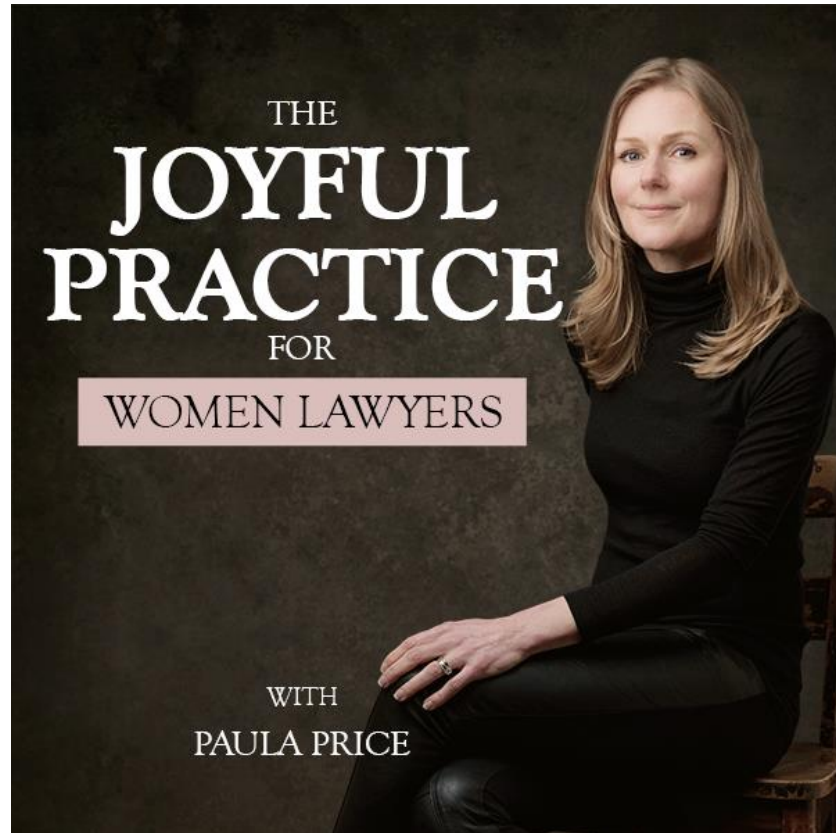


Ep #7: The Power of Non-Negotiable Standards



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Paula Price

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You're listening to *The Joyful Practice for Women Lawyers* podcast, episode number seven.

Welcome to *The Joyful Practice for Women Lawyers* Podcast. I'm your host Paula Price, litigator turned certified executive coach. This podcast was created to empower women lawyers just like you to create a life and practice you love. It's your time away from the daily hustle to focus on taking care of you. To see where you're stuck, figure out what you truly want, and learn coaching tools that will help you define and create success on your own terms.

If you're over the overwhelm, done with putting out fires, and ready to create a life and practice that brings you more joy, you're in the right place. Ready for today's episode? Let's dive in.

Hi everybody, and welcome back to the podcast. If you are joining for the first time, my name is Paula Price. I'm a lawyer turned certified executive coach, and the host of this podcast. Welcome. If you're returning, welcome back. I am delighted to have you. So great to be able to connect with you today.

I just wanted to give a shoutout to all of you who have been contacting me to let me know that you are listening to the podcast, that you are enjoying the podcast, and that what I am sharing on the podcast is resonating with you. I've had a number of listeners reach out on LinkedIn. They have reached out by email, writing reviews on the iTunes or other podcast platforms. I just wanted to say it means so much to me to know that you are out there, that you're enjoying what we're discussing here, and that you're able to incorporate some of what I'm talking about into your practice.

So thank you so much. I love hearing from you. If you are a listener and you would like to share something that you're taking from this podcast, I would be so happy to hear from you. So just wanted to put that out there.

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Also, if you're enjoying the podcast and you feel so inclined, I'd love it if you'd leave a review on iTunes or wherever it is that you listen to your podcast. It does help other people just like you find the podcast. So that would be amazing.

Now before we jump into today's episode, which is all about non-negotiables and the power that you can derive from making a decision about something that is non-negotiable. I just wanted to comment a little bit about what's going on here in Vancouver. For anybody who is in Vancouver, we're at the end of June. Today is an unprecedented day in the city. We are hitting a heat record for this city. I don't think we have ever surpassed this record. I think the last record on file was about 32 degrees Celsius for warmth, for heat, in this time of year, maybe ever.

