A person with long hair

Description automatically generated with low confidence

Learning to Doubt your

Self-Doubt

July 18, 2021

Well, hey Friends!

I hope you guys had an amazing week.

Before we get started on today’s episode, I wanted to remind you to send in your questions on your career or business. As I shared last week, I’m adding an “Ask the Coach” bonus episode on the last Wednesday of this month, which is July 29th. So, if you’ve got a problem or if you’re stuck in some way, send your question to [carla@thepurposefulcareer.com](mailto:carla@thepurposefulcareer.com) or DM me on Facebook or Instagram.

I’ll pick a few of them to answer on the show. Remember, it’ll be It’ll be anonymous, so I’ll only use your first name. I think it’ll be an interesting addition to the podcast and if you like it, we’ll keep doing it!

So now, let’s get into today’s episode.

If you’re a regular listener, you know I’m all about helping people build a career or business they love. And while I do share strategies and approaches that address your career or business broadly, I go deep in the one area that I KNOW holds most of us back in some way. And that’s about overcoming self-doubt and building strong self-confidence.

The reason I focus on this is because self-doubt is an issue that affects most of us at some point in our lives. In fact, research shows more than 85% of us contend with self-doubt. Some of us might experience self-doubt occasionally – like when we experience a big change like a new position or a promotion or whatever. But for many of us, self-doubt is our constant wing man. And when that happens, it can really do a number not only on your career or business potential, but on your self-esteem. Even if it’s only in a specific area right now, if it goes unaddressed, that self-doubt can creep into all areas of your life.

That’s because our Inner Critic is INSIDE our head. So, the things it whispers to us feel TRUE. If you want to know a bit more about the ways to quiet your Inner Critic, check out episode #6 – Soothing your Inner Critic.

When you listen to that episode, you’ll learn that silencing or banishing your Inner Critic isn’t really possible. In fact, it’s really best to try to understand your Inner Critic and soothe it a bit so it calms down. Because all it’s really trying to do it keep you safe. So you can’t banish it. Those neural pathways are already established. If you want to know more how THAT works, check out episode #25 on Thought Pathways. That’ll help you understand how recurring patterns of thought – in this case, your self-doubt – happen and how they get stronger and stronger through repetitive use.

But today I want to talk about Self Doubt from another perspective. And that is how you can Learn to Doubt Your Self Doubt.

So, let’s dive in.

Most of contend with our Inner Critic at times. Usually when we try something new. Or experience a next level growth spurt. Or perhaps when we’re in a situation where we are thrust to the forefront in some way – like a speaking opportunity or a big meeting where we have a chance to share our ideas (or not).

This is when self-doubt kicks in. And we find ourselves wondering:

What if I mess up?

What if they think my idea is dumb?

What if I’m wrong?

Who am I to [fill in the blank]?

And you know if you’re asking yourself those questions, it’s because your Inner Critic has started its monologue inside your head, saying things like:

You’re not smart enough.

You’re not talented enough.

You’re not GOOD enough.

So, what do you do?

You stay silent.

You DON’T try the new thing.

Or speak up at the meeting.

Or disagree with the opinion of others.

Or apply for the new job.

Or whatever.

And then what happens? You stay right where you are. Playing small. Doing what you’ve always done but never discovering what you COULD be doing. Far too many of us sell ourselves short because we’ve convinced ourselves we don’t have what it takes to succeed.

The truth is self-doubt is the killer of dreams. Because it keeps you from ever attempting them.

And if you let your Inner Critic stay in charge, the self-doubt will become the executioner of your self-belief. You’ll move from fear you might fail into a deep belief that you aren’t capable. And there’s nothing worse than that.

But we can learn to DOUBT the SELF-DOUBT. And for this, I LOVE this quote that’s been attributed to Vincent Van Gogh.

“If you hear a voice within you say you cannot paint, then by all means paint and that voice will be silenced.”

[Repeat]

Wow. Sounds like one of the greatest artists of all time – creator of numerous masterpieces – did more than a few dances with his own Inner Critic, right? And if he were just evaluating his capabilities in terms of selling paintings, he would have probably stopped. He only sold one painting in his lifetime.

Lucky for us, he pushed through those voices of doubt and PAINTED. In just a decade, produced more than 2,100 works of art, including some of the greatest masterpieces of all time.

