



PROJECT MANAGEMENT
CENTER FOR EXCELLENCE

A.J. CLARK SCHOOL OF ENGINEERING
Civil & Environmental Engineering Department

UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND
2026 PROJECT MANAGEMENT SYMPOSIUM

Sustainable Leadership: Managing Yourself Before Managing the Project

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Objectives



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- Understand what Sustainable Leadership looks like and why it's a necessity in our changing world
- Explore the “Menu Method” and how it supports a Sustainable Leadership practice
- Share resources for calculating personal and team capacity from a holistic lens

What is Sustainable Leadership?



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Leadership:

the ability to guide, influence, and inspire others
towards achieving a common goal



Sustainability:

The ability to support or maintain a process
continuously over time

Traditional Leadership vs. Sustainable Leadership



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Rewards relentless output and
“stamina-as-virtue”



Models self-care and balances
wellbeing with organizational results

Traditional Leadership vs. Sustainable Leadership



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Rewards relentless output and
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Models self-care and balances
wellbeing with organizational results

Focuses on fixing people rather than
systems



Understands how decisions impact the
personal lives of workers, the
community, and the organization’s long
term health

Traditional Leadership vs. Sustainable Leadership



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Models self-care and balances
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Focuses on fixing people rather than
systems



Understands how decisions impact the
personal lives of workers, the
community, and the organization’s long
term health

Prioritizes speed over substance and
bottom lines over personal and team
capacity



Ensures teams are operating at a
realistic capacity. Recognizes that a
sustainable pace leads to better
productivity

What is Sustainable Leadership?



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- **Sustainable Leadership is:**
 - An antidote to chronic stress and burnout
 - A two-way feedback loop / ecosystem
 - A practice



Why does it matter?



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- How we manage ourselves is how we manage our teams
 - The co-regulation effect (Wright, n.d.)

The Co-regulation Effect



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Regulated Leaders → Island of Safety



Dysregulated Leaders → Psychological Danger



Why does it matter?



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- How we manage ourselves is how we manage our teams
 - The co-regulation effect (Wright, n.d.)
- “How we spend our days is how we spend our lives”

Why does it matter?



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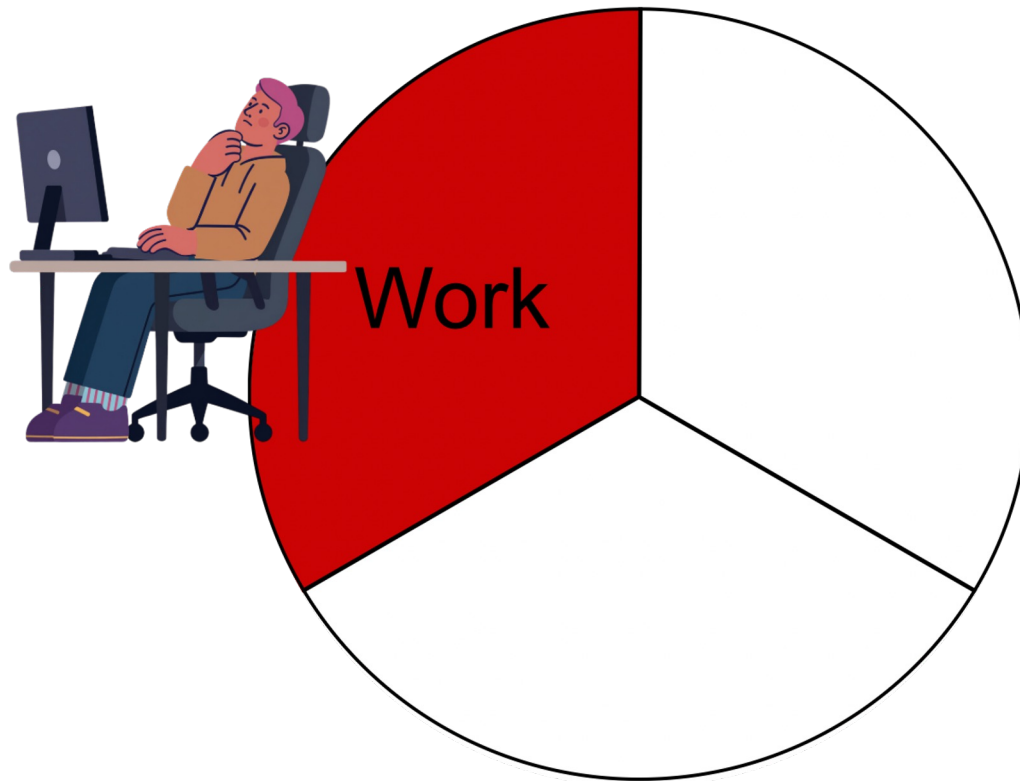
- How we manage ourselves is how we manage our teams
 - The co-regulation effect (Wright, n.d.)
- “How we spend our days is how we spend our lives”
- The average adult spends _____ hours at work.

