Priority Task Management: The Stress-Free Way to Get the Right Things Done

By Kalyn Brooke

Introduction

Getting Set Up

Welcome!

Today we are going to give your to-do list a makeover and revolutionize how you think about planning your weeks and days. If you have a question, there is a Q&A button where you can drop your questions as you think of them. At the end of this session, I'll do about 10-15 minutes of Q&A at the end.

There are two downloads I want to make sure you have. [One is a set of notes](#) that will help you retain the info that you learn and the [second are a set of 10 planning pages](#) selected from the Brainbook Printable Library, which is my membership website that helps you build your own custom planner. I'm going to use these planning pages as examples throughout the class and they are yours to keep.

If you decide you are interested in a membership, don't miss the discount code I have for you listed in that download.

Okay, are you guys ready to dig into all things planning and to do lists? I'm super excited about this, so let me pull up my slides and get started. I'm also going to share a little intro for people who will be watching the recording later.

About Kalyn

If this is one of your first interactions with me, my name is Kalyn, and I've been married to Joseph for 15 years. Three years ago, we leaped into full-time RV travel, so we now spend our days exploring the beautiful United States while working from the road.

I'm also the founder of KalynBrooke.com and The Brainbook Library, where I help women prioritize their mental health through planning and productivity systems, life-giving routines, and positive personal growth.

Part of this mission is making sure you have the right tools and mindset to manage your to-do list in the best way possible. I'm going to assume everyone here loves a good to-do list, right? They are one of my FAVORITE things to create.

We get this thrill from checking things off and seeing everything we accomplish. But to-do lists can sometimes feel like a burden. Maybe you've experienced a week where the list keeps growing and growing, and you can't keep up. Suddenly, you're buried under all these expectations and you don't know how to dig yourself out or even which task to start with first.

This class will help you approach to-do lists in a whole new way.

Because… to-do lists do not exist for us to pride ourselves on all the things we've accomplished. That is a great perk don't get me wrong.

But there is a greater purpose behind our to-do's—**they help us accomplish what is necessary before it becomes urgent and make intentional progress towards the right things.** Because when we do that, we have more energy, more opportunities, and more time to invest in other things, people, and passions. And that's what I want us to explore today.

Overview

Here's a quick overview of what we're going to talk about:

- Why we can't rely on our brains to capture and store all the things we need to do and how to optimize a task management system to help our unreliable brains
- The five different types of task buckets and how to manage each one as it relates to our weekly and daily to-do lists
- A sample step-by-step weekly planning routine you can practice consistently at the beginning of each week
- How daily interruptions can actually work in your favor (I know that sounds strange, but it's true!)
- THREE potential temptations you might face as you try to accomplish your to-do list and how to avoid them at all costs

There is a surprising amount of information we could cover about task management and so many different directions we can explore, but for today, I'm going to give you a basic structure of how to plan, prioritize, and execute the tasks on your to-do list based on the principles I practice in my own life.

I truly want your to-do list to excite you rather than stress you out. I believe this is possible when every task serves a greater purpose towards the priorities you've set in your own life. The best part? This method is completely customizable to your workflow, so be listening for how you might incorporate these ideas into your planning process.

First, let's talk about information overload.

Information Overload

We absorb, process, sort, and filter more information than ever before. Look at this study from 2021.

In any given minute,

- our world streams 452,000 hours on Netflix,
- watches over 167 million Tik Toks, and
- sends over 12 million messages through iMessage.

In one minute.

Some people call this the infodemic—the constant stream of information we receive. In 2011, another study compared the amount of this information to be the equivalent of every person reading 174 newspapers a day. I'd love to see an updated version of this study because I can only imagine what that number is now.

Add to that all the things you are responsible for on a daily basis that come with managing a home, raising a family, and trying to fit in time for yourself.

The author of *Getting Things Done,* David Allen, says, "**Your mind is for having ideas, not holding them**."

Our brains are not meant to handle all of these unresolved things, especially not all at once. Brains are great for filtering, processing, and being creative, but not for storing information on a long-term basis. I'm sure you've figured this out already, but our memories are honestly not all that reliable.

