

Ep #6: Getting Comfortable with Discomfort



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

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Ep #6: Getting Comfortable with Discomfort

Hey designer, you're listening to episode 6. This is the one where I'm sharing one of the key traits of successful interior design business owners, and it's not what you think.

Welcome to *The Interior Design Business CEO*, the only show for designers who are ready to confidently run and grow their businesses without the stress and anxiety. If you're ready to develop a bigger vision for your interior design business, free up your time, and streamline your days for productivity and profit, you're in the right place. I'm Desi Creswell, an award-winning interior designer and certified life and business coach. I help interior designers just like you stop feeling overwhelmed so they can build profitable businesses they love to run. Are you ready to confidently lead your business, clients, and projects? Let's go.

Hello designers, welcome back to the podcast. I'm excited to have you here today. There's been so much going on behind the scenes in my business and we are just getting in a rhythm here with the podcast. Out of Overwhelm, my group program opens for enrollment tomorrow, December 1st, if you're listening to this in real time. So there's been so many back-end things I have been executing on. And it's just so exciting that doors finally open tomorrow.

I'm kicking off enrollment with a workshop, Goal Setting For Busy Interior Designers, and there is still time to sign up. It's only \$27 and there will be a replay if you're not able to join me live. I'm teaching you the five-step process I use with my clients and in my own business for setting and achieving goals with ease. So definitely check that out. Go to the show notes and you can sign up still.

What we're talking about today is one trait that my most successful clients have in common. It's also something that has allowed me to grow exponentially personally and professionally. I've had a lot of clients tell me that coaching with me is their secret weapon in business. While I'm incredibly flattered, what makes the coaching a secret weapon is their willingness to apply the coaching, specifically the concept of embracing emotion. And this often means learning to be comfortable with discomfort, and that's exactly what we're going to talk about today.

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Before we dive in, I want to give a shout out to one of the listeners who left a review. This listener titled their podcast review, pure gold. They said, “I couldn't be more thrilled about Desi coming out with a podcast. As a former interior designer herself, she's the most qualified business and life coach I've come across. She truly understands the pain points of our industry and has a clear, calm, no nonsense approach. I look forward to listening to these tidbits of wisdom on repeat.”

Thank you so much for that review. I have to say, I love that you say I'm no nonsense. I do like to get right to it, it's actually one of those things that I've had to work on as an adult. Like I can remember being in my commercial interior design position and really needing to think, “Okay, I need to make some small talk while I'm in the kitchen with these other people as a way to exchange niceties and make sure that I don't come across as too all business and no fun.”

The fact is, I don't really care for small talk, I really want to get into the conversation. I want to know you, I want to go deep. And this is something I internally really have thought I needed to work on for a long time. And at the same time, I'm just starting to own that I like to get right to it. And I'm curious if any of you have something where you have felt like, oh, I need to work on this, and now you're starting to own it a little bit more, right?

I think as we get older, we just start to own parts of us that we previously thought we needed to fix or correct and we just start to lean into it. So let me know if that's you as well, or what you have thought you've needed to fix or correct. That's a total tangent, so let's just dive in.

Like I said, we're going to be talking about being comfortable with discomfort. Most of us are taught from a very young age that discomfort is bad. That it is something we need to get rid of as soon as possible. I think we can all think back to being a kid and maybe being told not to cry or being offered a treat when we were upset. Or being told like, “Oh, it's okay,” without the acknowledgment of, no, this is hard, this is something you're going through.

Or even just in entrepreneurship I think we get this message too. We see quotes like, “follow your passion and it'll never feel like work.” Or I certainly experienced

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this when starting my interior design business, I was surprised at how stressful it could feel. Remember, I thought I was escaping all that stress when I was starting my own business. And then when it felt hard and people around me didn't understand why I was doing it "to myself," it felt even harder, right?

It felt like wouldn't it just be easier to go work for someone else? Like it wasn't supposed to feel hard when I was running my business. And I think that there's really this collective belief that we're supposed to feel good all the time. And this is not beneficial to us at all.

I think it really stems from two different things. One is us as individuals not really knowing how to be with negative emotion, and then engaging in all sorts of false pleasures to try and escape. Which often just creates more negative emotion on the other side.

So if you think about eating too much candy or snacks, or scrolling Instagram for a really long time, it provides that quick dopamine hit, it is an internal escape. But, of course, whatever we're stressed about is just waiting for us on the other side, and then we often blame ourselves for those behaviors. So it doesn't really work, but our brains kind of trick us into doing it.

The other thing contributing to this idea that we're supposed to feel good all the time, I think, is really also stemming from the discomfort that we have when others are experiencing difficult emotions, or when we don't know what to do with our own negative emotions, or we don't know what to do with someone else's negative emotions, right?

So I often see this with clients where they're not wanting to stand their ground with their own client who's maybe pushing back. And the designer is uncomfortable with their client's discomfort, and then they're also uncomfortable with the negative emotion that they're experiencing, right? Maybe the self-doubt, or judgment, or questioning, or insecurity.

