

# Conjuring Up Courage

## #113

Featured this episode: Shohreh Davoodi

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**Shohreh Davoodi:** You are listening to episode #113 of Conjuring Up Courage. As the self-proclaimed queen of thoughtfulness, I thought I would use this solo episode as an opportunity to share some of my best-kept secrets for how to be more thoughtful. If you suck at gift-giving, regularly forget important dates, or blurt things out without thinking, you'll definitely want to keep listening.

To access the show notes and a full transcript of this episode, head to [shohrehdavoodi.com/113](http://shohrehdavoodi.com/113). That's [shohrehdavoodi.com/113](http://shohrehdavoodi.com/113). The show notes also include a free, downloadable list of 50 ways to be more thoughtful.

[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.

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.

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Hey y'all. I hope you are ready for a little solo episode action today. But first, in case you're curious about what's been going on with me, I will give a few updates.

Generally speaking, I cannot believe we are heading into the final quarter of 2021. Like, what the fuck? I feel like I'm still processing 2020 in a lot of ways. Plus, the first half of this year was a complete shitshow for me, so time basically has no meaning right now.

Existential dread aside, the good news is that things are finally looking up in my world! After three and a half months of living in my new place, it actually kind of looks like my home instead of simply someone else's house that I'm renting. Granted, there's still a lot to be done on the decorating front, but for the first time since April, I'm not waiting for the arrival of delayed furniture, so that is something.

Additionally, as I briefly mentioned in the last episode, I do have a girlfriend. And I know for a fact that anyone who regularly listens to this show is legitimately excited about that development, so cue the chorus of awws.

For privacy purposes, I am not going to be using her name on the show. Though if you want to creep a little, there is a picture of her on my Instagram feed. [Conspiratorially] But you didn't hear that from me. Rather than use her actual name, she requested that I have a code name for when I talk about her. So she will henceforth be known as Riot Grrrl. And yes, spelled the proper way, with three R's in Grrrl.

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Riot Girrrl does listen to the show, so I'm gonna try not to get too sappy, but y'all, my heart. She came into my life when I least expected to meet someone and was not looking for a relationship. But we had the most incredible, instantaneous connection, and I knew very quickly that she was the kind of woman I'd been hoping and dreaming about being with all this time.

She's just a fucking fantastic human and partner, and I'm so grateful that she's in my life and I'm so proud to know her. Especially after everything I've been through over the past few years and all it took to get to a point where I could even be an out and proud lesbian. Like, it feels really nice to have so much joy and lightness in my life after many, many dark months.

Alright. That's enough of that. I'm done making everyone puke over how adorable we are. Thank you for indulging me.

Let's get to what this episode is actually about, which is thoughtfulness. I am the self-proclaimed queen of thoughtfulness. You've probably heard me say before that thoughtfulness is my superpower. And I'm sure my thoughtful tendencies come from a combination of, like, innate temperament and how I was socialized. But regardless of the origin, it is a trait of mine that I really love.

And people will often say to me that they wish they could be more thoughtful but they're just not wired that way. I've seen this come up a lot around gift-giving specifically. I'm a pretty legendary gift-giver in my

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circles, so people will say things to me like, "Ah, I'm so bad at gift-giving and I wish I could be more like you."

What folks don't realize is that even though some people might be more naturally thoughtful, thoughtfulness isn't a black-and-white thing that you either have or don't. Thoughtfulness is a skill that anyone can sharpen with practice. Really, thoughtfulness is the amalgamation of other traits. Thoughtful people are typically curious, kind, intentional, empathetic, and generous, and have good observation skills.

At its core, thoughtfulness is about making people feel seen, understood, encouraged, and loved. And in order to make people feel that way, you have to be able to anticipate their needs and see things from their perspective, which requires an awareness of those around you and the ability to stay in the present moment.