So we have to, as Daniel Levitin says in his book, *The Organized Mind*, shift this burden of organizing and storing information to the external world.

Writing down our tasks, whether in an app, notebook, planner, or sticky note, will allow your brain to let that information go because you've captured it somewhere else. You are not relying solely on your brain to do the work of recalling the information for you. This frees up your brain to do what it does best—thinking and processing and being creative.

Do you remember this meme about your brain having too many tabs open? As I was working on this class, I had 16 browser tabs open—a few articles I wanted to read, an RV reservation I was considering, the back-end dashboard of my membership site, my email, and MORE. Your brain is just like that… maybe worse!

But when you transfer that information over to an external system, you essentially close each tab and reduce the corresponding stress that accompanied that tab. When I do this on my computer, the relief is instant. I no longer feel pulled in 16 different directions. You will experience the same thing when you adopt the mindset that your brain is not your task management system and can't ever be.

Task Management Basics

Now, this might seem a little basic, but it's essential to define what a task is. Tasks are small, detailed, *actionable* steps.

Something like "Plan Summer Vacation" isn't a task. It's a project.

Tasks are a single unit of action, whereas projects are made up of a series of tasks. Planning a summer vacation includes asking for time off work, researching lodging, creating a list of activities and restaurants to visit, buying airline tickets, etc. Those small, detailed steps make up a bigger project of "Planning a Summer Vacation."

So what about the **action** part of the definition?

Let's rewind to English class for a minute and talk about parts of speech. Don't worry; we won't get too detailed! But it's worth mentioning that every task needs an **action verb.**

Here's an example. "Laundry" is a noun. Laundry just… exists. It's either ready to go in the wash or ready to be folded. We're not doing anything to the laundry unless we add an action verb to the beginning.

So instead of writing "Laundry" in your planner, write down "Wash Sheets + Towels," "Fold Laundry," and "Put Laundry Away." Adding a verb is the tiniest tweak (and maybe it feels like overkill to be so specific. Maybe you don't even need to be this specific with some of your tasks.)

But I promise you this—if you are feeling overwhelmed by your list, it might be because that list is full of nouns, not actions. Try this hack and see if it makes a big difference in the attainability of what you need to do.

Now that we've defined what a task is, we need to organize them into a management system. Remember how we said our brain is not for storing, just processing? Task management is the process of capturing, organizing, and prioritizing your tasks, so you always know what to do first AND what to do next.

Thankfully, there are so many different options for you to choose between traditional dated planners to more robust management apps like Todoist, Trello, Google Calendar, and Notion that sync between all devices.

If I showed you how to create an entire task management system in each of these apps, we would be here for hours. So instead, I'm going to teach you larger principles that can apply to ANY system. And then if you're interested in learning more about a specific app, YouTube is honestly the best place to find people who plan their entire life using those apps.

However, I know we retain information better if we can see real-life examples. So in addition to each principle that I share, I will show examples of how these principles can be applied. It's important to remember though that these examples are just to help cement this principle in your mind.

Your success today will come from learning these principles and applying them to the system that works for you, whether that's a paper and pen planner, a digital tool, or some combination of the two.

Now, let's move on to the meat of this material—managing your actual tasks and how they all fit within your task management system.

The Task Funnel

When you think about where all these tasks come from, we can easily distill them down to FIVE different buckets.

- Upcoming events
- Goals
- Recurring tasks (tasks that happen on a daily, weekly, or monthly basis)
- Random to-do's that pop into your head at the weirdest moments
- Your master task list (which, if you don't have one, you will by the end of this class)!

Each bucket filters down to what you need to do this week and then what you need to do TODAY. **This is what I call The Task Funnel.**

THE TASK FUNNEL

Upcoming Events	Current Goals	Recurring Tasks	Random To-Do's	Master Task List

THIS WEEK

TODAY

This visual shows you that tasks don't just float around with this method: they have a direction and a flow. It's also an excellent physical representation of the amount of time you have in a day. The tasks from each bucket get funneled down into what you can realistically complete today.

