Podcast Transcript

ECC148 - Time Management

[00:00:00]

Anna: So, the biggest myth I'm excited to bust today is that multitasking is not real.

Matt: Yes, thank you. Thank you. I love that that's your number 1. Yes.

Anna: Because I cannot tell you how many, back when I was working in a PR agency, I can't tell you how often. It was considered a plus, an advantage, a badge of honor to be good at multitasking. it is one thing to be excellent at managing a number of different priorities or projects at once.

That's different. You can be skilled at moving several projects or accounts or projects forward at the same time. Multitasking is thinking that you can respond to an email while working on a report and listening to the recording of a, hearing to get the notes that you need for your next set of talking points.[00:01:00]

That's what doesn't work.

Matt: Well, hello, dear listener, and welcome to another edition of the Endless Coffee Cup Podcast, bringing you more in digital marketing education. And today we're moving away from purely digital marketing subjects or content. And let's focus on something I think we all need. And that is a refresher on time management.

So, we've got a time management, I would say even a productivity expert, Anna Dearman Kornick, who was highly recommended for the podcast. And how are you doing today?

Anna: I'm doing well. Thank you so much.

Matt: You're very [00:02:00] welcome. Well, Anna, I want to start with just a basic question. How did you get into time management as you're a coach, you're a podcast host, you're a speaker, you do consulting and training.

How did you get into time management as a career?

Anna: It's so funny because I certainly didn't stand up on kindergarten career day and say, when I grow up, I want to be a time management coach, because that is, that's not a thing. At least it wasn't when I was in kindergarten, at least. and it's interesting. They say hindsight is 2020. And when I look back at my life and my career, everything has truly pointed to where

and what I do now and how time. My very first job right out of college had me on Capitol Hill, managing the schedule of a brand-new United States Congressman. So, my very first job was as a congressional scheduler. Scheduling out my boss's day from the time he woke up in the [00:03:00] morning until he went to bed at night.

I'm serious. Every single minute was accounted for. And my, my email inbox was a daily avalanche of meeting requests from constituents back in the district and lobbyists that wanted to bend his ear about the latest policy piece on K street. Not to mention there were, Conference and committee emails.

And then there were meeting invitations and speaking invitations and dinner invitations and reception invitations. And sometimes even his wife would reach out and say, "Hey, can I grab 15 minutes on the boss's schedule this week?".

Matt: Wow. Amazing.

Anna: It was. It was truly interesting. And it being my first job right out of college, not only was I thrust into this baptism by fire, managing one of the most hectic schedules in the country. But I was also trying to figure out time management for myself a young professional work life balance. Boundaries, and being both efficient and effective throughout the [00:04:00] workday. Hill staffers are notorious workaholics.

And while I was determined not to fall into that, you better believe it was a really easy trap to fall into. and as much as I loved living in DC, working on the hill, all of that energy was so much fun. After a while. I began to realize that something

was missing. If you can think back to when you were a young professional and you really begin to come into your own as a person, what is most important to you really begins to take shape in a brand new way as you step into your identity.

And so, I'm from Louisiana. Louisiana, born and raised. And if there's one thing you need to know about Louisiana is that our food is. Second to none,

Matt: Oh, absolutely. I would agree with that. I would absolutely agree with that.

Anna: I'm, I'm so glad and I realized that I missed home. I missed the good Louisiana food because you just can't get good bold crawfish or [00:05:00] seafood gumbo or crawfish etouffee or shrimp creole in DC. I mean, there's mediocre versions for sure, but even more than missing the Louisiana food and culture.

I really missed being able to run down the road and share a biscuit and jelly with my grandmother.

Matt: I wanted to hug my mom, I had to stalk the free, not the free, but the cheap flights on southwest. com with my Hill salary, Hillstaffer salary to come home for the weekend. And it really began to come clear to me that home is where I want it to be.

Anna: So, I took that. Awesome DC experience. And I hopped on a plane and I moved back to Louisiana where I kicked off a 10 year career in the 24 seven world of crisis communications and government affairs, where literally Matt every single day was some kind of a disaster.

