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Lawrence: Lawrence Neal here. Welcome back to highintensitybusiness.com. This is episode 254. Today's guests are Skyler Tanner and Kyle Recchia. Skyler is an exercise physiologist and founder of Smart Strength, a fast growing personal training business based in Austin, Texas in the US. Kyle is COO, chief operating officer, for the Perfect Workout, a slow motion, high intensity strength training company with over 60 locations across the United States. Gentlemen, welcome to the show.

Skyler: Good to be here.

Kyle: Thanks for having us.

Lawrence: That's very awkward there because you don't know which one's going to go first. So really pleased to be able to do this, and obviously grateful for you both taking a bit of time out of your day to have this discussion. All of us are pretty obsessed with productivity, figuring out how we can get more done, the right things done, be more effective and ultimately more successful in life, having more of a balanced life, all of those good things. And obviously, a very popular productivity methodology is GTD or Getting Things Done. Which I won't go into too much detail for people because I feel like if you want to learn more about GTD and the basics of it, and we're going touch on some of that here, but I do encourage you to go and read the book, Getting Things Done by David Allen, or listen to my podcast with Kyle or listen to my podcast with David, actually.

Lawrence: I actually interviewed David, he's the author of GTD. And if you're in the [membership](#), I believe that Skyler is in the midst of creating a short program that will help you look at GTD and implement maybe a minimalist

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version of GTD, it's called ZTD. Yeah, and I've said read the book. This is the podcast. It's basically system for managing your work, managing your life, prioritizing tasks and ultimately getting things done. So I'm not sure if that was the best intro to what it is, but I figured I needed to lay some groundwork before we got into it.

Lawrence: And so let's talk about, I want to start this up by talking about my, I guess, experience with GTD, guys before that you jump in with your viewpoints. I love how your relationship with this. I read the book quite a while ago, probably five years ago now, maybe longer. I implemented most of it at that point and I struggled with it. I found it very overwhelming, I struggled to follow the systems properly, I found that there to be too much friction. I struggled with being effective, and I found myself just doing things that perhaps weren't that important.

Lawrence: And then I spoke to Kyle on the [membership podcast](#) probably a few months ago now. And Kyle convinced me to reimplement. He said, "No, no Lawrence you need to do for an implementation." And so I had a go of reimplementing the whole thing, I read the book again. I even read one of the followup books he did as well, and I'm still having similar problems. The love side of it is I love the idea of getting things out of your head, putting it into your in trays, the two-minute rule where if something takes two minutes or less, you just do it. The idea of having next actions is a really great way of removing friction from doing stuff. And I love the project structure to things.

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Lawrence: But there is some problems as I've alluded to for me, at least. And one of those problems, and maybe I'll ask you to comment on this first, Kyle, is I find that, I have this in tray, and then I start moving all the bigger tasks to my @computer, next to action list. My @computer next to action list is exhaustive, it is so long. And the reality is, is that I do very little on that because I'm very much prioritizing the things that are the big levers that are going to have the biggest impact on my business. And I think this might be where context is really important.

Lawrence: And I know a lot of these points I'm going to make right interweaved or interconnected. For example, if you're an entrepreneur and you're, I don't know, a startup and you're responsible for a lot of responsibilities. And you have to, by virtue of that, almost focused on big-impact activities, I'm sure Skyler, can really attest to that. Whereas if you're a CEO or COO, you're more likely to be delegating a lot of the work to service providers or teams of people. So I wonder if there's that dynamic, which plays a big role in whether GTD is that effective or not?

Lawrence: So a big question for you Kyle. But I'm just curious, how do you cope with the overwhelm in terms of moving your stuff from your in-tray to your to do lists and actually making sure that stuff gets done? Or does it always get done for you?

Kyle: Yeah, that's a good question. Now I really want to see your list, what you have in there.

Lawrence: So long.

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Kyle: Yeah. But in short, without... You made good a lot of good points there. I think that... I don't know where to start here. Let me think. So taking a step back, most people that I talk to in regards to GTD, it does take a long time to get it implemented fully because there's a lot of friction and there's a lot of new habits and it's a big full system. And so for example, I've been working with a few people for over a year now and we still do monthly calls and biweekly calls doing GTD coaching. So I think one big trick is just having a good mentor or a good coach that you can bounce off of.

Kyle: Because there's so many little things that I think, and that's the double edged sword of GTD, is if you don't do the full system really well, things start to fall through the cracks and then you get more friction, and then you don't want to do it any more. So when it comes to the in tray, if you take an item and you just capture it, let's say you put it on your voice recorder, and then you process that into your system. And you said you put a bunch of stuff when at the computer, that's fine to put it there as long as, like you said, it doesn't take two minutes or less.

Kyle: However, the weekly review, and I'm sure you're probably doing this, but that's where I find a lot of people struggle in continuing GTD well, which is to have a really good reflective weekly review. And that's where you'll be going through all those things that you might say, "You know what, I never want to do this. I want to put it on my some-day list. I do want to do it as soon as I can, but maybe not this next week." Or you're going to go ahead and flag it to get it done that next week. And then some things are higher level items that are really important, like you're talking about, but

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there's also things... A lot of times, those things take a long time, like an hour of deep work or two hours of deep work.

Kyle: There might be other stuff that are less important that take 15 or 20 minutes, and if you flag those, I think as long as you get into the habit of managing from your GTD system throughout the day going into the flagged items when you have 15 minutes or 20 minutes. Like for example, this call is one hour long, if we end it 20 minutes early, you could dive in there and you're not going to grab a big deep work computer item for an hour, but you might grab one of those smaller items. So I don't know if that helps, but sneaking in the right context is how much energy and time you have can be helpful.

