

So, Here's The Thing Episode 137

Welcome to so here's the thing, the podcast for small business owners, entrepreneurs and creative educators who are ready to take their business to the next level, through candid conversations, tactical approaches and a few unpopular opinions. We're lifting the veil on what it takes to build both a life and a business that you love. I'm your host, Layli Ahmadi, a coach for creatives and founder of the creative educator Academy, where I help entrepreneurs step into the role of industry leaders and educators. I'm so glad that you're here. Now let's jump into today's episode.

Hello, friend, today we are going to be talking about stress management and prioritizing your workload as an entrepreneur during a busy season. And I'm really excited about this. Because at the time that this episode goes live, we're going to be in the midst of busy season, but not just for entrepreneurs like you and I, but also just as human beings, right, we are in the midst of the holiday season, and this last quarter of the year, can get just so stressful. And I know that we can feel a lot of pressures that come along with that, especially for business owners and entrepreneurs. But then add in there the personal side of things, and it's just out of control. So I'm excited to dive into some tangible things that we can do tactical things that we can do to make the season a little bit less stressful for you. And these are lessons that I continually refer back to during any busy season throughout the year, not just during holiday seasons, but kind of anytime I feel like my plate is getting a little bit too full. Now this season in particular, I feel like can add an extra level of stress because deadlines that are usually kind of self imposed for entrepreneurs are now kind of set in stone.

Like we have the Black Friday sales, we have holiday obligations, we have events, and they all pile up. And they all happen on specific dates, where as usually one of the biggest benefits of running your own business or running your own entrepreneurial journey is that you are in charge of setting your own deadlines. And you don't have to answer to anybody else's calendar. Right. So we are going to dive right in with just a little bit of tough love to kick this episode off. And I'm just going to say that no matter what the season is, no matter how many deadlines or obligatory dates that are set on somebody else's calendar, you can choose what to participate in and what to opt out of.

So for example, there are many years in the 10 years that I've run my business that I did not participate in Black Friday, I did not run a Black Friday sale. And it felt like everyone else in the industry thought that I was a failure or that I was crazy, or that I wasn't successful, or that I wasn't making the right decisions based off of the messaging that was put out there. Now that's not anything anybody in the industry would say to me, they would probably be like, oh, cool, you're not running a Black Friday sale, no big deal I am. And they move on with their lives. But as entrepreneurs, especially a lot of us achiever type three type of people, we're out here, thinking that if we don't follow the norm, if we don't do what everyone else is doing, that instantly makes us less than and I just want to put that encouragement out that no matter how many photographers are hosting many sessions, you don't have to do it. No matter how many digital shops or brick and mortars are having Black Friday sales, you don't have to do it. If you truly cannot handle the influx of work that comes with these added deadlines and added, quote unquote obligatory dates, then you don't have to do them.

And that is my tough love of the day. Everything is in your hands, my friend. And that is the beauty of entrepreneurship. Alright, so let's talk about a few things that you can do to one kind of manage that stress if you're already really in it. And to work on prioritizing your workload if you just feel like I have committed to doing a lot of things, and I don't know what to do and when now, I used to get asked all the time, how do you do it all? You do so many things?

How do you do it all. And if you've listened to the show for any amount of time, or you've worked with me at all, you know that my tagline my mantra, the thing that I constantly say, not only to myself, but to my students and clients is that we can do it all. But we can not do it all at once. We can't do it all at the same time. So the follow up to that mantra is how do you decide what needs to be done now? And what can wait now I'm going to come at this conversation from the angle of you have already committed to a lot of things maybe you've over committed, maybe you haven't over committed but you've definitely taken on more than you thought you would. You're not really at the place where you can just say no to anything right now. Like I said in the very beginning of this episode, the tough love here is that you can say no to anything at any time. But again, like we're just going to come at this like okay, I'm already stressed out lately, like Tell me what I need to do to be able to get through, prioritize and get everything on my to do list done.

So the first thing I'm going to ask you to do, if you haven't done it already, is make a to do list like just make one master list of all the things that you need to get done. And this can feel overwhelming or daunting in itself. Don't worry about priority yet. Don't worry about anything else, except for writing down all of the tasks that you need to get done. In order for you to breathe at the end of this season. Once you have your list set, then I want you to go through and start numbering in terms of priority. And this is how we're going to do it. So don't worry, I'm not going to leave you alone to number by yourself. I'm going to take you through three questions I asked myself when I'm trying to decide how to prioritize what needs to get done first. So the first question I'm going to ask you is which tasks have the closest deadlines, like what has to be done? What is time sensitive, what requires immediate attention, and those are going to be the first tasks that you number.

