



PROFESSIONAL CHRISTIAN COACHING TODAY

Chris McCluskey & Kim Avery

*The podcast dedicated to Raising the Standard of Coaching...
and Changing the World*

Episode 041

Planning Your Ideal Week

CHRIS: And here we are taking up a very fun topic today, Planning Your Ideal Week. Oh if only once we plan it, it could play out just exactly like we planned it. Of course that's not quite possible but it is still going to be a very fun topic today eh, Kim?

KIM: Oh, I'm looking forward to it and just to clarify, we're not talking about going to Disneyland or traveling the world on our ideal week. We are actually talking about realistically ideal weeks and that is a fun thing to aim for.

CHRIS: Oh. No traveling the world or sweetest thing in any one week. That's right. What we're dealing with today is your ideal week as a business owner now, as a Christian coach, in your practice and having to fit it into all the rest of your busy life. Of course here on this podcast, we have addressed this piece of a larger theme many times. We had a podcast several episodes ago in which we interviewed Dr. Richard Swenson, the bestselling author of the books Margin and The Overload Syndrome, and others that are connected to the very real problem that we face in western culture of being way too overscheduled, having way too many commitments and not being able to really follow through on any of them or do many of them very well.

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We've also, in the past, done episodes here on a life balanced model that I have written and taught on for years. You may recall that episode on worship, work, and play and how each kind of needs to find its place of relative fluid balance in our lives so that we're feeding our spirit as well as our bodies and our souls. Here just recently, we did an episode on persevering in the face of trials and yet again, we referenced the idea of one of the keys to being able to persevere is to plan out your work ahead of time, be looking at your schedule, and giving a specific allotment to the various tasks that need to happen in any give week or month. So we just decided, "You know, we need to do an episode just on how do you plan your ideal week" and so here we are.

As we dive into this, Kim, why don't you walk us through the key things that we want to be sure we cover here today on this podcast.

KIM: Definitely. So we want to cover the benefits. Why would a coach, or really a coach helping their client, because I think this is beneficial for them as well. Why would someone want to have an ideal week and plan that out and then kind of step by step, how is it you create the ideal week and then there's that all important question, what happens when all the things I want in my ideal week don't fit in my ideal week? Then we're going to finish up helping people really operationalize it. How do I put this into action so it makes the difference I want it to make in my life?

CHRIS: Right. So let's dive right into what it is. Our definition is a time budget, very much like you do a financial budget or at least should do a financial budget. Time is actually different than money even in that both of them we normally think of as being zero some games. You only have so much time, you only have so much money, but the reality is, you can get more money. There are various things that you can do very creatively to help you generate a greater amount of income than you may have right now, so as you budget, if you realize there's a short fall, you can just say, "Well, okay. We could either do without some of the things we'd like to spend our money on or we can find some ways to make more money."

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You don't have that luxury with time. Time is the one thing that truly you only get so much. We only get 24 hours in a day but we also don't even know the end of our days. We don't know when our time is going to run out and so we're urged in Scriptures throughout to make the most of time. The days are evil. There is much to be done. We are to be wise stewards of the gift of the time and the health that we've been given. And so a time budget is, we might even be able to argue, more important than a financial budget, and that's quite a statement because anymore in the church, we're pretty used to hearing people emphasize how important it is to have a financial budget and we're painfully aware of what happens if you don't work on a pretty roughly clear financial budget. They come and take your cars, you lose your house, or other kinds of really unpleasant things happen.

With time, what tends to be the consequence instead is things that we can't ever so clearly put our fingers on, nobody comes and repossesses your health or your marriage or your relationship with your teenagers or that opportunity that you always dreamed of taking but never quite made the time to actually follow through on, but the reality is, there are horrible consequences of not managing our time well.

The idea here is that you can look at something in black and white and you can see with the amount of time that you believe you will have to work with and all of the things that you would like to do that they actually fit. If life were ideal, which isn't, but if life were ideal, it could work because it works on paper. Of course conversely, if it doesn't fit on paper yet then you don't just go plunging in and trying to do it. You stop and you keep working on it until on paper, in black and white, you can see, yeah, the things I would really love to do, the things that are my highest values could fit in this week if I could just live it pretty close to ideally.

