

Ep #5: Stop Thinking, Start Deciding



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Rachel Cannon

[Loudmouth Introvert](#) with Rachel Cannon

Ep #5: Stop Thinking, Start Deciding

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.

Hello, creative introverts! Welcome to episode 5 of Loudmouth Introvert! I hope you've been having a fantastic week. If you listened to episode 4, you heard that I was going to be inducted into my high school's hall of fame. Well, that ceremony was last weekend, and it was just so much fun. A big group of my friends came to support me, which meant the world to me, plus it was completely surreal being back at my alma mater. Quite a lot has changed since I was last there in 1997, and it was incredible that they felt that I'd earned this distinction! In fact, it was such a fun night, that as I think back over it right now, I think maybe the toughest part was deciding what to wear! First world problems, am I right?

But while we're on the topic of making decisions - Have you ever had trouble coming to a decision? I mean a decision about something other than your outfit. Most people have, at one time or another, really struggled with what to do - whether it's business, life, relationships, etc. We've all been faced with having to make a decision, and the ones that stump most of us are the difficult ones. The ones where the outcome is obvious before we ever actually make up our minds.

What about when you actually know what the right decision is, but you hesitate before taking action? If you've ever had to break up with someone, you've been exactly in this spot. You know you need to do it, but you also know you're going to hurt someone if you do, and that is what gives you pause. In business, if you've ever had to fire a client, you may have grappled with taking action on that decision for awhile after you came to the

Ep #5: Stop Thinking, Start Deciding

conclusion, because you were worried about how it would all go down. This is all pretty normal for most of us.

But creative introverts can feel this way about a lot of things, not just the difficult things. We can overthink our answers, our creative choices, our next business moves, all because we spend SO much time in our heads to begin with. The idea that we would make a decision on a whim is a completely foreign concept! Our classic behavior is to take the information that's available to us, then think through every possible solution or outcome. We'll think through several ideas, weeding out the ones we don't consider valuable, and only speak up or make a decision when we feel like we have the "right" answer or we've arrived at the least scary decision.

Now, in a lot of situations, that's a good thing. We're thoughtful, we're deliberate, we rarely have to take back something we've said. But when it gets us into trouble is when we get so trapped in thinking through the various possibilities that we come to no decision at all, and never take any action at all. This inaction could be based on past experiences, nervousness, but most of the time, it's because we've done a masterful job of convincing ourselves that we're never going to be successful, no matter what we decide or do. In any case, introverted creatives can quickly go from thinking through our ideas, straight into a zone of critical thoughts that immobilize us into indecision, thus hindering ourselves from any real growth in our personal or professional lives.

In Episode 2, I told you a little about my personal story. I didn't fill in all the gaps, but you know that I was in an unhappy marriage. What I didn't tell you was that I was in a relationship with him for 17 years. We dated for 8 years, and we were married for 9 years. I spent so much of that time thinking and re-thinking about whether or not this was the right relationship

Ep #5: Stop Thinking, Start Deciding

for me. Looking back, I can see that there were red flags all over the place. Once we were married, the thoughts quickly (and I mean within the first 3 months) shifted from whether or not it was a good relationship (spoiler: it wasn't) to whether or not I would get divorced. Then I spent nine years thinking about all of possible outcomes of that decision, but focusing primarily on the negative outcomes. I would think things like "it's better to be in a bad marriage than alone in the world," and "you'll be single and have to earn twice what you're earning now to live!" Of course, I know now that I'm divorced that those thoughts and feelings were just holding me back, but I had convinced myself that staying there was the safest of the options I was faced with, and so I opted to do nothing and to continue to think on it. I never officially made a decision about staying or going, I just lived in this world of limbo, feeling like my life was never actually going to start.

