

Disrupt Yourself Podcast

EPISODE 286: RICHIE NORTON

Welcome back to the Disrupt Yourself podcast, where we provide strategies and advice on how to climb the S Curve of Learning in your professional and personal life, disrupting who you are now to slingshot into who you want to be. I'm your host, Whitney Johnson. This week we're discussing the only truly finite resource in our lives and work. Time. We always want more, but there's no way to create it. But we can radically rethink how we relate to time. That's the crux of Richie Norton's captivating philosophy. He says the tools of time management are designed to squeeze every drop of productivity out of us. The results, as we've often discussed on this show, are burnout, career dissatisfaction and S Curve stagnation. Richie's new book is called *Anti-Time Management*, where he illustrates a skill called time tipping that can reprioritize daily tasks at the micro level and change the trajectory of your life in the macro. Personal tragedy has compelled Richie to think deeply about the power of now and why the past is not as influential as we might think. He also explains why setting positive constraints like where you physically live and what devices you use for work can have an enormous impact on the quality of your life. He also says We are lucky enough to live in an age of unprecedented opportunity, prosperity and choice that our grandparents could only dream of. And yet we often fail to activate it. I know what you're thinking. This feels a little hokey, a little pie in the sky. But buckle up, because I think this discussion is as practical as it is revolutionary. Richie's book, *Anti-Time Management*, is available now for preorder and debuts everywhere on August 30th. Enjoy.

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Whitney Johnson: All right. So, Richie, share with us a formative story, something that as we connect the dots, we'll say, oh, now I understand why he wrote *Anti-Time Management*.

Richie Norton: When I was 16 years old. I wanted to make some money. I mean, you want to have some money, you want to do your own thing. And I told my dad one summer that I wanted to get a job. And he said, You don't want a job. He's like, almost like you can't get a job. Like, what are you talking about? Like, like worst dad ever. How could you say something like that? Suppose it, like, encouraged me to get a job or whatever. And he's like, No, you don't want a job. I'm like, What do you mean? It's like, you know, you should go to school, you know, study, focus on that. You're only going to be a kid once. Yeah, but I still want some money. And he said, Well, if you want money before I tell you what he told me, I thought my options were to go work, like for minimum wage somewhere or really to pick up trash at the county fair. Normal stuff that a kid would do in a summer. And he said no. He said, Go down to El, I'm from San Diego. He goes, Go to El Centro.

Richie Norton: Which is hours away. And ask the farmers if you can buy the irregular sized watermelons that they couldn't sell to the grocery stores. And I'm like, what? So, I took my my brother, and we took our family van and got all the seats out of it. So, it's just empty. He gave us a little seed money and we drove to El Centro, and we asked them, and they said, Yeah, we filled up the van with watermelons. And we came back, and it was almost around the 4th of July. So, forth of July's coming up, contact all of our friends' parents, you know, in the neighborhood, we set up a little stand at the park. And in one day we sold all the watermelons. And what I learned was this, we made more money in one day than we would have made the entire summer working for minimum wage. And at the time, it was just like, cool. But looking back and reflecting, that was a, a major thing. It changed the way I thought about how you can work, how you make money, and you don't have to trade your time for dollars.

Whitney Johnson: How did your dad know to go to El Centro and get the watermelons? How did he know that to do that?

Richie Norton: I didn't ask him. I did more recently as I was working on the book and and thinking about it. And he's an entrepreneur himself. And I think he had or knew of a client that were farmers, and he knew that this was an opportunity that was out there. Now, which is cool because just because an opportunity is out there doesn't mean people take advantage of it. But because I prompted the thought, he's like, Oh, you should go do that. And what it turned into is, you know, they call it a processional effect, like one thing leads to another. So. So growing up, the mind shifted from. It wasn't that I couldn't get a job because I have, and I wanted to. And I've learned I've done lots of different things, but I learned it wasn't the only option. That's the difference between the generation now. And I'm not talking about Gen Z or Millennials. I'm not talking like that. I'm talking about everyone living right now. The difference with people living now and those that aren't, you know, 20th century, 19th century. Today, technology has changed. Yes, opportunities have changed. But today we know we have options even if you don't take advantage of them. Back back a while ago, they didn't know they had options, or at least the switching costs were too large when the incentives were too great. But today, when they say, how come this kid won't work for money, it's because one, they know they can make money doing something else until they actually want to live meaningfully. So, just the fact that they know they can do something else has completely changed the way organizations are hiring, where talent goes, what people do. It's a different world. It's a shift.

Whitney Johnson: And a really positive shift. I mean, I think there's I think there it can be negative. We had Patrick McGuinness on the podcast a few months ago, the FOMO, FOBO person who coined those terms. And I think you can, you can have too many options. That's the dark side. But I think the light side, the positive side that you just pointed out, is that right now on the planet, most people know they have options and that is very powerful. That leads us to your book that is coming out next week. And so, what's the gist? What's the thesis of this book and why did you write it?

Richie Norton: I'll just let me say it straight and then I'll go back with like why. But time management was never designed to give people freedom. It was never designed to give people their time back. And I don't think people even realize that it was an invention. I don't think people even understand that it was a craft that was created. I don't think they understand that management meant to separate the head from the body, take the knowledge from the workers, and then tell them exactly what to do. I think people even understand that anymore. We've just forgotten. Time management was designed to measure every drop of blood, sweat and tears of workers. It was designed to make them work harder, longer and to know. Basically, the idea was workers shouldn't have to think anymore. They should be told exactly what to do and to do it. Now it's built into an entire science. Quote unquote, science. Back in the day, they call it Taylorism. Today we call it Digital Taylorism because this guy, Frederick Taylor, invented it. But

we don't realize is why are we still using this term in the self-help vernacular to get our time back or to create freedom? When it's a tool that was designed to take away your time. Time management means time control. You can't control time. So, it's not about time control. It's about who controls your time and under time management, they control your time. Under anti-time management, you get to control your time. And it's choice. It's a choice, today. It's a choice.

