



Being Fearless with Alan Weiss

Episode #19

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Lisa Larter (00:01):

Welcome to, She Talks Business. If you're an entrepreneur, business owner or aspiring mogul, chances are you want to learn more about marketing and mastering and monetizing your business. She Talks Business is where you'll learn all of that and more. My name is Lisa Larter and I'm an entrepreneur, high school dropout, wiener dog enthusiast and your host. Let's get started.

Lisa Larter (00:25):

Welcome to episode number 19. I can't believe it, 19 episodes. We are on a roll. Today I am super excited to share my mentor with you. Alan Weiss is known as the rock star of consulting. He has written more books on consulting than anyone else in the world. He has written a book with me called Masterful Marketing, and that book is coming out either later this year or the beginning of next year.

Lisa Larter (00:59):

But the book that we are talking about today is called *Fearless Leadership*. I have never met a person more detached with what other people think and more willing to just live fearlessly than Alan Weiss. Alan has been part of my life and world for, I think around five years now. And I have to tell you, I have done some of the boldest things in my business as a result of his encouragement, when it comes to pricing, when it comes to offers, when it comes to how I think about my business, when it comes to really looking at whether there is a downside to risk, all kinds of great things. Alan, he's prolific. When I think about the things that people need to do from a marketing perspective, Alan has a podcast, he blogs daily, he sends out multiple newsletters every single month. One is weekly, several are monthly. He is a walking billboard for how marketing should be done well.



Lisa Larter (02:06):

His podcast, which is called, *The Uncomfortable Truth*, is really a great title that sums up Alan. Alan will make you uncomfortable at times. Growth is on the other side of discomfort, so that's why I keep him around, because he constantly makes me a little bit uncomfortable and that discomfort leads to growth. I hope you enjoy the show. I hope it leaves you feeling empowered to do something brave. If you want to cement that bravery, send me an email and tell me what one fearless thing is that you have chosen to do as a result of listening to this conversation. If you are enjoying a summer of reading, if you are one of those peoples who's texting me, telling me how much you love the show, but you have not left a review yet, come on, do a girl a favor, leave me a review.

Lisa Larter (03:00):

Do you know that less than 5% of all podcasts have more than 20 reviews? I could use a little bit help here, because I'm falling into the 95% hole and I don't like it. I want to be a top 5 percenter and I need your help. Enjoy the show. Alan is awesome.

Alan Weiss (03:17):

I wouldn't worry about overconfidence. The big sin, the big crime is underconfidence.

Lisa Larter (03:20):

How do you overcome underconfidence? You always say, if you've told me this once, you've told me this a hundred times, to have the courage of my talent. How do you do that?

Alan Weiss (03:32):

You remind yourself of what you've done well, and what we do is we tend to default to focus on negatives. We focus on defeats. We focus on setbacks. We focus on criticism. This is why I tell people, never listen to unsolicited feedback. It's worthless. What you have to do is say, "I've done this well, I've done that well, in these circumstances I've always acted well, there was no reason to believe I can't do it now". That way you build your confidence, not because you're giving yourself some stupid Tony Robbins walk over hot coals, but you're giving yourself self-confidence because you're reminding yourself of actual empirical evidence about successes you've had. All of us

have had successes, personal and professional, but you have to remind yourself of them until they become part of your muscle memory and you have that innate ability to realize “I can do this”.

Lisa Larter (04:18):

What about the one-off? What about the one customer where you feel pretty confident about what you do and then you run into a situation where somebody challenges you and somebody's not as happy with your performance, or they're not as happy with whatever it is, the service you've provided them. How do you discern whether they are an outlier and they're unreasonable, or this is a sign you should pay attention to?

Alan Weiss (04:45):

Well first of all, they're always an outlier, whether they're reasonable or unreasonable, they're always an outlier, because they're not part of the mainstream. You've run into this. It's unusual. The second thing is, you say to them, “why do you feel that way? Why do you feel it was a bad speech? Why do you feel the project isn't working well? Why do you feel I don't listen to you? Please tell me why”. If they cite evidence, observed behavior then you say, “yes, I can correct that”. And you say, “thank you for that. I'm going to correct that, here's what I'll do”. If they just cite an opinion or they have an agenda, that's how you discern. You look to the evidence and the environment.

Lisa Larter (05:21):

Okay. Second question Wendy had is, “what daily habit would you recommend for someone committed to living fearlessly, but who still battles with the guy on her shoulder? Asking for a friend”.