Let's explore each of these buckets in greater detail and explain how you might use them and how they relate to your task management tool.

Upcoming Events

This bucket is pretty self-explanatory, but Upcoming Events are any tasks you need to do related to a future event.

You'll need some sort of tool to keep track of these upcoming events and appointments so you don't forget them. Google Calendar makes this really easy because you can view your calendar on your phone when you're out and about as well as sync this calendar with other members in your household. But you can obviously use a monthly paper calendar too, whether it's hanging on your wall or hanging out in your paper planner.

Then when you plan out your week (I like to do this every Sunday evening), make sure you look at ALL the events happening over the next 1-2 weeks.

Maybe your sister's birthday is coming up, so you need to buy a gift or send a card. In this screenshot, my wedding anniversary was coming up, so I needed to add tasks like making a dinner reservation and checking movie times.

Whatever the events are, make sure you add tasks related to those events to your week far enough ahead of time, so you're not scrambling to accomplish them at the last minute. And don't forget to add a verb!

So that's the first bucket. The second is...

Current Goals

I don't know how many of you are familiar with The Six-Week Sprint, the goal-setting framework I use and promote. I'm not going into great detail about that here because you can learn more about that at PracticalDreamerBook.com.

But in general, if you're working towards a goal, *any goal*, you will have a list of tasks related to that goal.

Here's an example. I recently rebranded and redesigned the KalynBrooke.com website. So on my list, I had things like…

1. Create a new logo
2. Decide on new fonts
3. Outline the home page design
4. Write copy for that home page
5. Add graphics to the home page
6. Decide on categories for the blog and recategorize old posts

7. Decide on menu categories
8. Update my About page
9. Add new theme and "turn on" the new site

In a Six-Week Sprint specifically, you would assign each of these tasks to Week #1-#6 in your Six-Week Sprint Goal Planner so you can know what you need to do each week to stay on track. This step is very helpful to understand how many tasks related to your project that you can realistically add to each week.

Then when you plan your actual week, you transfer the tasks from the Goal Planner to your current Weekly Task List or Daily Task List, wherever you have that located.

This is how you accomplish your goals and bigger projects that take a lot of little action steps to complete—not by plotting them out in a different notebook and then forgetting about them. You must integrate these tasks alongside your normal everyday tasks, so you are constantly reminded about what you are working towards.

Recurring Tasks

The third bucket is Recurring Tasks—tasks that occur regularly. This could include bills that come due every month or doing laundry on the same day every week.

This is where paper-only planning can get a little tricky. You *can* write and rewrite all of these tasks every week or month, whenever they occur. But if you want something more automated, you can take advantage of the Google Calendar Reminders and Tasks feature. You just type in your task, set the date and time you want that task to recur, and it will automatically show up on that date for whatever timeframe you set it.

For example, I have a task titled "Design New Printables" that pops up every three weeks. If that task shows up when I plan out my next week, I know I need to carve out time for that task and perhaps drop a different task that I was planning to add.

But suppose you want a more tactile system using a paper planner without writing down these tasks repeatedly. I have a little hack for you.

Grab a label maker and print out all the recurring tasks you do weekly—laundry, finances, organizing paperwork, etc. Then add those labels to post-it flags. Each week you can peel and stick those flags to a specific day, then when you complete that task, just move the flag to the following week.

Random To-Do's

The next bucket holds all those random to-do's–things you think of in the shower or while you're falling asleep at night. Or you're talking with a friend, and suddenly your conversation spurred an action item you totally forgot and need to complete ASAP.

If the task can be completed in 2 minutes or less, just do them. No need to write it down and organize it somewhere. But if they take longer than 2 minutes, then you can do one of two things:

1. Add the task straight to your weekly or daily list, OR if you don't need to complete the task this week, say it's a task you want to do SOMEDAY…
2. Write it down on your Master Task List—which is the final task bucket we will talk about.

