list. Oh, but what about this and what about that, and then you have to sleep – put it down. Whatever it is, put it all down on your to-do list so you can then let your brain rest for a minute. Let your brain know, listen I've got all this captured. You don't have to keep thinking about it all the time. It's so important. When you have your brain filled with all those things, there's no space for wisdom to come in. So do that full thought download.

And somebody just says they do theirs on Sunday night. Totally fine, you can do it whenever you want. The obstacles are not necessarily the steps to do each thing. They may be things that are preventing you from doing the thing. Like, I want to invite the neighbors over but one of the obstacles of inviting the neighbors over is I need to find the day when they're available and I'm available. That could be an obstacle. Anything you think blocks you from accomplishing something.

And then, you want to go through, if there's a big thing on there that takes like four or five steps, break down the steps. Break it all down. You want that list to be as comprehensive as humanly possible. Now, some of you right now are thinking, I don't have time to do that. I've got to get on my bike and pedal. I've got to be pedaling, pedaling, pedaling. I can't stop to get out and get into the car. I've got to keep pedaling or I won't get there.

And what I want to tell you is this is one of the most important things you can do. It is the thought download, it's the to-do thought download that clears out the brain of all the cobwebs, all the things, all the mess, all the

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unfinished things. And if you do it every Monday, the first time you do it, there'll be a lot on there. But after that, it will start to dwindle, I promise you.

Okay, so you're going to do the to-do list, you're going to exhaust your mind. You're going to ask what else, and then you're going to ask what are the obstacles? This, in and of itself, is like a meditation practice. This is something I highly encourage you to do whenever you feel stressed, busy, overwhelmed, whenever you're doing a self-coaching model and in the model you're thinking, I have too much to do and not enough time, that is always a lie. Tell me exactly everything that you think you need to do. Put it down.

It's like people say, "I have so much to do," and then they give me five things or they'll give me 10 things. It's much more important to say, "This is my to-do list," and then notice what your brain thinks about it, versus just thinking that everything is real. Okay, so once you have this list and all the obstacles and all the things, then you're going to look at the list. And one of the things that I want you to remember, if you haven't ever learned from me before, is there's not one thing on that list that you have to do; not one.

You don't have to take care of your children. You don't have to bathe. You don't have to eat. You do not have to wake up in the morning. And, contrary to popular opinion, you do not have to pay your taxes. You don't even have to live. You have freewill as a human. There is nothing on that list that you have to do. You certainly don't have to vacuum. You do not have to cook dinner. You do not have to do laundry. You don't have to do any of it. So stop telling yourself that you have to do any of it.

So, put everything on the list, and then say to yourself, "I don't have to do anything on this list. I don't have to do it." Now, look at that list and decide anything on it that you don't want to do because you don't have to do and completely eliminate it. So, there are things that you think you should do, but you don't want to do them, and you don't have to do them. I give you permission right now to just never do them. Take them completely off your list, okay.

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You're maybe going to have consequences. You for sure will have consequences for not doing them. I want you to decide it's okay with those things that you're not going to do them. "I'm not going to invite those friends over." You know what, I'm not even – this is something I'm not going to do, you guys ready? We're not doing Christmas this year. We're not doing one present. We're not doing any of it. We're going to Australia. We're not doing stockings. We're not doing any shopping, zero shopping. We're going to Australia. We're going to be in a hotel on the beach for Christmas. We have decided to cross Christmas off the to-do list. And that's like the tradition of buying presents in that way.

Of course, Christmas will still happen and we will still be present on the day of Christmas and celebrate Christmas for what it means to us, but we will not be doing any of the to-dos around Christmas. It's just done. And I give you permission to do the same. You don't have to cook a Turkey on Thanksgiving. You can have sushi on Thanksgiving.

You know what I decided to do? I'm not sending any Christmas cards. That's what I thought last year. This year, I'm going to send them. Last year, not doing it. And it's kind of fun, what can I take off that list? What don't I want to do?

You don't have to go grocery shopping. Did you guys know this? Seriously. You guys know about Instacart? It's like magic. You order your food from the grocery store and some beautiful person brings it to your home. It's amazing. You don't have to cook dinner. There's restaurants. If you don't want to pay for restaurants, you could have someone else cook dinner.

