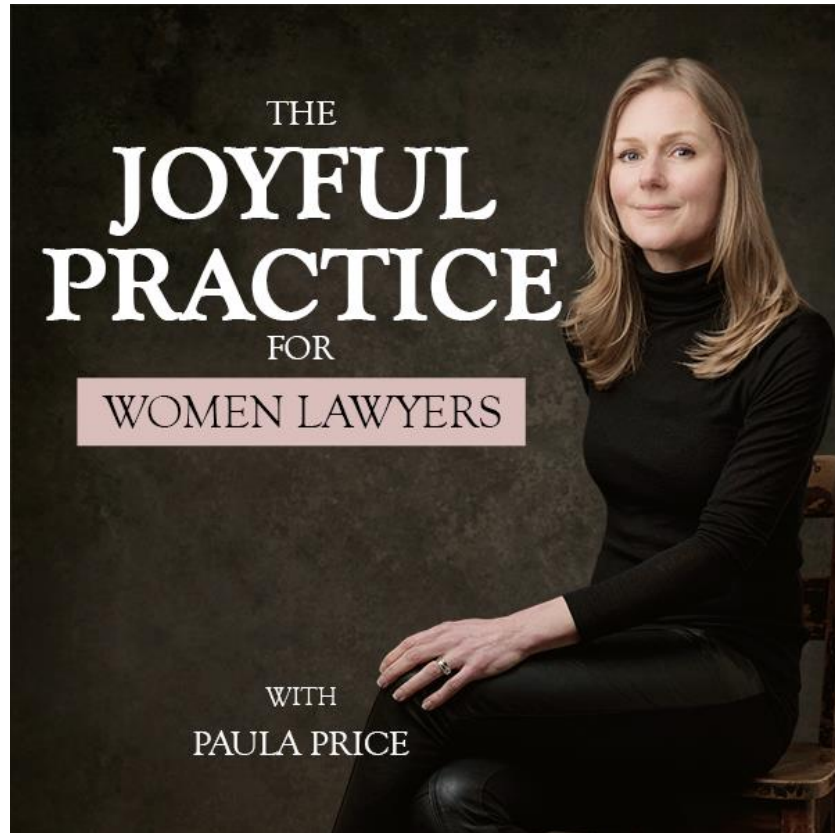


Ep #20: When You Need a Pep Talk



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 20.

Welcome to *The Joyful Practice for Women Lawyers* Podcast. I'm your host Paula Price, lawyer turned certified executive coach. This podcast was created to empower women lawyers just like you to create a life and practice you love. Join me every week for a break from the hustle so we can focus on you, what you truly want, and how you can create it.

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.

Hello, my friends, and welcome back to the podcast. If you're joining for the first time, welcome. My name is Paula Price, and I'm a lawyer turned certified executive coach and the host of this podcast. Today's episode is all about pep talks. The reason I created it is because I wanted to create a podcast episode that could be used as a resource in the future or now if you find yourself in a situation where you really need a pep talk.

I know this is something that lawyers are interested in having. You may not talk about it with your friends. It may not even be something that's on your radar. When I work with coaching clients, I will ask them what it is that they would find useful from me. In almost all cases, they ask me for some version of a pep talk. They look for a cheerleader or someone who can support them or someone to bounce ideas or help them get through some of the tough spots. So I wanted to create a resource that could do that.

I also was inspired to do this podcast episode by my daughter. She is amazing when it comes to giving pep talks, better than anybody I know. I can't tell you the number of times where I may have said something like, "Oh I've got this thing to do and I'm a little bit nervous about it. Or I'm doing this for the first time, a little scared. I don't even want to do this anymore."

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She'll come back to me, and she'll have these amazing pep talks for me, these wonderful words. Every time it just inspires me and gives me that extra nudge I need to move forward. So I wish I could have her come on the podcast. She would actually deliver a fabulous pep talk. Maybe we'll do that at some point in the future, but for now you're stuck with me.

What I'm going to be talking about today are four situations where you might find yourself in need of a pep talk. We are going to talk about what that might look like and some ideas to get you over whatever it is that's holding you back. So with that, we're going to jump into today's episode. Before I get into the situations, I just wanted to set the backdrop a little bit. If you do find yourself in a situation where you do need a pep talk, it's totally normal. You're not alone. In the legal profession, I think it can be particularly challenging for a number of reasons.

Number one, as lawyers often you're working on your own. So you're relatively isolated, and you don't always have people around you that you can turn to to give you a pep talk. Maybe that the work that you're doing is confidential. So you might be working on files that you're not allowed to talk about with people outside of your law firm. Some of what you might need a pep talk around might be so sensitive that you can't talk about it with your parents or your friends or other people who support you. So you feel a little bit isolated there as well.