But just a quick note before we move on. If you are out and about and don't have your planner with you, you can always jot down these to-do's as you think of them in a note on your phone. Just keep a running list going, and then when you plan out your week, you can move and organize them in their proper place.

Master Task List

The Master Task List is where all those tasks go that do not have a specific date assigned to them yet. These are house projects you hope to get to someday. Ideas you have for a side hustle. A creative project you want to pursue, etc. Just because you're not planning on tackling these tasks right away doesn't mean you should forget about them.

I've included two Master Task printable planning pages in the packet you downloaded early. One design is more customizable because you can add your own headers to the page, like using task categories such as work, home, and personal tasks.

The other design is labeled for you with columns to mark which tasks are a high or low priority or which tasks can be delegated to someone else.

If you'd rather keep your Master Task List digitally, you could again, keep a running list on your phone or do what I prefer and that is to keep a database of tasks in Notion. With Notion, you can easily add comments, upload images or other files to each task, AND most importantly, easily delete things you don't want to do anymore or don't make sense.

That was a LOT of info to digest, so I want to quickly recap the Task Funnel before we move on. All the task buckets we just discussed are where your tasks *could potentially come from*—upcoming events, projects and goals, recurring tasks, random tasks, and lastly, your master task list.

Now we need to funnel those tasks into what we need to do THIS WEEK. Not next week or a month from now. JUST THIS WEEK.

Weekly Task Planning

Weekly planning is ESSENTIAL. If you go into a week without planning for it, you end up playing defense all week trying to tackle everything headed your way. This only adds undue stress and anxiety to your life and you'll end the week feeling flustered and frustrated.

When you plan your week in advance, you become proactive. You can assess what needs to be done, without worrying about how it's all going to fit.

Like Michael Hyatt says, "You have a choice in life. You can either live on purpose, according to a plan you've set. Or you can live by accident, reacting to the demands of others."

A Weekly Planning routine helps you approach each week with purpose.

But first, you have to decide when you're going to do it.

Some like to do this on Friday as they close out the previous week. Others, like myself, prefer Sunday evening as a way to prepare for the week. Some enjoy doing it first thing Monday morning. Choose any time that works with your schedule.

The WHEN doesn't matter as much as the consistency does. You want to be prepared for the week ahead so you can use your time most productively.

Once you know WHEN you're going to plan, you can create your own weekly planning routine, which is the same series of steps that you will complete—in order—every time you sit down to plan out the next 7 days.

I'm going to share a sample routine that is based on what I do when I sit down at my desk each Sunday. You can use this routine as is, or you can tweak it to fit your schedule. Whatever you decide, it's a good idea to write down the order of your routine so you can refer back to it weekly. I keep mine as a list in Notion, but you could also write this down on a page in a paper planner or separate notebook too.

I'm going to use a two-page weekly planning page as an example here so we can see our entire week at a glance.

1. **First, grab whatever planning tool you're using and markdown any fixed, must-do appointments and events.** Since these are immovable, they must be added first. So let's add a doctor's appointment to Monday and Mom's Birthday on Tuesday.

2. **Then you're going to write down any tasks related to those upcoming events (This is our FIRST bucket).** Here, I wrote down that we need to call mom to wish her a happy birthday on Tuesday. Remember, you're also going to look at events in 1-2 weeks from

now and write down any tasks from those. So let's say there's a community garage sale next Saturday. You'll probably want to spend this Saturday sorting through your closet.

3. **Before moving onto the other buckets, now is a good time to migrate any tasks you didn't finish from last week to this one.** So let's say we meant to drop off a bag of donations to the thrift store and didn't. Because how often does that happen!? Now we'll add that task to *this week* on Monday, when we're already out and about for a doctor's appointment.

4. **Next, you're going to add any tasks related to any goals or projects you're currently working towards (Bucket #2)** Going back to where we discussed a task vs a project, let's use that example of planning a vacation. So this week, we'll add researching lodging to Tuesday.

