

Tiny Course Empire Podcast Episode 26: Letting Go of Perfectionism

PLEASE NOTE: This is a machine transcription. Some punctuation and spelling weirdness are to be expected.

You're listening to the Tiny Course Empire Podcast with Cindy Bidar. This is Episode Number 26, and today we're talking about perfectionism and how it stops you and me too from making a difference in the world. Stick around to find out what you can do to get past it.

Welcome to the Tiny Course Empire Podcast, a weekly show dedicated to helping you launch and grow your digital course business. Even if you don't have a big team or a six-figure ads budget, we'll help you design smart systems, take consistent action and achieve massive success on your own terms. Now, here's your host, Cindy Bidar.

Welcome back to the Tiny Course Empire Podcast. My name is Cindy Bidar and I am a perfectionist. I want everything I do to be just as good as I can possibly make it. Whether that's cooking dinner or releasing a course or folding my laundry, maybe you can relate.

Before we dive in, I want to tell you that you will find show notes and recommended resources for this episode at TinyCourseEmpire.com/26. And if you're new here, or if you're a returning friend, welcome, I am so thrilled to have you join me for this episode. It's my hope that you will find inspiration and ideas that you can put to use in your business in every single episode, and I would love for you to leave a rating and review wherever you listen to podcasts, it helps others to find the show, and it lets the podcast directories know that you find value in the content. Which means it's much more likely to show up in the search results. If you'd like to support me, that is the number one thing you can do, is to simply leave a rating and review. But regardless of whether or not you can do that, I do want to help you get past your perfectionism.

Here's what I'm talking about today. Let's talk about being perfect and what that shows up like in my world. I've told the story before about the kitchen that we had in our first house. I wanted a garbage disposal, and I guess if you're in Canada, that's called a carburetor, which I had never heard that word before. And for those of you in the rest of the world, you might not have them at all, but it's basically a little motor that sits under your kitchen sink, you put food scraps down the drain and it grinds them up, so you don't have to put them in the trash anyway. I don't really like to put food scraps in the trash, so I wanted a garbage disposal in my house. I could have purchased one for around 100 bucks at any home improvement store, and they're really not that hard to install. I could have done it myself, but here's where perfectionist Cindy shows up and ruins all of my plans.

I knew that if I wanted a garbage disposal, I had to start by pulling the sink out to get it installed, and if I was going to pull the sink out, well then I wanted a new sink because my sink was pretty crappy looking. And if I was going to take the sink out and I was going to get a new sink, I didn't want it sitting on my ugly old countertops. Well, if I was going to replace the countertops, then I had to replace the cabinets, and if I was going to replace the cabinets, I wanted a new floor, and if I was going to have new counters and new cabinets and new floors, I sure as heck wanted new appliances. So that \$100 garbage disposal that I wanted and that I could have installed myself in an afternoon turned into something more like a \$10,000 kitchen remodel that I could not afford and didn't really want to put the effort into in that old house that we had.

So perfectionism or this kind of all or nothing thinking kept me without the garbage disposal that I wanted for the 13 years that we lived in that house, and it kept me frustrated with my kitchen. And that's just not a good place to be. But you might be thinking, So really, what's the harm. Who cares? Isn't it better to strive for better products, especially when we're talking about business? The story I told it was about my kitchen, who really cares? But when it comes to business, isn't perfectionism good? Isn't it helping you to create better products, isn't it helping you to put better content out there, and if you're like me and you suffer from that kind of all or nothing thinking, that meant that I never got my garbage disposal.

Then you might see perfectionism show up as a course or a coaching program that you've been working on for years. I know more than a few people who have great programs that they're excited about, but there's always one more thing to add or one more option to try out before it's ready to launch, and you know what? Launch day never, ever comes. They're always making it better or changing it up somehow, and that means that it's never really ready to launch. And I'm telling you, I have seen this go on for years in some cases, so that's really the big harm, that perfectionism or this kind of all or nothing thinking is doing in your business. It's delaying those product launches and not just product launches, it delays the publication of blog posts or the release of a podcast episode or other marketing materials, you're too worried about making it perfect to just go ahead and put it out there. And that's costing you money, it's costing you money and lost sales, that course that maybe you've been working on for a while that you're not quite ready to put out there because it's not quite perfect or it doesn't quite have all of the elements that you think it should have is sitting there not making you any money.