KIM: I think this is especially important when you think about people who may be just transitioning into something different such as the field of coaching, whether it's

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building your own coaching business or coaching on the side or learning coaching skills that you want to apply at work, we all live full and busy lives. I think there's some sort of law of nature that says, "The tasks always expand to fill the time allotted to them." Very few people, if any, listening to this are walking around with extra time on their hands and some people do want to make changes or do something different. And so it just makes sense as you said, Chris, to sit down and budget it, look at it and think, "If I want to also build a business or learn these coaching skills and take classes, let me put this on paper so that I can see that it has the distinct possibility of working and I know exactly when and how it would work before I move into it."

CHRIS: Far better to see it ahead of time and be able to course correct than to discover it when you're right in the midst of something where you are, like I said, kind of beginning to suffer those very real consequences even though you may not be able to quite put your finger on them as tangibly as somebody repossessing a car on finances or something might be.

Well I can say this. I first developed my ideal week more than 20 years ago. I'm not bragging. I'm just saying I'm very thankful for something that I have then had as a life practice for the vast majority of my adult life. I was in my late 20s when I first came across the writings of a gentleman named Hyrum Smith and many of you may know him as the creator of the Franklin Day Planner, based on the writings of Benjamin Franklin who was very intentional about his use of time and had his very structured schedule that he floated through on a 13-week rotation. It had different topics of self-development and all but he was concentrating on over a 13-week cycle and he would just repeat it.

So Hyrum Smith, studying him and studying the lives of many others who seemed to have made very effective use of time eventually launched a radical new thing at that time, something in place of just calendars and blocks of time that we could see up on our wall where, well, even like a week at a glance kind of a calendar. He instead said, "No, there needs to a whole planning system for managing our

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time,” and he wrote an excellent book called “The 10 Natural Laws of Successful Time and Life Management.” As I say, out of that book and his other writings was birthed this Franklin Day Planner, well, I became a devotee of that planner system. Now it’s still around but in subsequent years, it merged with another person who wrote extensively on time and life management who was Dr. Stephen Covey, author, of course, of many books, his most well known being The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People.

Well basically, these two men had been reading each other’s mail or something. They just recognize, “Well, you think like I think” and they merged their companies together and so what we have today is what we know as the Franklin Covey Planner System.

One of the key concepts that we want to emphasize is a benefit of doing this is that, which is referred to here in this title, you are managing not just your time, you are managing your life. When you manage time well, your life becomes much richer and fuller. Your impact through your life generally becomes much greater. Another of the key concepts is that in managing your time and therefore your life, you are managing ultimately our most precious resource which is our energy. Our energy is even in shorter supply than the amount of time that we have.

To illustrate that point, of course we get 24 hours in a day. So if you’re going to do your ideal week, why, you’ll just plan something out for all 24 hours, right? Well, yeah except about eight hours of that or so are going to be for sleeping. So whoah, we just lopped out a third of all of our time. Well, no kidding except yeah, the reason you’re doing that is because that’s managing your energy. God himself, He wasn’t tired when He created rest on the seventh day. God doesn’t fatigue of course but He knew that we would and He built into a seven-day week, a complete day of just rest. But of course in a 24-hour cycle too, we know we have to sleep at least six hours, ideally more like eight, some of us even more than that.

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So in managing your time effectively, ultimately, what you're really managing is your energy so that when you awaken from hopefully a restful night's sleep, then the 16 hours or 18 hours at the most or so or maybe 14 hours if you need more hours, whatever is left then that time is what we're really looking ultimately at blocking out here and how will you use the energy that for most of us kind of ebbs and flows throughout the passing of your day. How will you use it to make the most of every hour you are given?

KIM: And Chris, it's really not just energy for your body which is I think what we naturally think of but more and more with the neuroscience and the way they are being able to study people's brains. They have realized that we've got to manage the energy as it were in our brain as well and that's another benefit of having an ideal week mapped out. Throughout the day, we make decisions all day long and what they have discovered is the brain really suffers from what they would call decision fatigue. It happens that every time we make a choice or we have to make a decision, our brain gets more and more tired and is less able to make good decisions. So one of the reasons we want to keep our brain fresh is so that when we do make decisions, we make good ones.

