

Ep #14: A Case for the Quiet Room (Interior Design for Introverts) Part 1



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With Your Host

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.

Happy New Year, friends!! How was your Christmas? I have to tell you, mine did NOT get off to a good start. If you follow me on Instagram (@rclinteriors), you might have seen me talking about having a stye in my eye. I was asking for home remedies because I'd been dealing with this particular bad boy for close to a month and I'd been on prescription drugs and THOUGHT I'd taken care of it, but then it came back! Okay, so here's the deal. Christmas is the most wonderful time of the year, and in this day and age, what that means is: pictures. Lots and lots of pictures. Parties and pictures. And what this girl wants more than anything at Christmas is to be able to do my eyes up like silver bells for every party I'm invited to. And dealing with this stye business REALLY put a cramp in my style. So I went back to the eye doctor about 3 weeks before Christmas and do you know what? I got another stye in my OTHER EYE the next day. I have been on every antibiotic known to the civilized world for a month now. Not that styes are convenient anytime, but around the holidays, that is an especially cruel trick by Mother Nature. I also know every home remedy known to man for styes now - baby shampoo, hot compresses, someone even suggested apple cider vinegar. All of the pictures from this past Christmas are of me with glasses, no eye makeup and a really bright lip, looking like someone who could be related to me, but distantly because I don't even look like myself! I am who I am because of my eye makeup. I'm telling you all of that to lead to this: it's January of 2020 and for once, I'm relieved that it's a new year. Usually New Year's gives me a lot of anxiety. People are real big on sharing their word of the year, or their goals for the year, or even their accomplishments from the year before.... I'm always surprised at what people will share when the calendar flips to the new year. Therefore, in the spirit of surprise sharing, I'll share this: I've always felt like it was the most depressing day of the year. A big let-down after all of the festivities of the

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holidays, and then New Year's Eve...New Year's Day usually finds me wishing it was already well into the new year so I could not have to listen to or read everyone's hopes and aspirations for themselves. My hopes and aspirations are things like "go to bed at 9pm" this year...or "find a way to make sleeping what you get paid to do." Not this year, though. I am actually excited for this new year. I won't bore you with my word of the year, mainly because I don't have one, but I will tell you that after this last holiday season, I am fully embracing the idea that all introverts NEED a quiet room. I don't mean your bedroom, I mean another completely different space where you get to go away from everything and everyone. While I was dealing with not one, but two styes, last Christmas, all I wanted was to be holed up in a dark room somewhere, away from the world, so I could convalesce in peace.

That got me to thinking about the way I feel like this most days. Not that I'm sick most days, but how, after I go to work, or spend time with friends, I just want to go home to where things are quiet. Obviously, we all understand what it means to want to go home, that the idea of "home" is almost inexplicable, it's so deep and heavy. But why do we love the idea of home so much? I heard interior designer Barbara Barry speak one time about how she broke her ankle and had to stay home for a few weeks while it healed, and she learned so much about her house during that time. She got to be an observer for days on end and ultimately, she found that her home played a big role in her recovery. And if there's one thing I know, as an introvert, every day requires some level of recovery for me.

Last year, I decided to niche down my interior design business to be more specific - working with introverted professionals to help them create homes and offices that respect and nurture the needs of the introvert. I'm not a fan of open floor plans - never have been - but now, more than ever, I am on a

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soapbox/mission to change the way we design and build homes and public spaces.

While I was pressing through the holidays, shopping, wrapping presents, going to parties, etc., I found that the one place I really wanted to be more than anywhere else was at home. Like something was physically pulling me there. It's safe there. All the things I like are there. It's peaceful and quiet. I can nap there. Maybe it was because I wasn't on my normal work schedule...but I think I broke through to a whole new level of being a homebody this year. Possibly because I'm embracing being an introvert and all that it means, and I'm just not willing to be exhausted or depleted anymore.

So in thinking about how that disruption in my normal routine really wore me out, I started thinking about my design clients and the way I wanted to help them. I love beautiful rooms, but more than that, I understand how our interiors must play a role in how we recharge and recover. But I also understand that most of us are sharing space with others (maybe even some extroverts), so how can we work with both introverts and extroverts to help them peacefully co-exist?

