

120: How I Manage My Time and Reduce Distractions



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

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Welcome to *The Wealthy Mom MD Podcast*, a podcast for women physicians who want to learn how to live a wealthy life. In this podcast you will learn how to make money work for you, how you can have more of it, and learn the tools to empower you to live a life on purpose. Get ready to up-level your money and your life. I'm your host, Dr. Bonnie Koo.

Hey everyone, how are you guys all doing? So we are in the full swing of summer. As you may remember I've been traveling like crazy and I'm so excited for the summer to be relatively chill. And the only trips we have planned are driving distance, no planes. And I'm really excited to not be on a plane for a while. It was way too much and it really, really tired me out.

And I felt like it kind of threw me off track personally and inside my business because it was just really hard to tend to things. And so this actually is a great segue into today's topic. I actually want to talk about how I manage my time and sort of give you the inside view of how I manage my time and also to give you some tips on how to focus, because I feel like a lot of us have trouble focusing now.

We're distracted, we are the distracted generation because of our phones. I mean, this isn't news to you. I'm sure wherever you go, I live in New Jersey, so I don't think it's a New Jersey specific phenomena. I live in a high rise luxury building and I get on the elevator, everyone's on their phone. I see people walking, where I live I can walk pretty easily to stores, everyone's on their phone.

To me, that's really weird. I mean, I've done that too, to be honest. But it means you're not paying attention and there's a lot of cars around. And so I've pretty much stopped doing that because it's just not a good idea.

Okay, so let's just talk about the lack of focus. So the reason why I'm doing this episode is because this is something I've really been tackling head on lately because I noticed that I was really distracted. And I don't have a diagnosis of ADHD, I don't pretend to be an expert on that. But I kind of felt

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like I had ADHD. Meaning that I couldn't pay attention to things, I was having a lot of trouble focusing, and that I couldn't remember anything.

Now, I generally don't remember things even before the age of phones and et cetera. In fact, it's kind of a joke in my family. I'm pretty sure I've said this before, which even just goes to tell you that I really don't remember things. But there's a joke in my family that I keep forgetting the plot of the movie Taken. It's a joke because the plot is in the title.

But yes, I have a tendency to repeat myself. Even my friends say, "Hey, you already told us that." I'm like, okay, whatever. I just don't even apologize for it anymore. If they've heard it, they can just tell me and I won't say it anymore.

So I read this book called How to Break Up with Your Phone. And I recommend it to you because if you're listening, you probably have a phone problem too. I think it's pretty universal. It's a very quick read, I downloaded it on my Kindle, well I don't have a Kindle, my iPad. You can obviously get a physical book as well if you want to.

Like I said, it's a quick read, the first three chapters just kind of describe the problem. And the part that really caught my eye, or my brain rather, is three short chapters on how it affects our brains. Basically it really messes up with our ability to pay attention, which kind of makes sense. But there's also some brain science behind it, and so I think that will be really useful for you to read about.

And the gist of it is that our phone use trains our brain to be distracted all the time. And it also said that our brains prefer and like to be distracted, like that's the natural tendency. And this just makes it so much easier to be distracted because focusing and paying attention requires a lot of effort. Makes sense, right?

And so it actually gives you a 30 day break up plan with your phone, I think I'm on day four or five. I've actually done this program before but I actually didn't get through the whole thing. But I feel really motivated to do it now

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because my lack of focus and attention, I can tell, has been affecting lots of areas of my life, not just my business.

So in terms of how I schedule things and get things done, so first I want to say do what works for you. I definitely have friends that don't like to plan and calendar really specifically. But most of the people that I work with or listen to my stuff, we're generally type A planners, so it might be helpful for you.

So what I do is a combination of something called Monday Hour One, and Michael Hyatt's Free To Focus Planning System. So let me explain what those two things are and how I kind of combined them. So Monday Hour One is actually a course inside of Self-Coaching Scholars, which is a coaching membership by the Life Coach School. And that's where I got certified as a life coach.

So I am a current member, I will probably be a member forever. I think right now I'm a Triple Diamond, it just means I've been there for three years. And this course is basically about time management, or how to get things done is a better way to think about it.

So the basic way to approach Monday Hour One, and then I'm going to segue into how I use that with Michael Hyatt's planner, is basically you take about 30 minutes to do this process. Basically you dump all the shit out of your brain. Every single thing because the thing is, when you have all these to-dos floating around in your brain it takes up space. I call it like mental load, it literally takes up space in your brain.