Alan Weiss (05:36):

Asking for a friend, right? Well Wendy, tell your friend this, I think that's a very good question. I think it's a question that more people have than they would admit to. What you have to do is, two things. First of all you have to ask yourself, “what's the worst thing that can happen?”. And the worst thing that can happen is that there'll be no changes in Western civilization. You'll get on with your day, the client will get on with his or her day. And so the worst thing that can happen if you try to be bold is not deleterious to your health. It's not fatal, get on with it. I think Churchill said, success is never final

and failure is seldom fatal, it's courage that counts. That's number one. Number two, understand that the guy on your shoulder is giving you negative images and it's just an image. "You can't do that, you're not good at that. They won't like you."

Alan Weiss (06:23):

And so you can dismiss the image. Dismiss the image. Because it's not true. If they were true, you wouldn't need the little guy, you'd remember all the failures you had, but the little guy is there to just tell you, you don't deserve it, you're an impostor. Drop the negative image. Those are my two pieces of advice. What I tend to do in addition though is, I look at every challenge, an objection, a confrontation, a conflict, a challenge, everything as a game. I say, a new game. How do I get through this game? How do I turn this to my advantage? And sometimes an apology is necessarily if I've made an error and the other person says, well, thank you. I feel better. But sometimes I say, I said to a woman just earlier, I'm the president of the ballet, and she wrote me this letter. And I said to her, "I do not respond well to threats. You want to cooperate and collaborate with us. I welcome your help. You want to threaten me, I'm not listening."

Alan Weiss (07:11):

And so you have to understand what's the right thing to do for you, and what's the right thing to do for the other person. The last thing you want to do is enable someone who's making threats. I hope that helps.

Lisa Larter (07:21):

Awesome. Thank you. Maggie has a question. Her question was, "when you first started your business, what was your greatest fear?" I'm going to add, "how did you overcome it?"

Alan Weiss (07:35):

I didn't really have a fear when I started my business. My wife was very supportive. We recognized we had no money. We recognized that we were at a disadvantage, because there were 250,000 consultants walking around and I was just fired. But the both of us said, let's give it our best shot. If we can't do that, if it doesn't work, I'll go get a job. My wife will go for the job. We do something. By the way, this was in a bad economy in the late 80s. But I didn't fear anything because, see when you are fearful, it affects your voice,

it affects your physical movements, it affects your cognitive skills. And so you tend to be less and less effective, which makes you more and more fearful. And so I tell this story a lot, but the first thing I did was I bought a \$2,000 suit. This is 1985 and I flew first class and I had limos, because I would not show up at a buyer's office looking disheveled and perspiring and lost.

Alan Weiss (08:33):

One sale took care of the suit, right? I said to my wife, I have to walk in looking like a success. I didn't have fears, I had strong expectations and desires that I could create a certain image of myself.

Lisa Larter (08:49):

Interesting. Have you ever had fear in your business? Have you ever experienced a down economy or a loss of clients or something that's happened in your business that has made you fearful?

Alan Weiss (09:01):

No. I've experienced a down economy. I've experienced loss of business. I've experienced projects that I thought would come through and didn't, and I've been thrown out a couple of offices, but I was never fearful. Those things come with the turf. Nobody has a perfect life. Nobody has a perfect business. My batting average is pretty good. See fear like guilt, is a wasteful emotion. It masks talent and it causes you more and more grief. The last thing you want when you have an unpleasant situation is more and more grief. I don't get afraid. I get challenged. When I was fired, when you get fired, you get either distraught or angry. And if you're distraught, you get depressed. I got really angry and I started doing things. I said, you're not treating me this way.

Alan Weiss (09:45):

I think that whenever we face a challenge or a threat or whatever we want to call it, for me it's a reason to be even stronger. In the book, I talk about fight or flight, but I also talk about fright. And so psychologists like to talk about fight or flight, but there's also fright, and fright is paralyzing. It's why deer stay in the headlights and get themselves killed.

Lisa Larter (10:04):

Can you remember a time in your life where you were fearful even as a child or have you always experienced fear as a game?

Alan Weiss (10:18):

No, I was fearful. I was fearful when I thought these people are going to beat me up. I went to an inner city high school. You didn't go complain to the principal and the ACLU didn't file a lawsuit back then. Somebody said, give me a quarter or you won't get into your locker. Or we'll take you downstairs and beat you up. You dealt with this. I crossed the street incorrectly once, these two, they called them junior police guys. Two huge guys ran after me. I was afraid if they caught me they'd pulverize me. When I was young, I was afraid of failing. I was afraid I wouldn't be like the other kids. I was afraid there were monsters under the bed. I was sure there were monsters under the bed. I didn't want to put a flashlight down there because I might see one. So yeah, I was scared of all the normal, natural things.

