

EXPLORE YOUR ENTHUSIASM

EPISODE 58: WHAT I LEARNED IN 33 YEARS

Today, the day this podcast comes out, June 3rd, is my birthday!

But it's not just my birthday, it's also the 5 year anniversary of TaraSwiger.com. I had been teaching crafters about business for more than a year, but starting TS in 2010 was a sign of committing to my passion around it.

And it's the 4 year anniversary of the [Starship!](#)

Each year on my birthday, I look back at the past year, and at past birthdays, and try to make sense of it all. So today I'm going to share the big lessons of this last year, and well, the last 33 years. You can find past birthday posts, linked in today's show notes, at TaraSwiger.com/podcast58. And if you subscribe to the emails, you'll get a link to the podcast transcripts, for a full transcript every week!

But before we get into the lessons I've learned, I want to remind you that there is a free webinar on June 4th on defeating overwhelm. You can go to TaraSwiger.com/lift to get the registration details. If you're listening after June 4th, then what you'll find at TaraSwiger.com/lift is information about Lift Off, which will be open to new students until June 12th ... and if you're listening after June 12th, Lift Off will be closed, and you'll find a sign-up box to get the Defeat Overwhelm Training next time it's released!

So, head to TaraSwiger.com/lift to get the webinar and lots of other goodies, like a done-for-you template for measuring what you do in your business.

And now onto the lessons I've learned this year.

To begin with, I have to acknowledge that my 32nd year was a great one. I taught at [CreativeLIVE](#) and [Craftcation](#) and the [Camelid Community's](#) Fiber as Business conference. I had several paid writing gigs that came to me. I got to meet so many of you, more than I ever have before. And I had a really great time and I'm so grateful for my business.

And that brings me to my first lesson:

LESSON #1

You overestimate what you can do in a day and underestimate what you can do in a year.

I've looked around and something similar was said by Bill Gates, but I read it first from Chris Guillebeau. And it's so true and ENCOURAGING.

You see, most days, even the most focused, productive days, I don't finish everything I was hoping to get done. In fact, most weeks there's at least one or two tasks that I wish I had gotten done.

But I had experiences last year that I never could have planned for. That I wouldn't have imagined. The trick, though, to that getting-stuff-done-in-a-year, is focused, consistent daily action. Usually it feels small, and not-enough. In fact, the biggest reaction I get, when I lead students in Lift Off or the Starship through Map Making is to the very first step - picking just ONE goal to focus on for the quarter. Last year a student said, "But wait! If I focus on just one thing a quarter, you mean I'll only get FOUR things done in the next year? That's not enough!"

And I replied that if you made a plan and met 4 goals in the next year, your business would be AWESOME. It would be more than enough. Your business would change like you wouldn't believe. You'd have opportunities and ideas that you can't imagine now. Your business would be in a totally different place. And YOU'D be in a totally different place. Even if you don't meet the goal every quarter, if you work consistently at it you're going to learn so much about what works, what doesn't, how you work, etc.

Because, we overestimate what we can get done in the short term, but underestimate what we can get done in the long-term. When you put together a year of consistent daily actions, you build something you couldn't have imagined.

LESSON #2

BE You.

I talked about this in [episode 14](#), how I discovered how to actually DO this, and this is been one of the biggest lessons of the last year. I recently heard Sally Hogshead on the School of Greatness podcast, and she beautifully explained this lesson: "The greatest value you can add to the world, is to become more of yourself."

It may sound cliched to say "Just be yourself", but this is truly the key to having a business that succeeds and to having a life that you actually enjoy.

The reason is not that you are wonderful, even though you totally are, but that:

- A. When you're not trying to be someone else, or do things the way someone else would do them, things are EASIER. You don't have to push as hard, you don't have to pretend. You get to show up to your life and business and bring the best version of YOU.

- B. When you focus your business on what YOU are BEST at, your business stands apart, naturally. No one else is going to be able to do it the way you do. Competition is irrelevant.

So my ongoing mission, in my own life, is to remember to bring myself, as myself. Not try to be who someone else wants me to be, not try to be "appropriate" and seem "normal" or "fit in". But to be my vivid, talkative, idea-filled self and connect as myself.

This is actually WAY harder, for me (for a lot of reasons related to how I was socialized) than showing up as a Normal. I had been pretending to be Normal 99% of the time, except when I was alone with my weird-o husband, until 2009 when I quit my day job, and on and off ever since.

So this is something I'm practicing.

LESSON #3

Confidence comes from doing. And then trusting.

There are many things that required my confidence in the last year, and honestly, I can think of a few painful times when I just didn't have it, and I was kinda a mess. But that's ok.

I get asked from time to time, by makers, about getting the confidence to sell your work, and I always tell them this: you get confident by doing it.

If I want to be a more confident teacher, I need to teach more.

If you want to be a more confident seller, sell more.

Experiment, try stuff, fail at some stuff and then use that as data to try new stuff.

From that experience and learning and data CAN flow confidence.

But, it doesn't always.