And even if you don't think it is, it's like this little background anxiety of the things that you aren't getting done. So you want to take out a piece of paper, it's much more effective in my opinion if you use paper. I have a, it's basically a legal pad but it's white instead of yellow. I just dump everything on there.

In fact, I had not brain dumped in some time so it was like five pages long. And you can just start writing things in no particular order. I like to break

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things up between personal, business, and maybe even money things, but that's within personal stuff anyway. But you don't have to do that, you can literally just start writing things down. And I will tell you, it's really freeing to get it all out of your brain.

And then you really want to put them in categories. Again, this is going to take some time. And if you haven't done this in a long time it's going to be, I don't wanna say painful, but it's going to take some time to do this. But believe me, it will be worth your time. You're going to feel so much better once you get it all out of your brain.

And the first thing is you really want to look at it, like look through all the things you wrote down. And here's what I want to say, and I tell this to my clients all the time, there is nothing you have to do. Did you know that? You don't have to do anything.

So I just recommend to stop telling yourself that you have to do something. You really don't have to do it, really. Instead, tell yourself I want to do this, I choose to do this. And looking at this list of yours, feel free to cross stuff off the list that you just don't want to do. You have my permission to do that.

Here's something that I suggest, before you start scheduling these into your calendar, I use Google Calendar specifically, most of us think of to-do lists as to-dos, like the actions. One thing that I want you to start considering is to instead of thinking of action, items to-do list items, think about what the actual outcome is that you want. Because everything you're doing is to produce a certain outcome, correct?

Let me give you some examples. So one of the things on my to-do list was to figure out something called Cloudflare. Cloudflare? Yeah, Cloudflare. It's a bit of a tongue twister, right? Nothing that you have to know about, but if you have a website you probably have heard of it because it's, I actually don't know what it is so I can't explain it.

But it's something that one of my website people, because I have two of them, needed because they were doing some changes on my website. And

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so that was on my list of things to do, figure out Cloudflare so my web person can do whatever she needed to do. So that's a to-do.

Now, I don't do this outcome thing with everything, but it helps me think about things when I'm feeling overwhelmed because ultimately everything we do or want to do is because there's a certain outcome or result that we want.

And so the reason why this to-do, as an example, the outcome is I want a website that works, meaning when you go to wealthymommd.com, it'll work, it'll be there, right? So that's the outcome. So that's just an easy example.

And the reason why I think it's really useful to think about things this way is it's really easy to get overwhelmed by all the to-dos. But if you really think about why you're doing this, like what's the outcome you're creating? I find that it just relaxes my brain a little and makes me feel more calm because instead of all these list items, the list of outcomes tends to be, well it makes sense, right? It's going to be a lot shorter.

And I definitely do cross off things I don't want to do. And sometimes that means telling someone or something, even if I've said I was going to do it, and literally tell them I can't do this anymore. Which ultimately means that you might disappoint some people, and you don't have to do it. And I think it's an important reminder that it's really important to prioritize ourselves instead of doing all these things for other people because women, we tend to do that.

So in Monday Hour One, after you've sort of creating this to-do list or results list, usually it's a combo of the two because it's just not natural for us to think about results or outcomes, we're really trained to think about to-do things, is to schedule it in your calendar.

Now, before I get into how I want you to think about that, we need to talk about the importance of something called focus time. That's the concept from Michael Hyatt that I use. Now, I know many of you listening have full-

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time jobs, full-time physician, et cetera and so you already have a lot on your plate.

So before I go into what focus time is and how to schedule it, I mean, it's pretty obvious what it means, right? I want you to actually schedule the things for you first. Because here's what most of us do, we schedule things like work, stuff for our kids, maybe other things that need to get done around the house or whatever to be an adult. So many annoying things to do as an adult these days, right?

And then if there's anything left over, which there usually isn't, maybe you'll get 10 minutes to yourself. So I want you to reverse that order. Figure out what you need. And it's going to be different for everyone, so maybe it's working out. Maybe it's specifically carving out time to spend with your partner. Maybe it's specific time you want to spend with your child. Maybe it's catching up with friends. Maybe it's scheduling a vacation with your friends.

