

Ep #54: Tobi's Top Time Management Tips



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Tobi Fairley

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You are listening to *The Design You Podcast* with Tobi Fairley, episode number 54.

Welcome to *The Design You Podcast*, a show where interior designers and creatives learn to say no to busy and say yes to more health, wealth, and joy. Here is your host, Tobi Fairley.

Hey friends. How are you today? Are you shocked? Are you shocked that it's the second quarter of 2019? I mean, it is, it flew, right? Crazy. And if you're wondering what happened to those three months and what you accomplished, then you need today's episode.

I was going to say you're going to love today's episode. You might not love today's episode if you don't know where your time went, but I promise you, you need today's episode. So this might be one of those where I'm talking directly to you and you're like, oh my gosh, how does she always know?

So I could not be more excited about this episode because so many of you have asked me about this, including a lot of you in our free Facebook *Design You Podcast* community. And if you don't know about that, go search for *The Design You Podcast* community on Facebook and request to join us because it's just a free place that those of us who love this content and these topics can get together and chat and support each other and have fun.

But some of you, when I've asked you in that community what you want to know more about, you're like, "I need to know how in the heck you do all the stuff with your time, Tobi," so that's exactly what we're talking about on today's episode. My top tips for time management and really how I make it all happen.

So if you haven't already listened to it, you should listen to my episode about changing the way you think about time and creating more time in your schedule. It's episode number 11 and it's technically called 6 Ways to Create More Time in Your Life, I think. But anyway, it's a lot of mindset stuff about time and some of these tips I touch on and talk on, but today's

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episode is more - let's see, it's more like real life logistics, how I actually do this on a day-to-day basis.

So it'll just build on top of that episode. So here's what I've been asked by a lot of you. "Tobi, how do you get it all done? How do you turn off work at the end of the day or weekends or nights because you work from home? And what tools are you using to make all this stuff happen because clearly, you get a lot of stuff done. And how do you balance everything and how do you balance things that you want to accomplish by looking at the whole week? Not just in a day, because clearly everything we want to accomplish can't all fit in each and every day."

So some of you said, "How do you look at that over a bigger period of time?" So that's exactly the stuff we're going to talk about today and I'm going to take those questions one at a time. So first, how do I get it all done? Well, the truth is I don't. But the truth is I don't get everything that I want to get done done, but I like a lot of stuff, and I bet you do too.

A lot of us creatives, we're into all kinds of things and we love learning and we would constantly be adding new things to our plate. So I absolutely don't get everything done that I would want to do, but I do get everything done that is important and that is a priority. So yeah, I always have a long list of things that I want to do, and then also there's the things that I need to do and then there's the things I have to do.

And I have a lot of other people in my life and on my team that help me get a lot of this stuff done, and then there's a lot of things that just aren't going to happen right now in this season of my life, but they can happen later maybe if they're a priority at that time. But I definitely have lots of help. My husband's a great help, my child's now 13, she can help, my mom helps me.

I have a personal assistant, I have someone who helps me take care of my home and keep it clean and wonderful. I have someone who helps me with ironing and laundry. I have a whole bunch of different team members, contracted team members, which are a lot of virtual assistants and

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professionals that are experts in their own right that help me get things done. So I definitely don't do it all myself.

But I do a ton of stuff myself. Let's just be perfectly clear about that. Because if it looks like I do a lot of stuff, I absolutely do. So yeah, I have lots of help, but I still do a ton of stuff. I would consider myself a go-getter, as we say in the south. I'm high energy, thankfully, and higher now that I work out a lot and take care of myself, which we'll talk about that when we talk about scheduling and some of my tools in a minute.

But I do, I get a ton of stuff done, and I have so many things in my life that I want to accomplish and that I want to experience and just do every day and every week and every month and every year. And so even when I'm relaxing or having downtime, here's the thing, here's the first nugget that you got to know. even when I'm doing that stuff, I'm not wasting time.

So what do I mean by that? I'm basically never spending time that is not intentional and not thought out. Even when I'm resting, like I thought ahead of time about when and how I wanted to rest and what that was going to look like. So I'm rarely, I mean almost never just aimlessly doing things, aimlessly scrolling social media or doing "nothing" that wasn't planned ahead of time.

I'm just not willing to use my time that way because when I just kind of wait and see what I want to do or what I feel like doing or kind of just let rest happen when it happens and then before I know it I've wasted hours that I really didn't even get that much out of it, I didn't get that much rest or connection with family or anything, but that time is gone and I can never get it back.

So I don't waste time. Now, that does not mean that I'm working all the time. And I do like to work, I honestly do. And I used to kind of apologize about work or feel bad about work, but when I started using the tools that I'm going to tell you about in this episode, I changed my tune about that because I really like to work, and I like to work quite a lot and it's fun and it

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fills me up and I'm a driven person and a type A personality and a high achiever.

