

#111: Visibility Anxiety



One Year from Now with Hailey Thomas

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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 through 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.

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Hey, welcome to the podcast. I am recording this episode kind of willy nilly. Not willy nilly in that I don't know what I'm gonna talk about, but normally, I have points and I know ahead of time what I'm going to title the episode, and I've written down, "Here the major things I want to hit." I don't have a lot of those things right now, and it's because I'm recording this episode after having almost the same conversation with three different clients in one week. And whenever that happens, I hit record. And this is me modeling B-minus work for you all, modeling just doing the thing without being 1,000% prepared and 1,000% ready, because I value my thoughts and I know that you're gonna get stuff out of this episode. So, I'm not worried about outlining everything perfectly, so much so as I am about grabbing this content, grabbing this thought, and it being useful and helpful to my clients, instead of making me feel good about things being perfect and pretty and very nice.

01:46

So, we're talking about visibility anxiety today. I'm defining it, or I'm thinking about, the physical sensations you experience, and the thoughts and the feelings and then, the actions that come with what happens when you start to become more visible than you are now. So, when I say more visible than you are now, by that I just mean, there might be a singular incidence where you're featured on a podcast, where you are making more money, your platform increases. We'll say, like, something about your platform increases your reach, the number of people who can see you increases, quantity. Or, when someone close to you, or maybe a peer, a friend, or family member, the depth in which they can see and how much of you they can see increases. So, their understanding of you increases. As I mentioned before, the volume of people, the number of eyes on you might increase. That might come from being featured on a podcast episode, being featured in an article, getting an interview in a popular news publication, doing a commercial. But the other part of it might be a partner, a friend, or somebody asking you a question and learning something new about you and maybe having an adverse reaction to it. That gives you kind of a new level of visibility anxiety, that makes you question what you're doing and why you're doing it and how you're doing it. So, this can happen in two ways.

03:21

I'm calling this out, I'm acknowledging this because there's a certain level of comfort you've created with yourself once you've made your first \$100,000, your first \$200K, \$300K, \$400K, and when you're playing at that half a million, or \$600K level. You've already bypassed a certain amount of, or grown a certain amount of like, "Middle finger to anyone who doesn't get me," right? There's a level of understanding you have that you are doing uncommon things and creating uncommon results. So, becoming an entrepreneur, being a self-sufficient entrepreneur. By self-sufficient, I mean, you make a full-time income, whatever that means for you, as an entrepreneur, working an online business. So, it's not like, being an entrepreneur and owning a hotel, which is pretty simple to understand. But doing

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digital marketing, or making courses, or coaching, any sort of like, online content, all these ways, all these paths into your first \$200+ requires a base level of, "You understand that I'm doing uncommon things so that I can have uncommon results, like time freedom, creative freedom, flexibility with how and when and where I work, no cap on how much I make." So, there's a level and part of you that already gets how to be visible, and it's kind of like, maybe I'll come up with a better analogy for it later, but it's kind of like a callus. You understand that some people are not gonna get it and you're able to like, "Okay, that's fine," and move on, right? There's no way you've made \$200k+ if you haven't already experienced some level people not getting it.

04:17

What I'm talking about is past that level, when you think you have a really good grasp on dealing with those sorts of conversations with the aunt at the dinner table, or the kids soccer coach who doesn't get it when you try to explain it to them, or you've started your own podcast, or whatever. Like, you are good with visibility. There is an upper limit and an additional stretch that happens around this dollar mark when you're increasing the volume of eyes on you, or you are increasing the depth that someone knows or understands you as an entrepreneur. So, for example, next week we'll be talking to Amelia and they are going to talk a little bit about how they've experienced this vulnerability anxiety over an experience they had being featured in an Ikea commercial. Another client talked about how they were having a conversation with one of their family members, their sister, and their sister learning how much they make, and their sister being like, "It must be nice," eye roll, neck roll, and feeling a new pang of pain around it.

