



Bonus Episode - My favourite planning & productivity hacks

Welcome to this bonus episode of the managing your smart mind podcast with Master Certified Coach Else Kramer, a.k.a. Coach Kramer.

A lot of people ask me about time management and productivity.

What tools do I recommend?

How do I make my life, business, planning work with my neurodivergent brain?

So I thought to celebrate the 2000th download of the podcast I'd create a bonus episode to share my tools and strategies for you.

But first of all, a warning.

What works for me may not work for you, with your unique brain.

So use this for inspiration, not as a prescription.

If something appeals to you: give it a try, and then keep, discard or modify as you deem necessary.

Ok. Ready? Here goes.

Hack 1 - How I don't screw up calendaring and appointments

Without tech this would be a complete nightmare for me with my ADHD.

I am date dyslexic and, unless I am in hyperfocus, have the attention span of a squirrel.

Without tools, this would mean I would completely screw up scheduling, be late to appointments or even completely miss them.

So I have automated as much of the process as I can - and I use reminders abundantly.

This is what that looks like.

My clients book sessions through Calendly, which I happily pay a monthly fee for because it is AWESOME.

They automatically go into my Google Calendar, so double booking becomes impossible. I've also linked it to Zoom, so a Zoom session is created and appears in my Zoom app. Clients get automatic reminders 24 and sometimes also 1 hour before the session - as do I through my Google Calendar.

Is this enough?

Nope. As said, I have the attention span of a squirrel.

In the morning, I look at my calendar and set my alarm to go off 7 and 3 minutes before each appointment.

Why both?

The first one to remind me to get ready if I'm doing something else, to make my way to my computer, look at notes, etc.

The second one to yank my attention back because it has probably wandered away again.

As an extra measure, I open the Zoom room and turn on the 'enter room' sound, so that I hear when someone enters the room.

Now interestingly, I have some clients who are astonished when I tell them this.

They are like 'is this allowed? Shouldn't I just be more disciplined and focused?' and I'm like WHAT THE HELL! Of course not!

Use ALL THE TOOLS you can get to help you with what's hard for your brain.

It doesn't make you weak or lazy.

It's SMART and it saves time and energy for what's WAY more important - the actual work you do.

So that's my calendaring sorted.

Is it 100% fool proof?

Nope.

Sometimes a client can only work with me through their own company interface, like WebEx. In which case I am screwed, unless I find a good workaround (yes, I messed up once and now have created said workaround).

But it works 95% of the time and it does all the heavy lifting that my brain isn't really capable of. So good!

Hack 2 - How I remind myself what to work on

Reminder systems about things other than appointments, like tasks, projects, etc. do not work for me. At all.

My phone will ping, I'll look at it and think 'oh yeah, I have to do that thing' and unless I start doing it straightaway, which never happens, I will have forgotten 10 seconds later.

So I'm not wasting time setting up reminders that my brain will simply ignore.

Instead, I use visual, physical reminders.

I happily pay a lot of money every month for my massive and beautiful studio (office space sounds so uninspiring).

I have a lot of square meters just for me - and a lot of TABLES.

I have coaching desk.

A writing desk.

A reading chair.

A LEGO table.

An art table.

A thinking and strategising table.

This may sound insane, but it's actually perfect.

It means I can leave VISUAL reminders of what I'm supposed to be doing next on a particular project which are hard to ignore.

A bit like laying out your gym clothes in the morning.

This can be a mind map I'm working on, a book I'm reading, an article I'm writing.

I also have a flip over so I can create massive, visual notes - and reminders.

The actual PHYSICAL thing is right there, in my workspace, to remind me of what I'm working on.

Now you don't need as many tables as I do to make this work for you - you can also create different areas on a larger table.

I do strongly recommend that instead of moving your stuff, you move in space, because research shows that there are massive advantages for your brain when you do this - check out 'The Extended Mind' if you'd like to learn more about how this works.

No need for apps.

And it also removes the temptation to work on too many things at the same time - because there simply isn't room.

Hack 3 - Keeping track of to do's

Again, I've tried so many planners and apps over the course of my life.

Nothing worked - couldn't stick with anything longer than two weeks, and it never seemed to fit my specific needs.

So I've gone back to basics.

A spreadsheet.

Yup. A very simple spreadsheet.

It's on Google Drive, so I can access it wherever I am (this IS massively important).

It has Four Columns, labeled: Done, Today, This Week, Sometime.

Every morning I fill out the 'today' column with what I think needs to be done that day.

I also check the 'This week' column to see if something needs to be moved to 'Today'.

Then, during the day, everything I do gets moved to the 'Done' column after I do it (which is so satisfying and creates a nice mini dopamine hit).

Whenever I think of a new task it gets added to whatever column it needs to be in. And because I also need to get away from my phone to do deep work I have a little notebook to add tasks that I think of during that time, so I can quickly jot them down, get back to work and add them later.

Now, being an imperfect human, with a limited amount of time and sometimes unrealistic expectations, those columns will start getting longer and longer.

Which is great - because this is its own alert system. When the columns start getting too long to see on my computer screen I do a mini audit.

I check which tasks have been on there for a while yet never get done.

And make a decision.

Is this just on here because I think I 'should' do it?
In that case I let go.

Is it something I dread, hate, but do want to do because I won't like the results of not doing it, like my taxes?

In that case I PLAN it, it gets an appointment so I will get alerts as under hack 1.

This keeps it real - because my brain, if left unchecked, will operate under the assumption that I have infinite amounts of time and energy.

If only!

So, it's all very basic - I make technology and brain hacks like visual reminders help me with stuff I'm not good at, and I LOVE that this is available to me.

I hope this is helpful and that it inspires you to create a system that works for you, with your beautiful brain!

If you would like to learn how to accept, embrace and manage your smart mind, I can help you. You can reach out to me via my website, coachkramer.org, or send me a message on LinkedIn for a free first consult.

And if you liked this bonus episode and would love for me to share more practical tips on how to manage your smart mind, do let me know - you can DM me on LinkedIn, Instagram or Facebook or send me an email via podcast@elsekramer.com.

Thank you for listening to the Managing the Smart Mind Podcast, until next week, bye!