

## Ep #26: Is Work Emotionally Controlling Your Life?



### Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

**Rachel Cannon**

[Loudmouth Introvert](#) with 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.

Welcome introverts! And extroverts, if your introverted friend introduced you to the show! I'm glad you're here! If you're a new listener, welcome to my podcast, where I share all of the ways I've learned to thrive as an introvert in my design business and in my life, so you can show up at your best in your own! If one podcast a week just isn't enough for you, I want to encourage you to interact with our community in our private Facebook group! To find it, just head over to my Instagram account (@rclinteriors) and tap on the "Podcast" highlight on my bio, and you'll find instructions there on how to request access! It's a great group of like-minded entrepreneurs who are eager to build their businesses without having to transform themselves into extroverts. I've hosted some live chats and we share all kinds of funny and interesting things there, so come check us out!

This first quarter has really been jam-packed for me with work and personal commitments, so I look forward to creating these episodes where I get to share a little bit about what I've been going through and what I've learned with all of you. I mentioned on a previous episode (*It's Not Happening To You, It's Happening For You*), that 2020 came in hot, and January was a real pill. I had to stop myself from allowing the stress I was experiencing from seeping into other areas of my life, and when I did that, I came to the realization that so much of what was happening was actually working in favor of a bigger goal I'd set this year for simplifying my life. (Hence the name of that episode.) Owning a business comes with certain responsibilities, and as the one steering the ship, it's tempting to devote all of my brain power and time to thinking about how to grow, adjust, or even fix it when things get stressful. Maybe even more so when it's stressful.

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I think that a lot of us - especially introverts - can get into a position where our work emotionally controls our entire lives. This is especially true for business owners, because we have so much riding on the outcome. January was nothing new. I've found myself in that place on many occasions - when work is good, my personal life is good; when work is stressful, it spills over into my relationships and my personal life. It's like being on a perpetual roller coaster, and there are no stops. And obviously because it's my business, I have to be mindful at all times of what's going on, but it's the feeling that the success or failure of the business defines what else is happening in my life that I really have had to work to overcome. Maybe you've felt this way before, too - that your work owns you, and thus kind of has control over your entire life.

Entrepreneurs tend to devote themselves fully to their businesses in the beginning. We create an environment where we're slaves to our work - working 24/7, willfully functioning without clear limits because we have this fire to build our businesses. It isn't until much later that we realize we're slaves to our work and the business is dictating the way we feel about most things in our lives. If you've ever been worried about your businesses finances, you know how that spills over into your personal life. Or when there's a problem with a client, you've experienced the downward spiral our thoughts can be while we envision every possible scenario or outcome. We don't realize it because it happens so gradually, but our businesses end up emotionally controlling our entire lives.

Today I'm going to share with you some of the ways I've allow work to dictate my feelings and control my emotions, keeping me locked into that roller coaster lifestyle. And I'm going to tell you how I've been able to create limits retrospectively - because, yes, I absolutely was describing myself when I told you about the entrepreneur just staring a business and eventually realizing I was a slave to it! I don't want you to think you can't

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put a stop to that feeling, because you can! And you'll feel much happier and fulfilled with your work when you learn how to take control of your life! But first, we need to identify the ways work can manipulate our emotions.

- Are you taking on more responsibility than you can handle?
- Are you surrounded by difficult or critical people?
- Are you expecting work to take the place of personal relationships?

Let's start with something every entrepreneur can identify with: taking responsibility for things that aren't our job. This is so easy to do, because we really want to make our clients happy! I'm 100% guilty of this, and it's one of the toughest ones to put a stop to. For example, one time a contractor told me he would be starting a client's job on a certain day. When the day came, he called to let me know that the house was locked, and nobody was home. I called the client, who happened to be in a meeting, and when she got out, she returned my message and expressed her frustration with me over the mix up. And when I say she expressed her frustration, she raked me over the coals. She gave me a talking-to. A tongue-lashing. It was humiliating. I apologized profusely, because I didn't want her to be angry. I felt HORRIBLE that whole day. I threw my phone across the room when I hung up with her and shattered the screen. I screamed "I cannot make ANYONE HAPPY!" It was not my finest moment. I was so incredibly disappointed in myself and my team that we hadn't communicated effectively. I lost sleep over it that night, too. I tried thinking of anything I could say or do to make it right, feeling absolutely sick to my stomach that she'd been as furious with me as she had been...until the following morning when it dawned on me: "Hey, it's not my job to be the messenger between you and your contractor. It was HIS responsibility to call you and coordinate the start date. Why am I the one apologizing??" I'd taking on way more responsibility than I needed to by assuming that I was the one who needed to be the gopher between client and contractor. The

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contractor doesn't work for me...he works for her! The schedule was always supposed to be coordinated between the two of them!

When you find yourself saddled with others' responsibilities, you have to make a conscious effort to see where your lane ends and theirs begins. I happen to be a person who assumes responsibility readily, and unfortunately, I do it even for things that aren't my job. That means I end up bearing consequences that aren't mine. That emotional day - full of anxiety, worry, and dread - was all created out of my inability to see how my willingness to be helpful had actually turned me into an enabler. This wasn't the first time a contractor had put me in a position to take the fall for his poor planning. No, in fact, that had happened several times before. But that was the last time, because I knew that the resentment it created in my personal life, hours after I'd clocked out for the day, were too much for me.