There was an interesting study done by Columbia University, their business school, and one of the things they did is they took jam, like little jars of jam that you would give people samples of in a grocery store and they put out six samples of jam and people came and tested them and they went to see how many they would buy. And then they came back and they did it again and they put out 24 jars of jam and as they suspected, people are more engaged, they stayed longer, they tasted more jam but the truth was is that when it came to purchasing it, the group that only sampled from six jams were 10 times more likely to make a purchase than the group that sampled the 24 jams. In other words, the more choices you have, the more paralyzed you become and the less likely you are to make any decision or to make a good decision. And different studies have shown this again and again. So choice is not our friend. So one of the ways to help ourselves be efficient and productive and manage our time and energy well is to

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make one decision. This is what my ideal week will look like instead of a daily hour by hour decision.

CHRIS: This is huge. An awful lot of our listeners are probably up to this point kind of nodding their head and saying, “Yeah, I’ve heard some of this before. I kind of dabbled in this before. I’ve never really planned it all out here but do I really need to? Does it need to be written down that clearly? Isn’t it just enough for me to have a week at a glance kind of a calendar” or “I have my little task lists here that I keep checking off by my desk” or “I know in my calendar what I’m basically doing on a given day. Why do I need to seriously consider writing everything out?” Well, Kim and I are both of the opinion and you just heard some of the reasons for that.

In managing the time that we have and accommodating the energy fluctuation that we’re going to get throughout that time, having major decisions largely ahead of time and committing yourself, “In my best clearest thinking, this is what I thought would be a good use of the time. So if I’m going to veer off of that, at least I want to do so very consciously. I want to know that I’m looking at it in black and white saying yeah that was a good idea, but now in the light of new information, I’ve got to alter. You’re still making a far more informed decision about your alteration than if you were just kind of taking life as it comes and kind of flexing and moving within the given moment.

KIM: And you said something important a minute ago when you said kind of print it out. David Rock who is one of the foremost kind of researchers into this brain science, in his book which I just love, “Your Brain at Work,” talks about how important visuals are for our brain because a visual can contain all kinds of information that we couldn’t remember item by item. For example, if you said, “Kim, what do you do on Tuesday afternoons?” If I’m thinking about it in a linear list format, I would have a hard time telling you, but because I can mentally bring up a picture, imagine an Excel spreadsheet with all sorts of pretty color coding on it since it mine. It’s not black and white. It’s always color coded. I

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can see what that block of time is and it holds all that information in one visual for me, so it's much easier for me to reference it, remember it, and to actually live it.

An example of that would be a client I was working with one time. We'll call her Michelle for the sake of our illustration here today. Michelle is working a fulltime job, young children at home, trying to volunteer and participate in the life of her church, and she was constantly juggling way too many balls and they kept dropping and dropping to the ground. She had tried that efficiency technique. "I'll try to be more efficient and get more done in less time," but she was totally exhausted and ragged and irritable with her children, and it just wasn't working. So what we did in our work together is she took a clean sheet of paper. For a week, instead of trying to rearrange the pieces in her already busy life, she started with a fresh draft, nothing on it and then looked at, "Okay, what are my priorities? What is most important to me?"

As Stephen Covey would say, "What are the big rocks that need to go in first?" And she put those things into her calendar and then all of a sudden, they fit. Were there all sort of smaller things that didn't fit? Yes but it was a conscious choice and so she had what she and I called "peaceful productivity." Instead of being kind of manic and going from thing to thing, she one time sat down made wise choices and then was able to live a peaceful but still very productive life.

CHRIS: I'm guessing that every listener who is launching a coaching business or growing it can relate to that because typically, we do so not from a place of excessive amounts of time and energy but instead, trying to think, "I can even hardly manage my life now and I'm going to start a practice? I'm going to build the thing out and launch a website and figure out how to do this marketing thing and take courses and then actually start to serve clientele. We're trying to cram something in that like you said is going to be a big rock and the jar of our life is already so full with all of the other rocks.

