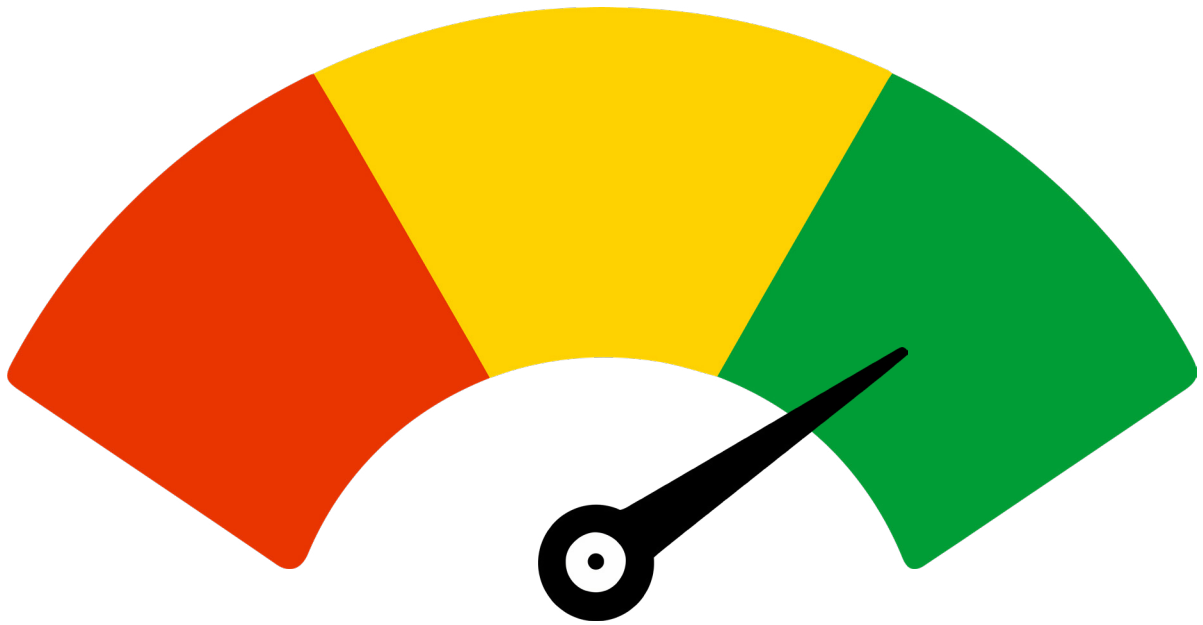


APPLICATION GUIDE

AT YOUR BEST



MASTERCCLASS

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01

THIS MUCH STRESS IS NOT OKAY

If you talk to most people, they'll tell you they feel overwhelmed, overcommitted, and overworked. And yet in many cases, they're doing exactly what they thought they wanted to do with their lives.

The false script that people adopt to be successful is...

- Slammed is normal.
- Distractions are impossible to overcome.
- Life will inevitably be reduced to going through the motions.

Stress—which is medically defined as “any intrinsic or extrinsic stimulus that evokes a biological response”—can apparently do some real damage. The American Psychological Association noted that the impact of stress can include headaches, chronic pain,

shortness of breath, and full-on panic attacks.

The script that passes for normal life for millions of people has got to go. I'd love for you to decide today that you're going to tear it up. On second thought, go further. Burn it. Get a can of gas, throw a match on it, and watch the last ember drift off into space.

If you haven't done so already, take the burnout quiz to see what your current level of stress is like.

**TAKE THE BURNOUT
QUIZ AT**
atyourbesttoday.com

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

1. What did you learn from the burnout quiz you took? What steps will you take next?
2. What are the common patterns, habits and 'traps' that leave you feeling overwhelmed, overcommitted and overworked?
3. Have you ever tried to convince yourself that you're just in a busy season, even though your season has no end? Why do you think is this such a compelling script?
4. "If you don't declare a finish line, your body will." How have you seen this principle apply to your life so far?
5. In what ways has time off failed to heal your perpetual state of overwhelm? Why?

02

LEAVE THE STRESS SPIRAL. LIVE THE THRIVE CYCLE.

You may have seen your story in the first session, but underneath your story is a series of patterns that shaped your story. In fact, your life consists of a series of ongoing patterns. I know you probably think you're more creative than that (I like to think I am), but try moving the toothbrush to another drawer, taking a different route home from work, or sitting in a different spot at the dinner table tonight, and you'll see what I mean. Most of us are far more creatures of habit than we realize.

Some of the patterns you're currently repeating have taken you into what I've named the Stress Spiral—a state

that leaves you stressed because time, energy and priorities work against you, not for you.

