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0:00:01.1 Nicole Antoinette: I'm Nicole Antoinette and this Real Talk Radio, a podcast filled with honest conversations about everything. This is our final episode of 2020. For the next few weeks our show will be on a little holiday hiatus, and I'll be back with a new episode for you on January 11th. One of the things that I think about a lot in running a small creative business is sustainability, essentially what needs to be true in order for this work to be sustainable for me to create, and then also released at a pace that's sustainable and joyful for you to consume. I don't know that there's a perfect balance there, but it's definitely something that I think about, and I find that with every passing year, I seem to crave an even slower pace for my life and work, which is why I've chosen ease as one of my guiding words for the upcoming year. I'm interested in going deeper, not faster, and my devotion to creating resources and gatherings for folks who crave honest conversations, both with themselves and others, feel stronger than ever, and yet I'm resisting the story that says that I need to constantly be making new things every single week, every couple of days at a breakneck pace in order to stay relevant, whatever that even means.

0:01:17.3 NA: This is a topic that I'd love to explore more within our Patreon community in the coming months to have some more conversations about this question of really how to find the right pace for your work, your relationships, your passions in your life, depending upon your current capacity, what else is going on. I would love to talk about that more and I'm super grateful to the folks in that Patreon community who make this podcast and those kind of conversations possible. If you've been thinking about maybe joining us over in Patreon now would be a wonderful time to give it a shot. Our entire community operates on a shame-free sliding scale, which you've probably heard me talk about before, it just means that you can support this work and help to fund it from wherever you are within your own means, and no matter where on our sliding scale your monthly pledge falls, you still get access to all the same events and bonuses of which there are many. I'm really proud to be ending another full year in which this podcast has been 100% listener-funded and in which every single one of our guests has been paid.

0:02:23.2 NA: That just feels so good. I really believe that we can vote with our dollars as much as we're able for the kind of world that we wanna live in and the kind of work that we wanna see more of, and so if you're looking ahead at 2021 with a craving for more honest conversations and a sense of community. I would love to have you in our Patreon community to help make that happen. You can find us over at patreon.com/nicoleantoinette, that's patreon.com/nicoleantoinette, where your support will allow me to keep making new episodes in January and beyond. Okay, now on to the show.

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0:03:04.1 NA: Alright. We are rolling. Bear, welcome to the show.

0:03:07.2 Bear Hebert: Thank you so much for having me. I'm so glad to be here.

0:03:10.4 NA: Me, too. Working with you as my business coach for the past couple of months has

been not just a highlight of 2020, but legitimately a highlight of my entire like 10 years self-employment experience, so there's no one I would rather have as my end-of-year podcast guest.

0:03:23.1 BH: Oh my gosh, thank you so much. That's so nice of you.

0:03:25.9 NA: I feel like I'm now that person who... You know how sometimes people would be like, well, my therapist says... Or when I was talking to my therapist like, literally, all of my conversations now are like, well, Bear said and Bear said... It's funny every time I'm going to have a session with you, my partner is always like, "Tell them I said hi." And I'm like, "They don't know who you are." And they're like, "But I know who they are because..." Oh my god.

[laughter]

0:03:45.8 BH: That's hilarious, I love it.

0:03:48.4 NA: Yeah, so yes, super excited. Maybe to get us started, you could introduce yourself a little bit to folks who you are, what you do, what you love. Basically, what are a few things that we should know about you?

0:04:00.9 BH: Yeah, my name is Bear Hebert. I am a life coach and a business consultant and a social justice educator, that's my like list of list of job titles. I have been self-employed since 2009 and have been fully self-employed without any other like employment side gigs since 2015, 2014, somewhere in there, and yeah, I was born and raised in South Louisiana. I live in New Orleans. I love it here and whenever I'm not working, I spend a lot of time going on long walks, hanging out with oak trees, cooking really good food. Hanging out with plants. Yeah, that's pretty much my life.

0:04:44.3 NA: Food and long walks is also my life, that sounds great.

0:04:49.4 BH: Yep, yep, it's not bad and yeah, the climate is super mild here, so it's like even in December where it's... I think it's like 67 degrees here today, so it's just like, okay, everything's yeah, everything's good.

0:05:02.7 NA: Yeah, it was 28 here in Massachusetts when I went on my walk this morning, so I cannot say the same and it's nice and frosty, but I have been very grateful, particularly during this year of COVID that walking around is my favorite activity, and that is still possible in where I am, so I feel very grateful. I'm like okay, I can go on a walk outside and that's already my favorite thing to do.

0:05:23.4 BH: Yeah, definitely same.

0:05:26.5 NA: So we are gonna talk about productivity, particularly productivity that won't kill your soul. I love that you use that phrase on your website 'cause I feel like that's... It's like the juiciest best topic. Tell me why you love talking about that.

0:05:42.5 BH: Well, so, so many reasons, but I feel like the gist of it is that there's so much kind of like discourse, for lack of a less academic sounding word around productivity, there's just so much sort of pop psychology around productivity. There's so much like Instagram content around productivity, and I feel like it tends to sort of fall in two camps. One end of things is like how to optimize yourself and your life so that you can be the most productive, or there's this sort of counterpoint to that, that's like productivity isn't... Don't worry about productivity at all, we should stop measuring ourselves by our productivity, which I think is true, and also I think it's more complicated than that, and so I feel like I really like to talk about it because I wanna talk about the middle space, like what's between those two extremes and how do we live into that? I feel like that is a conversation that I am having with myself inside my own head most days.

0:06:52.3 NA: Same. Definitely same. Yeah, anything that's set up is like it's either option one or option two. I feel like very rarely is that really the case? The truest truth for me is usually somewhere in the middle.

0:07:02.7 BH: Yep, agreed, agreed. And that kind of false binary is... I mean that's like a whole... We could go down that whole rabbit hole of the way that binaries both make society function and also deeply oppress us so that's... Yeah, here we are again, facing another one.

0:07:21.5 NA: Right, right, right. Yeah, I mean I often joke with people that I'm a recovering self-help junky, so I feel like I went so deep down the first thing that you described, right? I felt like optimization, all of that, and then my overcorrection was the second thing that you described, like none of this matters, I'm not gonna think about any of this at all, and that was I think what I needed at the time, but I'm now trying to settle into something that's in the middle, so I'm glad that we're gonna talk about that.

0:07:49.1 BH: Yeah, I think that's true for a lot of people in that kind of pendulum swing of doing things one way and then having to swing to the extreme opposite in order to break the habit of doing things the way that you have been, I feel like that's really common. And I'm starting to suspect from my own observations of myself and my friends and my clients that that it may just be a necessary part of change, right, that when we've done things one way for a long time, particularly if that way is really culturally prescribed, if it's really written into the culture of this is how you should be. This is what you ought to do. That then whenever we finally are like, oh, maybe not, maybe that's not the way I wanna do things. That there is this sort of necessity to swing strongly in the other direction in order to be able to get out of that mindset or break free from those kind of prescribed ways of being.

