

Ep #25: Is Perfectionism Slowing You Down?



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With Your Host

Diana Murphy

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Welcome to *Empowered Wellness for Leaders*, a podcast that teaches CEOs, entrepreneurs and sales leaders how to deal with the unique challenges of balancing a high-stress career, family, AND their own health. Here's your host, Certified Executive Wellness Coach, Diana Murphy.

Hello, leaders. I hope you're feeling like an empowered confident leader today. And if you're not, I hope what I have to offer you today can really be helpful. What I want to help you to do today is recognize when perfectionism might be at bay and slowing you down.

And you don't even have to notice or label it perfectionism. I'm just going to give you some scenarios and help you to see what might be slowing you down and some beautiful ways to disrupt it. I hope you're having a really great summer.

It's quite hot. The whole country was in a heat wave last week and I was in the middle of it in Dallas and DC and really didn't let it allay my plans at all. I really enjoyed both my visits with my sons – my son in Dallas and then my family in DC. And I want to tell you that I had an over the top evening with my kids and created just this beautiful memory.

I went out to dinner with my kids. We don't often all get together and travel together and they're buying rounds of drinks. It's awesome when your kids can start paying for their own things. It's so cool. And I was able to watch a three-hour sunset, no kidding, and watching the Thomas Jefferson Memorial in the background. So hit The Wharf in DC. It's new; it is awesome.

Alright, enough about me, let's get into it today. I know that perfectionism might be at bay when two things are going on. Does this sound like you? You're trying to get something done. There's something that's due and you keep doing it over and over. You look at it one more time, you're searching out for errors, you just don't feel like it's right yet.

And now you're onto your next meeting and you haven't even sent it yet, even though you promised yourself you would be done with it an hour ago.

[Empowered Wellness for Leaders](#) with Diana Murphy

Ep #25: Is Perfectionism Slowing You Down?

It could be a presentation. It could be a quote. It could be writing an important memo. You just want it to be perfect before you send it out or publish it or turn something in. Perfectionism might be getting in your way here.

Or for you, if you are in a team that you work together or you get feedback from a coach if you're working with someone or even just looking at your own work, that you overreact to feedback – like it really takes you out. Like you almost want to blame the person that's telling you that you did something wrong and that person might even be yourself.

As you look at it, you see a typo and you are like, oh my god, I almost sent this, and it just takes you out. It takes you a while to regroup and get moving again and you've almost gotten gun-shy. It's so important that we get onto ourselves in this situation.

Why is this so important? Why am I bringing this to you today? Because for business owners, sales leaders, entrepreneurs, anybody that's taking charge of their life and trying to get a lot done, this can be so damaging because we not only take longer to get our work out there if we're creative and we're creating things to post and get out in the world or we're making offers or delaying decisions in our businesses.

We're putting off opportunities. We're waiting until another date. That alone can be dangerous. But another facet of this that I've noticed in myself is we start building a story that it just takes too long so we're just going to do something else. We do the things that are easier and seem to be faster.

But in reality, those activities, we know, if we get really honest with our self, are really important; like quoting business or making a presentation that's really important, taking some time with that but getting it done and getting it out there. We build that story that maybe that's not for me, right. It's just going to slow us down, so we do the things that are easy but maybe too safe.

So I feel like it really is important to get onto ourselves here. And another facet, if you're anything like me and so many of my clients, you're setting

[Empowered Wellness for Leaders](#) with Diana Murphy

Ep #25: Is Perfectionism Slowing You Down?

really big goals. And this idea that it has to be perfect before you take any action is preventing you in reality of reaching those goals. It might be actually what is getting in your way. And so I want to help you get to the bottom of it so you can start taking more inspired and amazing action in your life and in your business.

Why do we seek perfection? At the bottom of it, we really think – our brains start believing – that if we're perfect, it's going to feel really good and we want to not make a mistake. We're trying to avoid the pain of failing. And so we kind of get addicted to it and what happens is we end up creating more pain.

Yes, in our human desire, that is so normal, to avoid pain, we actually begin creating it because we start creating a cycle of criticism every time we fail because we weren't perfect. We're starting to believe that perfect is even possible and we create a cycle of criticism, self-blame and we start evaluating our results against an unattainable bar of perfection.

So now, we're not only avoiding the pain of failing, we are now creating so much pain because we're criticizing ourselves so harshly and this can be disruptive. But I want you to notice that if you're starting to say things like, I'm not good enough, I'm a failure, I'm a loser, it might be because in your best intentions of doing great work, that sneaky bar of perfectionism has been raised and that belief in your mind that it was going to work for you.

It's the belief that's failed you; you have not failed you. So how do we disrupt this cycle? If you're deep in it, I just encourage you to listen carefully because all of these approaches work and it really is important that the very first one we offer ourselves when we notice that self-criticism – and you know I talk about this all the time and it is because it's so important.

