Announcer: You are listening to AcademiGig, episode five. AcademiGig Podcast is a podcast for current and aspiring academic creatives, freelancers, and entrepreneurs. Along with every episode, we post show notes with links to resources mentioned in the episode, and a full transcript. You can find these materials, sign up for our email list, and share your ideas for episode topics at academigig.com. Now, on to the episode.

Sara: Hey Katie.

Katie: Hey Sara, how's it going?

Sara: I'm doing well, how are you?

Katie: I am good. I'm excited to check in with you and see what's been going on in your business lately.

Sara: Yeah, it's been a crazy couple of weeks for me. One of the things that I've been struggling a lot with is this whole idea of getting balance back into life. I know in one of the last podcasts that we did, I talked a lot about being pretty militant in my making sure I had off time. That's been a little bit not ideal lately. For me, it's been a lot of figuring out how to take a step back and deal with putting up some boundaries around my time, even if that means I'm not checking all the things off my to-do list, which, as a type A, is really, really hard.

Katie: That is hard.

Sara: Yeah, that's where I am. How are things with you? What have you been working on?

Katie: This is I think a good topic for a future episode. I mentioned in a previous episode that I've been working through this Rock Your Web Design Business course and one of the things that they asked for homework, is to create these pricing pages of one of your services and list it as a PDF document. It's kind of like a set of slides, like PowerPoint slides, but it walks your clients through a bunch of information about the different packages you offer. There's pricing information on there. They learn about your team if you have a team. Who they're working with, that kind of thing.

It's the kind of document that you send to people after you have an initial call to see if they're a good fit to work with you. I actually spent some time creating a version of this for my website creation services. That was really interesting and super helpful and helped me to think very carefully about what we're going to be offering and ...

I think I'm going to create these pages for several of the other services that I offer because I think it's just useful to be able to have something that you can send clients and also create something really systematic for your business. So, I think that there is definitely a topic in a future episode about, how can we create systems for our businesses that helped us to have the kind of time that you're talking about where it feels more balanced and we're not constantly creating things from scratch to send to people. I'm thinking a lot about that these days.

Sara: Yeah, that's really relevant to me to. There are constantly times where I get emails or requests from people and I'm like, "I really wish I had a system for this." I'm really excited to learn a little bit from you as well about how that all works out for you on your business side of things.

Katie: Yeah, it takes time, but my sense is, it's one of those things where if you put in the upfront time, it's totally worth it on the backend like so many things in our academic lives. If you plan the course out really well, it's going to go well when you teach it. So, what is our topic for today?

Sara: Well, today we're talking a little bit about fear. What are our biggest fears for our businesses? This is something that I think everybody struggles with to varying degrees. I think some people are better at compartmentalizing fear and dealing with fear than others. I will be honest and say that, of course, my biggest fear as somebody who's recently jumped full time into self employment is failure. What if this thing doesn't work? You guys, what if it just goes down in a fiery blaze of glory? That's a hard thing for me to grapple with on a daily basis and so I do have to push it off to the side a little bit when I'm in the weeds.

One of my friends gives me a really hard time about this because ... He says, "There's no data to support that you're going to fail here. You always manage to pull things off and to keep all the balls in the air and you're very good at that. You've figured out ways to be successful in the things that you're doing." At which point my response is always like, "Yeah, but what if this is the time I can't do that? What then?" At which point he rolls his eyes at me. It works out well. But I think that fear is really real for a lot of people. Maybe some of our listeners out there are feeling that way too. That, what if it all falls apart? What if this is the time I can't keep all the balls in the air and I can't keep it all going? When I think about fear, that's kind of my biggest one. What about you, Katie?

Katie: Well, I want to dig into yours a little bit more before we get into mine, because I've got questions. So, when I think about fear, I think sometimes it's super-nebulous. When you say it's gonna fall apart and go down in this blaze of flaming glory, what does that mean exactly? Like, are you homeless on the streets? Are you like everybody thinks that you're an imposter and so nobody wants to hire you? Not to plant these seeds that are gonna give you additional fears but-

Sara: You trying to give me a complex?

Katie: I'm actually really not. I'm curious, what does it ... Because I think that ... And I would ask this of our listeners to. If this is a fear that you have, what exactly does it mean? Does it mean that you're not gonna have enough money to pay your mortgage? Does it mean that your kids are gonna be living in a car with you? What exactly is that fear of ... When it falls apart, what does it look like?