Today the temperatures are soaring. We are at about 39 degrees Celsius. It was so hot that they actually requested that the children not go to school even though this is the last week of school. They have today and tomorrow left before the school year has ended, and the kids are all home. So my children are downstairs keeping themselves entertained while I record this podcast. It's been a beautiful day. We went out and spent some time by the sprinkler to cool down a little bit, but it is so unexpected. This is not something that any of us ever could have anticipated. It really is the grand finale on what was a very unusual year.

I know that I extended a shoutout the other week to parents who have been going through this whole pandemic, working from home, and having their children at home. Today is just another reminder to me of how that experience unfolds, how challenging it is to really balance your life and your professional life, your home life, any circumstances. So hats off to all of who have been doing this on a much more intense scale than some of us in other parts of the world.

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So anyhow, wherever you are I hope that you're comfortable. That you're not too hot right now. I'm sitting in somewhat of a sauna, but I cannot complain. Everybody is safe, healthy, happy. We're going to look back on these hot days in the middle of winter and wish that we had 39 degrees. So anyhow, wherever you are, I hope you're doing well. Hope all is going well.

So today we're talking about non-negotiable goals. I really thought now would be a great time to talk about this topic in relation to previous episodes of this podcast. You'll recall episodes four and five. We talked about perfectionism, and we talked about fear. I love that listeners wrote in to say that they really resonated with what I was talking about. Some of the examples around perfectionism, some of what I shared around the feeling of fear when you're going after your big goals. I am so delighted that you are resonating with that, and that you're able to take on some of these suggestions that I'm sharing with you.

Last week in episode six we talked about great goals. That kind of moved us into this new dynamic, right? It's looking at this new space, and thinking about, "Well, how are we going to go about creating what it is that we want in our lives?" Today's episode is all about that non-negotiable. What happens when you make that 100% commitment, and how does making that commitment empower you to really go after what you want? So that's what we're going to be talking about today.

Now, the problem presents, and it will present for everyone differently. As we go through the podcast, I would invite you to think about your own practice. The problem that comes up, this is with a client that I work with. It has come up for me in my coaching practice and previously in my law practice. It's the situation that happens when you refuse to draw the line in the sand about something. Often, it's a decision that you need to make. You may hold back from giving it 100%.

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So what might this look like? In your practice, it might be you're in a job. You are no longer satisfied in that job for some reason. You know that you want to leave, but you keep putting off that decision. I've heard this come up in so many different varieties. Often, it's well, I've got this big closing that's coming up. It's three months out. I really don't want to leave anybody high and dry, so I'm just going to wait for that to be done. Then I'm going to start thinking about my next steps.

Or if you're a litigator like I was, maybe there are a number of files that you have, trials coming up, big mediations or events on files. You tell yourself that you really want to be there for those files. So you put off making a decision that is instrumental for your own professional development. So that might be one place where you're not really in, you're not really out either.

Another example might be if you have somebody that you work with who is very difficult for you to get along with. This could be a client. It could be somebody that you report to. That relationship is really strained. You think to yourself, "I really would like to address this in some way." Maybe it is having a conversation where you're starting to set up some boundaries with them. Maybe if it's somebody that you no longer want to be working with. It's finding a way to no longer work with that person.

It's something that you keep thinking about, but you haven't necessarily taken any action. It may be that you are letting your standards drop below what it is that you would like to have for yourself. So it could be in the way that you are treating other people. Maybe it's relationships that you have with your colleagues or with staff or with clients. Maybe it's relationships that you have in your personal life. Maybe it's a family member, maybe it's your spouse, maybe it's your children.

But you find yourself in a situation where you are not showing up the way that you want to, and you're not really making any progress. You seem to

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have the same thoughts. You seem to have the same arguments. You seem to have the same feelings of just futility almost because the process keeps repeating itself. That's another example where I've seen this come up where it's the refusal to make a decision. It's refusal to adhere to a particular standard for yourself.

It could also be that you are letting yourself down. Now, this is probably one of the biggest areas that has room for improvement. There is a tendency, and I see this a lot among lawyers, to put other people first. That means putting them first for all sorts of commitments to the detriment of commitments that you've made to yourself. It may be that you've committed to yourself that you're going to eat healthier or go to the gym more regularly.

That comes up a lot with my clients. They come to see me about something that seems very much in the professional sphere, but what it turns out is that there's also areas of their personal lives that they aren't attending to. But bringing those things back into focus can be really impactful in terms of how they treat themselves, how they show up. So you might ask yourself what it is in your relationship with yourself and the commitments that you've made to yourself, places where you're not truly giving 100%. Where you're not really committing.

It may also be in relation to the balance that you're trying to achieve in your work life and your professional life. So you may find that there is too much going on in one or other of those directions, and it's leaving you feeling unbalanced. Here I would just like to highlight that for every one of you, there's going to be a different space on a spectrum where you will feel most comfortable.

