

SHE SAID/SHE SAID PODCAST WITH LAURA COX KAPLAN Episode 209 - “How to be less busy, but accomplish more!” #mentalenergy #productivity #career

TITLE: “How to be less busy, but accomplish more -- while also building more influence!” EPISODE 209

TRANSCRIPT

SHOW OPEN:

Laura Cox Kaplan:

Building influence is something anyone can learn. It's an investment you can make in yourself and it can hold the keys to achieving your dreams and having the life and impact you want to have. I'm Laura Cox Kaplan. I've learned a lot over three decades about building and sustaining influence and how using it and using it effectively can make a big difference in your life and career. Here on She Said/She Said podcast, we're digging into the different dimensions that help us build and sustain influence. If you thought being an influencer was just for social media, think again. Whether you're starting a business, raising money for a cause, negotiating a promotion, running your household or trying to connect with those who don't share your views, understanding and using the different dimensions of influence will increase your chances of success whatever your goals may be. Listening to SHE SAID/SHE SAID PODCAST is a smart, efficient investment you can make in you. I'm really glad you're here and I'm excited we're on this journey together.

CONVERSATION:

LAURA COX KAPLAN:

Hey friend, welcome to a new season of she said/she said podcast!

I'm so happy to be back with you after a little summer recharge. I hope that you've been able to take advantage of some of our bonus content that I've repackaged and shared over the past few weeks. I've honestly been thrilled with your response to that. Our downloads have continued to grow -- and we're about to hit 200k. I couldn't be more thrilled or more grateful that you and I are able to spend this time together. I hope that you are finding it really valuable and useful.

I also found when I went back and relistened to those episodes that were some of your favorites based on your downloads, I found new nuggets that either struck me differently or that sparked a new idea or a new theme. Some of which you'll be hearing more about this fall.

In some cases, You also picked up on other themes that I hadn't appreciated how much they resonated with you. All of these things fit into this broader concept of INFLUENCE. Last fall, I tweaked our focus a bit so that this content alignes with the levers of influence.

There are five key areas that seem to underpin how I thought about influence

1. The first is “Self awareness” -- which includes things like mindset and the importance of managing self,
2. Investing in ourselves -- and challenging ourselves to keep learning and growing including embracing personal evolution.

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3. networking and building relationships, / creating those connections and collaborations that help us improve our ideas and move them forward. Investing in others.
4. A strategic and thoughtful approach to actions -- things like looking for a win/win in negotiations, and understanding the other sides' non negotiables.
5. Preparation and Presence -- everything from public speaking to how we promote our ideas and build support for them.

These are really the building blocks of true influence. And if you go back and listen to some of your past favorite episodes of SHE SAID/SHE SAID PODCAST you'll hear many of these themes.

Space was my word of the year for 2022. I talked a bit about why in Episode 180. It's an important dimension of influence. As I've thought more about it, it's that conscious approach to making space to invest in yourself --- such as listening to this podcast, and other things you do to make yourself smarter and to build more capacity for the things that are most important to you.

And speaking of making space and investing in yourself, that's the topic I wanted to talk about today. But specifically the connection between space and productivity and how that relates to influence.

One of my big takeaways from my summer recharge was this: My busyness often undercuts my most value-added productivity. And, it also tends to cause me to get depleted more quickly. In talking with many listeners I know this is something many of you struggle with as well.

Many of us are working moms with lots of demands -- both those we put on ourselves, and those obligations that come with work and caregiving and finding the balance between those things.

I have often felt that I am hard-wired for productivity and for busy -- so much so that reflection, or pausing, or taking a break can feel like a luxury (or can generate legitimate guilt) even when I consciously know that taking a break and stepping back is so important both for mental health as well as for the quality of the work I'm doing. Sound familiar?

My guess is that it will sound very familiar to you because our brains are wired for doing and for “busy.” Forcing ourselves to really dive in and focus is a more difficult state, but it's what's required for really building influence.

Over the summer, I decided to spend some additional time on this topic -- and specifically this idea of mental energy as a limited resource.

One of the resources I especially liked was a book by Dr. Isaiah Hankel called “The Science of Intelligent Achievement”.

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One of the big takeaways in the book for me was around the science associated with how and why we often create practices that seem to increase our productivity — But that in fact might be undercutting it. Trust me friend, I love checklists as much as you do, so I'm not suggesting we give those up. Please stay w/ me here.

One of the key concepts in Dr. Hankle's book is managing your energy v. Your time, and the value of selectivity when you are allocating your time resource.

Here's why: research that Dr. Hankle cites in the book found that time is much more plentiful than mental energy. Essentially we all have 1,440 each day. The difference comes in how and where we allocate those minutes -- some out of obligation and some out of choice. Dr. Hankle would argue that all of them are out of choice, but I would argue that as a mom that's not entirely true. I suspect many of you would agree.] Everyone's circumstances are unique. Regardless of circumstances, the research found that on average each person -- you, me, and everyone we know -- has about 90-120 minutes per day of **peak** mental energy -- and about 200-300 minutes -- some 4-5 hours -- of “near peak” mental energy each day. So on the high end of the scale -- that's about 420 minutes per day or around 7 hours. And that's likely when you have done everything in your power to really maximize the quality of those minutes -- adequate rest, eating properly, exercise, eliminating other distractions, etc....