Conversely, highly productive people follow different patterns. When time, energy and priorities work for you, not against you, you end up focusing your time, leveraging your energy and realizing your priorities. When you repeat those patterns, you enter a virtuous loop called the Thrive Cycle, where you live in a way today that will help you thrive tomorrow.

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

1. How do you see the patterns in the Stress Spiral showing up in your own life? Be specific.

2. Think through how you currently approach your time, energy and priorities. In what ways would you say your approach leaves your time unfocused, your energy unleveraged, and your priorities unrealized?

3. How would living in a way today that will help you truly thrive tomorrow look like for you? What would be different?

4. What would you do with 1095 hours of newly productive time? How would you spend that time personally? Professionally?

03

FOCUS YOUR TIME

On any given day, you have precisely the same amount of time as any other person on planet Earth. When it comes to time, you and I are rich. In fact, we're loaded.

Traditional time management makes you more efficient, but it doesn't make you more effective over the long run. The limit is this: you're managing a fixed commodity. Which is why time management usually leaves you feeling drained, not energized. You're managing a growing list of demands with a limited asset.

The first step to focusing your time is to start telling the truth about time.

Stop saying you don't have the time. Start admitting you didn't make it.

The second shift in how you handle time is to abandon balance and embrace passion.

What if you embraced everything you chose to do, not with resignation, indifference, or weariness but with passion instead.

Balanced people don't change the world. Passionate people do.

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

1. How often do you end up saying you don't have enough time to do something, or that you 'didn't get a chance'? What does that tell you about yourself?

2. What do you think will happen when you ban phrases like "I don't have the time for that" from your vocabulary?

3. Now that you realize you have the time, what will you start doing?

4. What do you wish you had more passion for? Why?

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

(CONTINUED)

5. It's time to dream a little. Because you DO have the time to do whatever you want, fill out the Dream List Chart and imagine what you're going to do with your time, now that you realize you have it.

MY DREAM LIST

PRIORITY

TIME

Person/task I wish I had more time for	Approximate hours per week needed

04

LEVERAGE YOUR ENERGY

While you have twenty-four equal hours in a day, not all hours feel equal or produce equally. Leveraging your energy is where the exponential returns begin.

Your energy waxes and wanes over the course of a typical day. Underneath that is a truth most of us would rather deny: most of us have only three to five deeply productive hours in a day when our energy is at its peak. That's it.

So where does that leave us? Well, you can cooperate with your natural timing and energy or you can compete with it.

The first step is to uncover the three-to-five-hour window when you're at your best. Let's call that your Green Zone.

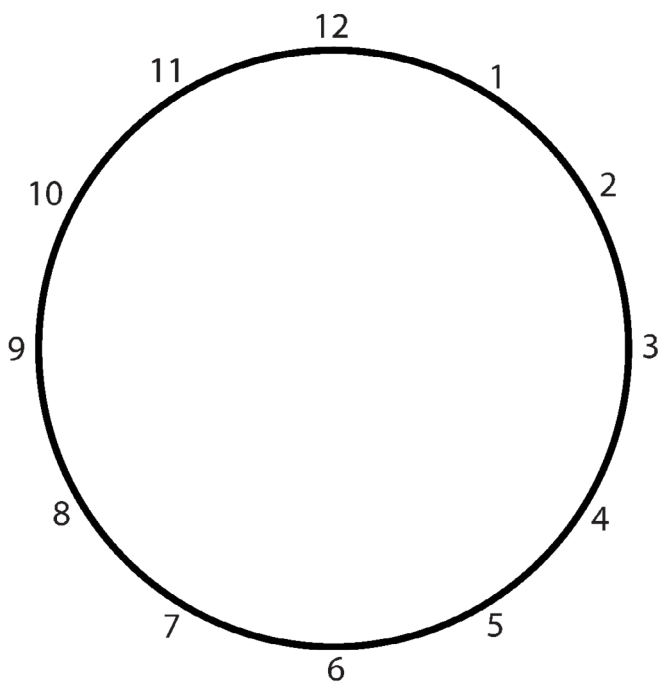
The rest of the day can be divided into Yellow and Red Zones. Your Red Zone happens when your energy level is at its lowest and you struggle to focus and get anything done. Your Yellow Zone is the balance...your energy is mid-level, not terrible but also not at your best.

The best use of your Green Zone is to invest it in the tasks and relationships that meld your gifting and passion when they have their greatest impact.