Lawrence: Yeah, that's a good starting point. This conversation is going to go all over the place, so I'm not too concerned where we start. And I think you're right, it's hilarious, my weekly review has sometimes taken me an entire day to do. And it's supposed to take like two hours or whatever. But that's a result of me being really undisciplined with my systems the rest of the week, but I know that. So it's interesting what you say there, so I should really be using that weekly review to look at that @computer list, let's say for example, and looking at these items and being absolutely Rufus with them and saying, "You know what, actually that's not that important to get done when I'm next on my computer. Maybe it could just sit in some-day maybe. Or maybe you can just go straight in the bin."

Kyle: And we can talk about the weekly review more later, because I have some other thoughts there. but what you just said... Maybe this'll make you feel

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better. I do have stuff in my system that's been there for six months that I really actually do want to get done.

Lawrence: That does make me feel more comfortable.

Kyle: Yeah. And it may be there another three months, but I do intend to get it done when it's appropriate. However, the magic of GTD is that you're not just getting stuff done, you're getting stuff done that's high level and that's moving you towards your goals. And so you might have things in there that would be really nice, so you don't want to put them on the someday/ maybe list, but you just don't seem to get to it. And that might be fine.

Skyler: See, this actual start of the conversation is one of the points that often gets made about GTD, is that it's almost like getting things into your trusted system rather than getting things done. And that a lot of the hangup that people seem to have, if you just know what Lawrence is saying or even go around in the internet, is that they're so focused on that horizontal planning aspect. They are in the weeds about, "Am I doing GTD properly?" That they end up actually almost, there's like a guilt around not doing or having not gotten things done, or, "I'm on backlog from what I wanted to do yesterday." And that seems to create this overwhelm.

Skyler: In fact, it took David Allen's second book, which was... What was that? Making It All Work, to actually start to talk about those horizons of focus, the six horizons of focus, which I think... I mean, they talked a little bit about that at the end of the GTD, which is, what are your longterm vision and how do you work towards that? But I think a lot of that where first of

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all, Lawrence, it's Leo Babauta's system is Zen To Done. That's not mine, but-

Lawrence: I knew that, but I thought I'd attribute it to you.

Skyler: All right. Well, I want to make sure it's attributed to him.

Lawrence: I understand.

Skyler: And so that idea of the version that I've implemented is meant to be... Some of the problems, even on the... I literally have, I pulled it up here just because this is what I address in one of my videos. One of the problems with getting things done, literally, literally I'm looking at the websites. It says, "Where do you start?" And it says start anywhere. This is incredibly problematic. There's an entire book written on the paradox of choice. If you give somebody a system like GTD and ask them, and say, "Well, what you need to do. Go ahead and just start there."

Skyler: That's too much choice. That is way too many options. As I say in the video, GTD is at least as complicated as the lower turnaround of a SuperSlow Leg Press.

Kyle: That's a good point. Well, and I haven't found anybody that would be successful if they just start anywhere, like you said, that's a really good point. In fact, most people, they go through the second part of the book again, which is kind of like a textbook, like, "Pause your systems, start here, set this up, set this up," etc, etc. I get requests to coach people all the time on it because that's what I actually had to admit, was like, "Okay, look, I really need your help here." I mean, I'm still a proponent like, "Oh

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man, it's totally worth doing it all the way, and if you don't, there could be some consequences." But I agree that you definitely want to have some guidance on where to start.

Skyler: Well, and that's your job as the coach, you are the one who's coming in and saying... If you're coaching within the perfect workout, you have some idea of where this particular role is going to be most valuable. Company-wide level, you can delimit some of their choices by saying, "You know, here's where you're going to focus most of your time and over the next three to six weeks, three to six months, we're going to pile these on or we're going to implement it all." And the important variable theory there too is the fact that GTD, and this is not a dog on it, because of course David Allen made a huge robust system. It's not the first productivity system that's ever existed, right?

Skyler: I mean, it's an incredibly popular one, maybe as a function of just time and place with tech companies and decentralized work having ubiquitous in the world. Having a system to manage all of the threads that used to be on your desk right in front of you, in your intrapersonal space, to have a system of filters to adjust for this makes a lot of sense. And but it's not the only system. And I think most people, I think Lawrence, you did a post on this on the [membership](#), most people are taking ideas from other systems and weaving or maybe a re-interpreting of a similar David might call an X, this other system calls it Y.

Skyler: And if you grok it a little bit better that way, so you think about it that way. And they put it into practice, but it's the same a categorical action. Like

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processing your inbox or setting up a, what they call ubiquitous capture, other people is your to-do list. They're different words for the same thing, but ubiquitous makes it seem like, "Oh, I don't need to try to, in real time, exactly figure out where this is. I'm just getting it out of my head.

Lawrence: Yeah, I love that concept.

Skyler: Yeah, that idea of just get it out of your head. I mean, I'm lying there in bed and I'm thinking about something, and I'm picking up my phone and it's going on the notes list and then I'm going back to sleep. Even starting with that, think about how many people just try to hold all this in their head. Just getting it in, it doesn't need to be fancy, just get it out of your head. Start with that. I mean, and that's actually with Zen To Done, literally the first thing. Literally the first habit is collect. Just get this stuff out of your head if nothing else.

Skyler: I feel like I have a pretty good memory, but that is still game changer. Just rather than relying on myself to do the grunt work of remembering all this, just ubiquitous capture as job one is huge.

Kyle: Yeah, I agree. That's actually where I start with coaching with anybody, "Let's set up your capturing devices, make sure that you don't have too many," because I do think that there is such thing. You're like, "I have this notepad, I have this notepad, I have this notepad." I know I've met people that have five notepads right now like, "This one for personal notes, this one I take business notes." So anyways, I'm like, "Just as many as you need and as little as you need at the same time." So for a lot of people,

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it's like a notepad, a voice recorder. And then of course you have the in-baskets that you can't control like your email, your texts, your voicemail.

