



Hello and welcome to another session of troubleshooting here in the Supervisors Circle.

We do these sessions because, let's face it, as supervisors, we come up against a lot of issues, obstacles, challenges, and troubles.

Much of what we experience is similar to what lots of other supervisors experience, so this is a space where you can come and share your issue, get it off your chest, listen to other supervisors share some of their experiences and perhaps some lessons learned, strategies, and tips, and of course to let you know that you're not alone.

Anytime someone writes in and says, am I the only one... I stop them right there and say NO. In the history of the world of supervisors, I can't imagine a scenario where you would be the only one.

These sessions help remind us that we're not alone, that this is hard, and that other people are there to provide support when we go through these challenges.

If you would like to submit your own trouble, you can come on here live and share it that way, you can write in and let us know. Also after every session we post in the forum so people can continue the conversation.

So thanks for being here and let's listen to today's trouble.

*"I'm so tired. I work so hard, but at the end of every day, my to-do list never seems to get any smaller. I've tried to set up better boundaries about taking work home, but if I don't do work at home, it's just not going to get done. How to how do I get this all under control?"*

See what I said about these troubles resonating with other folks? Is there any supervisor out there who isn't experiencing this or hasn't experienced this at some point in time?

How relevant.

There is a lot here. There's a lot that we can dive into in terms of not just the logistics of this but the philosophy and the mindset and the way that our systems are set up and our organizations operate. This runs wide and deep. We won't get into all of that today, but there is a reason why things are the way they are. They did not just happen. And when we try to change the way things are on an individual level there tends to be a natural resistance to that.

*This is just the way we've always done it. This is just the way it works.*

A majority of my career, I was in the nonprofit world. I still do most of my work in the nonprofit world. This type of mindset and mentality is prevalent. Drinking from the water hose, jumping in with both feet, trial by fire. All these cliches that are essentially admitting what we know to be true, which is we are set up this way.



Here Comes Selena, I'm going to time it one day because she doesn't come right at the beginning. There's maybe like a 60 second or two minutes. I am going to time it. They say cats are very scheduled so I am going to see exactly at what point she joins.

Cat life, okay.

So that that phrase or cliché that we hear a lot that I think is really relevant- it's not a bug, it's a feature. This concept of being busy, overworked can't ever get to the bottom of that to do pile...

In many cases, it is not a bug, it's a feature.

If you decide like this supervisor has decided enough is enough, I need to get this under control, you need to understand you're up against it. You're not just trying to get your own schedule in a manageable way. You're doing so within a system that says, but that's the way we've always done it. It is not an easy task.

And you are not just up against these larger systems. You are up against also your own system, your own system of how you've always done, it your own system of what it means to you if you were to clock out at five o'clock or whatever time you finish your work day and be done with it, if you took all your vacation days, which less than half of people in the US do, if you took a lunch break- all these things that are quite normal practices in other places and in a lot of other countries, that we just take for granted are not the way that we do things here.

Likely you have internalized a lot of that.

As you're battling against these larger systems and what they're telling you implicitly or explicitly, what's your own system, your own internal system that's telling you perhaps things that are quite similar.

Let's look at some things to consider here.

The first one is what do you want your work life to look like?

I ask this because of course everybody is an individual. I know that I'm guilty of making sweeping generalizations a lot. I've already done a lot of them and will likely do a lot going forward.

For some people they get so much joy from their work and they really, enjoy working. They are okay working some extra hours. They are okay bringing some work home. I don't want to categorically say, if you have a 40 hour a week job, don't you dare do one minute more and don't you ever do work at home.

For a lot of people, that's the goal, and if that's your goal, yes, let's figure out how to do that. But if you're somebody who likes to work a little bit extra or has more peace working from home than when you do in an office we want to support that too.



To this person who wrote in it sounds like taking work home and working hard isn't benefiting you.

You are looking for a change. You're not asking how many more hours can I work so that I get this stuff done? You're asking to get it under control, implying that it's not currently in control.

Before we get into strategies and tips and apps and software that you can use to manage your time think first about what's the end goal.

What do you want your time your work life to look like?

Do you want to be in a workplace every day? Do you want to work from home every day? Do you want a hybrid option?

Do you want to be working eight hours a day on the dot? Would you rather work four 10 hour days or do 20 hours at one job and 20 hours at another?

Would you prefer to work really early in the morning and get out earlier or come in later and stay later?

Not every job will afford you these flexibilities but all of those options and many more are out there somewhere. It might take a little bit of looking.

