



DEVIANT THINKING PODCAST

Episode 18 -
Hacks To
Handle Working
From Home

Transcript

See show notes at: www.deviantthinking.com/podcast/018

00:01

Welcome back to The Deviant Thinking podcast. I'm your host, Jennifer Thompson, and today and always will explore career advice that breaks the rules. So today's episode yet again is a little bit different. And it's going to focus on some of the opportunities and issues that folks are having working from home. I have heard from a lot of my clients, a lot of my friends that this working from home thing is difficult for them and they are looking for tips and tricks to make life a little bit easier for them.

00:38

So I've worked from home for many years I've been an entrepreneur all the way since I'm I was 16 years old, and have a few things to say about working from home and and working a little bit more independently. I've also done the corporate thing. So I appreciated the structure that goes into work at an eight to five job provided and kind of melded the best of both worlds together so that I can be productive, that I can get tons done and still retain my sanity. Because working from home is not easy. And let's start there. Starting with the admission that working from home with all of the distractions around you, is just that distracting, and it's easy to get caught up in the little things in life. So the first hint that I have is really declare and be clear about when you are working. It is really hard for your kids or your spouse, or even your pet to understand if you're working or not if you're not clear about it. So for myself, it's as simple as I do go into my office and I do close my door. And I'm lucky to have an office space. I know many of you aren't

Episode 18: www.deviantthinking.com/podcast/018

able to have an office space, you're not set up to work from home on a regular basis. But create a space for yourself and declare that space your workspace. And when you're in that space, let people know you're working. If your kids come in, you have to gently tell them, you know, this is the time that mom or dad's working and you know, at such and such time, I'll take a break. So pick a break time, and we can talk about that problem then but right now, you know, mom or dad's getting stuff done. You know, along with that.

02:39

Another hint that I have is I do wear earphones even when I'm working out of my home office, especially now with a house full of people. And my family knows when my earphones are in that more than likely I am doing serious work and it's not the time to disturb me. I've had many of them open the door and kind of peer around the corner to see, you know, do I have my headphones on. And if they, if I do they know clearly it is not the time to disturb me. I am a lover of an I guess it's an app is called focus@will. And it plays focus music, and I play that a lot when I have to get things done. It's actually a scientific based app that has music that helps you focus better and you can set it up for timed intervals of anything from 15 minutes to hours, and it gives you that time to really hone in and focus and when I really need to get things done and really focus that is my like, ultra secret weapon is using focus@will and I will be sure to give you a link to that in the show notes. There is a cost for it. It is just \$35 annually and I promise it is out absolutely worth it, the focus that you get is, is a steal, it will really help you block out the other noise block out the things that are happening around you and get things done. So that first thing is really setting up the space that you need, and giving the boundaries and and really, it's those boundaries. That's the important part. So the whole family knows when you're working. Another big thing for me is really organizing my day when I'm at my best when I do my best work at home, I get the opportunity to take a half an hour for myself in the morning.

04:42

A lot of times, you know, some of the pleasure of working from home is I take my time and I sit on my back deck with my cup of tea, and I bring out my daily planning pages, and I plan for what's most important for the day. Over the years I've actually created my own weekly and daily planning pages, and I'm excited I'm going to share them for the first time on those, this podcast. So look for those in the show notes. And it will offer up a weekly planning page. And I do start without at the beginning of the week today's I'm recording this on a Monday morning. So I did sit down this morning and really looked at my week ahead and said, If I could accomplish five things this week, what would those things be that I want to accomplish? How do I make sure that I focus on those things? And some of those things are very work related. You know, this week I'm looking to record a lot of my my video work this week, I have a pretty open work week, which is unusual for me. I said

I'm going to really focus on getting some new videos and and some additional podcasts out that I wanted to. So even this podcast is part of that is making sure I'm getting to that right away. So that went on my list, I'm looking to do a whole new program. So outlining that is an important thing that I want to do. So I'm hoping to get that done this week. So that's gone on my list. I am the chairperson for a committee that also has had to shift and do some new things. So it's a community organization. And I need to do a little bit with that. But it's interesting because that one I even knew I only needed to do a little bit this week. It's not a week of focus on that community volunteer program that I do, it's just a little bit so I made sure to make that a little bit smaller in my life.

