

The Uncorked Conversation Podcast with Allyson Scammell

Episode #5: How to Play Procrastination (and Procrastination's Opposite) to Our Advantage

Transcripts

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You are listening to the Uncorked Conversation with Allyson Scammell episode number 5. Hello and welcome to the Uncorked Conversation, a podcast for soul guided passion filled women entrepreneurs who want to uncork big magic in life and business without burning out.

We'll get to the truth of how to uncork our gifts, the ones we keep hidden inside., and how to infuse those gifts into our personal and professional life in a way that feels like magic.

We'll also uncover how to truly experience the joy of the journey. Through smart time management and planning. I'm your host Allyson Scammell. Let's uncork.

Hello friends. You are in the right place today. We are talking about such a cool topic.

It's how we can play procrastination to our advantage as well as a little exploration of procrastination's opposite. And I'm so thrilled to have as our special guest Natalie Miller.

Natalie Miller is a master certified Martha Beck life coach, a yoga teacher, a studio owner, a mom to three girls, and a practical feminist. She coaches fellow hardworking bad ass women to love their whole selves make the most of their gifts and create lives they truly love. And I am so excited to be chatting with Natalie today.

How are you?

I'm so good. I'm so excited to be chatting with you. I think about our women.

Yeah. Oh I have to say that you are the full inspiration to today's topic. I was lucky enough to listen to a telle class that you taught on procrastination. I thought it was so brilliant and it was your your thought that I'm borrowing about how we can play it to our advantage. I thought it would be a cool topic for the two of us to have together because I you have been to see you've described yourself as a bit of a procrastinator yes.

Yes I believe so.

And I am procrastination opposite which I will describe in a minute. But before I do why don't you tell us about your journey with procrastination oh my gosh.

So you know I feel like I have a procrastination origin story.

I think I remember being maybe maybe eight years or so and I had to do a report on the lake in Germany stone. And you know it was one of those things in grade school where you'd got a leg get a poster board and creator create like a poster board presentation and then have a little written up written up you know talks that goes with it.

And I remember the night before my mother looking at me and saying how well did you do this to yourself.

I had lots of information in my house but gemstones and I had not done a single thing and I remember staying up late and you know pulling it together at who knows what hour. And so yeah I was I was thinking about it and that I think is my first memory of procrastinating and then ever since I've had a it's just been part of my part of my process for a long time I regretted it and disliked myself for it and then finally eventually I was like you know I'm just going to go with a ton of pressure out.

I've got to figure out how work with the fire that is beautiful. And I think that there's sort of this thing that's like okay procrastination bad not procrastination good and I get a challenge as you challenge that notion I'm challenging it as well because I consider myself. The flipside of the procrastination coin in that I always I was a little girl who had the gemstone project all done and I had my poster board dad and I had everything done so I got a nice you know I got to bed early the night before.

The pitfall when in that can be at times I find myself almost like a slave to getting it done. And I put this pressure on myself to get it done on time. And it has to be done even if I'm not enjoying it even if I'm killing myself in the process. Like it must be done like you know in some sort of like strange seeking approval kind of way. So almost like procrastination is opposite is the slave to having it done on time even if you're killing yourself in the process.

Yeah. I mean it's interesting it just goes to show that really like any approach can be stressful.

Amy any approach can be stressful and it just so happens that I think you know you're so right. Culturally we feel like if you have all your shit together you know like you do.

Allison I and caring but even though I'm preparing for Pargo is like legacy is timely e-mails coming to me.

So organize and it feels so stable and steady and I see that as a plus three like that would be so. As much as I would say like in procrastinates in my style of procrastination where I actually should I just grab that a little bit.

Oh yes go perfect would that be helpful. Yeah yeah.

I want to say it so. So the way that the way that I've come to embrace procrastination isn't actually by like you know loving there putting everything after the night before. That's that's not exactly what I mean. Do it the way that I've come to embrace it is that I realize that for me every project means kind of time right so I almost approach it like cooking a really big meal.

Yeah I might not be serving brussel. I might not be cooking the brussel sprouts until right before dinner but I had my cut them up and wash them two days before. Because that's what feels like the right thing to do. And so I will have all these projects in kind of various phases of completion. And that for me leaves room for a kind of magic and it leaves room to do to do what I like to do right.

Do what I to do what I feel like doing to kind of the opposite of what you were talking about like you know not to say this is what has to get done today. And even if I don't want to or even if I'm not enjoying it. Well right.

