



## How to Craft a Well-Lived Life

Elizabeth: [00:00:00] Hello, and welcome to Everyday Unicorn, the podcast that helps you harness your magic for greater success in work and life. I'm your host, Elizabeth Hope Derby. I'm a mom, a recovering perfectionist, and a longtime leadership and business coach. In this podcast, I'll teach you the secrets of everyday leadership and how to leverage your brand of magic to supercharge your clarity, confidence, and joy.

No more trying to fake it till you make it or twisting yourself into knots so you can fit inside other people's expectations. Whether you're running a business, evolving your career, or just trying to find a balance between being a parent and an actual person, it's time for you to start living your version of success in the office, on the playground, and beyond.

Starting now, you get to make every day a bit more magical just by being you. So [00:01:00] let's get to it.

Hello, my friend. Woo! I am so excited about this episode. I absolutely could not send this podcast out into the world without helping you do something tactical, tangible, and concrete, to put some intention and planning into crafting your version of a life well lived. After all, that's what this podcast is really about.

This is about you taking time and space to create the life you want to live and the legacy you want to leave behind. And that doesn't happen without ever stopping to think about it. It also can't happen if you only think about it, and it will be infinitely harder if you overthink [00:02:00] about it. So, today I'm just pleased as punch because I'm giving you some very specific things you can do to, like I say, craft your version of a life well lived.

And this is pretty soup to nuts. It's a doozy. So you're going to want to buckle up. If you have exclusively been listening to this on Spotify or iTunes or somewhere else on the internet, you may not know that on my website you can download the transcript of each podcast episode. And with this one in particular, that might be a good idea because it's really pretty meaty, and there are a lot of suggestions of things you can do, sort of plan you can follow to craft your plan if you will.

And so if that appeals to you, go to Elizabeth. With a Z. Hope Derby, D E R B Y dot com [00:03:00] backslash podcast. And you will find the episode 7 link to this specific episode. And on that, you will see an opportunity to download the transcript as a PDF. So you can reread this and process this more if you love to listen to your podcast while walking, as I do, or driving or working out or someplace where you're really not going to be taking notes.

You're just listening. If you want to come back to this and really implement it, I'm going to encourage you to do it that way. So having said that, we can dive into the meat. There are four main parts to this and they are in order. It's a start with step one and work your way through.

The way that my brain works best is I look at the really big picture and then I like to make things, ultimately get them to be very small, simple, easy. Not always easy, but you know, to me, it's helpful to know where you're going. If you're trying to take a vacation, it's helpful to know where you want to go.

And [00:04:00] then you can kind of bring that big picture vision all the way down to the reality of, okay, today's step is to find our passports and make sure that they're up-to-date and if they're not, order new ones. Right? Like, that's a very practical step, but it doesn't make sense to just try and make a huge list of all the things you have to do before you take an international trip, in my opinion, because if you start there, you quickly get overwhelmed by detail, and it kind of, you know, just bums you out.

You lose sight of what it is that you're even trying to do, and why that matters in the first place. And for the way my brain functions and my heart functions, I cannot do things without meaning. I cannot do something that doesn't mean anything to me. I have to know the reason. I have to know my why.

Even if I can't put it into perfect words, I just have to feel it. And if I can feel it and connect with that feeling, then I'll go do the things, right? [00:05:00] And so the only reason you would live your life on default as opposed to intentionally is because one, you've never considered that you do have some control over your life, which is totally not you if you're listening to this podcast, or two, you just don't take the time to do it.

And that some seasons of life are not the time to do this, right? Like, I'm not recording this podcast with a newborn baby at home. I could never do that. I have done this particular project because this was the right season for me to do this. So I'm not saying you need to today like no matter what, you need to go craft your version of a life well lived.

You need to sit down and digest this entire thing or run through it all. I'm not saying that, but I am saying if it's a priority to you to live with greater intentionality and fulfillment and a legacy creation, then this is a great exercise to do, and it's worth carving out the time and space. So, okay, enough prelude.

Let's [00:06:00] get into the specifics. Here are the four main topics. We're going to cover, today, these four phases of crafting your life. So part one is defining your vision. I'm all about defining your vision. Part two is gathering your fuel. I'll explain what that means, but basically, it's the fuel to get you to your vision.

Part three is mapping out your plan. How are you going to get to your vision? And part four is starting small. What are the small steps you can take today, tomorrow, next week to start moving in the right direction? And how can you keep yourself accountable for that? So let's dive into it.

Step one, define your vision. Every time I work with a coaching client, we practice vision setting first. That is the first step in my opinion. You need to know where you're going. You need to know that you are motivated to [00:07:00] change. You need to feel motivated to change. Right? I mean, change isn't easy. If it was easy, we would all be doing it all the time naturally.

And that's kind of funny because of course we're all growing and changing naturally all the time, right? Change is inevitable, but for it to have intentionality and for you to bring your conscious mind and heart and effort, to grow through the things that make you uncomfortable in order to get more of what you want and less of what you don't, that requires motivation.

And motivation comes, for me, from vision. Knowing what your vision is. Now, I'm going to describe a process. I'm actually going to give you three separate things you could do. Pick your poison. Pick your bowl full of sprinkles. I started putting sprinkles in my son's yogurt, which I realized was a bad idea because he loves sprinkles.

Now he expects sprinkles every morning. What was I thinking? I, too, am obsessed with sprinkles. What? Anyway, pick whatever, pick whichever of these three things you [00:08:00] want, but you need to do something to anchor into your vision of what a life well lived looks like for you. So here are three ways you could do that.

Before I get into the three ways, actually, I meant to tell you that I'm right now describing a process for life, like thinking about your overall life, but you could also apply this to your business. You could apply this specifically to your career. You could apply this to any area of your life. Parenting, health.