That might sound like a lot of work, and sometimes it can be if I'm being honest, but thoughtfulness comes with a lot of benefits too. Approaching people with thoughtfulness is a way to meaningfully engage with them, and as social creatures, that is important for our social health. In my experience, thoughtfulness just makes for better relationships in general, and being thoughtful can head off arguments before they happen and make sure that resentment doesn't build.

Being thoughtful also feels fuckin' good, y'all! The world is a flaming dumpster fire and looking for moments to be kind helps anchor me within my small corner of the universe. It reminds me that even as one

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person, I hold the power to make someone's day every single day. And how magical is that shit?!

Now, there is a caveat because I'm a lawyer, so there's always a caveat. Please know that thoughtfulness should not come at the expense of your own health and well-being. And I'm saying this as someone who has, in the past, let my thoughtfulness take over when I needed to be focusing on myself. This is the oxygen mask analogy. You have to put your mask on before helping anyone else put theirs on; you have to take care of you and your needs in order to have the capacity to take care of others. It can be tricky to find that balance and if you're a people pleaser, you're really going to have to watch out for this, but it's worth it to find that sweet spot.

So if you want to be more thoughtful but you're not sure how, I've gotcha, boo. I am going to talk you through some of the main ways you can be more thoughtful and give you my best tips and tricks for executing them.

I'll start with gift-giving because I know for a fact that those of y'all who sweat bullets every time you need to pick out a gift for someone really want me to spill all of my gift-giving secrets.

While gift-giving is my specialty, I think that people make gift-giving out to be more than it actually is. Everyone wants or needs something and most people make what they want and need apparent if you know how to listen for it.

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Being a good gift giver requires learning about people and watching and listening to them carefully. For the people in my life who I regularly give gifts to, my mind is always scanning for things they like, things they get excited and enthusiastic about, things they want to learn more about, and things they wish they had. When you actively start listening for this stuff, you'll realize that people unknowingly drop hints you can transform into gift ideas all the time.

As an example, and I'm revealing my cards here a little, but it's for the greater good. If Riot Grrrl says something is her favorite in conversation, I know I'm gonna make note of that. And in my case, I'm gonna literally write it down as soon as I get the chance because my ADHD makes my memory shit. Sometimes I'll even repeat back to her what she said just to make sure I have it right.

And doing this is helpful across the thoughtfulness spectrum, not just in gift-giving. Not everything I write down will translate into a gift idea necessarily, but the better I know her, the easier it becomes to anticipate her wants and needs in any circumstance. And this is true for Riot Grrrl, my close friends, my sister, my clients, and anyone else I have an important relationship with. The more I listen to really hear and understand people, the better I can show up for them.

Now, if I waited to do that until just a few weeks before I needed to give someone a gift, I'd probably be shit out of luck. And yes, sometimes you have to throw things together last minute. But for most people in your life, you'll want to get in the habit of thinking about gift ideas all year round.

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To set yourself up for success, you need to have a method of keeping potential gift ideas organized. I guess if you have a photographic memory or even just a really sharp memory, maybe you can get away with keeping everything in your head. But for the rest of us whose brains are a bit chaotic, having a designated place for gift ideas is best practice.

Y'all know I'm an Evernote stan, but you can use the Notes app or some other electronic method to organize your gift ideas or keep notes written down in a journal or planner or on a bunch of sticky notes. Whatever works for you. I have a note in Evernote with the names of all of my people in it and their birthdays as well, and I use that to jot down ideas and save links. And something to keep in mind is that a lot of the time, I don't start with a fully-formed gift idea. Rather, I have a general category in mind and I build from there.

To give you an example, it was recently my dear friend Sarah Gray's birthday. Shout-out to Sarah who thus far has been the podcast's one and only guest host for episode #57. And over the pandemic, Sarah got super obsessed with Taylor Swift's Folklore album. We talked about it directly multiple times. I think she also mentioned it on social media a time or two. So I had it in my head that I wanted to get her some kind of gift to do with Folklore, but I wasn't sure what.

