

# BSO - Lewis Keeber.mp3

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## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

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Welcome to the brain space optimized podcast. This is the place where creative entrepreneurs get the insight and inspiration they need to become the best versions of themselves. I'm Haley and I run brain space optimized where I help successful small business owners get control over where they spend their time, energy and attention. Today we are having an open and down to earth conversation about a pretty serious topic. We're talking about trauma and how it affects your relationship with your business. My guest Nicole Lewis keeper is a licensed therapist and social worker turned business coach, and she focuses on the way in which small t trauma, we'll talk about the distinction between small t and big t trauma and this episode can deeply affect the businesses that we choose to build and how we show up to them. I know this is a sensitive topic and can be a scary topic. But I also think so few people are talking about the connection between our past experiences and what we're creating with our work. I think this conversation needs to be had more and Nicole does a great job of helping us see that we are not



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businesses, but instead are in relationship with our businesses. Now that distinction allows us to create healthier relationships that are financially successful and emotionally stable instead of relationships that are strewn with toxic patterns of behavior. So without further ado, here's my conversation with Nicole Lewis keeper.



01:20

Oh, welcome to the brain space optimized podcast. Thank you for having me excited to

be here. I am super excited to have you on because when I came across you online, you're having this really like deep conversation about trauma and business and entrepreneurship and in a way that feels fun and not fun. It's not fun, but it feels like



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easy to understand and easy to digest and easy for people to see themselves in. So can you start off by just telling our listeners who don't know about you and your body of work? You know who you are and what you do? Yeah, so yeah, let's let's use the word it



02:00

approachable. Yeah, yes, that's what I meant. Yeah, fun. Fantastic. And and



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yeah, so I have a master's degree in social work. I'm a licensed clinical social worker, these are all the boring details.



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And I was a therapist in some capacity for 18 years before leaving clinical practice to work at the to jump into my own business as a money mindset coach for small business owners and entrepreneurs.



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It was the closest and quickest certification for coaching that I have available to me nice because I wanted to jump into the coaching arena, but now it's like, ah, I was spent a year doing this so and it was something I was interested in, too. So that's how I became a money mindset coach. And after about two years of coaching small business owners, what I began to notice within my business and within theirs, is that they weren't really having a struggle with mindset about money. They were actually



03:01

reacting from trauma, childhood trauma wasn't just the flip of a mind. mindset switch. It

wasn't, I need to say more affirmations every day or, you know, I have to lean into the law of attraction and believe it to be real, you know, like they were really struggling with mindset because it was impacting it was being impacted by their belief in themselves around these childhood traumas. So I started to notice this pattern within my work with them. And within my own experience as a business owner, were about that two year point, I realized I was getting pretty burnt out in my business pretty quickly. I'm like, two years in I'm already burnt. Yeah.



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And so what I noticed was that I had created a relationship with my business that was pretty gnarly and kind of abusive and not supportive at all. And after I had that aha moment, everything just kind of fell into place for me, and that's what I have been really focusing on.



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Now in my career and my work is studying the impact of childhood trauma, small t trauma on entrepreneurs, how they do business and how they relate to their business. So all that long answer to say that this is where I'm at now. Yeah, that's, that's what my clients call me a business therapist. Yeah, and I love that so much because you're not coming at it. I think one of the dangers of hiring a coach you can't seem I'm using air quotes but a quote unquote coach is that they could not be teaching out of place where they have a deep level of understanding and so it can be they can sometimes in those places do more damage than good. And so I just I love that you kind of piece together what ultimately is your background anyway, with you know, this new piece was all partnership and business. So first, my first question is, how do we define small t trauma? What does that and what's you know, big t trauma? What's the difference there? Yeah. So we



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A society pretty much only identify trauma as what we've clinches called Big t trauma. It's like the big stuff, you know,



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violence or PTSD from combat, or maybe you had a catastrophic accident or illnesses,

such the big stuff that's usually surprising or you know, it impacts you and everything changes from that standpoint from that point on. And so we as a culture, that's the only trauma we tend to give much definition to, or much attention to really and really not enough attention my opinion.



