

EPISODE 868

“KN: I’m not the only woman who has struggled with over functioning, over controlling things and thinking that unless I do them, no one will do them. The only way that we can prove that opposite to ourselves is to loosen our grip.”

[INTRODUCTION]

[0:00:55.5]

FT: I like the sound of that, right? Who wants to hop off the I’m so busy train? I nearly had a heart attack last week. I’m not kidding. Things are stressful right now, with the launch of Stacks House, it’s more stress than I’ve ever taken on in my life, worried about things that I never thought I’d have to ever worry about, like mechanical savings pigs and you know, selling tickets to a live event, it’s pretty nerve wracking.

All this to say, I hope you’re going to show up to Stacks House, right? Go to stackshouse.com/tickets. Use the code `somoneystacksLA` for 20% off. Anyway, this interview with Kate Northrup fell into my life at just the right moment and I think a lot of us now, we’re back to school after spring break, it’s back to the grind and it’s important to remember things like you don’t have to do it all.

It is possible to have a thriving career without feeling burnt out. It’s possible to raise your kids without feeling like you aren’t doing enough. And our guest today Kate Northrup just released a book called *Do Less: A Revolutionary Approach to Time and Energy Management for Busy Moms*.

Kate was initially on this show about four years ago and at the time, she was talking about her first book, *Money, A Love Story*, which has been translated into five languages. This is her second book; it’s called *Do Less* and it’s really a reflection of all of the things that she has learned now as a business woman and as a mother to two children.

Her book gives women 14 experiments that they can try to eliminate their overwhelm and respond to the never-ending tasks and responsibilities that we face every day. We're going to learn how to loosen the grip, surrender control and perfect the art of allowing.

Here's Kate Northrup.

[INTERVIEW]

[0:02:39.4]

FT: Kate Northrup, my friend, welcome back to *So Money*.

[0:02:42.2]

KN: Thank you so much for having me back.

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FT: I was trying to remember the last time you were on; it was pre baby. At least a couple of years ago. At that time, you were on the show talking a lot about your work in the money space, your book at the time, *Money, A Love Story* had been published in five languages and we had really interesting conversations around, you know, our own personal money stories, your journey. Fast forward to today, you, are a mom to two kids and your focus has really been shifting more to helping mothers, in particular with productivity.

Your new book which comes out April 2nd is *Do Less: A Revolutionary Approach to Time and Energy Management for Busy Moms*. What was it about becoming a mom that shifted your focus to this? I mean, of course, we all need to be doing less, we don't think we can, you have a solution, you have many strategies in the book but for you, what was the personal journey to this arrival?

[0:03:44.3]

KN: Well, it was actually getting pregnant and with my first and suddenly, I was so exhausted, I just couldn't work nearly the amount of time I had worked before and yet, my husband and I run our own business, we didn't have any parental leave, you know, to be backing us up, so we needed to make the same amount of money with my work hours cut more than in half and so we just had to figure out how to do it.

The reality is, then after a difficult birth and a difficult first year of motherhood, which it turns out found like most people have that. I was really only working like I only had 10 hours of childcare a week for that first year and yet, our business remained steady and it wasn't like my husband started working 70 hours a week or something to make up for it.

I thought, well, wait a second, -

[0:04:37.5]

FT: Yeah, what were you doing right?

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KN: Well first of all, what was I doing right then, but what was I doing all those years? If I got the same results working less than half the amount.

[0:04:47.1]

FT: You should have had kids a lot sooner I guess, I don't know.

[0:04:50.5]

KN: What the heck was I doing? Yeah, there were many things that I learned because I basically went backwards and said okay, well, if I could do this by accident, while I was traumatized and exhausted, what if I did it on purpose when I'm a little more well rested and have my head screwed on straight? I learned what we had –

You know, what I had done, what we had done and then of course, I now – I'm kind of obsessed with time and I'm obsessed with how can we – especially as women, value our time more? And so essentially, this is the very same conversation I was having about money, it's just now about a different precious resource.

[0:05:34.1]

FT: Yes. And in fact, last time you were on *So Money*, you had said that, a quote, "I think that our relationship with time can be very similar to our relationship with money." How should we be thinking about our relationship with time?

