



Expert Summit

MASTERCLASS TRANSCRIPT



Namecheap Expert Summit

More than mindset. How to look after the most important asset in your business: you | Emily Jacob

Hello, I'm Emily Jacob. And today I'm going to be sharing with you a presentation about more than mindset and how to protect the most important asset in your business which is you.

So why am I sharing this information with you today? So, well, first of all, I'm a marketing professional and I work here at Namecheap and I've been responsible for bringing to you this expert summit. I've worked over 20 years in CRM at departments working on strategic marketing projects, brands like NatWest and Centrica, Microsoft, Vodafone, O2, Orange, blue chips here in the UK.

I'm also a coach and I've been a coach for about the past six, seven years. And I'm a master NLP practitioner that's neuro-linguistic programming. And some of that, and that learning really started to get me interested in how we can change our brains and take control of our brains.

I'm also a business owner. So this is Curious Decisions, my corporate facing business and I also own ReConnected Life.

Now Curious Decisions, I tend to work with leaders who are having some trouble with their confidence or feeling imposter syndrome often new leaders, young new leaders but also those who are more firmly established. And especially now with changes in the workplace and needing to communicate in different ways and looking after their own and their team's wellbeing.

My Reconnected Life business is my other coaching business. And with that, I am more female facing and I work with women who've experienced sexual violence and trauma and help them to move past their past and live a whole and reconnected life again. I've done a number of things I'm super proud of with that business which I won't go into here. Although one of the things I do want to mention because it's happening now is that I'm working with charities who are taking my learning and helping to give it to their clients who were on wait lists. And that means a lot to me 'cause no one should be waiting for help whilst they're waiting for help.

Now, the other reason I am really here today to talk to you about how to protect the most important asset in your business is that I, from my life experiences I really understand resilience in a very very deep experiential level.

So I've learnt about it in my coach training but I've also been on the receiving end of needing to understand resilience. I built my life back together after trauma. And then I was diagnosed with MS which is a degenerative disease. And it's like having a ticking clock but you don't know how, when it's going to count- down to, you don't know how long you've got until the next relapse. So on a daily basis stress management is really, really important.

Plus, as you can see I have two businesses and I work at Namecheap. I would not be able to achieve everything that I do if I didn't use the tools that I'm going to share with you today. Because when we burn out as solopreneurs our businesses stop. So I firmly believe it's more than mindset.

Now, very often you get a problem and the way people, you culturally, we're often taught to think about it is, you just push your way through. So here's your brick wall and you want to push your way through. You've got your, you've got your hammer and you are hammering at that brick wall. You have all the willpower it takes. And yet that brick wall is not getting through. And that can be so frustrated. And often we will give up and say, okay, we can't do it. And that's because it's not because we don't have the willpower and what we are weak willed in any way. It's that actually it's because it is more than mindset.

So we have our conscious mind, which is that willpower but we also have an unconscious mind. And it's our unconscious, which is really running the show. It has all of the scripts and patterns the beliefs that we have built up over time through our experiences and through what other people have told us about ourselves that really run the show. So if we have a belief that deep down we can't really do something, then that's going to be true and our conscious desire to achieve it. Is just not going to happen. We have to find a way and this is why NLP really fascinates me. We have to find a way to rewire our brains. So that our unconscious and our conscious are not working against each other.

And it's not just about that. It's also about our body what our body physiology senses will actually really rule the show entirely. So if our body is stressed and it anticipates any kind of stress it sends signals that basically say you can't do

things. And so we have to think about ourselves really much in a very holistic whole-self approach.

So you might think that some of these things that I'm going to talk about are really only applicable to big T trauma but actually any amount of stress really affects the body which affects our unconscious, which means that consciously we find things more difficult to do. All the time we are moving between the parasympathetic and the sympathetic nervous system. And I shall talk about that in a moment but let's start with where we are today.

