

# Ep #196: How to Create a Zoom Background That Doesn't Make You Wanna Puke with Carly Thornock

## Full Episode Transcript



With Your Host

**Simone Grace Seol**

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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.

Simone Seol: Hi, everybody. Oh my gosh, are you ready to talk about Zoom™ backgrounds? I have to tell you; this is not something I ever thought about. Well, I thought about it like a little bit. But my stance on Zoom backgrounds has always been pretty much like, whatever. Just make it work, show up, it's all fine. Don't worry about it.

And while that is, I think a respectable position; just get your face out there, people just want to see you, be with you. I started talking to my wonderful client, Carly Thornock, and she offered me some really amazing ideas to think about. I was like, "This has to get on the podcast." She's an expert in Zoom backgrounds, but also so much more. Please introduce yourself, Carly.

Carly: Sure. It's such a pleasure to be here. So, I am actually a researcher. I came from academia and I studied how our environments affect families, and affect the things that we do. Kind of like mind manipulation, behavioral control. That's what I was thinking, when I got into my degree. I'm going to figure out...

Simone: Wait a minute. What was the field? What was the discipline?

Carly: Marriage and Family Research. I specialized in the home, like the house, your actual physical house.

Simone: Is that sociology or psychology? Or, is it just its own field?

Carly: It depends. Social Sciences, Family Studies, or Environmental Psychology, as I later figured out. That's kind of what my passion was.

Simone: Oh, fascinating.

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Carly: So fascinating. So, this is like Disneyland stuff, where you know that there are minds going behind-the-scenes that are like, "If we paint this green, then people will think that they should buy a popsicle. And, if we put a parade this way, we'll go this way." So, I came in thinking...

Simone: And if we spray out this scent, they're going to want...

Carly: They're going to buy the sweet rolls. So that's what I was thinking, "I'm going to create this house that every family is going to be amazing at. They're going to go and paint their walls this color, and share bunkbeds until they're 12. Then they can work on to something else. There's going to be a formula." And, I realized that there's no formula.

Everything in our houses has to be filtered through our lens of perception, our thoughts, we know this. So, I changed my track of my career. Now, I'm a life coach. I help people design houses to help them optimize their goals. So, if you're a life coach; this is being true to yourself and marketing really well. If you're a mom; this is raising kids according to your specific value system.

Whatever it is that drives you, I want to help you make your environment do that, and help you. Even though we know the magic is coming...

Simone: Ok, I probably need to work with you.

Carly: Now accepting clients. Yeah, it's awesome. And the coolest part is, that our house... What we thought was a burden or something we used to beat ourselves up about, used to be insecure, or used to put up walls against the world because we felt unsure, inside of our own self, we can feel sure, and then use our houses and our environments to spread that sureness and spread that love.

So, that's where Zoom comes in, this is how we're doing business these days. This is how I talk with all of my clients. This is how I watch you, Simone, day-after-day on my laptop. What we have around us is going to

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tell a story. So, we just want to be intentional with the stories that we're telling, and make really great invitations that are even nonverbal.

Simone: I love it. I know that you have so many interesting ideas to offer, but first, I want to bring up what a lot of people have told me about their anxieties about Zoom backgrounds. A lot of people stress out that it doesn't look professional enough. "I don't happen to have a beautiful, professionally setup office space. I'm just working out of a corner of my cramped bedroom with..." And, they have inadequacy and shame about it. I would love for you to address that first.

Carly: Yeah, well, shame is going to be the killer of all love. I think. I feel like they can't really coexist. It truly doesn't matter what your Zoom background is. Just like you were saying, you show up, you love your people, and that's going to come through. That's really what matters.

When you get to a place though, when you're thinking, "Oh, how might it be? How could this be fun? What could I maybe do to make these nonverbal invitations a little more compelling," that's when we can start talking?

