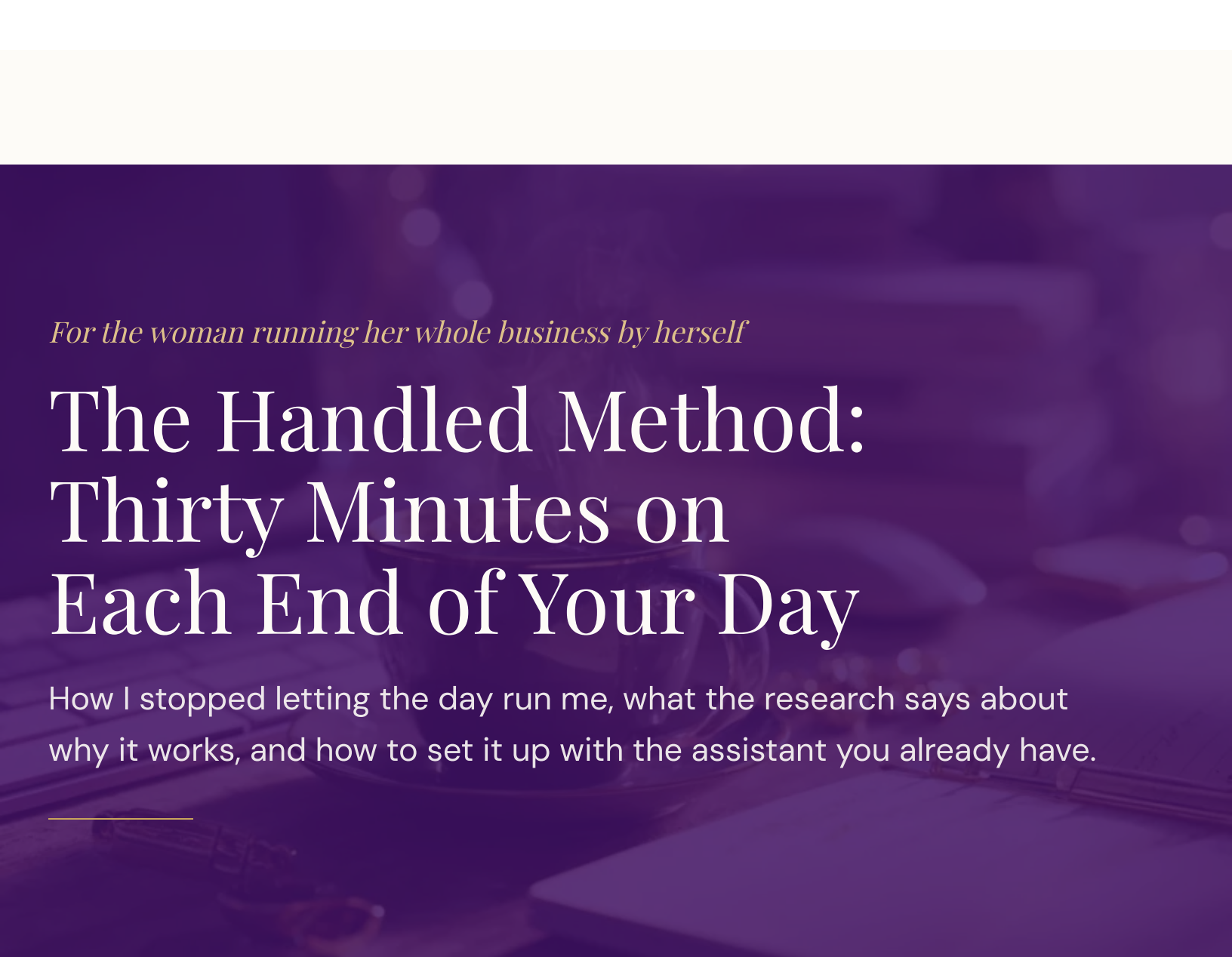




For the woman running her whole business by herself

The Handled Method: Thirty Minutes on Each End of Your Day

How I stopped letting the day run me, what the research says about why it works, and how to set it up with the assistant you already have.

