

# Ep 18 Laura Vanderkam

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## SPEAKERS

Laura Vanderkam, Francis Wade

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Francis Wade 00:08

It's The Task Management and Time Blocking Podcast, episode 18. COVID disrupted many of our regular routines, some of which have not recovered. In particular, if you work from home, you may notice that seeing the same people every day and working in the same space is quite convenient. But it's also predictable in the bad way. Many of us have lost a certain thrill that comes from being in close proximity to others, and the surprises which go with it. They're not there to invite us out as often. We don't meet up as frequently as we did with people outside of Zoom that is, in a way, we don't have as many new things to look forward to. Not surprisingly, this has an impact on our daily happiness. Having something anything to look forward to has an impact on our well being, and might say our daily joy, or daily dose of joy. Is there a sustainable solution to this particular dilemma? Join me in a conversation with Laura Vanderkam as we explore this issue, welcome to the Task Management and Time Blocking Podcast.



Francis Wade 02:29

Welcome back. Here we are with a special guest, Laura Vanderkam. As you can see, but before I introduce Laura, on a couple of things, first, I have to tell you that this is a very different type of podcast where we're not just interviewing Laura, we're actually going to be solving a problem that we think many people have had and face during COVID. And as you heard from the opening remarks, it's a problem that is pretty difficult to solve. So we're going to be agitating the problem from every angle that we can think of, and then solving it, particularly using some of the ideas from Laura's book. And the third part, we'll talk about some implementation. And again, just before I introduce Laura, let me tell you a quick story.



Francis Wade 03:58

Chin-Sun has just been laid off. Her husband is as scared as she is because his part time income sad can't support the both of them and their Manhattan lifestyles. She knows she needs to cut back on her spending. But she remembers what happened during COVID When neither of them could leave their apartment. They got the worst case of cabin fever and ended up hating

the work from home experience. In fact, they were so eager to go out that they caught the disease right after the restrictions were lifted. I have a witness. This time around she's a bit more savvy. She wants to ensure they don't end up being depressed and scared at home limiting their lives and ending up sad, morose but they can't spend any money to take a vacation, which is what everybody's doing. It's the accepted solution right? If she can't pursue this remedy, well, what what else is there?



Francis Wade 05:01

So I want to introduce you to our special guest today. Laura Vanderkam. She's the author of several time management and productivity books, including the forthcoming tranquility by Tuesday, nine ways to calm the chaos and make time for what matters, and several audiobooks, but I want to highlight that one. Her work has appeared in New York Times, Wall Street Journal, Fast Company and fortune. And she also hosts a podcast before breakfast, and is the co host of a podcast called Best of both worlds. She lives outside of Philadelphia with her husband and five children. And she blogs at LauraVanderkam.com. Laura, welcome to our show.



Laura Vanderkam 05:38

Thank you so much for having me.



Francis Wade 05:40

Great. So everyday happiness has become a challenge for some, like 10. Soon, as I mentioned, what do you make of this challenge of everyday happiness? Is it real? Or is it something that we're just all imagining?



Laura Vanderkam 05:52

Yeah, well, it can be hard to spend time in a way that makes us enjoy our lives. I think, you know, productive ambitious people, we get through our to do lists, we do the things that we have to do. But turning our mind a little bit toward the things that we want to do toward things that we might genuinely be looking forward to can be a little bit more challenging. And so yeah, as you said, the default people like, well, I need a vacation, and maybe you do. But, you know, sometimes that's not in the cards for one reason or another, whether there's, you know, travel restrictions because of COVID. Or if money is tight, or whatever other reason, we can't necessarily just throw money at the problem or, you know, look at the entire universe of options, then we have to be a little bit more creative. But I am thrilled with that question, because I think there are a ton of things that Chin-Sun and her husband can do, to make sure that they are still enjoying life, even if they're feeling like it would be, you know, maybe not so responsible to spend a great deal of money right now.