And so I really like that and I'm okay with that now because I have found a way to get a lot of other stuff done too. So yeah, I really like to work but I also like to do a lot of other stuff. I even like to do things that are kind of like goofing off like watch TV. I watch American Idol and The Bachelor with my family and I watch shows on Netflix, and sometimes, believe it or not, shocking I know, I even do things like play games on my phone.

Just totally mindless stuff to relax and to chill out. But even those activities aren't aimless or accidental. They are planned. Planned chilling out time. Planned playing on my phone time. I mean, I'm not kidding. I am serious. And I'll tell you more about this in a minute and why it's important, but the main reason that that stuff is planned is because when it's planned, it doesn't get out of control.

When it's planned, you don't wake up four hours later having not accomplished anything and feeling kind of frustrated with yourself. So I don't find myself hours or days later having binged on something and wasted a ton of time unless I planned to binge. Now, I'm not saying there's no Netflix binging because there is. I just know ahead of time that I'm going to binge and how long the binge is going to be.

So I literally plan all of this stuff. For example, I plan ahead with my family each week and we know what shows we're going to watch together on TV because we love to do that. We watch American Idol, like I said, when it's that season. We literally watch The Bachelor and Bachelor in Paradise and all those silly shows and we love them. And they're mindless and they're fun, but we know ahead of time and we're all super planners anyway so we love that.

But we know what we're having for dinner while we're watching the show and it's our family time and it's quality time and it counts and we connect and we're not on our phones and it is together time and it's awesome and we look so forward to it and we love it. And it's a lot of what puts balance

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back in our lives because we're busy and we make time to do that all the time, every single week.

And there are times when I absolutely do want to catch up on a Netflix show or I'm counting down the moments because the new season is starting and I'm going to watch it for several hours or a whole day on a weekend or maybe Saturday and Sunday on the weekend, but I know ahead of time and it's planned. And I'm not just ignoring my other responsibilities or needs or other things because again, I thought ahead about it and it's not just happening.

And because of this, I keep my free time and fun time balanced with my work time and my family time and other important things too that we're going to talk about in a second. So yeah, this may sound absolutely crazy to you. It may sound structured, which it is, and it may sound scary in a sense to you.

But remember, those of you who are asking me how I do it all and how I'm successful and I balance motherhood with work, and I have big successes and make a lot of money with my job, and have a good relationship and how I find time for all of that stuff that's important to me while running the business and making money too, this is exactly how I do it and it works perfectly.

So if you're thinking that will not work for me, that does not sound like fun at all, it's too regimented, I don't want to do it, that's totally okay. You do not have to. But here's what I want you to realize and what I want you to really ask yourself. How badly do I really want to get a lot of stuff done and make a lot of money while still having balance? Time for myself and my family. How badly do I want that?

Because a lot of times we say we want something but we're not willing to do what it takes to make it happen, and I'm going to tell you in a minute why this is not at all as restrictive as it sounds. It's actually the opposite.

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So whether or not what we want actually happens in our life, what we dream about, what we want, what we yearn for like balance and money and success, whether or not it's just a wish or a dream or whether it is reality is 100% dependent on how you're willing to live, what you're willing to change or give up or tweak or try - really not just try, commit to, and this could be the very thing you need to commit to because it's absolutely what changed my life.

So if this doesn't sound like an option for you, just know it's totally fine. It does not have to be, but also know that it might be the thing that could help you get what you really want and you're just not willing to do it. I'm just a person that just likes to be honest with myself. I'm completely okay with being honest.

If I decide I would rather eat sugar every week than to fit into my skinny jeans, then that's okay. I don't beat myself up about it. I just don't always wonder why I can't fit in my skinny jeans when the truth is, I'm eating sugar. So just get real with yourself and know that it's completely okay whatever you decide but just don't be confused about why you never get stuff done or never have time for anything, never have time to work on your business, never have time to make money if you're not willing to do some pretty radical stuff with the way you think about and use your time.

Another way that I get a lot of stuff done and find balance is I mix up the activities in my day. So I mix up work and relaxation and personal time in a day. So some of you said how do you get it all done across the week. Well, I'm doing some of each of those things every single day, even weekends. So weekends aren't all relaxation and weekdays aren't all work. They used to be.

I used to want to work crazy hard past the point of exhaustion during the week and then I wanted the entire weekend to be just laying around and recovering. And it really almost made me mad if I had to work on the weekends, which was a mindset that I've since changed. But what I've found is that when I practiced that kind of laying around on the weekends and downtime that was just like, hours of it, I actually didn't even feel that

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relaxed afterwards. And come Monday, I just kind of felt lethargic and kind of worthless even.

