

CREATE YOUR DAY

APRIL: I have always wanted to have a perfect formula for creating a perfect day. Now, that really doesn't ever happen. I don't know if it's possible to ever have a perfect day, but it is possible to be deliberate in how we create our day and we're going to talk about that in this audio recording.

ERIC: For me the goal is to actually get to having more "better" days than "worse" days, right?

APRIL: Okay, I like that!

ERIC: And it's a pattern or framework that you can employ systematically. To create or pattern out a better day than you otherwise would have had.

APRIL: Yeah. And you might call it, "Conceptually creating your day," you could call it...

ERIC: "Metaphysically creating your day...spiritually creating your day," depending on your background and your views, it doesn't matter what you use. But it's just the idea of getting it created, before it actually happens.

APRIL: Right. Like we've talked about architecting a life of excellence, you know, having a blue print, having a pattern, some sort of a plan for the day. So a lot of times when you go and start your morning, you just jump right in and do the things you do every day. You live by habit, maybe get to work, make sure you just get a bunch of stuff done. You grab some food, maybe you go to a drive through and just run around putting out fires all day long, and then fall asleep exhausted and maybe a little frustrated. And I think if we just take a little step back, I know in my own life when I've done this and take even just five or six minutes to creatively and conceptually plan my day, I am able to see *dramatic* results. And I think Eric has the same exact experience.

ERIC: I have!

APRIL: Okay, so we've put together seven things that have been really helpful for us to consider the night before or early in the morning before everyone else gets up. In order to plan your day and be able to figure out how it's going to be wonderful.

ERIC: Well I think you kind of glossed over something that's an important consideration, right? It is putting a book mark in your day, every day, somewhere to plan out what the next day is going to look like.

APRIL: Thank you! Exactly!

ERIC: It doesn't just happen, right?

APRIL: Right!

ERIC: So some people will advocate doing it first thing early early in the morning, great! If you're an early riser and can have that much time to do that before you launch into the actual important part of the day, before the main part of the day starts, great! Others will be advocating doing it the night before. And some will argue that you're tired, worn down then but from me personally, that's when I found out that I can best conceptualize what I want the day to look like so I can say, "Okay, this is my starting time tomorrow, I'm going to wake up and already start doing these things that I planned."

APRIL: I agree. Doing it the night before is great for me too.

ERIC: Well, I think it's up to those people, right?

APRIL: Right! But you can set an alarm in your phone, either morning or night.

ERIC: Right! But it's putting that book mark in your day to figure out "When do I want to take (what would say five minutes?) to really just conceptually gloss over and scan through what I want out of the day ahead?"

APRIL: Okay, so here are the seven items that I would recommend that you start with just as far as creating your own plan. Of course you can completely edit these, you can change them, you can use exactly what we have or you can just make them your own.

ERIC: Well I'll say, these are yours, right?

APRIL: These are mine!

ERIC: So mine are going to be a little different. So don't think that this is the only way we do it, alright?

APRIL: These seven things that everyone must do...just kidding!

ERIC: Wrong!

APRIL: These are my seven things that...

ERIC: Alright, so we'll talk about yours...

APRIL: Hopefully you'll get some ideas. Okay, number one: I look at my appointments for the day. What are the "Must do's?" I check these first because, if I'm in a conference, if I'm just going to be gone all day, or if we have a big day trip

planned, or if all the kids are going to be gone the whole day, that's going to be very different than if I'm here home on a Saturday with my whole family for the whole day. So first look at these appointments. Do you have a doctor appointment? Do you have dinner guests? Do you have a pick up you're in charge of or something like that?

ERIC: You know, what you call your "Must do's" or your "Appointments," I may be referring it to just "The landscape of your day."

APRIL: Okay, I like that.

ERIC: What's your setting, what's your situation? What are the general dynamics that day that you need a plan for, plan around?

APRIL: Right. And then second I consider the interactions I'm going to have with my family and loved ones during those appointments or during the other moments that are just going to happen naturally during the day, like while we're getting ready in the morning, having meals together, getting cleaned up at night, stuff like that. But when I think about the interactions with my family or loved ones during that day, it helps bring a completely new dimension to what I'm already doing.

For example, I was just talking to Eric about how we have dinner guests coming tonight. And I said, "So I think when our dinner guests are here, there are some topics I would like to talk to them about at dinner. Here's where they specialize, and this is where I would really like to hear their thoughts and ideas, that our children can hear these ideas as well..." And as I was discussing that, Eric said, "Well hey, did you consider inviting our other friends over for dinner too? Because I think all of us will really have a great time being together and enjoying this conversation and if we just made the dinner party a little bit bigger..." That was an excellent idea, I hadn't even thought about it. So I'm going to go ahead and text my friend to see if she can come and bring her family cause I'm already providing dinner for more people and the house will already been cleaned up, so why not?

ERIC: So the relationships you want to have inside the context of this landscape.

APRIL: Right. And if it's something like driving to a doctor appointment or something like that or you're going to have time in a car with one of your children or if you and I are driving together, I'll also consider how I'll use this time.

