

Ep #237: How to create success with flexible pricing with Cara Kovacs, Keli Lyn Jewel, and Becca Rich

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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.

Hey, everyone, such a juicy conversation that I'm about to bring you today. I invited some people in my community of amazing coaches and healers and change workers, who are also doing different forms of flexible pricing structures to serve different kinds of people. And you know I did a podcast a few weeks earlier. I had also written about it a lot in social media, about my decision recently to turn my flagship program *Joyful Marketing* into a flexible pay-what-supports-you three tiered pricing system.

I have just gotten so many questions about it. So many people have written me, actually, to tell me that they were inspired to do the same in their businesses. And that has just been so amazing.

The number one thing that I've been getting from people is, what does it look like for me to experiment with something similar if I don't have a multimillion-dollar business? And I know that while I came to this decision, at this point in my business, that there's a way to incorporate more equity and consciousness about being able to serve people at different points of financial circumstance, wherever you are.

And so, I put out a call for, "Hey, who has a flexible pricing structure in their business? Who is actually profitable with it? Who is running a successful business where they have a flexible presence, and it's working?" And by successful, I don't mean whatever conventional, whatever the fuck, however many figures.

I mean, you have a business that's feeding your life and supporting you in the way that you want to live. And you are serving your clients in ways that

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are meaningful to you, and you are remunerated in ways that are meaningful to you, and that support the life you want to live.

So, as a result, I've had a bunch of conversations, and I am so honored and thrilled to welcome Becca, Keli, and Cara into the conversation. I want them to introduce themselves, but you will get all of their links in the show notes. So, let's just quickly do a round of introductions. Okay, Becca, could you tell us a little bit about yourself?

Becca Rich: Yeah, so my name is Becca Rich. My business is called *The Holistic Time Coach*. Quick synopsis: I'm an engineer, Reiki healer, yoga teacher, mindfulness teacher person. I have C-PTSD. And I'm a digital nomad, so I've been traveling full-time for two and a half years. All of that comes together to help people work with time in a not so capitalistic, structured, time management, kind of way.

Simone Seol: Ah, I love it. I remember, y'all unless you changed it since when I looked at it, I highly recommend that everyone go to Becca's website and look at the languaging that she has on describing the financial ethics of her business and pricing. It's different from mine. It's a lot more than mine, actually, at this point.

But I was so impressed, and I was so inspired. I learned so much from the way she did it. And so, I was like, "We've got to have this person on my podcast." So, thank you for being here, Becca.

Keli, could you introduce yourself?

Keli Lyn Jewel: Absolutely. I am Keli Lyn Jewel. I came to coaching through the direct sales industry. When I started being a coach exclusively, I was coaching direct sellers as a life coach. I have since added a business coaching component to my business, because what I realized about a year ago, is that a whole bunch of coaches were coming to me going, "I don't

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fucking know how to sell anything. Can you teach me how to sell in a way that doesn't feel shitty?" So, I established that. I've got both a life coaching and a business coaching leg in my business, and I have done pricing in a variety of ways that are all non-traditional.

Simone: Love it. And, she's killing it. I love it.

Cara, please introduce yourself.

Cara Kovacs: Hi, thank you so much for having me. My name is Cara Kovacs, and I am a business coach. The thing that gets me out of bed in the morning is helping people who are like, "I need to do this. I feel so called to bring this mission to life, and it's burning inside of me." I help those people scale with love and joy and peace and ease to the maximum level of impact.

I've had a sliding scale model the entire time I've been in business, but for various reasons as my business has grown and matured. But a lot of that is informed because I come from a social work background. I have a degree in intersectional feminism, and I went to grad school for social work. And so, having an intersectional feminist practice is at the root of pretty much everything I do in my business. And it's so much fun to work with people through that lens.

Simone: Ooh, it's such impressive people in this room. I'm starting to feel a little small. No, just kidding. I'm just so turned on by the brilliance in this Zoom room. All right, I want to get to everybody 100%, but since we were just talking, Cara, about all of that, tell us a little bit about how you've had this built in from the beginning, because you just said that. Walk us through it.

Cara: Yeah, well, I think the reason I had it in the beginning is not necessarily from a place of empowerment, but it's something that I see a lot

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of people who I coach come to me believing. Which is that my clients wouldn't be able to afford to work with me otherwise. I had sliding scale because that was a belief that I had. As I've grown in my own business, my reason for sliding scale was really because I felt in opposition to the kinds of things that I was being taught as I started to scale.

