

# **Managing Conflicting Priorities**

## **Toolbox Teleclass Transcription**

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**Professional Program**

**Track 3B - Free Your Time! Organization and  
Time Management Systems**



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## INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the September 2010 Toolbox Telecast. I am going to be talking tonight about how to manage conflicting priorities. Has anyone else joined the call since I dropped off to turn on the recording? Nope? Okay, good.

So, I'm going to actually ask you to put yourself on mute until, and unless, you have questions as to minimize the background noise, and I am going to apologize in advance. I have a bit of a cold. So, hopefully I won't be coughing and sniffing too much through this class, but there we go.

### THE ISSUE OF MANAGING CONFLICTING PRIORITIES MANIFESTS DIFFERENTLY FOR DIFFERENT PEOPLE

So, tonight class, Managing Conflicting Priorities, is I would say, falls under the time management, project management and emotional intelligence categories. All of those. The issue of managing conflicting priorities manifests differently for people.

#### *PROCRASTINATION OR BEING COMPLETELY STUCK*

It could look like you're procrastinating or being completely stuck, and you just can't make a choice. You just can't step forward because conflicting priorities are all kind of screaming at you at once.

#### *ALWAYS SERVING OTHER PEOPLE'S NEEDS/GOALS AND NOT YOUR OWN*

It could look, and does look like for some people, like always serving other people's needs and goals and never quite getting to your own priorities, and it can even also look like always only getting to the things that are on fire--the most urgent priorities, but never really getting to your important priorities.

#### *FREE FLOATING GUILT*

For some people it manifests just as this free-floating sense of guilt or shame, because no matter what priority you're serving at any given moment, you're not fully committed to any of those priorities and there's always guilt about the priorities you're not getting to.

### TWO ASPECTS OF MANAGING PRIORITIES

#### *MAKING THE CHOICE*

These are the different ways that I see this manifesting for people. There are really two aspects of managing priorities. There's the initial making the choice: what priority am I serving right now in this moment? What choice am I making?



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*FOLLOWING THROUGH OR STAYING TRUE TO YOUR CHOICE WITH EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE*

And then there's the other aspect which is once you've made the choice, following through on that choice. In other words, keeping your word about that choice and staying true to your choices. But also, it has to do with, you know, managing your emotions or emotional intelligence, managing the aforementioned guilt or perhaps stress around this. There may be some resistance and resentment that floats up as a result of having to juggle conflicting priorities, but the truth is we always, at any given moment, have conflicting priorities.

That's just the nature of being alive. I don't think that that's changed. You know a lot of people feel like "oh, this is the worst of times and our conflicts are bigger and greater than at any previous time in history." And I'm not sure if I quite buy that.

I think we have many more opportunities than at previous times in history, but that doesn't necessarily mean that there weren't conflicting priorities in the past. It just may mean that the choices are happening more quickly or you're needing to make choices more quickly.

So, let's get into this concept. The first aspect is, of course, making that initial choice. Now, I wrote...this [month's newsletter](#) is really about this aspect of managing conflicting priorities. I wrote some good tips and tricks on how to make this choice. And I'm going to go into a bit more detail on this, but I really think that this is pretty well covered in that [newsletter](#).

## MAKING THE CHOICE

### HAVE CLEAR CATEGORIES AND GOALS IN EACH CATEGORY

So, really the first thing is to have clear categories and goals. Now, making clear categories is a topic I discuss in [Time Management 101](#). Creating clear goals is something that I talk about on couple of different levels. I talk about it in [Goals That Get Results](#). I talk about it in the [Special Road Map to Success](#), and I talk about it in the [Five Year Plan](#). So, these are all in the [membership classes](#) that are available for you to download.

### *THESE ARE THE BUILDING BLOCKS OF YOUR SCHEDULE*

Having clear categories and then having goals...clear, specific, measurable, time dependent goals set in these categories. These are the building blocks of your schedule. And knowing what they are is really the first thing that's going to allow you to make choices, because if you don't know why you're doing any particular thing, why



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you're making a particular choice in a particular moment, why you're taking this action right now, what goal it serves, it's going to make it much harder for you to make decisions, to make choices, because it's going to make it harder for you to see where these priorities land, you know, in a hierarchy of A-priority, B-priority, C-priority.

It's also going to be harder to stick to your choices because you won't know why you're choosing what you're choosing. So, making clear goals and setting, kind of differentiating between the different categories in your life, are really going to help you make these choices.