Sara: That's a great question and that's one that people that I talk to about this have always asked me, "What does that mean for you?" I think for me, the failure is in that I've promised myself and the people that I care about that I am gonna do this thing. Even if I try my hardest and do my best work, if I still can't manage to do this thing in the way that I have wanted to and the way that I have dreamt I would, that's failure. So, if I'm not able to maintain this self employed status as long as I want to and on my terms, then to me, that feels like failure.

I recognize that I could go out and get another job at some point, and I might do that at some point, but I want that to be on my terms. If I'm not able to secure the clients that I need and get the gigs that I need in order to make this work longterm, then that feels like I failed at this and have to get forced into making a decision about my career and about my business that's not on my own terms. I think that's what it is for me.

I'm not worried as much about the financial side of it. I'm not as much worried about like, I'm not going to end up homeless on the street as you said. I can pay my mortgage, I can do those things, and I have other ways to do that, like I could go get another job if I needed to. I'm not super concerned about that. I think for me it's more about these goals and these hopes and dreams that I've set for myself. If I can't see fulfillment in those and can't reach those in the ways that I want to and in the ways that make me feel fulfilled, that's failure for me.

Katie: I think how you've just described is very tied to my biggest fear, which is that I'm going to be trapped. I'm going to get trapped into something that I really don't want to do, and whether that's like full time work ... This is a more general fear, but I think it does tie to my business. That I'm gonna be in a situation where I'm doing something for making money for something that I do not like and I'm just gonna dred it.

I've been in that situation before, and have just gotten myself out of it. Like after I'd been in a job for a long time and it's starting to feel pretty stale and I'm not wanting to go to work every day. That kind of thing, and I know you have experienced this to Sara, where you need to get out of that situation. I think that that's my concern with my business, is I'm gonna somehow make a wrong turn with it and I'm gonna offer a service and everyone's gonna love it and I'm gonna become known for that thing and I'm gonna be like, "Oh my God. This is not what I want."

I'm trying to be really careful about as I'm offering new stuff, because I'm offering a lot of stuff. I'm experimenting with a lot of stuff right now, to remind myself like, "you cannot offer this at any time." I think we get stuck in this feeling of like, we don't have these choices. Like, I could pick up and move to another state right now if I wanted to. I could quit my job, I could find another job, I could move to Kansas, whatever. If I wanted to do that I could. I am not planning on it, just for listeners who are interested.

I think we get tied down with our mortgages and our family is more geographically bound. We kind of think we don't have the kinds of choices that actually we do. It doesn't mean it wouldn't be hard to make those choices, but I think that's my fear, is that I'm gonna get trapped into a situation where I'm unhappy.

Sara: That's a salient one for me to. I think that that's definitely a concern, especially as I'm thinking about growing my business and growing for sustainability, because I think sometimes the things that you can get paid for are not necessarily the things you want to get paid for. There sometimes is a difference between what you want to be doing and what people will pay you to do. I think that there's a tension there, for me especially. I love the initial thinking through about how to grow a thing and a lot of things that I am dabbling in and being a part of, there's not money in the initial start phase for a lot of these things.

Though that's where I get a lot of my energy, I can't put all my time and energy there because I can't get paid for that usually, or not in ways that would be sustainable. So, I hear you on the getting boxed in and also thinking about, "Okay, how do I grow this business sustainably by still doing the things I want to be doing and the things I know I'm good at, but not getting boxed into the areas that I know I can get paid for even though they're not the things that bring me the most joy." I definitely hear you on that one.

Katie: I have a question, because I think that one of the fears that I struggle with is, when I'm starting to think about doing a new thing in my business like offering a new service or giving a new talk or something like that. Sometimes I feel a lot of resistance to that thing. A good example of this, I'll just put it out there, is when I started to think about helping people with website creation. This is because people were asking me, "Do you help people do this thing?" They saw my websites, they wanted one and they were like, "do you do this?"

Initially I was like, "no I do not. I am not a web designer ..." and I didn't know anyone else to refer them to. That was the problem. I don't know anyone who specializes in working with academics, so if you are listening to this and you do that, let me know because I would love to have people that I can refer to. Even though I'm doing this now myself, I think it's important for us to be connected to each other and be cross referring. Anyway, so I had this thing and I was setting up.

