



the most
important tool to
get hard things done

THREAD OF A THOUGHT

UNRAVEL YOUR MIND WITH JENNY LEE

Planning is the magic sauce.

It takes overwhelm, stress, and indecision out of the equation.

My clients come to me because they are stressed, confused and overwhelmed. It's usually work, relationships, or their life. They want something more – a new career, a job promotion, or to realize their dreams of being a professional poker player. Maybe they want to do something completely different in their lives – they want to move across the country, write a book, or learn to blog. They can tell me why they have the dream or the goal, but they can't tell me how or when they'll get there. They feel like they can't get there, because life gets in the way.

They tell me it's all they think about, but I know that's not true. If it was all they thought about, they'd have it!

They tell me about the false starts, the failures, or the lack of support.

I've been there. I've done this many times. We hope it will all fall in to place, but when it doesn't, we feel lazy, or decide it's just not meant to be. We start to think we're not smart enough, not rich enough, not fast enough. Just not enough.

“When I didn't know where to start or if I struggled to get off go, I felt like a failure. I'd stop doing that thing and move on to the next thing, or give up completely. I was trying different things over and over and having the same result.

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When I didn't know where to start or if I struggled to get off go, I felt like a failure. I'd stop doing and I'd move on to the next thing or give up completely. I was trying different things over and over and having the same result. I'd be on fire for a few days, start to teeter.

Many of you may think planning is unimportant or difficult. You may think you are planning, and it still isn't working. I used to think that too. I didn't have a plan that worked for me and my life.

I decided I was going to get to the bottom of my starts and stops. I wanted to change, and that's what I'm going to teach you. Planning gives you power and motivation which is what you need in order to do hard stuff!

The most important tool to achieving your dreams – big or small – is a realistic plan. Let's get started with what you need in order to plan, what you need in your plan, and what you need to think in order to plan.

THE PROCESS

This is my process. I use this process with my clients and have used it on countless projects, of all sizes and complexities.

This process works because it takes **you** in to account. When you're living life and leaving little room for yourself, you need a plan that works. You need a way to have your own back. Showing up for yourself is such a powerful skill to have.

The process starts with self-empathy. We're good at empathizing with others, but not always with ourselves. This process will allow you to figure out where you're at, and meet yourself there. You have to abandon the thoughts you've created about yourself from past starts and stops.

If you want to achieve your goals, you have to become good at planning and following through with your plans. You have to get comfortable with being uncomfortable, because discomfort is the currency to realizing your goals.

If you continue to do more of the same, you will get more of the same. You can choose to experience discomfort now while working on your goals, or discomfort later when months or years from now you are still just existing in your own life.

I used to give up on myself a lot. I don't do that anymore. I know planning helps you to think about what you want most. It gives you a road map of where you want to go and it helps you build the habit of showing up for yourself. Instead of just merely existing in your own life, you start with your goal in mind, then build a plan backwards. Plan out the details to achieve the goal. In my work as a project manager, my colleagues and I would preach – plan the work, work the plan – it really is that easy.

When you work the plan, you show up for yourself. You may think you should be doing a lot of things, but practice self-empathy instead. Meet yourself where you are now, so you can practice showing up for yourself and succeeding.

“I can't come up
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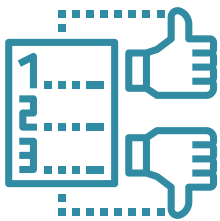
EMI KOLAWOLE

HOW TO PLAN



Step One: Strategize

You know your goal, now it's time to get real about it. Showing up for yourself means appreciating your obstacles and making strategies to overcome them. This is not the time to be mean to yourself. Do not give in to confusion or overwhelm.



Step One: Prioritize

Prioritizing your life is part of the planning process. Make sure you're focused on what's most important to you, then add those things to your plan. Eliminate the things that do not serve you or your goals. This does not mean eliminating any fun or joy from your life – it means be purposeful about it – plan it!



Step Three: Systematize

Our goals are too important to be left to chance. You will need a system to track your plan and progress. Do not over-complicate this. Start where you are. If it's a piece of paper, good. If it's a bound paper planner, good. If it's Google calendar, good. Plan the work, and work the plan.