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If we don't sit down and reexamine which rocks need to be in there, maybe reach in and start taking a few things out and shuffle them all back around so that it could fit in there, we are really foolishly setting ourselves up for failure. But even worse than failing, a crash because we would probably keep trying to make it fit until we break the jar or in our case as human being, we burn ourselves out. We just keep trying harder and harder and harder to do something which if we were to look at it in black and white on paper, we'd be able to say, "Wait, that's impossible. That can't work this way. Oh, so either I don't do it or since I really value it and do feel called to do it, I need to make the hard decisions now. Outside of the pressure of the doing, I need to just contemplate what else needs to be cleared away so this can actually fit in."

Kim, we mentioned here Dr. Stephen Covey and many of our listeners are very familiar with 7 Habits of Highly Effective People. He uses a graph in there for thinking about all of the things that call for our life and our attention, and he has them blocked into four quadrants. Walk us through those four quadrants. So if people aren't familiar with it, they can create that visual, that picture in their mind as we talk through these priorities.

KIM: Yeah. If you could sketch out in your mind or if you have access to a piece of paper, the typical four quadrant model, on x axis across the top, on the left is urgent and on the right is not as urgent. So it's a continuum. On the y axis going down, important at the top and so not as important then is down towards the bottom. What happens is we have quadrant #1 which is full of urgent and important things such as the house is on fire. It's urgent, it's important. We better deal with it right away, those kinds of things. The children need to go to school. In quadrant 2 which is actually I think a quadrant of leverage and power, we have things that are important and not urgent. Those are the things that tend to get overlooked in daily life such as I'm going to learn a new tool that will make me more efficient next year. I'm going to take some classes so I can learn how to become a coach so that I can have that career in my retirement, etc.

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Quadrant #3 are things that are urgent and not important. The phone ringing, well, just because it's ringing and it's urgent doesn't mean it's important to me. I don't know that I need to answer that right away and I love the mute button on our iPhone for that very reason. And then quadrant 4 is not urgent, not important, which most of us would probably agree would be TV and other things like that, but they are the decisions we make in a moment because our brain has decision fatigue and it's too hard to think of what we should be doing so why not just flip the channel and watch one more show. So those are the four quadrants and I think using the ideal week helps us wisely put back in the things that primarily are in quadrants 1 and 2.

CHRIS: Yeah, it's a really valuable tool. In light of those four quadrants, what things are really urgent and important? What things are not urgent but they are still terribly important? Where are those in my calendar? Those are the big rocks. The very fact that they are important says, "You better get them in there some way somehow."

It's not going to be okay to come to the end of your life and stand before the throne to give an account to the Lord and have Him ask about those things and go, "Oh, well, I kind of got busy. I didn't really find that I had enough time." We must be intentional about all of those things that are truly important and then to a lesser degree, we still need to be intentional about some of those things that are urgent though maybe not so terribly important. In a different way, we need to be intentional about not allowing too much time for stuff that is neither important nor urgent that actually just is a true time waster.

KIM: Intentional is a beautiful word and so those are some of the benefits of working with this ideal life tool. Let's go ahead and just briefly talk about how to create it. Thankfully, it's not rocket science and we have already mentioned some of these things as well and the first thing you need to do is really just identify those big rocks. What are your top priorities?

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CHRIS: So as a private practitioner then, you have your job perhaps that you're working still as an employee for someone else and you have your time blocks that you're putting in for when you work on your private practice. Where is that? How long? How many minutes or hours can you lump together all at once? Not just that it fits on the schedule, will your brain still be intact when you're there in the chair trying to work on that business?

Ideal means not just pie in the sky ideal like fantasy. It means ideal like real. If life didn't happen – life meaning all of its crises and surprises and all – this is ideally when my energy spikes. This is when my energy drops. I need to do these kinds of things when my energy drops and I need the other things when my energy is at its peak. You keep adjusting these large blocks that Kim was just talking about when you're working in your business, when you're working on your business, when you have time for your family that you are actually able to tune into the kids and give them the attention they needed, the grandkids, that you have time for your marriage, date night, yeah, and just tea time or wind down time or meal times together, when you're involved in the church and in your community, boards that you may serve on.