06:39

And then, I've got some things I want to do around my house. I live in beautiful North Carolina, and the weather is starting to get really nice, and I want to make sure I get time outside and to work on my garden. So I want to make sure I'm focused on that as well, as well as time for my family. So all of those things went on a weekly list of I get through this week and I've got some podcasts in the hopper, which would be great. And I've got a couple videos shot that I've been wanting to get to to really enhance my online program, be super proud of myself. If I get that time outside, I'm going to be proud of myself as well. So it's that balance between the two. But I know those are my priorities for the whole week. So I get into that weekly planning of things. So on my actual planning sheet, my weekly planning sheet, all of those things I just talked about, those live in the area that I call focus projects and goals. And I take the big ideas and I put them in the circles you'll see that if you download the sheet, and then I personally kind of put little arms out from there of the small things that might need to make up that big things I just kind of starting to create create a mind map for myself have some ideas of what I want to do this week. In addition to that, I do take the time to think about how am I going to use my strength this week? Because what I know from the School of positive psychology and you hear me say this often if we are living in using our values and our values, our strengths on a daily basis, that's when we flourish. So I want to make sure that I'm conscious about what are the things I value and am I really using those in my work week. So I start with what's my my strength that I'm going to use this week, what's my spotlight strength, and for me, this week, I picked zest, I want to get excited to get things done. I have the time I have the energy, I have the ability. I'm going to bring zest into my week, and I can feel it. I took a walk this morning as well to make sure that I had really good energy to come back today and work on this podcast. So really, living with that idea of zest and bringing it there and then I asked myself how long I use this strength in kind of my four quadrants of my life what's important to me. So from a personal standpoint, I want to make sure I use that enthusiasm for some personal growth and reflection.

09:13

And again today that was really an awesome time went for that walk, got supercharged, spent some time in nature took some great pictures of the flowers that are blooming out there right now, really gave me some some great energy, I found a spot while I was out walking to do a small meditation as well, so that I could really come back energized so that I could have a great week. So I'm going to use that strength of zest from a personal standpoint for that personal growth. The second thing is I want to get some stuff done this week. I want to get things cleaned up and off my calendar and off that to do list that I've had for way too long. So I'm going to use my zest in energy to really dive in. From a social standpoint, and this is so hard right now with our, our physical distance going on. But we're physical distancing, we are not social distancing. So I want to make sure that I still have time for my family, and that we get out there and have some time together. So I said, you know, there's family time that we can have now that we've never had the opportunity to have, you know, the kids are not running off to do something else. So I want to make sure I'm planning that I put on there. I want to play cards with my kids. My kids are older, they're college age, and they love to play spades. And we never find the time to sit down and play spades. So I've put it on my list. I want to, again, have some fun, use that zest and energy and play spades.

10:49

And then relationship. What do I want to do to build my relationship this week? Again, how do I bring that zest into their? Well, I'm going to be enthusiastic about spending time With my husband, it's a really tough time right now we're all stressed, we're stressed by naturally, we're stressed with this idea of distancing from each other. we're stressed when we look at the news every day. So I want to make sure I bring good positive energy into hanging out with my husband. So I do look at all of that in my week. And then I get, I also make sure I pick a passion project for myself. What's something I just want to do, because it's fun for me. And this week I put on that also work on my house in my garden. I love being outside this time of year. So I want to make sure that I schedule time in the week for this. So it really starts to build a structure for me for the week. And I think that big picture approach is super important. So that's the first place I start with putting some structure in my day is the weekly structure. Then I want to look at my day. What's today look like? Well, I always start with gratitude. Again, this is from the School of positive psychology folks, especially if you're stressed, especially if things are hard for you right now, there are still things we can be grateful for. So on my planning sheet for the day, I start out with what am i grateful for? As an added twist, you can also say, What am I grateful for? And how did I contribute to this be happening? And that gives us a sense of control as well, because so many things feel out of control right now. So really sitting down and saying, Hmm, what am I grateful for? And what what how did I help with this?

12:43

Again, very, very important to our well being. For me this morning, what was I grateful for? Well, I started off with being grateful for everyone's health and safety. So far, my family has fared very well, with all that's been going on with a career Corona virus, they've all been healthy and safe. And I'm really grateful for that. And if I want to step up and say, you know, what did I have to do to contribute to this? Well, I've talked to my family clearly about what they need to do to be safe and their hearing those suggestions. I've taken precautions myself. I've helped with my in laws, making sure that they're staying safe. So I'm truly contributing to this. And I'm really grateful for their health and safety right now. Another one of my things I was grateful for this morning was just, I had a wonderful morning on the back porch. It was warm, the sunshine was streaming into the porch and it was just absolutely lovely. And you can say, what did you have to do with that? Well, I took the time to enjoy it. I took the time to make sure that I took my cup of tea and I sat out there and I let the sunshine hit my face. I can control that. So I'm really grateful to have that warm sunshine on my face. And the third thing I'm grateful for is we got the garden planted yesterday. And that just feels so fabulous to me. I've planted some tomatoes and green beans and squash. And again, there's something I did my husband and I got out there and we dug in that dirt and we planted it. And I'm confident that you know, no matter what happens, my family is going to eat this summer and that that feels pretty darn good. So those are simple things that I can be grateful for.