Step Four: Analyze

Reviewing your work is nearly as critical as planning it and showing up to do it. You will not do it perfectly every time. Let the learning be fun. You will grow and expand with every win and every mis-step.

STRATEGIZE

It's time to get clear about your goal. It has to be measurable so that you'll know when you're done. Complete the following commitment statement:

By _____, I will have completed and/or created _____.

I will know I'm done because _____.



Brainstorm

Make a list of everything you need to do in order to accomplish your goal. The more you can anticipate, the better. Include those tasks that you can't do, but need someone else to complete in order to realize your goal. Break any large tasks into smaller tasks. Use more paper, if needed.

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

STRATEGIZE

2

Obstacles

List all the obstacles to achieving your goals. We know there are obstacles, because if there weren't any, you would already have achieved your goal. Ask yourself what's keeping you from your goal, or what has been hard about achieving it thus far. An example of an obstacles may be: I only have time in the early morning to work on my goal, but I can't wake up.

3

Strategies

Now that you know the obstacles to achieving your goal, develop a strategy for overcoming each obstacle. The strategies will become things on your plan. They may be tasks or even skills you need to learn. Using the example of an obstacle above, a strategy may be: every day I will wake up ten minutes earlier until I reach the time I need.

STRATEGIZE

4

24-hour plan

This is gold. The 24-hour plan is the specifics of what you will do for the next 24 hours.

Later in this process, you will set-up your calendar. You will commit to blocks of time to work on your goal. The 24-hour plan is the specific tasks or results you will achieve in that block of time and for one day. The 24-hour plan tells you exactly what to do. Making decisions ahead of time removes decision fatigue. We want to remove any possibility that the block of time you've committed to your goal isn't wasted by spending that time deciding what to do next. If you decide to get up at 5 AM to work on your goal, you'll know exactly what to work on. You will have decided in advance.

“A dream is just a dream. A goal is a dream with a plan and a deadline.”

HARVEY MACKAY

You can set up your 24-hour plan either the night before or the morning of, just be honest with yourself about when you're most likely to do it, then put it on your calendar!