06:09

And what happens is there's an instance in which the thing happens, or the incident happens, and then there's like, when our brains start to think about the instance, that moment, either leading up to it, if you know it's coming, like an interview, or afterwards. And the anxiety is, like I said, there's physical sensations to it. So, you might get really hot, your brain might start spinning, you might feel dizzy, you might feel like physically unsafe. So, my eyes dart around, and I feel paranoid. When I'm feeling unsafe, I can feel bile in my throat a little bit, I feel like I want to throw up just a little bit, I feel spiders up my spine, I just feel really unsafe. And then, you might also clamp down on it, meaning you might go to lock your jaw, put your hands into fists, curl your toes, and tighten everything up to kind of lock down on this feeling of feeling not safe, if you're not aware of what's happening. Because you're like, "Obviously, I'm safe. I'm sitting in my office, texting a friend," or, "I'm sitting in my office having this conversation, or whatever, so obviously, I'm safe." And you might tell yourself, "I should not feel this way."

07:21

It's the resistance of emotion that is creating the anxiety. It's not seeing that what's happening is you're having anxiety about the new levels of visibility, and shoving it to the side, that creates this ongoing anxiety pattern. When I'm feeling anxious, it's really hard for me to focus, I'm kind of spinning round and round and round on ideas. I try to shove that to the background, and it doesn't quite work and I can't quite focus. The spinning is also really exhausting. So, our brains are inside of meat suits, and are powered by our sleep and powered by what we eat. And our brains, even though we're sitting a lot with our work, they take energy. Thinking is exhausting. Worrying is even more exhausting, worrying burns calories. So, while you're feeling an emotion, suppressing the emotion, telling yourself you shouldn't

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feel bad about the emotion, trying to set all of that to the side, pushing that off to the side and do your current work, it's exhausting. So, you're feeling anxiety, you're exhausting yourself, you're not able to focus, and it creates this cyclone. Like, if you think of a cyclone that's going slow and then speeds up and then speeds up, the cyclone where you just feel super anxious as a result of new levels and depths of visibility.

08:41

Now, the big challenge here is understanding all these pieces and understanding what is causing what, because it's not the body's reaction to this experience, which will be, if you don't call it what it is and aren't aware, like, "I'm moving too far too fast. This isn't for me, this isn't real. This is a fluke." Feeling bad about whatever conversation you just had. At least, for me, when my body is experiencing this, personally, I want to back off, I want to step away. There's an interview that I've done in the past where I did the interview, and it was published, and I was feeling so much anxiety around it because we talked about how much money I had made at that point. I didn't want to engage, that's my version of flight, of leaning back. I did not post about it, did not listen to it, didn't share it, didn't talk about it, and it's a show that I was really excited to be on, but I was feeling so newly visible that I was so anxious and I just stepped back. So, you might have a response that's flight, or you might want to fight it, or argue for inconsistencies.

09:49

So, one of my clients that I love so much will do this, where they will be looking for details that prove the other person wrong, or just trying to like pick the thing apart. They're fighting, fighting to remove the accolade, if that makes sense, or to invalidate the accolade is probably a better way to say that, so that they can back away from it. They're fighting it. You might have any number of responses to it, but we're looking at it and we're naming it, because for you to continue to grow your business and grow your thought leadership— Because for many of my clients, those things go hand-in-hand, they're not the same thing, but they go hand-in-hand, like, you have to be able to be seen and be able to experience visibility deeper, further, wider to continue to go in the direction that you want to go in.

10:38

An analogy I like to use is when folks are scuba diving. When it's time to rise, you don't do it that quickly, because it will make you dizzy. You have to take it bit by bit and come back up to the top bit by bit. And it's kind of the same with your visibility, you have to grow into it as you go. It doesn't have to take a long time, right? Like, still swimming to the surface takes a couple seconds, a couple minutes, but you have to be aware that like, "Oh, I'm coming up to the surface." And so, at each level, I kind of do a body scan: How am I feeling? Take some deep breaths, stay calm. And that's kind of how we're dealing with visibility anxiety.