There are so many lineages of coaching, there are so many different ways to come into this work, but something that I think is really harmful that I was taught, is that people's commitment was commensurate to how much they could pay.

Simone: Okay, I'm just going to pause right there, and collectively debunk and shit on the terribleness of that belief of, your commitment is commensurate to how much you can pay financially. Listen, with every bullshit ideology, there's always a kernel of truth to it. Which is that, yeah, more skin in the game, sometimes, sometimes, it means you're more invested. Sometimes you go out of your... Whatever. There's a kernel of truth.

But overall, by and large, it's bullshit, it's toxic, it's oppressive, and it is not true in the vast majority of cases. People get fuck-ton of value from things that they get for free. They're very invested in things they get for free or very low cost. And people pay for expensive shit all the time where they have no investment. Everyone on this call is nodding vigorously. So, let the four of us just kill this idea once and for all. Thank you for coming to my TED Talk. And I'm sorry I interrupted you, Cara. Please continue.

Cara: I mean, it's true. The reason that I came to that conclusion was because I looked at the body of work of the people that I've coached. I've coached dozens and dozens of people. And some of my sliding scale clients were the most committed clients I've ever had.

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And so, I was being told, “You're graduating into a new evolution, where now people are going to pay your full rate up front. You don't do payment plans anymore.” It really started to pick up against why I came into this work in the first place.

I view business coaching through a liberatory lens, where I'm like, “You think you need to work a 9-5 job that you hate, to survive in this kind of economy? Guess what? You don't. And obviously, if you are going after what you feel so called to do, you'll be happier, and the world will benefit from that.” That's what gets me out of bed in the morning, and I see that as liberation.

And so, if I'm going to look at my work through the lens of liberation, and I'm not taking intersectionality into account, I'm doing my entire client base a disservice. From that understanding, I was kind of like, sliding scale is basic math.

The buy-in for somebody who has a 100k annual salary and has access to generational wealth or can take out credit and investment in coaching may feel scary. It may feel like a big investment; it's intended to for my clients because we're building your soul-driven business. You are going to be invested in it. But that's a certain percentage of their annual salary.

And then you look at somebody else, who doesn't have access to generational wealth, who doesn't have access to being able to put it on a credit card or borrow money from a relative. The buy-in shouldn't be the same for them.

It's basic math. It's not that complicated. The way that it works in my pricing structure is, I have 12 slots on my roster for one-on-one coaching. Eight of those slots are reserved for full-paying clients. And four of those slots are reserved for sliding scale paying clients. And that's worked really beautifully for me. I'm in my third year in the multi-six-figure range.

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I love the people that I work with. And I also got permission from some clients who've built businesses with me on sliding scale, to share about the work that they do, today on this podcast. So, you can go check them out if you're interested, because their businesses are really, really cool. Yeah, should I say that now? Should I highlight them now?

Simone: Yeah, do you want to talk more about it?

Cara: I mean, just to name the kind of work. Because at the crux and the core of what I do, it's like, "You have such a cool idea. I want to help you bring it to life." People of all different economic and socio-economic statuses and stories have cool ideas that I want to see brought to life.

So, for example, the company Ghost Town Oats. For those of you who are based in L.A. you can go to Go Get Em Tiger, which is a coffee chain here in L.A., and you can get their oat milk. I don't know if y'all know this, if you haven't worked as a barista, but oat milk doesn't froth very well. And so, a barista, here in L.A., literally formulated an oat milk that froths really well. It's a black, queer-owned barista-invented oat milk.

I took them on as a sliding scale client. By the end of this year, you'll see them in five states. And I'm betting, in a couple of years you're going to see them in your grocery store shelves, just like Oatly. A very smart business investment, if you're interested in looking them up.

I love my clients. I'm like, "I'm going to spy you out." And then, the second one I wanted to mention, her name is Marisol. You can look her up on Instagram @marisolvibracion. And, she is a witch. She is classically trained as a witch. In my business coaching program, she invented a witches apprenticeship, where you apprentice with her for six months and learn how to access your magical powers and magical skills.

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Those are two businesses that need to exist. And those people would not have paid me my full rate because it wouldn't have been accessible to them to buy coaching otherwise. And I loved working with them.

Simone: I am so glad you just shouted them out. Because it just illustrates how sliding scale is an investment in your community, investment in the kind of world you want to live in. Like, oh, that's so beautiful. We'll have links to all of them in the show notes. I wanted to slow down and cut you off every three sentences. I'd be like, "Hold on. What? Let me just digest that." But we'll just have to rewind and relisten. Thank you, Cara.