Francis Wade 06:52

Right, right. Because we had this weird feeling like she had during COVID, of kind of the day

right, right. Because we had this weird feeling like she had during COVID, or kind of the days blending into each other, you know, the kind of... "What day is it today?" I don't know, because all of the markers that told us what day it was, or kind of the the being outside and watching, seeing what other people are doing...being on projects that had timelines that correlated with a calendar, all that sort of went away. And here we are looking at our screens, in our bedrooms, our spare bedroom, and every day is kind of like, molding into...spoiling into the other and they're all kind of like slipping away. And internally, we're feeling kind of a level of God, is this gonna end? Yeah. Is that accurate? Yeah.

L

Laura Vanderkam 07:41

Well, it's true. And you know, this happened a lot during COVID. But it happens in people's normal lives, too. I mean, we can all become, you know, into our routines and our routines are good. I like routines, routines, make good choices, automatic. But sometimes when we have too much of life being absolutely the same day today, then nothing feels like it's ever changing. And our brains don't bother to remember the time because what's the point? I mean, every day is like the other our brains aren't experiencing anything new that they're bothering to lay down new memories. But the good news is that you can take small steps to put things that are a little bit more novel, or interesting, out of the ordinary into your life. You don't have to do a ton of these things. But just doing a little bit of them can make you turn a week from like, oh, that week was just absolutely like every other week to like, no, no, that was the week we did this. Or yeah, oh, that was the day I did this. And it's something that makes your brain remember it.



Francis Wade 08:39

Right, right. Because when those things don't happen, it's almost as if we don't have anything nice to remember. Because, you know, when you travel, you have all these new things happening, right? And you come back and you can tell all these stories about oh, look, here's a picture of the time where we went to the... So you have all these milestones, which were all brand new, and they were different. And it feels as if life, crept back into your bones, but go back into the regular day and COVID or not, it's really easy to fall into like a routine, especially if, you know, I know if I know this is true, but I don't have kids. So I don't have the drama of kids getting into trouble and kids doing growing up and doing different things. It's just my wife and I and we've been married for a long time. A long time. And so things don't change all that much between us. So it's really easy. But I imagine from what I hear people who retire often have a similar challenge. They have an empty nest. So all that source of excitement and the source of change goes away. And they kind of get into this dull kind of stasis. Is that Is that an accurate way of saying,

L

Laura Vanderkam 09:54

Yeah, that does happen and time keeps passing no matter what you do, right? And so it becomes, you know, in order to change that dynamic, we have to actually think about how we would like to spend our time. And so anyone who finds themselves in that situation needs to start asking that question of like, well, what would I like to spend my time doing? And there may be constraints, right? There may be, you know, travel constraints, or maybe budgetary constraints, maybe, you know, caregiving constraints, if that's an issue for someone, but you know, you can still start brainstorming ideas to this question, what answers do I have? Like,

what would I like to do with my time of the whole universe of possibilities, let's just start listing some, and try not to edit yourself too much, either. Because, you know, you could always shoot something down, but just go ahead and put it on the list. And think about anything that might be feasible, because sometimes when you put something on a list, you start thinking of other things, right? And it's good, it's a question worth devoting some research time to, I mean, especially if somebody is retired or between jobs, they may have a little bit of extra time to put some thought into this, and start coming up with some ideas.



Francis Wade 11:05

But it is kind of a non-routine behavior to do that, though, because the routine is to some of the regular way to live life, is to see what life gives you each day, and to respond appropriately. Right. And if you live in a, or you work in an environment where people are doing interesting things, then you don't have to do very much, right, you could just kind of go with the flow and have exciting things happen around you and to you. And all you do is you say, "Sure, I'd like to go", "No, I won't go".. and all you're doing is really being reactive. But until something like COVID comes, you wouldn't realize that that's what you are doing. You think about your time because your time was occupied by some good stuff.



