

Ep #19: It's Not Happening TO You, It's Happening FOR You



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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.

Things I've said in the last week:

"Why did I go into this field in the first place?!"

"Why do I work so hard killing myself?"

"Is any of this even worth it??!"

Y'all, 2020 came in hot on a mission to teach me a few life lessons, and she hasn't been very nice about it. I've been thinking it feels almost like an over correction - like last year was so wonderful in a care-free kind of way, that now this year really wants me to get my head in the game so it's just hitting me with dose after dose of cold hard truths that can't be ignored. Please keep in mind this is only the first week in February. My friend asked me today how that was possible because she feels like she's lived a thousand lifetimes since the first of the year. I answered that I was feeling like I'd died a thousand deaths. (It's worth noting that she is an extrovert and I am an introvert, and the differences in how this year has treated our respective energy reserves cannot be ignored.) Can anybody else relate?

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Since most of my listeners are other introverted, creative entrepreneurs, all of this upheaval in my life has made me wonder - what does it feel like for other people like me when you encounter this kind of experience? In a particularly dizzying moment of stress last week, I spoke with a dear friend for close to two hours on the phone where we compared notes on how life was, and all the ways it "wasn't". She's dealing with some similar circumstances, and had been at an event recently where the environment catered to extroverted needs - lots of excited, talkative, people trying to network in a very small venue where the noise was reverberating off the walls and glass of the space. She left early, even though this was a work event, because she could barely stand the irritation level it was bringing to her. She said for years, she thought something was wrong with her - like she wasn't healthy enough or that she needed to double up on her vitamins, because of how exhausted she feels after events like these. But she knows that's not the case - she's one of the earthiest, most organic, most Whole Foods kind of people you could ever meet - it's just that she's an introvert, and that doesn't mean she's broken for wanting to go home early.

So for me, it's the culmination of working towards success for 10+ years now, hoping to God I don't fail, and then over-functioning to make sure nothing ever gets disrupted in my little world I've created. I'm sure you can tell that I don't deal well with change. Or disappointment. I like a routine. I like for things to go according to plan. According to MY plan. When they don't, I can just about give myself a heart attack thinking about how bad it could all turn out. And I've also chosen, on top of my very rigid personality traits, to be an entrepreneur - of the riskiest things a person can do with their life, because nothing is guaranteed. There is no clocking in, clocking out, collecting a paycheck and leaving all the work stuff at work and not thinking about it again until Monday. It's with us constantly, and like we've discussed before - I have a 24/7 dialogue narrating everything I'm doing and have done in my head, and it's kind of judgmental! The best way I can

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describe it to you is this: Imagine you've been trying to outrun a figure who is always following you. They never make themselves fully known by coming out into the light, but you sense that their presence is always there. When you try to put them out of your mind, you catch a glimpse of that shadow again - just enough to be reminded that it's still lurking around every corner. That's a super uncomfortable feeling, and as an introvert, I have difficulty processing it.

Carrying around that kind of shapeless lump of weight gets tiresome after awhile. Logging countless hours of hard work, hoping that it all works out, and never giving ourselves a break (or some grace even!) takes a toll. And then when we get hit with the new-and-improved, 2020 models of challenges in life and business, which don't align with our vision for ourselves or our businesses, and we fall back on our instinct, which is to question everything. Remember those hypotheticals I was screaming earlier this week?

"Why did I go into this field in the first place?!"

"Why do I work so hard killing myself?"

"Is any of this even worth it??!"

As I mentioned earlier, I don't deal well with change or disappointment. I like for things to go my way, as I've envisioned them for months or years on end. I hate being stressed out. I hate worrying. I hate feeling anxious. And

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yet...stress, worry, and anxiety are part and parcel of running a business. And there are millions of things that are just beyond my control, so in thinking about the way 2020 has barreled right in and decided to start some upheaval in my life, I had a moment of clarity. I determined that I would just have to deal with the fact that this shadow would always be there, but it couldn't hurt me. If you have the same tendency as I do - to catastrophize, you can relate. I think introverted creatives are especially susceptible to this because we're emotional, empathetic beings. It's part of what makes us exceptional in our relationships with our clients and in our creative fields - our ability to tap into our sensitivity. It also makes us really vulnerable to the ups and downs of business ownership and life in general.

I did an exercise recently where I had to describe the feeling of stress or worry that I was experiencing by giving it some physical attributes. Talk about cathartic. Here is how I described my anxiety:

A heavy, black, hot sensation that something is pushing me back, sitting on my chest, slowly tightening its hold my throat with its hands, making it difficult for me to breathe.

Holy crap y'all. That is DARK! While it felt great to get that out, in looking at what I had just described, it was a murder scene! And I am not being murdered! That is literally the worst thing that could ever happen, and the things I'm worried about are nowhere near that scary.

So, okay, back to my phone call with my friend. We were talking about how we both wanted to just simplify everything this year. I'm cleaning out closets like a crazy person and realizing that I don't need 90% of what I

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have. I'm looking at my business and examining how I can make it even leaner. I'm looking at how I spend my time and figuring out what the most joyful activities are so I can focus on doing them more. As we were talking, she reiterated everything I was thinking about wanting simplicity in life, and she pointed out that the things that were stressing me out were actually doing so because they were threatening the idea of a bigger, more complicated existence.