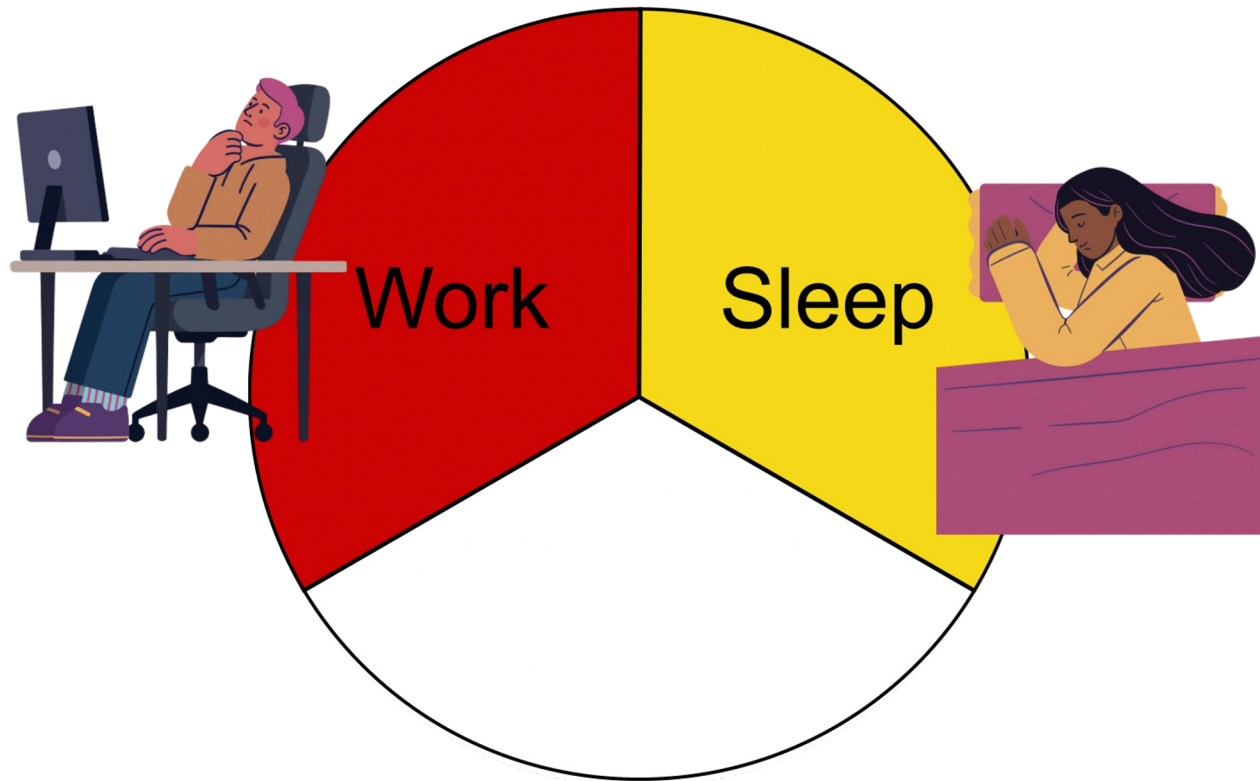
Why does it matter?

