**LWQA episode 136**

You're listening to lifework, QA episode 136. Welcome to life work QA where I answer a listener question each week and provide resources and guidance to help you take your life and work to the next level. I'm your host. Dr. Katie Linder. In this episode I want to ask if you have a little bit of fear of success and this is something that I think happens and we don't even realize it sometimes that we have this fear of our own success and it can't hold us back and I have this on my mind because recently I was working with a couple different coaching clients that kind of realized that they had this fear and that they weren't kind of stepping into the next space of their careers and it took them.

What kind of some active work in that area to be able to move forward and to step into what for that was kind of a new identity. So the first thing I think that is useful to think about when it comes to success is that it can have kind of an identity shift that we aren't always prepared for our there.

We don't really know is happening. And this is kind of that idea of like the Frog being in a pot of cold water and as it slowly warms up and the Frog gets cooked. It's not going to jump out because it's like such a slow thing that. It doesn't realize what's happening. Whereas if you put a frog into a pot of boiling water, it would immediately leap out and I think when it comes to especially things like career progression this kind of idea of success.

It happens along the way as we're kind of slowly adding things to our CV as we gain experience in certain areas and all of a sudden we kind of look up one day and we're like a more experienced professional and other people look at us in our like wow, you've really made it. And we're still kind of thinking like really like this is this all there is or you know, like this doesn't necessarily feel like success.

I still feel you know, really unsure of myself or I have self-doubt and so, you know, we're not sure that we've kind of achieved what that success looks like. And I think also sometimes success can bring added responsibility. It can also mean additional pressure that you like you have it all together because you are a quote-unquote successful person or a successful professional and this is something that I think we don't want to identify with, you know, we don't want to be that person that has it all together.

Well because none of us have it all together. Um, and so I think that, you know, we feel that pressure we don't want to be put into a box and I think also some. Your success because they think they have to stop growing once they've achieved a certain thing and they don't want that. They want to keep trying new things.

They want to be experimental and so it's hard to get to a place where you feel like you have to stop. So, I think that one of the most important things is you have to Define what success means for you. It can be a very abstract thing and also to try to Define it in a way that has a spectrum. So that the success grows with you as you grow as a professional and that you're kind of maybe always reaching for something new and different now, I don't mean to have a moving Target where you never feel satisfied.

You never feel like you have done what you need to do. But for some of us I think who are more achievement-oriented and I think this is a lot of us who end up in higher education. It is helpful to always have something that you can look forward to in a positive way. That is the next step of growth for you.

Now I also think we can reframe success and what it means as being really positive. So, for example, I think sometimes success can mean serving as a mentor or even as a sponsor for other people who are coming up behind you who want your wisdom who want to know lessons you've learned and also who need a little bit of assistance to kind of move into their next phase of their career and they're looking to people who have come before them in order to get that help.

If you are considered someone who is successful, you might be able to serve in that capacity by helping or mentoring other people who are coming up behind you. I also think that there are opportunities to really explicitly share lessons and wisdom and things that you've learned over time and you should be looking for opportunities for that.

So sometimes we get to a point in our careers where we need to write a book or start a blog or presented a conference, you know on a panel about something that we've experienced so that other people can really learn from that and it doesn't mean that you're perfect. It doesn't mean that you're not going to make mistakes.

Future or that you aren't still figuring something out. But sometimes you have kind of come over a hurdle in your career. And even if you're just over that hurdle people want to hear about it. They want to know how you did that how you survive that what you learned along the way? So it's really important.

I think to share out those lessons in wisdom. And then I also think that success is really about potentially getting new opportunities and being prepared for those opportunities to come your way and if we don't acknowledge that we are in a place of being successful or if we're kind of afraid to step into that new space then it's hard to be open to those new opportunities because we think that we're not the right person for that when really were the.

Person for those new opportunities and and if we're open to them some really cool things can happen and that could be about collaborations that could be, you know, all kinds of different things like, you know being headhunted for a new job. For example that you might think well, I'm not ready for that but someone else thought that you were and so you want to be kind of open to those ideas.

