

comeback

oct 2017 | #7

SETBACKS

EVERY SETBACK IS A SETUP FOR A COMEBACK

Setbacks, whether in your control or not, are universal. We've all faced them and somehow gotten through them. Setbacks are an inevitable part of any passion, goal, or hard work and we can always learn more about how to handle them.

Issue 7 shares the stories of creatives and how they handled their biggest setbacks, what they learned, and how we can all be a little easier on ourselves. From artists to musicians to television producers, everyone has a story of overcoming the challenges that face us on the path to something better.

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interview with



Giselle Melendres

PHOTOS FROM GISELLE AND MAD SOUNDS MAG

has been a platform for creatives, intended to inspire others to live “young and daring”.

2. How do you continue to find new and interesting stories for the magazine?

As someone whose job centers around both media and social media, I'm constantly inspired by the creative people I see online. Many of the people we've featured have been creatives I've found and followed on my own social media accounts, or creatives whose art I've admired on other publications and media outlets. I curate each issue of Mad Sounds with people who inspire me (and whose work will inspire our readers as well), and I also like to find people who will feel relatable, raw, and “real” to our viewers. I think one of the most important aspects of finding an interesting ‘story’ is to showcase passion and authenticity--and that's something that resonates with a young audience.

3. What has been a setback that has been the most difficult to overcome?

I think the largest setback I've had for Mad Sounds has always been a personal one. I always dealt with the idea of “imposter syndrome”, where I would question whether or not my publication was “good enough” or marketable enough, especially in comparison to other magazines. It was definitely an internal struggle, but I started focusing solely on my own magazine and making sure that the content we produced was full

1. What prompted you to start Mad Sounds Magazine?

I started Mad Sounds when I was around sixteen years old. I was a junior in high school at the time and I wanted an outlet for my creative interests of photography, writing, and music. I had wanted a singular platform where I could combine all of my interests into one (something like a website, blog, or magazine), and I decided that a magazine would be a cool way to develop my interests in these fields. Over time, however, the magazine itself became a new form of creativity for me, and I became more interested in the art of making a publication rather than featuring solely my own work. I wanted to shift the focus of the magazine to highlight other artists and creatives and create content that would inspire others to be creative. Ever since then Mad Sounds

of the passion and creativity that I knew we could achieve. Eventually, I started becoming happier and more secure in my own work, and stopped questioning whether or not people would like my magazine. I think if you produce work solely out of passion, you're bound to achieve your own success in one way or another.

4. How do you react in the face of a setback? What are your first steps?

In the face of a setback I tend to take a step back and reevaluate the situation. I know that everything takes time, just like it took time for me to realize what I wanted to do with Mad Sounds and how I could improve the magazine, and I like to give myself time to process my thoughts before taking any action. Don't let feelings of discouragement overwhelm you, and it's important to remember that you can set your mind to anything you want to do if you believe it's possible.

5. What motivated you and drives your passion for Mad Sounds?

I've always been extremely passionate about publishing Mad Sounds so that tends to be a driving factor in staying motivated. I love working on the magazine, curating editorials, planning content for future issues, dreaming up ideas for photoshoots, and I think it's my favorite form of creativity because there are so many different mediums that go into the production of one issue.

My readers are also a big source of





motivation for me, and I am so appreciative for anyone who has supported or contributed to Mad Sounds. It's an amazing feeling to know that you've influenced someone's life, even in the smallest way, and when readers email or message me to tell me that they enjoy my magazine or that it's inspired them to pursue their passions, it makes every challenge worth it.

6. What are your goals for Mad Sounds in the next few years? What are you hoping to accomplish?

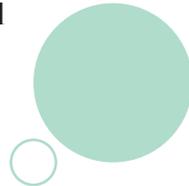
I don't plan on making Mad Sounds my full-time job or running it as an established business in the next few years, but I do intend to continue producing issues for as long as it makes my readers and me happy. My primary goals are to continue working with creative, inspiring people, and work on stepping up our content, pushing the envelope, and making sure everyone gets an opportunity to have their creative voice heard.





every time three times every time three times

personal productivity by Sarmad Iqbal



As a student, I wasn't always the brightest one of the batch but I progressed from being just an average student who didn't always pay attention to each and every single detail which was being divulged by teachers to an avid learner who not only pays attention to every single detail but also tends to innovate. When I was in second grade of my primary school I used to

be an irresponsible child who wasn't scrupulous enough to even check whether he has written the right answer in a test. I once, during the midterm exams of second grade, didn't recheck my math exam and had a lot of blunders in my exam paper where I lost so many marks. I gave a perfunctory glance over my answers after completing my exam hastily. My midterm math exam later turned out to be a D just because I didn't recheck properly. That D grade was cataclysmic to my dignity. After that I never fell as low and I always scored an A on my math exams.