Of course the pitfalls of that is true not like the night before a big holiday meal like oh my gosh there's so much going on so many balls in the air. And I've got to trust myself. And let's face it sometimes something's going to fall right like there is more flexibility. There's a lack of stability which I appreciate. You know I can feel in your work and I appreciate so much in that. Yeah.

And I think it's to me it sounds like you get you embrace your tendencies you first become aware of them. Yeah. And then you embrace it and in the embracing it's going with the slow kind of thing.

Yeah I think that's right. Well you know it's interesting like part of I think a big turning point for me actually around my procrastination was I read this this hilarious little book which I recommend very much to all the procrastinators out there because you will you will laugh with self recognition a lot. It's called The Art of Procrastination.

And that's by John Perry and he is a professor and at the very beginning of the book he says look I've been wanting to write this book for a really long time and really the only reason I'm starting it right now is I have this book border. I need to submit to the college bookstore and it was due two weeks ago.

It's great.

Basically though it's so good and so basically in the book she sort of talks about like how you know in playing in embracing procrastination and letting go of the shame around that was what he was able to realize as you know I actually get a lot done and I'm a successful person in the world.

It's just my path isn't linear and on deadline it meanders around I can often use my resistance to something that I do I can use that energy from that and pour it into something else right. So again it's like it got its own stresses its got its own kind of you know pressures but.

But yeah I've been noticing it and then re reframing it thinking about like well what are the advantages here or or what are the ways in which I can work with this tendency of mine rather than just deflect myself for it.

Okay. And I want to get to that those ways and one second. And it's what for those listening who are.

Procrastination opposite like me. I think it's interesting that Natalie mentioned the shame and procrastination. And I feel like for me there's also a shame in not getting my work done. So either way there is a sort of. You know dark side almost of our of our.

Plans our intentions and our ability to get them done right. And so whether we procrastinate or get everything kind of front loaded overwhelmingly done there can be the shame that pops up that either were were not doing enough or doing too much whatever it may be.

And so one thing that I do and have learned to do to rein myself in and get back to that place that feels balanced that you're in that flow and that you're just creating in a way that it's just coming from you and it's just feeling good is I I'm very clear at the start of each week what I want to accomplish in one week.

And of course I have a tendency to want to accomplish a million different things. I think that's maybe everybody has that. You think you can do more than you physically can. But I I get really realistic and I spend this time like what can I do in a week and then I plot out those actions throughout the week.

And that is just for me it keeps me on track without feeling like I'm not doing enough feeling this shame and not doing enough. And so that is another way that people who have my sort of tendencies sort of slave to getting the to do list. Done.

You get very realistic about what you're to do is to look like in a week and then you just focus on Matt and then hopefully by the time Friday afternoon rolls around you've ticked off all of your things and you can just have a period of rest over the weekend or whichever days your weekend is that you can you know just be a normal person functioning in the world instead of consumed with your to do list.

Oh my gosh. I love that. I just have to say I love that so much.

Blake I feel like I'm learning about another culture. Oh wow.

Wow. They feel Bayfield if they don't get to remove.

It's like the same is just like 10 of you.

You're feeling the same emotions as just like the opposite side of the coin or looking at it from a different angle kind of you know what I have to say because from the outside it looks it looks so smooth. I have to say that I mean it just looks I don't know but my hands look so smooth I feel like I'm like you here here here here.

You know the thing that you asked me for five minutes before it was selected from the outside I'm going to say the you know the planner approach to look so weird.

So it's a it's a fascinating insight.

I like that the planner approach is good.

So getting back to the some of the ways that we can play procrastination to our advantage. What are some ideas that you have.

Yes. So I guess you know like central to playing procrastination to your advantage really is seeing it and accepting it and and and loving it and recognizing it as a way that you are in the world or that it is part of your price range.

So I think for me so much of the strength and the truly like missing deadlines last minute naps that procrastination can bring just comes from getting down on myself. RAY When I begin to think oh this is such a problem. Oh there's something wrong with me. Oh I'm never going to get it done. That's actually when I am late and I don't get it done.

And I say I I feel like I just kind of inject the whole thing with this really negative and self-defeating energy. So it's no wonder that a self-deceit rate. So I think no one is just recognizing oh right procrastinating is part of my process. I accept this and in fact in a funny way you might laugh at herself and I kind of plan for it.