Okay, Becca, tell us about your sliding scale journey.

Becca: Yeah. So, when I started my first business, I was doing yoga retreats and private clients and in-person stuff in New Orleans, when I still lived there. And then, I transitioned into holistic time coaching in 2020. Basically, right off the bat...

Simone: Is that like a thing or is that your thing?

Becca: It's my thing. I'm a certified holistic coach and a time management consultant, and all of the things.

Simone: You just combined together. I love it. Yeah, yeah.

Becca: I started working with my friend, Bear. They're an anti-capitalist consultant. I don't know what their title is. But great resource. They have a great... It's called "Freely", that helps with pricing as well. That really, really helped me. So, I'll send the link to that. I worked with them, basically, right off the bat. I was like, "This is important to me. I really, really care about being inclusive, accessible..." Same with what Cara mentioned.

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I think it was really, in the beginning of my business, I just wanted to make money, have clients. I was in this weird place, where I was quitting my engineering job either way. It was like, "I'm just going to take a year off and travel the world." What happened was I took off and I used the time to travel, as well as build my business working only three days a week.

So, I figured out how many clients I needed to work while only working three days a week and traveling full time and doing that with sliding scale. My engineering brain calculated all of the numbers of how much I wanted to take home per month. And then I reverse engineered how much revenue that would need to be. Including taxes, and including all of the profit, savings, donation, anything like that.

I constantly donate 5% of my top-tier and sliding scale to organizations that I care about. I'm now actually starting a mutual aid organization giving low-income workers money. It's called MutualPTO. It's helping people take time off that don't get PTO. That is my next iteration of being accessible and being an activist in the work/labor time/space.

I started it right off the bat. I was like, "I just need money. I'm just going to get clients this way." And it was great. I worked with people from all over the world; in other economies, other countries, other cultures that don't necessarily have the same ability or accessibility as people from the U.S. And so, it was really great to be able to work with clients from Poland or clients from South America, people all over the US in different situations. Yeah, it was very much just reverse engineering math and figuring out...

Simone: Okay, so both Cara and you, Becca, have been like, "Oh, it's really simple math," and I'm like, "What? Hold on." I know there's a lot of people listening who are going to be like, "Simple math. Okay, Miss Engineer." Okay, hold on. Teach us how to do this; either you or Cara, whoever wants to chime in.

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I agree, a lot of it... I also have to sit down and crunch the numbers, which is not something that's intuitive for a lot of us, that we have to sit down and crunch numbers. I'm like, "What is that" to my brain. Can you give us a rundown of how to do this, for those who are math averse, let's say?

Becca: Yes, yeah. I actually have a spreadsheet now, called Calculated. It steps you through all of this stuff that I...

Simone: Oh, can you share it with us?

Becca: Yes. It's like a \$30 spreadsheet. So, you start with your take-home, right? You talked about in your podcast, what is the number that I needed to feel safe and well? Because we can't give without feeling safe ourselves.

Simone: I want to be very careful to say, the question isn't: What's the bare minimum, you need to survive? Like, no. What's the number that you need to live well, where you feel abundant and delighted and beautiful in your life?

That's probably not going to be a billion dollars. But it's also not the bare minimum you need. You deserve to be abundantly, beautifully, delightfully, provided for. So, please get that number first. And if you're not sure what it is, just pick a number that feels like it's in the ballpark. Alright, next.

Becca: Yeah, yeah, and I'll share, to destigmatize. Literally, the number that I needed to take home per month, to pay myself, is \$4,000. That's it, that's my number. And so, from that, I reverse engineered my revenue using my profit-first ideology. Which is, 65% of my business revenue, I pay myself. Which I think was the most important key to it.

When we first start businesses, it's like spend, spend, spend, spend, spend. Get all the courses, get all the trainings. And that's great, but then I kept paying for everything and not paying myself. And so, once I shifted

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that mindset to, I pay myself 65% of every cent that I make, that's when the sliding scale, that's when my profitability, actually shifted into a happy, safe, healthy place.

After getting that take-home number, the revenue number, then it goes into what I teach and talk a lot more about, which is capacity and hours and figuring out what is the structure for the week that makes sense for me and my needs and my body and my mind?

