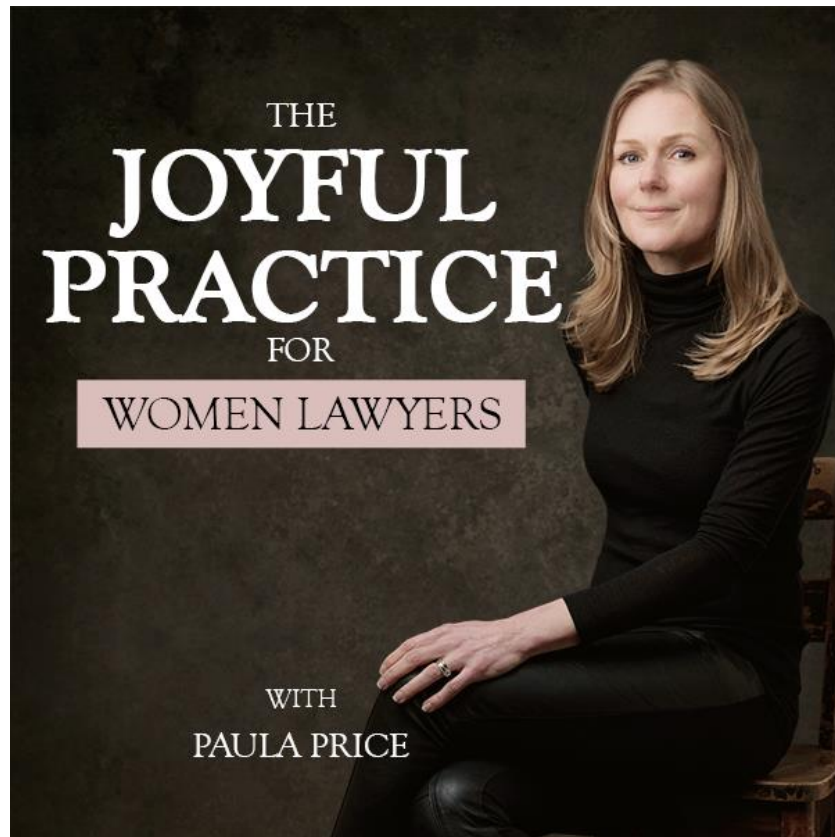


## Ep #43: Q&A: Procrastination, Leaving Law and Lessons Learned



### Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

**Paula Price**

[The Joyful Practice for Women Lawyers](#) with Paula Price

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You're listening to *The Joyful Practice for Women Lawyers* Podcast episode number 43.

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. Welcome back to the podcast, and hope you're all having a fabulous week. For those of you joining for the first time, welcome. I'm so delighted to have you. I hope you love the podcast. My name is Paula Price. I'm a lawyer turned certified executive coach.

This podcast is all about how to create a more joyful practice. We talk about things like time management. We talk about building confidence. We talk about the challenges and the opportunities that you may have as a lawyer. This is really a space to focus on you, on your practice, and how to thrive. So hope you enjoy hanging out here. I sure love having you all here.

For everybody, I'd like to wish you a belated happy International Women's Day. The day that I'm recording is actually Monday, March 7<sup>th</sup>, 2022. I'm just getting ready because this week I have the privilege and the honor of delivering two presentations in honor of International Women's Day.

The first presentation I'll be delivering tomorrow. It's on behalf of and together with Stewart Title who has requested that I speak at an event that is designed to really celebrate women, in particular lawyers and notaries and professionals in the legal sector from across Canada. So we've got a

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wonderful program set up tomorrow morning. I'm so excited to connect with all of our guests.

On Wednesday morning, I have the privilege of speaking with a group of students. It's for ELSA, the European Law Students Association. I'm so delighted to be connecting with some of their female students and talking about some of the challenges and opportunities that are out there. What's so fun about both opportunities is it's really an opportunity to connect with women from across Canada, women from Europe, and all this from my house here in Vancouver. It's really extraordinary.

I just love the community and the connection and the togetherness of how we are all coming together in some way. We're not doing it in person quite yet. We're still doing it virtually. It means so much to me to be able to be speaking and connecting and sharing what I'm doing, the work that I'm doing with lawyers, the work that is hopefully something that you are able to incorporate into your practices.

So a big shout out to everybody, and big celebration for all of us to really acknowledge ourselves. And to acknowledge all that you have accomplished over the last while, especially these past two years that we've been navigating the wild and topsy turvy challenges from the pandemic, the political challenges, the market challenges. There has been so much that's been going on.

