

CHRIS'LL DEAL WITH IT

episode notes



EP 24 - Exhausted Yet Eager

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What do I do when I'm exhausted? Do I force myself to do what I planned, or reschedule it? Should I make sure I accomplish something, even if it's something less than planned?

- I'm going to explore these questions using 4 unusual analogies:
 1. **Batteries**
 2. **Boulders**
 3. **Pucks**
 4. **Prescriptions**

1. Batteries

- On a scale of 0 to 100, ask yourself: How much charge do I have left?
 - Now, why didn't you choose lower? Or higher?

- How often do you recharge?
 - Do you take regular breaks to top yourself off?
 - Do you run yourself to 0, which then requires a longer effort/time to fully recharge?
 - Or do you keep finding yourself in that 25-50% range, stressed but functional, grabbing small snippets where you can to keep going a little longer?
- Maybe the issue be your battery's charging capacity
 - Is the issue the size of your battery?
 - Or are you not charging it long enough?
 - Worse yet, are you charging your battery in the wrong way?
- What does an ideal energy usage look like for you?
 - Everyone's unique
 - There's likely often a flow to your week: Mid-week might find yourself with lots of dips, and you need a solid weekend to get back to full
 - Be sure to leave some power in reserve for unexpected events - especially if you have kids!
 - Identify trends and imbalances
- To truly rest you need to truly unplug
 - Don't feel guilty about not always expending energy
 - Those who depend on you deserve your best self - rest assured knowing your resting to bring your true best later
 - Exhausted work is often low-quality work that may need to be redone
- Not all activities will draw you down at the same rate
 - What areas/tasks are depleting you more than they should?
 - Running multiple programs at the same time (i.e.: multi-tasking) will drain your battery faster
 - Switching quickly from task to task will also draw you down quicker

- Expending extra effort might provide inner strength & conviction.

2. Boulders

- Sisyphus: the Greek legend
 - A man condemned for eternity by the Gods to roll a boulder up a hill, only to have it roll down again once he got it to the top.
 - It's a useful metaphor for accepting the struggles of life.
 - Our effort may seem in vain, but each effort gets us closer to the top.
 - We'll never truly be finished at the top, but does it make the effort any less worthwhile?
- Perhaps your exhaustion is due to the idea of the monumental effort involved
 - Rather than focus on the hill itself, focus on the matter of getting started
 - Challenge yourself to do a minute of whatever it is your heart is set on
 - Then you can build on that
 - Soon you may find you've got momentum that carries you further than what you thought you had in you
- But what if you're truly not in the space to do 'the thing you really want to do'
 - For example: It's your turn to watch the kids, which means writing an incredible podcast episode isn't going to happen
 - I'll use this time to get menial things out of the way, as a way to free up more productive time later.
 - Doing some house cleaning, organizing, paying bills, etc... Is a way to gift future you the bandwidth to do the thing when time, place & energy are aligned to bring your full resources to the task
- Just don't waste those moments past you gifted current you: If you're faced with the work-or-play debate, go back to that first minute.
 - You can apply this to lots of things you don't want to do in the moment

- Exercise is a great example: Everyone can do something for a minute, and often you'll start gaining momentum and go for longer.
- There will undoubtedly be false starts, mistakes, and the potential for regretted experiences.
 - But those shape us too, help us to shift course towards new frontiers of understanding & ability.

3. Pucks

- As a beer league hockey player, occasionally I'm in a game where one team is up by a bunch of goals.
 - The result is pretty much assured, yet the game has to be played out.
 - Regardless of which side of the result you're on, this is often referred to as "Garbage Time"
- When I'm in this situation, I don't just pack it in. Instead I change my focus: How can I best utilize this time to improve myself long term?
 - I'll swap positions with someone so we can both get more experience in a position we don't play as much.
 - I'll use my back-up stick, so I don't risk more valuable resources on a blow-out
 - Often I'll focus on a specific skill, going out of my way to work on it. There's little harm in messing up since it likely won't affect the end result.
 - Reframe the game itself: Try to win the period, even if you'll still lose the game
- There's lots of other examples of Garbage Time outside the rink:
 - Waiting in a long checkout line
 - On a job site but waiting for a critical person or element to arrive before your work can begin
 - Playing out the end of a long strategy game where you know you're going to lose (Monopoly)
 - Commuting to & from work