See, these are things that we all know basically they have to fit in our lives. They are probably in your calendar already. Plot them right into your ideal week or ideal month and then ask yourself again, "Could everything actually fit?"

You will have blocks of time that only makes sense in your world. My world is not yours, yours is not mine so as you're thinking about this, you will come to the point where look at it on paper and you go, "Okay, yeah, these pieces are right. They fit. These pieces don't." So Kim, take us into what we do when certain pieces don't fit.

KIM: Well first of all, welcome to the human race. I think you're probably not alone and don't get overly stressed if all the pieces don't fit because that very normal. I think in a sense there's a relief with that. Similar to when you do a budget and you realize, okay, we have more money going out than we have coming in. In a

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sense it's stressful but in a sense, it's not. Now it's on paper and we can move pieces around. We understand what we're working with. So just take a deep breath and realize that it's normal that our eyes and our wants are a little bit bigger than our time budget and what we really have, but now we have choices we can make and one of the choices that this almost forces us to make which is a good one is that we need to focus on less but better. If I can't do everything, I don't just walk away from it. I decide what is the best that I can be doing with this time and that's really the secret to high performers in every profession around the world. They consistently do less or fewer things but they choose better things, the most important things.

So at that point for me, it's just a matter of prayerfully planning. Obviously, this is not just my decision and for you, it may also include your family, but just sitting down with the Lord saying, "For this season, this is not permanent, but for this season Lord, what things do you want me to keep and what things can I lay aside guilt free seeing that I'm only human and only so many things fit." And then there's also just the other possibility that maybe something outside the box. It doesn't necessarily have to be a fit or it doesn't fit, but sometimes, we can delegate things, hire a little bit of extra help around the house to get that done, put things in a more sequential format. "I won't teach that Sunday school class this year but I can pick it up next year when I'm done with this project or this training." Sometimes, we can creatively combine activities. For example, there are ways to include your family in some of your business building and marketing or networking activities. Some things can overlap and serve dual purposes, so be willing to look outside the box.

CHRIS: When we talk about this, Kim, I always think about our friend, Judy Santos, who of course has gone unto the Lord but she used to teach our Essentials of Coaching course with me for years. We would always, as one of the parts of that course, we talk about helping clientele, build an ideal week, so we start with us as coaches in training building our ideal week and she would use the 4Ds. Do it, delegate it as you said there, dump it, or the fourth D was discern it. The discerning is an active

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process. You are actually actively doing something. Sometimes, you can't tell immediately, I'm looking at those first three, is this something that I need to do? So it has to stay on the prioritize list or "This is something I could delegate. Somebody else could do this. I can step down from this role. I could farm that out. I could hire somebody to do that" or "I could dump this. I don't even need to bother with it and I don't need to delegate it. This doesn't need to be on my list anymore. It's not urgent and it's not important."

Sometimes, we can't really clearly tell even in times of prayer for a while. Is this a do it or delegate or a dump it issue? Well, that's when it stays in that category of active discernment. So that prayerful planning you're talking about sometimes is an ongoing praying time. It may even include fasting and certainly may include spiritual direction or coaching around the issue, some journaling time, maybe a private retreat, certainly some discussions with those who might be impacted - your spouse or other loved ones. As you're trying to discern what to do with all of the big rocks that seemed to be screaming for your attention. When you come to that unpleasant realization that they cannot possibly all fit, something has got to change. As Kim said, realize that's normal and work actively at discerning how to pare those down.

Part of what we're talking about here of course ultimately falls under that big broad category of stress management. We're just trying to manage better the stress in our lives inherent in life but I key piece of effective stress management is stress reduction. That means letting go, delegating out, moving on, discerning a particular season. That was a high priority for the previous season, that is a lower priority now so it needs to be pushed aside. So we reduce some of our stresses thereby making the ones that do remain easier to manage.

