

Conjuring Up Courage #109

Featured this episode: Shohreh Davoodi

Shohreh Davoodi: You are listening to episode #109 of Conjuring Up Courage. Raise a glass, because this week is the two-year anniversary of the podcast! So today, in celebration, I am sharing five things I've learned from podcasting after having put out over one hundred episodes, and I also have an announcement about the future of the show. So stay tuned if you want to know what's next for the pod.

To access the show notes and a full transcript of this episode, head to shohrehdavoodi.com/109. That's shohrehdavoodi.com/109.

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 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.

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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]

Oh, hello there everyone. This week is the two-year anniversary of the very first podcast episode I ever released. So back in August of 2019, I put episode #1 out into the world, and it was titled, “What Does It Mean to Redefine Health and Wellness?” Because of course, this was back in the days when the podcast was called Redefining Health & Wellness. In fact, I actually released three episodes that first week because I was a total overachiever and I wanted to get people’s buy-in for the show.

I remember that I felt a little bit nervous, but mostly I was excited. I knew that something just felt right about podcasting, and I was curious to see where things would go. That said, I never could have predicted everything that would follow in the next two years.

At this point, it’s not exactly a secret that my life has been a rollercoaster over the last couple of years, and podcasting specifically has not been all sunshine and rainbows. I have definitely wanted to quit *a lot*, and some weeks I’ve only gotten an episode out by the skin of my teeth. Case in point: have you noticed that three of the last four episodes have been solo episodes? Summertime guest scheduling is [sarcastically] so much fun.

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But after doing this for two years and releasing 109 episodes if you count this one, it's safe to say that I've learned a fuck ton. Not just about podcasting and everything it entails, but also about business and life. And today, I thought I'd share with you five of my biggest takeaways from producing, recording, and marketing this show over the last 24 months.

Plus, I've got an announcement for you about the future of the podcast. But don't worry, you won't have to wait very long to hear what that is. So, let's get into it.

The first thing I've learned is not to be afraid of reassessing my wants, needs, and goals and making changes based on what I find in that reassessment. I will say off the bat that this is easier in areas of your life where you have more agency.

The podcast is a place where I have tons of agency and 100% creative control. I get to decide what the show looks like, what it sounds like, who I interview, what we talk about, who I want to partner with, etcetera, and I love that.

Now, I would be lying if I said it wouldn't be nice to have a podcast producer, and a professional recording studio, and a team of people helping me put out the show, but the advantage to not having any of that is I call all the shots, which has given me a lot of control to make the podcast whatever I want it to be, and also to change things as resources and personal interests have allowed me to.

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So thinking back over the course of the show, seven months in, I changed the cover art so that it no longer had a photo of me on it. I realized that the show was so much bigger than me, and having cover art that included a photo of me didn't align with the vision that I ultimately had for the show. So I changed it. And just for fun, in the show notes I will include links to both of the past cover art images before the current cover art, in case you want to take a little stroll down memory lane.

Behind the scenes, I switched hosting services from Libsyn to Buzzsprout. And I have also upgraded all of my equipment since I first started. Really love what I'm working with now.

Then, the biggest change, as y'all know, was the rebrand this past winter where I changed the show's name, the cover art, and really the whole purpose behind the show so that it better fit with the evolution of my coaching. And that was a really hard decision. Putting listeners through that much change can really set you back as a podcast host, and it also required a lot of time and money for me to do it to the standard that I wanted it at. But anything else wouldn't have made sense, so I rolled with it, and I'm happy with the direction the show has gone in since then.

So I would say I've been very willing to change the show as needed; however, there is one area of the show that I have been terrified to take a closer look at and change, and that is the weekly release schedule. To give a little bit of background information, in preparation for starting a

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podcast, I took Pat Flynn's Power-Up Podcasting Course, which is really good and I highly recommend it if you are wanting to start your own podcast. And all the advice I got from the course and from past participants was that weekly episodes were the way to go if you wanted to have a shot at growing a big audience over time so that your podcast could be a contributor to your income.

