

Ep 22 Emily Cordwell Non-trad students

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SPEAKERS

Emily Cordwell, Francis Wade



Francis Wade 00:00

It's the Task Management and Time Blocking Podcast, episode 22. So you're a career person who has a family, and you want to return to school, to further your education. But in your mind, you can't see how you could possibly reconcile the image you have of student life with your current obligations, after all, now, you have a job, family, a commitment to your well being a spiritual life, friends, and you probably belong to different communities. All these things are not on the typical college students agenda. In fact, most students seem to put these things on hold, right? They put them on ice, while they're focusing everything else on their studies. You cannot do that, to say the least.



Francis Wade 01:04

But is there a way to have it all? You do know that people have done this before. People with careers have gone back to school, you're not the first. So there must be a way that you can increase your odds of success. But what what are the things you should be doing? Tune into this episode to hear from me and my special guest Emily Cornwell as we solve this challenging problem together, welcome to the Task Management and Time Blocking Podcast.



Francis Wade 01:59

Okay, and welcome back. And as you can see, we're joined by Emily Cordwell, all the way from New Zealand. Welcome, Emily.



Emily Cordwell 02:11

Hello, good morning, good evening, wherever we are in the world.





Francis Wade 02:15

Great before I tell people your your bio, your your background, and what you accomplished. Folks, if you've never tuned into one of our podcasts before, this one may come as a bit of surprise. So the reason it may be a little bit different is that we'll spend the first part of our time together, Emily and I, tearing apart the problem that I just shared the problem of going back to school as an adult and being able to manage your time and being productive, balancing your whole life. Once we've torn the problem apart, we'll then sort of build some solutions. And we're hoping to build some first time solutions in real time. That means that we're trying to come up with some serendipitous stuff. In addition to the stuff that we already know, or the things that we're bringing to the party. We want to put our heads together so that we come up with some brand new thinking. So if we do accomplish this brand new thinking, then you'll hear a bell. If we get to the end of the episode, and there's been no bells, you'll hear a buzzer. And that'll be an indication that we had a great conversation. But we didn't quite invent anything brand new. Kind of a high bar isn't it?.



Francis Wade 03:24

But that's our objective to come up with some brand new thinking that would actually be interesting, provocative, and the product of... I'm in Jamaica, she's in New Zealand, cricketing nations, but we're very far away in terms of geography. By putting our heads together across the ocean should be but we should be able to come up with something brand new. But let me tell you a story before I introduce Emily.



Francis Wade 03:47

So Eric, has just been accepted by a local university to finish up his bachelor's degree. He was fully committed when he applied, encouraged by his wife, his boss, his kids. Now his kids are just about to enter their college years. Even his parents offered to help, but he didn't really know what they were getting when they made a few comments. Now, at the moment of truth, it's arrived. He's petrified. Now that he's been accepted, he's a little bit scared.



Francis Wade 04:24

At work, he's just accepted a promotion. And already his days have become longer and he's taking work home on weekends for the very first time. Also, his older son has been diagnosed with a rare condition affecting his left leg. He's undergoing tests so no one knows the true extent. But whatever the outcome, it will take time from his schedule. But his wife and son are both insistent this should not affect his plans to start his first semester. So is his boss, but he's not so sure. Deep down, he doesn't want to fail. Again. The last time he left his studies, he had no solid excuse, just a gut feeling that it was too hard and he needed a break. Now, it's 20 years later, he realizes he made a mistake. But will the remedy be too much to handle? He wants some advice. But he really does need more than tips and tricks.



Francis Wade 05:38

So Emily Cordwell is a university level educator with a background in digital marketing, a website designer by background, she moved on to teaching people how to make websites. And

website designer by background, she moved on to teaching people how to make websites. And this developed into teaching and managing a diploma in digital marketing, she now develops new courses to meet the increasing demand of the changing student. That is the student who wants to learn online and change their career at the same time. She's currently writing a thesis in digital education, focusing on student engagement, and retention. Emily, it's great to have you on the show.

 E Emily Cordwell 06:18

Thank you for having me. Thank you in a great introduction.

 Francis Wade 06:22

Well, you also have a podcast, right?

 E Emily Cordwell 06:25

Yes, yes. So my podcast is all about Managing the Juggle, how you can try and use all these different techniques to manage everything you've got going on, whether that's committing to study, work, family, children, parents, the Juggle is we'll we all have some version of it. And I'm learning with you and my listeners around how to manage this juggle.

 Francis Wade 06:51

Yeah, and someone who, who decides and commits to, you know, some grand commitment in later in life, when you're no longer at 19 or 20. It's always a challenge, but committing to school as what they call a non traditional student. So first of all, what's a non-traditional student, Emily?

 E Emily Cordwell 09:09

So a non traditional student, well, not what you think traditional student is...traditionally it's a 18-19 year old who's come straight through from university, fresh faced, this is their first time doing tertiary study or university level study. Non-traditional is everybody else. So people who had a career change, people like Eric who have taken time out of study to come back again. The majority of our students that I work with are non traditional, and it's becoming more common these days, particularly with online study. I myself, I'm a non traditional student, I'm studying for my Masters in Digital Education. I am not 18-19... Maybe you guessed that?... and I've gone back to study I'm currently working I run my own company on podcasting, and I've got two children, non-traditional student.

