

Ep #2: When the Voice Trying to Silence You Is Your Own



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Rachel Cannon

[Loudmouth Introvert](#) with Rachel Cannon

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Welcome to *Loudmouth Introvert*, a podcast for helping creative introverted entrepreneurs thrive, despite living in a world that's designed for extroverts to succeed. If you're ready to make more money and build the creative business you've been dreaming of, you're in the right place. I'm your host Rachel Cannon.

Hey y'all. Welcome back. It's episode two of *Loudmouth Introvert*. Can I just be honest with you for a second? This is a total personal side note, but I have been getting spray tans on a near weekly basis lately because I've had several functions to go to. And I honestly think it makes me the best version of myself.

Like, I like how I look but I also feel like I'm funnier with a spray tan. And I'm sitting here right now with a fresh spray tan, trying not to get it on every surface around me and just by virtue of having the glow, I feel like this episode is going to be great. And I know someone out there who is a spray tan sister is giving me an amen. I can feel it.

While I do feel like the best version of myself today, thanks to the express tan, we are going to get real, so just prepare yourself. This is the deep episode. And if you have kids in the car, I suggest pausing and restarting this episode later when you're alone. I'm totally kidding. Not really.

But no, for real, the content today is a little more serious because I'm actually going to tell you my story. So in episode one, we briefly touched on the idea that the world is set up for extroverts to succeed, and how as introverts and creatives, we can often feel like our voices are being drowned out by literally everything else on earth.

I mean, honestly, I still get interrupted and talked over on a daily basis because I just don't talk that loud. And we feel like we have a lot to offer but we just can't seem to be flashy enough or loud enough for people to take notice.

So like most introverts, I have an inner dialogue that basically does not stop. I'm constantly talking to myself in my head. So much so that even

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though other voices have drowned me out in the past, the voice most prevalent in my world is my own. I mean, that's just the truth.

And the voice in my head is constantly telling me what to think about my extroverted friends and what they're doing and how I should feel about it, and then by default, what I should think and how I should feel about myself. So let me just paint a little picture for you.

So imagine you are stranded on a dock in a lake and – because I live in Louisiana, we'll say a swamp. So you need to get off the dock because you've run out of supplies, and on the shoreline across the swamp, you can see a big party going on. But the swamp happens to be infested with alligators and you're literally staring at the danger and knowing you have to decide one way or the other.

So stay and starve, or somehow get in this water and avoid the alligators. Something in you says that you should stay put because of the danger of staying on the dock, even though it's familiar, there's still danger there. But everything beyond that is unknown. Something else is saying that you have to go or you're going to starve.

And then there's this other voice that creeps in and makes you feel bad because you aren't the person having a party. You're starving and all you can think about is the host of that party and how they must be so great to have that many friends.

And then those thoughts turn inward and you think things like, I'm alone in this swamp because I don't have any friends. That's the voice I'm talking about. In business, those thoughts for creative introverted entrepreneurs can be things like, I'll never make enough money to move my business into an office and out of my home.

Or I would get so much more done if I had a staff of people helping me, but I can't even afford to pay myself. Something like, I better stop sharing so much of my work on social media because people are going to get so sick of me and block me.

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I'm here to tell you I have had every single one of those thoughts during my career. All of them. And unfortunately, this is where most introverts spend their time. We're trapped in our minds and the thoughts go from bad to worse. From the I'll never have – fill in the blank – to I'm just not talented, or nobody will pay for my services.

I mean truly, the thoughts in our minds are what trap us. And it's not necessarily that they're always negative, but we just have a tendency to examine everything from every possible angle before we decide to take action. And somehow, our thoughts turn inward and we internalize everything.

And this is how our own voices silence us. So let me share my personal story with you. So I went to design school. I graduated with a degree in interior design, and I thought this will be the thing that legitimizes me. This is going to make me a professional. I have the degree.

So then I went to work for a firm that did commercial and residential design, and the next rung on the ladder was I need to take the NCIDQ. The licensing exam. And I thought okay, so that will be the thing that legitimizes me. Makes me the professional.

So I take the NCIDQ and I pass it, and really nothing changed. It didn't mean that I made more money, and my clients honestly really didn't know what it was and I had a hard time articulating why it was valuable. And so I guess I just sort of chalked it up to well, it's a feather in my cap. It's a milestone. It's a mark of accomplishment for me and no one can take it away from me.

And so I worked with that firm for about five years, and in 2008, we had a bloodbath. In one day, the owner of the firm let a bunch of people go and it was because there was nothing coming in. The economy was horrible. We were in a recession.