Alan Weiss (11:05):

And then though I found out that if you were bright and you had a significant vocabulary and you weren't afraid to use your smarts and you have a sense of humor, there were very, very few situations where you had to be afraid. I was afraid once leaving at 4:30 in the morning, out of Quito, Ecuador when it was black and nobody was on the streets and they were supposed to assign me a driver who spoke English, I speak very little Spanish and you could have been kidnapped at any second. I said, what am I doing here? I was frightened then. I think anybody should be frightened when they see a gun or a tornado, or maybe a big bear.

Lisa Larter (11:43):

It sounds to me like you have a healthy capacity for discerning what you should be afraid of, and you also have a strong sense of self-confidence in terms of what you're capable of. And so a situation where I might be afraid, I might be afraid of not doing a good enough job, or I might be afraid of letting you down or, et cetera, et cetera, you wouldn't even be thinking that way. It's just not in your horizon. Is that because you are fearless or is that because you are confident in yourself?

Alan Weiss (12:21):

Well, I'm fearless because I'm confident. You know my mantra is no guilt, no fear, no fear. I walk into a room, I own it, prove otherwise. I learned, because I was always in the minority, when I went through school in the early days, I became very smart and very fast. I was smart enough to ace tests and get special treatment. I labored and tracked my freshman year, a skinny white kid. And so those things tend to stay with you. I learned as I went through high school and through college and my advanced degrees, that if you were smart and fast, you were going to not only succeed, you were going to beat everybody else and just became a way of life.

Lisa Larter (13:00):

Have you done things intentionally to build your confidence? Or because you talk a lot about looking at evidence and you talk a lot about going through your day and looking at the things that you did well that day, and then looking at the one thing that maybe you could do differently and looking at the day when you start the day and thinking about what you want to do. Can you give me an example, a real example of what that looks like? When you fell asleep last night, what did you think about that you did well yesterday?

Alan Weiss (13:32):

When I fell asleep last night, as far as I can remember, I thought about the fact that I had just invented two new pieces of IP, "Sentient Strategy" and "Dynamic Community Building", that I had launched and were both highly successful. And I was launching second and third situations for them. I was thinking about the fact that I was running a consulting convention in Sydney, Australia, halfway around the world, and all the parts were falling into place and it was going to be great. The third thing I thought about was, I'm president of the ballet up here. We had a meeting, artistic director, managing director, and we had a real financial situation that's going to be a problem, but I handled it calmly and well, and I gave them confidence and we have some things in place to try to deal with it.

Alan Weiss (14:18):

Those are the three things I can remember I thought about. I want to make sure that I tell you this. The way to build your confidence is never to run away. So as long as it's not a physical threat like a gun or a tornado, if you have a fear, walk into it. Psychologists will tell you, stand in the storm. What

I'm telling you is, walk into it and face it. The worst thing that happens is you lose and everybody loses at times, but the best thing that can happen is you conquer it. And once you conquer it, that's behind you. And now you know you could do that every time in the future. To be fearless, walk into the challenge, never run away.

Lisa Larter (14:56):

Awesome. Thank you. I appreciate that. I like seeing how you think, because I spent a half day with a client yesterday doing strategy and helping them with something that was really, really challenging for them. I am one of the main stage speakers at your event in Sydney. And my business is growing by leaps and bounds, but I'm not lying in bed at night thinking about, hey, I had a great day today. I was super effective. I did this. I'm not reminding myself of that consciously and or consistently.

Alan Weiss (15:34):

It's like an exercise and you should do it in the morning as well.

Lisa Larter (15:37):

Yeah, that was really helpful. It's easy to hear you say to do it, but when you show the example of how you've done it, it's even more impactful. All right. Next question is, "if you could go back in time, what would you change or have done differently in your business, given everything you know now?"

Alan Weiss (15:58):

When I was fired and I first went out on my own, I would have collected more names, more assiduously. We didn't have the computers that we have today, but that's no excuse. I could have written them down. I was much too blasé about names. I might remember the name of a buyer I was dealing with, but not all the other people I met, and not the people who were buyers with whom I didn't do business. I didn't establish a very effective network at first. Clearly I can see, I should have done that differently.

Lisa Larter (16:24):

What would you have done with those names? Are you saying that when you meet people or when you just submit a proposal, keeping a list of the names of the wins and the losses and keeping in touch with those people?

Alan Weiss (16:35):

Nothing so elaborate. I just would've kept all the names and put them on a list and I would have mailed to them. I would have sent them value. I would have reminded them where I was. Because you know without the internet, then you had to use different ways to stay on people's radar screens. Today would be like putting in a mailing list and sending out emails or sending out a newsletter or something. I think because of that, I still got referrals and everything, but I think I could have probably had 10 times as much.