So for some of you, for some women lawyers, the ratio of professional life time to personal life time will be allocated very much in favor of professional time, and that is where you feel most alive. That's where you really thrive.

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That is what feels good to you. There are others who will want to have their personal life weighted more heavily. They'll want to be spending more time devoted to their personal life commitments and less time devoted to their professional life commitments. I know there is a blending of those two areas in many ways.

So it's not really a black or white situation, but I would just like you to think about recognizing that what works for one person may not work for you. The key here is addressing what balance is ideal for you, and then thinking about where you sit in relation to that balance and are you where you want to be. If that's an area where you have an ongoing struggle, then it may be time to start thinking about where it is that you're not fully committing, where you're not fully taking action in one direction or the other.

Finally, another example that I have is maybe if you are struggling to maintain a time management practice. So this is another area where maybe you've decided for yourself, "I really want to be more punctual. I want to be delivering my work products well ahead of when I actually need them ready for." Maybe you have other challenges in your time management practices. So you know you want to commit to that, but you somehow don't find that you're able to get fully on board with that.

So these are examples of how an inability to make a 100% commitment could be showing up in your practice. So what happens here is that at an unconscious level, you have made a decision to be indecisive. You have decided to set up camp in a gray zone, and you're letting certain decisions drag on.

What happens here is you decide on some level that you prefer the discomfort of being in that space where you're weighing the pros and cons over the discomfort of making an actual decision about something. This is not surprising. This is not something that you need to beat yourself up over,

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and it's perfectly natural. If you look at the word decisive or decision, it has its roots in Latin, and it literally translates to cut off.

If you think about it that way, you can see how that would be really scary. I mean imagine that you're being asked to cut off something that is really important to you. Maybe it's your arm, or something you really don't want to let go of. That can seem really scary.

On the flipside, cutting off something can also be completely liberating. If you imagine you're floating up in a hot air balloon, for example, and you start to run out of fuel, then letting go of some sandbags will actually free you up so that you can start moving forward. If you think about times in your life where you've been forced to make a decision or where you've just naturally been very decisive and you've had to let something go, there is a magic in the clarity and the focus that comes along when making that decision. We're going to be talking more about that in today's episode.

Another thing that happens when you refuse to make a decision or where you haven't 100% committed to the outcome on something is that you may find yourself negotiating with yourself. If anybody has children, especially toddlers or young children, you will have experienced what happens when you do not set a clear boundary with your child.

I know. I've been here many times where if I'm not firm in setting a boundary and sticking to it with one of my children then they don't really know where the limits are. So their instinct is to keep testing and keep asking and keep coming back because they want to know what the limit is. If on one day I say, "No, we cannot do that thing. We cannot play video games all day." I'm making this up, although it may have happened. Then it becomes an option for the child to say, "Well, okay here's a day where you've said it's just an hour, but can't I have a little bit more?"

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You'll notice where it's not negotiable. So, for example, school. School is not a negotiable situation for children. They know they need to go there every day. That it's required by law. So the question of whether or not they go to school is not really something that's up for debate. Whereas something that may be optional. In our case in our family, our children go to after school care. We're a bit more flexible on that. There are a lot more negotiations that go on around that element of their day than around school.

So turning that around to yourself, you may ask yourself where you are firm with the rules that you've set for yourself and where you keep negotiating with yourself. I'd ask you to think about that because it works in two ways. Number one, there may be small slips that you're allowing for yourself that are not working in your favor.

So, for example, if your goal is to get a new job, and you are one of those people that is saying, "Well, I'm just going to wait for that trial to go ahead or just settle. I'm going to wait until next February because that's when the bonuses are issued. Or I'm just going to wait until someday when." Then what you're doing is you're giving these little, small steps in the direction against what it is that you're ultimately wanting to achieve.

In a similar way, you may be missing out on opportunities that would get you a little bit closer. So going back to that same example, maybe there are steps along the way that you could be taking. Maybe there are people that are present in your life who could be amazing professional contacts, people who may be able to find that next position that you're looking for. So long as you're in this mindset of indecision, you may not see those opportunities. You may not recognize those opportunities. Or you may see them and recognize them but decide to do nothing about them.

So that's why I think it's really important for us to spend a little bit of time today thinking about what is going on in your practice, in your personal life.

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Where you've set your non-negotiables, where you've got the negotiables that maybe you want to convert into non-negotiables, and how we can go about doing that.

So this problem that we're talking about, this indecision, the reason why it exists is that it can be really, really challenging to declare to yourself that you actually want something. That you are going to declare a goal for yourself because it can be really scary if you think that you might fail. None of us wants to declare some grandiose goal, and then not follow through.

