

Conjuring Up Courage

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Featured this episode: Shohreh Davoodi & Ashley Brown

Shohreh Davoodi: You are listening to episode #105 of Conjuring Up Courage, and y'all—I loved recording this episode. I am an absolute organizational nerd, and it was so fun to chat with Ashley Brown, the founder and owner of Routine and Things, about how to start arranging your life in ways that work best for you. Ashley and I discussed why a lot of people are resistant to the idea of routines, what steps to take for consistency and lasting change, the importance of assessing how you spend your time and energy, and how to make routines more joyful—or, alternatively, how to make them less annoying.

To access the show notes and a full transcript of this episode, head to shohrehdavoodi.com/105. That's shohrehdavoodi.com/105.

This episode is brought to you in part by Ample + Rooted, an inclusive therapy practice that provides an affirming and welcoming home for diverse individuals to reclaim their inherent worth. The folks at Ample + Rooted created a guided meditation on cultivating self-trust just for listeners and it's available in the show notes for this episode.

[Music plays]

This is Conjuring Up Courage, and I'm your host, Shohreh Davoodi. As a self-trust coach, I help people come home to themselves so they can be more of who they are, and less haunted by who they think they're supposed to be.

I created this podcast to celebrate what's possible when you commit to being brave. You'll hear from diverse guests who are refusing to let fear

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and self-doubt stop them from building fulfilling lives and creating a better world for everyone. I'll also teach you my favorite tools, strategies, and mindset shifts so you can do the same.

Consider this your invitation to stop living according to "shoulds" and to step into your motherfucking magic instead. Stay open, get curious, and let's grow together.

[Music fades]

Hello, Ashley! Welcome to the show. How is your summer going so far?

Ashley Brown: Hi! Summer, oh my gosh. Summer is goin' really well. I'm super pumped for summer because I'm a Cancer, my zodiac sign is Cancer, so we're in Cancer season right now and I'm like so for it. I'm like, let's go. I'm ready for my birthday weekend. Me and my daughter have the same birthday, one of my daughters, and so it's gonna be a good time.

Shohreh: This is your time to shine right now.

Ashley: Yep.

Shohreh: Like, this is me, welcome.

Ashley: Yep.

Shohreh: Perfect. So I'm super excited to talk to you today. I'm gonna give a little back story here, which is I had undiagnosed ADHD for, like, most of my life up until my late twenties. And before I knew that I was neurodiverse, my coping mechanism was actually to organize the crap out of my life from a really young age because my natural brain state is

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very chaotic and unorganized. And I learned early on that if I had systems and routines, that was a way to essentially bring more peace and order to my life. And if I didn't do that, then I wouldn't be able to find things and I would be frustrated all of the time. So I developed this very necessary skill that I've continued to add onto over time.

And of course, now understanding that I'm neurodiverse, I see even more how important that is for me to be able to function. And so I'm really looking forward to getting to talk to you about some of the magic of these things that I know very well, but maybe other people who haven't had these experiences or maybe have some misconceptions about routines and things, that we can set those straight for them.

But first, can you please just tell me a little bit more about you, and your work, and what lights you up?

Ashley:

Yes! So my name is Ashley Brown and I'm a mama of two. I am also a wife to a really great guy. And we live in Baltimore, Maryland, a really fun place if you ever want to visit. A very good food scene.

And what I do with my business is Routine and Things, which is a product-based business that really supports women with equipping them to live their happiest life one routine at a time. And so we have products that will help them get organized, like you were just talkin' about. And really structure their life in a way that works for them. Not so rigid to where they feel like they're just, like, checkin' off checkboxes, but at least have some structure there with flexibility in

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order to feel like they are grounded, somewhat in control, and just living a really joy-filled life that feels purposeful to them.

So we're really about intentionality, organization, of course routines everything is what we do [Shohreh laughs lightly]. And so I love helpin' women with this. It lights me up so much to just help women go from where they are, which is usually when they come to Routine and Things is, like, overwhelmed, they feel overworked. It's a lot going on in life. And when they use our products or even just connect with me, it's like they start to get on that path to goin' to where they want to be, which is more grounded, more calm, more at ease in their life. And just livin' a really intentional life.

So that's what really lights me up is helpin' people. I will say that it makes perfect sense because one, I am a nurse by career, and so with that bein' the case, I just love helping ,and specifically women hold a really special place in my heart, and also moms.

Shohreh: Yeah, and you have your podcast too. So you have this product piece, and then you're also, like, out there being like, here's how you can actually use these and make this stuff happen in your life, which is super cool.

Ashley: Yeah, I love the podcast because I get to connect with so many women and also just give a different perspective and spin for routines. A lot of us think about them as being super rigid, sometimes even boring or mundane, but as you were talking about, the routine really helps. Yeah, it can sometimes get that monotony, but it can be fun, like, monotony.

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It doesn't have to feel like, oh, I'm like dreading doing this routine. No, you can spice it up, add things to your routine. I know we'll probably be talkin' about that.

But yeah, just realizing that routines are what you make them is what I always like to tell people. And if you want them to be flexible and free, you can make them that way.

Shohreh: Yes, and I do wanna talk about that. Because I know that you know there are some people who even just see the word "routine" in your business name and are, like, super put off and, like, ugh, god, I want nothing to do with that. And so in your experience, what are some of the reasons that people can be so resistant to the idea of having routines in their life and organizing various things?