 E Emily Cordwell 10:00

You can see it ticks all those boxes, we're finding post pandemic that a lot of people are seeing an opportunity to go back to study. So with my course, we do a diploma in digital marketing

an opportunity to go back to study. So with my course, we do a diploma in digital marketing. Digital marketing is a really popular industry at the moment with a huge amount of employment opportunities around the world, people are looking for a job that's a little bit safer. I'll say post pandemic more flexible with working from home or working from anywhere. And digital marketing has boomed, people shop online, people need websites. And so the two have come together to create a perfect opportunity for people to study and do a career change into this industry. So a lot of our students have maybe taking a break, to raise their children, or have been in jobs that have been affected by the pandemic, or are finishing jobs that they've seen an opportunity to say, actually, I want to change, I want to specialize in this area. So they already have commitments, they have children, they have elderly parents, they have husbands, they have wives, they have full time jobs, they have part time jobs, and they're studying online for our course. And that's that hopefully helps explain what a non traditional student is.



Francis Wade 11:10

Yeah, it sure does. And the you know, taking on the commitment to go to school isn't like saying I'm going to join a gym is there's, there's something a bit different about that. And I remember, as a student, you know, dropping everything in order to study. And I've never tried to go the non traditional route, because all I remember was that I barely squeaked through, it was really hard. I had to work, save time, and every hour or every day was accounted for. And that was when I didn't have a life. But a non traditional still that has a life but what what makes what makes school so I will say the word I was thinking but so freaking hard or what makes it so hard. Why is school so different and so demanding.



Emily Cordwell 12:05

I don't think it's hard. I do think there's certain mindsets that are academic or aren't academic. And I think it depends on what you're studying. So some courses are quite applied. So you're applying what you're learning into your job or into your day to day life, or the job, or the courses are really academic. So it's very theoretical, with a huge amount of writing. Regardless, there's a lot of work to do. So in terms of it being hard work. Yes, in terms of it being hard. I think it's how you perceive it. But my goodness, is there a lot to do. And that also emulates the quality of the course because you could do a five hour video online. And that's fantastic. And that's great for your professional development and your learning. But it really depends if you're committing to a short course, long year, diploma, a degree a master's, it depends on the level that you're studying as well.



Francis Wade 12:59

Right, right. So somewhat someone like an Eric, for example. So what's probably is pushing him to the edge is the fact that it's a lot of money. He'd have to get a lot of people to agree. And it's very visible. You know, when you go to the gym, it's like you stop going, nobody recognized or nobody cares. But when you drop out of university, and somebody's gonna say to you, "Oh, so how are your studies coming along?" And you Well...I dropped out" and they go... their face just tells you. And you know while you're at school? So you know, you have to handle deadlines, you have a real hard deadlines. And some of them you can try and negotiate and some of them are you just cannot because there's a professor, there's someone out there who is looking at

who's going to be, you're going to try? And that person is going to say, oh, no, oh, no, no, no, that wouldn't be fair to the other 150 students in the class, you just can't get out of the day. You've got to get it in you fail. There's going to be that conversation at some point in your career, because the deadlines are sharp, you know, unlike the ones in most of the rest of our lives. The deadlines are on school are really sharp. Aren't they?

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Emily Cordwell 14:12

They are they are but I would believe that there is getting to be some more flexibility. Not "Oh, yes, no problem. You could submit it next year." But there is some understanding that non traditional students have lives. So there are some movement, maybe two or three days where teachers and professors do actually have empathy. They do have an understanding that in Eric's situation...good teachers have empathy. I can't speak for all universities and all institutions. But yeah, we think about it. He's got that ill child they're having to go through tests that's going to affect his emotional state. We talk about the well being of people, well students are also people. So it might be that he's got a test result or something around the time of an assignment. Now the advice that we give is to be organized and to prepare, but stuff comes up, that's unexpected. So yes, deadlines are real. But I think there's a level of empathy that has a movement of maybe a few days or a week. But at the end of the day, if you don't submit your assignment in, say, October, you're not going to be able to wait until January or February, it's just not going to work. You have a window to submit it, that's within a few weeks.



Francis Wade 15:26

Right. But poor Eric, you know, he's, he's thinking of what it was, like 20 years ago, when professors used to (from my memory) take a certain, you know, in tormenting little undergrad bodies, or whoever, you know, the students, because all the power was in the hands of the professors, and they could do whatever they wanted. And they could say, "No, you just have to repeat it next, next semester." And you're like, what, because that was, so in Eric's world, that's kind of what it was like so. So, in the story that I told, maybe there's the the challenge of going back to school is unlike any other challenge he's taken on in recent years. Even the promotion is kind of like, because with the promotion comes more responsibility. But depending on your boss, and depending on the environment. And as you look around, you look at other supervisors, and you think they're skating by without doing anything. But it's really hard to skate by a degree without doing anything. There is a, there is a really objective standard that professors try to maintain. And they try and and, you know, allowing the standard to slip has repercussions for the reputation of the University of the degree for their professionalism. You know, turning in a report that is on the job a couple of days later, a couple of weeks later, sometimes people just totally forget about the report altogether. Doesn't have the same level of agita for Eric's. Is that accurate?

E

Emily Cordwell 17:02

Absolutely, universities have standards, they need to keep up we need to watch I say that there's some movement of a few days, there's no movement in not doing it at all. And it is very different different to being in your job, because you can get away with it. Some people do in their jobs, and they still remain employed. And sometimes you wonder how but I mean, it's one

thing we say when we talk about time management, we talk about maybe delegating, you can organize your time by delegating out tasks. You cannot delegate your degree...that will be classed as plagiarism. You have to do it yourself. You are 100% accountable for it.