I have a system now that I work with people in a very specific way, because I do not identify as a web designer. If you ask me to build a website in Squarespace, I won't do it. If you ask me to do something outside of a WordPress content management system, I won't do it. I have very specific ways that I do this, because that's where my skillset is. I had this conversation with my partner, who is my partner in life and my partner in business because I brought him into this because he does a lot of the backend web work. That is not my area, but it is his area. He's very good about security and helping people purchase domain names and all those kinds of things that are the backend logistics of a website.

At one point I was like, "I'm not sure I want to do this. I'm not sure I want to design websites for other people," and he's like ... This is a big part of how he's involved in the business so obviously he cares about this. We had this conversation, and what it helped me to realize is, I'm scared of it. It's not that I don't want to it, because I actually really enjoy the process of walking people through this, because it's a coaching process of, "What do you want out of the website? How do you want people to feel about the website? What doe this website mean to you? What are the goals that you're hoping it will accomplish for you?"

I think professional websites are so important to people's professional identities online. It's just such a key thing, and people are so not sure where to start with it, especially if they've never done it before. I definitely want to be the person who can help them to do that, but it's also really scary because I don't identify in that way. I do not have formal web design training. I've picked up a lot of stuff as I've done it myself. I've built like a dizen websites for myself in lots of different platforms, all these different things, but there was just this moment of, I'm not sure other people are gonna find me credible to do this.

This is not the only time I've had this feeling but, it's a version of imposter syndrome where you're really questioning your own credibility, and I think there's a little kernel of truth in there because there are other people who can design websites in their sleep and I'm not one of those people. It's not easy for me to do all of these things, but when I talk with other designers, they say like, "It takes my like five iterations to make sure I get it right," or whatever. We're all kind of creating in different ways and it's not as easy as I think it is.

Anyway, I feel like this is a long way of saying, when you're offering something new, there can be a lot of fear associated with that, and the easy route is just to be like, "Oh I'm not gonna do that thing."

Sara: A followup question for you about that. You kind of hit on it already but, this idea of imposter syndrome. How much do you think that our fears about the things that we're offering or about our businesses in general are based on our perception of what other people's perception of us is? It's sort of that, what do we think that other people are thinking about us and how does that color the way that we think about our own business and our own work and the fear associated with it?

Katie: I've been thinking about this a lot because I have a new offering that is actually tied to an area that I feel super confident in. That's writing and publishing and I have this webinar offering. It's not selling right now, at least as much as I would like and I think there's lots of reasons for that. I think it's a timing issue. I started offering it in the summer. Academics aren't back yet. There's all kinds of things that I can attribute this to, but I don't feel an imposter syndrome at all because I'm like, "I am the person to offer this."

I know that if you come into this, you are going to get value. There is no question in my mind that if you buy this webinar series, it is gonna be way more ... You're gonna get way more out of it than what you're paying for, the way that it's priced and all these things. It's actually really interesting to experience what other people might call a failure, and I don't think it's failed yet. We're still waiting to see what happens with this. I'm right in the middle of it.

But, let's say nobody buys this thing. I'm not coming at it from this angle of like, "Oh, this is really making me question who I am," offering this thing. I'm more like, "Okay, so these tactics didn't work. What do I need to do about that? How could I have done this differently? What is it about my messaging? What is it about how I push this out?" It's such an interesting place when the fear is not there because you just get really granular about like, "Okay, let's dissect this thing and figure out what's going on," and it's refreshing.

It's still frustrating and annoying and I'm like, "Why isn't anyone buying this thing?" It's not like it's a walk in the park, but it's giving me a window on when you don't have that feeling of imposter syndrome. I does clarify ... It clears out all this other crap so that you can look from a more objective place, why is this working or not working? It's a weird comparison because I have stuff where I'm afraid and I have stuff where I'm not. I can really see how the fear blinds you in some ways.

Sara: My question back would be, if it were the web design part that was failing, would you take that more personally and say, "Well, it must be because people don't think I'm qualified to do this."

Katie: Yeah, absolutely, because I think that there's ... It's interesting because ... The smartest question you can ask someone who is gonna design a website for you, if you're gonna be putting out money to have someone design a website for you, the smartest thing you can ask them is, "What's your portfolio? Where are the other websites you've designed that I can see? That are live and that I can go play around with and see if I like the design. If they're functioning well," that kind of thing.