Whitney Johnson: Do you remember when you had this A-ha, Richie? Was it gradual or was there an epiphany moment?

Richie Norton: It wasn't like that after my my son passed away. My brother-in-law passed away. I'm like. It destroyed us. My wife lost her memory. You know, she had a stroke. We had foster kids that came and went. My kid got hit by a car crossing the street. Like there was just a series of things that made me think, why are we living the way we're living? And I would see people approaching 65. And, you know, as I was doing *The Power of Starting Something Stupid* and researching for that. And people, I'd ask them what made them successful or not. And they'd say, I waited for a time to do what I wanted to do when I thought I'd have more time, more education, more experience, and more money. Only to find out that when I got here, I still need more time, I need more education, I need more experience, and I need more money. And I realize the stick and carrot thing. The carrot can start from the beginning. You could do the carrot cake thing. You don't have to always wait till the end. In fact, when you value your time. And you stop timing your values. You create an entire different decision tree. So, as far as like realizing what's what, after *The Power of Starting Something Stupid*, people started to ask me for help to start their stupid idea. Cool. It wasn't that hard to identify a market and make it make it work.

Richie Norton: People want it. They can afford it. They can buy it. Great. What was interesting, though, is they would say after they were successful, they'd say, but it's not what I wanted. What do you mean? It's not what you want. It's exactly what you said you wanted. No, no, no. I wanted my freedom. I wanted more time. I want to be able to travel with my family. Oh, you know, we could have baked that in from the start. If you bake if you bake a cake without sugar, it's not going to show up with sugar, man. Let's let's let's start. If you if you're working for time and freedom, let's create a business designed to create time flow, not just cash flow. They can go together. And that actually creates different ways of thinking and working. You still get the work done. You're a responsible person probably better than you would using yourself as a bottleneck. You remove it. So, at the end of the day, it's like, where did you learn this where did you see, it was gradual. But when I did that, when I started looking at the history and I was like, Where do we come from? Why are we here? Then it was like, Oh my gosh, this isn't just some word. This was a science to prevent us from thinking and doing and living the dreams and values we have from the start.

Whitney Johnson: So powerful. So, a few things I want to unpack there. Number one is you said and I'm going to read a quote from the book that in capital is what you just said is "time management was designed as a means of wage rate setting not to increase the quality of your life."

Richie Norton: Yeah. And when you just read it, people are like, cool. But when you start thinking about it in your own personal life, it can change everything. It can change everything.

Whitney Johnson: You just mentioned that you had a series of cataclysmic events. Can you give a little bit more detail? Because I think you just set you went past that really fast. And we want to make sure that our listeners don't. We cannot expect that our listeners know the whole backstory. Can you? So, you can give a little bit more. You don't need to go into a lot of detail, but a little bit more about these series of events that happen that got you saying, Oh, yeah, okay, I got to think about this more.

Richie Norton: That's fair. Let me honor those stories a little bit better. Also, when we plan for things, we don't necessarily plan for tragedies, we don't create space to be able to make decisions that are thoughtful from chaos. Our calendars are full. But we have empty lives. Why? So, my brother-in-law, he was living on and off of this for about five years. And one day, out of nowhere, we don't even know why he passed away in his sleep at the age of 21. And when this happened, obviously it's like the worst thing you could ever imagine. And then reflecting on it, it was like he didn't get an opportunity to, like, live long. He didn't get an opportunity to live his dreams. The guy lived an amazing life. Like, I love him with all my heart. He did great things. It was just short. At least shorter than expected.

And that's what's crazy is, is all these things that happen that are so unexpected. Then a few years later, we had our fourth son and we named him Gavin. After my brother-in-law, Gavin. And this little boy brought so much joy into our lives. And he had this little cough and the doctor said he'd be fine. At some point they thought it was RSV. It wasn't. And one night it was pretty bad. And we took him to the hospital, the emergency room.

Richie Norton: And we thought they'd just say, Oh, yeah, just said, you guys are just overprotective parents, you know, like they've been telling us the whole time. And we get to the hospital. They keep us there. And they finally, at some point, even after quite some time in the hospital, they finally check for pertussis, also known as whooping cough. And it turns out that's what he had. And I remember a nurse came in and she said, You guys need to stay the night. Which was an odd thing to say because we always stayed the night. But it was her kind of way of saying that this was the end. And they took out all the little wires and all the tubes out of his body. And I held him for a moment, hand him to my wife, who's sitting on a rocking chair. And I'm like, I'm on my knees. And I have my hand on his little heart. And we sing him lullabies and we just wait for those last beats. And we left that hospital empty handed. When my wife and I talk about it. It wasn't for a while, but at some point, we were thinking about and she's just like, I couldn't leave. I couldn't leave, I couldn't leave, you know, how do you you don't think about it, but how do you leave your child and.

Richie Norton: It was. You have to. And what happened is a different nurse came in and she said. Can I rock him for you? And she she she rocked him. And we were able to, you know, do our thing. And someone asked, what did you learn from that experience of your brother-in-law passing away and your son passing away? And you know, I call it Gavin's Law, which is live to start. Start to live. Because when you live those ideas that are pressing on your mind, you really will start living. And this mantra has changed when I do things. Because we all have ideas. What's interesting is that we think of ourselves as this person who has done all these things in the past, who are avoiding all these things in the present or trying to do something in the present because we're leading towards some kind of future. But to the rest of the world, we just show up as this person right here. They don't they have no idea what's going on back here or what we're hoping for over here. This is how we show up. So, Gavin's law has been a way to show up. With greater compassion, kindness and also urgency, a positive urgency. We brought in these three foster kids. We weren't expecting them.