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But that's how most people see trauma.



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Then it's big T, small t trauma or little t trauma is more of a cumulative experience that you have in your formative years growing up where something happened on a regular basis that started to make you see yourself differently and it's not always what we think you know, and it can be different for each person. It could be that you grew up in an oppressive culture or system



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Where every day you walk out of your home and you see yourself differently in your what you feel your worthiness gets impacted by the way people treat you. It can be you know, if you get bullied, when you go to school, you start to see yourself differently or you have a you're a kid in a single parent household where you never see your caregiver because they're out working, you know, and



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it's just it starts to change how you see yourself and change how was possible. And so my I always say that big key trauma explodes. Small t trauma erodes, but they both know how to move a mountain like the right thing. You know, and so they both have big impact and they're both they're they're both important to look at, but a lot of people don't really realize that, Oh, I just had a bad childhood or things weren't great. Actually, that's those are traumas that need a certain level of attention to move and shift. Yeah, so I've got so many questions. So how do you how do you identify the



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within yourself, like how do you know how does it show up in your business?



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Yeah, you know, so that you're able to identify it and and do something about it in the first place? Yeah. So typically what happens is people will notice that, you know, we're wise we start to notice a pattern, in that maybe you notice a pattern in your business that you recognize from your personal life and you're like, Whoa, you know, wait a minute, that feels really familiar. Why am I doing that?



07:29

Or you have been trying to get relief in your business by hiring a business coach, and then another business coach, and then a marketing coach and the sales coach, because you you find yourself spinning your wheels because you're trying to solve an emotional issue with business solutions, you know, so you're not getting the relief that you needed. And so you start to notice Wait, you know, I'm doing all these things and I'm not getting where I want to go. Could this be something else you more of an emotional piece of it.



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People get pretty far down before they recognize that, you know, not everyone's going to have an aha moment at five o'clock in the morning like I did you know, where they realize, like, Hey, I created an abusive relationship with my business. You know, my therapist brain helped me figure that out really quickly and start to correct for it. But we don't always have that ability to look outside of ourselves and have that insight. So one of the things I see most is that people are trying to solve an emotional issue by putting business solutions on it and it doesn't work. Yeah, so so it not working. And like you said, Could be a variety of solutions or coaches or whatever. But that's like a major sign that hey, maybe you're trying to solve for the wrong problem here. Where do you see it come up with with people in their money, like, I'm thinking of my own experience, just to be candid, like there's a lot of weird money stuff in my household growing up of like not having any and then having a lot and then



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you know, a lot of instability there. And some



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times I see that reflected in my, in my business and I really struggle with like sustainability.

Because, you know, I'm used to or had years of like back and forth as a child is there. Do you see patterns of that around people in their money as well? Yeah, me and that's where the fall really started is I began to see that, you know, the problems that people were having with their money and their business. Again, they weren't a mindset issue. They were actually a money trauma that was from some experience they had when they were kid that they were acting out in their business through their money.



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And that can look like they can look a lot of different ways that can be underpricing, your products, knowingly underpricing your products because you don't feel like you can charge what's competitive, you know, for other people or giving things away because you want people to like you or you feel guilty. There's a lot of emotional connection around money for us and we we tend to do a couple of different things in our business.



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Either we rebel against what we were taught with our money and go the opposite direction. And we always find ourselves like kind of battling it out. Or, you know, or a lot of times we comply with what we were taught about money as a kid. And that doesn't work for a business as much, you know. So we find ourselves, you know, kind of in battle with that, too. So money is a huge one when it comes to business ownership, because you can get yourself straight, initially. And then when you decide to make a change in your business, to bring in more revenue, take yourself to another level, what they call up leveling in our world. Your Money stuff's going to come back again in a new arena. So you have to address it again. And then you have to address it again. And then you have to address it again, because we are trained to look at money in a really dysfunctional way. You know, so that's a big one. Yeah, that's so interesting. And I think I've heard other like mentors or other famous like entrepreneurs talk about money stuff and how it's really



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Just every time you hit a new level of success, like more stuff is going to come up or that same thing is going to come up, it's just going to look a little bit different. And that's kind of like the battle that we fight as an entrepreneurs over and over again, dealing with their stuff over and over again. So okay, so let's say we noticed some patterns like you said, that might be similar patterns to what we have in our personal life that might be patterns that were mirrored within our like our childhoods. What do we do? Like what does a person do next? When they say, hey, something's not right.