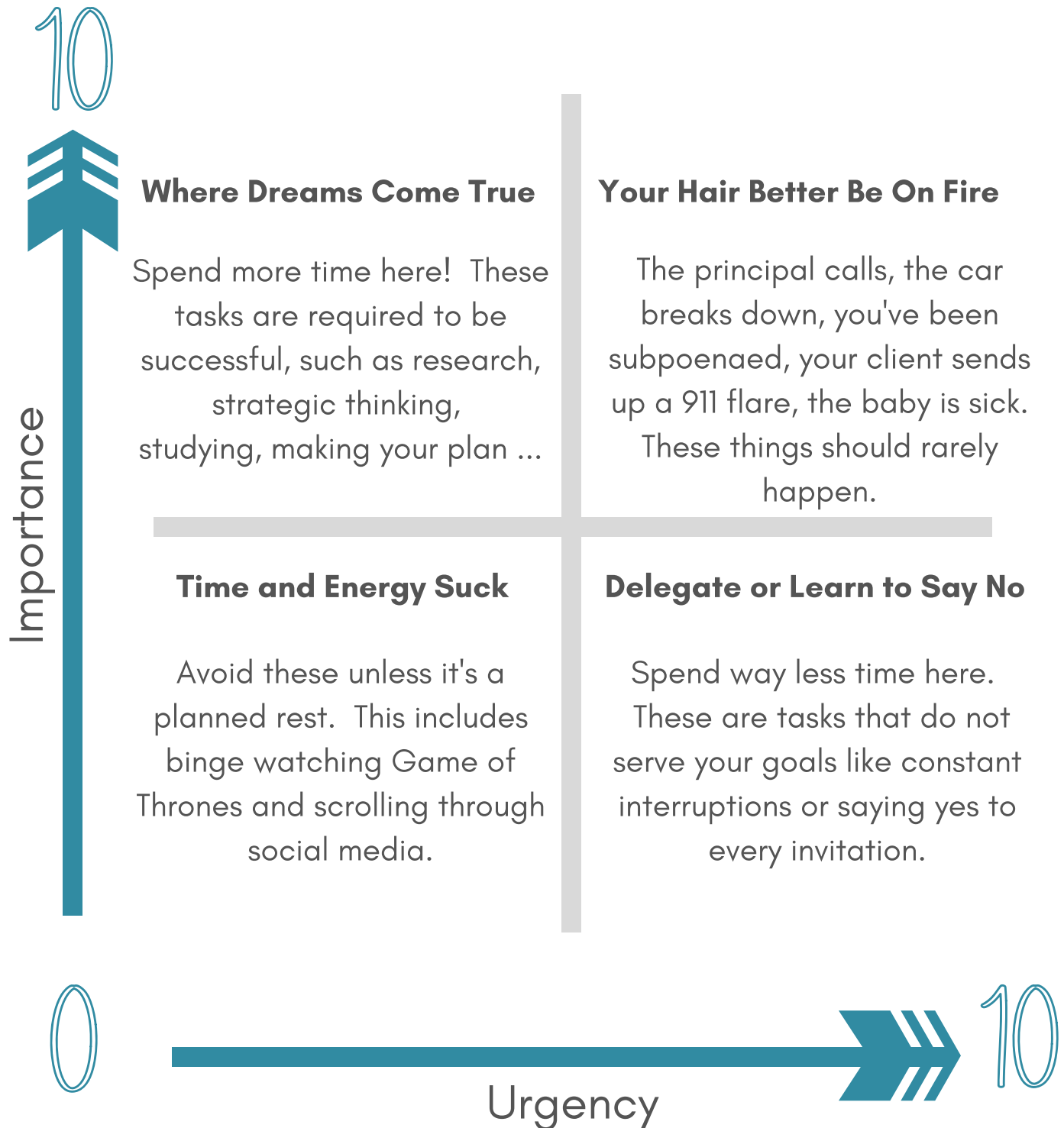
Your 24-hour plan is not just your to-do list for the day, it's your story - it's your quick wins! Quick wins isn't a new phenomenon. It's actually science, or a phenomenon created by two scientist who were trying to build a DNA structure. Along the way, they found their daily attitudes were influenced by the amount of progress they made.

It would later become known as the progress principle which states making progress in meaningful work potentially increases motivation more than any other factor. When you can see your progress, you have better thoughts. And when you have better thoughts about your progress, you will be motivated to create more. I call these quick wins, and these are on your 24-hour plan.

Write down your 24-hour plan. Put it on your calendar in the time blocks you committed to your goal. Now, all you have to do is show up.

PRIORITIZE

Life still happens while you work on your goals. The matrix below is a way to divide up the urgent from the important tasks. Not every task needs to be completed right away and some tasks that you think you need to do may not need to be completed at all. The key is to figure out what is what. The matrix represents a scale of 0-10 on the importance scale and on the urgency scale. 0 is least important or not urgent, while 10 is very important or urgent. Categorize your to-dos in this way.



SYSTEMATIZE

Do not freak out. I am not suggesting you create some crazy computer program to manage your plan. Whatever you use, let's start there. A paper planner or an electronic calendar is fine. If you don't currently have a calendar, get one. The most important thing is that everything you need to do gets on your calendar.

1

Front Load With Your Commitments

Get out your calendar and look at your week.

Think about everything you **MUST** do like doctor's appointments, meetings, drive time, exercise, even sleep. Be sure to include your making/having dinner, workouts, date night, and other time slots that are important to you. Block these times first. It's important to be intentional with your time.

I generally have a lot of meetings during the day and I need time to complete tasks, and I need time to think. I put time on my calendar for these things - usually 1 -2 hours depending on the project.

Once the must-do's are out of the way and marked on your calendar, you will see the time slots available for your dream come true tasks. Having line of site into your week is critical to your success. Why?

Being able to visualize your week gets you into the mindset of making decisions ahead of time. We waste an inordinate amount of time making decisions. Knowing what you're doing for the week empowers you to not only fill in the gaps with your dream work, but also empowers you to say no or to delegate tasks that don't serve you.

When you plan ahead your mental muscles get strong. The next thing you need to do is show up. If you've created a realistic plan, resisting the urge to do something from the time suck bucket will get easier.

