

She Said/She Said Podcast with Laura Cox Kaplan: Episode 190
Title: Why Being Underestimated Can Be a Good Thing (Episode 190)

Laura Cox Kaplan:

Do people underestimate you?

This week, we're going to talk about what to do when that happens, and how you can use it to your advantage. After you listen to this episode, those naysayers in your life literally won't know what hit them.

When I was in college, I took a design course taught by an incredibly talented but very prickly professor. At first I couldn't remember his name, but looked him up and all these memories came flooding back. [the experience is etched in my memory and is one I've thought about so many times.]

I was doing the work in the course, and thought I was working hard, but I wasn't performing all that well in the course. One day, when I turned an assignment in, the professor turned to me and said, "you know, Laura. To do well in this class you'll need to do more than just look cute and smell good."

Can you believe anyone would say that? He certainly wouldn't be able to today. Taken back, and furious. I went home and did the smartest thing I could think of called my mother. After making me laugh about this, and helping me diffuse my anger. She asked me what I had tried to do to better understand what the professor was looking for in the assignment. Had I done enough to really understand and to dig a little deeper than just looking at the superficial. While his comment was offensive, it occurred to me that there might be value to me in considering what he didn't say. Maybe I was looking at it wrong. Maybe it was less about me, and more about him....meaning maybe he was frustrated that his teaching wasn't getting through. Were there other ways that I could challenge myself to learn more from the assignment v. Just creating superficial designs?

Getting mad - and staying mad —was literally a waste of time. So I took mom's advice, doubled down and parked myself in the professor's office. I did this for several days in an effort to 1) better understand what I was missing; 2) make sure he understood that I was committed to the work — which, by the way, I could manage while also looking cute and smelling nice 3) that I was committed to doing the work needed to get a good grade.

Guess what. Ultimately, my persistence won him over. I showed him I cared about the subject matter—more than he anticipated I would, I learned a lot more in course, I got an A, and -- most importantly --I learned a really important lesson about persistence, about not letting anger be the driving force for my emotion, and using feedback even when it's misdirected or unclear, and not letting that feedback or criticism derail me.

More often than not, the feedback we get isn't clear. Or, maybe it isn't articulated in a way that can make it useful. So it's important to really dig into it to better understand it.

When I first started this podcast, it was after a big career shift. I was feeling pretty unsure of myself since what I was tackling was way out of my comfort zone. In addition to that, it meant coming on each week and being vulnerable both on the podcast and also on social media in a way that would help us boost our visibility.

Some of the early reviews — not many but a couple were really mean. One was something along the lines of “she sounds like a bored housewife.” Seriously?! I've never been either in my entire life. But the comment hit a nerve. I had to ask myself, was this an image that I was somehow conveying? Or was it just someone who was being mean? I decided to actually own up to the feedback and the comment. Maybe the person was somewhat right -- maybe I wasn't owning the platform, believing in it as fully as I needed to, and really owning my role as host and facilitator. Maybe I wasn't investing fully enough in the conversations -- and what guests offer -- nearly as much as I needed to to build credibility with YOU my audience. Was I doing as much as I needed to understand YOU and to understand what YOU are looking for, so that I could better serve you and meet that need better. Truth is I wasn't.

So whoever that person is/was. Thank you! I took your advice. I'm pretty sure I don't sound like a bored housewife anymore. Maybe I never did. But here's the point, by looking at feedback objectively we can use it to our advantage, even when it sometimes feels mean.

Often it can be hard to differentiate between constructive and negative or mean feedback. And, it's also true that we and our product or business or idea or podcast won't appeal to everyone. Nor should it. It ceases to be as impactful as it can be when we try to appeal to everyone.

But the most important thing is to never internalize negative or constructive feedback -- either one. Feedback is not about your value as a person, or your value to others. Don't ever allow yourself to fall into the trap of believing that it is. That's the surest path to ruining your confidence, and to finding yourself standing firmly in your own way. Believe me, I've done that.

