

Conjuring Up Courage

#134

Featured this episode: Shohreh Davoodi

Shohreh Davoodi: You are listening to episode #134 of Conjuring Up Courage, which I'm sad to say will be the final episode of this podcast. After nearly three years of podcasting, I've decided to hang up my headphones, for now. In this episode, I'll be talking about that decision, how my three-month hiatus went, and how to keep up with me and my work moving forward.

To access the show notes and a full transcript of this episode, head to shohrehdavoodi.com/134. That's shohrehdavoodi.com/134.

[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.

[Music fades]

Hey y'all. So, you already know from the intro that this is indeed going to be the final episode of the podcast. For anyone who missed the last episode, I spent the past three months on a near total business hiatus,

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which was also the only break I've taken from podcasting in the three years since I started.

With the release of this episode, I am officially back from hiatus, but while I was away, I had the opportunity to make some important decisions about my business.

I'm very glad I listened to and trusted my body in taking some time away. I definitely needed it, and I'm so grateful it's something I was in a position to do. In all honesty, I could have used several more months away, but from a financial standpoint, that just wasn't a realistic possibility.

In case you're curious about what hiatus life was like for me, I slept a lot. I played music. I read books. I did various house and personal projects that I'd put on hold for a while. I took two trips to Colorado. I went to Oklahoma City to see My Chemical Romance and Coheed and Cambria. I also went to Austin City Limits music festival. And Jessie and I watched every season of One Tree Hill, which I had never seen before, and that was...a dramatic journey.

Life was maybe not at as slow of a pace as I had imagined it would be due to a variety of personal circumstances, but it also wasn't anywhere near as fast-paced as it would have been if I was launching a group coaching program and onboarding people for it like I was supposed to be. Taking a real break from the content-creation mill was especially nice. I posted on Instagram less than 10 times while I was away, and I didn't send out any editions of The Queer Agenda newsletter. I was far

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more active on TikTok, but I was posting exclusively fun stuff, not anything educational.

As you can imagine, I also spent a lot of time thinking about my business. What's been working and what hasn't been and why that is. Which aspects of my work take a lot of my energy without giving much back. How I'd ideally like to spend my time. Because I don't want to end up right back in this place of dread a year from now.

And to be fair, the circumstances that led to me feeling so burned out had as much to do with the many tumultuous years I navigated in my personal life as they had to do with my business. But even still, I've never felt a sense of ease with entrepreneurship, and that concerns me.

So, over the course of my hiatus, I came to an initial set of conclusions and decisions about my business. And then some stuff happened and more conversations were had, and I came to a slightly different set of conclusions and decisions about my business.

Whether or not I would continue with the Conjuring Up Courage podcast wasn't really in question. I simply could not imagine a situation where it would make sense to keep podcasting at this time. I've shared with y'all plenty of times before how expensive it is to podcast when you don't have sponsors or some other way to offset the costs of hosting, editing, transcriptions, etc., plus the astronomical time and energy costs of booking guests, recording episodes, and marketing episodes.

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Frankly, it's a miracle I pulled it off for the past three years. And financially speaking, it has definitely held me back from making my business profitable enough to fully live off of.

Do I see myself returning to podcasting in the future? Yes, but I can't say when exactly. I anticipate that at some point down the road, I'll start a new, queer-focused podcast when I have more solid funding to do so. And if I do, I'm 99% sure I'll do seasons, so that I'm not podcasting all year round because it is truly just too much.

I really do love podcasting, and I'm sad to walk away from this medium for the time being. Connecting with y'all through the show has been such a magical experience, and I'll always be grateful for everyone who took the time out of their busy schedules to share this space with me, whether it was for one episode or every single episode.

Until I return with a future show, I plan to take opportunities to guest on other people's podcasts whenever I can. And if you've been missing me, three different podcast episodes where I was the guest dropped while I was on hiatus. I'll link to all of them in the show notes, or if you'd rather just look them up yourself, I was on episode 43 of *The Season Of You Talkshow*, episode 208 of *Coming Out with Lauren & Nicole*, which was a personal favorite, and episode 66 of *To All the Men I've Tolerated Before*, which is an incredible podcast name.

And since I will no longer have a podcast of my own, the best way to keep up with me besides social media will be through my email newsletter, *The Queer Agenda*. I aim to send out at least two editions of *The Queer Agenda* each month, and sometimes I manage to do

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three or four. The newsletter not only includes a thoughtful essay, it also contains announcements about my programs and services, and links to my latest posts and videos on social media, and any collaborations I do with other people, like podcast episodes or IG Lives.

It's free. I put a lot of time and heart into it. And I hope if you're not already getting it in your inbox, you'll consider signing up. You can get on the list by going to shohrehdavoodi.com/subscribe. That's shohrehdavoodi.com/subscribe. The first edition of the newsletter in three months went out today, and it was nice to be back.

Now that my hiatus is over, I'll also be on Instagram and TikTok more regularly again, but I'm rethinking how I show up on social media, particularly on Instagram. I'll likely be pulling back on strictly educational content and sharing more of my writing and pieces of my life. My goal is to make social media work for me instead of the other way around, and I'm still feeling all of that out. I just know that, as much as possible, I want to opt out of the crushing pressure to be making free content all of the time.