### CREATE TIME BLOCKS FOR YOUR MAJOR LIFE CATEGORIES – INCLUDING THE EXTERNAL COMMITMENTS

The second thing that's going to help you make the choices are creating time blocks for your major life categories as part of your time management system. So, setting up a time map and saying, you know, "Mondays, from this time to this time is devoted to these categories."

This should include your external commitments as well as the things that are important to you. So, the things that are important to your spouses and children, to your bosses and business partners or your band, to your customers.

### *IF YOU'VE CREATED AN AUTHENTIC TIME MAP – MANY OF YOUR CHOICES ARE ALREADY MADE*

Creating time blocks so that all of those priorities are getting served with some balance throughout the week or throughout the month, if you've created an authentic time map, many of your choices are already made for you. And then it really just becomes staying true to the choices that you've made in advance.

And part of that has to do with being willing to experiment to find out really what is the best way for you to work. Not just what way do you think is going to work best, but what way actually works best on a consistent manner.

So, again, these topics are covered pretty well in the [Time Management 101](#) and 102, in the [Project Management](#) classes. So, I don't want to spend a lot of time here because I feel like I've covered this material pretty well in other places.

### *A GOOD TIME MAP IS FLEXIBLE AND IT BECOMES A MATTER OF MASTERING BALANCE OVER TIME*

So, once you've kind of made some broad choices through your time map, you also want to be able to be flexible within that. And that has to do with mastering balance over time. So it may be that this week you've got a deadline, you've got a conference



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coming up that you have to prepare for or you've got a show coming up that you have to prepare for, and you know that's going to be the urgency this week and that's the way it goes right?

But during periods when you don't have major deadlines coming up, building towards the longer term deadlines, meaning your goals, your projects, becomes part of this managing conflicting priorities skill base, meaning that you schedule time to be working in the different areas and that you're actually keeping your words to yourself doing that.

A good time map is flexible. It becomes, you know, you can trade out like say you know on Thursday afternoon when you're going to be working on this project, that was the only time you could get your dentist appointment. Okay, well, dentist appointment for you falls under self-care, let's slip out a chunk of time that you were going to spend on self-care earlier in the week and put that project time in there. So, you can kind of do the trade-offs in your time blocks. And again I cover this more and more extensively.

#### ASK GOOD QUESTIONS

The last piece of this or actually the next to last piece of this, the penultimate piece of this, is to, in your decision making process, ask good questions.

#### *LISTED IN NEWSLETTER ARTICLE*

Now, I listed a whole bunch of questions in the [newsletter article](#). So, I don't want to necessarily go through and, you know, read those questions because they're available to you, and I'll have a link to that [newsletter](#) in the resources for this class once I've gotten this up on the website.

But basically you want to be asking questions that focus on, that really focus on clarifying your needs, clarifying which goals these serve, clarifying how you're going to really serve the different priorities in a balanced way throughout your schedule.

#### *WHY "WHY" IS NEVER A GOOD QUESTION*

And in general, "why" is not a good question. See, because unless "why" is asking you really "which" question in disguise. Which goal does this priority serve? Because you might be asking why is this urgency a priority for me, but that's really just a question of "which" category. Or which goal does this serve? Which project does this serve? So it's not really a "why" question. Why questions are more like "Why do I have to do this?" "Why does this always seem to happen to me?" "Why can't I just spend time on what I want to spend time on?".



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*GOOD QUESTIONS CLARIFY; BAD QUESTIONS DRAW YOU DEEPER DOWN THE RABBIT HOLE*

See, these kinds of questions are, first of all, based in a victim method of looking at your world. Right? "Why do these things happen to me?" That is classic victim thinking. And, actually they lead you not to empowering answers or clarifying answers. They kind of lead you deeper down the rabbit hole of feeling helpless and hopeless and being a victim to your circumstances.

So instead of asking those kind of questions, you want to be asking "who, what, how, which" kinds of questions. So who is this important to? Is this important to me or is it really just important to other people? When is this really due? Is this really as urgent as my boss is making it out to be? Or is it really only urgent because he's thinking about it in this moment, but really not due until next month?

So who, what, when, what goal does this serve? What project does this serve? How am I being fulfilled by this action or this urgency? Whose opportunity is this anyway? Is this really my opportunity? Or is this an opportunity that's better suited to someone else in a different level in their business?

