

Ali:

Hi, Miriam. I'm glad we got this episode together or that we're here together to do this episode finally after a few revisions or in scheduling, which as I realized this week when we caught up earlier was really just us exercising what this episode is about. Today we hope to talk about tools and strategies and ways to maintain your center throughout the workday and really set yourself up for success. And I'll just do one little, what do they call it? When you expose the...I don't know, the end of like a movie.

Miriam Meima:

Oh, like a teaser or spoiler alert?

Ali:

Spoiler alert, yes, one of those things is you can cancel and reschedule, which is what we did numerous times.

Miriam Meima:

It's so true. I mean, I think it's a gift to ourselves to notice, and you are actually quite great at this, quite practiced, I will say, at this, of noticing if something that's on your calendar is not in flow. And if it isn't, is this something that's moveable? And if it's moveable, then I shall move it.

Ali:

Yeah, yes. I think chronic illness does that to you because you're not always ready to like do the thing or show up for the thing. I think too, having a full life that's not all work all the time and knowing that those worlds bleed together, whether it's a weather event or a life event or a health event or a whatever event, sometimes it just makes more sense instead of cramming things in and forcing them to just let go a little bit and be like, whoa, I think we can just shift this one and it's okay.

And I have to say, it took me a while to learn the it's okay part because as a Virgo, I love it. I love crossing things off lists. I love getting things done. I love transactional conversations and so moving something is like, no, it took a long time to just be like, you know what? It's okay. And in fact, it's going to be better probably later because I'm going to be better. Time will, you know, sift out what really the most salient and important, you know, highlights and points are for this, this time together, this meeting. So yeah, I've learned to trust that moving things is okay.

Miriam Meima:

Yeah, I've through much observation. I've noticed that when I take care of myself, it's what's best for everyone. And then what other people take care of themselves. It's best for me. I mean, it really does. If one thing shifts, then there's space for everything else to shift and essentially Align with what is in the highest and best. And if we're so fixated on moving through our days as designed, then we are not allowing for something to emerge that could be even better.

Ali:
Yeah.

Miriam Meima:

So I love it when people take care of themselves. And I am always saying, okay, thank you. Thank you for taking care of yourself. And I usually have to remind myself and others, when you take care of yourself, it is what's best for everyone. And just communicate it. Just, you know, that's the only thing is just being really honest and open and just reaching out proactively. I think that's what I've learned over time is I can...

And you do this as well, essentially anticipate what's coming and therefore I can communicate it. I do have some people who try and force it and then I'll get on a call and then 10 minutes into the call, we just call it, we stop the call because there's no use in continuing. Where I would have much rather they just texted me right before and said, this isn't going to work or something else.

Ali:

Yeah. Yes. And a little bit of this ties to commitment hygiene, right? I feel like I was always this loyal commitment machine. And if I had it on my calendar, I was not going to say no. I was going to organize my weeks and my days and my everything around this. And so, you know, and then I would be like...people would reschedule on me or all these other things, whether it was last minute or ahead of time. And over time, I gradually began to realize like, oh, I can do this too. And as part of that commitment hygiene to communicate like, hey, this is not gonna be like a roaring success for me. If I show up for this or I'm not feeling great or I need to reschedule, is this okay? And are these other dates all right? And it was always...always well received. No one was like, you unloyal... I had been waiting my whole life for this coffee meeting and I'd be like, oh, I'm so sorry. None of that happened. It was always like, yes, please, I will take that hour back of my day. Yeah.

Miriam Meima:

Right. Which is an important point. So when we're changing an agreement or reaching out and taking care of ourselves, doing that in a way that we don't apologize is actually critical, I think. It's take responsibility for any impact that that's had or any inconvenience, but we can do that without saying, I'm sorry, I need to take care of myself.

It's like, Hey, update. I need to take care of myself. I hope that this doesn't cause you any inconvenience. Let's in fact, I hope it's a gift that you get, you're getting this time back. And usually if we treat it with that type of communication, it's so much better received. If we go in apologizing, then the person on the other end never really feels like they've been victimized. It's this unconscious thing that happens. It's like, yeah, you should be sorry is what happens inside our brain somehow. So if we can skip over the apology, it usually is helpful.