You could get really granular, or maybe just a little granular, and narrow your focus and use any of these to tease out one aspect of your life. So maybe you say, listen, I'm not worried about the legacy I'm leaving behind as a parent. I know I'm a good parent and I trust how that's all going to work out.

I am not worried about my relationships. I'm not worried about my health. I'm just worried about my business, and I really need to build out my vision for my business. Well, you could use these tools for that. Just for that [00:09:00] because we're talking about the bigger picture of crafting a whole life that is well lived, I'm

recommending you should do this while tackling all the topics, but you don't have to do that.

So here are your three options for how you could do that. You can also do all three. The first one is future visioning, and I like to do this via a time machine exercise. So you imagine yourself stepping into a time machine and blasting into the future at a date, you don't need to be specific about the date, but it's far enough in the future that you have realized, you can look around you and see the fruit of many labors, the coming to pass of many dreams, the feeling of fulfillment and satisfaction and joy and happiness.

You imagine getting into a time machine and blasting forward into one of those peak experiences where you are [00:10:00] so grateful just to be alive in your life and to have accomplished what you've accomplished, to have let go what you let go of and to be exactly where you are.

And from the perspective of your future self, you then ask, what is it that I see? What's different? How did I get here? Maybe not specifically how I got here, but what's changed? What's different between, remember that time I was sitting in my car at my desk or walking through the woods

That time when I imagined this future, now that I'm actually in this future, how is it different? What did I let go of? What projects did I accomplish? What habits did I install? How do I feel? That's the most important thing. What are my feeling words? How does it feel to be in this place of genuine joy and satisfaction for me?

What are the emotions that I experience? Who is around me? Why is my life so good? Right? But that's the kind of questions you want to ask yourself. And [00:11:00] again, really allow your mind's eye to illustrate this for you or to feel into it. If you're not a visual person, it doesn't matter. If you're very visual, you may want to draw what you see.

Or maybe you don't draw it. Maybe you just experience colors or sounds. You know, I don't necessarily see things in my mind's eye, but I'm more clairsentient in that I just know things and I feel things. So for me, it's more about a feeling, however your imagination works. You want to imagine yourself in that future scenario and take a few minutes to understand what your version of a beautiful future is.

What does that look like specifically? So that's one way to tune into your future vision. Another way to tune into your future vision is a little more real, and that involves writing your own obituary. You have probably heard of this exercise before, but if you haven't, it is powerful to reflect on your death and how your death will leave a [00:12:00] space and a legacy and a history.

One day future generations are unlikely to remember me or you or most of us, and that's okay. But for the people who do remember, for those folks whose lives we've touched, what do we hope they will say about us? What kind of person did we want to be?

If someone could write your obituary who really saw the best in you, what would they say? What do you hope they would say? And what would be the things that you did that they would cite as examples and illustrations of the kind of person you are?

So that's writing your obituary. And then the third exercise is also mortality-driven, but it's a little more immediate. It can be more upsetting depending on how you feel about these things. But the third exercise is imagining that you have six months left to live. So that's writing your obituary. [00:13:00] And I say six months, you could do 12, you could do three, you can do five.

I mean, however, whatever you feel, but really to me, it's imagining that you have enough time that you can do a few things, but what you can do is only the most important things, the things that will make the biggest, impact on your life and on the lives of the people you love and the causes you care about and shifting the world to be what you want it to be, like you're not gonna build an entire career in six months You're not going to gestate and deliver a baby.

And listen, if you really want to have kids, and you haven't had kids yet and the thought of doing a six-month-to-live exercise makes you want to cry because all you want is a baby. Well, that's great information, huh? Maybe you should extend it to 12 months and decide that like, okay, having a baby is actually priority number one.

Who wants to put a baby in me? The purpose of this is not to, make yourself feel really sad about the fact that you're dying, but to get some really clear information on if my time were [00:14:00] genuinely limited, how would I spend it and why?

What is the thing, what are the things that I most want to create, that I most want to do, that I at least care about in my vision?

So that's the six months to live exercise. And as I say this, I'm reminded that there is an author named Barbara Stanney who wrote a book called *Overcoming Under Earning*. And as I recall, in the very beginning of that book, she spells out a specific exercise that's around the six months to live. And I can't remember if it's three or six or 12 or something different.

But, she has a whole list of questions that I thought were really good. So if you want to, and I mean, I'm sure if you just Google it, you'll find other examples too. But

if you really want someone to spell out that exercise for you, okay. I took a nap today, but there you go. If you really want someone to spell out that exercise for you, I do recommend that one. I remember really liking it. And I also just love that book. I think it's a very powerful financial mindset toolbox. It's written for women and women [00:15:00] identifying people, but I think it would resonate for anyone who feels like they need a boost with their money-making and sense of worth. So those are the three tools I recommend for defining your vision. The time machine exercise, the writing your obituary exercise, and the six months to live exercise.

Choose whichever one you want. I lead my clients through the time machine exercise, but I think they're all valuable for different reasons. And ultimately, what you want to find is what you want to walk away with. Ideally write down, even if it's just a couple of bullet points, the feeling of how it feels to be living your life well.

Well, what's that feeling for you? What were the things you accomplished, or what did you practice on a regular basis that really helped you feel like you were living that life so well? Once you've done that part, once you've done the defining your vision part, you have your destination.

You have a destination in mind. So [00:16:00] now you know what it is that you're doing the rest of this work for. And you could stop there. You could say, you know what, that was all I needed. And if you just want to stop there, the advice I'm going to give you is to practice the feeling that you want to feel in the future as often as possible today.