So anyhow, today's format is going to be a little bit different for the podcast. I was thinking that it would be kind of fun to do a Q&A session, and Helena, who I'm working with to coordinate the ELSA presentation, sent me a list of questions the other day. They were so excellent I thought I would love to have these questions on the podcast. So I asked her if that was okay, and she said that it was. So I'm going to be answering those questions.

What I would invite all of you to think about is if you have questions that you'd like me to answer on the podcast, send them my way. You can reach me on LinkedIn. You can find me on email. I'd love to hear what your

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questions are, and I'd love to answer them for you. I'd also like to connect with you.

Again, for all of you who are tuning in, I do one-to-one coaching. So if that's something that's interesting for you, then by all means, reach out to me and we can set up a call to see if we're a good fit for each other. I also do speaking and training. So if any of that sounds like something that you're interested in, by all means, please feel free to reach out. I would love to hear from you.

So with that, I'm going to turn it over to the three questions. Just a little bit of a heads up. The questions are, well, I think this will be in the title. I haven't quite settled on the title, but really is going to be about procrastination. That's something that comes up quite a bit with clients. We're also going to talk about what I miss about legal practice having transitioned in into a coaching practice. Then third, what advice I would give my younger self. So stay tuned. That is what we're going to be talking about in today's episode.

Our first question is do your clients mentioned procrastination as an issue often? Do you have any tips for procrastination? Is it possibly something that fades over time? So this is such an excellent question. Yes, procrastination is a topic that comes up quite often in my practice.

Sometimes it shows up as a very specifically mentioned thing. Like the lawyer that I'm speaking with will tell me, "I have trouble procrastinating." But it doesn't always show up like that. Sometimes it looks quite different.

So the first flavor of procrastination, I'd say, is that typical procrastination. It's when you sit down to write a brief. It's when you put it off. You know you've got a task and you wait to the last minute. Often there's other people involved. So it means that you need to submit something to the court or you need to get a draft to the client, and you just keep pressing it into the future.

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You end up in that situation where you haven't left yourself enough time. Maybe you need to extend the deadline. Maybe you do it within the deadline, but you don't do it to the quality that you want it to. So that can sometimes look like a form of procrastination. What that often results in for the client is a very stressful practice, one where they may feel a lot of shame around it. They may feel a lot of anxiety around it. So they want help fixing that.

Another way that procrastination shows up into practice, though, is one that is a lot more subtle. This is the one that I think is potentially a little bit trickier because we don't always recognize it as procrastination. What this looks like is something a little bit more amorphous. So it's not like a single task. It's not like here's the brief that I need to file. It's more like this bigger picture kind of procrastination.

How that shows up with clients is often in unmade decisions. So it might be that there's a career transition that the client wants to make. They've known this for quite some time, but instead of actually taking steps to make that transition, they talk themselves into staying where they are. It's going to get better. Things will change. I don't really want to go. What if it's worse somewhere else?

What ends up happening is that they kind of drift and don't really make a decision. So in that way, the procrastination is really putting off the decision making. It's subtle. They may not actually recognize it as procrastination because it's not causing anybody else harm. Nobody else is necessarily saying, "Hey, you promised me you were gonna switch jobs by now, but here you are three months later. You're still in the same role, right?" The accountability is really more to oneself than it is to another person.

Another area where I see that procrastination or those unmade decisions might be around having difficult conversations. So maybe it's a conversation about setting boundaries or negotiating a raise or some other

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topic that inherently just feels kind of difficult and uncomfortable. So it just gets put off.

Again, nobody's necessarily calling you out on that because it's not in their best interest necessarily to tell you to start having firmer boundaries with them or to ask them to pay more money. So really, again, it's that procrastination that's really with yourself. It's not necessarily involving a third party.

Another area is important but not urgent tasks. So I think I would probably categorize career decisions and difficult conversations in that category. But there may also be other areas where those not urgent but important areas show up. So maybe it's planning, right. Maybe what you really need to do is sit down and make a career plan. You know you want to do it, but there's so many more hot fires that you want to put out that you never really get to that stage.

So procrastination. Yes, to answer the question, it comes up a lot. Sometimes it's quite clearly procrastination in the way that we typically think about procrastination, and sometimes it's a lot more subtle than that. If I were to draw an analogy, I probably use the example of say having something really immediate and painful.

Like, let's say you really stubbed your toe in a very terrible way, and it was broken, and you had to go to the hospital. I don't know. I don't think they put cast on toes, but you had to have some procedure done. Something that was painful and urgent and you couldn't ignore it any longer. That would get your attention.