0:08:42.2 NA: Well that's exactly how I felt when I quit drinking, that my answer to that was swinging so far to the other end of what sobriety looked like for me in the first couple of years is so different than what it looks like now, nine-and-a-half years in, has settled into much more of a middle ground coping mechanisms, but it's what I needed at first like sometimes you do need to make that 180 pivot.

0:09:02.3 BH: Yeah, I think that's such a good example. I feel like there's so many things I can

point to like that, that are just like, oh yeah, I did things this one way so strongly for so long that in order to balance the scales out that you have to put a lot of weight on doing things the other way.

0:09:18.9 NA: Yeah, and also just trusting that that's part of the process, so obviously we're gonna be talking about what works for us, sharing stories, that type of thing. I'm interested to start with this idea of enoughness or feeling like enough, because for me, I feel like that's what a lot of this is rooted in, my drive or desire to be productive or to feel productive, or if I'm really honest, to just be seen as productive, whatever validation I think comes from that it's I want that so that I feel like okay, I did enough. I'm enough. Whatever that is, whatever that enoughness is, and so I'm interested for you, why do you think that it's so hard to feel like we've done enough on any given day?

0:10:05.8 BH: Yeah, that is really the heart of the thing I think. There's so much to that, but I feel like one of the things that I... One of the theories that I'm currently working with is that the financial system of capitalism is rooted in they're never being enough like inside capitalism, we always have to be making more money in order for the economy to be healthy. It's literally how capitalism functions that if the economy flat lines, if it just stays the same as it has been, that that is seen as failing. So if it's not constantly growing, if it's not constantly improving, if we're not constantly finding new ways to create money, new resources to extract, etcetera, that the economy has seen as really tanking, and maybe as I'm saying this now, I'm like, oh, maybe this is like a chicken or an egg kind of thing like is that because we have on some kind of human level the strive to always just keep going and that's been folded into the economic system, or is it that the economic system is that way, and so therefore we've internalized it. The theory I have been working from is that it's so baked into the economic system that we've internalized that, too, but yeah, I think that sense of always driving for the next thing, always trying to figure out what else there is is really... It's just all around us. It's so pervasive. That it's really hard to escape.

0:11:40.0 NA: Yeah, I mean, obviously, I definitely agree with that. I feel like something I've been thinking about the last few years is trying to define for myself what enough looks like in different areas like what is enough money to earn, what is enough in all of these sort of different categories, what is enough growth for the business, what is it... And all of that has to be self-determined, otherwise, the answer is that there's never enough and that I constantly have to be growing and that feels quite unsustainable.

0:12:09.5 BH: Yeah, I think that's self-determination piece is really crucial, because what the world says is enough, what your parents say is enough that those things... What your friend group... What enough looks like in your friend group, like all of those things may or may not be relevant for you, may or may not be true for you, Nicole, but also for each of us. Yeah, and so I think that that piece of being able to really dig in and go, okay, what does it actually look like for me to be enough in my day-to-day, and I think it's tricky because I think that there's really a lot of worthiness issues that that gets tangled up in where it's like, oh, enoughness is connected to like do I feel worthy of love? Do I feel worthy of just existing?

0:13:08.9 NA: Yeah, and to have that then essentially boil down to what does my to-do list look like, and I need this to-do list to be checked off to a certain degree in order to be worthy of love. I

don't know that I'm ever sitting down and thinking that if I don't get these 16 things done, I don't get to have love, I don't know that it's that conscious, but I think that that's a lot of what's happening below the surface.

0:13:27.0 BH: Yeah, yeah, I think that there's so much of how we treat ourselves that's not happening on a cognitive level, it's not happening on a conscious thought level, but if you actually start to examine it and pick it apart, it's like, oh yeah, I'm acting as... Even though may never consciously think, If I don't get these 16 things done, I'm not worthy of love. We act as though that's true, we beat ourselves up when we don't finish the list, we need to numb out or check out if we haven't done it all, or we need to just keep pushing or work harder and do more and find the next thing. And so yeah, even if it's happening on this totally subconscious level where we never... I think for a lot of people it's... I mean negative self-talk is its own problem, but I feel like a lot of it is like this deep belief that's just baked in, that we run through the world and through our lives, acting as though we have to keep doing more in order to prove ourselves to each other, and I think ultimately to ourselves, I need to do all this stuff so that I can feel good about me. And yeah, it's really hard to unlearn that.

0:14:38.0 NA: What does it look and feel like for you when you're struggling with that?

0:14:43.3 BH: Man, it just happened yesterday, a friend, my friend who's also my neighbor texted me and said it's beautiful outside today, have you been outside yet today? And it was two in the afternoon, and I had a two-hour break until my next client, and I absolutely could have put on my shoes and gone for a walk, and I had this inner battle where I was like, oh, I really have so much more work to do and I was really counting on these two hours to be able to sit at my computer and crank through a bunch of things, a bunch of stuff all in a row that like, okay, now I'm done, now I can go and enjoy the day. Right. But also my last client was at 4, which means I was done at five, the sun goes down at five. So it was like, okay, am I gonna take these two hours to do all this work, or am I gonna actually just enjoy my life and get up and then maybe come back and work from five until seven instead of from two until four, but I really have this kind of inner battle and I texted my friend and said I know, I know I should get up and go out for a walk, but right now my inner voice really wants me to just stay glued to my computer because I have so much to get done.

0:15:57.6 BH: And ultimately, I put on my shoes and I walked around the block, that was my compromise with myself, I was like, okay, I'm gonna go for a 15-minute walk instead of a two-hour just long stroll around the park or whatever. And it felt like an okay compromise, some days, some days I would make a different choice, and that was the choice I made yesterday, but I feel like it's always there.

0:16:21.9 NA: Yeah, and that reminder that the right choice is potentially different on different days. There's no formula for productivity that won't kill your soul, that's gonna work 100% of the time, right?

0:16:31.4 BH: Yep, exactly, exactly.

0:16:34.3 NA: I would love to talk a bit about kind of how you format your day with this type of stuff in mind, whether that's practical strategies or... If I'm being honest, I feel like this feeling of, oh my God, I'm not doing enough, I'm not being productive enough, it's a daily thought process for me that I have to continue to unpack, and I feel like I'm constantly unlearning and unlearning and unlearning, and some days are harder than others, but I'm very interested in not that you are doing it perfectly, not that anyone's doing it perfectly by any means, but I'd love to just talk about what works for you.

0:17:09.9 BH: Yeah, well, one of the things that I try to do is really sort of a mindset shift thing, but I frame it up to myself as the game of my day, so I feel like the way that I used to look at my life and my days was like I would have the 16 things on my to-do list for today. And that would be starting out with 100 points, and then for everything that I didn't do in that day, I would be losing points all day long, right, like, oh, I had intended to do three of these things, but I only got to one of them... 10 points off, 10 points off, and get to the end of the day and be like, wow, I had 16 things on the list and I actually only did seven of them. That's less than half. That's a 40%, that's a F on a grading scale. I'm a failure. I didn't do enough and would end up feeling really bad about myself, and so now my kind of gamified way of looking at my day is that I start out with zero points instead of with 100 that I'm losing from, and anything I do in my whole day is points on the scale.