Richie Norton: We weren't foster parents. The mom without going the detail left them with us and didn't return. It was an interesting situation. I guess CPS had been following her for a while. I don't know. But the CPS came to our house, Child Protective Services, and they said they were going to take the kids away because that's what they do. And where are they going to stay? And they said, you know what? There's three of them. They say there's a seven-year-old girl and two and two twins. So, so, one year old twins. Three kids. And I said, We're going with them. They said, Well, there's nowhere for them to stay. Nobody wants three kids. They're going to stay in our office tonight. I'm like okay. I'm like I immediately said, well, we can take care of them. And my wife's like, we can take care of them, you know, at the same time, like, yeah, but you're not foster parents, but because the mom put them in your care, we can call it kinship placement. So, we were able to take care of them for, for two years. And then they went back to bio-Mom, which is a wonderful thing and also a scary thing for us. And what's weird is Whitney, we don't know where they are, and it is what it is. And it's a different kind of hurt then someone passing away because you know that they're alive, but you don't know if they're okay.

Richie Norton: It's very painful. And I'm telling these things because it it all. It all applies. But. We were going on a road trip in the car. My wife all of a sudden can't speak. Can't say my kid's names. Can't remember things. She had a stroke. And we go to the hospital, and they do a scan. They can't see what's wrong, but they tell us after a few days it's time to go. And we're like, Well, now what? And they said, Well, there's nothing you can do. It might happen again. And I said, Natalie, we're going to go home and you're going to we're going to relax, you know, and we're actually on our way to New York. And she was going to go ahead of us for some conference, and she's like, no, no, I'm not laying down. She was so brave. Like, I'm getting on the airplane and I'm going I'm going to New York. And she ended up doing that. I gave her a little card that said, If I forget my name, then I'll call, call Richie. But then I realized she'd forget to give them the card. So bad, so bad, so bad. What happened then is we ended up on the road for six months.

Richie Norton: We met up with her in New York, and we drove all around the country not knowing where we'd stay at night, not knowing what we'd do. We didn't have, like, money or all the money in the world. We made money on

the road. And I learned, like, the watermelon kind of thing that I could in this world make money from anywhere while doing the thing that was most important and bringing our family together. Then we come back to Hawaii. At some point, my son gets hit by a car crossing the road. He should be dead. But he's out riding these 20, 25-foot waves now. I thought he would live life scared, but it was the opposite. You know, he's it's more like he, he beat the car like he's, he's Superman kind of thing, you know? And all these things are relevant because when people today are trying to manage their time. They don't work for work sake. Very few people on this planet work for the sake of work. They're working for something else. So why not build a life around that, something else, and allow work to support it rather than work endlessly toward it and never live it? And that's that's the power. That's the power of like being a real human and bringing the humanity back to the workplace.

Whitney Johnson: Thank you for telling those stories. It's it provides context and provided the urgency for you to live the life, the way you're living it and to come up with your acronym TIME. Share with us what your acronym is.

Richie Norton: I can't remember what it is. I'm just joking. I know what it is. I know what it is.

Whitney Johnson: Yes, you do.

Richie Norton: Time.

Whitney Johnson: I was nervous there for a second. Not really.

Richie Norton: But what? Richie, what? Why is this guy always do this to me? No, it's time, T-I-M-E. Today Is My Everything. And when I think of that as anyone can think about it, when you think about time, if today really is your everything, what are you going to do? What are you going to do about it? And it's a good way to live. It's a good way to work. It's a good way to make things happen.

Whitney Johnson: Talk to us about what time-tipping is exactly.

Richie Norton: Let me let me use a quick example and then I'll try and define it. So, time-tipping. I had someone post on social media. I didn't have them, they just did it. They were a part of like a mastermind thing or I spoke somewhere, and she posted. A picture or a little video of her and her daughter just going out to the park. So simple. And she said, I'm time-tipping right now. And I was like, What? Because people were using this new language. I was like, What? And what, what, what she meant was and what she was doing was normally she would have put that activity possibly last or not at all because we're busy. We're doing our things. What she found out was by doing the things she was working for first, she was actually able to find a way to get the same thing done or better. You don't have to sacrifice what you love. For what you're working for. And so, in this sense, time-tipping is a way to peek into the future, bring it to the present, and it's actually a way to operationalize what you're doing. I call it the Castle-Moat strategy. So, if you go somewhere I know you were in Europe recently. You know, there's a lot of castles. You'll see a lot of moats around them. They're there to protect the center. But what's happened is most of us, because of time management, specifically, literally. By the way we work, we leave the breadcrumbs of time for our family. We put our work at the center because we're sacrificing for our family, and we put our family on the fringe. But you can reverse that. You can put your purpose at the center, your family at the center, your time at the center, the castle, then create strategic and economic moats around it to protect it. And we can talk about what that looks like, like legitimately. But imagine if everything you're doing increases your ability to do the something you love even more as opposed to taking away from it.

Whitney Johnson: All right. So, tell us a story what that looks like in your life or an example of what that has looked like in someone else's life.

