

# Disrupt Yourself Podcast

## EPISODE 136: DISRUPT YOURSELF

- WHITNEY Welcome to the Disrupt Yourself Podcast. I'm Whitney Johnson. I think, write, speak and live all things' disruption. And-
- MACY And.
- WHITNEY ... today.
- MACY Oh, I just interrupted you too soon. I'm so sorry.
- WHITNEY (laughs).
- MACY I, was so excited because I get to be here today. Again. This is Macy Robison. I am Whitney's producer for the podcast, and you may have noticed we've been leading up to today's episode, which is the launch, or the relaunch. I guess of *Disrupt Yourself*, so congratulations on that. Super exciting.
- WHITNEY Thank you. It's exciting to be relaunching the book.
- MACY You know, I remember reading a super early manuscript of *Disrupt Yourself*. Gosh, probably would have been six years ago. Um, you were in Austin visiting, uh, attending South by Southwest for the first time you were in my backyard with me. We were, I was reading through the book like, and I just remember I was, I was somewhat involved in the launch, and I think I was in your first book, *Dare, Dream, Do*. And this was such an interesting disruption of what you've been teaching and what you've been doing. And, um, and so it's been really exciting. It was a bit of a surprise to read it, but a really good surprise and really made me think and has been so, useful and helpful to me in my own trajectory of my life and my career. Um, but it's just kinda fun to have a chance to revisit it. So, thank you for [crosstalk 00:01:21].
- WHITNEY Oh, that, that's so fun. And I completely had forgotten about that. And now that you're mentioning it, Macy, I do remember you when you were reading that manuscript and you and I think like you said, you were surprised because *Dare, Dream, Do* was much more of this cup of hot chocolate-
- MACY Mm-hmm (affirmative).
- WHITNEY ... sitting across the table. Encouraging someone to dream and *Disrupt Yourself* was like for the business audience. And, and, and what did that mean? And what was that going to look like? And, and would, would the world be interested in reading a business book for me as opposed to the cup of hot chocolate of *Dare, Dream, Do*.

MACY

Yeah. It was a big leap off learning curve and, and it's, it's always been interesting to watch you, um, practice what you preach, I guess. And, and to me, as I read through the book and kind of got over the initial, oh wow, this is so interesting. This is a departure from what I've known from her in the past. To take a step back and look at it and say, "No, this is actually what she's always done." She's, you know, gone up a learning curve and jumped to a new one.

And sometimes it feels like you're at the bottom of a new curve and you're jumping down. But I remember we did a course with, Richie Norton, a couple of years ago and he talked about, really you're going up to the next curve. Like it's just this perpetual cycle that keeps you moving up and up and up as you learn, leap and repeat. So, um, it's, it's kind of fun to see, and, and, and to that end that like, you know, you, you released *Disrupt Yourself*, you started working on *Build an A Team* and even though this is a circle back to some of this material, it really is a leap up.

So the first question I wanted to ask you, um, I would love to know what you've learned in the last few years since the original publication of *Disrupt Yourself*. That made you want to take the opportunity to, to republish it.

WHITNEY

Okay. Well, there, there're, as with any, well not anything, but most things are kind of two things that brought this about there. At first there was a practical reason or, or maybe a catalyst, maybe not practical, but a catalyst of, of an opportunity where the book, uh, the publisher that we had originally published the book with, they had, um, had sold to another publisher and decided that they weren't so interested in these kinds of business titles.

And so was there was this ultimate thing of like, "Okay, so what are we going to do with *Disrupt Yourself*?" Like, do we self-publish? Do we publish it with someone else? And the obvious answer for us was we have loved, I've always loved working with Harvard Business Press. We'd published *Build an A Team* and thought, Uh, I wonder if it would be possible. And Erica Heilemann, who had been the publisher of Bibliomotion was now at Harvard Business Press. And so she and Melinda Marino were like, we want to publish, *Disrupt Yourself* here.

So that was super exciting to be able to then have, *Disrupt Yourself* and *Build an A Team* be a pair. So that's kind of the, the business piece of it that was going on behind the scenes. But the other big rationale was, is that when I published *Disrupt Yourself*, Boston Globe came out and they're like, "this is like the, *What Color is your Parachute?*" for the entrepreneurial generation." I'm like, okay, first of all, that's awesome because we've all read *What Color is Your Parachute?* At least I did when I was in college. But second of all, that's not awesome because now I've got this whole world of people who think this is only a book for career changers.