0:18:29.0 BH: So I start out at zero and zero is already enough, that's sort of where I start from. Maybe it would make more sense if I started out at 100 and I'm just getting bonus points like... That's probably the way I should frame it up, but it's like, I start out with enough... I wake up in the morning and I'm enough, I get out of bed, 10 points. I put on an outfit, like 30 points during quarantine, I brushed my teeth, five points, I went in the kitchen and made tea, 10 points. Okay, great, I went for a walk, 100 points. And so everything is just in the video game of my life, I'm walking through and every single thing that I do is just adding to what is already enough, what is already inherent worthiness, what is already like I'm okay, and so it makes it so that on the days that I wake up and I'm like, wow, I really feel like shit, I'm definitely just gonna lounge around in my leggings all day, I am gonna spend most of my day on the couch, maybe I will do an hour's worth of work because I have to show up for something. That even on those days, I can just be like, Well, that's what happened today, like that. Okay, that's fine.

0:19:40.9 BH: And to just really have this deep sense of self-acceptance about it, that even on a day that nothing "productive" happens, even if there are 30 things on the to-do list and I do 0.5 of them, it's like, cool, that's fine. Like here we are, I already started out at 100 and anything else I do is just bonus.

0:20:04.5 NA: I'm obsessed with this idea. It is such a good idea. Yeah, I also like and wanna talk about how using this, following this example of you as the video game, you're giving yourself points for things that I feel like traditionally people wouldn't consider productive. Well, I'm like, well, I just... I have to make breakfast or I have to... These things that I tend to tell myself that the only things that are productive are work-related things, things that make money, things for other people, things that other people are waiting for, and it leads to me really over-inflating the importance of those things and undervaluing a lot of the other stuff that I either do just for me or I

undervalue rest, I undervalue social things or... I don't know, reading a book for an hour on the couch, or these types of things they don't feel productive in the way that we're... That we are taught to think about productivity.

0:20:58.2 BH: Oh man, yes. I think about that thing so much, and so current working theory on that is that... I think that this one is because of patriarchy. We could all say that they're all because of all of the systems of oppression, but I feel like one of the things that happens inside patriarchy is that certain types of labor are valued, certain... And inside of patriarchal capitalism, certain types of labor are literally valued in terms of we pay money for them to be done, we pay money for that labor to be completed, and there's so much unpaid and therefore mentally un-valued, culturally un-valued types of labor that all of us are doing every single day, and that that kind of labor is the kind of labor that is typically "feminised labor."

0:21:52.0 BH: It's like labor that has been traditionally historically assigned to women, particularly women of color, and then that kind of labor is the care work, they're like feeding people, taking care of children, dealing with sick people, all of that kind of stuff, is the kind of work that we have not... That has been done for free, that has been unpaid, and so then we don't think of it as real work, and I think so much of that kind of work is the repetitive cyclical, you do it one time and you have to do it again, like you wash the dishes and then the next day there are dirty dishes and you have to wash them again.

0:22:32.7 BH: Like you get up in the morning, you have to... There's some of that stuff that just has to be done over and over and over again, and for me really learning to value that labor as actual labor and going like, oh right. I get up in the morning and I cook for myself. That's work. Like if I didn't do it, I would have to pay someone else to do it, so it's not like it... So it counts, letting a count for me that that is work that matters.

0:22:58.8 NA: Yeah. Yeah, it's work that matters. And I was laughing to myself when you said about you washed the dishes and you have to wash them again, there's just some of those things like, I had lunch yesterday. What do you mean I have to make lunch again? That they just... They're never ending. Didn't I already shower this week? Come on.

0:23:14.4 BH: Yep. Yeah, and that stuff for me gets really tangled up in my own sense of, are my needs worthy of getting met and not resenting my own neediness that we're just a little need machines, we wake up and we need to eat. We wake up, we need to shower, you need to see the sunshine in the sky, and those needs are recurring, you just have to keep meeting them over and over and over again, and really learning to just be okay with the fact that I'm gonna have needs every single day, and I have to meet them every single day, and that's okay.

0:23:55.8 NA: And for me, it's been about recognizing the difference between the need and then the story that I tell myself about the need or what it means to have those needs, did you as a kid, ever have one of those Tamagotchi toys, do you know what I'm talking about?

0:24:10.8 BH: I do know what you're talking about. I didn't ever have one, but yeah.

0:24:14.7 NA: It was like this little thing where you basically keep this creature alive through this very simple kind of video game, it needs water, it needs to poop, but whatever. I don't remember the specifics, but I had one when I was, I don't know, 11, 12, something like that. And something, when I started long distance hiking, because I had never been an athlete really, or an outdoors person, or I had never really done a lot of physical things, I wasn't used to being so smacked in the face with the physicality of my needs, being that physically exhausted, being that hungry, not being able to find water, being that thirsty, a lot of the stuff that comes, it's obviously suffering by choice.

0:24:53.7 NA: But it was a really interesting experience and I realized one of the things that really helped me with that, that I've since taken into my off-trail life is almost thinking of myself as a Tamagotchi or like, okay, hiker Tamagotchi needs to poop, needs to rest, needs to eat and not making it mean anything like what's wrong with you, you already need another snack, you just had... It's like, nope, this is what the hiker Tamagotchi needs, so this is what it gets, it sounds... Even as I'm saying it out loud, I'm like, this sounds ridiculous, but it has been really helpful for me, even in day-to-day stuff to really try to just let the need be what it is, instead of trying to talk myself out of the need or make myself feel bad about the need, just like, okay, well, this is what Nicole Tamagotchi needs, so this is what she's gonna get.

0:25:37.9 BH: Yeah, I love that. I feel like I sometimes do that, I externalize, which some of this is around my own inner child work, but I externalize my needs in that kind of way, just self, with self that I'm like, Oh, baby Bear needs to eat, baby Bear needs to rest and being able to...

0:25:53.7 NA: Baby Bear.

0:25:55.1 BH: Right. And being able to have that, which is also... That's a whole other conversation for a whole other podcast episode about re-parenting, but being able to do that kind of meeting my own needs without resentment because... Well, yeah, and that's... Again, that's a whole other conversation for a whole other episode, but being able to show up for myself and not be mad about it, that stuff is so deep like... Okay, so I'll share my mildly embarrassing example of that, but one of the super basic needs that I found myself really struggling to me is that I would get really absorbed in my work so much that I would not realize that I really had to pee. I would just be sitting in my computer and then suddenly be like, Oh my God, I have to pee right now.