So instead of admitting what you really want, you may just not admit it to anybody. Not even yourself. You may also find another way around it. You may tell yourself that you're just being realistic. That you don't want to say that you have these big goals because it's not likely to happen. Maybe you tell yourself that you're going to hope for the best and prepare for the worst. That may be an okay strategy but hoping for the best really isn't a very productive thing to do. There are other ways of going after what you want that are more likely to get you the results that you're looking for.

You may also be trying to predict the future. You may sit there with this decision ahead of you, and you might think, "Well, if I choose this option," going back to the example of looking for a new job. "Well, I might apply for a job, but I'm not going to get that job. So really there's no point in trying."

Or maybe it's a decision about your timekeeping practices. Maybe you think, "Well, I want to set this new standard for myself, but I know that every time I've tried to create a calendar program for myself, every time I've tried to plan and be strategic in how I strategize and how I use my time, I don't do it very well. So I'm just not going to bother."

Or maybe it's a conversation with somebody that you're concerned about having, and you think, "Well, I don't want to have that conversation because what if it goes off the rails. What if I get fired? What if that person

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doesn't want to work with me anymore?" There are all these different options that we dream up in our mind. Ultimately what that does is that it prevents us from taking steps forward.

There's another one that I see quite often, which is that you get so committed to getting the answer correct that you don't make a decision at all. So you should tell yourself that there's a right decision and a wrong decision. As a result of wanting to avoid making a wrong decision, you don't make any decision at all.

Finally, this is one that I see a lot, and it really strikes me as almost tragic. I've seen a number of lawyers who are working so hard, and they are so committed to what they are doing. They're so busy that they put off their dreams because they are busy doing something today. This has come up a number of times.

It came up in relation to a woman who is really interested in pursuing something that was different from her current practice. She was a very senior lawyer. She had lots of options, lots of experience. She really wanted to go out on a bit of a tangent, but she justified not doing it because she was busy. Because she had things to do. She had people to take care of.

It's very easy to convince yourself that you're too busy to go after what it is that you want, and you will be able to find the work to keep you distracted. You'll feel productive. But the challenge there is that at the end of it, will you have what it is that you are really looking for?

So you may try to solve your problems in many different ways. The strategies that I see don't always produce results that people want. It all boils down really to making a decision. It could be a decision about the standards that you have. It could be a decision about your goals, really

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committing to something and saying, “I want to do that thing.” It could be decisions that are really more globally affecting your life.

Ways that you might be trying to make those decisions now might be to create a T list where you have your pros and cons on two sides of a list, and then you decide to somehow weigh them one way or the other.

We’ve talked about this before, but you may try to predict the future. I would ask you how many times you have done this where you’ve got the decision. Maybe you’ve got your pros and cons listed out. Then you try to forecast yourself into each of the different options. That may get you some distance, but if it’s not helping you land into a decision then it becomes an academic exercise. You could keep churning and rethinking and trying to surmise what is going to happen.

The fact is there's no way you can predict the future. There's no way I could have predicted that today it would be 39 degrees in Vancouver ever and that my kids would be home from school. And that I would be trying to record a podcast while they were sitting downstairs. I could not have predicted that. We could not have predicted that we would have ended up in a global pandemic. There are certain things that are so beyond your control.

So, yes, there is merit in weighing out your decisions thoughtfully and weighing out your decisions thoughtfully and looking at the pros and cons, but ultimately trying to predict how it’s going to turn out probably isn’t a strategy that’s going to get you to where you need to be.

Another strategy that I've seen people use, and I've used this myself, is to try to abdicate responsibility for decision making by deferring to an expert, for example. You may have found yourself doing this sometimes. Maybe you’ve got a big decision that you need to make. Rather than make that decision, you might go decision shopping, right? You might go and chat

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with one of your friends about it or a trusted colleague. You might talk to a mentor about it. You might go talking to a number of different people hoping that one of them will just tell you what to do.

I've had clients who have asked me to just tell them what they need to do. The answer isn't something that I can tell them. If you're out there looking to mentors or friends or other people to tell what you should be doing, they can't tell you either. Ultimately the decision has to come from you. That requires that you take 100% responsibility for the outcome, and not everybody is really willing to do that.

It's not that it's even happening at a conscious level. It's something that happens at a much more subtle way. What's really happening there is there's not a full trust that you have that capacity that you're going to make the right decision. So it's an inclination to want to ask somebody else to do it for you.

So I would ask you to think about whether this is something that might be happening in your practice or in your personal life? Are there decisions in your life where you find yourself turning to other people? I know there are decisions in my life where I continue to do that. I know what I'm doing, and yet I can still see myself asking people for their opinion. It's like, "Okay, what is it that I'm wanting them to tell me?"