MACY

Alright.

WHITNEY

And... yeah. So now I have people saying to me, okay, you know what? "You can't come speak in our organization and I don't want anybody on my team to read your book." And, um, maybe they can't even listen to your podcasts. 'Cause if they do, they're going to leave. And I'm like, "wait, wait, wait. That completely misses, like, that misses the point entirely." Um, and so one, of the things that I wanted to do in republishing this was to really make a very strong statement that if you as an organization want to be a high growth organization, you need high growth individuals and the way you get high growth individuals as you have people who know how to learn, leap, repeat, who know how to disrupt themselves.

And this book, this framework of personal disruption is the mechanism by which you become a high growth individual. It's, it's, it's like it's that thing inside that makes the growth possible for the people and therefore the organism, the team and the organization. And so I wanted to republish it, to just get that framing in so that people could understand how it sits, within the infrastructure and the overall structure of building a high growth organization.

MACY That's so interesting. You know, I, I'm, when I think of growth, I always think of plants. I love analogies that like bring in the natural world. And I think that fear that's so interesting that companies have that fear because often I think a high growth individual in the environment of a typical corporate structure would, if you think of a plant that like overgrows its pot, like it needs to be moved, it needs to be re-potted in order to thrive and grow and you, you would see people like that, that they would be the ones who disrupted themselves.

They just outgrew their organization and the, the, the pot they were in so to speak and needed to move to a new environment. But what you're saying now with this new re-publication it sounds like is um, no, it's possible to create a greenhouse or an environment for everybody to experience that growth. Like there's a framework, there's a predictable way to, to walk people, all these different types of plants inside your organization, your greenhouse. You can, you can help them all grow. They'll all thrive. Um, and that will help your business and your company. Overall. Does that track?

WHITNEY I will, yeah, I love that image. Macy that. I, I can just see, like I'm looking outside my window and I can see these plants in these pots and I love that image of like it got bigger. And so now we're going to re-pot it and put it into, into a new pot so that it can continue to grow and thrive. And I think the other thing I would say is that, you know, it's true. Sometimes people are going to leave your organization, but there are so many instances where they don't have to, it was an avoidable loss. And so that's what I really want people to focus on is, um, understand that there are so many times where people depart, where it was avoidable, where there was a new pot for them. If you, if you were willing to allow them to think strategically, you were willing to think strategically on what can you do. And when you're willing to do that, then you as an organization are going to be able to be high growth. Because one of the things that we know is people will often say to me, well, how do you hire for, how do you hire for potential rather than a proficiency? 'Cause that's one of the challenges of companies.

They always want to hire people who know exactly how to do the job and they're like, Oh, but it's so, you know, it's so risky to hire for potential, but it's not risky to hire for potential when you're looking at people who are already inside your organization because they've already been vetted. Like they know the culture or people know them, they know how to work with them, but then people fall prey to this shiny new penny syndrome and so they want to hire people, people from the outside.

MACY Right.

WHITNEY But I do think that if you're willing to say, okay, I want to hire for potential, I'm willing to re-pot these plants and understanding that if you will do those things, that is going to allow you to have a high growth organization with less risk around people not fitting into the culture. This framework of personal disruption is a great framework for doing that.

MACY I love that. That's so good. Um, do you have any examples um, that you can share of, just, just as you've worked with, I mean, obviously anything you can share, whether it's a podcast story or a company, perhaps you've worked with where you were able to show someone, Hey, this is someone who wants to leave. And we were able to, you know, if we can think about it in this way, we can keep them here by letting them, you know, jump to a new learning curve. Um, I can think of the, the LinkedIn episode we did um, with the...

WHITNEY With, [Dan Shapero](#).

MACY [Dan Shapero](#).

WHITNEY Yeah.

MACY And, that to me is the classic example, and we can tell that story, but I just wondered if there's another.

WHITNEY Yeah. So, um, so one story is one of our clients, um, um, it's a Western Governors University, and they had a very, very seasoned executive there for about 15 years.

MACY Mm-hmm (affirmative).

WHITNEY And so very much a person who's at that top of that S curve and in many organizations, they would have been like, okay, you've been here for 15 years. You actually, you know, been able to contribute in a really powerful and strong way. 15 years is a long time. And in many instances they would've just been like, "thank you, very much." And kicked him off the curve. Right?