Right now, truthfully, we just moved out to the desert. I just bought a ranch. I'm in a storage shipping container that we drywalled. I'm in the middle of the desert in America, in Utah, and my office is a little corner, too. In a shipping container. But when we make it ours and when we're like, "This is me, this is how I'm showing up. I feel so good about it," then anything you do can be used to love better.

Simone: So, I love that. It's not that the background has to be fancy. It's not that has to look professional, it just has to look like you. And, when it looks like you, you're going to feel more like you, and you're going to feel more at ease. What I'm hearing you say, it's not about meeting an external standard, it's about creating a space that truly reflects your you-ness.

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Carly: Yes, it's like marketing. It's like everything you teach. Which is why I totally love what you do; you call your people in. And so, if people are looking for somebody who has the hair coiffed all the time, and the eyelashes, and the spray tan, and the whatever, like, that's great; if that's you. The people who are attracted to that, will go to that.

If your people are; we're showing up, we're mom's, we're working, we're doing all the things, and this is me in my trueness and in my love. Here's what I've created for you. Here I am. Then that's going to call in your people, too. So really, there's no wrong way to do it. We've got to get rid of the mistake phobia.

Simone: Mm-hmm. Amen. Okay, so let's get right into it. I love what you said about nonverbal invitations. I think that's one of the things that really got me thinking like, "Wow, that's so interesting." Because the way... If we're on a Zoom call... The way we use our bodies, the way our facial expressions talk, these are all nonverbal communication.

And, certainly the rest of what the other person can see, like your Zoom background, that's going to be... It's all going to be saying something without using words. So, tell us, how do we make nonverbal invitations that are inviting to the right people.

Carly: So first, we want to start with your nervous system. It always comes back to the nervous system. Because there's going to be people out there, I've met designers who are going to tell you, "This is how you set up a Zoom background. Do you have something colorful? Do you have something...", and there's a formula to it.

But what I found, with my clients and with my research, is that everybody has a different, what I call a stimulation setpoint. So, this is, I imagine it like a teeter-totter where on one side you have, "I'm really bored," and on the other side I have, "I'm overstimulated." We all have a place on this teeter-totter where there's balance.

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For some people, it's like a white room where there's nothing on the table, nothing behind, and they can focus. You can show up as the coach you want to be, you're not distracted by like little tinkery things on your desk; you need to just simplify, streamline. And that's what your clients need.

Some of us have more ADHD tendencies, where it's helpful and expresses us more if we can have color, and texture, and props, and things to use. That draws our people to us. We want to start with our own stimulation setpoint, so that we set ourselves up to be comfortable in our own spaces and show up in our own safety.

Simone: Wow. So, are you saying that the first thing to check for is, how do you feel in your space? I love that. That's always the first thing I ask about marketing, too. It's like, "Am I doing it right? What should I do?" I'm like, "Well, how do you feel in your marketing?" And most people are like, "Terrible."

Carly: That's what we need to address first. So first, your office space, your workspace is for you. And if you can't show up in your space, have it reflected back to you who you're becoming, where you've been, all of your successes, like all these fun things to help you get in this right mindset, this right thought pattern, then that's where we start, for sure.

Simone: Okay, love it. Step one, your nervous system, you feeling comfortable, and whatever is the right point of balance between being super relaxed, so you can fall asleep, or being super overstimulated, whatever that point is, you want to feel that in your space. Okay, amazing. Second...

Carly: Step two, I call this "lean into curiosity." So, this is like, what would happen if I put this big picture behind me? What would happen if I decorated with yoga signs all over? What would happen if I hung a disco ball right here? And you just experiment, because you're not going to know until you try it.

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Simone: Just like marketing. So many things that are the same, right?

Carly: You're not going to know. And you're also not going to know how your people respond to it. So, you might put up the disco ball, and they might be like, "Can you move that disco ball? I can't focus on what you're saying." They'll give you feedback.

But also, we want to get curious and start experimenting, which leads to step number three, which is how can you invite wonder? How can you invite questions like; why is that there?