For a long time, the day ran me

I used to start my day by looking at my calendar and letting it tell me what to do. There was never really a plan. Maybe I'd glance at tomorrow the night before, but most mornings it was just, okay, what's going on today? I didn't have a list of what had to get done. I went wherever the calendar or my inbox sent me, and it felt like the day was dragging me around.

I was working until nine thirty or ten at night. I'd stop for dinner, get my kid settled, and go right back to the computer.

The first thing that changed was small. I started putting actual work time on my calendar, just me at my desk doing the work, with no meetings or errands in it. That opened my eyes: I was busy enough that without some structure, the day would always win.

So I started what I now call the Handled Method: thirty minutes when I sit down in the morning, an Open, and thirty minutes when I stop at the end of the day, a Close, and an assistant I talk to out loud that holds every list so I don't have to.

*Now I never feel like I'm being run
by my day. I'm running the day.*

What the first week felt like

The first full week I committed to it, I stopped waking up anxious. I woke up already knowing I'd handled it the night before. All I had to think about was getting up, having my coffee, and getting my kid on the bus.

The biggest change was during the day. I wasn't splitting my attention a thousand different ways anymore. When I was sitting across from someone, I was actually there with them, because I knew everything else was handled and written down.

I'm a feelings-first builder. When I start working with a client, I ask what their perfect day looks like and how they want to feel at the end of it. This is how I want to feel at the end of mine, and it's too good a feeling to keep to myself.

Why it works, according to the research

I wanted to know why this felt so different in my body, so I dug into the research. A lot of what I was feeling has a name, and somebody's already studied it.

1 **A plan quiets the unfinished thing.**

Researchers gave people a task and stopped them before they finished. The ones left hanging kept having stray thoughts about it. The ones who wrote down exactly how, when, and where they'd finish it stopped having those thoughts, and did as well as people who had nothing unfinished at all. Your brain can let go of a task once it knows there's a plan for it.¹

Masicampo and Baumeister, 2011

2 **Planning at the end of the day helps you switch off.**

In a study of working adults, writing plans for unfinished goals at the end of the workday helped them mentally leave work, and it helped most for the people who usually struggle to stop thinking about it. That's the Close, almost exactly.²

Smit, 2016

3

Switching off is tied to being less worn out.

Across studies of more than 38,000 workers, people who mentally detach from work in the evening report less exhaustion and better sleep. A 2025 study of small business owners found they switch off from work less than employees do, and that feeling in control of their day was one of the things most tied to their wellbeing. If you run it all yourself, this is probably the piece you're missing.^{3,4}

Wendsche and Lohmann-Haislah, 2017; Le Moal and colleagues, 2025

4

Writing tomorrow's list helps you fall asleep.

People who spent five minutes writing tomorrow's to-do list before bed fell asleep about nine minutes faster than people who wrote down what they'd already finished. And the more specific the list, the faster they fell asleep. That's why the Close ends on tomorrow.⁵

Scullin and colleagues, 2018

5

A note on where you stopped lets your mind move on.

When people were interrupted, a quick note on where they left off and what came next cut down the leftover attention they carried into the next thing. When you jot down where something stands, you can give the next person in front of you your whole attention.⁶

Leroy and Glomb, 2018

6 **Your brain only lets go if it trusts where things went.**

When people saved their work before moving on, they remembered the next thing better. When they thought the save might not hold, the benefit disappeared. A brain dump only works if it goes to one place you trust, every time.⁷

Storm and Stone, 2015

7 **Deciding when and where makes you more likely to follow through.**

Across nearly a hundred tests, people who decided in advance exactly when and where they'd do something were noticeably more likely to do it. Picking your three things at Open, and the very first thing you'll do tomorrow at Close, uses exactly that.⁸

Gollwitzer and Sheeran, 2006

The method

The Handled Method is two short sittings. Open at the start of your day: settle in, empty your head, and pick what today is actually for. Close at the end: catch what happened, set up tomorrow, and end the business day on purpose.