*USE THE DECISIONS YOU 'VE ALREADY MADE WITH YOUR GOALS AND YOUR TIME MAP TO GUIDE YOUR QUESTIONS*

So you want to be asking good questions and remember use the decisions you already made as a result of having set your goals and creating your time map to help guide you through these questions. When am I going to be putting, giving this priority attention? What have I already decided with my time map? Is my time to be focusing on this project?

**BE REALISTIC ABOUT YOUR AVAILABILITY**

And also be realistic about your availability. You know, when looking at an opportunity or an urgency, just be realistic. Are you going to be able to accomplish this given the amount of time you have? Are you going to be able to accomplish this? Or do you want to perhaps delete, delay, diminish or you know, delegate this urgency? The four Ds also talked about in your [Time Management 101](#) class.

Okay. Before I move on to the other aspect of this, "Staying True to Your Choices with Emotional Intelligence," I did want to open it up to questions. Did you have any questions about the "Making the Choice" aspect of this piece? You can feel free to come off mute.

Guy 1: I guess the biggest statement that comes out to me is an effective time map means that decisions are already made for you. Because I think I can become a little





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overwhelmed with so much to do or so many options, and that in having an effective time map, not just a time map but an effective one, that's been built upon clear goals and clear categories, that a lot of those decisions that used to be overwhelming are already made for me, and I can therefore be a lot more productive.

Debra: Exactly! We're going to talk about this a little bit in the next section but very often the feeling of overwhelm is the result of focusing too broadly. You got too big of a focus so all of these other urgencies are coming in and making themselves heard.

Whereas, if you've made the decision with the time map and right now from 1 o'clock till 3 o'clock I'm working this project, then all of those other urgencies, because I've narrowed my focus, I might jot down something so I don't forget it when that thought pops into my mind, but really I'm focusing on this project.

And the overwhelm is diminished because I've narrowed my focus. One of the main solutions to overwhelm is to narrow your focus. And if you've laid out a weekly schedule so that you can trust that all of the priorities are getting the attention they need. Then you don't have to be thinking about them right now, because this isn't the time for that priority, this is the time for this priority. Does that make sense?

Guy 1: Yes.

Debra: Any other questions or comments about this section before I move on? Cool. Alright, go ahead and put yourself on mute and I'm going to move on to the next thing, which is staying true to your choices with emotional intelligence.

## STAYING TRUE TO YOUR CHOICES WITH EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

Now I have already several classes around emotional intelligence. I've got [Overcoming Fear](#), [Transforming Your Beliefs - The Key to Success](#), [Transform Your Inner Critic into Your Staunches Ally](#), all of these classes are going to be really helpful when dealing with this aspect. I've also got just an [overview around emotional intelligence](#). What it is, how to think about it.

And so I'll be referring back to those classes but I really want talk specifically about how you manage. So here you are. You've made your choice about which urgencies you're going be serving, which priorities you're working on at what point during your day or during your week.

So having made those decisions, how do you keep your word? How do you keep your word to yourself and how do you keep your word to other people?



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**MANAGE EXPECTATIONS BOTH YOURS AND OTHERS**

So the first thing is to manage expectations, and this deals both with yourself as well as with other people. So let's talk about managing other people's expectations first, and then we'll talk a bit about managing your own expectations.

I'm making a note because actually I didn't put that into the outline...it's not letting me...alright. I'll come back to that.

I'm dealing with Microsoft Office 2010, and I'm still learning how to use this system. I'm making a note to myself, expectations yours and others. Okay.. Sorry about that.

So, managing expectations. Let's talk about other people's expectations. First of all, when you're talking to someone and they're saying, whether it's the boss or a wife or husband or children, be clear about your availability and keep your word to yourself and to others.

What does that look like? If your child is coming to you because you're working from home and your child is saying "Hey I want to play right now," and this is really true with younger children, but it's also true with older children who want your attention. "I need help with my homework" or "I need a ride to my girlfriend's house" or whatever.

*BE CLEAR ABOUT YOUR AVAILABILITY AND KEEP YOUR WORD BOTH TO YOURSELF AND OTHERS*

Be clear about your availability. That doesn't mean you're not available or you're never available. It just means "Hey, I'm working on this project until 3 o'clock and from 3 to 4 o'clock I'm available to you to play" or "I'm available to you to give you a ride or work on your homework or whatever it is." Or "I'm available to work on the honey do list that you created for me, honey".

But be clear about your availability, but then, also you know, if you say you are available at 3 o'clock, be available at 3 o'clock. Just put yourself aside because that's what you promised. Okay? Be clear about the quantity of time that you have or how much you can accomplish in that quantity of time.

