



Proving Self-Limiting Beliefs Wrong

When Yare decides to change careers to become a model and disability advocate, she must confront not only industry stereotypes but her own restrictive mindset about her abilities. Stevon and Juleyka talk about why taking chances and looking for evidence can help high achievers overcome their perceived limitations.

Lewis Clip: Part of when we talk about those limiting beliefs is that we've got to do things that sometimes appear to be in opposition of what we told ourselves is possible.

Stevon Lewis: What's up, everybody? Welcome back to How to Talk to [High Achievers] About Anything. I'm Stevon Lewis, a licensed psychotherapist. We're going to talk all about limiting beliefs and how to overcome them in a second, after we hear from today's guest. Before that, I'd like to welcome Juleyka Lantigua, the creator of our show, and definitely, in my opinion, a high achiever herself.

Juleyka Lantigua:

Thank you, Stevon. You're so kind.

Lewis: Thanks for coming back. I appreciate it. This is really fun. You bring out good qualities in me.

Lantigua: Oh my God, I had so much fun last time. I'm coming back every time. Forget it, you will never get rid of me.

Lewis: Well...One, I don't want to get rid of you. Two, I really appreciate the way you ask questions. I think it allows us to dive into the guests' background and what they present in a way that I might not get just doing this by myself.

Lantigua: I just feel like you are so good at thinking on your feet and connecting big ideas, and sometimes those of us who can really function on that level need someone to be like, "All right, put these two things together. Let me see what you come up with." And you hit a home run every single time. So I love being the person who gets to do that on the show.

Lewis: All right, let's get into it then. Let's hear from our guest, Yare.

Lantigua: Let's do it.

Lewis: Yare is a model and disability advocate. Through her work, she's trying to change society's perception of what it's like living with a disability, but in her day-to-day, she also has to figure out how not to give into her own limiting beliefs that really make her question what she's capable of.

Yare: My name is Yarelbys Túa. I am a content creator, model, and a disability advocate. I'm 25 years old and I am from Venezuela. I live in Orlando, Florida. I was 14 years old when I was diagnosed with cancer. It was an osteosarcoma and it was a tumor that I had allocated on my back. I was a ballet dancer, so they thought it was something muscular. I had to get surgery three times, and I also had to go through nine cycles of chemotherapy and I had to do 22 seconds of radiation. Thankfully, everything went really well. I was very lucky to obviously be cancer free after one year. However, I developed a physical disability due to the radiation that I received on my spinal cord. I have nerve damage and I don't have full control of my right leg, so I walk with a cane.

When I was a child, I loved being a performer and I was good in school, but I knew I wanted to do something artistic and in the media. So as I became a teenager and of course had to deal with my illness and take care of myself and survive through that season of my life, I put aside those dreams that I had and those passions and hobbies. So for a long time, I felt that I had to settle to do a job that was a desk job because I had a disability, or something where I was sitting. And of course, I didn't see representation in the media, so it was just like, "There's no place for me there. No one's going to accept me and give me the opportunity..."

So as the pandemic came along, of course, I feel a lot of us had time to reflect and find out what other things we wanted to do with life. I was living in Orlando and I was working for a major company in the hospitality industry here, and I had so much fun in my job and I loved it, but I felt that there was just something else that I needed to discover and explore.

I had a good friend, he's a photographer and he needed to update his portfolio and he reached out to me. And obviously, I'm not a model, but I said, "Yeah, sure, I'll model for you." So that's where I saw an opportunity and I said, "This is something we can make happen." One of the main challenges that I have to face daily is the perception of disability that society has already believed and it's very hard for them to see beyond my disability. I feel sometimes people don't think that you're capable, so it's like breaking that stigma what disabilities are portrayed like.

That story has been told so many times that I feel it's almost common that people believe that. And even myself, when I first developed a disability, I didn't know how to act because was I supposed to look happy because I didn't see anyone

else be like that. There's a lot of limiting beliefs that I still am working towards, and one of my limiting beliefs, for example, will fall into beauty standards as far as being a model. I feel like, "Oh wait, no, maybe I shouldn't go for that because I don't have the look," when that's exactly the thing I'm trying to change, to normalize bodies in the media and just to have the consumers connect more with the models that you see.

So physically, I will say I don't have that typical zero-size look or I'm not tall, I'm five-five, I'm a size six, and I am a Latina woman, not a typical model you see, and of course, I have a disability, I walk with a cane and I have a foot drop. So not what you're used to seeing, but definitely a lot of people identify with me. I have a big smile and I feel it's a very contagious smile, and I also have very heavy eyes, I will say. So I transmit a lot through my eyes when I look at people. I might have a physical disability and I walk differently than you, but it's the same. I just need some additional accommodations, but I am still very capable of basically anything I want to set my mind to.

Lewis: Yare, thanks for coming on the show and sharing your experience with us.

So, Juleyka, as I listened to Yare's story, something that really jumped out to me was how she has to contend with her own limiting beliefs based off of how society can often view people with disabilities and how she has to overcome or let go of some of those for herself.