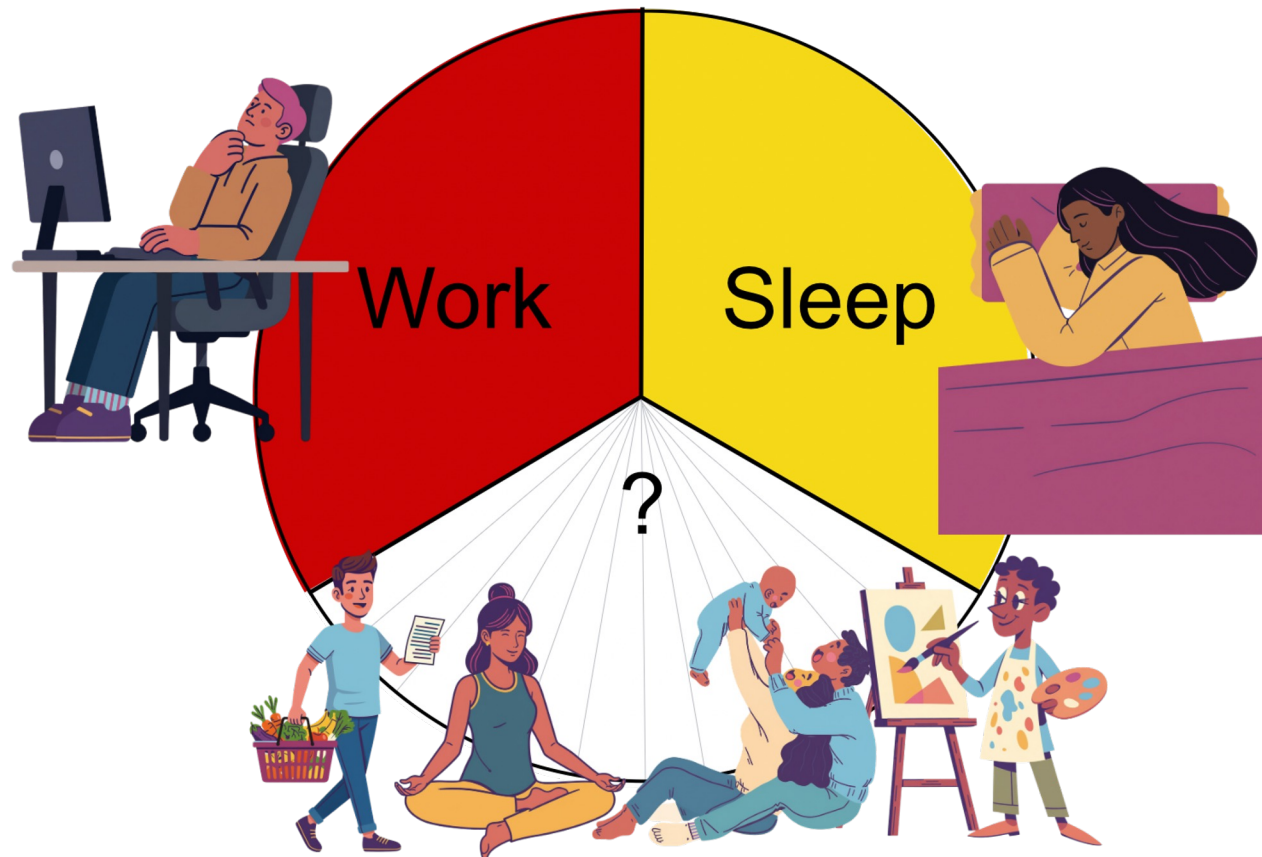


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- How we manage ourselves is how we manage our teams
 - The co-regulation effect (Wright, n.d.)
- “How we spend our days is how we spend our lives”
- The average adult spends 90,000 hours at work. (Gettysburg College, n.d.)







The Alternative



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- Burnout is a Project Management Risk
- Chronic stress leads to chronic illness
- Work place stress is a contributing factor to 120,000 deaths annually in the U.S. (*OSHA, n.d.*)