Laura Vanderkam 11:51

Yeah, we can become a bit lazy when stuff is just happening all around us. And we don't have to think about the planning of it. And we can just sort of spend time instead of actively thinking about how we would like to choose to spend it. So that can totally happen. But yes, everyone had that experience, then if all of a sudden, then the stimulus of the office is not there, you know, somebody's like, we should go to lunch, you know, who's walking down the hall, or going to this new, you know, Ethiopian place, let's go there and say, Hey, let's go do that. Yeah, that sounds exciting. And obviously, that does not happen when you are sitting in your house. But those of us who you know, work from home for a long time, have gotten accustomed to developing that muscle of like, if you want to get out and go somewhere and do something, you can. Right? Like you can I mean, now that COVID is the restrictions are not there as much. If you would like to get together with a group of people to go to that new Ethiopian restaurant, well, you know, you've got your phones, you can text people, you can set a time, you can all go and meet and you will have just as much fun. And it wasn't, you know, it didn't happen sort of more spontaneously, and sometimes that can feel a little bit like oh, well, it should have. But you know, it's it's just a discipline like anything else that if you want to see things to happen in your life, you can take the steps necessary to make them happen. And the payoff of them happening is pretty cool.



Francis Wade 13:10

Right? I think what you're what you're saying is that it's not for everyone. Is it a discipline they had before COVID? COVID waking them up to the fact that maybe for some who are who sort of had a realization is that but you know, if new things are to come into my life actually have to cause them to happen. Yeah, I can exactly just sit back.



L

Laura Vanderkam 13:33

You can't sit back and chance that the universe will come to your apartment. No, it's true. And it's when I first started working from home, it was like 20 years ago now, like we're talking a long time ago, I was living in New York City. And I had been working in a nine to five sort of job and then I wasn't... right? Like I was, you know, at my house, and I did not have a family at that time. So, you know, it was me and my roommate who worked crazy hours at a law firm. So you know, I wasn't seeing her either. And the, you know, I had to realize, like, if I'm going to see another human being, like, if I want other human beings to like, notice my presence or care if I did anything or not, I'm gonna have to get out and find them. And so at that time, I wound up joining three community choirs, right. So three nights a week, I would have to leave my apartment, go sing with a group of people somewhere, and then you know, come home, but it forced me to, you know, first stop work. I mean, like, I couldn't just half work and half not work all night, I had to get dressed, and then leave my apartment and go talk to people. And so that was a really good thing for me. And so I remember one of the advice, you know, the advice that I gave people during COVID You know, when they were working from home and then you know, they kept working from home but some of the restrictions started to go away. It's like, well find some sort of commitment in your personal life that will get you out of the house. and not just like, Oh, I'd like to do this at some point or another, we're talking about things that you are going to do. Because like, at choir, my attendance was expected, or if you play in a softball league, like they need a second baseman, so you should probably show up, and things like that. And so then you do, even if you're tired, and even if it would be easier to kind of stay in your pajamas all day. So, you know, that's the kind of thing and and, you know, for, we're talking about the person here who's, you know, not wanting to go back to that COVID place of feeling depressed and all that, doing something like joining a community choir, you know, generally not expensive, most places, there's just a small, you know, fee or if there's any, joining an athletic league, volunteering somewhere, obviously, volunteering somewhere regularly, that's something you can potentially do when you are not in a full time job. That would be harder to do if you couldn't control if you could leave the office at 6pm. You know, so she couldn't go do a regular Thursday night session at a food bank, for instance, she could commit to that for the next few months while while looking for a job.



Francis Wade 16:08

Any sense of what the trigger might have been? that got you to join the three community choirs? Because someone who is kind of kind of stuck. They may think they have to wait until they're almost on the verge of a nervous breakdown. And that's when I go join the three community choirs. But I suspect that that's not what triggered it for you. Okay, do you have a sense of can you remember what the trigger was? Or what the moment there was? There an epiphany was there, you look at yourself in the mirror one morning and said, I'm not going down like that?

L

Laura Vanderkam 16:44

I should take a shower at some point. Yes. Well, no, I think you know, I think a lot of these things wind up happening somewhat randomly, at least at the beginning. And so I think the first Choir I I'm, you know, on various email lists, as you are like, you're on newsletter list or whatever, you're on college alumni list, somebody mentions, like, there are auditions this week, and I sitting there in my apartment, they will geez, I'm not doing anything. Let me go. Why not?

Why not go audition and you know, if you've sang in high school, usually you can carry a tune enough to make it into an average community choir. So you know, you could go do something like that. And by the way, many choirs don't even have auditions. So people don't even need to worry about that part.



Francis Wade 17:27

But could you actually sing or was this like you had to learn how to sing?