What ends up happening is you're witnessing someone else have an uncomfortable reaction or emotion, and then you end up giving in because you can't be with their discomfort or your discomfort. And giving in feels like the

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easiest thing just to get that moment passed. While that works temporarily, it's not a long-term sustainable solution.

Being an entrepreneur, I like to say, is one of the greatest personal growth opportunities you'll ever be presented with. I like to think aside from being a parent. It's a lifetime of growth. You're going to solve one challenge and others will present. That is the cycle of having your own business. So truly, the skill of learning to be comfortable with discomfort is a business skill that you are going to need as you continue to grow your interior design business.

I think a lot of times when I say this, at first designers are like, "Oh, that is bad news, I thought I was going to escape this at some point. That I was going to get somewhere to some imaginary point and then I wouldn't have to feel these things anymore, ever again." And I want to encourage you to shift your mindset around this, that really challenges that come up and present themselves are an opportunity to evolve and to grow yourself as a person, grow your business. It's what keeps things interesting, and that's amazing.

And it also feels awful at times. And can we be okay with that duality? Emotions truly are just vibrations caused by our thinking. When you have a thought, that chemical reaction takes place in the body and creates the sensations that we know as an emotion.

So let's just say you were presenting a design fee and you have the thought, "They're never going to pay for this." You might experience then the emotion of uncertain or insecure. Or maybe you're going to market yourself on Instagram and you're thinking to yourself, "What are people going to think?" You might feel exposed or judged.

But uncertain, insecure, exposed, judged, those aren't happening because of the posts on Instagram or because of the dollar amount of the design fee. It's happening because of the thought that is triggering that chemical reaction. No emotion can harm you. It might feel really uncomfortable, but emotions are truly harmless.

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As I've been talking about emotions, I've been referring to them as positive and negative because that's really relatable and how we typically refer to them. And I think that we can all agree that there are certain emotions we'd prefer to have more of, and some that are less desirable. And at the same time, the truth is emotions are 50/50.

We're going to experience 50% negative, 50% positive. You could look at that from the perspective of a daily experience, over the course of a week, a month, a year, a lifetime. We have to have the positive, and we have to have the negative. The two can't exist without each other. We have to know what sad feels like in order to feel happy. We have to know what disappointed feels like in order to understand the feeling of proud or accomplished. There has to be that contrast.

Think about this in the context even of designing a room, you have to have contrast, whether that's color, texture, sheen, in order to appreciate the other elements. Think about if you had a room that was just full of everything being incredibly rough texture. You wouldn't really notice the texture because it would just become monolithic. You have to have the smooth elements, the shiny elements to appreciate the texture. And it's the same thing with our emotions.

This is just simply the human experience and most of us are running around believing it should be maybe 80/20 or 90/10. And that's a large part of what creates the additional suffering. When we argue with the fact that there is positive and there is negative to running your interior design business, that layer of wishing it wasn't that way is creating additional emotional pain.

And the ironic part is that once you accept the idea that life is 50/50 or businesses 50/50, you actually start to experience it more like it's 80/20, and the 20 doesn't hit you as hard.

There's really three things you can do with an emotion. The first is that you can resist it. That might look like avoidance, wishing it wasn't there. I like to think of it as trying to hold a door shut when there's someone or something else really pushing hard against the door. It takes a lot of energy and it's exhausting.

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The second thing you can do is react to an emotion. Typically, this looks like acting out in some behavior or verbally. And then lastly, the third thing is that you can embrace an emotion. This is one of the three steps in the Out of Overwhelm process. And really, when we embrace emotion, we're talking about allowing it to be there. Letting the emotion be present without expecting it to go away. And not letting it be the driving force of your actions or letting it run your business.

Allowing or embracing emotion is really the most effective and least energy intensive approach. One way you can think about it is inviting it in. So instead of holding that door shut with all your might, consider maybe just opening the door. And that doesn't mean that you have to let that guest in and let it overtake your business or call all the shots, but you can at least offer it a seat.

When you're learning to embrace emotion or become comfortable with that discomfort, the first step is always going to be awareness. It's to notice what emotions you're avoiding, resisting or reacting to. So you can just simply name the emotion. Oh, this is anxiety. Or, oh, I'm feeling disappointment right now. Or I'm feeling some fear about how this is going to go.

If you can, try and tap into what you're thinking that's creating that emotion as a next step. And even just naming the emotion has so much impact. But if you are able to tap into what some of those story lines are, what are the ones that you have on repeat?

For a lot of my clients it might be, I don't know how to do this, I'm always behind, this isn't going to work. I think this is a particularly interesting one, even things that you think should be good for your business, like setting up systems that you might be, in theory, excited about can be uncomfortable because you might feel a little confused, you might feel bored. So remember that even when there's things that you think you want to do, it might still be uncomfortable.

You might also be thinking like, I just don't want to do this, right? Sometimes we do things in our business, or a lot of times we do things in our business that we don't necessarily feel like doing, but we have to do them because it's part of running the business. So just noticing and naming the emotion created by a

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thought can give you so much perspective and it will release some of that emotional charge.