Three ground rules

- 1 **Put both on your calendar as recurring appointments.** Treat them like a client booking. If something lands on top of one, move the something.
- 2 **Save decisions for the sittings.** When a question pops up mid-day, say it to your assistant and keep working. Unless something is truly on fire, it waits for Close.
- 3 **After Close, the business day is over.** Everything you'd lie awake trying to remember is already written down, in one place you trust.



The Open: coffee first, everything out of my head, inbox later.

Your Open, minute by minute

0 to 5 min

Settle. Coffee, a deep breath, notifications off. Leave your inbox closed for now.

5 to 15 min

Empty your head, out loud. Press the voice button and say everything on your mind, in any order. Half sentences are fine.

15 to 25 min

Pick the day. Look at your calendar next to the sorted list and choose your three things. Those three are what makes today a good day. Everything else gets a day of its own.

25 to 30 min

Clear the quick ones. Send the two-minute replies so they stop following you around.

Say this at Open

"Here's everything on my mind this morning. Sort it into what has to happen today, what can wait until later this week, and what I can let go of. Tell me the three things that matter most today, in order, and point out any quick replies I can knock out in five minutes."



The Close: the day goes on the page, so it doesn't come to bed with me.

Your Close, minute by minute

- 0 to 10 min** **Say what got done.** Tell your assistant how the day went, including the things that came up that weren't on the list.
-
- 10 to 20 min** **Catch the loose ends.** Who's waiting on a reply from you, what you promised someone, what money came in or went out today. For anything half finished, say where you stopped and what comes next.
-
- 20 to 25 min** **Set up tomorrow.** Your top three, and the very first thing you'll do when you sit down. Be specific. End here, on tomorrow.

25 to 30 min **Shut it down.** Close the laptop, put the phone in another room if you can, and be done.

Say this at Close

"Here's how today went and what didn't get done. Make me tomorrow's list, top three first, and the first thing I should do when I sit down. Tell me who I owe a reply to, and draft a short, friendly note for each one."

Once a week, Close on money



Fridays are for knowing exactly where I stand.

Money has always been hard for me. I've never been a spreadsheet person. I'd check my bank balance before a big decision, and I knew roughly where I was, but it was never something I could actually put a number on.

Now every Friday, my Close is about money: what came in against my plan, what went out, what I've set aside for taxes, and who still owes me. The first time I did it, I knew exactly where I was sitting for the first time in a very long time. Now I can watch it month over month. When I follow the process I set for myself, I can see it in the money.

I took care of this, and now future me knows where the business is.

Not wanting to look is normal, and it's been measured. A study of investor accounts found people logged in to check their money less often after the market dropped.⁹ We look away exactly when looking would help most. The fix is a set time to look, whatever the news. And regularly checking progress toward a goal does make people more likely to reach it.¹⁰

That feeling is the whole reason I do it. It's the grown-up, proud-of-yourself moment of knowing, and better decisions come from it because you know where they're coming from.

Say this on money day

"Here's what came in and went out this week. Add it up, compare it to what I planned for the month, tell me what I should set aside for taxes if I'm saving a quarter of what came in, and list anyone who still owes me money so I can follow up at Open."

Ten minutes of looking every week beats one terrible afternoon in April.

Three ways to run it

You can start this tomorrow with the free version of the assistant already on your phone. Here's what that looks like, what changes when you connect your calendar and email, and what mine looks like with a system built for it.

The first way

With the assistant you already have



The assistant already on your phone is enough to start.

ChatGPT, Claude, and Gemini all work, free or paid, and all of them have a phone app with a voice button so you can talk instead of type. At this level your

assistant only knows what you tell it, and that's plenty to start.

Keep everything in one place. In ChatGPT and Claude that's a **Project**, and in Gemini it's a **Notebook**. Give it standing instructions once, then come back to it every morning and every evening so it can see yesterday's list when you sit down.

Say this once, to set it up

"I'm starting a routine called the Handled Method. Every morning I'll tell you everything on my mind, and you'll sort it into today, later this week, and let go, then help me pick my three most important things. Every evening I'll tell you how the day went, and you'll make tomorrow's list, tell me who I owe a reply to, and keep track of anything I left half finished. On Fridays, the evening is about money. Keep this list going from day to day so you always know where I left off."