Ashley: Yesss! Oh, I like to call those people "routine rebels" [light laughter]. They are like, "Uh-uh, don't come to me talkin' about routines, Ashley [laughs]." And it's so funny 'cause my podcast intro has changed, but before, um, when I first started it, I would say, "Routine is my absolute favorite word. You either love them or you hate them."

Shohreh: Mmhm.

Ashley: And I remember one lady messaging me and DMing me and said, "I heard that and was instantly like, yeah, I do hate routines, but let me listen more to this." [Laughs]

Shohreh: Good marketing.

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Ashley: Right? And so it's very true that some people hear that word and they just instantly get this feeling that's like, oh no, you're trying to box me in. Like, I'm more free flow. I like to have spontaneity in my life and routines are not gonna allow for that. And so that's one thing that I hear on a frequent basis from some women.

And then also another aspect that I've heard is that people feel like, oh, it's like Adulthood 101. Like I'm not tryin' to be that much of an adult. Like, yeah [laughter], I still wanna... So I've heard that perspective too, which blew my mind. I was like, oh, wow, I never thought about it that way, but okay [laughs].

Shohreh: You can't make me grow up, damn it!

Ashley: Right? Exactly [laughs]. Exactly. So with that bein' the case, those are the mindsets that I've heard. And every time I meet a routine rebel, I'm like, just stick around because [Shohreh laughs lightly] I'm tellin' you. It's like they know that routines are helpful, but it's just that rebellious spirit that's just kinda like, mm, I don't really wanna go all the way in. And it's like, no, you can build routines how you want them to flow. If you are more free flow or like to go with the flow, you can build routines that allow for that. They don't have to box you in or take you outside of who you are naturally. Routines need to work for you, not the other way around.

Shohreh: Yes. And that really resonates with me because the way that I do routines as a neurodiverse person is often gonna look different than how a neurotypical person is going to build their routines. And I've even

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had neurotypical people, or I've read articles, or I've worked with coaches where they're like, "You should do it this way." And I have to be like, that will not work for me and my brain.

And so it is so important when you're doing anything like this where you're trying to live a more intentional life, which is a lot of the work that I do with clients as well, is to say, well, what is my natural inclination? What works for me? How can I make this fit? Instead of trying to fit yourself into somebody else's, like, box or idea of what it has to be. So I think that's good to let people know right off the bat, is there's flexibility here. There's nuance here. It doesn't literally have to be, there's only one right way to do it.

Ashley:

Yeah, we're all different, and that's what makes us really special and that's what makes life special. All of us are different in the way we think, our mindsets and everything. And like you said, what works for you might not work for me. What works for me may not work for you. And that's for us to try to sift through and try to come up with what is going to help us to be intentional in our life and to stay organized.

And I just absolutely love that you bein' neurodiverse, just understanding from a young age that, like, organization was important. I haven't heard that before. Like, I've met multiple people that are neurodiverse, and many times they kinda shy away from it or they don't really organize their life much. And so it was really interesting to hear you say that you were the opposite, which is beautiful.

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Shohreh: Yeah, I think it's so dependent on the individual because some people with ADHD in particular, they almost thrive in that chaos. Like, they find it, like, it can be a really creative environment, or, like, it just feels comfortable for them. And for me, like, it's not a comfortable space. It bothers me.

And some of that, honestly, is probably because of my upbringing because my mom was always very particular about everything being in its place and cleaning and all of this stuff. And so I think some of it was me trying to mesh those two things: that I had parents who were like, it needs to be this certain way and were more on that perfectionism spectrum, and then my natural tendency was to not be that. So that's why I even call it a coping mechanism because it was really a way that I was able to function in the surroundings that I had. And now, it's just what I like.

But again, like we're saying, everyone's different. And some people are like, ugh, I don't want it. I can't do it. But I think even for these rebels, right, whether it is someone who might be, like, neurodiverse, who is like, I function in the chaos, or, I have so many clients who are the novelty seekers, where they're just like, if you tell them to do something they automatically don't want to do it. It is truly a rebel spirit where that's just their personality trait where they're like, nope, if everyone else likes it or thinks it's cool, not me! I'm not interested. And I think being able to find things that work for those people is so helpful.

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So in your experience with people who are in that category, where they're like, "Don't change me! This is the way I want to be," what are some of the ways they can bring this kind of structure into their life without feeling like it's taking away from who they are?

Ashley:

So with that, I always give the suggestion of really focusing on one, understanding which routine you are working with. So I'm a huge advocate for one routine at a time, and I like to break routines down in a certain way. I always talk about five routine categories: cooking, cleaning, children, self-care, and planning, if those are applicable to you.

So I really think for those people who do kinda shy away from routine or just are rebellious in that way, which is perfectly fine, you know, but if you find yourself getting a little bit stuck there and that word "routine" really jars you or makes you feel like you just wanna run away from it, I would say really get specific about one, which routine you want to start working on, and really get clued into why. I think when I connect them to why a routine is important, this has been really helpful to them.

So really not so much of having this superficial why. Like, you know, you can say you wanna exercise and be like, "'cause I wanna lose [bleep] pounds." Many times that's not gonna be strong enough for you to actually stick to a routine. But if you say somethin' deeper, like, yeah, I have more energy or I just feel more like myself, maybe that connects to you more. Whatever the case may be. So I think just really havin' a why is helpful for them.