Once you get the hours, you back up into rates, just general rates, that help figure out like, what is “my hourly”. That's a great place to start, and simple. You figure out out-money, hours, what's your hourly rate. And then with business, people can charge their services based on an hourly. I don't necessarily do that; I do perceived value. But the hourly rate helps me. This is the minimum that my product needs to be. If that makes sense.

And then from there, it's really just figuring out, that's my tier two. And then I go up and go down a certain amount for the sliding scale. If that makes sense. I think it was like 33% the last time I checked. I go up and I go down based on that.

Cara: For those of you who are like, “I work with people for 6 or 12 months,” and who don't operate in paying yourself by the hour, it's a similar model. But because so many of us are working in that capacity, I'd love to give you the math for that, as well.

I've got to shout-out *The Antiracist Business Book* by Trudi Lebrón. I did some work with her and that really informed how I got clarity on this.

Simone: We love Trudi.

Cara: Yes, we love Trudi. Trudi is the best. She talks about, in her book, there's something that she calls a “freedom number”. Also, again, for rate

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transparency, for me, I'm pretty shameless about the fact that I want to build and amass wealth. I want to be able to buy my mother a house. There are a lot of things that I want to create. I have a half a million dollar a year revenue goal. And I've been in the 250 to 300k range for the past three years.

And so, knowing that that's how much I want to make, I look at what do I need to charge for my 12-person one-on-one coaching practice to make the bulk of that. I also have a group business coaching program that I run twice a year. And then retreats, and smaller things like that.

Again, it's a similar model to what you had just said, Becca, in terms of looking at how much do I want to make, and then you literally just divide it. So, if you want to make 100K and you have 10 client spots, that means that your 10 client spots cost 10K. If you want to have 4 of those spots be sliding scale, then you have six client spots that cost like 12K; I'm probably messing up the math right now. And 4 client spots that cost like 6K.

That's what I mean by its basic math, it's really not that complicated. You just look at how much time you have, and how many people you want to serve. And then you make the sliding scale and the full price options align for that number. And then you can take into account additional ways that you can build revenue.

So again, for me, that's my business coaching program. Or sometimes I work with people where I get a percentage of equity in exchange for coaching. Which ends up paying me much more than my rate even would have, and I'm essentially coaching them in the beginning for free.

So, there are a lot of fun ways that you can do it. But you just need to get clear on what your freedom number is. Which is, like you said Simone, not just the minimum that you want to make, but how much do I want to give back? How much do I want to put away? What's it going to cost if I want to

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invest in my own coaching? What's it going to cost if I have, I don't know, an emergency thing pop up, and I want to have money put away for that?

And then you get to build a model. And this is what's so cool about entrepreneurship, too, is like, at the end of the day, working for somebody else, you can make less money than you can working for yourself. You can always make more money working for yourself. We're so taught and conditioned to believe that we need to live in somebody else's model to create financial security, and it's fundamentally not true.

The greatest safety you can ever learn is that you can generate money for yourself regardless of what's happening in the economy, or who's employing you. I think we can see that with what's happening in the tech industry right now. Job security is not a thing unless you build your own job.

Simone: I was so excited... But I was like, "I want to learn how to build my own business and make what..." I was like, wait, I'm already doing that. But you just made it sound so fun. I was like, "Oh, wait, I have that." You guys, it's great. And obviously if that's calling you, you should go hire Cara.

All right, Keli, please give us your wisdom. What's your story?

Keli Lyn: So, as I mentioned, I came to coaching through the direct sales industry. I sold sex toys for 12 years. Before that, I ran a brick-and-mortar massage therapy practice. I have weird business experiences, like, a lot of them. I can pull in six-figures in my sleep. So, when I started coaching, I actually started with a group program that was fairly high ticket, but I was also running my direct sales business at the same time.

And I want to be fully transparent about that because part of the reason I was able to do what I did is because I had full-time income, aside from my coaching business. When I started my group program, it was a year-long program. I sold it every couple of months because it was just kind of a side

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thing that I was doing for fun, just to see if I liked coaching. That was in 2019.

And then, the pandemic happened, and everybody was losing their jobs at the same time they were losing their minds. And I was like, "Cool. I have things that can help people, and they can't afford to pay my prices. So, what I did, I coached people to their price in their consult call.

Simone: Wait. You just put that in air quotes? You can't see it if you're listening. You coach people to their price, so, what does that mean?

Keli Lyn: I would ask people, "What kind of payment would be comfortable for them to add every month? And then, I would double it to see what happened. How do they respond? Does that doubling totally freak out your nervous system? Does that doubling make you say, "Absolutely fucking not, I cannot do that." Does that doubling make you go, "Yeah, that's fine." Okay.

