

Ep #3: Stop Saying Yes to Things You Hate



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With Your Host

Rachel Cannon

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Ep #3: Stop Saying Yes to Things You Hate

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. Is it fall where you are? I'm sad to say it is absolutely still summer here in Louisiana. It's so hot and there are people in my neighborhood who are just defiantly putting out fall decorations like pumpkins and gourds and wreaths and I mean, I have to say, I do admire their fortitude and their denial.

Meanwhile, my sunglasses are still fogging up when I get out of my car. But I wanted to have a heart to heart with you today. I want all of my introverted creative entrepreneurs to lean in really close. Okay, I have something we need to talk about.

Y'all, we have got to stop saying yes to things that drain us. I mean it. And I'm preaching to myself too, so just include me in this message. So let me back up a little bit. In the past few weeks, my business has undergone a major restructuring and rebranding, and in addition to offering interior design services, I publicly announced that I am offering consulting services for creative introverted entrepreneurs.

It's something that I've been doing on the side for about three years. But I felt like since we were doing the restructuring, this was a good time to announce it on social media. And so then I also decided that I wanted to niche down my design business to focus on the needs of introverts at home and in the workplace.

And then I decided to start a podcast. Yes, this one. The one you're listening to. Now, the response has been absolutely amazing and we've been selling strategy days for consulting clients and ramping up our marketing for our design clients, but the work that has been going on internally in my office on my computer to make all of that possible, oh my

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god, there have been moments where I have said out loud, on the brink of tears, I regret everything.

Because I felt like I did. And I've come very close to having a complete meltdown at least twice. Not because I don't want to go in the direction I've decided, but because the work, the actual work is – it's confusing and hard and not in my wheelhouse.

And I've had to hire copywriters, a website designer, a virtual assistant, a production company, I flew my photographer in to get all of our new work photographed for the website. There are lead magnets that we have to get done. There is a CRM email system that has to be managed, and we're trying to get people onto our email list.

And in the middle of all of that, I have been needing to write and record these podcast episodes for you. So finally, one day this week, I had a stroke of genius and decided that rather than being the gopher between my copywriters and my email marketing manager and my website designer, that they could all just communicate with each other.

I needed to just – I mean, copy me on everything, but relaying the messages, I mean, I was running myself positively ragged trying to be the person going between everyone. As a result, I was being incredibly unproductive and I hate that. Hate it.

So as a creative introverted entrepreneur, I am familiar with that feeling because I experienced it quite a bit when I started my business. And I said yes to a lot of things that I did not want to do or that wore me out, mainly because I felt like I had to.

And a lot of us do that. We feel like we have to constantly keep up, so we constantly say yes to every offer, we accept every invitation, we show up at every event. We bend over backwards to make sure our clients are happy. We will stop everything in the middle of the day to go solve a design emergency, or at least that's what I hear a lot of designers – the feedback from them we get is.

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And let's be honest. We know better. We know better. I know better. I've gotten really comfortable saying I can't, or not right now, or let me think about it. But for some reason, in the middle of relaunching and rebranding and restructuring, I repeated some very old, very bad habits and luckily, I realized it and took the necessary steps to remedy it before I had a complete meltdown and decided that I was just going to pack it up and not do any of this.

So let's talk about why that is so important for us. So obviously for starters, we are introverts. We get drained a whole lot quicker than our extroverted friends. And not surprisingly, I've been coming home and crashing every night for four nights straight when I finally decided I had to make some changes with how my team was communicating.

I went home one day early with a migraine. I mean, it was a mess. And those are the signs for me that my energy is depleted and that reserve of energy is very precious to me. I have to protect it. It doesn't mean I'm just like this delicate little flower and I can't hang. I can definitely hang.

But when things are sort of spinning beyond my control and I feel like I don't have a good grasp on where I'm heading with all of this stuff and who needs what from me and when they need it and who forgot to send this to that person, this is my actual living nightmare.

So if we don't protect our energy, we will 100% find ourselves screaming I regret everything, as we choke back tears like I was earlier this week. And furthermore, as creatives, we can't function or tap into creativity if our energy resources are depleted.

And our clients have hired us for our creativity, remember? I mean, when you were a kid, did you ever do a project at school where you put it off to the last minute? I remember I was a very bad procrastinator and so school projects that required any type of poster or crafty type thing, I don't really enjoy that and so I would never want to just get it out of the way and be done with it.

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So of course, I'd wait until the last minute and then there would be tears and screaming and I would hate it, and I would do several versions of it the night before it was due and throw half of them away. You can't be creative when your energy is depleted. You just can't.

And it feels terrible to know you're not giving 100%, and it's because you've mismanaged your time. And probably, those tears are because you know you're not giving 100%. And not to mention, your clients will sense that something is off. Even if they don't say anything.

And that can create doubt and we don't even want to go down that rabbit hole and imagine what can happen if the worst-case scenario were to take place because as we know as introverts, we are constantly in our heads trying to imagine worst-case scenarios.