Lantigua: Okay, so can you help me understand what defines a limiting belief?

Lewis: So limiting beliefs, our brains are really, really talented at getting us to believe things that aren't actually true. So based on what she sees and what other people may see, she will tend to think that maybe some things are off-limits for her, and that's not always the case or true.

More on this after this short break...

Lantigua: I feel Yare, like many people in certain circumstances, while they're fighting against limiting beliefs themselves personally, are also trying to be an example for people who might be going through similar things. So here's a loaded question, is she even responsible for trying to change the ignorance that pervades people's perception of those who are differently abled?

Lewis: Hopefully, everyone listening to this show can know that the answer to that is no, she's not responsible for everyone else's opinions or beliefs.

- Lantigua: Louder for the bleacher section.
- Lewis: Write it down, take a picture. You are not responsible for changing the opinions of others when they don't align with your reality.
- Lantigua: Woo-woo. Okay, Stevon, she herself calls herself an advocate. That sounds like work, right? So help me understand, if you are telling us we're not responsible, how does someone decide and how does someone make sure that they are acknowledged and compensated for the advocacy that they're doing?
- Lewis: Advocacy is work. Making changes or shifting a paradigm, people should be compensated in some way for that. Also, I think we have to be focused on what the intent of that work is. If we're saying by advocacy that we are intending on shifting the perceptions of others and forcing them to adopt an understanding of how we see the world and how we experience the world, then good luck on doing that.
- I don't know that we can control other people's opinions and force them to think anything, but I can get behind the idea that if what we're saying by advocacy is that we are being intentional in how we show up in the world and in spaces and do things in a way that are congruent and align with who we are, regardless of what other people may think or feel about them. As you do that, you become a firm wall against whatever opinions are outdated or not appropriate for what you're doing and what you're putting out into the world.
- Lantigua: I like that. I like that a lot. I also really loved the fact that it was almost by accident that she started modeling because her friend, who's a photographer, was like, "Hey, you busy? I need to update my portfolio. Come and pose for me." And I often talk to people about inventing the job that you want. You don't have to go on a job board and check what jobs exist that you fit, just invent the job that you want and you can do this as an entrepreneur, which is a very clear-cut way to do it. But you can also do this within structures. So, Stevon, let's dive into a little bit of what it takes and what the benefits are of literally inventing the work you want to do?
- Lewis: So this is really good because two things happened. She was presented with an opportunity from someone who saw something in her that maybe she hadn't seen in herself. And two, she was able to lean into something she believed about herself, that she could do it, so she went with it. Part of when we talk about those limiting beliefs is that we've got to do things that sometimes appear to be in opposition of what we told ourselves is possible, kind of how you talked about creating the job you want.

And in Yare's language, you hear it come out when she talks about being Latina, not being 5'10" or being 5'6", not being a size zero, being a size six, walking with a cane. All these things our brain defaults to naturally. I call it defaulting to negativity. Picking out things that don't seem appropriate. And if we go to this evolutionary psychology background, we'll say-

Lantigua: Oh, here comes the science. Hit me. I'm ready. Here comes the science.

Lewis: ... we'll say that when we were hunter-gatherers, it was really important to recognize things that seemed out of place, something that seemed dangerous or it might not work out in our favor so that we can avoid unpleasantness or possibly death. Our brain's been trained to do that. So what I get people to do is say, well, just because the brain is noticing these things doesn't mean that we have to accept those as truth about who we are or what we're capable of.

Lantigua: Okay, but wait a minute. That's confusing because what if we can't tell what is instinct versus whatever wrong messages our brain is sending us? How do we know?

Lewis: So the way to know is to look for evidence. If something is real, then there ought to be some evidence to support that. If Yare isn't supposed to be a model, then why would friend ask her to model? That doesn't make sense to me, especially for a portfolio that seems like it's going to be important later.

Lantigua: That makes sense, especially when the stakes are high. This is his work, this is his career.

Lewis: Yes, exactly.

Lantigua: So he's not going to take any risks that are going to undermine his own success.

Lewis: Who does that? People don't usually try to self-sabotage in that way when they want to do a really good job. Thank you, Juleyka, for joining me again today.

Lantigua: This was so good. I actually took notes. Thanks for having me.

Lewis: It makes me so proud to see high achievers like Yare achieving on their own terms, showing up as their true selves without running from who they really are, stubbornly refusing to pay any attention to the incorrect evaluations of themselves other people will inevitably have about them, and finding ways to move forward and still have major impact in the world.

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. Our show is produced by Virginia Lora. Editing and production support from Jordan Cali. This episode was mixed by Trent Lightburn. Juleyka Lantigua is the creator and executive producer. I'm Stevon Lewis. On Twitter and Instagram, we're at Talk To Achievers. Bye, everybody.

CITATION:

Lewis, Stevon, host. "Proving Self-Limiting Beliefs Wrong" *How to Talk to [High Achievers] about Anything*, LWC Studios., August 21, 2023. Talktohighachievers.com.

Produced by:



ERASING THE MARGINS