I would just play with the numbers until I noticed their body shift in a way that was like, that's uncomfortable, but it wouldn't be unsafe. And generally, it was between 50 cents and \$1. Where I would get like really close, I was like, "Okay, so if we add 50 cents to this, how does that sound? If we add \$1 to this, how does that sound?" And just notice what their bodies did.

Wherever we landed, was for some people, they paid... I think one of my lowest paying clients was \$128 a month. \$750 was kind of an average for the higher end. \$450 was about what people paid on average. And I ended up making more money by doing this structure than I was with my higher-end ticket price.

Simone: I have never heard that before, and that is so fascinating. How did you even come up with that? Why do you pick the price that's safe, but a

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little, however you said it, a little uncomfortable? Why that point? Why is it important to you to do all that shebang, to feel and to get to that number?

Keli Lyn: Because in my experience of selling, whether it's a massage or a product or now coaching, if someone is a little bit uncomfortable, but they're willing, they're willing, then that sort of signifies to me that they are invested to do the work. I don't know what that number is for anybody. But if it's more like, "Oh, yeah, that might be worth, I don't know, 60 bucks a month to me, and that's fine," then I might say, "Go have dinner with your friends instead, because you're probably not going to show up to do the work."

If there's not any sort of physiological response to the dollar amount, then that, to me, signifies that whatever they pay is just going to be what they would spend on online shopping or whatever else. That's not going to be the same kind of emotional investment.

I would always ask, "What number would be comfortable for you to add to your monthly bills, your monthly expenses?" I never knew what somebody was going to say. But it didn't matter. And part of the reason, again, part of the reason it didn't matter is because I did have another business that was supporting my income. So, I was able to do this in a way that comes from privilege. And I want to honor and acknowledge that, because that's not everybody's case.

But it did turn out that I made more money, and I had way more clients, and I was able to serve way more people. Not everybody paid the same amount. And there wasn't a particular formula that I used, it was very different across the board.

Simone: What I love about this conversation with all of you, is that your stories are so different. I love that it illustrates that there's no one right way to do things. Everyone's like, "I'm going to be transparent." I think y'all are so cool. Let me jump into, and be transparent, and I mean, if you've been

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following my business you know. I didn't have anything sliding scale until this year. And I loved every part of my business journey. I don't regret not having had sliding scale up until now. Right?

I was like, "This is my full price. And it is what it is." I didn't have monthly payment options. And that was not because.... No, actually, I did at some point. For a long stretch of time, I didn't. And the reason wasn't, "Payments are bad." But you know, I have ADHD. I was a one-woman show for the longest time. I was like, "I cannot handle the extra administrative load." It's not that 'paid in full's' are more committed, because that's bullshit, right?

I was coming from the opposite of any kind of sales background. It was so scary for me to say, "It costs this much. Do you want to buy it?" That was the biggest personal transformation, to be able to get to a place where I felt confident selling, charging a price for a thing, and not feeling weird about it.

And so, for me, it was so empowering in the beginning to say, "I'm going to speak to the people who can pay in-full, at that rate, while I'm learning how to expand my confidence and self-concept, to believe yes, you know what? What I do is worthy of that."

I was on such a high because that personal growth meant so much to me. And I think that spirit was what got me through a lot of the initial stages of my business. And now, the thing is I want to put so much nuance into everything. My truth is that, right now, I feel so amazing creating this, and experimenting with this model, because I am cushioned as fuck in my business. I have cash galore.

Not just cash, but I think a more important asset is my confidence. That if I want to make money, I can make money. I can make another offer. I have no doubt that whatever money I want to make it is within my entrepreneurial skills and creativity to be able to do.

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I mean, I don't want to say it wasn't a risk. Of course, it was. It was scary. I had to get coached. I had to figure it out all the pieces. But it was a manageable risk because of all these reasons. And earlier, Cara talked about how when she first started doing sliding scale, it wasn't for amazing, altruistic reasons. It was for a lot of reasons that a lot of us can relate to, which is, I don't think anybody can afford to pay my full price.

If I were business coaching you at that point, I would have been like, "That's not a good reason to do it." But guess what? We do things for reasons that, later, we look back, and we're like, "I'd probably do it differently now." But it was still all perfect anyway because I got to where I was by having been on the journey that I am on and Cara.

