

Episode 9 Transcript: Stress and Time Management

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>> Join counsellors Gen and Jeremy and their guests Luma and Olivia as they explore stress and time management.

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[Jeremy Jacob:] Hello everyone and welcome to the podcast. Thanks for taking the time out of your busy day to listen in. My name's Jeremy and I'm a counsellor working in the counselling and student wellbeing department of George Brown College. I have the distinct pleasure of cohosting this episode with my esteemed colleague Gen who also happens to be a counsellor at GBC. Welcome Gen.

[Genevieve Beaupre:] Thanks Jeremy. How nice of you, you're an esteemed colleague too.

[Jeremy Jacob:] Thank you.

[Genevieve Beaupre:] My name is Gen Beaupre. I'm one of the counsellors and I'm really excited for y'all [inaudible], and Jeremy. I haven't done this before so I'm really excited to be doing that, and I also am interested in or excited in reaching students in a new way. I mean, they've done before, they've done webinars and done other, other work together. So, it's the new way, and it, it, it can be fun I think.

[Jeremy Jacob:] Yeah, I've, I've been looking forward to this. This is the first time that we've done it together and with our guests as well, so it's an inaugural podcast for the four of us. Gen and I are really excited about this podcast and you're probably wondering what is this podcast even on? Well it's on a topic that is probably important to many of us. Certainly it's important to students at GBC but also employees of the college and people even working out in the world. It's the idea of stress and time management. That's what we're going to be talking about today. Also that's sort of the interconnection between the two, I mean they are cousins, they are related to each other. We know that being a student is very demanding and stressful at times. Sometimes more often than not. It's our hope that you're going to hear some ideas today on what you can do to improve your wellness, stay on top of your work, take care of your needs, all of which will help you to succeed at school, create a better sense of balance within your life. So the way we're going to do this today, like the way we're going to talk about stress and time management is to speak with two people who both understand and appreciate the importance of managing time, managing stress, as well as the challenges that exist in trying to do this, because it isn't easy. It's not this thing that is just like inherently obvious. I think it takes practice and it takes intentionality. So Gen and I are joined today by Luma and Olivia, who are full-time students at the college and they also work part-time as peer coaches in the Peerconnect Community program. So a big thank you and welcome to both you, Olivia, and Luma. Luma, I'm wondering just for the folks at home, would you mind saying hello and maybe just telling folks a little bit about who you are?

[Luma Chaves:] Yeah, of course, no problem. Thank you, Jeremy for the great introduction. So my name is Luma and I am a peer coach with Peerconnect Community as Jeremy mentioned. So I'm currently enrolled in the early childhood leadership degree program at George Brown College, and I am currently in my last semester, so I'll be graduating this month, yeah, today is the 1st, so this month. And yeah I've been with Peerconnect for a little while now and I just really, really enjoy working with the student body and getting to meet a bunch of amazing people.

[Jeremy Jacob:] Cool, thanks Luma. We are honoured to have you join us. And I didn't realize, or maybe you've told me before but I've forgotten, you're in your final semester so this is it for you. Light is at the end of the tunnel. You're almost there.

[Luma Chaves:] Yeah, yeah, definitely, almost there.

[Jeremy Jacob:] Almost there, so that's good, so anyway welcome.

[Luma Chaves:] Thank you.

[Jeremy Jacob:] And your partner in crime, also a Peerconnect Community peer coach, Olivia. Welcome Olivia, please say hi to the folks who might be listening and tell us a little bit about you as well.

[Olivia Francis:] Hello everyone. Thank you Jeremy. My name is Olivia and I am a student in the diploma of social service work program. I am also in my final semester, so right here in the final leg, about to be finished. I am a, I'm also a peer coach and a peer tutor, so I work with both Peerconnect and the TLC. It has been an absolutely wonderful experience being able to support students and also watch persons you know, grow and improve and build their confidence. So for me it has been quite rewarding.