So go through that list and decide on there, is there anything you want to eliminate? Is there anything on there that's there because you think you should do it but you don't want to do it? That's the first step. Cross it all off, I'm not going to do it, say goodbye, make the decision, it's not going to happen, done. That's it. So either you're not going to do it or you'll give it to someone else to do.

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It's so nice. And those of you who are in business, it's a beautiful thing. You can delegate stuff, take the time, get off the bike, teach someone else how to do it, and get in the car. So that's step one. The next thing you want to do is prioritize that list.

Now, for some of you, that's a pretty long list. Take the time and prioritize it. And here's how I want you to prioritize it. I want you to prioritize it in terms of when it needs to get done. Most of you will interpret this to mean, what is the most urgent thing? That is not what I mean. What I mean is, what is the most important thing? Those are the things that you should do first, the most important things.

Now, you're like, what about the urgent things? I want to tell you a secret. What you do this process for at least six weeks, you will start planning in a way where you don't have urgent things in your life. Whenever I'm hiring someone to come through the school, what I tell them is, we don't want fires that need to be put out. We don't want tight timelines. We don't want urgency around anything.

Now, that doesn't mean that we don't want to put up a recording of Scholars right away. We do, but we don't want the urgency around it, you know. If we don't get that up right away, we don't get it up right away. We like to. We like to post it within 24 hours. Sometimes we don't. But we're not going to feel this sense of urgency that we have to do it and we're going to be panicking and freaking out about it, never.

It's not a big deal if we don't, but we prefer to do it. And that's kind of that important balance between – and I'm always saying it doesn't matter at all and it's the most important thing. And the only difference is we stay calm in the process of it. There's no reason to be running around like chickens with our heads cut off. That doesn't serve anybody, panicking, freaking out doesn't serve anyone.

So I can say to someone, "Hey it's really important to me that we get that video up right away..." without being like, "Listen, oh my god, we got to get it up, what are you doing? What are you doing?" And then there's just panic

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around it. Super important, I want you to be able to look at your own to-do list that way and prioritize in terms of what's important. If you look at your to-do list and you have tons of stuff on there that is urgent, it's because you're not planning well. When you start planning well, nothing has to be urgent. I promise you, it's magic.

Okay, so you're going to prioritize everything on there. Nothing's going to be urgent. You're going to recognize that if there are things that are urgent, you're going to chill out about them and extend their timelines if you have to, especially if they're arbitrary timelines. Now, what you're going to do is, once you get that list in an order that feels good to you is you're going to take that list and you're going to transfer it to your calendar. This will take time. You will not want to do this. You must do this. This is the secret to the universe. This is the secret to getting everything done.

So you have all these things that you're going to do. Now, some of them, you're going to do on Monday, the day that you're doing this. You will put them at a time, what time you're going to do this, what time you're going to do this, what time you're going to do this.

Now, some of you will freak out and be like, "I don't want to schedule my life like that. I don't want to have my life planned out like that. That feels too restrictive." Trust me, that is where the freedom is. And the first thing that you want to do before you even put anything in your calendar is plan your free time so you know – like for me, I've got Tuesdays off, that's my free time. I normally have Fridays off. That's my free time. Everything else I have on the other days. So, you take everything off the to-do list and you put it on the calendar over the next week, two weeks, five weeks, whatever.

Now, some of the things that you have on your calendar will be multiple steps. So, like for me, right now, I'm designing a video series for my certification program. So I have record video one on text Tuesday, or probably next Wednesday. I have to record video two on next Thursday. So I have those on the calendar, so I will get it all done in a certain time. I'm planning a business workshop that I'm going to be teaching in March. Right now, I'm writing the curriculum book for it, so I have that broken down into

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steps of when I'm going to write it. It's on my calendar, write chapter one, write chapter two, write chapter three.

So all I have to do is put all that stuff on my calendar. And then you know what I do? Come on, say it with me, I throw away the to-do list, every single thing that I wrote on that to-do list is now on a time on my calendar.

The most common question I get is, "What if I don't know how long something will take? Let me tell you, you give yourself a certain amount of time to get that thing done and you get it done within that certain amount of time, period. When you're living on default mode, that's when you're like, "Well I don't know how long it will take me." When you're living in deliberate mode, you say, "I'm going to get it done in an hour." Because you could say, "I don't know how long it's going to take me to make dinner, I've never made this dish before," you have an hour to make dinner, get it done. That's the deal.