Matt: Oh, yeah, we have had a number of crisis comms people on for both, both government and professional. [00:06:00] cannot imagine that kind of life and, and a friend of mine just published like the, the top 20 crisis comms. Of the first six months of 2024. So,

Anna: Yeah.

Matt: He has no lack of content. Oh…

Anna: BP oil spill seafood related testimony. I’’’

Let's see both droughts and floods. I've done both sides. universities on the brink of financial collapse.

I've worked with two of those nonprofit embezzlement schemes, and then there was a nude swimming scandal at a restaurant and Matt, those words don't go together.

Matt: I'm, I'm like, how, what, but enough said that's…

Anna: And every day was some kind of fresh chaos to be brought to order. And I [00:07:00] loved it. I loved this type of work. It was energizing. It oddly enough, made me feel calm to step into strategy mode and to, to figure out, okay, how are we going to message this? What are we going to do? How are we going to handle this?

But when you give so much of yourself and your energy and your time to others, especially when they are in a place of crisis, they don't know if their business is going to make it to the other side of this. They don't know if their reputation, their livelihood, everything that they have built and worked toward is going to survive this crisis.

It can get really heavy. And I'm sure some of the other crisis comms pros that you've had on the show maybe have alluded to this, but it can be very heavy if you don't have the right boundaries in place.

Matt: Absolutely.

Anna: And if you don't have healthy habits, healthy routines, and, a way of intentionally taking care of yourself when you are so thick in [00:08:00] the crisis situations of others.

And so, I essentially looked up one day, realized I had cried in the staircase on the way to my windowless office one too many times, and that this isn't the life that I wanted forever. Maybe it served me in a season. It definitely taught me so many lessons about navigating overwhelm and being calm under pressure and having empathy, especially when people are going through such a difficult and dark time, because sure, I may have been representing government entities or corporations, but I'm working with people and I just didn't expect that I was going to end up being the crisis that needed to be managed.

Matt: Yeah. Yeah.

Anna: You think that when you can handle it all, you'll be fine. And so I had let it get a little bit too far. And so, my boundaries were gone. My relationships were crumbling. I was missing really important family events and friend [00:09:00] events because I was always the one who had to work.

I always had to answer the call. And. drop everything. but when it hit that fever pitch, I knew it was time to, to walk away from this career that I had built that on paper looked amazing, but it didn't feel right. Anymore. And so I walked away in search of something that would actually feel right. And I figured that there had to be some way to, to combine that really interesting time managed experience that I had earlier in my career with my ability to create order out of crisis and stay calm under pressure.

And so, I dove into every time management book and leadership book and goals. And I was just trying to figure out a way to create a life that I actually wanted to live every day.

And gradually after a lot of messy trial and error, I figured out how to do that for myself. [00:10:00] And then slowly people started to notice that something was different.

I started being asked to speak about time management. I started being asked for help by other women, other professionals, others in media and comms who were, had felt the same overwhelming level of burnout that I had. And very gradually the pieces fell into place. And then one day I just put my foot down and said, Hey, I'm a time management coach.

This is it. I am committed to helping other busy professionals and business owners stop feeling overwhelmed so they can spend time on what matters most. We only get one shot at the life that we've been given and we're not promised tomorrow or even our next breath. So let's get out of living a life that we feel stuck in and step into living one that we actually want.

Matt: That is amazing. Amazing. What a great, great story. That's one thing I always love is understanding a little bit of the background of the guests [00:11:00] and being that we have a lot of students, and we focus a lot on education is that's a great Realizing that people aren't finding their, their groove right out of universe.

In fact, it usually takes a decade, maybe two or three to hit that groove.

Anna: Right. Matt. What's really funny is that my very last semester of college, very last semester of my senior year, I had one elective spot that had to be filled. And so, I took a class called organizational behavior. And I absolutely fell in love with it. I was furious because where had this been the entire time I'd been in college?

Now I have a degree in public relations, in mass communications, concentration, public relations, and don't get me wrong. I love that work. It served me so well to have that degree, but something about organizational behavior just fit. And so, it dawned on me all of those years later that I could still have an impact on organizational behavior [00:12:00] and leadership development as a coach. So…

Matt: I love it. All those little things that are in your background. I tell people don't discount them. You may think it might be random, but it's going to come back there. The, all these things form and shape you, whether you know it or not. And I love that example. That is the perfect example of, of a one off something was great about it and, and now you're in it.