I had a client recently ask me that question. I had anticipated that so I have a portfolio that I can share out and you can see it on my website. There's videos walking you through different websites I've done and stuff like that, but it's one of those things where it's like, you have to anticipate what's the proof. There are so many people out there that are like, "Oh yeah, I don this, that or the other thing," but when you're like, "Who have you done it for? What do your clients say about you? What's the product? What's the outcome that I can expect based on your past experience of doing this?" I think that the hardest thing is when you're just starting out, and you don't have that yet.

Sara: [crosstalk 00:18:22] gonna say, what happens then?

Katie: Yeah, exactly. This is why I've gotten really into piloting stuff and ... Like when I did the website creation services, I piloted it with three people for free. I did complimentary websites for them. I'm actually still in the process of doing a couple of those. I was able to test out my coaching and really see, "Does this work? I think it will, but let me actually do it with three real people," and it gave me a portfolio of stuff. That was one of my summer projects, was to build that portfolio, and it gave me confidence, but that's a long game approach.

That's like, "I'm not just putting out a service." It's, "I'm gonna test the service. I'm gonna talk to people and make sure it works and I'm gonna get some testimonials," all these different kinds of things. Some people don't have the luxury of the time to do that, but I do think it's a smart move because it not only gives you confidence in yourself, but it gives you stuff that you can talk to other people about to say like, "Yeah, I've actually done this thing. I'm not just saying I can do it."

Sara: Yeah, I can certainly relate to that because when I first started doing some side consulting when I was still at my full time position, we had to do a lot of the initial work pro bono, partly because of that. We didn't have a whole lot of background to speak to, especially in doing this specific kind of consulting. It was a lot of like, "Sure, we can come do this thing for you if you're willing to take a chance on us. We have research experience. We have experience in this type of work, but we haven't done it in this environment before. We haven't done it in this way before. If you're willing to let us come in and try this thing, we'll do it for you for much cheaper or even for free." That actually is a great way to get some initial experience and try some things out.

It's kind of a no lose situation because ideally, you get some success out of it and the client that you're working with or the person that you're working with gets something out of it to. As you're starting to think about starting your business or starting your side hustle, I think that's a really great tactic. Just put yourself out there and for the first or two or first handful of clients even, just get your feet wet and get some experience under your belt because then you can go back to them and say, "Hey, what was your experience like? Can I share that with other people who are asking to work with me?" Then you start to build a client base. You start to build that credibility in that space.

Katie: I have a question, and I think that's such great advice. Aside from imposter syndrome, I'm wondering to what degree you're afraid, for lack of a better phrasing, people won't like you. Think about this from like, when we buy things from business, like if you buy a couch from like Crate & Barrel, it doesn't feel personal. It's this corporation you're buying this thing, and if you don't like it, you're gonna post a review. All of those kinds of things. But when you're buying a service from another person, it's a one-on-one coaching or you're hiring them to speak or something like that, part of what you're hiring is that person. A big part of it is that person and their personality and all those kinds of things.

I feel like one of my fears is that if people aren't buying what I'm selling, that there's something about me that is pushing them away. I've read people who say basically you should try to repel people as quickly as possible. If they're not the people who should be working with you, they need to know as soon as possible. So, you should be incredibly strong with your personality, just putting stuff out there because if it's not a good fit, they shouldn't be on your list. They shouldn't be looking at your blog, they shouldn't be, whatever.

That's one of those things that I struggle with sometimes because I'm just like ... I have to really force myself to not take it personally when something doesn't work out, or I have an initial call with someone and they decide not to follow up with the coaching or whatever. I have to just say like, "This is just not what they needed right now and that's okay. It's not a personal reflection on who I am as a person or whatever." I'm wondering if you have this in your business. You and I do different kinds of things so I'm wondering if this is something you ever feel.

Sara: It's interesting because I think I used to a little bit, but I tend to be ... This is gonna sound awful, but I tend to be much more like, "Yeah, that's their problem not mine." That sounds maybe a little more callous than I mean it to, but I take rejection of the work that I do more about ... It's more about fit for me I think. In a lot of those cases like you said, it's not the right time for them or they didn't jibe with my personality and I didn't groove on theirs and that's okay, that's fine. There are other people who maybe can meet that need.

I think where I get into trouble is, if I get really excited about a project or I get really excited about an opportunity because I want to do it and I think it's gonna be a really cool thing, if that doesn't work out, then there's disappointment. It's not so much about questioning myself as a person and like, "Oh, they didn't want to work with me because they don't like me." It's more about like, "oh, that would've been a super cool opportunity." I'm bummed that I don't get to do that thing.