Another area might be responsibilities that you are trying to avoid. So an example of this for me was when I was in private practice, not really feeling comfortable setting any boundaries around my time. I always wanted to be available. This is something I prided myself on.

But once I had children, I could no longer be the person who would always be available because somebody needed to be available to pick my children up from daycare. Somebody needed to be available to look after them. So I started to assert boundaries because I had my children there that I needed

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to take care of. Really the issue there is boundary setting, is being able to set those boundaries for myself.

You might ask yourself where there might be areas in your life where you've got a similar situation where you need to assert something or take responsibility for something, and you're not willing to do that for yourself.

Finally, another strategy that doesn't produce necessarily the best results is waiting for inspiration to hit you. You might be waiting for that decision to just strike you in the moment, and sometimes you may find that the decision does just reach you like magically. But sometimes it doesn't. If you're waiting for the decision to just make itself, you may be waiting for a very long time.

The reason that these strategies don't necessarily work is because you have not committed to the outcome. These strategies don't necessarily work because you've developed a habit with yourself that makes it okay to stay in indecision. We've talked about neural pathways before and how your brain gets really good at doing the things that you do frequently. So if you're often in a situation where you are being indecisive and that becomes your default way of doing things, that becomes a well-traveled neural pathway in your brain, and that becomes a very easy reflex for you.

Another reason why this is not a particularly effective strategy is that you may find that you are just draining your batteries. There's a lovely analogy for this. If you think about your cell phone and what happens when you go out into a remote area. If your phone is turned on, it will seek out a signal. It will keep seeking out a signal, and it will keep trying until it gets one. Even if it doesn't. So your phone may not be connected to any internet, it may not be in communication, but it's working really hard.

That's kind of like what's happening in your mind when you have an unmade decision, an unset standard that you're not willing to commit to.

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Your brain is constantly processing it. You're throwing that idea back and forth. You're spending time. You're churning. Yet because you're in that mode, you're spending a lot of energy, but you're not getting a lot of results. So that's another reason why this strategy doesn't particularly work.

What's really interesting is if you think about what you could be doing with that energy if you weren't mulling over or stewing over an unmade decision. I mean think about what would happen if you took that energy and used it towards taking steps in the direction of a decision.

Now, the result that is created when you aren't being strategic about your decisions is that you don't get what you want. If you're so busy making a decision or being in that space, that gray zone, of weighing the pros, weighing the cons, then you may never get started in taking direction.

So you may stay in that job way longer than you wanted to stay in that job. You may never have that conversation with the difficult boss or the difficult client. You may never make any progress. You may never decide that it's time to take control of your health, to actually engage in some self-care. You may decide that you just are going not to deal with your time management.

I mean you can make those decisions. You can put them off. The result is going to be that nothing changes. That you're stuck, you're not moving forward. You may start talking yourself out of things without even trying. You may decide that your goals are too big. That the standards are too high. There's no point. You're much more comfortable where you are.

Finally, when you don't actually make a decision, you don't try to make something work, you don't commit 100% then you may miss out on building your confidence. Every time you go and try something new and it's hard, but you make it work. Every time you make a decision, maybe you feel like it's a wrong decision after you've made it, but then you do everything in

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your power to achieve that non-negotiable. Then all of a sudden you start to build that confidence with yourself, and you can find it so much more natural for you to do that again.

So we talked about the habit of not making decisions. Well, what if you developed a habit of just making a decision? So I'm going to offer four steps that you can use. Easy steps to try to create some more decisiveness, decisions, standards, non-negotiables that will help you get closer to what it is that you want.

So we're going to start with step number one, which is to look around in your practice, look around in your life, and identify what is currently non-negotiable for you? So what are the standards that you are not willing to compromise on?

Some of those might be that you always deliver your work on time. Maybe that is just a basic standard. You are always on time, end of story. It may be that it's the quality of your work product. That you never submit anything with a typo. That it's always formatted a certain way. That you always do a certain degree of diligence and research, and you present it in a certain style. Whatever the hallmark of quality is for you, that may be a non-negotiable standard that you adhere to.

These are all areas where you are 100% committed to the outcome, and you don't even have to think about it. It's not a decision that you're making. It's just who you are. So I'd ask you to look around and see what areas of your life you have that level of commitment, and then to ask yourself what it is that you're doing to ensure that these standards are met?

It may be that you have a way of planning for it. If it's delivering everything on time, maybe you are getting your materials all together. You're looking at your calendar. You're deciding on the dates you need to do things by. If it's the way that you show up for other people, maybe it's prioritizing them.