0:26:45.8 BH: And jump up from the computer and run to the bathroom, and maybe not quite that dramatic, but I would really put it off because I would notice a little bit that I had to go and then just be like, oh, I'll just wait, I'll just finish this email, I'll just wait a minute, and then go. And so part of one of my learning to meet my own needs in a way without resentment kind of practices has been to just go pee the very first time that I noticed that I have to pee and not put it off and tell myself when I'm doing it like, "Hey, it's okay that your body has these needs, it's okay, it's okay that you need something, and like I'm gonna do my best to always meet your needs... " You being me, right? "I'm gonna do my best to always meet your needs as soon as I can, and with the most love and the least resentment that I can." It's so silly to be like I practice loving myself whenever I go to pee, but it means that I have the opportunity to practice loving myself and not resenting my needs like 10

times a day.

0:27:46.9 NA: Yeah, no, that's excellent. Everyone, I mean, maybe not, but I certainly can relate to the oh I have to pee, but I'm just gonna do one more or I'm... As if going to pee is the reward that I have to earn by doing enough work, just go pee. I don't know. It's really wild. I also just made a note like "Episode part two, re-parenting?" So we can revisit that at a time in the future, but anything else that you wanna speak to on this idea of practical strategies that help you with day-to-day productivity stuff?

0:28:16.0 BH: Oh yeah, the other thing that comes up for me here is the idea of actually... This is actually much more practical, all the things we've talked about so far have been sort of a little more philosophical in their approach, but this one is really about how I make my to-do list, so I divide my to-do list into projects, tasks, and then recurring themes. Recurring actions. And so when I make the to-do list, a project is like a heading for me, and then the task is like the sub... It's like the actions that go underneath the project heading, so if for instance, I was rebuilding my website, which I'm not currently doing, but have done a number of times, to re-brand on the website, I used to... Would put that on my to-do list as "work on website," which... What does that even mean?

0:29:09.6 BH: That could mean 50 different things in the work of re-doing my website. And so now I make sure that if I'm putting something on the to-do list that it has a really, really specific action verb associated with it, so I try to make it as tiny, I try to make the task as tiny as possible and as specific and discreet as possible, so it might be like, draft new "about page" text. And that might be just one task on the project of redoing the website, so redo the website might be on the list, but it's like the project heading and then all the different tasks underneath that are draft the new "about page" text, find the headshots that I want to update on to the... Go through and look for the right headshot.

0:30:02.7 BH: Play with brand colors in the illustrator app that I use. So each of those different things becomes a super tiny doable action, so that before, whenever I would just write "work on website" or even worse, no verb at all, just "website," would sometimes be like a thing I would write on my to-do list and then you never actually get to cross that off because you're like, well, I didn't finish it, well, the website re-brand is still not done, and that's a project that can take three months or so longer. And so being able to actually break it down into super manageable, super tiny, actually actionable, finishable tasks means that at the end of the day, I can be like, okay, well, I had 10 things under this project heading 10 tasks, but I cross off six of those because I actually did some stuff on this and it's not done yet, but some pieces of it have been completed.

0:31:00.0 BH: And just giving myself that opportunity to find completion in the things that can be completed and to really celebrate those things, cross it off and feel good about it, like that, I feel like it has been a huge shift for me. And then the other piece of that is that when I put things on the list that are more of the kind of recurring labor types of things, that I put those in a separate column on the to-do list, because they show up over and over and over again. So it's like, oh, if you're trying to build a meditation habit or go on a walk every day, or whatever those kinds of things are, that it's like, you're gonna do it and then you're gonna have to do it again, or even wash the dishes, vacuum

the floor, take the garbage out, all of that kind of stuff that if I write those things down, that they're in a separate place because I know I'm gonna do it and then I'm gonna have to do it again, and there's no sort of deliverable on that.

0:31:50.6 BH: It's like, well, the sink is empty right now, but in 15 minutes there's gonna be dishes in it again, so let me at least put that in a different category in my mind and on my list so I don't... So I don't feel bad whenever the sink is empty only for 10 minutes and then it's got dishes in it again.

0:32:07.9 NA: Yeah, I love all of this, I love that you're talking about the real specifics of what you actually do. One of the things that's helped me a lot is to not fight or demonize my desire for that feeling of completion or accomplishment. And this goes back to what you were saying at the beginning of basically not going... Swinging the pendulum so far to the other end where it's like, it shouldn't matter if I'm productive at all, that whole thing, realizing it actually, it feels good to complete things to me, and I don't think that I'm alone in that, and so... Yeah, structuring the to-do list, structuring the day so that I do have points of... That feel like completion. I really need that.

0:32:46.1 BH: Yeah, I think we all do, and the part of breaking things down into those smallest tasks, it can feel a little bit... It can feel a little squirmy at first to be like, well, I'm not allowed to give myself credit for that, that's so tiny. That doesn't even count. Well, it's still not done yet. And so really breaking things down into those tiniest, measurable increments, and then I feel like that gives me a lot of opportunity to then work on my own self-talk and self-belief, because when I cross something extremely tiny "reply to email from so-and-so," when I write that on the list and then I do it and cross it off, and I'm like, well, to actually give myself a moment to just be like, "Yeah, I did it. Congratulations, good job."

0:33:33.9 BH: Really letting yourself celebrate the smallest things, I feel like that can really re-train our brains and our hearts and our orientations to ourselves and each other in the world, which is like... I don't know, maybe a kind of lofty thing to say, but it feels like it's working, so.

0:33:49.7 NA: Well, I feel like all of this, it's like a two-pronged approach, there's the practical, what are we actually doing differently, and then there's the self-talk mindset piece, and I have had really no success just approaching one or the other.

0:34:00.7 BH: Exactly, exactly. I feel like it always takes... When I think about how change happens with myself and with my clients, I always think of it in terms of what is the cognitions work, what is the thought level work that we need to do to change things, what are the emotional things that we need to process through in order to change this behavior and then maybe under emotions, I would also put body-based somatic stuff, what is the emotional or somatic aspect of it that needs to be dealt with, and then what are the actual practical pieces that we can put in a place that support both of those.

0:34:36.0 NA: Yeah, with this topic that everything we're going into, I think a lot about what can I actually do to set myself up for success, and when you were talking about the way that you create

your to-do list, that resonates with me a lot. I also used to put really non-actionable things on an action list or things that couldn't really be crossed off or that didn't really... They didn't really feel done ever, and that felt very much like not setting myself up for a feeling of success, one of the things that I started doing, which basically is exactly what you said, I just think about it a little bit differently is... Especially at the beginning when I was trying to make this change, was writing out my to-do list as if I were delegating it to somebody else.

0:35:15.6 NA: Having to be specific enough that "I'm gonna hand this to someone else who isn't inside my brain, that they would know what to do," and like you said, you know, "research," whatever, or like "website," that's too vague. No one else would ever be able to take action on that. Whereas "draft about page copy for new website," that's an actual thing that somebody else could understand, what the deliverable is, what it is that you're asking for, and something about writing out a to-do list as if I'm explaining it to someone else or making the steps is something that someone else understands what the point of completion is, that's been a really helpful tiny shift for me.