As for the parts of my business that actually make me money—you know, the things that make my business a business and not only a hobby—I've made some decisions about those as well.

You may remember that part of the catalyst for taking a hiatus in the first place was the dread I was feeling around the launch of my Follow Your Arrow group coaching program after the previous launch had been a flop. One piece of it was that I hate the entire process and experience of launching. Another piece was that I had set Follow Your

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Arrow up as a year-long group coaching program, so it was designed to be very hands on for me and to essentially never end because each time one group was finishing up, a new group would be beginning.

To be clear, I really enjoyed FYA the first time I ran it for the full year. For the folks who participated throughout, I got to establish really meaningful relationships with them that have continued beyond the program. But it's not the best set-up for the kind of life I'd like to be living.

So, I went back to the drawing board because the year's worth of self-trust educational materials I created for Follow Your Arrow are excellent. I'm super proud of them, and the folks who did FYA literally only had positive feedback about the curriculum. They had critiques about other stuff related to the program, but nobody had anything negative to say about what I was teaching, which I consider a huge win.

Ultimately, I've decided to convert the Follow Your Arrow group coaching program into a course format that I will release early next year. Before I can get it into your hands, I need to do things like find the right platform to host it, re-record the lessons and update a handful of them, and make some pricing and format decisions. I'm still debating if there's going to be any kind of community component with the course, like a Mighty Networks group where people can share and ask questions. I do know I'll be offering an upgrade to the course where you can get some one-on-one calls with me to help you with applying the course materials to your life specifically.

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But the idea is that will be self-paced, and it will be available for people to sign up for on my website at any time. I'll definitely do an initial launch once it's available for purchase, so if you'd like to be one of the first people to know when the course becomes available, add yourself to the course interest list. You can access it by going to shohrehdavoodi.com/interestlist. That's shohrehdavoodi.com/interestlist. And I do occasional mini launches after the fact to get people into the course in groups.

But the positive thing for me is that FYA is going to become a lot more hands off for me, and I'm breaking it free of the endless launch cycle it was stuck in. Plus, it'll be more affordable, especially for folks who weren't going to show up to any of the group coaching calls anyway. Which, if you're wondering, has been at least 50% of people for every group coaching program I've ever done. A lot of people are just there for the materials, not the calls.

In the long run, I think having a downloadable course on my website is also going to be really attractive to the TikTok crowd and people who find me elsewhere on the internet who are interested in working on self-trust, but aren't quite ready or can't afford to work with me in a one-on-one capacity.

Speaking of one-on-one work, that's something that's not changing much. I'll be continuing to take on a small amount of one-on-one clients—usually 3-5 at a time. I increased the price a little because I hadn't done so in two years, and especially with inflation, it was time. But I lowered the minimum commitment from six months to five months

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to help offset the price increase a little and also to allow me to rotate in new one-on-one clients slightly more often.

If you're listening to this episode around the time of its release date in October 2022, I am taking new one-on-one clients currently. I'm fresh off hiatus and ready to delve into helping folks with all the self-trust things, such as exploring sexual orientation and/or gender identity, breaking out of cycles of rigid, all-or-nothing thinking, getting to know yourself on a deeper level, navigating identity, power structures, and privilege, or working through self-doubt, shame, and negative self-talk. So, if you've been hoping to work with me, shoot me a message or go ahead and fill out the application on my website, which can be found at shohrehdavoodi.com/coaching. That's shohrehdavoodi.com/coaching.

The reason I have an application and always do a discovery call with potential one-on-one clients is because it's important to me to make sure we are actually a good fit for one another. I don't want you to waste my time, and I know you don't want me to waste yours, so I spend significant energy ensuring we're a good match before I ever make a single dollar from a potential client.

Previously, Follow Your Arrow and one-on-one coaching were the only official ways to work with me. I did do consultation calls as well on the side, but only when I asked. Now, post-hiatus, that is changing.

When I sat down and thought about it, I realized I actually really enjoy doing consultations. I really enjoy coaching too, but they're totally different services. Coaching usually occurs over a long-term relationship (at least five months for my clients), and the subject matter can span

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every aspect of a person's life. There's a lot of unlearning and unraveling on the front end, followed by learning and implementing new concepts and ideas.

When I'm coaching someone, I like to say they're in the driver's seat and I'm like their GPS. While I can lay out a number of paths and provide cautionary alerts and helpful information, they're the one driving the car and making the decisions.

On the other hand, when I do consultations, they're about tapping into my expertise and experience in a quick and focused way. Where coaching is more about active listening and asking great questions, consultations are more about giving advice. And y'all may remember I used to be a lawyer, which means I love giving advice. And I'm great at it.

The consultations I've done over the years have been a pretty even split of personal topics and professional topics. I've done personal consults on things like coming out, thriving as a neurodivergent person, prioritizing self-care, getting organized. And I've done professional consults on things like the nuts and bolts of starting a business or side hustle, visibility fears and struggles when it comes to social media, starting a podcast, copyediting help, etc.