So you can go ahead and start numbering one through whatever. And once you're done with that, come back and listen to question two, now that you've numbered any time sensitive tasks that need your immediate attention. The second question that I would ask at this point to help you prioritize this to do list is are there any tasks on this list that would have a higher impact more impact on the overall season of your business? And if so those are the ones that are going to be next on your list like next highest to do right after the high priority deadline tasks, you're going to have the high impact tasks. And even better, like bonus point on the second question is if there's any of these tasks that have maybe lower effort, but higher impact as well, those are really, really great to prioritize and bump up higher on your To Do lists, because you get them done quickly. But they have a really great and big impact on the list as a whole. And then the next question. And if you didn't see this coming, I don't know how because I talk about this all the time, is there anything on your list that you could delegate, and if so, you're going to want to not number those, but move them on to their own list and find the person you're delegating these tasks to. So whether that's an assistant, a virtual assistant, whether it's your OBM, any other team member that you may have, that could take a little bit off of your plate, this is when you're gonna want to tag them in.

And I know that it's really hard if you are a, you know, a team of one, like, I know that that's where some of you guys are. And that's okay, it's it's never a good idea to start hiring in the midst of chaos and

confusion. So don't worry, if you don't have somebody you can delegate to. That's okay. But maybe there's a creative way to get around this. So maybe you have a friend you can tag in or a work bestie or whatever, like a biz bestie that could You could ask, you know, hey, is there anything looking at this list that I'm maybe missing that I could delegate out that I could maybe hire a contractor for or bring somebody in temporarily. Maybe you're not making a full hire or expanding your team at this point. But you are looking at ways to kind of outsource whatever it is that you can.

So for example, if on your list, there are social media graphics, could you purchase some templates to make that go faster? Could you hire a designer for some sort of day rate where they knock out some of your design projects, if your website needs to be updated for a sale or for a promotion is there again, web designer that you could hire on a day rate and just kind of knock that out together. So those are some examples of ways to delegate without having to actually grow your team overnight. And I really hope that you'll take a creative look at how you can kind of offload some of those tasks and understand that you don't have to bear the brunt of like every single thing in your business, you really don't have to do that. And there are ways to do it creatively without having to invest in growing your team tremendously overnight. So I hope that helps. Hey, friend, if you're looking for a community of educators in the creative industry, I'd love to invite you to pull up a chair at our table. The creative educator conference was created for people like you and me who are ready to grow their educational offers and create more impact and who want to come together and learn from the very best high level educators around.

Unlike most conferences in our space. This event is so unique because the educators in the audience could easily be the speakers on stage, which means the possibilities to learn and grow together are literally endless. And I know that we've all sat in audiences before at other industry events thinking this content is definitely lower level than what I need as an educator. So if that sounds like something you need, you can head to creativeeducatorconference.com Or of course the show notes to check out all of the info on the next round coming up here in Dallas, my hometown on January 15 through the 17th And I cannot wait to welcome you to our event. And I can't wait to see you here. Let's say you're working toward prioritizing your To Do Lists prioritizing your tasks in your business. And you're feeling a little bit better about this, you now have your list, you've numbered it. But you obviously we are not solving all of our stress in just a few minutes, right? So let's say you've got your task list, you're working through it. Now how can we work on some of our stress relief, in order to not come out of the season, feeling like the worst version of ourselves, like we want to, we want to get out of this busy season, feeling pretty good, feeling pretty put together.

And I know there are so many experts out there on stress management and self care. I'm not an expert in this whatsoever. But I'm happy to share what has worked for me and what I really have found success in over the past, you know, years of being in business and having stressful seasons, the first thing that I'm going to suggest to you is probably what some of you might think, is the most drastic, and that is finding a therapist, now a therapist or counselor, whoever you want to seek out, that's totally up to you. But I think having a third party expert in managing our mental health or emotional health and well being is just as important as if you start to feel really sick, and you need to go to a doctor. And of course, starting therapy is not something that you can just really easily jump into, I know that there's a lot that goes into a lot of thought that goes into it, you have to make sure that the logistics are there, of course, and then you want to vibe with your therapist, you want to be able to get along and have a good rapport. And all of that can be hard, it can be hard to like open floodgates, but the support that comes from it, and the clarity that comes from it, and just having in the same way that I would recommend

having a business coach, it's the same thing, in my opinion, having somebody to counsel you through and to support you through a hard time can be really, really beautifully helpful.

So if that's something that's within your power to do, check that out, I know that there are a lot of virtual options now as well. So just starting to open the door to that possibility, I think could be really, really beneficial for anybody who is experiencing a busy season, especially when you do something like run your own business, which can be just incredibly taxing on you mentally and emotionally. So that's the first one. Now the next few things are things you can just do today. Obviously, you know, everybody's like self care, get a massage and love massages, I'm not here to like Bash on them. In fact, I would say my massage therapist is just as important to me as my actual therapist. So if you can go get a massage great. That was I was actually trying to say that, like you don't have to get a massage for self care, you can incorporate some sort of physical activity into your day. So whether that's taking a walk again, this doesn't mean you have to go out and start a gym membership and become like, you know, some crazed orange theory fanatic like I have become or you don't have to like go join and get memberships to places, you can literally just take a walk, get you know, I have like a walking pad that I use with my standing desk and some I'll walk walk on it for about 15 minutes a day.