So basically, this whole episode, the message isn't you need to be doing sliding scale, or if you're not doing it this way, you're doing it wrong, you don't care about equity. I am so happy with my entire business journey, and you have to be on your own journey.

You have to be where you are and make the decisions that you're making now, for reasons that are personal to you and that matter to you. And that very well may not include doing a sliding scale at this point. I want to be very emphatic about that because it's true. Anyone have anything to add to that? No? Okay.

Cara: Can I just say, Keli you look so familiar. Did I buy a vibrator from you? Now that you're saying you sell sex toys. I want to say I feel like I bought a vibrator from you.

Simone: I'm like, "I haven't bought a vibrator from you, but I know I want to buy a vibrator from you." Okay, what else can we talk about? Okay, what would you say to people who are like, "Okay, I want to try a sliding scale but I'm afraid that everybody's going to opt-in to the lower end, because like why wouldn't they? Why would people want to pay more if they can get

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away with paying less?" I think that's on a lot of people's minds. What would you say to that?

Cara: First of all, the model for my sliding scale pricing 2 is, pay what your 100% commitment rate is. A little bit similar to what Keli had said. It's a minimum \$5K investment. Payment plans can be structured however you like. Most people self-elect to pay over the minimum. I've actually only ever once had somebody request to pay less than a minimum. We had a conversation about it, and we came up with a number somewhere in the middle.

But every single person that I've ever said, "What's your 100% commitment?" They choose to elect more. Now, that's very specific to the kind of people that I work with. Because I'm literally, at this point, only working with people who are like, "I'm so committed to bringing my business into the world. That if I do anything else, I will be sad." And those are the kinds of people that I love working with.

And to those people, I think an interesting kind of comparison to be made, especially for those of us here in the United States, is that when we're 18, 19, 20, our parents and our culture and our society is like, "Go take out tens of thousands of dollars in student debt." We have an entire generation of people completely crippled by owing student debt.

We have this major conversation about student debt forgiveness happening in our country right now. And my parents were like, "Yeah, go spend \$50,000 to go to NYU for a social work degree where you're going to make \$43,000 a year." But when I wanted to invest \$12,000 in my certification program, everyone was like, "That's really risky and very stupid."

And so, I just want to destigmatize that if you're investing, whether it's \$100 or \$100,000, which is probably how much I've invested in coaching at this point. If you're investing in bringing what you most want to create in your

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life, whether that's a business or self-love or a relationship, that's the smartest investment that you can make.

My undeveloped frontal lobe investing in a generic degree... You know, like back when I was 19, was that a smart... I have so much student debt. Like I have student debt coming out of my ears. Was that a smart investment? I don't know.

I just also think it's worth adding into the nuance of this conversation, that we're given this narrative that it's a smart investment to spend 50 grand on a sociology degree, but to invest in the change you want to make in your life is risky, and somehow stupid. And that you can't put a dollar value on that.

So, when you actually are talking to someone who knows that they want the change, and you're asking them to commit at 100% level, a person who's being honest with themselves, which is the only kind of person I want to work with, is not going to short themselves on that investment.

Simone: So good. So good.

Becca: Yeah, I'll add to that. I think a lot of times, so many people that I work with at least, are scared of looking at the data, looking at the numbers. And me, being who I am, I'm like, "Okay, how can we make a way to look at the numbers in a safe, loving, gentle way that makes sense, whatever that looks like for you." And so, to someone that's like, "Everyone's going to pay the lowest tier," again, that hasn't happened.

Simone, you mentioned on your other podcast as well, there are people paying tier three, there are people paying the middle tier, there's people paying in every tier. That's my experience, as well. And so, proof of three people, at least, I'm sure. Keli, you can add to that as well. There are people paying-in all.

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And so, when you know the data and you know, “I can only accept a certain amount in this tier, and in this tier,” you can just tell the person, “I already have all the people in tier one that I can have right now. Do you want to talk about potentially moving into different tier? Or do you want to reconvene in a couple of months when I client potentially goes away?”

It's really just creating trust and safety and open communication with your data, your numbers, and the person that you're working with. And I've found, time and time again, coaching is about creating trust and safety, and creating a relationship with your partnership about all of it, including the pricing. And not to just shy away, and to not have the open conversation is not creating trust and safety.

Simone: That's beautiful. I also want to say, look at the language that Becca uses on her website. I'm sure, Keli and Cara, you too; the kind of language you use with your clients. Look at the language on the *Joyful Marketing* invitation page. It's not like, “If you'd rather not spend money here, opt in to this lower tier.” People have written me to thank me for making the tiers so specific, in terms of who it's for, so there's no ambiguity as to, “Um, should I pay less? Should I pay more?” Right?