At the time, my mother was so appalled by my grade that she punished me by instructing me to write "I will recheck three times every time" five-hundred times on a paper every day. She also made this line my slogan as a student and wrote it on my stationary case and geometry box so I won't forget how essential rechecking my work was to productivity. My mother shortened that slogan for my convenience to "Every time three times" so my classmates won't be able to fathom the secret slogan gifted to me by my mom out of shock from an appalling result. Rechecking scrupulously has become very cardinal in my personal productivity style as a high school student after the unforgettable lessons of rechecking I learned from mistakes in the past. Rechecking my work and how I am going to execute a task has shaped my personality in a very profound manner. Now, I am an A* student who is adored by his teachers, a fairly decent debater, a passionate writer and a neophyte journalist who applies the

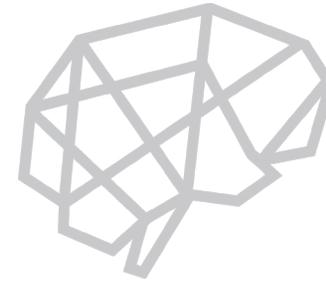
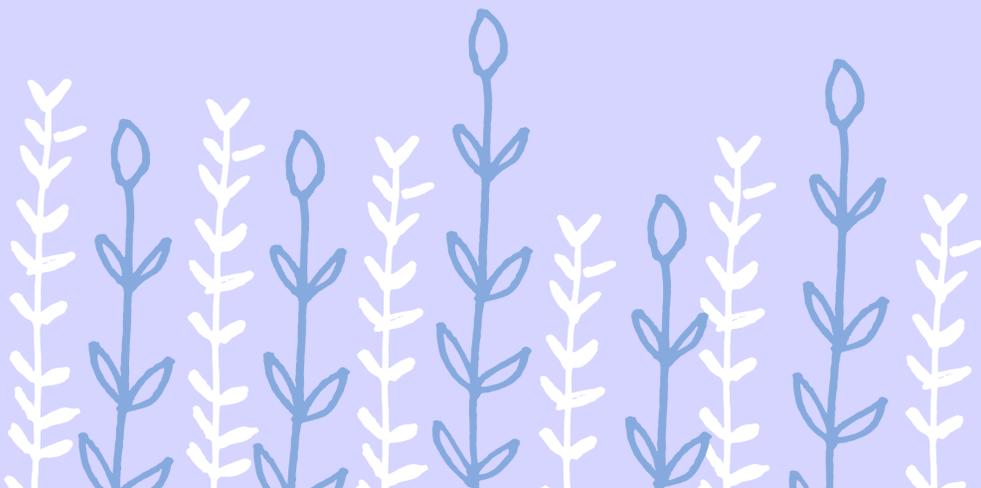
golden maternal slogan of rechecking even to his articles, which are being read by people around the world from Pakistan to the US.

A famous idiom in my country Pakistan is "Phoonk Phoonk kar Kadam Rakhna" (which means taking careful and meticulous steps and decisions in life) and this famous idiom aptly fits with my personal productivity style. Behind whatever I have gained in my life yet and whatever pinnacles and peaks of success I have climbed, my mother's slogan about rechecking and scrupulously making decisions has been a substantial influence on my personal productivity style. Along with scrupulously doing my exams or work, I also pay significant attention to time management, practicing past papers before exams with my clock timed and working on evenly dividing my time both for leisure activities like football or reading. My productivity style and whatever success I have gained through it is purely a visible manifestation of an age-old idiom that is "Behind every successful man there is a woman" and in my case that woman is my mom.

I would recommend everyone out there to never try to stick to a single productivity style that isn't your own, is somewhat alien to you, or you think it will work for you because it worked for someone in your office or class. Always try to search for what you require as an individual because a personalized productivity style will equipped with all sorts of plans to make your work productive and lands you into great opportunities worth considering.