MACY Mm-hmm (affirmative).

WHITNEY But that's not what happened at Western Governors University. What happened instead is they said, okay, you have been this really strong contributor. Um, you're in the latter part of your career. Um, we know that you have made a big difference. We also know that because you're at the top of your S curve of learning, there's some latent innovative capacity. So what do we want to do? We really want you to stay. So what can that look like? And so what they did is they had him jumped to a brand new S curve. They had him disrupt himself and take over, um, an initiative that's, um, that's around helping people prepare to be able to go to college, whether it's WGU or somewhere else, which is a really exciting entrepreneurial initiative.

And so this is a great example of a person disrupting themselves, leaping to a new role inside of an organization. Very different, very entrepreneurial. But what's so exciting about it is that for a person who is in the latter part of their career, but this applies regardless of where you are. Instead of, sort of being kicked off and sort of being like, "Oh, what am I going to do?" My career ended in a sort of not very exciting way, instead of, it, it's going to end this. And very exciting entrepreneurial, contributing, helping people get ready for college and really building a very meaningful organization and role and place for himself on very, very different. Repotting that plant. Um, and everyone is benefiting.

MACY You know, it's so interesting. I have a good friend. She started working for Western Governors University. She's worked for them for a while, and you've been working with Western Governor's University, for the last couple of years and it's been fun to watch from the bleachers and see how, you know, this vast organization that expands over several States, that's a non-profit entity, how much they're benefiting from this idea of letting people learn, leap and repeat, you know, like she's been able to accelerate, up her learning curve and jump to new responsibilities. And um, sometimes when other people you have may have had more, more time in the seat than her, but she had the right experience and the right expertise and she was able to move into a new role. It's been really fun to watch that that can happen.

Not just at the officer level, like the story you said, but, but throughout the organization.

WHITNEY Yeah, yeah.[crosstalk 00:12:48]. Oh yeah. Across right. Like you said at the top, you know, everywhere in between. That's exciting-

MACY Mm-hmm (affirmative).

WHITNEY ... to hear that story.

MACY

I just want to just talk briefly about kind of what they can expect to read in the book if they haven't read it before. Um, it's a really great outline of the seven accelerants of disruption, which if you've been listening to the podcast, we've gone through and, and interviewed a guest and kind of focused on each of those accelerants over the last seven weeks. Um, so go back and listen to those. We have some other podcast episodes we'll link to in the show notes. Um, but I love this framework. Knowing where you are on the S curve of learning and also leaning into those accelerants of disruption.

So let's talk about the S curve just briefly for a second. Um, can you talk about what it is and why it's important to know where you are on the S curve? And just really quickly before you start, I want to say just for our visual learners, cause this was a good for me. Um, it's not shaped like a letter S it's shaped kind of like, um, I think it looks like at the beginning of a rollercoaster. Um, but the beginning of the S curve is very slow and then you start to take off as you go up the hill of the rollercoaster if you need to kind of picture that in your mind.

If you can just walk us through, um, what you've learned about people's, S curves and why they matter and why knowing where you are on the S curve is so critical, to knowing how, to disrupt yourself and be a high growth individual?

WHITNEY

Absolutely. Okay. So first of all, S curve, learning. Um, for those of you not familiar, this is something that, um... the S curve itself was popularized by EM Rogers in 1962. And we use this S curve at our Disruptive Innovation Fund when I co-founded the fund with Clayton Christianson and his son, Matt, um, to, uh, help us figure out how quickly is an innovation going to be adopted. And so what we learned is that at the base of the S, that growth is slow. Like Macy was just describing this bottom of the roller coaster. You're like chick, chick, chick, chick, chick, chick, chick, getting ready to go up. But then you're going to hit that knee of the curve where you're going to accelerate into hyper growth. And then once you get to the top, that growth tapers off, you reach basically saturation.

So the big aha, that I had as we were doing this investing is that this S curve could, could help us understand how people learn and how we grow and how we develop. And that was this huge aha and, and, and something that I've now just been writing about and thinking about, and we go into a lot of detail on in *Build an A Team*. But here's what you need to know for you as an individual, is that whenever you start something new, you start a new role, you start a new job, you are at the base of that S, that bottom of the roller coaster and growth. It's not slow, but it feels slow. And so a lot of times going to pass, and it looks like nothing is happening cause that exponential growth hasn't kicked in. And the reason it's important to know that is then because you know that, you're not going to get discouraged.