2

Fill in Your Dreams

With your commitments on the calendar, now you can see the time slots that are available for your dream come true tasks. Making decisions ahead of time means you aren't reacting to life. You have taken the time to have your own back and work towards your goals.

It's important to set a realistic plan. We tend to set unrealistic goals. We get excited and think we can do more than we actually can. There is a law similar to Murphy's Law called Hoftstader's Law. It states time estimates for how long anything will take to accomplish always fall short of the actual time required -- even when the time allotment is increased to compensate for the human tendency to underestimate it.

A good rule of thumb is to decide what you want to do in the time allotted, determine how long you think it will take. Now, double the amount of time you think it will take, or cut the goal you wish to achieve during that time in half.

3

Blacklist Everything Else

Avoid any tasks from the Time Suck and Say No buckets. Sometimes these things will come up, but avoid them as much as possible.

Numbing out by wasting time scrolling through social media, binge watching Netflix, or other bad habits will take your time and energy. Aside from your brain, time is your greatest asset. When things get difficult, resist the urge to get a moment of relief by numbing out. It's like Doritos - you can't just take one [minute].

The Say No bucket will be your biggest time reward. Saying no to quick phone calls, water cooler talk, or neighborly chat will free up more time than you realize. Using boundaries and allowing others to solve their own problems before engaging you will be a win for everyone involved.

ANALYZE

Taking stock of where you spend your time is critical to the process.

When you start this process, take a look back at how you spent your time the previous week, or spend a week writing down everything you do before you start the process. Write down what you did and who you were with.

Take the time to consider the things that are most important in your life. If you had to list the top three – who or what would make the cut? Then take a look at the things you spent your time on to see if you're supporting what's important in your life.

You'll want to do this look-back every week. How did you show up for yourself and for the things that are most important to you?

This is part of the planning process. You have to review your work and see where you made mistakes. You are doing things you haven't done before. You are thinking thoughts you haven't thought before in order to achieve your goals, so you should expect mistakes. This is okay. But, you will want to evaluate and correct them. If you didn't do what was on your plan, write down what you did instead, then ask yourself, why you decided to do that. Sometimes we say we don't know. Sometimes we blame others. We have tons of excuses. Until you're honest with yourself, you cannot address why you're not fulfilling the commitments on your calendar.

When I wasn't making progress towards my goals, my honest thoughts were "I just didn't feel like it" or "I don't know how to do it." And when I'd tell myself these things, I'd find myself doing other things that I'd in turn tell myself were "noble" and "needed to be done" – like organizing a closet, or shopping for a gift, or calling a friend to check in.

At the beginning of the week I was full of fire. By Wednesday, I'd start making excuses for why I couldn't keep a commitment to myself.

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ANALYZE

Be honest about your excuses. If you don't like your excuses, you know you need to work harder on your commitment to yourself, or your plan was unrealistic. Make a list of the of the tasks you committed to doing this week, but did not do. Then, next to each write why you changed things. What happened?

Do you like your reasons? Do you like your excuses? Use what you learn about your excuses and include it in your planning for next week. What strategies will you create to ensure these excuses do not continue to be obstacles on your path to success?

There are only two options: make progress or make excuses. Now, create at new 24-hour plan and show up!

YOU'VE GOT THIS!

You have taken the first steps towards achieving your goal. I hope you are feeling excited and motivated. Remember, motivation gets you started, but habit is what will keep you going.

Make planning your habit. It is truly the magic sauce. You can do this!

I am here to help.



Hi, I'm Jenny Lee.

I'm a Certified Life Coach, Certified Project Management Professional, Certified Six Sigma Greenbelt, and practitioner of design thinking.

I've spent twenty years learning how to get hard things done. Fifteen of those years were spent helping women and men of all ages and backgrounds work through hard projects. There is no project too big or too small to plan. Helping people realize their goals is truly rewarding work. It's my mission to help my clients figure out what's standing between them and their goals. I have the tools and the experience to help anyone design their life on purpose.

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CLICK HERE to schedule a free strategy session and learn more about how my program will help you or visit my website.

threadofathought.com