

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

You are listening to the Tiny Course Empire Podcast with Cindy Bidar. This is [episode 65](#), and today I'm really happy to bring you an interview with a special guest. I actually recorded this as a lesson inside the course creation challenge, but the strategies that my guest is sharing are so good that I just had to put it out there for everyone to benefit.

If you do any kind of video or audio work, you're going to want to listen in today because we are going to up-level your confidence and your speaking skills too. I've been creating video and audio content for years, and I even picked up a few tips from my guests. My guest is a former professional dancer turned coach and consultant.

She helps her clients overcome performance anxiety so they can be more confident on stage, on camera, or on the microphone. I'm happy to welcome Six-Figure Systems member Laura Donnelly to give us some tips for overcoming our fear of the microphone.

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Laura, thank you so much for joining me on such short notice. I really, really appreciate you taking the time and I look forward to hearing some tips that maybe I can use in my presentations too.

Cindy, I'm really excited to be here and, and just for all of your listeners, and for my fellow Six-Figure Systems people, when I get excited, my voice goes up and pitch and I start to talk really fast because I'm happy and excited. And that's just a demonstration of how our good feeling can overwhelm what we're trying to teach.

And also how it can make it hard for people to understand us because we, we aren't conveying what we meant, which was the content of our information. And we know that content, so we don't have to be that nervous about it. And I'm sure you're going to have tips and tools for if we want to read a lesson, how to do that.

Well and skillfully, the thing about anxiety is that's excitement. So fear and happiness, excitement actually present in your body the same way. And so one of the things I would tell my students when we were getting ready for a performance and they would say to me, oh, I'm so nervous. I'm so nervous, I'm so nervous.

And I said, well, what are you feeling? Well, my stomach is just da da da. And I said, Aha, are you breathing? Well, no. I said, so sounds to me like you're excited. And my teacher. This, my ballet teacher, the, these are the same signals in your body. So maybe you're not nervous, maybe you're just excited, and if you make that little switch in your mind, that's enough a lot of times to let yourself settle in your body.

The reason I keep referring to our bodies is because they're very well, they're with us all. and their job is to help us, but sometimes we misinterpret what they're saying to us. The other thing, especially with the computer screen and the camera, is we can get sucked into the camera, and when the information is important, we can punch on the information, but then help then help the viewer.

Then help the listener. So a little bit you were. going along with me, and when I did my little punching thing, you're, you're, I saw your jog a little bit tight. Mm-hmm. . Yeah. Because you were responding to my energy. Mm-hmm. So one of the things that is great for dancers, and I think it's very helpful, and I I did this in the beginning of my going online time is to practice and to do a recording that you're not going to show to.

And I can do it on my little eye photo thingy on my computer, but then I can see when I don't pause between sentences, I can see when I'm pushing on the camera and I can, I can remind myself, oh, that's an important point. Maybe I can make that

point with a little space, which allows me to. and allows my listeners or viewers to process the information and the words.

So you and I talked about this before we started, how this can feel slow compared to our normal talking. Very much so, yes. And that's a, that's a kind of a trigger that can make us speed up, right? So that's another reason. That practicing taking a video and practicing and then looking at it can help us understand this medium, how learning happens in this medium, and also the fact that because we know our subject so well, we can cram too much stuff together in a lesson.

Absolutely. And that's one of the things I really like. Your lessons is that they're clean and clear and really focused on a topic. They don't jam too much in one place. Don't try to cover too much in a single lesson. Yeah. I want to, I, I want to, I want to go back to what you, a couple of things. You talked about, a couple of points you made that I think are really important and I want to make sure people get them.

Number one, and I was just talking to somebody about this the other day on the phone, excitement and nervousness feel the same. So why not choose to believe it's excitement, right? Instead of telling yourself that you're nervous or that you're anxious about something, tell yourself that you're excited. It feels the same, so you might as well have the better feeling than, than the the one that makes you crazy, right?

And the other thing is, and this was so hard for me, it, it still is hard for me. It still is, is just cringe worthy as far as I'm concerned, but recording yourself and then watching the videos. Pay attention. Look at what you're s what you're saying, how you say it, how you appear on screen, because that's the only way that you're going to be able to get better and more comfortable is by watching those videos back.

And if you think about even professional athletes, , right? This is very common and probably common among dancers too. They watch recordings of their performance. That's how they improve, and that's how you're going to improve as a speaker on camera or off camera as well. So two really important points. I love those.

And, and the other thing I want to say is, is a lot of times we look at ourselves and we say, oh my gosh. You know, look, I have wrinkles in my chin . Oh yeah, I have this, I have this thing. I have this little waddle thing going on. You know what? I'm 56 years old. I earned. Right. And, but nobody's looking at those.