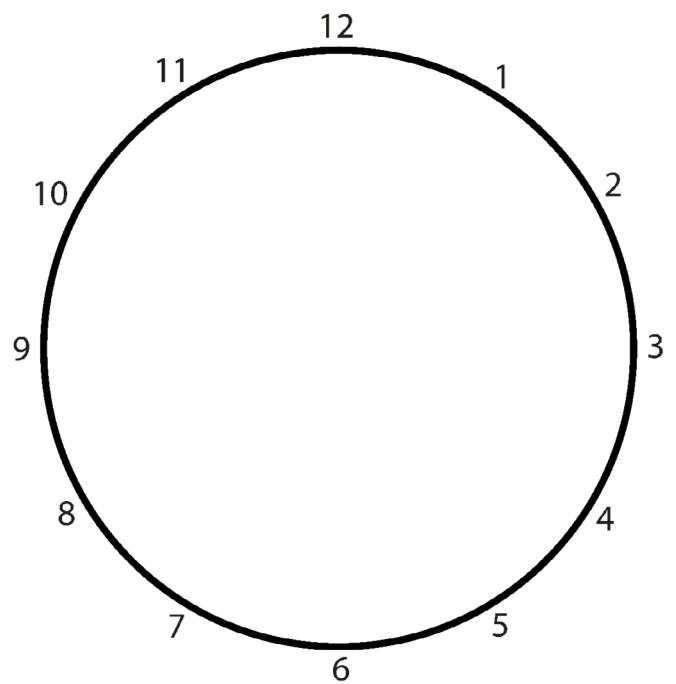
APPLICATION QUESTIONS

1. Do you naturally try to compete with your energy levels during the day, fighting through slumps, or do you cooperate with them? Why?

2. Let's get really practical and plot your personal Energy Clock. You can do it here, and once you have your zones plotted out, come back to tackle the next questions. Don't worry about getting your clock perfect on the first try. Observations over time will help you fine tune it.



DAYTIME



EVENING

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

(CONTINUED)

3. What are the activities that will produce the highest impact if you accomplish them in your Green Zone? Write them down.

4. Even if you're not the CEO, you have a ridiculous amount of control over your life. If you only have 20 hours of meetings and fixed commitments at work, that means you have control over 88% of your week. What changes would produce an immediate return on investing those hours differently?

5. What difference do you think it would make in your life to focus on what you can control, not on what you can't?

05

REALIZE YOUR PRIORITIES

Nobody will ever ask you to accomplish your top priorities. They will only ask you to accomplish theirs.

One hundred percent of a workday or day off can be used up helping other people accomplish their priorities while yours sit unattended. That's how you work all day and accomplish nothing—or at least nothing you planned to do.

In addition, the wrong things always seem to want your attention, which is why in your Green Zone, you should embrace the Pareto Principle and spend 80% of your time on the things that produce 80% of your results. If you know where your gifting, passion and impact come together, and you use your Green Zone for what you're best at, you'll start to see significant progress.

One of the most valuable skills you can have in ensuring your priorities get realized is to master the art of the 'clear no'. Without a strategy for saying

no, you default to yes and your life vaporizes with other people's priorities being realized rather than yours.

Wise leaders both master the art of saying no and learn how to make categorical decisions.

Deciding what you won't do ahead of time will free you to do what you want to do in the moment. It becomes so much easier to eliminate overwhelm when you have categories you've simply eliminated. And you avoid all the mental floundering—time and energy—involved in thinking about whether you should say yes or no.

People are among the biggest time hijackers most of us face. Digital connection has opened up thousands of contacts for most people. Research shows that the number of relationships people can have is not just a matter of preference or willingness; the limits are cognitive, having to do with how the brain works. Evolutionary Psychologist

Rob Dunbar argues that people are wired for three to five close friendships, twelve to fifteen friendships, and 150 personal relationships.

To manage relationships better and keep your priorities straight, stop treating everyone the same. The deepest relationships rightly belong with the closest connections. The depth of the relationship should determine

the depth and speed of your response to digital communication.

The final priority hijacker is, well, you. You don't need an enemy to interrupt you. You have one—it's perpetually distracted you. Turning off all notifications on your devices, setting yourself up in a distraction free environment, and protecting your green zone from people and yourself will set you up to thrive.

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

1. How good are you at saying no? In what ways could you get better at it?
2. Practice the five steps of saying no covered in the session on a request you're facing right now. Go ahead and write the email, send the text or make the phone call.
3. What kind of categorical decisions could you start making? Make a list of things you will no longer do to free up time for what's most important.

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

(CONTINUED)

4. Reference the diagram in Session Five that outlines Dunbar's number of 150. Who are your inner circle? Who will you put in your inner circle of best friends? What about friends? Who might be part of your tribe? Plot out a response strategy for each group based on this principle: the depth of the relationship should determine the depth and speed of your response to digital communication.

5. Even without outside interruption, how distractable are you? What steps can you take starting today with your devices and with your environment to ensure that you can work uninterrupted and undistracted, especially in your Green Zone?

06

THE BIG SYNC

Up to now, we have a decent theory. But what happens when life gets in the way of our perfectly made plans?

So much depends on your calendar, and this is where the theory you've learned so far becomes part of your daily rhythm.