And don't make promises just to get someone to shut up. Only make promises that you're really clear you're going to keep. Because I promise you, if you make a promise just to get someone to go away or to shut up, that is going to come back and bite you in the ass big time.

And if you do that a lot, then no one will ever trust you. And you won't trust yourself either because you know you lied. So be clear about your availability and keep your word both to yourself and others.



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*WHEN THINGS CHANGE (AND THEY WILL) COMMUNICATE RESPONSIBLY AND IN A TIMELY MANNER*

And you know what, when thing change and they will, communicate responsibly and in a timely manner. So for example if something else comes up that really, truly is more urgent, as soon as you know that it's come up, communicate that you're not going to be able to complete what you thought you could complete.

If you get sick like I did today, if some other urgency comes up, just communicate. Be responsible. And don't wait until something is due to communicate about why you couldn't do it.

Communicate it as soon as something comes up, even if you think you might still be able to get to it. I'm going to say that again. Even if you think in your mind you might still be able to get to complete this project that you promised to so and so, but something came up and you're starting to not be completely sure, communicate it. Send an email.

Say, "You know what, this thing has come up. I may or may not be able to complete that. What I'd like to do is A. change what I've promised, B. let you know that it's a maybe now instead of an absolute or C. Promise less. I won't be able to put an hour into this but I will be able to put a half an hour into this.

So manage people's expectations. Now, manage your own expectations. Really be wise to how to how you talk to yourself. Like, you know "I'm going to sit down and do email for a minute". Well, I don't know about you, but for me and for most people, it's impossible to do email for a minute, because really what you mean is you're going to do email for a while.

Right? But if you say to yourself you're just going to do it for a minute and then an hour and a half passes, and you didn't do what you were intending to do in that hour and a half, then you've already screw the pooch with your schedule.

So schedule those thing that you just know you need to get to and manage your expectations about how long it's going to take or how much you're going to accomplish in the time that you've allotted.

Part of that is just experimenting and finding out what's real and what's true. Part of that is finding systems that allow you to postpone dealing with things, like I've discover a new system on my Google apps Gmail called Manymoos, which allows me to, within my Gmail, actually schedule a task, and then I can just copy and paste a link to that email into the task. It saves into my task list on Manymoos, and I can archive that email. It's no longer in my inbox. I'm no longer staring at it, but I know that I won't forget



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it because it's in my task list, and I'll get to it because I scheduled time to go through my task list, and my tasks are organized by my categories, and by my goals and projects.

So when it's time to focus on developing my website, for example, I take a look at this cool tool that someone told me about for my blog, right? That's the time to do it. Not now while I'm trying to do my email. That make sense to you guys?

So, you want to basically create systems for managing this stuff. I'm going to come to that a little bit in a minute. So you want to manage expectations, your own and other people's, and you want to primarily just be responsible around your decisions. Don't be unconscious around your decisions.

If you decide to work on email for half an hour, set an alarm, do what you have to do to stop working after half an hour. I also found really a cool tool that, I'll have to find it and put a link on it, but it's basically a countdown timer. It's a website that you can create a countdown timer. I had it on my old computer, and I don't think I got it up on my new computer yet.

Basically it's just a countdown. So you set it for half an hour and at the end of half an hour the alarm goes off. What's really fun about it is you can set the alarm sounds and I have mine set to applause, so that when that half an hour is done, I hear this (clapping sound), which it always makes me feel good because I'm getting applause.

And you know I'm an actress from way back. I like getting applause. So just find stuff that helps you keep your word to yourself and keep your word to others, which leads me to my next thing which is maintain good boundaries...both internally and externally.

#### MAINTAIN GOOD BOUNDARIES BOTH INTERNALLY AND EXTERNALLY

##### *HEALTHY BOUNDARIES MAKE HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS AND SUCCESSFUL PEOPLE*

Look. Healthy boundaries make healthy relationships and successful people. What do I mean by boundaries? Well we've already talked about some of them. We've already talked about maintaining, managing other people's expectations and saying, "I'm not available now but I will be available at 3 o'clock." That's a boundary. That's setting a boundary. "I can accomplish this thing that you want from me but I won't able to do that." Saying "Yes and No" clearly to people and saying "Yes or No" clearly to yourself.

##### *PEOPLE TREAT YOU HOW YOU TRAIN THEM TO TREAT YOU –*

See, people treat you how you've train them to treat you. If you don't respect your boundaries, why should they? If you don't keep your word to yourself, why should they keep their word to you? If you don't make your business a priority, why would anyone



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else? So when someone says, "Oh, you don't have a job you could drive me to the airport, can't you?" if you're working full time for yourself.

