



## 151: 3 Steps to Restart Your Life-Giving Rhythms

I'm Emily P. Freeman and welcome to The Next Right Thing. You're listening to episode 151.

This is a podcast about making decisions, but also about making a life today's episode is for you. If you're in need of a restart, whether you suffer from chronic hesitation, if you've been experiencing an unfamiliar onset of decision fatigue, or if you're just feeling stuck because of a particular unmade decision, no matter the reason, maybe your rhythms and routines are feeling sideways and upside down, and you can't seem to find your way to step one.

Well, I've been there. In several areas, I am there, but before we begin today, we're celebrating a huge milestone on the podcast. A couple of weeks ago, we crossed 10 million downloads and that's since the day we started the podcast three years ago. In celebration of those 10 million downloads, I would love to do something I've never done before, but I've always wanted to. And that is to ask you a question and to get your answers in your own voice.

I want to know how has The Next Right Thing informed your decision-making process. Have you made a major life decision as a result of doing just the next right thing? Or maybe there was a particular episode that was a real pivot moment for you? We would love to hear it all in your own voice. All you have to do is visit [emilypfreeman.com/share](http://emilypfreeman.com/share) and follow the instructions. Basically, you'll use the voice recorder on your own phone. You'll say your first name and where you're from. And then maybe about a one-minute answer to tell me how The Next Right Thing has informed your decision-making process. For example, "Hi, I'm Emily from North Carolina and The Next Right Thing has changed my life in every absolute way."

You're the best thing ever. And this is my favorite podcast of all time. You know, just something general like that. I'm not the boss of you. So you can say what you want. But the point is I can't wait to hear from you in your own voice as we celebrate 10 million downloads, but first a word from this episode, sponsor Talkspace. When you have a lot on your plate, it's not easy to make yourself a priority, but investing in your mental health has long-term benefits. And with Talkspace, it can actually be affordable. Unlike in-person therapy sessions, Talkspace gives you 24 seven access to your online therapy room, send unlimited messages to your dedicated therapist and they'll respond daily five days a week, best of all, an entire month on Talkspace cost about the same amount as a single in-person session. Talkspace is HIPAA compliant. Meaning everything you send and share is absolutely secure.

And their therapists network has thousands of licensed professionals trained in over 40 specialties, including anxiety, depression, trauma, relationships, food, and substance abuse, and more. Plus Talkspace

online therapy is now covered by some major insurances. We all need someone to talk to. Talkspace wants to give us the support we deserve at a price we can afford. Right now, Next Right Thing listeners can get \$100 off their first month on Talkspace. To match with a therapist whose right for you, go to talkspace.com or download the app, use the code NEXTRIGHTTHING, all one word to get \$100 off your first month. That's talkspace.com or Talkspace in your app store and use code next right thing at checkout. Now onto today's episode, listen in.

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To say there's a lot going on in the world right now feels like the biggest and most ridiculous understatement of our time. So I'm just gonna leave that there and say, if you're feeling all the weight of all the things undone by your lack of ability to plan, suffering with decision fatigue on top of pandemic fatigue on top of just regular human fatigue and chances are, you could use a rhythm restart. Or maybe you're thinking rhythm? What rhythm?! Having a predictable anything is so 2019. I completely relate, but the fact remains that no matter what happens in our elections, our churches, our families, and our relationships, we still have good work to do. We still have people to care for, places to go, dinner to make, homes to clean, proposals to write, losses to grieve, appointments to schedule, small wins to celebrate, emails to write, and decisions to make.

We still have life to live. And if there's one thing I know about you is that you truly want to live your one life well. I want that too. And I've found this next right thing posture to be most helpful when life begins to feel like a Rubik's cube in the hands of a toddler. Having a rhythm to count on is key, but how are we to get there? Or how are we to get back there? Hopefully, by now this three-movement practice is a familiar one for you, but if not, I'll walk through it again to help you restart your soulful rhythms.

Our first step is to clear the space physically and thoughtfully. It is not productive to just begin to try to set a new rhythm in any particular area of life, or even to return to an old one that you know, because what if your old rhythm doesn't serve you anymore?

What if a new rhythm looks right on paper, but doesn't actually apply to your right now life? So we'll go in order and we'll take it slow. Part one of clearing the space is to first pick a space. That means find a time sometime today, maybe it's right now for you to spend just a few minutes to pause. It doesn't have to be fancy and it doesn't have to be long. It could just be the time it takes for if, you have little kids to have them watch one cartoon, or it could be an extra 10 minutes that you sit in your car, outside the post office, pick an actual place in your house, in your apartment and your hospital room, your office, the front seat of your parked car. Maybe you want to take a walk. If so, clearing the space here, in this case, would include taking the time to ready yourself, put on comfortable shoes, leave your earbuds at home, get an appropriate jacket so you're not too cold or leave the sweater at home if it feels too warm.