My mother-in-law, in her house... I went down in her basement first time over there. There's a huge stuffed bear in her basement. And I was like, "What the...? Why is there a stuffed bear in your basement?" I ran upstairs and asked the question.

We want to invite our clients to engage with us further, to come deeper into our space, into our world, by leaving a little bit of unanswered questions, visually.

Simone: Is it a little bit like having conversation starters in your...

Carly: Yes. Yes.

Simone: Well, that's a conversation starter. Like, what is that? Yeah,

Carly: "That's interesting." Yeah. I feel like when I first saw you, Simone, you were cool glasses and you were wearing some cool outfit, and I was like, "She's interesting. I have no idea why she's doing this, and I need to know. I need to know right now." And so, the same thing can go for our environment as well, where what's in your environment that's going to make people be like, "Whoa. That's not like the Pinterest™ Zoom background that we've all been taught to do. That's not a fiddly fig.

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Simone: Okay, I have a question. I feel like a lot of people might hear that and have this thought, which is not true, but their brain might offer them a thought, "Well, I'm not that interesting. I don't have anything... I'm just like a normal, vanilla, boring person." Everybody says that; it's such a lie.

But people think that about themselves. Nobody is a boring, normal, vanilla. Everybody has... I guess I already gave away what I think, but when somebody's like, "I don't know what that would be, around me. I can't think of any conversation starters." If somebody's believing that, what would you offer?

Carly: All of my clients say this, without a doubt. I go into their house and I'm like, "Let's make a gallery wall. Get out your cool stuff." And they're like, "I don't have anything cool. I'm just boring." The reason you're boring is because you live in your own life; you're just bored by yourself.

So, you've got to get interested in what you have. Go to the back of your closet, get out some box from high school, whatever it takes. And then, hold up everything and be like, "What's the story of this? Is this what I want to tell? Is this a story that's part of me, that I want to tell? And sometimes we're like, "It's not pertinent."

But if it's even a little bit intriguing, a little bit different, a little bit, I don't know, something that is part of you in any sort of way, even if it feels boring, put it up on a shelf. Tack it to your wall. I love hanging up rakes, and seed packets, and random stuff, uniforms; I tack them right to the wall. Put stuff on your wall; your old t-shirt, your whatever it is. Put it on the wall and see what happens.

A quote that you love, spray-paint it on the wall. Take a weird approach to the things that are normal to you. And see who that calls in. Because you want people in your space, on your Zoom calls with you, who are going to be like you and who are going to get you, based on the inside joke of your life.



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Simone: Oh, totally. And if they don't get that or don't like that, they're not the right people. You want to go find them. My heart was about to burst when you were talking, because this is about like, play; you really get to play. And it's not that serious. And I just love... You know what I really appreciate about Disneyland?

I was actually there pretty recently, is that everywhere you go, you can tell... You can have thoughts about super-capitalist consumerism, whatever... I have a very nuanced view of Disneyland because I also love... Whatever.

But what I really appreciated was the amount of thought that went into every corner of anything that you could see, to evoke a very particular experience. It took so much thoughtfulness, and I was able to actually notice it for the first time, because I hadn't been since I was a kid. And now, I went as an adult. I'm like, "Wow. Every part of this is so intentional."

I can tell that there was somebody who really cared about... If you're a fan of Disney, you're having a magical experience, right? You're experiencing emotions of whimsy, and magic, and fun, and dreaming, and all of that. Of course, if you're not a fan of Disney, why would you even be there?

So, it's sort of the same thing; creating the space for whimsy, and wonder, and conversation, and it's an invitation into your world, right? If you have random seed packets and a uniform from high school, somebody's going to be like, "What is that?" I feel like it's an invitation into intimacy, as well, which is one of my favorite things.

We're not just exchanging value based on information. It's like, "Let's get to know each other deeper," not necessarily all the personal details, but like, "I want to let you into my frequency. And I want to know about your frequency."