So what I learned about myself is that I actually do a lot better and I'm way more productive and more relaxed and more balanced when I do some work and some rest and some family and personal stuff every single day in blocks of time instead of doing all or nothing on a particular day.

So for example, in the middle of the week I go to the gym on Mondays and Thursdays, right in the middle of the day like at 11am when my energy level is the highest and yeah, that's traditionally a time that most people are thinking they're supposed to be working. But I found that that time on those two days is a really good time for me and I can be very consistent and show up and work out with my trainer and make it happen regularly.

When I've tried to do that first thing in the morning, it's not my favorite. It's not my favorite workout time. And it's not because I'm not a morning person. I do get up really early. In fact, a lot of days, most days I'm up at 5:30 or 6am, kind of depending on what that day's schedule looks like, but I just don't like working out in the morning.

And then at the end of the day, in theory I have more energy than I have in the morning but because I work so hard during the day, I'm usually too tired, and so I find excuses for why I don't feel like working out in the evening. So that really never worked for me either.

So I figured out that on these two days, I do fitness training, my weight training with a trainer in the middle of the day, and then I do cardio on other days in the middle of the afternoon, at like two o'clock. Another time that I'm not too tired but my energy level is really high. It's a great break in the middle of my workday and it's really working well for me.

So this is not typical what most of us want to do and it's not what I used to do. But now, I put those times of exercising and fitness in the middle of my day and then I mix up other things in the day. So a typical day might look like this. I might get up at 5:30 or six in the morning on most days as I said,

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and then I spend about an hour journaling, drinking coffee and meditating in the morning.

And then I get a lot of my best uninterrupted computer work done from about 6:30 in the morning, 6:30 or seven until say, nine o'clock, which most people are just getting to work and getting started at nine o'clock. And I've gotten a good couple of hours in of just really focused computer time, which is really good. And then I might go workout, like I said. I might have a meeting or so with a team member, then I go workout, come back, shower, and then I do some more work. So I mix it up.

Then on weekends, I mix it up too because on weekends I mix some productive things in around my rest. So a typical Saturday if we're home for the weekend, not out of town, might be that I wake up around 7am, even 6:30 sometimes. I don't like to sleep real late if I can help it, unless we had to stay up late for some kind of event or wedding or party or something.

But I like to still get up early. I like those morning times. I like to drink coffee and journal and meditate just like I do on other days, but I also like to read. Read in bed, read books that I'm working on, sometimes it's just thinking time, planning time. Sometimes that's working on a new idea when it's really quiet and nobody needs me and my teenager's usually asleep and I'll do that until say, 10am.

And then I usually do something productive. So I might clean out my closet for a couple of hours, which I do it so often it only takes a couple of hours to get it in shape. Or I might clean out the refrigerator or I might go outside and do something like work in the garden, trim my - deadhead my hydrangeas or something that's super productive but that I like to do and want to get done.

And then I might shower and dress and go to lunch with my family for some quality time. And we've had then a couple of hours together and they're ready for a break from me and then I come home and I might do a little more work. I might do a podcast episode or write a blog, and then after that

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I might watch Netflix for three hours with my daughter and just cuddle up and chill out.

And sometimes I even do a little more work later in the evening. If they're busy, my husband and my daughter doing something, if my husband wanted to watch a ballgame that I didn't want to watch or she's got a friend over then that's the perfect time where I'm like hey, I'm going to clean out my email inbox on a Saturday night because nobody else needs me and I want to do that and it feels good, and I might get that done after dinner.

But the point being I don't have this just workday on steroids during the week that's like an eight- or 12-hour day and then this eight- or 12-hour day of rest on the weekend, which always made me feel tired and lethargic. I instead have this balance that has plenty of rest. I'm not overworking, it doesn't feel overwhelming, but I get so much done so I feel super productive and then I have family time and then I mix in other things, other productive things and there's plenty of rest in and around all of that.

And I have found that this is the recipe for me to have the most energy and be the most productive and accomplished. Now, here's a funny thing. It's funny to me at least. My mom who - you know how when you're a teenager you think your mom doesn't know what the heck she's talking about, and when you grow up and you pretty much for most of us figure out our mom was always right. Well, that's definitely the truth for me.

And I used to argue with her when I was a teenager and then by my early 20s, I was like, wait, she kind of knows a lot of stuff. And then by my 30s I was like, oh my god, she's a genius. And like now, I almost just want to ask her ahead of time what I should do before I even try to figure it out myself because I know she knows.

But the funny thing is that my mom has pretty much always been this way. She was never so all or nothing like I was and this concept is so common sense of rest a little work a little, have some fun a little, work a little. It just makes so much sense. But it took me years to figure this out, and it's really if you think about it, exactly like the tortoise and the hare, isn't it?