5. **The next bucket is Recurring Tasks. So the tasks you typically do every week).** I added grocery shopping on Monday, laundry on Tuesday and Thursday, and then cleaning the house and checking in on our finances on Friday.

6. **Now it's time to brain dump any random to-do's that popped into your head that absolutely must get done this week. (Bucket #4**) These tasks will probably take up the majority of your week depending on how much stuff is pressing and must get done. This is where you'll see your days fill out a little more and you could stop here if you wanted.

7. **If there is room to add more, (this is a BIG IF.) you could see what you can pull from your Master Task List over to this week.** (our final Task Funnel bucket #5). Since this Wednesday is looking a little light, we'll write down that we want to start the Travel Photography course we signed up for a few months ago. But in your own weekly planning, you have to be very realistic with this. There are many weeks where I don't pull anything over from my Master Task List at all, and others I have room to pull two or three tasks. Know your limits and don't overwhelm your own capacity. You are allowed to take it easy if you have a lighter day.

As you work your way through this Weekly Planning Routine, try to front-load your tasks on Monday and Tuesday and leave a lighter load Wednesday thru Friday. I have learned this the hard way. I spent years packing my weeks full and then was frustrated at all the unexpected things that happened during the week, which made me push more and more tasks over to the next day and eventually they all piled up on Friday when I had the least amount of energy for the week.

Instead, give yourself room to migrate the tasks you don't finish. This will keep your entire week much more manageable.

Daily Task Planning

Now we're going to dive into the final part of the Task Funnel—daily task planning.

You could plan the most productive week possible, plotting out all the tasks you want to complete in the next seven days. But solely working from a weekly list could also result in massive task procrastination.

Here's why: when you see that you have 7 full days to complete your to-do list, you feel like you have all the time in the world. Then suddenly, it's Thursday and all that time you had the past few days disappears, and you're stuck scrambling to finish off that list. But when you break off a few of those tasks each day, suddenly they'll seem a lot more doable AND you'll make steady, *consistent* progress throughout the week.

Just like everyone prefers to complete their weekly planning routine on a different day, people like to create their daily to-do lists at different times. Some prefer making their list the day of; others swear by the night before.

So when should you do it?

I tend to lean towards the night before, and I'll give you my best argument for why.

1 You'll give yourself the gift of closure. At the end of the day, when you write tomorrow's list and migrate your unchecked tasks from today to tomorrow, you're telling yourself that you're done working for today. And then you can actually relax!

2 You'll fall asleep easier. No more tossing and turning because you've already written down your plan for tomorrow. You don't need to stress about forgetting something when you've already dumped all those lingering tasks on paper.

3 You won't waste time wondering what you should be doing. With your game plan already in place, you'll hit the ground running as soon as you complete your morning routine.

Now whether you use a paper planner or an app, you're going to open up that tool the night before and follow a two-step process to plan your next day:

1. Write down any events and appointments for that day.

2. Then add all the tasks you want to accomplish for the day, *including* any tasks from the previous day that you didn't finish.

As you're doing this, you really want to be mindful of how long each task will take so you don't overload your list. I mentally add an extra 30 minutes just in case. Remember, it's better to have

a shorter to-do list that you can add more to later than to reach the end of the day feeling like you accomplished nothing.

Prioritizing Your Tasks

Once you've created your task lists (for the week and/or day), it's probably going to feel like everything you wrote down is essential. Remember that this class is called PRIORITY task management. Study each task on your list, and you'll see that some things don't actually have to get done this week… or at all.

We just think they do.

So your next step is to distill your weekly and daily tasks down to your absolute Must-Do's. Don't worry; you don't need to use white-out or cross things out. Instead, grab a highlighter or a different colored pen and mark your top must-do items for the week and day.

On to-do list apps, you can add priority flags, tags, and different colors to digitally highlight those important tasks.

The number of items you highlight depends on how involved each task is (some are more time-consuming than others). Also, not everyone has the same availability or energy to complete those tasks. But in general, I would shoot for your **top 5** must-do tasks for your week, and your **top 3** for each day.

