How to Manage Your Time & Get More Done

A TIME MANAGEMENT EBOOK
FROM MICHELLE LOCKE

HEY, HI NICE TO MEET YOU

Until a few years ago, I never considered myself very good at time management. In fact, if you asked me on the fly, I'd be the first to tell you that sometimes, I forget things I'm supposed to do or realize 3 days after the fact I needed to return an email.

However, I think if you asked people who knew me, you'd hear a variety of answers: that I never miss a deadline (true), that I'm excellent at returning emails (hmmmm), and that I tend to always get everything done exactly when it needs to be (true when it comes to other people).

Maybe you're like me: you are really good at gettings things done for work and other people, but when it comes to, say, folding and putting away laundry, you find yourself realizing it's still lying in a pile a week later.

It's ok! We all need a little help sometimes. That's why I'm writing this ebook: to help you better manage your time, get more done, and stop spending so much time wondering how you forgot a doctor's appointment, or to take your laundry out of the dryer.

This ebook is split into a few key sections:

1. Your Calendar
2. Your Plan
3. Your To Do List

Along the way, I'll talk tips and tricks, self-care (you know you need it!), and much more, as well as provide 5 worksheets that will help you achieve your goals, get that to do list under control, and get everything out of your brain onto paper.
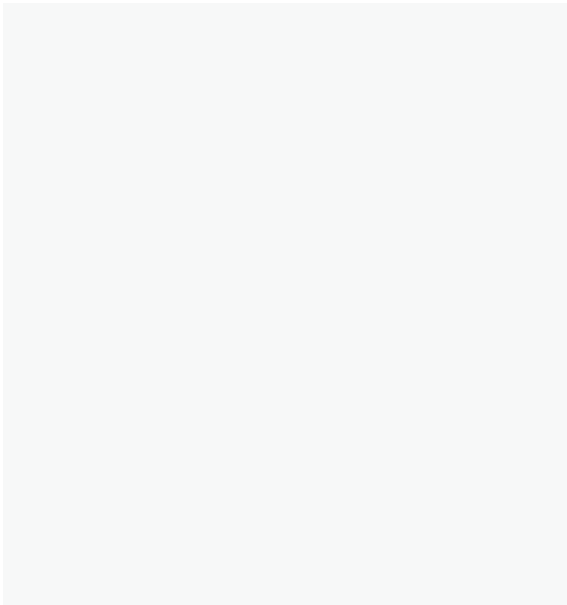
I hope this ebook gives you all the resources you need to achieve whatever your goal is. I'm always available to answer questions on Instagram @michellelocke6 or @seemichellewrite, or Twitter @michellelocke_.
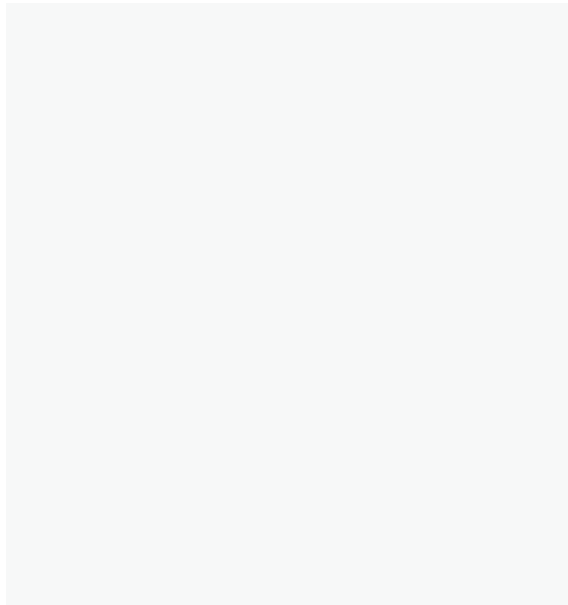
BEST,
MICHELLE