A Solution: The Menu Method

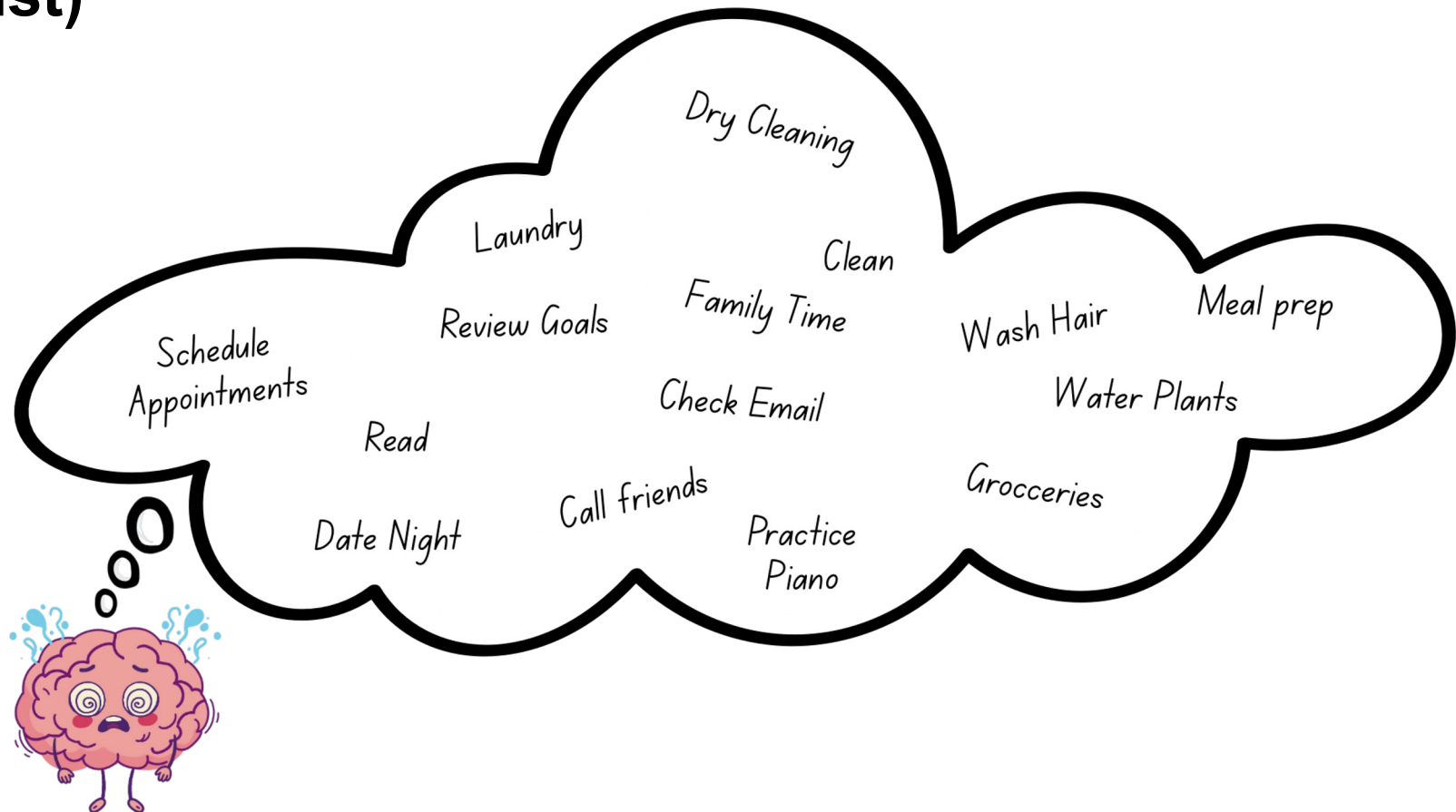


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A time management framework designed to build consistency in tending to the aspects of our lives that support our wellbeing in a realistic and sustainable way



Step 1: Write Down Your To Do (or “Want To Do” List)



Step 2: Arrange the List Into “Menus”



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Self-Care

Wash Hair

Review Goals

Rest

Hobbies

Practice Piano

Read

Relationships

Family Time

Call friends

Date Night



Chores

Laundry

Meal prep

Clean

Errands

Groceries

Dry Cleaning

Admin

Schedule Appointments

Review Budget

Check Email



Step 2: Arrange the List Into “Menus”

Self-Care (15%)

Wash Hair
Review Goals
Rest

Chores (20%)

Laundry
Meal prep
Clean

Hobbies (20%)

Practice Piano
Read



Errands (15%)

Groceries
Dry Cleaning

Relationships (25%)