Kyle: Yeah, just getting them out of your head and getting them into your in-basket, I think is a game changer for most people. And I do believe it is pretty horizontal and I think that some things that we've adopted, or at least I've adopted in the GTD methodology as well are things like, and I've mentioned this in the last podcast, the deep workbook, scheduling out enough time to actually be able to do some deep work things. Also, the A3 critical thinking process that is part of the lean thinking methodology that I think Toyota came up with.

Skyler: Lean manufacturing, I think is what Toyota called it, and then it became agile software development.

Kyle: Yup. Agile. Yep. Super good. And I like agile a lot. I think when it comes to personal productivity... Anyways, I think GTD is still the way to go. But the A3 problem solving document during your weekly review is a great outline for not just looking at those horizons of focus, looking at your debt bed, what are your goals kind of thing, and looking backwards, but actually putting a lot of your projects into the proper perspective and making you think about what are the metrics, "What are the areas in my life that I want to improve on?" So adding things like deep work and lean thinking and problem solving, good decision making.

Kyle: There's a book called Smart Decisions, which is a great book and having a good process for making decisions, I think are things that GTD is missing, like you said, because otherwise you'd just get a whole bunch of

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stuff. Now, if people stop at just getting stuff out of their head, then I find that they get even more overwhelmed. Because eventually they are like, "Kyle, I've been capturing every thought and I'm getting rid of stump, a lot or going to my someday list, but I've got 1,000 things and I don't know what to do with it, and now my subconscious is starting to build up a resistance to doing any of the work. And how do you even sort it? I was much better off just thinking about the three things I could think about."

Kyle: And to me, that's a good sign. I'm like, "Well, you're doing it right because one, you're starting to quantify how much stuff actually goes on in your head at any given point and how much it might slow you down. And two, if you stop there, yes, you'll probably miss some things, but I don't think the answer is just going back to a system that allows you to only juggle two balls at once or three balls at once because there's just a lot more that we're responsible for in life." I think the magic of GTD is, it's a double edged sword, but the magic did GTD is that you can juggle 20 balls at once without dropping any of them, but you have to be really careful because then you might end up just getting a bunch of, I think, like you said Skyler, horizontal work done that's not getting you where you want to be.

Skyler: And it's funny you talk about the day three thinking because, I think what that process does is inadvertently, if you, if you think about like, "Well, where am I going to [inaudible 00:19:34]?" And then work backwards from there, the problem is that it's almost like trying to eat the elephant, whereas the A3 thinking, it almost... It's like Charlie Munger talks about this a lot, the idea of like inversion. Inverted thinking rather than thinking

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about the way he said it, he's like, "The nature of things is that many hard problems are best solved when they are addressed backwards."

Skyler: It's like the fastest way to solve a maze, is actually to start at the end of the maze and just work backwards from it. So if you think about it as a mental model, the A3 thinking does offer a little bit in its process of almost finding the far off sticking point and walking yourself backwards from there. Instead of like, "How can we make this experience better?" The question could be, "How can we make our slow high intensity training better?" Another way to think about it is, how can we eliminate the problems with the slow high intensity training? You end up in the same place, but it asks the question backwards. "How can we get more clients? Well, how can we keep the clients we have?"

Skyler: They are different but you end up having more revenue when people aren't leaving as often. We've talked about that one with Wayne. I mean, he was talking about advertising out, advertising out and he's like, "Yeah, that's great. You need to obviously get people in the front door, but what's the lifetime value of a client once you make sure that they never want to leave?"

Kyle: Yeah, exactly.

Skyler: So that's a great point that keep you from getting too high minded or too in the weeds, A3 seems to be a nice middle ground.

Lawrence: What is this A3? I'm not familiar with this, or least I don't know it by its label.

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Kyle: And I can send you this document. There's a few versions probably out there, but A3 in... Agile project management and lean project management, I believe was originally developed, well, heavily in the software industry, but it was a replacement for the old school, what would they call waterfall method of project management, which is like you're starting at A, you want to be at Z, what are all the steps in between? And you just tackle it step-by-step. Agile has a lot more about, here's the outcome that you want and here are some outputs that you might do to head you in the right direction of that outcome. But in the spirit of being agile, you want to just do the very minimal thing that you can and adjust, etc.

Kyle: So Toyota in that lean thinking, I think, and the story goes is that they needed a critical thinking process that allowed them to... And I'm going to pull up the documents so I can just quickly read off these steps. It allowed them to just have more critical thinking when it comes to a project or a problem, let's say you're building a car and you're like, "All right, we're stuck on this specific aspect of the car. What do we do?" So this A3 document, a lot of people start at step five, there's seven steps.

Kyle: And step five is really, "What are the experiments we can do?" Or in GTD, it's like, "I have this step in my head. There's more than one action step. I want to improve retention, and so what are the projects we can do to improve retention?" The problem is you're making a lot of assumptions there. One that you actually know what the real problem is. Two, that you might know how to fix the problem just off the top of your head, etc, etc. And so this A3 document forces you to go through a few steps before

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that. The first one is really getting the background and figuring out why you're even thinking about this or talking about it. The second one is, what are the current conditions? Like, what are you observing? What are the problems? What does the data say?

Kyle: The third one would be, what are the goals and target conditions? What do you want to be different about this? And then step four, you really get into a root cause analysis. What do you think the problem really is? What do you assume it is? Can you prove that? So it's just making you slow down and put a lot more energy and effort into some good critical thinking on the project before you ever get to, "Okay, what are the experiments? How are we going to implement those? And then how are we going to follow up and measure whether or not they're impactful?" It's not like I do this all the time in GTD with personal projects. Like, if I have a project to build a deck in my backyard, I don't always have to go all the way through the A3, I can just-

Lawrence: That sounds really useful, and I use David Allen's planning method in the book. He has those, is it five steps? Yeah. What is purpose and principles? Vision and outcome, brainstorm, organize, and next actions, which I guess is fine for simpler projects, although I've been using it on complex projects. It sounds like your way might be more appropriate for more complex projects. But you know the one I'm referring to?