I think that clarity also helps people being able to articulate, this is the purpose. It's not just because you want to spend less. It's not because it's such a stretch. In the Green model, that website that I linked to on my invitation page that so many of us have referred to for sliding scales, they talk about the difference between making short-term sacrifices that don't endanger your safety, versus expenses that will literally endanger your safety and compromise your ability to feed yourself and have a roof over your head.

So, people making sacrifices to pay for coaching, you know, giving up nice meals out, vacations, outfits, extra stuff like that, I have no problem. I do

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have a problem if you're not going to be able to feed your kids because you're paying for coaching.

Refer to what other people have done. At least it helps me to do that. To get clear on exactly who your lower tiers are for. That's a service to everyone, where you make that clear. And so, the people who pay more aren't like having lingering thoughts, like I could have paid less, right?

Keli Lyn: There's a conversation that needs to be had about the idea of trusting your clients, even before they pay you. That's what Becca touched on. When I teach sales, and this is how I fucking show up to coaching too, is, "I have to trust you, if I want you to trust me." By showing up in trusting that your clients are going to be honest with themselves, be honest with you. Might there be some asshole who sometimes wants to pull some shit over? Sure, okay, fine. But that's not going to be the majority of people.

And if you're coming at the idea of client generation, from a lack of trust, and assuming that they're going to try to pull the shade over your eyes, that's not going to establish a very solid foundation for a client-centered relationship anyway. So, there's some work that needs to be done there, on trusting your clients.

Simone: Such an important point. I have to tell you about this conversation I had with one of my mentors, before I decided to do sliding scale. For me, with *Joyful Marketing*, for example, I don't have individual conversations with everybody who signs up, right? It's an honor system. People look at the website, nobody has to submit documentation to prove if they're whatever. So, it's an honor system.

And we talked about how a minority of people will abuse it. There's a lot of people in *Joyful Marketing*. We get dozens of people signing up every month, and inevitably, one or two, here and there, probably, definitely,

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could have paid a higher price and they just didn't, for less than super honorable reasons.

And knowing that I might find that out, I might not, but if I do find out, I'm going to be pissed, it's going to be not fun, right? That is something that I'm willing to have. That's a contingency that I'm willing to have exist in order for me to serve the purpose of the sliding scale. Right?

So, it's kind of like, yeah, there will always be a few; just because humanity, right? But also, by and large, my thoughts are always... And this is such an important point, Keli. My thoughts are, "My people are fucking awesome. My people share the values that I do. And when we work together, it's to create a better world based on the values that we share." And so, there's that trust that goes both ways.

And trust has to start from somewhere, and you have to be the one show up with the trust. I actually think it's so rare... I actually think it's rare, aside from our circle of people, the wonderful humans that I'm connected to, to see examples of coaches exhibiting this kind of trust. Because everyone else is like, "I don't really trust you. So, I'm going to throw all these complicated shenanigans in your face to try to manipulate you..." Keli, you're nodding vigorously, tell us.

Keli Lyn: I've just seen this in so many places and spaces, including in the coaching industry. Where like, I don't trust you, and that's going to come across in every single interaction that we have. And then that means you're not fully trusting me. So, are you actually getting the greatest result that you could from this coaching? Probably not.

Which then taints your idea of what coaching is. This like, fucked up kind of, I don't know, illusion, about promises of grandeur and your life changing like that, and all of this, that never can actually happen. There's so much, oh, there's so much that I could say, but I absolutely won't, about the ways

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in which I see the sales process happen and marketing happen and things that just are really shady.

And it all comes from a lack of trust. “I don't trust myself to generate clients in a way that is honest and in integrity. And I don't trust that people will actually pay for this transformation in a robust way. And I don't even know, bizarrely, now that I trust what I'm offering to produce the results that I'm saying it will.” There's just no trust anywhere.

Simone: And so therefore, what masks trust always, is strategies and sales scripts and do this and then do that and then ask them this, right? 100% it's just very loud, “I don't trust myself, and I don't trust you.”

Keli Lyn: Well, in all of that, oh, God, it's just dripping with oppression. It comes from this ultra dude-bro kind of language and this super patriarchal, white supremacist, kind of Christian supremacist, kind of ideology where it needs to be a certain way, otherwise, it's wrong. I'm like, “No.”