Lisa Larter (17:01):

That's a good point. I remember you telling me one time that you catalog your stories.

Alan Weiss (17:07):

I do.

Lisa Larter (17:08):

So that you remember the stories that you want to tell at events and things like that. I think it's the same thing, catalog your network, keep track of all of those people. Okay. Next question is, I'll be curious to see what your answer to this is. Who are, or who were your avatars that helped you build resilience?

Alan Weiss (17:32):

Well, an avatar in that sense is, the definition is exemplar. I didn't have any exemplars. I had supporters, my wife was tremendously supportive, but there was nobody who did what I was trying to do. People who are billing by the hour, the sort of time and materials, just how to make money. I wanted to get out of that business altogether. I tell you who I respected though, I respected people like Peter Drucker who were unequivocal experts. The guy invented strategy. I saw him speak once. And he just, in this Austrian dramatic accent, he took no prisoners. He just said, here's the way it is. You don't like it. I don't care. When a partner and I wrote, our first book, my first book was with a partner and it was on innovation. He had a book on innovation and we called him at Claremont University in California and picked up his own phone. And we said, look, we're writing this book, there are four or five things in your book that we'd like to use, but we don't want to offend you.

Alan Weiss (18:30):

He said, I don't give a damn what you do and he hung up. I said to my partner, okay, I'll take that for approval. It's okay. I thought Drucker was great. I liked the way he handled himself. I liked the fact that he was absolutely confident in his abilities and his talent. And now I'll tell you two other things which you know, and that is, I've always admired Frank Sinatra and I've always admired Sandy Koufax. I think Sandy Koufax was the greatest pitcher ever in the history of baseball. I think Sinatra of course is the greatest interpreter of the great American songbook ever. The reason they are so appealing to me, is that when they are on their game, there's nobody better, nobody better. They were just extraordinary. If you want to talk about an avatar, I like to think that when I'm on top of my game, there's nobody better and I'm going to keep doing what I do as long as I'm on top of my game.

Lisa Larter (19:25):

Awesome. I still have a few years left with you, so I hope you keep doing that.

Alan Weiss (19:31):

Well, I look forward to next week.

Lisa Larter (19:33):

I know, crazy. Do you see a difference between genders regarding fear, how they deal with it and how it builds confidence?

Alan Weiss (19:45):

Yeah, I do. I think women's fear increases because, and now I'm generalizing here, but I think it's accurate that women have a need to be liked more than men do. Women feel that an argument might jeopardize their relationship more than men do. Men can argue prolifically, vociferously, and then go have a beer and not care. Women worry that even though the argument is isolated to an issue today, it means tomorrow they might lose respect in other people's eyes. And so I think fear is somewhat greater there. I also think women are fearful of stereotypes. They're fearful of being called a bitch. I don't know how many times I hear that. Even though it's not necessarily true. Has it ever happened? Of course. But they're fearful of these things that haven't happened yet.

Alan Weiss (20:33):

On the other hand, as sociologists say, men have a much greater fear about their ego. Women are far better with their egos. Men feel to a large extent that when there's criticism or there's a challenge that their egos are at stake, and they'll be seen as a lesser person, they'll be seen as a failure. They wear their ego out in the front of the ship there and it's hit by the wind and the tides and everything else. Women, not so much. When women are capable of learning so much more easily because of two things, one is, they have less to unlearn, in that they don't grab onto these things and hold them so fast because their egos aren't so involved. And the second thing is that women, if you would have in Fisher's book, *The First Sex or The Second Sex*, they tend to think in more web-like configurations, so that they're seeing a bigger picture.

Alan Weiss (21:22):

A man tends to see a rifle shot and a woman's looking at the big picture, which I think is far more empathic and far more valuable. I hope that answers your question, if not, try it again.

Lisa Larter (21:32):

Question for you, what I observe is women take things a lot more personally. When you talk about having an argument as an example, women take it personally when people disagree with them. Is that a symptom of being fearful? Is it a symptom of lack of confidence?

Alan Weiss (21:53):

Well, it is, because that fits in with what I said, they want to be liked. And they take things personally because they think it's an attack on them and their likeability. The fact of the matter is that men don't really decline in the eyes of others because they object, they complain and they argue, as long as it seems they're being rational and they have good reason. But you're quite right about that. I think women tend to self-edit more than men. And so in a conversation, in a meeting, I think women tend to think more carefully about what they want to say, so it's exactly appropriate, but by the time they do that, the conversation has moved on.

Lisa Larter (22:33):

That is a symptom I think of perfectionism, again. I want to say the right thing, I don't want to make myself look stupid. I don't want to say the wrong thing. I need to think through and make sure what I say is the right thing.