Versus the type of procrastination where it's more like, oh, you know, there's this dull ache in my heel, but I can still walk. So I think I'll just keep on going with it. That really is that kind of procrastination that I think can lead to those tough situations where you're stuck. That's an area where I find I can really help people because sometimes it's just a conversation is all it takes for them to get themselves back into motion.

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So when it comes to procrastination, before I move on to the tips, I would invite all of you who are listening to think about where procrastination might show up for you. I mean, I think all of us on some level, procrastinate. I don't think anybody is perfectly immune to it. Although maybe you are out there and you're so efficient and you never procrastinate. Hats off. But I think for most of us, there are areas where we put things off, at least from time to time.

So I'd encourage you to think about what that looks like for you in your practice. If it's those short term assignments, if that's something that you struggle with. Or if there are some unmade decisions that are lingering that are coming to mind now that we're talking about it. So if that is you, don't worry. We're going to talk about some strategies as well.

So when it comes to strategies, this is moving on to the second part of the question. There were three parts all together. Do I have tips? Yes, I do. I have a lot of tips when it comes to procrastination. I am obsessed with efficiency and time management and executive functions. So yes, I love it. I find conversations about tips and strategies are most effective when I know exactly what it is that is challenging for somebody.

So for you, I'd invite you to think about what your triggers are, where it is that you procrastinate because that will help inform what kind of strategies are going to be most helpful for you. But I'm going to jump into some strategies.

First, I'd like to highlight that I've done a number of podcast episodes on time management, and most of them do relate in some way to procrastination. The first is episode number two, which is a time management for lawyers podcast episode. So that gives you some of the framework for time management.

There's also episode number 25. This is a wonderful interview that I have with my friend Mylène Houle Morency, who is a professional organizer

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based out of Montreal. She talks about all sorts of strategies for decluttering your home office, and all of this leads to efficiencies.

Number 26 is making peace with procrastination. So this is really talking about how you can make peace with the idea that you are procrastinating because sometimes procrastination maybe isn't a problem. So we don't necessarily need to get too upset with ourselves if that's what we're doing if there's no harm in it. Again, going back to what is the nature of the procrastination? Is it putting somebody else at risk, or is it degrading the trust that you have with yourself? So you have to think about how that all plays together. but that's another episode.

Then finally, an episode I did recently, episode number 36, which is called sort of systems checklists. So we go through a number of different areas where you might improve your systems. I highlight that there are all these episodes because the very first recommendation that I have for anybody who struggles with procrastination is to get a solid handle on your time management practices.

For a lot of lawyers that I work with, they do not have an established practice in terms of how they structure their time. For anybody listening, I highly recommend having systems, having a calendar system, having regular times during the week when you schedule. Knowing what is on your plate, what workflow is coming your way. Because that really is the basis. Once you have a solid calendaring system in place, it becomes a lot...It's less tempting, I should say, to procrastinate because you now know where your time is allocated to and how you're going to use that time.

One example is that today for this podcast episode that I'm recording, I had it in my calendar scheduled for today. I could also do it on Wednesday afternoon. Part of me wanted to do it on Wednesday because I would have already done the presentations I'm doing tomorrow and on Wednesday. I thought, you know, maybe I'll be in a different mood. Maybe I'll feel like



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super inspired after speaking with all these amazing women. It's true. I probably will feel super inspired.

But I also thought, you know, this is kind of a good time to do it. We're going on a vacation next week. It would be nice to have everything all settled by then. This gives me that open window of time later in the week if I need it. So because my time is structured, and I see the benefit in sticking to my calendar, I'm doing that. I'm following through. So you may find the same thing.

It also helps because when you have a calendar and you know roughly at least when you're going to be working on different tasks. When new work comes in, you're better able to number one, forecast whether or not you can do it.

So if it's a file or a task where you have some degree of authority over saying yes or no and when you can do it then at least you know when it goes, when it fits in your calendar. If it's something that comes in that is urgent and you absolutely must deal with in the moment, then when you displace activities you have scheduled for that day, you now know which activities are being displaced, and you now know where you can put them. So number one is start with a robust system.

When you then get to the procrastination stage, that is when you are sitting down. It's two o'clock. You have a brief that you need to write. You have an email you need to send. You've got a pile of documents you need to review. Usually there are going to be certain tasks that are particularly painful to you.

What I would recommend doing there is to try some of the methods that I've recommended in other podcast episodes. So one of them is the Pomodoro method, and that's where you basically take a task and you give yourself 25 minutes. You set a timer, and you just do. For 25 minutes, you just work on that thing. What you may often find is that once you get into

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that project, then the time starts to pass. As soon as you start building momentum, it's okay. You can get it done.