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I think also informing them to keep things simple has been really helpful too. Because sometimes we can get into this mode where we hear routine or we wanna create a routine and we wanna go big or go home. But I think it's really important for us to always keep things simple because simplicity, to me, really lends well to if you want to be more free flow or if you want to not be so boxed in. If you keep things really simple for your life and really just knowin' the purpose, like I said, for why you want this routine, that's a huge thing. That's really what I find for these people.

And one tip I always like to give, I will share this tip, is I like for people to think about routines as an outline versus a script. So that is a really beautiful way for you to think about routines if you are that rebel. Because you will see if you do have an outline, that could look like, let's say, for example, a morning routine. A script would look like wake up, wash face, brush teeth, brush hair, put on clothes.

Shohreh: Yeah, in that exact order.

Ashley: That exact order, every single time. Versus an outline is, like, wake up, bathroom time, get ready for the day, plan. Like, that's more so of an outline because get ready for the day could include a few things. Or bathroom time could include a few things. So that you don't feel like every morning you have to check those checkboxes of that script. But, like, for bathroom time, you can be like, okay, I wanna do my skincare, and then I just wanna take a shower. Maybe you don't wanna take a

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shower one morning, you don't need to. You wanna go on and do something else. You have that flexibility there.

So I think that can be really helpful as well as thinking about routines as an outline versus a script.

Shohreh: It's so interesting 'cause you mentioned skincare. There's someone that I follow on Instagram, I think her name is Charlotte Palermino—I'm gonna pronounce it wrong—but she is a huge proponent of skincare routines, one, getting down your basics first. And she's basically like, if you can't regularly, like, wash your face, moisturize, and wear sunscreen, then you should not be adding anything else to your skincare routine until you can get those down. Which I'm like, yes, this makes sense, those are, like, the foundations of good skincare.

But then for the other pieces of it, she's very much about the flexibility of, like, you don't have to do every single step every single day. I really had to internalize that myself in order to get into a good skincare routine. And to be able to say, alright, well, how much time do I have right now? How tired am I? What else is going on? Where I don't have to do every dang step every day.

But if I have lots of time, then I can be like alright, I'm gonna go through all ten steps. We're gonna take the full half-hour or whatever I want. And I think that not being rigid is so helpful because when we look at things from an all-or-nothing perspective, more often, we're gonna do nothing.

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Ashley: Say that again [Shohreh laughs lightly]. I mean, honestly. I wish I would have known that probably about four years ago, like this all or nothing. 'Cause that has been a mindset that I have worked hard to try to get out of. And still today I have to still say, Ashley, it doesn't have to be all. It can be a little progress, that is perfectly fine.

And so that is somethin' I definitely share with clients that I work with, just the customers that come by and shop with us, is, you know what, it's not about all or nothin'. Because like you said, we will choose the nothing route. We will go that route because that's the easier route to do. But instead, don't put so much pressure on yourself to feel as if you have to do, like, certain things every single day if you take a step of your routine and, like, make that broader, that means that you can choose to do whatever you feel in that day, you know?

'Cause some of us can be very rigid, let's be real. And I used to be that type of person. Like, I used to be like—

Shohreh: Me too.

Ashley: Boom, boom, boom, boom. And that did not work well, especially when I became a mom [Shohreh laughs lightly]. It was like, blow this mess up [Shohreh laughs]. Like you cannot handle your life if you continue to think this way. If you continue to be so rigid, being a mom is gonna, like, wear you out.

And so I really had to start to shift that. And I just realized how much that yes, structure is really important, it makes you feel comfortable and also gives you, like, a roadmap, but flexibility is purposeful in life as

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well. And it's important for us to make sure that we are doin' things and live a life that allows for flexibility.

Shohreh:

Well, and I like how you described the importance of finding your why for any routines and organization that you wanna do because I always tell my clients when we're coming up on any kind of goals that if you don't have, like, a true, deep why for wanting to do it, a lot of times you're gonna fall into "shoulds." Feeling like, well, I'm *supposed* do this thing, instead of being like, do I actually *want* to? And I think it gives people a way to structure this in terms of figure out what you need, what's not working. Like, why are you wanting a routine or to organize something in the first place?

Once you have that in mind, it's like you get to work backwards and be like, okay, well, if what I'm doing right now is not helping me, what might fix the situation? What do I want to see here? And then that can be the steps of how do I create the actual routine.

Ashley:

Exactly. You hit the nail on the head because that's how I always teach about creatin' routines is you always start with, what is the outcome? What is the purpose of this? And once you know what the outcome is, and you try to get really specific with the outcome, you can then work backwards and say, well, what steps are going to take me to that outcome? What steps in my routine will bring that outcome to life? And so that's exactly what I share.

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And you talked about "shoulds." That's another thing, oh my gosh [Shohreh laughs lightly]. Like, anyway, we could have a whole conversation about "shoulding."

Shohreh: Oh yes [laughs lightly].

Ashley: But we really have to get curious with ourselves as to how we have even started to think about certain things and why do we do things certain ways. That was one huge part of my, just, evolution with routines, is when I hit a certain point in my life, I went from workin' mom to stay-at-home mom. I was a stay-at-home mom for about two-and-a-half years. I'm now back a workin' mom, but during those two-and-a-half years, I was goin' through this process. It was a lot of trial, it was a lot of pain durin' that time for certain reasons, and what really got me back on track were routines. But what I started to get curious about is why am I cleanin' my home certain ways? Like, why am I doin' it this way versus doin' it the way I probably wanna do it? Oh, because my mom told me to do it that way, right?

