

Transcript for "Episode 2. Time Management"

Student Academic Center

Charles Frederick, Director

Sharon Chertkoff, Basic Skills and Outreach Coordinator

Molly Burke, Coordinator of Retention Services

Anthony Guest-Scott, Academic Coordinator

Kelly Rollins, Office Services Assistant

Click to Succeed, Online Student Support

Anthony: We mark time in all kinds of ways. We talk about the experience of time; how it flies by when we're having fun, like water running through our fingers. And we talk about how it can drip out painfully slowly. We divide up time. We chart historical periods - the rise and fall of civilizations, the passing of seasons, beginnings and endings. And we measure time down to the tiniest fractions: hours, minutes, seconds, and even smaller than that. But even with all this marking and all this measuring, mastering time and learning to use it well can be extremely elusive. And not just for college students. For everyone.

Your time, like your money, is not endless. You have to spend it wisely if you want to achieve everything that you want to do. And so cultivating a successful time management habit is really one of the keys to college success, one of the most important keys, and one of the most important keys to success in life. As you go through college and get older and move out into the working world, and you find a partner, and maybe have children, careers, this doesn't get less complex. So now is the time to master this skill, when you can focus on you.

So we bring you our episode on time management. We're going to start with some attitudes about time management we hope you adopt. We'll get into the basics of organization, some best practices for that. And then we'll wrap up by talking a little more about some of the most common challenges people face.

Part 1: Attitudes

Drew: Hi everyone. Welcome to our podcast. We're filming this week at Indiana University's arboretum, a place known for its beauty and peace. That seems especially appropriate this week because it is finals week at Indiana University. And if there's any week that needs good time management skills it is this one. My name's Drew. I'm from the Department of History at Indiana University and I am an instructor for the Student Academic Center.

Kate: I'm Kate. I'm also an Instructor for the Student Academic Center and I'm in the English Department at IU.

Bianca: I'm Bianca. I'm a journalism student here at IU and I'm a peer instructor in the Student Academic Center.

Drew: Okay, so we're going to start off this podcast talking about different attitudes about time management and the first one is this: *You are your time*. Now that sounds kind of like a quote. I imagine there are some that are similar to that.

Kate: Absolutely. Franklin Field said that "The great dividing line between success and failure can be expressed in five words: I did not have time."

Bianca: Or there's one from Charles Bruxton that says, "You will never find time for anything. If you want time, you must make it."

Drew: So there's probably a million of these kinds of quotes going back to, you know, ancient people. I wonder why time has been so heavily quoted.

Kate: Well I think it might be because time management really isn't about just putting your schedule for the week on your calendar.

Bianca: Right, it's not a simple task, but it's really important. I mean, it affects everything you do.

Drew: That's right, Bianca. In fact, how you manage your time paints a picture about who you are as a person. It talks about, for example, what your hobbies are and what your values are. So a person can tell a lot about you by your time management.

Bianca: So an important question, then, to ask yourself is this: is there a disconnect between how I actually spend my time and how I think I'm spending my time?

Kate: Absolutely. And one of the important things to realize is that you can use your time to control this picture of who you are and who you want to be.

Drew: Okay, so if attitude number one is you are your time, the second one is this: Be a "timeologist."

Bianca: A what?

Drew: A timeologist. You know, an "ologist" is someone who studies something, like a geologist studies the earth or a psychologist studies the mind. A "timeologist," Bianca, is someone who studies their own time.

Kate: I think you're making that up.

Drew: I did make that up. Nevertheless...

Bianca: So what exactly does a timeologist do, Drew?

Drew: Well, the important thing to remember here is that a timeologist does not stop studying their own time. So, they begin looking at all the different ways that they're spending their time. They find out what works and what doesn't work. The things that are working well, keep doing them. The things that are not, go back to the drawing board.

Kate: Okay, so it's not one plan for your time from the first semester of Freshman year to the last semester of Senior year.

Drew: Yeah, that's actually especially important. As the semester goes on the expectations on you and your time change, and as a timeologist you need to be able to study these kinds of changes and adjust your time management as needed.

Bianca: Okay, great! So attitude number two is "Be a timeologist." What about number three?

Drew: Attitude number three is "Attune to the now."

Kate: All right, so we've gone from timeologist to Zen Buddhist

Drew: From science to spirituality, if that helps you think about it. Actually, there's nothing particularly mystical about this "attune to the now."

Kate: Well, so do we have another quote coming on for this?