Cara: I think it's also important to remember that the experience of what coaching is starts before somebody signs the contract. When somebody is on an enrollment call with you, they should be experiencing what it's like to be coached by you. So, if you're not meeting them with the same love and integrity and intentionality that you would meet them after they signed a contract...

Which I think, oftentimes is really well intentioned, because people are nervous and they're really hoping that somebody is going to enroll with them. But that's making the enrollment call about you. Essentially, what you're telling that person is, “Please enroll in coaching with me so that I can trust that this was a good idea for me to try to do this business.” Who wants to buy that from you? Nobody...

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Simone: Oh my god. Listen, so many people are doing that, not because they're bad people, but out of fear. And because there's not enough modeling of how to do it in a non-shitty way. I'm obsessed. I want the four of us to have a podcast. That's how obsessed I am with the three of you. So fun. Okay, I could keep talking forever. Any last words you want to add?

Becca: I think having an alternative pricing model has helped me heal. I've seen it help my clients heal, and create that trust and safety within ourselves, within our partnership. And that is magic, like pure magic.

Simone: Same. I felt definitely healed by... So much healing magic happened because I changed the *Joyful Marketing* pricing model. Okay, Keli, Cara.

Cara: I guess what I would say is, it doesn't really matter what your pricing model is, as long as you feel good about your pricing model. So, that energy that we were talking about, 'please enroll, so that I know that my business is going to work,' that would be where I would start. If sliding scale makes you feel more confident in sharing your offers with the world, it's probably a good idea.

Simone: I love it. And just to add on to that, the purpose of a business is to make money for you to be able to do shit that you need and want to do. In some ways, contemplating sliding scale equity, that kind of shit, it comes from having a certain amount of privilege, right? If you're in danger of being evicted and you can't feed your kids, I'm sorry, thinking about equity? I can think about it because I have privilege.

I have always been lucky enough to be very privileged all my life, but my parents didn't. And they worked through times when every dime, every penny, they scrounged together to buy a burger from McDonald's, and that was their one meal for the day. Right? And so, that is real for so many people.

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It is 100% not just okay, but it's an obligation to yourself to take care of you. And if that means making all the money and keeping it all for yourself, for the time being or forever, I don't know, do it. I just want to acknowledge that. That this conversation assumes privilege, and the more socio-economic privilege you have, the more I probably want to nudge you to think about it.

And if you've been marginalized in the world, and if you've been one of the oppressed, in marginalized identities, then I want you to make all the money and not have to worry about equity. You getting rich off your business is going to be equity for the rest of us. So, I very much want to say that too. I feel very conscientious not to leave you with the impression that this is somehow a "should" or a "must", and everyone's journey, everybody's decisions, may be different. Okay, so, Keli.

Keli Lyn: The thing that I always try to impart to myself, as well as to my clients in my sales coaching programs, is that there are actually no rules. And so, what you just said also reiterates that point too.

Simone: No rules for being profitable, and no rules for being a "good" person. No rules for how to run your business in an ethical way. Yeah.

Keli Lyn: Yeah. The rules don't fucking exist. Including things like, "Oh, you have X number of clients. Now, it's time to double your prices." Okay. Or "You should have a sliding scale pricing structure." But there are no rules. You get to run your business in the way that feels good to you. You get to create your pricing structures in a way that feels good to you, and that supports what you want to do in the world.

Simone: And there's so many ways to give back if it's important for you to give back. I only set up sliding scale a little while ago, but for almost two years, I've been giving away 5% of my gross revenue to charity and mutual giving. You might not do any of that and spend a lot of your time

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volunteering, right? You might not have a spoons to do any of the above, if you have things in your life that you're managing that requires extra spoons for you to just survive and get through the day and make shit work.

So, in your heart, you know what you need. You know what it would mean for you to thrive and prosper and what the next step is. Please trust yourself and honoring that.

But today's episode, for anybody who is like, "I'm dying to do this, but I just want to see more examples," I hope this was like an oasis in the desert. And I, once again, am so blown away by all of you. Thank you so much for joining me. I'm obsessed with everything you've said. Everyone, go check all three of these amazing humans out. Go check out their socials and websites and hire them. We'll talk to you soon.

Hey, if you want a shot of fresh inspiration and actionable tips to improve your marketing every single week in your inbox, you better get on my email list. Sign up to receive my free e-book called *20 Unsolicited Copy Tips*. It's been known to get people to come out of the woodwork and ask to work with you. So, get on that link in the show notes, and I'll see you in your inbox next time.