And they already makes me feel better, you can put on a YouTube yoga for 10 minutes and just do a nice little stretch, whatever gets you up out of your chair, out of your office space, wherever you are, that work is really overloading you, it can be so helpful to incorporate that physical movement. And I think you might be surprised if you're putting it off how impactful that could be. The next thing I want you to do and this might actually sound like it would stress you out more but trust me it will pay off. I want you to look at what are you eating throughout the day? Are you staying hydrated? Are you eating healthy foods that have nutrients in them? And I ask this because I have found that in my most stressful times, I tend to eat the quick grab kinds of foods that are usually the most unhealthy and I don't really think anything of it because I work out I stay active. And I think you know, it doesn't really matter. Like I know I'm healthy overall. So I should be okay. Well, that's typically not the case, I think the worst that I eat the worst that I feel. And sometimes it takes a minute to catch on.

That's what it is. But if you have the ability to, you know, order one of those if you can't, if you can't find the time to cook you can order premade meals that are healthier, there are so many resources out there now. And again. It doesn't have to be so excessive or so out of reach. It could just be incorporating more fruits, more vegetables, more greens, starting to do something like juicing or if that takes up too much time buying a premade juice, things like that to just kind of fuel your body and fuel your brain so that you don't feel the same slump every so often throughout the workday that you would I think that really helps with stress management overall Next up, and I love this, I've been starting to do this more in my own business when I get really stressed out. And I use time blocking techniques. I think I've talked about this on the podcast before about how I schedule my weeks, my days, my morning routines. But when I feel really stressed, it's very helpful for me to set really clear deadlines and say, Okay, I have this number to do lists that we made earlier together, I have this number to do list, I want to knock out like as many as I can, from numbers like one, two, and three, and I'm going to set my timer cube, I have this like, little cube you can get on Amazon, it's like the Pomodoro Technique cube, and I flip it to 30 minutes, and I'm like, What can I get done in 30 minutes, and at the end of that 30 minutes, if I'm not done, that's okay, I hit pause anyway, I know that at the end of the 30 minutes, I'm gonna get a break, I'm gonna get up, I'm gonna go get a juice or take a walk or do a stretch, whatever.

And then I'll come back and I'll set another time block, whether it's the same amount of time a little bit more, a little bit less. And that kind of like incremental time blocking technique really helps me from feeling overwhelmed. And it makes me feel like things are happening in manageable chunks. So hopefully, that time blocking will help you too. I have two more tips for you guys, before I wrap up. And one is obviously I talk about community a lot. I obviously believe very heavily in community as somebody who hosts community events and is really involved in the creative entrepreneurial community myself. But within the larger scale community, I would encourage you to build a support network if you don't already have one.

And again, this is something that similarly to growing your team during times of chaos might seem really overwhelming. But unlike growing a team or making a hire in a time of chaos, I still think it's worth reaching out to somebody who maybe have hit it off with and say like, Hey, Suzie Q from this conference that I attended, i we i would really love it, if we could do like a zoom co working, even if it's like silent, co working. And we can try this time blocking technique together if you're also feeling stressed out. And just being in community with people in on a smaller scale, whether it's in person, or virtual, can really help you kind of like manage that immense amount of stress that you may be feeling. Because although you are the person in your business, who's carrying that load, your person who you're cultivating this relationship with, they're also carrying their own stressors and their own weights. And so you guys sharing the brunt of that together, I think could be such a beautiful thing. So reaching out to people who you've connected with, to further and deepen that relationship during this time could be really, really great. And then last but not least, I know some of you guys might roll your eyes at like the mindfulness meditations or breathing exercises, or the relaxation techniques that people recommend for managing stress, like in the moment.

But if you have a hard time learning those things, and making those things happen, or if you think they're silly, I still want to encourage you to try them. There are apps that you can download that can help you do that. I know, one that I've used that I've really enjoyed is called Headspace. And I think they have like a free trial. But it's a really affordable app. And I find it to be really, really helpful. So check that out. And hopefully that can help you if you are feeling just like immense amounts of stress that you need to be able to manage at that exact moment. And again, trust me if you're one of those people out there who's like, that does not sound like it's up my alley. It wasn't mine either. And I'm embarrassed now to admit that I definitely rolled my eyes at it. But honestly, those mindfulness and those meditative resources are so helpful and they can be really helpful in the moment. So I hope that these tips really help you. I'm try to keep this episode short. Because if you're listening to this, then you know that your time is probably limited. And that's probably stressing you out too. So I hope that implementing these will help and if they do, let me know and if I can be of any other help let me know that too. I love hearing from you guys. And I am just cheering you on over here. I will catch you guys on the next episode

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