Richie Norton: I met a guy, and he wanted some coaching and he was an executive making \$250,000 a year, more or less. And he says he's sick of his work. He wants more time. I think he's an accountant and he wants to hang out with his kids. And I said, Cool. And he says, What are you going to do? He says, I'm going to start a gym. I go ok cool. And he goes, I'm going to start two gyms for it to be profitable. Like he knows all the numbers. Right. And I go ok cool, and how long will it take? And he goes, Five years. And so, I'm going to fast forward, but I'm like, okay, cool. And what's what's the goal? What do you want to do? Well, I want to spend two months out of the year with

my family in Italy, and he's talking about this time freedom thing. I'm like, Hmm, how old are your kids? Oh, oh, they're 13 and 15. Hold on, Mr. Mr. Accountant, let's, let's let's start running these numbers for a second. You know, I was obviously nicer than this, but it's like. So, you're telling me when your kids are 18 and 20 and out of the house, you're finally going to have time to go on vacation with them? Then it got real.

Richie Norton: So, it's not about the gym. It's change how you how you're paid to change your life. So, I didn't say how much. At some point you have enough money. At other points you don't. But at some point, you do. Your lifestyle is dictated by how you're paid, not how much. So, you can still have the gym. Just do the 24/7 thing where they do a card and they come in and in and out. Do it online. You know, he said he's a micromanager, so he has to be there. I'm like, who's going to open and close the doors at night? He said he would like you chose your lifestyle at that point. So, there's a lot of ways to do things. But if you're trying to live in alignment, do them in a way that allows your dream to happen from the start, not endlessly working toward it in the end, which generally often doesn't even happen.

Whitney Johnson: So, you talk about procrastination, precrastination, perfectionism, and I want to just read a few definitions. And then have you can comment if you want, but then also talk about ghost stepping and phantom living. So, here are some definitions that I think are really powerful. Procrastination is being impulsive on low priority tasks to avoid high priority living. No one is more productive than a procrastinator with an impending deadline. Oh. Next one. Perfectionists choose activities that are low risk that they can do well right now, instead of working on big projects because it will require more time and attention to do it right, saving them for later.

Richie Norton: So, there's a lot of confusion around these three words, these three terms, which is why I had to define them. And I also went into the research about what they are. I'm not just like I'm saying it in my own way, but this is this is legit. Like procrastinators, it seems like they're lazy and they're waiting to do things to the last minute when in reality they're addicted to immediacy. So, they do all these things they can do right now instead of the thing that is in the distant future, because that thing is harder.

Whitney Johnson: Wait, let me just say this again for everybody's listening. Procrastinators are addicted to immediacy.

Richie Norton: Yeah. If I can't get it done now, I'm not doing it.

Whitney Johnson: Continue.

Richie Norton: Which is the opposite of what we think procrastinator is. Right? And then you then you have the precrastinator, which is the one that basically over prepares. They feel so good doing all the things. But they never do the thing. But they feel so good about it because they're ready. They're over-ready. It's done. The bake is, the cake is burning in the oven. Then this one, this is the one that trips people up and they're like, Oh, I'm a perfectionist. And it goes, I get it. And I also get we all want things to be perfect. We also know it can't be perfect. So, what do you do? You still do things that can be perfect, but you do lower priority tasks that you can easily do perfectly instead of doing the thing you actually really want to do. Because that thing requires time. That requires thought. And by the way, it's really hard to get perfect. So, the way to do it is actually through proliferation, not through perfection.

Whitney Johnson: Yeah. So, that's one way that you can really stall out at the launch point of a curve, isn't it? Because you're just perfect, perfect, perfect, perfect. But you don't ever you don't ever move. You're just stuck there.

Richie Norton: Yes. And for high achievers and using the S Curve when you get to the top of the S Curve. It is the distance between where you are and where you've been is further than it was when you first started. So, the consequences, at least in the head, seem greater. So, to become perfect after you've already succeeded is that much, at least mentally, is that much harder? And this is where people get stuck. This is why masters stop mastering things.

Whitney Johnson: Why do you think the distance in your mind expands once you get to the top? I hadn't, I never thought of that before. What do you think is happening there?

Richie Norton: Think about this. If you do something well and you're recognized for it, what's going to happen when you do the next thing, and it doesn't do so well?

Whitney Johnson: So, emotionally, emotionally, the distance expands.

Richie Norton: It's fear, it's pride. It's then it's the negative pride. Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

Whitney Johnson: Okay. All right. So, I when I read that, I just that, that hit that, that hit very close to home. And another thing that really hit close to home, and I never heard anybody talk about this before. And I would love for you to share this, which is this idea of ghost-stepping and phantom living.

Richie Norton: The idea of of ghost-stepping is that you don't know you're doing it until you know you're doing it. So, you'll create a checklist of all the things you're going to do in the day, and you'll do them all like, have you ever done all the things in the day? And then wondered, Wait a second, I did all this stuff. How did I actually get nothing done? So, ghost steps are the steps you're taking, you're actively taking that leads you not necessarily to nowhere, but possibly to nowhere. But they lead you on a path that doesn't lead you towards the actual goal that you're working towards. This creates a phantom life. So, I mean, it's it's prevalent how many people are like, I did all the things how come I didn't get the thing I was working for? Well, you weren't aligned, so. So, I'll make it super real. Someone will say, first time client or even a new business unit, hey, we're doing all this stuff. We're working so hard. We're working so hard. How come there's no revenue? How come we're not making money? How can people aren't buying this thing? The easiest question to ask this person, try it.

Richie Norton: It's the easiest question. When's the last time you ask them to pay you? When? When did you ask them for their debit or credit card? And that's when their face falls and they go like, Oh, I haven't asked anybody, you know, you know. So, look, if you're defining work as getting paid and you're not getting paid, then you haven't worked a day in your life, have you, at least on this project? And, you know, I don't I don't define work that way. I think work is work. But if you want to define it as getting paid, obviously the alignment would be sales activities, obviously. So, then you go, you get taken off the hook, Oh, I didn't make money because I actually didn't do anything that was aligned. My work were they were ghost steps. They were ghost steps. And that leads to a phantom life. But if you realign it and go, if this is the real goal, then I need to do these things. And then then the magic happens.

