



The Thinking Is the Work

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Not long ago I found myself in the middle of a familiar mental maneuver—trying to expunge an onslaught of trivial thoughts while simultaneously gripping the quickly-fading essential ones, all while desperately attempting to recall what exactly I was supposed to be doing at that moment. In that haze, a thought broke through—this is not the sort of mental work I thought I would be doing when I was a kid in school. I remember writing papers and solving math problems, assuming that I was preparing for all the hard thinking I would be doing as an adult. Not once did I imagine that a huge amount (the majority?) of that calculating power would be going into remembering, deciding, re-ordering, cataloging, and optimizing an infinite number of tasks.



This classic clip conveys the mood pretty well!

I am definitely not alone. While I found some comfort in [articles](#), [videos](#), and [musings](#) about the now-familiar [“mental load,”](#) most of those are focused exclusively on mothers. In my real life there were plenty of men and non-parents who were also feeling buried.

It was Anne Helen Petersen’s fantastic [breakthrough article about burnout](#) in 2019 that most accurately captured what I had been experiencing. While she does mention the unequal distribution of household chores and parenting care that frequently falls on the shoulders of mothers, her scope is broader. She links that feeling of burnout to the inherent unachievability of our goals. We can never actually cross everything off the list—there is no such thing as “all done.” Petersen recognizes that what we’re striving for is vibes— the feeling that everything’s finished, gang’s all here, and we’re having a great time. The paradox is that this fantasy leaves us with an even longer list. She says, “That’s one of the most ineffable and frustrating expressions of burnout: It takes things that should be enjoyable and flattens them into a list of tasks, intermingled with other obligations that should either be easily or dutifully completed. The end result is that everything, from wedding celebrations to registering to vote, becomes tinged with resentment and anxiety and avoidance.”

Nothing epitomized the burnout list for me like planning a birthday party. My feelings layered upon themselves like a complicated cake: dread at the task list, guilt for feeling dread, love for my beautiful kid, eagerness to please them, panic about the party planning, crankiness at the internet for not making this easier, resentment toward Pinterest for even SUGGESTING these absurdly time-consuming activity ideas, disgust at the idea of going to the trampoline park, general overwhelm at the whole process, and finally resignation that I was going to buy a bunch of cheap licensed stuff that I knew everyone was going to throw away anyway. At the end of all that I just ended up feeling gross and sad—the literal opposite of the feelings I wanted to be feeling about celebrating my beloved child!



He looks pretty happy! It’s a pity that I was a ball of stress leading up to this lovely moment.

Everything about the party planning process was pulling me further away from what I really wanted—a relationship-building experience that both my child and I could look back on in the future and say wow, that was so fun! I wanted to have the experience of throwing a meaningful celebration without the mental load that came with the party. My “how-to-have-fun” list was self-defeating and burning me out. The thinking was so much work. Moreover, it was not the kind of work I wanted to be doing!

Since an actual [party planner](#) was not in our financial range, I was resigned to the inevitability of the process. That was, until my friend Margaret and I found ourselves at a serendipitous career crossroads. Margaret, who thrived on building creative, imaginative, fully thematic parties, had long mused about going into the party planning business. A few casual conversations became more earnest and we decided that here was a problem where we could offer a solution—Streamer Trunk was born.

All of the worst parts of scouring Pinterest for ideas or endlessly optimizing party tableware packages is gone. What is left is a fully planned party brimming with stories, projects, games, and activities for you and your child to unpack together. Our goal is that when you open your Streamer Trunk you find relief and happiness. Relief that the thinking has been done for you—you can allocate those brain cells toward more important thoughts! And happiness in experiencing a special celebration for you and your family.

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