

There's no right way for growing an online business. And honestly, me and my guests are more than fine with that.

I'm Hailey Thomas. And this is the podcast that lets you be a fly on the wall for candid conversations and mini lessons with a variety of online entrepreneurs who are growing their businesses based on their own visions. We are on a mission to normalize and laugh about the behind the scenes truth of achieving a new level of success in your business. This is one year from now. Hello, and welcome to this episode of the podcast. So today we're talking about the armor of excellence. And this is a concept that I came up actually in conjunction with one of my favorite clients. I love her because she is so the opposite of me in terms of like mannerisms, and like she is internally processing things and is a little bit more serious than I am. But brilliant. And I really enjoyed working with her. But we came up with this concept to give a name to this way that she was showing up and being in the world that was very useful for a lot of time in her life when she was in school when she was a W two employee somewhere, but became really heavy and cumbersome and not helpful. Once she stepped into entrepreneurship. And the further she gets into entrepreneurship. So the concept is the armor of excellence, we talk about it as like a full body, like think of like a medieval suit of armor, except instead of made of metal, it's made of correctness, and excellence. And if I'm being even more specific and honest, it's typically connected to a proximity to whiteness, right? And not like any white person, specifically, but the ideology, the values, the attitude, the way you speak, the way you move. And its proximity to European based, like ideologies and values and all those things and proximity to masculinity, right. So not being emotional, not being very direct when you speak and not being too happy or too sad, or to whatever. So it's this armor, that we have a tendency and I think a lot of first generation entrepreneurs, particularly if they have been socialized as women are in black and brown bodies, to not just act and be in proximity to whiteness, and in proximity to more masculine presenting way of doing things, but also without any trace of flaw. So this shows up like when you step into a new space, and that could be like a live space, right a networking event, going to a conference, or stepping into a new platform to use. So starting to do webinars are starting to do Instagram are starting to do podcasting. And there's a struggle to show up in a way that allows for experimentation and humanity. Because the armor as cumbersome and large and bulky as it is, is a means of project protection, its protection to rejection. It's not invalid, either. So there's a real fear of what being wrong being cast out being rejected of these spaces might cost someone safety is at risk, there's something to lose, that might be cloud that might be respect, which translates into financial safety, physical safety may be at risk, emotional safety may be at risk. So as a way to protect us protect ourselves from those things, we were put on this armor of excellence, all that we do need to show up as close to excellence as possible for whatever whatever that looks like in that realm. Right? Whatever the acceptable level of showing up looks like, then we need to show up at that level, but like plus five, okay, this is really detrimental to entrepreneurship, because what is required most of the time and entrepreneurship is learning by doing, learning by failing and evaluating and figuring out what to do next. Right, you learn most deeply and most quickly by doing not by reading ahead of time, not by planning. And the armor of excellence will have you doing shit like planning for a really long time to do a thing, or wanting to read up for a really long time to do thing or coming and getting coached for like 16 sessions before you

go and do a thing because your brain is really concerned about the risk. So it puts the armor on the armor says we need to be there needs to be a level of excellence before we can go out and do the thing. And like I said this causes the journey of learning whenever you're building assets sets like a business when investment portfolio or real estate like by avoiding failure, it makes the whole process take longer. It's the difference between taking like a safer, more meandering route against like a hole in the ground. Or taking a more direct route

that involves some risk, like a rope bridge over the hole. It's a little risky, but it's a much more direct route. But if you've got this, like, for my own safety, I need to be excellent. It's like taking a longer way around. The armor of excellence is essentially excellence as a mean of protection and of safety. But it's like real armor because it's heavy and cumbersome and slows things down. And it takes more energy, it takes way more energy, to put a concept out there to hop on a new platform and learn as you go. That all that will take more time and more energy. If you've got an unexamined, like if you're walking around with the armor of excellence on and don't realize that that's what you're doing, then everything's gonna feel like it's taking so much more energy, it will be more tiresome. And we have these stories like the armor of excellence showing up when you've got historically, generationally. So even think about the stories inside of your family, how are you allowed to show up. So for example, inside of my family, there was a couple of rules. Growing up just in how we like physically presented ourselves, we never leave the house without earrings on. If you're a young lady, tis the rule, you always need to be, first of all, we never wore sweatpants or anything like that to school, we always had to iron our own clothes. I don't do it now anymore. But I've been ironing my own clothes for myself since like the fourth grade, fourth grade all the way through high school and I got to college. And I'm like people are wearing sweatpants. And people are just like out here wrinkled as hell, what is going on. So we've got all these rules about just generationally and my family about how to show up. Because again, the excellence was about safety. And then you also have personal stories. So stories just inside of your life, about how you might have failed or entered a new situation and been rejected. And something was at jeopardy, you lost something. And that loss was so significant, that armor of excellence went up. Okay, so there's like generational implications, systemic implications, inside your personal story implications of why you might have the armor on and make the entire journey of entrepreneurship more challenging and take longer and require more energy. But one of the first things so like, what do we do with this information like cool Haley, but what do we do? One of the first things is to recognize that you're not wrong, if you're having this experience, right. So our brains are naturally not interested in playing games, our brains are naturally not interested in taking calculated risk. And entrepreneurship is a big old game of calculated risk. If you have like multiple reasons why armor of excellence is on makes this game unfun to play. But your brain is not interested in doing that. It's interested in preserving your life. And anything that is a threat to that your brain is against. So if you have the armor of excellence on or I'm talking and you're like, Ooh, yeah, I've had that experience, I've had that experience. It's been challenging for me to show up in new ways. And I will offer even in newer levels of having wealth, and growing your business to certain levels, like past certain revenue numbers, or into certain models, feels uncomfortable to try and fail at it, because of the armor of excellence. So for example, many of my clients are going from they