KIM: Terrific. So we've talked about the benefits of having an ideal week. We've talked some about creating, you know, how to put that down on paper and get it done. So let's just briefly touch on operationalizing it. So it's the beginning of a new week and you have your ideal week - if you're me, color coded, if you're

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Chris, black and white. You have it in front of you. Where is it we go from here? For me, it's a Monday morning activity where I start to turn these groupings into that week's prioritized task list of action list. I sit down, I call it my Monday morning meeting with God. I sit down on Monday morning and I just prayerfully say, "Okay Lord, this is what's in front of me this week. What's most important to you? What needs to get done?" Again, those need to be prioritized A, B, C, somehow chosen because they are not all going to get done but they need to move from conceptual things in my ideal week to action steps that are actually going to take place this week.

I just want to say, when it comes to action steps, again, in terms of brain science, the brain is good at following orders. It's not as good at imagining what it's supposed to be doing. So if we just took an extra second to each of those prioritized task items and begin it with an action verb instead of just a category. So I could write down, "tires" because I need to change the tires on the car, but I'm going to look at that every day and think, "tires, tires, I don't have time to mess with tires. But if I say, "call get three quotes on tires" or "Make appointment at tire shop" then my brain can look at that and think, "Oh, I've got five minutes. I can make an appointment right now." It knows what to do and it can follow through. If we don't start with a verb, it just kind of gets confused and stays on the list forever.

CHRIS: It does. I referenced at the beginning that the writings of Hyrum Smith and then later of Stephen Covey and these natural laws of successful time and life management, this was one of the other things that Hyrum Smith just nailed in that book and built into the Franklin Planner System is that when you block out your ideal week with all of its time allotments for your big broad categories, then you absolutely must tie that into not just a task list, as you're calling it here, Kim, a prioritized task list and the tasks are action verbs. Of course, any task is a doing so it's easy actually to plug the verb in there but as Kim is saying, you want to be sure and do that.

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When you write out on your calendar for that particular week the various tasks that need to be done, list them out with their verb and then prioritize them. Now, the way that that's done in the Franklin system and the way I typically do this, not everybody wants to be quite this granular about it, that's okay, but follow the thinking on it anyway. When I have a list on a given day, it is not a list of all of the things that I have been accumulating over the weeks and months that need to be done. That's way overwhelming. That's going to chew up a ton of time for me to just filter back through that for the umpteenth time. Instead on a given day, when I come to the block of time that says, "I'm working in the podcast and here's our topic for today." I'm working in this block of time in teaching this class or on this new product that we're trying to develop.

Each piece of blocked out time that I come to, there are certain tasks that are not only listed for that time period, they are prioritized alphabetically. In other words, there may or may not be the #1 that has to get done but there are going to be the A's that have to get done. So there might be two or three of those tasks on this day in that block of time that are A tasks. So they will have a letter A by them that says, "At this time, you be sure that if nothing else gets done, this one, this one, and that one – those get done. Now you have some other tasks on there, hmm. Those must be B's, well maybe."

What is a B list? A B item is something that ideally if I don't get surprised by anything and my A lists doesn't take longer than I'm hoping it will, I would ideally like to get to these B issues as well. Well there are some that are still left. Those are the C items. You only list A, B, or Cs. You don't put anything else on the list but As, Bs, or Cs mean only if all of the As and the Bs are done do I attend to the Cs. It's perfectly okay if I get at the end of the day and the Cs aren't done. They will roll over to the next day or that same day next week, or whenever. They find another time on a different day on that same block but on that day, they may still remain Cs or they might bump up to being Bs now, or eventually when it's time crunch, they are going to become As.

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You move through the ones that have to get done, the ones that would be really nice to get done, and the ones that really don't have to happen but you want to keep them on the radar. And then you can even go back through those A, B, and Cs and number them – A1, A2, A3, B1, B2, C1, C2, C3, C4, C5 - However you want to go. As I say, not everybody has to be so granular about it but it is nice that if you have a blocked out time, beginning of your day or end of your day as you're wrapping up, when you look at that day's issues and you prioritize that day's tasks, then when you get to those tasks, as Kim, you were just saying a moment ago, your brain doesn't have to work harder again at making decisions in the face of all these different things.