Family Time
Call friends
Date Night

Admin (5%)

Schedule Appointments
Review Budget
Check Email

Step 3: Input Recurring Obligations



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday
	9-5 Work	9-5 Work	9-5 Work
Thursday	Friday	Saturday	
9-5 Work	9-5 Work		

Step 3: Input Recurring Obligations



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday
	9-5 Work 6-7 Jamie's Soccer Practice	9-5 Work	9-5 Work 6-7 Jamie's Soccer Practice
Thursday	Friday	Saturday	
7:30-8:30 Therapy 9-5 Work	9-5 Work 6:30-7:30 Pickleball (1st & 3rd)	10-11 Yoga	

Step 4: Designate Time for Morning + Evening Routine



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday
	7-8 Morning Routine	7-8 Morning Routine	7-8 Morning Routine
	9-5 Work	9-5 Work	9-5 Work
	6-7 Jamie's Soccer Practice		6-7 Jamie's Soccer Practice
	9-10 Evening Routine	9-10 Evening Routine	9-10 Evening Routine
Thursday	Friday	Saturday	
6:30-7:30 Morning Routine	7-8 Morning Routine	10-11 Yoga	
7:30-8:30 Therapy	9-5 Work		
9-5 Work	6:30-7:30 Pickleball (1 st & 3 rd)		
9-10 Evening Routine	9-10 Evening Routine		

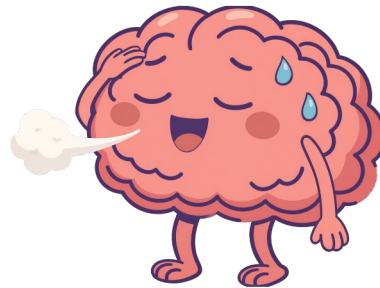
The Morning & Evening Routine



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Morning Routine = Mind + Body + Spirit

Evening Routine = Regulate + Release + Prepare



Step 5: Assess Available Time



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday
	7-8 Morning Routine	7-8 Morning Routine	7-8 Morning Routine
	9-5 Work	9-5 Work	9-5 Work
	6-7 Jamie's Soccer Practice		6-7 Jamie's Soccer Practice
	9-10 Evening Routine	9-10 Evening Routine	9-10 Evening Routine
Thursday	Friday	Saturday	
6:30-7:30 Morning Routine			
7:30-8:30 Therapy	7-8 Morning Routine	10-11 Yoga	
9-5 Work	9-5 Work		
	6:30-7:30 Pickleball (1 st & 3 rd)		
9-10 Evening Routine	9-10 Evening Routine		

Step 6: Assign Your Menu Categories to Time Slots



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday
		Hobbies	
	7-8 Morning Routine	7-8 Morning Routine	7-8 Morning Routine
Self Care	9-5 Work	9-5 Work	9-5 Work
Relationships	6-7 Jamie's Soccer Practice	Relationships	6-7 Jamie's Soccer Practice
	9-10 Evening Routine	9-10 Evening Routine	9-10 Evening Routine
Thursday	Friday	Saturday	
6:30-7:30 Morning Routine			
7:30-8:30 Therapy	7-8 Morning Routine	10-11 Yoga	
9-5 Work	9-5 Work	Errands	
Admin	6:30-7:30 Pickleball (1 st & 3 rd)	Chores	
9-10 Evening Routine	9-10 Evening Routine	Hobbies	

So Much “to-do” Not Enough Time



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- Where can I ask for support?
- What do I need to do less/let go of?
- What do I want to do more of and where can I create space?
- What can I delegate/outsource?
- What can I do more efficiently/what tasks can I stack?