It might sound silly for me to say these basic things. But in my experience, one reason why we need a restart is that we have actually slowly abandoned ourselves for the sake of survival. And we need some reminders to parent ourselves again. So once you've picked your space, then you are to begin to clear your space. If you're inside your home, your car, your workplace, take care of the visible clutter. Maybe you'll want to set a timer for just a couple of minutes and throw away all the trash that you can see. Maybe you'll want to put things away. Straighten the pillows, stack the mail. This is not the time for a deep clean. Resist it. And it's also not the time for a thorough organization or even a mild organization.

I've even been known to just take every single solitary thing off my desk in a giant pile, carry it into the dining room, put it on the table and walk right back to my desk as if nothing happened. I'll deal with that pile later. For now, when it comes to restarting a life-giving rhythm, I just need to clear my physical space. Once you've picked and cleared your physical space, it's time to do the same thing for your inner space, your inner life, same thing that you just did for your outer life. So take a deep breath man, and a long breath out. Then repeat that two or three times. This right now is your only job. Your concerns, your anxieties. Your worries will always wait for you on the other side of a deeper breath. No need to rush it. Be here now. Now, time for part two of clearing the space and that's the soul or that weighs you down, that means it's time to make a list, set another timer for a certain period of time.

I would probably do five minutes and grab a pen and a paper, but you can do whatever amount of time you'd like. And then, in that period of time, write down bullet point style like a list everything you can think of that's causing you concern, anxiety or stress. Don't overthink it. Just write. And then when your timer goes off, you'll probably have a hefty list. These things will represent what you're carrying on the inside. You might not be able to get it all down, but you'll probably be able to record more than you think. And you might even be surprised at what comes out as you look at your list. If it feels complete, you can move on to the next step. If it doesn't, finish it. Remember, this is a bullet point list, not a narrative. Put down just enough to recognize what the concern is that you're carrying.

And once it seems that the list is complete, put down your pen and say a simple prayer. Ask God, "What do you need me to know?" This is a key step in the process. We're still in step one, actually, but this is part of step one, because the temptation is to see your list and to rush to solutions or action, but life with God isn't linear like that. Life with God is often inefficient. It's slow. It's unpredictable. It's upside down. As you see your concerns before you on the page, no need to pray through each and every single one right now, God can read. He sees them there. Just ask God, what do you need me to know? Because here's something we sometimes forget. God knows everything. God knows what your son is hiding, how to do your taxes and the best way to optimize a sales funnel. God knows what will settle your fussy baby, and how to create that perfect color palette and the deep woundedness your coworker is exhibiting, but will never reveal why. This doesn't mean God will reveal these things to you. But lack of revelation does not indicate God's lack of knowledge. God will let us know what we need to know when we need to know it, because God is the definition of love. Jesus was the smartest man who ever lived. Spirit is comfort, incarnate God, what do I need to know?

Now it's time for step two. After you create the space, both on the outside and on the inside, step two is to name the unnamed things. As you look at your list, are you able to categorize your concerns? Do you see any patterns or repetition? There might even be a few lines that you repeated, but just use different words to explain. Maybe they're just one concern. Now, resist the urge to solve or explain any of it and work instead to name it. See if you're able to categorize the concerns that you're carrying. Are they mostly about your family life? Your work life? Your daily tasks? Personal growth or health? As you look over your list and seek patterns and connections, maybe you'll discover some primary categories. Now you can categorize these anyway that makes sense for you.

But for example, when I created my own similar list, I discovered three main categories. When I wrote down all my concerns in bullet point style, I found a lot of them had to do with my work life, also my home life. And then what I'm calling my personal life in my work life. It was not just one thing. It was

both outward, like my tasks and my projects, my dreams and my relationships, but there was also an inward piece that I started to see patterns between like, not just my task, my projects, my dreams, my relationships, but also how I feel about those tasks and my projects. And then how I feel about myself as it related to those. So it wasn't just the tasks and the things themselves. Although those were very important and were definitely there, but it was also how those outward tasks or projects informed my inner life.

And I put all that in the category of my work life. The same goes for my home life. This could be projects and tasks and things, and people who live in your home and things you have to do that might be concerning you. But then there's also the way you feel in your home and how you move through your day. And the schedule that you're occupying as you walk through your home life and everything that has to do with your family life or your roommate life or whatever that might include. And then there's your personal life. Or at least this is how I named it. And I hesitate to put my spiritual life in here because the truth is that there's a spiritual aspect to all of these categories. So it does give it its own category. I'm kind of averse to that, but I will say that personal life in here might even include my life with God or how I'm expressing worship or connection with other believers or with God. And in our relationship on my own, this could also include health or exercise, different things like that. That might cause you concern that feel off-kilter or off balance. So again, there's no exactly right way to do this, but as you look at your own list, consider if you see patterns or relationships and how they relate both outwardly and inwardly.

