



## Uncertain During a Business Leap

Elzie is stepping back from day-to-day operations to help his podcasting company grow. This stressful transition is forcing him to reconsider his business model, and even his own identity. Stevon and Juleyka unpack the dangers of narrow forecasting and Stevon offers strategies for staying grounded during business and career changes without catastrophizing the future.

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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're talking about how to handle stressful transitions without falling into the pitfalls of forecasting. Predicting that there's a possible negative outcome in the future even though we've not gotten to the future yet, something that I often see high achievers struggle with.

Before we get into it, I'd like to welcome Juleyka Lantigua, creator of our show. What's going on, Juleyka?

Juleyka Lantigua:

I'm so happy to be back.

Lewis: I already know that we're super excited to hear from our guest today. Today we have Elzie with us. For Elzie, the journey to entrepreneurship was both exciting and arduous. Along the way he learned a lot about himself. But now during a business transition when everything is changing all around him, managing his stress feels like a whole new challenge. Let's get into it.

Elzie: My name is Elzie Flenard, The MAYOR of Podcast Town. I am a podcast entrepreneur. I eat, breathe, sleep, podcasting. It is my life. I got into it by accident. I was looking for an escape from my day job. And podcasting happened to come

along, did my first interview in my car over my lunch break at my day job, and I haven't looked back since.

I was born in Chicago, Illinois. My mom and my dad divorced when I was around five or six. She moved us to Southern Illinois and that's where I grew up. I had a great childhood. And so when I was about 13, 14, there were two things that I knew. I knew I wanted a family because that was something that I didn't feel like I had the way I wanted it growing up, and I knew I wanted to be a business owner. This was my 14-year-old brain, so I said, "Okay, I'm going to go to school, make mom proud, make sure she's happy, get a job. And the second, and I do mean the second I get the opportunity to quit that job and do my own thing, that's what I was going to do." It took a whole lot longer than I anticipated, but the plan worked.

On the flip side, it was extremely stressful. The stress on my body, the stress on my relationships, the stress on just my world, how I navigate that. In years past what I would've done is work even harder, and do even more and be gone even longer. But what I've come to realize is that's really not the answer. Sometimes the answer is to pull back. Sometimes the answer is to stop.

One of my favorite stress relievers is I like to go to Marvel movies. I'll get my popcorn, my hot dog, and my vanilla Pepsi, and I'll just escape for a couple of hours.

The biggest challenge is that you're always changing. The way I handle things now in my 40s is completely different than how I handled them when I was in my 30s. My life situation was different. The way I perceived the world was different. The way the world perceived me was different. And so just when you think you've got it mastered, everything changes.

The biggest change that I'm in the middle of right now is shifting the focus so that the business isn't so much focused on me and what I bring to the table. I'm your quintessential entrepreneur. So the number one goal this year is to fire myself from my business so that I can do some other things that I'm really, really passionate about.

It's a big shift because it's my baby, and so now I'm watching it grow to the point where it doesn't need me. On the surface that sounds like that's great. But really the underlying feeling and emotion is like, "Oh, okay. Well, where's my value? What do I do next? How do I make sure that it maintains the culture and the vision that we set?"

The thing that makes me most afraid is that when I am not as involved in the business, that it doesn't survive. Because this is something, again, I have literally

dreamt of owning a business since I was 14 years old, and so this isn't something that I'm casual about. When you have staff, their livelihoods are depending on this business being healthy. There's always that stress and that pressure. Are we providing services that the market still wants? Are we positioned to grow? And if not, what do we need to do to get there? Am I serving the business where the business needs to be served? That's a tough question because sometimes the answer is no. Somebody else can lead the company to the next level, and you need to step back. I'm navigating all those questions right now. That's extremely stressful.

I am by nature a very cool, calm, collected individual. So if a bill comes in that I didn't expect, I normally would look at it and say, "Okay, let's look at the budget and see what the next steps are." If I get that same bill and for whatever reason on that day it makes me angry, then that's a flag to me to say, "Okay, there's something else that's going on. Is it anger? Is it fear?" So really just getting to the root of why that stress is there and then dealing with it, recognize the emotions and say, "Okay, how do I make a decision that is in the best interest of the business?" It's going through a transition, and there are decisions that will have to be made to make sure that I am not the person that's in the way of that growth.

Lewis: Thank you, Elzie, for coming on the show and sharing your story with us.

Lantigua: This is someone in my field, podcasting. But a lot of what he talks about is pretty universal among entrepreneurs. What stood out to you as you listened?

Lewis: Elzie is really insightful. He's really insightful and aware about his journey and what he's learned along the way that he can recognize he's built something good. Now, he's at a crossroads of where he recognizes he's built something good, and what does it mean for him to step away in order for that good to continue to grow?

Lantigua: Yeah, I love when he says that his, "Number one goal for this year is to fire myself from my business."

Lewis: I love that. I was like, "Oh, man, that is awesome." He recognizes he might be a sticking point, a barrier to the growth that needs to happen for the business. And he also admits that it's really difficult for him to let go that this is his baby.