Laura Vanderkam 17:31


I mean, I'm not gonna be you know, no one's gonna pay me for it. But it's, you know, I enjoy it. And, and so I went and auditioned. And, you know, they were a welcoming sort of choir. So I made it in. And they, you know, I started going, I was like, this is pretty fun. Like, it was fun to have this thing on Thursday night or whatever night there, you know, rehearsals happen to be. And I realized it started being this, like, tent post on my week that like, oh, yeah, now, this is the thing I need to do on Thursday. And I'm kind of angling toward that. And I don't do other things on Thursday night, because I'm expecting to be there. And I enjoyed it enough that when I started getting, you know, once you're in the choral sea, and you start getting news about other choirs and such, I'm like, Well, you know, maybe I'll like one that did different sorts of music, like maybe one that did, you know, bigger orchestral works, that might be fun. And so I found a choir that did that. And then I found one that was specifically oriented toward, you know, young people, I was in my 20s at the time, so I joined one that was, you know, just people in their 20s. And, you know, that's, that's kind of how it happened, that you, you see something that seems fun, like, often, you have things in your life that you've enjoyed doing. I mean, I it happened to be choir for me, but you know, I've done other things. I like dancing, for instance, or painting or whatever, you know, it could have been anything, right? That you are just on the lookout for things that answer that question of like, what would I genuinely look forward to? Like, what sounds fun? What would get me out of the house? Have me talk to other people give me some structure to my time you try stuff. You see how it goes? If you enjoy it, you see if you can do more of it. And that's basically how it works.



Francis Wade 19:08

Right? Right. And at the same time, there's a, there's a there's a systematic way, because in a way, what I think your book answers is the question of, shouldn't there be a way for you to bring this happiness into your life? As soon as you can detect that it's dipped. So there's, there's a system to this, this is not the book doesn't say just randomly, you know, follow whatever happens in your world. The book says, wake up. The book says, wake up to something and waking up to this something and then following a systematic method is the way that you're saying that... sort of you're answering the question, there should be a way to go from being kind of stuck and not having anything to look forward to and kind of unhappy and kind of depressed So engineering your life so that that goes away. And you found, and I'm jumping ahead into the solutions. But but it might help might help our listeners as they think through because they may not have had this terrible thing happened. They may catch it a lot earlier that, oh, there's a little bit of sameness routine-ness, boredom and kind of lack of


aliveness in my life. And maybe there's a systematic way for me to engineer in the kind of happiness that would make a difference. That this is kind of what I'm wondering is where, where your solutions will take us? Am I that accurate?

 Laura Vanderkam 20:41

Yeah. So I mean, *Tranquillity by Tuesday* is basically about nine strategies that do help you make space for joy in your life, right, that will help you feel like life is less of a slog. They are all, you know, time management ideas that are oriented toward helping you feel sort of more energetic, for starters, so that you feel like you have the capacity to look at your time and think about what you want to do with it, then help you figure out what you could do in your life and a good pace for putting new and sort of interesting out of the ordinary, exciting things into your life. And then how to make sure that you're not spending all your time on things that, you know, we all spend too much time on. But we probably don't wish to write that you can push a little bit more joy into your life by making some of the things that are less exciting take a little bit less time.

 Francis Wade 21:36


Right. So in that sense, it's not a time management book. It's a joy book.

 Laura Vanderkam 21:40

Well, that's, I mean, that's what it's all about. Really, I mean, what's the point of managing our time? Well, if it's not toward any useful end, that, you know, the idea is that people should enjoy their time. And, you know, we're talking about the person finding themselves newly unemployed, not wanting to spend money, that can be a very stressful time, right, like the via time that we could give in to these feelings of depression and like, what am I doing with my life? Who knows, you know, I can't have any fun, like, but it can also be an opportunity because you know, we're talking a productive, ambitious person, this person is going to be like, fully employed more than they want to be like within the next six to 12 months like that. That's just the truth. I mean, that's, that's how it works for 99% of people, you'll, you'll be in something else, you'll be as overcommitted as you were before in six to 12 months, right?