My guess is most of the time -- based on circumstances that really are truly out of our control -- a sick child, an unexpected deadline, natural disaster, accident on the way to work or school, whatever it is -- We often don't have that full 7 hours.

But when circumstances are optimal, there are a few things we can do to really maximize our limited mental resources.

The challenge comes when your mental energy is forced to share space with the energy needed for less demanding tasks. Guess which one tends to suffer the most -- frankly all of them, but especially the ones that require more brain power. And, guess what? Your brain is literally chomping at the bit to work against your ability to really concentrate.

Here's a quote from the book I found particularly compelling: (quoting Dr. Hankle “The Science of Intelligent Achievement:” “Your brain hates change; it likes distraction. It wants you to stay in this comfort zone of distraction you've created, wasting your energy on the wrong things. So it's wired to keep you there.”

Literally, the science and research supports why so many of us get such a rush from being busy. And Why all those check marks next to “accomplished tasks” feels so good.

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Here’s another great quote (also quoting Dr. Hankle): “Mental energy is the world’s hottest commodity. People are going to try to steal it, drain it, and suck it up every second you’re awake. Yet very few of us protect it. Few of us know how. People carefully protect the money in their bank account and the time in their calendar, but they do little to protect their attention. Attention is the gateway to your mental energy. Where your attention goes, your mental energy flows. More often than not it’s flowing toward something someone else wants. Taking back your mental energy is not a cakewalk. It’s a dogfight. Even your own mind is going to fight viciously to keep you distracted. All the yesses you’ve said and all the obligations you’ve taken on in the past have created a kind of psychological immune system .”

The point he’s making is this: we have to learn to break the habit of falling into the busy trap and wasting our peak mental energy on things that aren’t as important.

In the book, Dr. Hankle also goes into the importance of being careful about getting drawn into drama or allowing people who thrive on drama to suck up your limited mental energy. We all have those people. The trick is learning to manage them rather than the other way around.

As I’ve thought about this concept of limited mental energy, it aligns so beautifully with the idea of investing in yourself in ways that create a more impactful product or outcome. While — at the same time — understanding this concept and how it may be working in your own life can help you fight burnout.

Now, if you’ve been listening to SHE SAID/SHE SAID PODCAST for a while --- you already know that I’m a realist, and pragmatic, and also a working mom. Notwithstanding Dr. Hankle’s points about choice, there are going to be times when things are chaotic and largely out of your control. Times when you simply have to gut it out and plow through. But in reality, there are also plenty of times when many of us waste mental energy on things that don’t matter, but that suck it up and leave us depleted. And that work against our ability to really build and sustain influence in our lives. That means that we may need to revisit or reconsider how we work, how we produce, and those ways of working that enable us to create the most impactful value for ourselves and for others in our lives.

With this new season of she said/she said podcast, I’m going to dig into several dimensions related to productivity and mental energy, and the impact it can have on our ability to build and sustain INFLUENCE.

I’ll build on today’s conversation about managing your energy v. your time, and talk about the impact of open loops and the science behind why corralling them can make a huge difference in your ability to focus.

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I’ll also talk about some of the best ways to structure a recharge or sabbatical -- like the one I take advantage of in the summer.

One of the interviews I have coming up in October is with time management and productivity expert Laura Vanderkam about her new book “Tranquility by Tuesday.” you can preorder the book now.

We’ll also talk about some interesting tips for battling brain fog.

For those who are looking to build their brand and get more attention for their work, we’ll talk about some best practices for pitching yourself for podcasts -- like this one.

We’ll talk about the best ways to build your confidence so that you are better equipped to put your best ideas out into the world -- the ideas that can distinguish and differentiate you and that are so essential to your ability to create an influential brand for yourself. Related to that, we’ll also talk about how to get over (or at least tame) the self-doubt that can often prevent us from sharing our ideas in the first place.

We’ll talk about the best ways for building your credibility in a new career after you pivot.

As always, you’ll continue to hear a mix of conversations with my guests, as well as some deeper dive perspectives on topics that I think you’ll find valuable and useful. All of those great topics and much much more!

As always, please let me know which topics and guests you’re enjoying most, what you’re finding most valuable, and what you think may be missing from our line up. I’d love to hear.

Remember in addition to following SHE SAID/SHE SAID PODCAST wherever you listen to the podcast, I also share additional thoughts and perspectives on each episode topic along with a full transcript that you can download for free in show notes. You can find those things on my website at SHE SAID/SHE SAID PODCAST.com. You can contact me there to share your thoughts, but you can also share your thoughts with me on social media -- you’ll find me @ Laura Cox Kaplan on insta, linked in, fb, and twitter. And I also share other perspective that’s related to our week’s topic there as well. So please don’t miss that and be sure to hop on and say “hi” .

As always I hope you found this a valuable investment in you.

Until next week, you take care.

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