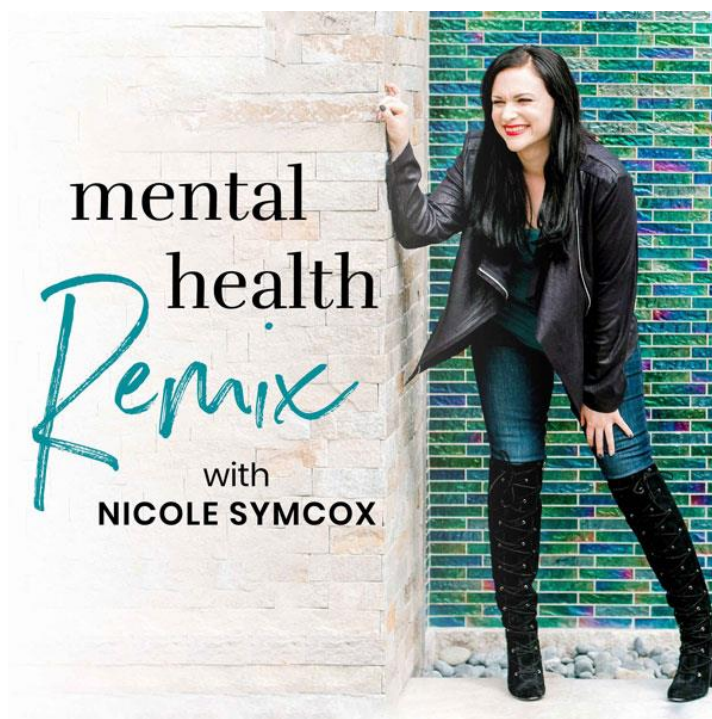


Ep #49: How to Manage Your Time



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Nicole Symcox

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So, find how you focus best. If you're not ADHD, do you need to be in complete silence? Do you need to have the door closed? Or do you need to have nature sounds in the background? Do you need to be outside? Figure out how you focus. And sometimes, it's a process of elimination, meaning you try something and it doesn't work so then you try something else.

Welcome to *Mental Health Remix*, a show for ambitious humans who are ready to feel, think, and be different. If you want to stop struggling with perfectionism, build better relationships, and connect with yourself and your potential, this is the place for you...

Here's your host, educator, coach and licensed psychotherapist, Nicole Symcox...

Hello, my friends. Welcome to episode 49. So, today, I want to talk to you about time management, something we all kind of struggle and wrestle with. And I'm just going to give you some quick tips on how to manage your time well and what to do if those things aren't working.

Because sometimes, we try to do time management and we're like, "I'm implementing all of the right things and yet I still can't seem to get it together and get my stuff turned in on time or show up on time for appointments," or whatever it may be. But, let's talk about time management.

So, basically when you think about time management, it's really about planning. And so, planning is really, really difficult for the anxious or stressed or trauma brain because you're up against all of this internalized chaos. And so, a plan can feel very foreign to that part of yourself that is so acclimated to chaos.

When you introduce a structure or a plan, sometimes it's difficult for that anxious brain to get on board with it because it's so concerned with all of

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the what-ifs. Like, what if we don't do it right? What if we fail? What if I'm late? We start worrying about all the things. And pretty soon, we're so distracted down a rabbit hole, we're not even implementing the plan.

And so, going back to one of the episodes I did previously on how to make decisions with an anxious brain, you want to ground yourself first before you start any task. You want to try to drop some of that anxiety to the best of your ability before you start because it's going to create a path for you to be able to focus.

And so, the first step in all of this, once you have grounded yourself – and you can refer to that episode where I give tips on how to do that – you first want to start with a plan.

Now, you can do this the night before. But you should do it when you're able to think logically and easily and be able to strategize, okay. So, you want to create a plan.

So, before the day even starts, you want to sort of write out all the things you need to do and you want to put a time limit for each task that has to be done. Now if you have to drive somewhere, you would include drive time in that task.

So, let's say you need to run an errand for 15 minutes but it takes you 15 minutes just to get there and 15 minutes just to get back home, that's a 45-minute task. So, to be safe, in case you hit traffic or there's an extra-long line, you might want to allow an hour for that specific task. That way, you don't overschedule yourself. Because if you schedule yourself right up to 45 minutes to be on the other side of town, you're not going to make it.