 Laura Vanderkam 22:28

So once you know that about yourself, you can say like, look, I've got this time, and I can truly enjoy myself during this time. I mean, maybe we don't want to go overboard on spending money. But I do have this time, now that I can structure in the way I want, I can experience new things I can experience all that the city has to offer. And knowing that, you know, we'll be back to the way things were soon enough. But but for now, this is this is how I can orient myself.

 Francis Wade 22:57

Right? Is that sense, your your your book is a wake-up call to not slip back into the routine of


right? In that sense, your your, your book is a wake up call, to not slip back into the routine of the nine to five and the overcommitment that you were that you were in before. COVID may have indicated to you something, but the truth is the seeds of the dilemma were there before. It's just that COVID made it worse. And you're just kind of are you kind of saying this as a wake up, wake up to what your life could be. Wake up to the level at which you have settled, so to speak, and wake up to and here's a system, here's a systematic way to once you've awoken to Oh, my God, I actually do something about this, that here are actual practical steps that involves time management. Yes, it's time blocking. Yeah, there's this technique involved in it. But it's not about the technique. It's about the original impacted that you want to have on the quality of your day to day life.

 Laura Vanderkam 23:53

Yeah, because I mean, we want ways to calm the chaos and make time for what matters. We want to build things that are exciting into our lives, build things that we are genuinely looking forward to. And so yeah, Tranquillity by Tuesday offers a framework for how to do just that.

 Francis Wade 24:10

Great, great. Well, let's look at one of the one of the specific recommendations. This is the one that you made at the Task Management & Time Blocking summit back in March. And it's one that my wife and I heard together. We were both listening. And we actually have one coming up one of these. Let's start with the big adventure. Big Adventure coming home. It's all because of Laura. But Laura, can you take us through the what a big adventure is?

 Laura Vanderkam 24:36

Yeah, so one of the Tranquillity by Tuesday rules is to have one Big adventure and one Little Adventure each week. So two things that are out of the ordinary novel that will be memorable, right that your brain will bother remembering. And so you know, I say big adventure. I know you may be about to tell me about some fabulous trip you guys take? Yeah, but for most people like by Big Adventure... Sure, I mean, three to four hours, right? Something that you could do on half a weekend day, okay, that would qualify as a big adventure. And then a little adventure, something that could take you know, an hour, maybe even less something you could do on a weekday lunch, like a weekday evening, just as long as it's memorable out of the ordinary. And the idea of pacing yourself doing one Big Adventure, one Little Adventure, is it's enough to make time feel different enough to make time feel special, like your brain is bothering to remember any of it. But it's also not enough to exhaust or bankrupt anyone, right? Like, we're not going to all take four day weekends every week, and you know, go somewhere that it would be great, but it's not going to happen. But we could take four hours, and go, you know, bike ride somewhere cool. And you know, then bike ride back, right? Or take four hours to go see a show and get tickets to a show or, you know, four hours to go mini golfing or whatever it is that you like to do. But you know, something that would be fun, interesting novel out of the ordinary, memorable, do that once a week, do a little adventure once a week, and you will find time feeling incredibly different.

 Francis Wade 24:50





Francis Wade 26:08

Right? Right. Okay, so I broke a rule I did not, I meant a mega adventure, which is not in your book.



Laura Vanderkam 26:15

I'm all for mega adventures, to me, those are



Francis Wade 26:18

just one of all the struggles. So it but the so that that particular example I had in mind doesn't apply. But but we have started to create these Big Adventures on a Saturday morning, where we would normally walk in the neighborhood. And our big adventure is to jump in the car, drive somewhere different, or new, or that we haven't been to in years, or because of COVID, park the car and then do our walk from about 530 in the morning, takes us a couple of hours and then takes them to go visit somebody and then come back. And and sure enough, just like you said, it gives us something to look forward to each week. And it almost makes me think that if you're somebody who time blocks, then what you should do is you should act you could do is actually start off with a blank calendar, and programming your big adventures on your small adventures first before sleep before lunch before work before anything else because that would change the quality of your time blocking. Right.