Shohreh: Yes!

Ashley: So then I felt like, oh, I should be doin' it this way because my mom taught me to do it this way or that's how I've always done it. And it's like, I started to really question and challenge that to say, you know what, this is how I wanna do it. I don't wanna wash dishes at night. I wanna wash them in the morning so they will sit in the sink at night, right? My mom would never allow that when we were young. No, you

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needed to wash dishes at night. And so I just started to get curious about this.

So I challenge anyone listening today, if you feel like you're doin' things because that was just how you were taught, really dig deep into is this how you want to be doin' them? Does this feel good for you to be doin' things that way? And change it if you need to.

Shohreh:

Oh my god, I just wanna shine, like, a million spotlights on everything that you just said. There is so much good stuff in there. There is so much research that shows how we get into certain things or buy certain things literally just because that is what our parents or our caregivers did when we were growing up. Like, a lot of people—if you're listening, think about brands that you buy. Why do you buy them? Because that's the brand that you had in your house. Or because you bought it one time and now you just keep buying it. It's not because it's actually necessarily better or you've tried out a bunch of different things, it's just we get into these habits.

And I wanna say this makes sense because our brains are constantly looking for ways to be more efficient, to make things easier. Like, being a human is complicated and there's so much shit we have to be thinking about all the time, and so it makes sense that our minds are like, alright, well what are some things I can make easier by automating them? But you mentioned curiosity and this is where it's so important. If you want to be intentional about anything, you have to get curious about what it is that you're already doing and why you're doing it.

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And so often with my clients, they find that, like, yeah, I'm just doing it because I've always done it this way. Or because someone told me I should do it this way. And I've never actually stopped to think, do I want to? Is it working for me? Does it work in my current version of my life?

'Cause that's the thing too, and I know you know this, is that routines aren't permanent. I'm sure your routines were very different when you became a parent than when you weren't a parent. It doesn't have to be a forever thing, but that means that we have to be continually curious. And we have to keep coming back and saying, is this working for me?

Ashley:

Yes! Routines are definitely not permanent. I always tell people this as well. It's like, you can have seasonal routines. You can have routines that last. And then you have just this slight change in your life and then you need to do somethin' different. And so, like you said, that curiosity comes into play there. And just being willing to be flexible. Being willing to get a little bit uncomfortable, too.

When you have to change your routine, it doesn't feel that comfortable because you found comfort in the past routine. Now that you have to change it, yes, you're going to feel a little bit uncomfortable, but if you lean into what your life needs and what routine can support where your life is headed, that will help you to get more comfortable as you move along. And so definitely, we have to start to become curious, like you said, but then also sit with discomfort at times. Because all discomfort isn't bad discomfort, it's just what needs to take place at that time.

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Shohreh: Exactly. And old habits die hard. When you've been doing something for years or decades, of course, at first it's not gonna feel great, or you're gonna struggle, or you're gonna mess it up. And I think this is where people often will just give up because it doesn't, like, automatically have a switch flip and they're like, yep, now I'm doing the new thing. It takes time.

And, so understanding that, again, getting rid of this perfectionism, realizing that it's okay if it takes a little bit of time while you're trying things out and figuring it out. It can be so helpful because I've found that so often we feel like we have to get it right away, otherwise it means, like, we're doing the wrong thing or it's not right, and that's not true.

Ashley: Yeah. And that's one thing that I always share about routines is we'll have what we wanna do and we'll either write it on paper, maybe have it in our head, and when it comes to us translating that to actually doin' it and acting that routine out, sometimes it doesn't translate well. Sometimes what you think in your mind, what you write down on paper, isn't going to play out how you think when you go to do it.

And I always say give yourself permission to try again, to tweak the routine. It is always gonna be, I would say 90% of the time, trial and error when it comes to routines. You're gonna have to change something. You're gonna have to re-do a certain part of your routine. It's not that something is wrong with you. Many times we wanna put it on ourselves—oh, I just can't be consistent. I'm like, bump that. That is

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a lie that you're tellin' yourself. You are a very consistent individual if you just look at the evidence of your life. You are very consistent.

Shohreh: You're consistent in the thing that you're trying to change right now [laughs lightly].

Ashley: Yes, exactly [laughs]!

Shohreh: Like look, there's your consistency.

Ashley: Right? And with that bein' the case, just give yourself permission to edit what you need to edit, and really, like we said, that curiosity is important there as well. What is happenin' with the routine? What part of it may not be sitting well with you? And you have to take the time to look at it and be okay with changing it in order to get a better result.

Shohreh: Going back to me being neurodiverse, so something that folks with ADHD struggle with is realizing how long a task is going to take. Like, we just don't have good understanding of time and good time-management skills. So for me, if I went off of my initial guesses of what the length of time is something is gonna take, it's almost always going to be wrong. So if I just gave up at that point, I'm never gonna change anything in my life. I have to actually try it, see the length of time, and then be like, nope, I miscalculated.

'Cause I have a tendency, or I'll try to put way too much stuff in a timeframe without realizing, like, oh, everything is gonna take double the time that I actually thought it was going to. And that's just become

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a part of my life, where I know that about myself and I have to change this.