Alan Weiss (22:45):

Right. Let me just argue with you. I don't think it's perfectionism, I think it's a fear of doing the wrong thing. It's just the opposite, really. And so they don't need it to be perfect, they need for it to be acceptable.

Lisa Larter (22:56):

What do you see is the most important daily practice to reduce fear?

Alan Weiss (23:01):

I think you have to face challenges and not procrastinate. Procrastination and I write about this in the book, is a manifestation of fear. Being critiqued for not moving is less harmful than the fear of actually doing something and being critiqued for not being done well. People don't mind being called a procrastinator because they're more fearful of being called a failure. I think you have to face your challenges. I was saying this before, the best way to build your confidence is to face challenges and get the experience, get the muscle memory for how you dealt with it. This applies to public speaking, it applies to proposals, it applies to dealing with conflict, negotiation, you name it, but it's got to be experiential. You don't take skiing instructions from a guy in the lodge with a brandy, telling you, when you go up there tomorrow, flex your knees.

Alan Weiss (23:55):

Or you take ski instructions from the guy who was in front of you by six yards, doing what you want to do. And so you've got to get out there and do it and experience it.

Lisa Larter (24:04):

All right, next question. In my experience we cannot change our mindset to a new belief without that belief being believable in our own mind. It seems that once fear gets recognized, verbalized and validated, it becomes less powerful. Is this your experience? Can you say more about jettisoning fear?

Alan Weiss (24:25):

Well, I don't know what you mean by validated there. Some fear is valid and some fear isn't. And I talk about in the book, valid, invalid fears. I talk about fears that you're conscious about and other fears you're not conscious of. I'd say this though. We carry baggage around with us that wasn't packed by us. It was packed by our parents, it was packed by siblings. It was packed by circumstances. The fact is we need baggage, but it should be baggage that we pack and repack for the current circumstances. And so periodically we have to open the baggage and throw stuff out that no longer applies or that was mythological or doesn't count in this day and age. And consequently some fears that we hadn't lived, for example, a fear of writing and being understood by others, we carry around with us. But the fact is, we've been writing for years now effectively, an email, an article and so forth.

Alan Weiss (25:22):

And yet we still carry on the fear because we don't examine it. If that's what you're talking about, I agree. If you examine fears, you can do away with the ones that are invalid and you can find out why you are still fearing the ones that appear to be valid. I think that's useful. But the thing you have to remember is you can't fear, fear, And so when my son wouldn't go into the funhouse on the boardwalk, down at the beach, I said, "don't be afraid to go in the dark". And he said, "it's not the dark. I'm afraid of what might be in the dark". I said, "okay, fair enough". I said, "but look at those people coming out of the ride". And when he looked, I said, "how did they look?" He said, "they're laughing". I said, "does that sound like it was dangerous in there?" You have to deal rationally with these things.

Alan Weiss (26:07):

I was afraid of a monster under the bed. It could be, there was a monster under the bed. It could be that I never put the flashlight down there at the time the monster was there. I can't prove unequivocally that there was never a monster under my bed. I cannot prove that, there was no video. However, I can tell you this, if there were a monster under my bed, it never did anything bad to me. And so the empirical evidence is, even if it is a monster down there occasionally, it's not harmful. What's the monster under your bed?

Lisa Larter (26:40):

Right. I think the question that comes to mind for me is, you say that you need to confront your fear. You need to move into your fear instead of away from your fear. I think that, for me, when I think about something that I'm afraid of, or I'm afraid of doing, or I'm afraid is going to happen, I don't always know what the first behavior should be or how to find the courage to take that first step. I don't know if that makes sense. It's like, if you're looking at it and you're like, okay, I'm afraid that my talk isn't going to be good enough. What do you do to eradicate the fear? Yes, you give the talk, but if you are spending a disproportionate amount of time putting the talk together, because you are so afraid that you're rooted in perfectionism and going way above and beyond, how do you eliminate that behavior that was compensating for the fear? Does that make sense?

Alan Weiss (27:43):

It was a hell of a long question, but let me try. Okay. Number one, okay? You say to yourself, what's the worst thing that could happen? The worst thing that can happen is the audience is not going to stand up and throw tomatoes at you. Right? The worst thing that can happen is the audience might not enjoy it a whole lot. All right? The worst thing that can happen is maybe the buyer or the coordinator says, it didn't go so well. Well, so the hell what? So you live. Right? The second thing is that you have to say to yourself, I have value to give to these people and I am going to give them value. In other words, this isn't a beauty contest. This isn't a judgment; people aren't voting yay or nay. It's not like the Roman emperors, right? And so you have to say to yourself, I'm here to give these people value, I'm going to do the very best I can.