And so that's how you have to plan your life. Now, what I do is I give myself a certain amount of time to get something done. If I don't get it done in that certain amount of time, then I tell myself, "Okay if you don't get it done then you're going to have to work during your free time." I don't want to work during my free time, so you know what happens is I get it done, and it helps me pace myself, it helps me work smarter and more efficiently because if I have an hour to get something done, I'm not going to go see what my friend posted on Instagram. I'm not going to answer the phone when it rings. I'm not going to be looking at notifications that are coming in. I have an hour to get this done, that's it, so I've got to get it done.

Are you guys following me so far? Are you with me? We've got the to-do list – exactly, if you don't get your schoolwork done you don't get to go to recess. That's exactly right, Kate. Okay, so, you're going to look at your calendar and it's going to be crazy with all the stuff that you have to do. There's going to be chunks of free time, because you've got to plan those ahead of time. But then, when you work, you're going to go to work and you're going to be so much more productive, because if you give yourself a whole day to get your to-do list done, you know what you get done? Mostly

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nothing. And you're haphazard and you're all over the place and you're switching gears and you're trying to multitask and everything gets done half-assed.

So you put everything on the calendar and then you throw away your to-do list. So you no longer have a to-do list, you just rely on your calendar. Alright, sounds great so far. Everybody's with me so far. Now, someone says, "What about last-minute things?" There are no last-minute things. You get something that comes to you that you need to plan, you may need to plan it right then, it goes on your calendar. If not, it waits until the next time you do a download and you do your to-do list download.

When someone gives me something that needs to get done and you say, okay I'll get this to you by Friday, it goes directly onto the calendar to get done and I have already scheduled when it will be done. Okay, how do you decide what a reasonable amount of time is to give yourself time to do something? You have to decide what that is and then you have to honor it. That is one of the things that I think is the most challenging for us is we want to let ourselves have as much time – but if you think about when you're in school, you have one night to get your homework done. You give yourself two hours, I'm going to give myself two hours to get this done.

Most of us give ourselves the whole night to get it done. We don't start working on it until eight o'clock at night, and then it takes us an hour, whereas we could have started on it at four, got it done in a half-hour, and then enjoyed the rest of the night.

So here's where my work really comes in. This is where all the work that I teach in scholars really starts to be applied because, easy for us to write a to-do list, really easy to put it on the calendar, but here's what's going to happen; Wednesday is going to come and you're going to look at that calendar and it's going to say, "Clean out the closet from 12-2." And 12 o'clock, on Wednesday, you are not going to want to clean out the closet. You are not.

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You know what you're going to want to do? You're going to want to eat Cheez-its in front of Netflix because your primitive brain is like, "That would be so much more fun." But you've already decided ahead of time because you know what your brain does ahead of time? It uses the prefrontal cortex, which always has your long-term best interests at heart.

It's always thinking, "If we do all these things, then we'll have this book done and then we can sell the book." Or, "If we do all these things, then we'll have a business. If we do all these things, then we'll have a clean house." Whatever it is you want, "If we do all these things, then I'll lose weight." If you don't do all the things then you just stay where you are and your default mode is to just keep doing what you've always done.

So, 12 o'clock, it's time to clean the closet, it's Tuesday. Your primitive brain is like, "I don't want to." And then your prefrontal will be like, "Well maybe we don't need to today. Maybe we'll do it tomorrow or there's some other things that have come up that are important that we should probably focus on instead and what about this and that?" If you live your life like that, you're going to have a very sloppy life. But if you say, "No, I made a decision that 12 o'clock I was going to clean out the closet, you know what I'm going to do at 12 o'clock? I'm going to clean out the closet."

And the only thing that you have to practice doing, and this is whether you're working on overeating, whether you're working on overdrinking, this is whether you're working on procrastination, whatever it is you're working on, this is what you're going to have to learn how to do. It's to overcome the urges in the moment. You're going to plan, you're going to make decisions ahead of time, and then you've got to learn how to process an urge without acting on it, because the urge will be to not clean the closet, to not write the blog post, to not eat the kale salad, to not go on the walk, to not whatever it is you said you were going to do during that time when you said you were going to do it.

You're not going to want to do it. You're going to want to push it around and change it and spend less time on it. You're going to want to change your calendar. But if you follow that calendar so strictly, so beautifully, then you

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get your free time at the end and everything's done. And I'll tell you what, when you overcome those urges for that instant gratification to switch into the delayed gratification and to do the work that gives you the delayed gratification, that's when your life completely upheaves because you start obeying and working from the prefrontal cortex which has your best long-term interests at heart instead of acting like the primitive toddler brain that is the loudest yelling one.