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Because she's the tortoise, not that she's really slow. She gets a lot of stuff done too, but she just methodically would click things off her list and then she would sit down and rest a little bit and not just be crazy tired like I was. And then here I was the hare, which was basically working on steroids and then binge resting, and it wasn't until I learned to be more methodical like the tortoise and stop all those extremes that I finally seemed to have the time and the energy to get all the things that I wanted to get done done while feeling more rested and more balanced.

Novel ideal. Thanks mom. Thanks for showing me. I was a little slow to clue in on this one but man, is she smart. So for those of you again, who wanted to know how I turn off work since I work from home, I have to admit that I do still struggle with it sometimes because I enjoy working so much. I really love my job and I love what I do.

But this type of thinking and this type of balancing work with family time really holds me accountable more than anything because I make plans with my family for dinner or to watch TV, Netflix, or a date out, or date to the movies or a lunch date or shopping on a Saturday or a Sunday event, walking, something that we planned to do together, watching a ballgame.

And so when we commit to each other, then they're standing there looking at me ready to go, excited about our plans, and it holds me accountable to turn my work off and to relax with them. And because I know that I can still get some other work done later because I know exactly what my calendar looks like, which you are about to learn about how much I really know about my calendar because I really, really know about my calendar, then on those days I'm like oh it's cool, I can go for a couple hours or three or four hours and do this stuff with them because later I'm going to come back and I'm going to do some of those other productive things.

So it makes it a lot less hard to walk away because I have a really clear idea of when I'm going to get that stuff done. And let's be honest too when we're thinking about this. My family does not want to be with me all day. I mean, really, who wants to be with anybody all day unless you're in the

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honeymoon phase of a romance? Maybe then you do but other than that, you don't want to be with someone all day.

Now, in my mind I used to think that turning off work and being with my family meant that I had to spend hours upon hours with them to make them feel like I cared or to make me feel like I cared about them. I don't know if it was them or me that I was trying to convince. But a few years ago, I was working with a therapist just kind of mid-life, going I got to get some of this stuff figured out.

And at the time, I was feeling some mom guilt and some wife guilt for not spending enough time with them and she helped me realize that a good solid hour or two with your family - well, anybody really, not just your family. Family or friend, a client, anybody, an employee. A good hour or two where you're really present and not on your phone or your laptop or distracted is really all that those other people need and all we need honestly, to be filled up and get what we want from that relationship with the other person.

Because let's be clear, they have other things they want to do too. They have other friends that they want to spend time with, they have things on their own to-do list, they want to take a nap, they may want to watch something that I don't want to watch. So we all want our time. it was kind of silly, I guess, and just a little misguided to think that I had to spend all of this time with somebody else to make them feel like I was really committed to them and present with them.

So it was a huge shift for me when I started to realize that carving out a couple of really quality hours, real quality, all in, completely present with other people made it so much easier to fit quality family time or friend time or self-care time or work time really, it was true for all of it. It made it possible to have quality time in every area so much easier. It made it amazing, honestly.

And if you think about that, if you're thinking about even in my work time I don't get that much done, well, do you turn off your phone? Are you sitting in a room with a whole bunch of people where you're constantly distracted

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and having conversations? Or are you focused on that work for an hour or two? Because focused quality time in every area, you don't need near as much as time as you think you do when you're constantly being distracted. So this was a big, big shift for me.

So next, I want you to know about my time management tools, and yeah, this is not a short podcast y'all. This is an important podcast, so sometimes they're 20-minute podcasts and this one is not going to be 20 minutes, but this one is so important and really life changing.

So next I want to tell you what my time management tools look like because they're what help me really get all of this stuff I'm talking about done. They're what help me manage those weekdays and weekends that are structured in the day I've alluded to. And so I want you to really know how I do this.

And you may have heard me talk about this before, I might have talked about it on the other time podcast, or some of you may have heard me talk about it in my coaching program or in a talk. But I'm going to go through it again because it's worth hearing again and tell you the system and the structure I use but before I do that, I'm going to tell you really one of the main things, the main tools if you want to call it that, that helped me manage my time. Probably the most important one honestly.

And this is it. You ready? Most important tool. Saying no. Saying no, y'all. That's one of the biggest time management tools I have and I say no to almost everything that does not fit in my top five areas of focus or priorities. I call them priorities, but you may have heard me talk about in the past that that's really sort of a misnomer because priority is the thing. There's only one, and when you get multiple priorities, that's kind of really not possible.

But that's how we talk about it, especially in the US. So I have five priorities or five areas of focus and here's what they are. Family, health, work. Not all work. Money-generating work that's fulfilling. And then sleep and self-care. So if someone asked me to do something, let's say volunteer. Someone

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asked me to volunteer for something. If it doesn't directly benefit one of these five things, and I mean directly benefit, then the answer is no.