My point is this. We all have something we are here to do. And I can promise you, that does NOT include hiding your gifts, playing small or not pursuing the things you want to do.

Whether it’s something as simple as speaking up and expressing your ideas or something as BIG as starting your own business.

Whatever is calling to you, you can be sure that right behind that dream is going to be the voice of the Inner Critic telling you that you can’t do it. Or that you’re going to look stupid. Or that you don’t have what it takes.

So how do you LEARN to DOUBT the voice of SELF-DOUBT?

It starts by asking yourself a different set questions. When that Inner Critic starts to whisper things like “What if You’re Wrong?”

You can choose to disregard that and instead ask yourself a different question.   
What if I’m right?

Or What if I don’t have to have all the answers?

Or What if my idea is just as valuable as that other persons?

Or What if it’s okay that you don’t perform perfectly on the first try (or the 10th)?

When you start to question the accuracy of that voice inside your head, it weakens its power over you. Because the truth is, the voice of self-doubt or your Inner Critic isn’t TRUE. It just FEELS true because, like I shared in episode 6, the enemy is ‘INSIDE the house.’ It’s not something someone else is saying to you…YOU are saying it to you so we can make the mistake of believing that it KNOWS something we don’t. That what it’s saying is TRUE and so we should listen to it.

It’s not true.

It’s just your primitive brain – which has evolved over the Millenia, that same part of the brain that kept your ancestors safe inside the cave instead of getting eaten by the lion. And while that part of the brain is useful occasionally – like convincing us it’s a bad idea to walk down that dark alley alone – most of the time, it’s actually NOT very useful.

Especially when we’ve got a new dream or a big ambition burning inside.

So as soon as the self-doubt flares, counteract it by asking yourself questions.

This interrupts that neural pathway. And shifts your thought pattern in a NEW direction. Towards the place that you want to go.

This is what it means to proactively build a NEW thought pathway. (Again, go back to episode #25 if you want to know more about Thought Pathways, or listen to the entire Thought Series – episodes 23 – 26 to get a good idea about how your brain works and how that can work against you in your career unless you proactively learn to manage it).

A few other things on self-doubt that can be helpful to remember.

1. **You’re not alone.** Almost everyone – more than 85% of us – suffer from it occasionally. It’s just that some of us have a more disciplined way of overcoming it. You can develop this too.
2. **Have compassion for your Inner Critic.** It’s trying to keep you safe and when it tries to convince you to play small or stay silent or NOT do the new things, it’s trying to help you. But you can choose not to listen.
3. **You can Learn to Doubt the Self-Doubt.** When you feel it creeping in, develop the discipline of asking yourself a question that is the EXACT opposite of what your Inner Critic is trying to convince you of. So, “what if the opposite is true?” What if I AM a great writer or speaker? What if my idea IS the right answer? What if I AM ready for the next level? What if I COULD learn to get great at this new thing? Or if someone else has convinced you of something you don’t want to believe, “What if [that person] was wrong?”

Bottom line, we get to choose what we want to believe about our possibilities. We can choose NOT to believe our Inner Critic. Or that person who was overly critical of you. Or whatever.

That doesn’t mean life will become all sunshine and daisies. It doesn’t work that way.

After all, you’re human. You won’t be perfect all the time.

Sometimes you WILL speak up and your ideas will be discarded or perhaps not as strong as someone else’s. That’s okay. Many times, it’s the putting together of different perspectives that make the BEST ideas anyway. And even if your idea wasn’t adopted, wouldn’t you rather let your colleagues or customers KNOW that you’re thinking, trying, contributing? I think being someone who considers and develops and shares is more important than always being RIGHT or SUPPORTED or whatever.

Sometimes you WILL make mistakes. That’s okay. In fact, that’s GREAT. Because think of everything you LEARNED.

And sometimes you WILL doubt yourself. Even if you’re working on it or aware of it or whatever. That’s okay. You’re human. We’re ALL going to doubt ourselves sometimes.

It’s what we do NEXT that matters.

Will we quit? Will we shrink down? Will we stay silent? Will we give up?

Or will we instead, allow ourselves to consider, what if the opposite is true? What if I CANT do it?

When that happens, look out. Because ANYTHING becomes possible for you.

Such a better way to live, don’t you think?

Until next time, make it a great week my friends.