Ali:

Yeah, yeah. Yeah, I think a lot of this goes back to feeling safe enough to take up our own space and to take care of ourselves, which, as you said, when we actually can operate from that place, that it's okay, and that in fact, it's serving everybody when we can operate that way. It's such a gift, especially even in the clarity of like, oh, I'm really not going to be able to make tomorrow, can we bump it to another time? It's like, oh yeah.

And you know, I've had so many moments, sometimes actually even in the shuffling around of this episode, but even like days where I'm just feeling so crunched on time and then all of a sudden the client will drop or cancel or we'll need to reschedule. And then I just, I get like this relief, like, oh cool, I just needed a little more time today.

Miriam Meima:

Yeah. If I'm looking at my day and it feels tight, I will always say out loud, I choose ease and flow all day. And I, I often have to repeat it over and over and over again, because it's me essentially Aligning my nervous system with the choice of ease and flow. And so I'm really, I'm attuning my attention to see, is there anything that I need to adjust? And I'm also essentially committing to a state in which whatever is gonna happen, I will find a way to experience ease in that.

And then the flow state, which is so well researched and that musicians can tap into and athletes can tap into, but so can all of us professionals. We can tap into the flow state where we're essentially the day is happening. We're more attuned to the content of the conversation than the clock. And quality over quantity of meetings.

And I think that's essential for anybody who's a knowledge worker, who is a business leader who thinks, who needs to get into strategic thinking mode. We need to be able to access the parts of our brain that are more accessible when we're in a flow state, which is really very much interrupted. If we're trying to multitask, which is as we know, a myth, or if we're in back to back, to back, to back, to back meetings, the amount of context-switching we're doing is just leaving us under-resourced. So I think you and I have a lot of strategies and tactics for how to stay ahead of that, which has taken us a long time to build.

Ali:

Yeah. And I have to say, like, I think most folks reality is a little bit of calendar hell, you know, if they like open up their Google calendar or whatever their, whatever app they use, and they look at it and it's like back to back or paved over and it's like, how do they like make more space, right? And set even their calendar up for their own success, whether it's 50-minute meetings or 20-minute meetings versus 30-minute meetings, or not starting the day before, not taking meetings before 11, or ending at a certain hour, you know, but how do you push back on the way appointments and meetings and all these things that really grab your attention and your energy and your life force all day long, and leave you under-resourced, how you push back so that you can gain some of that resource. And even if it is an intense day, you can arrive at the end of the day feeling a little less washed up on shore. Like you've got a little bit more like still with you.

Miriam Meima:

Oh, right, I think that's the goal, is to be able to end our work days with still some energy in the tank. Because whether we live alone, or we are partnered, or whether we're parenting, the idea is that we are not giving everything, every ounce of our being only to work, because that isn't super sustainable. A lot of people push themselves, obviously, to burn out, but if we wanna avoid that and have a great, I believe we want to do great work and then go home and have a great life.

And so yeah, I think to your point, there's, there's a kind of three buckets of, I think, tactics. One is what we can do before the day starts. One is what we can do to set our space up for success or what we can do to set ourselves up for success during the day. And then the other one is just time management. Great, great practical things. So maybe we'll go through them one at a time.

Ali:

Yeah. What do you do? Like, what are your favorites for the first bucket?

Miriam Meima:

For the first bucket, so I have learned not to look at Slack or email before my brain is awake. So that's something that most people don't do, is essentially allow themselves to wait. A lot of people literally look at their phone first thing.

I believe our nervous system is the most calm. It will be all day when we first wake up. And so preserving that state, making sure that I'm setting my intention for the day and doing some mindfulness practice, whatever that is for me. For me, that rotates. I know there are certain people that have a practice that they've sustained for decades. For me, a year or two is kind of the most I might sustain a mindfulness practice. And then it shifts.

Right now it's journaling. So I journal most mornings and I want to get some fresh air. I want to stretch my body. I want to drink water, usually with lemon in it to help with the hydration. And so I'm essentially attending to all aspects of myself before I'm asking myself to produce anything.

Ali:

Yeah, that's so key.

Miriam Meima:

How about you?