So this is normal everybody! It's totally okay to try something out and then change your mind. I know it's hard to believe, but it will make you feel so much more free to allow yourself to do that.

Ashley:

Yes, for sure. And one other thing to add on to when you talk about time management and just seein' how much time is gonna take you, I always share too, think about the energy you're gonna be exerting too. Because energy plays a huge part in time management as well. So when you're thinkin' about doin' a task, it's not just how much time it's gonna take me. You also wanna think about how much energy is this going to either take from me, or sometimes things can give you energy, let's be real. It can be either/or.

And so you want to think about not just time, think about energy as well when you are planning, like your days, when you're planning what you're gonna do in a certain time block. Think about both, because then you'll be able to see, okay, if doin' the laundry takes this much time, how much energy does it really take me to do the laundry? For some people, it might be like, I'm usually tired and I don't wanna do anything else after laundry. Some people are like no, I just do one load a day, and that's fine for me and I have some energy left after.

So if you think about those two things as you are planning for your day, planning for your weeks, that can really be helpful in helping you to manage your time in a better way.

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Shohreh: Yeah, order matters. And this also goes to how you function throughout your day as an individual. So, like, two things that are coming up for me are if you lean more introverted versus extroverted, right, that's gonna have a big effect on energy in terms of how you're scheduling things. 'Cause either you get energy from other people or you lose energy from other people, so you're gonna want to keep that in mind.

And then also, how your own internal clock works. 'Cause some people are very awake in the morning. Some people are very awake in the evenings. And you have to take all those things into consideration when you're deciding the order of routines and how you want to schedule your day.

Ashley: Yes! I love that you said that. That is so true. I'm naturally introverted, so with that being the case, I know that I'm always, like, for business, it's either one podcast interview, one thing where I'm talkin' to someone [laughs].

Shohreh: Yes, you're like, no more!

Ashley: No more, 'cause I've done it where I've done three, four things, and I'm like, why did you do that to yourself? [Laughter] So I always try to do one thing.

But like you said, we also have to think about our energy. And that just makes me think about when I share about my mornin' routine. My mornin' routine is very simple. I don't do much at all 'cause I'm a mornin' person, but I'm like a 9:00 AM mornin' person. I'm not—

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Shohreh: Yes, I feel you on that [laughter].

Ashley: Right? So it takes me time to wake up. So when I'm thinkin' about my mornin' routine, I remember before I really started getting very intentional about bed and routines, I would try to do all of these things that really just wasn't working. It was just like, I can't exercise in the morning. That does not work for me. I'm too tired. I'm not getting a really good exercise in. So I started bein' like, you know what? No. I just need to do things that kinda wake me up, get my mind a little rejuvenated in the morning. And that's really it.

And so for my mornin' routine, it's usually prayer, and then I will also give myself a little massage and I will say some things I'm grateful for. Because I'm tryin' to just wake up my body, I'm tryin' to wake up my mind. But it's not this long thing that I'm doin' where I feel like at the end I'm like, that didn't even feel good. It's like, no, this feels good to me. This works for my season of life right now. If I want to change it in the future, I will. But this is good for me.

And so yes, thinkin' about how your energy just sways throughout the day is really important when you're thinkin' about creatin' routines.

Shohreh: I'm so glad you mentioned that about morning routines because especially since I became an entrepreneur, there is really this push in entrepreneurial circles of the morning routine of, like, wake up at 5:00 AM, and you're gonna write in your journal, and you're gonna have your cup of coffee, and do all this crap before anybody else is awake. Which, if that works for you, amazing. Get after it.

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But I felt so much pressure in the first few years of my business when everyone around me was like, oh yeah, what do you do for your morning routine? What time do you wake up? And all this stuff. And I'm like, I can barely pull my ass out of bed in the morning, so, like, morning routines are not—like, I do the things I have to do in the morning before I'm woken up enough to do other things, very similar to you. And I tried to do some of that stuff, and I could never stick with it.

I'm like, of course you couldn't stick with it, it does not work with your brain.

Ashley: Exactly. So we have to really lean into who we are and make sure we pay attention to that.

Shohreh: And, I'll also say for folks on the other side of this, whenever you're making recommendations to other people, realizing that there really are no recommendations that work for every single person. Because I've seen other coaches or people in businesses, like, try to take this no excuses attitude of like, you should be able to make this work. And it's like, that's crappy coaching. You're doing a bad job if you're not listening to the person that you're working with and hearing what works for them in their life and trying to be like, go in the boxes.

This is why people don't want routines and organization because that's what they're thinking about. They're thinking about someone forcing them to do something that they don't wanna do.

Ashley: Exactly. And it's not a force at all. It is what works for you, and you go towards what works for you. I don't care what anybody is tellin' you. I'm

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here to say, you make routines work for you. You create routines in a way that works for your life and you know, do you.

[Music plays]

[Ad break]

Shohreh: Hey y'all. Let me take a moment to tell you a little bit more about Ample + Rooted, an inclusive therapy practice that is directed by my dear friend and colleague, Neathery Falchuk. The awesome practitioners at Ample + Rooted not only serve folks locally here in Austin, they also serve folks online all over the globe. Through therapy, mindfulness practices, courses, trainings, and events, they support, guide, and hold space for folks to feel valued and nourished.