Until finally, I just could not take it anymore. I was a version of myself that I do not recognize today. Completely devalued, bitter, resentful, unhappy, you name it. When I finally made a decision and took the steps to get divorced, I felt so much relief. Instead of fear and regret, I felt like I had this great big future ahead of me, and my real life was finally about to start. Now, 3 years (almost to the day) post-divorce, I can say without a doubt that I have never been happier. I allowed things to get so bad before making a move, and for what? That time is lost to me forever, although I don't live with regret about it. I had to come to this decision in my own time, and that's fine. At least I did eventually make a decision. But occasionally, I do wonder how my life would be different if I'd just decided sooner.

1. So I share that story with you so you can see what it was really like to be inside my head. It's like this in most creative introverts' heads. We can get so wrapped up in examining every situation from every angle, our thoughts can become an echo chamber, which causes doubt. My friend is a therapist who has told me that this imagining worst-case scenarios, then

Ep #5: Stop Thinking, Start Deciding

amplifying them, is called “catastrophizing.” I used to be the worst about this, becoming hyperfocused on only the negative possibilities. With respect to my business, I would think things like this: “I can’t afford to move my business into an office, so there’s no point in even looking!” And “My work will never be published, so why even submit it?” Or “My clients would find someone else to work with if I changed my rates!” In short, my brain was wired to expect and prepare for a negative outcome - in fact, most people’s brains are. It’s our way of protecting ourselves from hurt or embarrassment. Our brains show us the worst, as a warning, hoping we’ll pick another route. Unfortunately, this is where that echo chamber comes into the picture. We envision the worst, our worries deepen, we doubt ourselves, and ultimately, we can’t make a decision.

2. That doubt that gets created causes introverts to become immobilized. We make very generalized conclusions based on our doubt, rather than on reality. We think things like “I already know how this is going to turn out!” Without actually having any evidence. We allow the fear of messing up to stop us in our tracks, inhibiting our growth. We start believing that it’s safer to just keep thinking things through, rather than making a decision. When end up living in the moment before we finally have to decide. That makes us feel good, like we have options because we haven’t actually made a choice yet. In our minds, we rationalize this by telling ourselves we’re in control. And appearing to have control over our behavior is very important to us! We want people to think we’re poised and composed, even when we’re cracking right under the surface! There is nothing worse than for our insecurities to be on display, which is why fear has so much power over us. We care very much about the threat of losing, making a mistake, or appearing to have lost control - so when our generalized conclusions based in doubt immobilize us, we haven’t actually maintained control of anything. And really, what is control if not haute couture fear? When we become immobilized, fear has won, and fear (in this sense) is nothing more than our assumptions about the future.

Ep #5: Stop Thinking, Start Deciding

3. Sometimes we like to pretend that being stuck in this cycle where we're "thinking things through" is the same thing as planning, and it's not. You're procrastinating, which James Wedmore calls a self-defense mechanism for avoiding criticism. Planning actually involves us making some decisions about things (like deciding to file for divorce...I pretend planned that for years before I actually made the decision to do it). You can't come up with a plan without settling on some conclusions. All of this worry, doubt, indecision, and fear is just our minds' way of trying to make excuses for us, so we need to come to terms with this: excuses don't keep us safe, they keep us small. Excuses are just a bad pattern of all-or-nothing thinking. "I would do that, but then X will happen." We have the amazing ability resolute about the future, without ever actually taking any action at all. When we get into the game of pretend planning (i.e., procrastinating), we're actually just making excuses for why we can't take action - and in this place, we believe that there are only absolutes, and most of them are negative. And as creative introverts we are hardwired to believe that perfection is the only reasonable outcome. And there's no way we'd accept a negative outcome, so we allow that all-or-nothing thinking to be our guide, assuming that taking action is automatically going to lead to failure.

What I am NOT saying is this awful platitude that seems to have crept into our collective consciousness: feel the fear and do it anyway.

I am NOT a fan of this phrase.

For my creative introverted friends, let's break this down into something we can swallow.

Ep #5: Stop Thinking, Start Deciding

First, fear - real fear - is someone's coming at me with a knife. My actual life is being threatened. What we are experiencing is discomfort. So when we think back over the examples I've given you, can you start to see how being paralyzed due to discomfort is...well, honestly, a little silly? Let's agree that we're not actually fearful of any of this stuff, we're just highly uncomfortable that we'll make a mistake, and then be embarrassed.