Whitney Johnson: Let's talk about outsourcing. What is it? Why don't we do it and how do we start doing it?

Richie Norton: So, this one's really interesting because everyone knows what outsourcing is. But the problem is when you when you outsource or even you hire someone or when you delegate to someone. The biggest fear that people have is that they're going to do it wrong. And they're going to have to teach them, manage them. And then, by the way, they're still going to get it wrong.

Whitney Johnson: And you're still paying them.

Richie Norton: And you're still paying them, and then you're going to have to do it yourself. So, this is a problem. This is a problem. But I the idea is to make one decision that eliminates all the other decisions. That's the idea. So, in the book, I don't talk about outsourcing. I talk about expert sourcing because inherently an expert doesn't need training. Inherent, if they are an expert, they've spent years learning, spending their time, spending their money, they've done 100 projects. They can do it better than me. So, if you hire an expert, you don't have to manage them. And it's done well. Of course, if they can come through you, you can approve it. You can be like Spielberg looking at a movie. You don't have to be the editor, but you have editors, and you can still direct and you can still produce. So, there's a lot of ways to get done. The next thing you will say is, Well, I can't afford somebody. I go, first of all, you can't afford to hire someone that you have to train unless you're willing to be a trainer. Because that's expensive, man. But legitimately dollar for dollar. If you don't if you can't, you go. There are ways to do it. But if you if you are willing to spend a little of money. Whitney, there are over a billion people, a billion with a B on Upwork and all these freelancing websites that are out there, you put them all together. You're telling me there's not a human in the world somewhere on the planet that isn't willing to do this at a price that you're willing to do it at? And the cool thing is that you're not taking advantage of anybody because you're just saying, I need this thing done.

Richie Norton: Here's the price I'm willing to pay. Is anyone willing to do this? And either an expert will say yes or no, or they'll negotiate some of the best people I've ever worked with negotiated with me. So, at the end of the day, if you want something done, this is this is the thing we both know Covey people. Covey would say, begin with the end in mind. He did not say begin with means in mind. He did not say begin with means in mind. And we have all, we have all decided it means are ends. So, we've made goals. We've made habits. We've made strengths ends unto themselves. When did we forget that the purpose of a goal has a different purpose than the achievement of the goal? It's what comes after. When do we forget that strengths are things that help us achieve something, not just to get stronger. When do we forget that habits which we choose wrongly all the time? That's why we're moving from bad habits to good habits. But when we forget that the habit is not the goal, the habit is only a means to an end. So, when you start with the end, it changes the entire nature of your decision tree of what goals, what habits, what strengths you're going to use or someone else's to get it done.

Whitney Johnson: This is so fun. All right, so.

Richie Norton: You're getting me on a roll. You are getting me on the roll here.

Whitney Johnson: It's fantastic. So, so I want to I want to talk about the S Curve for a minute. I'm thinking about the S Curve and as a way to think about your growth and then as you move up the mountain, you have your tools in your backpack and you're disrupting yourself in order to make it up the mountain. And so, what I wanted to do is just riff for a minute about these seven accelerants and how I think *Anti-Time Management* fits into the backpack and then just have you respond to what I'm thinking. So, the first accelerant that you put in your backpack when you're disrupting yourself is to play where you haven't played and disrupt your mindset. And certainly, when I think about these ideas, they have disrupted my mindset of how I think about time.

Richie Norton: Well, you said play where you haven't played before. Is that what you said?

Whitney Johnson: Yeah,

Richie Norton: Well, I know we might talk about this more later if we go deeper into this. But I love that, because to me, and I think people should start thinking about it this way. Goals from experience are tasks. Goals, outside experience are growth. So, when you say player, you haven't played, I'm thinking, Yeah, why are you always in the same sandbox, man? Let's go do something different and new. Otherwise, you're not actually setting goals, you're just making another to do list. Goals are outside experience.

Whitney Johnson: Ah, so good. So, goals inside experience are tasks and goals outside experience are expansions.

Richie Norton: Yep.

Whitney Johnson: So good. So, that's number one. Second accelerant is to play to your strengths, which means that you would do what you do well. And then you expert outsource the rest.

Richie Norton: Yes, yes. Yes. What's cool about this one is that the first thing that comes to mind is when you play to your strengths. That's a great thing. The other side of the coin of that, though, is a lot of people don't like their strengths anymore. They're really good at laying bricks, they don't want to do it. They're really good at doing code, they don't want to do it. These are career transitions. They were, these people you're working with, they were so good at what they do. They're the best. They don't want to do it anymore. So yeah, play to your strengths and also to the ones you like and want to do and the ones you don't like and want to do. Even if you're good at delegate, outsource, eliminate where you can and you can still get the work done but maintain your energy.

Whitney Johnson: Right. So, that's when you get to the top of an S Curve and you think, I know I'm really good at this, but I can't keep doing it. So, you delegate the things that you're good at or not good at, or you expert-outsource/delegate, excellent. Embrace constraints. One of our biggest constraints is time. So, today is my everything.

Richie Norton: Okay, yes.

Whitney Johnson: Oh, you're going to disagree with me, I can tell.

Richie Norton: No, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no. This is good. This is good. This is good. I was going to add I'm going to add a I'm going to add one more word to the term.

Whitney Johnson: Oh, please.