Kyle: Yeah, I use in my weekly review, all of that is actually... what you just mentioned from David Allen's book is written out in my weekly review, and I use that. Looking at my life vision and purpose and looking at my values

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and our company values, I look at those things. What are the principles when it comes to making the decisions? I don't know if you guys have read Principles by Ray Dalio. I just read it this year and it's now in my top five books of all time. But I use all of that more often than I use the A3. However, the A3 I do think is one of those gap fillers for GTD that's like, "Hey, if you really need to get analytical about what it is you're doing or what you're thinking about, this is a good way to do it."

Skyler: Yeah. And if I recall correctly, Lawrence, you might be familiar... Are you familiar with the five why's? Like asking why of a question. That also comes out of lean manufacturing in Toyota. The idea of, the example often given is like the vehicle won't start. You go, "Well, why? "The battery dead." You go, "Well, why is the battery dead?" The second why. And then the third why and the fourth why. You can actually get... Typically, Toyota figured out it takes about five why's, like being one of my children. "Why? Why? Why?" To get to the root because of the reason why the thing is happening. So that's a component.

Skyler: And also lean manufacturing, and this is also an element that depends on the size of your business. Lean manufacturing also is incredibly successful because it empowered people, and this is also agile software development, it empowered people closest to the problem to make decisions. The idea being that instead of somebody on the floor needing to ask their manager to stop the line because something isn't working, they could just stop the line. They could just go and have a tool prototyped to see if it works better, and if it worked better then it was implemented full stop.

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Skyler: Agile software development is similar, and this is why you have something like Github where you have multiple teams working in different components of the software because they're closest to it and then it can be brought together in one central location that isn't changed as it's being worked on.

Lawrence: Cool. Skyler, I'd love to hear you talk more about, is it Zen To Done?

Skyler: Zen To Done.

Lawrence: And then I'd love to hear you go through that. I'm not sure how familiar Kyle is with it. I'd love to hear you go through it and then Kyle to kind of critique it if he feels like, "Well, that's fine, but what about X, Y, and Z?" Because I think that would be quite useful. Do you mind?

Skyler: Sure. Absolutely. Absolutely. I've got it pulled up here. Actually, Leo, like I know him, wrote an entire book about this. He says, "It's about the habits and the doing not the system or the tools." That's the important variable here with all of this stuff. There's another way of saying this, which is, it doesn't matter how amazing your theory or system is, sometimes you have to look at the result. And so the focus of the Zen to done, what Leo tried to do, he says is, capture the spirit of the new system. He says, "Simplicity. Focus on doing in the here and the now instead of planning in on the system."

Skyler: So the system is trying to facilitate the doing rather than the planning, and, "Am I doing the system right? Is the system allowing me to do the things I need to do to move my business or myself forward." And one of

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the things I've talked about trying to address these criticisms, which we've talked about a little bit here is that it's a series of habit changes. And so whether it's atomic habits from James Clear or the work of BJ Fogg at Stanford, who I think he might have the first habit change lab and all of the country. And BJ puts it pretty straight forward, changing habits basically happens in one of three ways.

Skyler: You either have an epiphany, which you can't draw up on demand, you change your environment, you move somewhere else, you create some new space, or you take baby steps. And so the challenge of GTD is it's a system of habits. So if changing one habit is hard, how are you going to adapt to all of these habits? And so Zen to Done on just one habit at a time, building up from there. And so there seems to be, which is what you've talked around, obviously the point of getting things done is doing, it's done, it's in the title.

Skyler: But there seems to be, as I noted early, a lot of the focus on the capturing and the processing rather than the doing. And so his solution is then Zen to Done, focuses on more doing. GTD is too unstructured, which we just talked about. And then the idea of trying to offer some structure in that the idea of when you have this giant system, it can feel like it's focusing on too much, it's too big. And if you're a singular person or a small business it, just might be too large a system.

Skyler: Actually, I've been dealing with that right now, trying to find a tool to replace Google Docs for tracking client workouts and sharing between employees, they all try to do too much. They're like, "Yes, we'll have your

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exercises and your charting and your nutrition and you can text with the clients and you can... " I don't want all of that, I just need to improve the tracking of the work-

Lawrence: Business opportunity?

Skyler: Yeah, yeah. Well, it actually, there's strength portal. There's a whole nother discussion on the side about this, but this thing exists, but most people, they want to try to be everything to everybody. And then finally, not focusing enough on your goals. The idea is that GTD is a bottom up runway level system. And then you have to get in late in the book and then in that second book to have the top down six horizons thing, but most people... Have you read the second book, Lawrence? Have you read Making It All Work?

Lawrence: No, don't be mad at me.

Skyler: Exactly. No, no, I'm not getting mad at you, but that's my point. That is actually my point, is that GTD is about the system and not contextualizing the system as far as your goals as much. So GTD tries to shift it back to you and your points and your goals. And so he summarizes that in the habits building from the bottom up of collecting, which we talked about, processing, make quick decisions; the things in your inbox, not putting them off. We've talked about all of that. Setting your most important tasks for the week or the day, focus doing them one at a time without distractions. And then from there, you've already got yourself a nice little trusted system, then you can start to get a little bit more granular with

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your lists at work, at phone, at home, etc, making sure everything's at its place.