14:36

The next thing I look at is what am I excited for? This is an interesting thing because being excited for something is a little bit of a trick to your mind. Excitement and fear live in the same space in your brain, they actually elicit the same chemicals. So by considering what you're excited for, it changes the story and Your hat. So I try to look for each day, you know, what am I worried about working on? What am I dreading? What am I maybe putting off because I'm afraid I won't do it as well as I'd like. And if I can find those things, and I can flip it and say, Oh, I'm really excited to be trying this new thing. I'm really excited for this meeting, to talk about my new proposal. I'm really excited to do this podcast, any of those things, when I put it in excitement, it really opens things up and and it keeps us out of a fight or flight mentality. And it gives us so many more options to be productive during the day. So I always try to list one or two things, maybe three things that I'm excited for in the day, because that again, gives me that zest and energy to go forward with with where I want to go in life. The next thing I look at is what again, what strength did I say I was going to use this week. How do I apply it from my app tasks and actions for the day. So today's priorities were I wanted to review all of my to do's and make some plans. So I'm going to bring some zest to that instead of finding that a dreadful activity, I really need some organization. It's been a crazy couple weeks getting settled in, and kind of things are kind of back to normal around my house. So I really want to sit down and do that. So I'm going to bring them some zest and energy to that. I am launching a sale on my LinkedIn program. And I'm super excited about that. It's an opportunity lots of people are home from from work and have time to do things like

update their LinkedIn profile. So I want to make sure that people are excited about that. So I'm going to bring some zest and enthusiasm to that and more about that later in the program.

16:58

And then I also want to look at? I want to make sure that I take time outside today as well. Because it is a beautiful day I actually, you know, maybe here's another devious hint. I look at the weather on Monday morning for the week. And when I'm working for home that's really important to me because I want to know what days are it's going to be rainy and what days it's going to be sunny outside, because again, outside time for me, that's my recharge. So I want to make sure I know that. And like today I know is a gorgeous day in North Carolina. It's a it's a Monday and our afternoon is supposed to be 75 and sunny, it's about as perfect as it gets here. So I do not want to be cooped up in the house. I want to be able to take time outside. So I'm working really hard this morning to get all my stuff done so that I can take that time. So I think you can see here that I really take the time to look at what are the things that are missing. Most important to me. And again, some of them are work based and some of them are a little bit more selfish based. But when I take that time, I really can fit everything into my day. I also don't try to get everything done in one day. It is so easy to get sucked into that idea of the endless to do list. But by prioritizing and saying, hey, if I get these three to five things done today, I've done a good job. Now I can go relax and enjoy my family. I can go relax and be outside and not worry about it. Because that I think is one of the hardest things is understanding how to shut off. When you're working from home. It can really seep into all parts of your life and that's not fair to you or your family. Now, that doesn't mean that you have to work a regular schedule. I do want to emphasize that I noticed a lot of companies are giving parents and workers a lot of leeway of when they get their work done. So I do want to encourage you to work when it works for you. Many of you are juggling trying to help your children with their online school that they've now kind of been pushed into, and so on. So it doesn't have to be a set schedule. You get to set your own schedule and decide what works for you. And I think that really helps. But again, set that schedule, decide what it is plan it at the beginning of the day, don't fall into the trap of Oh, I'm I'm working from home now I can sleep in late, you know, things like that. I do. I guess I'm a morning person. So So take that with a grain of salt. But do get up in the morning. You know, take that time before your kids get going and have that time for yourself to plan out the day even if you're not going right into work at that moment. But know that hey, at one o'clock I'm going to start on these projects because my kids are going to be done with their stuff. And I'm going to put the movie on for them. And I'm going to get my work done. And I'm going to work one till five. Again, I'm going to stop at five, and then I'm going to go do dinner. And then I'm going to work again after they're in bed for two hours. And again, limit yourself because it's so easy for work to seep over into every minute of our day, if we're not careful and set our scheduled. So I hope that helps a little bit with kind of the scheduling side of things. One more things