It may be cultural. Think about how lawyers, you are a person, a professional, who's in a position of advising others. Maybe you feel like as someone in that role, you can't ask for help. You can't share things that are on your mind because you don't want to come across as anything less than 100% confident in what it is that you're doing. So if you find yourself in a situation where you feel isolated, you feel alone. You can't really have this discussion with somebody. Those may be reasons that are holding you back from getting some of the support that you need.

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So I'm hoping that this particular podcast episode will serve as a way of bridging that gap, of filling that void so that you've got someone who can cheer you on next time you need it. So let's jump into the four situations where I've seen people needing pep talks. You might be able to relate to one or more of them.

So the first situation that you might find yourself in is the one where you're putting off or you're avoiding a task. We've all been there. Maybe the task is particularly large. Maybe it's particularly complex. You don't know where to start. So you do busy work instead. You try putting it off. Maybe you find yourself feeling really exhausted every time that you sit down to do that work. So you get up to get a snack or a cup of coffee, maybe you take a nap. It can come up in all sorts of different situations.

In practice, I've had lawyers come to me who really struggle with this when they're trying to write something. They feel really overwhelmed when they open the document, and they have to put words in that document, and they don't really know where to start. They're nervous about the outcome. What if it's not perfect? There's a lot of places where you might feel this sense of not wanting to tackle the thing that is on your desk.

It might be dog files. Some of us may have had that experience. I know I did when I was in practice. Those files that literally sit at the back of your filing cabinet and you ignore them because they don't have any pressing deadlines, but they call to you. They call to you in those slow times, and you really want to go and reach for them and work on them, but you don't. Or you do it and you do it very slowly.

It could be administrative tasks. It could be doing your timesheets. It's tasks that you don't really want to jump into because they seem large, they seem heavy, they seem overwhelming, whatever it is for you. This situation I'm nicknaming the elephant. The reason I'm calling it the elephant is because it's heavy, and it can feel overwhelming. It takes a lot to get it moving.

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The underlying feeling here is overwhelm. Maybe it's dread. Maybe it's that dog file and you dread looking at what's inside of that file. You haven't looked at it in a while. If that's what you're feeling, I just want you to know that it's totally normal. There are lots of lawyers out there who are procrastinating, who are feeling that sense of dread, who are feeling overwhelmed. It's not just you.

It can be particularly challenging when you are working on something that is not urgent or that is particularly large. When the pressure is off, it can be hard to get started especially if you're used to working in a really fast paced environment where there are deadlines and people emailing and wanting things. You're not alone, and there is a solution here. The solution is, it's an old proverb. I've heard it before. I don't quite understand it, but the idea is to eat the elephant one bite at a time.

I don't know who is eating elephants. I'm not quite sure that's a thing. I suppose I could have looked that up before recording this episode. I didn't. You can see what they're getting at. One step at a time. So if you take that giant task, that daunting task, that scary task and do it piece by piece, you will eventually get to the end of it. The goal I'd like for you to have in mind is to think about how you can break it down so that each piece that you have to do, each bite that you have to eat is in itself easy.

So some ideas here might be to set a timer. If you set yourself a timer and say, "Okay, I'll spend 10 minutes working on this." You might find that once you've gotten through that first 10 minutes that the rest is a little bit easier. It flows a little bit more readily.

I would invite you to consider breaking down the project. So this is something that I love doing. I do it with my clients. I do it for myself. I do it whenever I sit down to write anything of substance, which is to break it down into steps, bullet points, results that you want to achieve in relation to one goal or project. So that's the next thing that I would suggest. Finally

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you might also just commit to doing just one single thing. So you've got a task ahead of you. Identify one step you can take and do that step.

Now, if this is something that you struggle with, I would encourage you to go to podcast episode number two. It's all about time management, and I offer a number of strategies that you can use. I talk about procrastination in that episode. So I would encourage you to jump in, and that can be part of your pep talk.

Now we're moving on to situation number two. That is you made a mistake, or you failed at something. This one really hurts. If you've been there, I know I've been there. Almost every human I've ever met has been there at some point or another. That feeling at having made a mistake or failed. So what might that look like in your practice?

It might be that you make a true mistake. One that requires you to get other lawyers at your law firm involved, get your insurers involved. I can't speak to what system you have in place at your firm. I highly recommend that you figure out what that is in case it ever happens and that you follow those procedures. I'm not really talking about how to deal with it in that way. That's a separate thing. I'm looking at more from the perspective of how you feel about that mistake. So it could be a mistake as big as that.