Another strategy is to use slices, right. You can take a task. You can look at it. You can break it into small digestible pieces so that any single one of those pieces doesn't feel overwhelming. It feels like something that's relatively easy for you to do.

A couple of other strategies would be number one, scheduling difficult tasks when you're fresh. So I'm a morning person. If I have something that I absolutely need to do, if it's urgent or if it's something that I've been putting off for a while, I do it when I'm fresh, which is usually in the morning. So I would recommend doing that.

For me, there's an additional set incentive, which is that my morning time is my most precious real estate when it comes to my work. So if I take a task that is not really high value, but I've been delaying it for so long that I put it there, there's a cost to me now in not doing it. I'm wasting my precious morning hours. So you can really play with the timing of things and putting things where you're most apt to do them or most likely to do them.

Then finally, I have here building an accountability. So sometimes that means getting somebody else involved. It means setting a deadline for yourself. Sometimes you might not meet that exact deadline, but at least you're a lot closer and you now have that additional incentive to move ahead.

Now, a couple of other suggestions when it comes to procrastination. One of them is to take a step back. So if you find that you're procrastinating a lot in your work, it may be that there is something about the work that you're doing that is not resonating with you. If you go back to podcast episode, I'm not sure the number, but it's all about the four pillars of a joyful practice. One of those pillars is alignment.

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In my view, it's really important for us to be aligned with the work that we're doing. That's when we feel that sense of flow, that sense of fulfillment. If you are out of alignment with the work that you're doing, you may find that it gets harder and harder to do that work.

This doesn't mean that you necessarily need to leave your job. It doesn't necessarily mean that you need to make any drastic changes, but I would invite you to think about your values and the work that you're doing and what you love to do and what you're actually doing. Is there a discord there that is resulting in you procrastinating more than normal?

So think about that. Is that part of the challenge? It might be perfectionism. For a lot of perfectionist, you may sit down to do a task. You don't want to do it unless you can do it perfectly. So you may talk yourself out of doing the task. You might get really anxious. You put it off. The more you put it off, the less likely it is that you're going to do it perfectly. I have an episode about that too about what perfectionism is costing you. I think that's episode number four.

Really take a step back and look at how the procrastination is showing up and in what context. Then let's talk about. Let's deal with what the real problem is.

Then finally, there's a third layer that I would invite you to consider if procrastination is something that shows up a lot. That is to ask yourself whether or not this is something more than simple procrastination, and whether there's a neurological basis for it. By this what I mean is that for some individuals, they have ADHD.

I'm doing a deep dive into ADHD in terms of my own personal research. I find it to be a topic that is really interesting. I find executive function to be an area where there is so much learning for me to do and leverage once we understand how our executive functioning works.

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For a lot of individuals, for some of the lawyers that I've been working with and other professionals and people that I know in my professional and personal lives. Sorry, life. I have one life, but there are many people. There are a number of individuals who are diagnosed at a later stage in life who have ADHD who never knew that's what they had.

What it means is that they have trouble with organization, procrastination, planning, sustained focus, and they may have been able to be very successful a lot. Most of the individuals that I know who have experienced this are very, very high functioning, but they find it challenging to stick to task or to initiate tasks.

So if this is something that comes up for you, it may be worth going to your doctor or mental health professional and getting a real evaluation to see if maybe this is a challenge that you're facing. Because if that is the case then there may be ways you can deal with it. Certainly having structures in place, having good time practices, time keeping practices, that all helps, but you may really benefit from learning more about how your own brain works and how you can work with it most optimally.

So the last part of this question is, does it change over time? I can't really speak for everybody because I see lawyers in pockets. My practice has been going on for, I don't know, is it four years or something? So what do I notice in terms of procrastination over time?

Well, I can tell you from my own personal experience is that, yes, I continue to procrastinate. The nature of what I procrastinate on has completely changed. I used to really procrastinate on schoolwork and exams. When I started practicing, I believe I started procrastinating less as a practicing lawyer because I didn't have the option. There were firm due dates. There was nothing I could do about it.

I didn't like that feeling of things being too last minute, especially if it was going to court. I always figured I would be better off showing up with a full night of sleep versus exam periods where I used to kind of pull those very

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late nights and very early morning so that I could just show up and answer as fully as I possibly could.