When we are in the vibe that brings us genuine joy, pleasure and fulfillment. When we are in that space of compassion and generosity and magnanimous belief in others and ourselves, we tend to do things that are in alignment with the future we want to create. That's just a truism from self-help, personal development, psychology stuff that it's your intentions are what you tend to create, not what you want just because you say you want it.

And so that's what I would say is if you don't want to do more than the vision exercise, just do it and then make a point to focus on feeling those things regularly. A little [00:17:00] example of that is a couple of years ago I had done one of these visioning exercises and I realized that what I wanted more than anything was a feeling of peace.

And so that was my focus for pretty much every month for several months. And you would be amazed and how many, how many things you can do. I did so many things. It actually quickly lends itself to a whole list of stuff, right? You can have a lot of to-dos come out of one desired feeling.

Even if you don't go to the trouble of making an actual plan or going any deeper, it's very useful for me. Does this bring me peace or not? Guess I'm gonna do the dishes because I hate looking at a sink full of dishes. Does it bring me peace? No, this closet stresses me out because there's too much in it.

Oh, does it bring me peace? No, I feel lonely, and I need to go see some friends. So I'm going to get a coffee date on the calendar. Like, Oh, I want to feel more peaceful. Well, I guess I do have to write that email I've been avoiding because it is just driving me bonkers. You know, like all that kind of stuff can just come out of one [00:18:00] feeling.

So this is as far as you get, God bless onward and upward. But if you wanna hang in there with me for the rest of it, I highly recommend it. That was part one, defining your vision. Now we're gonna move to part two, gathering your fuel. Gathering your fuel is essential and often overlooked.

We are not going to create change from a mostly empty tank, and we are going to run out of steam if we don't have intentional ways to refuel our motivation and our energy, and we're not attuned to the resources we already have access to to help us create what we want. So when I say gathering your fuel, here's what I mean.

As you look at your vision, ask yourself why do these things matter to you? Why does this matter? Why does it matter? You probably have a short phrase come to mind because I want to feel proud on my deathbed. Because family is the most important thing to me. Because I have one wild and [00:19:00] precious life and if I haven't fully expressed myself inside of it, then I might as well not have been here.

Whatever it is, right? There's going to be an overarching reason why your unique vision matters to you. And maybe you'll have multiple reasons, but you want to answer that question. Why does this matter to you? Why do these things matter to you? And then write down whatever that phrase is, because here's the deal in a week, two weeks, a month, unless you intentionally revisit your vision document, which you can do.

But if you're like me, and you forget about it, and you misplace it, and then you're like, what was that? You know, I've gone through periods where I'm very diligent about checking in with my vision, and I do that visualization process that like all manifestation teachers teach, but it's also not natural or easy for me, so I don't do that on a regular basis, and I don't think it's required if your brain doesn't work that way either.

But I do think what you need to do your best to remember is something very simple, like why am I doing anything that I'm doing right now? What in the [00:20:00] world is going to motivate me to stop scrolling and try and better myself somehow? Or what is going to cause me to take the risk of doing that thing that feels uncomfortable?

I gave the example before, sending an email that's been stressing you out. Why would I submit that proposal? Why would I increase my rates? Why would I start disciplining my child more? Why would I start therapy? Why would I have a difficult conversation about boundaries? Why would I do any of this when I could just not because it's easier not to, right?

Like your natural resistance will show up in any change process. It's like science, it's biology, it's natural, it's normal. You're gonna resist it, and that's totally fine. So when you're in the midst of resisting it, what is that one thing that motivates you? Is it for your family?

I knew someone once whose password on her computer was "for my family". Hopefully, it's okay for me to say that. But I mean it's, I'm sure it's not anymore, this was like 10 years [00:21:00] ago, and I'm not telling you it was, and you're not gonna break into this person's house to get her stuff, right?

For my family. What a beautiful motivation. That would give you a reason to do things. So it's nice to have a little. A reminder, a little verbal, quick, small reminder of why you're doing what you're doing. Even if you forget the specific vision, you have that.

So, answer the question, why do these things matter to you? From there, ask yourself, what do I need to make this happen? What do you need in terms of time? What do you need in terms of energy? What do you need in terms of support? You don't have to come up with an exhaustive list here, but you do need to be honest with yourself about the fact that, I don't know, if creating a podcast is on your list of things that you really want to accomplish before you die, then it's going to take some work, it's going to take some time, it's going to take some bandwidth, it's going to take some focus, and it's free brain space.

You know, [00:22:00] I have wanted to start a podcast for years, but I didn't do it because I knew I didn't have the bandwidth. I was like, I can't do this. I don't have enough support. I don't have enough time. And those weren't bullshit excuses. Those were I have a baby who's nursing exclusively, and I have a pretty full client load and I don't have enough mental health.

I can't remember if I've talked about this on the podcast or not, but certainly, if you're a newsletter subscriber, you've heard me talk about this. I started Zoloft a while ago, and that was so useful for me because it increased my overall bandwidth because I didn't have this emotional drag that this low-key depression that was actually wearing me out more than I realized kind of drag on my energy.

So I feel like all these factors came together, a bunch of different factors came together so that I could do this now. And I'm working with an intern, a fabulous person. So if you're hiring someone, and you need help with like virtual [00:23:00] assistant in marketing support stuff, reach out to me. I can tell you her name in case she's looking for a job.

But anyway, having that support has been tremendous to me in getting this project out the door. So all that is to say, it's important to think about what I really need to do these things, to start these habits or projects, or accomplish these things that matter to me. What kind of support?