[Jeremy Jacob:] Yeah, that's awesome, yeah. So both of you are almost crossing the finish line, and I think it's particularly relevant because you know, we put this podcast together, the four of us worked on it. We've been working on it for probably it feels like more than a month, like many, many weeks we've been getting together, trying to bend and flex around your respective schedules, and you guys have been doing this final push. So the fact that you can even come onboard with us, agree to do this, fit it into your schedule, you've had to manage your time, probably your stress in order to make this happen, so you really are like putting your money where your mouth is, so this exactly why we want you guys on board today because you have, or we think you definitely have some good ideas and suggestions for the folks that might be listening around the time and stress management stuff. So this is super awesome. Yeah, we're really pumped to have you guys. And I guess it's a good segue, you know having Luma and Olivia with us today helps make this conversation very relevant and focussed on the student perspective. You know, you're both actively trying to juggle responsibilities of being a student, finishing up your programs, working part-time, as well as the other roles and obligations that you have outside of the college, because we're not just students of the college, we're not just employees of the college, we are brothers or sisters or mothers or fathers, partners. I mean we are all wearing many hats and all of these hats take time and attention away from the day. So

we think it's going to be really helpful for folks who are listening to hear about specifically the sorts of things that the two of you do in order to manage that time and stress that we know to be so important. So let's get right into it, let's start it. So one of the things that we hear a lot from students, both Gen and I working in the counselling department, is the difficulty that they have, that students have in managing their time, and that this leads to a lot of stress and feeling overwhelmed. Many students find it hard to balance work, school, play, family responsibilities, as well as the unexpected demands of life that just happen to come up. So Luma, I'm curious to know, what's the one thing that you learnt about time management as a student who juggles both part-time work and full-time school?

[Luma Chaves:] The one thing that I feel that I learnt about time management, it got, you know no matter how good I think I am at managing my time, I think it's really, really important for myself to use some sort of tool to support my time management skills. So you know, prior I was just you know, cramming everything into my mind and just saying ok, I'll remember, I have to do this, this, and this on this day, or today, this is my daily schedule, and I would just go through it and kind of just try to remember these things. But you know, with all the other things that are going on with you know, work, school, and life in general, it was really, really hard to keep all that information in there without forgetting something or being late to something or not you know, allotting the right amount of time to certain tasks. So I think for me the main thing that I learnt would be you know, find that tool or that support that can really help you with managing your time. And again, this is going to be different for everyone depending on, on your schedule and your life and just what you prefer in general. So for me I found that if I had a schedule, you know something tangible that I could see, where I could input the various things I had to do, input my schedule, that was really, really helpful for me. I just think it's a lot to try to just have all these things in our mind and just kind of go off our, our mental schedule per se. So for me, I think that was the main thing is just finding some sort of tool or support. You know, I think as students we take on a lot, a lot of the time, so you know, we don't have to do it all alone. We can have a schedule or we can have alarms on our phone, or we can you know, go seek out support from maybe someone who specializes in time management. So that's what I learnt, is just making sure that I have something that works for me personally that I can go back to and refer to, and in a sense hold myself accountable in that way, where I can you know, have my schedule and check off the things that I've done and then still see the things that I haven't. So for me it was that, and also you know, just making sure I prioritize what's most important throughout my day or throughout my week. So that way you know, I'm getting those most important assignments done first so that you know, I'm not as stressed about them later on in the day or later on in the week. So just making sure to also prioritize those things that I find are most important or most pressing.

[Jeremey Jacob:] Yeah, so I guess the takeaway for me, I really resonate with this idea of having a tool. And this is interesting because you and I are, we are, are from different generations. I'm not going to task you how old you are. I'm from the 70s, so for me it's like a, a schedule book or an agenda. I, I live and die by it. Gen, I'm wondering, do you have any thoughts or ideas about what Luma shared with this?

[Genevieve Beaupre:] I also, it really does resonate with me as well, and I, sometimes I hear as a counsellor from other students saying, you know that they, that's what they always did. They did that in high school and it worked for them. They just remember or the teacher would remind them any, anytime that something was due, and that no longer works when you get to postsecondary because not as many reminders, there's more things going on. Sometimes people move away for the first time. They have so many more responsibilities to deal with. So, relying on our memory is, is, is kind of, it's taking a chance, right? Sometimes it will work and sometimes it won't work. So I like how you're keeping yourself organized and, and using a tool, and I think you're right, there's not just one tool out there, there's many ways. Some people like the traditional write it down type way, and other people prefer to use the technology ways to do it. I also wanted to add one piece if I could as, because I'm not a student anymore. Haven't been for a long time. Not a full-time student. I think of myself as a lifelong learner but I'm not a full-time student, obviously. But it's still, it's something that you might still struggle with even as a full-time employee and a mom as well. It's a lot that I need to remember, so the, the tools are good. But another thing that I try to remember or to keep reminding myself about instead, there is going to be good days and there's going to be bad days. Sometimes I'm just not productive no matter I do, no matter what tool. I just don't have a productive day. But I try to kind of state to myself that's normal, it happens. A curveball gets thrown at us, we may not feel that well that day or whatever. So I try to treat each day as a fresh start. Just because I had a bad day yesterday doesn't mean I'm going to have a bad day today or tomorrow. So just remembering that, that, that's ok to have a bad day and to just kind of dust it off and, and keep going. That's the piece that, because it works for me and I wanted to share that.