Anna: Right. A friend of mine calls those "universal breadcrumbs".

Matt: Yes, I love it. I love it. So let me ask you, you made a point of talking about young professionals, how many of them when they get into the job. Completely immerse themselves in it, and I see sometimes end up losing themselves. What are some ways that young professionals can maybe start to insulate themselves from over committing or completely losing themselves in the job and, avoiding that burnout?

I think that you're eventually, you're going to get to the point where you may miss home [00:13:00] or you may find, this isn't the career, but that first four years, you're either of the mindset that I'm just not going to put everything in because I, but then there's the other people, the overachievers, the type A's they're all in.

How can you, as you said, set boundaries. What's a healthy work way to be productive to get noticed, but yet not lose yourself in the job.

Anna: Yeah, so there are a couple of things here and I'm so glad you asked this question because you're right, it's in those first to five years when as a young

professional, you very likely are still single, very likely don't have a family yet to go home and take care of, maybe a dog, maybe some plants, and it makes it really easy to be the one to stay late makes it really easy to be that person and to step up and chances are your new employer is going to love that about you. I still remember the very first time that I stayed late for work to help out [00:14:00] with a project and I felt amazing because they were so thankful. But then that became the new expectation because Anna was able to stay late.

From work because I didn't have anything at home except for my dog and she was fine. So, when it comes to avoiding falling into the trap of losing yourself in your work, which, we can think of that as placing your identity. in your work, you are your job title, which is again, something that's so easy.

It's actually zooming out and thinking beyond work and creating other facets or pieces of yourself. Who are you outside of work? Because your job title, your work is just one piece in the puzzle that makes you, you. And so if you think about your Other roles and responsibilities that you have [00:15:00] in your life roles being, okay, I am a personally, I'm a daughter.

I'm a friend. I'm a neighbor. I am, a volunteer. We have all of these different roles. And then we also have different areas of our life that we feel responsible such as our financial health, our spiritual health, our physical fitness and mental health, our overall wellbeing. and then there are also hobbies.

Recreation things that we do just for the sake of doing them. And so, while it might seem counterintuitive, one of the best things that you can do early on in your career is develop and create hobbies for yourself. Things that you enjoy just for the sake of the enjoyment, because those are the things that are going to recharge you and re-energize you when you need them and they will help you have a multifaceted identity outside of just who you are at work was [00:16:00] working in crisis communications and government affairs, I can't tell you how many different roles I actually had within that timeframe. First at this agency, then at this agency, and then for this organization and then for this elected official, and the job title was constantly changing.

But who I was and how I spent my time outside of work didn't change. and so having something that is just yours in this economy, like you're not, you're not, your job usually isn't promised tomorrow. things happen. Like I, I have been impacted by layoffs before. I know, I know what it feels like to have invested time,

energy, and emotion, frankly, into working and being a team member at an organization, and then it all being gone the very next day.

So, you can't hold too tightly onto your identity through work. And it's having hobbies. Regular [00:17:00] dinners with friends or family, having a running group, going to a bar class in the evening, going to pottery or painting, whatever, those are the things that give you a reason to have a boundary outside of work.

Because if you allow Parkinson's law, Parkinson's law states that work expands to fill the time available. If you don't have any plans or if you don't have any activities or things that you want to spend time on, that work is just going to keep expanding.

Matt: Oh, absolutely. Absolutely. I, I love all of these things that you talked about, Anna, because I'm… it's not just the new employees or the new graduates in the first few years, it's entrepreneurs need to do these exact same things. Otherwise, yes, it will consume you. And, yeah, the, the activities, the hobbies, as I think back, those have been the things that have been reliant and it's that getaway time.

It's that recharge and this is probably part of your time. That's where the ideas come. [00:18:00] That's where some of the creative comes is, is when you unplug and get away from, sitting there staring at the screen doesn't solve the problem.