Francis Wade 17:44

Right and isn't it? isn't it also true that the Eric's of the world are highly motivated in the sense that they're not, they're not just undergrads, who are 18 years old, who were kind of just on a wing and a prayer and kind of happy go lucky. And, you know, he's, he's, he's going to be losing some sleep, because he's someone who is already. He's already a high achiever work. He cares a lot about doing well in his degree. And he he's conscious of what happens if he doesn't make it for all the reasons that we mentioned. So he's not your regular, your regular employee, because regular regular employees don't take on additional degrees. You know, they don't, he's already a high achiever, and someone who's really ambitious. So he has a full life. So you already have commitments. But in a way it was getting a life that's kind of balanced, is kind of the big objective that he has, but all his obligations are I know, kind of the enemy right?



Emily Cordwell 18:52

Yeah, I'm finding this with my current research. So I'm looking into the motivations of non traditional students while studying online. And we're finding, through my research that people like Eric, are extremely self motivated, they are motivated to in the first place in well, in fact, they're more motivated than a traditional student, because they have a clear reason for doing so. That might be a job promotion, that might be a career change, that might be better pay that might be to support their family. Looking into what motivates them in the in the first place. It's not only internal, it's also got external in there as well. So their motivation to actually finish is often higher, and we do find, they will push themselves through, despite all these challenges that Alex is facing, which are very common, you've got family pressures, work pressures, time, pressures, health pressures, a lot of stuff you cannot control. But his motivation is what's going to get him through. At the moment, Eric's got this fear, but he has a huge amount support from family and his employer, which is a great thing Having that support will really help him to, to work through the challenges and to get into a routine. And we find, if the students get through that first semester, and they get ourselves a routine, and they get the confidence, and they really enjoy the content and the learning and the style, they will stay. It's keeping that motivation to continue that support students to complete that all the way through to the end.



Francis Wade 20:30

Right. And in a way, you know, he was motivated enough to get promoted and have a family and be successful at work. But you know, as he sits in the library and looks at the other students hanging out, and having a good time, he's thinking he's feel envious, right? Because he looks at them, they're not balancing or they're balancing... "Do I go drinking tonight? Or do I study?" He is balancing like real things that have real deadlines, and he has a boss breathing down his neck, and he has his real commitments that have real consequences if he doesn't pay attention to them. And probably, we mentioned this, when we were talking about the show, you said that there's a there's a season of life kind of societal assumption that when you're in your late teens and early 20s, that's when you sacrifice and go to school. That's the proper

way..that's the season for it. Not when you have two kids, and you just got the promotion. That's so he's out of season. It's like he you know, in the Caribbean, we'd say you're trying to look for mangoes in December, there's no mangoes in December. They just don't grow..wrong season, wrong thing. Or it's kind of like, you know, if I flew to from Jamaica to New Zealand, I'd be going from summer to winter. If I were to arrive in Auckland, tomorrow, you'd meet me at the you meet me at the airport, and you'd have a jacket for me. And that was that for

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Emily Cordwell 22:05

different seasons.



Francis Wade 22:06

But but we have here, and people who are non traditional student come to school with what you call a season of life kind of thinking, which is very traditional. And everyone understands it, because it's already accepted. And here you are out of season. And it's a kind of a, in a way, it's a mentality to get rid of, or be aware of. And because it could limit a guy like Eric, as he sits there feeling envious of the other students. Am I understanding that correctly?

E

Emily Cordwell 22:36

Yeah, absolutely. It's you out of season, it's not what is expected of you. He's at a stage of his life, where he should be knuckling down and getting promotions and earning money to support his family and being the father and the family man. But we are finding it's more and more common, more and more common for people to study at different seasons of life. And I would say it's a post-pandemic thing. And also with the ability to study online. There's so many opportunities now to study online, whether that's a traditional university, diploma or degree, or even just doing a short professional course, maybe for a day or for a week. Previously, your commitment would be traveled to your local University, maybe even relocate to your university, because it's the only place that provided that topic. And that is not going to fit in with Eric because he would then have to leave his family behind. Even if he's just attending an evening class, and doing the rest of the work online doing a hybrid model, then that's still more accessible to him. So I think with it being more available, it's becoming a lot more common for people to go outside their season.



Francis Wade 23:47

Right. So Eric wishes he could fly from his home in Cape Town. Let's see, he wishes he could fly to Boston to Cambridge, and go to Harvard Business School there and disappear from everything and everyone and basically, yeah, you know, go into a cave, and not hear from anyone until the summer time and then go back and he wishes he could do that. But this business of having everything that he had before continue plus this brand new commitment, given that he's someone who he's he's not about failing, is not about also not about stressing himself out. And, you know, having I've heard of people have nervous breakdowns when they try to do these kinds of things. Because they it's all an internal commitment. It's an internal drive, but we all kind of have our limits to what we can accomplish. And he's not interested in

any of those kinds of failure modes that could hit someone. So partly it's you know, it's it has this external set of commitments, but there's also an internal game he's playing. He is feeling anxious is he's tired. all the time. And it's driven by this ambition, because he really wants to add this into the story for the sake of it, he wants to be a CEO. And he can't be a CEO without a degree, he believes. And that's really what he really wants to accomplish. But should it come at the cost of his family? So it's internally he's feeling a bit perplexed.

E

Emily Cordwell 25:22

So that's his motivation.



Francis Wade 25:24

Yeah, yeah. He wants to get over his perfection, his his state of anxiety, and he wants to feel good about the choices that he's made. He wants to be prepared, because, you know, you know, we there should be a way to reach his goals without...Other people have done it, he thinks I didn't put anything in a story that says like, they came to him and said, "Don't do it, you're crazy. I did it, I almost died. I ended up in hospital, I'm still seeing my psychiatrist because of it. My wife left." No one, I didn't put that in the story. But that would have made it even worse. But there are some real downsides that he is grappling with.