We talk a lot about systems of oppression on the show and how they can disconnect you from your inner knowing, and the Ample + Rooted group believes it is your birthright to both inhabit and trust your physical and emotional self without shame.

Luckily for y'all, the kind folks at Ample + Rooted created an exclusive guided meditation on cultivating self-trust for listeners of Conjuring Up Courage. You can access the free guided meditation and learn more about Ample + Rooted in the show notes for this episode.

[Music fades]

Okay, so I wanna talk about how people can make their routines and organization more fun and joyful.

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Ashley:

Yes! So it's some ways that you can do this. The first thing I always share is first, think about the routine that you're doin', and if you can add in fun steps in that routine that still take you to that outcome, then do so. But sometimes we're gonna have those routines where it's just like, you just have to do the routine, like laundry [laughs lightly]. It's just like puttin' clothes into the washer or dryer isn't much—I mean, it may be fun to some; it isn't fun to me. So some things we just have to do.

And so for those things where you can't put, like, fun steps into your routine, pair your routine with things that bring you joy. And that can just be whatever you choose it to be. So for me, I love music. I love listenin' to podcasts like this one that you're listenin' to now. And I also love drinkin' wine. So I love drinkin' wine when I'm doin' dishes or even if I am planning for the week, dependin' on the time. Um, and so I love doin' things like that. I also love chattin' it up with my bestie on the phone. I love lettin' in light as I'm cleaning. Like I will raise all of the blinds, everything. I will sometimes even open up the windows. If it's nice where you are, like, put the windows up. Let some air in. Let your house breathe. Like, that makes it a lot of fun for me.

So in any way that I can spark joy within myself as I'm doin' the routine, that is a really beautiful way for you to add some enjoyment to your routine. So you really have to think about who you are, and this just makes you dig more into who you are. What is fun for you? What brings joy to you?

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Another thing that really makes routines fun for me is because I know I'm always gettin' a result from them, so that's fun for me to think about. I'm like, oh, after I clean this, it's gonna be clean. I don't have to do it for an entire week. So yes, great [laughs lightly], that's fun.

So really just think about what's gonna be fun for you and make it yours. So those are just some ways for you to enjoy your routines.

Shohreh:

I'm glad that you mentioned how sometimes the end result is the fun part and not so much the process 'cause I think that's true for a lot of different things in life. Like, I have some clients where they're like, yeah, I really wanna start working on exercising. And they realize that, like, the exercise themselves is never gonna be fun for them. Not everybody actually gets endorphins from exercise. Some people just hate it. But they want that end result. They want to be able to play with their kids more easily, or easier to breathe when they're going up and down the stairs, whatever the things may be. And so they have to make the thing more tolerable so that they can get there.

And so that's the other thing that I want to say is that sometimes it's not about how can I make the thing more fun, it's how can I make myself dread it less? And I'll give an example of this from my own life 'cause you were just talking about laundry. So in my new house that I just moved to, the laundry is in the garage, which I don't love. I used to have a laundry room—because I live in Texas, and so for six months of the year it's like 100 degrees. You don't really wanna be hanging out in your garage doing your laundry. And then my bedroom is on the

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second floor. So there is a long distance between the laundry room and my bedroom. And so I'm in a new space, have to come up with new routines, right? This is a big life transition.

And so what I purchased this last week is a laundry hamper thing that has four individual bags so that I can actually do all of the sorting before I ever go down there. So I sort by, you know, darks, lights, delicates, and towels. And now they each have their own bin, and those bags pull off, so I can take one of them, walk it downstairs, put it in the washer, and then that one is ready to go. And so this saves me from having to spend more time in my garage. It also saves me from, like, having to kneel on the floor with a giant pile of laundry trying to sort the things there. And I was like, ah, this is a genius solution. Laundry is still not fun for me. I'm still not gonna enjoy this trek down there. But I just made it way less terrible by making this choice.

And so there's this two-fold where sometimes, yes, we can have fun and we can have joy. You know, I like to listen to music, so that can be one way I make laundry a little more joyful. And sometimes it's like, what can I do or buy or create that will just make this less annoying in my life?

Ashley: Yes! And that's the thing, man. Like, your creativity was beautiful there because that was super smart [laughs lightly].

Shohreh: Thank you, I thought so too!

Ashley: That was very smart. I'm thinkin' about that now. I'm like, should I do this? Because I'm in my basement right now and that's where our

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washing machine and dryer is, but our laundry is upstairs on the second floor. So yeah, I'm always like—I usually carry down one basket, though, 'cause I do laundry every weekend. We don't have many clothes, and that's an intentional choice. But yeah, but still, I could have two, maybe buy a hamper with two sections with bags and maybe just have my daughters' clothes and me and my husband's clothes, and then I just pull the bags out. That would be very, very smart.

Shohreh: Yeah, they make two's, they make three's. So some people said they were using them to divide up their family's laundry, just like you were saying. Where they'd be like, if there's one person who's doing all the laundry, it's so much easier. If it's in those individual bags, you know whose is whose. So there's a lot of different options here.

Ashley: Wow. So that was really, really smart. And I love that. And that's the thing is like, getting creative with routines. You have to get creative. And sometimes it can be hard, so I always say, ask what other people do. I'm always like, ask around. That doesn't mean you have to take it, but that at least gives you a different perspective to be like, oh, I never thought about it that way, just like now. So I love it.