Because they accept it so poorly. It's not like you know it. It comes up and bites me in the ass because I already knew it was going to happen. And so and so you know I'm not like caught by surprise.

So you do that. I think basically this is the number one best friend of a procrastinator and I bet it's a good friend of a planner to work Martha back calls curdles that I needed the amen for that.

I know right. I loved you. Yeah. Do you want to describe what they are.

Sure. My clients and I always say that turtle steps is Martha Baks concept she came up with it but my clients always give me credit for it because I'm such a turtle Stupp percent.

It's like how are your turtle steps. Let's identify your turtle steps and so am a huge believer in the concept in that obviously a turtle. Makes a small step when it moves when it walks. As compared to other animals and so most of us have big ideas big ambitions and it can just be overwhelming when we think of our end state versus where we are today.

And you just like how can ever get there and so very often a reaction to that is to just do nothing. But if you break down what needs to be done the actions and the milestones you need to achieve to reach the oral vision. And if you keep breaking them down to the small action that you can take today that's all you can do.

Any any big idea started with one small action and Martha says. Break it down until the action gets so small it would be silly not to do it. I love that and that is the essence of a turtle step. Do you agree Natalie. In addition yes.

No I totally agree. And I would say for a procrastinator sometimes the turtle step has to get off honestly ridiculously small right leg in this scene Liz multo the lot.

I was thinking what the last projects that they had to really kind of watch out on the procrastination front right. And of course filing taxes or you know or getting getting the things together for the accountants Ray and Phelps. Honestly for me I have to make a turtle that that is something like. Find one.

Tax documents straight leg lake Lake not even open at night and get them all find one Ray or if they have something that I need to write.

And I am and I'm putting it off. And I know I can feel some procrastination vibe around it.

It'll be like open Google Docs name the documents and close Google Docs. Like that's it. Just open up Google Docs and and save a document with the name of the thing you're gonna write. I mean that is how small and for me Alisson like I want to make sure I do make a little distinction between procrastination and the other thing that I call procrastination.

The Procrastinators. Yeah the procrastinators all know what I'm talking about procrastinators said.

And when you have put something off so long that you no longer feel able to do anything at all regarding it. So it's like the project had been there been there been there and it suddenly becomes like this monstrous blob that you don't even know you don't even know what and is what and it feels like it feels like it could never you could never possibly move with that right.

So for procrastination is like this kind of it's I mean I don't know I don't think it's that different from a planning strategy right it just means like to do tomorrow so that the planning stages procrastinate nurture is where you don't believe you have any power to do the thing anymore right. You are. Not you are stuck in not doing so in those cases those ridiculous turtle steps are are just super super helpful.

That's awesome. I loved that year and I would say everything you've said is also extraordinarily relevant for the planning approach. In the sense that. You understand that you're a planner and that you know you. Planning is an important part of your creative process. So don't do that quickly. Don't neglect it really take some time.

No shut off all your technology. You know it's part of your creative process. And just be in that planning and then get really realistic. As I mentioned earlier about what you can accomplish accomplish in a week. So if you are too ambitious and you don't accomplish it then you don't get to that same limiting belief that Natalie mentioned there's something wrong with me.

I'm not getting through my to do list because you've taken the time for the planning which is something that you know most planners really enjoy and find joyful and you realistically identified your tunnel stops because that's all that's all we can do in a given day as a whole series of journal steps.

And you've been really realistic about a period of time and I like to plan in week chunks. I find that to be the most useful. But obviously if you find it's easier to plan for the day of the month than you should go with what feels best for you. But I love that it's a lot of the same things.

It is yeah. I mean I think for me the only difference would be like let's say I've got like you know four projects going and you know the most pressing is Project A but I'm feeling like I'm just not feeling project A right. So to me what's really important is that I go and do turtle steps for Project B C D I go and do a little bit around some some some small steps toward the things that are calling me right.

So like I like John Perry row right. I'm writing this article because my book order is still OK.

I'm going to honor that. I'm not up for project right now. I'm going to go get some turtles up on B C and D. Because guess what. Then when I do arrive to project C and Project C is due tomorrow I've already taken all these steps toward it.

When I was avoiding project. Yeah.

It really is kind of marvelously worked out and more than anything it keeps the feeling of empowered had been set up right. And that is what is most important to me. Can I just tell you one word funny a strategy that I learned that I really I really love.

