

Ep #42: When Things Go Wrong



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With Your Host

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Ep #42: When Things Go Wrong

Hey designer, you're listening to episode 42. In this one I'm going to be sharing how to navigate times when things go wrong because let's face it, they do. Might as well make it easier on yourself.

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 designer, welcome back to the podcast. I hope you all are having an incredible summer. I cannot believe that we are into August at this point. We're coming up on a few weeks out from school starting, and I don't know about you all, but if you have kids you're probably kind of ready for it. I know I am. I mean, I don't want summer to end at all. And at the same time, I'm looking forward to a quiet house.

I'm recording this on a Wednesday and Wednesday mornings I go to a barre class, so shout out to Barre3. And this morning I got there a little bit early and I just had to sit in my car and soak up the silence for just a few minutes before I went in. I am definitely someone who is very comfortable with alone time. I'm pretty introverted and I like quiet. And so as much as I love summer and we have so much fun, I really, really miss silence. And if you have kids, you know exactly what I'm talking about.

I have a little bit of silence actually right now. My husband normally isn't able to pick the kids up from camp on Wednesday, but he was today. So I took them up on that offer and I am here in the home office ready to record an episode for you.

We're going to be talking about when things go wrong. And in a business such as design where you're working with other humans and lots of moving pieces, things are bound to go wrong from time to time. So like I was talking about with

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accepting annoyances in the last episode, we can also expect that things will not always go perfectly in our business or with the project. And with that, then we get to decide how we show up when things do go wrong, how we see ourselves through that, and how we inevitably handle ourselves and the actual issue at hand.

Before we dive in I want to let you know that for the first time in a very long time I'm going to be opening up space for a private one on one coaching partnership for you to get started this fall. If private coaching is something that you've been wanting and you're really interested in this, you're going to want to get on my email list, which I'll link in the show notes. This is going to be the first place I share the details and provide the link to schedule a consultation.

I start any coaching partnership, and I call it a partnership because it really is you up-leveling with me by your side with a consultation where we work together to identify your specific challenges and discuss solutions that we could address while we work together. It's so important for me that when I'm working with a client one on one that it is a fit on both ends because it's such an intimate setting.

So if you're thinking private coaching is for you, go to the link in the show notes, sign up for Monday Mindset, my weekly newsletter, and then be on the lookout for me to send that email.

Now let's talk about when things go wrong and how to handle it. Before we get in depth I want to define what I mean by going wrong with some examples. I think we can all probably agree that never has there ever been a time in the history of design when there wasn't something that went sideways on a project or caught you by surprise. And it's probably not a surprise in the best way possible.

It might be that you opened up a wall to find a very expensive problem to solve that you had no idea was lurking. Or you might have missed something and now it's time to share the news and you have to figure out what you're going to do about it.

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What I also mean by going wrong is that you receive some kind of what you might call negative feedback. This could be about the design you just presented, the way you're handling something, the way that you're running your business. Basically some opinion someone else is sharing with you and it's not usually feedback that you want to be receiving.

Even though there are no designers who get every last selection just right, where they never miss a mark or never have an oversight, we kind of hope that that's the case. And if it's news to you that no one ever gets everything right, I want you to do a little rewind button on the podcast app and listen to that again and let it soak in.

And if you're like yeah, yeah, yeah, I know. Nobody gets it right all the time, people make mistakes, things go wrong, but you don't actually believe this or you're hoping you can somehow avoid this for yourself, stay with me. You can intellectually know something to be true but I really want to give you permission to release an unrealistic expectation of yourself that things will never go wrong or that if you plan or if you perfect enough that you can somehow avoid these types of things happening.

If you're putting your creative work out into the world, especially in exchange for money from a specific person, you're inviting feedback. You're inviting parts of a process that have a lot of moving pieces that aren't always going to connect. And even if you do your absolute best, sometimes things just go wrong. This could also be sometimes when you just have one of those clients who always seems to find something to complain about. Those exist for sure, when it feels like there is always something wrong and they're the first person to let you know about it.