Laura Vanderkam 27:21

Yeah, I mean, it's hard to probably not block in your sleep. I mean, I don't know I'm...sleeps pretty fundamental. So you should probably make sure you got space for that. But but you know, maybe, maybe one particular big adventure might be worth waking up a little bit early for or you know, staying up a little late for some night or another. But yeah, no, that's wonderful. That is exactly what I mean. And and adventure is it's more a state of mind than objective measurements, right? So just because you're not getting on a plane somewhere, it doesn't mean it isn't a big adventure. It's as long as you find it interesting, and that you are looking forward to it. And that you remember it. Right, those those are basically the criteria can be those three again? Well, it's that you are well what would I say? Do you find it interesting, you're looking forward to it? And that you remember it? Yeah, the those three?



Francis Wade 28:07

I should have written that down when you gave the first talk...



Laura Vanderkam 28:12

to write that down to? I think that's a great work that's actually in the book. But I you know, those are the sorts of words that I use, right? That things that are memorable things that are novel things that are intense in some way or another, you know, any of those things allow our

brains to hold on to something. I mean, that's why we remember vacations, right? But this is about taking that mindset of what why do we remember vacations and putting it more into our everyday lives?



Francis Wade 28:38

Right. Right. Right. And guys, if you're wondering, okay, we're Laura probably made up the stuff one, you know, one night when she was sleeping? No, Laura, and, Laura, tell us about the primary research, you did to arrive at these conclusions. That is not just something you read in a horoscope somewhere. Yeah.



Laura Vanderkam 28:59

Yeah, I know. And it will tell Self Help for you. But um, so I mean, I've done 1000s of time makeovers over the years had many people share their schedules with me. And I realized at some point that I was giving a lot of the same advice. Even people in very different stages of life, people in different professions, a lot of the time management advice was at least somewhat similar. And so I started, you know, honing this down to kind of nine things I say a lot, like, as I look at somebody's schedule, and analyze, like, what would make it better, it's often one of these nine things that would would make it better. And so I came up with nine time management rules, and then I decided to test them out systematically.



Laura Vanderkam 29:40

And so I had 150 people try out the nine rules. So they would learn one rule a week. They would, you know, learn it, they would answer questions about how they plan to implement it in their lives. I would check back a week later to see how things went. I was measuring them on various dimensions through the course of these nine weeks. And I found that people who did you know attempt to follow these rules over the course of nine weeks, did see their time satisfaction levels rise to a very significant degree. So that was exciting to see, you know, people felt better about their leisure time, people felt like they were making more progress on both their professional goals and their personal goals. People felt like they were wasting significantly less time on things that weren't important to them.



Francis Wade 30:25

Right. So guys, you hear that there's 150 guinea pigs before us. For any of us. This is empirical research. This is not stuff that you just made up and said, Oh, well, let me put together a book and see if I can make some sales. This is from from measured research by someone who is committed to doing the hard work that many of us don't want to do, we just want to write the book and have the pithy sayings and come up with the memes and sell, sell, sell. So we appreciate the work that you put into this Laura, because they're having having tested your big adventure on smaller Vento, I can see that it's almost like an extreme form of self care. It's weird.

L

Laura Vanderkam 31:04

And having the rule is what nudges us to do it I mean, I know some people are listening, the subtitle of tranquillity by Tuesday as nine ways to calm the chaos and make time for what matters. And I present these as nine rules. And I know not everyone likes the idea of rules. So you know, if you don't like the word rules, just think of them as strategies, suggestions, ideas, you might consider trying out. But I did find that when people follow these rules, strategies, suggestions, ideas, you might try out... their life felt different, right? Like these are things that do have an impact. And that's, you know, it's important to me that if I am presenting ideas to people that that I am not just making it up, right, that there is something behind it. And so I was very thrilled to say that people did report feeling better about their time. And, you know, we got all sorts of quotes and anecdotes from people to that effect, which is what I what I put in the book as well.