Nobody cares. What if they are, and this is important to them and they don't want to learn my work because of that. Those, those are not my people. Exactly. And so

partly confidence comes from self-acceptance. And this is an interesting journey and it doesn't have to be done all at one time, but looking at our.

Even just not looking at the first time, just listening to see how was the speed, how was the pitch? I have, I've watched some people on camera and they, and, and they're on camera voice. It's just in the top of there. I go, whoa, baby., take a breath. I just want to take a deep breath hearing that like, I know.

And see, and they haven't listened. They, they might not have listened to themselves, but they might have, and they, and our voice is with us all the time, so sometimes, well, in the old days, I used to sound like Minnie Mouse,. It was too funny., but gradually as I came back to myself and I paid attention, because one of the really important things is in your whole system is when you have ease in your system anywhere, whether it's your big toe or your shoulders, you have ease everywhere because your whole body is connected.

So one of the things that people can do to start. Discern this ease sensation in their body is to just make a fist. And now you're going to hear what happened to my voice as I'm squeezing and I'm continuously squeezing. But what'd you hear? Hmm? Your voice did change a little bit. Yeah. Yeah. So now I just stop squeezing.

I don't even stretch it out. Cause if I stretch it out, oh man. Same thing. Yeah. This isn't stretched out. Squeeze, so I just let it open or I just stop. S. and as soon as that happens, there's ease in my whole system, whether I feel it in my vocal chords or not. Mm-hmm., it's in my vocal chords and so that is sometimes like if I'm on an interview, like a podcast or something, I might have my fist in my lap and while the host is talking, I might make a fist and soften it just before I start to.

And that helps my body. Remember its natural state. I love that. Easy, this easy state. This is what we were meant to be. I love that. When I'm in, when I'm in yoga class,. Oftentimes the teacher will, will say, you know, okay, we're going to move into, you know, whatever pose, and then she'll say and relax your shoulders.

And I invariably find that my shoulders are up around my ears, you know, whatever, whatever pose I'm doing, my shoulders are up here and I don't even notice it until she says, relax your shoulders. and I, I think the same thing is true when we're speaking or when we're presenting, we can be very stiff and, and nervous and, and we wouldn't even notice it unless we deliberately, like you said, you know, maybe make a fist and then relax it.

And that just kind of triggers your entire body to relax a little bit. Right, right. And it, and it allows. This space to really connect to people because your not your false

enthusiasm. You know, this is so important. We have to learn this piece before we can go on to the next thing. I mean, we might know that's true and we might feel that, but if I come back to my, my basic self and I like do the squeeze and the relax and check in with.

And I say the reason this lesson is so important at this early stage, and then I'm communicating an entirely different way, the importance of that lesson without the pressure on the person so they can, they can understand this lesson is foundational. And if we don't have this lesson for the base of the rest of our event, , the event will be unstable.

And that's way different than me just telling. You have to start here. This is so important. You can't skip this step or else that creates an entirely different engagement, and your voice is really powerful for engaging people, for inviting them in. And it's not about being scripted and it's not about being.

Practice, practice, practice and rehearsed, and it, it's about discovering your own authentic voice. What is the thing? Yes. That you love most? Yes. We talked about that in the lesson about finding your writing voice. What is the tone that you write with what is the style that you write with, but your speaking style, your presenting style is unique to you too as well, isn't it?

It is, and it relates to that. And it grows out of that. And, and they, the two of them affect each other. Mm. And if I develop a writing style that is, oh, I. Academic writing. Oh my God, I'm so sorry. I know I shouldn't say that. We have academic writers in the group and, and, and there's nothing wrong with academic writing if that is your style and if that's, if that's what attracts your audience.

The key is, as you said, to be authentic with it. And, and I had to pretty much compress myself into a box to fit into that. And it was hard because it wasn't authentic for you. , no, it wasn't authentic for me, but in order to achieve in that environment and, you know, you submit and you get your papers presented and everything, I had to learn all those rules.

And so it, it wasn't me and it wasn't easy. And it, and even if I would go and do a presentation, a lot of times I would just take note cards and talk and I wouldn't, I would refer to bullet points in my thing and they. relate to my paper, but I wouldn't hold to my paper the way it was written. And the, and I did okay.

The people liked it because it was an engaging presentation. But the first time when I had my outline and I stuck to it and every, it was dull, dull, dull because it

wasn't me. Right. And let's see, now, do you have any other questions? I was going to say like clear engaging. This one tensing and easing in your system.

So this squeezing exercise is really good because it might help you to notice other places you tense, like, you know, in yoga, like you explained, that you need to look for your shoulders, right? And I know I need to listen to getting carried away by my topic. and speeding up. And if I start to hear myself speeding up, I can just like say, let's pause Laura to myself in my head.