0:35:49.0 BH: I love that, that's so smart to think about how are you making sure that it's comprehensible even to your own self, because then I feel like the other thing is that you can break things down into those tiny little bits, but then if you're not giving yourself that moment of completion that then you're just like okay, great. Now on to the next thing, right? And it's like, okay, but wait, can we pause? Can we slow down and rewind a minute and just go like, "Okay, great, you did that thing, look at that, you did that thing. Hey, good job. You did that thing." And to have that moment with ourselves, I feel like giving yourself all the tools and opportunities you can to make it so that those moments are more possible, it's just like... Yeah, that's such a... There's so many different approaches to make that more possible.

0:36:41.6 NA: And just... Yeah, that moment of pause before moving on to the next thing like... "Yay me," little fist bump, little chair dance, like where I'm sitting, "Good for me, I did this thing," I'm all about... Give yourself as much credit as possible, I feel like.

0:36:52.0 BH: I just had this conversation yesterday too, with another friend of mine who... This is actually with my cousin, who is almost 20 years younger than me, and she had texted me to say... We were texting about something else, and then she said, "Hey, I wanted to tell you, I started... I've started learning to cook and not just taking frozen food out of the freezer and putting it in the microwave, I'm actually learning how to cook on the stove top," and she texted me like a picture of the breakfast that she had made, and I texted back and I was just like, Oh my God, that's so cool. Good for you. That's so great. I texted trophy emojis and gold medal emojis to her, and she wrote me back and she was like, You're literally the only person I know who would be so genuinely excited about this small thing that has happened for me, and I was like, Man, you gotta get some new friends, 'cause literally all of my friends are like... All of my closest people, and we text each other shit, that's like I took a shower today and I'm like High five, like Lisa Simpson dancing, gifs, whatever.

0:37:55.1 BH: Really celebrating each other because it's hard to be a human, it's hard to just get up

and live every day, that's like a choice we're all making, to just be like, Okay, I'm getting up, I'm doing it again, I'm gonna keep going, and I feel like that tendency to just be sort of derisive to each other and derisive to ourselves, where it's just like you expect credit for that? You expect celebration for that? You want a trophy emoji 'cause you cooked something? And that there is a different way to be. There's like we can actually be not just neutral or kind to each other, but we can be enthusiastically effusive with our praise to ourselves and to each other, and it feels really good.

0:38:45.8 NA: It feels incredible. I have one of my closest friends, we very much have that relationship too, and I think about it as building a culture of celebration where it becomes normalized to send those texts back and forth, to send those trophy emojis, to do that type of stuff, to send the \$10 Venmo, like, "Congrats on this thing you did like go get a fancy coffee," right, that type of stuff, even if you just wind up sending the same \$10 back and forth to each other over and over again throughout the course of your friendship, there's... It has helped me celebrate myself more because even to have that moment of like, "Oh, I could send this to her, she would celebrate me," or this could be something that's appreciated, it makes me give myself more credit. I think that there's... I think there's really something to that, this idea of taking responsibility for being enthusiastic for your loved ones and for yourself, and why not have more and more moments of celebration. I feel like culturally, celebration is reserved for these really rare or once in a lifetime moments, or these like... I don't know, like a graduation, or a wedding, or the birth of a baby.

0:39:50.3 NA: And it certainly doesn't mean, don't celebrate those things, but it makes me sad to think that there are maybe this small handful of five to 10 things over a person's life that we... Those are the things you would buy a Hallmark card for, and everything else, it's like, alright, well, just get on with it. Just do your life when... I don't know, I like what you're saying about more celebration.

0:40:11.5 BH: Yeah, I love that. I feel like the... Especially for people who opt out of so many of the things that you might send a Hallmark card for that... If you're not graduating from an educational institution or getting married or buying a house or having a kid or whatever the other things are, retiring from a job, like the other things that are sort of culturally sanctioned to celebrate, then it's like, Oh shit. Well, then there's just nothing? Okay, I don't know, I have opted out of most of those things, and I'm just like... So then the opportunities to celebrate each other are... Become more limited, but also become more limitless because it's just like, Oh yeah, right, we can celebrate each other for literally everything all the time.

0:41:00.2 NA: So I wanna ask you, 'cause obviously I love the strategies that you shared, and we've talked about some of the ways to think about productivity, and maybe I'm more... I'm just gonna say in a more productive way, clearly, that's where my brain's at. But obviously, that's... We're not robots. It's not... That's not a perfect formula. Even giving ourselves the points when we wake up and having the to-do list that's realistic and manageable and specific, all of the things that we've talked about, of course, things don't go according to plan all the time, I'm interested what self-forgiveness looks like for you when that's the case.

0:41:37.7 BH: Wow. Yeah, that's such a deep question. I think the... Well, the... Well, I think of a couple of things. One, I am really working on trying to trust that none of my feelings about myself

are permanent, and so when I feel like shit about myself, that I am like, Okay, this is gonna pass, like this is just a thought I'm having and it's gonna change. I feel really bad about myself right now because... It doesn't usually happen anymore for just being unproductive, it's usually like I was unproductive and I had a difficult emotional interaction with someone and I have PMS or something, and then it's like, Oh yeah, today I feel really bad about myself. And so trying to trust that Rilke poem, No feeling is final, where I'm just like, right. No feeling is final. This is how I feel about myself right now, but that's gonna... That will shift. I am hopeful that I will wake up tomorrow and feel differently, and I feel like some of that is just learning to be okay with discomfort, to just be like, Okay, this feels really bad, but also I don't actually believe... My feeling is real, my thought is real, but I don't believe that it's permanent, and so I can just tolerate this discomfort for however long it's gonna be here.

0:43:00.2 BH: And then I think the other thing that I really... That I work on a lot with myself and recommend to basically all of my clients, maybe I've recommended this to you already in some form or fashion, but it's is just like tenderness practices, where it's like, What does it look like to actually just be really soft with ourselves? So for me, and it's in a really practical way when I feel bad about myself, and I notice that I'm getting that kind of... Either the kind of gripping, Hurry up, do more clench your fist tighter, keep going, don't move from the computer, whatever that kind of feeling, or whenever it's the just like, I didn't do enough today, I'm a failure. It's never gonna get any better. It's always been this way, and it always will, that kind of... More like despair feeling about myself or about my work, or about my ability to be productive. That in the simplest ways that I can just notice that that's happening. And then for me, what I do is just like if I can, if I am resourced enough to notice that it's happening, and if I am resourced enough to be able to make an action around it, that just putting my hand on my heart and softening for a minute, just literally softening my jaw, trying to soften my belly, feeling my body be soft, and then sometimes that...

