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Hi guys, Adam S. here, Prepped and Polished., South Natick, Massachusetts. Today we're going to talk about another important building block in executive functioning backward planning.

So what is backwards planning? Well, for example, if I asked you to draw an image of a dog it would be pretty easy. Working backwards from the image in your head you would do your best to reproduce that image of a dog on a piece of paper.

But what if I asked you to draw a picture of an ibis? Not so easy, right? What the heck is an ibis? You wouldn't even know where to begin. So when you don't have a finished product or a picture in mind, the task can seem pretty overwhelming. An ibis is a kind of bird, by the way. It's a cross between a turkey and a vulture.

The same principles can apply to academic work. When you're first assigned a big paper or a project, sometimes you can't see the finish line. And the task can feel pretty overwhelming. In fact, it can feel so overwhelming that we never even start it. We just keep putting it off and putting it off and putting it off until finally it's due tomorrow. And we scramble around frantically the night before with usually a lot of help from mom and dad.

You go through all this anxiety and frustration that's completely avoidable. It's not a great way to go through school, and what's worse is you're building associative memories. So next time you are assigned a big project or a big paper all you're going to think about is all of that anxiety and frustration and the frantic scramble you went through last time.

What if I told you there's a better way? What if instead of starting at the beginning we decided to start at the end. Let's go over to the white board, and I'll show you what I'm talking about. Say you were given an assignment where you have to give a presentation on a leader that you admire. There's a speech, a paper, maybe a PowerPoint. Sounds like a lot of work, right? It's a pretty big project.

So where do we begin? Well, let's start at the end. What did the end look like? So what do we have? We have a paper. We have maybe some index cards for your speech. There's a PowerPoint going on in the background and [inaudible 2:01]. Not so overwhelming, right? The question is how do we get there?

So that's still a pretty big project. So let's break it down into some component pieces, right? So we have a paper. There's a speech, and there's a PowerPoint, right? Three things. So how do we break these three things down?



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Well, the next part is going to involve some really simple math. First, you have to figure out how much time between now and the due date? Say it's six weeks, right? Six weeks between now and when this presentation is due, and how many things do we have? Three, right? One, two, three. Six divided by three equals two.

That means we can assign about two weeks to each one of these tasks. So let's go back to the schedule we talked about the last time. Now what you're going to want to do is take each of these guys and plug them into spots in your schedule.

Now I know this is still pretty complicated. Don't worry; we're going to have another video. I thought I'd break these guys down a little more so you know how to write a great paper. Something that I really like to do is to put your daily task items on sticky notes.

Say what I am going to do is research on Monday, write a rough draft on Tuesday. That way if you get home Monday night and you really don't feel like doing research, that's okay. You're going to have to move it to Tuesday. Now there are two things to do on Tuesday. What if you don't feel like doing any work on Tuesday? Well, now you have to move it all back to Wednesday, and you can see how the work really starts to pile up.

It's a great visual to kind of show you the cost of procrastination which I think is great. So once you've plugged these guys into your schedule all you have to do is follow the day by day stats that you've laid out for yourself. Watch out for the procrastination, and you'll reach that finish line, no problem. You will avoid all the anxiety, stress, frustration you may have experienced in the past.

So those are the basics of backward planning. Start at the end. Which does the finished product look like and once you see what it looks like, ask yourself how many pieces does it have? Then figure out how much time do you have between now and when the project is due. Divide that time by the number of pieces. That's how much time to assign to each piece.

Then all you have to do is follow the schedule that you lay out for yourself. Remember procrastination has its price. If you do these things and reach that finish line, no problem, and pretty soon big projects will be no big deal.

All right, guys. See you next time.