Francis Wade 26:03

And, you know, this kind of commitment, while school is a particularly difficult one, I think it's true for any time anyone takes something seriously. Anything any kind of additional, big commitment that causes a spike in the demands on their time. So this is just a an example. But I think as our listeners, it could be something else that for some reason you think is important. And some some of them society, you know, would say yes to some would say, that's not serious, some people may have their opinions, but ultimately, the end of the day, if you think it's important for you to do this, then that's the driver. So it's really some internal kind of motivation. That's, that's the fuel. Am I understanding sort of kind of what your research is showing?

E

Emily Cordwell 26:57

Absolutely. I mean, I can use myself as an example. I started my master's, be four years ago, in December, I enrolled. And at that point, I was just married, I had a full time job, and was doing some freelance work. Since then, I have had two children, I still have a full time job. I still do some work on the side. And I started a podcast, and I'm about to finish my masters. And I can tell Oh, and COVID hit, I can tell you that I went through phases of "Well, I didn't quite realize that was what I was going to do." I have continued all the way through. I was planning on having one child, I do admit I did plan on having one child during that four years. And I was planning on taking a year out whilst I had that child take a year out from the study, I'd already spoken to them about taking a year out. I chose not to actually in the end, I was about to have my child in March 2020, which was the peak of the COVID. We all went into lockdown. And I was learning online, thank goodness. And I actually decided to continue. I took a four month

maternity leave from my employer job, so I didn't actually do my job. But actually, I could do it with a newborn baby. That was fine. Went back to work. Child was in childcare, I was at work full time and studying. That got harder. And then I got blessed with a surprise second child. I had a slightly more complicated pregnancy than the first one. And then the challenges hit. I was then working full time I had a 10 month old baby. I was in the early stages of pregnancy. It was a bit more health concern than the first one. And then I was heading down the "This is getting too much for me and I'm quite good at managing my time". That was definitely me. Then last year, I had the baby all healthy. Oh, wonderful. She was born July last year. Now in New Zealand, we had a second COVID locked down from August until December. So we were all good last year 2021. So we were all good. We always COVID gone and they've COVID appeared and we went into a form of lockdown. Just as I've had my second child, at which point I then had a toddler not in daycare because it was closed. Everybody at home. I was on maternity leave and I had assignments to do. That was probably the challenging hardest part. Yes, actually, I did reach out to my university who were barely understanding they did allow me a couple of extensions, which is why I have sympathy for anyone asking extensions. And looking back that was my third year of my study. I actually did really well. I actually did my best year of my study. I don't know why. I just sat down and said I'm going to do this. I'm going to finish this and I'm going to do it. I think I got a two week extension on my final assignment. And I'm very grateful that I had that understanding and that that empathy that we were in a COVID lockdown, I just had a baby, I'd got a toddler at home. And yeah, I was very grateful for that because it was out there. And this year, we are now back to normal with COVID active in the community, we have to go into isolation if we've had it. But it's not a forced lockdown by the government, two children in daycare, which is great. They're there most of the time when they're not ill. So there's the chipwood? standard, being sent home type thing, husband's at work, I'm now back at work full time and have been this year. Things are better, I would like it to be over, I have to say, I'm enjoying it. But I'm going to see this through, I've got literally four months left. And I think the whole picture on that is seeing the ups and downs. So I am Eric a little bit. Except for I didn't start it with that daunting, realizing what I did. I discovered halfway through! I realized that my motivation was to complete this because I had committed and paid good money and have to admit, that was one of my motivations was I've self funded this, I'm gonna finish it.



Francis Wade 31:12

Gotcha. So it was more of a determination on your part.



Emily Cordwell 31:15

Yes. And I tutored students through, and I have a real empathy for them. And I often tell them my story. And they and it's not a competition, because I've had students go through some horrendous situations that have been much worse than anything I've been through. And they still completed. And they still said, You know what, I'm gonna do this, this is in line with what I want to achieve. So I think Eric's gonna find that he can dig deep, and he can do it. Because the most important thing I'm picking up from Eric story, is he has the support. And from my research, I'm finding support is one of the most important factors to motivation, whether that's support from your family, your employer, and your university. So your tutors and your professors. If they all support you, you've got a great support network around you.



