

Creative Mindset Bootcamp

MODULE 3

finding focus and flow

I don't believe in a "hustle hard" approach to business, or promote the idea of building a business that requires you to work 100 hours per week at an equivalent pay rate of \$3/hour.

I think that, once you're focused, and you've found your flow, you can be highly productive even in small time frames. It also won't feel like it's a grind all the time because it will be aligned with your core goals.

That is not to say you won't need to work hard, and do things you don't enjoy. But that the goal here is to get clear on what it is you do really want, get better at decision making, and reduce the volume of any negative inner dialogue you've got going on so that you can achieve amazing things!

get clear on what you want

One of the challenges of starting, and running your own business, particularly if you are a team of one, is the sheer number of decisions that need to be made, all of which are your responsibility.

And if you're of the perfectionistic type, it's highly likely you also struggle with decision making. Not a great start!

If you've spent much time reading online businessy things, or in the entrepreneurial world in general, you'll likely have heard a bunch of different opinions about how to plan out your business, how to define your "why", and how thoroughly crucial it is to do so before you do anything else, or why it's important to write a mission statement. All great things, but also great opportunities to get stuck.

I tend to fall into the camp of "just start somewhere and get going".

If your initial motivations for doing what you're doing are rubbish, you'll work that out along the way. If you have a general sense of what you want to do, but don't ever launch anything because you couldn't craft a beautifully-worded mission statement, well, what's the point?

So before we go any further, write down below (or in a journal) what you know already. Some of you have already done this when I asked you for introductions. Maybe you know a little more now than you did then. And remember, this is for your eyes only - it doesn't have to be pretty, it doesn't even have to be realistic, the point is to get it out of your brain so you can move forward.

some prompts to get you started:

What sort of "thing" do you want to sell? Product/service/event?

Who do you want to help?

Do you see yourself working mostly alone, building a small team to work with you, or do you picture building a large empire?

What lights you up?

What things are you amazing at?

What areas do you anticipate needing help?

Why does this matter to you?

make better decisions

Decision fatigue is absolutely a thing. And for those of us who don't exactly love decision making to start with, it's something we need to work on getting better at so that it doesn't get the better of us!

In the video for this module I covered some of the mistakes I think we make when it comes to making decisions and the steps we can take instead to move through decision making with a little more ease.

1. Write it *all* down.

When you've got 600 ideas running around in your head, it's pretty much impossible to prioritize things and make clear decisions. You need to get it all out of there, and down on paper, or into an app on your phone. If it works better for you, you could even record voice notes.

It doesn't have to be pretty, you just need to write it all down.

I use a combination of a journal for specific projects or brainstorming sessions, and the notes app on my phone (because it's always with me). I can hold a certain number of "to do" items in my brain at a given time, but as soon as a child walks in and interrupts my train of thought, or I see a bird fly by, or I notice a gorgeous colour and start thinking about what kind of art I could make from that, all list items are gone.

Write everything down. Even the stuff that feels silly. You'll be glad you did, it will free up brain space for creativity and decision making, and you'll be better positioned to move forward.

2. Let go of believing that there is *one right decision*.

Most of the time there are many good options, and the idea that we need to find the *right* one, or the *best* one is the sort of nonsense that keeps us stuck.

Most of the decisions we make in business can be changed along the way if needed. Sure, you might feel stupid going back on something you said, but that feeling isn't fatal.

Let go of the concept of the "one right answer" or "best way to do things" concepts all together, and remind yourself that the action you take is more important, and that in the long run, how you learn and grow from your decisions is what really matters.

3. Define what winning looks like.

Fear of failure is a huge part of avoiding making decisions. But you're setting the goals here, not an employer, not a spouse, not a teacher. You. You can decide that the goal is "launch one product" this year - in which case it doesn't matter if it's a mug or a journal, you've had a win if you get something launched. It doesn't even matter if you don't sell out on the first day, because that's not what the goal was.

Over time you'll set bigger, scarier goals, and learn to exercise your disappointment muscle as you don't get the outcome you were hoping for, but if you're stuck because of a decision that needs to be made and your fear of failing is tied up in it, try shifting the goal posts a little and see if that moves anything for you.

4. Set a deadline.

It's really easy to let months, even years, slip by before we launch something, or take some other step forward in our business.

We get stuck on some trivial decision and use that as the excuse for everything.

This often happens because of #2, we want to make the *best* choice, or because making a decision means that the next step is taking action, and that can feel terrifying.

Work out what your brain needs to force a decision.

Mine needs a deadline. Preferably one I've shared publicly, or at least with a friend who will actually take the time to follow me up to see if I've done it.

I often get in my own way when it comes to making decisions, and having a deadline forces me to get out of the way and just get the work done.

Harsh truth here, when you get stuck on a decision like whether the branding should be pink or teal, or the label on the new product you're designing should be white or gold, the answer is "whichever one sees you actually launch the thing, because it's going to suck in the early days and you're going to change it all again over time anyway, but if you don't start now you can't get through the sucky early stuff".

Put a deadline on the decision, make a choice, take action.

5. Choose carefully who you listen to.

Sometimes when we have a decision to make, we ask 20 different people for their opinions.

It never helps.

They are rarely people whose opinions should have any weight in that context. Often they're friends, who are never going to buy our product, or strangers on the internet who wouldn't know a good logo design if it hit them in the face.

Because of #2, there's not *one right* decision, so asking lots of people will likely just result in lots of opinions, and more overwhelm for you.

rehearsing better stories

We've talked a lot about the stories we tell ourselves in previous modules. This module is about starting to re frame those stories into something more helpful, and then rehearsing those until they become or new inner dialogue.

Less critic, more friend.

I don't believe you can change years worth of inner dialogue just by putting a cute quote up on your wall, but I do believe you can see incredible transformation over time if you actively rehearse new, better stories.

To begin with, find one of the stories that you tell yourself that you could re frame.

I have often slipped into "this is too hard", which I now re frame with "I can do this". You might prefer "This is hard, but I can totally do it".

Once you've chosen your new story, it's time to embed it into your brain so that it becomes the thing that rolls around in your head, or comes out of your mouth during times of stress and added pressure.

I take a multi-sensory approach to this. Which really just means *try everything*, and engage as many of your senses as you can. Sometimes a particular thing will work well for a time, and then you need to try something new (like when you get sick of the sound of your own voice!).

Things to try:

- Write it down.
- Make some art for your wall, or the lock screen on your phone.
- Say it out loud, repeat with the emphasis on a different word each time (more on this in this week's video)
- Ask a friend to repeat it back to you.
- Set an alert on your phone to pop up multiple times per day and remind you.
- Have a friend video themselves saying it for you (yes, I've done this for someone.. She needed a pep talk, so I told her to start recording, told her she was capable of doing hard things, that I believed in her, and that she should re-watch this as many times as she needed to!).

Your homework this week is to find one new story you can tell yourself, and choose at least one new way of rehearsing it. I've included some ideas over the page, but you can come up with your own too!

stories to rehearse

I can do this.

I have something valuable to share.

It's exciting exploring my creativity in new ways.

Greater creative success means more impact and influence.

I am grateful for the opportunity to learn and grow.

I have confidence in myself.

Worrying about failure is pointless; I will use the opportunity to grow.

I am capable of making great choices and achieving my goals.

I am capable of great success.

I can make an impact with my art.

I am confident, loving, and generous.

My art is valuable.

Done is better than perfect.

I am focused on achieving my goals.

I am grateful to have the opportunity to grow my business.

I am choosing curiosity and courage over fear and failure.