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Coaching is very much about working with that frequency. So, I love it so, so much. Okay, so hold on, summarize the steps for me: One, nervous system...

Carly: Nervous system, get curious. And then, what was the last one I talked about? I don't even remember exactly. Create from this place...

Simone: Experiment.

Carly: Experiment and decorate from this place. And evolve your thoughts about Zoom, from 'things have to be professional.' "This is my professional space," we use this word professional, but you just listed a whole bunch of other adjectives of how we can be feeling in our space; wonder, curious, these are on my list, too, conversation, symbolism, excitement, or any other emotion. Besides professional.

Simone: Yeah, yeah. I love it. You already said this, but I think it's really important to stress again; that what feels like you, and what makes you feel at home and good, is going to look so different from so many other people's. I know that I've definitely beaten myself up in the past, about people who really had a lot going on their background, and it was really beautiful and cool and interesting.

Because I'm ADHD, I need a lot of cool, and zen, and clean, right? And then I would use that against myself and think, "Oh, I'm so boring. I wish I had all these cool things to display like other people." I bet the opposite could work as well. You might be like, "Oh my gosh, I have all this clutter. I wish I could be that really zen person."

But if you were like everybody else, if your version of aligned felt like somebody else's, then people wouldn't be able to have access to your unique magic, to your unique frequency; which is what you people to hire you for?

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Carly: Yes. So, know where you are now, and know where you're hoping to become.

Simone; Oh, tells me about that.

Carly: If you're starting out... Go ahead.

Simone: I just said... Before, you mentioned you want to put clues in there about who you're becoming. And I was like, "I want to hear more about that." It's almost like inviting your future self or your future vision into that energetic space, and how to do that. So, let's talk about it. Oh, so good.

Carly: Totally. Okay, so, if you're a beginning life coach, or if you're just somebody who's existing in the world, in the present, all of us, right? We have goals for the future. What is that girl want in her space? What is the girl who's making this X amount of money, or who is contributing this way in the world, what does she fill her soul with? What does she fill her space with?

Like you said, we have tendencies that we help ourselves mitigate imbalance, using our external environment. So, if you're one that's hyper excited about all the things and you want a zen space to help you focus, that's what you step into. Who is it that you want to become? Where are you evolving? What will help you the best, to become that? That goes into your space.

Simone: Amazing. Oh, my gosh, do you have any examples of what you've done with that? Like how...

Carly: Yeah. Okay, so behind me right now, I have a picture on my wall. And this is... I got it on a road trip with my family. We went into this cafe, and they had this picture on the wall. And I was like, "I need this for our house," I told my husband.

Simone: It's stunning. I've got to get a picture of it. It's so fun.

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Carly: My husband is like, "We are in an RV, 1,000 miles away from our house, and we are packed to the gills. Where are you going to put a picture?" I'm like, "I don't know. We'll figure it out. Pack it up." So, we bought it. And my space is generally navy blues, reds a little bit, white; it's like a little bit more calm, a little bit more like a mountainy vibes, I don't know, evergreens kind of style.

I bought this like crazy painting, and the reason that it stood out to me, it spoke to some part of my soul. It's bright colors; it's pink, and yellow, and green, and polka-dot blue. It spoke to this part of me that wants to be spontaneous, and wants to have fun, and wants to just surprise people.

So, this is like the 'surprise painting.' And, if you don't see the rest of my house, or if you don't know me, you might not know that. But to me, every time I walk in here, I think, "Be surprising. What can you do today that might surprise people and get a fun reaction, or surprise yourself?"

Simone: I love it.

Carly: Every item is like a prompt. Right? Yeah, totally.

Simone: I love that.

Carly: I call them trigger items. Often, we talk about triggers as being a bad thing. We're triggered into an emotion that we don't like.

Simone: Positive triggers.