Lantigua: Oh my God, this is a childhood dream.

Lewis: And now it's a thing of where he recognizes for that business to grow and evolve more, he's got to pull himself out of it. And I think that that's really good insight, and I know also very difficult for him to do.

Lantigua: Oh, it is terror inducing. You have worked so hard and your imprint is in every facet of the business.

Lewis: I like that word imprint because what I was thinking was his identity. That who he is now a part of this business. If he removes himself from the everyday or the day-to-day activities, then what? Then who has he become? And if he's not defined that, it's going to make it very hard or even more difficult for him to step back in a healthy way.

Lantigua: How do we prepare as entrepreneurs who have singularly pursued this goal to extract ourselves and to remain whole with a healthy sense of who we are?

Lewis: I love it. I love it, right? Because you set a vision for the goal and then you accomplished it, and then it's "now what?" So for high achievers like Elzie, I would say think of things more along a spectrum that we are constantly evolving.

We're going to dive into this after the short break.

So he needs to incorporate an approach of where evolution is part of the journey. The analogy I use is people have phones. Those phones receive updates, and those updates make the phone better and make them work. Things will evolve, things will change. He will be involved in some of that and integral. And in some of that stuff, he will have to take a back seat. And so I think for him to update his definition of who he is and what his role is.

The other thing I would like for him to do is to stop forecasting. Forecasting is what we call looking at the future and saying, "I know *exactly* what's going to happen." And so a lot of his fear about his company falling apart if he takes a step back is forecasting behavior. He's saying that, "If I'm not here on the day-to-day, I believe that this company has a higher probability of failing." And my mind says, "Well, what evidence are you using to support that claim? Because it sounds like you just made it up. You don't have a lot of evidence because you've not done it yet to know that that's actually true."

Lantigua: Okay. I'm going to just play devil's advocate here and remind you of that well-worn phrase, prepare for the best, but expect the worst.

Lewis: Oh. Oh, expect the worst.

Lantigua: Right? I think that a lot of us catastrophize when we are going to take these massive leaps, so that is very familiar territory to a lot of us entrepreneurs.

Lewis: One other tangible, I guess, intervention he can implement is to really put a time limit on how much he's thinking about what could go wrong. I think oftentimes we

will just sit in that, or high achievers will, myself included, sometimes, of just thinking about all the ways as we plan for the worst, not expect it, how things can go wrong, and maybe putting a hard stop on how long we allow ourselves to do that. Because if it goes unchecked, we can spend days thinking about how terrible it's going to be, and we don't spend any time thinking about how good it can be. I think if we say, "All right, for the next hour, I'm going to spend that planning or thinking about all the things that could go wrong. And then after that I'm going to start thinking about solutions to that stuff."

Lantigua: I like that. Because I definitely I'm the type that dwells on the negative. And then I'm like, "Yeah, something good happened. Great. Let's move on back to the dwelling."

Lewis: Don't do that anymore.

Lantigua: Okay, yeah, sure. I'll just go into my brain and turn off that switch.

Lewis: Yes, yes, yes. No, be intentional about that. Spending all that time there, it's like you just dismissed all the good that happened. Because you're getting back to the bad and it's like, "Well, how are you going to feel accomplished and successful, and good and motivated?"

Lantigua: Yeah, I know it's difficult. All right. Since there is no switch in our brains, what is your best practical advice for people who stress continually? How do we start to manage that a little bit better?

Lewis: I think everyone is prone to at times stressing or what I call distressing themselves over life and what's going on. I think it's really important for people to ask themselves questions about what's going on for them. So really getting in touch to connect and be present in the moment of, "What am I afraid of? How likely is that to happen? Has this happened before? What's been my response when things don't go the way I planned?" Because those things then I guess more grounding and allow you to be more objective about the future, and your concerns around what could go wrong, or what might not go right.

Lantigua: Okay. I will take that under advisement. Thank you.

Lewis: Yeah, and the other thing I like to do is this what I call scaling, thinking about how much something has to go wrong in order for it to no longer be good. So I think about this in terms of grades, that grades are a range. So an A is like 90 to 100, and so what we've determined is that any score in that range is an A. And so I think as we evaluate how things could go wrong, how far away from perfection can something be, before it's actually bad?

Lantigua: So like a D?

Lewis: If that's your bad, yes.

Lantigua: Okay.

Lewis: Thank you Juleyka for joining me today.

Lantigua: Thanks for having me.

Lewis: I love it when I see high achievers like Elzie achieving on their own terms by accepting that reaching success is a long-term process, by being aware that they need to slow down sometimes in order to move forward, and by understanding and working within their own limitations.

And that's a wrap. Thank you so much for listening to *How to Talk to [High Achievers] about Anything*. We want you to be a part of our show.

We want to hear about your successes and challenges, your sacrifices and celebrations, and what's ahead on the journey for you. Send our Producer Virginia an email and we'll get your story on the show. She's at [virginia@lwcstudios.com](mailto:virginia@lwcstudios.com).

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