Whitney Johnson: Positive constraints. Positive constraints. So, when I so when I told myself I was going to only work for my cell phone, what that meant, it's literal, but it's not actually literal. Sometimes I'll do other things, but 99% of time it really is only from my cell phone. So, when I go, I'm going to do that. It created a positive constraint because the goal was, I have to think differently of how I'm going to get work done. So, I don't have to necessarily be in the office, and I could be traveling with my family. Now, when I say this today, it's like, Oh yeah, anybody can do that. I was doing this before Facebook started, before Facebook when phones when phones folded. So, so it was crazy then. So, to think like how am I going to do this require different level of thinking but allowed me to think that way. It's a weird thing to say, but when you make the decision, you create the positive constraint. It also creates what's called a forcing function, right, in psychology. So, so you're creating an environment where these things can just happen because you don't necessarily have another option if you if you do it with integrity as far as, as far as the the exercise is concerned.

Whitney Johnson: I like that distinction. Positive constraint. All right. Let's keep going. Next one is step back to grow. And what I thought of there is when you were talking about the phantom living and the ghost-stepping is what steps do you need to stop? So, that's something you said in the book, and I really like that is you step back and you reflect and you say, what steps? Yes. It's fantastic that I have a checklist of 20 things that I got done, but what steps do I need to stop? And maybe that list should have only had five things on it.

Richie Norton: Yeah, I like that. And I'm actually picturing myself when you say it. It's a good visual. When you say step back, I picture myself stepping back when I first hear it. I think like looking back at what's happened, but when you step back, you might see what happened. But you're also going to see this this future in front of you, like you. It's that vision. It's on top of a mountain, right? You're seeing you're seeing things from a different perspective. So, in that sense, like in the book, I'm always saying start from what we call Final Cause, right? The success after the success. The goal after the goal. Once you understand that, then everything changes. So, I really love the idea of stepping back because when you do, it's not about did I do ten steps or five steps, although I am a theories of constraint person, I'm a lean person, you know, like I'm into all that, all that kind of stuff. What it really is, is does it need to be done at all? Because we're digging a hole with shovels. It could have been done with a bulldozer, but actually we didn't need the hole at all. At all because we could have, we could've been doing these things when you step back and start from purpose. Everything changes literally. You will save so much time and money with using your steps there just by stepping back and then identifying what do we really, really want? You'll do, you'll do things differently.

Whitney Johnson: Yeah. So, even something as simple as I was thinking this morning as I, I was recording something for a podcast, I was doing an intro outro and sometimes and this isn't quite it, but it is kind of is. I was thinking to myself, Oh, I have these ten steps and I need to do it so it's perfect. And I thought, No, I'm getting I'm going to be on this call with Richie and it needs to just be good enough. And so, those steps were it, I've got my outline, it's going to be good enough. I'll do two takes and I'll be done. You do one take, but ordinarily I would be five, so it got down to two takes. So, it was so this is what needed to be done. And this was good enough and this isn't exactly what you're saying, but somehow this idea of yours was in my brain and it created, it created the condition wherein I did it faster and with less angst or perfectionism about it.

Richie Norton: I love that. And also, just be hearing what you're saying. You trusted yourself.

Whitney Johnson: Yes.

Richie Norton: You stopped taking counsel from all these different voices out there. What if what do they think? How are they going to feel about what's going to go here, which is which are all great things. But you think you've thought about that for a long time. It's already there and you trusted yourself. That's that's important. I love that.

Whitney Johnson: Yeah. You know, it's interesting that you say that Richie, because I think that part of eliminating steps and, and the ghost-stepping is about self-trust.

Richie Norton: Mm hmm.

Whitney Johnson: When you trust yourself, you do ghost-steps when you don't trust yourself. And when you trust yourself, you stop doing them.

Richie Norton: Absolutely.

Whitney Johnson: All right. I've got one more. And that is, be driven by discovery. So, this is accelerant number seven. And this is this idea of you take a step forward, you gather feedback and then you adapt. Anti-time management allows for that to happen. And so let me give you a concrete example and then you can give me other examples. So, a few months ago I'm in San Diego and you were in San Diego. And I think our we weren't we're almost overlapping. And I said, Hey, I'm going to be in town. And you changed your travel plans so that we could have dinner. And I was thinking of this quote that you shared. Sometimes there is nothing more valuable than an empty calendar. And so, I thought I had was if you're so calendared you can't take a step forward, gather feedback and adapt because you're too boxed in. But you had created space so that you could change your travel plans so that we could have a lovely dinner.

Richie Norton: Yes. Yes. And I'm very glad I did. It was it was fun. We learned, you know, we got we got to talk about all kinds of things that are happening in the world. But but you're right. If I had a rigid calendar, even if it's rigid, if you don't include the opportunity for flexibility to live on purpose, then what are you calendaring for? You know, so, but but likewise, you were coming in to San Diego for something else and you were able to even reach out and make time. So, what's cool is I think there's something everyone can relate to when it's something they actually care about, they will actually make it work out.

Whitney Johnson: Mm hmm.

Richie Norton: But when they trick themselves, people go like, Well, what if I want to work? What if? It's fine, I get it. Great work is a great high. You're going to be doing that forever. Like, it's it's awesome. Just recognize what you're working for. Recognize what you're working for, because when you start realizing what you're working for, you'll make different decisions. You'll make room for things.

Whitney Johnson: This is total aside, but everybody who reads Richie's book you're which you're going to love, and you must read because it will change it will change your world. You are so good at coming up with tweetable phrases. How do you do that? Did you practice doing that? I mean, it's like it's like I can tweet that line and that line and that line. I mean, everybody, as you're reading his book, you're just you're just going to be amazed, like over and over and over again. So, is it tell us your secret? Is it a natural talent that you've developed or what's what do we need to know?

