



TIME BLOCKING EXERCISE

INTRODUCTION

Time blocking is a time management strategy that goes back a long time. It's a way to prioritize and organize time into small, manageable blocks. If you're unfamiliar with time blocking I'll explain it here. If you are familiar with time blocking this exercise serves as an opportunity to bring the practice back to front and center. There are few more impactful things you can do than manage time according to the things that are important to you and impact your life the most.

TERMINOLOGY

There are a few terms that will be referred to throughout the exercise:

- Blocks are boxes of time. We've all got the capacity for a limited number of blocks in our lives.
- Default activities can help keep us in rhythm or they can take away from our rhythm. They are the things we do when we are switching from task to task or maybe we finish a task prior to the end of a block. Default activities are like default blocks. We want to choose default activities intentionally, just as we do with our blocks. Things like reading a book, journaling, going for a walk, standing up and stretching and meditation are a few examples of default activities that tend to help me stay in rhythm. If I'm not intentional though, things like checking email constantly, scrolling through social media or playing Clash of Clans tend to get in my way and pull me out of productive time management.
- Action timing refers to where you place your blocks. If there is a time of day when you're most creative, schedule creative blocks during that time. Schedule your workout to align with something you already "have to" do and you'll be more likely to get it done.
- Efficiency windows are hyper-productive windows of time. When working in efficiency windows eliminate all distractions and focus only on the task at hand.
- Reflect and optimize is one of the major keys to this whole operation. The idea that we'll have it all figured out from the jump is ridiculous. Create the plan, reflect on the action and optimize your approach.

TIME BLOCKING EXERCISE

First things first as we get going here. Start by engineering a distraction free environment. Use pencil/pen and paper, be decisive, pick a day to start (a hard start date has been associated with a higher likelihood of success). Make sure you're in a place where you won't be distracted. This is where the magic starts to happen. I said it a couple times and I'll say it again, no distractions. Let's get into the exercise itself.

DISCOVER CURRENT BLOCKS

Identify your current 6-8 time blocks. Where do you currently spend the majority of your time? In the spirit of keeping distractions to a minimum I encourage using a blank sheet of paper and, using a pen/pencil, track the 6-8 areas of your life that currently are getting the most attention. Be honest with yourself. In addition to discovering your current blocks, identify your default activities.

FILTER BLOCKS

Keep, eliminate/minimize and add blocks. Anything goes. It could be helpful to make a simple brainstorm sheet (start with a blank sheet of paper, and write any potential block that comes to mind that you would like to put in and/or that you know would be good for you to add). Be realistic and try to keep it under eight blocks.

PRIORITIZE BLOCKS

Which blocks are most important/impactful? Label the blocks you've identified as the most important to you in order from most to least important/impactful.

TIME-BLOCKING APPLICATION

Sit down and look at a day in your life. Insert time blocks into the day (be realistic with the amount of time you give to each block), this is where default activities come into play (pick powerful ones; you can also prioritize them). Blocks can range from 10 minutes all the way up to 9 hours (work/sleep). I like to start with efficiency windows and things that have a specific time associated with them. Then, I'll fill in the other things around that. It's a good way to build some framework.

BLOCK ACTION

This is the execution in real life. Give yourself some grace as you first go through this. You may find that you are falling into old patterns without even thinking about it. Read the book "The Power of Habit" to learn more about why. Be aware. Switch gears and move on to the next thing. You'll have time to reflect and optimize later.

REFLECT AND OPTIMIZE

Now that you're working to live according to the calendar you intentionally created, your work is not done yet. Spend a few minutes each night reflecting on the previous day and creating your time block schedule for the next day. Give it all the time it needs, make notes from the day and adjustments for the following day. This reflection process may feel clunky at first but will soon

become smooth and make a big difference on where you spend your time and how much you're able to get done.

REPEAT

Time blocking is about being intentional about how we use the most valuable non-renewable resource we have, our time. The most effective way to use time blocking is to do it at the end of every day. Like I mentioned earlier, at the beginning, this might feel clunky but as you get consistent with it and see the impact it has on your ability to get things done, the rhythm will come. Chances are good you'll see a big difference in the quality of your calendar. It will be filled with things that are most important/impactful to you living your best life.

BONUS: Work is a block for most of us. Go through this exercise within just that work block. These subblocks could consist of things like meetings, deep work, checking emails, writing, eating lunch, meditation breaks, workouts and more (anything goes).

*Please let me know how this exercise has impacted your life by emailing me at jon@relentlesscourage.co. Sign up for one of our online coaching programs today and get \$50 off your first online coaching purchase with promo code **PODCAST**.*