However, as you're considering which tasks to highlight, you can think through these two questions to help you decide:

1. What items feel IMPORTANT and URGENT? These make a significant impact and are things you need to do right away.

    ○   Sometimes a visual can be really helpful to understand how to prioritize your tasks. This method is called the Eisenhower Matrix. If you wanted to, you could plot all your tasks for the week into one of these four boxes—Urgent and Important, Urgent and Not Important, Important, but Not Urgent, and Not Urgent or Important.

    ○   This top left box is the stuff you want to complete first, like calling a plumber for your toilet that is currently backed up—that's pretty important and urgent. Or shop for supplies to make your daughter's birthday cake… which happens to be tomorrow.

    ○   Sometimes I use this method if I'm really stressed out about the coming week, and I'm not sure what order I should use to tackle my tasks. But eventually, it

becomes second nature to know which tasks land in that IMPORTANT AND URGENT box.

2. The second question is, what tasks would make your life easier and less hectic for this week and in the future? I immediately think of things like meal planning or organizing an entryway closet. These tasks take time, but have a ripple effect on the rest of your list. They lead to a more organized and peace-filled life that will ultimately help you feel more in control and on top of everything.

Once you're finished highlighting those Must-Do tasks, anything else on your list should feel like a bonus.

The truth is, most people overestimate the number of tasks they can complete in a week. So I highly encourage you to shoot for a lower number than you are comfortable with because you can ALWAYS add in other tasks later on.

This will focus your efforts, so you don't feel stretched too thin among all those tasks. You'll also surprise yourself with how much more energy you'll have when you can visibly see a completed to-do list rather than one left undone.

If you want to go one step further and *really* see how much (or how little!) you can fit in your schedule, I suggest you try time-blocking.

When you insert your must-do tasks among immovable events and your typical daily tasks, you might find there's not a lot of extra margin left. This knowledge will not only help you put LESS on your calendar, you'll be less tempted to squeeze more tasks into your day than physically possible.

I like to time block my tasks using a digital tool like Google Calendar because I can easily move blocks around if a task lasts longer than I expect it to. But if you prefer using paper, there are lots of paper time-blocking printables and planners you can use.

Task Auditing

So far, we've discussed all of our task buckets, a task management system through weekly planning and daily planning, and how to prioritize those tasks, but there's one more essential step that we need to do at the end of each day and each week—a short review about what you accomplished, what you didn't, and why—a task audit, if you will.

This exercise does not need to be super formal. But it's healthy to dedicate a few minutes at the end of your week to reassess your to-do list and objectively view how your last week went.

Maybe you were interrupted a lot and could not give your undivided attention to some tasks. Perhaps other things came up that took precedence. These could be one-time events, or you might start to see a pattern emerge and need to switch things up.

Here are a couple of examples of this.

1. You want to create a meal plan for the week every Sunday night, but it seldom happens because Sunday evenings are hectic with other things. So switching that task to Monday morning might produce better results.

2. Or, you find it hard to concentrate on certain tasks while your little kids are awake. Rearrange your day, so you are doing simple tasks (like folding laundry) when they are awake. The potential for interruption does not derail these types of tasks. Save more focused tasks, like writing or reading, for when they are taking a nap or having a quiet time.

While not lovely to experience, interruptions and frustrations can actually work in your favor. They can highlight some problem areas and force you to come up with a creative solution. That solution can streamline your work instead of feeling like you have to constantly fight against it, resulting in a better workflow than before.

Also, when your time is limited, you're more likely to prioritize what *needs* to get done. Remember when I showed you earlier how time blocking can shed light on how little time you really have? When you accept this limitation, you focus only on those essential, must-do tasks. And you're more likely to notice how few tasks on your list are that important and can be shifted to later in the week.

Here's where I would start paying attention, though. If you migrate a task for more than three days, and by migrating, I mean rewriting an uncompleted task from one day to the next, there is a reason you're not accomplishing this task. Maybe it's because that task is not that important. Perhaps you are procrastinating and simply don't want to do it. Ask yourself WHY? Look at that task objectively to see if it even belongs on your list or if you should move it to your Master Task List to tackle at a later date.