I never
LOSE.
I either
win, or
LEARN.



brain hack: the starfish

I'm was very anxious person and didn't do well in recitations. So before a school presentation, I would sneak to the toilet and stretch my hands and feet then wiggle it a bit. It helped put the nerves down and made me more confident. Years later, zoom to 2017, I've read that mammals like apes will do the same to show dominance and aggression in front of a prey or predator. The act readies our mind for a fight that boosts our confidence in front of a scary audience. These days before an interview or a pitch, I do the starfish (mostly without the wiggling).



By Kar Villard of NEUROPLANNER, the brain hacking planner. Your personal coach to tick your life goals and end the year on a high with brain hacks, tools, and smart features.

INTERVIEW WITH

Sadie Solomon

OF EMMIEBEAN



1. What's the story behind starting EmmieBean?

I started EmmieBean in 2009, sort of on a whim. I had been working on a series of digital drawings in art school based on some quirky vintage family slide photographs from the '60s, and fell in love with the bright colors and funny, oddball scenes in the photos. I realized that maybe other people would be into similar drawings of their own photos and opened an Etsy store to test the theory. I was lucky enough to get a feature in Apartment Therapy and TODAY soon after opening and that bit of press gave me the initial boost I needed to get the business up and running. EmmieBean stayed a side-hustle for three years while I worked as a graphic designer during the day, and then in 2012 I left my day job to pursue EmmieBean full-time. This September I'm happy to say I'll be celebrating 5 years full-time.

2. What are your favorite and most challenging parts of running your business?

My favorite part is being my own boss and the captain of my own ship. When I worked as an in-house graphic designer and merchandiser, I found I

was never completely fulfilled working towards someone else's creative vision. Creativity is a very personal thing, and if you're not 100% in alignment with the vision of the other creatives you're working with, it can feel like you're not being true to yourself as an artist, and your work will be missing that authenticity factor. Running my own business allows me to be fully in the driver's seat artistically and not have to compromise. That's not to say collaborating with other artists isn't awesome, and the collaborative projects I do with friends are some of the most fun and exciting projects to me, but that's different than working for a company where you're producing work for their brand, which might not be your style. It's a fun exercise at first to interpret and create for a certain style unlike your own, but at some point you're ready to move on and do work that is fully aligned with your own personal aesthetic.

The most challenging thing is also what makes it great... being the captain of your own ship. The success of the business all rests on you and your ability to generate consistently good work, a stable income, marketing content, and keep innovating at the same time. When everything rests on you, it can be hard to take time off or take a sick day. That's when setting up systems that allow the business to run itself for a few days if something does come up is super helpful. And learning not to be too hard on yourself if something does go wrong... you're doing the best you can and it's a constant learning experience and opportunity for personal growth.



3. What has been a setback that has been the most difficult to overcome?

My biggest setback was hitting major burnout a couple years into running the business. I had been working crazy long hours, not taking adequate breaks, saying yes to projects I should have said no to... basically never shutting off the business, and I just hit a wall where I was exhausted and not having fun anymore. Work was feeling like a chore and I sort of had a realization... so much of running your own business is supposed to be about doing that one thing you love, and having FUN in the process! I was definitely not having fun anymore, and I knew something needed to change.

4. How do you react in the face of a setback? What are your first steps?

When I faced that major burnout I knew that I needed to add in more acts of self-care and set up healthy work/life boundaries. It honestly made all the difference. I found it helpful to check in with myself on a regular basis and ask, "Are you enjoying this? Are you still having fun? Are there any systems in the business that could work better so things flow more easily?"

I can't state it enough, self-care is really important as a business owner. Doing things outside of work you really enjoy is important- for me, that's taking long walks with my husband, cooking, decorating, researching topics that are interesting to me, playing with my cat and bunny, watching GOT or something on Netflix. Talking to other

friends who run businesses, the biggest challenge is often working all the time and never taking time off for yourself. It's easy to see a business as your baby and neglect your basic needs for fear that if you take some time for yourself, you'll be saying no to revenue or that the business will somehow stop functioning. On top of that, I think as women we are often socialized to be people-pleasers, so that adds another layer on top of it because you worry if you take time for yourself you'll be letting your customers down. One way I've helped negate that challenge is by setting strict hours for the business. I generally work 9-6pm Monday-Friday and try to power down my computer at the end of the day so I'm not tempted to do any more work. I also changed my phone settings so I don't get email notifications, which sets up good boundaries between work time and personal time. I don't work on weekends unless I'm under a crazy deadline because I really need that time to recharge and spend time with my husband and friends. Also, something new I've been trying is taking a day off before a major craft show weekend and that's been huge. I used to work like a madwoman up until I got on a plane to fly to a show, work all weekend, and then come home and work some more. I'd do that for an entire month and basically come home exhausted, burnt-out, and in serious need of a vacation, which was hard because I'd just booked a ton of orders at the fairs. So what I've been doing now is taking at least one day off before a fair weekend to relax, and also a day off once I get back to California. That keeps me sane and ensures I can power through the



