

Ep #266: How to Speak Your Truth Fearlessly

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With Your Host

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Hey, I'm Simone Seol, *I Am Your Korean Mom*. I help you drop your fear of marketing, and bring joy back into business, overcome the paralysis, fear, and chaos that's been keeping you stuck. Let's do this.

Hey friends, in light of recent, horrible, horrible events in the world, and what I have spoken about through my social media, I've gotten a lot of requests from people to speak and teach on how to use your voice, and speak for what you believe in, what you advocate for, courageously and fearlessly. I have some thoughts on it.

So, I did an Instagram Live, really breaking down what I know about this, and I really think it's going to be worth a listen for you. I'm going to be teaching you the two things you have to remember about speaking your truth.

And, the five questions that I'm going to offer you that are going to guide you to the most productive and intentional decisions you can make about how to use your voice, in a way that is coming from total alignment and the convictions that are coming through from your integrity. I think this is going to be really helpful.

I apologize in advance for all the toddler noises in the background. Just pretend like you're sitting in my office with me, in my home, and we're just having a chat. I'm sorry about that. But I think you're going to find the teaching content really valuable. So, have a listen.

How to talk about things, how to speak your truth, when talking about anything is really hard and a scary thing for a lot of people. How to use your voice in a way that's actually useful and doable for you. So, there are just a couple of things... I made notes... there are a couple of things that I want you to know.

I think a lot of people know them at some level, but we're in denial. The first thing I want you to know is that there is no such thing as doing right by everyone. There is no such thing as making everybody happy.

Ep #266: How to Speak Your Truth Fearlessly

If you take one position, you will be a hero to some people and a villain to other people. If you take no position, you might not ruffle as many feathers probably, although you might sometimes, precisely because you didn't say anything. If you say the vaguest, most bland, generalized thing, that could actually be the most hurtful thing to some people.

For the same reason that when you say “all lives matter,” as a response to Black Lives Matter, is hurtful to a lot of people. Because when you erase the differences, when you erase the specificities, that require certain specific things to be spoken about in certain ways, that could be hurtful for people as well.

So, please, can we just all drop this idea that we can do the right thing, say the right thing, so that nobody gets mad? That is impossible. If you hold yourself up to that bar, you're never going to be able to speak. So, one, let's just drop that. Let's just disabuse ourselves of that aspiration to make everybody happy.

Even to make all my friends happy. Impossible. Your friends are probably diverse people with their own independent intellect and worldview. How are you going to make sure that what you're about to say is going to conform to every single one of their ideas of what's important and what it means to be a good person? It's impossible.

Stop trying to force people into moral uniformity. I don't think that's good for the world. I don't think we need it. We don't all need to believe the same things. We don't all need to do the same things. Right? So, one, let's get rid of this bar that it's possible to not hurt some people, to not offend them. That it's possible to be on the right side with everybody, to do the right thing by everybody. It is simply always impossible for everyone, period.

The second thing that I want you to know, another thing that's impossible, is changing most people's minds. If 100 people want to talk to you, probably only like three people out of the 100 are really willing to talk to you to learn something new. To challenge their own entrenched beliefs and automatic default biases, and are really willing to go on a journey to think

Ep #266: How to Speak Your Truth Fearlessly

about things differently than you. That's always going to be a tiny, tiny slice of the population, even amongst people who already know you and like you.

I think people really underestimate how deeply invested every single one of us is, unconsciously, in maintaining our biases and maintaining our old worldview. We cling to what we know. We cling to what we think is true, even when it's hurting us.

Those of us who are change workers and coaches, we know this. We could intellectually know a million things that are better for us to do, but we don't do them. Why? Because our nervous systems, our neural wiring, both are wired to make us keep doing the same thing, keep believing the same thing, to keep the same habits of thinking and feeling. Right?

So, the majority of people who you might engage with are not open to changing their mind, even when they say they are. A lot of that is like 'Don't take the bait.' It's totally useless to try to change the majority of people's minds on Instagram.