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Thinking about all the different things that you have on your to-do list, and you're setting your priorities in a way that you get those things done. It may be that you're doing those things at the expense of something else but notice that you are giving priority to that one thing.

Another example is it may be that level of commitment. It may just be that you have committed to yourself. There is that non-negotiable standard, and that's what you adhere to. End of story. What I would invite you to do is to think about what these strategies are that you're using, looking at the meta skills that you're engaging, and create a list. Create a checklist. Because that may be the ingredients that you need to set up a success formula for yourself. Those steps may be the ones that you simply need to take in relation to something that's important to you but not yet non-negotiable.

Now step two is to be honest with yourself about where you are not staying true to your goals. So this is really looking at areas in your life. Maybe you identified some of these when you were thinking about what was non-negotiable to you. So what is it right now that you're not 100% committed to that you could be 100% committed to, that you want to be 100% committed to.

When you look at those, think about what they are. For some of you, it may be your relationship with yourself, like I mentioned before. Maybe that's an area where you know you're falling short. You don't want to fall short, and you want to improve the trust that you can have with yourself that you're going to follow through on the commitments that you make to yourself.

Maybe it's your exercise program. Maybe it's time that you're spending looking after yourself, time with friends, time with families. Maybe there are hobbies that you have. Maybe it's your own professional fulfillment. Maybe it's looking at your career more strategically and being less in that reactive mode where you are answering to everybody else and not really taking the time to think about what it is that you want.

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So these are areas where you might think, “Okay, I have a goal here. I know that I'm not committing to that goal 100%.” So once you have identified those, then I would ask you to think about how long this has been going on for. I mean really what we're talking about here is somewhat of a negotiation with yourself. So you have the standard that you want to have, but you're somehow talking yourself out of committing to it, to taking steps towards it. So what's going on? How long has that been going on for? What's it costing you?

If you look at that duration, I mean maybe it's your health. I know this happened with a number of individuals when we went into the pandemic mode. It's a big adjustment. If you're not used to working from home and all of a sudden, you're working from home, a lot of your self-care routines may have fallen to the wayside.

So look at that and think, “Well, what is it costing me to have that happen? Do I want that to continue?” So think about the cost, think about what would happen a year from now if you followed on that course, and think about what would happen a year from now if you just decided that this was it. I'm making a decision. I'm going to change this. In a year from now, I want to be 100% committed to my health, my new job, whatever it happens to be. Then take every imaginable step that you can to make that result happen.

So that's step two is really to be honest with yourself about where you're falling short of your goals, and then you can start to really work with those and start to make them happen.

Step three is to be bold about the goals that you declare for yourself, about the standards that you set for yourself. Going back to that earlier point, we often talk ourselves out of setting the bar too high because we don't want to fail. We don't want to declare something and then be embarrassed that we didn't actually achieve that thing. We want to be realistic, right? We think,

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“Well, that’s likely what’s going to happen. So why don’t I just set my goal for that?”

There's quite a downside, actually, to that in that you may be selling yourself short. There's this wonderful expression. Hal Elrod shares it in a book called *The Morning Miracles*. What he talks about is this idea that setting a goal isn't so much about achieving that very specific goal. The whole point of setting a goal is the person that you become in trying to achieve that goal.

So if you set yourself up with a nice, large, juicy maybe it's an unattainable seeming goal, and you do everything in your power to reach that goal, you may not actually reach that goal. But you may reach something well beyond what you would have reached if you set what you conceived to be a more realistic goal.

So step number three is be bold. Think about what you really want. If there were no limits to what you could have, if there were no restrictions, if reality wasn't a factor, what would you set your sights on? Make that your goal, and then think about all the ways in which you can go about achieving that goal. I promise you. Your goal achieving or goal pursuing activities will be so much more exciting, and you'll have so much energy because you'll be able to imagine yourself in that position and think about how amazing that would feel. That's so much more motivating than going towards something that maybe isn't quite as exciting to you.

Then step four, this is the final step that I'm sharing today, is to train yourself to make a decision. Decisions come up all the time in the course of your day. There are small decisions like what you wear, what you're going to eat for lunch. I would highly recommend training yourself to be decisive.

I can speak for myself. I have certain areas of my life that I've really trained myself to be decisive to the point of automation. I try to routinize as much

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as possible from meal planning to exercise routine to the way that I set up my work schedule. As much as possible I try to default those decisions so that I don't have to make them. I've made those decisions. They've become non-negotiable. They're just the motus of operation, or however you say that.