11:18

Alright, so here's how I suggest we treat this, in the way maybe a doctor would suggest one might treat the bends, which, I think, is what happens when you change water pressure too quickly. Number one is just to acknowledge the source. It's really challenging, actually, I think for entrepreneurs who are in it to realize that their success is the thing that's causing their anxiety, or is the thing that is connected to their anxiety. Because they'll say things like, "But it's working, I got that interview, I wanted it, I'm

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making twice as much as I did last year. Things are going well, why do I feel so bad?" And again, have the opportunity to reject themselves and go, "Well, I just shouldn't feel bad," which is just not the direction we want to go and it adds the anxiety. Or, they have the opportunity to dig into it and look at it, and start to release that pressure and create some relief there. So, number one is just like be connected to what is happening. You can experience anxiety and stress as you're succeeding, just as well as when maybe things are not going the way that you want them to. And that's okay, that is a part of this process.

12:24

So, the first one is just like, acknowledge it. And then, you're acknowledging: "New levels or new depths of visibility is a part of why I'm feeling bad right now." Try to name the situation, the event, the thing, something you can put your finger on, that is different than before, because your brain might also offer, "Well, it's not that interview, I wasn't nervous for it." No, but you might be nervous about all the things around it. Try to identify what it is, or if it's a number of things happening at once. And then, also think about there's the thing, and then there's our thoughts and judgments about the thing, right? So, if you are nervous about an interview, and feel some level of uncertainty about an interview, that's the thing.

13:04

And then, there's our judgments that like, lays over top of it, that squeezes down around it that, "I shouldn't feel bad about this," or, "I shouldn't feel nervous," or, "I should feel this, I should feel that." It's a judgment around the thing that doubles down on the experience. So, one of my peers, one of my favorite life coaches from the past, her name's Rachel Cole and she made this great analogy to anxiety, which is it's a little bit like trying to hold an inflated ball underwater. If you've ever tried to hold a beach ball underwater, it's really hard, you have to struggle a lot to hold that down. And it's the kind of the situation we're talking about where the thing might be thoughts about, or nervousness about, the interview and how you're going to perform in it. And you might have thoughts underneath there that, "I don't deserve this, and I shouldn't have this, and is this even right for me?" But instead of looking at those thoughts, you should try to shove the beach ball underwater and go, "You shouldn't feel that way. Let's focus on the talking points and move on, not examine it." And it could be purposely not looking at it, it could just be not taking the time to acknowledge what you're feeling and thinking, and that's holding the beach ball under.

14:22

So, the next step is to again— First one was to recognize the anxiety and pinpoint like: Where's that coming from? What success am I having and visibility I'm experiencing that might have led to this kind of cyclone starting of anxiety? And then you get to look at the pressure you're using to hold the ball down. And then, you get to look at the ball. So, typically what's underneath, like what is the ball is feelings of anxiety, feelings of unworthiness. It might just be like, nerves, and your job is to look at them without judging them. Look at them, and give yourself compassion and care over them, and not judge them. Look at them without crapping on yourself, and being able to like, that happens in your brain, but also being able to calm your nervous system physically, having the skills to contain yourself if you need that, to get co-regulated with your breathing, to walk using bipedal motion to like, help your brain process and help your nervous system process, to punching pillows, to yelling, to venting. Like, there's a number of things to do, that you could do, but the goal is just to complete stress cycles, and close the

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stress cycles, which requires some physical work, and then also examining our thoughts around the thing, and then, be able to experience that and give yourself time to experience that. And by that, I mean, like literally, like, take half an hour and explore maybe through journaling your thoughts on the thing that your sister said to you about your new level of success, or how it is you are feeling about this interview. And you're just journaling it out and looking at the thoughts that are most potent, and getting to compassionately examine that. Is that true? Is that how I want to think about this thing? What other things might be true? How does this thing make me feel, right? So, examining without judgment.