Decisions are already been made, letters have already been assigned, numbers are already there. Just do it and then move right on to the next one. Just do it and move right on to the next one. You already did the hard thinking and prioritizing beforehand. Now just follow the little map that you made for yourself for the day.

KIM: And I think people are pretty much set here but there's one other really key step that is most frequently overlooked and that is to now build a fence, as it were, around your ideal week, and by that I'm saying you need to limit distractions. So many people go through these planning exercises in one way, shape, form, or another, but they don't realize that people out in their life have actually prioritized task lists for them. They have things they want them to do and they are their A item. So distractions and interruptions come.

An interesting study by Basics called Information Overload, we have met the enemy and he is us. With an article they have published in October 2005 and they found that employees spend an average of 11 minutes, 11 on a project before being distracted or interrupted. After that interruption, it takes them 25 minutes before they return to the original task. So much lost time by things pulling at us. So when you have this block of time that says "I'm working in my business, on my business, with the project, with my family" please, I know the smart phone came with an off button. You may have to look to find it but it is there. You can

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turn it off. You don't have to answer your office phone. You can put a note on your door. There are things we can do to limit the distraction so we really can maximize that very intentional time that we've so perfectly chosen and put on that ideal week.

CHRIS: We did an entire episode just on that and other kinds of distractions. Some of our listeners may want to go back and pull that up. It's just called the Distracted Coach and How Not to be One. I always think of one of my past clients, he called those kinds of interruptions, Kim, he called them drive by shootings. He said, "I'll be in my office and I'm working on something at my desk and I really need to be nailing it out here but I'm the boss and so I have this open door policy and somebody strolls by on their way from one office to another or from the coffee break room or wherever. They see my office door and it's open and they pop their head and say, "Hey, how's it going?" Of course I'm going to be friendly and polite and say, "Hey, good man. Did you have a good weekend?" So there's my interruption, but it's like a drive by shooting. It kills what I was working on.

This is one of the coach things we coached around actually was having to modify his open door policy with his people. So they didn't go back to strictly closed door. That's not cool for community and moral and all, but having certain times when that door is closed and understanding that even like us working at home here, when the door is closed, mommy or daddy is working, that means you respect that closed door. This is the time when we have to focus. I often even use earplugs. There's nobody else here in my office. I'm up on the third floor of my home. But I still find that I get distracted by noises that I can hear drifting up from down below or a car pulling in the driveway or the kids out in the yards laughing and all. I put foam earplugs in my ears when I'm in those concentrated times of high productivity, when I'm doing my A list things. This got to happen right now.

I do as much as I can to move the other distractions out. I am so much more efficient. Again, just that issue of conscious intentionality about effective use of

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the time that you have and capitalizing on the energy that you have when you have that time.

KIM: And then the last thing we want to say is people go out hopefully and put this into action in their own lives is don't stress when it doesn't work out each week because odds are, it won't. I think I've heard you say, Chris, that you've never yet lived an ideal week.

CHRIS: Yes, that's right. So far, no ideal week but I got a whole lot closer than I ever would have if I didn't have these things planned out ahead of time.

KIM: So we have some good news for people today who are listening who are interested and that is that we have a tool that they can use. Chris, you want to tell them about that?

CHRIS: Right. If you have been listening to this and you're excited by it or motivated by it or challenged by it but it feels kind of daunting, yes, this is happy news for you. We have actually had our virtual assistant, Susan Fleming, who we have interviewed here on this podcast, develop for us a planning tool. It's a template that you can use. Yes, even if you're not very good at computers and even if you're not very good with spreadsheets, like me, it even allows you to color code like Kim loves to do. If you will go to our website at ProfessionalChristianCoachingToday.com, you will see over there on the margin, we have put up a new block and it says, "Download our free ideal week planning tool." You can use this and plan out your ideal large blocks of time and then as Kim says, connect those with your prioritized tasks lists. I think you'll have, if not fun with this, at least you'll have fun with the results of doing this, and that tool will be tremendously helpful. Again on our website, ProfessionalChristianCoachingToday.com, download that free ideal week planning tool.

With that, we will wrap up this episode and look forward to seeing you next week. Until then, keep raising the standard of coaching and changing the world.

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KIM: God's richest blessings to you.