What kind of time? What kind of energy? And what do I already have access to, right? I mean, I'll give you an example. I am thinking a couple of years out now, about money and career stuff for myself. And I have some softly cooked, like the yolk is definitely still runny, softly cooked

concepts of what that might be. I have not gone through the exercise I'm describing to you, but I will do this whole thing about crafting a life well lived. I have my plan for the next couple of years basically, but I want to look further out. That's just coming up for me as a thing that [00:24:00] this is the right time for that and so I'm not normally like a five-year plan kind of person, but here we are.



So, anyway, I'm beginning to think about that, but I haven't yet done any kind of thinking about, okay, what do I actually want here, and what are the resources I already have at my disposal? My brain will quickly tell me all the things that I will struggle with.

I feel like part of the reason I'm a business and career coach, the reason I do leadership and executive training is that this is the stuff that I'm most passionate about. It's also the stuff that I have learned the most about and often have struggled the most with, right? Like I'm good at it and I care about it and it can be really hard for me. To me, it makes sense that I would set aside time to say, okay, if I want to create X, Y, and Z kinds of changes in my career, in my finances, in my professional projects, however, I want things to look, first of all, how do I want them to look?

Second of [00:25:00] all, what resources do I currently have that can help me get there? And what I mean by that is my network of people, my own intrinsic skills, the skills I have learned, the emotional support and cheerleading that I have. And then what kind of support might I need on top of that?

Like, I work with a coach sometimes, but not all the time. I don't think you have to exclusively work with a coach 100 percent of your life unless you want to. But I find that coaching is incredibly useful for creating transformation. So maybe working with a coach is going to be part of my process at that point because that's the kind of support I could benefit from, or will my son need to be in daycare for a couple extra hours a week? Is that going to be crucial to my functioning? You know, these are all the questions when you say, what are, what's the resources I already have, and what do I need? What do I need in terms of time, energy, and then intellectual, mental, and emotional support?

And so that's the second part, right? First of all, get that little phrase of why does this matter to me? And then the [00:26:00] second part is just beginning to be a little bit aware of what you're going to need to make that vision happen. And then the last question is pretty pointed, and it's from Mel Robbins, who is a coach who I think is great.

I'm actually going to reference her again because she's got another tool that I love that I'm going to recommend to you. But the question from her is, what do you need to start doing? What do you need to stop doing? And what do you need to continue doing to move toward that vision. You could probably go down each area of your life for this. To have the kind of relationships I want to have what do I start, stop and continue? To have the kind of financial security I want to have start, stop, continue.

To have the kind of career satisfaction or professional growth, start, stop, continue, to be the kind of parent I want to be, to be the kind of community member and person in society who actually contributes [00:27:00] to the world becoming a better place instead of a worse one, start, stop, continue, right? Physical health, what do I want to start, stop, or continue? It's just a very powerful question to start shining some light on. What are those tasks you're going to need to accomplish

or what areas do you need to start focusing on to fuel your movement in the right direction?

So now you've defined your vision, you've gathered your fuel and if I were doing this exercise with you as your coach, I would recommend that you write it down. This isn't something you just think about. It's something you put down on paper because it's too much to try and just remember all this and be like sure I'll plan it out like no write it down. Get it on paper.

Type it up. Dictate it. Something like that. It's all solid But make sure you get it down on paper. So define your vision and gather your fuel. Why do these things matter to you? Why does your vision matter to you? What do you need to make it happen? And what do you need to start, stop, and continue doing?

Those are the three pieces of fuel you are gathering. And then, [00:28:00] once that's done, you can move on to part three, which is mapping out your plan.

Now, I am a person who loves to plan. I love planning. I do hit a point of burnout with it and I get bored by it, but I'm more type A than some people and that kind of structure really helps me. So I'm going to suggest a process for mapping out your plan that can help you tangibly start crafting this well-lived life.

I want you to be able to walk away from this podcast and say, oh yeah, I know what I need to do. She gave me a list of steps to take so that I can walk away with a written plan and something I can start doing tomorrow morning or in a week to actually make this happen. I like that kind of practical hands-on stuff and that's why I'm giving it to you like this.

If you're not so much of a planner or having plans stress you out, then maybe what we've already done is enough, right? You may say, you know what? There are some things I've got to start, stop, continue, and that's enough for me. And I know what's motivating me, and I'm going to ask for help.

So [00:29:00] don't write it down if you don't want to, don't map it out if you don't want to. If you like to map things out the way I do, let's go for it. You've got your vision. You've got your fuel, and now you're making your plan. There are a couple of parts to this. So for mapping out your plan. First, we're going to think about what are those needs that you have that will allow you to move toward your vision.

So you already identified this, right? I said, like, what do you need to make it happen? But you want to just think about if I'm living in this vision that is really inspiring to me, what kind of ecosystem will I need to exist inside of so that I can get there? Meaning, if you have a vision, let's say peace does really resonate for you, and you have a vision of having a really peaceful family home life and working in a job that brings you peace and having relationships that bring you peace and that's your carrot.

That's what you want to create. Well, okay short and long [00:30:00] term. What are you going to need to get to that place of peace?

What I mean by that is, if you know right now you have some contentious dynamics in your life, if you have relationships with people that are difficult and tumultuous and bring you the opposite of peace, well then you can say, okay, I'm gonna need to probably set some healthy boundaries. Okay, I'm probably gonna need to work on those family dynamics or those friendship dynamics or those internal dynamics in my self-talk, right?

Like, my relationship with myself. Hmm, there's something about this, right, that leads me to think I'll need better boundaries, or I need more time in nature, or I need more consistent exercise, or better sleep, or all the sort of hygiene things that I think a lot of us ignore in the pursuit of other stuff.

Like, oh wow, if I really care about feeling peace, it's going to be important for me to become the kind of person who doesn't sleep with her cell phone in her hand. Which I don't usually do, but, you know, I [00:31:00] do charge my phone right next to my head, which I know is terrible. And I'm gonna change it one of these days, but I'm just being honest with you.