[Jeremy Jacob:] Yeah, I think it, that's a helpful reminder. I think it's important to be able to shake it off. There's lots of stuff that happens to us that we don't expect that I was sharing with you guys just before we went onto the recording that my kid had a meltdown this morning and I was trying to get in my Zen space to get ready for the podcast, and I needed to quickly shake it off, and my partner reminded me of that. I couldn't even, I couldn't even bring myself to, to sort of do that on my own. So I think it's important, you know, having a tool that Luma alluded to that spoke about around organization is really helpful, and also that kind of like remembering to just shake off a bad day or shake off a bad moment. Because it really, if you don't shake it off you could get locked into that headspace, and then that's going to colour the rest of your experience maybe for the next few hours or maybe even for the day. I'm sure we've all there been there, it's a very human thing, so really good reminder I think. Shake it off. Use a tool and shake it off. Two really important pieces of info. And Luma, when you were answering your question, you kind of started to touch upon prioritization which I think was, is actually a great segue because I want to move into that conversation right now. You know one of the things that experts say that, that's, in order for us to make the best use of our time and keep our stress levels in check, it's really important to prioritize those things that are most important, the things that we need to get done more immediately, say. So Olivia, I want to ask you about this particular question, like I'm, I'm curious to know, how do you determine what is most important, and then how, what do you do in order to ensure that you stay focussed on, on those things first?

[Olivia Francis:] Well, for me, as a student of course, the most important is going to be my academics. So getting my assignments completed, that's usually at the top of my list. Also as a student working, I also need to monitor my schedule and be able to, and ensure that I'm showing up and I'm doing the best at my job, and I also need to be taking care of myself, right? So prioritized at the top is academics, and this is something that I try my very best to get my assignment done in advance because I don't like doing things the night before. It's not that I won't get it done, it's just that it becomes very overwhelming, and just the added pressure, I just don't like having to deal with that. So I generally try to do that the night before. I like to you know, just be as organized as possible. I think I'm probably more toward a type A personality, so I like to like set timelines and really try to stick through it and get it done, and then once my assignments are taken care of then I generally have more leeway to do other things. And I plan around my schedule so I know what my work requires of me. So I have to get my assignments done in that downtime that I have and I also need to be making time for myself, especially now, you know, with this pandemic that we have been in for over a year, I have definitely learnt that slowing down and really making that me time is extremely, extremely important.

[Jeremy Jacob:] Yeah, absolutely. I'm wondering, like that's a, that is a lot of stuff to just keep track of, right? Like the, the school stuff that you have to do, the relaxation, maybe work or placement obligations. So do you, I mean, just in, in the spirit of what Luma was talking about around using a tool, do you put this all somewhere or do you keep it up, do you keep in your head? Like how do you, how do you keep it organized?

[Olivia Francis:] Most things I make a mental note. So I tend to do that a lot, but that also does not work all the time, especially whenever I'm doing something for the very first time. So I do have a little tool that I will use to help me stay on track, right? But even in terms of like my me time, so on weekends, well especially Sundays, that is the day that I have pretty much no obligations. So on that day, especially doing school online, working online, so much screen time, I usually use that day as a day where I don't do screentime. I have majority of the day just down for myself to just relax or to get stuff in place. So that's how I go about prioritizing how I do and when I do it.

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[Jeremy Jacob:] You know, it's fair to say that our efforts in finding ways to better manage our time and manage our stress is not always perfect. You know, many of us, we tend to make mistakes along the way and in fact one could argue, and we've said this quite a few times already that you know, making mistakes is going to happen but it's often the best way for us to learn. I'm going to ask you both to be a little bit risky now. Luma, what is one mistake that you've made about time or stress management that you would like to avoid in the future?

[Luma Chaves:] Well for me, I can, I know faster off the top of my head, but I would definitely say procrastination, for sure. So you know, I think there were definitely times where I thought oh, you know, it's ok if I watch another 20 minutes of this show and start my assignment after or you know, it's ok if I do this on Tuesday instead of Monday. And you know, again I want to emphasize, it is ok if you need that time for self-care for your mental health or your wellbeing to skip the assignment for that day, or say you know, I'll work on that later. That's totally ok.