So think about what it is in your life that you can simply make a decision, and then not make any more decisions about that thing. Be decisive. Then you may start looking for new decisions to make. What are some decisions that you're not currently making that you could make? How are you going to go about making those decisions?

I'd encourage you to start small, right? Start small, small decisions, and practice that. As you get better at making those decisions, start moving on to bigger ones. What you'll notice is that you may find that once you make those decisions, you're not as attached to having that perfect outcome. Because you'll start to see that making that decision is really where the power is.

Once you've made the decision, you can move forward. Maybe you need to course correct, but maybe not. Maybe you just move forward. If you do need to course correct, you may still be closer to getting what you want than you would be if you hadn't made any decision at all.

If you're stuck, you can ask yourself what's one small thing I can do to move this matter forward? You can use it on files. You can use that when you're writing memos. You can use that when you're sending a challenging email, or you want to start initiating that difficult conversation with somebody. What's one small step you could take today to move you closer to your goal?

So here we want to train yourself to be decisive. What's lovely about doing this exercise is that you will learn to trust yourself. As you become more

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decisive, as you develop that practice, as you realize that regardless of what decision you make, you're going to be okay. You can become more comfortable with the fact that you are making these decisions, and you'll learn to develop a much closer relationship with yourself. You'll trust yourself. You'll trust your ability to make a decision and move ahead.

Second, what will be very interesting is once you start making decisions and cutting off options to yourself, you'll see that there are new opportunities that open up. So there's this idea that if it's not a hell yes then it's a no. I'm not saying that every decision has to be at that standard, but the beauty in that expression is that it really highlights that what you say yes to is where you're going to proceed.

Every time that you say yes to something you're saying no to something else. So if you say yes to working late at the office, you may be saying no to spending more time with your family. Maybe that's the decision that you want to make, but it's being conscious of that. The more that you are cutting off the things that may not serve you, it allows you more time to pursue those things that do serve you.

So be strategic about those commitments. Be strategic about your commitments. Be strategic about what you want, and you may find that you don't miss the things that you let go of, and that you're finding so much more fulfillment in the things that you're saying yes to.

Now, the reason that this will work as a strategy is that you will start to notice in your life opportunities where you can either up level your thinking and move forward towards your goals, or opportunities where you may not be taking action and you may deny yourself opportunities to grow. Once you start noticing that, then you'll be able to make really conscious decisions.

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Once you start making those decisions, once you start seeing yourself as a decisive person, somebody who takes action. Somebody who knows that the decision doesn't really matter nearly as much as how you proceed after you make the decision. You will have a new conception of the way that you see yourself, and you will become conditioned to a pattern of decisions and adapting and growing in a way that allows you to evolve professionally and personally.

The reason this is going to work is because every time you do this, you're developing a new way of thinking. Your neural pathways are becoming more entrenched, and you'll build your confidence. You'll gain momentum, and the snowball effect will take place. Pretty soon you will start to see yourself as decisive. You'll become very comfortable with setting high standards for yourself knowing that you're going to then make decisions that align with those standards that you've set. You'll find that this really starts to work in your favor.

Now, the skills that you'll be developing as you do this are mindfulness. Again, you'll start to see the opportunities to create goals for yourself and then pursue them. It is a willingness. You'll develop that new skill of letting go of old habits. This can be really hard because we get really attached to things that we're comfortable with.

I'm sure you have items in your closet, a dress maybe, that you really liked five years ago that you haven't worn in several years. Or maybe it's a piece of furniture in your condo or your house that you have a strong sentimental attachment to. The kids used to sit there. Your friends come over and sit there.

There may be certain things that you're just not really ready to let go of. Maybe it's part of your work. Maybe there are elements of your job that you love doing, but you know that they're below your paygrade. That these are

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things that you should be delegating now for efficiency reasons because it frees you up to take on more challenging assignments.

So there may be things that you really, really love and you don't want to let go of, but you need to let go of those things so that you can evolve to the next level of your professional work and your personal growth. So your willingness to let go is a skill that you will develop as you commit to those greater goals, to that 100% commitment, the standards, the goals, the decisions that you want to make in your life.

The last skill that I mention, although I'm sure that there are many more, is that it will help you to develop focus and clarity. When you refuse to make a decision and you're sitting in that stage of waffling back and forth, weighing the pros and cons, being in the discomfort of not making a decision but not wanting to choose or take responsibility, you can't really get clear and focus on the path ahead. Once you do make that decision and you have that focus and clarity, it allows you to really learn just what you're capable of.

I know that you've done this in the past. I know that you haven't got to where you are by not being in a position where you've been focused and clear and determined to go after that one thing. Think about what that looks like for you.