Think about what do I want my work life to look like? What do I want my days to look like? Then once you have a picture, how are your actions reinforcing that? Or how are your actions going against that?

If you decide I don't ever want to bring my work home with me and you keep bringing your work home with you then what you're saying you want, is it matching up with what you're doing?

Be honest with yourself about why that might be. We'll get to delegating in a minute because that is an important piece of time management. When it comes to things like delegating things like how much we're working, there's always a reason that we do the things we do.

Sometimes the reason isn't what we say out loud.

Sometimes it's not even something we admit to ourselves.

Be honest with yourself. You don't need to disclose all of that to us, but be honest with yourself. Sometimes people really like being really busy, because it makes them feel needed and important and that they're contributing.

Sometimes people are scared to delegate because they're scared that they're giving up their power in doing so.



Perhaps they're scared that the person they're delegating to might do it better than they did.

Some people just like to be in control of everything.

People attach all kinds of different meanings in their life to what their work means to them. A lot of people's identities are wrapped up in their work.

So what does that mean if you pare down your schedule a little bit? If you didn't spend quite so many hours outside of work doing your work what does that mean about who you are and your identity as this worker?

Think about what you really want. Not just what you say you want.

I have a friend who like a lot of you has a schedule that, I do not even know how they make sense of it. It is every minute of every day color-coded with things related to work, things related to family, things related to social stuff and it's just jam packed. Yet when something comes up like an opportunity for example to volunteer at their child's school or to do something at church, they're always the first one to volunteer. Admirable and what comes along with that is a lot of complaints about not having any time.

It's important to understand, what is it really that we're trying to accomplish?

And is the complaining, is the martyrdom a little bit so to speak a part of it? Like look how hard I am working. Look how busy I am.

If that is the case for you, it doesn't make you a bad person. It is a big part of US culture.

How many times do you check in with a friend or colleague and say *hey, how are you? How have you been?* And the first response is, *I'm so busy. Yeah, tell me about it.*

It is reinforced a lot. If you weren't quite so busy, what do you take that to mean about yourself? Deeper questions and really important ones.

The next thing to consider is what's realistic.

The first question what do you want your work life to look like and you decide I want to work an hour a day and make 10 million dollars a year. For most folks not such a realistic goal, both with the bigger picture and with some of the details and how you start to get the schedule under control.

What is realistic?

What's realistic where you are right now in your job, in your organization, where your life is right now in terms of obligations outside of work- family, friends, social... sorry I was trying to prevent Selena from stepping all over my keyboard. Oh, okay.



Let's go back. Sorry.

What is realistic?

If you stay in your current position at your current organization, what are some options for you? With what's going on in your personal life and your obligations and things you want to be doing not just your obligations. What is realistic?

Knowing your boss, knowing your organization, what are things you might be able to ask for that you might actually get?

Is it time to be looking elsewhere?

Sometimes what we perceive to be realistic can either be way off one end or the other. Like this is such a small thing to ask, I'm sure they'll approve it and they don't. Or I would never ask for this thing because there's no way they would let me do that and then they do.

I teach an ESL class and I love to teach idioms because we use them all the time and they're they really capture a lot of situations in a perfect way.

The one I most recently taught my class was- a closed mouth never gets fed. We really dove into that. Particularly when it comes to work. We all make assumptions, and we all decide ahead of time what we think might happen. Sometimes we are right and sometimes we are not.

Is there something you could be asking for that you just can't imagine your boss, your organization would say yes to but lo and behold they might. They might not but they might so think about what's realistic in terms of, you don't want to expect something that's just not possible.

But on the flip side, you don't want to sell yourself short and not ask for things that actually are available to you. Of course so much about time management scheduling is about what can we reduce? What can we delegate? What can we eliminate?

I have read a lot about time management. It's something that comes up for me certainly and for lots of people I work with and everybody's looking for that magic tool. Do I use Slack or do I use Teams? Do I use Asana or do I use Trello? Do I use Acuity or do I use Calendly?

If none of those words mean anything to you, don't worry about it. We're going to share some of these resources that are in place for exactly what we're looking for scheduling. (Excuse me in time management.)

The thing that really helped me change my mind and I pass this along to anyone who comes to me about time management is that there is no scheduling tool on the planet that is going to fix your schedule if you simply have too many things to do.



In a lot of cases as we go back to that question is it realistic, let's ask that question again looking at is what you are trying to accomplish. Is whatever's on your to-do list, is it ever realistic?