WORKSHEET 1: YOUR GOALS

When it comes to managing your time, it's important to have a good idea of what you're trying to achieve. First things first, let's talk what your goals are: long-term *and* short-term.
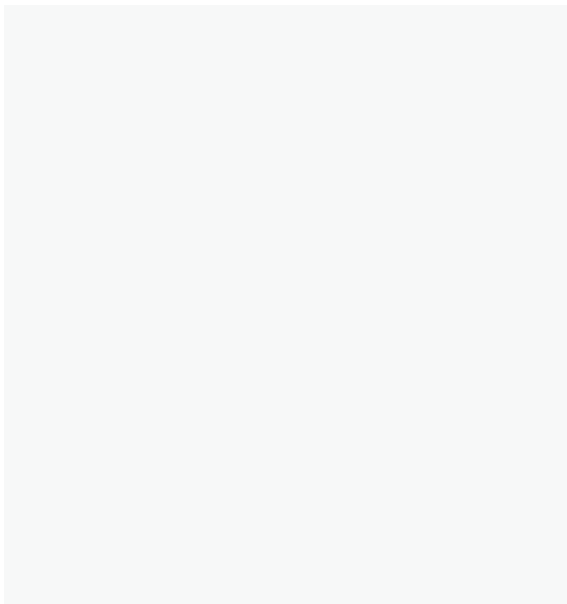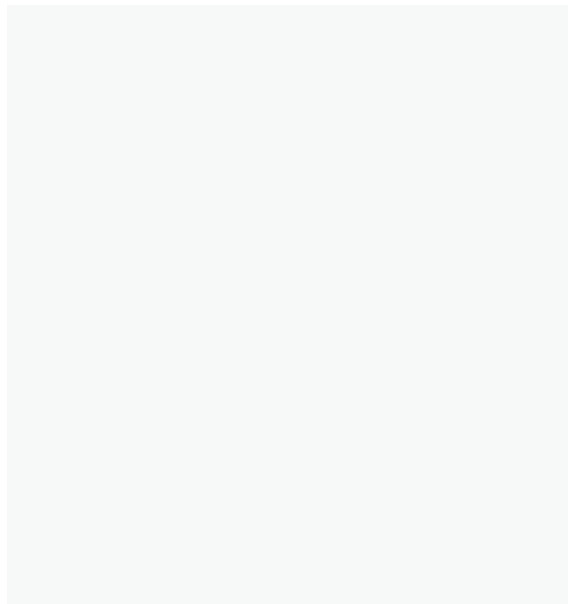
WHAT ARE YOUR GOALS FOR THIS MONTH?

WHAT ARE YOUR GOALS FOR THIS WEEK?

WHAT'S YOUR GOAL FOR EVERYDAY?

3 THINGS YOU NEED TO GET DONE TO ACHIEVE YOUR MONTHLY GOAL.

WORKSHEET 1: EXAMPLE

Here's an example of how I fill out this worksheet myself. If you need help deciding on your goals, don't hesitate to send me a DM or email!

WHAT ARE YOUR GOALS FOR THIS MONTH?

finish unpacking all rooms!
send invoices on time
take 1 no-work day per week
launch new ebook

WHAT ARE YOUR GOALS FOR THIS WEEK?

unpack suitcases from trip
meal plan and go grocery shopping
write newsletter for Saturday

WHAT'S YOUR GOAL FOR EVERYDAY?

slow down and take time for myself
don't let my stress effect other people
take time to play with Forrest

3 THINGS YOU NEED TO GET DONE TO ACHIEVE YOUR MONTHLY GOAL.

1. start planning new ebook
2. have my mom watch Forrest so I can unpack
3. set up reminders on calendar re: invoices

SECTION 1: YOUR CALENDAR

Chapter 1: Using Your Calendar

The most important part of time management that no one really wants to talk about is this: you have to use some kind of system to organize all the information about your schedule and how you use your time.

The calendar you choose is entirely up to you.

I've always been particularly fond of paper calendars, and using my bullet journal, but in the past few months, I've been moving everything, from my daily schedule to my tasks, to Google Calendar. Part of this is running my freelance business; it's easier for clients to schedule time with me when they can view my calendar or use scheduling programs like Calendly (more on this later).