For example, right now in the season we're in with my daughter, she's a teenager. I am required, thankfully, they make me, which is good because I might not want to otherwise. I'm required to volunteer at her school to support her volleyball team and her Palm Squad, which is the dance team at school.

So those two things require me to volunteer and show up and work at the concession stand or do other things for them, which is totally fine and good, and I love supporting her school and her. But those two things are enough volunteering for me at this season of my life. Anything else that I do that is in the realm of volunteering, I write a check to. They don't get my time because this is not a season of my life with a child at home that allows me to give more time than that.

And even at her school, if they ask me to do any other optional stuff - you know, a lot of times they'll ask me - they used to. They don't anymore because they know I say no all the time, but they would ask me to do something that has to do with decorations for an event or whatever, I say no. And yeah, I'll gladly give money, but I don't give my time because time is my most precious resource and it is for all of us because we can get more money, but we cannot get more time in a day. We all have 24 hours.

So I just am fine with the idea and very comfortable with it actually that this is just not the season for extra volunteer work right now while I'm a busy working mom. Now, I will have plenty of time for that in other seasons like when she goes to college and I have these hours that I would have in my day. But right now, I don't. I had time before she was born. I did nine years with the junior league and I used to be a chair or décor chair in some big role for other charity events for good causes, which was really fun.

But then when she came into the world and I was married and running a business, I no longer had time for that stuff. And for a while I tried to fit it all

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in and it was miserable. So now it's so easy for me to see that it is a no for right now.

As far as work related things go, it's a no if it doesn't make me either a lot of money or if it doesn't have a real high level of fulfillment for me, like high level, checks one of my priority boxes in other areas, like gives me an experience with my family, get to take my mom with me, or my daughter, which sometimes I do that kind of stuff.

But otherwise, if it takes me away from family time or takes me away from taking care of my health, like gets me off my exercise routine because I'm traveling too much or it diminishes my sleep, if it goes against any of those other priorities and it's not a really high net profit, then the answer is no.

So again, there is a time and a place for lots of work opportunities. But if it doesn't fit with my current priorities or areas of focus, then it's just a not right now. And the way I'm able to do that, say no to amazing opportunities at work or really convincing people that happen to also be my friends that I don't want to let down, the way I'm able to say no to these things is through an abundance mindset, which means I know that there will be another opportunity. This won't be the only one.

Even if it seems like the coolest, best idea in the world, sometimes it's just not the right timing. And I didn't always have an abundance mindset. I definitely lived in scarcity for years, and the two times that I experienced actual burnout in my life and in my career in the past was because I believed that all these opportunities was important, especially with my job, and that they would never come along again.

If someone asked me to do a show house in some ritzy wonderful place, that would be the only time that that ever happened. Or if somebody asked me to go be where a bunch of magazine editors were going to be, I would never have that opportunity again. And rarely was that really the truth. Occasionally, maybe. Most of the time I absolutely was going to have that opportunity again. In fact, a lot of times I had it all the time.

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But in those moments, it seemed like this was a once in a lifetime thing and so I would say yes and I always justified that this thing, whatever it was, would be the thing that was finally going to bring me either a big new client or a big piece of publicity or a whole lot of money, fame, something that I just was dying to have and I would justify that all of the opportunities had to be seized because they were going to possibly be that one tipping point that got me over to where I wanted to go.

Well, what I found is that rarely is one thing, one situation going to get you those results. Occasionally, yes. But most of the time no. But what saying yes to all those opportunities and for work or for volunteering or other things does do is it makes you tired. Definitely makes you tired, and it makes you sacrifice those other priorities in the process.

So now I know that if I'm supposed to do it and if it's meant to be, then if it's not the right timing for it, it will still be there waiting for me when the time is right. For example, if - this hasn't really happened but I'm just giving you an example that comes to mind right now. So if someone came to me tomorrow and said here's a book deal for you, Tobi, or here's a TV show for you, we want to put you on a TV show, which that part has happened. I've talked to casting agents and stuff before.

They didn't ever pan out, but I'm just saying I would talk to them thinking it was the next big thing, that was back when I was in burnout land. If those things came to me today, I could easily say not right now, it's just not the time. And having an abundance mindset helps me believe that if that is meant to be, and I absolutely know I will write books because I want to at some point when the timing is right, but now is not the right time.

I mean, I can look at my schedule and see it. There's not enough time in it. So if it's meant to be, it's going to still be there or something better will come in its place and I am so good with that now the way I've shifted my thinking to an abundance mindset that it is really, really easy for me to say no.