I think as in an effort to just sort of brace ourselves for what possible outcomes might be. And what it comes down to quite frankly is boundaries. And boundaries, that's kind of a hot button word these days. People love to talk about boundaries and crossing boundaries and setting boundaries and I mean, let's be honest.

We're some of the worst as entrepreneurs because we own our businesses and our clients have a direct line of communication with us any time they want to. And we feel very responsible for their happiness. We feel very responsible for doing a good job. We feel responsible for doing everything we can for there to be a positive outcome for our clients because we know if we haven't done our best, we're going to beat ourselves up.

And if things go south or goes sour, we're going to feel incredibly responsible for that. And it's difficult. It's really difficult for us, especially for those of us who are solopreneurs or one woman shows to set boundaries because we assume it's going to create tension between us and other people, especially clients.

And I hear this a lot from colleagues and friends of mine who own their own businesses. They just feel like there's no way I could not take a client

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phone call when I'm in the carpool line because I don't want to lose the job. And you've gone from zero to 100 in two seconds.

You've gone from I can't not take their call because I'm going to lose the client if I don't. Well, my feeling is always I've never called my dentist or my doctor or my attorneys after hours or on the weekends. I've never texted any of them.

And the truth of the matter is that even if they weren't doing something like picking their kids up from school, if they were playing golf and it was just for fun, they wouldn't answer their phone then. So we've just got to get some perspective about this.

So this is really big, and I want you to repeat after me. Make it work for me before I make it work for anyone else. Now, I read this in a book recently and I wish I knew what book it was and I don't because I would absolutely give the author credit. But that just hit me like a ton of bricks.

Because even though I've established this method of working in my design business, with my new business, I just went right back to my old habits and decided I was going to be the person that was responsible for every single thing, and I was making myself absolutely miserable and crazy and exhausted and sick and tired.

So I had to once again say hey, I can't do this, I need you all to communicate because this is out of my wheelhouse and it's not my expertise. And so when something is due, I'm going to need my VA to remind the person that it's due and just copy me on that communication rather than emailing me and saying hey, is the lead magnet for x, y, and z ready?

Which would then make me have to go and communicate with another person to say hey, did you finish that lead magnet. And then I'd have to relay their answer back. Like no. I'm honestly exhausted just telling you what that scenario would look like.

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So make it work for me before I make it work for anyone else. This is your new mantra. This and lighting yourself on fire to keep someone else warm is self-destructive. In fact, that may be a better one. Let's change it. That's going to be your new mantra.

So making it work for you before making it work for anyone else means that you don't attempt to run your business on a depleted battery. And it's very important for us to understand too that environments without boundaries can quickly, quickly become toxic.

So have you ever experienced this situation where you have a client who just sucks the life out of you? Maybe because you haven't been clear about the boundaries of your professional relationship, but their energy is just so awful that you come away feeling like you couldn't be creative if your life depended on it.

Oh hello, it does. Your creativity is your livelihood. And maybe they don't even realize that they're being a negative energy, but sometimes I think clients feel like they're not getting their money's worth if they're not constantly asking questions or if they're not constantly making me qualify my decisions.

What do you think about this? What do you think about that? What do you think about this? Are you sure? Are you 100% sure? I'm just not so sure. And it just starts to feel like I've said yes, I'm sure, for the last 20 minutes. I don't know why you think I'm going to change my mind now.

Although sometimes I do just give up and go yeah, that's great, you should do whatever you want. When I don't have any fight left in me, I'm just going to let them design it themselves. And I've been around people who clearly just do not see the value in what I do, and as a young designer, I'd expend so much energy trying to prove my worth to those people that I would just feel crummy after every exchange.

And I have a perfect example. One time I was working with this couple that it seemed like they just wanted to negotiate with me on every single aspect

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of the project. From what the fees were going to be, to how much money they wanted to spend on the products, although they had a very unrealistic budget to begin with, to I actually installed some artwork in their house and the husband came back and said this seems like an extravagant amount. Maybe we should offer them this amount.

And it was an embarrassingly low amount of money and the artist that they were suggesting we offer this little pitiful amount of change to was like, kind of a really famous artist. And it would have been so offensive for me to have to take back to her and be like, hey, I know you said your painting – I don't remember how much it was. We'll say \$10,000.

It wasn't, but I know your painting was \$10,000. My clients want to offer you \$300. Is that cool? I mean, no. That is not cool. So it took me a while to learn that you can't feed someone who isn't hungry. I mean, you just can't.

I have experienced this on more than one occasion where I felt like I was just really trying to sell myself very hard and that feels really bad. And so I don't do it anymore. I'm just not going to waste the energy and time it takes to convince someone that what I do is valuable and that they could benefit from it.

So since we're talking about creativity, what about people who have zero appreciation for artistic talent? Are we expected to educate them the entire time we do our jobs? I mean, that is a full-time job in and of itself.

So make it a point to monitor your tolerance levels with everyone because we feel like we have to be tolerant of all kinds of behavior and be the yes at all costs person. And that is absolutely the opposite of making it work for you before making it work for someone else. And it is the definition of lighting yourself on fire to keep someone else warm.

