

Ep #194: Processing Clean Pain in Business

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With Your Host

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Welcome to *Joyful Marketing*! I'm Simone Seol, and I teach you how to get your life coaching practice fully booked, without having to pay for ads, buy Instagram followers, or complicated sales funnels. It's not rocket science, and you can do it too. Listen on to find out how.

Hey friends, how's it going? Let's talk about clean pain versus dirty pain in your business. This is a concept that... It's not something I created. I think I learned it, a long time ago, from one of my first coaching teachers, Martha Beck. Again, I don't know if she invented it, anyway, I learned it. And I'm going to relay it to you the way that I understand it, because it's really powerful.

But before I start talking about clean pain, dirty pain, I first want to sell you on why learning about this and thinking deeply about this is so important, and why it's worth me spending time on it in my marketing podcast. I want to tell you why it's relevant for your business. I want to offer that, your ability to name and separate out dirty pain from clean pain, is going to help you grow so much faster in your business.

Because here's one fact about business, that nobody is ever going to be able to refute; it involves a lot of discomfort, it involves a lot of pain. It just does. Painful, difficult shit happens to every entrepreneur, even the most advanced, the richest, whatever. If anyone says otherwise, if anyone says there's a ticket out of that, they're lying.

Let's just say the same difficult thing happens to two people. So, let's say, you have a client that signed up for your thing after so many weeks of you trying, and making offers, and trying all the things. Finally, this client finds you and they say they're so excited to work with you, they're ready to pay, they're ready to go. And you're like, "Yes! This is finally happening. It's working. All my hard work and overcoming my doubts, is paying off." And then, they ghost you.

What?! Let's just say they disappear, no word; they just ghost you. Ouch, that hurts, right? Hey, I've been there. Consider the difference between the person, let's say person A; who feels that ouch, and stays with the ouch,

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and processes the pain of the ouch in just a few days, learns from it and moves on.

Versus, Person B; for whom that ouch was like a sucker punch to the soul, and they get stuck in it, they're not processing it, and they're just stuck in the pain for weeks and weeks. They lose the energy. They lose belief. They lose momentum. And, they're sinking, and sinking; sinking for weeks and months.

By the time they start back up again, if they start back up again, they're like, "Oh my gosh, is it even worth me doing all this shit, when... What if the next client just ghosts me?" Then, it's just like a vicious cycle of doubt and fear compounding on itself.

I see this happening again and again. Painful shit happens; that is inevitable. That's a given, to everybody. And, some people process it, and learn from it, and move on from it fast, and use it to make themselves even stronger and more skilled. And others, it just sinks them. So, when those experiences accumulate, is that Person A gets to where they want to go really fast. And Person B, it takes them forever. And sometimes they quit before they make any progress towards their goals.

Okay, I'm sorry. There's crazy construction happening at my neighbor's, and also my baby's crying. So, if there are noises, I'm sorry, but I don't have a choice. I've got to record this podcast.

The difference between A and B, is whether you know how to distinguish between clean pain and dirty pain, and how to process these two different types of pain. I think if you have awareness of this, this is going to make a giant difference; it really did for me. It really is going to determine how fast your business grows and how fast you grow as a person.

So, let's talk about what the difference is. Here's how I define clean pain, let's talk about that first. Clean pain is the discomfort that you experience as a result of being human on planet Earth. It's the kind of discomfort that's

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built into being alive. It's unavoidable. No matter how successful you are, no matter how beautiful you are, or rich you are, beloved you are.

If you're a human being who has desires, who cares about things, who wants to grow, who feels love, you're going to experience tension, loss, disappointment, right?

These are some examples of the kind of pain that nobody can avoid. Let's say you really wanted to have a biological child, and it turns out you can't get pregnant, for medical reasons or whatever. That's the clean pain of not being able to have what you desire. Every human being experiences this pain.

Let's say you play a sport, and you and your team trained really, really hard with a goal of winning this really important game. You really thought you were going to win, you thought you had it, and in the end, let's say you end up losing. That's the clean pain of reality not matching up to your expectation. This happens to every human, every human experience; this is pain.