So we've all been through 2020 and experienced what that was. I don't think I need to say much more about the fact that we just we've had it. And the thing is, it's continuing, it's continuing this year and there will be degrees of coming out and getting into and trying to define what a new normal might be. But that's, that is change that we won't be going back to where we were. Anything that we experienced that is the same as we had will be clouded by our experience of the pandemic.

So even when we're able to go back into bars we will have somewhere in the back of our minds asking ourselves how safe are we? So the stress and uncertainty of what will happen into the future is it's going to, it's going to continue for some time, whether we go back to offices how much we use public transport, et cetera it's all going to continue and compound and different people will adjust in different ways.

It feels at the moment that we're pushing up this really heavy brick, heavy rock up up the mountain a bit like Sisyphus. And that when we get there we're rolling back down and starting again, it's hard work. We're feeling the cognitive strain of being under this pandemic stress for so long.

And as solopreneurs we are, you know, just as the stereotype and actually as I've experienced, how it can be true. We are workaholics. For Namecheap, I've just been talking to a number of our customers who identify as a solopreneur and they are all telling me how they work all around the clock. Through the pandemic, as solo business owners, we've had to adjust and pivot and change what we do. We've had to work around the clock and we're passionate about what we're doing and bringing to life, our businesses. And so that's okay. And it's also means that we don't get a lot of rest.

Also it's in the name, we are solo, that can be quite isolating. We do things ourselves we're really independently minded. And that means that we can get

perhaps quite lonely. And especially in the last year, we have, sometimes been, literally almost locked away in solitary, not quite the same, of course but we have been in our own worlds, working really hard 24/7 on our businesses. And very rarely if we don't live with other people having other people around. And so that can compound some of what we're feeling. And we're very, the balance and blending of the worlds with working, working from home and relaxing, not really necessarily happening in balance.

And there have been business challenges due to the pandemic and we've all had personal challenges. Some of us have been ill. Some of us have had to care for people. We can, you know, who, who are ill. Some of us have the grief of saying goodbye to those who are close to us. So there has been an awful lot of stressors that have been happening in the world right now.

So take a moment and think about where are you right now? What is, what are the causes of stress? How are you looking after yourself and just have those in your mind as we go forward here.

So the thing is, and why stress is so important is because we can't get through that brick wall when there's stress. Because when there is stress we switch on the fight flight part of our brain, the response in the amygdala and the amygdala? amygdala is what I'm going to say. So that's when we're under stress, any amount of stress, that will switch on.

Now, when that switches on, executive function in the prefrontal cortex switches off. And executive function is what's responsible for planning, organization, time management. You've got it here on the slide. Task initiation, focus, working memory, flexible thinking, self-control, including handling emotions. So of course we can't get through that brick wall when we're stressed we we've lost our focus. We've, we've lost our memory. We've got no organization and structure and time management. It's gone out the window and we're feeling more emotional. We can't handle our emotions in the right way because our executive function is switched off.

And so that's why it's so important even when you're thinking to yourself, well I'm just handling an ordinary amount of stress and it's nothing particularly happening to me right now. Well, yes, there is. You, you're, all of your senses are on the lookout for a virus it can't see. And so even if that's just at the back of your mind what's happened is it's switched up your stress levels and has had an impact on your executive function. And this is why people are talking about

brain fog and feeling really drowsy and not able to focus on things, it's because our executive function is like way up and just switch you can't can't, can't it can't function at all.

So let's talk a little bit about what kinds of stress there are. So this is Hanna, Heidi Hanna's three layers of stress and the first layer is a stress load. And that's the tension between demands and capacity. So it's not a case of who has most resilience. It's actually a case of what are the different factors that are in your stress load.

Now, some of these factors that I have here and it's quite small, will be, will be more helpful. And some of them will be unhelpful in terms of how you manage stress as an individual, but we're all, all absolutely individual. And this, this kind of stress load pack pattern the way where it shows up in everybody is incredibly unique. It's made up of your genetics, your health factors your personality factors, structural factors and any life experiences.

