

Ep #158 : Future You Thinking: 4 Strategies to Simplify Goals and Build Momentum



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With Your Host

Kristi Angevine

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Welcome to Episode #158. I'm Kristi Angevine, and I'm here to help you stop the habits that take more than they give and rewire new ones. If you have the tendency to overcomplicate tasks, lose steam when you're pursuing a goal, lose sight of the big picture, or procrastinate because it just seems like the tasks at hand are too enormous. This episode is for you. Let's dive in.

Welcome to *Habits On Purpose*, a podcast for high-achieving women who want to create lifelong habits that give more than they take. You'll get practical strategies for mindset shifts that will help you finally understand the root causes of why you think, feel, and act as you do. And now, here's your host, Physician, and Master Certified Life Coach, Kristi Angevine.

Hello, hello, everybody. So today on the podcast, I am going to talk about how to work with your habits and mindset through the lens of "Future You Thinking" and combine "Future You Thinking" with four very easy strategies.

Now, my long-time listeners will know that part of my purpose in life is to leave this place better than I found it. And one of the ways I pursue that is with my mission to help you understand why you think and feel and act and respond in the ways that you do. The way I keep this really practical is I wanna help you take the knowledge you have and your understanding about yourself and then actually apply it so that you can create real-life changes in your everyday life.

So when it comes to that actual execution phase of taking your understanding and then implementing it in really concrete, tangible ways, sometimes it is tremendously useful to have a framework and a handful of really clear strategies that can get you out of any overthinking or analysis paralysis or constantly asking, how do I do this?

So to this end, I'm going to offer an approach that will help you simplify task initiation, reduce overwhelm, and keep your priorities really clear when you're going for a goal. And these strategies work particularly well when you've got a lot of moving parts in your life.

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So if you're listening and thinking, you know, strategies and steps, I don't know, this sounds a little bit too cutesy and a little bit like a hack, and I'm not sure that's going to work for my life. I hear you, I really do. But go with me on this one, because the ones that I'm giving you here are specifically intended for someone who has a lot going on, whether it's all the time or in just a particular season that you're in. So if you struggle to get started on things, or if you struggle with taking on too much and along the way kind of dismissing your progress because what you're doing is not enough, I want you to know you're not alone and the tools I'm going to talk about today can be the thing that could help you so much.

Alright, so let me just check in with everybody. I'm curious, have you ever had that feeling when you set a goal for yourself and like a week or a month goes by and you kind of realize, oh wow, I set that goal a while ago and oh my goodness, the needle really hasn't moved much. And then do you ever find yourself thinking, how on earth did this much time pass and nothing has really changed? How have I been so unproductive? Am I just avoiding the work? Is this self-sabotage? Am I incapable of follow-through unless the goal is for somebody else or the stakes are really high? What the heck?

Well, if you have found yourself in this predicament, there is an approach that can help you not have to do that again. And the approach that I'm going to talk about today is "Future You Thinking". Now, "Future You Thinking," it's one variant in a variety of different approaches that fall under the category of future self-work. And this particular approach helps make more regular progress towards goals and prevents that special version of hell that comes with an open loop of an untended-to goal.

So what exactly is "Future You Thinking?" Well, "Future You Thinking" is basically asking what would tomorrow me want the today me to do? What does my future self want? How about the future me of next year? When you ask these questions you're helping yourself make decisions today and take actions today that your tomorrow self and your next yourself will thank you for.

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Now, because I know a lot of you who listen are quite good at being hard on yourself, overextending at your own expense, or maybe sort of pushing yourself without realizing the consequences. I wanna clarify that when I talk about your "Future You", I'm not talking about the future drill sergeant version of you. The drill sergeant "Future You" would want you to do all work, no play, sleep when you're dead, hurry up, and frankly suck it up buttercup, let's go. The "Future You" that is the most effective for "Future You Thinking" is the future self that is your wisest, kindest self.

Not a pushover, but it's also not a drill sergeant. It's intuitive, it's the version of you that is street smart, can set boundaries, be courageous and say hard truths, and it's the version of you that knows what really matters versus what's fluff. So this is the "Future You" that you use for any "Future You Thinking".

Now the good news about using this very simple approach of, what does tomorrow me want? What would tomorrow me want the today me to do? Is you no longer have to rely on extreme self-discipline, very very firm willpower, or perfect execution in order to make progress toward even your most outrageous goals.

So I want to introduce to you four practical strategies that you can use for small and big goals alike. And then I'm going to bring in a little bit of IFS or Internal Family Systems, and then we'll tie it all together in a way that makes it something that you can start using today.