Francis Wade 32:00

Yeah, so I was like he was he was he was smart in creating, creating that. And as he looks as he looks to the future, he's probably wondering if it's going to be if it's going to be enough, you know, is that is that going to pull him through. But what he's facing in a sort of a general sense is not special to him. And it's not special to people who go back to school. Because whenever we take on a commitment that requires a dramatic increase, you know, even if we're in a job, and we decide to start a company on the side, that's why it's a huge, huge commitment, right? If it's a serious company, it's like, it's a huge commitment. And it's one that we could...not succeed at. So you know, if you're driven but to have it work, the first option may be just to give up weekends and holidays and nights and mornings. But that's not quite the best solution. Because there are better solutions than just adding on time. And those solutions go to the kind of techniques that that we're interested in, which is, how can Eric, change his task management, and upgrade it and take it to the next level, so that he prepares himself for, you know, for the degree, because he has some time and prepares himself in life for future challenges like this, because let's say, let's imagine that in the future, he does complete the degree, he does get promoted to the the sales directors, Senior VP level. And they do tap him to be the next. Not next, but it's one of the future CEOs. And at that point, he looks to the CEO job and he says, you know, something, this is going to be, this is going to tax my task management again. And if he actually learned how to do some things differently, how to think about his task management, and how to approach it with a view to getting through...not a crisis, because this isn't an emergency. It's not a pandemic, in his case. It's an opportunity that he's grasping. But whether it's an opportunity, or a pandemic, or an illness, or whatever it is, the impact on our calendar is the same. It's that all of a sudden, we got 20 hours of new tasks that just kind of fit on top of an already full life. So in a way that's, I would say that's kind of the the mega challenge or the epic challenge that whenever we're faced. It comes it comes at us from all kinds of different parts of our lives. And what do we do, do we give up which is what many do and they just kind of decided to stay you know, he quit school. I've seen people turn on promotions because they rightly or wrongly have this stated that their tasks, they're not task management because they're not so sophisticated, but they just say, I can't manage what I'm doing. No, it's all my go to Manage when... And they don't see that they have an option in which they look at the way they're doing their work. It just is something that they give up on. So if the assistance isn't there, if they don't have someone to say, well, listen, you know, there is this thing called how you manage your tasks, and you could do it better? Or if they're arrogant, and they say, Well, no, I don't think that's for me, I'm already doing, you know, I'm already really good at task management. What do you say to someone like that? Emily,



Emily Cordwell 35:36

I would say that you cannot go into this thinking, Yeah, I'm going to do all my evenings and all my weekend, because that is the straight channel to burnout. It's not going to work, you've got to look at what you're doing already. You look at your tasks. And earlier, I joked and said that you cannot delegate your study. You cannot delegate your study. But you can delegate other stuff. So you stop and have a look at everything you're doing now before it gets busy. So let's sit down at the start of the semester, before we're having an assignment due. What is it that we're currently working on? And what's great is his employer is supportive... It doesn't mean the employer is going to say yes, no problem, you can have less hours. But you could chat to your employer and say, right, is there an opportunity for me to take, say, annual leave a couple of days for my son is due, or maybe I'll take this annual leave two weeks before, you've got

availability. For things like annual leave, you've got availability for delegating certain tasks that might be things within your personal life. So your family are here to support you? Are there certain things at home that you need to do? Maybe he's in charge of doing the dishes or the gardening? Maybe this year, whilst he's studying, we need to pay gardener, we need to delegate. So there's certain things that can be organized...time with his family spending quality time with his family. It sounds awful, but it might have to be scheduled in. So you'd say this Sunday is going to be family time, I am dedicated to family time, I have an assignment due the following week, two weeks later. So the following Sunday is going to be study time. So let's make sure we have this quality time a week before.

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Emily Cordwell 37:13

For me, I look at the bigger picture. So I sit and look out the whole year pretty much. As soon as I get my timetable for my study and my assignment due dates. I have a look. And I work backwards. And I look at each week that I've got in the lead up to that it's that due date, I am not one, not one for leaving it to the night before. In fact, you can't you can't a degree level, it doesn't work like that I have marked many assignments. I know they went in at night before. And I've worked on that feedback form. You wrote this the night before, didn't you? And I've spoken to some amazing students who went I'm so sorry, I left it so late. And I said to them, you are better than that you are better quality student than what you've produced for me. And that usually, then it gets them to sit down and organize their time.

E

Emily Cordwell 37:58

So look at the semester, when are things due? What are the due dates? How can he work backwards? How can he allocate the most important things in his life? Family work study? And how can you delegate those things that can actually be delegated his other commitments and his hobbies? What things can go on pause this year? What hobbies does he need to pause and say, Look, I can't be in the cycling team this year, whatever that is, and just put it on pause or just say no to a few friends just for this year, because his higher priority is to complete the study and eventually get that CEO position which will help him help his family and help them to achieve this study.



Francis Wade 38:39

Yeah, you know, you touched on some good points there. Because it makes me wonder why this problem where we're even talking about it today. Because when someone gets promoted to let's say, the the C suite. So they're in now an executive. And at some point, someone from HR may come to them and say, Listen, do you do you want to an admin or a secretary? And they say, No....I've gotten by without one now. Though, there's all kinds of research that says that executives are more effective with admins. So that person who's responding and saying, have never had one before. And I could see myself saying that. That's pure ignorance. That's because you don't know any better. But the truth is, there should be an onboardingn a course, it should be a training for you to understand the value of an admin at that level. And because you didn't have one means nothing. You are in a whole different world. And this research shows some McKinsey research actually shows that support that you receive from an admin, a

competent admin makes all the difference between your success and your failure. And that you don't know that there's a problem, but that it's not taught to executives. is a huge mystery to me.



Francis Wade 40:02

The same way I wonder why isn't that non traditional students, the minute they get accepted, aren't given a course, a free training that says,



Francis Wade 40:15

'Okay, guess how many hours of the week you're using right now?" And it's like, well, I have like, five, five hours of discretionary time right? Now, let's say, okay, great. We're not going to put 20 or 30 hours of schoolwork. So 20, or 30 plus 165, gives us more hours than you have in the week. So you simply can't do the life the way that you do the life you had before. The math won't support it. So here are tools like time blocking, that, that I thought that I thought that I use, it's actually taught, you know, the assumption seems to be for executives, and students, who are some of the most time pressed people in the world is that good luck, you're on your own.