Whatever calendar you use, here are a few tips:

Color code different areas of your life. Choose a few colors to use consistently in your calendar. These will represent the various areas of your life. Here are the colors I use:
- Purple: Freelance tasks & meetings
- Pink: Blog tasks
- Green: Miscellaneous
- Teal: Family/Personal

At the beginning of every week, set your unavailable times. As you go throughout the week, there will be times when you are simply not available. I block out times on my calendar of my commute, my breakfast, lunch, and dinner (including cooking time), when I'm picking up my son, and when I'm walking my dog. That leaves me space to know when I can schedule everything else quickly and easily.

Keep your calendar with you. This is the benefit of using a digital calendar: you can sync it with your phone. But even if you use a paper calendar, or dry erase board, you can carry a notebook with you that includes your weekly availability and gives you space to take notes, or write down meetings if you get a phone call or make an appointment.

Don't try to do everything. Generally, I find most bullet journal set ups exhausting to look at (tracking my water intake, my food, my mood, and everything else alongside all my tasks!?), so my advice is typically to not try to track every aspect of your life (unless you totally want to). To me, that's just a waste of your time and that's why we're here, huh?

Make time for yourself. Remember when I mentioned that you should block out your availability at the beginning of every week? Yep, let's talk some more about that. Cut out an hour for yourself every evening at the absolute least--but really, it should be more. Include this on your calendar and make it part of your schedule.

Chapter 2: Splitting Up Your Day

As we've discussed, there will be times during the day where you're unavailable--meetings or appointments or picking up your kids.

However, once I have my unavailable times marked, I like to split each day into a few specific "chunks" of time, dedicated to one specific area of my life.

6:30am-9am: Family & Home
9am-12pm: Work
12pm-1pm: Family & Home
1pm-4pm: Work
4pm-7pm: Family & Home
7pm-9pm: Self

Within those chunks of time, there might be separate meetings and areas of unavailability, but dividing each day into set chunks allows me to focus on my tasks specifically for those things. For example, work tasks occur within my "work" hours: I don't do anything on my work to do list after 4pm unless it is absolutely necessary. I also won't do any home tasks during my work sections of the day.

This is just the way I split up my day, but how you split up your day might be totally different (or very similar).

Either way, use your calendar to block out these sections of your day. We'll come back to this in a little bit!

WORKSHEET 2: DAILY PLANNER

Use this planner to sketch out your day, to plan important events, and to take notes throughout the day. Or, make your own to match your needs. The possibilities are endless!

MY GOAL FOR TODAY IS:

TODAY

7AM: _____
_____
8AM: _____
_____
9AM: _____
_____
10AM: _____
_____
11AM: _____
_____
12PM: _____
_____
1PM: _____
_____
2PM: _____
_____
3PM; _____
_____
4PM: _____
_____
5PM: _____
_____
6PM: _____
_____
7PM: _____
_____
8PM: _____
_____

BIG TASKS

SMALL TASKS

IMPORTANT NOTES

WORKSHEET 2: EXAMPLE

Here's how I feel out my planner every day.

MY GOAL FOR TODAY IS:

send invoices and finish unpacking office

TODAY

7AM:

8AM:

9AM:

10AM: phone call w/ client

11AM:

12PM: lunch with mom

1PM:

2PM:

3PM: phone call w/ Client

4PM:

5PM:

6PM: dinner w/ Client

7PM: drinks w/ friends

8PM:

BIG TASKS

Send client X invoice
publish blog post
write newsletter

SMALL TASKS

put away laundry
unpack from trip
clean showers

IMPORTANT NOTES

Client X needs email update in 7 days.

Mom on vacation X-X, add to calendar.

New password for client Facebook.

SECTION 2: MAKING A PLAN

Chapter 3: When It All Falls Apart

You can plan and plan and plan all you like, but sometimes things simply fall apart.