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So if this concept, like the other concepts I've mentioned so far seem really hard for you, again, I want you to ask yourself, do you really want the balance and success that you say you do? Both of those, balance and success? Or do you want to say yes to everything, hoping that one of those things is the big thing that's going to get you to your goals like, super-fast, like a magic pill.

Because what I believe now is that consistent action gets you to your goals. Not one big thing. And saying no allows you to stay on the path of consistent action, managing your schedule and priorities along the way. So let me tell you about the other big tool, and this is the last thing I'm going to tell you about that's going to take me a few minutes to describe it and help you understand it and it's really worth it, I promise.

So the other big thing, the big tool is a physical tool - actually, it's a digital tool that I use to get everything done in my life and to have balance and to have joy and money and all the stuff that I have, and that is a digital calendar and I use it with the concept I created called zero balance time blocking.

And yes, I did say a digital calendar. And I know the physical ones are so pretty. I love them all. I love the Day Designer and the simplified planner and all these other awesome amazing planners that are out there with stickers and covers that are pretty and cute and all that stuff, and I've bought all of them, I promise you. And I'm not against those, but I'm just telling you that those don't afford you some of the conveniences and workability.

They're not a tool in the same way I have created this system in my life with a digital calendar. So I love those things, but to do your calendar the way I do mine, you're going to need to use a digital calendar. And the one I use is Google calendar. So those other things are super fun, but again, ask yourself, do you want fun or do you want money balance and getting a lot of stuff done?

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So those cute wonderful calendars didn't get me these results, but when I used a digital calendar and I started using it with this concept I created called zero balance time blocking, everything changed for the better in my life, and I've been doing this for probably going on three years now. Maybe a little longer. And I get a ridiculous amount of stuff done.

So what is zero balance time blocking? Well, I got the inspiration from Dave Ramsey, you know, the financial guru. Love him or hate him, he's really smart, and I took his course called Financial Peace University and this is not an advertisement for him. Just a, I guess technically a testimonial because I took it a few years back and I learned a lot about how to budget my money and I really, really liked it.

And what I learned is that I needed to budget all of my monthly income, not just some of it. Because Dave says if you just plan for the big stuff with your money like paying the mortgage every month, those utility bills, your car payment, that kind of stuff, then you just leave the rest of your money, whatever's left kind of almost like it's in a big pot that's in your bank account technically, but it's like it's just lumped together, guess what happens to the rest of that money?

It just sort of evaporates. You have no idea where that money goes, which is so true, especially if you use a debit card because they're so easy to swipe these days. You don't even have to write a check anymore. And so you just kind of dwindle that money away, eating out and buying things you don't really need like if I ever go to Target and I come home with all this stuff that is so cool but I absolutely did not need it. You know what I'm talking about.

And that money is just sort of gone and you don't have anything to show for it. And Dave is so smart and he's so right, and when I was working on ideas for managing my time better, I realized that his philosophy with money is exactly the same really truth about time. Because if you just put the big stuff in your calendar, which is what almost everybody does.

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The big stuff, like an actual client meeting or presentation that you have to show up for, or a work trip to a seminar, or maybe it's a vendor meeting. Or if you're an interior designer, maybe it's a contractor meeting, those things you have to show up for, for sure, that you can't forget. Or maybe it's your kid's school performance or like, your haircut.

But if you just put those bigger specific things in and you leave all the rest of your time just open, so it's kind of like the money in the big pot, you have absolutely no idea what happens to all of your time. Think about it. It's so profound. It just dwindles away and you just have no idea why you didn't get enough sleep or why you never have time to work out or why you never take vacations or why you don't ever go to the movies or have dinner with friends or do marketing for your company or do your social media that you were going to start doing, or have time to create a new idea or a new revenue stream.

You don't know why you have no time to practice self-care or yoga or get a massage or eat healthy. The list goes on and on and on of all the things you want to accomplish. That's why you're looking at me going how do you get it all done, Tobi? Because you're not getting it all done. Well, if you're just leaving all the rest of your time open, there's no wonder. You don't know what happens to all that time. It evaporates. You end up wasting a lot of time and you just don't even know what you wasted it on.

So I began about two or three years ago as I said, working with this concept, and I created this idea of zero balance time blocking. And literally blocking every single hour on my digital schedule. All of them. Including if you see my schedule right now, there's a big block from 10 o'clock, it's really 9:30 to 5:30 or 10 to six, depending on what time I'm able to go to bed on any given night based on my daughter's sports activities and other things.

You will see eight hours blocked for sleep. It's kind of funny. My team sees it on there and they laugh. They're like, you plan your sleep? And now they do it. But at first, they were like that's kind of silly and weird, but you see time for sleep and for work and for working out and for relaxing. Literally,

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you see time on there that says watch The Bachelor and eat supper and what we're having actually even for supper on there literally.