This is not advice coming from the top of a mountain. This is advice coming from another human who's on the same path as you. What are your needs, right? What are your needs? What is the ecosystem? What is a healthy ecosystem that would allow you to thrive look like? Consider things like your physical health, financial health, emotional health, creative health, spiritual health, and then once you get an idea of what that is, and bear in mind you don't have to do everything,

It's not meant to be a plan where you just do everything because that's what the site tells you to do. Like it's fine to eat carbs and scroll on the internet and binge-watch Netflix. It's about what are those activities that, for you specifically, you do know will make a difference in creating a genuinely healthy ecosystem.

So once you identify what those are, and you want to get clear on, okay, what are the habits that I need [00:32:00] to install to create that healthy ecosystem, right?

I'm not on the PTA, and I've never had cause to be a PTA mom or be involved with school stuff, but I have heard from people that sometimes working for the PTA can be contentious or just like school ecosystems, right? Like when you're in the parent group, it's a whole, can be a whole thing socially. Someone was telling me about this the other day, and I was like, oh, okay. So we'll see. Right? But I'll see what it's like for me, but. Let's say, you know, you want more peace, and you currently feel a lot of internal upset and tumult and unhappiness when you are involved with school board activities or PTA activities or something.

You know you need better boundaries. So what is the habit that will help you start to create better boundaries in that area? Maybe it's therapy. Maybe it's like weekly therapy sessions. Maybe it's automatically saying no every time someone asks you to do something or saying let me think about it as opposed to [00:33:00] yes or no.

It may be not responding to emails as quickly as you've told yourself you need to be responding because it stresses you out to think, Oh, I got an email from the PTA and I didn't answer them today. And like I really should. Those are all habits that you can cultivate over time, right? You can cultivate the habit of saying, let me think about it. You can cultivate the habit of saying I don't respond to my emails sooner than 48 hours because that allows me to live my life, and I'm allowed to have healthy digital hygiene. So what are the habits that will help you get there, get to that place where you have a healthy ecosystem? Make a list of those habits.

Again, you don't have to do everything. You just have to do the things that are really going to move the needle, the things that are actually going to make a difference to you. Once you have this list of habits, you have a big old list of habits, or maybe a short list of habits, that'd be great.

What does that look like on a daily, weekly, or monthly basis? If you were to really be fully executing all of those habits, what would you do daily, what would you do weekly, what would you do monthly, quarterly, annually, etc.? [00:34:00] I told you I like planning. Now then what you've crafted is sort of the ideal calendar for your habits, right?

That's an ideal. That is not, oh you're going to start that tomorrow because that's overwhelming and terrible, and no, you're not going to start all those things tomorrow. And I'll get to that in the fourth part here, which is to start small, but right now we're not there yet. We're just mapping out your plan.

So your plan is okay. This is the ideal calendar I want to get to for my habits. Now that you've figured out how am I going to cultivate this ecosystem where I can really thrive, and I can move toward my vision. You also want to identify what the projects are that you want to accomplish because it's not just about, I mean, it might be for you just about having a healthier ecosystem.

Maybe you don't even want to accomplish anything. Maybe it's like, listen, I'm at a point in my career and my family life and my relationships where I'm really, really happy. The only thing I want is to feel more peace. Then, hey, it's great. You don't even need to start any projects. You don't need to worry about starting a podcast or getting a promotion or [00:35:00] whatever it is that you may think is a project that just because someone else tells you to do it doesn't mean you need to do it, right?

If you're satisfied, be satisfied. Maybe you really want to try writing a book, or you really want to run a half-marathon, or you really want to have another child, or you really want to, get a new car. Like, maybe these are things that just matter deeply to you, and it's part of your vision.

Maybe you want to live abroad for a year. Whatever those big projects are, get those down on a list, too, because that is often where we go first when we think about living our vision and crafting a well-lived life, we kind of come up with this laundry list of projects. But you'll see, I've taken you through a lot of steps before

we get to those specific projects, because otherwise, without any of this groundwork, and then the follow-up steps I'm going to share with you, without this sort of bigger plan, you're just going to be struggling to start anything and then feeling like a failure [00:36:00] because you didn't do them, which is terrible.

So now is the time to think about projects. What are the projects that matter to you? Like, genuinely matter to you? And make a list of those, right? And it may be shorter than you think, which is kind of exciting. But anyway, you get your list of projects, short and long-term. And then in the interest of planning, we want to put those in a kind of order, kind of timeline, a linear timeline, right?

You don't have to do them all right now. You will not do them all right now. You are going to, because you don't actually have six months to live, unless you do, in which case I'm sending you big hugs and hearts and I hope that you're taking the time to listen as this is really, really powerful for you.

But let's assume you don't. Let's assume you presume to have a long, healthy life in front of you. You don't have to stress about doing everything at once. Do yourself a favor and put them in a timeline. Assume that the world will keep spinning, that you will have whatever amount of [00:37:00] freedom and flexibility you have now, that you will continue to have good things come your way, and put these projects in a timeline.

If you're like, I have no idea where to start, or you really can't just do that, a way to think about it is, first ask yourself what would give you the biggest bang for your buck here? Of all these projects, if you could just accomplish one, what would it be? What would make everything else be easier, or feel better, or more exciting, or just like what matters the most to you?

What really, really matters? And then, the sister question is what season of life are you in now? And what can you predict about the future to the degree we can predict the future? Ha, ha, ha. You know, like I have a two-year-old who's about to turn three. So that dictates certain things about the season of life that I'm in.