Y'all know me—I am a gal with big dreams and goals, so I, of course, envisioned that my show would take off, it would be adored by the masses, and eventually, I would have consistent advertisers and be able to make income directly from the show.

But the podcasting game has changed a lot in just the last few years. You've probably noticed that most of the big-name celebrities, politicians, and influencers have podcasts that are produced by huge companies like Apple and Spotify. So these companies are bringing people in who already have built-in audiences, and they're paying them for their shows. Between that and the overall crowding in the podcasting space, it's become increasingly difficult for the everyday podcaster like me to have a show that takes off.

So coming back to my weekly episode conundrum, I've been pushing myself to put out weekly episodes for the last two years, come hell or high water, based on an expectation of success that has become fairly unrealistic. And I'll also be honest and say that for a long time, my therapist has been gently encouraging me to take a break of some kind

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from podcasting or to change up my release schedule because she's seen the toll that putting out weekly episodes has taken on me.

Podcasting is one of those things that can be made to look almost effortless, but actually requires massive amounts of work. And if you go back to episode #50, you can hear me talk about everything that goes into a single podcast episode. It really has been like doing a part-time job that I don't get paid for on top of all of my other full-time duties. And podcasting costs me money because I have to pay for hosting as well as pay my editor and transcriptionist for every single episode.

And still, every time my therapist brought this up, I would shut her down immediately. Because I was married to the idea that I had to stay consistent, and it had to be weekly, and anything else wasn't good enough.

But over the past couple of months, I've really been trying to reassess how I want to run my business and where I want to spend my time, and I've realized that if I am to have any hope of a better balance in my life between work and everything else, I need to make some changes. And not just say that I'm going to make changes but actually make them.

And I owe Steph Gaudreau of the Listen to Your Body podcast a shout-out. Steph's been podcasting for seven years now and when I was stressing the fuck out about the future of the podcast, I reached out to her for advice, and she was so generous with her wisdom. And she really extended me the permission I needed to realize that I can do

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whatever the hell I want with this show as long as I'm getting out of it what I want to.

And her show is awesome, y'all. I've been on it. I'll link to my episode in the show notes so you can check that out. But I'm just so grateful to her that when I was feeling in crisis that she was willing to chat back and forth with me for a long time and help me figure out what I wanted.

So I finally sat myself down and I thought, okay, if a major boost in income is an unlikely outcome of continuing to do this show, then let's get clear on what I am getting out of the show. And what I realized is that I continue to get so much from hosting Conjuring Up Courage. I get opportunities to meet and converse with incredible people I might never have crossed paths with otherwise. And sometimes I get professional opportunities because of those incredible people that I've met through this show. I also get to see the impact that my work has on the lives of all of you. And thank you for the sweet DMs and emails that you send me because they mean the world to me. And I do occasionally get paying clients because the podcast acts as a lead magnet for my coaching services. Lastly, all of my episodes together form a beautiful archive of information, and conversations, and my own life history. And because that archive will continue to exist permanently, it has the power to help people for years and years to come.

And once I had developed this clear picture of what the podcast gives me and why I do all of this work in the first place, it was easy for me to

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see that I can still get all of that even if I don't continue to put out episodes weekly.

Which brings me to the announcement part of this episode. As of today, Conjuring Up Courage is officially moving to an every-other-week release schedule. That means episode #110 will not come out next Tuesday, it will come out the following Tuesday. And the schedule is going to stay this way for as long as it feels good.

Consistency remains important to me as a podcast host, and I think listeners like to know what to expect. But what I realized is that there's more than one way to achieve consistency, and putting out episodes every other week is how I'm going to do that going forward.

And while some of y'all have been here from the very beginning, or close to it, and you've listened to every single episode, many of y'all jumped in somewhere along the way. So on those in-between weeks, you have the opportunity to go back and listen to the huge back catalog of past episodes, all of which are available on my website and the major podcast providers.

Even still, I know that some of you will be disappointed about my decision to change the release schedule, and I totally get that. Please know that this was a difficult choice for me to make. That said, in order for me to practice what I have preached on this show for two years, I have to do this to make sure that I'm taking care of me.