I'm bummed that I don't get to be a part of that work because for me, the joy comes in doing the work more than it does in ... I love working with people, but it's not so much even like, "Oh, this client is the best." I connect with them on a personal level. It's more about, the work that they're doing is so cool and I want to be a part of it. I want to make it better and so I feel like in those times where I'll have a meeting with somebody and then it just doesn't work out for whatever reason, it's not so much a personal upfront to me, or I don't take it on that way. But there is disappointment if I'm really excited about the work that I would've been able to do had it worked out. For me, it's more about that. Not that they're rejecting my work, but like, "oh, I could've done this thing and it would've been awesome and I don't get to do that now."

Katie: I think this is where fear is really personal to people. I'd love to hear from listeners about this to. What are the things ... Because I think that ... in my day to day life, I'm certainly not like, "Oh my god I have to perform in such a way that everybody likes me." There's definitely a part of me that's doing exactly what you're doing, which id like, it's their problem. I'm pretty secure in who I am and all those things.

However, there is this kind of kernel of ... I think that deep down, I'm gonna get real deep here with our listeners. I think deep down, I don't think I'm a likable person. I do feel like there's a certain extent to ... That's where the fear is rooted in, because as someone who is introverted first of all, and who struggles with emotional intelligence, it's hard for me to interact with people on an emotional level. I have to really think about it. If you invite me out, I would so much rather be home reading a book by myself. I am that person. I am not a social person.

In coaching relationships, that it where I thrive, because that one on one like that as an introvert ... but I think that there is this deeply rooted concern I have that's like, if you really knew who I was, you'd not like me because I'm like this emotionally stunted whatever. It's hard for me to connect with other people. Now, logically and whatever, I can look at that and be like, "You're overblowing it." I think everyone of us has that thing that's like ... we think it about ourselves. It's probably not true, but it's still where fear is growing out of.

I think that those are the things you have to watch out for the most because they're the most ... they can grow into huge illogical things that are not true, and you can't let that drive your business. Also, you have to some degree really be yourself. You can't be trying to hide stuff, which is why I talk about stuff like emotional intelligence in my podcast and other places. I'm not, not telling people that I've got this thing. It's definitely part of who I am as a professional. So anyway, I think it's interesting and I'm curious for our listeners, what's that deeply rooted thing that you're almost afraid to believe about yourself and it's impacting your business?

Sara: Yeah, it's really true. First of all, I will say that what you describe about yourself is not at all the experience that I have had with you having had a fair number of hours of conversation with you at this point. I don't find you unlikeable at all. I understand that-

Katie: Well, that's nice to hear. I hide to so well Sara, that's the problem.

Sara: You have this perfectly constructed façade. But I know the feeling. There are certain things that are deeply rooted, and if you go back and look at like how you grew up and the experiences that you had and all of those kinds of things, you start to recognize where the neurosis come from. I think a lot of ... my deeply rooted fear as I expressed early on is this irrational fear that somehow I'm gonna completely fail myself and let everybody that I care about down by not being able to keep it all together.

I'm not even sure exactly where all of that comes from, but it's definitely been rooted I think in this expectation, these really somewhat ridiculous expectations frankly that I have of myself and of my work that sometimes manifest in really unhealthy ways. I definitely have to kind of keep an eye on that and think about, "Okay, but what's really important here? Is it more important that you check that thing off your list, or is it more important that you spend time with your dogs and have fun with friends?" What are you gonna remember at the end of life kind of stuff.

For me, that fear of, you know, "But if I don't go, if I don't do this thing and if I'm not working and struggling with all of this," that somehow that's a failure. I can't put my finger on exactly what causes that or where that comes from, but I think you're right. I think it's deeply rooted and I think it's something about how I see myself and perceive myself as a professional woman.

Katie: Yeah, when I talk with other academic professionals who are doing this kind of work on the side or who are trying to do small businesses, I actually see this fear come out a lot in around money. A lot of people have ... And I don't have this myself, but I feel like I've grown out of this I guess. Maybe I had it in the beginning, but people who grow up ... I think you're so right on about, this is so rooted in childhood and other experiences you've had in your life.

There are a lot of people who do not think that they're worthy of the kind of value that they might assign to their services or they've capped what they could charge for example. If there's any kind of pushback, like if you say, "This is what I'm charging," and people are like, "oh, that's a lot ..." I've gotten to the point where I've had that happen. I've said like, "This is my base price," and they were like, "Oh, that's way out of our budget." And I'm like, "Okay, well that's my base price." I feel very confident in what I'm charging and what my time is worth at this time in my career and it's gone up over time.