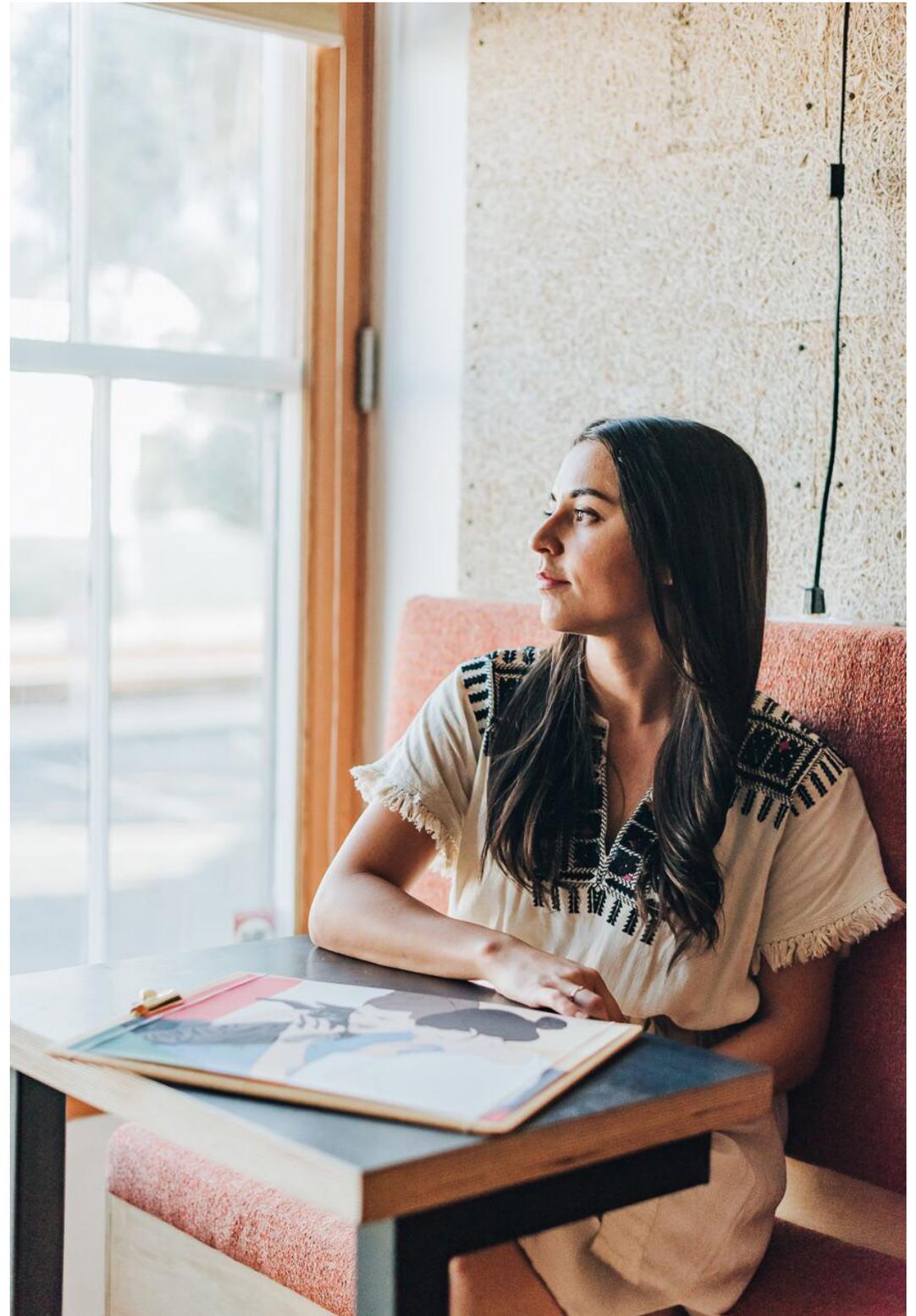
busy weeks ahead. It also makes fair weekends way more fun and I get to really look forward to them instead of dreading how tired I'm going to feel afterwards. And finally, don't forget to take a vacation once or twice a year and fully unplug. Set a vacation message for your email, and really be present during your time off so you can head back to work reenergized.