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Besides,



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the very first thing to do is to take a deep breath and have an immense of self compassion for yourself as you can, because you don't know what you don't know until you know, right? And clarity is key to everything. So there's kind of that aha, oh shit, right what you know. So just, you know, taking that deep breath and saying Okay, so



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I'm seeing something that I need to address. And one of the first questions I always ask people is, so think about your business as if it was a person, a relationship in your life now currently or in the past, and tell me if you can say to yourself, my business represents my blank, who would it be? And this is always my first question, because I see people



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that in with an emotional piece, differing their power in their business. And it's usually because they're deferring it to an kind of an invisible person from their pasts, and their business sounds really complicated. But often what the answer is, oh my god, my business is my father, and I'm relating to my business as if it's my father because I can't do enough. There's not enough money in the world that would make it successful in his eyes. So I'm striving but never arriving. Or if this teacher I had when I was in third grade, who told me that I was behind the reading



13:00

Classic Yes, I'm trying to prove something. So the answers that come up for people are fascinating. But that's always where I start. I'm like, Who is your business? That is so fascinating because immediately My mind went to a person I just went, Oh shit, like, holy cow.



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That's so fascinating. Yeah, so that's always the first thing, admit self compassion, and then identify the relationship you have. So that you can then say, all right, this is not working for me. And this is why and this is what I would like to move towards the type of relationship with my business that would feel secure, healthy and supportive and start to identify a person for that or it could be an entity like it could be, you know, a unicorn like whatever it is some something that you can connect with in a different energy. That's so good. And so I think I want to I want to pause here because I do want to talk about like when you start to make that transition, so



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I do want to talk about that. But first I just want to talk about like why why this



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work matters, right? There's so much. I know when I started my business, my goal was just to like, figure out how to make the money I needed to make. And I'm typically a very pragmatic person. And very, like,



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you know, I'll deal with my emotional stuff later. I'll deal with that at some other point right now I just need my business to work. Why does this work? matter? It matters for so many reasons. The bigger picture is that we as a society, and as a culture don't allow people to look at all of the pieces of the puzzle, we diminish and minimize people's experiences and try and fit them into a mold or system that just moves them through and grind. Some, you know, if you look at the statistics for any kind of childhood trauma, whether it's small t or bigger, the statistics are staggering. All of us have had some kind of trauma, and our brain reacts to trauma pretty consistently across the board as human beings. And so we develop coping patterns and pass



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Turning it in our brain to it changes it. So just from a bigger standpoint that for me to not allow people to identify and talk about and work with their experiences and all the arenas of their life, not just quietly on the couch with this is not helpful, right, we need to talk about it. So that's the bigger standpoint of it. And for me, my deep embodied why is that

what I was seeing is I was seeing highly competent, very smart, capable women mostly who had left these positions in the incorporated from employers to strike out on their own. And I've had a lot of courage to start a business I you know, it just does it takes somewhere with all it takes some courage, and then to see them take this leap and not you to only have their trauma show up in their business.