So if, for example, you're someone like me, who has MS, so there's a health factor has a personality pattern of being an achiever with quite a strong perfectionist streak as well. Then and has experienced a trauma, then there's I'm going to have a different kind of stress load than somebody who maybe has a different health condition has a very good emotional life. Maybe they are a helper and they get helped a lot too. Maybe though they live in an area which isn't the nice middle class area of Oxford that I live in. And perhaps they've grown up in a place which has been quite, quite a struggle, perhaps they're not white. So the structural factors are going to be really really different for everybody as well.

So I'm hoping that makes a bit sense if you're looking at that and you're asking yourself what is an ACE, that's an adverse childhood experience. And they will, of course impact as well on our ability to handle stress. And the thing is we have this load that we're carrying all the time, and most of the time for most of us, we're managing that load. And then it's when something happens that can trigger something in that load. And it's normally something small. It's, you know, the straw that broke the camel's back then that's really when we start to overload and that's this stress load, the tension between the demands on us and our capacity to handle it.

We also though have a stress lens, and that's where we the way we perceive what's happening to us. So as a coach, we learn how to help people to reframe

what's happening and put a different kind of spin on, on what's on, on something. But we're all individually doing that all of the time through how we take in information how we translate that information into what we believe as fact, what we're seeing hearing, thinking, you know, and, and we create thoughts. from that information, and, and so that's our that's really our stress lens.

The event happens, our five senses pick up 2 billion pieces of information around that event. We generalize delete distort and all those patterns that I was talking about earlier around our beliefs and our experiences and the scripts that we've built up in our unconscious, they all take effect and we make meaning and thoughts from that event. And so when we've made that thought how we are going to respond to it through our mood and emotion, and then our physiology and behavior really is quite impactful into how we actually perceive stress.

So, for example, if I spill some water on the floor I could make a meaning from that event. because I'm just thinking about the fact that it's, I've spilt it. And so all of my thoughts come into place around the fact that it might be my MS playing up. So I get really emotional. And then my behavior is, you know, tears or I can change the way I perceive it by just saying it was an accident. It's fine. And moving on.

So the way we perceive what's happening to us can be really important in how we think about stress oops and then there's our stress signature which is how it shows up for us personally. So stress might be, you know, you might get a warning of stress when you get a little bit of pain in the back of your shoulder or you might feel something happening in your chest or in your tummy, you might find yourself starting to snap. You might find yourself drinking more than usual.

So think about for yourself. What does your stress load feel at the moment? What are the things that are in your basket of stress? How are you perceiving those? And could you perceive them differently? And how does stress show up for you? How, what are your signs of you are under stress and perhaps there's something you need to do about it.

So I want to talk to you a little bit here about Polyvagal theory, which is created by Dr. Stephen Porges. And this is actually the vagal ladder, which Deb Dana has come up with to help explain it. But the vagal nerve is the nerve that,

you know this core concept of polyvagal theory is that this vagal nerve, it connects the amygdala with the know, which sorts out your your fight flight freeze response. And it connects it with all of your major organs. So it connects to the heart, the lungs the guts.

And you can start to regulate that through actually, how you're breathing, to change how your lungs are working to change how your heart is going to give a signal to be calmer to your amygdala. So what the vagal ladder looks at is where are you at different stages in different situations on this ladder?

Now it can be quite useful to actually put some names against these different numbers. So one might be blissful whereas three is just merely content. Four might be snappish, whereas seven might be furious or slamming the door and walking out. Eight might be flopping onto the sofa and just scrolling, doom scrolling through through the news, or, you know just scrolling through Insta. Whereas 10 might be totally disassociated and just blanked out.