that I would share, was talking with a friend this morning, and she is now doing all of her appointments online. And this is new for her. She's a therapist, so she's been used to meeting with people face to face and she's just like, how do you handle it? How do you set up all of these meetings and know how your meeting with people and so on. One of the ways that I handled that is I take charge of it. And I decide how we're going to meet. I have worked really hard to pick days where I have meetings. And I've worked really hard to have days where I don't have meetings so I can get actual work done. So that's the first thing is really deciding like which days or which which days? Are you going to deal with other people in which Days Are you going to deal with yourself. And I know if you're working for a company, you can't always own that completely. But it might be something that all of you can do together is talk about it and say, well, what's going to work for the team? Let's make Tuesday, our meeting day or Monday, our meeting day, so we all get our marching orders. And then Tuesday, we take the whole day to get the work done, and then come back together on a Wednesday or something like that. Just try to organize it in some way so that you're not bouncing from thing to thing, you'll work a lot more efficiently. And then even when I get to my meeting days, I'm also pretty focused on how am I meeting with people on days where I'm working with on podcasts, you know, I don't have to dress up. That's like an added bonus right from working from home. You know, as I'm doing this podcast, I'm sitting in a pair of jean shorts, and a tank top and my sneakers, my hair is pulled up. I've just come back from that walk. I don't have any makeup on. And I'm totally chilling because I know no one's going to see me today I made sure I set up anything I had to do today to be something that I didn't need to get all dolled up for. Well, tomorrow, I'm going to work on some video stuff and I've got some face to face video meetings that I need to do. So tomorrow morning, I'm going to get up and after my shower, I'm going to put on all my makeup and do my hair and pick out a nicer outfit and get all of that done tomorrow.

22:51

So it really makes me a lot more efficient. I'm not trying to do that every single day. So again, this is what I do and what I need for my business. But think about that in your business. What are things you can do to help yourself be more efficient, because working from home can really be a blessing, you can get more done, you can find ways to be interrupted less. And you can find more downtime when you're not working if you do it right. But it definitely takes some planning. So that covers a little bit of the how I work from home.

23:29

I've also gotten a couple questions about the logistics of working from home what's important what's needed. As I just mentioned, it's really important to be able to control

your schedule. And for me that happens through using acuity scheduling, it allows me to choose when I have time available, and it really stops the back and forth with people because I just give them a link to my calendar and let them pick a time that works for them. And because I've already set up in the app what time's I'm available, I don't have to go back and forth. So I can really control that. So I can choose the days that I, you know, choose to be more in front of people and the days that I choose to be working on projects. So if you're not working for a company and need a software like that, that works great. Then for that video conferencing, I am a big fan of Zoom. I've been a zoom fan a long time, it's probably four or five years that I've been using that application and I really can't recommend it enough. Zooms super steady, it's super reliable, you can record calls with it, you can share your screen, you can do all kinds of thing. So really, really works well. So it's a great option for those conference calls and those meetings. I'll be sure to link to both of those applications in the show notes. Do note that they are affiliate links, but they are still great products and they are the products that are use every day. Now as far as the hardware that's needed. You know, it's really important to get good quality hardware, but it doesn't have to be expensive. And trust me over the years, I have tried many, many things. And I'm really happy to share some of the things that have worked well for me.

25:19

First thing I recommend is if you're anyone that has to deal with the public in some way if you have to be on phone calls, if you have to be talking to other people, invest in a good headset. And I really mean this, you know, you can't sit there with a phone to your ear all day. speakerphone is not an option, folks. I know it's a great way to start, but there's way too much echoing that goes on. You can hear the dog bark, all of those things happen. It becomes uncomfortable for yourself. So definitely take the time and invest in a good headset. My favorite I use a Bose earbuds they're about \$100 there on Amazon. I know \$100 seems like a lot of money, but they have great quality. So I can hear really well, the speakers great because you want to be heard in a really great way and they're super, super comfortable for my ears. I have really tiny ears. I know that sounds silly, but most earbuds don't fit comfortably in my ears. So these Bose earbuds really do help and I'll toss a link to those in the show notes as well. So that you can kind of see see what I'm using on that. So that's what I use for my meetings.

26:38

I also have a good camera. So I started out using the camera on my computer, and that works in most cases. Now I have to do a lot of videoing and recording so it makes sense to have a little bit better of a camera. If you're not doing that probably the camera that's either on your phone or on your computer currently is good enough, if not, there's a Logitech camera, I think it's a 920 that I use that's relatively cheap, I want to say it's about

\$50. And it's a great option as well. And it's one of the great things about that is it fixes almost any lighting. So bad lighting is kind of the death of a video call. So if you can have good lighting, and this camera automatically goes in and helps with the lighting situation. So that helps greatly. So those are two simple things that I use.