So a good example is one time my friend said – she's a very wonderful interior designer. Her uncle was building a hunting camp and that's a big deal here in the south. People build these extravagant camps and I mean, we say camps. They're like, amazing mansions.

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But anyway, her uncle was building this camp. And so I said oh, are you going to do it? Are you going to design it for him? And she goes, oh, no, he has absolutely no interest in working with me. And I was floored because I thought I was the only person that that'd happened to.

My family has never really asked me to design anything for them other than my mom and my sister. So I was like oh, well, maybe I'm not the only one. And I said, really? I'm so surprised. Because she's such an amazing businesswoman. I'm thinking, surely she would have been able to communicate to him why he needed to hire her.

And she goes, girl, he doesn't care about what I do. Why would I try to spend my time convincing him that he needs to hire me when what he would really rather do is spend his money on deer stands and rifles? And I thought, oh my god, you're exactly right. That's where his priority is.

And I can't make someone else's priorities be my priorities. So lighting yourself on fire to keep someone else warm is self-destructive. And sometimes - we've talked about this in the past, how that voice in our head can be the one that's most prevalent and the most negative. So you got to kind of keep that in check.

And it makes a lot of sense when we put it in extreme terms, but allowing someone to suck the life out of you or making you jump through hoops to show that your talent is valuable, or constantly having to qualify your artistic choices to them, that's basically the same thing as lighting yourself on fire to keep someone else warm.

And we have to stop saying yes to these things that drain us because being a yes at all costs person will eventually cost you money. Actually, it'll eventually cost you more than money. You'll resent your clients, you'll resent your vendors, you'll resent your employees, and ultimately, you'll resent yourself for even deciding to start a business.

So introverted creatives, we have to have some non-negotiables. If you want to go grab a pen so you can take notes, this would be the time to do

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it. If you want to pause, grab your pen and your notepad and come back, I'll give you a second.

Okay, I'm guessing you had your second, you went and got your stuff to write with. So number one. Number one non-negotiable. We have to measure our interaction with others so that we can maintain our ability to think. And even if we aren't fielding rapid fire questions, a client who is constantly asking what if, what if, what if, is going to impede your ability to put a coherent thought together.

And I typically just answer that with, you know what, I don't know right now. I'll have to go back and think about it and get back to you. Or you can just go silent until they stop talking. Sometimes that works too. Sometimes that's the most effective.

If client meetings have a tendency to drain you, keep them to a minimum of two a day. I mean, make it work for you before making it work for anyone else.

Two, we really need spaces where we can achieve deep focus without distractions. And this includes clients who prove to us over and over again that they just do not value what we do. So if we're continually having to course correct because they keep grabbing the wheel, we will never be able to do our best work because the distractions are too frequent.

And it's not going to be anything you're going to be proud of when it's done. I mean, if the client is constantly stepping in and taking over, at some point you need to just say hey, I think you might be happier doing this on your own.

If you're not an interior designer, if you're a landscape architect, you might say hey, I think maybe you'll be happier designing your yard yourself, or if you're a photographer, hey, I don't think that you like my vision so maybe you'd be happier taking your pictures yourself.

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I mean honestly, if we're in a space, either a physical space or an emotional and mental space where we can't achieve deep focus because the client is so distracting, we're not going to be doing our A+ level work and that's not going to work for us. So make it work for you before you make it work for anyone else.

And three, beyond just setting boundaries that determine how you'll run your business, you also do need solitude and quiet time away from work. And I'm going to give you just a radical idea here. But the best thing I ever did was to stop working from home because it was with me all the time and I felt obligated to work all the time because it was just right there in the next room.

And then I stopped text messaging with clients a few years ago, and it is a company-wide policy now. And can I just tell you, I was so scared about saying out loud to our clients and sending a message to all of our clients that hey, our new policy is that we're not going to text message with clients anymore because I absolutely thought oh my god, if I don't text message with them, they're not going to want to work with me and they're going to hire someone else and I'm going to lose all my clients.

And you know what? No, I didn't. That's crazy. But knowing that when I leave for the day that work is not coming home with me and that clients can't text me in the wee hours of the night or morning, life-changing. And believe you me, they did.

And it's not their fault. I had never said don't text me after hours or on the weekend. I had never said it. They just thought, I mean, I text everybody else every time I feel like it, why can't I text you?

And I had clients who would text me at 6am on a Sunday and say hey, we're walking through the house and we noticed that the banister looks weird and start sending me pictures. One time I had a client text me while I was in church on a Sunday morning.

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And I texted her back and I said, I'm so sorry, I can't talk right now. I'm in church. And she texted me again to say oh I'm so sorry, I didn't mean to disturb you but – and then she gave me her problem again. I'm going oh my god, people, boundaries.

So I stopped saying yes to things that drain me and now even though I occasionally wander back into that pattern like I did earlier this week, I am quick to correct it. And it just doesn't feel good, and I need to feel good to do a good job.

So the simplest way we will succeed as introverted creatives is to set boundaries that make things work for us before we make them work for anyone else. And the simplest way we can do that is by acting like introverts. Don't set yourself on fire to keep anyone else warm.

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