Emily Cordwell 40:58

I think that was the case, I'm coming from an organization where we support our students, and have worked with them to understand this. And it's the reason I started my podcast, because I wanted to have some resources available for our students, we have a wellbeing coach who can also sit down and support our students through these different challenges. A lot of resources are now available. And I think I know from the point of view with my organization and other university level organizations, particularly New Zealand, there's a level of understanding that the non traditional student needs more support with time management than a traditional student. And traditional student will just pull just learn it. And I think like you say, with becoming a chief executive, what about when you become a parent. Who told the parent that your time is just going to be boom, so much of it has changed, that's a prime example. I'm going to have children Great, that's an easy statement to say. And then when you actually realize the effect, it's got on... nobody's teaching you time management for trying to fit your kids around your career, your study, just life in general.



Francis Wade 42:07

So those are three major transitions, right? They, they, they all come from a place mostly from self motivation, mostly. But we haven't cottoned on as a world as a race of human beings, that people who go through those three transitions, for example, all of a sudden, it's like a light switch gets turned on. And that's what separates them from other kinds of commitments, I guess is that these ones are, the three that we're looking at here are very sudden, there's, there's there's no steady increase. It's like one day you walk into class, one day you deliver the baby, and one day you're promoting, you're in the job, but you're in a new office, or you have hundreds of people reporting to you, it's really like flicking a switch. We don't really give people

anything to help them manage your time better, and manage your tasks better. I don't know, I really don't, I don't understand it. I have empathy for it. But you know, I wrote my book to try and help people who see a steady increase. But in my book, I didn't even mention the fact that there's an there's some all of a sudden increases. And they come like surprises to the three groups of people that we just mentioned. Is that true?

 Emily Cordwell 43:22


Definitely, definitely. And some people are more prepared, because they've had experiences of being organized and time blocking and using these tools before other people just go, wow. And just cannot cope or cannot manage it all. And they they're left to deal with these situations and they'll be unsupported.

 Francis Wade 43:44

But if you're not, but if you're not, if you're already productive before this moment, chances are you're you're you're running at 168 hours of 168. So you're already someone who is if you're someone who is really ambitious, you're using the tools to get a lot of stuff done. But if you underestimate the bump, you underestimate the turning on of the light all of a sudden, you could be caught unawares, as well.

 Emily Cordwell 44:15


Absolutely, yeah, I'm not saying just because you are productive, you're going to be even more productive because there's only so much you can achieve. But I think learning how to manage better or understanding that there may be some compromises, but there probably will be some compromises on what you can actually achieve with your time and the tools that you need to do so. It's important, and maybe these things should come with a warning. If you want to get a promotion to be the chief executive. You want to be a mother. If you want to be a parent or you want to enroll in a course. Here's the warning. In the disclaimer, you will be busy.

 Francis Wade 44:57

Yeah, no, okay, this is this is our first this is our first bell then, then because I see a book called something like sudden spikes in the demands on your time.

 Emily Cordwell 45:11

in my book title

 Francis Wade 45:14

Something that says there are there are certain well defined parts of your life where all of a sudden everything changes and to cope with that transition especially if it comes as a bit of a

surprise like you didn't quite see it coming or you're So.



Francis Wade 48:12

You still there? You're back that was me that was a poor cut this down oh my goodness. Second one second one for the day like that that do something I'm sure some work



Emily Cordwell 50:00

Oh well, you can watch it. It's all been recorded. It continued, because the army I'm recorded here. So yes, I had had a quick sip of water had a stretch, and that's all like,



Francis Wade 50:17

Oh, nothing exciting.



Emily Cordwell 50:20

Okay, I did refresh because I thought, Well, maybe it's me, but I thought no, I think it's him.



Francis Wade 50:34

Okay, so you know your your soul, so busy doing your life, and you don't pay attention to the bump that's about to come. So even if you already know it's coming, you're not paying attention to it in terms of your task management. So that when it comes, it throws you for a loop. And for sure, there is no three step something already other, although we've talked about two steps, so maybe we can find a third. If you were to prescribe three steps to someone who, you know, I've seen these ads on TV, we're surprised you're gonna have twins. And it's like, you didn't even know you weren't even trying to also No, you have like, what? So what are sort of three steps that two steps we've said so far, are delegating, and time blocking. Those are the two. If there's a third, it would be nice to leave our listeners with three steps to cope, when all of a sudden life throws you a make surprise, mega demand on your time. So delegating, finding somewhat knowings knowing that you need offload commitments, or you need to move kind of in the corporate world, we would say you need to move up a level. So you need someone who admin who who's going to work for you and do things for you, that you otherwise would do for yourself the same for entrepreneurs. But it happens more slowly in their case, and more gradually, it's usually not all of a sudden thing.



Francis Wade 52:06

So, for example, Eric could rely on his parents in ways that they in their wisdom, they know he needs to but he doesn't probably see it, they probably said I don't want to bother them. I don't want to be a pest. He probably thinks I want to be a good son and not stressed them out. But they're probably thinking, "I think we're going to hear from Eric soon, aren't we? Yeah, I think

we're going to hear from him. Because he's gonna need it. Yeah. But does he have the sense to ask for it, though? I don't know that. He does need it. But we'll see. He may just tought it out and do it the way he does it."



Francis Wade 52:41

So then we have this whole, his parents may have this whole conversation about Eric's new, you know, stressor. That's the first one. And then the second one. Are you want to add anything to that first one? Anything more? But



Emily Cordwell 52:54

yeah, so I think I think the third thing is actually the first thing. So I think the first thing you need to do is sit down and work out everything, everything that is in your life, right? You cannot delegate and prioritize until you've done that. So what are your commitments? What are you doing what is taking up your time now, before this large commitment comes in, then you can prioritize, then you can delegate, and then you can work out how you're going to going to manage it. So I think there's three steps.