And even when you know that they're that type, it can still feel really challenging to be told something is wrong or that you're doing it wrong or that they don't like something. Knowing that this is just part of having your design business, then we can talk about what you do about it so that something going wrong or getting negative feedback doesn't end up spinning you out or putting you into a doom and gloom spiral.

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Hopefully we're on the same page now, where this is something that is a part of running a business and that things are going to go wrong sometimes or you're going to receive feedback that you wish you wouldn't have received. And now I want to share some really concrete things that you can do to help navigate these situations with more calm, more ease, and become more resilient because of it.

The very first thing, as always, is to have awareness. With these types of scenarios I want you to focus on specifically two areas of awareness. One being your thoughts or that inner narrator. And then the second thing being the vibrations or the feelings that you experience in your body.

When things go wrong, often we have thoughts like I'm an idiot. I shouldn't have done that. This shouldn't be happening. If I was so and so, and then insert another designer's name, they wouldn't have missed that. The client doesn't like me.

I could go on and on about what this dialogue might sound like. You might even notice then that as you tune into your body while I'm reading those sentences or those thoughts you might experience when something goes wrong, that a reaction happens in your body. A physical reaction happens. And that is because our thoughts create feelings.

There's a chemical reaction that happens in our brain that generates the vibrations or the experience that we have of an emotion. Sometimes we aren't really aware of the inner dialogue, and that is where you can also tune into your body to just notice what's going on when something goes wrong. Is your heart racing? Are you restless? Do you have this sense of wanting to flee?

With either of these types of awareness you'll get a sense of when you're in that triggered, panicky, activated state. You want to know when you're having these types of thoughts or experiencing these types of emotions so that you can then take a second, calm yourself down and don't go into reactive mode.

When you're feeling triggered or activated, it's time to pause and take some deep breaths. Bring yourself back to the present moment because when things go wrong, it can feel like a threat and this sense of activation is very primal. It's

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the survival part of your brain. This is not the place you want to take action from, that is that reactive action.

When you're in the protective state your solutions are going to be really reactive, your words might be sharp, you're just not going to be as skillful as you could be and you won't be able to effectively listen to new information coming to you, to that feedback, and could miss something that would be really important for creating a solution.

So when you notice that you're either having that internal negative dialogue or you're experiencing the heart racing or the fluttering or the sinking feeling, whatever it is for you when something goes wrong, take a breath, take a break and just pause. And if you're in the presence of others you can always say, I need a minute. Or go get a glass of water, whatever you need to do to create a little bit of time to settle yourself down.

When you're feeling a really intense emotion, I know it doesn't feel this way, but emotions really only last about 90 seconds in your body if you embrace and allow them to be there without resisting or fighting that experience. So they can actually dissipate quite quickly if we give them space to work through our system. And then when you're in a more settled state, then it's time to gain perspective so you can decide how you want to move forward.

When the thing going wrong involves somebody else, the very first thing you want to do is acknowledge the other person's experience. And that doesn't mean that you have to agree with them or admit fault for something you truly don't think that you caused. But you do want to acknowledge that they are having some type of reaction or experience for themselves because that is true for them, even if you don't necessarily agree with it.

Using statements like I can understand why you feel that way, or I can understand where you're coming from, or I see that you're feeling this way, goes so far with creating a sense of compassion and connection, as opposed to two people tugging on a rope or fighting against each other. People want to be seen and heard, and doing this for others by acknowledging their experience instead

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of getting defensive, will make whatever follows so much more productive and can actually strengthen the relationship.

The next thing I want you to remember is to remain objective. When something goes wrong, when you get some negative feedback, this is not a good time, well, actually, it's never a good time. But this is not your chance to go beat yourself up. It is a chance to learn. And the best way to learn from mistakes is to stay out of judgment and stick to the facts.

Now when I say stay out of judgment and stick to the facts, let's compare and contrast a scenario. I'm going to give you an example from one of my own design days when I was early in my residential business after being in commercial for quite a bit of time. And I was learning a whole new way of sourcing products.