Ali:

You know, I used to have this joke, this was kind of like pre-chronic illness diagnosis, but like I used to have this joke that I didn't make public appearances before 11 a.m. but now it's like I don't really do that before 2 p.m. in the afternoon. But I've learned that, I mean, my life pre-living on a farm and having horses was different, because I was trying to just be normal like every

other human. So, you know, it was like the wake up and the big, you know, four plus mile, you know, walk slash hike every morning and all of that and, you know, smoothie and the green juice or whatever it was back then.

But now it's, it's different in the sense that I kind of have these critters that are dependent upon me. So my morning is really get the barn ready, get myself feeling like I have that world in a good place so that I can then move on throughout the rest of the day, whether that's sitting down for some administrative stuff, for Reboot or writing or having fun conversations with people like you.

Or seeing clients, which I'm really save for later in the day, because that's when I'm able to like sit down and actually be present for other people. Um, whereas prior I've just learned, even if though I've tried to do things before that, I just, nobody gets the best of me before mid-afternoon. I'm usually distracted or wondering what the ponies are doing or in between, you know, things that need to be done and it just like, I am not. I'm not my best, especially as a coach before mid-afternoon.

Miriam Meima:

Mm-hmm. Yeah. I love to essentially have everybody think about what are the actions that we can take that set us up to be our better selves or to have a better day. And I think we can we can learn we can yeah, I'm a better me and I have a better day when I get exercise or sauna or cold plunge is the new thing right or the sauna cold plunge...

Ali:

Oh my god.

Miriam Meima:

Combo, I mean, that's, it feels like what a luxury, but I can also do this literally in 10 minutes. I need to drink water, I need to take a few breaths, I need to set my intention, and then I'm ready. But I know that I will be a better me and I'll have a better day if I do those things before I interact with others. And I think we all can create our short list of those things.

Ali:

Oh yeah. And I think the important thing, and this is kind of a big narrative now I'm hearing, but it's like, it's not doing the things, like it's not creating the morning checklist. It's literally, how do I connect with myself and resource myself, right? So that I can go through the day in a way where even if the day starts getting away from me, I'm not getting away from myself or I'm not getting, you know, caught up in the undertow or riptide of of wherever the day might take me.

Miriam Meima:

Yeah, I definitely recommend if anyone listening isn't already tracking their energy levels throughout a day or their moods throughout a day, either to develop some awareness or to

develop a tool or strategy, literally it could be a notepad or it could be somewhere on your phone, but some way of tracking energy levels, it can be one to 10, and then moods. And usually those are delayed reactions. And so I know some people will come into sessions with me and they're really needing to dig into this relationship that they have with this cross-functional partner that's really adversarial. And it turns out every time they meet with them, it's their lunch hour, my client's lunch hour, and they're under resource going into the meeting. And so therefore, it doesn't matter who's doing what. It's an annoyance to this person's whole system. They're just literally not available for the call. And...

So it's something as simple as noticing that and then making a shift in the day and time we have key meetings that Align with our peaks like you were talking about in the afternoon is when you're at your best and just like, oh, okay. When are my peaks? When are my valleys? What causes a peak? How can I sustain those peaks? Where are my valleys? Is there any way to soften those? Is it the need to preempt it with a break? Do I need to preempt it with protein? Do I need to, do I need to be getting more... There's something, there's something that I am needing and that we can actually create more resilience and sustained energy levels if we learn those things about ourselves.

Ali:

Yeah, I think that's like a critical, I don't know. That's a critical, that I would put on a checklist, like that as a human in the work world, or even not, like even, I think just to kind of get through life, just so handy to know, you know, or have awareness around that.

Miriam Meima:

Yeah, exactly. The awareness. And then, and then just, you know, there's, I think we have a certain capacity to notice those things and then we also just need to get on with life. And so I'm not suggesting that we suspend life in order to learn about ourselves. Some people have done that. There's authors and podcasters who are truly, they've created a whole profession around being students of themselves. Um, I think though, for the benefit of everyone else, so that we can do it when we have spare time. So whatever we're available for, just start noticing it and then start experimenting a little bit and I think yeah we can all we can all do a little bit better attending to ourselves.

Ali:

Yeah. Yeah, and making sure that we are resourced so that we can meet whatever wild and wondrous and fascinating things coming out of left field happen in a day.

Miriam Meima:

Yeah, because they will. And they do. Yeah. So there's all the things we can do before day starts. Or just essentially they're operating in the background in terms of awareness of ourselves. And then there's what we can do to set our physical space up for success.