It could also be a much smaller mistake. It might be a typo that you have in a document that you send to somebody that's really important. Maybe it's that you misspell a client's name, and you feel embarrassed about it. Maybe it's something more than that. Maybe you make a mistake in... You're doing a presentation, and there's everybody there and they see you get a date wrong or a case name wrong or something like that.

It may be that you have a conversation with somebody, and you say the total wrong thing. I know I've been there where I've had a conversation with somebody, and I've literally put my foot in my mouth. For hours, possibly

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even days, I will ruminate over that conversation thinking back to the thing that I said and how much I regretted saying it.

So there are mistakes that will come up in your practice. They'll come up in your personal life. That's one situation where you might really need a pep talk. Another is where you fail at something. If you know my work then you'll know that I don't truly believe in failure. I think failure, and I use it with air quotes, that really it's an opportunity for learning. Failure in itself is simply not meeting expectations, whether it's your expectations or somebody else's expectations. That can show up in a number of ways.

Maybe you're told that your colleagues find it difficult to work with you. Maybe a client complains about you or decides they no longer want to work with you. Maybe you lose your court application. Maybe you lose a case. Maybe you've won a case and now it's been overturned. I mean there are all sorts of situations, especially when you're practicing as a lawyer where you can "fail". Again, air quotes.

When this happens, you might feel sick to your stomach. You might feel like you don't want to talk to anybody. You might start beating yourself up, telling yourself stories. Like this always happens to me. If that's the case then I want you to know that you're not alone, and that mistakes happen.

This situation I've given the nickname of the camel. The reason that I've given it that nickname is because you literally want to bury your head in the sand. The associated emotion that comes along with this is shame. Really, ultimately, it's because you feel ashamed or embarrassed that you made a mistake. We've all been there. What I want you to know about that is that mistakes are a part of growing, that mistakes are part of being human. That we all experience it at some point or another. That nothing has gone wrong. There is nothing wrong with you. This happens to all of us.

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The solution here that I'm offering to you is to give daylight to whatever it is that you think is so terrible. What you will find is that when you're open about it, when you share what has happened and you choose who you get to share that with, you will see that it's not as big as you thought it was. That it's not insurmountable. If it was a mistake you made and you need to take steps to fix it that there are steps that you can take to fix it whether these are steps that you take on your own, whether these are steps that you take with somebody else.

If there is a mistake that you made, I would invite you most of all to forgive yourself. You don't need to carry this mistake as something that you use to punish yourself, to beat yourself up. This is something that I would invite you to really forgive yourself and to move forward. When you do that, I would invite you to use whatever the mistake was as a learning opportunity to look at how that situation arose in the first place, what you learned about that situation, and how you're going to apply it going forward.

I can tell you from lawyers that I've worked with, stories that I've heard from other lawyers, that really it's in making those mistakes that you have your greatest learning opportunities. It's not so much whether you make a mistake or if you can somehow avoid them and be perfect all the time. It's how you deal with those mistakes that really defines who you are. So I would encourage you if you find yourself in a situation where you have made a mistake, decide who it is that you want to be in dealing with that going forward. So that, my friends, is situation number two, the camel.

If that's something that resonates with you, that's a topic that you might be able to relate to, I would encourage you to listen to a couple of podcast episodes that I have recorded. The first episode is episode number three, which is how to turn around a bad day. In that episode, I talk about a day that I had that was going a little bit sideways and how I turned it around. I offer suggestions on how you might be able to do the same.

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Episode 11, I would also encourage you to look at that one. I talk about being your own best boss, and there it really is all about the dialogue that you have with yourself and learning to speak with yourself in a way that is empowering instead of a way that is beating yourself up and knocking yourself over and having to get back up again. So episode number three and episode number 11 I would encourage you to check those out.

This brings us to situation number three. In this situation, you talk yourself out of trying even in the first place. You may be in that situation right now. Maybe you're in a job where you feel like you could be somewhere else. There's a better job out there for you. You've been doing the same thing over and over again. You don't like the practice area that you're in. You don't like the subject matter. Maybe you've outgrown the people, the place. It could be all sorts of things. Maybe it's just that voice inside you that's telling you it's not right, but you haven't done anything about it.

It could also be that you want to take action. Maybe you want to get a mentor for yourself. Maybe you want to negotiate a better salary. I mean there's all sorts of situations where you might find there's this thing that you're kind of interested in or very interested in, but you're talking yourself out of doing it or taking any steps.