And if I were at the start of my career, that would dictate something totally different. If I were nearing [00:38:00] retirement, that would dictate something different. If I had any chronic health issues with timetables involved, that would dictate something. I knew that maybe something was coming down the line for my family or something was coming down the line or something was present

In terms of the international stage or national stage or even happening inside my community. What project would be the best fit for the season of life that I'm in now? And you know, you're kind of triangling all of this. There's not necessarily a perfect answer, but like, if you are very involved in on-the-ground protests, then you're protesting what's happening in Palestine.

At the time I'm recording this, like, you have places to be, and it is not the season to go abroad for a year. It's a time for you to be in your own neighborhood and [00:39:00] basically do the work that you know is here for you to do. Unless, right,

you're looking at other factors in your life, and you're saying, okay, let's say having a baby. I'm gonna have a baby in six months, and if I don't travel now, then I can guarantee I won't travel for some amount of time, right?

So then maybe you'd be like, okay, I'm going to travel now because now is the time. So anyway, you get what I'm saying. You can kind of map this out. But those are the two questions to help you figure out what that timeline should be what season of life are you in? And also what will give you the biggest bang for your buck.

And that's how you can begin to map out a timeline of projects. I have even gone so far as to, because I do have a child now, who I assume will live a long and healthy life, and I assume I too will live a long and healthy life, I hope and pray. Then, I have done the exercise of like, you know, I'm recording this in 2024.

So like, what is 2027 gonna look like in 2030? And oh gosh, by 2045, I guess this means whatever. You know, maybe we'll all be living on like the moon or [00:40:00] Mars or something, but I just can't plan for that. And I'm not actually planning. I'm holding all of this lightly. But it is useful to see, oh, you know what?

It's actually okay. Like, it's okay that I don't do everything right now. And that's the purpose of mapping this out. It's not to then beat yourself up if you miss a deadline or to hold yourself to the impossible standard of not only predicting the future, but creating it perfectly. It's just about thinking it through enough to give yourself the grace to relax as you pursue different projects as well as your habits.

Okay, so now that's mapping out your plan. So what you have is an ideal sort of habit calendar and you also have a rough timeline of projects. I'm gonna suggest, and I will remember to link in the show notes, a blog post that I created called "Let's Talk About To-Do Lists".

It's comprehensive. It's long. It's going [00:41:00] to give you some very specific tools and ideas for how you can manage your to-do lists more effectively. But also, if you're going through this exercise, how you can begin to work with your to-do lists. If you're thinking of this list of projects as a to-do list and the habits as a to-do list, I really don't want you feeling overwhelmed by that.

That's not the point of this. And we're going to talk more about that in a second, but the blog posts about to-do lists will give you more ideas of how to dial into what you can take on right now, what you can't essentially, and giving yourself permission to be gentler with that, more spacious in your planning.

So now you've defined your vision, you've gathered your fuel, you've mapped out your plan, and now we're going to start small. That's the last piece, start small. Let's not make this an overwhelming, terrible exercise that makes you want to quit everything.

It's very easy to get hijacked by feelings of overwhelm. It's very easy to let your overwhelm get the better of [00:42:00] you when you're thinking in such broad terms. And especially when you've created something that's like, wow, here's everything I want to accomplish in my life, as well as an ideal calendar of all of my habits.

Please hold all of this lightly. Please hold all of this entire exercise from a place of I love myself. This is meant to be fun. This is meant to bring me more of those core feelings that I said I wanted to feel. And if that's peace or if that's pleasure or if that's joy or if that's hope or if that's like caring for others or compassion or uplifting or justice or whatever it is, like that's gotta be true for you too.

It's gotta be true for you now as well as later, so let's not make this exercise something torturous. Starting small is about now taking all that work that you did and making it really bite-sized, really easy, really simple. We're gonna break it down. So starting with your habits, you perhaps have heard of a concept called habit stacking.

Habit stacking basically says one thing at a time, and builds on what you're already doing. So you have this calendar now of like all the habits, [00:43:00] rather than be like, okay, starting tomorrow, I'm going to do everything on my daily list. And then I'm going to do everything on my weekly list.

And then I'm going to do everything on my monthly list. And it's going to be perfect. And I'm going to be perfect. Like, no, you're not, you're going to be human, which means you can't possibly implement that many changes at once. And I don't care if you only have three changes, it's still too much. You can implement one thing, one thing at a time, that's the rule.

And so, which by the way is always a hard pill for me to swallow. I'm like, I can do everything. Like, no, you can't. You can't do everything in a sustainable, committed way. Oh, you just can't. So fine. It's like gravity, planet Earth, fine. Just kidding. I'm probably really grateful for gravity in ways I don't even understand.

So habit stacking. Habit stacking is thinking about it like stacking a tower of blocks. What's a habit you already do? Maybe you brush your teeth in the morning. Maybe you drink coffee in the morning. Maybe you get out of bed in the morning. I hope you do. Because life is better when you have, I don't actually, I was going to say life is better when you have pants on, but that's not true.

Life feels [00:44:00] great when you don't have pants on. But I do think life is good when you can stand up and go outside. And these are little things I'm extremely grateful for. So, there are habits that you already do by rote. You know, you may reach for your phone immediately, right? Like I do. Not every day, most days, unless I'm being intentional.

You may always eat a snack at a certain time, or you already have automatic habits and routines. So, habit stacking says, if you want to implement a new habit

you link it to an existing habit. So you've got your map of habits, right? Pick one habit that you want to start with.

And again, you can ask that question. What's going to give me the biggest bang for my buck? If I'm honest, the thing that would give me the biggest bang for my buck right now is waking up earlier, waking up say 15, nope, 20, probably 30 minutes earlier. However, I'm tired.