But not making that a habit. So I kind of fell into the habit of procrastination, and that's not just with school, that's maybe you know, if I had to go to the bank and do something, I was like oh, I'll do it tomorrow. But what that does for me is it sets everything else back on this, on, on my schedule. So you know, that then contributes to my stress. If I'm procrastinating and I've allowed a couple assignments to build up or a couple tasks to build up, now my stress levels have been heightened you know, maybe times 10. So I think those things go hand in hand. So just really trying to stick to that schedule that you've made or whatever tool you've chosen to use, or just you know, try to again, like we mentioned, prioritize the things that need to be done first so that they're not getting pushed back and falling on top of the other things you now need to do. So definitely procrastination is, was my biggest mistake. I've really gotten a handle on lately, which has been amazing, and I've noticed such a huge difference in my stress levels. You know, I look forward to doing assignments now, knowing that I have 4 days to do it instead of 1. So it makes a huge difference for me personally, and also you know, Gen mentioned this in the beginning is, is realizing that you know, sometimes we have bad days, but my biggest mistake was being hard on myself, being really, really hard on myself, you know if I didn't get something done on time or if I you know, wasn't as productive as I wanted to be that day. Because when I was hard on myself, again contributed to my stress all over again. You know, let's say I didn't do an assignment. There's, I, I, there's nothing I can do about that if I didn't do the assignment that day. So, so being hard on myself about it isn't going to change that fact, it's just going to make me feel, feel worse and you know, impact my mood in a negative way. So that was another big mistake I found is just being really hard on myself, and I've learnt that especially now through this pandemic, we all have to try to be kind to ourselves and be patient with ourselves. We're human and you know, maybe we're not always as productive as we'd like, but again that's ok. As long as we're kind to ourselves and realize that we're doing the best we can, given the circumstances, I think that's really, really important as well to recognize.

[Jeremy Jacob:] Yeah, I think that's really important messaging to be sure. Gen, any thoughts about that?

[Genevieve Beaupre:] I like everything that you said. And I, I certainly hear a lot of procrastination being a challenge. So I'm sure a lot of our listeners can relate to that. But it's also, I, I wanted to share one of my mistakes because I've made a lot of them, and one that I've learnt a lot from, but I'm still working on sometimes is, it's kind of like almost the opposite in human lives that, sometimes I keep pushing through even if I'm not getting anywhere, right? Like I will try to do something and then can feel that deadline coming, and I just want to push through it and keep doing it and get it done, but it's not happening, it's not working. So one thing that I've learnt is that when I start to feel the signs of stress and I'm not going anywhere, to really have the wisdom, and this is the part that I'm working on, having the wisdom to stop and take a break and regroup, maybe take a few deep breaths, maybe going outside. I think I, that's one thing I hear a lot about right now. It's because we were so cooped up inside all the time, that just going outside and getting some fresh air can give you a different perspective. And, and even if it's not for long, it's just, we're not outside as much as we used to be, because we're not commuting back and forth or we're not going places like we used to. That was built into our day before. Now we have to make the effort to do it. So, that is the thing for me, like that I've learnt, and, and that's something I've heard from students as well. Just push, push,

push, but sometimes you've just got to stop and then take a break, regroup, and then get back to it later, right? But I think just to do the opposite, not doing anything and pushing it off is not necessarily helpful, but also pushing through too much is also [inaudible]. Finding that great sweet spot, that balance which can be so challenging. But thank you for, thank you for sharing that.

[Jeremy Jacob:] Yeah, thanks Gen. Thanks Luma. I think both of those, both of those narratives are really, really central. I'm not, I wasn't sure how you were going to answer this question Luma because we haven't, we haven't sort of prepared this. We wanted it to be spontaneous, and I think procrastination was really helpful to bring up. The, the folks that I've been working with, students at the college, that comes up time and time again and it is often a thing that I'm challenged by because folks will ask me, so how do I stop procrastinating? And it's a, it's a hard thing to answer. I think it's really idiosyncratic because what might work for one person doesn't necessarily work with another, and I err on the side of Gen. I often get very stressed out or anxious about completing something, and so that anxiety pushes me, probably similar to Gen, beyond the point where it's actually helpful. So I'm not necessarily good at giving that advice because I'm going to be, I'm going to be reflecting it through my own bias. And procrastination is the opposite of what I tend to do. So I think that was really helpful to sort of bring that up. I appreciate that, and I also appreciate your narrative, Gen, around finding that balance, because I think that that is quite important. Too, too much of one or too much of the other is not going to be helpful. You've got to find that sweet spot. And folks, please, give yourself time to find it. It, you will eventually get there if it's top of mind, but it will take time. It takes time, energy, and patience, to be sure. So thanks to you both for that. Really, really helpful pieces of information. So experts say that being organized is key to managing your time and not getting overwhelmed, but staying organized is hard and it's not everybody's strong suit. So now I'm going to put you in the hot seat, Olivia, if, if I can be so bold. What are some of the challenges that you have with keeping organized and how do you overcome them?