[0:05:48.6]

KN: We should be thinking about our relationship with time where time is a reflection of how we value ourselves. So many of us give away our time willy-nilly because we don't value it enough, we think somebody else's desire for our time is more important than our own, especially if you were raised to be a people pleaser and it's so important that we see our time as the precious resource it is because especially women who take care of a lot of people.

Whether you're a mother or not this applies, our time is so precious and if we don't reclaim it, we end up exhausted and really no good for the people around us as well.

[0:06:30.4]

FT: Part of what you prescribe is that we have to loosen the grip, surrender control. The art of allowing is something that you talk about a lot, can you bring that to life for us a little bit and make us convince that we can actually do this and still get results?

[0:06:45.9]

KN: Yeah, my gosh, it's such a great lesson. Many years ago, I was dating a guy and I really wanted him to take more of the reigns in our relationship, like plan things and just be a little bit

more in the lead. I remember telling him this one night, you know, I was the one who had like made the plans and make the reservations and all the things.

I said, “you know, I’d really love it if you took more of the lead and whatever.” And he said “well, I would really love to pick up the reins, but you’re going to have to put them down first.” I just – I’m not the only woman who has struggled with over functioning, over controlling things and thinking that unless I do them, no one will do them and the only way that we can prove that opposite to ourselves is to loosen our grip and see what happens.

But one of the key things for this is learning how to ask for help because all of us need help, there’s not one of us who can do everything alone, it’s just not possible. Not needing help is not a sign of strength, it’s just a sign of insanity, you know, like trying to not need help and yet when we ask for help, there’s a way to do it and there’s a way not to do it.

Most people, are asking for help at the 11th hour when they actually needed help, you know, three hours ago, they’re totally frantic, now it’s an emergency. It’s very difficult to help somebody who is in an emergency because they can’t articulate what they need, they’re frantic and usually they’re not very kind about it.

What I love to teach is to ask for help early, so way before you think you’re going to need it, often so that you’re getting in the habit that asking for help is like breathing, it’s just part of daily living as a human being and then kindly because when we ask for help early and often, it’s much easier to be kind about it and it is much easier to help a kind person, especially in marriage.

[0:08:46.7]

FT: Well, speaking of marriage, I’ve talked about how in a relationship, as the breadwinner in our marriage and I’ve written about this in my book that rather than asking for help, sometimes you need to ask for ownership. I don’t want help.

[0:08:59.7]

KN: Yes.

[0:09:00.4]

FT: I don't want help because I don't want to half ass it and then bring in somebody in like the third hour, the 12th hour, how about you're just – you're in charge of food, okay?

[0:09:12.6]

KN: I love categorizing like that. This is your wheelhouse, this is my wheelhouse, we are each responsible for that and that applies whether you're in marriage, with your children, on a team, in business, in your company. That's genius, thank you.

[0:09:28.4]

FT: You're welcome, you can take that. I want to talk about your book because there's so much in it, you have 14 experiments that we can try to eliminate overwhelm. Take us through some of those and maybe starting with the one that for you, was the most maybe like personally challenging experiment.

[0:09:49.0]

KN: Yeah. Gosh, I mean, the asking for help one continues to be a challenge. We already talked about that one. You know, I really find that the one about – here's where a lot of women go wrong, I think, and people. We have been taught that the way to fit more things into our day like the way to be more productive, is to actually deal with time.

Somehow, if I can manipulate time in the proper way, then I'll be able to get everything done. That's basically the premise of time management systems. Here's the problem, time is the wrong resource to manage. It's actually the way we manage our energy gives us more time. This is based loosely on Einstein's theory of relativity which really says that our experience of time is actually relative to energy. How that applies in human life is let's say, you waited in line at the coffee shop this morning for five minutes for your latte.

Okay, that amount of time, five minutes, felt very different than the first five minutes that you held your child, after your child was born. That's the difference between Kairos time and Chronos time. Chronos time is linear time, it is what it is, five minutes is five minutes and an hour is an hour, and then, Kairos time is really that sense of timelessness, it's being in our work lives, it's being in flow, like [inaudible 0:11:18.2] checks in.

[0:11:20.2]

FT: Like when you forgot to eat lunch because you were -

[0:11:22.4]

KN: Yeah. In it, right? Not because you forgot to eat lunch because you were just running around like a crazy person, but you were really enjoying what you were doing, right? I'm sure you've had moments writing your books where that has occurred.