Drew: Yes, that's right. I'm going back a ways for this one. Publilius Syrus one time said, "To do two things at once is to do neither."

Kate: Okay, so that means when we're studying, we're studying, but when we're at home on a study break, we're relaxing, we're not obsessing about a test or about school.

Drew: That's right.

Bianca: So what about when you move from one "now" to another? How do you do that?

Drew: You've got to switch modes, and this is particularly tricky. The way to think about this is, "When I'm in the classroom or when I'm working on my homework, I'm in 'student' mode." And "student" mode isn't necessarily thinking about what I'm going to be doing this weekend. It's not about what I'm doing with my friends; it's not about, even, what are my plans for tonight? The student mode is thinking about, "Here I am in the classroom, this is what I need to be working on right now."

Bianca: So one more time. The three attitudes of time are:

Drew: Okay, so the first one is "You *are* your time."

Kate: The second one – "Be a timeologist."

Bianca: And the third – "Attune to the now."

[Music]

Part 2: The Basics of Organization

Kate: Now we're going to talk about the basics of organization, and we're going to start with a really popular business book by Brian Tracy called *Eat That Frog*. [Frog sounds] It's about procrastination and how you can deal with your habit of putting things off.

Drew: The title sounds kind of silly, *Eat That Frog*, but it's taken from a Mark Twain quote. Twain one time said that every morning he gets up, he eats a live frog - that way he can be certain that the worst thing that can happen to him that day has already happened. So the idea, I suppose, is that every day we need to do something difficult.

Kate: Absolutely. And if we do that difficult thing, we're going to get rid of all of the negative emotions we have associated with it. All the anxiety, nervousness, dread we have about the paper, the test, right? If we actually get up, and we work on it, and we get at least some if it done, we're going to feel great.

Drew: Now, all of us have projects like that, things that you know if you did them they would make a huge difference in your life. And yet, we put them off. Now, for me, it was my dissertation for the history department. And I went too long, in fact, feeling terrible about myself for not getting it done. But once I read Brian Tracy's book and once I began focusing on that frog

- my dissertation - every single day I worked on it, I started feeling great about myself and I got it done.

Kate: Okay. So number one, it's about "frog selection" - recognizing what the most important task we have to do is and what will move us forward the most in our life if we get it done. And then number two, it's about creating a habit. If we can create the habit of eating the frog, getting something done every day, that's the most important skill we can have.

Drew: But it seems like frog selection is really tricky business. I mean some people, I imagine, are really good at this, but for some of us it seems like it would be really hard to learn. Is that something I can learn?

Kate: Yeah, it is. And the main point there is that, right, this is a learned habit. Once you do it, you get into a cycle because you do something, you get it done, and you get kind of a natural high on these endorphins so that you want to do it again.

Drew: Yeah.

Bianca: I see. So then you want more of that feeling so you keep going and create that habit.

Kate: Absolutely. It's the habit of starting and finishing work. That is the most important skill you can have for success in life.

Drew: So now that we have this idea about a prioritizing habit, it's now time to put it into action. And this is harder than it sounds. I mean, it's one thing to know what you ought to do. It's another thing to actually do it.

Bianca: Right. I think the place you need to start is, you know, with what you're doing right now. Hey Drew, can I see your schedule from Freshman year of college?

Drew: Very funny. Like I have my schedule from freshman y - like I even *had* a schedule my Freshman year of college!

Kate: Well, let's make one from memory.

Bianca: Great idea, Kate. In fact it just so happens that I have a pretty accurate depiction of what Drew's schedule looked like right here.

Kate: Cool, put it up.

Drew: That's amazing!

Bianca: I see a lot of stuff that's not on there. What about study time, fun, sleep? All I see are class and work times.

Drew: Well, I didn't think I needed to put, like, study time and sleep on there.

Bianca: Exactly the point. But you do. I mean, at least at first. How else are you really going to see how you're spending your time? So here's a helpful exercise: if you don't already have a weekly schedule, create one that you think pretty much matches what you are doing now, and then spend a week with it. Remember attitude number one? "You are your time?" See if what you *actually* do matches up with what you *think* you do.

Kate: Well, what if it doesn't?

Bianca: Well, let's look at what the most common mistakes are. The first one can be summed up by a Scottish proverb, which says, "What may be done at any time, will be done at no time." This is what's going on with Drew's schedule. It's incomplete. You have to give everything a place.

Drew: Hey, well thanks, but what do you mean by "everything?"