Anna: Oh, absolutely. Lin Manuel Miranda has even said that he has written some of his most creative lyrics while playing with trucks on the floor with his son. You have to have that off time to allow your subconscious to make the connections and give you those amazing ideas.

Matt: Mm hmm. Mm hmm. I love it. I love it. So, I've got a number of questions for you and so part of my time management, I got to write this stuff down, but now I just need to decide where to go first. let's get into, so, we talked about the unplug time and the creativeness There are myths that I think people think about when it comes to time management, one being, I've got to get this project done.

So, I need to spend all day doing it, or, I'm behind. So, I need to spend 10 hours on this instead of five. What are some [00:19:00] myths that we tell ourselves or that have just been passed down that really aren't true when it comes to time management?

Anna: Yeah. Okay. So, the biggest myth I'm excited to bust today is that multitasking is not real.

Matt: Yes, thank you. Thank you. I love that. That's your number 1. yes.

Anna: Because I cannot tell you how many, back when I was working in a PR agency, I can't tell you how often. It was considered a plus, an advantage, a badge of honor

to be good at multitasking. It is one thing to be excellent at managing a number of different priorities or projects at once.

That's different. You can be skilled at moving several projects or accounts or projects forward at the same time. Multitasking is thinking that you can respond to an email while working on a report and listening to the recording of [00:20:00] a hearing to get the notes that you need for your next set of talking points.

That's what doesn't work.

Matt: right.

Anna: A great way to make more mistakes and make things take twice as long.

Matt: Absolutely. I completely agree with that. on that. I mean, that's one of the things I found that my productivity skyrocketed when I turned off my email. once in the morning and maybe after lunch, and then again in the evening. I just found that I don't get distracted. I can work on things for a longer period of time. These endless notifications are probably the worst thing for management.

Anna: Yeah. Notifications are rough because we can be connected. Sometimes people believe that we should be connected. I had a boss once who, His policy was that if I did not respond to an email within five minutes of it being sent with a minimum of an, okay, got it, I got a phone call.

So, you better believe he had his own special ringtone. So, I knew [00:21:00] when it was coming, and it was this really horrible alarm sound. That was a rough time, but some people truly believe, Oh, you're accessible 24 seven. I am going to access you 24 seven. But then on the other side. We still hang on to a lot of our primitive survival instincts, as much as we want to believe that we have advanced, and

evolved with all of the technology that we have, we're actually still reliant on a lot of those, like I said, primitive survival instincts, one of those being the need to respond to communication.

Because if you think about it, when we were still in hunter gatherer societies, if you did not respond to communication from a member of your tribe, you risked being ostracized, starving and dying. So now whenever we're driving down the road and we're at a red light and we see that we have a text message, we desperately want to open that message and see what is needed of us.

And until we do that, we feel [00:22:00] this compulsive need. To see the answer and respond. So, it's very difficult to kind of retrain your brain and trick yourself into not feeling that urgent need to respond every single time we get a message and you're, you're attacking that in absolutely the right way in creating, I like to call it tech checks.

Throughout the day, we have email, we have text messages, we have voicemails, we have slack or teams messages. We've got messages from the daycare messaging system. If you're like me, they're constant. And if we are in perpetual reactive mode, we are not able to use the greatest asset that we all have, which is our ability to focus and to communicate. Concentrate and create unique quality work product. And so having a number of designated tech checks throughout the day, I'm a big fan of Dr. Pepper time. Do you remember Dr. Pepper time?

Matt: [00:23:00] Oh, wow,

Anna: Yeah 10, two and four. Is Dr. Pepper time. My dad and his office had this antique Dr. Pepper clock for the longest time. And the 10, two and the four were all, were like a different color because that's Dr. Pepper time. That's when you need a little, need a little boost, a little pep in your step. And it's a great time to plan your tech checks during the day, because you've given yourself the ability to settle into your workday, get started.

Now, let's see. What other people need for me, then you've got a spot after lunch, and then you've got a spot at about 4 PM right before you do your daily shutdown routine.

Matt: Yeah. Somehow, we've gotten into this mentality that emails need to be answered immediately. And that's not the technology. It's not what it was designed

for. It's not how it should be used. And so, one of the things a good friend of mine, she owns an agency here. we went to university together and, and she, right from the beginning, let's say client.