I also know that without this change, it wouldn't be long before I would burn out on the show for good and have to call it quits completely, and

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that's not what I want. For all of the crap podcasting can entail, I have truly grown to love creating this show, and I want to keep doing it for as long as I can in a way that honors my needs.

And remember, that's what this first lesson I learned from podcasting is all about because periodically reassessing your wants, needs, and goals and making changes accordingly is a powerful thing to do for yourself. And I hope that I have demonstrated that with today's announcement.

[Ad break]

[Music plays]

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

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Courage. You can access the free guided meditation and learn more about Ample + Rooted in the show notes for this episode.

[Music fades]

Alright. That brings me to the second thing I've learned from two years of podcasting, which is that connecting with other humans and building community are damn near everything in this life. Hands down the most special part of hosting this podcast has been the connections I've been able to form with my guests and my listeners.

I learn so much from every single person I get to converse with for the show. And I continue to be committed to bringing on diverse folks from all walks of life and specialties because that's how we learn to appreciate experiences that are different from our own.

And while every guest has something unique to share, over the last two years there have been a handful of guests I've felt an instant kinship with who have gone on to become my friends. In particular, this show has given me an expansive queer community that has inspired me and held me up through my own queer journey, and I didn't realize how much I needed that kind of community and what I had been missing out on until I finally had it.

In the last few years, I've come to more deeply understand the power and intimacy of true friendship and to push back against the societal narrative that romantic love is the best and most important kind of love. I love the shit out of my friends, whether I see them all the time, see

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them very rarely, or have never even met them in person. Navigating this life without people like that in my corner is unfathomable to me.

Because of experiences I had growing up, my natural inclination is to go lone wolf and do everything on my own and be fiercely independent. I learned that tendency as a form of protection, but it's through unlearning it that I finally felt actually safe and cared for.

This show has helped open my mind to new people and new experiences in ways I never could have dreamed of when I first started it. And while you definitely don't have to host a podcast to find your people, for me, it's been an effective bat signal to bring some incredible folks into my life.

The third lesson I've learned from two years of podcasting is to push through my fears of asking for what I want because the worst thing that can happen is someone says no. As you may have noticed, this show is primarily made up of guest interviews, which means part of the job of producing the show is to constantly be researching new potential guests and then reaching out and inviting those people to record with me.

For every guest who actually ends up coming on the show, I probably send out four invitations. Sometimes guests I'm really excited about say no for whatever reason. Sometimes people don't respond to my invites at all, even with follow-up emails. Or there may be people who have some interest, but we do the schedule-chasing game for months on

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end. Those are probably 50/50 in terms of how many go on to actually end up on the show. So rejection is just part of the podcasting game.

But there have also been many times over the last two years where I've asked a guest to come on the show who I assumed would say no, and they enthusiastically said yes. I don't want to say that there's never any harm in asking because that's for sure not true depending on the circumstance, but a lot of times we get in our own way when it comes to asking for what we want. This is true with something like a podcast or other work project, in relationships, in the bedroom, and pretty much everywhere.

People aren't mind readers. We can't expect them to know what we want unless we tell them. And yes, when we ask for what we want, we do open ourselves up to rejection and that can be scary. But we also give people the opportunity to step up to the plate and hit a grand slam, you know? I can do sports metaphors. Yeah, I've got this. Phew.

Hearing no isn't the most fun thing in the world, but no's are information. When I invite a guest on the show and they say no, I've learned that I no longer need to put energy into courting that particular guest. And sometimes when guests say no, they offer suggestions for other people who could speak on the same topic, and then I have new avenues to pursue. I would always rather have a no so I can decide how to proceed, than not have any answer at all.

The other thing is that we often anticipate and fear a no when there can be a lot of other possibilities between no and yes. Sometimes when I

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invite guests on, they'll say, I'm too busy for this right now, but could you reach back out in a month or three months? When you simply don't ask for what you want, you miss out on the entire realm of responses that you could receive by asking.