Ali:

Mm-hmm. Yeah.

Miriam Meima:

And we've talked about key questions, like how can I be more comfortable? Just constantly asking myself, how can I be more comfortable? How can I be more comfortable? And usually I pair that with how can I be more engaged? Cause I notice if I only focus on being comfortable, then I might fall asleep. But what are the micro-interventions I can do so that I'm more comfortable? And so I personally, I have a standing desk that I sit, I stand. I.

I also set up my physical space differently each day. I decide what is it that I need today. Do I need to be in a brighter space or a darker space? What physical objects do I want on my desk today? Sometimes I need it to be totally empty with just my note system, which is on my iPad. And other times, I've got my water, my tea, my coffee. I've got my. My crystals, my candles, I mean, it depends on what's happening for the day. And I reset.

Ali:

Yeah. I like the reset. I think that's really important because I think we're such fluid beings to think that every day we're gonna arrive and do our amazing morning, and sit down at our desk and have another amazing day. It's a cookie-cutter experience, but it's not. And we're such fluid humans, we need to really be able to roll with our own energy levels, our own needs for the day, feeling states or lack of sleep or overabundance of sleep, whatever it is that's like really fueling us and what we're feeling, you know, letting that be the ruling litmus rather than have I checked these boxes. It's like, do I need to check box five today? Maybe I don't feel like I need to sit or meditate. Maybe I wanna go stare out the window and watch the birds at the bird feeder, whatever it is.

But what I love about the reset, especially in one space, is every day you might need something that's gonna give you, that's gonna resource you in a different way. One day it might be something soft and fuzzy, the next day it might be, you know, who knows, well, a strong cup of coffee.

Miriam Meima:

Mm-hmm. Exactly. What do I need right now, essentially, to be present and engaged? Yeah. And we can literally, anybody listening can practice. How can you be more comfortable in this moment? I mean, really, there's a million things that we can be doing. I can adjust my, right now I'm standing, so I could adjust how I'm standing. I could take a big breath. I could have water. I could gaze at you. Or I could close my eyes. I mean, it's really there's infinite interventions we could be making on ourselves. And I believe there's no limit to how comfortable we can be. And I also believe there's not really a limit to how engaged we can be or how present we can be. And they definitely all play off each other the more comfortable I am. OK, I'm feeling a little bit more at ease, but now I want to engage. Now I want to be present. And so it's all can become like a game. It can be fun.

Ali:

Yeah. Well, it's important to notice. It's just so important to notice that we're not a static, we're never in that static place. It's just so fluid, I guess. Again, is the word that keeps coming to me. Like we're always, we're always changing. You're going in and out of presence like every four seconds throughout the day. And

But this way of tracking, where is my awareness? Am I tracking my inner state? Am I tracking something in my environment? Am I thinking about what was just being said? Where am I right now? It's a really great way to play with your presence and also stay engaged, I think.

Miriam Meima:

Mm-hmm. Exactly. Yeah. I love being really prepared for my day also. So I just know I'm a better me and I have a better day when I have given myself the space to look at my calendar and get ahead of everything. And I notice a lot of people don't give. It feels almost like a and nice to have rather than a need to have to really think through the details of how to set themselves up to be present in key situations. But this year I heard more people set the intention of be present than ever before.

Ali:

Oh. Wow.

Miriam Meima:

I mean, I feel like we can all set that goal anytime. It's a wonderful intention. And it just seems to be very up right now for us. I think probably because there's more understanding that the more present I am, the more I can enjoy my life, the more I can show up the way that I want to. And I was working with someone yesterday and who was going into major, essentially, conference where they're gonna have a presentation that they're going to give, but this person's goal is to be able to show up with presence throughout because it's more about the relationships they're building that's more important than actually executing the presentation flawlessly.

So we went through a lot of different things that needed to happen in order for this person to be able to be resourced enough to show up the way that they want to. And if we had not had that conversation, my trust that they would have been able to accomplish their intention is almost zero. Because this person just isn't yet practiced at how to do that.

So it started with take a Lyft to the airport instead of driving yourself to the airport. It's window seat versus aisle seat so you can be more in your zone. What headphones are you bringing? Make sure that you have time blocked before you get on the plane to run through your presentation so that when you hit the ground there, you don't have to feel like you're rehearsing anymore. Have a stone in your pocket to remind you the intention to be present. I mean, we went through all of these things that would support this person and being able to show up. So we'll see. We'll see how it goes. But I trust that it's going to be a lot better than it would have been otherwise.