If you had the best scheduling tool, the best project management tool, the greatest assistant on the planet, you had every resource available to you, is it even possible to still get it all done?

In a lot of cases the answer is no. There isn't that one magic tool that's going to allow you to complete things that it's not possible to complete in the amount of time that you have.

Before you get into systems it's really important to look at what is your current workload? What is expected of you? And within that what is realistic?

Really examine your meetings, especially because they take up so much of our time. For the average manager between 40 and 60% of their working days are spent in meetings.

Meetings aren't inherently bad and in many cases they're necessary. But there's also a lot of wasted time when it comes to meetings. When you take a look at your schedule, this is the place I suggest people start. Look at your schedule for a typical week, for a typical month, for a typical quarter, for typical year. Generally, you have meetings that meet on a consistent basis whether that's daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, or annually.

Try to get a hold of what that meeting schedule looks like and then really examine each one. Does it need to happen at all? If so, does it need to happen with me present? Does it need to happen at the frequency with which it is happening? Does it need to happen at the duration for which it's happening?

Really taking a good look at your meeting life and deciding which meetings can be eliminated, which meetings can happen less frequently, and which meetings can happen for less amount of time instead of defaulting for that 60 Minute meeting? Which ones can default to 45 or even 30 minutes?

In addition to looking at your meetings, what do your tasks look like? Which ones can be eliminated? Which ones can be delegated to other folks? Which ones should you be spending a little bit less time on?

Such a big part of time management is learning to say no. Or not right now. When we talk about time management and there's this excitement to get to the tools and strategies, this one's often neglected.

It shouldn't be because it's one of the most important. That Eisenhower Matrix of what's urgent and what's important and where are you spending your time?

Are you stopping what you do every time an email comes in regardless of how important it is? Are you catering to last minute requests that you are not obligated to cater to?



What is your ability to say no? What is your ability to say not right now?

Next time if instead of just always saying yes, yes, I will do it and then after all that sure, use systems. Systems help. I still have some really old school systems like my to do list every day. This is it- pen and paper. Maybe someday I will switch to electronic. It works for me until now. There's no reason or incentive for me to switch but lots of people like to have to do lists electronically to share.

With project management and to have all kinds of reminders and notifications. That's where the Asana and Trello and other systems like that come in. I encourage you to try systems. Even ones that you are a little hesitant of or you don't think might work for you. Talk to people in your circle about what systems work for them.

It took me a long time to switch from a paper calendar to an electronic calendar. It got to the point where I really had no choice. I had no space left in my little boxes on my paper calendar. And boy, am I glad I did. It has helped me a lot. I discovered just a couple of years ago using an online scheduling system. I went with Calendly- there's lots of other ones. Acuity is a really popular one.

It is- I say this with no exaggeration- it is the best eight dollars I spend every month in my whole life not even just my work life in my whole life. Because I have so many things to schedule all the time.

In my pre-Calendly life it was the email that what time works for you? Four o'clock. That does not work for me. Okay, how about... and then finally we land on the meeting, and the day before something comes up and we need to reschedule and here we go again.

Bane of my existence.

Finally, I took the plunge and I used Calendly's free month or whatever their free trial was. I was in love. People could schedule with me without me being involved. They could choose what type of meeting. If they chose a Zoom meeting the Zoom link automatically got created and sent to them and put on their calendar. They got automatic reminders, everything that could be customized.

I had this moment which you know, sometimes we are not so logical. I had this moment after the free trial was coming up and as much as I loved it, I thought so I really want to pay for something else and pay for another subscription.

Luckily I thought that for about three seconds and then said are you kidding me? This is worth its weight in gold. So that's been a system that has really helped me.

You might like that kind of system or not. You might get into some type of calendar sharing system with your team. You might use any kind of file sharing apps or desktop applications, Google Drives, OneDrive.



There's lots out there to keep you organized, but systems are only as good as the people who are using them. You need to again be realistic. What can you stay on top of?

One of my early challenges with Calendly is it syncs with your schedule, but if you are not updating your schedule, then it doesn't work. If you're not putting where your availability is then somebody's going to schedule over it. You also have to do your part with these systems. You want to be realistic about what you're able to manage.

Try different ones out. Talk to people in your circle and find out what they use, what works for them. See what works best for you, but remember systems help. They are there to make our lives easier, but they can't solve the problem of simply having too much to do.

The eternal question. What can you let go of physically, and mentally?