I think that when I talk with other people, that is one of those little core things where they're just like, "I do not think I'm worth this." It's a story that they tell themselves, and it really caps what they can do in their business because ... Even when I think about what would it mean to be successful in my business, I don't think about, "Oh, half a million dollars a year." That's not the number that's in my mind. I've already capped myself by not saying I want to have whatever, like this huge revenue stream. What do you think about that? Is that something that you struggle with?

Sara: it's something that I definitely see in other academics, especially academics that I talk to. I don't know how much of that has to do with the academic system and how much of that has to do with the type of person who goes into academia. I'm not really sure to try to figure out where all that comes from, but I think you're right. One of the things that I see a lot is this question of like, "Oh, but how could I ever ask for that amount of money or that particular arrangement.?"

I do think some of that is rooted in the academic environment, because you're sort of expected in some, at least in the research world, you're kind of expected to work all the time for whatever-

Katie: Willing to do a lot of things for free.

Sara: Exactly, and do a lot of things for a pittance salary, and so when you break out of that and get into side hustles or get into your own business, that's a totally different landscape. It's interesting having conversations with potential clients in academic institutions and in academic environments, because sometimes they don't have a clue about what the going rate is for hiring a consultant to come in on a project. I had a conversation several months ago about that and the budget range that they had allocated for this particular project was so, so insultingly low that I just ... I was like, "I don't even know if I can keep a straight face right now. You have no concept of what this is actually worth in the open market."

I think there's sometimes a disconnect in the academic world just in the nature of how funding happens and how people get paid to do work. Whether that's developing courses, or teaching, or doing research assistantships or those sorts of things. When it comes to making that jump to the outside world, we tend to undervalue ourselves and undervalued the amount of work that we do and the value of that work in the open market and to clients who are outside of academia.

Katie: I think this is one of the questions I get the most and it's why I've addressed it several times on my other podcast. We can link to those episodes in the show notes about how it price things, how I talk with clients about money, because I think that there are so many ways to do it systematically to take away some of the fear. One of the ones I've heard that I really like, and I don't know if he's still does this but, there is a creative entrepreneur Paul Jarvis. He talked about something along the lines of like, when he's booked out six months in advance, he raises his pricing by 15%. He knows that there's something ... Once he hits that and he's got a lot of people coming, he knows he may be undervaluing his work.

I think that we don't always think about how over time, you write more books, or you do more things, or you get more experience, or your portfolio grows. Your value needs to increase with that. Our value I think in a lot of positions, and maybe tenure track positions are a good example of this, when you get a promotion, you go from assistant to associate or associate a full, some institutions, you don't get much financially for that. We don't associate financial growth with our increase in experience and value, and I think that in a small business, you have to be thinking about that quite a bit.

When you write a new book, that's something that should be increasing your value. So, that's one of those areas of fear where I feel like I just kind of force myself through it. I don't experience a lot of fear around that anymore. I think part of it is because when people want to hire me, I don't have to say yes. I'm in a position where I can turn work away. I know not everyone is in that position, but because I have full time work, if someone is not valuing me at the level I want to be valued, I can just say, "No, I'm not accepting that job."

I've had that situation where I've said no, and I don't like ... I'm not nasty about it. I do it very quietly. I just say like, "I can't," for example, "Travel to the east coast for four days for $2,000." I can't do that. I can't take the vacation time. The amount of investment it would be in my time to create the materials you want, and not to mention the time actually facilitating and doing the work you want me to do. I'll say it like, "Now you know my pricing and if in the future you have a budget that accommodates that, I would love to work with you."

I have had people come back to me and say, "We have a budget now that we can work with you and we want to bring you out." It's a long term game of kind of thinking about this in terms of how you're engaging with your clients. I think that that goes back to the fear I was talking about, about wanting to make sure people like you because people do circle back. You never want to burn a bridge. You never want to create a situation where someone doesn't feel like they wouldn't want to work with you because you never know when they might need to.

Sara: Right, right, I certainly agree with that and I think that almost has more to do with liking you professionally more even than personally. I think sometimes we conflate the two, and it can feel really personal because we literally are our businesses. Our businesses would not exist without us-

Katie: It's a hard boundary. That's an incredibly difficult ... I'm so glad you said that. That's an aha moment because I think it's very difficult when you're in a business where you are selling to some degree you, as a speaker, as a coach, whatever it might be. That gets conflated so easily.