When I do consultations, most people book a single session, maybe two, and that's it. It's not an ongoing relationship. I get their questions answered and send them on their way. So it's also more affordable compared to coaching. One-on-one coaching is pretty pricy both

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because it's so time and energy consuming for me, and because I have such limited availability for it.

To make it even more affordable, I'm offering a few different kinds of consultations as well. You can check those out on my website at shohrehdavoodi.com/consultations. That's shohrehdavoodi.com/consultations. Maybe I'll see some of you in my consultation books soon.

So that's what I have going on as far as ways you can work with me for the rest of 2022 and moving into 2023.

Now, I mentioned earlier in this episode how I had made an initial set of decisions around post-hiatus life and then ended up pivoting a bit later in my hiatus. Not many of y'all know that back in January, after my failed launch where I was questioning everything, I decided I wanted to start working on a novel. I'd been toying with the idea for a while, and my despair gave me the push I needed to commit to doing the damn thing. I actually have a bunch of ideas for books, but this debut novel is a modern queer romcom that is loosely based on my love story with Jessie while also exploring bigger themes about queerness, coming out "late," and having the courage to change your life.

However, up until I went on hiatus, I hadn't started working on it too seriously outside of some outlining and reading a lot of books for research because I had been so busy with work and life. So, during my hiatus, I decided to recommit to writing the novel, and I've actually made progress on it. My manuscript is still in the early stages of creation, but writing is happening more consistently now.

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The project has become so important to me, and even though I've been a writer my entire life, writing a whole-ass book is scary! It's been years since I've done creative writing, so that alone has been interesting after so much legal writing followed by the enormous amount of non-fiction writing I've done since becoming a business owner. But I'm having a lot of fun so far. I was the giant book nerd kid who always dreamed of writing impactful books, and then life took me in other directions and I lost touch with that part of me. Not the writing itself, but the fiction.

Part of my research for writing this book was pouring over my journals from the past few years, and I marked multiple passages where I talked about wanting to write a book and set a goal to do so. But now that I'm actually doing it, of course I've been plagued with ghosts of self-doubt and impostor syndrome gremlins and the brain shitstorm that every writer and artist and creative person ever is familiar with.

What I keep reminding myself is that we still don't have anywhere near enough queer art in the world. That while representation has improved, it still hasn't gone far enough. And that we as queer people and marginalized people deserve to see ourselves in media. And not just any media, but good media. Media that makes us feel something. And I hope I can do justice to that with this book and, fingers crossed, future books too.

So bringing it back to hiatus decisions, I initially had decided that I was going to pick up some kind of part-time job to have a steady source of income while I'm still growing other aspects of my business. I even

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signed up for a career course to help me figure out what kind of work I might like to do.

But then, when Jessie and I sat down to talk about it more, it became pretty clear that doing a part-time job for around 20 hours per week, plus doing coaching, consultations, and prepping the Follow Your Arrow course, would leave me very little time for writing my novel unless I was prepared to sacrifice all my nights and weekends to do it. And I already spent enough years being miserable from sacrificing my nights and weekends for working, so that wasn't a real option.

What had also just happened was that Jessie had changed careers and gotten a new job making better pay towards the middle of my hiatus. So, that has given us some more financial breathing room and made it a possibility that I can wait on the part-time job for now while I'm finishing my draft.

Just to put it out there, once my draft is in good shape, my goal is to find an amazing book agent who really gets me and what I'm trying to do—ideally queer—and to get the book published through a major publisher. And trust me, I know those are big asks and things might not pan out that way, but that's my ideal scenario and that's what I am working toward.

So, for the time being, I'm going to hold off on the part-time job and make this novel my number one priority outside of my business. And I suppose whether or not I eventually pick up a part-time job will depend on if a book deal happens or not next year. So hey, if you know any amazing agents or you work in publishing or have any other

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connections that could help me along the way, please reach out. I am all ears, and I would greatly appreciate it.

And that's the scoop, y'all. You are now fully up to date on my hiatus and what comes next. I am going to miss podcasting for you for however long I have to be away from it, but I'm so excited about the potential for great things to come in my future, whether as a coach and consultant for queer folks and our accomplices, or as a novelist, or as a breakout lesbian TikTok star. Anything is possible!

I hope this podcast has helped you conjure up a whole bunch of courage in different parts of your life. If you've learned even one thing from listening, I consider that a success. If at any point I've made you laugh, that makes my Sagittarius heart happy. And not to worry, for the time being, I'll continue to pay to host the entire catalog of Conjuring Up Courage episodes online. They'll all remain available to listen to on my website and in all the usual places like Apple Podcasts and Spotify. So now is a great time to go back and listen to any episodes you may have missed along the way or revisit your favorites.

Thank you for being so supportive and so kind for the last three years I've been podcasting. Thank you for your sweet reviews and for sharing the show with the people in your life you love. None of this would have been possible without all of you out there listening in, and I will never forget that.

I'm sending big gay glittery hugs to every single one of you! All of my love goes out to you. Until next time, whenever that may be.

[Music plays]

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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 Queer Agenda, 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.

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