Richie Norton: First of all, it's really nice for you to say because it is a conscious choice. You know, I do try and think of how can I write this in a way that is succinct and is memorable, you know, and and shareable. But at the end of the day, it's like it's like poetry, man. I'm just, you know, I mean, I'm having fun. It's the art. But if I'm super honest, like, I was a punk rocker guy growing up. I wrote songs. I wrote music. Like, that's what I do. And so, I bring this whole, like, music, punk rock vibe to what I'm doing, either selfishly or because it's really, it's really fun, or maybe people like it. But at the end of the day, like when I if I write something really long. Whatever. But if I write something short that is like it says, it says exactly what it means in a way that can be shared. People highlight it. And then I see that online they might highlight a medium and I go, Oh, that should be a quote that I should be sharing more. Oh, that should be an article. That should be a video. And then all of a sudden one thing leads to another. So, I do pay attention to what things grab people, and then I do my best to share that because at the end of the day,

you either writing for yourself or you're writing for other people. And I guess I'm doing both, but I want it to impact people in a way. So, I try to write it in a way that's clever and also makes sense.

Whitney Johnson: You make this thought-provoking statement in the book, which is "Our aspirations, our struggles, our pains shape us, and so does how we are paid. Change how you are paid, change your life, get paid for results and value, not time."

Richie Norton: There's so much to unpack. But let me try and say this. Yeah. Change how you're paid. Change your life. As I've looked, I get health, wealth, romance. Those are the things we're all looking for. Got it. But when you look at how someone actually lives their life, it is directly tied to how they are paid. Directly tied. So, someone could change their health, but they still don't have any time. Someone's romantic situation could change, but they still don't have any time. This is through the filter of time. But if someone changes how they spend their time to show up. Because how you spend your time is how you show your love. It impacts your health and your relationships and all of your available possibilities. So, a kid graduates from college. Kid decides to get it. This isn't. This isn't a bad thing. Let's just. Not. This isn't a good or bad, it's not a judgment. Let's just say it is what it is. Kid decides to get a job in a city. He or she decides to get a job in a city they hate. What's their lifestyle? Their lifestyle is in that city doing things probably they don't want to do. Sure, they can find all the good things in it. I got it, I got it, I got it, I got it. But that becomes their, that becomes their life. And they get two weeks out of the year, which they probably won't take to go on vacation.

Richie Norton: Whereas someone says, I really like fishing and I really like Montana, and so, I want to live by a lake in Montana. So, they go to a lake by Montana, and they find a job that pays probably the same that the other kid got. You know what I mean by the city? But it's their life. How you're paid dictates your lifestyle. I met with a venture capitalist; someone you actually know. I mean, you know them all. But I mean, little old me. I know them. So, so? So, I met this venture capitalist, and this famous, very wealthy person comes out of the office, and I'm going in and talk about something else, and I go, Whoa. And the guy realizes what's happening, that I'm seeing this. And he turns to me, and he goes, Yeah. He wanted my time. Money is easy. Time is hard. I'm like, oh, I wish, I wish I wish that was the problem for everybody. Right. But that's the thing is we think, wrongly, that the more money we have, the more time we'll have, you know, millionaires that have no time. It's not a factor of money. It's a factor of is my job tied to a chair or can I do it from my cell phone? That makes a difference in someone's lifestyle. So, yes, change how you're paid. Change your life in dramatic ways.

Whitney Johnson: Yeah. So, here, here, you said this I'm just recapping something you said in the book, which is "Prioritizing time is a way to prioritize what you love. Time is about love. Time is an expression of love." So, why don't you tell us where people can find you? And then I will tell you some of the things that I learned in the process of reading your book.

Richie Norton: First of all, it's so fun talking with you because you you get it, and you ask you ask me the most interesting questions. So, I appreciate that. Go to richienorton.com, and you'll find all the things. The book is available right now on Amazon, *Anti-Time Management*. If you go to richienorton.com/time, I have a bunch of bonuses, including what I'm calling the time-tipping toolbox that will help you take your ideas and move them from just the idea phase to your reality in ways that expand your time. But also take that thing like we were talking about earlier, like that goal on the ledge and rescuing your dream from the ledge of a timeline and bringing it home. This will help you and it's free. So richienorton.com/time.

Whitney Johnson: Let me tell you some of the ways that your work has influenced me. About two months ago, you and I had the conversation that we mentioned in San Diego, and you were asking me about what I wanted to do. And I said, Yeah, I want to do the work that I'm doing for ten more years, then I want to do X and I don't even remember what I said. And you looked at me and said, Why are you not doing it now? And that really affected me and has really gotten me thinking. And so, one of the some of the things that it caused to have happen is this was already in motion, but I doubled down on it. So, for example, I had planned on going and spending a week taking tennis lessons. That's something I wanted to do for a very long time. Oh, next year. Next year. Next year. Next year. Well, I just did it in June. I took tennis lessons for a solid week. Now, and and I've been one of those people that said, Oh, I'll go on vacation. I'll do this thing next year, next year, next year.

Whitney Johnson: So, I made that commitment, and I did that tennis. Then the next thing I did is while our family was on vacation, mind you. This, our family has not taken really much of a vacation for years. I booked a vacation for our family in December of 2023, so a year and a half away already. I booked it and said, this is on the calendar, this is happening, we are doing this. And then even today I found myself this morning I was getting up and I had started my routine for the day, and I went and hit tennis balls this morning and I thought to myself, time is my everything. If today were my last day, would I go play tennis? And the answer is, yeah, I would, I would go hit tennis balls. And then I guess the last thing that I would say to you is that when my daughter and I were having this conversation about like books that have been really influential this year, she said to me, Mom, I think Richie's book has been one of the most influential in terms of you changing your behavior.