Francis Wade 53:29

I think you're right. So that first step for you to know that you need to do it, it's almost requires some kind of intervention, either your school sends you send you something in the mail that says three steps, like three boxes, you know, checklist, three things. Yeah. Number one, sit down, sit down and go through everything in your life. Even better if we could be a little more sophisticated. and track the flow of your time.



Emily Cordwell 53:57

Yeah, yeah. Yes.



Francis Wade 54:00

are for last, however, week, week or time period? And then how will it change? Forget about school? How will it how's it likely to change over the next few so for Eric? Okay, there's his son's illness, and there's his promotion. So he already is in flux. Things are already going in the wrong direction, so to speak. So if they could tell him, we estimate that you need 20 hours to complete the first semester. And you now need to sit down and think about how to fit the 20 and what needs. So just the sitting down I think uand the consideration, I agree with you that that's it's such a even if he doesn't do the other two steps, he at least would get a signal that says this is gonna take some different kind of thinking a different kind of approach that you've not used in the past. This has never happened to you before. There are some hints that you didn't get through the undergrad degree because you didn't do this part, well. Now that you are a mature, non traditional student, you probably do need to do it to get through. So that's cool.

So that's the first step, the first step is sitting down on a reconsidering and understand understanding the nature of the challenge. And do you think that becoming a becoming a parent? Or getting a promotion? That should be the first step as well?

E

Emily Cordwell 55:30

I think No, exactly the same. Yeah, I think you sit down, you think, how do I use my time now. And if you're sitting there thinking, I'm already overwhelmed, okay, pull it apart, it might be that actually you sit, realize that you spend three evenings a week binge watching Netflix. Now, that's fantastic. And I'm really glad you have that downtime, but you're gonna have probably sacrifice to have those evenings. If you want to achieve this next thing, whatever it is this next goal, so you're probably going to lose two evenings of Netflix binge watching, I'm not actually saying you should remove any downtime at all, because you need that as you will burn out. But if you realize you're doing it for three evenings a week, then you're going to have to say I'm going to have to compromise somewhere on somebody's activities. So if you don't know how you're using your time in the first place, how can you delegate delete, prioritize, to then move forward with your new plan with your new commitments.



Francis Wade 56:25

So in that, in that session that you have with yourself, I'm supposing that if you're an ordinary person, you can't hire a coach, you don't have that kind of disposable income to have someone coach you individually. So it's just you and you. It sounds like there's within that first step, there's a whole host of... there's a sequence of activities to go through, there's like a blueprint almost. There's a transition...let's call it a transition meeting or set of meetings. And then there's a something that could be laid out that says, the first planning meeting for your transition involves..., second meeting involves..., and then the third meeting involve..., and, you know, I had, I had friends who done MBAs and a bunch of them, they wish that I went to Harvard. And they told me, they got some advice from someone that said that before you go, before you start the first semester, take a course in accounting, and a course in statistics, and they say that those are the two hardest courses, and you're better off having already done them than going there. And assuming you learn them the way other people who are smart. And they took the advice, and it made a huge difference. It was basically the courses they did when they actually got to the start the MBA were basically repeats of what they had already done the summer before. So it seems to me like a kind of such a smart, you get ahead, might not get ahead, because that way you have a higher chance of succeeding. So we're in a way we're giving someone advice that kind of like that, because, you know, it's not normal advice. The advice that my friends got wasn't normal either. Because why would you take a course that you're going to repeat just a few months later? Well, that's because the whole course, though, is so demanding. The same way we could tell someone, well, you're gonna go through this transition, you're about to have a baby, why not take Emily Cordwell's, Three Steps to Entering a Major Transition. And they say, well, and you say, trust me, you take these three steps, they'll make a huge difference for when the baby actually comes, you'll be prepared for things you don't even imagine. You won't even have time to think about them when the time comes. Now you have all this bandwidth, you don't realize you have it. But take take Three Steps. It can't hurt. It might help. And they say oh, okay, all right. I'll do it, whatever, you know. And then it could turn out to make all the difference. Maybe it's it's one of these things that seems like it's no big deal upfront, but actually could be a big deal.

E

Emily Cordwell 59:04

I think Eric needs to get that perspective, like that he needs to sit down and, and work out where he's at now. And how these changes are going to affect him. And actually, you'll probably realize that he... I hate using the term but... wasted time, time is never wasted. You're always doing something. But there were times when he has time he could use for these new commitments, he could realize that that could be easily removed from his his commitments and delegate or prioritize. And then he may have a bit more confidence when he then finds out what his timetable is for this semester to say, Okay, no problem. So, because I've stopped doing either a football on a Monday evening, I'm going to use that for my coursework time. So that means my Sunday afternoon I can still spend with my son. I can still spend that time with him. And my Monday evening will be focused on study. So you can see this plan because he's looking at the bigger picture.



Francis Wade 1:00:03

Right? And whereas before he could rely on...call it instinct, because when you're when you're not that we're not that pressed and have a lot of discretionary time, you have time to recover and say, "Oh, maybe I should spend some time with my son this weekend."