5. What are your goals for EmmieBean in the next few years? What are you hoping to accomplish?

One of my biggest goals is developing a line of stationary in tandem with my custom portraits. So many customers ask me if they can use their custom portrait for their wedding invites, save-the-dates, or holiday cards and up until now I've always just had to send them the digital file to have printed somewhere like Minted.com. Going forward I'd like to have some offerings in my own shop so customers can do everything through me. So stay tuned! :)



PHOTOS BY MOLLIE CRUTCHER



Dealing with Setbacks

A COLLECTION OF STORIES
GATHERED BY IRIS ZHOU

Frank Lloyd Wright Andy
Warhol **The** Pablo Picasso
Coco Chanel Matt Groening
John Lennon **Art** Steve
Jobs **of** Alexander McQueen
Salvador Dali **Creative** Maya
Lin Robert De Niro Nikola
Tesla **Thinking** James Joyce
Miles Davis Henry Ford F.
Scott Fitzgerald Frida Kahlo
89 Ways to See Things Differently
Michelangelo Renzo Piano
Georgia O'Keeffe **Rod Judkins**
Francis Ford Coppola

ROD JUDKINS

One of my biggest setbacks happened when I was a young artist and I'd recently left college. I was asked to exhibit at one of London's top galleries. They put my name on the gallery window alongside Francis Bacon, David Hockney, Lucien Freud and other famous British artists. They held a group exhibition where my work sat next to the greats of the art world. I had arrived. But my work didn't sell and they dropped me quite quickly. It was quite a shock. But I already had other exhibitions planned and the rejection made me throw myself into them with more intensity.

For me setbacks are part of the creative process and something to enjoy. Any creative endeavour is full of setbacks. A painting never develops in the way you plan or expect. Putting on a one-man exhibition is also full of setbacks - unexpected problems arise that you have to find a way of dealing with. In a way, the setbacks are the

point. If you don't enjoy overcoming problems you're not going to enjoy being creative. People imagine an artist's life as being one full of pleasure and enjoyment when really there is a lot of pain and hard work. Being creative is difficult. Like a mountaineer you have overcome something.

The psychologist George Loewenstein researched the leading mountain climbers and discovered that humans are often drawn to things we know are hard and give us little pleasure or concrete reward. We enjoy the process of overcoming difficulties. The life of a creative person is similar.

The famous mountaineer Joe Simpson wrote after reaching a peak of a mountain in the Alps, 'It was strange to be filled so soon with a sense of anti-climax, now that it was finished.' I feel very similar when I've an exhibition of my paintings is finished or I've completed writing a book. There is momentary satisfaction but I'm immediately thinking about the next project and the next set of problems to overcome. Producing books and paintings is rewarding but it's the process that is enjoyable and the process is about overcoming setbacks.



The setback that has been the most difficult for me to overcome was probably making poor money choices when I was younger. Not being cautious with my money and learning to save early on. A lot of my later years have been spent playing catch up and getting my finances in a position that just put me at a good starting point. If I were to start over I would have made different decisions when I was younger and built a solid foundation for myself to grow from. I spent my younger years believing that I was young and that was the time for me to be frivolous and throw caution to the wind. While I wouldn't trade my experiences for anything, if I were to start over, I would start with a solid savings account and then have experiences from a safer place. It's easy to think that responsibility will come later, but, I've learned that it's way easier to start out strong than it is to build your finances back up once you've dug a hole.

I am the kind of person who sees setbacks as a learning opportunity. I truly believe that there is no such thing as failure if you learn from the experience. When something doesn't quite work out the way I planned I immediately assess what is working well and what isn't working and form a new course of action based on that information. I believe it is imperative that we are quick to be humble, quick to learn and quick to make changes. Being adaptive in our approach is one of the best things you can do as a creative entrepreneur!

SARAJANE CASE

JOHN FOLEY

My experience may not seem as dramatic as a “riches to rags and back again” story but I got a band, a recording “career” and two books out of some enforced setbacks and that's not bad. The old cliché of “one door closes, another opens” seems to have worked in my case.

