

# EXPLORE YOUR ENTHUSIASM

## EPISODE 77: CONFERENCES FOR INTROVERTS

I am about to fly across the country and teach at [School House Craft](#), a two-day business conference for makers. I am so excited to see my friends and students and even some podcast listeners that will be attending, and I'm looking forward to meeting brand-new people. Not that long ago - just earlier this year, actually - I would get SO NERVOUS before something like this. I was worried about all the normal things like if my hair was going to be flat or if I was going to embarrass myself by talking to much ... but mostly I was nervous that my introversion was going to sideline me. I was worried that I was going to have to sit out a huge part of the fun, or I'd miss out on all the good stuff, because I would need my alone time.

I'm not any less introverted than I was a couple of months ago, but I'm hardly worried about introversion this time, because I've learned how to handle conferences, and I've learned that I CAN handle conferences, without getting totally fried from over-stimulation. I was flipping through my Evernote and I found some notes I took when I taught at my very first conference, the GIANT yarn industry trade show, TNNA. I jotted down some notes to myself, to make the conference more manageable, and in the 2 years since, I've put them to the test and they work!

### Decide what matters most

You can attend a conference for MAXIMUM education. Or you can attend a conference for MAXIMUM connection. It's hard to do both, because if you're sitting in a classroom all day, you're not going to be talking with and meeting people. But if you're having deep conversations with your new friends, you're going to miss some of the sessions.

Both things are OK. You just need to decide which one is right for you and where you are in business. I have attended conferences where I didn't go to a single session, I just hung out with people. And I have gone to conferences where I took EVERY class I could, because I wasn't going to get the opportunity again.

Both are OK, but it'll help you alleviate some anxiety about missing stuff if you decide why you're going.

Many people use conferences as a chance to meet new people and forge new connections. And being around tons of people interested in what you're interested in is the best opportunity EVER for that...

But honestly, when I think about having to meet new people in a crowded environment, I just want to stay in bed.

I would much rather use that time to deepen my existing connections and spend my time meeting people I already know - like internet friends, clients, and their friends. So I tell myself ahead of time: You don't have to meet anyone new. Just plan some meet-ups with your people, and tell them they're welcome to bring anyone they like. And without fail, you do end up meeting new people, but in a really natural ways, as someone else introduces you. (This is how I met [Blair!](#))

### **Don't overbook yourself.**

Give every activity an hour more than you think it'll take.

Yes, it's possible it won't take that long and then guess what? YOU HAVE ALONE TIME! But if you plan stuff back to back and your 9am coffee date goes longer than expected, you'll feel scrambled all day.

### **Meet people in a way that works for you.**

I much prefer to connect with smaller groups of people rather than large groups. HOWEVER, I'd rather hang out and talk for one kinda-intense dinner vs 11 different coffee dates (also, there aren't that many hours in a day!). So for TNNA, that meant that instead of meeting up with everyone 1:1, I organized a dinner and invited everyone. That gave me time to explore (and nap) during the day, and still see everyone I wanted to see. (Some of students couldn't make the dinner, and that means I didn't get to connect with them - but that's ok!)

### **Take breaks.**

Lots of breaks. Breaks to eat, breaks to nap, breaks to drink water, breaks to write down all the great ideas you had during your last conversation. Maybe you just need a break to stare out the window. Whatever you find restorative - take a break and do that!

## Defeat FOMO

Fear of Missing Out can drive you batty. Yes, there's an awesome meeting of people I'd love, happening RIGHTNOW. But I wrote some notes that formed this podcast episode from my hotel lobby, all alone. Am I missing out? Probably, but I'm not going to let fear drive me to either misery or towards taking actions that aren't healthy + sustainable.

## How do you extract FOMO from your experience?

Revisit #1 and remind yourself what you really want. Focus on doing your best to create THAT experience for yourself and try to forget about the experience everyone else is having.

Remember - you get to find a way that works for you, you get to spend your time and make the most of your experience, whatever that means for you! (For me, it means that I don't worry that I'm missing out on networking.)

If you'd like to meet up, check out the next places I'll be [teaching here](#), and [sign up here](#) for my weekly lesson, where I'll announce any meet-ups I plan!