



THANK YOU, JON ACUFF

EP #66

“Do I need a life coach?” You’re listening to Episode 66, with Rhiannon Bush

Welcome to the Do I need a life coach? Podcast. We’re here to discuss the ins- and outs- of the life coaching industry and give you tools to use, to see for yourself. I’m your host, Rhiannon Bush. Mother, management consultant and a passionate, certified life coach.

I have been reading John Acuff's book *Start* and the recommendation came from a good friend of mine in Hobart, Tiffany Doman and it is amazing. It's exactly what I've needed to hear for quite a long time and it's rare that I find a book that gives me information, some of which I already know, in a way that reinspires me, or really piques my interest and simultaneously takes the pressure off.

Most content when we receive it is memorable because of its context right? So I’m going to take you through a few lessons and takeaways that impacted me from the book, and then you can read the book if it resonates with you. If you’re an aspiring or existing entrepreneur, business owner, or if you’re in a day job that kills your soul each morning you wake up and have to go, this book may be the very thing you need to help awaken that dreamer inside of you. If you’re looking to take a passion and make it a career, I’d definitely recommend purchasing the book.

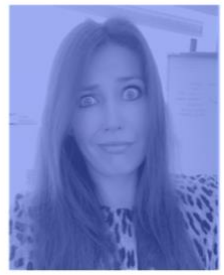
I feel like many self-help books and business books and entrepreneurial books today are weighty and pressurising. I love books. One of my favourite shops is the Dymocks store on Collins Street in Melbourne. I’ve spent hours in that place because when I go into a library, I feel like anything’s possible. Not to mention the countless books still on my library shelf waiting to be read... but I keep buying them because they give me hope that I can learn anything and reinvent myself or hone my passions to use the information whenever I choose to. It feels wonderful for me.

When I read business books, or coaching books, I become full of ideas and I immediately want to implement all of the things which is far too much and becomes overwhelming. They can also be very complex and if you suffer from imposter syndrome, they can verge on fueling your inner demon instead of inspiring your inner rock-star instead. Jon Acuff talks about incremental, manageable steps.

In *Start*, there’s not a wasted word throughout the entire book, and the use of humour and the realness just sucked me right in. I hope I do it justice in this episode and at most you go and purchase a paper copy or audio version, or at the very least you get some key insights from me here.

Thank you, Jon Acuff.





So the whole book title is "Start: Punch Fear in the Face, Escape Average, and Do Work That Matters" and is described as a motivational and practical guide for individuals seeking to pursue their passions and turn them into meaningful careers.

The first talking point is about your inner rock-star. In the book, Jon contrasts going down the road to average versus going down the road to awesome but he gives awesome the context of when you're being awesome, it's when you're in the flow of your passion and doing things you love. An old mentor of mine, Glen Murdoch, used to call this your inner rock-star and he meant when you're being who you were truly born to be. You're in the moment, in flow, you're having fun, you feel the most alive. Jon Acuff says that when you're on the road to awesome, a.k.a. being your 'inner rock star', it's rarely about you. It's often about other people, not yourself, and can range from very common and mainstream – like a singer, through to extremely niche or unique – like model train collecting. It doesn't matter what it is and Acuff points out that the more passions you have, the better. It doesn't mean every single one of your passions will be able to be turned into a career – or that you'd want it to. But it certainly gives you more options and more roads to 'awesome'.

The second thing that stayed with me is how he talks about time. Now, I've always been a planner and I'm highly organised, but I'd never considered how my time has changed in recent years. He talks about time in the way of it not always being your own – as in communal time and your time. Jon even has an acronym for it – SWORD. While the actual parts of the acronym haven't stuck in my mind other than the S being Service and the D being dance, (just know I consumed this book super quickly and as an audiobook!), the point was that there are times of my week that are not mine. It's communal time. Time dedicated to my kids. There are other times in my week dedicated to my work. And as a mum of young kids, I don't get a lot of me time and prior to having kids, I absolutely loved it. If I do get 'me' time, it comes at a massive sacrifice to others – either my kids, Damien – my partner, or my sleep. While yes, we can sleep when we're dead, I'm not my best self on reduced sleep and therefore I value my sleep so I've found it really difficult to prioritise "me" time over the past few years.

Jon Acuff then goes on to discuss a lot of studies that have backed why working early in the morning is a bit of a life hack because we're more efficient and effective due to the hormones in our brain – dopamine which I've talked about before, and I'm sure there's more to it but the take away – if you're prioritising when to do quality work fast, do it first thing in the morning. He says 5am. For those of you cringing right now I feel you, I'm with you but as someone who's been doing 5am starts 3x days a week for the past 18 months or so, it's really not so bad until later in the evening. I personally find at that point I crash, but I do get so much more out of my day. I had a friend a while back who was reading the 5am Club by Robin Sharma. Maybe check that out and see if it helps?

Purpose. The way he talks about purpose I found to be so refreshing and this was probably what really got me into the book. I work with clients, and I too myself have said many times "I just don't know what I want" or "I don't know why I'm here" or "what's the meaning of life". Just teeny tiny questions right?! But the way Jon Acuff describes purpose is as a set of values, not a





final destination. It's living each day in each moment with purpose. It's knowing what 'purpose' means to you and doing that each day. That way you can know that yes, or no, and it helps you set boundaries with other people as well. He speaks about purpose the way I speak about values. And it's was truly enlightening for me. Because I stopped and wrote down how I want to show up as a mum, as a worker and as a woman and then I found the synergies between the three, worked out what the differences were and found they were all pretty similar anyway. It gave me 'guiding principles' if you will, for how I want to live each day and the type of person I want to be characterised as being. Not only by others, but by myself. And if others turned around and described me as those or perceived me that way, I'd be really happy about that. Sorry if I missed the point on that Jon, but it had a profound impact nonetheless.