So because I had seniority and I had been there the longest, she allowed me to stay. So I stayed for another year and things were really bad, to the

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point where I was just trying to find anything to do to keep myself busy during the day. So I cleaned out closets, I refilled and refilled and refilled all of the client information.

I cleaned the bathroom. I tidied up our desks. I mean, I truly tried to make myself so useful because I was so scared I was going to lose my job. And then after all that, a year later she called me in and said I'm so sorry, but I'm going to have to let you go. And the writing was on the wall. There was no work coming in.

And if you were in design during that year, 2008, 2009, you know exactly what I'm talking about. Well, in the meantime, my ex-husband and I had purchased our first home and my boss told me on Monday that she was letting me go and the closing for our house was set for that Friday.

And I could have gone into a tailspin and I could have gotten really, really panicked, but instead I just thought okay, I need to be an adult. I'm just going to start my own business. Now, there was a little bit of naivety in that thought because I didn't know what in the hell I was doing.

I had no idea what I was doing. I had only ever worked for someone else. I didn't know what it meant to really own a business. I assumed owning a business was just like working for someone else, except that now your employer was your clients.

So we closed on our house. I have lost my job. I got another job in the meantime at a granite slab yard and the people who owned it was so lovely and so nice, but it just was not a fit for me. I mean, it was just a job. It was not a career.

And so after about three months, they let me go. And so I thought okay, I'll just buckle down. I'll get really serious about making this my business. And it was very, very difficult. It really was. I had probably in my bank account \$300, if even that, and my marriage wasn't great, and we were sort of newlyweds and still trying to figure it out.

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I don't know, it was a bad time. It just was not a good time. So I struggled for close to three years. And I was miserable. I felt like, why in the world did I decide that I wanted to start a business? Because then I felt like well, I can't stop now. I can't have started a business because it's too embarrassing to stop now and go back and work for someone else.

And so in those three years, I experienced every bad client scenario. All of them. People didn't pay, people decided what they were going to pay, people decided to take my ideas to someone else and let them implement them. I mean, it was just a total mess.

I was very unhappy. I was unhappy with my business, I wasn't happy with my marriage, I was just unhappy in my life. And I got to a point where I convinced myself that I would just have to settle for mediocrity. Like that's just what my life was going to be.

It was like, everything had gone wrong and the voice in my head was just saying give up. "You can't do it. Why bother? You're not special enough. You don't have anything to offer. A monkey could do your job."

Every single one of these thoughts was the result of looking at what someone else was doing and achieving, and feeling like I was never going to get there. And I rationalized their success by making excuses for them and not giving them any credit, and that's a very horrible thing to have to admit, but I did. I did it.

So things like well, they got published because their clients are so wealthy. Or they have wealthy clients because they are in a certain social circle and we're just not, and I don't meet those people. I don't know where those people are. Or their business is thriving because they have family money and I only had \$700 or \$300 or \$200 whenever I decided to start my business. What they're doing requires no talent.

It's horrible, isn't it? I was such a horrible person. And in addition to those thoughts, I felt like I had no support. People weren't hiring me to work with them on their homes, and instead they would just invite me over to see

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what they'd done and then expect me to shower them with compliments. It was horrible.

It was miserable. I was miserable. And miserable to be around. I was bitter and the cycle of negative self-talk was only reinforced by my interaction with people because I was coming from such a negative place. No wonder I felt alone. I had pushed everyone away.

And we can't bring clients into our businesses if we secretly believe those things about ourselves or others, so while it might feel like it's the extroverts drowning us out and making our message get lost, I hate to tell you this but really, it's us.

So I finally decided that of all the things that were so terrible in my life, the one stinking rotten thing I could control was myself. And let me be clear. I was rotten. Rotten. So the first order of business was to just stop looking at what everyone else was doing and focus on me and only me.

And once I was able to put blinders on, things got easier, but not like, I didn't skyrocket to the next level. Things just got easier. Little by little, every day got easier. And if I felt like giving up, I just pushed harder. If I had a bad client experience, I learned from it and I didn't make those mistakes again.

If things went wrong one day, I picked myself up and went back again the next day to try to have a better day. And this was the hardest one. If someone else had some success, instead of feeling bitter and resentful and trying to subtract from their win, I decided I needed to be positive about it, even if it killed me.

And sometimes it did. Sometimes it absolutely did. And those little negative thoughts would creep in and go, well, they don't have a design license, they didn't go to college. You know what, big deal. Big fat hairy deal. You heard it here first.