In the end, I got her a crewneck sweatshirt with lyrics from the song "Cardigan" on it. But let me walk you through how I got there. Sarah and I have been friends for over 15 years, so at this point, I know her pretty dang well. I already knew that Sarah prefers colder weather and

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that she often wears crewneck sweatshirts. And specifically, she has a gray Elizabeth Warren one that she has a special affinity for because I've seen it featured in multiple Instagram photos.

And FYI, people's social media accounts are often goldmines of information about them, and they can come in very handy for trying to be more thoughtful. My friend Odile also recently had a birthday, and I got her this beautiful light-up Poké Ball that's meant to be displayed. I knew Odile was a Pokémon fan, and I had a vague memory that she had mentioned her favorite Pokémon on her Instagram before. So I scanned through all of her posts about Pokémon to confirm what her favorite was, which then allowed me to get a Poké Ball that was even more meaningful to her.

In that case, I was able to get the information I needed without having to talk to her about it. But sometimes, you do have to reach out for clarification. A person's partner or friends can be great resources for figuring things out. I've definitely messaged friends' partners before asking for things like clothing sizes or whether they already had a certain record.

But don't be afraid to reach out directly to the person you're giving the gift to. There are ways to do so without tipping them off that it's about a gift or at least without giving away what the actual gift is, even if they suspect your question is gift-related.

With Sarah, once I'd found the Etsy shop that sold custom clothing with Taylor Swift lyrics, I knew I needed to know what her favorite songs

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were off of Folklore. So I literally texted her and said, "Seemingly random question, but what are your fave songs off Folklore and Evermore?" Once she answered the question, I kept the conversation going about the albums because I knew it would likely distract her from thinking too much about why I'd asked in the first place.

Similarly, my friend Alex had a birthday recently, and I realized that I didn't know what his favorite color was and I wanted to know in order to select his gift. So I texted him and I said, "Random question: what is your favorite color and why don't I already know this?" I found out what I needed to know, and I added that information to my gift note in Evernote so that I wouldn't forget in the future, and he was none the wiser to the gift that I had in mind.

I'm sure that me being a naturally creative person does help me come up with great gift ideas, but you don't have to be super creative to make the kinds of connections that are needed to give good gifts. So anyone who's been mildly paying attention to me and my social media since last spring would know that I've developed a pretty intense obsession with "RuPaul's Drag Race." And knowing I love Drag Race opens up an infinite number of gift possibilities that are related to Drag Race in some way.

A person could pair the knowledge that I'm a Drag Race superfan with anything else they know about me as a person and be able to pretty easily figure out a gift that I would like, if not love. For most people, the best gifts are not the fanciest or most expensive or most time-

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consuming to create ones. They're the ones that show you know the person and have been listening to them.

Bad gift-giving is often the result of giving a person something that you would like without taking the time to consider if they would like it. So just put a little more thought and intention into your gift-giving, y'all.

The people in your life will thank you.

Continuing along on this thoughtfulness train, one of the best ways to be more thoughtful is to remember important dates in the lives of those you care about. That includes birthdays, anniversaries, graduations, the day your friend starts her new job, death anniversaries, pet gotcha days, visibility days like Transgender or Lesbian Visibility Day, meaningful holidays like Juneteenth or Eid, etcetera.

With electronic calendars especially, it's easier than ever to keep track of this stuff. I use Google Calendar and any events that happen every year I set to repeat annually so I only have to input them one time. I also add people's birthdays to their phone contact in my iPhone so that information is easily available to me.

Acknowledging important dates is a seemingly simple thing that can be really meaningful. I tend to send out Pride cards and presents during Pride Month for my queer fam, and I often Venmo friends coffee money for visibility days and certain holidays. Even just a short text message showing them that you understand the day is important to them can go a long way.

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So once again, the moral of the story is pay attention and write that shit down so you don't forget.

Another way you can practice thoughtfulness is by making it a habit to praise people and show gratitude. This is something that tends to fall by the wayside in relationships, but making an effort to sustain it is so necessary. Praise and gratitude cost nothing to offer, and giving them out without reservation shows people that they matter to you and you don't take them for granted.