It's easy to make plans, to set up chunks of time on your calendar. It's harder to account for the things that go wrong: the client who calls 15 minutes ahead of time and keeps you on the phone through an important meeting; or the phone call from your child's teacher telling you they're sick and need to go home. And those things will happen. That's just life, unfortunately.

But it doesn't have to be all bad.

A plan is a plan. And plans can fall apart. So what can you do to keep yourself on track?

Have a back up plan. (And that back up plan totally depends on what you think works best for you.)

Here's mine: I don't usually work Saturday or Sunday on client work. I do often work on my personal blog on the weekends. So, if I have a day during the week where I don't feel good (hello migraines!) or where I end up falling behind on my work, I will often dedicate a Saturday morning to client work instead of house work or working on my blog. Does that put me a little behind in other areas of my life? Sure. So, I'll readjust my whole day: if I have to take two hours I would normally use for my blog to finish up a client task, I then spend two hours I would normally dedicate to folding and putting away laundry on my blog instead. Then, I work on the laundry at the very end of the day.

This means I do the awful, no-good, very bad thing I often tell people not to do: I skip self-care. I don't read that evening, or take a bath, or watch a movie with my husband. I fold laundry or write blog posts instead. It's not an ideal situation. But it's a "my plan totally imploded this week and I need to meet my deadlines."

Here's another question: what if you just don't want to do those things? And trust me, sometimes I don't.

Good thing is, there is an alternate back up plan.

Let's say, on Friday, you usually schedule all your weekly emails to your clients, write your newsletter for the next week, write your meal plan for the next week, and take a few client phone calls. (I'll talk more about what Fridays should mean in your schedule, especially as a creative, coming up!) But this Friday, you got a phone call from a client early in the morning, asking what was wrong with their [blank]. Immediately, you're handling a fire: you run your kids to school on time, but you miss a client phone call and send a hurried apology. You spend all your time handling the emergency that by 3pm (when you're normally wrapping up to go start dinner), you are sending those weekly emails. You haven't even started your newsletter and meal planning? Nice try, maybe next week.

Now, here's the thing: on Saturday, you usually spend the morning with your family before doing housework and going grocery shopping. Do you:

   A. Drop everything to work on that newsletter and that meal plan?
   B. Drop everything to reschedule those client phone calls?
   C. Neither A nor B

The answer, my friends, is C… sometimes. Sometimes, it might be A. Sometimes, it might be B. It really depends on how you feel.

I know that seems like a wishy washy answer and perhaps it is. But when it comes to time management, here's the best advice I can give you: **there is absolutely no reason whatsoever to run yourself ragged.**

Did you catch that?

There is no reason to run yourself ragged. There is no reason to work 24/7 and never stop.

Phone calls can be rescheduled. Clients will understand! And if they don't, they are probably shitty clients.

Newsletter can go out a day late. It's not the end of the world (even if your clients might try to convince you otherwise. And those clients are also shitty clients.)

Meal plans can be delayed a day or shifted without the world tilting off its axis and falling through the galaxy. It will all be ok.

So, what's my advice for when plans fall apart? There are two options:

Readjust your weekday or weekend schedule, if you feel like it.
Wait until Monday and fit everything into your schedule.

That's it. There's no reason to panic.

Chapter 4: The Case for Automated Reminders

The number one way I keep myself accountable to my to do list and my tasks is by using reminders--again, on my calendar. I am the kind of person who forgets nearly everything if I don't write it down and see it right in front of me, usually multiple times per day. As I've gotten older, I've definitely gotten worse about that one.

I use reminders on my calendar for repeated tasks or time sensitive tasks. These might include:

- Sending weekly emails to my clients
- Scheduling newsletters
- Remembering to send follow up emails/texts/phone calls

Reminders are a great way to keep something on your calendar so you always remember to add it to your to do list. On Monday morning, I remember to add "send weekly emails" and "schedule Google My Business posts" to my to do list for each client because it's set as a reminder every Monday and Friday on my calendar. It's just that easy.