27:31

I do also have a microphone that I use for recording videos, that helps capture it better than even my headset does. So that's helpful as well. And I can link to that in the show notes because I know a lot of you are making videos now, which you never had to before. So any of that help that I can give and I'm happy to do because those are things like I said that I do regularly. I also think it's important. You know, many of have laptops and if you're working from home a laptop is great but I also promise you if you can connect your laptop with a real screen and a real keyboard, your comfort of working goes up significantly. And a real mouse, those touch pads, again great for an airplane seat. Not so great for sitting at your desk. They're really ergonomically not not comfortable. So definitely recommend, you know getting a good keyboard getting a good mouse and if you can afford it getting a screen so that you're not staring at a small laptop screen but you've got a nice, big screen to work on. Because really your comfort is super important. And then kind of on that idea of comfort as well. You know your desk is a great place to work but also I challenge you to think of other places that are comfortable to get work done. I'm as I've told you, I love to hop out on my back deck. I've got to beautiful couch that's out there, that in the morning, especially, I curl up on my couch with my cup of tea and I do that morning planning so that I'm in a little bit different space, you know, in the afternoon, I'll come inside, especially if it's warm or cold outside and I've got a couch in my office, and I'll curl up on my couch and it can some of the work that I can do that's that's off of the computer, or maybe does, doesn't need as big of a screen to work on. And then I spent a few hours at my desk, you know, doing the things that really are needed to be at a desk, you know, if I'm doing working on graphics, something like that, where that big screen is really helpful. That's where you'll find me.

29:42

Another thing to think about is those meetings that you have, if you're doing phone meetings, have a good hint here with a good headset, go for a walk and do your phone meetings if you don't need to have a paper and pen and it's really a touch base and to talk with someone getting and stretching your legs and going for a walk and talking is super, super helpful. It is one of my favorite ways to get out of my office and keep myself from going stir crazy when I'm homeworking. Well my whole goal of today's podcast was to give you some ideas and some encouragement of how you can find working at home really enjoyable, and easy. And really find ways to make it productive for yourself and maybe fit in some things that you hadn't planned to fit in by being a little more structured

in it. You know, if you get up in the morning and you just hop on that email first thing and start kind of putting out fires of what other people want you to do. I promise you at the end of the day, you might have done a lot of things, but you don't have that sense of accomplishment that you do if you really take the time to structure your Figure out what's most important. If you have to schedule time to check that email, but make that a task, not what dictates your day. And when you can do that you're in control again. And I think that's something we're all looking for right now is just a little bit of sense of control in all of this chaos and building that structure can really help.

31:24

So definitely check out in the show notes. I'm going to put up my weekly and daily worksheets that I do to get me through each day and each week. I'll put that up as a download for you and I hope that inspires you and helps you to keep organized. I'll also put in the show notes list of some of the equipment that I use on a regular basis. I've tried a lot of different things and would love to share that wisdom that these are things that that work really well and aren't super expensive. I've been really really careful to not overspend on these items it can, can get really easy to kind of go overboard with it. So check that all out in the show notes.

32:10

Now the one thing I did hint at is, I am offering for a limited time for the month of April. I have an online LinkedIn program, and it brings some zest and enthusiasm to your LinkedIn profile. I believe after life gets back to normal, well, I kind of question what normal is going to be. There's going to be lots of opportunities out there. So now is a great time to focus on what's important to you, and how you can start to really amp up your career and having a great LinkedIn profile and reaching out to others and connecting even in this time of social, well, I hate the word social distancing in physical distance.

33:01

It is a great opportunity that you can spend some time where you always say you should but never seem to have that time. And that's fixing that LinkedIn profile. And getting out there and maybe doing some of that social media and networking that can happen there. So for the month of April, I'm going to be offering my LinkedIn program, which is normally \$49, for just \$9.99, roughly 10 bucks, folks. So I want to do that so that all of you have the opportunity to get out there and update that LinkedIn profile and have some good structure and some good guidance to getting that done, so that you can stand out and be remarkably different than others out there.



33:46

Well, thank you so much for listening to today's podcast. As always, I super appreciate it. If you've enjoyed this podcast, please take a moment and head on over to iTunes and give us a review. Those reviews mean the world to us. Until next time, stay safe, enjoy working from home and definitely Be Deviant.



Episode 18: www.deviantthinking.com/podcast/018