Bianca: Well, you need a place for taking care of yourself, eating right, exercise, sleep.

Kate: Right, and college is your full time job.

Bianca: Any other employment.

Kate: Fun.

Drew: And don't forget relationships – family, friends, my extensive dating life!

Kate: Well that sounds like a complete list. What mistakes are we making, then?

Bianca: Well besides not giving everything a place, people tend to not give things enough time. They have a schedule they use but it may not be realistic. Remember how you said, Kate, that college is your full time job?

Kate: Yeah.

Bianca: Okay, guys; well, let's walk them through the math.

Drew: Okay, so the math goes like this: for every hour that you have in class, you should plan on two to three hours outside of class.

Kate: What is outside time?

Drew: Well now, that's everything that you're not doing in a classroom and yet it pertains to the class. So it'd be like research for a paper, it would be working in a small group, it would be preparing for your quizzes and tests, it would even include reading that you have to do for the class. All of that kind of jazz is outside time.

Bianca: And then you take your credit hours for the semester...

Drew: Yeah and that's a minimum of twelve here at IU.

Kate: But doesn't it take fifteen to sixteen credits a semester to graduate in four years?

Bianca: That's true. So, about 15 hours per week of "in class" time, plus 30 hours outside of class - 15 times 2 - which equals about 45 hours per week of school.

Kate: That really is a full time job.

Bianca: We should point out that, in reality, this will vary with what you're taking. But start with this number and, you know, go up or down from there.

Drew: There's a couple of other variables too, like the amount of time it takes to get to class - that should be factored in, as well as time to eat.

Kate: Absolutely, and also it's helpful if you place some of that outside time just before and just after class. If you have a few minutes before class, review the homework, review your notes from last time, prepare so that you're really focused and ready to take good notes this time. If you have ten minutes after class, look over the notes, summarize the class, right, connect it back to the homework.

Bianca: Right. So what Kate's saying is use your downtime to get ahead. That time when you're sitting in class, texting on your cell phone before the teacher gets there is a time that you can be using to, you know, further your education.

[Music]

Part 3: Common Challenges

Drew: So now we've talked about having a prioritizing habit and also a weekly schedule. We should now address common challenges and there's one at the top of this list. One monster that threatens to stop everything.

Kate: It's something everyone does, even grad students and professors.

Bianca: It's miserable.

Drew: And it can mess everything up.

Kate: It's...

Bianca: It's...

Drew: Procrastination! [Scream] Did we make that scary enough for you?

Kate: I think so. So how do we get a handle on it?

Drew: Well, the first step is to understand where it comes from. Why do people procrastinate so much? We have a top seven list for this.

Kate: Absolutely. Number seven is perfectionism.

Bianca: Number six: It doesn't seem relevant to you and satisfies someone else's goals.

Drew: Number five: The task is ambiguous.

Kate: Number four: You adjust the time that you think you're going to take to do your work by lowering your ambitions on the project.

Bianca: Number three: You plan to do it, but do so unrealistically.

Drew: Number two: You tell yourself that you work best under pressure.

Kate: And the number one reason we procrastinate? It's addicting.

Drew: Now I want to talk about this one in particular. I think it happens kind of like this: you have a project, it's the night before and you finally decide I'm going to get that project done. You

go ahead and you work on it. You finish it, you turn it in, and when you get it back, you find out, hey, you did all right.

Kate: What do you do the next time you have a paper?

Drew: So the next time you think to yourself, well heck, last time I procrastinated and I still did all right. I don't even need to start as early as I did this time - I'll even work later.

Bianca: So you see how it works? It gets a little bit worse every time. Little by little, you start doing things later and later.

Kate: Okay, well, why does that matter as long as I'm still getting an okay grade?

Drew: This is a miserable experience. It's a rollercoaster of doing everything at the last minute. You have extremely stressful moments where you keep putting off doing the project, thinking to yourself, "I ought to be working on that," and then you suddenly, in kind of an adrenal rush, get the project done, only to repeat the cycle over and over. It's exhausting.

Kate: Okay, so this is a problem lots of people have. What do we actually do about it?

Drew: Well that's a good question, Kate, and for this we need to not look just only at our weekly schedule, but we actually need to zoom back just little bit and look at our semester schedule.

Kate: All right, so the first step is when we know we have something to do we actually get organized and get ourselves together. And the moment that you actually know you have something due is at the very beginning of the semester, when you get your syllabi for your classes. That's when you should write all of your due dates in a calendar. If you have email with a calendar feature, like Gmail, you can send automatic reminders to yourself a week in advance saying, "Hey, start on the paper."