Carly: Yeah, but like a positive trigger. Every time you see it, it reminds me who I want to become. I do this around my house too. I feel like Post-its® are awesome, and I use Post-its all the time, too. But sometimes you just have too many Post-its.

We got to start designing our stuff to reflect to us. They're a little like inside messages that no one else is going to get. Like the penny in your shoe to

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remind you, just like a little, quiet spoken whisper to help you become the person you want to be.

Simone: So, you put a penny in your shoe?

Carly: Well, some people do. I've heard of this. You want to remember something, you want to reframe your thought, every time you feel the penny in your shoe, you're training your body to do something, your brain to do something. Like a string around the finger, or the Post-it note, right? You can do this with the things in your office, within your home.

Then, when people know you and they know this about you, they ask questions about it. So, like my clients know this about my painting. They know this when they see my Zoom. And then, they are expecting, "What is she going to do next? She's working on being surprising. Is she going to deliver? What can I be surprising about in my house?" So, this is the translation of the value, to the people who are receiving, on the other end of your Zoom call?

Simone: Ahh, that was just like a total, all over... This whole conversation is a mic drop. You are my mic drop, you as a person are a mic drop.

Carly: The feeling's mutual.

Simone: Oh my gosh, is there anything you want people to walk away with, before we close the convo?

Carly: I just want them to walk away with this idea, with this possibility that they can invite wonder. That their whole life experience, in the physical world, can be a symbol of their story. And just like how all parts of great stories have ups and downs, and adventure and fire swamps, and romance and tragedy, like, so do our lives. We can reflect that in our spaces, to invite people into that intimacy quickly, and without having to exchange so many words. It's just like, it can work for us. It's on autopilot almost.

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Simone: And how much richer, and meaningful, and more human, and beautiful, and magical is that? Compared to trying to curate an image of perfection, and what will pass as impressive and whatever the fuck, right?

Carly: It's so boring, right? We've all seen all the magazines. We've all been on Instagram. We've all been on Pinterest, and we're bored of seeing the same kitchen with no people in it. Where's the humanity? We want the office with the real person, who's really going to help us with our problems, and solve the world. Let's go.

Simone: Yeah, it's like, every time you hear my baby crying in the background on my podcast, that's a part of my story.

Carly: Yes! That is your story. And for all of us moms out there who hear that, we're like, "Oh, we can do this. My baby's crying too. And look at us, taking time to be intentional as mothers, yes. And, a successful businesswoman in the world."

Simone: Yeah, because I literally don't have a choice. I live in an apartment. There's nowhere for my baby to go. There's nowhere for me to go. So, it's just going to happen. Sometimes it's like, "I record this podcast, or I don't have my baby." It's like... You know?

Carly: I guess you could rent a space down the road, whatever. I don't know. There are always options. You can make it work however you want to have it work, but why would we choose to hide that part of ourselves, just to be perfect? Perfect, whatever that means. Having a Zoom call where kids are allowed, or where sometimes the internet is glitchy, where we can be human to one another; it's so powerful. And if we edit it out, and smooth it over, and Photoshop® all the things, we just don't even know each other anymore. That's why it's so important.

Simone: Just, hallelujah. Amazing. Carly, you are a blessing. Obviously, everyone should go hire you. Where can they find you?

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Carly: I'm at IntentionalHouse.com. You can find me at Intentional House on Instagram, as well. Where we make lots of messes, and reprogram our nervous systems, and design things that we think are super beautiful.

Simone: That's the only kind of design I'm interested in. Thank you so much for being here.

Carly: Thank you, Simone.

Simone: I can't... You guys all watch for what am I going to do with my Zoom backdrop, okay? Because I can just feel some changes coming. I had like fifteen ideas just from this conversation.

Carly: The magic is bubbling.

Simone: That's right, and it's going to have ripple effects. You're going to have a more interesting Zoom background that's going to affect your clients' lives and on, and on, and on. Alright, amazing.

Thank you for listening, everybody. We'll talk to you next week.

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