For the most part, you are going to congregate with people who see things the same way you do. Where there's enough alignment between where you are and where they are, that it makes sense for you to be in allyship with each other.

Then there's going to be a small percentage of people who are not neither quite here nor there, but they trust you. They like you. They respect you and they want to listen to you. They want you to influence them. They're open to influence, right? You know when you're talking to someone who's actually open to influence.

Know that a majority of people are not. When's the last time you heard someone say, "Hey, I had this argument, I had this debate with somebody on social media, and I totally changed their mind. I succeeded in persuading them that their previous position was wrong, and I was right." When have you heard anybody say that?

Ep #266: How to Speak Your Truth Fearlessly

If it happens, it happens in very rare situations where there's a lot of preexisting trust and high regard for each other, right? When that's not already established, that mutual investment in that conversation and mutual vulnerability, when that's not present, you cannot change other people's minds.

So, give it up. Don't run after people trying to enlighten them. If that worked, I'd encourage you to do it. But it doesn't work. So, changing people's minds, for the most part, is none of your business. And, of course, if there was no ability to change or affect or influence anything, there'd be no point in showing up and speaking our truth.

For the people that do want to be influenced by us, for the people that we can affect with our truth, for the people that we can invite into a new way of thinking and feeling... Remember, that they're always going to be a minority. Don't take the bait of everybody who comes to you saying they just want to talk; they just want to debate.

You can talk to them, but not everybody who says that is actually open to input from you, right? So, here's some critical questions to ask yourself when you think about how to speak your truth in a way that's useful.

Number one, think about, what is the change that I want to make in the world? What kind of world do I want to live in? What are the specific changes that I want to make happen in the world, so that we move towards a better world that I want to live in?

Following that, who are the people that I need to collaborate with? Who are the people that I need to connect with? Who are the people that I need to team up with, to make those particular things happen, to make the particular changes happen?

I'm just going to use a different example. Let's say, I am trying to reduce the usage of plastic straws. I just picked a very neutral example on purpose. Let's say, I want people to reduce the usage of plastic straws. Who you're partnering with is not somebody who has never thought about

Ep #266: How to Speak Your Truth Fearlessly

the environment in their lives. Who you're partnering with is not somebody who's probably a climate change denier. They are not going to give a shit about plastic straws, probably. Right?

You're going to think about, "Okay, so I need to partner with environmentalists. Within environmentalists, there's lots of different kinds of environmentalists."

"I'm probably going to need to team up with people who also believe that it's important, and that it's fruitful, for people in our everyday lives to change our behavior in small ways that lead to bigger changes in the environment. If you don't fit that very particular description, then you are not going to be a good fit to be my partner in my campaign to reduce plastic straw usage."

Many, many, many years ago, when I was a spring chicken, I had, for a short time, a part-time gig canvassing for an organization for abortion rights. The way I was taught to canvass was, if I talk to someone and they're like, "Oh, I'm pro-life, I don't believe in abortion. I think abortion is bad." You say, "Thank you for your time," and you move on. You don't try to convert them. That's never going to happen.

So, let's say in that moment the change I wanted to make was getting more people to vote for abortion rights. In that case, my choice of who my partners are has to be strategic, right? My partners are, one, people who already are pro-choice.

And two, people who are willing to take the time out of their day to talk to me and to sign something, to donate, to do something about it. People who have that willingness. That's not even every pro-choice person, right?

So, these two go hand in hand. What's the change you want to make in the world, and who are going to be your partners? Who are the people you need to reach out to? Who are the people you need to connect with? Who are the people that you need to rally in order to make this change happen?

Ep #266: How to Speak Your Truth Fearlessly

Now, this works exactly the same way in marketing when you're selling your product, as it does in activism. You don't go after everybody. You think very specifically about, what's the change I'm after? And who is a good fit to be my partner in it?

I can tell they're a bunch of you're watching but nobody's commenting, so I have no idea if any of this is landing. If it is landing, let me know in the comments.