Enter the idea of the Quiet Room. For an introvert, a "quiet room" is not just a room where there is no sound. A quiet room is a sanctuary from the stimulation and overwhelm that we encounter every day, where we can go and unwind, revive our energy, and give our brains and our senses a break. In my 20s, when I'd get home from work in a VERY extroverted office environment, I just needed some time, away from people, stimulation, etc., to zone out and recharge. It usually started with the car ride home. I would get in the car after a day of being pulled from my desk by constant

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distractions, wishing I could finish at least one task, feeling tired by 2pm, and ready for a nap by the time I clocked out, and I'd ride home in complete silence. The minute I walked through the door, I'd change into pjs, get into bed, and watch *The Barefoot Contessa* and fall asleep for at least 20 minutes because her voice was very soothing. Then I'd wake up and watch the episode again because I actually did want to see what she was cooking. Sidenote: I've since discovered ASMR and my naps have become so much better, and I still immediately put on pajamas when I get home from work. But at that time, that little hour-long break was my version of a quiet room.

You might be thinking – okay, but I'm a wife and a mother, or I'm a single parent, and I don't have time to take a nap when I get home. My day doesn't end until everyone else's does! And furthermore, I can't just take a room in my house and turn it into a meditation room. Well if you know me at all, you know I'd never tell you to meditate because as an introvert my mind won't shut up any more than yours will, and that's wasted efforts for me. Today, I just want to talk to you about the importance of giving yourself permission to restore your energy and avoid shutting down from too much stimulation. In the next episode, I'm going to cover some specifics about the actual design of your quiet room, but before we can do that, we need to really dive into this idea that we deserve it. Obviously because we, as introverts and creatives, feel we have to earn everything – and if we are going to invest in ourselves, we need very good data to back up that decision!

So let me just start by telling you: I hear you. There are days when I don't get to stick to my little routine, and I can feel them catching up with me after a day or two. I'm not saying you need to neglect the other areas of your life, but I'm saying it's important for you to prioritize your need to listen to your internal rhythm. Think about it: our culture tells us that we must be creating

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and consuming content 24 hours a day, or be left behind! When we think of our businesses, and how we position them in our markets, we feel overwhelmed and like we can't catch up because we don't have the resources others do, or maybe just the bandwidth that some of our extroverted counterparts do. But what does our internal rhythm tell us?

I don't know about you, but mine reaches its limits with stimulation. I get bored with constantly looking at social media, yet I still do it because we're conditioned at this point to not want to miss anything. I could be resting, reading, soaking in the tub, but instead, I'm staring at a screen. So my point is this – if we're spending hours a day on social media or on a device of some sort (and if you think you're not, you are, and you can check your daily screen time report on your phone) and feeding the monster that drains us, why do we think we don't have time to do a little self-preservation and recharge for 40 minutes a day?

So, it's 2020. And rather than asking you to pick a word of the year, or set some scary goals for the year, or make resolutions you will not keep by next week, I'm asking you to take care of your introversion. Give yourself permission to take time to rest and recover. It doesn't have to be every single day, and I don't think it's something we can "schedule" because that, again, is putting us back on the rhythm of our culture that tells us we can't NOT be doing something every second of the day.

What I'm talking about is honoring your body's own needs. Just like you need to eat, you need to rest. But being an introvert means you're going to need more rest more often than others. And that's completely normal and fine! Since I created this podcast for introverted entrepreneurs in creative

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industries, I want you to think about what that means as it relates to your abilities to run your business.