Skyler: The seventh habit is review systems and your goals weekly. Eight is, reduce your goals and your tasks or your essentials. Habit nine is, set and keep routines. And then habit 10 would be, find your passion. We already have that. So you can see how that builds on it. What I did was actually shockingly and even simpler version of that, but I'm just, I have three people in our business here. So collecting, that first ubiquitous capture, just getting it all out of my head, getting it in one place, processing, making quick decisions on the things in my inbox, email, physical voicemail, notebook, that's step two.

Skyler: Step three, I use a little bit of the one, three, five idea here, I have my most important task for the day, I have three things I'd like to get done, that could be really helpful. And then I have five things that would be nice to get done if I can get them done. And then I just make sure I get at least the most important tasks for the day done in addition to my training load. And then from there, now I've added number five and number six from what we talked about earlier. So that's the minimalist interpretation, I collect into my Apple Notes app, and I have a note for that, like an actual, you can quarantine notes with an Apple Notes.

Skyler: So I have a Zen to Done tab, it has ubiquitous capture, it has my Boulder for the quarter. It has my most important tasks for the day, it has my monthly rock. And knowing where I want to end up, that lets me prioritize weekly decisions.

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Lawrence: So I'm going to comment before I let you... I know you've been massively triggered call by this...

Skyler: I don't think so.

Lawrence: No, I'm kidding. I just want to comment quickly. I know we talked about this system a long time ago, Skyler and I, I know I asked you questions about that and I'm probably repeating myself, but one of the issues I had was, do you not still have the problem, maybe I missed something here, but when you come to process your captured items, do you not still have the issue where it's like, well, if those things that you've processed don't fall into your MIT or key objectives or whatever, then they just don't get done. And so you end up getting done, making progress on urgent and important and high impact, but you actually in the process of doing that, you end up letting things go that might not be as important, but make....

Lawrence: This is the GTD argument, it's like, maybe they're not right up there at top of the list, but there will come a point where because you have not done that thing, that you're in a crisis situation.

Skyler: Well, that's a great point and actually on my most important tasks, my one, three, five is actually labeled as the thing I must do today, and the things that'd be great to do today, and the things that would be nice to do today. So adding that word of rather than just a number of three things I need to do, it is that I'm already getting things done as in service of the three month goal. So I'm already have that big filter, and then I had the weekly rocker or any of the big rocks for the week. And then so the things that are directly in service of and supporting of getting to that rock, those

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take priority. But you're right, but it also sounds like when you asked me that question, it sounds like, do you have guilt about having things on your list?

Lawrence: Hugely.

Skyler: Oh, I have never, ever, ever had guilt about that, but that's me.

Lawrence: But this is David Allen argues, because obviously, I don't know how good the science is. I know he's obviously picked a lot of science to support the GTD method, but I don't know how much of that is cherry-picked. And he argues that if we don't process this stuff, that it doesn't matter who we are, that it is going to stress us out, is going to cause us some anxiety, but you were just saying there that maybe we differ individually and that you might not be affected by, whereas I know that I've got an Evernote list of 100 items that just never seems to get done and that bothers me. And sometimes I just want to delete the whole thing and start a new.

Skyler: There's a book called Messy that I think you would really enjoy reading that makes the argument that in fact, we miss out on a lot by having too much structure or for example, trying to answer and organize every single email, it's much faster just to throw everything in archive and search it now rather than trying to deal with it. So when I say it doesn't bother me, it's because I've already pre-processed it, if it's the two minute or less thing, otherwise, I can search it if it's out of my head. And very quickly, I've got things on my ubiquitous capture, it's sat there for a little while and I'm going, "Oh, that has resolved. I didn't need to do anything about that."

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Skyler: And sometimes that happens too, that something is on your list, it's not priority, but it gets wrapped up in something else you're doing through no fault of your own because you couldn't have anticipated it or because something was higher value and greater reach than you could have originally thought. So I think that there is a differ there because once it's out of my head and it's on my list, then I have to answer the question, "How much time do I really have to work on this stuff?" We're talking about before the phone call, once you have kids, you become ruthless and actually deciding what is valuable versus what is expedient. Sometimes that needs to be valuable and expedient. But that has worked for me and actually just as the same...

Skyler: You guys may have heard of this guy, Ben Franklin. It turned out he was pretty successful in his life, the thing in his personal memoirs that he was most regretful of was that he could not get organized. It didn't seem to cause him too much problem. And in fact, some of this is because we have a really large visual processing center in our brain, so a lot of the stuff becomes... People remember where things are on their desk, the moment somebody moves it, they ruin the system. And so I'm not suggesting that everybody have a messy desk as much as there are arguments that could be made counter to David Allen from people just as qualified right at the cusp of the research that says, "Some structure is good, just like some choices is good, but too much might be tyrannizing."

Lawrence: Kyle, I would love to hear, you've been very patient and I'd love to hear your view on, I guess what Skyler has been saying and maybe his view on Z to Done and whether you feels that-

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Skyler: Zen.

Lawrence: Sorry. What did I say? Z.

Skyler: Z. You keep saying Z to Done.

Lawrence: Sorry, sorry.

Skyler: And it's important to point out. I am just saying that for me at my size, something the size of GTD, maybe too much, and for a lot of the smaller... If I had 60 locations, the full suite of GTD tools, I would see all of the value of that.

Kyle: Yeah. I think it's good. That's my mind, honestly, because we all have our biases, especially when we have found something that has worked well for us. So I probably evangelize about GTD more than I would need to because the truth is, it's like exercise. I would rather somebody do something than nothing at and maybe it's always N equals one. Maybe this system is literally perfect for myself and maybe it's worked well for Matt. I should say that or note that we don't really use GTD for across the board for the company or with the trainers, we would like to, I wish they would, and I do like a once a month GTD call and coach people that seem to be interested in it.

Kyle: So yeah, I've seen people where it is a lot to get down, especially in the beginning. Let me go back a little bit. It sounds like the method you were talking about, there's a lot of overlap, habits and goals and collecting your stuff.