And what happened is I had this wonderful client who was a great project, loved to work on it. And we were finishing her living room and I had presented a collection of fabrics that we'd used for this assortment of custom throw pillows that were really going to finish things off. I presented the options, she really liked some of them, we made the selections, she was very excited and I went to place the orders.

And then I realized that one of the fabrics she had fallen in love with had a minimum yardage. We didn't need anywhere near that minimum yardage. And I don't remember the price per yard at this point because it's been so long, but it was not one of those basic filler fabrics that are low cost. And I just remember how wrecked I was and definitely was not objective.

This was something that I felt had gone seriously wrong. And this wrong wasn't even anyone else telling me I was doing it wrong, it was just a wrong I was creating internally. And I was thinking I can't believe I missed this. She's going to think I don't know what I'm doing. She's going to be mad that she can't have what she wants. I mean, there was so much self-judgment and self-blame over this really quite small oversight.

Now, if I had remained objective I would have thought, okay, I thought this could be ordered at any quantity, I now know that it can't. And I could have gone to the

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showrooms, found a replacement, had a conversation with the client letting her know the facts, that if she wanted this one, the original option, she would have to order more than we needed. Or I could say I found this other option that could be even better and there's no minimum. And then I could let her know I didn't charge her for any additional design time as it was my oversight and so on.

Instead, what I did is that I went ahead and ordered the fabric that she wanted that we selected at the meeting. And I ate the cost because I was so worried about what the client would think of this thing I had done "wrong." Had I not made myself so wrong in what I had done, this really wouldn't have been a big issue.

And I know this is a small example, but I want you to extrapolate it to some of the bigger things that can go wrong on a job site or on a project. When you're objective your next steps become so much more clear. And when you judge and blame yourself, you're going to end up spinning.

Now, this next one I want to share with you might sound like a little bit of a contradiction to what I just said, but let me explain. One of the best ways to handle something going wrong is to look for your responsibility or how you created the scenario. What I want to be clear on though is this is coming from a very objective standpoint. This is why it doesn't contradict what I just said.

When we take responsibility for how we created something, this is not to blame yourself or let others off the hook either. It is to bring you back to where your power lies, and that happens if you remain objective. When you see how you created an issue or a certain result, you also show yourself that you can be the solution and that you can fix it. This is so empowering.

With the fabric example, if I take responsibility, I think about, oh, I just didn't know. I didn't have enough experience to even think about that. Or I was in a little bit of a rush because let's face it, I was rushing around all the time. I learned a valuable lesson when I take responsibility. I need to slow down. I need to ask the showrooms for more support. I need to look for the minimum quantities.

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There's so much that I learned from just that one little oversight. Other examples of taking responsibility could be like, what did I not communicate here? What did I leave out? What did I not say or do? Did I put this off? Or was I rushed? And then once you see where you can take responsibility, you get to say, how am I going to solve for this in the present moment for this current issue? And then taking responsibility for yourself again, how are you going to use that information going forward so that it's not a continuous issue?

Being objective with yourself in this way and taking responsibility is also going to help you with what I want to share next. And that is filtering whatever input you're receiving from somebody else, whether that's a receiving house, the client, possibly an employee, filter that through the other person's lens. I just did an episode on this, we'll link it in the show notes.

Essentially, though, what is their viewpoint? What are the belief systems or thought patterns that they are coming from that they're acting from? And then once you have an idea of what their lens on the situation is, what can you learn about that or understand about them that might be motivating what they're sharing?

Perhaps they're trying to avoid blame because it's something where it's not exactly clear whose fault it is. I hear this a lot when it comes to trade partners. Or the lens might be this is the client and a few other things have happened recently and they're feeling frustrated, like things are just not stacked in their favor with how this project is progressing. And that's really where you can go back to one of the other things I shared about validating and understanding their experience.

Once you see, oh, that's the lens they're coming from, you can ask how do I want to use that insight to resolve this issue? Maybe there's something you can do to reassure them that you're going to make it right. And know that you can always say thank you for sharing that, or thank you for letting me know when someone provides that negative feedback or tells you something was done incorrectly.