Alan Weiss (28:26):

And then the third thing is, you've got to watch your self-talk. Your self-talk has to be very positive. It has to say, God, I am happy to be here. I love these opportunities and I'm going to provide these people with just what they need. And that has to be your self-talk. *Learned Optimism* is I think the book on this by Martin Seligman, who was my guest at one of my conventions. I was talking to somebody earlier today and I said, "listen to you. You're saying, well, I don't know what to do with my time and I'm just not good at handling my time. I just don't know if I can get any more time". You've got to say, "I'm going to find more time for myself. I'm going to change some things and find

more time for myself". And as simple as that sounds, it's very effective. Your self-talk informs your behaviors.

Alan Weiss (29:08):

And so if you say, "oh my God, what are they going to think of me?". When you go on stage, you're going to be worried about everything you do, and it will affect everything you do. If you say to yourself, "I can't wait for this, I am going to give them so much value, they won't know what to do with it all", you're going to be on top of the world.

Lisa Larter (29:23):

That's really good. Really good. All right. Last question on my piece of paper is, what has been your biggest growth edge in leadership? I don't know, maybe your greatest leadership growth.

Alan Weiss (29:40):

Well, I don't know what the question means, but let's say it means that, what's the biggest factor in forging excellent leadership? There are several. One is consistency. If you look at the research over the last decade or so most people say that they want a leader who's consistent, so they know what to expect and not hot and cold, up and down. I think that's one thing. I think a second thing is a leader has to make the tough decisions obviously, visibly. If somebody has to be fired, you fire them. Something has to be cut, you cut it, but you don't blame it on others and you don't do it backstage, you take a stand. The third thing is that you accept blame and you share credit. If something doesn't go well, the buck stops with you. But if something does go well, it's the team that did it. And then I think finally is, a leader has to walk the talk and talk the walk.

Alan Weiss (30:33):

And by that I mean, if you're saying customers are important, you need to go visit the customers, not just send other people. But then you need to tell people that you visited those customers. That's talking the walk, so that they know it's been done. I believe that you need both of those dynamics to show people that you're in charge. In the civil war in the United States, the highest percentage of casualties of any officer was Brigadier General. And that's a one-star general who led a brigade and a brigade walked behind the general who was on a horse. And the general got on this horse and said, "follow me"

and start to ride across the field. Now, everybody in the other side, the enemy was shooting at this guy on the horse. So they had the highest percentage of casualties.

Alan Weiss (31:17):

But when you get on a horse and lead your people, they're certainly going to follow you. They're not going to follow you if you're in the back of them saying, "you go, I'll be with you later". And so today nobody's shooting at you, but you got to get on your horse and you've got to say, follow me.

Lisa Larter (31:35):

What would you say the biggest fear is that you observe working with consultants and entrepreneurs that is holding most people back?

Alan Weiss (31:47):

Well, their fear is that, that they're an imposter. Their fear is that they're really not as good as other people think they are. And that lowers their self-esteem. And when that lowers their self-esteem, they're dead in the water, because their confidence goes out the window. I've had people I've coached, who've said, "God, I haven't got any business". And I say, "fair enough, let's get you some business". But I've had some people I've coached who say, "I have four proposals out and I'm deadly worried". I said, "well, why? You have four proposals out." They say, "well, if I get them all, I'll never be able to deliver". My reaction is, if you're afraid of failing, and you are afraid of succeeding, there's nothing I can do for you. Right? And so I think that most entrepreneurs fear, not failure, they fear that someone will find them out. That they are really an imposter.

Lisa Larter (32:38):

Okay. Stephanie's question, "in your experience, what's the best way to gather client feedback? Do you send surveys, have a call, capture your teams interactions, combination? What has been the highest engagement and best frequency in gathering that feedback?"

Alan Weiss (32:55):

Well, if you mean client feedback in terms of what's going on in the client, the best thing you can do is walk around and look, because you can't believe what you read and what you hear. You can only believe what you see. My

habits been to walk around organizations, including places that executives don't go, warehouses and things. I walk around and I take a look and I observe, and I make, I draw conclusions based on that. Employee surveys are notorious because they're self-selecting. In other words, people who are very happy, are very unhappy, will answer them, but the vast amount of people in the middle usually won't. They're not all that accurate. If you're in a focus group, no matter how much you claim it's confidential, there are another 12 and 15 people in that room listening and you have no guarantee they won't repeat what you said.