Francis Wade 32:00

I also noticed that you made mention of keeping a running list of adventures. So you always have like a backlog. Yes, people have ideas of good ideas and end up with

L

Laura Vanderkam 32:11

Yeah, no, I mean, it can be hard to come up with adventures, especially, you know, if money is tight, or you have other constraints for one reason or another. But it's partly about being in the mindset that you are looking for adventures, like I need to find two a week. So let me start making long lists of them. Let me start getting on the email lists for all the local institutions, right, like, wherever you are, there are libraries, there are museums, there are, you know, maybe arts groups, there are community groups, get on those email lists, right, because then they'll start telling you about, oh, like the library system of the branch, I don't go to very often, but they have a new art exhibit, you're like, oh, that sounds kind of cool. I'll stop by on my lunch break. Now you've had your little adventure for the week, right? That's, that's how you start to see these things. You know, you can be a tourist in your own town, there's probably some place that visitors are told to go, you can try those places out, like you and your wife do, you can change your routine slightly so that your routines are a little bit different and memorable and novel. So if you normally walk a certain place, you could walk somewhere different, you could walk with a different person, you could, you know, take a different exercise class, go run on a trail, if you normally run on your treadmill, you know, all of these are things that you can do to change things up just a little bit.



Francis Wade 33:30

Yeah, you know, just there's something weird about even the walks that my wife and I take that I can't, I can't explain to you but I bet you found through in your research is that these seemingly insignificant tweaks, like deciding to walk somewhere different, that you haven't been for a while. It was different. I cannot explain to you why walking somewhere I have walked before two years ago. Why is it so why is it so different? Why does it add so much joy? It has an outsize proportionate effect, given the amount of energy it takes the input. It's like, this shouldn't be working this well, but it does. How come?



Laura Vanderkam 34:11

Well. I'm glad to hear that you found it did. No, it's just that when things are new and interesting, it wakes us up to life to a surprising degree. And we start to see how similar days could be like when we don't experience that. But just anything new and different and interesting wakes us up to the wonders of the world around us.



Francis Wade 34:30

So we're not as boring as we think. We don't,



Laura Vanderkam 34:32

life doesn't need to be as boring as we sometimes make it.



Francis Wade 34:35

Yeah. And by the way, I'm now seeing a new role for social media like Facebook, because through Facebook, I have discovered other big adventures that people have had. They don't call them that. But they say I went here and I did this and I'm like, well, crap, I could go there and do that. That's not we could I could do that my wife and I on our Saturday morning walks or on a different kind of evening. I get ideas because no one I'm kind of open to finding big adventures and trying to make them real. And we skipped our big adventure last week. And it was like, Oh, we had a conference... we didn't go walk. And I really was like, oh, yeah, because it's kind of like become this special. It's your thing. Yeah, especially investment is an injection of joy. And, you know, what I appreciate is that you did the research to discover this for us. Yeah.




Francis Wade 35:31

So, you know, on behalf of our listeners, I want to and I thanked you at the conference. But I want to thank you again, it's, it's so easy to skip over that part, which is like the hard part, to come up with real findings that may not seem to make sense logically, or it's hard to explain to someone why that's such a big deal. But it works anyway. As long as it works, it's something that kind of that sort of routine of finding the big adventure and putting it in our life. Yeah, has become something that is now always going to be there.




Francis Wade 36:04


Last thing before we before we wrap up, is that in the article that you sent me, you mentioned, doing something whimsical? Is that something in your book as well? Or was that only for the article? And can you say more about?

 Laura Vanderkam 36:15


Yeah, so when I you know this particular rule and Tranquility by Tuesday, it's rule number six to do one big adventure and one little adventure. And then as part of the book, I tacked on a bonus strategy to every chapter like so something related that you could try, like once you've made the primary strategy a habit. So once you're in, you know, the habit of doing one big adventure, one little adventure, a third thing you can do is just do something whimsical. In the course of your week, add whimsy to your week, somehow. And you know, it can be anything right it can be having breakfast for dinner, or you know, making yourself pumpkin pancakes for breakfast to celebrate the start of fall. It can be you know, drawing a cool picture on your driveway with chalk or blowing bubbles. You know, whimsy is anything that's kind of fun and silly. So think about how you can do to just something fun and silly in a moment in your life in the course of the week. And what it is, is it's just making even smaller than a big adventure, a little adventure. It's just one more thing to make life seem a little bit different. A little bit novel a little bit worth remembering.

 Francis Wade 37:21

For some reason this one sounds harder than the others.

 Laura Vanderkam 37:25


Whimsy is you got you gotta think about it. But you know, there's always like lists online like go Google add whimsy and see what comes up. I mean, there's probably tons of stuff, you know, put garden gnomes outside your window. I don't know.