Well, I'm sorry. You do have a job, and you do have commitments and that doesn't mean you can't drive them to the airport. But you need to clarify that in order to drive them to the airport; you are putting aside these other commitments. And you need to be clear to yourself.

Keeping clear boundaries is energetic as well. I know I work with a lot of people who share physical office space. And so, keeping clear office space boundaries, whether it's in your home or in an actual office, is going to be really critical. Somebody else's chaos or mess impinging on your area will become a conflicting priority.

It will become a distraction. By the way, keeping your own space organized can also create conflict for yourself. So managing physical space can be really important, but managing energetic space, so that when you're focused on your own work, that focus is not constantly being interrupted.

For example, if your computer gives you any kind of an alarm that you've got email, turn it off. Just turn it off. Look at your email when you've schedule time to look at your email. If you're working on a creative endeavor, turn your phone off. Just turn it off. That's what voicemail was invented for.

### CLEARING THE SPACE – THE PROCESS

So now I want to talk, I want to teach you a process called "Clearing the Space." Now, this is a process that I run with private clients at the beginning of every session. I also use it for myself on my own time when I'm wanting to physically and emotionally clear the space because, at any given moment, most of us are thinking about 14 different things.

But like your computer, if you got 14 programs open, I'm betting your computer doesn't work as well. Well, your brain won't work as well either. So what we do with this process is literally close the other programs, so you can focus on the one program you're working on, because multi-tasking doesn't work.

Studies have shown that when you are distracted by a phone call or an email or something else coming along, it can take as much as 15 minutes to pull your focus back to the project you were working on. And that's a huge amount of time if you add that up over weeks and months.

So clearing the process. First of all, clear your desk so you have a clear space to work on, and then you're going to work this process. I'm going to give you an example of how this process works, and then I'm going to break it down into steps for you, okay?



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Let's see, what is going on in the background for me in this moment is that I'm closing my office and moving back into running my business from my home. The emotions associated with that are overwhelm, anxiousness, some anticipation, and some stress. So I'm setting aside overwhelm, anxiousness, anticipation, and stress, so I can focus on what I'm doing right now in this moment.

What else is going on in the background is that I have a cold, and the emotions associated with that are annoyance and impatience and discomfort. So I'm setting aside annoyance, impatience, and discomfort, so I can focus on our session, on what I'm doing right now in this moment.

Okay, so let me break this down for you so you can kind of hear what I've been doing. So first you name the thing that's going on. You just want to give it a title you don't want to go into great details about all of the aspects of it. Like with my move, I could have got into a whole story around it, but that's counterproductive because the more you talk about something the more you bring it up. So you just want to give it a title. I'm moving my office.

Next you want to name the emotions connected to it. And again without explanations. So it's not, I'm anxious because....it's Anxiousness, Excitement, Overwhelm. You just name the emotions. So step 1 is to name stuff that's going on. Step 2 is to name the emotions connected to that stuff. Step 3 is to state your intention powerfully and in the present tense. Now the words I use is "I am setting aside..." and I always rename the emotions because I find it helps. "I am setting aside the anxiousness, excitement and overwhelm so I CAN focus on writing my music." "So I can focus on this coaching session." "So I can focus on..." whatever it is you are focusing on. Okay?

So you name the stuff that's going on. You name your emotions. You state your intentions powerfully and in the present tense. So it's not "I'm going to TRY to set this aside." "It would be nice if I could set it aside." It's "I AM setting it aside so I can focus".

And then you give yourself a moment to actually set it aside. Now I have a lot of relaxation training, a lot of times I'm able to just set stuff aside with a breath. If it's a big thing, and also a lot of my clients use this technique, you can use a technique of visualizing literally, physically setting that thing aside. You can put it into a drawer and close the drawer. You can put it in a box and seal off the box.

I had one client who would call me from his office outside in the parking lot. He would call me from his car outside of his office in the parking lot, and he would always put everything into the trunk and close the trunk. That is his visualization of taking the emotions and putting them in the trunk. By the way, that's what you're setting aside. You're actually setting the emotions aside.



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Because that's what gets in your way. So that's what the process is. One thing at a time. You set all of the other urgencies, all of the other priorities, all of the other noise that's going on in the background, so you can clear the space and emotionally just be grounded and centered to do the project that you're about to work on.