So really, what it came down to was I had to adopt the idea that if it was going to be, it was up to me. I couldn't rely on anybody else to make this

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business work but me. And when the voice in your head wants to automatically go to the negative because it wants to protect you from embarrassing yourself or from looking like a big failure, it's just there to protect you and tell you don't do that, don't step out, don't do that, what will people say, really sometimes you need to tell it to shut up.

So the second order of business was to tame that inner voice. It needed to come correct and get in line. And so one exercise that I found to be very helpful was to ask myself if I hear someone say this out loud to a little kid, what would I do?

So I would put myself in the place of the little kid and sometimes I would even say out loud what I had just thought to myself, and y'all, you talk about brutal. When we hear out loud, say the things we think about ourselves, it's gross. It is gross. It will make you see how destructive that behavior is.

And not to mention, if I ever heard anyone saying such horrible things to a little kid, I would absolutely lose it. Like, it's so abusive. So abusive. And eventually, that voice that had said such nasty things to me and about me started to be kinder to me, and it started to be kinder to others. And it didn't happen overnight, trust me.

It was not one day I just decided I'm not going to think negative things anymore. And the next day I wake up and it's rainbows and sunshine and no, absolutely not. It was a process. It absolutely was a process. It was being conscious when I would have a negative thought. It would be reminding myself that I had come so far already, even though it wasn't a smooth transition from working for someone else to working for myself.

I had to constantly remind myself not to beat myself up over everything and anything because I did. I just beat myself up so much. So when that little voice would creep in, I would just have to be conscious about it. My therapist one time told me maybe wear a rubber band on your wrist and when you have a negative thought, pop that rubber band.

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I never actually did that, but it was a good reminder. It did help me think about how I could be more conscious about the thoughts in my head. So I eventually just stopped telling myself things like nobody in Baton Rouge will pay for your services, because guess what, I don't know everyone in Baton Rouge and that's a limiting belief that does me no good.

And of course, they paid for them and they still do, and I stopped saying things like, oh my god, I'm running out of money when the cash reserves got low. Because I've learned that business is an ebb and flow and there's ups and downs. I stopped panicking when the pipeline of projects wasn't full.

Very, very difficult to do, especially as an introvert and especially as a perfectionist because you just want to know the lay of the land and you want to know that everything is going to be okay and you want to just feel like you know that tomorrow, there's not some impending doom that's going to happen.

Well, none of us have that guarantee. We don't. So you've got to learn to roll with the punches, and that is so difficult, but that's also – that's business ownership. Just plain and simple. Whether you're an introvert or a creative or anything, you've got to learn to roll with it.

So I started to see my business for what it was. Like I said, just an ebb and flow that when I examine it over a period of time and I look back was actually doing quite well. And mediocrity is really a very sneaky situation and many of us creative entrepreneurs and introverts, we stay there because it's not technically the worse-case scenario.

We know that the worst-case scenario would be you tried this thing and you failed, and now everyone knows that you couldn't do it. In our minds, that's the worst. And so mediocrity, while we're not completely satisfied with it, it's not as bad as the worst-case scenario.

And that mean little inner voice is doing its best to convince us that it's not so bad to work with clients who don't pay on time, or to abandon a

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marketing strategy altogether because it's too overwhelming and you don't have time to figure it out. Or to avoid putting some structure and boundaries in place because it's probably going to offend your clients when you don't communicate via text anymore.

I said it. I said it. Don't text your clients. Mediocrity is acid. It burns away at our intuition until we are numb to what our gut tells us. Mediocrity is the poison that told me that an unhappy marriage was better than living alone, and it was the poison that told me that some money is better than no money.

And when it came to clients trying to negotiate the absolute lowest fee for my services, mediocrity was the acid that said give them what they want because if you don't, you may have no clients at all. It lulls us into believing that stuff.

Now, fortunately, we are all created with a desire to want more for ourselves, and sometimes some of us tap into it and sometimes we don't. I tapped into that desire because I saw the dock I was standing on in that swamp and realized that the mediocrity was actually the alligators. Not the dock where I was going to starve to death.

So stepping into action and taking steps to get out of that place was not easy. I'm not going to lie to you. It wasn't easy. I don't want to downplay the story. I was 100% difficult at times. There were projects that I thought would work out and halfway along the way the clients just up and moved to another city. That actually happened and it was tough. It was really tough.

Projects that are clients that you think are going to be so promising and maybe a little bit in the middle of everything you kind of realize oh, they didn't show their true cards upfront and wow, what have I gotten myself into? I really honestly want to quit but I'm not a quitter, and so I'm just going to have to just see this out until the bitter freaking end.