Now we all go through these different steps with everything through through the day we're, our five senses are constantly looking out to see, where should we be? Should we be on alert or is it okay to be safe? Is it too much, do we just want to switch off? And so perhaps again you want, you want to think about where you were this morning when you woke up where you were earlier today where you are right now and measure, well what was happening that made you feel these different these different emotions and feelings in terms of where you feel you were.

So to get us out of, and anything that's in fight or flight and certainly and to stop us from going into freeze. When we notice that we, you know, from our stress signature that we are starting to become snappish, become angry become frustrated, losing patience with, with ourselves or with colleagues and friends and family, there are some immediate tools that we can have at hand to bring us down a couple of rungs on that ladder.

Well, first of all, there are breathing techniques. If you want to regulate your vagal nerve and send messaging to your amygdala that it's okay, you are safe. If you breathe out for longer than you breathe in your vagal nerve will calm down. So seven 11 breathing can be really helpful. People talk about breathing out breathing in for two and out for four. So, you know, doubling the length. If you're breathing in from your belly deep belly breathing can be really calming again because you're really breathing out for a really long time. And that's

sometimes called diaphragmatic breathing but I can not say that word. So that's breathing.

You can also ground yourself. And really when you start to tune in to all of those five senses, which are bringing in all of this 2 billion amount of information when you tune into them instead of focusing on your thoughts, if you tune in on your five senses, what you can see, what you can hear what you can feel, what you can taste, what you can smell, you start to get really present. And in the now, and that is very calming.

And of course, if you really want to feel more powerful and empowered, you can change your physiology. So simply going from a shrugged down position to a straighter back makes you feel more empowered. And this is something I often share with the leaders that I coach when they're talking to me about confidence I ask, how do you show up? Do you positively intentionally think about your, your posture and how, how you are presenting because just by being, you can feel differently that physiology has an impact on your mood, which has an impact on your internal representation, going backwards around the communication model that I showed earlier.

And we have Amy Cuddy here. You can go to her video if you haven't already seen it. I think most of the people in the world have seen her video now. I think it's one of the most popular Ted talks where she talks about the power pose and the science behind that.

So these are immediate tools that when you notice that you are starting to be too high up on the ladder and you want to come back down to where it's safe and social, where we rest and digest where the parasympathetic nervous system is in-charge and working then taking the focus away from the sympathetic nervous system, which is the, the fight and flight parts. When we want that to happen, we can, we can breathe. We can ground ourselves. We can change our posture. All of these things will have immediate impact.

But also it's really important to create a resilience practice, to be focused on ourselves as the most important asset in our business. And I call it a practice because it is something that we do every day and it evolves. And sometimes we want to change it and switch up. Sometimes something's not working too well, so we'll change, we'll add something else in. And so we keep an open mind and we practice every day. And because it's not as, as we said it's not a

case of mind over matter executive function is compromised. And, you know, we struggle with actually doing the thing that we want to create the habit in if we are stressed.

Now, habits are our behaviors. And we've seen that if, if we hold a belief that belief will create a thought about ourselves. So if we think we're not a runner if that is our belief, we are not a runner. Then we will be saying that to ourselves. And we, as much as we try to get up early in the morning and go running that belief will derail us and we won't be able to. So whilst we want to have the behavior of running we have to change that belief around running first. Now we can do that by forming a habit. So actually going out running although I would say we're going to use one of the other, of the other tools. I'm going to show you in a moment to overcome the belief first but anything that we want to form a habit about we've got to recognize that it can take up to 254 days. You know, that's, that's a long time that's a large part of a year. So yeah, it depends on what kind of habit it is. And also who we are as our unique, you know, our unique footprint. Our stress load will be different for everybody but you also, I expect, you know, research has shown that if we break it at 250 days, or even 130 days it doesn't mean we have to start back at zero again. It does mean that, you know, if we start up again and try, try, try again, like Robert, the Bruce that's that's absolutely key to forming the habit. It just slows, it's just slows it down.