Part of the delegating challenge is not the steps that need to be taken to delegate something. That is pretty easy. The delegating challenge is the stuff up here. It's our mental stuff that gets in the way. The control issues, the trust issues, the I can just do it better myself issues. The insecurities, the ego, all of those things often wrapped up into one.

What can you let go of?

What can you let go of physically in terms of you don't need to be the one who does this thing? And what can you let go of mentally?

Maybe something you've believed for a really long time such as: it's my responsibility to take my work home to ensure that it gets done even though I'm being given too much work to get done. How do you let go of something like that?

*I don't want to be seen as a slacker. I don't want to be seen as not being a team player. I want people to know I'm a hard worker. My competence is important to me. I don't want to cause trouble.*

Let's go back to being realistic again. What I always try to share are things that work, have worked, will work are within your rights and sometimes cause backlash.

If you're being paid for a certain amount of hours to do certain number of tasks, but the expectation is you're working more and doing more, you are well within your rights to have conversations with your boss to set boundaries, to say no. That does not mean there won't be backlash. It doesn't mean you won't be labeled as difficult, lazy, not a team player. That is the reality of it.

A lot of organizations, a lot of bosses are very used to people working really hard and doing lots of extra things for the organization.

This concept of quiet quitting, of scaling back and saying I'm going to do what is



expected of me, but not one thing more. A lot of organizations do not like that. A lot of organizations are feeling the repercussions of people doing what is expected and nothing more.

It's expensive to hire more staff or to invest in making these jobs more manageable. There's a lot of things that are already in place that benefit from folks like you who wrote in going above and beyond.

Any decision you make with your professional life should come with an understanding of it might not be received in the way it could or should or you hope.

The question then becomes is this a place I want to continue working?

If you've decided number one, this is what I want my work life to be and you do all these things and then some to try and get everything under control and your organization pushes back, your boss pushes back, then you ask yourself another set of questions. Am I okay with that?

Am I okay with continuing to work at this pace? Or am I okay scaling back my work and letting my boss think I am lazy or not a team player?

I'm okay with that or I need to start looking.

Most of us aren't in a position where we can just up and quit a job without another job lined up. That often takes a lot of time. There's so many considerations particularly when we have other responsibilities.

A lot of people get stuck in jobs because of the health insurance, because of the schedule, because of the commute, because of how it works around when they need to take care of their kids or other folks and their family. There is so much to it.

Sometimes you just cannot leave. You are close to a pension. You are who knows? There are lots of reasons why we can't just say well that's not a good organization for you. You need to quit. I recognize that is not always an option.

If it's not an option to leave ask yourself which works better for what I want? Do I want to continue working at this pace to continue to be seen as however, my organization sees me or is it more important for me to stop going so above and beyond and have my organization see me in a different way?

Time management is something that we all deal with. It's something that some people seem to have a better handle on than others. Sometimes that's because they have the quote unquote right systems in place.

It's often because they have those right systems in place and they've worked through some of this other stuff. They've learned to say no, they've learned to delegate, they've learned to make their product good enough.



They've learned to walk out the door of for the work day and not bring it home.

Certainly different jobs have different amounts of work involved. That's why this is so complicated and that's why so many people struggle with this.

I'm sorry, you're feeling out of control. I'm sorry, you're working so hard and feel like you're not getting anywhere. That's not the way it should be. And it's the way that it is for so many people.

I am sorry for that.

This is part of the collective work we need to keep doing so that this stops being the norm. That when someone's in this position as a boss as an organization as a society we say this is not okay. How can we help? How can we get this off your plate? Who do we need to hire?

It is not that way yet in most places. Like most times of change it does not usually come from the top. It comes from the people like us who are tired. Who are working hard. Who deserve a work life that we want.

I thank you for writing in.

I know it is not easy to admit where we are struggling. I feel the temptation to show up as if we have it all together. The truth is many people are in the same situation.

People are tired. People are burnt out. You deserve a work life that feels good. We all deserve a work life that feels good.

Let's continue to work at it.

Let's continue to support each other.

Thank you for sharing.

We will continue the conversation in the Forum if folks have other things to add. Support, encouragement, lessons learned, tips, strategies, any and all of it. Please share what you have gone through. Let this person know they are not alone. Let this person know that we support them and that we're all here figuring it out and working on it together.

If you have your own trouble that you would like to share feel free to reach out through email. We can set up a time for you to come on live if you'd like, or we can do it like we did today and read your letter on your behalf and talk about some ways to support you.

Thanks for writing. Thanks to all of you. I hope this was valuable.

And I look forward to seeing you next time.