When we're growing and doing more in our lives, no matter what you're up to, we trigger a lot of self-criticism. So self-compassion is our strongest tool here. So if you want to disrupt that ugly cycle of judgment, get more aware. Just set your mind on noticing the thoughts, I should have, what an idiot,

Ep #25: Is Perfectionism Slowing You Down?

you'll never succeed, you're not good enough – increase your dial of being aware of when that's happening for you.

And in that moment, literally make a decision to be kind to yourself. Whoa, what was that, you know, when you notice, it's like, what am I doing? Disrupt that angry tirade that's going on in your mind. And my quickest hack in these moments, because I have them quite often – I am moving forward very quickly in my business in a new way right now and I asked this question; would I ever speak to a friend, a client, a colleague, in this manner? Never.

I would never allow a client to believe that they weren't good enough. I would call them out on that, right. Why am I not calling myself on it? That's what you use. Disrupt it immediately and get back to work. Let those emotions flow through you and get back to work.

So self-compassion – and another really beautiful way to disrupt this cycle of perfectionism is staying learner mode. In the beginning stages of doing anything new, we give ourselves a lot of room, a lot of grace, to learn. Like, I'm just learning. What if we gave that space to ourselves all the time?

It's so powerful. No matter where you are in your business, stay in learner mode. Oh, I'm learning to do this in a new way. I'm learning to approach this new facet of my business in this way. I'm learning to do this faster.

It can start with this great intention of being really good and excellent at what you do, like oh, I expected to be at this point after a year of being in this position and you're not there and, you know, really be self-critical in that moment. Nothing's gone wrong. Who wouldn't you, in that second year, give yourself space to learn and grow based on everything that you accomplished in that first year?

Give yourself grace and just remind yourself, I'm learning to do something new; I got this. And it really is giving yourself grace, so offer yourself self-compassion, give yourself grace and the trickiest one I want you to go away practicing – and it almost makes me want to throw up when I say it –

Ep #25: Is Perfectionism Slowing You Down?

this last tool really will show you if you're in perfectionism if you're creating something.

Embrace B-minus work and send it out now. It's going to take some practice. It will be uncomfortable, but it is one of the most beautiful things to get us moving. If you're really sick of things feeling slow in your business and in your life and anything that you're doing, I want you to embrace B-minus work – it's beautiful – and send it.

Now, some work – like, I want my doctor or when it comes to numbers – I know that there are just some levels where perfectionism is really important, but that's why we work with partners that can see our errors. What if we more quickly got that B-minus work out and got it to a partner, had them edit and get right back to it? Can you imagine how much faster it would be if you didn't get stuck in that cycle?

And it's almost like the rabbit hole – like once you go in it and you're trying to make it perfect, you're just never getting it done. What if you just took a breath and said, okay, I'm sending this off?

Decide that B-minus work and taking more action is just your new style. And you're going to have to practice allowing some discomfort. You know, I was that A student. I wanted that all the time and it really isn't that worthy, right.

I want to share a story. I changed majors when I was in college and I went from the science major that everything was exact, right, everything was perfect – we had to be right to get the right answer; there's no subjectivity. But I wasn't finding any careers that could grow out of that. I was in a physical therapy track and I knew I didn't want to be doctor and it was just crazy, so I changed to business.

I knew how I was wired. I was not a great writer and I knew it was going to be a lot more subjective on my grading, so there's just no way I was going to get As. I got quite a few but it was like, what if I just approached this new major as I switch and just really learned so that I could become the best business major, best marketer possible, because that was my major.

Ep #25: Is Perfectionism Slowing You Down?

And it was like, that was so different. And again, I was literally choosing, in that moment, to be a learner and actually to get off the high road of trying to be perfect all the time. It was draining me. So be the person that embraces B-minus work and take more action. Just see what happens in your business. Try that for a week because as we get more results, which we will if we take more action, we will get more work done and it will build a beautiful momentum.

You know, I know it can seem really confusing when we are in those slow moments when we're working, but if you're consistently finding that you're going in a rabbit hole or that you're quickly getting really self-critical and it takes you a while to get back to work, perfectionism just might be at play. Look for the symptoms.

Are you really self-critical? Are you starting to feel like you're not good enough? Use these quick hacks of self-compassion. "How would I talk to my best friend?" and start turning that on yourself. Or if you're doing something new and you just really know that your expectations are unrealistic, give yourself some grace and go back into learner mode.

And if you find yourself in a rabbit hole very often, really apply the B-minus concept, you know. I do B-minus work and I get it out there. I get more done. And just see what that does for you.

By identifying that we are creating our own misery when we're stuck in perfectionism, in this frame of mind, that again, remind yourself, only creates more misery, you know what can happen if we really shift and start doing more and get out of that mode? We actually can learn to have more fun in our work and we will hit our goals with more ease and flow and start having more fun.

I know it's been happening for me. It has made a huge difference in my life. I hope this has helped. I cannot wait to see you next week and thanks so much for listening.

Thank you for listening to this episode of *Empowered Wellness for Leaders!* If you enjoyed this episode and want to learn more, download our

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Ep #25: Is Perfectionism Slowing You Down?

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