After you have the experience and you survive it (even if you were awful!) a Confidence Fairy doesn't come down and grant it - you have to grant it to yourself. You have to give yourself permission to say: Ok! I did that, I can do this next thing! I survived that, I can survive anything!

And you don't have to wait for the experience to be something horrifyingly difficult. For some of my clients, they survived cancer, so they find confidence for their business there. For others, they survived a toddler, so they find confidence there. For me, I taught live online for an audience of several thousand, and I didn't fall down, so I find confidence there.

But even smaller stuff, like surviving your first craft show (whether you made any sales or not!) or surviving your first application or surviving High School! That all counts. In fact, when I first started, I got my confidence to move forward from the fact that I had the guts to get a totally impractical degree. I'm a

French Lit major! I read dozens of novels in French and then wrote dozens of long research papers *IN FRENCH*. I can sell some yarn! My first teaching gig was teaching 4 grandmotherly, sweet women how to knit. I used that to teach my first online class. I used that to teach my next classes and grow and grow.

So if you don't have confidence: Do something. And then, TRUST that this counts, and that you can do the next thing.

LESSON #4

Everything is a choice.

This goes back to what we talked about in [episode 15: personal responsibility](#). Everything in your life is a choice, either that you're making today or that you made in the past. This isn't like, all new information, but this Lesson, for me, is about REMEMBERING this.

Today, the day I'm recording, is a perfect example. There's a lot to do in preparation for the webinar, and tomorrow I'm teaching a workshop that's 2 hours away, so a good portion of tomorrow's workday will be driving and teaching. The next day I'm driving 6 hours to Ohio for TNNA and for teaching a workshop at Wholly Craft and I realized that I wasn't going to be able to get home on Sunday night at a reasonable hour. I'm going to have to spend some of my workday Monday driving. Which means I maybe shouldn't take off my birthday on Wednesday, in order to get everything done for the webinar on Thursday. And I just totally freaked out. I HAVE to work Monday. I worked very hard all day on the upcoming webinar, I tested it, and it didn't quite work the way I expected. And that was it, I pretty much completely freaked out and started ranting about how I'll be working all this week, and all weekend, and I still can't take my birthday off, because timing and blah blah blah.

And Jay said: Honey, you work for yourself. You're allowed to do whatever you want. You could choose from lots of options.

OH YEAH. Everything *is* a choice. Saying yes to the workshop 2 hours away is a choice. Choosing to go to TNNA to have dinner with 15 of my students is a choice. Teaching the workshop from 2-5p on Sunday was my choice. Not wanting to drive all night is a choice. Doing the webinar is a choice. Yeah, it's overwhelming, but it's all my choices. So I can change any of them, at any moment, or I can choose to make the most of it.

And this is true of EVERYTHING. Even the things you think you HAVE to do. Even feeding your kids - some people choose to NOT to take care of their kids and neglect them. But you are choosing to take care of them. Or working. You could choose another job. Or another field. Or to be unemployed and suffer from that.

So this is true, everything is a choice, and my lesson is to REMEMBER it, and focus on WHY I'm choosing what I'm choosing. Ask myself: Why am I choosing this? And if it's a good reason, soak in the reason, not in the hardness.

LESSON #5

You'll stop worrying when you decide to stop worrying.

This one is a lesson I've been working on a lot lately. First, you have to acknowledge that worry is not the same as taking action. And things only change when you take action, whether you spent a lot of time worrying about it or not. So worrying is getting you nowhere.

You also have to acknowledge that no matter what good or amazing things happens, if you don't learn to stop worrying, you'll KEEP worrying. Worrying about nothing. Worrying about everything. It doesn't stop based on external events. Whether I have \$5 in my account or \$500, I felt the same kind of obsessive worrying. (I like to worry about money, for you it might be your weight, or your kids, or terrorism.)

Because it's not based on external events... you can choose to make it stop, no matter the external events. That means that, right now, you could stop worrying. if you don't then even when things are going great, you won't enjoy them.

And here's what I've learned - if you get serious about not worrying, then you'll have more peace even when things do go wrong, or get worse.

For me, I've realized that Not Worrying = Trust + Making Decisions on desired outcome (what I want from life.)

What that means is that a percentage of this is Trust. You just have to trust it'll be ok, whether you obsess or not.

But you can't JUST trust, you also have an active role to play in what happens in your life (remember: everything is a choice!). So the equal half of not worrying is making conscious decisions, based on the outcome I desire.

Instead of stressing about ALL money spent, and obsessing over saving \$2 here and there, I make sure to make decisions based on what I want from that money. Am I saving up? Am I spending on an experience I want (like buying airline tickets to see my dad in Oregon)?

And then, it circles back to trust. Trust that I'm making the best decisions that I can, and that worrying and stressing isn't going to change what I've already done or make me better prepared for what I'm going to do.

Don't forget! There's a webinar on Thursday! Visit TaraSwiger.com/lift to register & learn more about Lift Off, which is open from June 4-12.

Thanks for listening!