And speaking of asking for what you want, y'all, this is the two-year anniversary of the show, so I have a request for you. If you haven't left a rating and review yet in Apple Podcasts, I would love it so much if you could do that for me. All you have to do is go to the Apple Podcasts app on any Apple device, whether that's an iPhone, an iPad, or a MacBook, or a friend or partner's device if you don't have one of your own, search for Conjuring Up Courage, scroll on down to the bottom where the ratings and reviews section is, and then submit yours.

Also, people always get confused because they hit submit and they don't see the rating numbers change and don't see their review pop up instantly. It can take a whole week for them to show up publically, so don't worry.

Now, most of you listening to this episode who have not yet left a rating or review probably aren't going to even though I just asked, which is totally fine. But because I took the time to ask, there's a good chance a couple of you will, and that wouldn't be the case had I not asked. So there you go.

The fourth thing I've learned from two years of podcasting is that active listening and asking better questions will take you far, whether you're interviewing strangers or speaking with loved ones.

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Prior to starting this show, I had no experience with interviewing people whatsoever. I had done a bit of public speaking giving presentations and being on panels, but I had never been in charge of the flow of a conversation with others. As an extrovert who loves to chat with people and learn from them, I suppose I have a bit of a natural advantage, but for the most part, I learned to interview people well by doing it for the show.

And interviewing people taught me how to listen in a totally different way. If you haven't listened to episode #106, *Strategies for Cultivating Curiosity*, in that episode I talk about the importance of active listening and asking questions, so I'm not going to go into too much detail about those here, and I will link to that episode in the show notes. But suffice to say that when I'm interviewing guests, I have to listen very carefully to what they're saying, and just as much what they're *not* saying, to guide our conversation in a way that feels comfortable and affirming for them.

It's important that I stay focused instead of letting my mind wander, and I can't make it about what I want to say next. And I say plenty, to be clear. I take notes while my guests are speaking so I don't lose my train of thought and I can come back to important points they're making. But the interviews aren't about me, they're about the guests.

And when you're having conversations with people in your own life, especially more serious conversations, these same principles apply. Active listening is how you can make the people in your life feel heard,

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and it's also how you'll come to better understand them. That and asking open-ended questions that help the conversation continue to flow.

If you can come into conversations, or in my case interviews, with the goal of really seeing the other person and making sure they feel heard, you'll always have a better outcome.

That brings me to the fifth and final lesson I've learned from two years of podcasting that I want to share with you, and that is: talking about the hard things, the scary things, the awkward things, and even the gross things out loud is what helps dissipate shame for all of us and encourages people to live more authentically. And, of course, this is not an original concept. Brené Brown has been talking about this for years and many people before her have too. But this is a lesson the show has taught me so, so beautifully.

While having a public persona and putting so much of my life on the internet has its pitfalls, through the honesty and authenticity of this show and all of my content, I've been able to cast light on things we usually keep in the shadows so that they seem a lot less scary, or at least more common. There's nothing like the realization you're not alone in something when you previously thought you were the only one who experienced it. And I've been able to use this show as a tool to cultivate those kinds of realizations for listeners in all different aspects of life.

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I think The Girl Gang does this especially well, which is one of many reasons I continue to invite Ally and Tiff back on the show, but many of my guests have the unique ability to connect with y'all in a way that makes you feel seen. And the way they do that is by not shying away from the messy, and the unexpected, and the things we're not "supposed" to talk about publicly.

I pride myself on creating an environment in interviews where my guests feel safe to really open up and go there. My hope is that by showing you people living their truth, you'll feel like you have permission to live yours. That by hearing from people who have overcome hard things in pursuit of an authentic life, you'll be able to conjure up the courage to do the same. And while you don't have the follow the path I have of putting your personal business all over the internet, if you can start to have these conversations interpersonally, that's how we change the culture.

And there you have it: five takeaways from two years of podcasting. Thank you all for supporting the show. Thank you for sharing it with friends and for reaching out to me to tell me about your experiences as listeners.

Don't forget, the show is now on an every-other-week release schedule, which means the next episode will drop two weeks from today.

Finally, happy fucking anniversary, Conjuring Up Courage. Two years of podcasting down, who knows how many more to go. I'm excited to see what's next.

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[Music plays]

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]