



Deciding When to Quit Your Day Job

In addition to a full-time gig, Leslie enjoys her freelance work as a writer, voice actor and audio creator. And big ambitions have her looking for the next big project, one that might become a dream job. Stevon offers advice on figuring out the right time and necessary mindset to turn a side hustle into a promising career.

Stevon Lewis:

What's up everybody? Welcome to How to Talk to [High Achievers] about Anything. I'm Stevon Lewis, a licensed psychotherapist. Today, we welcome Leslie. Leslie is a writer, voice actor, and content creator. Through hard work and dedication, she's turning her passion projects into a career. She's had some major creative accomplishments, which came much quicker than she expected. The problem is she doesn't know what the next big project will be, and she feels the pressure to keep creating. This is really concerning for Leslie and she's wondering what's next for her. Let's get into it.

Leslie: My name is Leslie Gideon. I have a pretty standard nine to five. I have an office job. I go in, I do work completely unrelated to podcasting, writing, voice acting, anything that I consider my passion or part of my identity. And then I come home and I do my creative work around that. That nine to five affords me the freedom to pursue these creative projects without constantly having to stress about, when is the next pay check coming in? I would love to be a writer and a voice actor and a content creator full time, but that's not quite in the cards right now.

Leslie: So I started podcasting in 2018, first as just a voice actor. And then I realized that all of the stories that I had built up in myself over the years, I could tell through podcasting, and I could make that happen basically immediately with just enough drive and gumption. So I started podcasting, took on some roles, got a feel for the landscape, the lay of the land of audio drama podcasting, and really entrenched myself in the community. And from there, it just grew.

Leslie: I asked a lot of questions because there was a lot that I didn't know, and using all that information, that's when I launched my audio fiction podcast, The Path Down, which is a sci-fi, slice of life audio drama. And I also had a limited run non-fiction podcast, Sideline Tackle, which is about soccer history and how it interacts with every section of history. I ended up wearing nearly every hat imaginable. I edited

my own podcast. I did the sound design, and eventually I ended up checking off all of the goals that I had for myself off my to-do list. I wanted to tell this personal story that I've been carrying for years, and I've done that. I wanted to tell stories about this sport that I am incredibly in love with, and I've done that.

Leslie: And as a voice actor, which is another passion and pursuit of mine, a lot of my big aspirations, get a lead role, work with a bunch of great people, build up a reputation as a reliable, well-known voice actor. Those are all things that I expected to have to slog for, and I did. I put in the work. I auditioned, I networked, and I checked off all those to-dos on my initial to-do list.

Leslie: There is that feeling of, what's next? And what am I aiming for? What are my new goals? What is the next big, overarching project that I'm passionate about, that I want to pour myself into? I've still been voice acting. So that's still growing steadily. In terms of writing, I've collaborated with a bunch of great people in the podcasting space, and with some people outside of it, so it's not necessarily that there's nothing going on, but there is that feeling of being that high achiever and not just being okay with just a steady progression. There is that desire to have a capital A achievement, some big, overarching goal to work on. And I think that is where, for me at least, a lot of that pressure comes from of I've done a lot of things that I'm proud of, but a lot of those things are now behind me, and it's not enough.

Leslie: When I dig deeper and I really, really think about that unease that comes from the question what's next, there's almost this feeling of a fear of fading. I essentially work in the entertainment industry. If you're not constantly producing, if you're not constantly putting out new material, new content, new product for your audience to consume, there's that fear of fading into irrelevancy, of fading into the background.

Lewis: Mm, thank you, Leslie, for sharing what you're going through.

Lewis: While listening to Leslie's story, several things jumped out at me. There's a group of high achievers who do well in one area of life, but it's often not their true passion. And she is at a place where she's recognized that, that she has this nine to five that she talks about, and it pays the bills, and it sounds like she does well there, and then she has this alter ego, other life of Leslie the creator, and she's really good at that too. When you're really good at multiple things, it's sometimes difficult to make the jump to do one over the other. And I guess part of me is hearing this idea that you might have to let go of one of the achievements in order to kind of go achieve more in this other space.

That's difficult for some high achievers to do because it's scary. They have to jump to this new space where they're still building and are still figuring some of that

stuff out and what it will look like. And it might feel like, and we know that feelings aren't always facts, it might feel like you're failing, but it might just be kind of a recalibration. That's a transition period. And that isn't always easy and can be unpleasant at times.

Lewis: So for someone like Leslie, who's at a crossroads, I'd say or ask the question really, at what point then would it be the right time for you to let go of one and jump both feet into the other? And the reason I ask it that way is because she mentioned that she's gotten some good traction and that she's not there yet. She's suggesting that she's not at a place where she can let go of the nine to five and she can do the creative side full time. I'm unclear about when that time would be. How will we know? How will we know when we are there, when we've arrived at that point? And it might be one of those things that she has to make happen as opposed to wait for it to happen.