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And even if you don't agree that something is wrong, or you don't agree with the feedback, you're still going to gain perspective on how others are perceiving your work or the issue at hand. I also find this really helpful for developing compassion, for understanding where people are coming from, especially when they're upset, they're feeling very activated. If we can take a look at, okay, I'm understanding their experience, this is where they're coming from. Maybe I don't agree with it. But I can kind of put myself in their shoes and it just softens things.

The last piece I want to share is that if you're getting feedback or learning of something that has gone wrong, listen for the actionable items and where there might be some truth in whatever you're being told. Usually, when we're feeling kind of triggered, it's because there is some kernel of truth there. Whether you're agreeing with what the person is sharing or you're recognizing, oh, I kind of messed up.

You can use this to really gain valuable insight into your next steps. Or you could hear what the other person would like you to do to help resolve the issue. And if they have a solution that works for you, you're on your way.

Let's recap this. When things go wrong, how to handle it. And, like I said, the very first step is awareness, awareness, awareness. Notice the thoughts and feelings that are arising for you and if you're feeling very triggered or activated in your body. And if you're in an activated state or have a lot of that negative self-talk, pause and reset. Once your system is feeling more settled, that's when it's time to gain perspective and decide how you're going to move forward.

You can do this by acknowledging the other person's experience. It's also really helpful to acknowledge your own experience as well as part of calming yourself. Of saying, hey, I can tell this feels really hard for me right now, or I'm really disappointed that I missed that thing. There can be validation without agreement, whether that is for someone else's experience or validation without blame for your own experience.

The next thing you want to keep in mind is you want to remain objective with yourself, the other person or the circumstance that has occurred. You can also

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look for areas in which you contributed to the situation and take responsibility so that you can then empower yourself to be the creator of the solution.

Another thing you can try is considering the lens through which the other person is coming from. You can use this to create that understanding and start to see where the other person is coming from so that you can both remain on the same team.

Lastly, listen for actionable items and see what lessons there are to learn. Then decide how you want to move forward, both in the moment to resolve the immediate issue, and then also how you want to use that information going forward.

When you learn to navigate challenges like things going wrong in your design business, whether that's something you're fully in control of or it's those surprise things that go wrong, there is so much to be gained. Think of the pressure that you can release from yourself when you understand that things going wrong sometimes happen, it's part of running a business. And knowing that you have the tools to support yourself through it.

You're for sure going to be more resilient, kind and patient to yourself, and also others because when we extend that understanding and kindness to ourselves, there is a ripple effect and we start to extend it to others. It's also going to help you stay out of the spin and use the feedback that you receive or the lessons learned to improve your process or the way that you do business in the future. And you're going to be doing it from a very empowered place.

And not only is learning to navigate challenges beneficial for you, it's really beneficial for your relationships with your trade partners, your clients and vendors. When things go wrong, it is an opportunity for you to shine. I find time and time again that these missteps or things going wrong can actually be an opportunity to strengthen our relationship.

People are going to remember how you showed up for them, how you delivered a solution, and how you followed through when things go wrong, and they're going to talk about it. They're going to remember that you treated them really well and that you took whatever happened very seriously.

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Things going wrong can actually be something that creates better customer service. And I know that can be a little bit of a brain twister, but trust me, it's true. That's what I have for you today about when things go wrong or you get that negative feedback. Next week, I'll be back with a brand new episode and I can't wait.

As a reminder, if you're interested in private coaching with me, click the link in the show notes so you can sign up for my newsletter and get the details. As always, I'm wishing you a beautiful week and I'll talk to you in the next episode.

Have you ever wished I could be your coach? If so, keep listening for a limited time. When you leave a rating and review for the podcast, you'll be entered to win a one on one coaching session with me. I can answer your questions and coach you on your unique challenges.

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Just click the link in the show notes to submit your review so I know how to get in touch. I can't wait to select a winner and it might be you. I'll talk to you next week.

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