And the idea is that there's no open spaces at all that aren't accounted for. So if you don't have anything to put in all your spaces, then you earmark them for something like open block for work, or open block for rest, or open block for reading. But you got to put something there. You have to account for all 24 hours, all of them.

With Dave's money concept and budgeting idea, it works the same way and you take all that leftover money and you have to earmark it for stuff. Like you say this is how much spending money we have this month, this is how much eating out money we have, this is how much we're saving. This is how much - and it's even earmarked for certain things like we're creating an emergency fund or we're paying down on our credit card or whatever you're using the money for, but every dollar, all the way down to a zero balance has to be accounted for.

Because then you do have money in savings and you do pay down the credit card and you did set aside money to go out and eat and it didn't just evaporate. It's really cool. And again, I know what you may be thinking. I know. You're thinking, "Seriously Tobi? That sounds horrible. It sounds restrictive and like I will feel trapped and overwhelmed," and you know what, I hear you because I used to think that about time blocking too before I figured this out and even had Dave's course.

I was like, you will not put me in a box, Tobi, or any of my employees. I one time had an employee that was like, I'll just plan your schedule for you and I was like no, back off, get off my schedule. But the truth is this is the most freeing most liberating thing I've ever done and here's why; because my calendar shows me exactly what makes the cut and what I have to say no to.

And it shows me exactly how much I'm working and what I'm working on during those hours so I don't just wonder and feel confused about the results or the lack of results that I'm getting. And this process shows me

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exactly how much I'm working out and eating and what I'm eating when I'm eating right. And it shows me exactly how much time I'm spending with my family or on health and wellness, and there is no confusion and there aren't any surprises.

And I don't wonder why I can't fit in my skinny jeans because I absolutely know oh yeah right there, you ate pizza and over here you ate cheese dip and over here you ate cake and that's fine if I decide to do that, but there's no confusion. It's so much clarity.

So yeah, the same goes for family time and for self-care and for sleep. My other priorities. I have no confusion at all whatsoever, no surprises, no confusion, no wondering what happened to the day or the month or as we're sitting here right now, the first quarter of the year, I know exactly where all of that time went.

I know what I accomplished in the first quarter, which was a whole lot. I know what I did in all of my areas of priority. I know what I did in my fitness, I know what I did with my relationships and my family. I know how much self-care I got. And the only way that you can change anything is to have total clarity on it.

The only way you can measure your results and adjust them is to have total clarity and this gives me total clarity. And one thing I do to my block scheduling is I color-code the blocks. So at a glance, I can see if I have too much work time or too little family time, which might be also too much work time, or not enough working out time, or if I've put in self-care time, I can see all of that because it's color coded. I know how much time is with my daughter or what I have for any of her stuff because it's purple.

And my own personal and self-care time is yellow, and working on my consulting business is coral and working on my design business is bright blue. I can look at it and see and know without even reading the very detailed descriptions that are in the boxes because I'll tell you about that in a second. They have to be detailed.

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But just at a glance, I can look on there and be like, I'm way out of balance this week, I better move some stuff back, I better clear some of the work off or I'm going to be overwhelmed. I better make sure that I did my podcast this week and that I went to the gym those two times and it's become super easy, like second nature and all that stuff happens every single week because it's in there.

And it's so much easier to be balanced this way because I'm looking at it in those specific colors and you can't really do that exactly in the same way with a paper calendar. And when an appointment does have to move or change because it happens, in the digital calendar you can just drag it and drop it to the week or day that it needs to go on. Or if it gets cancelled, you just delete it.

But unlike a paper calendar, you don't really have those options. So again, it's not restrictive. It's liberating. I'm no longer waiting for time that I can rest and relax because I'm thinking I'll finally get my work done and rest and relax. I can clearly see that's not going to happen because it's all in the calendar and I'm like well, if I'm going to relax I better put it in there because I'm going to work these hours, I'm going to relax these hours.

But if I just wait and see if relaxing and rest ever happens, guess what? It's not going to happen. I'm going to keep working and keep working and keep working because our work is never done, especially if you're an overachiever like me. So it is not restrictive. It's liberating. It helps me have the balance, the health and wellness and all the things I really want in my life, and it helps me see how much I really can do in a week and helps me make sure that I get those rest times and play times and friend time and all that other stuff in.

And I don't just put a three-hour block that says work because that's just also like having a big pot of money. What goes in that work block? You're going to think that everything that you need to do in an eight-hour period in your head, it's like that'll fit in that three-hour block. But guess what, it doesn't. So you have to be super specific.

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So in that three-hour work block, it will say Smith client living room fabric selection and clear email inbox for an hour and a half, or return emails, or drive to Jones project and check on the plumbing installation. But it literally is blocked in there specifically. And I know exactly what I'm supposed to be doing. Work on my coaching program and work on my members' questions or record podcast episode number 54, which currently on my calendar is the block that we're in right this moment.