Bianca: And then take a look at all of your large assignments in your classes. For each one, break it down into small manageable steps.

Kate: And then you put your steps in a task list and give yourself a due date. You can even use online tools. We really like Remember the Milk.

Drew: Now, in addition to those kinds of tasks you can also do things in the moment, very specific things that help you overcome procrastination.

Kate: Simple things like cleaning up your physical environment, getting all the stuff off your desk, and putting your phone across the room so you're not texting every five minutes.

Bianca: You can adjust the way you're thinking about the task at hand also. Connect it to a bigger picture, a goal, or something you really care about.

Kate: Yeah, tell your friends, ask them to check on your work and see if you're getting it done. They can give you accountability.

Bianca: You could try the Pomodoro Technique. Check out pomodorotechnique.com for more info. But the basic idea is that you divide your work into thirty minute blocks, then you work for 25 minutes, break for five, work for 25, break for five... you get the idea.

Drew: And finally, the best thing you can do is get started. So one common challenge is procrastination and the other one is probably a heavy workload. There are times when no matter what, it seems like you don't have enough hours in the day, that no matter how efficient you are, you're not going to be able to get everything done.

Kate: Especially busy weeks are during midterms and finals. What do you do when you run into them?

Drew: So, let's show them the Rubik's Cube, Bianca.

Bianca: Absolutely. Everyone knows what this is, right?

Drew: Mm-hm.

Bianca: Have any of you ever solved it?

Kate: I've never done it.

Drew: Not once.

Bianca: Right. Probably because it's made up of a lot of little squares on six sides - you know - a lot of little parts. Even though it's a complex object, in the end you can only do it like this. [Twists the rows on the cube].

Drew: Hmm.

Bianca: You know, turn it one row at a time.

Drew: Now, what does this have to do with a heavy workload?

Bianca: Everything. No matter how complex a problem is, almost any problem really, the only way you'll solve it is by taking it one step at a time. You turn one time and eventually you'll get there.

Kate: All right, so you break it down just like you would an assignment.

Bianca: Yes. The only difference here is that you have a lot less breathing room than you usually do. There's a lot more steps to put into your schedule, especially during, you know, midterms and finals week. But, essentially it's the same process.

Kate: One row at a time?

Bianca: One row at a time.

Drew: All right, so that's a wrap for our podcast. Let's go to the takeaways.

[Music]

The Takeaways

Anthony: If you run into academic trouble, chances are the first place to look is your time management. When you first get to college, you're suddenly trying to handle everything about your life, and you probably really haven't done that before. And so it's unreasonable to expect that you're going to be good at it at first. But the good news is you can work on it and you can get better. So that's the thing to remember right now. Start working on it and improve. The first place to look, if you want to do that, I think, is at your attitudes. Remember those three we talked about? The first one: You are your time. Make sure there's no disconnect between what you say, or would like to believe, is important to you and what you actually do with your time. Two, be a "timeologist." Really study your time. Analyze it. That way you can find those disconnects and you can fix them. And third, attune to the now. Be fully present, 100% engaged in whatever you're doing at that moment. When you're in class, you're about class, and when you're not, until you have time to work on it, turn it off and enjoy yourself. Move on to the next thing.

Once you've got those attitudes in place, you're ready to think about prioritizing. Every day when you wake up ask yourself, "What's my frog for that day?" Remember *Eat That Frog*? Okay, do the worst first, and get it done, get it out of your way, get it out of your life. That feels better and it starts the day off on the right foot.

And don't forget to schedule everything. Put everything in your calendar, not just class times and major exams, but every assignment. Break them down into steps; put them in there. Put down study time. Put down review time. If you give everything a place and you give it realistic time, when you sit down to look at your schedule, college should pretty much look like a full time job.

If you follow all of these things, what you're going to create is an addiction to accomplishment, and to positive and productive energy. Every step completed will be its own reward and will bring you feelings of success. The payoff? A job complete *and* well done without the misery of trying to do the work the night before and probably not doing the best job that you could. This is how you beat procrastination. This is how you handle the most complex and heavy assignments and the most grueling schedule. Other people do it all the time. So can you. See you next time.

Co-Hosts

Andrew M. Koke
Kate Goldstein
Bianca Lev

Boom Operator

Amber Girven

Scripts, Videography, Editing, and Original Music

Anthony Guest-Scott

Additional Media

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