Alan Weiss (33:40):

I find that walking around and observing and looking for evidence in the environment is the best possible thing you can do. I became very adept at that. I would say to executives very often who had a point of view, I'd say, "that is not born out by what you see out there". And they'll say to me, "well, I've never seen what you've seen" and I am saying, "yeah, but I'm out there more than you are". I had a vice-president at an insurance company who was considering using me, take me around his operation. It was big floor with a few hundred people. I noticed everybody was staring. I said, "I don't know if this will work if everybody's staring at me as an outsider". We got back to his office and he said, goodbye. I stopped at his secretary's desk, and I said, "why do people stare so much at an outsider here? Don't you have them?" And she said, "they weren't staring at you. They were staring at him. They never see him".

Lisa Larter (34:29):

My last question, you talked about, I forget the exact statement. Pain is unavoidable, suffering is a choice, something.

Alan Weiss (34:40):

Suffering is voluntary.

Lisa Larter (34:42):

Suffering is voluntary. And so that was really helpful for me when Gretchen passed away, because I had my mind was on a loop of suffering. When you said that to me, I became consciously competent when I was choosing to suffer and I was able to actually shift my thinking. What would you say that people should do, can they do the same thing when it comes to avoiding

fear? Is it the same metaphor in terms of how we behave when we're fearful of something, like we are creating our own suffering by continuously playing that loop of what we're afraid of?

Alan Weiss (35:29):

That's a very good point. And if you take out obvious real fear, the gun and tornado, I talked about, you're absolutely right, in that we choose to be afraid. If we choose to be afraid, we can choose to be unafraid. And so as long as you're not doing something stupid like walking off a roof or a cliff, we have the ability to choose how we want to be. And that's why I maintain that self-talk is so important in forming our behavior. We can talk ourselves into being petrified or we can talk ourselves into being brave. You're exactly right, it's as simple as that.

Lisa Larter (36:04):

Okay. It was a really profound shift for me because I remember feeling, really, really, really, really low, but I also remember feeling I didn't want to keep feeling that. I remember choosing that I can't live my life like this, this is not who I am. But when you said that to me, I was able to actually recognize the sign of it. I think when you talk about, you look at fear as a game. Most of us look at fear as fear. You are a different animal, so to speak. You don't look at the thing that most people fear the same way. And so I think that if there's a way that we can look at fear differently and process it differently and call it out, it could be a good way to move forward, so that fear doesn't hold us back.

Alan Weiss (37:02):

Well, see when you just said that, you realized you were suffering and you realized when you were choosing to suffer and you wanted to suffer less, you were not clinically depressed, you were sad, which is understandable. And then you said, okay, it's time to do something else. People who are clinically depressed can't break that cycle without help.

Lisa Larter (37:21):

Right. Awesome. All right. Do you have any final parting words that you would like to give everyone to inspire them?

Alan Weiss (37:31):

I want to thank all of your vast members for reading the book and I want to thank you for having me on. I would simply say this to people, if not now, when? It's time to be bold. It's time to be brave. It's time to have the courage of your talents, and fear masks your talent. It undermines you, and it hurts you. It causes illness and stress and everything else. Consequently, don't look at this as some nicety, like, I should have less fear or I should be more cordial at dinner. Think about it as something you can control. And if you can get rid of it, get rid of the irrational fears and the rational fears over which you have control, you'll lead a better life and you'll be able to help others more as well.

Lisa Larter (38:13):

Awesome. We have two more questions. Do you have time?

Alan Weiss (38:16):

Sure.

Lisa Larter (38:17):

Okay. Christine said, "I understand challenging our fears in day-to-day life, but I find it translates differently in work life as a leader. Some days I feel fearless and other days I'm scared shitless to make decisions. I'm a sole business owner and a single mom, so I find I have to calculate my risk to a certain degree before making big decisions". Do you have a question Christine or is that just more of a comment? Is the question, how do you transcend that? I'm going to move to Morna while Christine responds.

Alan Weiss (38:49):

I disagree with Christie's conclusion. She says, I find it translates different in work life as a leader. That's because you allow it to, and it's got nothing to do with being a leader or work-life. Overcoming fear is overcoming fear. When you're scared so much, I'm not going to use your technical term here, because I don't use profanity when I can use other words. But when you're so terribly scared to make decisions, you're basically afraid of making the wrong decision, ask yourself why that is. Ask yourself, if you make the wrong decision, what's the worst that can happen? Ask yourself, is there precedent of you making bad decisions? Ask yourself, if you make a bad decision, do you have the resilience to recover from it? And so, you're a sole business

owner, well, so is everybody else listening, more or less. And you're a mom, and so are a lot of other people, and a single mom.

Alan Weiss (39:35):

So you feel like you'd have to calculate your risk to a certain degree before making big decisions. I think you're rationalizing that. I think you'd be as bold as anyone. Look how successful you've already been. You're a single mom and you're a leader, you're running your own business. That takes a lot of guts, you ought to start to recognize that.