[Olivia Francis:] Well, we kind of touched on this earlier, so I generally make mental notes. Now while this works really well most of the time, it doesn't always work. And then that's when I'll realize that maybe I missed something that was really important and I'm in a spot where I need to either you know, work overtime to make up for that lost time or reschedule then, which is something no one really likes doing, right? So especially when I'm doing something for the very first time, I tend to forget. So what I have started to do, I have this whiteboard, and I will write it down on that whiteboard, and I will put it on the dresser which is in front my bed. So every morning when I wake up it's right there. When I'm going to my bed it's right there. Every time I sit it's just in front my face, so that way I know I'm not going to forget this. I know for some persons like using a, a schedule, that works really well, but I think maybe it's because it's something that I never really practised doing, so I never stay committed. I'll start off and then I just stop using it because I'm like, I already remember it, so I don't need to be checking, until I realize that I forget something. So ok, I need to use something to remind me, and this has been working really well for me, just making a note on that whiteboard, that helps to keep me in check, to cover what needs to be covered.

[Jeremy Jacob:] Nice, yeah I resonate with that as well, because I'm a combination whiteboard and old school agenda guy. That's what really helps me. I, I use the agenda for some things, and I use the whiteboard for others, but the combination of both those tools is, I need it. Actually that's, and I also use a calendar. So I like, I do bills on my calendar, I do meetings on my agenda, and then the whiteboard is sort of for all of the other stuff that doesn't fall into those first two categories. Luma, do you have something that you want to add?

[Luma Chaves:] Yeah, I just wanted to say, Olivia brought up a great point about like not remembering to check the schedule. That is a great point, and I struggled with that in the beginning, so I just want to add too something that I suggest is maybe set an alarm every morning after, let's say maybe 15 minutes after you wake up, to, that just says like check schedule, you know? And I know for some people that's an additional thing to do, so it's totally ok, you know, if you prefer the whiteboard because whiteboard's great, because it's right there and you know you're going to wake up to it. So even that too, just setting little reminders on your phone is something that I, I wanted to mention too, just, just even if it says check schedule or check calendar or check whiteboard, I think that's a good piece.

[Jeremy Jacob:] Yeah, that's also a good point. I think we, we all have these, I have mine close to me, but we all have these phones, right? These supercomputers that we can totally leverage this technology and make, make it work for us so that it's not something that's causing us stress, but helping us to stay organized and, and mitigate the stress as much as possible. Easier said than done, though. So I think it's been really helpful for, for folks to hear both of your perspectives on this, this conversation that we've been having around time and stress management. You both have done a really nice job, you know sharing with us your lived experience with regards to how you try to manage the time, try to manage the stress, stay organized. Gen and I appreciate how honest and genuine that you've been with us, so thanks a lot. Guys, you really did a great job. I think this information will be really helpful for folks to hear. So yes, a little, nice little round of applause for you guys. This is, we're sort of concluding the podcast now. This brings us close to the end of it. Certainly for the folks that have been listening at home, I hope that you have found this information to be rich and useful. I have really appreciated the, the time and effort that the four of us have put into this podcast. This has been a really interesting experience. I think I'd like to do another podcast at some point in the future and just want to say thanks to Gen for being an excellent cohost and certainly a big, big, big thank you to Olivia and Luma for allowing us to occupy your time, picking your brains, and sort of participating in the development of this podcast, because it certainly wouldn't have happened without you and it wouldn't be as rich as it was without your support, candour, honesty, and all the help that you guys have put in.

[Luma Chaves:] Thank you so much Jeremy. That was really kind, thank you, it was our pleasure.

[Olivia Francis:] Thank you very much Jeremy. Definitely been a pleasure.

[Genevieve Beaupre:] And I, this is Gen speaking, I want to say thank you so much to all of you. Thank you Jeremy, you've done such a great job in, in being the main host for today. It's been great cohosting with you. Thank you for making the time, for sure.

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>> So this concludes today's episode. Thank you for joining us. If you have any questions, feedback on our episodes, suggestions for future topics, or wish to book an appointment with our counsellors, please send us an email at letstalk@georgebrown.ca. Come by again and let's talk.

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