If you loved someone, you ended up breaking up. Or, if you had a dog that you loved, and that dog passes away, that's the clean pain of losing something, or someone that you loved. Every human experiences this pain. I don't care how rich, and successful, and beloved you are, there's just no ticket out of the human experience of these types of clean pain.

Unless, you don't have any feelings at all. You don't know how to care. You have no desires. You don't want to know how to love. In which case, you're probably a bit of a sociopath. And I probably don't want to be friends with you. And you'd probably make a terrible life coach.

Now, here's what dirty pain means. Dirty pain, is the pain that you super impose on top of the clean pain, because you have a story about yourself being wrong, bad, less than, unworthy. It's like this, "I can't have a biological child. Therefore, I'm a failure as a woman," dirty pain. "Someone

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I loved, left me.” Ooh, there's the clean pain of loss. “Therefore, I'm unlovable and undeserving of love,” that is dirty pain.

“We lost the game when I really thought we were going to win,” there is that pain of an unmet expectation. “Therefore, that means nothing ever works out for me,” dirty pain. Every time you attach a painful story about your not good enoughness, your undeservingness, your uniquely fucked-upness, that's dirty pain. It's just a false story of your unworthiness, heaped on top of the clean pain of being alive.

You know, I think of clean pain sometimes, not even as pain really, but as a way of experiencing the tensions that are inherent to life. I think tension is also inherent to growth. Think about when you're doing yoga. There are some poses that are super easy for you, it's not a problem at all. But it's when you do those poses where you feel tension in your muscles, maybe even in your emotions, those are the poses that grow you. Those are the poses that really deepen you.

Maybe you don't do yoga, but you can think of strength training, right? We inherently tax our muscles when we lift weights. We intentionally introduce more and more tension. And, when we do, we get stronger. Sometimes we create tension for ourselves this way, like we go out of our way to strength train, or do yoga, or whatever, so we can get stronger. And sometimes, life gives us tension, when we didn't ask for it. Right?

Tension is what happens, whether you create it or whether the universe hands it to you, when what's being called for, is you expanding beyond your current capacity; your emotional capacity, your physical capacity, your spiritual capacity. Tension grows capacity, but only when you allow it, and are willing to work with it, as opposed to go against it or avoid it.

That tension, the clean pain of being alive and being oriented to grow, you want to make the space to feel as much of it, as possible. Sometimes you want to run towards the clean pain, because feeling a lot of it is often the fastest road towards getting what you want.

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Let's say you really you want to be really good at the guitar, and you have no idea how to play right now. The fastest way to get really good at guitar is to learn and practice as much as possible, during which you're going to suck. If you avoid the clean pain of being bad at guitar, when you want to play like Jimi Hendrix, you're never going to get any good.

So, there's the gap between how skilled I am now, and how skilled I want to be; Argh, that gap hurts! There's that tension. It does not feel good. But the only way for me to get better a guitar, is to suck a lot in the beginning. So, I'm going to keep going. I'm going to embrace the suck. I'm going to embrace the tension of wanting to be good, and not being good, yet.

This is what I mean by running towards attention, in a way that actually puts you on the fastest path towards your goal. So, I want to ask you; what kind of tension are you running straight into? What kind of tension are you leaning into? What kind of tension are you inviting into your life? Because, you want to get somewhere. Because, you want to grow your capacity.

I think that experiencing a lot of this clean pain, is also what allows you to live a full rich and meaningful life. The kind of life that you're not going to regret from your deathbed. So, you go for things. Maybe you get your heart broken a few times. You have some big, fat failures. All those experiences hurt. You might not get everything you want, but guess what? You look back on your deathbed, you're going to know, "Man, I gave this one and only precious life my all. I had dreams and went after them. I dared to love, even when I knew there was risk of loss."