No, [00:24:00] I'm not going to answer your emails right away. And in fact, she has a communication schedule that this is the ideal response time to these types of things I'm going to tell you, if you email Anna, you will get an automated response that lists her priorities to answering your email. I absolutely loved it.

I was cheering when I saw it. Like this is wonderful. I absolutely loved it. More and more, I think we need to aggressively set these boundaries. Because if not, you just allow people and you allow these notifications to, to run your day, assuming multitasking is normal. And it's not.

Anna: Well, what's so hard is that there are times that the same manager who expects an immediate response also expects you to complete projects that require deep work and concentration.

Matt: [00:25:00] Yes.

Anna: around communication to model that to those around us, especially as we ascend into more and more leadership positions, the tide is going is going to turn because of a generation that has healthy boundaries.

It's definitely not going to be overnight. but if any opportunity you have to model that to your direct reports and those that you work with is going to be just one step closer to changing that culture.

Matt: And just to add on to that, you're [00:26:00] also demonstrating it to your family. If you have a family, those around you, when you start demonstrating those same things, you're telling them you're more important than work, than the phone, than any of this. And that is going to make a huge impact in, as you said, just that next generation moving forward.

Anna: Right.

Matt: What is another myth that we can tackle here on time management?

Anna: That more hours equal more productivity.

Matt: Yeah.

Anna: Because once you hit that 45 to 50 hour mark in a week, you hit, and it's give or take in different directions, but you hit that law of diminishing returns that point where any additional work hours that you put in are [00:27:00] not increasing the amount of output.

That you are creating, more hours do not mean more productivity. Parkinson's law, just like I mentioned earlier, it tells us that work expands to fill the time available. And we're seeing organizations making the shift from five day a week working schedules to four day a week, four day per week working schedules, making sure that they have the correct systems in place to do that, but they're finding that as a result of cutting out one working day per week, people are forced to be more productive in those four days.

And so people are accomplishing the same amount in fewer hours because we only truly have a limited number of productive hours for concentration each day. So. If you are getting into a, [00:28:00] a deep work phase, you really have about 90 minutes to two hours in a sitting before the, the law of diminishing return sets in and you begin to get fatigued and you work slower and you make mistakes, which is not fun. And so, if you look at a typical work day, you can't have four back to back two hour in depth focus sessions. You have to eat, you have meetings, you need to take bio breaks, you have to break that up.

So really, and truly, if you look at a typical day, you only have maybe four to six hours of true focus time available. And most of that is probably going to be scrapped by the fragmentation of meetings thrown into place.

Matt: So, I'm laughing because when I, I very similar, I, had an agency, for about 10 years. And I also was traveling and speaking and training while having agency. So, it was two businesses running and eventually got to [00:29:00] the point where I had to make a decision where I was going to go. So I closed down the agency, moved my office back home to be with the family.

And one of the biggest issues I had to deal with is going from that mentality of being at the office from eight to six. No, I would spend. as the owner, I'd have to meet with each of my managers, and most of the time it was just going and sitting and asking them how they were, there was the coffee room time And I realized that when I was, I'm going to put it in quote, working at the agency, I was maybe doing

90 minutes of work. And then when I moved home, I felt guilty putting in less than eight hours a day.

Anna: Mm hmm.

Matt: And it took us such a long time to change that mentality that I'm actually being more productive in less time because I don't have meetings.

I don't have employees, but it was so hard to change that. I just felt like I had to put, [00:30:00] I have to sit here for eight hours.

Anna: Yeah, to working at home. I talked with so many people who felt like they had to be sitting at their desk at their laptop. For all eight hours of the day, even though they didn't even do that in their actual physical offices, they had hallway chat, they hung out in a coworker's office, but there was something about, okay, well, I don't have an office, this chair now represents my office, so therefore I must sit here for eight hours in order for work to count.

Yeah. And like you said, it's that pathways in the brain. they need to be rewired and it takes time it's, rewiring a habit,

Matt: Exactly, exactly. Oh [00:31:00] my. Yeah, I think there was a study, wasn't there, about the 45 hours I think I remember like comparing it to a 60-hour week and, how the productivity was not improved.