An example that came to mind is a client that I worked with who was moving from out of province to Vancouver. In the course of our work together, it was clear that there were beliefs that she had that she would not be able to get the thing that she really wanted. She wanted a job in Vancouver in a specific practice area, and she wanted to do it on a certain timeline that fit really nicely with other events that were taking place in her life.

In that situation, I could tell that she believed that these things were not necessarily possible because of the time of year, because she had been told that there were no jobs available at law firms. That the economy was

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bad. That this particular practice area was impossible. In the end, this client that I worked with managed to get exactly what she wanted. A job in her practice area in Vancouver within the time frame that she wanted. It may be that you're talking yourself out of doing something before you even try.

If you're finding yourself in this situation, then the nickname here is Velcro. It may be self-explanatory, but the idea here is you're really letting yourself be stuck. You're stuck. You're holding yourself back. The overriding feeling here is doubt. It's doubt. It's doubt in yourself. It's doubt in your environment. It's doubt that what you want is possible. What I want you to know about this is if you're feeling doubt that it's totally normal. It's your lawyer brain trying to protect you.

You've probably heard about the negativity bias, and how lawyers tend to have a higher than average bias when it comes to seeing negative things. It's a wonderful skill to have if you're looking for holes in a contract or you're picking apart somebody else's argument. But when you're planning for your life, you probably don't want to just be focusing on all the terrible things that can happen and start focusing on some of the things that are positive that could happen.

So what I want to share with you is that if you're finding yourself in this spot where you're stuck, you're not moving forward because you're just not able to see what is possible for you. Then I want you to know that there is a point in trying. For every story you tell yourself where the end of the story is, "Well, that was a bad idea. It obviously isn't going to work so I shouldn't even bother trying. I'm never going to get the raise. I'm not going to get that job. I'm not qualified enough."

Whatever story it is that you're telling yourself, there is an equal story that has a happy ending. One where you could get that job. One where you could get the raise. One where you do get whatever it is that you want to have happen. The solution here is a choice that you need to make. It's

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choosing to believe in yourself, and it's a choice to believe that that outcome is possible for you.

The action step here is to ask yourself this. If you believed that whatever it is that you want is possible, what would you do next? Then, my friend, I invite you to go out and do the first step towards getting that thing. For those of you who may identify with perfectionism, if that's part of the recipe for self-doubt or doubt in your case, then I would encourage you to check out my podcast episode number four. It's called What Perfectionism Is Costing You. It talks about how perfectionism can hold you back. That might be a helpful tool to help you through that. So that, my friends, was Velcro.

We're going to move into the last situation, which was situation number four. Which is that you are viscerally resisting what it is that you're about to do. This, if it's happening to you, you're well past the doubt stage. Chances are you've already taken a number of steps, and where you are now is really in that moment of truth. So maybe you are about to leave a job that you've had for a while. You're about to have that discussion with your boss where you let them know, "This is it. I'm leaving."

It may be that you're doing something really challenging for the first time. It's a court application. You're leading a deal. You are taking a risk. You're giving an opinion. You're putting your neck on the line so to speak. It may be that you've decided to start changing boundaries. You've decided to be firm about not doing certain things, and you're scared that there's going to be repercussions for you when you do that.

It could be that you're about to have a difficult conversation. I like this example because I think we've all been there where we're about to walk into a room to say something to somebody, and we're nervous about the outcome. It may be that you're about to set one of those boundaries.

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Maybe you're about to say no to something and you're worried about how the other person is going to respond.

For some people it comes up when they're talking about being pregnant. I mean you might be really nervous about the implications that's going to have on your boss, on the team that you work on. Are they going to look at you differently? There's all sorts of situations where this can come up. What it feels like is it might be that pulse racing. You feel hot. You feel nervous. You feel anxious.

The nickname that I've given this situation is house on fire. The reason I called it house on fire is I'm drawing a bit here from first responders. I don't mean to say that having a conversation with your boss is on the same playing field as jumping into a burning house, but the parallel that I'm trying to get at is courage. The idea that you may need to take an action that you are going to take in spite of whatever feelings you have that are going on within your body.

So you can imagine a fireperson who's about to leap into a burning building. Chances are the logic part of their brain is saying, "That is dangerous. You're risking death." It's holding them back, and yet they push themselves forward because they know that the upside of doing that, of saving lives, is worth it. It's worth the risk for them.

So you may not be jumping into a burning building, but your body might feel as though you were. You may feel all that resistance, but you may look on whatever it is that's on the other side of that and say, "This is something that's really important to me. This is something that really matters to me. So whatever fear I'm feeling, I'm going to go ahead and I'm going to do it anyways."