So when you come to 12 o'clock and it's time to clean the closet and your primitive brain is having a conniption fit, you can be like, "I hear you, your opinion is noted, and we're going to clean this closet out," because at the end of the day, you'll have the clean closet and the blog post written and the kitchen will be clean and dinner will be ready and you will be like, "Yes..." and you won't have done it in such a frenzied, panicked, exhausted way. You will just be honoring yourself the whole time.

Now, here's what I've noticed to be true. When you do this, it actually energizes you because you're honoring yourself. You're following your commitments. You're not thinking about all the stuff that you haven't done. You're not worried about all the procrastination that you've done. You're not rushing because you have so much urgent stuff to be done. You're just honoring your calendar.

Now, some of you will say to me, because I've heard you say it to me many times, "Okay, Brooke, but what about I tell myself I'm going to go to yoga, I make the plan to go to yoga, and then when it's time to go to yoga, I just literally can't get myself to go? I just can't even imagine driving to yoga." And so, what I recommend is that you – the things that you most want to do that you aren't getting started on doing, you have to break them down into even smaller steps. So don't say I'm going to go to yoga at noon – let's say your yoga class is at noon and you put on the calendar, noon yoga. That's easy to dismiss.

But 11:30, what you're going to do is put on your yoga pants. I know this may sound totally trivial, but I'm telling you, this shit works. I taught this in my book, *If I'm So Smart, Why Can't I Lose Weight?* when I first wrote it 10

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years ago. You want to go for a run, you want to go for a walk, step number one at 11:30 is put your tennis shoes on.

Step number two at 11:35 is to fill your water bottle. Step number four is to get the car keys, get your yoga mat, and go get in the car. Break to down for yourself. Your brain will do the little easy things. It doesn't like the big hard things. Going to yoga is a big hard thing. Putting on shoes, alright, you can talk your brain into that.

So if there's something important that you want to do and you're not doing it, break down the steps, okay. Let's say that you want to write a blog post. Step number one, sit down at the computer. Step number two, brainstorm five ideas. That's it. Step number three, write three sentences. Outline the blog post. Start writing. You break it down on your calendar. Now, you're going to look at your calendar, there's going to be a lot of stuff on there.

But you make these decisions ahead of time and then when you're in the moment, you learn how to honor yourself that got this through for you. And here's what's so interesting is when you plan your day ahead of time, when you plan for your future self, you're honoring yourself in the future and then when you execute on the plan that you created for yourself, you're honoring the gratification that you're going to get for your future self in the future.

We're always robbing from our future self when we take that instant gratification. Our future self has to deal with the weight gain, has to deal with the urgency, has to deal with all the stuff that we didn't get done. But when we honor that calendar - so how do we honor our calendar? Two ways. We learn how to overcome urges, which I teach all about in Scholars, you can learn about it in the overdrinking or in the overeating part, in the buffering part.

We talk about how to overcome urges. The urges are just your primitive brain wanting what it wants right now, just your toddler brain that most of us live in obedience to, which is why we never get what we want. You want to live in obedience to your prefrontal cortex, which will give you the best life

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you can possibly have. You don't need to go out and get anything else. You just need to honor the magic of the brain that you already have.

So, here's what it looks like for me. I get up on Monday, I do my thought downloads, I do my to-do downloads, I put everything in the calendar of when I'm going to do it, and then the next thing I do is the first thing on my calendar and my brain doesn't want to do it and it throws a fit about it. But I'm gotten really good at overcoming urges. I've got really good at noting what my brain wants me to do and just doing my work instead.

And I've become a person who trusts myself. I know that I'm going to do what I put on my calendar. My calendar is the most important thing that I honor because it's a reflection of my word to myself, and there's nothing more important than my word to myself. And so here's the other added benefit is when you treat yourself with such reverence, you don't let anyone else treat you any other way.

So when people show up late for meetings or they don't follow through on commitments or they don't do what they say they're going to do, I have very little tolerance for that. I don't allow myself to do that to me, I'm certainly not going to allow anyone else to do that to me. I'm on time for meetings with myself, I follow through with my timeframes, I end my meetings on time, I end everything for myself on time.