Anna: It doesn't. And I want to say that it declines at around 45 to 50 hours.

It's right around that spot where you hit this point of no return, where it doesn't matter anymore. because there's this Elon Musk quote where he says that in order to change the world, you need to work a hundred hours a week.

And that's no, you, that doesn't work because all hours are not created equally, even during the course of a day, we have high energy points in our day and we have lower energy points in our day and you have to match the right type of work with your energy level. If you truly want to make the most of your productivity and your energy throughout the day.

Matt: Absolutely. I love that. I agree with it. And for some reason though, I [00:32:00] think that that mentality, like even now I've, worked from home now for

why I want to say almost 10 years. And even still, there are times where I'm like, should I leave the office right now? I'm like, , I think I've got my work done for the day, but it's, yeah, exactly there.

There's the mentality is strong. I will say, of doing that.

Matt: [00:33:00] so I want to ask a question. I think it's related to our, our multitasking, but how much when you talk about time management, how much do you deal with these things? phones and social media. We talked about the notifications, but I don't think we can talk about time management.

discussing how the phone has intruded upon our lives.

Anna: Oh my gosh. It's a whole thing. And I think a lot of it plays into that primitive survival instinct that we talked about. I mean, we know that there are entire divisions of technology companies dedicated to [00:34:00] making their products as addictive as possible by pressing those survival instinct buttons that are so deeply ingrained in us.

And so, you almost have to you proof. Your phone so that you don't fall into those traps. The best way to start doing this, if you know that your phone is a huge time suck distraction, waster for you is to do a notifications audit.

Just takes going into your settings and seeing every single notification that you have turned on and asking yourself, does this interruption, because that's what it is, does this interruption add value to my life?

And if you can say yes, and this is how, Keep it. That's awesome. Sounds like you need it. I love the notifications that pop up whenever my kids' summer camp posts a new batch of pictures. And I welcome that interruption during my workday, and I will [00:35:00] stop what I'm doing and I will see if there are any pictures of my kids, because that's fun and I love it and it adds value.

But there are a lot of other notifications that probably are not adding value to your life. And so you can go about this one of two ways. You can either ask yourself the value question and turn off anything that doesn't measure up, or you can turn off

every single notification, every single red dot, every single badge, pop up, whatever, and then see what you missed.

Because if you realize like, oh, wow, I realized it's actually helpful for me to have this notification, then you probably need that. But I personally, I do not get notifications when I even get text messages, because I will check my text messages when I am ready to respond not when you send the message and if it is truly an urgent message, you will call [00:36:00] me. That's it.

Matt: Yep. And it's, again, it's the boundaries. and like you, that's one of the things I do like about Apple, is you can set different, modes and yeah, only my family get through and that's my setting throughout the day is only the family get through. And then again, yeah, I'll do the text messages.

I had one person that was an associate and then he became a client and they texted me on a Friday afternoon about something and I kinda had to like, Hey, let's keep the text messaging, at this level, not for work, especially on a Friday night. No, we're not going to.

Anna: I mean, one way that you can address that is not even to respond to the text message and go straight over to your email and say, Hey, saw your text want to keep our conversation in email because it's easier for me to keep track of.

Matt: Awesome. I love that. Yeah.

Anna: That way you do not even. Give them the response in a text message.

If that's something that you [00:37:00] choose to do, So, so setting that boundary, but also it takes that mindset shift to know that everything is going to be okay. If you don't respond to your sister-in-law looking for the salt and caramel brownie recipe. now,

Matt: Yeah.

Anna: it's going to be okay,

Matt: I love it. Yeah, yeah. Not everything's a priority. right? And using the focus modes, if you are not taking advantage of the built in focus mode setting in I, in iPhone, I'm sure, Androids have something similar. But at nine o'clock every

morning, my phone automatically shifts into work mode. I have fewer apps available. There are fewer people, less people who can get through to me.

Anna: My text messages, again, like they don't, they don't pop up. Everything essentially goes on a version of do not disturb. And then it automatically shuts off at around four o'clock.