Blank space on your calendar is a trap. It looks like freedom, but it's really jail disguised as liberty. The moment you think the white space on your calendar gives you freedom, disappointment is right around the corner.

A blank calendar is pretty much a guarantee that you'll spend your time on everyone else's priorities, not yours. There are more than a few Jasons in your life (well meaning as they are) who are always asking you what you're up to, and as soon as you say "Not much," you're at a party you weren't planning to attend, playing golf when you really wanted to watch movies with your kids, or helping somebody move.

To change that, decide how you'll spend your time before others decide for you. If you don't decide ahead of time how to spend your time, others will, which is a ticket both to feeling overwhelmed and to ensuring you accomplish nothing that's important to you. Instead, decide in advance what you're going to do, and put it on your calendar. Not only does that make the art of saying no that much easier, but it also makes it dignified and almost automatic.

Calendaring your Green, Red, and Yellow Zones and scheduling your priorities is the final strategic move you need to make to turn what you've learned into the reality you live.

By setting aside a few hours every day to tackle whatever matters most to you professionally and personally, you'll be able to experience the kind of productivity and nurtured relationships that you thought were impossible. Maximizing your Yellow and Red Zones produces similar results.

There are four key decisions for you to make when you design your Thrive Calendar:

1. Decide what you will and won't do within each zone.
2. Decide whom you will and won't meet with.
3. Decide when you'll do specific tasks within each zone.
4. Decide where you'll do your work, especially your Green Zone work.

Your Green Zone is, of course, the most important zone to protect in your Thrive

Calendar. If you craft your Green Zone well, your Yellow and Red Zones can act as catch basins for some of the daily issues that crop up, as well as for your regular work that doesn't rank high enough for Green Zone space.

And having worked through the concepts in the masterclass, you hopefully have a much better filter by now for leaving numerous things off the calendar altogether.

**DOWNLOAD THE
THRIVE CALENDAR**
atyourbesttoday.com

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

1. Take a look at your calendar as it stands now. What benefits does your current system give you? Where does it fail you?

2. Download the Thrive Calendar (it's free) at atyourbesttoday.com and follow the instructions at the link to set it up. Then come back to finish this session of the Application Guide.

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

(CONTINUED)

3. If you haven't done this already, take some time to customize every zone each day.
 - a. For example, your Green Zone on Mondays can be customized to say "Strategic Planning" or "Metrics Review"—whatever makes for a recurring optimal Green Zone for you on Mondays.
 - b. Similarly, your Tuesday Red Zone might be customized to read "Work Out" while your Thursday Red Zone might say "Rest" or "Nap". Whatever makes sense. Use your task list to decide daily what specific items you should tackle in each Zone.
 - c. Think through your weekends or days off carefully, setting different purposes for each zone so you can be sure you get your most important relational and other tasks done. For example, you might designate your Saturday Green Zone to say "Brunch with the family" while your Yellow Zone says "Yard Work". That way you'll make sure your most important relationships and responsibilities get your best energy.
4. Setting up your Thrive Calendar is a big exercise, but because you categorize each zone as repeating appointments, once you program your first week, you're done. Then, as you move through your first month with the Thrive Calendar, fine tune your Energy Clock or how you use each zone each day to make sure you've found an optimal or near-optimal format.
5. Eventually, the rhythm you set up will stop working as well as it used to. That's usually because either things changed or you changed. Set an appointment with yourself now for every two months to simply ask this question: What adjustments do I need to make to my Thrive Calendar to optimize my work and my life? Then make them.

07

FUTURE YOU (THRIVE ON)

There's a deeper motivation behind the Thrive Cycle, one that will keep you engaged not just for months or years but perhaps for your entire life.

If you wonder whether the long obedience in the same direction—the regular adjustments, recalibrations, and perseverance necessary to make the Thrive Cycle a lifelong guide—is all worth it, I want you to imagine yourself not tomorrow or next month but years from now.

Perhaps decades from now. Imagine the future you at fifty or sixty-five or

eighty-five, if you can stretch your imagination that far.

Doing what you're best at when you're at your best is to some extent about what you accomplish, but to a much deeper extent, it's about creating the space you need to focus on who you're becoming.

In the end, who you're becoming is so much more important than what you're doing.

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

1. Has being overwhelmed, overworked and overcommitted taken a toll on your inner self? In what ways have you paid a price for living in the Stress Spiral?
2. You've thought a lot about what you'd like to do, but who would you like to become? What future picture of yourself would you like to see relationally, emotionally and spiritually?
3. Write down some personal and even character goals (e.g. more patient, more loving, more present) you'd like to see realized for yourself over the next few years.
4. Form a picture of yourself decades from now, when you're fifty or seventy or even eighty years old. Who will you be? What do you need to do to become that person you see in your mind?