What would happen if I quit clinging so tightly to those things? What if I just released them and let them go? Would it really be so bad? It would actually make my life a lot simpler. Up until that moment of clarity, I'd felt like I was in a snowstorm so thick I couldn't see an inch in front of my face. But suddenly, things felt calm, settled, quiet. Simple.

What if I stopped imagining myself fighting this feeling and trying to loosen its grip on my throat? What if I looked at all of it from another angle? What if I chose to see my stressors as opportunities to learn something about myself?

Once I stopped fighting, a beautiful thing happened. Perspective. Understanding that even when I've felt like everything is going to come crashing down around me I've always gotten through it. It's a weightless feeling, leaving behind others' expectations of you, working not to impress them, but to support yourself and your family. Seeing that it's okay for some stuff to fall away in my effort toward a simpler existence. Finding meaning and fulfillment in your work. That in the times where I've felt like I've failed, I have the choice to decide to learn something from it.

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What if, instead of catastrophizing and thinking everything is happening TO me, I stopped to consider that it was happening FOR me. Well. That changes things, doesn't it?

We live in this limbo of thinking we MUST have certain things or a certain lifestyle in order to be considered legitimate - often to the detriment of our deepest desires. I used to think I needed to travel non-stop in order for people to think I had a glamorous lifestyle as an interior designer. But you wanna know something? I kind of hate to travel. I know. I don't actually hate it once I'm at my destination, but everything leading up to it, actually getting on and off a plane, etc., it all wears me out. What I really want is to be home, where it's quiet, and I'm cozied up in my bed reading. That's the ultimate luxury to me. So why on earth do I need to fly halfway around the globe to sleep in a bed that makes my back hurt in order to read the book I'm trying to finish? Okay, I'm being dramatic for the purposes of my illustration here, and I definitely have a list of places I want to see at some point - but it actually is exhausting to me...So like, why put so much pressure on myself to do it? Who am I trying to prove something to?

You could also think about your business this way. If you think the only way to be considered legit in your field is by offering every possible service to your clients - even the services you really don't like to do - what's your motive there? What are you trying to prove? What happens when you accept a client for a service you'd really rather not do, and then they end up not being happy with their results? You probably say something similar to:

“Why did I go into this field in the first place?!”

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“Why do I work so hard killing myself?”

“Is any of this even worth it??!”

But what if, rather than continuing to do those things, we just simply decide that we're not offering that service. It's not in our wheelhouse, or the cost we pay in energy lost or stress just isn't worth the money we receive to do it. Is it possible that we stay in that cycle of stress, worry, anxiety, etc. feeling like we're slowly being choked to death because we're still thinking this bad luck is happening TO us. But what if it's really happening FOR us?

What if we could look back over those experiences and see the common thread? What if, when we identified it, it was in the shape of a giant red flag? What if the whole time, we were supposed to be learning from those experiences, listening to our gut, trusting our feelings, and making decisions that benefit US, rather than ignoring all of that and then feeling victimized because we didn't see how we shouldn't have been doing any of this in the first place!

Here's what 2020 needs to know about me. I'm not backing down. It's tried its dead-level best to discourage me, and I'd be lying if I said I hadn't had a few days and nights feeling defeated. But when I ask myself, “what's the worst that could happen?” NOTHING I can come up with even comes close to that image of being slowly suffocated by a shadowy figure. And please keep in mind, that figure is all in my head, and it's the way I described the feeling I had from FIGHTING my intuition, rather than listening to it. When I embrace the idea that simplifying my life means I'm going to have to give some things up, the scene is no longer dark, hot, heavy, and scary. It's

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actually bathed in bright light, peaceful, billowing. It's a feeling of total rest. That's what it's like to re-frame every experience as one that's happening FOR me, rather than TO me.

I know this episode was really deep and kind of rambling. Normally, I'm much more practical and I love giving you tips and making lists for you. I'll confess that I started and stopped writing this episode several times because it just felt too difficult. I knew I was going to be revealing some things that could potentially make me look weak. But here's the thing, y'all. None of us are alone. I don't know who needed to hear this today, but I know somebody did. I know that it always makes me feel better when someone shares their reality with me, and it's similar to what I'm going through. I don't feel like I can really help anyone unless I'm willing to be truthful with you. I can't fake it! That's what you need to know about me.

In two weeks, I'm going to host a webinar where we talk a little more about this topic, as well as some of the more practical advice I'm known for. I'd love it if you would join me then. It's set for February 19, and I'll be sharing three secrets creative introverts need to be successful entrepreneurs. In the meantime, you should join us in our private Facebook community that I created especially for listeners of the podcast. To find it, head to my Instagram: [@rclinteriors](#), and click on the "podcast" highlight. There, you'll find instructions on how to join us. And if you'd like to be the first to sign up for the webinar, be sure to join my newsletter, where I'll be sharing more details on this course, and others that I'm working on, very soon.

Remember, changing your perspective can and will make all the difference in your business. You are guaranteed to encounter problems, but we have to choose to learn something in the face of all of them. For the rest of 2020,

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I'm not fighting; I'm thriving. I'm not worrying; I'm believing. I'm not stressed; I'm being shaped. Nothing is happening to me, it's happening FOR me.

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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