

## Ep #15: A Case for the Quiet Room (Interior Design for Introverts) Part 2



### Full Episode Transcript

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.

Hello friends! Welcome back to the podcast! Have you gotten used to writing 2020 as the year yet? I'm not there yet. It takes me a few months to get used to making that change, but then I'm also the person who will periodically write the year as 2009 because at this point, they are all a blur to me.

Today's Loudmouth Letter was a comment on the blog, which if you didn't already know, you can find at [rachelcannonlimited.com/podcast](http://rachelcannonlimited.com/podcast) – we post show notes there, plus we have all kinds of great links to more content, so be sure to visit us there! And while you're there, please leave a note, like Brandi Wilkins, who said (about Episode 11, "Community and Collaboration"), "Each episode is great, but this one has been my absolute favorite because it is so timely for me and where I am. The shark analogy was huge! Hearing that confirmed for me that it is okay to need help and it's okay to admit it. I absolutely appreciate this podcast because I finally feel that for once someone gets me and understands my struggles and how my mind operates. Thank you so much, Rachel!"

Brandi, I can't tell you how much I love to hear that. It is amazing to me to hear exactly how many of us have been introverts, attempting to function in this extroverted culture and feeling totally exhausted and overwhelmed because of it. In fact, last week, we talked about making a case for a Quiet Room. If you haven't heard that episode, now is a good time to stop, go back and catch up, then join us here for this episode, which is part 2.

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Many of you know that in addition to being a business consultant, I'm an interior designer. In fact, I've spent the majority of my career building my interior design business. I knew at a very young age that I wanted to become an interior designer, and after years of reaching each pinnacle of success that I set out to achieve, I found myself feeling a little disillusioned with it a couple of years ago. It was beginning to feel very transactional. It seemed like everyone – and I do mean everyone – was becoming an interior designer, and the already-crowded market was getting more and more saturated every day. Having worked for all of my adult life as an interior designer, I found it difficult to continue to compete with other designers based on our aesthetic alone. I'm a fan of lots of designers – including people in my city with whom I'm friends – so I didn't like the idea that if someone's work looked similar to mine, we were being judged solely on that...and our fees. I knew I needed to find a deeper meaning in this work in order for me to continue to grow, both professionally and personally.

I spent a lot of time searching for the “why” behind my chosen career. To be honest, as a young person, I just thought this was glamorous and that interior designers made tons of money. Sure, there are glamorous moments, and some of us are lucky enough to make tons of money, but on the whole, this is a complicated, challenging, at times frustrating, and (for many) financially fruitless career. Yes! To anyone listening who is not an interior designer, don't believe everything you hear. Most professional interior designers are making roughly \$36-\$40k a year. A far cry from what we've all been led to believe. So “money” turned out not to be my big “why.” I kept digging deeper and deeper and at every turn, I found that the “why” just didn't feel like enough to me. Is it life changing? I mean, it definitely makes people's lives better – you know, those who can afford it – for a moment, at least. Is it life-affirming? Meh. Depends on what's important to

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you. Does it make you feel confident? Sure, there is something to be said for being proud of your home. But all of this still had the sting of transaction attached to it...like the way a new car is the most exciting thing in the world for the first few months that you have it. But like the car, a home that is merely valuable because it's beautiful eventually loses its lustre. The "new" wears off.

Focusing on the function and features that make life easier seemed to be the area I wanted to concentrate on, when it hit me: I've been preaching against open floor plans for years, but what if there's more to that. What if I hate open floor plans because I'm an introvert? I can't tell you how many open floor plans I've looked at and just seen square foot after square foot of unused space. Unusable space, actually. Hundreds of square feet devoted to the open floor plan that served no purpose at all because furniture can only be spaced out so far before it starts to feel weird and disconnected. We've eliminated walls and become a nation of noise-making devices, and we wonder why we're all frazzled and fried all the time!

It was then that I knew my business had to make a change, and it needed to be a bold one. If you visit my website now, you'll see that I'm taking the idea of interior design to a new place. I had to do this for myself. It doesn't mean I can't work with clients who just want beautiful homes, but I had to find a way to make all of this more meaningful. And working with introverts who are also professionals was the most natural fit in the world for me because I know from first-hand experience what that's like!