Considerations



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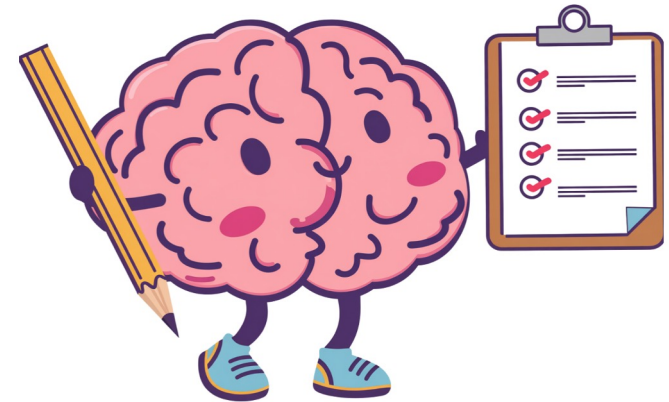
- Every task may not fit into a category
- Every open time slot does not need to be filled
- This is a **FRAMEWORK** meant to be adjusted to fit your unique self

Why This Works



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- Audits how you are spending your time
- Mitigates decision fatigue
- Framework flexibility
- Decreases “task switching”



Measuring Team Capacity as a Sustainable Leader



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- Calculating capacity from a holistic lens goes beyond “how long will this take?”
- Capacity is not just about time. It’s about energy, clarity, and support.
- Better question lead to better systems



Measuring Team Capacity: Initiation Phase



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- Are there any steps that can be done more efficiently and what tools, information, or support would be required?
- Where do you tend to lose momentum or motivation?
- Which parts of this task feel the most mentally or emotionally demanding?

Measuring Team Capacity: Planning Phase



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- What type of work drains you the fastest? What energizes you?
- What else is currently on your plate that may impact this work?
- Given your current workload, does this feel realistic?

Measuring Team Capacity: Execution Phase



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- On a scale of 1–5, how manageable does your workload feel this week?
- Do you feel like you have enough space and support to do your best work on this?
- Is your current pace sustainable for you?
- What parts of this feel unclear or under-defined?

Capacity Signals



- The goal is to gauge capacity without crossing personal boundaries
- You don't need personal details to understand capacity. Observe the signals.

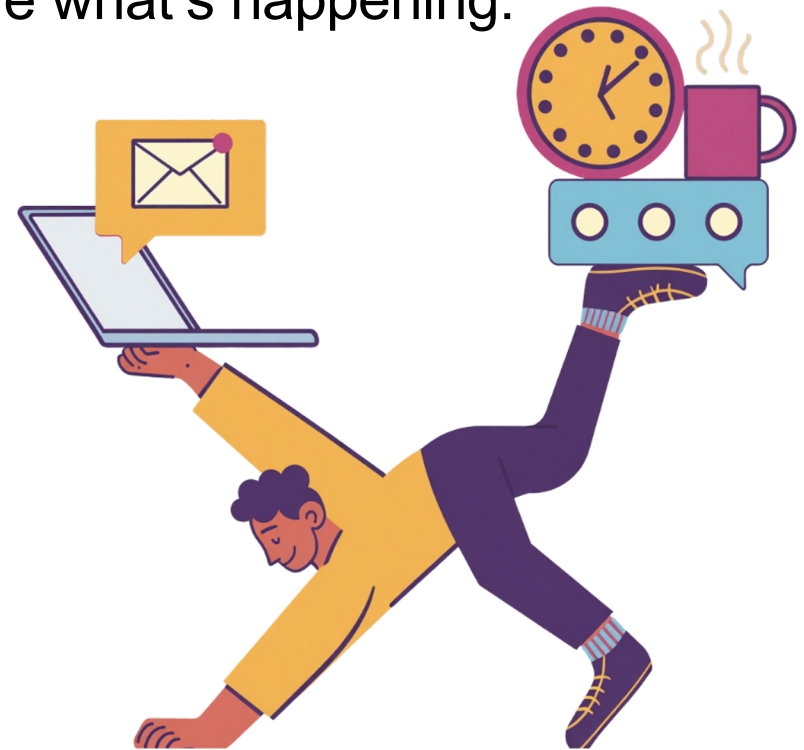


Capacity Signals



- Instead of asking “*what’s wrong,*” observe what’s happening:

- Increased delays or missed deadlines
- Drop in communication or responsiveness
- More errors or rework needed
- Difficulty prioritizing or making decisions



Capacity Signals



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- “If anything is impacting your capacity that you’d like me to be aware of, feel free to share.”
 - *Emphasize that sharing is optional and respected*

From Management to Stewardship



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Manage your time → but also your energy

Plan your projects → but also your capacity

Support your team → by modeling sustainability

***Lead in a way that sustains both the work and
the people doing it.***



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Questions & Evaluation

Evaluate Session:



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References



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