For some of you if you're just starting out, maybe it was getting into law school and securing your articles and getting through your articles and getting called to the bar. I mean that might be that first burning goal that's ahead of you. If you're further on in your practice, maybe it's becoming partner at your firm. Maybe it's getting that in-house position. Maybe it's doing your first trial.

There are so many opportunities along the way where you can make that decision to go all in and to enjoy the benefit of the energy that fuels your actions in relation to that goal and the way that you feel about yourself

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when you finally reach it. So I highly encourage you to think about how you're developing these skills as you're reaching for those non-negotiable goals.

The results that will create are increased confidence. You'll develop more confidence in your ability to go after and achieve what you want. Your outcomes will start to be more consistent with the goals that you want. When you start being decisive about what you are choosing, you'll find that your path is narrowing way more specifically in the direction of where you want to go. Instead of being pulled in all these different directions, instead of waffling kind of like a sailboat in choppy waters where you don't really know where you're going. It's like your sails catch the wind, and you start going the direction that you want to go.

That is where I want you to see yourself. I want you to be thinking about that when these decisions come up. It doesn't matter how small they are, how big they are. Take advantage of those opportunities to think about which one of these decisions is going to get me closer to where I really want to be?

As I mentioned before, one of the benefits of this is that you'll really develop that trust in yourself. So many of us have put our trust in other people. We think other people hold the answers. That they know the right steps to take. That they know better. That they managed to achieve success, and so they must know all the answers. But they know the answers for themselves. They know the answers because they tried and they tested and they set their own goals, and they managed to get to where they are.

Your path is different. Your path is yours. So my words to you are to learn to trust yourself, to learn to trust that inner voice because that is what's going to guide you to exactly where it is that you want to go.

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Finally, you will evolve. As you let go of what's no longer serving you and as you take steps towards what you really want, you're going to evolve. You're going to go through all the things that we talked about in earlier episodes, right? You're going to go through that fear. You're going to maybe struggle with perfectionism. You're going to have to manage your time around it. You're going to have to start saying no to things. As you make those decisions, once you've declared your non-negotiable goals for yourself, you are going to get that moment. You're going to build. You're going to evolve.

So those are my tips. That's what I have to share today. Going back to the tips, I'll just recap them here. Number one was to look for the non-negotiables that already exist in your life and identify how you go about them because that's your roadmap. That's your path to success. The second step is to be honest with yourself about where you have goals that you wish were non-negotiable that you still haven't committed to. I would encourage you to commit to those goals, and to start looking at what that's costing you and what the benefit would be of actually going after them.

Step three is to be bold in the goals that you declare for yourself. To really think about what the non-negotiable is and to go after it. Step four is to train yourself to be decisive. So before we sign off, I invite you to think about what your non-negotiable goals might be. Maybe it's you'll get a new job by the end of 2021. Maybe you will leave your current job by the end of the year. Maybe you will stop letting others call the shots near life.

Maybe you will own your decisions. Maybe you'll decide that you're just going to be confident in your abilities. Maybe you make that declaration to yourself. You stop doubting yourself, and you just decide that you're confident period. Maybe you'll make a decision to take 100% responsibility for the outcomes in your life. Maybe it's your relationships, maybe it's your professional achievements. Whatever it is, you are going to own them 100%. If you were to have that thing, imagine what your life would be like.

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It has been such a pleasure speaking with you this week. I hope you enjoyed today's podcast as much as I enjoyed creating it. I am so excited to have you here with me week after week, and please let me know. Please let me know what's resonating with you, if you have topics that you'd like me to cover.

Of course, if you're interested in working with me, I do work with lawyers one to one. I do coaching on all sorts of topics. We talk about job transitions. We talk about time management. We talk about all sorts of ways of showing up in practice, building confidence. I would be delighted to speak with you if that's something that you're interested in. If that is the case, then I'd encourage you to send me a note.

You can find me on thejoyfulpractice.com website. There's a contact sheet there. Send me a note. Contact me on LinkedIn. I'm also there as well, Paula Price, and I would love to hear from you. So wishing all of you a fabulous week. Hope you stay cool, and I'll look forward to seeing you again soon. Thank you for tuning in. Bye for now.

If you enjoyed today's show and don't want to miss an episode, subscribe, and follow the show wherever you listen to your podcasts. If you haven't already, please leave a rating and review. Your feedback will help me create a podcast that's tailored to your needs and goes straight to the heart of what matters to you. For instructions on how to subscribe, rate, and review the podcast, visit www.thejoyfulpractice.com/podcastlaunch. See you next time.

Thank you for listening to this episode of *The Joyful Practice for Women Lawyers* podcast. If you want more information, visit www.thejoyfulpractice.com. See you next week.

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