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Lawrence: He actually, he's inspired by David. His whole point is, he says he love this stuff, but he couldn't... If that's what he talked about. He said, he tried to address these problems in his own work life because he was so inspired by it, but he sounded a lot like Lawrence. He was feeling basically beating himself up over the fact that he couldn't do it to the extent that he felt like he should have to make it work.

Kyle: That's a place where, and I'll make this comment and it's literally half a joke and half probably a little bit of truth from my mind. I think that a lot of people get into GTD and because it's a little complicated and there's not clear directions, I mean, step two in the book does give some directions on like, why don't you shut down your systems for two days and set up your new systems. And I found that really useful, but getting back to habits or atomic habits, I think that making sure that you take the environment that you have now and using that to implement these new habits is important. But on the flip side, I think that if somebody got pretty far into it and they're like, "This is just too much," and I've heard a lot of that too, that they end up being guilt because it's like, "I'm collecting all these things, I'm not getting the stuff done, I'm so focused on the system."

Kyle: In fact, when I first started, my wife was like, "Oh my gosh, dude, it's like you're neurotic. You're just focused on capturing everything and then you get in the right place." Then it would force me to adapt, which it sounds like the other system has done. My belief is that, and this is going to be like a really exaggerated comment, but my belief is that, we don't have an option not to do it, because at the end of the day, David makes a really

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good point that, that stuff is going to be in your subconscious no matter what. The things that come at us in life from not just our business or a wife or kids, but from our friends in Ireland doing podcast to our friends in Austin running a business, so your little comments made by Luke, when I'm at a conference to somebody who says something on a flight.

Kyle: Some of these things may just be nothing, but at the end of the day, they could be groundbreaking. That book, *The Black Swan*, I don't know if you guys have read that.

Skyler: Yeah.

Lawrence: It reminds me... My point is, when we've adapted some of these systems around the GTD process, my goal is to do a few things. One, to make implementing the full system a lot more what Matt calls Homer Simpson, meaning anybody could get it. And then the second step is to challenge the question, what option do we have? Because if you're going to be responsible for responding to people, your friends, for being agile and rethinking your rocks, rethinking your goals and getting more things done, which again, is a double-edged sword, you don't want to just get stuff done, like getting more things done rather than just the most important things, if that makes sense. The blend is getting more things done and more important things done too so.

Lawrence: Anyways, I get concerned with the idea that I think GTD mixes in two other concepts, which is, what context and what resources do you have to get something done. If you've got 15 minutes and you only have your

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phone, then you might knock out a 15 minute phone call that has been on your list for a while, which is super powerful.

Lawrence: But then he might just meditate.

Kyle: Right. When it comes to meditating, I actually, that kind of stuff, I block out time for it because it's important.

Lawrence: What about doing nothing? This is the thing, Kyle, there's something I'm a little bit skeptical of is, I agree with you that there's no harm in capturing stuff, and I think that's pretty low labor, low brain power thing to do, but I also think that for me personally, is tyrannizing to use the words Skyler likes to use in his context, and to be at my computer and be like, "All right, I'm at my computer, I should look at my computer list at least." I have to almost have like very few, well-defined projects I know that I should be blocking out time to work on as opposed to trying to decide between loads of items.

Lawrence: But anyway, that was kind of going off topic, just to say that I think sometimes I just, this is going to sound so lazy and maybe I am inherently quite lazy, but sometimes I just want to do nothing. Of course you feel neurotic because you want to be doing stuff all the time.

Skyler: No, no, you're supposed to block out time to do nothing, definitely. I'm not even sick.

Kyle: I remember in your podcast, David made a good point that if your cortisol levels are lower and your subconscious is lower because you're not trying to do nothing... And I think most people that are honest with themselves,

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when they meditate their minds all over the place and it tends to be because they go, "Oh yeah, Bob yesterday said that he wanted this for me and I need to get eggs from the grocery store." And so I think we like to think that we can just relax and let everything go, but David made a point in your podcast that he feels a lot better than most humans walking outside, dropping everything he has to do for the day and pulling weed if he sees some in his yard because he's not going to be pulling weeds thinking about the 50,000 other things that need to be getting done or that are coming at him or that he might be responsible for.

Kyle: So I do think it's good to block out deep work. I think it's good to block out time to meditate and stuff like that because there it is. If people like more flexibility in everything like meditating and then I'm like, it's totally okay to keep your calendar open, my question would be though, how many, and most people can't quantify this, how many times where you flag something from your computer lists that are high level projects, that are good? There's two concepts here. One, I'd say half the time, the projects that we think are big rocks that are important don't end up being big rocks and important. That's the spirit of agile. It's like we thought this would be a big deal and then all of a sudden, life change and it's not. So there's that.

Kyle: But the second thing is, if those are the only things that you may or may not get to, and you don't get to those because they're going to take two hours for you, Lawrence, so they're going to take this. You might have something on your computer that is, research mitochondria, whatever, pill that you're interested in, you're like-

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Lawrence: Those types of things never happen. That's my issue is if it's like-

Skyler: You got to give it some time, you got to time-bound it. That's out of this book called Indistractable, which is to say that in order to be distracted, you had to have known what you need to be tractioning. But also that idea of time bounding something, say work, instead of saying, "I'm going to do this," and leaving it open-ended, say, "Work for 30 minutes on X." And if you do that, if how long is success is bound to, the completion of the task, then it's easy to let it go. It's like, "I'm going to work on my taxes for an hour." Rather than do taxes.

Lawrence: Yeah, I do that. I use Egg Timer Do you guys use that? Like e.ggTimer?

Skyler: Like the Pomodoro?