Now I find this really helpful is to link activities into chains. So for something that you do every day anyway and is already a habit, for example like brushing your teeth in the morning is there something that you can link in to an activity that means that you're making easier for yourself to, to do the thing you want to do? For example, if you're brushing your teeth at night do you want to link into, after I brush my teeth at night I always get my running kit out. So it's there ready for me in the morning that makes it easier to to get up and get into the kit when the morning comes. So always linking activities into chains just helps psychologically to connect the things that we want to do together.

But let's look at the basics first and we're looking at a resilience practice. We have to get more sleep than we're getting. It's, yeah, if we're tired, we all know this intuitively. And some of this is like, it's common sense but actually it's quite... You know, not a lot of common sense, it's uncommon sense. That common sense is applied, I think is the way it can be said. So if when we're tired, everything feels worse. We're more on edge. We are, we have less, you

know, capacity in our stress load. And we're more likely to perceive things negatively than be able to perceive things in our stress lens in a more balanced way.

So we need lots more sleep than we're getting. So in the U S the national sleep foundation is recommending a minimum of eight hours of sleep. And a lack of sleep is defined as six hours or fewer. So that is, you know, I think for a lot of people to know that six hours or less is defined as a lack of sleep, would cause some kind of concern 'cause I expect most of us as solopreneurs are working all hours. And that can have really serious consequences. As you can see from this quote here from Matthew Walker who is Director of the Center for Human Sleep Science at the University of California in Berkeley. And there's recommend has, has has written Why We Sleep, which is a book I do recommend you will make, you'll prioritize sleep. After you read that book.

Now, if you're struggling to sleep you can start to build some practice around your sleep hygiene before you go to bed, restricting blue light reducing caffeine intake and alcohol, et cetera. So I would say, look at your sleep, look at what's causing you not to sleep and see if you can make some adjustments to improve that.

And one of the things I want to say about everything I'm saying is don't try to do everything at once. It's one thing at a time, pick your first domino and do that one first, and then see what you want to do next. But one, small adjustments at every stage.

The other thing I want to say about basics is water and nutrition. So one percent of dehydration, which can happen within four to eight hours can negatively impact mood, memory, cognitive performance and motor coordination. All of those things that were part of executive function. So drink more water guys, drink more water.

And the other thing about nutrition is if we're just you know, basics, if we're, if we've got lots of sugar and carbs inside of us, that means there's a lot of cortisol flowing around our bodies. Cortisol causes stress. We want to reduce stress because stress causes us to have reduced executive function, which stops us getting things done.

And of course exercise is a basic too, and there's lots of different kinds of exercise, there's exercise for fitness. And it's really great on the surface, but if you're stressed and you're pushing yourself really hard on the bike or running,

you're doing sprints. Remember that you're creating a lot of, you know, using a lot of adrenaline and that can actually have an impact on how your body manages stress as well. So if you are stressed, I wouldn't be recommending a lot of very high intensity fitness. We do need to expel stress and prevent it being stored in the body and boxing and some running is, is useful for, for that. So think about the kind of stress you have and if you're really trying to reduce cortisol and calm that parasympathetic nervous system then of course, things like yoga and swimming and walking and pilates are really good as well.

So let's look at some other practices that we can actually do that will help us calm and bring us more focus. So there's meditation and mindfulness, of course And there's lots of different kinds of meditation. There's so many apps out there. If you think you can't do it, I would say give it another go. It's not supposed to be that you become all zen and calm straight away. Your mind will, it's supposed to run off in different directions and try to be thinking thoughts. That's what the mind does. The practice in meditation is the self-compassion. And non-judgment of saying to yourself, oh, okay. That was a thought, you know, noticing that, bringing that awareness of noticing other I'm having a thought, okay, come back to the breath and being so it's, you know, starting to notice that helps focus and it's starting to, you know to be nonjudgmental and compassionate, to oneself to come back to the breath. And that helps the calm. So it really is a very great, good anchor to be able to come back to the breath all the time.