16:20

And that starts to slow the cyclone down, doing that process of like, examining the thoughts and emotions and closing stress cycles with physical movements and modalities, like, they go together. And it's kind of like, turning the cyclone backwards and slowing it down. I know, that's not how cyclones actually work, but stick with me for this analogy. And that's our version of like, encountering the next level. If we go back to the scuba divers coming up for air, at every level, you're pausing to examine, pausing to feel and process. Okay, then we go to the next level, pausing to examine, pausing to feel and process. And so, you can continue to grow without getting sick, without getting anxious.

17:04

And I will offer again, experiencing anxiousness and experiencing nervousness, experiencing fear and experiencing unsettledness and experiencing unworthiness, these are just part of the human condition. We are in no way shape or form trying to remove those human experiences. What we are trying to do is help you understand them and to process them, so you can keep going, instead of turning around and going back, or getting stuck here because you think something's wrong with you, because getting through this step is too hard.

17:32

I think that might be all I want to say about visibility anxiety. This comes up in a lot of ways and, like I said, it came up three times this week across clients. And I think the other thing I want to mention, it's not just about— I just gave two examples of like, more eyeballs are on you from an interview, or a commercial, or a podcast episode, or someone may have learned something new about you. But this can come up in a couple of different places, so it might also look like a potential client learning how much you cost and then telling you that that's too much, right? So, it's like a person learning new depths about you that they didn't before and rejecting you, or rejecting your offer and your business. They're not actually rejecting you. It might be someone rejecting you as they learn about your business and what you do. They might disagree with your model, or what you offer, or what you do. It might even be someone who loves you, who is saying something positive, but also is like, "Holy crap."

18:30

Someone I love so much, I was talking with her on the phone this week, and I told her what The Residency is and how much it costs to work money, and she was just like, "Holy shit. That's a lot of money, Hailey, I cannot believe you charge that much." And she was not being mean or incredulous. She was just processing it, and I had this moment of like, "Woof, oh, no. Oh, my gosh, is this a lot? Do I charge a lot? Oh, my gosh." There's something in me that resonated with what she said. And so, I had to kind of like, pause and examine it, see what it is and check what my body was doing, even though

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she was encouraging and loving and like, "You're a bad bitch. This is amazing." It was this person I love who saw a new depth of understanding of my world that she didn't have visibility or access or vision into before now. So, this can come in a number of ways. Your job is to keep an eye out for it, especially if you're feeling really anxious, and you can tell that you're going around and round and round about being successful and being more visible. Check to see if this is what's going on, or part of what's going on, right? It might be something else altogether, but this is something I wanted to bring light to.

19:34

So, thank you for listening to this episode. I will probably have more thoughts on visibility anxiety going forward, but hopefully, this episode will help you to understand more of what your body and brain are experiencing. If this is the sort of coaching and thought work and understanding that vibes with you and your entrepreneurial spirit, I want to invite you to send me a message and think about joining us in One Year from Now: The Residency. So, One Year from Now: The Residency is a 12-month group coaching business incubator, where we're not only learning the tactical and practical skills of being an entrepreneur, managing multiple assets, building assets for resale, or to keep and to cashflow, the mechanics of business, but we're also learning how to be mentally and emotionally mature enough so that you can keep building high-impact, high-profit assets for the rest of your life. I am taking 12 people into this cohort. It is currently enrolling as you're listening to this in June of 2022. You can send me an email hailey@brainspaceoptimized.com. Find me on Instagram [@BrainspaceOptimized](https://www.instagram.com/BrainspaceOptimized) and we can talk about you joining us in Cohort Three of The Residency. Alright, friends, I will see you on the next episode.

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Thank you for listening to this episode of One Year from Now. You can find the show notes and all the links we mentioned at [BrainspaceOptimized.com/Podcast](https://www.brainspaceoptimized.com/Podcast). If you want to chat me up about all things entrepreneurship, then head to [BrainspaceOptimized.com](https://www.brainspaceoptimized.com) 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. Lastly, you can find me on Instagram [@BrainspaceOptimized](https://www.instagram.com/BrainspaceOptimized). We will see you in the next episode.