You can use this process before you get up on stage. You can use this process before you walk into a recording studio, before you walk into a meeting, before you pick up a phone to make a call. Whatever it is. Just use the process to clear the space.

And honestly this process shouldn't take you...it took me about 4 minutes to explain the process to you. It probably shouldn't take you longer than that to clear the space. You can do it inside you own head. You can do it out loud. If you are sitting down to do some work with another person, you can have them clear the space, and then you clear the space or vice versa.

So it can be really powerful to just get grounded and centered before you move into the next phase of what you're doing. So in other words, this is about transitioning. Right? This is about transitioning into a chunk of time in which you are focusing on a specific priority.

#### SETTING A CONTEXT

Another thing that you can do is set a context. You can set a context for this next hour and a half. Now, a context, and I explained context in another class but I don't remember which one, but a context is basically the underlying belief that allows you or frees you or empowers you to do what you're about to do.

So it's not the agenda. It's not, "I'm going to write 2 great songs." It's "My unique vivid personality speaks through my music." Okay? So it is the underlying belief that empowers you to create what you're about to create.

So for example, if you're about to make marketing calls, "My gifts and value are needed and valued highly in the marketplace," could be a context before, you know, an hour or two of marketing calls. So basically a context is the underlying belief.

It's not so much the agenda, what you're looking to get done. It's not so much the emotion, how you want to feel while you're getting it done, but it's the belief that empowers that emotion, that empowers your ability to achieve what you're looking to get done. Okay?

Now, I want to actually take a quick break and open it up for questions before I do the last major points on this "Managing Emotional Intelligence," and "Keeping Your Word to Yourself" once you made these decisions.



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Uhm, Ron did you have any questions?

Ron: Well, my hand hurts from writing all the notes.

Debra: Ah, yay! My underlying purpose has been fulfilled!

Ron: Uh, I like how you use the phrase "emotional intelligence." I don't know that I've heard it referred to as intelligence. I've heard emotional maturity before...

Debra: There is actually a great book by Daniel Goldman called *Emotional Intelligence*, which is where I got that language from.

Ron: Okay, I like that. Also... but I like how you empower yourself too like the applause alarm, little tweaks or little things that you do to keep you...keep the positive hop in your steps.

Debra: Yup! You need to make this stuff fun. You know, if I'm going sit down and do my finances or do filing, both of which I dread, just like any other human being, you know, I put on Pandora and play some awesome music, you know, or give myself a limit. "I'm going to this for 45 minutes. I can do this for 45 minutes it's not going to kill me." You know.

Ron: Yeah, that's right!

Debra: So absolutely, you do what you need to do in order to make it fun. In order to make it easy. Sometimes, you know, if you're really feeling stuck and frozen just do something for 5 minutes. Just do it for 5 minutes. You know, that's it.

A lot of times I resist going to networking events because I actually have a fairly strong shy streak when going into a room filled with people that I don't know. And, it's different when I'm a speaker or something because then I like, you know, I have that role to fulfill. But it's harder going to a party where I don't necessarily know a lot of people or a networking event. And I just say, "Okay, half hour rule. I only have to stay half an hour. If I'm miserable, then I can leave."

And I'll ask me to go because I know I only have to stay half an hour. I can do half an hour. And usually I end up staying for 3 hours you know, because once I'm there, you know, it's just the getting there that's hard. So you just have to make it fun for yourself. Absolutely.

## MANAGING THE RECURRING THOUGHTS ABOUT OTHER PRIORITIES





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Alright! So the next thing I want to talk about is managing the recurring thoughts about other priorities. Now, these recurring thoughts maybe, "Oh don't forget to do this," and "You need to do that," and "Why are you spending time here when you need to be spending time there." Right?

These are some thoughts, but it can also show up like you're walking, you just got a cup of coffee and you're on your way into your studio, but in the mean time you saw these dirty dishes or something fell on the floor and you want to stop and pick it up. Or you see the pile of bills and they need to get paid. You know there's all these things that can trigger other conflicting priorities. Or it could be a phone call or it could be an email. It could be a million different things. It could be a tweet or a text message that distracts you.

Now, the truth is in this world the likelihood of you being able to eliminate all distractions is pretty small. Stuff comes up. Stuff distracts, whether it's internal stuff or external stuff. You're going to get distracted moment to moment. Particularly if you're taking on something that you find difficult or challenging for whatever reasons.

Then those voices, those thoughts they come in to distract you, because frankly, what you're doing is difficult. And you want to go do something else. How do you manage these things?