I'm a board-certified Music Therapist working primarily with kids with developmental disabilities. There aren't a lot of full-time positions in the field so I've cobbled together a circuit of public schools and private facilities that keeps me going 5 days a week. The programs, public or private, are often prey to budget cuts so I try not to depend too much on any one source. Still, from time to time a program will get the axe, often on short notice.

Some time ago a for-profit Special Ed school changed hands and the music therapy program was eliminated. Fortunately for me it was only one day a week but it was still a 20% drop in my weekly income. By coincidence a friend had just installed a small recording studio in his basement and was looking to test out the gear. He said I could record anything I wanted for free while he experimented. I had a repertoire of songs I had written for the kids so we called in a few friends and everyone had such a good time

making the recordings we decided to form a "family music" band. In honor of my old Radar Range microwave oven we called ourselves The Radar Rangers and began to perform at concerts, schools, libraries, etc. We released the recordings commercially and a review on CD Baby called it "The music grownups leave on when the kids are out of the car". Another CD followed soon after along with



a number of videos and related activities.

My specific circumstances may not be mainstream but the lesson I took away was that it's always good to have some side projects, something for the lean times. I took advantage of the next cutback in the schedule to finish and self-publish a book, 'Guitar Music for the Mid-Life Crisis'. On my most recent “break” I asked an artist friend to illustrate one of my songs and we're currently shopping a kids' picture book around with a music video “trailer”. Good to keep busy.



HOLLYWOOD CLICHÉ

by Lou Dennig



“Get a new Agent” is a legendary Hollywood cliché, but it worked for me. Usually when somebody fires their longtime agent, it’s a sign of the end of a career. For me, finding a new agent was just the pivot I needed to reinvigorate my career.

I had been producing a TV show for CBS, thirteen seasons of *Judge Joe Brown*. It was a great long-term job that kept me busy for fourteen years and over 3000 episodes. I managed a wonderful staff and had a blast, but like all shows this one came to an end. I needed work. I had never needed an agent before and now I needed one badly. So my search began.

I talked and met with people I knew, and that led me to landing a wonderful agent. This agent was great and worked diligently on my behalf, but I had chosen an agent who knew everyone I knew. When I went out for jobs, I was comfortable. I knew the folks who might hire me and they knew me. The issue was that they didn’t have any work for me. I knew that, because I had already talked to them. I needed to meet new people who wanted jobs done that I didn’t know about, and since my agent and I knew the same crowd, I wasn’t getting anywhere.

It took a little over a year for me to wise up. To get new work, I needed to meet new people. I met with my agent and we agreed to part ways. It is always better to deliver bad news in person. The agent wasn’t happy about losing a client, but we remained friends. I was surprised to learn that the face-to-face termination meeting was uncommon; most clients end their relationships by email. In my opinion, you always have to be respectful.

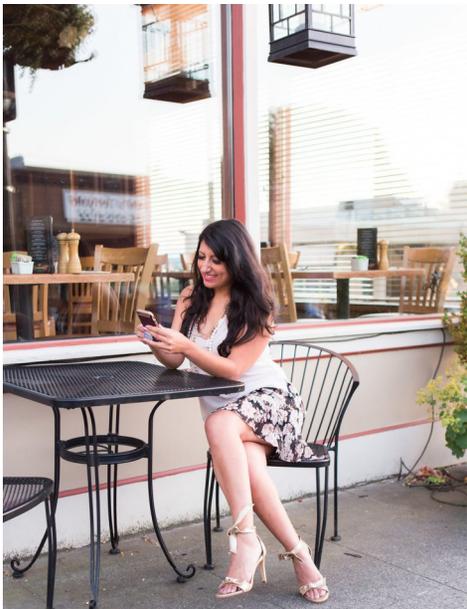
Now, I needed a new agent. Through a colleague, I found one who agreed to take me on and from there, I met people I didn’t know at companies I had never heard of. I booked a couple of pilots and did a show for Comedy Central. None of this work would have come my way through old contacts. My new contacts are a blast and I can’t wait to work with all of them again.