Matt: [00:38:00] Perfect. Love doing that. And yeah, that's one of the things we've been trying, even as a family with, managing phones and they've never been allowed at the dinner table. and that's one way we're, we've been trying to do that. But then. And also, just throughout the day or weekends, what we can do to manage that.

I mean, what we're trying to do is that eliminate that dopamine, like that, that dopamine hit. So let me ask you this in this way. How can I get dopamine from time management? All right.

Anna: So, I like to think of priorities. In terms of 3 different categories, So we start, we're going to get to our dopamine, but we're going to start with priorities. And those 3 different types of priorities are boulders, big rocks, and pebbles. Now, you may have heard an illustration before, I think it's sometimes it's called the parable of the pickle jar, where if you fill a jar with.

[00:39:00] Sand first and then pebbles and then big rocks. It doesn't all fit, but if you reverse it and you put the big rocks in first and then the little, anyway, it's that whole, that whole gist. and so, I like to think of the things in life that are important and not urgent, things like professional development, things like one on one time with your kids or your partner, things like taking care of your health and wellness, those are our boulders.

Okay, they're important, but they're not urgent. And then we have our big rocks. These are the things in our lives that are important, and they are urgent and they move the needle in our life and our work. And they get us closer to the goals that we have, to the goals that we have and to the vision that we have for our lives.

This is what we typically think of when we think of priorities, because it's usually the core of our work. and they, they move the needle, but the third, the third category of priority is a. recipe for dopamine hits and that's pebbles represent

everything else in our [00:40:00] lives all of the little insignificant tasks and to do's that we have to do that have some level of importance.

But it's not life changing. It's not moving the needle. It's filling out a reimbursement form. It's, I don't know, making a dentist's appointment. It's signing a permission slip. It's ordering school uniforms, things like that, that have to be done, but they're not needle moving activities. And the thing is, is that our brains love pebbles.

Our brains crave novelty and completion. We want different things, and we want to complete things. So that's every time we switch from one thing to the next, we get a hit of dopamine. Every time you change the channel on TV or look at a different show option in Netflix, you get a dopamine hit because you're looking at something new.

And then every time you complete a little task, you get a dopamine hit, even if it's super insignificant. [00:41:00] And so that's why it's very easy for us to spend an entire day being busy and still get nothing major accomplished. Because we start our day and we have this to do list and we think, okay, well, I really need to do that thing down there, but it's really hard.

So, I'm going to procrastinate. We're not, this is what's happening in our subconscious. So, we're like, so I'm going to do these 7 little things 1st, and then I'll be ready to do the big thing. And we not, we do those 7 little pebbles. And then the next thing we know it's like 3 PM and we've spent our entire day just playing with pebbles.

And so, what I, how to strategically get the dopamine hit using time management is whenever you make your to do list for the day. Anything that qualifies as a boulder or a big rock goes at the top of the page.

[00:42:00] Bottom up.

And any time You need to take a quick break or anytime you have a meeting that ends 15 minutes early, you can pick up your phone and you can scroll Instagram, or you can go pluck some of those pebbles off of your list. You can knock those out and you get, boom, you get the dopamine hit. And so it's productive because you're getting something done that needs to be done.

And it gives you that little accomplishment to keep going.

And if you want to do a pebble and then write it down on your list and then cross it off, that counts too. We all love that. We all love to add things to our list. We've already done. but that's one way to be intentional about it is to pick your pebbles wisely.

Matt: There is a great amount of dopamine that comes from, crossing something off the list. I use a whiteboard next to my desk [00:43:00] and I love it. And my wife loves to joke because I will keep things crossed off for like a week that I've done. I'm like, look

Anna: to remind yourself,

Matt: Yes.

Anna: At all the things I do.

Matt: Have worked today.

My favorite task management, platform. And sometimes when you check off a task as complete, a little unicorn will fly across the screen. And it's random because random rewards. are more effective to us than consistent rewards.

Anna: And so, I don't get a flying unicorn every time, but man, when I do, it is so fun.

Matt: That is great. I love it. Wow. This has been so fun and time management, I have been preaching it more and more, especially to students, to young professionals, but also, I [00:44:00] deal with business owners and entrepreneurs and it, there is so much in life right now that is such.