Experiencing lots of clean pain, is how you know you lived your life to the fullest; you squeezed all the juice out of life. Imagine instead, you avoided it. And, even though you craved love, you never opened up your heart to anybody. Even though you wanted to have wild adventures, you never dared to leave the confines of your day-to-day, because you're afraid that something unexpected would happen and you would get hurt.

Then, you look back at your life, from your deathbed, full of regret. You might have avoided certain types of pain, but now you're facing a different

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kind of pain. Having said no, to your own heart's calling over and over again.

My friends, in life as in love as in business, we're not meant to stay in one place. We're not meant to stay in this padded safe room. We're meant to get out there, get bruised, get a limb or two broken, and know that at the end of the day we lived. Clean pain is the price we pay for a full life. Clean pain is good for our souls.

Alright, so, you might be thinking, "That's all very nice. But what the fuck does this have to do with marketing?" Stay with me here. Clean pain is also the price that we pay for an amazing business. You've got to go out there; risk failure, risk being rejected, heartbroken, ignored, misunderstood, criticized, cancelled. Right?

You set a goal, and you don't hit it. You put your heart and soul into a launch, and you watch it flop. You feel really invested in a relationship with a client, that you care so much about, and you watch them ask you for a refund. They don't want to coach anymore with you. Ouch. All of this ouch, Inevitable.

I don't know a single coach, at any level of "success," that doesn't experience these pains. I'm inviting you to experience these, not as problems to be solved, and definitely not evidence of how inadequate and fucked up you are. But as, the tension that is inherent to you, living a full life and going after your dreams, and wanting to grow and expand your capacity. It's a completely different understanding of discomfort and tension.

And, you know what's cool about that? Cool about clean pain? Is that it flows and passes... Clean pain wants to flow through you and out of you; when you allow it. How you stop it from flowing, is when you attach a self-shaming story to it. You make it mean, there's something wrong with you. You heap dirty pain on top of it.

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“Oh, this client doesn't want to work with me, anymore. That means something's wrong with me. I didn't hit six figures, yet. That means I'm just doomed to mediocrity. Wow, I really wanted to enroll twenty clients by now; didn't happen. I'm the only one who can't figure this shit out. Everybody else has it figured out.”

Anytime you feel like you're the only person... You are the one that's uniquely flawed, irredeemably flawed. You're the only person that's subjected to some kind of gross unfairness of the universe. That is a dead give-away; you're stuck in dirty pain.

Here's a skill that I would love for you to walk away with today. I would love for you to identify and name the dirty pain, when it's happening. And also, at the same time, identify and name the clean pain, when it's happening. This is super powerful.

Sometimes, just naming what kind of pain it is, is enough to make the pain go away. Actually, the first step, is to name the pain, “Oh, this is dirty pain.” And, the second step, is being willing to fully be available, to feel the clean pain. I would love for you to be able to do this: “Oh, that's dirty pain, where I'm making myself wrong. Where I'm shaming myself.” And, underneath, there is the clean pain that is inherent to life. It's this type of clean pain, I would love for you to be able to identify.

I'm going to tell you the most frequently occurring types of clean pain that happen in business. The more you can identify it, the more available you are to actually feel it; the faster you go through it. That means, you're taking meaningful action a lot more, you're taking a lot less time to recover from setbacks. It means you just get more done. It means you do more meaningful work, you create more value, your business grows faster.

So here are the most frequently occurring types of clean pain that I see happening in the business. One, the clean pain of disappointment when something doesn't go the way you hoped. Ever have that? I do, constantly. Things constantly don't go the way I hoped. That's unavoidable clean pain.

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Two, there's the clean pain of being aware of the gap between where you are, and where you want to be. This is like, every time... You're like, "Oh shit. I really wanted to be good at this, and I kind of suck right now. I really wanted to hit that goal, and I feel like I'm so far from it."

That gap? It hurts; happens to me all the time. And, it's because I care about growth. No matter where I am, I have bigger dreams. It means I'm always aware of this gap, and it doesn't feel good. And that's not a problem; that's good. I want to feel the gap. Because I love that I have desires, I love that I want more, I love that I dream. I want to know that I'm aiming somewhere. And I want to be cognizant of where that gap is, so I can grow into it.