First, as you prepare to create your Quiet Room, consider this: we already know that this world is full of distractions, and what we, as introverts and creatives, need more than anything to build our businesses is to achieve deep focus. And although we do spend a lot of time in our minds, thinking about things, when we want to accomplish something specific, we must have ZERO distractions. A designated space where no one can interrupt you is the perfect way to start checking those things off of our lists. And what helps us feel relaxed more than anything? Knowing we haven't let anything fall through the cracks. When our minds are full of "to-dos" and we haven't organized them or started to work on them, we are restless, wired, anxious. But if we have the space selected where we go to work on those things, as well as the time blocked off to do them, we feel productive and energized, rather than weighed down with all of the things we need to be doing. And if you're like me, there is no resting until I feel like I've done everything I need to do, otherwise, it's just going to nag me until I get up and do it. Not to mention – when you clear your mind of the menial tasks, you can tap into your creativity faster and really spend some quality time with those big, imaginative thoughts that got you into your creative business in the first place!

Second, when you think about creating your Quiet Room, think about all the ways our culture asks you to be "on" on a daily basis. We must make small talk with the person checking us out in a store. We should sound pleasant and happy on the phone. Communicating with our clients sometimes comes with a very big price tag of diplomacy and not wanting to come across as inflexible. We're expected to chit-chat with people about their day, or heaven forbid you run into someone you know while you're out and they want to do a catch-up session on the minutiae of life right there in

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the parking lot. As an introvert, you know that you're not rude for not wanting to engage in any of this – but our society says that we must, in order to be seen as having polite manners. But small talk, chit-chat, diplomacy, all of those come at a very great expense to introverted creatives. The shallow stuff drains us. We'd rather wait until we can really deep dive into things so we can make a meaningful connection. What if, on top of all of that transactional kind of conversation, you're also dealing with an actual issue with a client, or with one of your kids or a family member? We need our energy to be preserved, but our society tells us that small talk is to be expected and if we're not okay with that, we're rude! The price we pay for small talk and shallow connections is great. It can completely derail a train of thought or a schedule and it takes us sooo much longer to get back on track! Simply put, we need time OFF from having to be ON. All that is asked of us – to engage, however meaningless the connection, and plaster a smile on our face, or to have to do the dance of peacekeeping with clients in order to be tactful – is shaped by the way our culture honors extroversion. Your Quiet Room will give you the space you need to process all of it. The meaningless interactions and the big issues, so you can close those chapters and have a life outside of your work.

And finally, we, as entrepreneurs, need some privacy. We're bombarded with over-sharing every day. I can't even say it's necessarily people sharing their highlight reel...there are people who share everything: fights with their spouses, issues with their kids, all of it goes out there on social media. And you can engage on whatever level you feel appropriate, but this again is where I begin to feel a heaviness start to move in on me. For me, it's best not to engage. It's also best for me not to share a lot of personal stuff. I feel like the more people know about me, the more they want from me. As a business owner, I like keeping a lot of things private – like plans for my business, goals, things I'm working on. I might share with a select group of like-minded people, but I've found that privacy helps me feel secure. Take that concept literally, and we have maybe the best case of all for a Quiet

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Room. Many of you have written and told me that you feel like the only privacy you have is when you're getting dressed or bathing because someone is ALWAYS asking for something from you, even at work! Your day is a stream of interruptions while you attempt to be productive, and then when you get home, you are juggling extra-curricular activities, dinner, homework, and more. Essentially: everyone has access to you all the time. Incidentally, this is going to be the most difficult concept to embrace. Ready? Not everyone needs access to you all the time. Not even your family. I know. That's explosive. Possibly think of it this way: we need boundaries. We need a cut-off on what people can expect and request of us. Maybe after 8:00pm, you get an hour to yourself. Maybe between getting off of work and when your family gets home. Maybe you close your office door at work and take a full hour for lunch and you even get a little nap in there if you can. The way you find this time is up to you, but I want you to get comfortable knowing that you need it as much as you need food and oxygen.

Because next time, we're going to talk about actually designing a Quiet Room, and how being an interior designer AND an introvert has influenced my design philosophy. I can't wait to share that with you because I think it's really going to drive home everything we've discussed today – from how we, as introverts, need to tune into our internal rhythm to the way we deserve a space to escape from the feeling of running on fumes. The year is new, and this is the time to embrace a change that is going to have a super-positive influence on all areas of your life, including your business!

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.

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