What we need to do is manage our energy and I recommend a tracker. And I have this tracker as a free resource with my book where you actually track like how do I feel at different times of the day and how do I feel at different times of the month, so that I can then organize my time appropriately to set myself up for success?

Then, when you are for example, I know for me, I'm a way better writer in the morning and I'm not such a good writer in the afternoon. I'm not going to schedule my writing in the afternoon, no matter how much time I give me, my writing's not going to be that good. An hour in the morning, now, I've just expanded time because my energy is at its peak, so I get way more done in a time in a higher quality.

[0:12:28.2]

FT: Your book is a really great compliment to Dan Ping's book about when, it's called *When*. It's all of the science -

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KN: I love him.

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FT: He's great and what you say, I mean, what I love about your book and his books is that there is so much science to what you're saying, it's not just here's how we think or feel, there's a lot of data to prove what you're saying and in his book, he talks about how there are better times to do things. If you want to be more productive or feel more successful in a task, do it when, everyone's different, right?

I'm not a morning person, I probably wouldn't write my best in the morning, but I would write my best at night.

[0:13:03.7]

KN: Okay.

[0:13:05.8]

FT: Knowing yourself is a big part of how you can do less, successfully, right?

[0:13:11.8]

KN: Absolutely. This piece, I probably is not in Dan Ping's book, though I haven't read it, you'll have to tell me. For women, we actually hormonally are primed at different times of the month to have our brains be better at certain types of tasks. And that is where tracking your cycle as a woman is really helpful because there's a time of the month call the follicular phase that you're going to have really high energy, it's great for brain storming, your ideas will be on fire at that time. It's the week after your period.

Then the next week is your ovulation time, that's – you're going to be, your brain is the best for verbal fluency during that time, it's a really great time for shooting videos, doing presentations, having meetings, doing a pitch, showing up at a networking event.

[0:13:56.1]

FT: My god, you need to make an app, that is your follicular –

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KN: My friend, Alisa Vitti did, it is called the *My Flow App* and I highly recommend it.

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FT: *My Flow*, I love that I get to do a podcast and learn all of these things. This is such a good mine –

[0:14:10.5]

KN: Yeah and then the next phase is the luteal phase and the luteal phase is actually a little longer than the other phases because it's the time for the buckle down detail work of completing projects and so our bodies are so genius they know that you need a little bit longer to finish things than you do to start them and so it makes our brain wired for it for longer than the other phases. And then the menstrual phase is great for reflection, for evaluation, for research.

[0:14:37.4]

FT: Netflix and chill?

[0:14:38.4]

KN: Yeah, Netflix and chill and where your brain is going to be the most interconnected, so you have the best intuition.

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FT: Eating a lot of greasy food. Yes.

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KN: Yeah, so that is some really helpful planning tool that is really great.

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FT: I love watching your career just take off. I mean I have known, I first learned about you I think probably seven or eight years ago with your first *New York Times* bestseller and I am so admiring of the structure that you have built for yourself and the places that you go in your career. You really go there, you talk really candidly about money and womanhood and motherhood and building a business and I just love that your business is growing with you.

Like you are your business and so that probably to some extent feels like spontaneous, but also strategic. Tell me a little bit about your career path and where you are today versus where you were seven, eight years ago. A bit different. But in many ways, still very you.

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KN: Still very me. I guess I just make my living talking about what sort of insights I am gathering that I think are helpful for other people. I am not probably one of those people who is going to be talking about the same topic for my whole life. It is not who I am, but I really love to go deep on what I am into and this time, conversation is so critical. I will tell you one thing that I really noticed, was by tapping into my own cyclical nature and starting to think about time cyclically, which I talk a lot about in *Do Less*, my work got way better.

I mean the depth of experiencing my work, so if anyone is listening and really wondering what is my work? what am I supposed to be here doing, right? It is easy to look at people and think, "oh well they must be in touch with their calling." but I will tell you in between my book, *Money, A*

Love Story and this book, I felt quite lost, as far as what I was supposed to be doing career wise.

And I kept doing things because we have a mortgage, we had a wedding and I got kids and I wasn't going to just stop. You know a lot of people read the title of *Do Less* are like, "I can't do nothing. I have da-da-da." And I'm like, "I didn't say do nothing. I just said do less." But it's not that I just sit around and eat bonbons.