run their their business, like they are the admin person, they are the project manager, they do the invoicing, they do the billing, they do all the things, and it's time to hire. But what is required to move to that next stage requires so much like risk and the ability to fail and test and iterate. They feel so uncomfortable with that process, that they will stay smaller longer. Because they have this desire for excellence as they continue to grow. But the only way to grow is like by doing it, and by virtue of doing it, it means you're gonna be failing at doing it until you learn to not fail to do it while you're doing it, particularly around hiring. So that's one of the places that it comes up. It's not just in going on to a new platform or into a new space, but also new levels of wealth, new levels of business, higher capacities for leadership and hiring and all those skills of investing or for taking on debt. That's another good one, taking on debt or editing your cash flow in a way that supports you as an entrepreneur that directly goes against the quote unquote rules of excellence and perfection. and being without flaw and not making any errors. So what are you supposed to do about the arm of excellence?

I've got a couple thoughts on this, I don't think it's as simple as when you're going to listen to this podcast, and then you're gonna like, do a journal entry, and then it'll be gone forever. And it's just rosy. But we you can do is a couple of things. One, this does not have to be a major thing. It doesn't have to be this major problem. Sometimes I think, especially when we work with coaches and really enjoy self coaching. We want to like deeply unravel every incidence of this, before we can take action, or without this arm of excellence arm and you get to just decide it's not a major thing. Yes, the arm of excellence has caused me and multiple of my clients to like recognize they need therapy, and do need to unpack some of those things. But as it pertains to your business, your main job is to notice when it's on and when it's off, and what purpose is it playing when it's on? And you're getting an Ask yourself, Do I want to take it off right now, you step in, you step out, you're like, I don't love that I'm forcing excellence on myself in a scenario that doesn't require excellence. And I'm a scenario in which excellent is actually detrimental to my learning, and you get to take it off. So that's the first thing is that this doesn't have to be a major thing. And you will just like, let me check myself, let me check myself out. The second thing is, let's not pretend that there is nothing to be afraid of, because there is your mind can be stubborn, but it's not dumb. And we're not interested in gaslighting ourselves. So be willing to hold space for your own mind. Like what is there to be afraid of? Like, what are you afraid of brain? What is the arm of excellence protecting me from speak truly speak kindly, indirectly, as those thoughts come up, don't avoid addressing them and then just like hope they go away because they will. Thirdly, in my mind, I love to see entrepreneurship as a game. And not a game like this is frivolous. But as a game of calculated risk, and learning and strategy. It's like chess, right? But play requires safety. you've ever noticed, kids that will say things like, oh, that kid grew up so fast, or that kids like a tiny adult, it's almost always because they're lacking a certain amount of safety that makes it safe for them to play, play, require safety. So find the safe places for you to take off the armor and practice being vulnerable in your business. And in your experience of entrepreneurship. Practice playing practice, showing up unpracticed not having rehearse things 1000 times, practice, curiosity practice looking like an idiot practice preparing less, right one of the most compelling learnings a client of mine recently had she's in the sports industry. Among the most compelling learnings she learned recently is she

said, Oh, I can research and prepare for sports analysis like half as much as I used to. And part of it, it was like she loves the game and could get into this for a long time. But she's like, Oh, I