The lesson here is that if you want a new result, you can’t keep doing the same old thing. New opportunities come from new contacts and new experiences. If an opportunity arises from an old contact, that’s great - you are ready for that. But if you expect new challenges you need to find a way to break out of your circle and meet new people. It took me a year to realize that the “old ways” weren’t working. Don’t wait- embrace the New. //



Carrying Out Intuition

BY TANNYA BERNADETTE



Every decision you take will lead to a new destination. Mine happened almost in an instant. The moment I entered the office I was hooked. Smooth hardwood floors led to white French doors that opened up to a view of the city. It was perfect. As I stood there taking in every detail of the room, I imagined possibilities of creating a space to fill with my dreams. I felt something magical was going to happen and there was no way I was going to miss the opportunity. Without a second thought, my bright starry-eyed self decided to follow that deep intuition, and told the landlord I was signing the lease. As I quickly scanned the contract, I signed away without consulting anyone and was firm on my decision to start a business on my own.

That elated exciting feeling quickly turned to worry and fear. After I got home to share the news with my husband, his shock had made me realize what I had signed myself up for. I didn't think about where I'd find my first client or how I'd pay the rent if I couldn't make enough money. We had no extra savings in our bank account, my husband worked to support both of us while I was in school, and I was a recent college grad. At 21, I was already thinking of creating something that I could call my own. It must of been a mix of maturity and the natural entrepreneur mindset that I was always coming up with ideas, but this time I was ready to execute.

I felt a panic overcome my whole body, I quickly called the landlord and told her I had made a huge mistake, that I hadn't even thought about the details of how I'd fill the space or where to start. She laughed and said, "Sorry sweetie, signing the lease wasn't a fake process, that was a legal move. Now it's time to put your big girl pants on and get to work." Tears ran down my face, with cell phone still in my hand, I sat in my car shaking from anger and fear. I had to figure out what I was going to do. I knew I had taken on a huge responsibility to fill. This was the beginning of my journey in discovering myself and learning how to build a business from the little resources I had.

1. Make a Plan

Direction is key to stay focused. This big picture plan will help you make better decisions to lead your business on the right path. My immediate goal was to form visibility and create awareness of my personal shopping service. The plan became to create a website for potential clients, to create a cohesive brand that clients could easily recognize, and to reach out to local magazines to get my story out to the universe. I remember sending a press release to everyone in the city and I only heard back from one woman from Seattle Magazine. She was interested in recording a small video at my office on how to wear a scarf three ways. That first opportunity opened the doors to more contacts and gave me a boost of confidence to keep going.

2. Find an Intern

My ideas became notes and bullet points lost in files, notebooks, drawers, all over the place, and I knew I needed help. When I was in college, I worked with a stylist and that opportunity inspired me to go out on my own. I created a description and reached out to schools letting them know I was offering an internship. They loved that their students would get hands on experience and to my surprise, I had many applicants to interview. There was one young lady who was quiet but on her game and I decided she was perfect for the job. The first day at the office, we were in an empty room. I still hadn't gotten the decor together, there wasn't enough money in my budget. I kid you not, there was one desk, two black fold up chairs and my laptop. I'll never forget that moment we sat down in front of each other, welcoming her to the new space and then getting to work and realizing we only had one pen. As we both laughed at the situation she told me that when I write my first book, to remember that moment and how my dream started in an empty room with a new intern, lots of ideas to work on and one pen to share. Those moments are literally priceless.

3. Share your voice

For the longest time, it was difficult for me to share my opinions and feelings. I was scared of being judged but most of all, I was afraid to fully let others see who I was. I spent my childhood being the perfect child for my family because their lives were too difficult for them to deal with and I was the one who made it all right. When I

became an adult, I didn't know how to handle failure, disappointment, and sadness. My personal shopping business became my opportunity to risk everything and give part of myself in a new way. I had to stand up publicly for what I believed in, share my ideas to others that didn't agree with me or see my vision, and let people get to know me. Blogging and vlogging has been my creative outlet to not only share knowledge but other related material from my personal life as an entrepreneur. I've had to feel through situations that have felt uncomfortable and be brave. Speaking publicly has turned into a natural high that does take a lot of my energy, but at the same time makes me stronger emotionally.