So here's what you're going to learn about. We're going to talk about number one, task initiation; Number two, the Rule of Threes; Number three, celebrating micro wins; and number four, a weekly review. And this is a weekly review that is practical and it's not so boring that you're going to avoid doing it. It's going to be really, really useful.

And then by bringing in Internal Family Systems, you're going to be able to notice and work with the parts of your system that surface if you get overwhelmed or stuck or start looping in some perfectionistic overthinking.

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So as I go through these four strategies, I want you to keep in mind that every strategy, you are going to float through the question, what would my wise, kind, future self want?

So the first one is task initiation. Task initiation is not often discussed outside of teaching executive function skills, which is something that if you grew up in the 70s, 80s, 90s or earlier, you probably didn't encounter in your schooling. That said, task initiation is an essential part of completing tasks. And often we learn task initiation by trial and error or we don't actually ever learn it.

Somehow, some way, we got great grades or we were really productive and still just wonder, how come starting feels so impossible? Well, here's the thing. Getting started can be the hardest part of almost any task.

And when you're not taught how to actually do the skill of initiating a task, you're missing a basic skill for doing a whole task. And it's not that difficult. It's just not something that we're usually taught explicitly. So whether it is a work project, a workout, or even something smaller like cleaning out a drawer, you might have a part of you that says, oh, this is too much, I don't have time, I don't want to start it, I'll do it later, why bother doing it now when I could do something else, I've got bigger things to do.

And if this is you, and you notice you have difficulty beginning things, this simply means there's a gap and you get to now learn the skill of task initiation. So enter the 10-2 Rule. Here's the 10-2 Rule. When you have a task that you need to start, the idea is very simple. When you have a task that feels huge or tedious or boring or blasé or just you don't want to do it. All you do is you commit to doing the task for 10 minutes. That's the 10 part. Now if 10 minutes feels like too much, you're not willing to do 10, go for two.

And that's it. Once you get started and you can set yourself a timer or do anything you want to do, like bribe yourself once I'm done with 10 minutes, then I get to do something that you find more pleasurable. What happens is you overcome the inertia by starting. And once you commit to doing

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something for a certain amount of time, knowing that there's an end that you can stop if you'd like, you often happily get some momentum, which makes it easier to continue.

But here's the thing, even if you don't generate momentum, you make progress, which ends up being more than doing nothing. So if you think about it, if you do 10 minutes of work on something four days a week, that gives you about eight hours over the course of a few months. And if you think about that over the course of a year, you end up with over 30 hours spent on something just at doing the 10-2 rule with 10 minutes, four days per week. So let's bring in the Internal Family Systems lens here.

Sometimes you might notice a part of you will resist even the smallest step. You might think, well I'll use the 10-2 rule and a part goes, well the 10-2 rule is really dumb, why even bother? I'll never finish it anyways. If this is you, number one, it's very normal. And number two, this is what you do. You simply just, as soon as you notice this, you pause. And you think of your wise future self, and calmly, kindly, you acknowledge this part of you, and you say, hey, I see you. Like I hear those concerns. But how about this? How about we just test the waters? We'll try two minutes. And even though you're right, we are not going to finish this in two minutes. We'll do two minutes and then we'll reevaluate.

And what you're doing by talking to yourself in this kind way is you're not pushing this objection or pushing this part away. So you're not white knuckling and being like, whatever, I'm going to do it because I should. You're acknowledging. A part of you thinks, you know, this is silly. And then you're essentially lowering the barrier to starting by doing that very acknowledgment. And then you start, and after the two or the 10 minutes, you just check back. Hey, for the part of me that was really worried that this is dumb, why even bother? How was that? Was it horrible? Was it medium? Was it tolerable? And when you check back in, you will oftentimes notice it is a lot easier next time.

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So let's go on to the second strategy. The second strategy is called the Rule of Threes. So do you ever start your day with a short to-do list that's just for the day and it looks short, like you've written it down on like a small sticky note, but then as the day goes on, you notice that it gets longer and longer and longer. Or if you use like the notes section in your phone, you start off with your list and the top part of it looks like what you could do in a day, but if you actually scroll down and scroll down and scroll down, and if you're really honest about it, you probably have three months of tasks on this list. Okay, yes, this is me too.

When you have these long lists for a day, and when many of the things on your list feel pretty urgent, it's easy to feel scattered or feel like you're a failure because you can't keep up with it all. It's easy to end the day going, "I just didn't get anything done." And this is where the Rule of Threes comes in.