In paper planning especially, it might feel annoying to keep writing down that task, day after day. But this is actually a GREAT perk of an analog system! With a digital task management app, you can easily move that task to the next day and the next day and the next, until one day, everything you pushed aside comes due on the same day and you're looking at a MASSIVE list.

But when you physically write down that task for the third or fourth time, you start to wonder whether this item actually deserves a spot on your daily task list. You want to make sure that everything you've assigned to a specific day is current and worthy of your attention.

Three Potential Temptations

The last thing I want to talk about is three potential temptations you might face as you tackle your task list. These temptations are not impossible to overcome; they are just things you want to think about as you plan your weeks and days.

1. The Temptation to Multitask

Deep down, we all know multitasking is a myth. But in today's fast-paced world, no one wants to believe this is true.

However, even if you've listened to a podcast while cooking dinner or knocked out a few things on your to-do list while chatting on the phone, you might think you're multitasking, but you're really not. Your brain flits back and forth between tasks without giving full attention to either one.

Your cooking goes on autopilot as you tune into an interesting phrase from your podcast. And while you're focused on measuring ingredients, the podcast slowly fades into the background. But your brain switches so quickly that you may not even notice the back-and-forth.

In *The One Thing*, authors Gary Keller and Jay Papasan compare multitasking to juggling.

"Juggling is an illusion. To the casual observer, a juggler is juggling three balls at once. In reality, the balls are being independently caught and thrown in rapid succession. Catch, toss, catch, toss, catch, toss. One ball at a time. It's what researchers refer to as 'task switching.'"

So while you may *think* you can concentrate on two things at once, your brain can only focus on one thing at a time. And every time you switch activities, you're sending your already exhausted brain through a series of mental gymnastics to adjust to its new role.

So here's the solution. When it comes to your to-do list, you first want to remove as many distractions as you can. When I need to focus, I turn my phone on Do Not Disturb and go so far as to put it away in a box so it's not tempting me to pick it up.

Secondly, and you'll probably need to remind yourself of this one over and over, because I certainly do, remember to focus on one task at a time. Just ONE. You already know that your brain cannot concentrate on two things at once, so let's not try to be smarter than our brains. This methodical way of moving through our to-do list will result in more progress—and faster progress—than multitasking ever will.

2. The Temptation to Create Unrealistic Time Frames

For some reason, we think we can accomplish things quicker than humanly possible. We don't expect interruptions or setbacks, so we plan our days on how they will go idealistically rather than **realistically.**

And you want to know how that goes? Badly. Every time.

In fact, I cringe when I see people schedule their day down to the very last minute like back when we were given these types of schedules in high school. The buzzer would ring at 9:55 and we had only five minutes to run to the next class.

But most of us do not live in a controlled environment like that anymore. We can plan as much as we want, but between phone calls and child melt-downs and insane traffic, we can't always predict how that plan is going to go.

So what do you do instead?

Here are two ways you can solve this problem head-on:

- Track your time for various tasks, so you know how long they actually take. Maybe you assume that you can complete your morning routine in an hour and a half if it includes a workout, reading time, breakfast, and getting ready for the day. But after tracking, you realize it takes you two hours to do all that without feeling rushed.

- Build in time for delays. I suggest adding 30 minutes to most tasks to give yourself that extra margin. You might not need it, but at least you won't overschedule yourself if every task on your list has 30 minutes built into it. And when you do need it, you'll be happy you planned that buffer zone!

Eventually, you will better know how much you can reasonably add to your list. Remember, less is better. Everything above and beyond your highlighted to-dos is a bonus!

3. The Temptation to Wait for Motivation

I wish we could rely on motivation to cruise through our to-do lists. That would be amazing, right? We could accomplish so much if we *felt* like working.