Shohreh: Yes, and I for one—I love organizational products. Like, I wanna be clear to people that a lot of times you can find other solutions, you can thrift things. Like, you don't have to necessarily buy stuff. But I love the aesthetic and creative parts of organization. So I will tend to lean towards, like, I wanna get the product that I feel like fits what I want.

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And of course, someone could create what I created, right? They didn't have to buy an already-created bin. They could buy some really cheap four bins, throw them in their closet, and they're good to go. I chose to get something that's actually already put together for me. But I love The Container Store, ridiculously expensive as The Container Store is. Like, for me, I like having everything to have a place and that's been a really helpful thing with organization. And so, if I have the like, appropriate item for it, it's helpful.

And almost anything you can think of, someone out there has created, which is the great thing. So it really is about, just like, looking at the problem and being like, what would make this better? And then I just start searching, start looking on Amazon, The Container Store, whatever, to see what's out there. And I almost always find a bunch of different clever options. I'm like ugh, yes, someone else realized that this was an issue, and they created a product for it.

And I know that you create products. So, here's an example right there.

Ashley:

Right? Yeah, that's the thing is that yes, it's great to be able to get really creative, but sometimes in some spaces of life or seasons of life, like, you don't have the mental capacity to get really creative. And so that's why you have people that have ideas that's like, well, here you go. Here's something to help you so that you don't have to think so hard.

So yeah, that's what I love about our products too is we try to make them in a way that gives you some structure so that it leads you in a

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certain way. But you still can make them your own and have that flexibility to do it.

Shohreh: Can you share what some of your favorite products are that you have?

Ashley: Yes! I think that all of them are favorites of mine, [Shohreh laughs lightly] but I can share what customer favorites are.

Shohreh: There you go! Customer favorites.

Ashley: Customer favorites are our Daily Planning Notepad. People love that one. It has three things at the top of the Daily Planning Notepad that helps you to be very intentional. So it has, like, at the top: I'm feeling, I'm grateful for, and also my intention for today is. And so people love that part of it. They also love just the colors. Our notepads are very colorful.

Shohreh: Ooh, you know I love that!

Ashley: [Laughs lightly] Right, it gives me that happy vibe. Also a customer favorite is our Meal Planning Notepad. It's super simple, but something about it people love. I guess because it just helps them get organized and really think about—be proactive. Because that's a huge thing. If you can just be proactive in certain areas, it can really help you in livin' life with ease.

Another one is our Weekly Planning Notepad too is a huge customer favorite as well.

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So those are the customer favorites, and we're hoping to continue to create more favorites for people.

Shohreh: Yeah, your products speak so well to people—and I have a lot of friends like this—who want to write everything down. Like, it just feels really good for them to actually have pen, notepad, and write things down. I'm the person where I have, like, an extremely intensive digital organization structure, to a point where I recently hired a virtual assistant, and she's super Type A like me, and she was like, oh my gosh, your organizational structure puts me to shame and now I need to like, [laughs] raise the bar on mine.

Again, this is my coping mechanism, is like, how can I organize all of the things? But I have so many friends who are like, oh my god, I hate doing digital organization. I have to have it written down. And so your products are perfect for those people.

Ashley: Yes, I'm that person. I'm like no, I have to write stuff down. Digital is fine for certain things, like appointments and like schedulin' things with times, just especially, like, with hard-stop appointments where you just have to do them. But as far as, like, plannin' my day, my week, I'm like, no, where's the paper? [Shohreh laughs lightly] I have it in front of me right here. Let me look on the paper [laughs lightly]. It's just somethin' about that hand and paper that I don't know, I love it.

Shohreh: Yeah, I have a few friends who have said that they feel like the actual act of writing helps them commit it to memory. And that is true for some things in my life. When I went to law school I found that, like, the

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typing was the thing that was really helpful for me to commit things to memory when I was doing outlines and stuff. So I think I just got so deep into the digital land that I mostly do that.

Now, to be fair, I do journal in an actual written journal and that's the only way that I like to journal. So it's not everything in my life that is digital. But in terms of planning, I think I'm a cloud person. So I really like being able to be on any of my devices and access all of the different stuff.

Ashley: Wow, I love that. I love that. My mind could never take all of that. I would get so overwhelmed [laughs].

Shohreh: This is the advantage of the ADHD mind: I can hold a lot of stuff in this here brain of mine! [Laughs]

Ashley: Okay, you sound like my husband. I love that.

Shohreh: Alright, so, for folks listening who are just like, okay, I feel like my routines could maybe use some work and maybe I misjudged routines, what would you recommend for them as just a place to start? Like, what do they do right now if they're like, okay, I need to survey my life and change some things?

Ashley: Right [laughs]. So the first thing I would say is really hone in on which routine do you want to focus on. 'Cause we're not gonna focus on everything that might be jacked up in your life.

Shohreh: You're gonna be tempted, but don't do that [laughter].

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Ashley:

Right, you will be tempted, but don't do it. One routine at a time. So really hone in on which routine is that going to be for you. You can think about the five routine categories: cooking, cleaning, children, self-care, and planning. But get even more specific. So if you're thinking about planning as a place you want to start, is that daily planning? Is that weekly planning? Is that a monthly planning routine? Like, what is it?

You need to get really specific, even within those categories. If you're thinking about cleaning, what type of cleaning routine do you need? Is it a laundry routine? Is it a kitchen routine? Like, you know, get really specific.