Sara: It can also feel like ... And this is maybe a topic for a whole other podcast, but this idea of, where are those boundaries between what you share and what you don't. I think you and I are talking a little bit about that with respect to this podcast to like, what are we willing to share about our businesses and what's too personal? There are certain things that I want to hold on to and not share with the world because they are important to me, but does that make it harder for people to connect with me because I'm not willing to share that? Where is that personal and professional boundary, especially in cases where you're selling yourself quite literally?

It can feel a little gross sometimes because you put yourself out there and in a presentation make a joke or share a personal story and then that's out there in the world. You can't take that back. I think that's another issue that I sometimes struggle with and maybe a fear comes in about, what do I share? Am I sharing too much or not enough? Finding that balance I think is different for everybody.

Katie: Yeah, I definitely struggle with that as well. I think what you just said about having people connect with you, I think that's a better way of describing what I was talking about earlier. It's not really about people liking me or not, it's about whether or not they feel that they can connect with and whether or not I am putting enough out there that they can have something to hold on to. My default, and this is especially true on social media.

I recently went through an experience where someone in my family passed away. On social media, everyone else in my family was posting all this stuff about it and I was like, "I am never posting about this on social media ever." That is a clear boundary for me. I do not go to social media to get support in those kinds of situations, but other people do. It's one of those things where I'm like, I don't care if that causes you to not like me. That I'm not engaging in social media on that way. That is such a hard and fast rule for me to not do that. It's just so uncomfortable for me to even think about it.

But, it's that kind of thing that it's like, we all have different ways of emoting and putting stuff out there and what our boundaries. It does impact how people see you, and I think that it's not the stuff that's easy for you to make the decisions on. In that case it's like, I don't care what you think about it. But, it's the stuff that's a little more gray, that it's like, "Maybe I should be posting about this more," or, "Maybe I need to be a little more personal with people."

That I just see as kind of personal and professional development, where you're trying to figure out who you are as a professional, and what does it mean to people to have you engage with them in those spaces, and that's just constantly under development. I don't think you ever are done.

Sara: You mean we haven't arrived?

Katie: Yeah, I wish.

Sara: We are not just there?

Katie: If I could just push a button and arrive at that space, I would do that. Maybe that's another interesting way to some degree, close out our conversation about fear, is the fears change and develop over time. You get over certain things. You do something enough that you feel comfortable with it, like someone was asking me the other day, "Are you ever afraid to do public speaking?" I was like, "Yeah, I get anxious every now and then, but I don't have the fear that other people have." I've just done it too much. I know my stuff and I feel confident doing it. I know how people are going to react. I know that it's helpful to people and that's worth it to me to get out there and do that.

I'm confident as a public speaker. That's a privilege I have. It's a skill I've worked on for a long time, but it wasn't always that way. These things kind of shift and change over time and I think it's useful to think about and reflect on, what are you afraid of now? Come back to that a year from now, what are the new fears that have cropped up?

Sara: Yeah, I think that's a great point. I was actually just reflecting that I really wish that two, three years ago Sara could hear this conversation. I think about where I was a couple of years ago with a lot of this stuff and there was a lot of fear around things like pricing and around things like, am I really worth this amount of money? I thought I was, but did I have any proof that I was, no.

To hear this conversation now and be like, oh yeah, I'm gonna get to that place where I feel confident public speaking, like you said, I feel confident asking for what I'm worth. I'm okay turning down clients if I need to because my time is more valuable than that. Those were things I couldn't have said two to three years ago, but now, I have different fears. I hope like you said, I can come back in a couple of years and maybe listen to this podcast to be like, "Ah yeah, that was nice. Now I have this whole new set of fears."

It's a constant journey and I think reminding our listeners of that to, that where you are now is not where you're always going to be. You will keep learning and growing and that's part of the process. It's scary and uncomfortable and there's fear associated with it, but that's okay.

Katie: I think we have to talk about it to like we are in this episode because I'm sure you and I to some degree will have a little vulnerability hang over as [inaudible 00:42:26] calls it. This episode airs and people are hearing about all of our fears. Also, I think what's funny is, what is so deeply rooted as a fear to you other people are like, "Yeah, that's not a big deal." It's just so funny how we all perceive these things. All right, let's shift into our resource. Resources that we want to recommend to people as we close out this episode. What is your resource Sara that you want to recommend?