As you look at this list, which areas feel most in need of a restart? Your work life, your student life, your home life, your personal life, your relationships, all of the above? And then within those, which aspects of those categories seem like they need a restart? Are you able to give a feeling or a descriptive word to each of these areas? Like maybe you feel scattered or disorganized or worn out in an area or just plain sad. See if you can find a word or either a feeling word or a descriptive word that describes each of these areas, or at least some of the main categories, and then you're ready to move on to the final step.

And that final step is a question that you're all too familiar with by now. And that question is what is your next right thing? If you're feeling in your personal life, maybe you need a practice to ground you. For me, it helps me to write in the morning, just one page in my journal, start at the top and I fill it all the way to the bottom. It's a very small journal. It doesn't take a lot of time and the writing is really terrible, but that's not the point. Somehow for me personally, having a page and a pen that I physically write in makes a difference for me, and it helps me to feel grounded. That's the practice that I needed. Another thing when I'm feeling scattered is it helps me to set an external timer, not just in my head and say, I'm going to sit down and read for 15 minutes. No, no. I set a timer for 15 minutes and that timer is my boss. And then in that amount of time, I'm set free to pick up a book that I want to read and read it for 15 minutes until my timer goes off. Those are two simple practices that I engage in to life-giving rhythms that I've chosen for myself. When I look at these categories where I feel scattered, and I want to feel gathered or grounded again, if you're feeling cooped up, maybe in your home life or in your relationships, maybe you need to pick a practice that enables you to have some sort of release. Like for example, something physical, maybe walking around the block. Again, my block takes me a little under 15 minutes to walk around. By the way, you'll find that I am a big fan of 15 minute practices because they feel approachable and friendly. So for me, walking around the block, when I feel a little bit, blah, or cooped up, that can make a big difference. For you, it might just be cracking a window. It might be walking around your house. It might be walking up and down the stairs. Maybe it doesn't have to do with walking at all. It could be like my friend Kendra does. Sometimes she just does one downward facing dog. And that's the one physical thing that she does that day. And there's nothing wrong with that. Maybe you're feeling tired in your body and

you want to do something to wake yourself up, like create a playful playlist or pick some other practice that gets you moving around similar to the last one. But again, this is not for the sake of exercise. It's just for the sake of waking things up. If your work or your dreams right now are bringing a sense of sadness or longing. Maybe you need to name what it is that's causing that sadness.

Consider what it is that you're missing. What is it that you need? And what do you need to grieve? If you're feeling invisible or lonely in your social life, maybe you could pick a practice of reaching out to just one person a week. Obviously, there's no promises of the response that you'll get, but there's something good about engaging in the practice that could help restart a life-giving rhythm.

I could go on, but I think you get the idea. If you feel stuck, the goal is never to give you a list and send you on your way. The goal is to help you create space for your, to bring you closer to the heart of God, to remember your belovedness, to ask God what you need to know that you don't currently know to give the unnamed things a name, and then an only then to take action based on where you are today, not where you were last week or before that big loss or before this pandemic started, or even based on where you think you ought to be first, create the space, then named the unnamed things and finally ask yourself, what is my next right thing?

Dr. Larry Crabb says, "We have a God who meets us where we are not where we pretend to be."

So really, this three-movement practice to restart life-giving rhythms is simply to help you answer the question, where are you today? What do you need to know as you do your next right thing in love?

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Thanks for listening to episode 151 of The Next Right Thing. I hope this simple practice of clearing the space, naming all that is unnamed within you and doing your next right thing can be just one more rung on the trellis upon which your rhythm of life can continue to grow. Because while it's true, this is a podcast about making decisions. The bigger truth is that our daily decisions are actually making your lives.

As always, you can find a transcript of this and every episode at [theNextRightThingpodcast.com](http://theNextRightThingpodcast.com). And you can find me at [emilypfreeman.com](http://emilypfreeman.com) and at [@emilypfreeman](https://www.instagram.com/emilypfreeman) on Instagram. Don't forget. I would love to hear from you in your own beautiful voice. Tell me how The Next Right Thing has informed your own decision-making practices, record your words, then submit them by visiting [emilypfreeman.com/share](http://emilypfreeman.com/share). I can't wait to hear from you.

In closing a quote from Thomas Kelly in *A Testament of Devotion*, "We need not get frantic. He is at the helm. And when our little day is done, we lie down quietly in peace for all is well."

Thanks for listening. And I'll see you next time.