So, giving yourself a little bit of buffer can sometimes reduce your stress levels because I think, when we overschedule ourselves and overpack, we start to get overwhelmed, right? It's no surprise there.

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So, make sure, when you're creating your plan, like when you're writing out, you're putting time limits on each thing. So, that's not just for getting place to place. Time limits also work in terms of putting limits on yourself. This is part of putting boundaries on yourself.

Because when we are anxious about a task, we can spend days overthinking it. It will never be right. It will never be perfect. If you're working on a project, if your anxious brain has the opportunity to really chew that up, you are going to never feel good about it. So, you need to put time limits on stuff.

This is a way of putting boundaries on yourself. And I talk about this in my boundaries course, how to do this, because this is part of it. And a lot of times, we don't think about that, that we need even boundaries on ourselves. We usually think it's about other people. But boundaries about us. So, sometimes we put limits on our own selves.

So, let's say you have a project that's due. You need to put a time limit on how long that's realistically going to take. So, perhaps it is going to take three hours. Put a three-hour – like, from 12 to three, you are working on this project and this project alone. You say no to everything else and you stay focused on the task at hand.

It's really, really important to really honor that time. But if you use that 12 to three and you're answering phone calls, you're paying attention to texts, you're answering things on Slack, you're going to get distracted and that 12 to three is going to be gone before you know it and you're not going to have worked on anything.

So, putting a time limit on things increases our ability to focus. And it also takes away this fear of not being able to get it right. So, sometimes, we procrastinate. This is why we don't manage time. We procrastinate because we dread the task we're doing, or unconsciously we are afraid of failure.

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More times than not, the reason people procrastinate is they have an unconscious worry that they're going to fail or not do well at the task. So, they put it off for as long as possible until they're up against the final hour before it's due and then all this adrenaline kicks on and then they do it. But it's an emotionally draining cycle to have to wait for adrenaline to motivate you to get the task done.

And I hear this all the time from friends, from clients, from whoever. It is really frustrating to be a procrastinator. That is not an enjoyable process. And so, if you're in the habit loop of procrastination, we want to start giving you some support and start changing your patterns and how you do that.

And so, sometimes, you may have to address the underlying issue in therapy, you know, why am I so afraid of failure? Or why I'm so afraid to show up for myself. Like, what is this procrastination rooted in?

Because procrastination is often rooted in some unconscious things, my friends. It's not about – I mean, sometimes it's about being lazy, but not all the time. A lot of times, it's about unresolved stuff that we need to work on. When you work through some of that unconscious stuff, a lot of times, the procrastination goes down. It's not a perfect science, but a lot of times, there's some underlying roots into why you're procrastinating so much or why you can't implement a plan. Which actually makes a lot of sense.

Like, if you grew up in a chaotic household or you're currently in crisis and there's tons of chaos that's going on all the time, setting a plan can almost feel unsafe in a very strange way. At first glance, it doesn't make any sense whatsoever. But that is what can happen for us. It can feel internally so foreign that we don't really understand how to make that work unconsciously.

Consciously, we get it. From a brain standpoint, we're like, "Oh no, this totally make sense. I can logically implement a plan." But it's the

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unconscious stuff where we get stuck and we have to resolve and work through in therapy.

So, I want to give you some hope there. Don't just label yourself as lazy or incapable of implementing a plan. There's choices. There's options. There's other strategies if the current strategies are not working.

So, going back to our tips, some of this stuff is training your brain how to get things done. Now, if you only have an hour for a certain activity and you're really strict about that, meaning your brain learns, if you don't utilize that hour properly then it doesn't get done.

And I think this is one of the powers for moms. Like, I think moms get really good at this because they know they only have like two hours of nap time to get something done and then literally their kids are all over the place and they have just lost the rest of the day to their children.

And so, I think moms pick up on this really quickly in terms of I only get two hours at nap time. I am going to, like, hyper-focus and really get this done because otherwise it's not going to get done. So, that's kind of the mindset when we set time limits on things. You need to be really diligent about that.

The other thing that's really important is to make sure that you are setting yourself up for focusing success. So, learn how your brain focuses best.