Another habit I identified was my hope and desire to make clients happy. Now, 99.9999% of my design clients are incredibly happy with their finished product and waste no time in saying thank you. But the truth is that I actually cannot guarantee that they will be happy, because that's something I don't have any control over. I think they'll be happy, but all I can really guarantee is that I will deliver what they've paid me for in the time frame upon which we agree. Happiness is another story altogether. And especially when there is a client who is difficult or overly critical. Again, I am the overly-responsible person, so I happily throw that into my sack I'm carrying, adding to the already heavy weight and stress of running a business, my attempt to ensure someone's happiness. Y'all. We can't do that. Trying to make a critical or difficult person happy amounts to trying to change that person - and that's literally impossible. Once a client told me that she was so unhappy with the work I'd done for her, she wanted to burn her house down and start all over. Yes. This actually happened. I was GUTTED. Especially since I thought the home was stunning and some of

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my best, most creative work to date. My identity was so wrapped up in what I was creating, that when I heard those words, I felt completely crushed. The emotions I felt gave her every bit of power over me, causing me incredible pain and sadness. I dealt with that blow for years. It was another valley on that work-controlled emotional roller coaster.

Over time, those feelings faded as I began to see that this person was not happy with anything in any aspect of her life. I'd internalized her opinion of me, allowing her words to be a moral appraisal of my character...when really, they spoke volumes about her own insecurities. The lesson I learned here was this: I can't attempt to gain the approval of someone who is deeply critical. I'd worked so hard to make her happy, all under this cloud of negativity, thinking "she'll get it in the end when it all comes together," but in actuality she would never be happy, and I should never have allowed myself to be controlled that way. I was never going to win with her.

And finally, for years, I allowed work to take the place of meaningful relationships in my life. I looked to projects, clients, and employees to fill the places in my life where the support that comes from a spouse, family, and friends would normally be found. In essence, I didn't see the boundary between my work and personal life. But work is not the place where nurturing, self-esteem, and approval are fostered. It can be, but only as it relates to how we learn, improve, and are productive in our work. Work can't take the place of a parent or loved one - because it can't love you back. This was particularly challenging for me while I was still married because I was so deeply unhappy in my personal life. Since that area of my life was such a mess, I poured everything into work, hoping that the fulfillment I got from it would somehow even me out. What I should have been doing, instead, was finding the supportive network I needed outside of work - like a therapist or a healing network. I bottled up all the sadness I was experiencing in my marriage and suppressed it, and then looked to

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work to make me feel whole and happy. But work is not where our emotional hurts are healed - as evidenced by the two examples I've already shared with you, one of which happened while I was still married, and the other during my divorce. Talk about adding insult to injury!

When we look to our work to help support us in ways that our loved ones should, we have misplaced our expectations. Work is an organization, not our family. Many of us are guilty of allowing this habit of looking to those outside of our homes and personal lives to offer us emotional support, and all that leads to is difficulty. Because, as I've just demonstrated, work comes with its own kind of expectations. At work, we cannot attempt to function as adults when we are wanting our childhood needs met. Work does not owe us the pat on the back that our families may give, or the deep feelings of satisfaction we experience in quality time with our loved ones. It's nice when we do get those things from it, and ideally, a great work environment can provide some of that. But ultimately, our work is not obligated to provide any emotional support. Because instead of emotional support, we receive a paycheck for our work. There was a great line in *Mad Men* where Peggy, in a moment of frustration, exclaims to Don Draper, "You never say thank you!" And he answers her, "That's what the money is for!" And you know what? He's right. I'm not saying you have to stay stuck doing work you hate - that's not my point at all - but I am saying that when we expect work to fill an emotional void in our lives, we have opened up the hurt parts of us to an entity that has no capacity to heal us - and may also actually create deeper wounds, keeping us stuck on that emotional roller coaster.

As creatives, our work taps into our natural abilities and talents, but we have to identify where work ends and we begin. We are our own people, separate from what we do for a living. Allowing our work to emotionally control our lives can have serious consequences, and rather than

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continuing to let it dictate to us, we have to take ownership of how we feel, how we think, and what we want. That includes identifying clear limits that we might have missed in the past.

Taking on too much responsibility? Stay in Your lane.

Impossible to please clients? Refuse to be manipulated.

Making work your most meaningful relationship? Find support outside of work.

Our time and our energy are finite resources, and we have to make a conscious effort to ensure that work doesn't hold the control to all of our emotions, costing us the things that matter most in our well-being. If we want to thrive and be fulfilled by using our talents to earn a living, we have to be clear on our responsibilities by clearly outlining where they are. We have to distance ourselves from negative clients who have disruptive attitudes. We have to make sure that the role work plays in our lives is actually the one it was always intended to play. Because allowing it to emotionally control us is the surefire way to end up feeling out of balance in our whole lives.

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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