That's the clean pain of the gap; between here and there. It does not have to be a problem. It's not a problem.

Third, there's the clean pain of disappointing others, or being disappointed by others. That's another one that's baked into the human experience. In an ideal world, it wouldn't happen. I would never disappoint anyone. But guess what? It does happen. I disappoint some members of my audience. I disappoint my clients, from time to time. I, for sure, disappoint myself sometimes.

If you have the thought, "This shouldn't be happening," then you're making dirty pain from it. You're making yourself wrong for experiencing disappointment. But remember that the experience of disappointment, in relation to other human beings, is unavoidable as long as we coexist alongside other humans and human society. You're like, "Ooh, there is that clean pain of disappointment; unavoidable."

Fourth, there is the clean pain of being misunderstood by others. This one, also universal. Also, a constant in life. Happens all the time in business. I misunderstand others, all the time. I feel misunderstood by others, all the time. The only way to shield myself from this happening, is to shield myself from other people entirely, which is impossible if I want to have a business.

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Or, be able to control other people's minds, so they always have nice thoughts about me, and never feel disappointment towards me. Well, unfortunately, I do not have that power. Yet. If I find out how to have that power, I'll let you know; that'll be very exciting. As far as I know, that power is not available to mere mortals.

Fifth, is the clean pain of loss and grief. You know, a lot of things can actually fall away from you, as you become a coach and grow as an entrepreneur. You lose your old identity; in which you were not a coach, you were something else. You lose your old identity; when you were an employee, and not an entrepreneur.

As you learn how to make more money, and be more solid in your identity as a coach, you might grieve what you used to be. You might grieve the identity when you were always broke and confused. You know, that sounds weird, but it's a real thing.

You might mourn the loss of the relationships that you had when you were in your old life. Those relationships can fall away. There's always loss. We always encounter loss. We always encounter grief. That is not unique to life coaches who are trying to grow their businesses. It's just a human experience. It's unavoidable.

And lastly, there's the clean pain of experiencing uncertainty. Our brains are wired to find safe in the known, in what is certain, and in life, as in business, as in love, there's always uncertainty that we have no choice but to navigate. We have to take risks for uncertain outcomes, all the time. That's very uncomfortable. And it's also unavoidable. Especially, if you want to make new things happen in your life.

So, what would it be like if every time you experienced pain in your business, you identified what...? First of all, is this dirty pain or clean pain? "Okay, so that's a dirty pain." And, what kind of, where the clean pain is, what kind of clean pain is it? "Oh, it's the clean pain of loss. I can be available for that. I'm only human."

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“Oh, it's the clean pain of being misunderstood. That's also universal to the human experience. I'm willing to feel that. Oh, I'm feeling the pain of the discrepancy between what I want, and what is reality. And that is also a constant. I am willing to have the vulnerable experience of feeling the pain of that gap. I am up for it. I can feel this.”

This, I do this for myself all day, every day. It's a super powerful practice. Often, it makes the dirty pain instantly dissolve. When you're making yourself available for the clean pain, when you're letting yourself process that tension in your body without making it a problem, it makes it move so much faster.

And, even if the pain doesn't go away, right away, naming the dirty pain and naming the clean pain, it still has the effect of making the false story of the dirty pain very evident. So that you can, at least, see that separation in your mind. Like, “That's the lie. And, here's the part of that pain that's true. And it's just a part of my human experience.”

You know, I think there's a kind of maturity, in acknowledging that our paths toward making our business dreams come true, isn't just paved with rainbows, and roses, and daisies, and unicorns. There is a maturity, there's a strength in understanding that we will be met with pain. And that our success comes from not avoiding them or bypassing them. But it comes from us being made stronger, wiser, more courageous, more resourceful, more loving, more attuned to our own humanity, through them.

I think that is the very best thing that we can model for our clients. All right, my friends. I hope that was helpful. I'll talk to you next time.

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