The other big harm that perfectionism does is it means that you're constantly telling yourself that you're not good enough, that what you create is not good enough, and that you must do better, and it just never ends, this kind of self-talk

just never goes away. Instead of focusing on the amazing progress that you've made, or the results that you've achieved, you focus on what you didn't do or what didn't go just right. And that's a downward spiral that can lead to overwork or even just simply giving up. Perfectionists also tend to be unwilling to try new things because what if they fail? What if it's not perfect? What if it's not good enough? So you're more risk-averse. Less risk-averse, I don't know which way that goes, less likely to take a risk, less likely to put yourself out there because you're so worried that you're not going to be perfect, that how you show up is not going to be good enough.

Perfectionists also tend to take on more work themselves than they should be doing, they're not delegating it because the person that they delegated to probably won't do it just right. So they have to do everything themselves. And this is me, you guys, this is me 100%. I want things done exactly the way I want things done, and unless I can clone myself, I'm less likely to hand off those tasks. It took me a long time before I got comfortable with delegating things because I was so worried that people wouldn't do it the way that I would do it, and you know what? The way that I do it is not the only way to do things. So it's okay to delegate things in your business, but if you're a perfectionist, you probably have a really hard time with that. Or if you do delegate things, you're what's known as a micro-manager who's always looking over the shoulder of the person that you've delegated the work to making sure that they're doing it to your standards, or doing it exactly the way that you want it done, or the way that you expect them to do it. And that's a really difficult situation to put your contractors in because nobody likes to be micromanaged like that, so that's another problem with being a perfectionist in business, is it means that you're working more than you necessarily should be working.

And finally, there's a counter-intuitive thing that happens to some perfectionists. And this has happened to me more times than I can count. But you can actually make something worse by aiming for perfection, it's like we overshoot perfect, like we try so hard to make something just as perfect as it can be, that we go too far and we make it actually worse than it was before.

So that's the harm, that's what being a perfectionist does to your business, it costs you time, it costs you money, it costs you stress, and it means that you're not growing as much as you could potentially grow because you're probably just not willing to take the risks or try the things that would mean your business would grow. So how do you get past it? How do you pass this perfectionism, how do you learn to live with it? And do the work anyway.

Well, the first step is to stop comparing your first draft to other people's finished

products, I talked about this in Episode 24 about being a better writer, but it holds true in everything, especially in course materials that you're putting out there, or podcast episodes that you're putting out there, or YouTube videos that you're putting out there or social media updates that you post. It holds true in all of that because we're looking at what we are creating, what we've done, and we're comparing it to what someone else has already put out there, and we're not stopping to think this is my first attempt at this. I'm going to polish it up, I'm going to edit it a little bit, I'm going to get somebody to make the sound better, or I'm going to figure out my lighting better, or I'm going to edit that video or tighten up that writing in that blog post. We're looking at the first draft and we're comparing it to what someone has published publicly, that's already been through all of those rounds of edits, and our stuff just doesn't look so good in comparison. So stop comparing your first draft to other people's finished products, work on your editing process instead. And I think you're going to be much happier with what it is that you're putting out there.

And of course, we all need to accept that we're still learning, and it doesn't matter how long you've been in business, we all still have more to learn, even if you've been in business for 30 or 40 or 50 years, there are still new things to learn, and that's okay, just keep putting things out there. You're going to get better, Ira Glass has a really great video I'm going to link to in the show notes about the gap, and that's where you recognize that what you're doing isn't up to your own high standards, but you just have to keep going, you just have to keep putting stuff out there because that's the only way to get better.

One of my favorite podcasters, I've talked about her before, Brooke Castillo over at The Life Coach School, recommends that you get comfortable with B-minus work. Now, I gotta say B-minus is too far for me, I'm never going to be comfortable with B-minus work, but I can be comfortable with B work. And what that means is get comfortable with putting things out there that you recognize are not perfect. And here's what you can ask yourself. Ask yourself when you're about to release that course or you're about to publish that blog post, or you're about to hit publish on your podcast or on your YouTube channel, ask yourself, Will your customers notice that it is not, and if they do notice, will they really care, because chances are good, they either won't notice or if they do, they won't care, and it's okay to put that B+ work out there. Don't spend so much extra time going for A plus work when B work is perfectly acceptable.