*CREATE A SYSTEM TO JOT DOWN THOSE REMINDERS*

The first thing you want to do is to create a system to jot down those reminders. For example, I mentioned the Manymoos, you know, where I can just create a task. I can just go into my Manymoos website and create a task. Because in that moment I'm thinking about it, you know, or see that the task already exists on my task list.

Whatever system you use to manage your tasks, create a holding bin, a single place that holds these spots so you can just jot them down. You might want to do it if you have an iPhone or smartphone. You might want to just record it. I use, when I'm handling, really, when I'm going through major change or a major project, I have a little micro cassette player that I just carry around with me everywhere, to remember.

And very often I'll find that I'll speak those thoughts, and then I'll go down to jot them down on my major task list, and most of them are already there.

*THE MORE YOU KEEP YOUR WORD TO YOURSELF, THE MORE YOU WILL TRUST AND THE LESS YOU'LL HAVE TO MANAGE*

So then the next time that thought comes up I can just say to myself, "Oh you know what, that's already scheduled. I'm handling that Thursday at 2 o'clock. Don't worry.



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Thank you for reminding me. I appreciate you watching out for me. But you don't need to worry about that. That's handled." Okay?

The more you keep your word to yourself on a regular basis, the more you're going to trust your system, and the less of these distracting thoughts you'll have to manage. You'll just find them falling off because you're trusting your system. Okay?

But while you're building your system and while you're beginning to really make that system a habit, you're going to keep reminding yourself because you don't trust it yet and that's okay. That's part of the process. But the more you can say to yourself, "You know what. I've already scheduled that and I will keep my word about that. I promise." And then keep your word about it. You know you don't have to do that because you spent, up to this point, not keeping your word to yourself.

And so that voice just doesn't quite trust you yet and it's looking out for you. It's trying to keep you from messing up. So just thank it for reminding you and let it know that it can trust. That you've got it handled.

*USE THE INNER CRITIC METHODS FROM THAT CLASS*

I have a couple of specific techniques for that in the Inner Critic class, [How to Transform Your Inner Critic into Your Staunches Ally](#). The training method how to train your inner critic. All of those methods will really help with this as well.

But the more you've organized your task list by category, the more you've created systems for managing those task lists and managing those projects, and the more you've used those system on a regular basis, the less this stuff is going to happen. Just because you're trusting yourself and you get use to it. Okay?

MANAGING GUILT

*GUILT HAPPENS WHEN YOU ARE PLACING OTHER PEOPLE'S VALUES OVER YOUR OWN IN YOUR OWN MIND.*

The last piece I want to talk about has to do with managing guilt. Now, guilt is an emotion, so this is all about emotional intelligence. One of my mentors, one of my teachers said once, and I found this to be really fascinating, that guilt happens when you're placing other people's values over your own values in your own mind.

I'm going to say that again. Guilt happens when you are placing other people's values, meaning what other people think is important for you. Guilt happens when you're placing other people's importances, urgencies, values over your own decisions, your own values, your own choices, your own priorities and urgencies in your own mind.



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Because in general we don't feel guilty about placing our own choices above other choices of our own. It's usually other people's voices that create guilt. And if you're finding that you're feeling guilty because you're balancing two internal choices and internal priorities, then you just need to create more balance in your life.

Or just be really more honest with yourself about your availability and what you're capable of doing in a given day or a given week or a given month. Okay, so that may have to do with managing your own expectations of yourself.

*GUILT AND BLAME ARE DEAD EMOTIONS – THEY KEEP YOU STUCK, THEY DON'T HELP YOU BE RESPONS-ABLE*

Guilt and blame are dead emotions. Meaning they keep you stuck. They don't help you to grow. They don't help you to improve, and they really don't help you be responsible. Meaning, keep you able to respond.

When you're feeling guilty, when you're blaming yourself or blaming others, you are not empowered in your own choices. You are not trusting or believing in your own choices. You're actually believing that you're making wrong choices. I actually think that that's an illusion. I don't think there is such a thing as wrong choices. I don't think there's any such thing as right choices. I think there are choices and each choice leads you to consequences and outcomes.

Now, if the consequences and outcomes aren't the ones you want, make different choices. But they are not right or wrong. Good or bad. They just have consequences. Okay? And what responsibility is is owning your choice. It was yours. You made it. And owning the consequences and the outcomes, both the ones you expected and the ones you don't totally didn't expect, because they're yours too. Okay?