So, once you know what's the change and who are the people, where it's suddenly so much clearer; we have narrowed it down by a lot. Then you ask yourself, "Okay, so given I know who I'm talking to, and why I'm speaking to people," then you ask yourself: What here needs to be seen? What here needs to be heard? What needs to be witnessed? What needs to be affirmed? What needs to be challenged?

Because you're not thinking about the general, you're not thinking about everybody, you're talking about *these* people for this cause, for this specific change. What do these people need that's going to help them to feel better, to feel more committed, to feel better informed, to feel comforted, emboldened, inspired, encouraged, to do the thing with you in order to make that change in the world?

You go from the change, to what change? And then you think about who the people are? And then you think about what do the people need? You think about their needs. Somebody said, "Help them to invest in themselves and their value system." Exactly.

Once again, same thing in marketing, same thing in activism, right? In marketing your product, it could be they buy this product so that it can have a positive impact on their life. In activism, it's like investing in the world they want to live in. Investing their time and energy into creating a social change that, again, makes it more of a world that we want to live in, those of us who share those ideals.

Ep #266: How to Speak Your Truth Fearlessly

So, what do they need? And how can I give them more of what they need in order to feel the way they need to feel? And give them the knowledge that they need in order to take action towards this change that we are both co-invested in? That's the third thing; the what, the who, and what is the need?

The fourth thing, is you want to be sure, in all of this process, why all of it matters to you? Why do you give a shit? Because...

I'm going to tell you what the last thing is. The fifth thing you need to keep in mind, the fifth thing you need to ask yourself is, what are the risks that I'm willing to take in order to do this work? If I'm going to piss off a bunch of people, if I might lose followers, if I might lose popularity, if I might lose clients, even lose money.

In a minute I'm going to be asking you, what am I willing to risk? I'm going to talk about that more deeply, but first, in order to know what you're willing to risk, you have to know why it matters to do this, to speak your truth. Because you could so easily not. I don't speak about a lot of things that I feel strongly about, because the reason is... I just don't have really deep reasons.

Let me give you a personal example of the reasons about why I speak out about the particular things that I speak out about. I come from a people that in the past century has endured unimaginable, epic amounts of trauma and suffering, that was brought on by 36 years of very violent, brutal occupation by a different imperial government, followed by a really horrible Civil War, followed by decades of military dictatorship.

Now, I live in a peaceful and prosperous country. Where I am, where my people are still here. We still speak our language. We, more or less, have our culture intact. We have our language intact. And the fact that I am able to enjoy all of this right now, the only reason that I'm able to have it and enjoy all of this, is because many, many, many of my ancestors literally died for it.

Ep #266: How to Speak Your Truth Fearlessly

They fought for our people, our sovereignty, our freedom, our democracy. They risked being arrested, beaten, tortured, killed, being torn apart from their families. All kinds of things that I can't even begin to imagine. They willingly put themselves on the line so that their descendants, me, could live with a knowledge of where I come from. So that I could be free, and have all the opportunities that I do.

The world I live in was directly paved with the suffering that my ancestors chose; to fight for my people, to fight for our country, to fight for the principles that gives me the current peace and prosperity that I enjoy.

So, when I think about my own work, when I think about my own business, and how I use my platform and my activism, what really matters to me is that when I face my ancestors, I don't want to be fucking ashamed. I don't want to be embarrassed, right?

I imagine an imaginary conversation between me and one of my ancestors, who were dragged and beaten and killed because they dare to protest imperialism. I think about me explaining my business and life to them. I ask myself, would I be embarrassed, would I be ashamed, to tell them about my choices? Would I be ashamed to tell them about who I stood up for, and who I didn't stand up for?

I think about that pretty much all day long, every day. And so, that's why all of this matters to me. Because of my ancestors, and because of what needed to happen in order for me to be where I am today.