And so I really think most of us need to anticipate our future state more than we do get ahead of it and make sure we're thinking about not only the output that we want to have, but what inputs we need into our bodies and into our systems in order, or the conditions in which we need to create essentially in order to be able to show up with the quality of presence that we want to have in addition to driving the output.

Ali:

Yeah, I really love that. I feel like a couple of questions that really help there. Like if you're at the top of your day, looking at the calendar and going, wouldn't it be great if... Which is, I'm pretty sure, a Miriam question. And wouldn't it be great if, wow, by the end of the day this happened or something. And it's just, it's also a counter muscle to our negativity bias, right? Like it's getting us to not only breathe into a whole other possibility in a future state that we really would like to move into, but another thing that to really look at and be like, well, how will ease and flow find me today? Or something, like how, you can look at a crazy day and just be like, all right, ease and flow, let's bring it in and let you know, let the universe kind of restructure itself so that even amidst a calendar day that looks potentially hairy, you know, little small miracles or boons can open up and create something unforeseen, but relieving and delightful.

Miriam Meima:

Mm-hmm. Exactly. Yeah, that makes me think about the three different forms of manifestation, first being, I make it happen. So if I want an apple, I go buy an apple. That's a one way of manifesting. So in this case, it's if wouldn't it be wonderful if dot, dot. And then I actually create that for myself. So I take the time back, I cancel a meeting, or I order groceries for delivery because I reAlize that I'm gonna need lunch and I haven't figured that out for myself yet. So that's the first form.

Second is, I outsource it or delegate it to someone, which is a version of number one. And then number three is essentially a let go of it. I wish it into the universe. And then things rearrange itself. And that's frigging fun. I mean, it's absolutely the most fun and I do it all the time. I don't expect it to work, but it surprises me how often it does. And yeah, I'm like, oh, I'm just gonna wish it. And if it happens, it happens. And if it doesn't, it doesn't. And then it's so amazing how many times it does.

Ali:

Yeah, and in ways where you're like, wow, I never would have imagined that or couldn't have asked.

Miriam Meima:

Right, I couldn't have designed it or known it could have come into form this way. Yeah, exactly. Which makes me, I know this is a slight pivot, but your one-minute miracle list. I mean, you have a list of what is it, a hundred things that you can do in one minute. If what? What would be happening in your day that would have you think, oh, I should think about my one-minute

miracle list.

Ali:

Yeah, I guess that comes from the awareness of like, am I present? Am I not present? Right? So it comes from that like self-awareness level personal check-in. Like, where am I right now? Am I in my head? Am I super terrified? Am I hyper-anxious? Like, am I spaced out? Am I feeling depressed about something? Like, where am I in my emotional state? But then to kind of reach for something in your world that can help you shift, really in a quick way, like one-minute miracle way.

So that, in essence, it's shifting out of that contracted, more fear-based space that we can get into throughout the day into a more open, maybe more centered, more resourced space that can start to expand out of that contractive fear space into something just a little bit more allowing, right? Whether that's allowing the possibilities of the day to shift counter to what our anxious imagination is positing for us, or actively, consciously choosing, oh, I'm going to really think about how I would like this story to end versus catastrophize about all of the various awful ways that I think it might be heading for or whatever.

So I guess in a short snip, like those one-minute miracles, how do we shift from that contraction to a more expansive or whatever state, but really it's like, how do we just come back to ourselves and not get lost in, you know, just dissociative thoughts or fear states and unresourced places that aren't really going to serve us? How do we bring ourselves back to presence so that we can like fully experience and be engaged in our day, our world or whatever.

Miriam Meima:

Mm-hmm. Yeah. How to stop if I have a runaway train of thoughts, especially about in reaction to a certain, basically, if I am in a reaction or a reactive state versus in a more conscious state, then I know like, whoop. OK, I've got to shift somehow because nothing good comes from this way of thinking. So it's all those things. I used to have to watch puppy videos on YouTube. Did I ever tell you that?

Ali:

No.