I mean you will, but not as much as you would have otherwise. So that's, that's what the bottom of that S curve, or the launch point looks like. And it also can be characterized basically by, by overwhelm, but then you hit the knee of that curve. It, you start to move up that roller coaster and growth is accelerating. You're in hyper growth, and it's hard, but not too hard and easy, but not too easy. This is the part where you feel very exhilarated, um, because you're growing so fast in a little time, a lot happens and then you hit the top, and you're like, okay, this is awesome. But actually it's not quite so awesome because, um, you, you pretty much know what you're doing. You figured it out. You're not enjoying dopamine. The feel good effect that comes with learning. And so this is characterized by underwhelm.

And so what, that means, when you get to the top of that curve, it can be a plateau. Or if we're going to continue with the roller coaster analogy, it can become a precipice where you fall off. And so the idea for our framework of personal disruption is - how do you, how do these seven accelerants help you move up that S curve as quickly as possible, and then prepare you to jump to the bottom of a new S curve. Because that's how you become a high growth individual is that

ability to move up an S Curve quickly, and then have the tools to jump to an new S curve and just do that over and over and over again. So that's the quick overview of the S curve.

Um, now you asked me about the seven accelerants. "What are those accelerants and how do they help you move up an S curve? Um, effectively." So accelerate number one is to take the right kinds of risks and there's a lot, a lot to that. We have an entire solo episode on taking the right risks. It's episode 100. We did a podcast interview all around that all from Adela Mizrachi who started a Podcast Brunch Club. So like book clubs, but she's doing with podcasts. That's a great example of a, someone who's taking the right kinds of risks. They are taking on market versus competitive risks. They don't know if there's a market, they don't know if there's an opportunity. But if there is, then there's no competition. And that goes back to this idea of disruption where the odds of success are six times higher when you play where no one else is playing. And that's what taking the right kinds of risks looks like. So that's the first chapter of the book.

You can dive into this in episode 129 with Adela, you can listen to episode 100 if you want to understand it better.

Second, accelerant is to play to your distinctive strengths, not only what you do well, but um, finding ways to do well and play where no one else is playing with those actual strengths. Um, and so the, the, an example that really illustrates this nicely is the idea of a koala. So the koala - cuddly animal sleeps up to 20 hours a day. You're like, that's awesome. But how is the koala can actually eat? Well, it eats because it has a strength. It eats eucalyptus leaves, which are poisonous to, pretty much every living thing. On the planet. And so this, it's distinctive as strength. It can sleep all the time because it can just go out and get the food that he wants and doesn't have to compete for that food. Um, on that one. That's really fun and interesting. There is a podcast episode, episode 130, it's um, uh, uh, Celia Harquail where she talks about feminism and, and before you kind of go, Oh, feminism, no, seriously, it's so interesting, and it's so well written and I would call it feminine, feminine-ism, and the idea of how we need the masculine and the feminine. We need ships and harbors. We need disrupters and stabilizers in the workforce.

And so super interesting way to think about that kind of strength and then ask yourself what are your strengths? And we also, again have an episode, episode 120, that really does a deep dive on playing to your strengths.

So now you're playing to your strengths. You're playing where no one else is playing. And those two things can be this flywheel that allow you to move up that S curve and then you're like, okay, I've got momentum. I'm ready to go into the knee of that curve. If only I had enough time and money and maybe more expertise and maybe I could get everybody around me who is their stakeholder to say, that's a great idea. Then you could move up the curve.

But what we know from the law of physics, or from physics is that we need friction. We need something to bump up against. And so third accelerant is to embrace your constraints 'cause the constraints that you have are not actually what pushed you down the curve. They're what can give you in the pushing against them the momentum to climb the curve. We don't have a solo episode on that yet. That will be episode 140.

But what, I will tell you is the episode 131 with Jonathan Mendonsa on who's figured out a way to help you have financial independence. Super compelling. Super interesting.

And how he's embraced that constraint on of, of really spending less in order to have huge financial freedom.

So number four, that is battle entitlement. And there are lots of different ways to think about entitlement. And I, I share on one definition of this on podcast episode 132 but I want to share

one now with you all because for me, entitlement is this belief that our experiences, our lived experience, what we think, what we feel that we as, as, a, as a human being, as an individual, are somehow fundamentally of greater worth than the person to our right, to the person, to our left in front of us, behind us, the person who's listening to this podcast, et cetera.