Other practices, if you are worrying a lot there's something on your mind that's making you really anxious. Then I recommend booking some worry time. And that it's literally, you do book an appointment with yourself to devote that time to writing about that thing that's worrying you And tell your unconscious, okay, thank you for telling me about this thing that's worrying me. We're going to, we're going to address it tomorrow at three o'clock and it's actually interesting how your unconscious will go, oh, okay you've listened to me. We're going to talk about it then and stop knocking at the door. When you try to resist what it's trying to tell you, it will keep knocking, so you need to address it.

And also if you find that, if you're, if you're a writer, if you like writing, then one of the ways to start to be able to get more focused and calm is to actually write about it. And if you'd like to understand the science behind how writing it

down helps you to bring more focus and calm to your life. And then I do recommend this book by James Pennebaker and Joshua Smythe or Smith, "The Artist's Way." By Julia Cameron is wonderful. If you are feeling out of touch with your creativity because your stress has started to overwhelm you and you're feeling really stuck, and you can't get out of the place you're in, you haven't got the, you haven't got the solutions for your business to hand. I really recommend the morning pages, which, you know as part of Julia Cameron's Way here, I have developed a lot of the content for this by just writing in the mornings. And I find that as well, that if, once I've written everything is like uncluttered in my brain. I've written it out in the morning when that, kind of door between the conscious and the unconscious. Isn't quite so stiffly closed. There's a little bit of a gap and my unconscious kind of pulls it all out and helps me be more focused in the day because I've listened to what it needed to say.

And we can also start a gratitude practice. You don't have to keep a journal but noticing the things that we're grateful for actually opens us up and develops more of our neuroplasticity to opportunities and serendipitous coincidences. And we start to normalize seeing abundance and opportunities instead of lack. And I think that's really important for us as solopreneurs, especially when we're struggling and when we're finding it hard to get going and pushing that really heavy rock up the hill to start to be able to open up more to the opportunities around us is really, you know valuable and just something simple as thinking about three things that you're grateful for each day can start to create that opening for you.

So here is where if you had a belief that you weren't a runner but you really wanted to start to be a runner consciously you wanted the willpower to run, but unconsciously you didn't believe you were a runner. This is where the self-talk can be really important. So it says here, "neurons that fire together wire together." It's a quote from Donald Hebb but what we're actually doing when we're thinking about mantras and affirmations so all beliefs are really thoughts that became habits. So what we're trying to do is create new thoughts to become new habits.

If we were to listen to the way we generally talk to ourselves, we would be really, we would not allow our friends to talk, to be talked about in the way that we talk to ourselves very often. So when we one of the things that's really important as a solopreneur is to have self-belief to really believe we can do it and we can achieve what we want and make our dream happen. And so

whenever we catch ourselves with any self-talk, that's, that's more negative and is attacking our self-worth, we really have to notice it address it and replace it with a different thought that can become a different habit and really change that neuroplasticity in our heads.

It's not a silver bullet. It does not happen straight away. It's not the 200th time or even the thousandth time necessarily but we do start to believe the new thoughts that we're telling ourselves.

And finally, especially for solopreneurs but for all humans, connection is really important. Humans are wired for connection. And as I said at the beginning solopreneurs can tend to be quite isolated and therefore can tend to suffer from loneliness but loneliness is itself linked to increased stress and increased cortisol. And cortisol has been shown to decrease when we're in supportive connections. So, so really, even though it can be quite difficult in current times to get that connection do what you can to be as connected as possible to other humans who matter to you and reduce that stress that comes with loneliness.

And of course, this is a magnet that I've taken this picture. It's on my boiler in the kitchen but the real challenge is to have balance and stability within continuous change. And I really hope that some of the tools and techniques and some of the science that I've explained around why it's difficult for us to do that will help to let you have that balance and stability within the continuous change that we do live in.

So thank you so much for staying with me. You can connect with me on LinkedIn or at emily@curiousdecisions.com