So back to the idea of the Quiet Room. I was on a local radio show one day a couple of years ago, when the other guest, a realtor, said that her mother

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made sure there was a Quiet Room in every house they ever owned. Genius. Absolutely genius, and I couldn't agree more. On last week's episode, I made a case for why introverted creatives need a Quiet Room. And I know it sounds totally self-indulgent, but remember what we said – you need to be able to recharge and recover from your day as much as you need food and oxygen. Y'all, this is no joke!! You can't thrive if you're not eating or breathing, and as introverts, we cannot run on empty batteries. Since many of us share our homes with other people, we don't have the luxury of sitting in the living room in total silence until we feel rested up. Other people want to use that space, inevitably turning on the television, while simultaneously watching something on their device. Maybe someone else is just a talker. Possibly kids doing homework. At some point, someone needs to make dinner... If your home is an open floor plan, you already know the chaos that's about to ensue, and you might even be feeling drained from just imagining it.

On top of that, you've had A Day. Maybe a client was difficult. Or maybe you had an issue with a vendor. Maybe there was drama at the office. You haven't even had a chance to process all of that before going home to your second job – wrangler of chaos. I'm being funny, but also kind of serious. When we introverted, creative entrepreneurs carry that stuff with us without taking time to process it and recover from it, we deplete our own energy resources. However, we attempt to function at 100% because we think if we just ignore that weight, it won't drag us down.

This is why I preach in favor of walls. Walls in interior design are a good thing. A great thing actually. The open floor plan has encouraged a culture of 100% together 100% of the time, and the introverts are dying, people! I'm not saying you need to go home and lock yourself in your room for the night, but I am saying you owe it to yourself to designate one room or area of your house where you can retreat into peace and quiet. I don't mean the

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bathub. I mean a room where you could read, do some work if you wanted to, take a nap...but not the guest bedroom. A room that's yours. Maybe you'll need to carve this space out of your master bedroom, but more than anything, you just need to find this space and start using it. To get you started, here are my design tips on how to create that space for yourself:

### 1) Eliminate visual and audible clutter.

If you're like me, you can't really rest until the house is picked up and neat. The clutter around me is a constant reminder that there is something left on the to-do list, so I recommend making sure your Quiet Room is a space designated for YOU... that way nobody else's clutter is creating a distraction for you. Acoustics are also a key point. You'll want to use fabrics, rugs, etc., to dampen sound – and if you have the budget for it, I even suggest upholstering the walls so that you get the coziest effect possible. Remember this: An introvert's need for a quiet room is not about escaping the outside world; it's a necessity for us to process the world without distractions, and visual/audible distractions must be eliminated for us to do that.

### 2) Avoid over-stimulation.

I'm not one of those designers who's going to tell you that introverts need a houseful of neutrals. In fact, if you've followed my design work for any length of time, you already know I use tons of color in my work. I believe in color as a way to boost our mood, so an entirely neutral room wouldn't work for me. Possibly a monochromatic room, but even then, I say pick a color you love and go all-in. What's more important is for you to take some time to include a few special details. Not every element in the space needs to be a show-stopper, so find thoughtful ways to add special details – nailheads around the trim of the room? Unusual color combinations? Be

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creative and let yourself really explore some out-of-the-box ideas. Since this space is all for you, it doesn't need to meet anyone else's approval.

3) Tiny can be cozy.

I'm not recommending that you all go out and buy she-sheds (although if you can, you absolutely should), or make your kids share a room so you can use the extra bedroom for yourself. You just need some space that is tucked away from everything else that you can retreat to. Start with the low-traffic areas of your house. Does your guest room stay empty 360 days of the year? Do you have a walk-in closet that really filled with junk? Your space doesn't have to be extravagant; it just has to be yours. If you don't immediately find a space that feels right, don't give up.

4. Because it can be as simple as asking for what you need.

If your house really just does not have the space you need, it's not out of the realm of possibility to ask your family for what you need. Talk it over with them and let them know how you're going to be taking care of yourself – and them – moving forward. Maybe its 20 minutes to yourself before the evening's activities begin. Maybe you have some time during the day when everyone is at work or school, so you let your employees know you'll be going home for lunch. Above all else, I want you to prioritize your need to recover, process, and recharge. Running your creative business will be so much more of a challenge if you're not able to ask for what you need from the people around you.

