

EXPLORE YOUR ENTHUSIASM

EPISODE 85: THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE CREATIVE BUSINESS OWNERS FACE

This week we're going to look at the #1 challenge every one of us faces: Overwhelm.

Before we go further, I want to tell you - I'm going to be diving deep into how to defeat overwhelm in your creative business on December 11, in a free, live webinar. You can sign up for it at TaraSwiger.com/defeatoverwhelm. Register to save your seat; even if you can't make it, you'll get the recording AND you'll get a few of my fave tools for defeating overwhelm.

First of all, let's start with what I mean by "overwhelm" - it's that feeling when there's just too much STUFF - too many ideas, too many tasks, too much input - and so you don't act. You just get wrapped up in all you could be doing, instead of taking action.

And as you've heard me say MANY times, Taking Action is the key to growing your business. If you don't take action, nothing will happen. You won't have sales. You won't meet your customers. You won't have a business.

So if overwhelm is keeping you from taking action, then you can't just ignore it and hope it goes away. You definitely can't just read more blog posts and listen to more podcasts and hope that it all clears up.

Instead, you have to figure out what kind of overwhelm you have, and then make some changes to defeat it.

3 kinds of overwhelm:

1. I have so much to do and no time.
2. I have no idea what to do (too many options and no clue which one is the right one for me)
3. I know what to do, but I'm getting distracted.

The solutions:

1. If you know what you need to do and you have no time, you need to do something counterintuitive - take a little time out and actually look at what you need to do.

You need to check that:

- A. It is all actually necessary and will contribute to your goals.
- B. You're doing it in a way that makes sense, and not just higgledy-piggledy, as you remember.

If you take some time out and make a plan, and you put everything in order, it's going to allow you to do more when you start working. For more help with this, check out my class, Get More Done, at TaraSwiger.com/time.

2. If you have no idea what you should be doing - first of all, you're not alone. MANY of the makers I talk to are in this boat.

When you're first starting, either from the very beginning or even when you are starting a new aspect of your business (like publishing book or building a studio) - all of your options are overwhelming. You want to do some research and learn as much as you can, but soon all the info starts conflicting and you don't know what's the most important thing to do or to start with.

The solution is to FIGURE OUT WHAT MATTERS.

I know, that doesn't seem easy, right? But the good news is, you don't have to do it alone. After working with makers and artists for over 5 years, I have honed in on what matters for most of us. I've learned that there are only 4 foundations that really matter in your business. They are truly all you need to pay attention to, and once you get those solidly in place, your business will improve. Once you get them, you just keep tweaking them and improving them, and every time you do, your business will improve. I'm going to FULLY cover these 4 foundations and give you actions to take to start working on them immediately, in the upcoming webinar. You can sign up for it at taraswiger.com/defeatoverwhelm.

And if FOUR things sounds like a lot, I've got even better news: usually, my students start seeing improvement after just working on the first two. One student, Susan, had an unprofitable business for over 6 years, but within the first month of working on her foundations in the program Lift Off, she had her first profitable month ever. And she's been in the black ever since.

3. If you know what to do, and you know that your foundation is really wonky... but you just aren't working on it, then you've got a problem with distraction.

And I totally understand this. In fact, I feel like, when I feel overwhelmed, this is where I am. I know what to do but I get distracted by other things. I hear about a new software I want to try. I read a book and get excited about a new method, even though it's not the area of my business I know I need to be working on.

So what's the solution? Setting clear goals and focusing on your goals, to the exclusion of everything else. (The [Map Making Guide](#) can help you create a plan for reaching your goal.) This might mean you need to take a break from business blogs, and only listen to podcast episodes that relate to what you're working on. This might mean you need to only read books related to your goals. (I have done this before!)

Focusing on your goal doesn't just help you avoid distraction now, but it also builds your confidence and trust that these other ideas, you'll get to them. You see, if you constantly jump from thing to thing, you may worry that you have to do something now or you'll NEVER do it. And that might be how you've operated for years. But if you can train yourself to focus in on the most important goal and tasks right now, you'll learn to trust that, "Hey, it's okay. I can try out that software when I make it my goal next quarter! I don't have to do everything this very minute!"

Along with staying focused on your goals, be sure you have some method for taking notes and remembering what you want to do towards other goals. So if my goal last quarter was finishing a book proposal, but I heard a great podcast episode about building my email list, I take a note of what I learned and what the episode was, so when my goal is email list growth next quarter, I can use what I learned.

Your note-taking habit has to include both RECORDING your ideas and REVISITING them, when the time is right. For this, I really like the tool [Evernote](#), because it's easy to search and I can save anything from photos of a book page, to clippings from a webpage, to notes I make myself. I'll even take pictures of my brainstorming on paper, so I don't have to go find that paper notebook in 6 months when I want to revisit it.

Now, we've discussed the three kinds of overwhelm and solutions for all three... but I want to reiterate that *it's perfectly normal to feel overwhelmed*, and that it's not a sign you can't figure it out. It's only a sign that you need to take a step back and reassess and perhaps change your focus.

If you're falling into Overwhelm #2: You're not sure where to focus, I hope you'll join me in defeating this overwhelm, by learning the only 4 things you need to work on in your creative business, on December 11th. You can sign up for it at taraswiger.com/defeatoverwhelm and you'll get free access to that workshop AND tools to help you identify the areas that need work, like a quiz and the spreadsheet I use to track my stats.

Thanks so much for listening, and have an enthusiastic day!