And I always say, when you're thinking about which routine, one, you can go to the website routineandthings.com. We have a routine assessment that's totally free that you can take. But here are some questions for you, I can throw out a few to help guide you when you're trying to decide which routine to start with.

And that's one, I want you to first think about what's going well in your life. That's really important to start there. A lot of times we want to skip over what's goin' well because a lot of things might not be goin' so well. But it's really important to first think about what's goin' well because one, that shows you that you don't need to work on that. But then it also helps to motivate you to know, okay, everything doesn't suck. So that's a great motivator [laughs lightly].

And so once you think about that, then I want you think about in what ways can you be more efficient with your time? Like in what areas of

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your life? That can be really helpful as well. So if you are always scramblin' to figure out what to cook for dinner, then maybe that could be a way that you improve that part of your life, which is by meal planning so that you know what you're cookin'. And, you know, you can write Monday through Friday what meals you're gonna make. But you can also know that any of those meals can be made Monday through Friday. You don't have to hold to it just because it's on Monday.

And maybe for you an area in your life is a morning routine. If you are a mom with kids, or just a parent with children, maybe you're like, our mornings are always rushed. So maybe that's something you wanna focus on is a morning routine for you and your children to help.

But one thing I always like to share because sometimes we can go really heavy on emotions as far as what will guide us to change things, which I think is important. I think intuition is very important in life, but I also feel like sometimes emotions can get in the way if you're not really lookin' at evidence in your life. It may feel like a certain area of your life is crappy, but when you look at the evidence, you're pretty efficient in that area. And so I love doin' time studies from time to time. I'll at least do them every quarter to try to see about where is my time goin'? Where am I not that efficient? Where am I really losing a lot of time that I don't wanna be losing for a particular reason?

And so a time study can be done by just, you know, from the time you wake up, take one day. I like to do it for a full week, but you can take one day, like a typical day for you. And then what you'll do when you

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wake up, from the time you wake up 'til the time you go to bed, every hour, after the hour passes, you, like, jot down on paper or in your phone what you did within that hour.

And then you'll look at it at the end of the day or the week and you'll see oh, well, I actually ended up doin' my children's hair. It took me maybe two hours to do my children's hair. And then you may be startin' to think, okay, well, can I get that shorter? Or can someone else do that, my children's hair? [Shohreh laughs lightly] And can I use the time to do somethin' else? Or it can just really help you really understand where are you losing a lot of time and maybe you can structure a routine that supports you in that area.

So those are some things for you to think about. But like I said, we do have a routine assessment at routineandthings.com if you want to take that.

Shohreh:

That time piece is crucial because what I've really found is that we are not great at assessing how we use time. We think that we're using time in certain ways or that certain things are happening, and then we realize, like, oh, no, I thought I was spending an hour on my phone per day. No, I'm spending five hours on my phone a day. And until we actually are willing to take a closer look, then it's hard to find that out.

And some people get a little scared and that's why they're resistant to the idea of doing this. They're like, what will I find? And I'm just like, this is where the curiosity comes in because getting curious about, well, what is there? You can't change anything until you have the awareness,

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until you have that information. And so especially if you've never looked at your time or haven't looked at your time in this current iteration of your life, I would also highly recommend this practice.

Ashley: Yeah, time studies are really beautiful. It really supplies so much evidence. Like you said, that curiosity of being like, dang, I have been on my phone a lot lately, and then I start getting curious about why. Like, what is going on with me emotionally that I'm on my phone?

Shohreh: Yes!

Ashley: Because I know for me, that's like a sabotage, a distraction type thing if I'm on my phone a lot. But that's just me.

Shohreh: Exactly, that's the next layer deeper [Ashley laughs lightly], is like, oh, why are things going the way they are going? [Laughs]

Ashley: Exactly.

Shohreh: Well thank you so much for being here, Ashley. This was a delightful conversation. You are so easy to talk to. For my listeners, how can they find you and how can they best support you right now in your work?

Ashley: Yes! So first of all, thank you for having me. This was so fun, I loved chatting.

Shohreh: Yeah!

Ashley: So you can find out more from me or just follow along with Routine and Things on Instagram, for one. We are always on there. I am always there, you can DM me any time, @RoutineandThings. But then also

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check out the website, routineandthings.com. It has a lot of really helpful and routine-inspired products that are there to help you in your life. And like you shared earlier, I do have a podcast, Routine and Things podcast, if you wanted to check that out.

Shohreh: Yes, I am going to link to all of your stuff. I'm also gonna link to the products that you mentioned earlier, so if any of those things sound interesting to y'all, you can find all of it very easily in the show notes. So thanks again, Ashley. I think people are gonna find this super helpful, especially those who are a little resistant to the idea of routines.

Ashley: Thank you.

[Music plays]

Shohreh: And that's our show for today. If you're enjoying Conjuring Up Courage, don't forget to subscribe through your podcast provider of choice so you never miss an episode. Additionally, if you haven't left a rating and review in the Apple Podcasts app yet, you can do so from any Apple device to help more people find and benefit from the show. I also love hearing from listeners, so feel free to take a screenshot from your podcast player, post on social media, and tag me. My username is @ShohrehDavoodi on all platforms. Finally, you can sign up for my email newsletter, The Sunday Share, and get more details about how to work with me by going to ShohrehDavoodi.com. Thank you so much for listening, and I hope you'll join me for the next episode.

[Music fades]