Lawrence: No, it's not like that. Pomodoro is obviously like, it's like 25 minute blocks, isn't it? Whereas this is literally a URL, you type it in and you type, it's like e.ggTimer.com, and then after slash, you put the time amount and it'll block out that much time. So you put like one hour, and then all it is, is a huge white screen with a black digital clock in the middle. And it's great because if I'm like, "I'm going to process email for an hour." Or, "I'm going to do deep work on, for instance, right now I've been very focused on a sales page for the [membership](#), trying to make sure that the copy is good and the testimonials are there. And thanks Skyler by the way, and Kyle for your testimonial a long time ago. And trying just to make sure that the copy resonates with people.

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Lawrence: And that has actually, copywriting is incredibly challenging even for someone like... I studied English at uni... and I guess I do feel like I'm quite strong with the written word, but it's something that I've had to almost, I'm reading like two books at a moment in terms of trying to upgrade my copyrights skills. And so anyway, tangent again, but that's been like my project where I've been really focused, and so blocking out that time. So I'll use something like Egg Timer to block out two to three hours and I'll just do that. And I know that if I've done that for the day, that does fill me with a lot of comfort and I know that I've been pretty productive? Go on, sorry, I'm just rumbling.

Kyle: I think that, and this might be what you guys have sparked something that has another thought, but if not, it might be my final thought here on this pod... Because again, I take everything I say with grain and salt in equals one, and if people find something that works well for them, it's good. But my paradigm with GTD is that, it's a massive paradox. It feels like it's a massive system that takes all this time and energy and yet, if once fully implemented to the point that they become regular habits in your subconscious, it's quite the opposite. For example, right now I've got stuff flagged in Omni that I'd like to get done this week, I've got stuff on my calendar, etc, and I could drop everything for the day and truly actually feel at peace.

Kyle: Let's say I could meditate and not have these thoughts running across my mind. And part of it's because there are the little things, I don't know if you guys ever have someone in passing asks you for something, "You

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know what Lawrence, I think you mentioned this in a podcast before, like sending some butter or something like that to a friend."

Lawrence: Yeah. Sending it to [inaudible 00:49:28].

Kyle: That will never actually be, hopefully, that won't ever be a high priority rock or would not be-

Skyler: [crosstalk 00:49:36].

Kyle: Yeah. And I'll say this for lack of a better phrase, but at the end of that, if you want to be a friend that makes your other friends feel good because you're not forgetting things and you're getting it done or that you're not in the middle of meditating going, "Damn, I wish I would've sent that stupid butter." Without the system in my mind, there's so many gaps that it seems like it'd be simpler to let go of some of it, but the way life just is set up, you're going to have higher stress levels. And that's hard to convince people of because again, I'm like, until all of it becomes second nature, I think Matt would say the same thing, it's hard for people to really feel like, "Oh wow, this actually is not a system that takes any of my time up it, but it allows me to... "

Lawrence: What I'm hearing here is it comes down to the habits. Clearly to you and Matt, Kyle, GTD, the habits have become so ingrained and natural to you. Now, I don't know how much you've improved since we last spoke, but you were very honest and open about there were various aspects of GTD that you didn't do so well. But, compared to me probably, it sounds like the habits are far more ingrained. And you said to me that Matt literally

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owes much of the success to the perfect workout to him discovering, getting things done, which is quite a statement. And so I'm starting thinking that habits is the main thing here. It's like, I have not been able to install a lot of the systems as habits yet.

Kyle: Yeah. And I think that where I start with most people, the big habit that most people start out, and I think you said this, Skyler, is capturing every thought. And that to me is the hardest one because it takes a lot of practice capturing every thought, literally, every thought that you don't want to just negotiate out. Like if I have a thought that's like, I want to learn Chinese, and then two seconds later I'm like, "Well, that'd be cool, but I'm never going to do that and I don't really care." Then just whatever, delete it from your brain. But any other thought? Like if you're like, "I want to learn Spanish," and you're like, "No, I really do. I've been thinking about this for four years. I don't know when I'll get to it, but I'm tired of thinking about it." Then capture it.

Kyle: And that to me, like I said, it takes time, you have to have the right systems. But the other pieces of GTD, processing it, reviewing your waiting lists, del for things you've delegated, I'm doing two minutes, the weekly review, you name it. A lot of these other pieces of GTD that are especially involved in engaging with the work, I tell people the first thing that most people would agree on is that they trust their Calendar. I don't know if you've made it anywhere in life, if you can't at least get the stuff on your calendar time.

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Skyler: I too rely on my calendar. I totally break the GTD rules, like my calendar is like, every block of time is something in there.

Lawrence: Yeah. And this might sound paradoxical to what I said earlier too, I hate being micromanaged with my time, I don't want to have timers, I don't want to... because maybe I'm just out of energy, I'm out of creativity and I need to go do something different. So I will block out deep work time on my calendar in meetings and that's it, but here's the cheat that I get, most people with GTD. It's first, do what the book says and maybe take a day off, instead of your systems, you need to set up, if you're using OmniFocus, for example, you need to set up OmniFocus and download your voice recorder and start putting together your weekly review.

Lawrence: But the key that I tell people is, I have people add a checklist calendar for the day, which is just an item on your calendar that's marked for the full day and that has the things that you would need to do for GTD. And that to me is the best way. Atomic habits is pretty clear, is surround yourself in the proper environment, so if the environment that you trust is your calendar, then having something on there that says, "Review your wedding lists, process your email etc, etc, etc." And then on Friday, it has your weekly review, then it would be hard for people to miss most of the aspects of GTD because they're right there.

Skyler: Yeah. I think that's a great one. And the thing I put in my video is I look at it like this, it's a Ken Wilber idea here, essential versus complete, everybody's heard me blather on about this before, but the idea has ended in is like, it's the essential, like what are the essential ingredients

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that are actually are moving you towards your goals as per GTD system versus the complete system. As I say, Zen Buddhism, it's about Satori, it's about enlightenment, it's about getting there. And so meditation is going to get you there quickest, but to Tibetan, Buddhism is like the whole shebang.