If you implemented it now, would it give you the biggest bang for your buck? And waking up earlier in the morning would give me the biggest bang for my buck, but it's not in the cards right now because I'm going to bed [00:45:00] too late. So actually what I need to do and what I've been doing, is go to bed earlier, and then from there I can wake up earlier.

And so the habit that I am stacking is essentially going to bed when my son goes to bed. Not exactly, but something to that effect, right? We do a bedtime routine at a pretty consistent time every night and that's my cue to put on pajamas, brush my teeth, and get into bed. So that's where you want to start.

You just want to start with identifying what is the first habit. And then from there, you know, identify a few more. So that you know what comes next, but they say it takes 21 days to form a habit. So you could say, okay, for the next 21 days, I'm going to focus on getting to bed, turning off my light, and putting down my phone by 11 PM or 1030 or whatever.

And then in 21 days, because you have this map, you know what your next habit is. When you're picking whatever that habit is, you stack it against something else. And by the way, if you master a habit in a week, cool. Get to the next [00:46:00] one. So that's the habit piece.

That's how you start small with habits in terms of projects, I want you to remember the law of little wins and the law of little wins says if you have little wins, if you accomplish something small and easy and achievable. It will make you feel inspired and motivated to take the next step in the right direction.

This is a concept that I have actually heard from personal finance folks, where if you're paying off debt, you know, most people want to tackle their biggest debt first. And actually, if you have some smaller debts that you can pay off quickly, that will give you more of the incentive to keep going that excitement and fuel and like, Oh, I can do it.

Little wins are really powerful. And actually, when I know I have to get myself working on my computer after I've been in a completely different mode all day. I've been parenting, or I've been cleaning the [00:47:00] house, or I've been outside and exercising, or I've been talking to friends and out and about. I have to sit down and get started.



Usually, I start with something really easy because it feels so good. Then I'm like, oh look, I like knocked out the easy thing, and then I can do the harder stuff. I like to start with easy projects. I like to break projects down into steps. If you've identified that your first major project is that you want to do a podcast. I keep using that example, but here we are. So when you think of those projects, what is the piece you want to start with? When you've identified that one project that matters more, that's the biggest bang for your buck, and that's the right fit for the season you're in, you can break every project down into parts and steps.

And I've written and spoken extensively about this, and it frankly could be an entire new podcast episode, so I'm not gonna exhaust you with more than you need to know here. I'm just gonna say that for your projects, there are generally two kinds of projects. There's one that it's very clear to think of all the [00:48:00] steps you can kind of think of what all the steps are and for me podcasting is like that.

It's like I have to come up with a concept and a name and a theme and a description, and then I have to come up with individual episode concepts and names and outlines, and then I have to record them, and then I have to edit them and I have to upload them and I have to process them, and then I have to promote them and that means promoting them in a newsletter, in social media, right?

Like that, it all just kind of rolls into a plan, and then it's done. Unless you're doing a podcast forever, in which case it's never done. But that's not how I'm treating this podcast. At least not right now. I'm treating this podcast as a pop-up podcast. Meaning, I'm going to have a limited number of episodes.

And if I want to come back to it later, I will. But for now, there's that kind of project, which is a linear, somewhat obvious, series of steps you need to take. And then there are the more nebulous projects, and it's not so obvious or linear how you're going to approach them. So let's say you want to make more money.

Well, that's pretty vague. I [00:49:00] would first counsel you to figure out how much money you're trying to make. But anyway, if I was coaching you, but we're not directly coaching right now. So I'll just say it's a goal, but even if you say, okay, I want to earn an extra 50 K this year.

That's specific. How are you going to get there? There's not one obvious set of steps to get to that 50K is there, but there, you have a lot of ideas probably. And maybe for your set of circumstances, there is an obvious path. Like you work in sales, and you know that if you sell a certain number of extra whatever's, you'll get some amount of bonus that adds up to 50K.

But if it's broader for you, and you're like, oh, I don't really know where that money's going to come from. Well, then you can brainstorm, right? All the different sorts of paths and steps you could experiment with and take. Because we're talking here about starting small, all you need to do is figure out the first step and take that.

So, it's really okay if you don't have a perfect linear plan for how you're going to accomplish all these projects. You just need to take your best [00:50:00] guess and start there. I urge you to not overthink the plan. Do not overthink how you're going to get where you want to go, because it rarely works out that way.

It is rare that you get to where you think you're going to go because you planned it out, and then you executed the plan perfectly. It's much more likely that you're going to just try some things. And then the only really important thing that you do is come back to the intention, come back to the project, come back to the goal, come back to the vision.

Even if you've totally gone off the rails, and you're not even working on a plan anymore, just kind of floating around. And like, again, to use the money example, like, let's say you're just like, I just need more money and I don't know. It's fine. Just come back to the vision and your fuel. Look at your map, remember what you're doing, and then start where you are and take the next small step. It is genuinely that simple.

So that's how you do this step-by-step process. That's how [00:51:00] you start small. I can't overstate the importance of starting small. Starting easy. Start with things that will allow you to build your confidence in yourself, that will allow you to build your self-esteem, and feel good about yourself on this journey.

There's no reason to say I want to climb Everest. Therefore, I'm going to go buy a pair of boots and climb Mount Everest. You know perfectly well the people who do it that way hurt themselves or die. So please don't do that intellectually. Start small and understand that the pleasure of getting where you want to go is the journey.

I know you might be rolling your eyes. Oh boy, the journey, but I mean it. Crafting a life well lived is not about spending a whole life being miserable so that you can get to the part where you accomplish everything. That's not a life well lived. A life well lived is that each day you live well and then along the way you do some cool shit, right?