0:44:24.0 BH: Sometimes I cry a little bit. Sometimes I just feel the kind of agitation or irritation, but just like pausing and being soft can help me to get to the place where I'm like, Okay, I feel this way right now. I'm still okay. I still am a person that deserves to live a life and receive love and see beauty and whatever, eat dinner. I'm still a person who deserves to exist, and I trust that I won't feel this way forever, and to really do that deepest level of work that's like, Hey, to talk to myself in a different way that's like, Hey, it's okay that you're being so hard on yourself, I know that this is a the thing that you've had to learn to do in order to survive. Both in order to survive in my childhood and also in order to survive inside the this system of capitalism that literally, if you fail at capitalism, you might die. And so the fact that all of us are so tangled up and wanting to be productive and wanting to do more and wanting to make sure we're always doing the most, it's like, yeah, that's like a survival drive from deep within, so to be able to be really soft and tender and compassionate with myself about the fact that that's how I feel, and then sometimes makes it feel a little less dire, a little less urgent to hurry up and fix that feeling or fix that, to treat that emotional experience that I'm having as a problem that I need to make go away.

0:45:55.7 NA: I particularly... I appreciate everything that you just said, but I particularly appreciate what you said about failing at capitalism, the stakes are actually high sometimes with this fear of, well I'm not doing enough, and that's gonna mean that I'm not gonna earn enough

money, and that's gonna mean that I'm not gonna be able to take care of myself that... Sure, I can spiral out in... About that in a way that is potentially not realistic and not supportive, but the root fear there is real, and I have never found success trying to make myself feel silly for what actually is a real and understandable fear.

0:46:32.9 BH: Absolutely, I think it's really... All of those deepest drives in us are there for a reason, and to be able to go like, Okay, I can honor and acknowledge the deep intelligence of my body, the deep wisdom of my nervous system in wanting to push me like this, and also I can choose differently, and also, I can not let that be the only force that is driving me...

0:47:04.8 NA: Yeah, also what you were saying about a feeling... Not thinking that a feeling is gonna be permanent, that's... I feel like I come back to this over and over again. One of mine... And I've worked on this in therapy quite a bit, is not kind of catastrophizing and future projecting that doom spiral, well, because I didn't get the things that I had promised myself I was gonna get done today, or because I'm feeling so exhausted that I can't do X, Y, or Z today, that means I'm not gonna be able to do it tomorrow, and that means that this weekend it's is gonna be bad and that... Right, and I just go forward until all of a sudden everything... Nothing's ever gonna be okay again right, and really trying to not latch too much on to any one thing, and sometimes I'm better at that than other times, but it has been helpful for me to push myself as I don't know, potentially like a grounding exercise during that period of time or when I'm feeling that way, to look for even one piece of evidence from my past that that's not true. Can I think of a the time, this comes up a lot for me, around the seven or eight days before I start my period with PMDD, with everything it just...

0:48:22.4 NA: Everything is bad, right? My mental health is terrible, like depression, anxiety, insomnia, physical pain, nausea, vomiting, it's not great, and I always... I'm like, Oh my God, I'm not getting anything done this week, I'm having to cancel things, I'm having to push things back, this is gonna mean, and I go forward and I go forward and I have to stop and say, Okay, have I ever had an experience in the past where I felt really bad one day and then felt a lot better the next day, and of course I have, and something about that helps to break me out of the cycle.

0:48:49.5 BH: Yeah, I love that. The sort of looking for evidence to the contrary is super useful. The other thing that that makes me think of is just like... This is sort of going back to optimizing things, but that I feel like part of the reason we get so down on ourselves is because we hold ourselves to our best standard all the days of the month. Why you feel bad on those seven days, I also have those seven or eight or sometimes 10 days of like, Okay, it's just not happening right now, right? And that even for people without hormonal fluctuations that at least hormonal fluctuations that are related to a menstrual cycle, and I think that sometimes even happens in a subconscious or not quite fully articulated way, that we think about what is the best... What is my best most productive day look like? And then we expect every day to be like that, and then it's not like that, I maybe get like three or four days like that every month, where I'm like, I really feel like I just banged it out, everything worked... Everything went exactly smoothly and just the way that I would want it to, and then all the other 26 days in the month or whatever, it's like...

0:50:03.8 BH: It's not like that. And so I feel like actually just lowering the bar for what we expect

of ourselves is another huge sort of practical and philosophical, our mindset kind of peace that can make it a lot easier to just feel okay with however much you get done that we're expecting that... What actually is your average? If your most productive day looks like this, and then your least productive day looks like that, what is it that we could reasonably expect of ourselves on a regular basis?

0:50:39.0 NA: Zooming out a little bit, I find that to be really helpful. I remember when I used to be a runner, one of the things that was really helpful for me was realizing that in any, let's say 10 runs, if you take 10 consecutive runs, they would maybe be one run that was so awful, like the side stitch, the stomach cramp, the foot hurts, the knee hurts for maybe no explainable reason. It just, it was garbage, trash fire run, and there would maybe be one or two runs that were like the magical unicorn run of, Oh my gosh, this feels amazing. The endorphins, I feel like I could keep going long after my scheduled stopping point, and every other run was kind of like, meh, okay, it was fine. It wasn't anything to write home about in one way or the other, and that was really helpful for me once I started expecting that that was what it was gonna be most of the time, if most of the time, it's just kind of like, meh, it's fine. That I feel like that principal sort of applies here as well, that you're right, that it's easy to look at our most productive day of the month, of the quarter, and set that as the standard instead of being like, Well, what happens most of the time, 'cause what I do most of the time matters more than what I only do once in a while.

0:51:46.2 BH: Yeah, yeah, and I think it lets us see the accumulation of our efforts as opposed to just were your efforts good enough today or this afternoon or over this one hour, and instead being able to go like, Okay, yeah, but I did, but eventually things are... Eventually we're getting there, even if it's on a slower timeline or at a different... At a more undulating productivity pace that we are like making forward progress, we are getting somewhere...

0:52:21.1 NA: I especially need some kind of reminder of that with those recurring tasks that you were talking about before, that sometimes what I'll do in my planner is I'll have... I'll draw a bunch of little squares, and every time I do whatever the thing is, let's say it's writing or stretching, that's the thing, I constantly always know that I feel better when I do, and for whatever reason it falls out of my brain every day that it's the thing that I can reach for and do, so every time I stretch for five minutes or 10 minutes or whatever, I get to color in one of the little squares, and it really is nice over a month period to be able to look back at like, "Oh, this added up to something," not that I have something to show for it, of like, "Look at this fancy stretch I can do," 'cause that's not the point, but for something like that that doesn't have a completion in the same way that finishing a work project, right. I find that it's helpful to give myself some kind of tangible reminder that it all stacks up.

0:53:12.2 BH: Yeah, I'm a big proponent of the gold star chart, like you would have when you were a little kid, and to just write those kind of recurring actions on it. So stretching, feeding yourself, going for a walk, whatever those things are, that... Taking your meds or your vitamins or whatever, putting all those things on your list and then... Yeah, and giving you... It's literally giving yourself a little credit for it being like, Oh yeah, look at that, I did a thing, and buy stickers, buy some LISA FRANK Stickers or whatever would make your inner child happy, right, and then use those. So

you're like, Okay, I actually I did a thing. And giving yourself that kind of dopamine hit to the reward, the reward center in your brain being like, Oh yes, this. I feel like that's really, really useful.