I really encourage you to stop thinking of your emotions as stop signs, but something to move through. Of course you're going to feel self-doubt. Of course you're going to experience uncertainty. You're a business owner, and that doesn't mean anything has gone wrong.

You're always going to be doing new things, encountering new problems to solve. It makes sense that you're going to have these emotions as a business owner, and at the same time you can continue to move forward. Everything that you want is on the other side of an emotion, or rather being willing to feel an emotion or allow it to be present.

Let me give you a couple of examples so you have an understanding of how this might look. Consider if you were truly willing to feel disappointed. What would that open up for you in terms of your possibilities? Would you be willing to approach that builder you've been wanting to work with, knowing that they might say they're not interested in working together? Would you be willing to set your fees where you know they need to be knowing it won't work for every client and you might have to risk feeling rejected?

This can go for positive emotions too. Positive emotions can sometimes be equally as uncomfortable because we're not used to allowing them to be there. So let's think about this, if you were willing to let yourself be proud, would you be willing to talk unapologetically about your work in social gatherings? Would you be willing to pitch your work to a magazine? What would happen if you were really truly willing to feel proud of yourself and to celebrate how far you've come?

This week I want you to play around with practicing the skill of embracing emotion. This does not take long, you can do it as you're going about your day. It doesn't need to be another thing you put on your to-do list. When you notice you're experiencing an emotion, just simply notice where it's living in your body. Is it in the shoulder? Is it in your chest? Is it in your stomach? Just mentally note where it is. Mentally note what the actual emotion is.

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If this feels hard, know that you are not alone. Most of us, like I said, are not taught this. I actually give clients a list of emotions in Out of Overwhelm because most of us have a very limited emotional vocabulary. We're used to just putting everything in the bucket of mad, sad, happy and glad. So if you're having trouble coming up with words, you can always just Google a list of emotions and just see what those different flavors are.

So, as you notice where the emotion lives in the body, start to experience it, start to describe it. Maybe it has a temperature or a texture. Maybe it is a solid or hollow experience. Maybe it's moving, or maybe it's staying still. Use that creative brain of yours to explore what the emotion feels like in your body. And the beautiful thing is, once you start to put your attention on those sensations, they do start to lessen and dissipate.

And even if it's not totally gone, you start to build evidence for yourself that you can handle anything that comes your way. So try it this week, you're going to increase your capacity to experience the discomfort that comes with running your interior design business. Think about it almost like going to the gym, right? You're going to be lifting those reps and getting stronger. You want to lift enough that you get your muscles to grow, and also not too much so that you end up hurting yourself.

So take this gently, take it slowly, and just see what it's like. And I know there's some of you who are just like me where I was like, "I don't have time for this feeling stuff. That feeling stuff is not for me." So if you're thinking that right now, I really want to share that you don't have time to not do the feelings work. You can always just notice this as you're going about your day.

And research shows that it usually takes only around 90 seconds for a wave of an emotion to pass. So compare that to the time you spend procrastinating on your billing because you're feeling anxious about hitting send and sending it to a client. Or compare that to the amount of time you spend having negative self-talk about something you missed on a project, when you could just allow the emotion and get back to problem solving.

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You're also going to be putting rocket fuel on achieving your goals in your interior design business. You're going to be able to achieve things you never thought were possible for you, because the emotions that you're not willing to feel are what's in the way of you achieving those goals. Things like tripling your design fees, being published in House Beautiful, starting a wait list and saying no to non-ideal clients. Being able to build a team. Managing your time to create space for that high level of creative thinking you're meant to do.

This work impacts everything in your business and it's going to extend to your personal relationships as well. Feelings really are the secret to your success as an interior design business CEO, they cannot be ignored. You've probably been trying to push them away for a long time and you probably can see that that approach doesn't work.

So just give this a try this week. I invite you to just play with it, use it as an experiment. Emotions are just vibrations and they aren't a sign that anything has gone wrong, or a reason to not pursue your goals. They are what is in the way of your goals. It's how you become a confident interior design CEO, by allowing and embracing emotions.

So that's what I've got for you today. I have another new episode, of course, coming out next week and it's going to be all about becoming a CEO. And whether that's stepping into the role for the first time, or stepping into that next level version of being CEO, you're not going to want to miss that episode. So be sure to follow the show. And until then, I'm wishing you a beautiful week. I'll talk to you in the next episode.

To celebrate the launch of the show, I'm going to be giving away gift cards to Jayson Home, one of my favorite home decor sources. I'm going to be giving away \$50 gift cards to five lucky listeners who follow, rate, and review the show.

Now, it doesn't have to be a five star review, although I sure hope you love the show. I want your honest feedback so I can create an amazing show that provides tons of value. Visit desicreswell.com/podcastlaunch to learn more about the contest and how to enter. I'll be announcing the winners on the show in an upcoming episode.

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Thanks for joining me for this week's episode of *The Interior Design Business CEO*. If you want more tips, tools and strategies visit www.desicreswell.com. And if you're ready to take what you've learned on the podcast to the next level, I would love for you to check out my signature group coaching program, Out of Overwhelm.