Part of my concern about her waiting for this perfect moment to know when to jump is that it can hold her back from getting the very thing she wants, that capital A achievement. She labeled it as the really big achievement that she's looking for to provide some validity that this is the decision she needs to make, that now is the time to go all in. And I guess I'm saying that maybe you got to go all in to get the really, really big achievement. The items she had on her checklist of what she wanted to accomplish creatively, she kind of blew those out of the water. She did that really quickly. And I think what happened there is that because that success came kind of quickly and easily, she's not adopted it to be valid. That was too easy. That can't be right.

Lewis: Why couldn't that be right? So there's still some hesitancy, I guess, or reticence in on her end to really suggest or believe that she has all that it takes. There's this, I need to have my accomplishments in this space, be at a certain place for it to count. And so that, I think makes her a little bit more cautious because what if I don't have it? What if I wasn't ready yet, or as ready as I thought I was? And I think when you couple it with the idea that her success came easily and quickly, what she didn't expect, it rocked her kind of confidence in herself. It made her question whether or not she really did know what she was doing, because it didn't transpire in the way that she envisioned it.

And listening to her, it's this thing of where, why would the outcome or your response to doing something well and doing something fast be to say, "Well, I must have not done it right"? All the signs suggest that you did it the way it was supposed to be done. Maybe you should do more of it now. And it also, I think another interesting thing that kind of came up for me was this idea of where she talked about she's done all that stuff. All the stuff she's accomplished is now

somehow in the past. It's not really part of her anymore. It's, I guess, attached to an old version of who she was.

Lewis: It would be like being in sports, getting a record and that record's still standing, but you're like, "Well, I'm retired now, so it doesn't matter." You did that. It still matters, but she's operating as though it doesn't. And so she's on this kind of cycle of what I call chasing success, right? Like I got to be in the hunt for the next big thing. And I guess I'm saying, well, then what about all the other stuff? Because once you get that, you'll quickly dismiss it and on to the next one, which doesn't allow you to really stay in a place of where you feel good about anything you've done or are doing in that moment.

Part of the concern Leslie has in, and high achievers like Leslie will, is that there only as good as their last accomplishment. I kind of have the question or want them to kind of answer the question of, well, when is anything you do going to be good enough? And so, it's perfectionism. That if there's a possibility for it to be better, then this wasn't the best. That's a trap. Do not go down that rabbit hole. That's a bad place to go. You'll never be satisfied with anything. Is there a point at which an accomplishment is big enough or significant enough or got enough praise or enough positive review that you'll be okay with it? You are not connecting that to who you are now. And you're willing to say that, "Well, I've got to do something more in order for me to know that I'm good and talented." And I'm saying, "Yeah, but you had to be good and talented to keep building on and doing more stuff." So you're doing yourself a disservice by not being willing to attach to your accomplishments or being so quick to move on to the next thing.

I think it's going to take some sacrifice, but there are ways that we can move from our day job to our dream job. So for Leslie in her real life situation of needing a nine to five to maintain her livelihood, I'm not saying quit your job today. I'm asking you to think about what would need to happen for you to be able to leave the nine to five and pursue the creative side full time. You've gotten some confirmation, outcomes, evidence to show that you're good at what you do. And you've worked with some, it sounds like people you've wanted to work with or high profile folks, and so you've checked off all these boxes. What other boxes need to be checked off to convince you this is something you should put more time and energy into? And how do you go about doing that without sacrificing your livelihood?

Lewis: And so something you might do is find a way to use vacation time from your job and use that to put out a really significant project. And so you plan it all out before, instead of going to Miami, you really buckle down to put out some of your best content to date. Maybe you start to look at collaborating with more folks, right? So ways to get paid more for doing the creative side of things. And that might come

from you recognizing that you have value in charging a higher price so that you're now offsetting the need for the nine to five.

Lewis: And I guess speaking personally, I've had to do that. I had a nine to five and also a private practice on the side, and now I'm full time private practice. That was not a quick, overnight decision, but I kept working to do it. And my threshold was that I needed to get to a place of where I was losing money by staying at my nine to five. And once I got there, I knew it was time to jump. And I think that Leslie needs to evaluate her situation in a similar way to say, "All right, it's time to leap so that I can do more of what I love."

And that's a wrap. Thank you so much for listening to How to Talk to [High Achievers] about Anything. We have really big plans for our show and we want you to be a part of it. We want to hear about your successes and challenges, your sacrifices, the ways you've celebrated and what's ahead as you grow. Send our producer, Virginia, an email, and we'll get your story on the show. She's at virginia@lwcstudios.com.

How to Talk to [High Achievers] about Anything is an original production of LWC Studios. Virginia Lora is the show's producer. Kojin Tashiro is our mixer. Juleyka Lantigua is the creator and executive producer. I'm Stevon Lewis. On Twitter and Instagram we're @talktoachievers. Bye, everybody.

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