I also think though it's really important to remember. If you are in a place where you've gained, you know, some level of Career Success that it's okay to ask for help, you know, even if you feel like you're doing something pretty successfully and that your experience in a particular area. You can ask for extra feedback.

You can want additional guidance from someone who's come before you or someone who's maybe a peer who's equally experienced and I think about someone I know for example who is a very experienced writer and someone who's really looked up to for being an experienced writer and recently I found out that this person had a writing coach for their most recent book and I was kind of taken aback by that.

I was like, wow like, this is somebody I thought. Wouldn't need that who would really kind of have it together and then I thought you know, like that is not the right perspective to take with this like this is someone who wanted some extra guidance or support as they were going through this experience and maybe they had a lot of other things going on or maybe they just wanted a little bit of a boost or a supportive partner because I think that sometimes with success it can get kind of isolating you don't have other people around you and people just kind of assumed you always know what you're doing and that you're always doing it correctly.

That is not necessarily true. So you will want people around you who can support you and troubleshoot with you when things are not going well or when you just have questions or you have some doubt about you know, a certain direction that you might want to take and I can I can give an example of this recently.

I was talking with I have a mastermind group that I lead that is for people who are kind of working in higher ed who do side businesses and this is a group that I've had for. Two or two years now, maybe more and we talked monthly and it's just a place for us to come together and troubleshoot share ideas.

And we talked about all kinds of things. We talked about adding new programs to our businesses. We talked about how to price things we will share. Situations are happening with clients that we're not sure which do but recently I came to this group and said, you know, I'm trying to make a bigger decision in my business.

I'm not sure you know where I want to go with us. Here are the different directions here kind of the pros and cons that I'm weighing. What do you all think about this and and they gave me some really good feedback and some people you know might look at me or my business and say like well you can kind of make those decisions on your own like you seem to be doing pretty well, but for me, I really wanted a little bit of extra.

Support in that area. I wanted some guidance and wanted to be able to hear perspectives that are were different from my own and my peers were able to offer that and it was a really helpful conversation for me. So I think that sometimes you know by fearing success, we don't step into a place where we can be confident in our success and that confidence brings the ability to ask for help.

It brings the ability to help other people who need to know the information that we have. But also I mean there is just that identity shift of being in a place in your career where you're kind of stepping into this next stage and saying, Yeah, I am the person who does these things I am the person who has had a certain level of achievement.

Now. The other thing I think is really important and I learned this lesson from another one of my coaching clients who has achieved a certain level of success in her own career, but she keeps kind of framing it as a being accidentally. And this is something that she and I have talked about quite a bit and that you know, she'll say well.

Yeah, I did this thing, but I was able to kind of get in through a back door and I always say like, but maybe that's just the way that it happens. Maybe it's not really a back door. Maybe that's just like normal par for the course when it comes to her particular field and how things get done and I think sometimes we can undermine our own success by telling ourselves.

Well, this is just kind of random or it wouldn't have happened unless this other person had helped me. This is accidental that I've gotten to this place. We need to be able to kind of map out our careers and our skills and look back and say yeah, I built this like this is this is my own doing and it doesn't mean that other people didn't help along the way it doesn't mean that there wasn't a certain level of synchronicity about you know, how things came together.

But you were probably prepared for some of those synchronicities. You were having the right skills and abilities to kind of jump into particular situations that were able to advance you and I think part of our fear of success comes out when we tell ourselves stories about how it wasn't really us that got us to this place and we just like happen to wind up here.

And now what do we do step into that space? I think it's important to kind of embrace that embrace the new identity to see what's next. But also to help other people who are coming up behind you. So I would love to hear more about this if you feel like you have a fear of success or you had one and were able to get over it.

What is it that you did that you found to be helpful. You can always email me at contact to Katie Leonard artwork. You can tweet to me at Katie double underscore lender. You can connect with me on Instagram @ KD underscore. Or you can write me a letter at Katie lender PO Box 1621 in Albany, Oregon nine seven, three, two one.

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