Unfortunately, motivation isn't like that. That magical "can't wait to do the work" feeling doesn't usually appear when we need it most. Instead, motivation most resembles a wave. Waves don't stay the same. They rise and fall. Some hold a lot of power, others... don't. We can't wait for the high point of a motivational wave to make forward progress on our goals and tasks. If we do, we might be waiting for a very long time.

So rather than wish for motivation, we need to focus on consistency. With consistency, you do the work regardless of how you feel… which I know doesn't sound fun or sexy AT ALL. But

that's how you develop discipline. You don't wait for the right mood, time, or supplies to start. You just take the next right step forward. More often than not, motivation will soon follow once you get started. You just need that initial momentum.

Secondly, ask how doing this dreaded task, whatever it is, will benefit your future self. Envision yourself at that end goal, whether it's a fitness goal, a clutter-free home, or a side hustle you hope will become your full-time income one day.

It's SO easy to push things off. But when you keep your future self in mind, you're more likely to do the thing that will help you reach that ideal person.

Conclusion

As we wrap up, I want to leave you with this quote from an amazing book I've already mentioned, The One Thing.

"Live with purpose and you know where you want to go. Live by priority and you'll know what to do to get there."

When we tackle a to-do list, we're doing *something.* But the real question is, are we doing what moves us in the direction we want to go?

Are we spending our days fighting fires? Or are we doing what really matters to improve our homes, families, work, and selves?

We only have 24 hours in a day to accomplish everything we need and want to do, which forces us to be strategic about how we use the time we have. Our priorities help us define what's essential and what's not.

For example, if you value a clean and clutter-free home, you're more likely to wash the dishes before watching a TV show. If you value travel and adventure, you're more likely to spend time building a business that can sustain that lifestyle. If you value your family time, you probably won't say yes to social activities that take you away from your family.

If you're not sure of your priorities, you can easily find out. Take these questions to your journal and give yourself time to explore these answers:

✨What do you want your life to look like?
✨What fills you up on the inside?
✨What legacy do you want to leave?"

The answers to these questions will be different for everyone. But once you establish clearly defined priorities, you can check in with yourself and those priorities when other things threaten to take your attention away from what's truly important.

When you look at your to-do list with your priorities in mind, you won't just know exactly what to focus on and why. You'll also be moving towards the places you want to go, the goals you want to achieve, and the people you want beside you along the way.

That's all I have to share for this specific class. I want to open it up now to any questions you might have. I can clarify something that we talked about here, or we can discuss some productivity hacks to make your to-do list more manageable. Or we can talk about something completely unrelated. Whatever would be most helpful to you—we can take a lot of different directions with this!

Q & A

Q. I always feel like I'm behind all week if a scheduling conflict keeps me from planning at my typical time, how do you get back on track if you miss your Sunday Night planning section?

A. I always look for different blocks to move things. Let's say I miss my typical workout time; what's my next best block to do this? If you usually do it on Sunday and didn't, I would ask: "Can I wake up a little early on Monday morning and do it then? Or should I schedule it around lunch time?" It's just about checking your schedule and seeing where you can shift that block.

Q. How many times do you push a task to the next day before you decide whether or not to remove it altogether?

A. If I push a task 4-5 times, then I have to reassess if that task is worth doing or not. Why am I procrastinating? Is it necessary or do I think it's necessary? Sometimes if I see I'm moving a necessary task from week to week and still not getting it done, I look at my other tasks and see what can I push down to make sure this actually happens because it is a priority.

Q. What part of prioritizing is the hardest for you?

A. I experience a lot of FOMO (Fear Of Missing Out) and I think all this stuff has to get down right now. I have to stop myself and ask what is going to bring the biggest return on investment for my time. Is it something that will matter in the next week, month, or years? Or is it not going to matter at all? That will help you see what you need to tackle the most.

Thank you so much for attending. I hope what you learned here was helpful and that you have a few takeaways and AHA moments you can implement into your weekly and daily to-do lists.

If you have any questions that I didn't get to or that you think of later, email kalynbrooke@gmail.com or message me on Instagram @KalynBrookeCo.

Have a great rest of your day, and will catch you later.