Having children has changed things a lot for me. You may experience that if you have children yourself or if you have outside obligations or commitments external to your professional work that give you a solid book ends. So you cannot exceed your workdays. What having children has meant for me in terms of time management is that I'm so much more efficient because I know there's no backup plan. I can't stay late at the office to finish a task. I can't work on a weekend unless I cut into family time. It's not just about me anymore. It's about my whole family.

So yes, the nature of procrastination has evolved in the sense that that type one procrastination I described, the tasks, I'm much better at executing. What I find has changed is that those big decisions. Those ones are probably where I see myself procrastinating more. I think that I can say that from the experience that I have working with lawyers at different stages of their careers, that that's probably true for them as well.

At the beginning, there's a lot of firsts. The first court application, the first difficult conversation with opposing counsel, the first time you run your own deal. All of those things can be scary and maybe bring up some of the fear that may lead to procrastination.

As your practice evolves, I think the procrastination may be more in the nature of well, I've been doing this for a long time. I don't really want to shake the boat. So I'm going to maintain the status quo even though it's not what I really want to be doing right now. I could use a bit more vigor infused into my days, but I'm not going to do that because.

Then the laundry list—I shouldn't called a laundry list. I'm sorry. I hope it doesn't sound condescending because it's not meant to. But it truly is a list of the reasons why not to make a change. So what I find is that individuals may talk themselves out of opportunities. You may find this is happening for yourself where you talk yourself out of doing things because it's

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comfortable where you are. So you're looking for reasons to stay put when what you know is that you really want to change. So that's where I see procrastination creep up more as you evolve further in your practice.

So that was a really...I just realized I spent quite a bit of time answering that first question. So I have a feeling the second two questions will be a little bit quicker. So wonderful question all about procrastination. I hope that was helpful, but it does come up a lot. Let me tell you.

The second question is I can imagine working as a coach can be very fulfilling, but is there anything you miss about legal practice? So the answer to this question is, yes. There are things that I miss, but not to the point that I would change what I have done. If I look at legal practice, my own career path was one where I left law school. I articulated at a Bay Street firm in Toronto, and then I moved back to practice in Vancouver with my family. This is where I grew up.

I found a job here working at an insurance litigation boutique. I worked there for a couple of years before moving into a larger firm where I did commercial litigation for the good part of my legal practice. I was there for about 12 years. In the later years, I was primarily doing legal research and certain court applications for approval of transactions. Then I had a couple of years where I kind of had more of a contractor role.

So I've worked in large law firms, smaller law firms, as a contractor lawyer. So I had really a varied experience of practice. Always really geared toward the litigation side of things. I loved a number of aspects of my work as a lawyer. I loved the challenge of litigation. I loved that the files were always different, that the personalities were always different. I loved being able to peek behind the scenes and hear all the stories and the facts that led to these situations where people were now trying to figure out what had happened.

I loved law. I love legal research. I love research. I mean, it's one of my passions. As a child, I remember I was in grade two, I think, at the time. I

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opened into a dictionary for my very first time, and I saw that wow, like here's the word and here's the description of what that word means. I think at that time, there were even images next to the word. That, to me, was just the most amazing thing.

So as a lawyer, I got to do that. I got to do legal research. I loved the writing process. I loved the camaraderie. I loved working in teams. I loved working with lawyers who were super, super smart. I loved the community of a law firm. I loved having a beautiful office with all the pens and highlighters that a girl could possibly dream of. These were all really amazing things. I loved that I was able to grow. I loved that it was challenging.

When I was working as a litigator in particular, we were always in a different forum. So it was either Provincial Court or Supreme Court or Court of Appeal or it was in arbitration or we were in administrative tribunal. So things were always different. I think that really lends itself to my personality. I like variety, a lot. I love the excitement of kind of going from task to task. So there was a lot that I really loved about it.

At the end of the day, I do miss elements of that. I do miss the connection and the community, and I love being in an office. But at the same time, what I realized as I was answering this question is that I've managed to recreate a lot of what I loved about my legal practice in my coaching practice. So if I look at that list, okay I do not have the office with the bells and whistles. I can tell you my systems are really not at all on par with the systems of the beautiful firms where I used to work, not by a long while.

This morning, I had trouble opening a document. As it turns out, I just had to close out of Word, reopen it, and I was able to access everything I needed. But you know, I had that moment where I thought, oh life would be so much easier if I just had this tech person that I could call up, and they would solve all my problems magically. So yes. There's things that I miss from working in that environment.

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However, I have built a different community for myself, a community of lawyers that I work with. A different community of professionals who support lawyers, of coaches, of counselors of educators. I do work in the nonprofit sector. I love that work. It allows me to connect with community and a team in a different way.