One tool that I use to get past my perfectionist tendencies is to use deadlines, I use public deadlines, I release a course on a regular basis in my Six-Figure Systems Program, and I have 500 members who are waiting for that course. I don't have time to make it perfect. If I had all the time in the world, I would be that person

who just continues to work on it and work on it and work on it and spend years creating a single course. But I don't have that luxury. People are waiting on me. So when you have public deadlines, when you have people waiting on you, it's a really good way to force yourself to get the work done. I'm doing that as a matter of fact, today with this very Podcast, this podcast is not perfect, I am not 100% happy with the content that I've put together today, I'm not 100% prepared. I could spend the next week preparing this podcast episode and getting it recorded, but Igor is waiting for it, and after Igor gets it, Gina is waiting for it to do the transcript, and after that my husband is waiting for it to get it published, so I don't have the luxury to wait another day to get this recorded, I have to do it today. So those deadlines really helped to light a fire under you, so you can say, You know what, it may not be perfect, but I need to get it out there. So it's good enough.

Another way to set a deadline is to use time blocking in your calendar and give yourself X number of hours to complete a task, set aside an appointment in your calendar, for example, where you're going to write a blog post, I'm going to write this blog post from 8 AM until 11 AM on Tuesday morning. And when 11 AM rolls around, you're done. Pencils down, whatever you have at that point is what you publish. We learned this in school. Right, when the test was over. The test was over, put your pencil down, you're done, whatever your score is at that point is your score. You can do the same thing in your business. It's okay, give yourself a deadline, give yourself a timeframe to complete that task, whether it's writing an email, writing a blog post, recording a video, recording a podcast, creating a course, whatever it is, give yourself those boundaries because it will really help you to get more comfortable with putting things out there that are not 100% perfect.

Also, and I tell this to my coaching clients all the time, realize that nothing online is written in stone, you can always revise things. Bob Spark ANS has a book out, and I'm going to link to this in the show notes as well, called *Take Action, Revise Later*, and this is 100% true in anything you do. Whether it is a course that you're creating or a blog post that you're publishing or an e-book that you're writing, or even a published book that you're writing, you can always fix it, you can always go back and edit it. Pixels are not carved in stone, you can always change things up, so don't let that quest for perfection prevent you from putting something out there. Just recognize that if it's not perfect, if I find a mistake later, if I want to go back and fix something up later or improve it later I can, I can always replace it. You can always edit that blog post, you can always replace that podcast file, you can always re-publish that book, it doesn't matter. Get it out there, fix it later.

It's also probably a good idea to recognize that failure is not a bad thing, I mean really, failure can be a good thing. Without a failure, you cannot have success. Babe Ruth is arguably one of the best baseball players ever, and he had one of the

best records for hitting home runs ever in the game, but he also held the record for the most number of strikeouts in any season. So he was failing at a rate that was just as high as his perfectionism rate.

Finally accept that perfect just doesn't exist in anything, you can always add to a course or to a blog post or to a podcast, you can always make one more round of edits, you can always improve something in some way, you are never going to reach that mythical place of perfection, and that's okay. The bottom line is aimed to be consistently good rather than occasionally perfect, and your business is definitely going to improve, and I would argue your life is going to improve as well if you just aim for consistently good instead of perfect once in a while.

And that's it for me today. I hope that I have given you some inspiration to get past any perfectionist tendencies you might have. And now I'd love for you to head over to the show notes at TinyCourseEmpire.com/26 and leave me a comment. Are you a perfectionist? Do you consider yourself to be a perfectionist, have you seen it be detrimental in your life or in your business, and what kinds of things do you do to combat that? Perfectionist tendency. I'd love to know.

Finally, if you're enjoying the show again, would you do me a favor and leave a rating and review over at Apple Podcast, because that really does help others to find us. And of course, if you have a friend or a colleague who really needs to hear this message about perfectionism, you can send them the link to TinyCourseEmpire.com/26. Next week, we're going to talk about perfectionism's more sinister cousin, procrastination. We're going to dive into that because I am definitely a procrastinator, too. And perfectionism ties right into that. Have a great day everyone, and I will talk to you all again next week.

If you like what you hear on the Tiny Course Empire Podcast, you're going to love all of the courses and workshops and support, you'll find inside Six-Figure Systems, that's my monthly program, where we dig into online marketing for regular people like you and me. We don't do big launches, we don't have the big headaches and we don't have the big expenses that come with them, instead we focus on creating repeatable, sustainable systems that continue to grow over time, and that don't suck up all of our energy or require a 10-person team to manage. You can come see what we're all about at SixFigureSystems.com, and I'll see you on the inside.