The second way

Connect your calendar and email

On a paid plan, your assistant can look at your real calendar and inbox. At Open, it can tell you what's on today without you reading it out. It can draft the replies you owe, and some can even send you a morning brief on a schedule before you're out of bed. Claude calls these **connectors**, ChatGPT calls them **apps**, and Gemini calls them **connected apps**. Turning one on is a few taps and a sign-in, with no code.

Claude

Connects to the widest set of small business tools: Gmail, Google Calendar and Drive, plus Stripe, QuickBooks, Square, PayPal, Notion, and Todoist. It can add calendar events and draft email, and it asks before sending. On a paid plan it can run a scheduled morning brief even while your laptop is closed, and the voice mode on your phone can use your connections too. Turn them on under **Customize**, then **Connectors**.

ChatGPT

Strong with Gmail, Google Calendar, and Contacts, and it can draft and send email from a chat on the web. In the US, it can also show you your bank accounts, read only. Scheduled tasks can send you a morning brief at an exact time on Plus. Turn connections on under **Settings**, then **Plugins**.

Gemini

The easiest if you already live in Google: Gmail, Calendar, Drive, Tasks, and Keep connect with one switch, and a daily digest of your calendar, to-dos, and email is free. One catch matters for a business: Gemini's connections only work with your activity saved, and with it saved, Google can use your chats to improve its models, including review by people. If that bothers you, Claude and ChatGPT both let you connect your tools and turn that off.

Say this to set up a morning brief

“Every weekday at 7am, look at my calendar and email from the last day and send me a short morning brief: what’s on today, who’s waiting on me, and anything that looks urgent.”

Checked against each company’s own help pages in October 2026. These products change every few weeks, so if a menu name has moved, ask the assistant itself where to find it.

The third way

With a system built around your business

This is how I run mine, and it’s what I build for clients. The difference is that the assistant already knows your calendar, your customers, your inbox, and your money, because they all live in one place it can see.

Before I’m up

A text tells me what today looks like and that everything’s taken care of.

Through the day

My inbox gets handled, and a midday text brings me only the things that actually need me. If something’s on fire, I hear about it right away.

At Close

I sit down and it already knows what happened today. We go through what needs me, and set up tomorrow.

Every Friday

The money Close: what came in against the plan, what went out, what's set aside, and who owes me. It's already added up when I sit down.

Once a month

We look at the whole month against the year, and decide what changes next month.

The more of the day-to-day it carries, the more of me goes to the things that actually move my business: the relationships, and the people sitting across the table from me. They get my whole attention now.

*So much technology pulls our attention away.
Everything I build is meant to give it back.*

It started as a hobby. I liked building things with these tools. It turned into the thing that made my own life better, and that's what I want to hand to the women I work with: the tools, set up for them, owned by them, so they can be present in their own lives.

Keep a few things out of the chat

A general assistant app is a great notebook, and it's still somebody else's computer. Leave out passwords, full card or bank numbers, and anything private

a client has told you about their health or family. “Follow up with Sarah about her order” is plenty for it to work with.

Check your training setting too. In Claude it’s under **Settings**, then **Privacy**. In ChatGPT it’s **Settings**, then **Data controls**, then “Improve the model for everyone.”

Your first two weeks

Fair warning: this is a habit change. You’re changing the way you operate, so put some thought into it before you start. Put both sittings on your calendar tonight, set up your one place, and do the first Close before you do the first Open.

Give it two weeks before you decide how it’s going. The first few Opens feel slow. Then one morning you sit down and the day is already waiting for you, sorted, with nothing rattling around in your head. For me, once I felt that, there was no going back.

Want it waiting for you when you sit down?

If you’d love this to go further, with your calendar, your customers, your follow-ups, and your money already there when you sit down for Open, that’s exactly

what I set up for women running their business on their own. Leave your email and I'll reach out to you myself.

Or email me at kateparker@shethrivessoftwareconsulting.com

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