Yes. Take a little breath and go again as I, because I took that second, it's just a second to recenter. Yes. This is a problem that I have and you and I spoke about it before we, before we got on the, before I hit the record button. , it's, it comes from a bit of nervousness, a bit of anxiety, I'm sure, and a, I know a lot of people feel this way where we feel the need to fill every second, we have to keep talking because we're the only ones on.

And we, and that's, I think, a lot of times where those filler words come from. If you find yourself saying and ah, between words, it's because. You are struggling to fill every second, and you don't need to fill every second. It's okay to have some blank space. It's okay to have some silence in your recording, and this is another place where practice can help because you can have your script or outline and you can listen, and if you have trouble looking at yourself on screen, just practice. It gets better. If we have a script and we listen to our practice, reading of the script or the lesson, we can make notes on it like a musician or a performer does. Oh, a pause here would be better. A little bit of. , I asked a question, a little bit of space for people to write down an answer, especially if we're teaching to slides, they're looking at something.

So it's not a movie. They're not being entertained by James Bond jumping from building to building. They're trying to make sense of the information we are teaching in relation to their. , and that's a complicated process. So as we listen, we can, we can add space in our script, and sometimes I actually put space on the paper.

When I'm talking. Yes. So that I'm visually reminded, oh, this is another place I can pause. I can make my fist under the table. I can do my things. And if you hear yourself speeding up in a certain spot, you can make a note of that on your script and, and look at that or remember to yourself, oh, I need to, to pay a little bit of attention before I get to this place because this place is important.

But sometimes the best way to share Important information is with space and slowness. So those are some tips. I hope that they're helpful. So let, so those were,

those were great. So I would just want to do a quick, quick recap of, of what we talked about. So the first, the first tip was that anxiety and n and excitement feel the same.

So don't automatically assume that you are anxious or that you're nervous because maybe you're just excited to be presenting. And if you're not, maybe you should frame it that way because it feels the same. . The second tip is to practice and to watch your practice sessions. Remember that no one has to watch that video.

You don't have to publish it just because you record it, but you need to watch it as cringey as that might feel. It gets easier, trust me. That is also one of my biggest tips. You can rerecord anything, so you know, if you don't like, Delete it. Record it again. Do it over again. You don't have to publish your rough draft, so you get to wait until they're polished and, and up to your standards.

Just don't do that forever. Right? Make a fist. I love that tip. Make a fist under the desk and use that as your cue to relax. , relax a little bit. Go and your body will do its own relaxing. Exactly where it needs to relax. Yeah, absolutely. Speak authentically. Don't try to put on a speaking persona. Speak like you would normally speak.

Use your own voice. Don't try to use someone else's voice. Those voices are already taken. Use your. and speak more slowly than you think you need to speak
Something Laura and I talked about before we hit the record button was that people who are watching your video can speed it up. If you're speaking too slowly for them, they can speed it up.

Every video player online now allows that function. Personally, I watch videos. Two or two and a half times speed, just because I'm impatient. So you don't have to speak faster. Let your viewer determine what speed they're listening at. Did I get them all? Did I miss any? I think that's it. And it's just like to begin to learn to hear your own voice, to hear your own pacing, to allow that we're not listening to.

How bad we sound. We're listening to know that we, we, oh, I need to take a breath. Oh, I'm speeding up. What's, what's really happening? So that it's, it's, I think sometimes too, like the screen sucks us in and our presentation sucks us in and we just get into the, getting through the bullet points. And even then just thinking about that, I changed how I was.

And so when I come back to who I am, I'm, I like myself better. I don't get tired. I, I don't lose my voice during a speaking event. And I think it's, then it's fun and we start to learn things about ourselves. A another thing people can do is like when

you're watching your video, if you start to do this and have a lot of judgment, do your fist and let go at those places of judgment.

Be as nice to the person you see on the screen as you would be to say a seven year old who was doing their first video. Hmm. That's a good tip. Be kind to yourself.

Yeah, so not kind to us. Why would we be kind to anyone else, . That's right, that's right. I love that. Cindy, these are, these are fantastic tips, Laura. I so appreciate you. You know, jumping on here with. With almost no notice. You guys, Laura and I scheduled this this morning and we're on the call this afternoon.

So she's been great. These are fantastic tips. Like I said, I'm going to have a checklist below this video. If you want, you know, just kind of a quick recap or, you know, hit that two times speed button and listen to us on. on . Fast forward if fast, fast, listen to it three times on fast, but Exactly.

Whatever works for you. Laura, thank you so much. I really appreciate you and your expertise. These were, these were great tips, like I said, and I'm going to put them to work in my own, in my own video practice.

Where can people learn more about you and what you do and what you teach? If they go to DancingWithEase.com, that will get them to my website and they can find everything there. Awesome. All right, great. Thanks again for joining me today. I really appreciate you and we will talk again soon .

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