Right after this, I'm going to go take my dogs on a hike. I'm so looking forward to it, they're so looking forward to it. I've been in meetings all morning. This is usually my day off. My dogs are like, what the heck is going on?

So I know that that's coming up for me and that I get to honor that for myself and I'll feel so good on my free time now because I have all my work done. And I know that my work will be done next week too because I honor those commitments to myself. So throwing away your to-do list is less about being able to throw that away, although that's super fun, and more about trusting yourself and honoring yourself and knowing that you will do what's on your calendar.

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You'll take the time to plan for yourself. You'll take the time to overcome instant gratification. You'll make decisions ahead of time. Now, let me just talk a little bit about decisions ahead of time and why that's so important. When you make decisions ahead of time, it takes the need for willpower out of it. If you are on a Wednesday trying to decide, well should I lay on the couch or should I clean my closet and you're in that moment, it's going to take so much willpower in that moment for you to make the decision to clean your closet.

So you have to muster up the energy to make the decision to do it and create the commitment to do it and then you have to actually do it. When you make your decisions ahead of time, all the decisions are made before. So you're not making that decision on a Wednesday. You're just honoring that decision, which is so much easier.

We have so many decisions to make every single day. If we have to constantly be making decisions about what we're going to do in the next minute, we're going to be exhausted. So we make all of our decisions ahead of time when we're not under the stress of having already made 25 decisions in the moment, trying to overcome our urges. We're making the decisions before the urges come so in that moment we can honor our commitment and overcome the urges so much more easily.

Now, once you get your schedule down, once you get this down, then you can apply that discipline, you can apply that decisions ahead of time, you can apply the utilization of the prefrontal cortex to everything you want in your life. You take all of these tools from Scholars, you start applying it, and you start creating things.

You're like, I do what I say I'm going to do. If I say I'm going to write a book, I write a book. If I say I'm going to create a video, I create a video. If I say I'm going to do a class, I do a class. So this class that I'm teaching to you right now we decided two weeks ago. Now, I could have decided I didn't want to teach this class right now. I get up and I'm like I don't want to teach it. I could have cancelled it, no problem.

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No one's paid me for this class, it's totally free, but I would never do that to myself, let alone to y'all. I honor the things I'm going to do. There's no reason for me to have to do it. I want to do it. I don't have to do anything in my life. So that is the process. Let's go through it really quick.

You write down the to-do list every single thing that's on your mind, every single obstacle, what else, what else, what else, what else, get it completely empty. Go through the list, cross off and get rid of anything you don't want to do because everything on there will be something that you want to do and you have to remind yourself, I want to do everything on this list otherwise I wouldn't do it, there's nothing I have to do ever. Everything is because I want to do it.

You know why I want to pay my taxes? Because I don't want to go to prison. You know why I want to take care of my children? Because I love them and I want them to be taken care of. I don't have to take care of them. I want to take care of them.

Go through all of that. Then you're going to put them in order of importance in terms of timeframe, you're going to put them all in your calendar, you're going to throw the to-do list away, and then on that day you're going to look at your calendar, you're going to honor it no matter what.

Listen, every once in a while, you'll have an emergency. Every once in a while, that will mess up your calendar. It's very rare. I'm telling you, when you have your life planned, there are very few emergencies. But every once in a while, your kid will call you, his car's broken down, you need to go get him, you're right in the middle of doing something.

That's when you might need to adjust your schedule, but it's very, very rare. It's not like, "Oh, a new show came on, there's a sequel." That is not a reason to interrupt your thing. Most of us are just so reactive to anything that happens.

I watch people do this all the time. They say I'm committed to doing this thing with you right now and then their phone rings and they answer it. Like,

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what are you doing? This is our conversation. Why would you answer an interrupt our conversation that we have planned with a phone call? That's reactive.

Turn off the notifications, turn off your phones. Be in the plan that you have planned now. And then you follow through on that and you overcome your urges to be able to create the life that you ultimately want. You don't have to do this. You can live your life in reactive mode, or you can live a deliberate life where you plan what you want to do.

Here's what's ironic; I get way more done and work way less than I ever have in my entire life. And whenever I have someone that wants to make a lot of money, who wants to create a lot in their life, I tell them they have to get good at working less because it makes them more efficient and more calm and more present and less frazzled.