So, ADHD brains actually focus in a way that goes against common logic. So, this is what I mean. Even if you don't have ADHD, find how you focus best because with ADHD brains, they, a lot of times, need some kind of other focus to be going on while they are focusing. It's like this dual focus needs to occur.

So, sometimes, you see this in kids and you see it in adults too, they need to be around where there is noise. Not noise that completely distracts them. But it's like background noise. And what it does is it actually helps them focus on homework or the task that they're actually doing or holding a [Mental Health Remix](#) with Nicole Symcox

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stress ball or chewing gum or doing something tactile while they're trying to focus on whatever task they're trying to do.

The ADHD brain focuses very differently than a non-ADHD brain. And so, when you learn the specific things that really support focusing, it really, really helps that you're not fighting against yourself because once you start fighting against yourself, you start telling yourself a negative story. And then, once the negative story kicks on, then you have other parts that show up and join in, like a depressed part or an anxious part or a PTSD part.

We have all these different parts of us and we're having these internalized conversations with ourselves all the time, whether or not we're aware of it. So, we want to be aware of that because we don't want to start a negative story that's going to send us down a negative path.

So, find how you focus best. If you're not ADHD, do you need to be in complete silence? Do you need to have the door closed? Or do you need to have nature sounds in the background? Do you need to be outside? Figure out how you focus.

And sometimes, it's a process of elimination, meaning you try something and it doesn't work, so then you try something else. But you are never stuck and there are options. So, don't get stuck in that space of thinking you're just lazy and can't get anything done. Take ownership of your life and find tools and strategies on how to work with that.

And sometimes, if you're really stuck, again, that has to be worked out in therapy and there's no shame or blame in that. Especially now in the world we're living in, like, taking care of your mental health is the most important thing you can do for yourself because everything about your mental health informs everything you do. And I see this all the time with the clients that I work with.

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When we start to really address their trauma stories or their anxious brain or some of the things that are really holding them back, productivity goes up. Time management improves. They start becoming more productive. Not less.

And I think we have this idea that if we go to therapy and we focus on our feelings, then we're not going to be focused in our life. And that's not true. Emotional energy takes up space. And that space can sometimes get in the way of doing logical, linear tasks. You are one entity. You are one being.

So, if one thing is too full, it's going to affect something else. That's just how it works. So, it's actually the other way around. If you address the emotions that are getting in your way, give yourself a proper outlet, support, then all that emotional space starts to go down and you start to feel like your emotions and your mind and your life are managing in better ways.

So, I just want to make that really, really clear, that it's never a waste of time to work on your mental health. Especially now because this is what will get in the way of time management all the time. It's going to be your anxious brain. It's going to be your PTSD triggers. It's going to be – these are the unconscious things that we're not always super-aware of, but they're going on anyway.

So, I want to remind you today that you are a badass. You are capable. You are intelligent and you are able to change your life if you want to. And so, one of the things in time management is learning how to say no. And we talked about this.

And again, this is in my boundaries course which if you want to check that out, it's at mentalhealthremix.com/boundaries, where you can learn how to implement boundaries in your life for this very reason. Part of implementing boundaries is putting our own internal limits on ourselves. So, like I said, putting time limits on how much time you're spending on an activity. But on the other side, being able to say no to other things so you can focus and do

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the job you need to do, so you can honor the things in your life that need your attention and need to get done.

Because if we're just saying yes to everyone in our lives about all the things that they want us to do, you're not going to have any emotional time or probably any physical time, to get the stuff you need to get done. If you're always helping someone else with their business, where is the time in your day to focus on yours?

So, this becomes really, really important and I think sometimes people don't understand how vital boundaries are just to everyday living. So, at any rate, I will leave you with that and if you enjoyed today's episode, please be sure to rate and review it on Apple Podcasts. It helps other people find the podcast. And as always, if strong emotions came up for you or you felt triggered or overwhelmed at any point in this episode, take it as information that something in your internal world needs support.

There is never shame or blame in getting mental health support in your local state of residence. It is probably the best thing you can do for yourself. Alright, my friends, I am rooting for you and I will see you next time.

Thanks for listening to this week's episode of Mental Health Remix. If you like what you've heard and want to learn more, go to nicolesymcox.com.

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