Listen to feedback, decide if there is value. If there is, find a way to address whatever the issue is, and then -- most importantly -- move on. Period. End stop. Use that method for the good, the bad and the ugly as it relates to feedback, and when you are underestimated.

When you feel that the feedback or criticism is beating you down -- Get someone objective to help you sort through it all with you. Essentially getting feedback on the feedback. Now this only works if the person you get to help you can be objective. But there can be real value in this. And it's why coaching and constantly seeking advice can be incredibly helpful.

Mindset has so much to do with how we think about and process what happens to us, and the role that we ourselves can play in rewriting the script that runs in our head....and how as we live that script it

informs how we often appear on the outside....even in ways that we may not fully and always see for ourselves.

A healthy mindset's faithful partner is CURIOSITY. It's really hard to overinternalize or to be overly critical when we are truly curious.. That's when our orientation is focused on what we can learn, and then dedicating ourselves to really double down with persistence to learn, And to show ourselves and everyone around us we are committed to growing and getting and doing better.

So here are a few takeaways to help you when you find yourself underestimated, and when you find you need to rewrite the script:

1. Make (and keep handy) a list of what you are good at, and what you know how to do -- keep this up to date. Add to it as you regularly reflect on your accomplishments and what you've learned. If you aren't building in that time for reflection, be sure to do that too. My morning journal time is often when this happens, but I also build in regular time usually a couple of times a year or at the end of the financial quarter to do this. It's a good habit and one that helps fuel your confidence. Confidence of course is essential for not internalizing negative feedback.
2. Don't let anger cloud or color your ability to see the situation objectively. Staying calm in the moment -- even when someone has been an ass to you -- as was the case in my earlier example -- can be one of the most difficult things we can do. But, when we do that, it gives us the time and space to process, and to make decisions that are much more difficult if not impossible to make in the moment.
3. Try to look at feedback -- good, bad and otherwise objectively. Ask a few other people -- people who are part of your personal advisory board if you have one -- people who will be honest and objective with you -- and ask them for their views on the feedback you've received. A good coach -- if you can afford one -- can be essential here, too.
4. As you think about the feedback, dissect it with a focus on something you might need to learn or something you might consider doing differently. Would changing course or learning that new thing put you on a different path? Would it improve something you hadn't considered? What other differences might it make? Asking yourself lots of questions can be really helpful for creating some space through which to view this situation and the feedback more objectively.
5. If possible, ask the person who's giving you the feedback for more feedback, more clarity, and more perspective, including how they might have struggled with something similar. This action -- getting curious and asking questions -- helps put you in the driver's seat. You shift from being on the receiving end to actually being in the position of driving the conversation. And in the process, you're more likely to get additional clarity on the feedback which can help you decide if it's really something you need to spend time and work on. PLUS -- there's a bonus -- the person who has given you the feedback sees how invested you are in learning, growing and improving.

Friend, I continue to learn so much from you, and from our incredible guests who join me here at She Said/She Said Podcast. I'm truly grateful to do this work, and I hope you are finding it a valuable investment in YOU.

But, the only way I can actually know that is if I hear from you. So, please send me your thoughts. And please be sure to LEAVE A REVIEW!

How I can continue to improve what I'm offering, and what topics would you like to hear me tackle either solo or with a guest. You can reach me via the contact link on the website: saidshesaidpodcast.com or via DM on Instagram or linked In you'll find me [Laura Cox Kaplan](#)

Over the last few months, I've been spending a lot of time -- well even more time than normal thinking about how I can add more value to you. One of the challenges is creating a solid revenue stream for this platform and content. I'm exploring several options, but would also love your ideas for ways to support what we're doing here at she said/she said podcast, and to continue to add value to you, so that I continue to make your investment of time even more worthwhile.

Friend, have a great start to your week! Take care, and I'll talk to you next time.

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