Miriam Meima:

It was like, if I was really in a state, I would just sit there and it might take 10 minutes to watch YouTube videos of puppies. And then I would start to let my, my nervous system essentially would come back online. The blood would come from like my limbic system back into my prefrontal cortex. And that was like one of my strategies essentially, or I guess it was a 10-minute miracle. It was a one-minute miracle.

Ali:

But it took you one minute to realize that that's what you needed. So that counts Yeah

Miriam Meima:

That's true. That does count. Yeah. Yeah, some of my other go-tos are, let's see. I mean, breathing, I feel like that's always with me. So taking a breath, having vegetables or having a cookie or cupcake, depending on what I'm eating. Lighting a candle, taking out, looking at written reminders of my intentions, looking out the window. I know a lot of people move through their five senses. Like what is something I smell? What is something I see? What is something I hear? What is something I feel on my skin? Going and then cycling through that two or three times. Do you have other favorites?

Ali:

I really love just returning to breath. Um, and really wonder, like really, it's like realizing like, oh, I have not really not been breathing for the last like five or 30 minutes or maybe the last like half day. Um, but to come back to myself in that way, um, is, I mean that's just so quick and easy because it's always there, right?

There's also this like four question, four or five question. I'll call it a rubric for now, but like, I'm pretty sure this is also a, I learned from working with you, which is, what's happening for me right now? Like, what am I feeling? So it's like running through the senses, right? But what's happening in the body? Where is it? And what does it feel like? Like, is it cold prickly? Is it like soft squishy? Is it kind of crunchy? What is it?

And then also naming an emotion. And I think getting really fluent with emotions has been a real practice over the last few decades. Because I'm able to be like, wow, I feel kind of hurt. And then to be like, well, but there's also a little sad and there's also a little anger, right? Just to kind of know, what's in my emotional territory right now? And how can I process these things so that they're not kind of shoved out of the way and then glossed over by the calendar so that I arrive at the end of the day like really trinket and awful and just scabobulated wondering like why I feel so awful. So you know the emotional inventory we can call it.

But then also asking the question you know what does this remind me of? When have I been here before? Whether it's kind of about the situation or about the feeling state or thoughts and the beliefs I'm having or whatever that moment is for me, like, oh, what does this remind me of? And then being able to say, like a little bit or appreciation for, wow, I'm really appreciative of all of this awareness and whatever, being able to return to a more present state in light of all this information.

Um, that as a, as a shorthand go to keep it in your back pocket tool, I think is, I mean that and your breath. If I was to only choose a few things to take on a deserted island or to get out of a dysregulated, you know, situation, I would be those, would be those. If I couldn't bring a horse, then I'd take those things. Yeah.

Miriam Meima:

Yeah. Well said. Yeah. And I think that's what we all need, is our shortlist, our desert island strategies. And then when those don't work, what do we go to next and just essentially have a list of ideas and start experimenting with them, and then we get to figure out which ones are more effective and which settings?

And so that's in the moment. And then if we couple that with what we've been talking about starting kind of bucket one was anticipating my needs of the day and making sure that I'm setting myself up to be well-resourced, that I'm going to need these things less. But if a bucket one is setting myself up to be resourced, two is creating the conditions in which I can sustain that throughout the day. So having stress balls, pictures, everything up.

And available to me that I need in order to sustain that throughout the day. And then third is the time management of like essentially having on or having created the calendar that is most likely to Align with what is most important to me, and then adapting as needed, scheduling, rescheduling the meetings, taking breaks. Coming early late to a meeting or leaving early to a meeting if that's what we need in order to be able to show up the way we want to throughout our day, which is more than just the work day. I think those were the three buckets.

Ali:

Yeah. And you know, we have so much available to us when we...discover what those things, what the supportive mechanisms and practices are for ourselves. And I feel like there's also this next layer out, right? Which is, there may be these continual spaces where we get stuck, where we can't see clearly our own stuff. And so then it's like what's our next layer of outreach and reflection, right? Whether it's a good friend who's not gonna hold back truth, right? And give you like honest reflection or feedback or a really solid therapist or a good coach or personal trainer, whatever it is, right? But then to have your cadre of support humans also lined up and at the ready, I think is also mission critical.

Miriam Meima:

That's right. None of us have to in any moment feel alone because we aren't. Yeah. Thank you for this.

Ali:

Yeah. Thank you.