*STOP SHOULDING ON YOURSELF AND DON'T LET OTHER PEOPLE SHOULD ON YOU EITHER*  
And the final thing that I want to say about this before I open it up one last time for comments and questions is stop "shoulding" on yourself, and don't let other people "should" on you either. "You should be doing this." "You should be doing that." "You shouldn't be doing this." "You shouldn't be doing that." There's no such thing. There's only choices, and as long as you are conscious and intentional in your choices, and even when you are not conscious and intentional, as long as you own that they're your choices, then there are no "would've, should've, could've." They're just choices and outcomes. Okay?

So one last time, if you have any comments or questions, and I would also Ron, love to hear what one think that you're taking away from tonight's class that you're going to be able to implement in the immediate future.



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Ron: Well the immediate future, I do remember here about clearing your desk, clearing the space, setting aside the things, the distractions, so you can detach and state the emotion powerfully and in present tense. During that part of your discussion, I recalled just a few weeks ago where I felt I needed to be more productive. I could make more instrumentals as a composer, and it's always bothering me, but I never recognized it until I somewhat went through what you're describing here, this practice of clearing your mind and clearing your desk.

And noticed my keyboard sat a little too far from my work desk. It sat about like a foot and a half two feet from my desk. I moved it closer to my desk and really boxed myself in and made about five instrumentals in a span of less than 48 hours, and actually got a forward on one of them where it was accepted positively. So, that definitely, there's a lot of truth to what you say there about clearing the space so you can become more productive and more effective.

I guess my only question would be, do you plan on offering the time management intensive that you offered a few months back? Do you plan on doing that any time in the near future?

Debra: I don't know. If I offer it again, it would probably be in the winter in like January, February. It's going to be after I move across country because I'm not doing anything else until I move across country, and I've been juggling that, because frankly, it just didn't sell. And what I may do first is create a DIY kind of workbook, a self-study course that also includes the book that I use, Julia Morgenstern's *Time Management from the Inside Out*. I use that as a text for the class, but I have extra exercises and I have kind of, I don't go in the same order that she goes in, like I do...

So I may create it as a self-study first and then create a workgroup that comes along with it but I haven't decided yet. I just haven't decided. Just because, you know people keep saying they need it, but they haven't been buying so...it's stopped testing the marketplace.

Ron: Sure, sure, absolutely. Yeah, you can't do it if it's not selling. You can tweak it though.

Debra: Right, right. I can tweak it and I may change the format somewhat that I can lower the price point. You know, I have to work on that, but I'm open to suggestions and this goes out to anyone who's listening to this recording as well, for how to make that work. Because, yeah, I think it's needed and I think it's something that suits a group discourse really, really well, and it's really a question of how do I set it up. I may set up some more groups that are add-ons to the membership, like higher levels of



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membership. But you know I'm kind of playing with some ideas around that. I don't know yet. Is that the answer to your question?

Ron: Right, right. Well, it's a marathon not a sprint. We keep putting things out there and got to see if it works.

Debra: And you know, I teach the Multiple Streams of Music or Multiple Streams of Art Income concept, but I use that in my business as well. And really what those courses are are the middle of my funnel. SO I got the low end of the funnel. I've got the memberships, and I've got some CDs and those kind of things. And I've got the high end of the funnel which is private coaching and I'm really missing the middle, so that's kind of where those concepts sit in my coaching funnel. So, I'm working on that.

Ron: Well I got 3 or 4 pages of notes here or so...

Debra: Very cool. So, very good. Thanks for being on the call and have a good couple of weeks and the next class, of course, is the Ask Coach Debra class, which is on my birthday. Isn't that commitment? That is such commitment!

Ron: I saw that! I know. I send you a virtual birthday cake! Happy future birthday! I want to make that one so bad though. You gonna make us all to sing for you?

Debra: I would love that! I would love that! That's really fun.

Ron: I'm a terrible singer.

Debra: You could play. You could provide the music accompaniment.

Ron: There you go.

Debra: Alright! Very cool! It's a free class so we won't have to pay the copyright. Alright Ron, I hope to see you in the Taxi Road Rally. And if not hear your pleasant voice and we have actual a call in the next couple of weeks. So, I'll be calling you.

Ron: Alright, good talking to you. Thank you for your class!

*RESOURCES:*

*GOALS, 5 YR PLAN, SPECIAL ROADMAP, TIME MGMT. 101, 102, PROJ MGMT., PDR, TMIO BOOK, EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE BOOK, TRANSFORM BELIEF, INNER CRITIC, EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE (CLASS)*