If time management is something you struggle with and you find yourself getting engrossed in tasks (while forgetting the little pieces, like scheduling pins on Pinterest or sending a follow up email), I highly recommend finding a system of Reminders that work for you.

WORKSHEET 3: MONTHLY TASK PLANNER

Use this planner to plan those big tasks that you need to accomplish during the month & need to remember to add them to your weekly lists.

WEEK 1

WEEK 2

WEEK 3

WEEK 4

IMPORTANT NOTES

WORKSHEET 3: EXAMPLE

WEEK 1

send blog newsletter
replace air filter in
house
call about garage
door

WEEK 2

schedule vet
appointment
call pediatrician for
well check reminder

WEEK 3

does my car need an
oil change?
clean out Christmas
decorations in storage
call client X about
contract

WEEK 4

winterize outside
pull up summer
garden
mow lawn and spread
fertilizer for winter

IMPORTANT NOTES

i need to clean out the freezer next month. add to
next month planner!
I think Forrest has a dentist appointment next
month. Doublecheck.

Chapter 3: Organizing Your To Do List

It goes without saying: if you want to manage your time better, you need to write a to do list.

And if you want to really manage your time better, you need to set up a to do list system that makes sense.

I organize my to do list by the same "chunks" I separate my day into. If I have a "work", "blog", and "home/family" section in each day, then I need "work", "blog", and "home/family" to do lists. I keep all of these lists separate, instead of mashing them into one. Why? Because when I'm in a specific "chunk" of time (such as my morning hours, when I do client work), I want to only work from that to do list. I don't want to see that nagging little note to call about getting my garage door opener installed on there; it would make me want to do that immediately.

So, keep your to do lists separate.

Don't just keep your lists separate though; *keep them realistic.*

Oftentimes, I will find myself writing my to do list and adding things to it that, yes, I need to do… but aren't realistic for my day. Your to do list should be everything you know you can accomplish that day: not what you need to get done this month or next week or in ten years.

My other piece of advice is that if you think of something you need to do, but not this week, or next week, but rather eventually: add it to the to do list you keep somewhere else. In a notebook or on a post it you stick to your bulletin board in the kitchen. Somewhere where you'll remember it, but it won't occupy your valuable brain space when you're trying to actually make money or take care of your family. Consider this your "I'll get to that eventually" to do list.

Is my to do list unrealistic?

You'd think most of us would be able to answer this one easily, but we often trick ourselves into thinking we can (or can't) do something quickly and easily. So, here are a few examples of realistic versus unreaslitic to do items.

REALISTIC

1. Finish Client X project.
2. Vacuum upstairs.
3. Schedule vet appointment.

UNREALISTIC

1. Launch Client X project absolutely perfect the first time around.
2. Get featured in Country Living.
3. Become a vet.

WORKSHEET 4: TO DO LISTS

This planner is about writing separate to do lists for all areas of your life. Typically, I recommend one for work, one for home, and one for hobbies.