The way the Rule of Threes works is this. Each day, you limit yourself to up to three main tasks that you will focus on. These are your non-negotiables. And sure, you're probably going to get other things done, right? So if you don't write on your to-do list, "brush teeth", but you brush your teeth twice a day, yes, you will get that done also. But these three main tasks, these are the priorities that align with what matters most to your future self. And these are the main things that if you complete these, you will be super satisfied about your day's accomplishments.

So why pick three? Why not have five? Why not have 10? What if you have 10 things that need to be done? Why the heck would you pick three? Well, here's the thing. When you narrow your focus and you constrain to focusing on the three things that matter most, you give the parts of your system that crave clarity and like a sense of structure, you give them something very concrete. And then the parts of you that worry that you're not doing enough, well, they can rest knowing that these are the only things that we're really focused on today.

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Now, if you have 10 actual things you need to get done, and you prioritize three, what usually will happen is you're able to focus on getting those three things done first, and when they are completed, then you say, "What are my next three that I focus on?" So that you can be very systematic about getting things done.

Now, this isn't to say that you can only focus on one thing at a time, right? You might have to do part of something and then while that sits or somebody replies to your email, you do something else. It doesn't mean it's one thing at a time, it's very fluid and it's very individual. But when you use the Rule of Threes to constrain to three main things to focus on, it helps reduce a lot of the other chatter that can have you feeling kind of like spread all over the place.

So now let's be real here. What if you pick three and you have a perfectionistic sort of voice in your head that says, "You know what? Three is not enough. It would be so much better if we did seven. I mean we honestly have seven and you know what maybe even 10 would be better because you know So-and-So, she probably does 20 things." As soon as you notice that pause. Bring in your kind wise future self energy and either simply notice this part, saying something like, "You know what? I hear you. I hear you wanna do more. And today, we're just going to test this out, okay? And we're going to do three. And if it doesn't work, well, we can adjust." Or you can even add in some curiosity and just ask yourself, "Hey, how come more would be better?" And then you can see what could you do to help the side of you that feels really drawn to doing more, at least temporarily be willing to go along with the experiment of using the Rule of Threes.

All right, so now let's talk about the third strategy. This is the strategy of celebrating micro wins. Now, you've heard me talk about celebrating wins before, and for many of us, it is just not easy. We default to minimizing, to dismissing, to ignoring, to shrugging off progress, and to just not even acknowledging things that are really good.

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Now, for some of you, the idea of celebrating tiny wins might feel not only uncomfortable, but frankly, kind of pointless. Like why on earth should I rah, rah, rah when there's so much more to do? And who needs to be so self-congratulatory just to get the basics done? Isn't that a little bit silly and childish and lame?

But here's the thing. Progress builds momentum. Small steps build progress. When you actually acknowledge small steps as the wins that they are, like small things like making a phone call, clearing out a drawer, spending a couple minutes on a task, when you actually acknowledge these as meaningful, then you can really take stock of what is working well. Now, these things are meaningful because they help you keep moving forward.

And when you ignore the things that help, when you dismiss them or ignore them, and then ultimately if you hit a wall and you're not sure what to do, well the thing is, you've forgotten that the small things are big things. You forget that everything counts. And because you haven't celebrated and acknowledged things along the way, you might not know what to do next.

And then on top of that, if you don't celebrate wins along the way, you limit the satisfaction and the joy that can come from moving forward. And it's this satisfaction in small steps that gives you the positive reinforcement you need to go, you know what? This actually does work, this does feel good. And that robs you of any momentum that you could have.

Now, you know this is true, right? Intellectually, we know small things add up. But sometimes we have a little voice that says, you know, this just doesn't really count. I mean, it's not anything worth acknowledging, much less celebrating.

So if you notice this in your head when it comes to actually celebrating wins, all you do is pause, notice this objection, and just say, hi, hey. Like, I totally get it. This doesn't seem like it's that much in the grand scheme of things, but the truth is it is something. And I appreciate you showing up with

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that perspective, but tomorrow we're going to be really glad we did this, right? So no harm in celebrating today.

And when you approach that objection with that kind self-talk like that, what you end up doing is you help rewire your brain to value small steps instead of waiting for massive, perfect, big steps. Because if you're always waiting for like massive big chunks of effort, you're kind of waiting a long time to get anything done because I don't know about your life, but my life is full. There's all sorts of moving parts. I don't always have time to carve out a big chunk of time to do a massive effort.

So by celebrating wins, you are helping wire essentially a new circuit in your brain where you link satisfaction with small steps. And the more you do that, the more progress you can make.