A distraction. I mean, I can't remember a time in my life where there has been more things competing for my attention and not just competing, but demanding, demanding my attention. And I feel like more than ever before, it is more difficult to focus on myself, my business, my family, because of all of these demands is this.

And so, I have to imagine you must be incredibly busy.

Anna: Who have come to realize that living in perpetual overwhelm doesn't have to be the way that it is. And so I am always. to hear from someone who is ready kind of get that

Matt: Exactly,

Anna: Together. I mean, did you know that if you search for how to [00:45:00] not be overwhelmed on Google, you get 35 million results. And so any opportunity that I have to help someone not only be more productive, because I look at productivity as being a really awesome side effect of values in mission purpose driven time management.

Matt: What does that do to someone's mentality when they finally, I won't say when they finally get it under control, but when they start seeing results, when they start seeing benefit, what does that do to their thinking? What does it do to their life when they start to get some of this under control?

Anna: Yeah. So, I've had clients describe it as.

Matt: Mm.

Anna: The form of an exhale, because you think about how, when you are in that overwhelmed state, your shoulders are scrunched [00:46:00] up. you feel tense. You're trying to keep it all together. And once you have your vision for the future, once you've articulated your core values and you have those two key pieces as your North star, and then you're equipped with the skills.

With methods of prioritization, depending on the scenario, because it's not one size fits all. When you have the clarity about what parts of your personality can work with you regarding time management and which maybe require a little bit of flexing. I've just been told that everything feels so much.

Easier that life feels slower and that it's not that the amount on their calendar has changed, but it's that they're making fewer decisions on a day-to-day basis about how to spend their time. And those decisions are easier because everything runs through a [00:47:00] values, a vision, priority, or goals filter.

Matt: Wonderful. I like that. And, and yeah, that is certainly, I know when I get through a day and I've not, I've completely managed my email the way I want to, I've managed my phone the way I want to, I have such a greater sense of accomplishment because I was in charge of my day.

And I think so many people feel that they are at the mercy of so many other things that run their day and that makes you more exhausted.

Anna: It does. I mean, one of the first mindset shifts that we typically have to make is that you are in control. You get to decide.

And sometimes those decisions are very uncomfortable, but you know, that silly saying you are not a tree move. if you don't like the way that your time is being spent, you really can change it.

But sometimes it's really hard for people to see that initially, especially based on those little personality nuances.

Matt: Absolutely. [00:48:00] Well, Anna, thank you so much for your time today. I know it's valuable and I so appreciate you coming on. One thing I would like to know is if any listener wants to know more, how can they contact you? And then also tell us about your podcast.

Anna: Sure. Thank you so much, Matt. Well, I would actually love to invite you to, take advantage of a resource I recently created. It's called Blueprint to Balance. And it is a free video mini course that is dedicated to helping you tackle each day with confidence. Beat back the overwhelm and begin to take those first steps toward defining your personal version of work life balance.

And this isn't one of those like fluffy free courses. I have put some of my best materials into this course, just so you can get a taste of what it really feels like to take control of your time using your vision and your values and your personality. [00:49:00] and so. It's called Blueprints of Balance. You can access that over at blueprintsofbalance.com. and then my podcast, It's About Time is a podcast about work, life and balance. I have brand new episodes that go live every single Monday. Lately, I've been on a really fun kick of throwing in a bonus episode on Thursdays, just for fun.

Matt: Good for you

Anna: You can find, all of my best, tips, strategies, stories, and interviews with go getters who are getting things done.

Because I love to take a peek behind the curtain and find out how other people are making life work because it's always such a great source of ideas. So, I'd love for you to check out Blueprints of Balance and my podcast.

Matt: Fantastic. We will link to both of those on the show page. And so dear listener, I hope this has inspired you to take control of your day, to take control of your life and implement some of these practices that Anna shared with us today. And [00:50:00] again, thank you so much for your time.

Anna: Thank you so much for having me. It's been my pleasure.

Matt: And thank you, dear listener, for joining us on another edition of the Endless Coffee Cup. I hope to see you next time and have a great cup of coffee and conversation.