Whatever you need to feel you and to feel relaxed, whatever you want to call it. Basically, it's you time. It's personal time. It's fun time. However you want to categorize it, I want you to actually put that in your calendar first. Now, if you have a job that's going to be pretty much the same hours every day, like you already know that schedule so you probably don't need to put it in your calendar unless you work sort of uneven shifts.

But I want you to put your stuff first. And this is really hard for most of us because number one, none of us have probably done that before. And two, it seems like the wrong thing to do because you're like, well, don't I have to do all these other things, like they're more important? But when you do that you're basically telling yourself that you're second fiddle to all these other things.

So this is about putting you first. So I think that might be hard for a lot of us. Then you want to schedule the focus time. Now, Michael Hyatt and Monday

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Hour One I believe, actually no, this is Monday hour one, I think, in terms of a concept is scheduling two hours of focus time at a time.

Now for those of you with full-time jobs this might not be an option on a regular basis, so start with an hour. And for those of you saying I don't even have an hour, I know you do because we also spend a lot of time or waste a lot of time on our phones. In fact, the how to break up with your phone book talks about looking at your screen time statistics.

Now if you have an iPhone, you go to settings and screen time and it tells you some really scary numbers. It says how many times have you picked up your phone and how much time have you spent on it. So unless you're someone who already doesn't spend a lot of time on your phone, I'm guessing there's at least one hour you spend on your phone, if not more. It can be really scary, so just warning you if you have not looked at your stats lately.

I'm not saying you need to schedule an hour every day, by the way. So if this is a new concept to you, start simple. That's like one of my favorite things I always tell my clients, like start simple and get fancy later. So start with scheduling an hour maybe once or twice a week, you get to decide. But if you want to start with one, that's totally fine.

Now, focus time is what it sounds like, meaning you have no other distractions. So you want to put your phone on silent, or better yet put it on Do Not Disturb so you don't even hear it vibrate. No distractions period. This means not looking at your phone for texts, not looking at Facebook, not looking at Instagram. It's just you and the things you need to pay attention to.

Now the next question is, well, what do you schedule or what do you do during your focus time? This is where you decide. And here are some of the pitfalls that I see with people, including myself. We think we can get a lot of stuff done during our focus time. Now, you might be able to, but we usually overestimate what we can get done in a short amount of time.

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Going back to your brain dump list of things, you want to make things really specific because here's what I see a lot. For example, one of the things that a lot of my clients put off is estate planning because we know it's important but we don't really want to deal with it. So we just don't do it because we think it's fine, we'll do it later.

Also, if you put on your focus time estate planning, you probably won't actually know what to do. And this is what happens, you put something like a big category like estate planning on your focus time. Let's say it's Saturday at 9am in the morning, you're going to look at that, have no idea what that actually means and or feel completely overwhelmed because what does that even mean, estate plan?

Does it mean working on your will? Does it mean finding a lawyer? It's a lot of things, right? And so your brain is going to be like, "Wow, this sounds really complicated, we are feeling overwhelmed. Let's just eat a cookie instead." Or I guess Saturday at 9am it might be let's go out to breakfast instead.

So it's really important to be really, really specific. And if this is something you have trouble with, meaning have trouble with getting things done because you do get overwhelmed when you try to schedule things, make it really, really simple. First of all, it just shows your brain like, oh yeah, we can definitely do this. And it's going to help you think about what you need to get done in a more useful way.

So using that example of estate planning, do not put that on your calendar, you're not going to know what to do. So it might be email or text my friends about referrals. Post in Facebook group to find a lawyer. So it might be find a lawyer, and then like thinking about how you will do that. And then once that's done, you could be like, okay, what's next? And so forth.

I'm a big fan of batching, I think I've talked about it on my podcast before. But this simply means batching similar tasks together. And this works because your brain is sort of thinking the same way and it's sort of easier to

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get it all done at once. Remember, this is focus time, no distractions. You will get so much shit done when you actually do this without any distractions, any notifications.

Now, as you're figuring out this system it's going to be completely normal for you to overestimate what you can get done, normal. Or things take longer than you scheduled, normal. So you've got to give yourself some grace as you figure out this new system of getting shit done.

Now, I'm not saying you have to schedule every single thing on your to-do list. But if you find it helpful, then do it. And remember to break things up into little, tiny, tiny steps because when you see a tiny thing on your calendar, like find a lawyer, even though for some people that might be overwhelming to break it down into who can I text? Where can I post? Who can I ask?