0:54:01.4 NA: Yeah, and I have to push back against the story that my brain wants to invite me into of, "What's wrong with you that you need stickers in order to get basic adulting done what's... You shouldn't need X, Y or Z thing," and all of that is stupid and untrue. And if it makes me feel good, I'm allowed to do it.

0:54:19.0 BH: Yeah. I feel like the overarching life lesson of my 30s has just been like, whatever works, literally whatever works. Do you need this thing to make that happen? Cool. Whatever works, that's fine. And to really let myself out of the grip of the kind of should stories, the like, This is what I ought to be able to do, or this is... Because true or not true. It's just not reality, right? Thankfully, I have managed to overcome this in pandemic times, but I used to really struggle to write... If I was sitting at home at my computer, I was... I could do all kinds of other things, but when it was time to actually write a blog post or whatever Instagram caption that I would really struggle to do that type of work. But I knew that if I went and sat in on a coffee shop because that I would be able to write in part because of what you said before about wanting other people to think I was productive, if I was at home, I might be scrolling on my phone or I might be watching cat videos on YouTube or some other stupid shit, but I would go to a coffee shop and I would want other people to see me as being productive, so I would sit down on my computer and open my Google doc and get to work and be really focused, and I used to be really down on myself, if I were a real writer, I would be able to you know...

0:55:36.0 BH: I would be able to just get up every morning and open my... Open the tool and do the thing and not need anything else, but the reality is that's not... That wasn't true. It wasn't possible. And the other piece of it is that the reality is that when I went to a coffee shop, I could write 2000 words and it was just like, ping, okay, it's done, no big deal. And so letting myself out of that shame, that attachment to an idea of who I should be or what I should be able to do meant that then I actually could just do the thing.

0:56:08.8 NA: Yeah, I love what you said before about whatever works for me with writing, I have that same thing, you know, if I were a real writer, I would be able to insert whatever nonsense here, but for me, it's... I need writing dates, at least right now, at this season of my life right now, I have two writing dates per week with different friends where it's an hour or an hour and a half, we meet on Zoom, We chat for like... I don't know, 10 minutes or less kind of catch-up style, and then for the rest of the hour, we each right quietly and then briefly talk about it at the end, and it's literally the only way that I'm getting any writing done and should I, air quotes, be able to do that on my own. Okay, fine. Maybe, but it's what works. So why not give yourself permission to do what works.

0:56:50.3 BH: Yeah, I'm that way now, with a lot of house chores, especially in the pandemic, I have a story that I should be able to just keep my house clean on my own, but the reality is I can't, and so... Or I won't or I don't, but I know that if I get on the phone with a friend who I feel comfortable with, particularly a friend who I can say, "Hey, do you wanna talk on the phone while I wash my dishes" that then I will wash the dishes, or like, "Hey, do you wanna talk on the phone

while I fold my laundry," that then I will fold the laundry, and just letting that be okay, and instead... So then I'm just like... Then I look at the pile of laundry or the sink full of dishes, and instead of being like, God, I'm such a failure because I can't just do it, instead I just think to myself, Oh, I need to make a phone date with so-and-so, so that I can actually do these things.

0:57:41.0 NA: Oh yeah, yeah, completely. I'm a big fan of bribing myself, like little treats or rewards after a thing that I don't wanna do, setting up some kind of co-working. I'm a really big fan of using timers. I'm like, "I'm gonna set this timer for 13 minutes, that's how long I will clean for, whatever gets done in 13 minutes is what gets done, and everything else is not getting done," and [A], it always surprises me using cleaning as an example, how much I could actually do in 13 minutes, it's not an insignificant amount of time and yeah, just figuring out what it is that works for me, and like you said, being willing to say to the friend, "Hey, will you talk to me while I do my dishes" reminds me of something else that I have been really working on is creating... I don't wanna say a culture of honesty, that sounds, I don't know, too lofty, but creating a culture of honesty around needing to change or cancel plans, both personally and professionally.

0:58:31.6 NA: I have this really deep fear of seeming flaky and everything that comes along with that, which I'm sure, we could unpack, but it has been really challenging for me to, especially in a work context, to cancel or reschedule things, there are either so many podcast recording or maybe not so many, but there's definitely been a handful of things over the years that it would have been kindest to myself to re-schedule and I didn't, and I wouldn't let myself do that and kind of wore that as a badge of honor a little bit, and again, there's a middle ground there.

0:59:04.7 NA: It does matter to me to be a person who does the thing that they say they're gonna do and that people feel like they can count on, but I'm trying to practice being honest when I do need to change something about the real reason why. This is kind of embarrassing to admit, but there were times where I had to cancel something and I made up what felt like a more understandable or non-weakness based thing, like, oh, my internet is gonna be down, so I can't have such and such call, when it's actually, when we were just talking about the menstrual stuff, right? Or I'm having a bad mental health day or I felt too vulnerable saying any of those things, and so made up some other reason, and maybe that's appropriate sometimes. But I'm trying to be honest about needing to change or reschedule, to almost humanize it a little bit. Does that make sense?

0:59:52.1 BH: Yeah, that totally makes sense. I love that you brought that up too, because I actually wrote a blog post specifically about flakiness and it was like, I forgot it was entitled something like "in defense of being flaky," that was specifically about this thing, of like we... And I think it's so rooted in this culture of coercion and co-dependency, which is also really rooted in patriarchy, that says that we should put other people above ourselves, and so if you said you were gonna do something like therefore your obligation is to the other person who you made that commitment to instead of to yourself. And I agree, it is a middle ground, I think in relationship, our responsibility is to both of us, when we have willingly entered into a relationship, we then become... We are opting into being somewhat responsible for each other.

1:00:45.7 BH: But the idea that like you said yes to a thing three weeks ago, and now you have to

do it, just feels so coercive and manipulative and not consent-based. And I feel like the idea that we should be able to say yes and then revoke consent, I'm like there are so many ways that that is true and not actually practiced in society, and so being able to put that into practice in friendships and work relationships is so important. And yeah, to be able to give the real reason why I think it's just another piece of that, to be able to say, I didn't reply to your email because I've really been struggling with my mental health rather than being like, "Sorry, it's just been so busy over here" or whatever.

1:01:29.4 NA: Yeah, yeah, I remember earlier this year, earlier this season, my cat died, and obviously I was really sad about that, and I had a call scheduled something that I was supposed to lead with a small group of people, and it was so hard for me to reschedule that, it was one of the first times I ever rescheduled that type of call, and I had to sit there and be like, well, I could technically do this, I have the time, I could show up, I could sort of phone it in... I'm gritty enough that I can make most things work, and I had to stop and be like, it's okay to cancel this, you are sad and grieving and this isn't in anybody's best interest, and when I cancelled it, I said Why? And of course, everyone was really understanding, but I don't know, there's a real learning lesson for me of like, you actually can just meet your needs to the best of your ability and other people will hopefully understand.