can trust myself, and trust and I am good at my job. And I am, like, well versed in this industry and on these teams and all those things. But like, she removed the requirement of perfection and of 100% without faultiness. And then like cut down her time by like half. So this takes some time. But go and find those places. And it also feels like you're gonna die. Like feels like something's terribly wrong, and you're gonna die and be rejected, but you're not. So find those places where it's safe to do so the practice strengthens your ability to go out and do more and more without the armor on. Lastly, in terms of what to do with this, and I kind of alluded to it in that last point, but use this to your advantage. I think one of the best things about the fact that I grew up having a very specific way in which I needed to present physically a very specific way in which I needed to speak a very specific way in which I needed to stand a very specific way in which I needed to greet people and all the things is I'm really good at speaking. I really good at stepping onto a stage and being fairly commanding. I'm really good at at being at being eloquent. Not that that sentence was an example of it, but pretty good at just speaking off the cuff because of the skills that I developed from the armor of excellent. So again, we're not like, this is so terrible, and I'm so horrible. I need to get out of this. But like, oh, I actually learned a lot of really useful skills for entrepreneurship, from this armor of excellence. So recognize the skills that you have learned know that they're backing you all the time. That's just like who you are now, I just am a good speaker period. You probably speak more eloquently than you think you know more than you do. You're better prepared than you think you are and you get to use that instead. take that forward with you forever and ever be in. Those are things no one can take from you to use that to your advantage. Okay, so lastly, as I'm thinking about the armor of excellence like to me now, so for your five in business, and for a long time, this was really, really uncomfortable. I really struggled with how to show up with clients when I presented myself and was onboarding new clients or marketing or having sales calls, I felt really uncomfortable talking to my previous employer about what it is I was currently working on. And now, I don't want to say I don't care. But I believe so strongly in what I'm able to do, and so much more strongly in what my skill is, and the value of that skill, that it's, I kind of don't care. I'm not pro chaos, particularly in your business, because I just not, but to me refusing to be excellent. Like refusing the pressure of being excellent, is a sort of rebellion. It's kind of an FAQ to a set of invisible rules that says, I can't be successful unless I do things just so which is a thief of not just my time and my effort, but of my humanity. If you're perfect, you are not human. If you're perfect, you don't get to cry, or have emotions, or be sad or feel desperate or feel deeply joyful, or lazy or bored. You only have excellence. And that's a detraction from my humanity. So right off the bat, I'm uninterested in it. It also steals my ability and willingness to like trust my own instinct, and learn how to trust my instinct and learn how to listen to myself, particularly in situations where I should have set boundaries or said no to things. I only knew at first how to say yes, and how to make it look really good. But I lost this ability and willingness to like trust my own instinct. And I have gained that back now by repeatedly stepping out of the armor, taking off the armor is like refusing to battle but winning anyway. And as I look at like the landscape of

entrepreneurs, as I mentioned earlier, it feels like this isn't true, but it feels like it is about or can be about the proximity to whiteness, to correctness to masculinity, and you win by getting as close to those things as possible. And by when you get the clients, you get the clout you get to be recognized. If you do things just so you have the good and the Instagram grid and against this isn't even just about physically presenting yourself, it's also about, I need to have this ideology, I need to be on all the time, I need to be available and responsive, I need to be xy and z. So it's about values and how you handle yourself and what's allowed and what's not allowed. They have to be this amount of personal in this amount of business. That's how you quote unquote, win. And I personally am just unavailable for that narrative these days. That narrative is an invitation for me to put on the armor and like fight for my spot, fight for my position, fight for clients fight for a spot as a thought leader. But by opting out of that, and refusing to wear the armor of excellence, that's, to me is winning without going to battle at all, which I'm here for,

I get to make my own rules, and be successful in the way that I want to be being who I am and having the full human experience that I'm having being a black woman with dreadlocks. So I wanted to pinpoint this concept. Because I think many of us are operating with the armor on but not knowing that there's an option to take it off. And not knowing how. And my hope for you is that by just listening to this episode of being able to identify where you've been wearing it when you don't want to is, frankly that it speeds up your learning and speeds up. Your entrepreneurship journey makes it easier, more enjoyable, more comfortable, you move faster, you have more fun doing it. My point is go further faster with more fun, and that's completely possible and available to you. I will see you on the next podcast episode. Thank you so much for listening. And by the way, if this show has been useful to you, and you're enjoying the concepts that I teach on, if you could head to Apple podcasts and leave me a rating or review, the podcast is called one year from now with Haley Thomas. I'd really appreciate your legitimate and honest thoughts about the things you're learning or taking away from the show. Alright, I will talk with you soon. Have a great week. Thank you for listening to this episode on one year from now you can find the show notes and all the links we mentioned at brainspace optimized comm slash podcast and if you want to chat me up about all things entrepreneurship, then head to brainspace. Optimize calm and join my email list. This is where we have rich conversations about the experience of business ownership. It's thoughtful, it's funny, I like getting responses and chatting with you all it's a good time. See you can find me on Instagram at brainspace optimized we will see you in the next episode