Okay, number three. I like to then think about the main tasks or projects that I want to get done by the end of the day. So even though I have my regular task list and I know I'm going to be working from that or from my next actions list like

we've already talked about, then I am able to think, "Alright, if by the end of the day I can have these two main projects done or this one thing done, I'm going to feel much more excited."

ERIC: I would just add to that something we'll talk a lot more about as part of the STEP program is just how you coordinate on a weekly level as well as the daily. But I think these first three things are actually something to consider from that weeklong perspective as well. April and I have actually a weekly meeting, we try to meet on Friday mornings for an hour. And the first ten to twenty minutes is actually looking at our daily calendars for the next week to ten days, making sure all the gaps are covered. And then we'll actually take you know, twenty minutes total, ten on the weekly planning, ten on the bigger picture (like the rest of the year). Big things we need to be thinking about are planning for and structuring.

But these first three things that April identified, these landscaped items (these "Must-do" or "Appointments,") your interactions with others, and your main tasks or projects, it's actually helpful if you'll be discussing those briefly in that weekly conversation. I shouldn't have sprung this idea of having three families over instead of two because that might affect the shopping list or groceries and stuff like that. But if we have this framework for our day, we can easily extend it and how we look at our weeks as well. So that actually helps support and under pin what we want to do on a day-to-day basis. They're setting it up for a better success.

APRIL: Yes, I love that! Alright, number four. I like to think about what I'm actually going to be eating during the day. Not just me but the family. So a lot of times we think, okay, at least, what are we going to have for dinner? If I can think about that the night before, then if I need to defrost something or run by the store or something like that, that's great! Otherwise it's like the other day we were making pizza dough for making pizza we realized we had no cheese at all. Eric was in a really good mood.

ERIC: Those pizzas didn't turn out so well.

APRIL: So, just thinking about that in advance is great! I'm also trying to get a lot of vegetables in. So I try to think, alright, how am I going to get all these servings of vegetables in? And thinking about that in advance helps too, so it's planning out your meals.

Fifth is thinking how am I going to strengthen myself spiritually today? If I am doing a scripture study, well then, what part of the scriptures am I studying? Or what are the spiritual resources that I could utilize today that are going to help

me? Is there a topic that I want to study? Something like “Forgiveness” or something like “Peace” or what is it I want to study?

ERIC: And it can turn out faith based, it could be spiritual or personal strengthening and developing. It can be some part of you or characteristics or attributes, who or how you are that you want to develop. But I think taking that in context, you know April’s fourth, fifth and sixth steps here are all focused on the body and physical. The spiritual on that fifth one and the mind we’ll talk about it here in a second. I was just thinking about the larger you and the larger kind of interaction you have with those around you. How those fit in your daily plan.

APRIL: Right. Because if I don’t make a daily plan on how I’m going to spiritually strengthen myself I just might miss that altogether.

ERIC: Well, it’s all too often than one that gets dropped the fastest, right? You have to do things that are mentally challenging, work based and you have to eat.

APRIL: You have to eat!

ERIC: So taking care of our physical self not just the diet side, but taking care of ourselves physically and kind of personally/spiritually tends to be the thing that falls out first.

APRIL: Yeah, okay. So after the spiritual strength then I just look for number six, what else can I do to learn? What can I read, what can I do to learn? And you know I was reading an article on “How to become a better leader” and the author of the article suggested that you spend three hours a day learning. And that sounded insane at first when I heard it but then I thought, you know, it’s totally possible. That’s including listening to podcasts that includes reading books that includes reading newspapers or magazines or articles online. It could include a lot of things. And so just thinking throughout the day, okay, is there an online course that I’m taking that I could participate in today? Or are there podcasts that I have been wanting to listen to? Or hey, which books? There are a thousand of books we have over our shelves! Which book do I want to read today? Which one is going to help me the most?

ERIC: Oh, that even doesn’t even sound that ridiculously or extreme. Three hours a day actually is awesome! Because it’s going to help you break down the mundane, the routine, just the traditional of your life, and add two or three hours of new elements that will stimulate your brain and kind of awaken your soul to say, “Okay, I’m interested in this. I want to learn or understand this better. I want to become proficient at this. I want to develop those attributes.” You’re going to

find it has a tremendous result on how you live your life and how you see your life.

APRIL: Absolutely! Alright! And then number seven, this is just where I look back and think about my general goals, things I want to be more aware of. Things that would help me to be more focused. And just looking, instead of the quantitative goals, oh I'm going to exercise for 20 minutes. It might be more something like "Today I'm going to be more patient. Or today I'm going to breathe more. Or today I'm going to be on time." I laugh because I think I'm on time and Eric thinks I'm not. So were working on that. I'm working on that.

ERIC: That one's qualitative, it's not subjective.

APRIL: Okay. So you mean quantitative? That one is? Alright.

ERIC: Did I say qualitative?

APRIL: That's okay. Alright, so just stepping back to think about my overall goals and "How am I doing in life in general? Where can I improve? What are the things that I could be thinking about more?" That's really helpful.

ERIC: The soft and fluffy stuff.