Richie Norton: Wow, wow, wow! You're getting me all emotional here. That's amazing. Oh, gosh. Thanks for sharing that. That's really cool. That's really cool. And did you like mess up and get all your work things not done?

Whitney Johnson: No.

Richie Norton: They still got done. That's the thing.

Whitney Johnson: That's the thing, right? They still get done because they need to get done.

Richie Norton: Because they need to get done. And maybe they get done in the same way, just different time, or maybe they get done differently, but it frees you up. Every project can create time, not take time. If you if you if you measure for that. Oh, my gosh. That's so nice of you to share that with me. Oh, my gosh. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. That's beautiful. I love it.

Whitney Johnson: You're welcome. Okay, so, let's do. So, now it's your turn to share what's been useful to you in this conversation. And you can't say that. Well, you can. But what's been useful.

Richie Norton: I think it was that.

Whitney Johnson: Yeah, of course. That's what you're going to say. I should, I should have asked you the question first.

Richie Norton: You know, you know, I think I think your follow up questions, any of them pick one are good because it makes me rethink, like what parts I should share in a way that like look at it from a different angle or go deeper. Because, you know, podcasts are amazing, but we only have so much time. So, I love that you, you're such a good example to me of like as a host, as a podcaster, as a, as a person, because you're always conscious about how this is going to be consumed by others and how they're going to use it. So, I have appreciated how you've led me along in helping me share this in ways that hopefully will be helpful to others.

Whitney Johnson: Okay, good. All right. So, final question, and I'm going to read a quote that, so you started to say this earlier, but I want to go to it. You said, "Rescue your meta-goal from the ledge of your long-distance timeline and bring it home by placing it directly at the center of your life." My question to you is, what is the call to action for everybody listening on the basis of that quote?

Richie Norton: Have you. Have you ever read *A Wrinkle in Time*?

Whitney Johnson: One of my favorite books. My mom read it to me as a kid.

Richie Norton: Do you remember the part where there's, like, a string or something and there's ants? I don't know. Maybe I'm saying something wrong, but the idea was all they had to do was put the string together. And all of a sudden. This side and this side were where one, they didn't have to travel that whole distance to get from one side to the other. And so, I think that for someone listening, when you think you have this long-distance journey to do this thing, I would rethink that. I don't think you do. In fact, the crazy thing is in the future, you probably don't even want this thing that you want today. So, you might as well do it now. If you did and you would have managed your time for it, you probably would have done it already. Think about who you were ten years ago. You were a different

person, different spot, different money, different ideas, different goals, who are going to be ten years from now. Also, a very different person. So, it's really important to do them now. So, I would say identify the job of the goal. The essence of the goal. The purpose. Then make that a priority. Because most people put their priorities last. Ironically. Priority means to proceed and precede. Then create a project around that thing. Because now you can actually do something about it and then find a way to get paid doing it. And all of a sudden it becomes this project stack that I call it. We are able to do all these things where one decision creates an array of all kinds of opportunities while you have more flexibility of time.

Whitney Johnson: Any final thoughts?

Richie Norton: No. That's it.

Whitney Johnson: The string? *A Wrinkle in Time*. Put the string together and tie it up in a bow. Richie Norton, thank you very much.

Richie Norton: Ahh, you're Whitney Johnson, you are the best. Thank you so much. So grateful. That was fun.

This conversation with Richie was a roller coaster of emotions and inspiration in the best way possible. Here are two key takeaways. Number one, take a moment to recognize our unique generational optionality. For 99% of human history, the village you were born in was the place you would die. The farm or factory where your parents worked was probably the place, you'd spend your life toiling as well. But perhaps you've noticed that today we have airplanes, cell phones, the Internet. Richie reminds us to use them to learn, explore and create every day. This sounds obvious, but we really do need reminding that we are not stuck with one job or one location or even one way to use a piece of technology. At any moment, you can change how you relate to the world in ways previous generations could not. Richie has a knowledge job as a speaker and author, but never touches a computer, and he lives in Hawaii. That took a lot of hard work and perseverance, but it's also the result of a conscious choice he made. He decided that he wanted to make his living from a mobile phone, something that wasn't really possible even ten years ago. This freed his family up to live anywhere in the world, even paradise. That was more important to him than climbing a corporate ladder in a big city.

Which brings me to the next takeaway. Number two, value your time and stop timing your values. There's something in our nature, our culture or maybe both, that tells us to plan for the future. One day I'll have enough time, education or money to do the thing I've always dreamed of. Richie's story of personal loss reminds us that tomorrow may not look like we planned. If something is so important to you that you are working for years to attain it, why not rethink the plan and do it today instead? Obviously, there's more to this. You can't buy the dream home or travel around the world before you can afford it. But Richie is talking about the new decision tree that forms when you focus on what matters rather than the road to getting to what matters. He explains this in the parable about a man with two options take an amazing job in a city he hates or move to the lakeside town he loves and find a job when he gets there. There's a part of us that thinks this awesome job will give me the money to travel to the place I want to be, Richie says, live in the place you want to be, and the rest will follow.

For more on visualizing your future self, listen to Ben Hardy, [Episode 46](#) and for more on the elasticity of time, listen to Laura Vanderkam, [Episode 60](#). Thank you again to Richie Norton for being our guest. Thank you to you for

listening. Thank you to our producer and engineer Matt Silverman, audio editor Whitney Jobe, production assistant Stephanie Brummel and production coordinator Nicole Pellegrino.

I'm Whitney Johnson.

And this is Disrupt Yourself.