So what you need to know here is that fear in itself is not something that you need to be scared of. It's not a sign that anything is going wrong. If

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you're feeling fearful about something, I think it's a good sign. I think it's a sign that there's something you really care about, and it's an opportunity for you to do something about it. When you push yourself through fear, when you actually go through that exercise, you come out so much stronger on the other side. You develop a skill of being able to manage and deal with and overcome fear. You have now gotten yourself closer to whatever it is that you're really looking for.

If you keep doing this over time, if you keep pushing through that wall of fear and getting to that next thing that's important to you, overtime you're going to find that your life just starts to look so much more like you want it to and so much less like how you feel like it has to or somebody else decided it for you. Another thing that's really important to remember when it comes to fear is that it's a feeling and that it's temporary.

So if it's a conversation that, for example, that you're having and it's a 10 minute conversation or maybe it's a court application and it's going to take one hour. Whatever it is, it probably is time bound. So you can actually do that math for yourself. Okay it will be 10 minutes, but then it's over. When you look at it that way, it puts into perspective the upside of whatever it is that you're really striving to get in exchange for going through that fear. And if you're looking at it in this way, you will actually be in that situation.

If you put that thing off, it only prolongs the discomfort that you're going to feel. Because until you do that thing, you're going to live with that sense of dread. So if you have a conversation that you need to have and you know it's going to take five minutes. It's going to be painful potentially. You could have it this week, but you decide to put it off to next week. Then you decide to put it off to the week after that. You're only prolonging that fear because you're living out that conversation in your head several times before while you could just get it over with.

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So my advice to you if you're in that situation is to do the fear. The fear is temporary. What you want that lives on the other side of it may be a lot more long lasting and a lot more rewarding. So, my friends, I would invite you to go out and just do it. If this is something that resonates with you, I invite you to check out episode number five of this podcast where I talk about how to do fear. I draw a parallel between myself, my fear that I had when I launched this podcast.

It was something that I wanted. I was excited about it. I did all the steps that I needed to do. So I was well past that doubt phase of not getting anything done. I was past the elephant phase. I was there. I'd probably gone through some mistakes. I can't remember. Before this podcast launch, I just remember feeling this wall of fear and having to work my way through that. So I talk about that in the episode. I talk about some strategies for getting through that fear. So absolutely. If that's you and there's something on the other side of it, I encourage you to go for it. Listen to that podcast episode.

So to recap, we've talked about four different situations where you might need a pep talk. We've talked about some suggestions for getting past those roadblocks, those hurdles. No matter what it is that you're being tasked to do that you were made for it. No matter what the outcome is whether you are successful or if you fail, however you define either of those terms, that you'll learn from that experience and that you will grow.

So to recap the four different situations that we talked about today. We talked about the elephant, overwhelm. How to overcome that you can take it one step at a time. The second one was the camel, otherwise known as the shame. Where you feel embarrassed, where you want to stick your head in the sand. Daylight and forgiving yourself are the steps to overcoming that particular obstacle.

We talked about doubt, aka Velcro. How that feeling of it not being possible, of doubting yourself, of doubting your environment. How that can

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really hold you back and it doesn't have to. Then finally the house on fire. Fear of looking at a situation where you feel like every fiber in your body is telling you not to do it, that it's dangerous. But you go ahead, and you do it anyway because you know that what lies on the other side is so much better.

So my friends, that is what I have to offer you today. I hope that you can come back to this podcast whenever you need a podcast. Like I said, I should probably bring my daughter on to give one of her pep talks. They really are amazing. But for now, hopefully this is effective for you, and that this will help give you that nudge you need to take that next step.

So that's what I have this week. I would encourage all of you to reach out to me. I would love to hear from you. As I mentioned, I'm on LinkedIn. You can send me a note. If you would subscribe to the podcast, if you would review it, that would be so great. Every time you leave a review, it helps the algorithm of this podcast so other people can find it as well. So it would mean the world to me if you would do that.

I would also like to give you a heads up about some upcoming webinars I'll be putting down. I've got the dates. October 22nd, November 12th, and December 3rd. By the time this podcast goes live, you'll be able to find the registration pages on the web page with the show notes. So I'd encourage you to go there and check that out at thejoyfulpractice.com. Go to podcast episode number 20.

Again those dates are October 22nd, November 12th, and December 3rd. They will be at noon pacific time. I'll tell you more about what those webinars will be all about. I'm really excited about them. This is giving me a chance to connect more with you. So keep an eye out. Like I said, I'll share more about that next week.

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So that's what I have my friends. Thank you again for tuning in. It is always such a pleasure to connect with you, and I'm so excited to reconnect with you again next week. Bye for now.

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