So there's all these opportunities that I have now where I have basically built out my social network, and I feel that sense of community. It's a different sense of community, but I still have that. I've rebuilt that for myself. In terms of the projects that I work on and the excitement and the variety, I've managed to rebuild that into my coaching practice.

So I have a combination of working with clients in a one to one capacity. I have speaking projects that I do. I have webinar work where I am helping with public legal education. So there's all these different pieces to the work that I do. So when I look at my desk as it was when I was a lawyer in private practice, and I think about all the different files that I had on my plate. I now have a very similar makeup. So I have that again.

Again, that notion of being surrounded by really intelligent people, by constantly having that intellectual challenge. I continue to have that. I continue to surround myself with mentors and teachers and trainers and people who are ahead of me. I learned from them. I learned from my clients.

When I have the privilege of working with lawyers, I just love the way that they are thinking about their problems. We work on those challenges. We plan and we strategize together. So very much of what I loved about legal practice, I've managed to reproduce in my coaching practice.

So how I would relate this back to you as a listener is to know that whatever role you're choosing for yourself. Maybe you're in a traditional legal role right now. Maybe you're in a totally different type of role. Maybe you're not even a lawyer, you're just interested in listening to this podcast and welcome. You're all welcome to be here. I love connecting with you.



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What I would invite you to think about is how much of your work you are creating yourself, how much of the culture of your work you are creating yourself because my guess is that it's a fairly high percentage. I can say this because I've created much of the opportunities that I had when I was in practice. I've also managed to create some of the challenges that I had. In particular, really taking everything on and wanting my plate to be so full.

Maybe I don't procrastinate too much, but sometimes I do. Sometimes I bring on more, and then I have files that I'm not as on top of as I would like to be. Some of the challenges that I had working as a lawyer. So some of the challenges doing things for the first time, right? Am I going to do this well? This is nervous making. Am I really cut out for this? Those challenges come up too.

As a coach, I can tell you I have lots and lots and lots of tools to deal with those things. So yes, I do approach those challenges in a different way than I did from before becoming a coach. But those challenges still come up.

The last thing I would note here is that I loved working with a lawyer. I'm still technically a lawyer, a non-practicing lawyer. I admire the work that is being done in the legal profession. I love keeping up to date on developments in legal profession.

Yes, there are times when I see lawyers making announcements, and I think oh, that is so amazing. You have done such a great job. Whether it's becoming partner, whether it's being appointed to a really high role in government, whether it's having a firm where you've got lots of lawyers who are working for you. I look at that, and I think that is so incredible.

Then I look at the work that I'm doing. I feel like the coaching work that I am doing is work that I was called to do. I feel so strongly and passionately about the impact that I'm able to make in my own way. That is what brings me back to where I am is that the success that I see in others, as much as I

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admire it and look at it and think you are amazing, I know that my path is my path.

So I would invite for all of you to ask yourself the same questions because I know sometimes there can be a tendency to look towards others and say, well, they're doing all these things. I'm not doing what they're doing. But look at what you are doing. Because chances are you're doing something completely different that is totally in alignment with your path, not theirs. So that is my answer to the second question is do I miss being a lawyer? Yes, in some ways I do, but I also love the work that I do now.

So this third question is if you could go to dinner with your younger self, what would you tell her? If you could give younger Paula a message about how to change your future, what would it be? Do you think she would listen?

So I'm going to deal with these questions one at a time. I think there's three of them here. So the first is, what would I tell my younger self? This is such a fun question. Interestingly, I recently did a similar exercise. I'm almost 45. I was looking at myself at 50. I was thinking oh, that's nice. That's a nice round year, round number of years five, you know, until...Like well it's not technically. Well, it's round. Round enough. In five years, I'll be 50, and where do I want to be?

So I decided to put myself into my 50 year old self and write a letter of how things are over there. How are things going? What did I have to do to get there? What would I tell myself? So I do this exercise. If you haven't practiced this or you've never tried it, I would encourage you to give it a try. It's maybe a little bit out there.

It maybe a little bit woo if you're not used to this type of thinking, but you'd be amazed at how creative you can be when you put yourself five years forward and think about where you want to be and how you would speak to yourself. What advice you would give yourself looking back?

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So in this case, the question is what advice would I give my younger self? So I'm imagining I'm speaking to maybe my 25 year old self. What would I tell her? There are about four things that I've identified here.

So number one is there is no wrong step. Here's the magical thing about having children. When you have children, and at least this was my experience. So I can't really speak for everybody. But my children are my children. I never would have been able to imagine them before they were born.