See? So it's very specific, and why do I do that? Because we are all time optimistic as some of my clients call it. We think we can get way more done in a block than we really can, and it's so not true. So putting actual task and assigning them to that time and sticking to them is what keeps you honest and shows you how few things you really can fit into a day and shows you where you do need to put in rest and other things and it's a lot less time in a 24-hour day or in a whole week or in a whole month or in a whole quarter than you think it is, which is precisely why if you're not running your life this way, you're scratching your head going where did the time go.

But when you're looking at it this way, it's really clear where the time went and you're not surprised. So yeah, there's some other technical things that I do with this. In fact, I have a whole month on this in my coaching program of content that we practice it and really get it right because you've got to have some other rules like I can't cancel an appointment just because I don't feel like it with less than 24 hours' notice.

So I can't just get to my work out and be like, I don't feel like working out today, I'm just not going, which is what most of us do. If I didn't plan it the day before and move it around, I just go anyway. Or I don't get to a creative block and be like I don't feel like doing design today, I'm going to do my emails instead. I don't do that.

If it's not in advance notice, then whatever's on the schedule, like it or not, I just do it anyway and I'm always so glad I did once it's done. But if you don't have some rules and you don't really follow through and keep your word to yourself, this kind of calendaring, this kind of time blocking absolutely will not work for you.

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So that's how I do it, y'all. And here's the very last thing about it. You can't just keep working on something even when the time block is up. So say I mentioned that three-hour work block earlier. If you really were time optimistic and you really did need eight hours, at the end of that three-hour block you don't just blow through everything else that was left that day like working out, family time, family dinner, rest, self-care, sleep.

You don't just forget all that and keep working, which is what the old me did and what a lot of you do. You stop at the end of the three hours because all that other stuff is on your calendar for a reason, and you go ahead and do that other stuff and with the other five hours of work time that needed to be done, guess what, you go at least 24 hours out because you can't make a change in less than 24 hours and you start finding time to fit in these other five hours to meet your deadline or whatever it is you have to get done.

And if you have to do that a couple of times, which is pretty frustrating because you're like I want to keep working, I'm on such a roll, but I'm not going to let myself, I'm going to keep my word to myself, if you have to do that a couple of times, you get really, really, really, really good at estimating your time, especially on recurring tasks.

Like for me, I know exactly how much time it takes me to write and record a podcast and I'm not time optimistic. I'm very realistic. And I even pad things a little bit so I have a little buffer time just in case it takes a little bit longer. So once you start doing this, you again, miraculously become really, really good and really realistic about estimating things and how much time they're going to take and all of that stuff.

So if you're feeling like freaked out about this system right now, that's totally okay. If it sounds miserable to you, as we've talked about a couple of times in this episode, I just want you to ask yourself, okay, am I resisting because I think I honestly deep-down need this but I'll have to act like an emotional adult and show up and actually do what my calendar says?

But ask yourself too, how bad do I really want what I say I want? Do I really want balance? Do I really want to get healthy? Do I really want to make

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more money? Do I really want time to work on my business so that my business starts to run effectively and efficiently, which again will make you more money? Because if you aren't willing to do what it takes and put systems like these in place, it's totally okay. You don't have to. Just know that you are the reason that you're not willing to get the results that you say you want.

So when I got that honest with myself and I was like, Tobi, you didn't want to do time blocking, it felt restrictive, but what if it's the thing that changes everything, and it was, I had to get super honest with myself and say either stop complaining and do this or just be okay with not having those results. And for me, that kind of meant be okay being sort of mediocre. Not quite reaching your potential, which I was absolutely not okay with.

So that's it. There you have it. You can ignore this whole podcast if you hate everything about it, and I will not judge you because that's just you. You get to decide. But if you really want to level up your business, your time, your relationships, your self-care, your health and wellness, your balance and all of that stuff that I fit into my life and my week every single week, then you really should try these techniques because they have made such a huge difference in my life. They've made such a huge difference in my money, my financial output and my bank account and in my relationships and it's just been amazing.

So here we go. Wrapping this baby up. You can listen to it again if you need to because this is a lot of stuff and next week we won't be quite so in the trenches with a system or a plan. We're going to have more fun because I'm having another interview. This one with one of my besties, and I think you're really going to love that episode so meet me back here next week.

Good luck with trying all these time management tips and techniques if you want to give them a try and I can't wait to hear from you and see how they worked for you. See you guys next week. Bye for now.

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Thank you so much for joining me for this episode of *The Design You Podcast*. And if you'd like even more support for designing a business and a life that you love, then check out my exclusive monthly coaching program Design You at tobifairley.com.