For years, I've talked about the open concept house and its many flaws from a design perspective – no walls to hang artwork on, furniture layouts become difficult, finding storage is next to impossible – but it hasn't been until recently (like within the last year) that I've come to understand the toll

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an open floor plan takes on introverts. We actually feel guilty when we want some peace and quiet. And others are offended when we want to retreat. In the work place, systems furniture is clustered together like bee hives, with no partitions, no privacy. The introverts have to resort to wearing ear buds and listening to white or brown noise to drown out all the distractions. If we ask for others to be quiet, we're being rude and entitled, whereas maybe they're being inconsiderate for being loud!

You know I've said it before – our society rewards extroversion. It wasn't until I realized that that I also realized the ways I'd been playing along all of my life. In design school, we had to go to class on a weekend (A. Rude.) for a design competition that the school wanted to win an award for. So they grouped us together (B. Nightmare), and the morning we arrived, we got the project info and were expected to complete a design by the end of the day. (C. Welcome to my personal hell.) I had to attend, and as a person who wants to do well, I couldn't just not try, but that day, my laptop gave me fits, and my group – of which I was the leader – did not finish our entry. So the fact that this happened well over 10 years ago and I am still not over it should demonstrate how we introverts internalize our struggle in this extroverted culture. I don't do well in group projects. Never have. I also don't do well on competitive, timed assignments. None of those things fit the way I can do my best work. But those were the rules, obviously written by extroverts, and I played along. Open letter to anyone grading students anywhere in the world: pressuring an introvert to perform is a surefire way to get us to shut down completely.

The great news is this: I'm an adult now, and I can decide when I don't want to do something, or if the circumstances are going to hinder me from doing my best work. One of those circumstances is allowing myself to go too long without recharging and recovering. I can always tell when my creativity starts to suffer. I hate not giving 100%. I don't feel good about it,

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I'm not proud of it. And my business will begin to show signs too – I forget small things, I incorrectly delegate other things. I used to be sort of unaware of when I needed to retreat to a Quiet Room. Maybe the biggest tell-tale sign is that I'd get cranky. Or I'd want to say "leave me alone!" Or everything everyone did annoyed me. Honestly, those are still some good indications that I need to recharge my batteries. I know I'm not the only one.

I realize that I'm kind of lucky in that I have my whole house to myself. Hopefully, that will change in the future, but for now, my whole house is my Quiet Room. And I can testify to the fact that it played a huge role in my recovery from my divorce, and it does so much to help me recharge after every day now. I have a few different favorite spots in the house that I use for different kinds of recharging...I work at the breakfast table/nook when I need to focus. I do research for podcasts in bed, and the whole bed is covered with my notes and books. I love nothing more than to cozy up on my sofa and watch some Real Housewives. I also love to read in bed. I've been known to go home on a Friday after work and not emerge from my house until Monday morning. I love it that much.

My point is this – I am living proof that if you are an introvert, you need a space that's yours. Whether you start by doing what I'm doing now and choosing cozy corners to tuck myself into, or you go all-in and redesign a room in your house for this specific purpose, you need a Quiet Room. It literally exists only for you to rest, recover, and recharge. Possibly sometimes you use it when you need to concentrate. But don't underestimate the power this room will have in your ability to be effective and productive. When I wanted to find a deeper way to serve my design clients, I worried that I wouldn't really be able to do that. But this has changed the way I do business, and I see the value in designing for specific

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reasons other than just creating pretty rooms. The bonus in all of this is that your room can be pretty as well as being quiet!

Give yourself the chance to see what operating at 100% feels like by creating your own Quiet Room. If you want to dive a little deeper into this concept of a Quiet Room, please visit [rachelcannonlimited.com/15](http://rachelcannonlimited.com/15) for today's show notes, and while you're there, download my 4 Signs You Need a Quiet Room guide, with more tips on how to create your quiet room.

And if you're one of the many listeners who isn't a business owner, but is an introvert, and you're considering a design project soon, I'd love to talk to you about how we can work with you to create a home environment that fosters peace. Just visit [rachelcannonlimited.com/interior-design](http://rachelcannonlimited.com/interior-design) to find out how to start the conversation!

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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