LIST 1: _____

LIST 2: _____

LIST 3: _____

WORKSHEET 4: EXAMPLE

LIST 1: _Home_ _____

Clean upstairs
Unpack
Put up photos
Clean out fridge
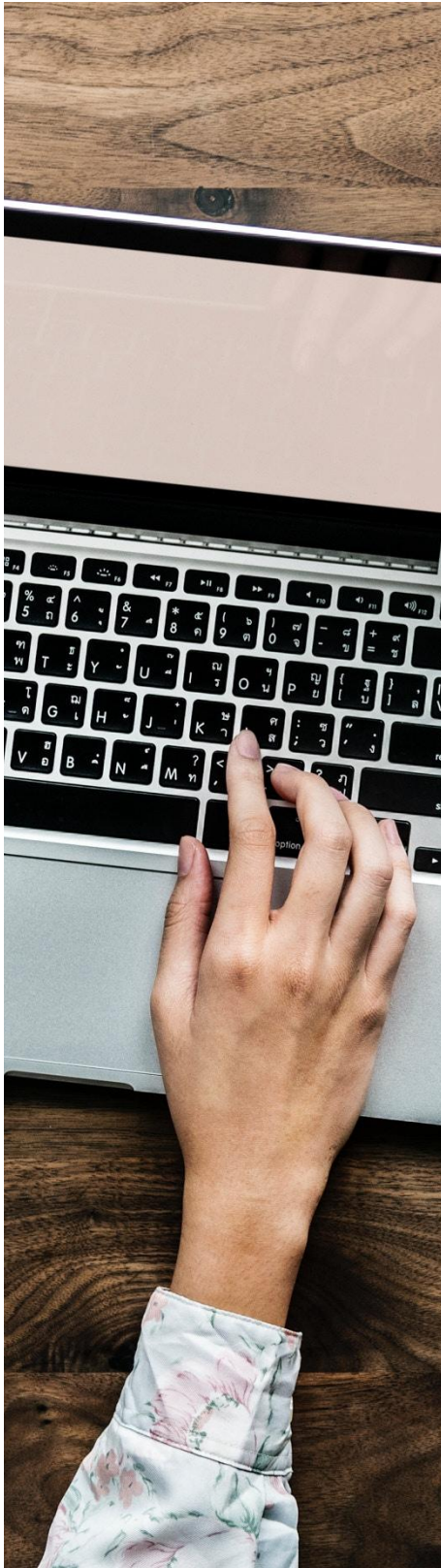Find sink storage
Buy floating shelves
Mop downstairs

LIST 2: _Work_ _____

Send invoices
Complete project X
Renew subscriptions
Finish client social
media
Write client blog post
1 and 2

LIST 3: _Blog_ _____

Take photos
draft blog posts
finish ebook 2
add ebooks to store

Chapter 4: The 80-20 Rule

If you're a creative (that is, you work in a creative industry and make your money by creating something, whether it's photography or writing or whatever), I highly recommend following the 80-20 rule.

What does that mean? It means that 80% of your working hours, you should spend creating. If you work a 40 hour week, that works out to roughly 32 hours. The other 20%, or 8 hours, should be dedicated to something else.

I started following this rule when I got my first job at an agency. They had a few very specific rules designed to help creative (or production) team members avoid burnout:

1) We don't launch on Fridays
2) We don't create on Friday

What does that mean?

1) We don't launch big projects on Friday. It will always go wrong.
2) We don't focus purely on creating for clients on Friday. We dedicate that day to admin work, or research, or taking classes, or learning new skills.
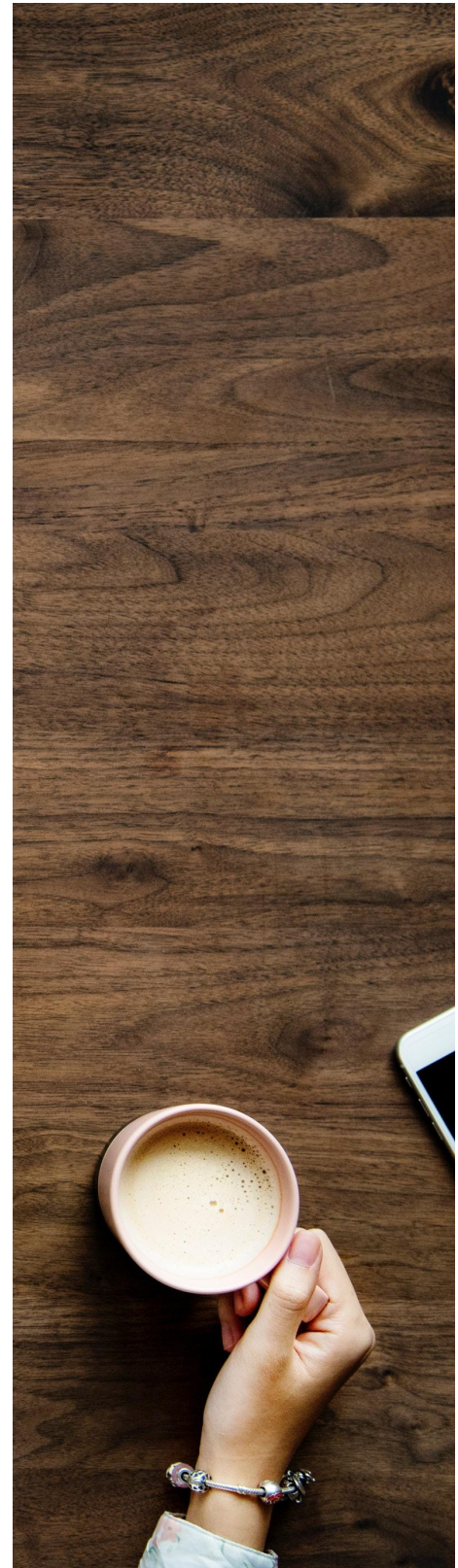
All of this is designed to keep clients happy, avoid massive mistakes caused by fatigue, and prevent burn out.