That breaks it down and your brain is like, oh yeah, we can do that. We can text a friend. We can post on a Facebook group asking for referrals. Your brain needs those quick, easy instructions. Remember, our brains are lazy. And once you do those things you're going to feel good because you've made progress on something you may have been avoiding for a long time.

So this is something I do a lot inside my program, Money For Women, is breaking things down into simple steps. I can do that, but then also coaching the client to tell me what are the steps that they are going to take? Because let me give you actually a very common example that comes up in the program.

A lot of my clients want to invest in real estate syndications. And so they'll say things like I really want to invest in one and they give a timeframe. But then they get overwhelmed because like what do they do first et cetera? And so I'll just be like, okay, what do you think the first thing you have to do is? And they said, oh, I guess it might just be doing the course, or spending 30 minutes reviewing the videos, or posting in their Facebook group, things like that.

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Now, let me just spend a few minutes talking about the paper planner I use. Now, this is not required. I really used to think there was a perfect planner for me. And I don't think it exists. And I think this is why people create their own and why there's so many new planners popping up because people want things a certain way.

I do not think I'm going to create my own planner, although it's definitely occurred to me. I was actually thinking of creating some kind of money planner. Now, we do have a workbook inside of Money For Women, which kind of gives you that. But the workbook also is kind of an instructional as well. And so it's not quite just a workbook, anyway, I digress.

So the Michael Hyatt planner is called the Full Focus Planner. It's on the pricey side because you have to buy four of them per year and they run between 40 and 50 bucks per planner, which I know you might be like that's crazy. But it is a great system, I really like it. It is broken up by day. There's stuff in the beginning for months and tasks and goals.

And I really like the way they present it. You can go to, or just Google Michael Hyatt Full Focus Planner and you can actually see how the pages work. And they even have a whole, like how to use the planner because it is like a system. I've actually gone on and off from using it. The reason why you need four books a year is because each book is one quarter.

And so I actually just started reusing it again to see if I want to keep using it. But I think I will because I really like, even though I use Google Calendar, I really like to sit down and spend a few minutes just planning out my day, thinking about it, looking at my appointments, writing it out. It has the space to write out your actual schedule.

Yes, it's on Google Calendar, it might seem repetitive, but something about writing it down is super helpful. And then I like to actually put in parentheses between my appointments the times I have free because I do coaching calls, I have private clients, I have my group coaching calls, and meetings, appointments, et cetera.

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But what I do first is always scheduled in my focus time, and I like to do it in the mornings because my brain is definitely the freshest than. And so I will schedule in those two hours of focus time. And if I have more time available during the day where I know there are certain things I should do, I will schedule additional focus time.

Now, this week I've had a lot of focus time multiple times a day because I'm just playing a bit of catch up from traveling a lot. However, it's been really taxing on my brain and by the time four or five rolls around I am beat. I am super tired. I've been really tired this week, probably because of all the focus time, because focus time does require a lot of energy and attention from your brain.

And I'll be honest, it's been kind of hard to be 100% distraction free because I'm so used to checking notifications. I had to turn a lot of them off so I wouldn't hear those stupid beeps. And this is where the importance of scheduling your stuff coming first is so important.

So scheduling my focus time first, before other appointments, is really important. And I actually make it like a recurring thing on my calendar. My assistant has specific instructions on how to schedule things for me. I basically don't do any calls or appointments until at least 1pm in the afternoon, if not 2pm, that way I can have that morning time to really focus and get things done.

And I don't really do much work on Mondays and Fridays. And so I really sort of pack it in Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday. It's not that I don't ever have appointments on Monday and Friday, but I try to keep those days relatively free and really work on my personal stuff during those days. Or I might spend extra time with my son, for example.

Okay, I hope that was useful and we will put links in the show notes if you want to find out more about the Michael Hyatt Full Focus Planner and the Monday Hour One program. I think you have to be inside of Self-Coaching Scholars to get that. You might be able to buy it as a standalone course but

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it probably would just makes sense to join Self-Coaching Scholars as well because you get so much more. All right. I will see you guys next week.

Hey, if you're ready to create wealth, I want to invite you to join my program, Money For Women Physicians. You'll join a community of like-minded women physicians, who are committed to creating wealth, just head over to wealthymommd.com/money to learn more.