- Cutting the grass
- Or in the case of our asker: Facing the reality of exhaustion.
- What's done is done, so focus on what you can do in the situation
 - If you force performance, *the Juice may not be worth the squeeze*
 - Change focus, what can you do that will set up future you for success
 - For example: Taking care of menial tasks or going to bed early

4. Prescriptions

- What would you prescribe yourself to alleviate your situation?
 - Think outside of yourself: As a doctor, or better yet a mentor, looking over your own shoulder giving you sage advice
 - Assume they know the all of your situation:
 - Weighing your current mental & physical state
 - Your goals & aspirations
 - The state of your battery
 - The resources available to you in the moment
 - Taking all that into account: What activities might they prescribe?
- One thing about prescriptions: They're supposed to be taken on a regular schedule.
 - You never want to miss a dose
 - But when you do, you're often supposed to just get right back on schedule
 - They're often taken every day, at specific times of the day: Planned into or around our existing routines
 - Sometimes they don't taste good: But we do them because of our faith they'll improve us
- These regular doses can be considered rituals or patterns, which help prepare us for switching from one mode to another, or opening & closing our days.
 - journaling

- reading
- meditation
- a walk around the neighborhood
- the Sunday crossword with a cup of fancy tea you only bust out during that specific ritual
- These doses don't all need to be relaxed & restorative. You may prescribe a ritual that requires expending more energy than you normally use. One that scratches an itch you don't get during your day job or during the work week.
 - Maybe your hobby is motorcycle repair: Working in the garage for a few hours with some of your favorite music
 - Yardwork
 - For me: Writing books is vital to who I am as a person, often bringing me immense satisfaction, despite the difficulty and long-term commitment it requires
- It may seem counter-intuitive, but your restorative prescriptions will often counter the tasks in your life that exhaust you
- What about uncertain situations that can often derail your plans and make us unexpectedly exhausted, such as kids?
 - It's frustrating to have our plans & expectations altered by outside forces
 - It can feel like the world is conspiring against you
 - I struggle most with this: It stinks when you don't accomplish what you set out to do in a day
 - It can help to adopt a stoic mindset:
 - Reframe the situation as one where you consider how lucky you are to have the thing(s) in your life that are causing those derailments.
 - Consider the blessings you do have in your life, and how you might enjoy them best in the current situation.
 - Image your life without those events or commitments

- Similar to “garbage time”, can you reframe your goals to suit the current moment - setting future you up to get back on track quicker?
- We need to be conscious of what we’re spend our energy on. There are likely patterns we’ve gotten ourselves into that we don’t realize, which are sucking away valuable resources such as time and the ability to focus.
 - The poster child for this is scrolling social media.
 - These digital pacifiers are eroding many people’s ability to focus for long periods of time.
 - It counteracts our ability to daydream: When the brain seem like it’s not doing much, but it’s actually doing a lot.
 - Are those fleeting little dopamine hits getting you closer to where you want to be?
 - Consider the insatiable pull of these little screens: You’ll often see people sucked into the trap even when performing vital but tedious tasks like walking down a city street or driving a car: **You really do need to focus on what you’re doing in some situations!**
 - One distracted mistake can derail not just your life, but other people’s too.
 - When you sit on the toilet, do you instinctively grab for your phone?
 - While there’s not many things you can actively do during “toilet time”, you could be training yourself away from habitual energy drains.
 - Recently I’ve been keeping a small book in the bathroom that I can read in short snippets, leaving my phone back at my desk to avoid its pull

Episode 24 Quote:

Another gem courtesy of the Stoic philosopher Seneca:

If men could see their future years numbered as precisely as their past, what a flutter there would be among those who saw that their remaining years were few, how sparing of them would they be!