Skyler: I don't have a Catholic or a Western Christian equivalent, I mean, I guess you could say like Protestantism versus Catholicism, but then you can go down rabbit holes and we're not talking religion here, but the idea being that if what you want to do, what's the straightest path to get there? I'll use super-psi, do you have a full body workout with a leg press a row and the chest press? Essentially, you do it. Is it a complete workout? Absolutely not. But if you started somebody there and they just got the intensity of effort. We all have some version of an on-ramp type routine where we're trying to teach people the basics and then we're adding on top of that.

Skyler: To me, that's what Zen to Done is, it's just a little bit more prescriptive in, it's not giving people do what you want and saying, "Do this first and then this and then this." And if you actually build up the habits, you basically end up at a slightly tweaked version of GTD. So it's a smoothing from essential to complete as required. And part of the reason, to your point, I said this to Lawrence and other times I say, Matt attributes the success of the perfect workout to GTD, but it's also not GTD, it's the fact that you all are able to do GTD to the fullest extent and it's across the company. I's not the secret gnostic wisdom of GTD because it's everywhere.

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Skyler: It's the fact that you have a system that you've implemented consistently day over day, week over week, month over month, year over year, and it has been so valuable because a lot of people, they're just a drift, they're rudderless.

Kyle: Yeah. And I think that systematizing our company more in the perspective of like the E-Myth book, working on your systems rather than it's the personalized, is something we've done a good job. We definitely haven't systematized GTD like I said, into a cross... Well, it's probably Matt's main frustration, he's like, "I don't know, I've been talking about GTD for 10 year, nobody seems interested." And he's like, "How is it you start talking about it and all the sudden you've got like 10 people that are asking to be coached and stuff like that?" And I'm like, "Well, maybe I'm just louder about the fact that... "

Kyle: And I actually like the tension, I like that, when people are like, "I'm trying this and I'm not figuring it out." I'm like, "Good. That means we have some more work to do here." Rather than, and I'm actually agreeing with you, Skyler, I think that system that you're on, if it takes people step by step, then that would be great. My only concern is, if there are a few pieces that leave gaps and if people get stuck at one habit, the butter will never get sent to Lawrence's friend and meditation will still be full of a lot of that.

Lawrence: Can we stop talking about that, I was hoping you'd forget. Matt, if you're listening to this, I'm so sorry.

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Skyler: I think that I agree with that, but I also think that at that point, if it seems like there's a gap, you have a structure that would support the fixing habit from GTD because it is based on GTD, right? I mean, it is. That seems like an easy enough gap to fill... When you work up to the level of being competency of the system, then you've got a parent system that can fill the gap and it's not a sea change, you're speaking a lot of the same verbiage. You could just, "Oh, Kyle's got this, and here's the fix." And if it fits with everything else I've already gotten pretty good at doing. Boom. And it becomes an atomic habit rather than a giant house.

Lawrence: Yeah. Just a aware of time, I know you both got both needs to be.

Skyler: We're three past.

Lawrence: Yeah, I know, I know. But I really appreciate this and I almost feel like it'd be great to just sit laptop to laptop and actually look at each other's lists and systems, it would actually be quite fun.

Skyler: In that explainer I got, I have a video showing my little style and explaining how I think about this stuff.

Lawrence: Oh, I'm looking forward to that.

Kyle: What I'm going to actually do is, I'm actually going to read Zen to Done and maybe I can speak more to whether or not I think are awesome.

Lawrence: Is that a blog that you have done as well?

Skyler: It is a blog posts, well, he made a book too, but it's all kind of...

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Lawrence: It can be reduced to a blog post, one of those.

Skyler: Which is absolutely also a shebang, he's the minimalist. So it's a blog post, but it's also a book.

Lawrence: Best way, guys, for the listeners to find out more about you, starting with you, Skyler.

Skyler: Yeah. You can find me, Skyler, S-K-Y-L-E-R at [smartstrengthaustin.com](http://smartstrengthaustin.com). You can shoot me an email. Let see where else you can get ahold of me, I'm on Twitter, but I'm not on Twitter. You can find me on Instagram maybe, but really the fastest way, just shoot me an email. I'll process it in two minutes, I promise

Lawrence: Assuming it's a short email. What about yourself, Kyle?

Kyle: Our website is, [theperfectworkout.com](http://theperfectworkout.com).

Skyler: Looks great by the way?

Kyle: Yeah, we finally got that redone.

Skyler: Yeah, it does. It really does.

Kyle: George, our chief parking officer's done a great job there. And then my email's is [kyle.recchia@theperfectworkout.com](mailto:kyle.recchia@theperfectworkout.com) And I'm pretty active on Facebook because my family gets mad that I moved, if I'm not.

Skyler: Kyle, did you all build your tracking app in-house for your workouts?

Kyle: All of our software at this point is custom-built.

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Skyler: Nice. Very cool. Very cool.

Kyle: But we used to use, if you're looking to track workouts, we used to use AppointmentPlus for years and-

Skyler: For tracking, I use [MINDBODY](#), but I'm talking about building the programs and then like keeping them... That's been my...

Kyle: Yeah. There probably is something existing that and I don't know, we built ours. And AppointmentPlus just tracks the appointments.

Skyler: No, I use [MINDBODY](#), it's good.

Kyle: Cool.

Lawrence: All right. All right. And for everyone listening, if you want to find a blog post for this episode, all of the books, resources that we've all mentioned, please go to [highintensitybusiness.com](http://highintensitybusiness.com) and search for episode 254. And until next time, thank you very much for listening.

Access Skyler's HIT Business Productivity Course [inside HIT Business Membership](#)