1:02:23.8 BH: Yeah, it's such a practice, it's such a practice to be able to be like, "Okay, I'm gonna let you see me as fully human and hope and expect that you will treat me as such."

1:02:41.4 NA: Well, I felt like it's really generous when other people have done that to me, it's a reminder that, oh right, I also am a human and can do this and... Yeah, the last thing that I wanna ask you is, if you have anything that works for you to not get really sucked into self-destructive comparison with what other people are producing, creating or getting accomplished.

1:03:03.8 BH: Well, a couple of things. Always, I'm like, I'm like, oh, there's 17 answers to this question. One of the things that I try to do is just really not compare myself to other people, which is like... That's a little bit oversimplistic 'cause how actually do you do that, but I feel like there's some cognitions work that happens there for me, that's like, I don't need to... I don't need to compare myself to anyone else. And I can... I am trying to work, trying to work on letting that go, just like in general, as a life practice. I think that sometimes I tend to be... I don't know that I actually compare myself to people's productivity levels, honestly.

1:03:45.9 BH: I feel like I compare myself to other people's success sometimes, and that's a thing that I work on where I'm like, okay, just because somebody else is succeeding doesn't mean that I'm not going to be able to, there's enough for all of us. And particularly in the kind of line of work that I do, I'm like, oh yeah, there is no limit on the amount of social justice-oriented work that needs to be done in the world, and so just the fact that lots of other people are doing this kind of work also doesn't mean that there isn't space for me to do it too. Yeah, I don't know, I don't get super tangled up on looking at other people and being like, "they're doing more than me."

1:04:23.9 NA: Yeah, also, I appreciate that because that maybe that is a struggle of mine and not a

struggle of everyone's. It's helpful to hear too sometimes, and it's like, well, that's just not really a thing that pings so much.

1:04:32.5 BH: Yeah, I have plenty of... Don't misunderstand me, I have plenty of problems and plenty of shit that I'm trying to unlearn, but for whatever reason that doesn't feel like a particular one, I feel like I have... The battle for me is with myself that it's like, did I do as much as I expect myself to do?

1:04:57.3 NA: I feel like that's what it is for me as well. And I just noticed, sometimes I have to ask myself, where are my expectations for what I should be doing coming from? And oftentimes they are, whether it's like you said, cognitive or not, they're coming from what I see or think other people are doing, and the only thing that's been really helpful for me with that is again, having to define enough for myself, not looking outward to what would actually enough be for me, what is a good life for me, what is enough money for me, because if someone else's definition is wildly different, that's okay, it doesn't actually affect what mine is, I find that to be helpful.

1:05:36.3 NA: And I also find it to be helpful to continuously remind myself that I don't know everyone else's story, you don't know... If it looks like someone's getting such and such many things done, maybe they just have a higher capacity than me, okay, can I allow that to be fine? Maybe they have more help than me, maybe they have a different situation, and at different periods of time that could... All of those could be true, but I sometimes just feel like I have to remind myself about that.

1:06:00.8 BH: Yeah, yeah, that seems... I hear that. I think that's probably quite common. For me, I feel like it's this deeper thing, which is this like, it becomes like a soul level thing that's not actually about productivity at all, but that's actually really about purpose. Am I doing the thing that I'm meant to be here to do? Which makes it so... Not that, I'm not comparing my troubles with your troubles in a hierarchical way, but I feel like it makes it... Not getting enough done on my to-do list feels like one piece the puzzle, but the sort of like, am I living the life that I meant to live? Those kinds of existential questions come up for me that feel like they're rooted in the productivity question, and that stuff feels like the place that I really get tangled up.

1:06:56.9 NA: That's so interesting, I feel like this could be a whole other conversation, like digging into this idea of purpose. Yeah, no, because at the end of the day, it's like, what are we trying to be productive for, what are these 16 things on the to-do list for?

1:07:11.5 BH: Right, and I think the sort of un-tangling from productivity mentality of... "I have to be productive in order to earn my keep, in order to feel worthy of existing" or whatever that... The flip side of that is that piece of like, well, you don't need to be productive at all, don't pay any attention to it, but... Yeah, again, that middle ground for me is like, okay, how do I get really clear about the fact that there are some things in my life that I wanna accomplish, I have things that I like, I really want to do these things. And that doing in and of itself isn't wrong or bad, even though it's been sort of pathologized and exploited inside capitalism, like doing is okay, and making sure that what I'm doing is in alignment and then I'm actually... For me, it feels like if I don't do some of those things that I feel the soul longing for, that it's like that my soul shrivels up and dies, and that's

really a thing I'm trying to prevent.

1:08:12.0 NA: Yeah, and so I feel like that's a really good place to start to wrap up, because it's like that's the larger umbrella over all of these things, what is the purpose, why am I doing these things? What is my soul calling for, and then within that, how to approach the doing and the making and the creating and the accomplishing that it takes in pursuit of those things, how to do that in a way that is humane and kind and tender and sustainable?

1:08:34.3 BH: Exactly, that's the summary of all the things we just talked about, I think.

1:08:40.1 NA: Yes, yes, it is. Okay, so if you could leave folks with one call to action based on our conversation, what would that be? Maybe a question to ask themselves or a small thing to do?

1:08:52.0 BH: The question that comes to me right now is like what would it feel like to just let myself be enough just as I am right now in this moment? And to really sit with that. Yeah, what does that feel like? Does that feel possible... Does that idea feel possible to hold... What does it feel like in my body to feel like enough?

1:09:17.6 NA: Yeah, I love that. What is the best place for people to find you and say hi online? Do you have a particular favorite way to connect with new folks?

1:09:27.8 BH: Yeah, if people wanna hear more about my work, they can find it on my website, bearcoaches.com, all of the things, life coaching and business consulting live there, and if people wanna be in touch in a more casual way, I'm on Instagram @bearhebert with an underscore at the end of it. And yeah, those are... I have social media presence in other places, but it's sort of... It's like cursory placeholder social media presence, and Instagram is the place where I actually am and I'm interacting with people, so I'm happy to... Happy to connect with folks there.

1:10:03.2 NA: Awesome, I will put links to both of those things in the show notes. Thank you so much, Bear.

1:10:05.4 BH: Thank you so much for having me, this was so fun.

1:10:14.3 NA: And that's our show for today. Our music is by Adam Day, who also handles our sound editing. Thanks, Adam, you're the best. And huge thanks as well to every single member of our Patreon community for making this honest conversation, this entire podcast, and so much of my other work, like my twice weekly personal essay newsletter called Good Question Possible. Your monthly funding allows me to keep creating resources and gatherings for folks who crave honest conversations, both with themselves and others, and I fully believe that these conversations can change our lives, our relationships and our world.

1:10:46.9 NA: To join us, just come on over to patreon.com/nicoleantoinette. Our community operates on a shame-free sliding scale, so you can feel good about supporting this work from within your own means. So I'll see you over in the Patreon community. Yeah? And until next time, I want

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you to know three things: First, that you are enough; second, that you are not alone; and third, that I'm totally rooting for you.

[music]

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