Francis Wade 1:00:20

But when you're in the heat in the middle of it, and you have an exam do and your boss expects you to do a presentation the following day, you don't have the discretionary time to sit back and think the way you used to. You have to program it, you have to be very, very conscious and very, very deliberate. And it's I imagine, it's hard to convince Eric of that this is going to be that different. Because he's always gotten by, he's always been able to do well enough. He's, you know, he's, he's done well, in spite of having to do those things. You know, someone could pick up a book like, like, like GTD and say, Oh, I don't believe in time locking. And is it..? Well, being a student is a lot different. There is going to be a huge multiplier on the time that you have to spend, there's going to be sharp deadlines. And if you don't do you know, time block time to study, for example, before you go to class, time block time after to do your homework. If you don't become a mega time blocker, chances are, what's likely to happen is that your discretionary time is going to get squeezed because you haven't programmed it. And you're going to feel the consequences of it. So for someone who loves GTD and swears against time blocking, this would also be a bit of a, you know, "I've always got done well enough, I don't think it's going to be that much of a problem" and you say Okay, so those are three counter... They're counter. Not cultural. But they're, they're not necessarily just common sense. Yeah, they're not easy to arrive at. And they take some, they may take some sacrifice and some discipline, some conversations with people that some practices that you've been like, three, three steps when you spend two hours each following following Emily's ... Emily's Menu of Items or Emily's Recipe to Prevent Disaster. Sorry, there could be uncomfortable and not easy to execute. But, but I think the wisdom that we're trying to put together here is to say that if you do these things, the payoff is huge, on the other side, you just can't see the level of it. Does that kind of see you nodding? Is that kind of accurate?



E

Emily Cordwell 1:02:46

Yeah, definitely. He, he, I always say to when I say to my students, you signed up for a reason. You chose to do this for a reason. When they're going through that really emotional, stressful, overwhelming time, we go back and we look at the original motivation. So Eric needs to just remind himself, why he's doing it and what his payoff ultimately is.

E

Emily Cordwell 1:03:08

Now, sometimes, it's quite rare. Sometimes, that's not the result that people want. Maybe people change, maybe they change, maybe they realize actually, I don't want to be the CEO. I've now decided actually, I just want to settle as I am. But the majority of the time, you just go back and you say, what is the reason that you did this in the first place? And when you're in the heat of the moment, just take a minute to reflect and go okay, this is why I'm doing it. This is why I'm doing it. Because if he can do that, he can then find himself to be re-motivated to continue.



Francis Wade 1:03:45

Yeah, and if you can, I guess you could you could put that in your steps as well. I have you writing a book when when the stuff hits the fan, that there is a deliberate...maybe there's a process to return yourself to the commitments, when you're having these thoughts that you shouldn't be you shouldn't be doing this. And I've heard these awful stories of parents who decided this isn't for them. You know, male and female and they are gone. You know, this is not what they signed up for. T

E

Emily Cordwell 1:04:23

I can empathize. I'm not going anywhere, but I can some days I can understand I think this morning is one of those days I can understand...my day started at 4am this morning.



Francis Wade 1:04:41

Well thanks for sacrificing to be on the show, cause you showed up 100%! You don't show any sign of 4am dramas.

E

Emily Cordwell 1:04:50

I'm watching the video looking at myself going yeah, okay, but I'm glad that comes through.



Francis Wade 1:04:58

So Emily, how can people get get a hold of you, if they want to contact you and pick up your Three Steps and hear more on everything. Books that you have coming out and follow you.



Emily Cordwell 1:05:10

Got me writing a book? Yeah, yeah.



Francis Wade 1:05:13

I know, I didn't do that you told me you're gonna write, I know you're gonna write.



Francis Wade 1:05:18

I'm going to like to write a book. That's my job for next year to look into when I finished my study this year, and I'll be looking into it. And I'm sure Francis and I will be doing another brainstorming session again. For me, I am Emily Cordwell. Just give me a Google there's not many Emily Cordwell. So that's quite good. I'm very active on LinkedIn, I have a website, EmilyCordwell.com, where you can see the whole variety of things that I do. Also, my podcast is available on all good places where you find podcasts, Spotify, Apple, Amazon, it's also on my website, Emily caldwell.com. It's called Managing the Juggle productivity podcast, I update once or twice a month, I am slowing down at the moment because I need to prioritize. But there's already about 25 episodes on there which, if you're new to my podcast, I think you'll really enjoy. There's a lot of things around how I'm learning about habits. I'm learning around, well being I've done some good interviews with people around making time for yourself in your busy time, areas on work productivity, how you can increase your productivity, how you can deal with things when they suddenly change like we've just been talking about, and how you can be more efficient with your time.



Francis Wade 1:06:31

Latest one, it was around simplifying your life making things a little bit simpler, just to help you with your productivity. Where things like stuff and unnecessary things in your life. And that's probably jumped into one of our steps. So on the simplifying. So that's me, Emily Cordwell, and I run a podcast called Managing the Juggle.



Francis Wade 1:06:50

Great, and I'm gonna throw a question out to our listeners. So we came up with three areas, three parts of your life promotion, having a baby, and going back to school that has this phenomenon where all of a sudden there's a flood, your commitments have taken you to the point where you get to turn on a light and all of a sudden life changes. It's an instant transformation in terms of the demands on your time. What other parts of life, where else does this happen? I want you to send me a note, if you can just go to my website, TimeBlockingSummit.info, if you want to do it, send me a note from there. And tell me some other areas of life because I'm curious to see what other areas have this kind of sudden kind of shift where all of a sudden everything changes. But it changes in a sense in the sense that the demands on your time, just skyrocket. And then not something that you expected you wanted it in the abstract, but you didn't quite expect the velocity or the volume that that the change

would occur in. So keep listening. I'm going to be previewing the next episode of the Task Management and Time Blocking podcast in the next couple of minutes and also purchase some resources. So stay tuned. Keep listening...