APRIL: The soft and fluffy stuff.

ERIC: Well I kind of joke at that but it is important, right? What she's laid out is that the first three things she looks at have to do with the kind of rough framework of the day, things that kind of need to happen and managing those best. The next three things really do revolve around body, mind, and spirit. And you know you're going to see as we go on, (if you have interest in exploring our other resources at LearnDoBecome) these are things we go into. The body with the health, we want to try to maintain the mind and the spirit that have everything to do with life architecture. And how were productive and how we are able to connect spiritual or divine core, something higher than us.

And so, finding time to build those in, become very very important. And especially that seventh step, those intangibles, the softer things that are harder to measure. You want to make sure every day you're considering "How do I fit a couple of those things in?" Because it really will make all the difference. There's no shortage of reports that need to be done, or emails that need to be turned in or carpools that need to be driven. And those generally are going to happen. They're just kind of built in to our routine. But some of these more metaphysical, more above our head type stuff that we need to build into our day.

APRIL: Right. And one thing that I've noticed is that we use the words, "Making time" and "Finding time" interchangeably. I have been doing the same thing. But I think it's interesting for us to note that this is about being deliberate. This is about actually making this a priority. Because just honestly, try it for one week. Even try it for one day and watch what happens. You can't help but have a more productive day because you've made that plan, you thought about it and then it just makes everything else run so much more smoothly.

ERIC: Right. And one last little caveat I kind of mentioned it. If you see the sheets April put together, it looks like the first three things are the most important but this is just the step to go through and consider what your day would look like. You're going to plan where you want to put these elements in your days schedule. We all have twenty-four hours. You might be an early riser, somebody getting started at five or six in the morning. You might find that you want to put your spiritual or your mental stuff first in the day when you're most alert, you're most awake, you're most clear. And so this template or this guide becomes a way to help you structure your day, to put in what's most important.

And just as a side note, you know, we're people of faith and so you know we believe in a higher power, in God. And just this last weekend I had an impression that I needed to do a better job at putting my connection with God, or with that higher power, first in my day, first in my life. And I've traditionally done that, historically. But I think I'm needing to get better than that. I find myself getting up and the first thing I'll do like so many people with smart phones will be to check emails, or check a social media platform. And do a few other things and get caught up all of a sudden the routine of life. Whereas if you have conscientiously planned out what you want your day to look like. Like when you say, you know what, first thing I'll do is I'm going to get up, going to wake myself up and spend a little bit of time doing something that might be more personal or more devotional, something that connects that higher power. And then slowly unrolling these other things that are more important and then getting to the trivial of the mundane later. Those emails are going to wait.

And I will tell you in my experience historically, my days, my weeks, my life, goes much better when I'm putting those things that matter most first. I know that sounds like, you know, old home spun wisdom but I think it's just this process of adopting a willingness, a commitment to going through a process of organizing and creating the day before it happens and putting the most important things earliest or in the places that will get ample attention.

APRIL: I love that! And just to clarify when you were saying after you've done your more spiritual devotions, then you do the things that are more important. You don't

mean more important than the spiritual devotions, you mean you start with what's most important.

ERIC: Right.

APRIL: Then you go to the things that are...

ERIC: That are more important than the email or social media you're checking, running carpools, you know things like that.

APRIL: More important than the email...Okay!

ERIC: The running car pools, you know things like that. There are a lot of...

ERIC: We have, if we organize our time well, the hours we have awake really can be very very productive. It's just being clear on how we want them used. And we can still fit in maybe that three hours of learning and development might fit in after that early morning devotional or you know, finding that purpose and I think you have plenty of time to fit that all in. So many people say, I just don't have time my life's just so busy.

APRIL: It does feel that way.

ERIC: It is. Life is busy. If we let it control us and run us.

APRIL: Right.

ERIC: But I guess the thought I will leave you with is, to the extent were willing to put this things that we know, we feel, we hear, are more important, our most important. If you will make place in your life for those things, all other things will balance out and will shrink to be able to fit and still be accomplished within the remaining amount of time that you have. I don't know what kind of principle, an eternal, a natural, a metaphysical principle, but it's true that, as you put the things that are of highest priority, somehow time optimizes and lines up for you in a way, that the things that really matter will get done.

APRIL: Well I feel a renewed desire to do this more often in my life and feel really inspired and excited. And I hope that this has been helpful to you. Again this is just a starting point for you. We'll include with this audio a printout so you can see an example of how I organize my day and you can take these ideas and create your own template. What do you want to do? Every night before you go to bed? Or every morning before the house gets busy? Or before you get started with your day? So that you can create your day and instead of just living through it and getting through the day, you actually get to enjoy it and grow and become.

ERIC:

I think that's a great thought! As you model and experiment with what works for you, we would love to have you share. If you caught something that is really working for you, come back and share that with us. Because we love learning from one another and so if you found the best practices really working for you, there might be some elements of it that others can benefit from as well. So again thanks for joining us in this recording! We just look forward to watching and seeing how you're going to grow and how you're going to use your efforts to plan your day ahead.