 Francis Wade 37:37


Do something No, me. No, me and my audience will probably have to go. Okay, well, so definitely.

 Laura Vanderkam 37:43

I don't know. I don't do anything silly. Yeah, exactly.


 Francis Wade 37:48

Okay. Laura, tell us about your book coming out in just a few weeks. I know there's some bonuses involved. Yeah, with the website. Oct 11.


 Laura Vanderkam 37:58

So if you preorder Tranquility by Tuesday and go to my website, you can sign up for a bunch of preorder bonuses, you can get an excerpt of the first chapter. So you can go ahead and start reading it. You get a paperback, which you can start tracking your progress on the first time


reading it. You get a scorecard, which you can start tracking your progress on the nine time management rules, right? Which ones did you do each week? Which ones did you not? What happened? What you know, what worked, what didn't?

 Laura Vanderkam 38:21


People who preorder are getting early access to a series of videos, I did called Tranquillity by Tuesday in Real Life, that has four of my readers slash listeners, talking about how individual rules made a big difference in their lives. So you can see you know, what happens to a busy person when she starts planning on Friday? What happens to a really busy person when she starts building in one big adventure and one little adventure? So those were really wonderful to put together. And so people get early access to those, and to a webinar I'm doing shortly after lunch, where we'll talk about the book and all the things that you know, we learned and things that questions people might have. So yeah, if you order before October 11, you can sign up for all of those at my website, which is [LauraVanderkam.com](http://LauraVanderkam.com).

 Francis Wade 39:05


Yeah. So so from a certain point of view, you might say that this is sounds a lot like time blocking, and to my ear as a time blocker, and given that this is the time blocking podcast, it is. Yeah, but it's not. It's not the mechanics of time blocking in the way that we normally talk about how do you use your calendar? How do you do this? What is that? It's a combination of practical activity that produces an emotional benefit. And I guess we shouldn't be surprised because that's what time blocking is supposed to do. It's supposed to have this affect on us or effects.

 Laura Vanderkam 39:41


When we block and cool things, it has the obvious effect of making us feel better about our lives. I mean, that's pretty much how it works.

 Francis Wade 39:49

But it's not so obvious, though, because I could do something cool that I think like I watched a movie on Netflix. That's my routine that doesn't have the same effect as my big adventure.

 Laura Vanderkam 39:59

It's true, but not as not as interesting, really in the grand scheme of things in your own life. Yeah.

 Francis Wade 40:06

And I watched a lot of Netflix like, I can't remember, ask me what I've watched in the last month. It's all went in one, you know, came out. But for some reason, the walk that I took with

month. It's all went in one, you know, came out. But for some reason, the walk that I took with my wife went up to the mountains, where we used to live and visited the old neighbors and hung out with them for an hour. And that was like the high point for the last two weeks. Oh, yeah. I want you to explain these for me when you come back next time with your next book. I love

 Laura Vanderkam 40:34

spending time with really cool people too. I mean, that ups the enjoyment factor a lot that if I were going to choose a 10th rule for Tranquility, by Tuesday, it would be that people are a good use of time. So anything you can do with awesome people in your life is probably going to be worth the while.

 Francis Wade 40:50

They weren't. They weren't. Well, well, I don't want to say that.

 Francis Wade 41:02

I agree they were really cool. So I want to have you back. And when you write your next book, you can explain why you think how surprising results, such a surprise effect in our lives. So Laura Vanderkam thanks for joining us here on the pest management and time blocking podcast. It's been great having you good luck with the book. And we look forward to dropping this episode and having it come out sometime around the guest timezone when the book is just released to the public and all the excitement is happening. Congratulations. And once again, thanks for putting in some some heavy lifting to produce the results that you could share with us today.

 Laura Vanderkam 41:37

Well, thank you so much. It means a lot to me. And I'm glad you find some of these rules useful yourself.

 Francis Wade 41:43

We do...take care all the best. Oh, oh, I didn't need to sign off on the podcast completely because listen, there's some other a few other recommendations I have coming up after the break and I'm going to let you in on to the next episode of the podcast. I'll give you a little preview. So keep listening. Bye Laura bye