Second, the remedy for discomfort is action. I do not mean "do it anyway." Have you ever had to go to physical therapy for an injury? The same rules apply here. If we allow our discomfort to immobilize us, we will stay stuck with the same wounds we've been carrying around. And they only get worse. Physical therapy is a guided, planned out process that allows our bodies to heal themselves. Nobody is telling someone who just had surgery on their elbow to try to pitch a fast ball the next day. (That's "do it anyway" thinking.) Nobody is telling you to move your business out of your home tomorrow. No, I'm saying make a plan. The plan will still cause you some discomfort, just like in PT - Is it painful to work those joints and muscles in physical therapy? Yes. Will it kill us? No. Will it make us better in the long run? 100% yes.

Third, and most importantly, "doing it anyway" for a creative introvert could be better described as setting a goal and giving yourself some time to achieve it. "Do it anyway" sounds so risky, like jumping off a cliff. I've never wanted to jump off a cliff, and I'm certainly not about to start with my business! I'd much rather make a plan, see the lay of the land, and then take action once I decide on my next move.

Maybe "feel the discomfort and come up with a plan to overcome it" is a better saying.

Ep #5: Stop Thinking, Start Deciding

Our thoughts become the voice in our head. When we focus on negative outcomes only, we end up communicating awful things to ourselves and about ourselves. And there is no voice more convincing than your own.

So how can you stop thinking and start deciding?

1. When you hear yourself catastrophizing, stop. If things had worked out the way I imagined they would, based on all of the catastrophes I visualized, I would be in a long term, supervised mental care facility. I know stopping this behavior is much easier said than done, because I've been there. You're imagining failures, but y'all - failure is just one step on your way to success. It's a blip on the radar when you look back over your career. You will have more than one failure, and that's totally okay. Trying something, and failing at that attempt, does not mean that YOU are a failure. You haven't actually failed until you quit trying.

2. While I was going through my divorce, I had a big note on my mirror that read "Control is an illusion. Surrendering and letting go are real." For me, that meant letting go of the illusion that my marriage was okay and going to work out, and surrendering to the feelings of sadness and regret that I was feeling. I'm not gonna lie to you, even though I knew it was the right decision, I had to deal with those feelings. Maybe in the context of our businesses, this might mean something like letting go of the notion that we're perceived as having it all together, and surrendering to the understanding that we need to ask for help. Our egos are bruised when we have to admit that we're not perfect. But when we allow ourselves to let go of the illusion of perfection, we give open ourselves up to so many more opportunities because we have to actually acknowledge our deepest feelings and desires. And that's when growth and progress happen.

Ep #5: Stop Thinking, Start Deciding

3. You can't build a business by thinking about things indefinitely. Stop glamorizing the idea that if you never make a decision, you have all kinds of options open to you. Doors close all the time when we can't bring ourselves to take action, and it's much more palatable to have explored an option in earnest and make the decision that it's not right for you, rather than having the opportunity be taken away, and have you left wondering. The remedy for the stress we feel by getting lost in our echo chamber of thoughts is to TAKE ACTION. There's a quote by Dr. Robert Anthony that is so fitting for today's episode:

"The problem with worry is that we attract the very thing we are trying to avoid. We live a self-fulfilling prophecy. Life keeps its agreement with us through our beliefs, because whatever we think about, we bring about. Life is like a mirror. It reflects back whatever image we present to it."

Creative introverts, now is the time to stop thinking, and start deciding. Hey, y'all, if you love the show and you find it useful, I would really appreciate it if you would leave me a rating and a review on Apple Podcasts, or iTunes if you're an Android or Windows user. Your feedback helps other creative introverted entrepreneurs find the show and it helps me create an awesome show that provides tons of value.

So, visit rachelcannonlimited.com/podcastlaunch for directions on how to subscribe, rate, and review.

Thanks for listening to this episode of *Loudmouth Introvert*. Want more? Come visit us at loudmouth-introvert.com. We'll see you back here next week.