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because no one's looking for it there, right? And to let that be the thing that closes their business when they have all this competency capability, all the strategy, and that to be the thing, no, no, that doesn't get to be the thing, right? And so we need to talk about it. And that's why it's so important to me because I feel like when, you know,



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other people besides you know, the norm in corporate, you know, in big companies,



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when we have more financial freedom and financial flexibility, we have more power. And when we have more power, we have more say when we have more say we can change things and so for me, for people to not understand that there are childhood, you know, any kind of trauma they had impacts and plays out in their business to their demise that sometimes is not okay with me. And I know that was a long answer, but no, so it's so important that we look at all of the components because we



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Do not drop our baggage at the door, we start a business, we bring all of who we are into it. Yes, you're so right. And and that wasn't a long answer. I thought it was an excellent answer. But, I mean, that's part of the reason why I transitioned from doing just virtual assistant work to doing this, like coaching a little further upstream. Because, like you said, it's not enough. You know, it's not enough for you to just have a marketing strategy and sales strategy and like, be able to connect the dots, you know, from A to B, B to C, C to D, because there's all this other stuff that happens in and around the work that we do every day. And I think more problems happen. Like, like the impact can be a lot worse. When people ignore that component of it. They ignore the emotional component they ignore, you know, the patterns and habits and things that they keep that keep them stuck. So,

one of the things I wanted to talk about too, is like, which we sort of already talked about, but do you



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Fine there any personal habits that people continue to do around I'm specifically thinking around communication or like taking on tasks and things like that you've seen regularly, that are maybe one of the symptoms of like, hey, you're not dealing with some stuff.



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Yeah, you know, leaky boundaries, flimsy boundaries, whatever you want to call it. When we don't have a clear sense of self, we allow other people to define who we are. And that includes us as a business owner. And so I see people really struggling to be very clear about what they offer and what they don't offer and they're always trying to be you know, kind of a chameleon and be every every all things to everyone because they have that people pleasing part of them, you know, they've actually added on you hear people talk about trauma response. They have, you know, fight flight and freeze. Well, they've added a new one, thank goodness called fun like you



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Ever people overly invested you it's like almost like codependent type of you know, behavior. And so I see people doing that in their business where they're just trying to make everyone happy and you know, they're to the, to their own detriment. And I keep reminding them like this is your business, you get to decide what happens



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is yours, it's not someone else's. So I seen that happen. And on the other side of that, I see people who are really rigid and very, very boundaries, that it's really difficult for them to connect with their clients and connect with their employees in a way that allows them to be a true team.



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And so, I see that happen a lot, too. And so, what the result of that is, is that they use their employees or people they contract with to sabotage themselves, right. They



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know and I, I think we talked about this where I have seen a phenomena where people will



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Utilize you know their employee for people to contract with like the yeas are your copywriters that they would sabotage their own business because of their own emotional stuff, but they would lay it squarely on the shoulders of that VA or that copywriter. You know, let's, let's talk about that.



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You and I had this conversation a few weeks ago, but that is something that I was so surprised as a virtual assistant to see was that people weren't bringing me in to, they didn't know they were doing. I don't know that they're doing this, but they were bringing me in to solve a problem that hiring a VA was not going to solve.



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And so and then you hear the story, then they'll then they'll the relationship will go partly because they have unrealistic expectations of what a VA supposed to do or not be able to supposed to do for their business. And as you and I talked about really hiring a person into your business is a long term payoff and a lot



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term investment, it takes months for that relationship to work well, and it takes a lot of canoodling and it and it takes the person who's making that hiring decision to be very, very, very clear about that role and make sure that what that role is solving is an actual, like need and an actual problem. And so having if you haven't done that work, or don't come into it with that expectation, and then just like bring a VA in and then expecting to clear everything up, and they don't because you're unclear about exactly what it is maybe not even the tasks that you need them to do, but what role they're supposed to play for you and your business. And then everything blows up and then you wipe your hands and say VI's don't work and I'll just do everything myself and everything's, you know, no one can help me. I saw that a lot. And I just was so like, as frustrated by it. But also it makes sense if like you said it's kind of a form of self sabotage. We don't know that we're doing it all the time. Oh my gosh, hiring the hiring piece. This is this is such a huge one.