Sara: Well, my resource this week is totally practical and exactly what I need, which is to go for a walk. I'm actually being serious. This week as I mentioned early on in the podcast, or the last couple of weeks have been really hard for me around balance and around making sure that I'm taking time for me. Taking my dogs for a walk and that sort of thing. I don't have a book resource or a web resource this week. To me this week and for the podcast, it's go and take a walk. Think about where you are and where you've been and where you're going next and how you can take the world by storm. I don't know. That just feels really important to me right now.

Katie: I question about you're walking. When you're walking, are you listening to a podcast or is it just like, "I need to just have time alone with my brain thinking about things," or do you do both? What are you doing?

Sara: It depends. Sometimes I'll listen to a podcast, but usually when I'm listening to a podcast while I'm walking, it's something totally ridiculous that is not related at all to my professional life. It's definitely break time for me. I do that on runs to, but other times I just need to walk and let my brain wander and do whatever it needs to do. Chances are it's chewing on something. To just have that time and space to allow my brain to really work through whatever it needs to.

I find swimming is great for that too because you can't really listen to stuff unless you have those underwater headphones, which I don't. And so, just the rhythm of walking or the rhythm of swimming allows my brain to just go where it needs to and I find I feel way better at the end because it's kind of chewed on and work through some stuff that it needed to. When I spend so much of my time focused on very specific things, I don't have that freedom to kind of daydream and let my brain go. That's why I think walks or other exercise for me is so important, because it gives me that time and space.

Katie: I agree with that. All right, so my resource this week is a little video that I found online actually that I really liked. It's Debbie Millman talking about how good things take time. I'll leave a link to this in the show notes because I'm not sure I've got the title exactly right, but this is on 99 News website, which is an organization that hosts conferences. They have videos, other resources. They put out a print magazine that's really beautiful.

Debbie Millman is a designer. She actually has her own podcast, Design Matters, which I've listened to a little bit. We'll link to that in the show notes as well. In this this video, talks about how when you're in the moment of something, you don't always quite know where things are going and why something is happening the way it is happening. What is the purpose of that thing?

Not to get like too woo woo like, you know, the universe is aligning things in your life or whatever but, just this general idea of like .... It's really hard I think sometimes to step outside of a situation and see the long term goal, or the impact, or where you're headed. We probably actually talk about this a lot on the show where, like you even just said, a couple of years ago, you wish you could've heard this episode. I think that we don't always look back and say, "Wow! That really came together in a good way. It impacted something I'm doing right now."

I think about like ... I got a random email and they asked me if I had a book manuscript and that resulted in me publishing my first book. It's just, you don't always know the constellation of things that are gonna bring something about. I appreciate what Debbie Millman says in this video, which is basically, when you do the work and you do good work consistently, it will add up to something and you don't always know what that thing will be. But, it could be something really amazing that you could not have imagined.

I just loved that message, especially as we're all kind of slogging along in our little businesses. You and I have talked about all the little administrative things we have to do. It doesn't always feel like "Wow, I'm a rock star businesswoman." But, we're laying the groundwork for very cool things that are going to happen in the future that we can't even envision yet. We will link in the show notes.

I want to thank our listeners for checking in on this episode of AcademiGig. I hope that you'll share with us. You can go to the academigig.com website to be in contact with Sara and I and share some of your biggest fears. Of course, we want to hear all about them, and we would love to support you as you're working through them, but thanks so much for listening.

Sara: Bye.

Announcer: Thanks for listening to the AcademiGig Podcast. We hope you enjoyed the conversation and heard something useful that you can apply in your own business. Show notes with links to resources mentioned in the episode and a full transcript are available at academigig.com. There, you can also sign up for our email list and receive over 100 great resources for recommended books, blog posts and podcasts for the academic creative, freelancer, and entrepreneur that you won't want to miss.

You can connect with us on Twitter, @academigig or, you can also find Sara, @DrLangworthy and Katie, @Katie\_\_Linder. We'd love to hear from you and continue the conversation about this episode. There are several other ways to connect with the AcademiGig Podcast. Visit the website to post a comment about a specific episode, suggest a future topic, or ask a question that could be featured on a future Q&A episode. If you like what you heard, please consider leaving us a review on iTunes. It helps us out and helps others find the show, and as always thanks for listening.