It's from Barbara Asher who is the hilarious self-help writer. And it is around. Oh she's she's a hell where oh so this is from the book Live the life you love. And then she also has one called like witchcraft maybe.

Yeah yeah I've read that one I've read witchcraft.

Yeah. Oh she's so. She's just great she's funny and she's wonderful. So she has this thing that this chapter in live the life you love about resistance and it's about the tiny tiny tiny tiny turtles that bright so let's say I made my tiny turtle step around taxes.

OK. I'm going to find one tax document and then I get to that. I get about that and I'm just like oh I can't do it right. She says what you have to do when you can't even do the tiny step right.

Even though it is easy to do it's ridiculously easy if you just can't get yourself to do it. You have to own that moment. You have to like stand up and stomp your foot and say out loud I am Luli with you is to find one top tax document today. Right. And I mean it's like the article is hilarious but

what happens in that moment that's really important is that you remember I am still the deciding person here. I'm still the creator. I'm still the one with power. I'm like overwhelmed by the tax document I am deciding not to find it right.

And there is really something so important. I think either way a planner or procrastinator that we just remember although we are making choices to empower I so love that.

Absolutely. And like I say you use the word resistance which I love because I think whether you're a planner or a procrastinator we all feel resistance. We all feel like I need to plan a. I just don't feel like it either.

I just don't have it in me but I know I want to but I don't want to. And I think it always feels so much better to to say hi resistance. Look look at it acknowledge it like you're here. Maybe.
Question Why are you here.

Is there something going on than to stuff it inside and just keep it stuffed inside. And then your stuff your resistance in and then you get in this sort of a flurry of criticism self criticism as to why you're not doing it. You should be doing it. Why am I not you know finding that one tax document. It's like an invitation for self-criticism.

Whilst it's a lot more liberating just to see the resistance. Say hello. Say it's here. I'm going to feel it and maybe just ask hey resistance why shown up. Was there something I need to know. Trying to get my attention.

Oh my gosh.

So I just I just love that. Yeah. Just to room. I mean again. It's kind of tapping into that leg. I'm the creator here right to write in I imagine for the planner to remember I made this plan.

Yeah like the plan doesn't make me. I made the plan. Premier right. It's like I agreed to the deal agreed to pay taxes. Yeah. I'm.

I have some control here. I love that idea in coaching. You know that you know we don't have to do anything.

There's not a single thing in the world. We have to do we're deciding we're choosing all the time right. And so whether it's like on the planning front or the procrastinating but when resistance comes up at flow you know I don't know if this is kind of interesting moment right because it's.

It's like herea manifesting along. And I get I run into a little friction or a run in to I run into maybe an obstacle or or. Or for me. Sometimes I start to I start to question a little bit. And I love that idea of just seeing what wow what is going on here instead of being totally buying it right.

Oh I can't do that.

Oh I can do that because I'm brave because you know it because I'm blah blah blah.

Yeah. And absolutely.

And Natalie knows coaches we spend a lot of time with ourselves and with our clients in the world of limiting beliefs thoughts that are painful aren't serving us. And I used to think that if you identified a woman and believed that you had to sit with it for like an hour and do all these tools and coaching processes and self-help stuff and sometimes that is exactly what is a helpful thing to do.

And sometimes all you have to do is identify the thought. So getting back to Natalie's example of refusing to find one document just simply be like why. What's the thought. Maybe the thought is I don't want to find the dark tax document because I don't want to face my finances right now. You know maybe your finances are in a place.

Maybe it's something deeper. Maybe it's not just simply I don't feel like doing it but maybe there is a deeper thought that is causing this resistance a deeper painful thought. And if you just ask like what is the thought that's really causing the resistance just by seeing the fat out out or writing it down. I find that there's a lot of relief in just doing that and then going on with your day just identifying with thought yes completely.

Completely agree. Right.

And sometimes too it can come from just like going wow how am I feeling so instead of like you know what would I do. I like need to go to the grocery store because we don't have any onions. Oh you know I'll say instead of you know instead of asking Hey resistance what's up. Looking for that. But I would like run away to do an errand of some kind right.

That would be nice. Just a kind of strategy right.

And so there's also something to be said just like sitting with the feeling of it to just going Wow what does this feel like. This feels really like I feel really antsy I feel almost nervous. Well where does nervousness come from. Right.