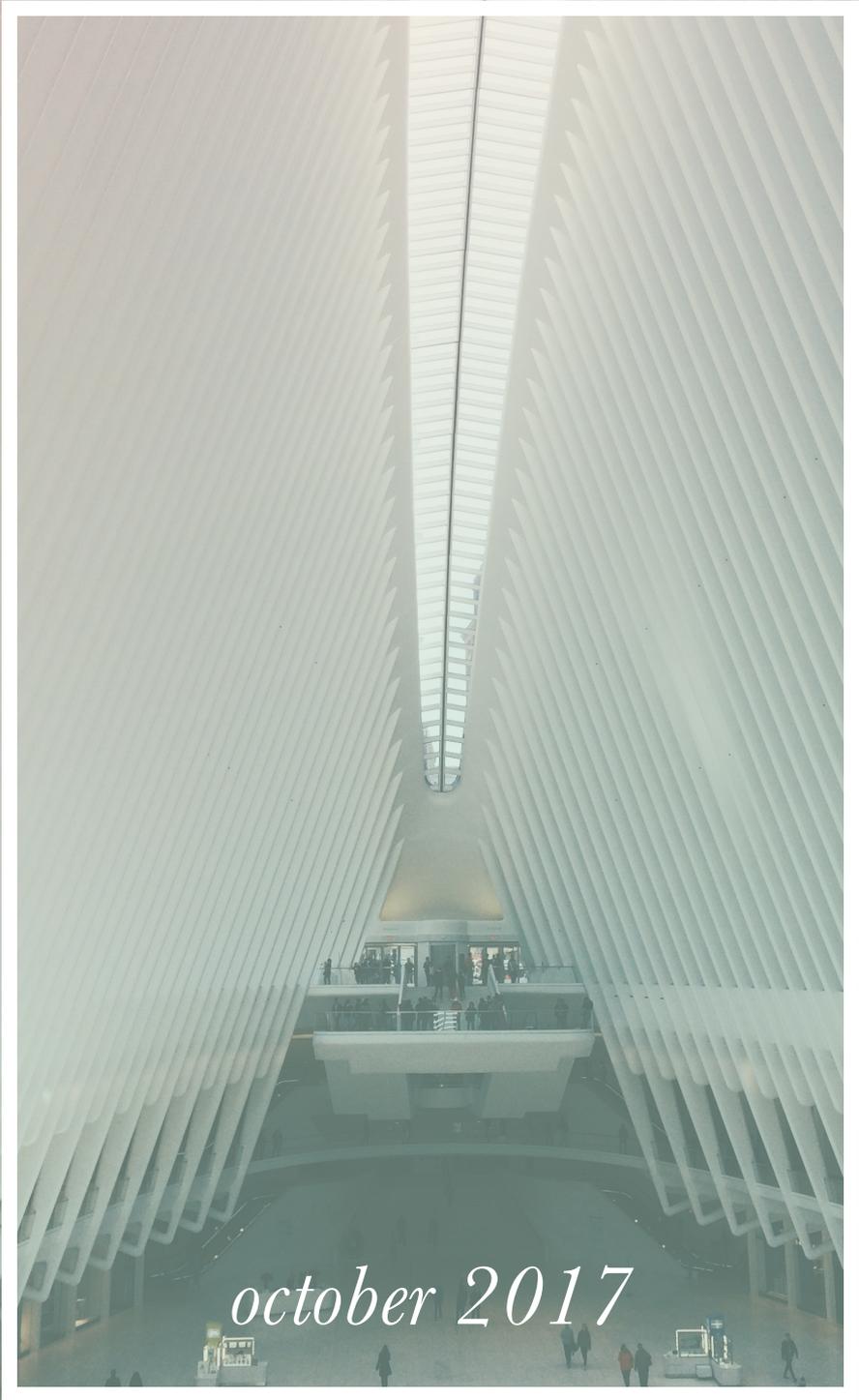
4. Stay in contact. Communication is key

You will meet people everyday, trust me, and you never know when they'll be a good contact for future projects. It didn't come to my attention until a year in when I reached out to a client I worked with beforehand who said she enjoyed working with me but she never heard from me again. I realized I was losing on potential business by not keeping in contact with past clients and losing their trust. Be kind to people, stay in touch, check-in with them regularly. Run your business with follow-ups and kindness. Don't ever feel that anyone owes you anything and don't feel offended when you don't hear back from someone. There is no way any of us can say yes to everything that comes our way and no doesn't mean no forever. Don't be afraid to reach out with a different

idea at a different time or another follow-up to check-in on someone you haven't heard of in months or even years. Just make sure the information you share, the emails you send are personable, thoughtful, and provide content to make contact relevant.

Although I went to college and studied Fashion Marketing, all the lessons I learned were with experience along the way. At the time, I was angry at the landlord for being harsh and so direct but now I look back and am grateful it happened that way. I made the initial decision to start my business and dream, but signing that lease gave me a push that really made it happen. Don't let roadblocks stop you, take a breath, make a new plan and find the solution.





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