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Whether it's employee or contractor,



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because, you know, in order to leverage your business and build it out at some point, you just can't do it all yourself. And, you know, people who are entrepreneurs usually are entrepreneurial because of their childhood experiences. So it's a fantastic skill set, you know, they rely on I know, it's just heavily, but at some point, you have to rely on other people. And so what ends up happening is they'll hire a VA or you know, contract worker or Freelancer or employee, and they haven't built up the capacity to be able to delegate and then not just delegate but rely on someone to do to have ownership over their piece of the business. And because they have trust issues around their trauma, so they don't trust and we're lying is the behavior of trust, right? That's how we and so it becomes such a big, a big, you know, it's so much emotional lava around this because they feel really resentful that they just can't do it all themselves, and they don't allow for capacity.



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To really lean into the simple year contractor and partner with them, so they get really stuck in the delegation piece. They don't they don't cooperate, they do things themselves they set and I and again, I'm using they and with the most love in my heart, but they set up the VA to prove that they can't trust anybody, you know. So the next thing you know, this person's like what the hell says



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and the business center right here is like see, Nicole, I told you you can't you can't rely on people. They don't do their job, blah blah blah and I'm in my business is going to fail and it's all their fault. I'm like, Okay, let's just back that up.



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Right and this is not to say like you said, there's so much like I gosh, I love my clients so much, probably too much but and that's not to say like there aren't just terrible VA is out there because that's also a good thing.



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And but I was just so price. So surprised when that was the majority of my work how often that happens.



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And like how often because when you're a VA, like you can see people's crap like you're right up underneath them and their businesses, you can see all this happen. So I just thought that was so interesting. Yeah, it's definitely a pattern I noticed a lot. And you know, that's why I brought it up to you to thank you.



24:17

And I was like, I didn't know if this was, you know, happening outside of my experience. Um, but yeah, so we've got, we've got higher room, we've got money stuff. Is there any place else where you see this come up a lot? Yeah. So I think the hiring piece kind of lives underneath the trust, you know, banner, for sure.



24:34

And yeah, there's the money. There's the trust piece of it. You know, there's also the boundaries, you know, boundaries are so complex, and they can go from anything from where, where you decide you're going to do your work all the way up to who has bought into your business around you, like your family, you know, so boundaries is a huge one. So I think that that just plays out in a lot of different ways. And if you don't have very clear boundaries,



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for yourself personally in your life, it's going to be probably hard for you to set up clear boundaries within your business. So that That, to me is like the first place to work on is the boundary piece. Hmm. Yeah. Okay, so so you already kind of gave it to us, like, where do we start? But Nicole, if I'm sitting here listening to this podcast, I'm like, What the heck, I'm a hot mess, everything is broken. What's the path that we start on to start either working our way out of this? Or do you have any words of I don't know if encouragement is the right the right thing. But you know, if someone comes to you and they're just like, holy crap, everything is broken. What do we do first? Yeah, so I get you know, I just respond to say it's not broken because now you you see where the cracks are, you know, so you know,



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again, have a lot of self compassion because we are not taught to look at emotional sustainability as part of our business plan. We're not taught to do it. We are taught to compartmentalize to minimize and not bring who we are to our life on our



26:00

work.



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And so no one's looking Trust me, I was a therapist and the coach, you know, and I wasn't looking for it in my business. So,



26:11

you know, to know that this is actually a moment of freedom, and a moment of clarity that you can move through instead of feeling like I'm broken and everything's wrong. Yeah. Because it's, it's not so. And as I said earlier, you start to identify Okay, so who is my business? How do I relate to it and how would I like to relate to it and start to just think of it differently and maybe journal it out.



26:36

You know, I own my website I do have something called the business relationship assessment workbook. It's not a sexy name at all. But it's there are go download it and it'll walk you through, you know, kind of how to identify what what currently What relationship you have currently because then you can see where you need to make some fixes. You know, is it in your money is it in that you're giving too much of your power?