When you're thinking nice things about people, don't hesitate to tell them, whether that's in person or through some other form of communication. Be generous with your compliments. Express your appreciation for both the big things and the small things a person does.

We all have to deal with so much negativity and criticism in our lives all the time. So there's no reason not to tell your friends how wonderful you think they are and how proud of them you are. There's no reason not to thank your partner for making you coffee or doing the dishes, even if it's the millionth time they've done it. And there's no reason not to tell your coworkers when you think they had a great idea or executed a project particularly well.

Life is fucking unpredictable and none of us know how long we'll be around to say these things to the people we care about. I would always rather err on the side of giving too much praise and gratitude than not giving enough. And as long as you're being truthful, I'm not even sure

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there's such a thing as too much. So make it your mission to lift up your people as often as you can.

I also want to talk about engaging in thoughtful communication. This is a pretty big topic, but I can at least give you some suggestions for how to be more thoughtful in conversation with others.

I've already touched on this a little, but giving people your full attention when they're talking is one of the best ways to do this. That means not playing on your phone, not thinking about how you're going to respond, and not letting your thoughts drift off to what you're going to make for dinner. Easier said than done for sure, but definitely a good thing to keep an eye on and aspire to.

Another aspect of thoughtful communication is not giving unsolicited advice. No one likes unsolicited advice, y'all. We think it's a means of connection when we dole it out, but it mostly just frustrates people or outright pisses them off. If you want to give someone advice that they haven't asked for, make a point to check with them if they're open to receiving advice from you first.

Many of us have a desire to fix things for people. But a lot of the time, people just want to share or vent or express something without someone jumping in to try to make it better for them. And if you're not sure what someone wants out of a conversation, simply ask them. Say something like, hey, that sounds really hard. How can I best support you right now? Are you looking for advice, just someone to listen, or something else?

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One piece of thoughtful communication that can be especially challenging for folks is giving people the benefit of the doubt. Depending on your personal history, being distrustful of people or assuming the worst may be your standard of operation. But automatically ascribing negative motivations or intent to other people's actions before getting clarification is usually a recipe for disaster.

Thoughtfulness calls on us to try to see the best in people even when it's hard. So much can be resolved through discussing things directly with people rather than acting on our assumptions.

One last piece of thoughtful communication I'll mention is making sure that you check in with your people. When someone you know is struggling or going through something big, periodically checking in with them is a kind way to show them that you care and you've been thinking about them.

When I was in the depths of divorce hell, I really appreciated it when people would check in with me. For instance, there was a period of several months where my friend Veronica would regularly send me pictures and videos of her dogs because she knew it brightened my day. It was her way of letting me know she had my back, and it didn't require me to revisit my pain, which was nice.

It's just as important, if not more, to be there for people when they don't have much to give back as it is when things are going well for them. And if you know you have a hard time remembering to check in,

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this is another area where you can take advantage of calendar alerts and reminders.

Thoughtful communication takes work, but it makes for better relationships and less misunderstandings.

At the end of the day, being more thoughtful comes down to looking for ways you can make the lives of other people better and easier. And if that doesn't come naturally to you, the only way to develop the skill is to practice it.

I recommend setting some thoughtfulness goals for yourself. For example, could you commit to doing one thoughtful act a week or several per month? Could you set reminders to check in with and offer support to the most important people in your life at regular intervals? There are so many different ways to be thoughtful that you can find the ones that fit your personality, schedule, and capacity.

And in case you need a little bit of help generating ideas, in the show notes I've included a free, downloadable list of 50 ways to be more thoughtful. You can grab that at [shohrehdavoodi.com/113](https://shohrehdavoodi.com/113). That's [shohrehdavoodi.com/113](https://shohrehdavoodi.com/113).

And if this episode inspires you to go out and do some thoughtful shit, I would love to hear what you get up to. Please feel free to shoot me an email or DM with all the warm fuzzies.

As always, thank you so much for listening, and I hope you have a great fucking day.

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[Music plays]

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