I know someone's been there. I know that's not just me. But ultimately, I knew I could not stay there and leave my future up to chance. I had to build

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a life raft, and when it was ready, I got in and pushed off. And that brings me to the third order of business.

So ultimately, I did end my marriage because the verbal and emotional abuse was absolutely unacceptable, and probably had a lot to do with why I'd become such a retched mess in the first place. But oddly enough, it was one of the last steps I took in fixing things, and not surprisingly, it came after my inner voice started being kinder to me.

And looking back, sometimes I don't even recognize the girl that I was even three years ago. The girl I am today would never have stayed on that dock or in that marriage or in a floundering business for as long as I did. And it's shocking how different my inner voice sounds to me now because it no longer tries to convince me that the curse of mediocrity is enough for me.

No, actually, now my inner voice tells me crazy things like you're the most hilarious when you have a spray tan, or girl, you should start a podcast. Or hey, you know what would be a great idea? You should start cooking keto recipes and record yourself cooking and put it on Instagram.

My inner voice is like, my biggest cheerleader these days and that's an awesome place to be, especially when I look back at where I was. So ask yourself, if you feel silenced, is it really because you're being drowned out by other people? Introverts, think about this.

Is the voice trying to silence you actually your own? Because the truth is you can't do anything to control other people. But you absolutely have the power to control your own voice. So don't settle for mediocrity because even though it may seem harmless, it is a gator-infested swamp just waiting for you to sit down and give up.

And besides, if you're having a really bad day and that inner voice won't cooperate, you can always get a spray tan. I'm kidding. I mean, I'm kidding but not really. A spray tan really does do wonders for me.

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So I've shared my story with you because I feel like it's important for you to know that we all have struggles. We all have a story to tell. And from the outside looking in on my life, I'm sure it looks completely different from what you've just learned about me.

Some of you have known me for a while and you know that I did get divorced. You probably didn't know exactly how bad it was. It was pretty bad. The divorce itself was – I'm not going to say it was easy, but it was amicable. The things that happened after the divorce emotionally, I mistakenly coined 2017, the year after I got divorced, as "the year of Rachel."

It absolutely was not the year of Rachel. It was not. This year, 2019 has really been the year of Rachel. And I guess because I just wanted some type of – I wanted to turn a corner. I wanted things to be positive. I wanted to move forward with my life, and I felt like I had spent so many years in that relationship and in a business that just was not supporting me, kind of just like looking around and going okay, but when is my real life going to begin?

And your real life begins the minute you decide to take control and to just say some things are not acceptable anymore and I'm not going to live like this anymore. And maybe that means clients. Maybe it means the types of projects that you're taking.

I just don't want anyone out there who is a creative introvert to hold themselves small. Just don't do that because when we hold ourselves small, we really limit ourselves and we limit our potential. And holding ourselves small is absolutely what mediocrity looks like.

And maybe the mediocrity that you experience from day-to-day isn't so acidic as what I was experiencing, but overall, if you just kind of feel like this is not the life that I envisioned for myself, this is not the business I envisioned for myself, think about how you're speaking to yourself.

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Are you watching what other people are doing? Kind of like I was. Kind of on the sidelines, watching what other people were achieving and sort of thinking negative things about them because I really thought negative things about myself. Or are you allowing what other people say about you to really be internalized and become your own beliefs?

I don't know. I don't know what it is for you but I just want you to know, I was in a very bleak situation and that life raft was really my responsibility to build. And like I said, once I built it and I felt like I could get in it and paddle myself away, I did.

And so now my business is thriving. I can honest say I've never been happier in my life. The lie that mediocrity told me that staying married was going to be better than being alone is 100% not true.

Now, I don't want to be alone forever, but I'm not alone. I have an amazing group of friends and an amazing family, and my business is so much better now that I've decided to think positive things about myself.

So my best friend Mary Catherine gave me this thought earlier this year that life becomes what comes into your life. And that's just so amazing on so many levels to me because if what's coming into your life is just negativity and it's because the voice that's the most prevalent in your life is your own and it just wants to go to that negative place, you've got to make some changes.

You've got to start saying positive things and believe me, as an introvert, I understand how weird that is because it feels so weird the first time you do it. But I don't know, you say some positive things to yourself every morning in the mirror, eventually you do start to believe them.

If you have friends that lift you up, if you have family that are completely supportive, and you have clients that are just raving fans and want to tell everyone about you, you can't get there unless you're positive first. You can't.

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So think about that. Think about life becoming what comes into your life, and think about the voice that's telling you what your life needs to be because if it's your inner voice telling you that mediocrity is A-okay, you need to tell that little voice to shut up and have several seats. And it needs to, like I said, come correct and get in line.

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