Another thing he says, and this isn't a direct quote but it's close, is "be unrealistic about where you're heading but be highly realistic about where you are today". One of the traps I fell into early along my road to running my own business which, in hindsight was a great learning curve but at the time felt horrible, was putting all my hopes and dreams and... yes... money into my business because "well if I really wanted it badly enough I'd make it happen..." and "I have to back yourself and burn the boats" ... and all the other quotations taken grossly out of context that left me hoping some higher power or the universe would save me when I wasn't physically in a position to keep going or able to meet the universe half-way. The way he talks about it is that when you start with the end in mind – in mind, as in a rough idea of what you'd like to achieve and what you hope for, opposed to setting it in stone which, as Acuff says, we've turned Stephen Covey's 7 Habits of Highly Effective People, but when things don't align to that exact plan we give up because it's "not going to work out" – but when you start with the end in mind it's impossible not to dream and hope and consider all it could be. I mean that's the whole point right?! That's why we start in the first place. That's why we dream and plan and envisage... because we get excited by the result.

But on the same side of the coin, if we hyper-design the runway and demand too much control and circumstances being exactly right, then we'll struggle to cope with any changes, hurdles or curveballs that get thrown our way on the path. Being a perfectionist about it weakens us, it doesn't make us stronger. Perfectionism and control are the ticket to procrastination, analysis-paralysis and sometimes never getting started in the first place. Not good. So to approach dream-catching with no idea of what we want as an outcome is unrealistic, but to lock that outcome in stone and control the journey so much that we can't sustain it or we miss opportunities along the way, won't work either. Be realistic about where you are now, and unrealistic about where you're going. Or something to that effect.

That leads me to context. Everything can be taken out of context and it's important for your sanity as you consider and maybe making your passion into a career, that you put everything firmly in context. Today with our exposure to social media and curated lives, images and well... everything, it's difficult to put what you're experiencing in the exact context your lower-common-denominator brain wants it to go, as in that part of your brain addicted to comfort, safety and everything staying exactly how it is, despite the higher-common-denominator part of your brain who is screaming at you for more – more passion, more purpose, more fun, more meaning, more growth, more contribution, just more. The problem is that when we're not provided the appropriate context, we make it up and because of that, we'll give things meaning





based on our upbringing, our conditioning and the values given to us by our environment – if we haven't consciously decided on our values for ourselves. Start gives us the context, and that's the beauty of reading the whole book – not just a summarised version.

Jon Acuff discusses our self-talk and how it's not always right. He recommends journaling or documenting it so you can visibly see on paper how ridiculous some of your thoughts actually are. He gives great examples in the book.

I loved his framework for achieving awesome - Learning, Editing, Mastering, Harvesting, Guiding. It gave structure and a method to follow.

Within that structure he talks about being brave enough to be bad at things. As the old saying goes "don't knock it 'til you try it" and we can't know what we'll love, let alone what we'll love so much we're happy to continue doing repetitively enough to be great at, to then monetise and make into a career, if we never try. He also says it's never too late to start and gives proper stories and statistics around "overnight success stories" we've all heard and loved.

The entitlement ladder was great. I've often struggled to decipher the difference between knowing my worth, standing up for it, believing it and backing myself, versus the entitlement ladder and in his book, he describes how climbing the entitlement ladder always leads to nowhere, because you haven't done the work to back it up or earned the resilience or respect that comes with repetition. For those of you who freak out at that, don't panic – Acuff also discusses short-cuts to success and that it's not start now and get it when you're wanting to retire. There are ways to get legs up along the way and ways to arrive at success faster, especially in the land of opportunity we're currently living in with the internet and social media.

Relationships is a key ingredient in Acuff's success recipe. He talks about not only building, having and regularly engaging with people who can provide guidance, encouragement and opportunities, but also paying it forward. He specifically talks about a "brag" table, where you have people in your life who you can brag to without judgement to celebrate the wins along the way.

One of the biggest impacts this book had on me was that where I am right now is ok. This may or may not be my road to awesome, but without taking action and trying, I may never find which road it is for me. So try. Be brave and try. Because the risk in not trying is that things stay the same. And I don't know about you but I've never been satisfied with things staying the same. I'm getting better at gratitude and appreciating where I am now and hopeful for what tomorrow brings. Between Jerry Rolls 2023 CMA award for New Artist of the Year, and Jon Acuff saying there's a reason the windshield is significantly larger than the rear-view mirror, where we're going is so much more important than where we've been.

Take action in the face of fear, take manageable steps supported by others and ignoring those who aren't, pursuing not only passion but something others' also need and will benefit from – making it a win-win for all, and starting today. Just take that first step and the lessons that fall out from that step will at best, propel you forward and at least, give you lessons to help you





pivot in a different direction and that will still be more fulfilling, in the pursuit of awesome, than life is right now.

See you next week.

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Hey! Before you go, I always find reviews really helpful when looking for new information or insights...

If you've found this podcast valuable, please take a minute to write a quick review about what you've found most beneficial for you, so other people can benefit from your insights, and listen in too. I would LOVE that!

Also, if there are any topics you'd like me to cover specifically about life coaching or the life coaching industry, visit rhiannonbush.com to contact me. Thanks for joining and I'll see you in the next episode of Do I Need A Life Coach?!

Please note, this transcription may not be exact.