So let's just talk briefly. What does it look like to actually celebrate a win? To actually acknowledge moving forward? This is something that does not just happen naturally. You have to make an effort to do it.

So what it looks like is you plan at the beginning of your day, you just set that intention. I'm going to look for things that are progress. And when I notice them, I'm going to say, ah, good job. That's awesome. That worked well. Look at this contributing. Whatever your style is, you can pat yourself on the back, you can do a little like happy dance when you do something, it doesn't matter. It can be as simple as, that was pretty good work. Everybody has their own style.

My style is definitely more on the sort of subdued, perhaps maybe some swear words tossed in. It's not like very flowery and like, oh my gosh, this is so great. That's not really what comes out when I'm noticing, wow, you know what, I made some progress on that. Mine's a little bit more metered. It works because it's my flavor of acknowledging progress.

So I want you to sort of keep in mind that when you're going to celebrate a win or acknowledge progress, you want to do it in a way that feels authentic to you, not fake or over the top or like somebody else's version of

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celebration. Now, if your version of celebration is kind of big or more boisterous than what I'm suggesting works for me, you should do that. You need to do your version of celebration And it could be just like a small internal nod of like, nice work. Good job Or it could be something a little bit bigger like that was amazing Good for me. Whatever it is.

You want to not only acknowledge it and sort of celebrate the fact that you've done something, no matter how small it is, but you want to feel into what's it feel like to allow myself joy and satisfaction from doing something small.

All right. So let's talk about the fourth strategy. This is the weekly review blended with some "Future You Thinking". This is where everything gets tied together. A weekly review helps you stay really sort of in line with your bigger priorities in life by helping you reflect on what you've done in the past and where you want to head. And this is how it works. There's basically three steps. Number one, you look back. Number two, you look forward. Number three, you adjust. So let me explain what that means.

In a weekly review, you set aside maybe 30 minutes or an hour, and step one is to look back. What wins did I have this week? What worked, what didn't work, and what obstacles showed up? That's it. What worked, what didn't? What were the wins, what were the obstacles? And then you look forward. What would wise "Future You" want to prioritize next week? And then you adjust. What are small steps are going to get you closer to that vision? What obstacles can you plan for? And how can you simplify?

And that's all. This reflection process gives you perspective. It also gives you a concrete plan for your week that you can then use with those other steps. You have your concrete plan and you use the 10-2 Rule for task initiation. You also pair your three priorities per day and you celebrate your wins along the way. Then you ask, what would wise Future Me want for me to do today? And you use your wise self of today to meet and address any parts of you that come up that have objections to the overall plan, to the small plans, to the task initiation.

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So let's recap all the strategies that you can use for pretty much any goal. So number one, you frame all of this with the question, what would future me want? What would my future self want me to do today? And then for task initiation, you can use the 10-2 Rule, where you can commit to doing something you really don't want to do for 10 minutes. If 10 is too much, do two.

Number two, you use the Rule of Threes and you constrain to only three priorities, three things each day. Number three, you celebrate your wins so you build momentum. And number four, you do the weekly review so that you stay lined up with your future priorities.

The way you do your review is you look back, look forward, and adjust. So you look back at your wins, what worked, what didn't, and what obstacles there were. You look forward and you ask, what does wise Future Me want to prioritize next week? And then you adjust. What small steps will get me closer to that vision? What are the obstacles that I can plan for? And what can I or how can I simplify? And when you combine these strategies with a bit of self-compassion, with some curiosity, with some creativity and playfulness, you will make progress towards your goals so much easier. And along the way, the byproduct of this is that you will end up cultivating habits that help you feel less stuck and more empowered.

And the brilliance of this approach is you can use it for any type of goal, external projects, like getting better at public speaking, a work project, a home project, resuming that sewing that you swore you'd get back to 10 years ago. Or you can use it for internal goals, like stopping people pleasing, getting better at setting boundaries, growing your confidence, or your self-acceptance.

So I can't wait to hear how it goes for you to sort of filter everything through the "Future You Thinking" of what does my Future Me want me to do today? And then taking these four strategies and using them in your day-to-day.

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So I'd love to hear how it goes. So you can find me on all the places on Instagram and Facebook and if you're not already on the email list you can join the email list there and let me know how this goes. I hope this was valuable for you and I will see you next week.

Are you on the *Habits on Purpose* email list yet? I send community emails with practical information, habit change tips, and announcements about workshops, lectures, and in-person events that I'm going to be attending. I share things that I don't share here on the podcast, and I let you in on what I'm studying, what I'm learning, and what I'm going through in my life.

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Take care, and I look forward to connecting.

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