But what was so cool is when I had my first daughter and then about a year later when I got my period back, it was so amazing because for the first time I started tracking it and I am telling this might sound woo, but I, at the same time, had such a deeper understanding of what my work was on the planet. And it was through actually, literally tracking my hormonal experience of being a woman and I thought it was the most practical way of people talk about in the personal growth industry like loving yourself like, what does that even mean? I don't know.

But for me, tracking and paying attention to what my body needed at any given time and scheduling my time around it, was the most practical way I could think of, of loving myself. And then through that, this work came through and it is the most excited I have ever been about anything career wise.

[0:18:05.3]

FT: And as it relates to your money and your relationship with money and how you use money as a tool, how has that shifted over the years as you have also had these awakenings around productivity and time and physiology and all of that?

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KN: I've gotten so much more intentional about my money meetings. So, my husband and I have a money love date every week and I will tell you, even after writing *Money, A Love Story*, my default I still sometimes would slip if we got busy and since my time became more limited with having children, I have gotten so devoted to the way we manage our finances because I see how much time and energy it saves us.

When we show up every week for that meeting, which we do and we look over what is in our bank account and we use YNAB. I don't know if – I am sure you are familiar with it. And we just are really intimate with our financial reality. It saves us so much time because we don't have slipups. We don't have dramas, we don't and so that 30 minutes every week that's scheduled in with this rhythm with this ritual has become really for me like a huge time saver and productivity hack.

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FT: Do you think that we are in kind of a – I don't know like a primetime for moms to be out there and being – I mean I have had so many moms in my own life, on this podcast, myself included really start to be very unfiltered about how we feel about the world, which I love and unapologetic and just the fact is, moms are super productive, at the end of the day. And we need more credit. I think that too often we're discounted because, "oh she's just too busy."

I've had people on this show who've been fundraising for their startups, women and when they go into a room full of VC's, some of them have been asked, "what are your family planning ambitions?" Because they assume that if you want to get pregnant and have a kid you are going to slow down and –

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KN: They are wrong, obviously.

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FT: And they are wrong and so what happened? Why suddenly all of us now are just fed up? What was the tipping point? Because I love it. I love what is happening.

[0:20:29.8]

KN: You know I don't know, but I do know this, we all know that if you want something done ask a busy person. There is no one busier on the planet than moms. We are so freaking effective and I will tell you, our brains shift when we have children and the same thing actually similar things happen with adoptive moms as well, where certain areas of our brain expand and certain areas of brain shift and shrink and they make us more able to determine what matters and what doesn't.

So, I don't know about you, but when I became a mom, I had so much less tolerance for BS. My boundaries got fierce and I just was like, people were not allowed in my life if they were screwing around. And I think that that maybe part of it coupled with where we are in this moment in history and politics and the Me-Too Movement and this particular wave of a feminism. I think it is just a time of that fierceness.

I mean that mama bear energy is real and I just think the while pink washing of motherhood is just incredibly irritating because if you want to be terrified, like be out in the woods with a mama bear, right? We are the scariest out there and we should be.

[0:21:49.2]

FT: If you want to survive, join my tent. Yes.

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KN: Exactly.

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FT: Oh my gosh and so what is next for you as you are raising your family and running your business, where are you leaning towards next?

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KN: Well you know, I am just so excited to help women reclaim their time and know the value of their time because the world does not need us busy as women. The world needs us powerful and a woman running around like crazy is not her most powerful. It is when we slow down, it is when we take the space, we need that we can really dig in and make really intelligent decisions. And really intelligent powerful proclamations as well for what we want and what we want for the world. And so, for me, it is about continuing to deliver tools and resources to help women to be their most powerful not their most busy.

[0:22:49.2]

FT: Thank you and giving us permission to Netflix and chill because that's what our bodies are asking for sometimes during the month. Listen to your body ladies.

[0:22:58.8]

KN: Yeah, listen to your body because when you do, she will reward you with better ideas with more productivity. When we honor the season our body is in and the season our life is in, then in the more fertile seasons or the more those seasons of harvest, you will get a more abundant harvest.

[0:23:19.0]

FT: Kate Northrup, thank you so much. Congratulations, your book again, everybody is called *Do Less: A Revolutionary Approach to Time and Energy Management for Busy Moms*. Love that energy component. I guess we could thank Albert Einstein, but now we can thank Kate Northrup for literally bringing it back into modern times.

[0:23:37.4]

KN: Thank you.

[END]