If you're a creative, I recommend designing your calendar to put all your tasks that focus on "creation" at the beginning of the week, then dedicating one, or even two, days to all your admin work: writing and responding to emails, scheduling things, working through your spreadsheets of data, whatever.

The 80-20 rule will allow you to get more work done and focus on the things that excite you, versus the parts of your job that can feel exhausting (like those client phone calls where you have to ask them to, please, pay their bill); it can also help keep you from getting exhausted by the parts of your job that you're supposed to love (like writing blog posts).

Help! I thought I was cut out for creative work, but I'm not.

The truth is... some people aren't cut out for creating for a living. This isn't a character flaw or a defect. It's just the truth. **Some of us don't thrive on this kind of work.** If earning your money through creating is leaving you feeling drained, it's possible that this just isn't your path. And that's ok! Take a break, try some other things, and keep creating as a hobby.

WORKSHEET 5: SELF-CARE CHECKLIST

On this planner, I want you to write down 4 BIG things you will do for yourself every single month.Incorporate these into your schedule.

SELF-CARE 1:

SELF-CARE 2:

SELF-CARE 3:

SELF-CARE 4:

WORKSHEET 5: EXAMPLE

SELF-CARE 1:

Take Forrest out to luvnh and to the park

SELF-CARE 2:

Meet my friends for coffee and/or lunch

SELF-CARE 3:

Go for a long hike

SELF-CARE 4:

Spend 20 minutes every day writing not for work or my blog

The End

That's it, huh? Pretty easy, am I right?

I know, I know. Easier said than done.

But if you downloaded, and read, this ebook, I knew a few things about you:

1. You want to feel less stressed
2. You want to get more done
3. You want to spend more time with your family

Time management is a skill set that is built primarily on organization. I hope this ebook has given you some tips and tricks that you can use to build a system that works for me. What I've outlined here is purely what has worked for me-- and it might not be the same for you! Don't feel like you have to follow my system exactly in order to manage your time efficiently. Take my advice, find what works for you, tweak what doesn't, and then go for it: launch that website, start that blog, drop that fire mixtape (is that what the kids say?), and go get shit done.

Thanks for downloading this ebook and supporting another entrepreneur like yourself. My DMs and email are always open if you have questions, or just need advice.

About Michelle

I'm a 30-year-old mom & content marketer who lives in Oregon with my husband, son, and chocolate lab named Remus. I love all things Harry Potter, embroidery, writing, and pretending I knew something about home design (I don't, but I like to dream).

I launched my freelance content marketing business after the marketing agency I worked at went out of business. I realized that I thrived on being my own boss, loved doing client work, and wanted a more flexible environment where I could do what I love, make more money (yeah, I said it!), and spend time with my family without feeling guilty.

I've been blogging for 10 years and have learned the hard way the value of good SEO content, social media, and using tools to get the most bang for your buck. When it comes to time management, I like to think I'm queen: I've blogged every single week for 10 years, while finishing college, working full time, having a newborn, *and* going through multiple job transitions. Take it from me: **anything is possible**.

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