Because I know why it matters to me, it's so much easier for me to answer the next question. Which is, what are the risks that I'm willing to take to speak my truth? Now, in some of the things that I've said recently, I have risked losing followers, losing friendships, losing clients and money. I have lost these things. I knew that going in, and I was willing to take that risk.

Because I knew what all of this meant to me. What's really important about this is, what risks you choose to take, what risks you're willing to take, is a

Ep #266: How to Speak Your Truth Fearlessly

profoundly personal question. There's no right or wrong. Nobody gets to shame you for it.

Me being able to take a lot of risks is in large part a function of how much privilege I have. I know that even if I lose half of my clients, half of my followers, I know I'm going to be fine. I'm not going to be homeless on the streets. Nobody's coming for me, right? So, these are, in the grand scheme of things, small risks that I chose to take based on my resources and my capacity.

You might not be able to be as vocal as you want to be because doing so might cost you a job, and you literally need the job to eat, so you can have health insurance for your kids, and pay rent so you don't end up homeless.

Also, there are those of us who are more sensitive. I also identify as a highly sensitive person, and I'm not going to be anywhere marching where there's a possibility I could be arrested. I've got a kid; I just can't do that. That's not a risk I'm willing to take, at least up until now. So, you have to decide for yourself, this is what I'm willing to do and these are the risks I'm willing to take.

Because once you know, once you decide in advance what risks you're willing to take, when it actually happens, when people come for you, when people criticize you, when you lose followers and friends and clients, whatever, at least you're prepared. I'm never going to say that it's easy and fun, and that it's not a problem. It's really upsetting.

It really makes me sad to have that happen. But I knew that this was a risk I was willing to take, for the reasons that I just talked about. Because I know why it matters to me.

Know that anything worth standing up for in the world has been won at a cost. Please, know that. If there's no cost in standing up for something, then everybody would stand up for the thing, and that would have no meaning. Everything we value, like women's rights, queer rights, our ability to vote... I could just go on and on and on. All of these were hard won

Ep #266: How to Speak Your Truth Fearlessly

because people sacrificed. People gave something up in order to challenge the status quo.

So, while it's not easy to lose things and risk things, know that this has always been part of what it takes to change the status quo. Something that's been helping me a lot, is reading up on ancestors, and people in the activism and intellectual lineage, who have given up far more than I have, and are just really inspiring with how much courage and integrity and conviction they leave me with.

I think, thinking in advance about what you're willing to give up is a really big part of it. Because if you're not willing to give anything up, then there's no way you're going to affect any kind of change.

So, let me sum this up for everybody; grand summary of everything I've said so far. Two things to remember when you are talking about having hard conversations about hard things in the world, and how to be useful about them.

One, there is no such thing as not offending some people. There's no such thing as getting it right, and making everybody happy, doing right by everybody. That does not exist, give it up.

Number two, for the most part, the vast majority of people who interact with you, you're not going to change their minds. Just know that. It's only always going to be a small percentage of people who are genuinely willing to engage with you to learn, and to think and do something differently. So, stop trying to drag people into being educated, drag people to do something different. Your energy could be far better spent.

The four questions that you need to ask yourself, to anchor yourself in the right mindset to speak your truth. Number one, you've got to know, who are the people I'm serving? Who are the people that I'm connecting to and partnering with?

Ep #266: How to Speak Your Truth Fearlessly

Two, what are the changes that I want to make in the world? What is the world I want to live in? What changes need to happen in order to create that world? Of course, that ties into the question of, who are the people that I need to partner with, in order to co-create that world together?

The third thing is asking, “Okay, given that I know what I'm going toward, and who I'm doing it with, what are the needs that need to be met? What needs to be seen and heard? What needs to be affirmed? What needs to be challenged? What do people need? What does this movement need? What does this cause need?” And then, you stepping up to that.

Fourth, is knowing personally why it matters to you, your personal “why.” The deeper “why” is going to give you the resilience that enables you to answer the final question.

Which is, what are the risks you're willing to take for that?

So, I hope this helps, and I will talk to you later. Okay, bye.

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