Lisa Larter (39:52):

Where do affirmations and or meditation fit into fear, getting past fear and building confidence?

Alan Weiss (39:59):

Well, it depends what floats your boat. I'm not big on meditation, but for some people it's wonderful. I never argue with success. I don't find meditation very useful myself. I'm a stimulus kind of guy. But in terms of affirmations, they've got to be substantive affirmation. When you say to yourself, there used to be a speaker who talked about this all the time, say it was Keith something, but he would say, "I'm great at what I do. I'm great at what I do. I'm going to conquer the world. I'm going to conquer the world". And these were affirmations he suggested people tell themselves. I'm suggesting you make affirmations, but the affirmations are, "here's what I did well today specifically. Here's what I'm going to do well today specifically". Those are substantive affirmations and they are based on pragmatic reality and deliverable evidence, so they're much more powerful. If you used do that, I'm all for affirmations.

Lisa Larter (40:47):

Yeah. When you say positive self-talk, it's essentially affirmations, but it's legitimate, real, truth-based affirmations.

Alan Weiss (40:58):

Exactly right.

Lisa Larter (40:59):

Okay. Last question. How do you ground yourself when you're already spiraling and thinking about it, how can you see yourself like others see you, when it comes to imposter syndrome?

Alan Weiss (41:14):

Well, when a plane is spiraling, the way you stop it generally, is you create drag. You load the landing gear or you lower the flaps, the ailerons, whatever, but you create drag to stop the spiral. What you have to do is create drag, so you have to slow down. You have to slow down and take stock. Don't try to ground yourself in the midst of a busy business day or scheduling things, take a half day and sit down. And the second thing you need in that half day, you need people you trust to talk to you, and you need to say, "tell me how you see me". When they tell you how they see you, you then ask this question, "what is your evidence of that?". When I walk off a stage, I've given 30,000 speeches in my life or whatever, when I walk off the stage and somebody says, "you're the best speaker we've ever seen". I say, "no, I'm not". And they say, "yes, you are". And I say, "no, I'm not". They say, "yes, you are". And I say, "what's the evidence? What did I do that was so impressive?"

Alan Weiss (42:10):

And if they say, "well, just how you walked and you talked, you held the microphone", so what? But if they say to me, "you used stories relevant to our industry. You created intellectual property that pertained only to us, and it was contemporary". Now I know that I've done something special, which I can repeat. It's replicable. That's important. You have to ask your friends, "what do you see in me that tells you who I am and what's the evidence of it?". And then you have to internalize that. You have to do that with trusted others. See what happens too often is, we get feedback from people we didn't ask, and that's for the sender. We become a ping pong ball, back and forth. We have to ask somebody we trust and listen to what they say.

Lisa Larter (42:46):

That's great. I actually have an evidence folder that I encourage some of my clients to use when people send you positive feedback about work that you've done, keeping it in one place, so that when you are having one of those moments of doubt, you can read back through some of that, to remind

yourself of the impact that you've had on other people's businesses or lives. All right. Alan, thank you.

Alan Weiss (43:12):

My pleasure Lisa. Thank you.

Lisa Larter (43:15):

Thank you for being here. Thank you for answering our questions. Thank you for inspiring us to all be less fearful and to embrace a more fearless way of being in our lives and business. I appreciate you.

Alan Weiss (43:29):

My pleasure.

Lisa Larter (43:31):

Thank you for joining me for this episode of She Talks Business. If you enjoyed the show, you know the drill, leave us a review, tell someone about it and join the conversation on social media. Thanks for listening and until next time remember, done is always better than perfect.





Lisa Larter is a Business Strategist, Digital Marketing Expert, Author and Speaker.

The Lisa Larter Group helps their clients to formulate marketing strategies that support their business goals and objectives. Lisa provides consulting & advisory services, and implementation services including: social media & content management, book marketing, and website design.

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His consulting firm, Summit Consulting Group, Inc., has attracted over 500 leading corporations. His speaking typically includes 20 keynotes a year at major conferences and he is an inductee into the Professional Speaking Hall of Fame® and the concurrent recipient of the National Speakers Association Council of Peers Award of Excellence, representing the top 1% of professional speakers in the world. His prolific publishing includes over 500 articles and 60 books, including his best-seller, Million Dollar Consulting (from McGraw-Hill) now in its 30th year and sixth edition. He has coached former candidates for Miss Rhode Island/Miss America in interviewing skills. He once appeared on the popular American TV game show Jeopardy, where he lost badly in the first round to a dancing waiter from Iowa.



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