[00:52:00] That's what I want for you. So one more resource I have for you on this, especially with the starting small piece. I mentioned Mel Robbins earlier. I love her. She has a morning routine that I think is so great and I highly recommend you just google her, find it if you google Mel Robbins' morning routine.

I think she has a workbook about it. I'll give you the highlights here, in case you're like, I'm not going to bother doing that. Just know that I learned this from Mel Robbins. I think it's great. And I have used it with fantastic success. So perhaps you will too. It's basically the morning routine is short, but it's a daily practice.

And I think of it as a practice because it's about carving out time in your morning, first thing in the morning, to do a few things for yourself. And then the rest of your day can start. Then for the rest of your day you can be totally taken over by everything in your life. You can go to every meeting, put out every fire, parent all

the way, run to the grocery store, [00:53:00] deal with all the tedium and scroll and watch TV and take a few deep breaths or eat a good meal and feel very satisfied with yourself because you, at the start of the day when you had the most brain power, you carved out some, some space and time, you carved out some bandwidth, and you got shit done specifically, you got the shit that matters to you done.

That's why I love this. For me, that works really well. I am a morning person who is sometimes a night person. But I just have a really good time when I get the thing that matters most to me out of the way first thing in the morning. Cause then I feel great all day. It's like exercising first thing in the morning.

Then I feel great all day. The last time I went to a gym class at 6:30 in the morning was probably five years ago. So I'm not saying I do it everyday, but that's just an example. You know how it fuels you for the rest of your day. I think this morning routine is like that. And the great part about it is it's short. You don't have to wake up two hours early. You can, but you don't have to.

So basically the highlights of the morning [00:54:00] routine that I really like look like this. You start off by waking up. That's a good thing. How blessed are we that we get to wake up? Probably in a pretty peaceful room. Pretty healthy bodies. That's really amazing. And then wake up. Put on exercise clothes.

Do two to five minutes of exercise. Do some kind of mindfulness practice, whether that is a minute of meditation or deep breathing or journaling, but just do a few minutes of something to tend to your spiritual, mental, and emotional well-being, something to tend to your body. And then she also recommends high-fiving yourself in the mirror.

And just a few ways of how I interpret all that. So what I like to do when I'm being diligent about this morning routine is I wake up, and change into my schlepping-around clothes. And then I go into the bathroom and I drink some water and I brush my teeth and I high five the mirror, which is like high-fiving yourself in the [00:55:00] mirror.

I love that exercise from her. I think it's great. You basically pep talk with yourself. And then that takes two minutes. Then I go downstairs, and I start a cup of coffee because I love my coffee and usually eat something too because I tend to be hungry in the morning. And then I write in my journal.

My only practice at this point, my only committed practice, is writing a gratitude list of things I appreciate, ten things I appreciate. Write down ten things I appreciate, that usually takes between two and five minutes, and then go for a walk. I just go for a ten-minute walk. And that's what I tell myself.

Minimum 10 minutes. If I want to go a little longer, fine. But I can go around the block basically. And it's not a big workout class, not a bunch of stretches. Although I do like to do some yoga stretches. I also do five yoga stretches. And it should take

me like five minutes, but I do it in like a minute and a half because I'm cheating, but that's the only way I'll do it.

And so I just do it right. I get the stretch in, then I get my walk in. Now my blood is moving. I have my coffee going. I've done [00:56:00] my things. Now my mind is right, my heart is right, my body is right. And then, that is when you set out some time to work on a project. To work on a project or projects that matter to you.

And in the Mel Robbins philosophy, you give that as much time as you have. But you've thought about it the night before. So you wake up at a time that gives you the amount of time, roughly, that you think you want to work on that project. And it, from there then, you're done. You're done.

You've done it. Maybe you're not done, you're definitely not done with your project, but that's fine. Because you've done something today that will make your vision come true. You've done something. You didn't get to the end of the day dragging your feet and beating yourself up because you didn't do anything today, and I really should've, and now I'm never going to have a well-lived life.

Like, no. Just something in the morning for you. Something for you. So I love that. I love it. I think it's really simple. I [00:57:00] love how doable it is, for me anyway. You know, my husband's usually home, so I can leave the house to walk. My son is usually still asleep, so it's okay that I can go outside, I can get fresh air.

And it just makes me feel amazing to do this routine. And that's why I'm going into such great detail with it for you because I think hopefully it makes you feel amazing too. That's what I want you to get out of listening to this. So I told you we were going deep today, guys. I told you that you needed to buckle up.

This was a lot, but let me review what we talked about. So step one is how to craft a well-lived life. Step one, define your vision. Step two, gather your fuel. Step three, map out your plan. Step four, start small. Now you have the full plan, project and map laid out in front of you. I've given you my complete soup-to-nuts philosophy on how you can do this.[00:58:00]

And I hope you do make some time for this exercise. As I said, I'll be doing it in the coming weeks. Right now I am deep in the current project. You hear me actively recording. How meta is that, right? For me, one of my projects for 2024 was getting this podcast out the door, and here we are.

But then I will be coming back to this set of steps as I think about my next chapter and what's coming up next on my project list. So I hope this was helpful to you. I am so grateful to you for listening. I'm so grateful to you for being here. Thank you for helping me make one of my lifelong dreams come true.

Thank you for tuning in and giving this podcast a reason to go out into the world. I hope that my voice and intention find you in a place of hope, inspiration and joy. I

hope that you have a day and week and [00:59:00] month and year ahead full of all the best things. And until next time.

Thank you for tuning in. I hope today's show helps you remember that every day can be extraordinary and that you, my friend, already are. If today's episode was inspiring or useful to you, hit subscribe so you don't miss an episode. If you want to go deeper, you can hire me as your private coach or as a workshop leader for your organization.

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