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Way to your clients. This is a boundary issue. It's going to get clearer to you when you do that where you can start with the most important thing is self compassion and knowing that there's no way you could have seen this and I say that 100% there is no way you

could have seen this



28:12

Yes, I love that so much. And I so appreciate you talking about this because it's just like you said in the beginning, each of us has our own trauma, small t, big T, like every everyone has it. And I think that people that are going to be the most successful at running their own business or being an entrepreneur are the people that can see it. And then, like you said, start to make adjustments and start to recognize patterns and see where they're going, you know, kind of often to a habit or into a thing that is dictated by past trauma. And I just think it's so helpful to like shine a light on it and talk about it because like nobody talks about it. This is a very like unsexy. I'm sure this the title of this podcast is going to be this episode is going to be very unsexy compared to like, earn \$150,000 in the next



29:00

month like it's not gonna be one of those episodes. This is like inner work episodes.



29:04

Yeah. So which I love So, okay, so we're going to switch gears a little bit. We're going to do our lightning round of questions. So are you are you ready? I'm ready.



29:16

So the very first question is, What are you reading right now? Right now I am reading actually I'm listening to it. Because I like to listen to books a little bit more than read because I have a learning disability for reading cards for me.



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And it's it takes more energy isn't it that way? So I'm listening to where the crowd at things. Oh, audible right now. And that's that's my fun book like me at my my fluffy book. Yeah, that sounds cool.



29:48

Next question is if you got to choose a made up superpower, what would you pick? It would not be hearing people's thoughts. I feel like I do that.



30:00

You're like hard pass



30:03

Yeah, I think like being able to eat anything I want and have you know this healthy spelt body? Maybe that is actually ditto on that Yeah, I eat what I want. Yeah, yeah that one that one please.



30:20

Okay and then what have people told you or have you recognized as your real life superpower my real superpower is reading people's brain you know connecting patterns I am a master pattern notice sir



30:35

My husband yesterday said that I have magical powers because I just know what's about to happen or I know what you're thinking. And so like he literally said this yesterday so I think that that's my superpower is really getting into the pattern of of how people are and seeing what's possible Next, you know for them. That is awesome. Man. I feel like that comes in really useful as a mom, like I wish I had that power. That



31:00

Better. I think it's what made me a really good therapist. And it's what I think makes me really good coach, if you want to call me. Okay. And then our last, my last question is, tell me about an exciting mission that you are on in your business, or you and your family are on right now. So I'm, my husband and I are not on a mission because he's a homebody and I'm someone who likes to travel. So we have done it, we have not come up with a joint mission at this point, other than to stay cool this summer.



31:29

So for me and my business, it really is speaking to this topic, you know, speaking as much as possible coming on podcast to talk about it, you know, trying to normalize this as much as possible. And, you know, I just got back from training with Renee brown and her team, which is the perfect person for me to train with because she was the forerunner of addressing shame and vulnerability and other people don't want to talk about Yeah, so I feel like integrating her work into mine is what comes next.



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And I have a great program starting in the fall, which for me is kind of a first and I'm excited about that, too. So that's kind of my mission is to bring all these pieces together in a way that synthesizes and makes sense. Todd is awesome. Where Where can people find out more about that group? program? Yeah, so the best place to hear about it is on my Facebook page, which is Nicole Lewis keeper coaching. It's not on my website yet. I finally do have a sales page for it, which is a miracle. So that would be there. Okay. We'll link up to that.



32:37

And what was that? What was that assessment you mentioned? Oh, yeah, that is on my website. It's called business relationship assessment workbook that you can download. Awesome. And it's on your website. Yeah. It'll say what is your relationship with your business question mark, question mark, question mark. And that and I yeah, I will go take that immediately. But yes, yeah. Awesome. Well,



33:00

Nicole, thank you so much for being on this podcast. I know this is so just so useful for our listeners to hear because like you said, Everybody has it. Let's all figure out how to deal with it so we can keep moving it forward. Yeah, absolutely. Awesome. Well, thanks for being on. Thank you.



33:18

A big thanks to our guest for being on the podcast this week. Thank you to our producer Melanie Scroggins and ticket details about anything we referenced in this episode. You can go to [brain.space/optimized.com/slash/podcast](https://brain.space/optimized.com/slash/podcast). We will see you in the next episode.

