

CHRIS DEALS WITH IT

episode notes




EP 67 - Embracing The River

Status	Published ✨
Publication Date	@October 31, 2024


 www.ChrisKreuter.com/CDWI

© 2024 by Kreuter Studios - All rights reserved

 *AI Statement: All elements of this episode are products of the author, Chris Kreuter, made without any use of AI tools.*

Signup for the Kreuter Studios Bulletin

Thanks for your interest in signing up for the Kreuter Studios Bulletin. It's a monthly newsletter featuring the latest updates on my writing, the Chris'Il Deal With It podcast, and

 <https://mailchi.mp/810367311f3d/ksbulletin>



I'm thankful for the semi-hiatus I took over the past few months: Not forcing creative work, taking time to think and reflect, even taking a month off from this newsletter and podcasting. I'm happily back into a creative groove, working on a book project, and producing new CDWI episodes , and I even dipped my toes back into game design for a bit.

There were many reasons why the break was needed. Reasons that led to feeling daunted, overwhelmed, and frustrated. Forcing me to step back and evaluate where I am, who I am, and where I'm headed.

It was time well spent and done with purpose. I've been growing disillusioned about my task list and how I organize things. This time it's less about my anxiety convincing me if I do things differently everything will work out better. Lately, I'm realizing I'm disillusioned by the endless amount of stuff that needs to get done.

I keep desiring my to-do list to become manageable. Something I can see on a single screen, wrap my head and hands fully around. I want to set out a plan for the day, accomplish it, and not turn around and see a new heaping pile of tasks in my inbox that need to be sorted and completed.

Regardless of the tasks that do come to us: We need time to slow down, enjoy life. Rest, recuperate, and smell the proverbial roses. There's a finitude to our lives. Recent events have reminded me of this reality. **There is only so much we can get done.** And there will always be many more tasks left undone. I reckon this has been the case throughout history. Our tasks have evolved far beyond *survive another day*, but it's always been in our nature to get things done.

When I implement new methods to managing my life's tasks, it can feel great. A fresh start to a new era of ticking things off with clearer purpose and greater efficiency. But what feels good for a few days quickly returns to that daunting feeling: When could I possibly get all this stuff done?

Envision a day where your to-do list is just... Complete. Every single thing you've ever been assigned, or set out to do, is checked off. I bet it would feel amazing, liberating, an achievement worth marveling at. But ... How long would that moment of triumph last? A day, an hour? How soon does the next request/demand/email/task come in demanding action. It's truly endless.

And that's okay. Do we really want life to stop asking for our contributions? I like getting stuff done. Sure some tasks suck: They're tedious, or come about because of mistakes we've made. I recognize I'm fortunate to have a lot of agency over how I spend my time. I don't ever take that for granted, because that agency is not guaranteed. Given the state of the world, I ever feel guilty sometimes over having any agency at all. It makes me want to do more and greater things because I do have it.

I recently listened to [an interview with Oliver Burkeman](#), which offered up an amazing metaphor: The River. Rivers are consistently flowing, somewhat unpredictable things. No matter how much you work on the tasks within it, the river keeps flowing. It's nearly impossible to stop. The river changes throughout

the course of our lives: It's level can rise or fall, its path shifts, it can be calm or full of raging rapids. Sometimes the river floods and throws our lives into disarray.

Regardless, we need to venture out into the water and do the best we can.

Rather than viewing my task list as an object to be whittled down with some percentage of completion, I can view it as an endless, ever-shifting river. It will always be there, presenting tasks needing my effort. Starting each day at even par rather than feeling like I'm already behind. There's no use stressing about the endless flow of life. That's its nature, and I should feel fortunate for my opportunity to partake in it. I can view each day, each moment, as an opportunity to draw a few tasks from the river, complete them to the best of my ability, and if time and fortune allow: Repeat.

To some degree, we can construct an environment around this river. Build embankments, bridges, even dams. A scaffolding around this endless stream of tasks. But these efforts can become ways of trying to transfer our individual finitude onto the river. If only we contain the river, get it to flow in this very specific way . . . Perhaps then we can pause the flow long enough for us to take care of everything we need to take care of. That's not sustainable. There's a danger in looking to efficiency and automation as saviors from this endless river.

We can also train ourselves: Improving our endurance and becoming stronger, more efficient swimmers. Or building vessels to help us spend more time on the river without exhausting ourselves. There are countless methods for managing our lives and interacting with this river.

I'm embracing this mental shift towards seeing the river for what it is: It's just life. It's going to keep coming at me, keep asking for my efforts, until the end of my days. And even then, the river will keep flowing long after I'm gone. It is truly unlimited in scope. So why stress over this fact?

Our task lists are important things. As are the methods and organizational strategies to deal with them. But what's changing is my mental state towards its endless nature. It's up to each of us to identify what's important, do those tasks to the best of our ability, and maintaining a mental and physical balance that works for us, our families, and our communities.

Episode 67 Quote:

From Chapter 4 of Oliver Burkeman's incredible new book Meditations For Mortals

Actions don't have to be things we grind out, day after day, in order to inch ever closer to some elusive state of finally getting to qualify as adequate humans. Instead, they can just be enjoyable expressions of the fact that that's what we already are.