I wouldn't have been able to tell you what they look like. I wouldn't have been able to tell you what kind of personality they have, what eye color they have, how they are when they wake up in the morning. What kind of conversations we have. I'm so glad that I did not have control over that. That I do not have any control over that, and I can't imagine my children being any other children than the ones I have now. I've got two.

This gets a little bit out there, but the chances of human beings being born. The chances that you are here listening to this podcast episode is one in like a trillion. That's a teeny, tiny, tiny fraction of a point that you are even here. Because every event prior to your conception had to go a certain way in order for you to actually physically be here. So it's really down to the millisecond.

So when I look at my children, I think okay. I love each of them as they are right. They are exactly who they are meant to be. If anything had gone differently in my life, any one single thing had gone differently, chances are they wouldn't be here. Now, I probably would have other children. I probably would look at those children and love them, but they wouldn't be the kids that I have right now. I feel like these are the right children for me.

So sometimes I tell them this. I say, you know, I know that everything in my life that happened up until the point that you were born was meant to happen exactly as it did. The good times, the bad times, and everything in between because if those things hadn't happened, then we wouldn't be

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here right now in this moment. It's really easy to say with kids because there is that point in time, that conception point.

Whereas when you're looking at your career, it's a little bit more ambiguous because the career kind of ebbs and flows. Chances are, there's not one single point in time that you can identify as being the moment. Maybe there is, but I haven't thought it through completely. I'm not sure that it's an exact parallel.

Here is where the parallel is, is that at any given moment in your life, there are elements of it that in order to be here, you had to go through whatever it is that you went through before. So regardless of how it may feel in the moment, it is what was meant to happen because it has brought you to where you are right now. Even when it doesn't feel great, it's still the right path for you.

Going back to what we were talking about earlier. If you're looking at others and looking at their path and saying, "Oh, I really wish that I was a partner at a law firm like so and so or I wish that I had just been, I don't know, I founded my own firm." Whatever it is. It's easy to look at them and compare yourself, but let's not lose sight of the reason that you are on the path that you're on.

Similarly, sometimes it's easy to look ahead and say, "Ah, man, I just wish that I was five years from now where I knew how to do all the things. I was really competent at leading files. I knew how to manage a team. I knew how to run a trial start to finish. I could do five of them on my own." Whatever it is. Maybe you're already doing trials, and it's doing bigger trials. Maybe it's something in the future that you're looking toward, and you're wanting to be there now.

The answer to that is that maybe that is supposed to be in the future. It's not supposed to be right now. Because in order to become the person who can do those things, it requires you to develop a certain level of skill. It

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requires you to develop a certain level of confidence, of self-trust that you are ready for that, and that you can handle that.

So that is tying back to the first thing that I would tell my younger self is there is no wrong step. Wherever you are right now is exactly where you're supposed to be.

The second thing that I would say to my younger self is that every stage will be 80/20. So as you're going through this process and sometimes things are great, sometimes things are terrible. Sometimes they're a mix. I use 80/20 because my grandmother used to say that to me. She used to say, "If you're doing 80%, you're doing pretty well."

So let's take 80% as a threshold. It might be lower, right? It might be that some days, it's 80% good, 20% bad. Sometimes it's 20% good and 80% bad. But there's always going to be an ebb and flow in terms of the things are going great and the things that could use improvement. That's great. Let's enjoy all the wonderful aspects that are going on. Let's use those more challenging pieces as learning opportunities to keep moving forward.

But that's probably what I would say is you don't need to worry or wait for a time when everything is going to be perfect. It never will all be perfect at once. There are maybe fleeting moments. I think I've had a few of those where I've just been like, "Wow, everything is so great right now." Things really are overall excellent, but there's always going to be something that's maybe going to alter your ratio. So keep an eye on the ratio, but it's not all perfect all the time. That's okay.

Now the third thing that I would tell my younger self is that you will always create what you set your mind to. At 45 years old, I have evidence of this. That the things I truly value, some of the goals that I've accomplished professionally and in my personal life, things that really, really matter, I have managed to make happen. So that is something I would say to my former self or my younger self I suppose. There's no former me and current me. We're all the same person.

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But that anything that you set your mind to, you will accomplish. Sometimes it takes time. Sometimes the route to get there is not circuitous. I talked about that in last week's podcast episode all about creating your dream job. But if you stick to it, if you don't give up, you can make it happen.