You will very, very rarely - I can't even remember the last time I felt frazzled. You know there's people, "Sorry I'm late, oh gosh, there was just so much traffic and everything was just so crazy, I'm just so sorry okay now I'm here." And it's consistently like that. I'm consistently on time here present and ready for y'all and prepared. How is that possible?

I have more going on than most of y'all have going on. How is it that I'm able to do that? How is it that I'm able to have everything planned the way that I do? And I have to be available to employees, I have to be available to my family members. I have to be available to my dogs. I have to be available for those things, and they know that when I have scheduled time for them, I'm going to be there and I'm going to be present.

And when I have scheduled time for other people, I'm going to be with those other people and I'm going to be present. That's really important for you to be able to plan. Let me ask you this; are you honoring the commitments that you make to yourself? Are you overcoming the urges for instant gratification? Because that instant gratification will rob you of your future. It will rob you of your future.

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Your ability to be uncomfortable long enough to get what you ultimately want is the secret to getting what you ultimately want. It's not rainbows and daisies to getting there. You have to be willing to overcome the stuckness of being where you are.

Alright my friends, let me here what your questions are about this. "Thank you for this free class, you look fantastic, Brooke." Well, there we go, class is over. "Do you write down all the obstacles needed to accomplish each before eliminating them?" Yes, Brendan. So I write down the obstacle and whatever the obstacle is, the to-do becomes the thing that I need to do to overcome the obstacle. That's a good question.

So you don't just leave the obstacle on that to-do list. You write what you need to do to overcome it, and sometimes it's find the answer, study, research, ask people. Good question. "What's the difference between importance regarding time versus urgent? That seems the same." No, urgent feels like I have to do this right now or something terrible is going to happen, versus this is the most important thing for me to do first.

A lot of times what's important doesn't get done because what is urgent is the priority. So if something is urgent, that means you didn't plan it well. And so if you haven't planned it well, that doesn't make it important. It just makes it urgent. You guys all know Stephen Covey's work, right?

So you want to make sure that you don't let urgent things become the important things. Important things go first. Urgent things, whether they're time sensitive or not, they get put in line with what's important. So a lot of times, people are like, "I need that from you right now." And if it's not important to me, if it's not important on my priority, I'll say, "I can get it to you next week, sorry that's when I can get it to you."

I don't make things urgent, especially based on how other people define what's important for them. They want me to make that urgent to me. I don't do that. But here's what I want to tell you; when you plan your life like this, you can let people know when you're available to get things done very

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accurately and you aren't living in a state of panic. You're living in a state of planning.

I know what I'm doing next week, I know what I'm doing the week after that. I know where I have space, I know where I have time. I know how much space I have in each day to be able to create new things. I give myself time to think. That's why I take Tuesdays and Fridays off, so I can think about - and people in my office are like, "Wait, I thought you took Tuesdays and Fridays off," because I'm always sending them ideas on Tuesdays and Fridays.

I'm like what about this, what about this, what about this, what about this because that's my time to think. I'm not having to work, I'm not having to show up to meetings, but I'm still thinking about or business and still thinking about my life and what I want to do, and that's where I get all my wisdom and all my creativity because I have so much free time built in there.

"Does it help to have a routine?" Yes, absolutely it helps to have a routine. Yes, I like to - in the morning, I don't like to start my workday until after 11 and I like to end it five or six. So that's my routine and that's Monday, Wednesday, Thursday. I'm pretty solid during those times. And during the fall, Chris and I on the weekends love to sit around and watch football on the weekends.

So yes, having a routine where you consistently can just follow into that automatic daily life is - there's so much freedom in that. It's funny because people think routine is stringent and it keeps you so you can't be spontaneous. I find the opposite is to be true. When I know everything is taken care of, then I can be more spontaneous and have more fun because I'm not going to blow off the day of work and go do something fun and in the back of my mind I'm kind of worried that I'm blowing the day off of work.

It's like, I have a whole day where I don't have to work so I can go and spend that whole day doing all the things because I know that my work is done. That's much more freedom than spontaneity is.

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"My calendar is very well planned and then the people I work with break their plans with me, which leads to chaos and shifting my schedule." I don't buy that. I don't think that that's true. I think chaos is a state of mind. I think that managing other people's schedules and how other people show up is up to you on what you're willing to do in terms of adjusting to that.