So sometimes even just sitting with the feeling can give you a sense of relief. Well discomfort initially of let's face that the feeling doesn't feel great right. But then a sense of relief in that like you know I don't actually have to run away from here. And to think again it comes around to kind of agency right. I'm choosing how to deal with that. I'm I'm I'm interested in that. I'm wondering where it's coming from.

Ray I love that I 100 percent agree. I think that that it's finding the thought and also the feeling. Yes yes yes yes.

So let's recap the bidding here. Me. Well there are more than just obviously we know that there's more than just two kinds of people although we're loosely saying that there's a world of procrastinators and there is a world of planners and there's a world in between. But if you feel yourself tending towards one or the other the first thing is to recognize your tendency. Yeah. Would you agree with that.

Natalie I think to recognize it and to just honor it right. This is my tendency and I love myself for it and I'm going to make it work for me.

Absolutely. Absolutely and so trying to get away off of being in that self criticism mode or that labeling procrastination is good or bad it just is and how you can honor your natural tendency is just honor being in the natural creative flow of things.

Yes I agree. What is interesting to me about like in both respects it seems like it's kind of like stress and discomfort of different kinds of different kinds.

And then I mean not my side for the procrastinator just kind of saying hey you know what. Just like when you know you keep doing what you want to do which you feel like doing and know that that's actually a strategy.

No that that is you know you're you're putting together your you know retreat materials when really the taxes are due tomorrow is a bad and wrong. It's your way of taking steps towards projects a strike where they say perceptual projects. See when when you know project a is is is heavy on your plate right. And that's not a bad thing that's actually part of your process.

So you know to know that there are pitfalls really is that procrastination thing when nothing is happening. That's that's that's the thing to avoid. So taking steps in another direction is great because that's actually you know it's it's actually a great strategy for for those of us to procrastinate.

Absolutely. And for the planners it's allowing yourself the creative process to plan and knowing that sometimes the plan changes. And that's also part of the process. So you don't have to be a slave to the plan and you can respond to your day and being creative response to your day in a way that feels good instead of like I have to get this list Stana Hafter.

I have to be enslaved by the planet created.

And we also talked about turtle steps which are tiny tiny steps that you can take. And if you're feeling a lot of resistance you just keep breaking down actions until you get to the action that this feels so easy it would be silly not to take.

And then we talked about just the overall concept of resistance. And just maybe it's an opportunity to question where the resistance is coming from what's the thought and what's the emotion. And just to spend some time with that thought and that emotion and see if there's something there for you to be aware of.

Yeah or if there something that you are just going to stand up to him that's hilarious. I refuse I refuse to open Google dark web.

Exactly. So maybe 10 of the theme is like you know you're the director of your movie.

I have to say the Thanksgiving menu just came back to me right like you made the Menu menu girl like you.

You decide what you want to serve and you know what some things are going to burn. And you know sometimes you know things aren't going to work out exactly the way you planned and you know what. Some of the things are going to be last minute and you might be carrying something out after everybody already sat down and it's all OK.

I love it. So on that note that's a great note and on. Natalie how can people find you oh my gosh.

Well I my Web site is Natalie cave Miller dot com and I have some little blog there and they have a newsletter that you can sign up for. It will not be coming out on a set schedule.

You're going to have to come out with a feel like get them.

Yeah. And I have a bunch of really good retreats coming up. So yes if you like if you like to learn more about you you can come right over there.

Awesome. And I am a subscriber to Natalie's newsletter and she is such a gifted writer. I love her style.

She's funny and yet she always gets like this really profound lessons and she has a way of sending me the newsletter in its sporadic fashion and I receive it just when I need it. So definitely she's doing some there.

Oh my gosh. I'm so grateful for you. And how fabulously you have things all together that league.

I love that we got to talk today. What a gift it was to get to meet you. Oh my gosh.

Oh I know I feel the same way. Thank you so much for making the time.

You are such a gifted teacher and speaker and I look forward to seeing all the amazing things that you continue to create the world's yeah.

And someday we'll do something together and it will drive you crazy. I mean it I mean it will be a growth experience for both of. Them.

Probably drive you crazy right back.

Thank you again Natalie so much for making time to speak with us today and share your brilliance. And so those of you who are listening if you're selling at all connected to this content I would be so grateful if you subscribed and left a comment and review on iTunes. So more people can find us and until next time. Stay uncorked.

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