Then number four is kind of just a thank you. It's a thank you for taking care of your health. I think I've always made an effort to be reasonably healthy, and I've got good energy. I've got lots of energy. I feel good. I have myself to thank for that for eating reasonably well. I'm not always the healthiest. You know, I think I haven't always worn sunscreen. When I was younger, I probably had more fun than maybe I would have now. I'd stayed out later and went to more parties, etc. But overall, I've taken very good care of my health. So I thank myself for that.

I thank myself for showing up. Even when things have been really tough, really challenging, where I've wanted to throw in the towel, I haven't done that. I've continued on, I've persevered, and I've stuck to the things that really matter to me. So those are four things I would tell my younger self.

Let us recap those. There is no wrong step. Every stage is a mix of good and bad. You'll always create what you set your mind to. Finally, thank you for taking care of your health and for doing all the things that got us to where we are today.

Now, the second question is okay, if you could give Paula a message about how to change your future, what would it be? So going back to that answer to the first question, which is really that I wouldn't change anything significantly. What I would say is that I would recommend, and this is for all of you listening, is to listen to your gut more than you listen to others. Yes, listen to others. But ultimately, you need to make that decision.

When it's I remember very early on decisions about even going to law school in the first place, and then decisions about what kind of job to take. Then decisions about what practice areas to focus on, decisions about allies to make in the professional context, decisions about friendships, all

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those things. Like there's so many decisions that come along over the course of your career, and your personal life. This isn't just about work. This is about the whole package.

I would encourage my younger self to really evaluate from within what is important, and then make those decisions from that place. Again, I don't have regrets. I wouldn't change anything about the way that I have lived my life, but I would certainly. This is something that I do is to really look inward more often than looking outward when it comes to making those key decisions.

I would also say when it comes to changing the future or changing the course of the path, it would be to question when you doubt yourself. So when you find yourself going up to those challenges where you start to really doubt yourself, chances are it's something that you haven't done before. It's something that is really challenging, and to use those opportunities to get to know yourself better and to grow.

I would also recommend creating a vision and then working toward that. It's a lot easier to build out an idea. Again, going back to that idea of you'll always create what you set your mind to. Be really conscientious about what it is you want to create. Because when your energy goes into that direction, that's what you're going to create. There's an expression that just came to mind. It's like the energy goes or the focus goes or the I don't know something like that. But bottom line, focus on what you want to do, what you want to create.

Which ties into the last point I want to make here which is just spend as little time as possible trying to fix things that are broken. So when you're in a situation and it just isn't worth it to try to fix it, I mean you can spend a lot of time trying to fix another person. Whether it's in a professional context or otherwise, and it may just be that there's no point investing your energy.

I mean do what you need to do to get by, but if there is a systemic problem and you don't need to be a part of it, it's not your ax to grind. Then please

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like keep your energy to focus on what you're creating. Because that's where you're going to get more traction. That's where you're going to get the growth. That's where you're going to get the joy of creating and fulfilling what deeply matters to you.

Last part of that question is do you think she would listen. I don't know. If I went back to my 20 year old self or my 25 year old self, she would probably be like wow, this is super weird. So from that perspective, maybe she'd be so intrigued by this woman from the future that anything that I would say she would do. That's an interesting idea because I think we can still all have the leverage of that if we imagine ourselves five years out, 10 years out, and what we would want to say to ourselves. That can be a really compelling way to keep us on track, right. Whether it's a career aspiration, whether it's a health aspiration, personal aspiration.

So do I think she would listen? I think probably on some level yes. That being said, I can remember being younger and not wearing sunscreen. So sometimes when you're at the younger stage, right, when you're in your 20s, the world looks so different, right? You haven't necessarily done a lot of the things that you want to do yet.

So the landscape is just seen from a completely different perspective. I can tell you that having traversed over the 30s, through the 30s, and into the 40s that I feel like things really settle a lot more at this stage of life. Again, it really does result in where your focus is and the extent that you focus on building things that are important to you, then this stage is really fulfilling. It's also hard, right. Each stage comes with it's own challenges.

So at the mid-40s stage, it's balancing family and work and wanting both to be top, top and really trying to find ways to thrive in both areas and to feel good while doing it.

So those are the questions. Again, a big shoutout to Helena. Those were such beautiful questions and it was such a pleasure to answer them. I hope you all enjoyed this podcast episode. I feel like in a sense we've been



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having a conversation, although it's just me here. I'm so delighted that I'm having the chance to connect with you.

So, again, if you have any questions you'd like me to answer on the podcast, send them my way. I'd love to do more of these. I'd love to connect with you whether it's for coaching or whatever it is that would work for you. So thank you again. Have a wonderful week. I'm so excited to reconnect with you next time. Bye for now.

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