Now, some of you have small children. Some of you have to build in that flexibility in your calendar and you have to practice and see what works. When will the kids go down for a nap isn't an exact science for some of you, and so you need to build in those timeframes when they may or may not go down for a nap.

You can plan for the things that are unplannable, which is pretty interesting. If someone's always late to a meeting, if someone's always cancelling meetings, you can actually plan your life around that, especially if that's your boss. You just adjust for that. But people cancelling meetings and not showing up does not create chaos. Chaos is a state of mind. It's a way of thinking.

"How do you overcome urges?" Okay, you have to do one hundred urges. You have to practice allowing an urge. An urge is just a feeling. So think about it. Should I sit down and focus on this work or should I go eat pumpkin pie, right? Your brain of course is like, pumpkin pie is the answer, it will make everything better. And in fact, just go eat some pumpkin pie and then we'll go do the work. That's an urge.

And when you can just let your brain talk away and you can feel the urge to do it and you just allow it to be there and you don't succumb to it and you don't react to it and you go and get your work done instead, that is step one. That's urge overcome number one, and once you do that 100 times, you will get so much better at managing your primitive brain, at being in control of your primitive brain and not letting it be in control of you.

Self-coaching 101, my tagline is manage your brain, manage your mind, don't let it manage you. Don't let it be in charge of you. You be in charge of

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it. You have that upper level authority over your brain but you're not using it. So many of you aren't using it.

"Do I plan a break time in between each task?" That's a good question. I don't. I like to work straight through. I like to go from one to one to one to one and then be done. A lot of people like to plan breaks in between. It depends on how focused you are and how long you can focus. Once I start focusing, I can sustain my focus for a long time pretty easily.

Some people need more breaks, some people like to do work in the morning, take a break in the middle of the day and then do work at night. However you want to do it. I prefer to do it all in one big chunk.

"Do you add this all to your digital calendar or on paper?" That's a good question. I always do my to-do list on paper and I add it to my calendar on the computer. But I have many of my colleagues who have paper calendars that they do them in. So I don't think the calendar matters. I like to have my calendar online because I have an assistant that also helps set appointments in my calendars with very strict rules of when she can set appointments for me.

So I like to have it on there, but I could easily have it on paper as well. Don't get caught up in the tools. The tools don't matter. Your brain is what matters and managing your brain matters. Yes, this recording will be on the site for a couple of days. They want their 17-year-old to watch it. I totally understand.

Yes, if you can figure out how to manage your life and overcome urges at such a young age, can you imagine what you could create in your life? "Do urges eventually subside?" Yes, here's what happens. They don't subside. You're always going to have urges because your primitive brain is always going to be there and it's always going to want the instant gratification. You just get very skilled, very adept at overcoming those urges.

And allowing them to be there, not resisting them. Allowing them to be there and getting your work done anyway because it's so gratifying. You

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guys, I love putting my head on the pillow at night and being like, "Dang girl, you slayed it. You slayed it."

And I had the whole morning off and then I killed it all afternoon and then I go to bed having done and accomplished a beautiful day for myself. And would it have been easier to lay on the couch? Totally. But I don't. I honor myself. I treat myself with utmost respect. I show up to a meeting with myself as if I was showing up to a meeting of the CEO of the most important business because I am the CEO of my life.

And if I'm not honoring myself, I'm not honoring anyone else in my life. I'm not setting an example of what is possible and that's what I want to teach you all to do. So here's what I want to recommend. If any of you are struggling with this, if any of you want more help, join Scholars. What the heck? Come on.

So it's thelifecoachschool.com/join. We spend two entire months on planning your time and on getting things done. We talk about it all the time in terms of Scholars. The most valuable thing that you have is time over money. People think money is the most valuable thing. No. You can always get more money. You can't get more time.

We can help you manage your time better and that's a really important thing. Time is your most valuable asset. The way that you think makes time go faster or slower, so I teach you how to think and then I teach you how to manage your time so busy becomes a state of mind. Chaos is a state of mind. And peace and consistency and discipline becomes your new state of mind and it's just such an amazing joyous way to live. And so I want to encourage you guys all to join me.

Alright my friends, you know what it's time for? I have about one minute. I'm going to take these guys on a walk. They're going to be so excited. As soon as I say goodbye to you they're both going to jump up because they'll hear me say goodbye my friends and then I'll turn this off and stand up and they'll be ready to go,

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Alright my friends, have a wonderful, glorious day. Have a good one.

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