We somehow believe that, that we are preferenced above other people. And so since that's the human condition and we all struggle with it, we all battle our sense of entitlement. It comes in lots and lots and lots of different guises. And so, um, and this particular one, it's important because as you're climbing that S curve, one of the ways it can manifest itself as you start to think, well, I'm doing great, right? I, I'm, I'm playing where no one else is playing. I'm feeling strong, I've embraced my constraints is so that's unleashed all this power. And so now you're in that sweet spot of the curve and you're moving really quickly and you start to think this is the way things will and should always be. And so we stop asking questions like, "Huh, um, what could I do differently and what could I do better? And how could I disrupt myself even further?" And so that is of all the, of all the accelerants, this is the one that you can't do without. You can somehow do without some of the other ones. But this one you, it's an absolute curve killer. And the episode that we have for this one, I love. His name is Buster Scher. I met him, um, at TED earlier this year through a friend Mitch Joel.

And he is just super interesting. Um, fellow 19 years old, built a media empire. And so the obvious idea here is, you know, I'm not 19, and I could say, what could you teach me? Um, there's so much I can learn from him. But this again manifested in many ways. It might be that someone who's 70, I could say, well, what could you teach me? Well, if we're willing to look, there are people, that can teach us everywhere. And this goes back again to this idea of neither you nor I are more important or less important than the other person. Uh, I love this. I love this accelerant. I think it's so important.

MACY Okay. [crosstalk 00:23:51], So that's-

WHITNEY Yeah.

MACY Like you said about being a curve killer also, because anytime you start to think that you know more than someone else, um, you're going to either find out the easy way or the hard way that you're wrong. Um, I, it's, it's just interesting to watch. I, I think when you look at stories of people, you know, getting derailed or something terrible happening in their life, or career, it often comes down to this sense of entitlement.

WHITNEY That's a great observation. Macy. And I think it's interesting, you know, if you think about moving, accelerating up this S curve, it, the derailers, you know, you remember we had this amazing podcast episode with Carter Cast-

MACY Mm-hmm (affirmative).

WHITNEY ... about your derailers and how, you know, you do need to be aware of what those are in and mitigate them and, and manage that risk. Um, but then in order to really become a high growth individual, it comes back to your strengths. So mitigate the derailers, right? You know.

MACY Right.

WHITNEY Manage for them, but then lean into, double down, triple down on your strengths because that's what's really going to give you momentum to climb that S curve.

Okay, number five, step back in order to grow. So this, it goes back to the theory of disruption. So if all of you can in your mind get the little piece of graph paper, um, where you've got those little teeny boxes, which I love, and you think about disruption, what is disruption? Well, if you've got a Y axis of growth and, and you know, moving forward and then you've got the X axis of time. When you disrupt yourself, what you were doing is you were saying, okay, I've got this line or this trajectory on my graph paper, and it might be over one, up, one, over, one up, one or the slope of the line.

And it's pretty good. But I want more. I want to grow more, I want to grow faster, I want to get more done. I want a higher growth organization. And so when you disrupt yourself, what you are doing is your making a conscious decision and sometimes you are disrupted and that's okay but you're making a conscious decision to move down that Y axis. Maybe you're at 10, you've decided I'm going to move down to eight, or seven because I believe that in the future by plotting myself at a different point on this graph paper of existence, it's not going to be over, one, up, one is going to be over, one, up, two, over one up two. And so that's why you step back in order to grow.

And stepping back can be a slingshot and the podcast episode that we have on this one, and there are a number of people that we've talked about this idea of step back to grow. But this one we decided to take a slightly different tack and we interviewed [Tiffany Shlain](#), who wrote a book called *24/6* and her whole thesis, is, um, she is uh, culturally Jewish and they practice a technology Shabbat and she's found from the research and from her lived experience is that by being willing to unplug for an entire day, uh, once a week, that on the day when she re-plugs, which for her is Sunday, she's more productive so she can get more done in six days by unplugging for one day. So step back in order to slingshot forward. Lots of different ways to step back. But that's just one example and if you look at your life, you will see there have been times when you've made a conscious decision to step back and that can oftentimes catapult you forward. People may think you've lost your mind, that's another way to know, that, you've taken your step back. But you-

MACY Absolutely, [crosstalk 00:27:13].

WHITNEY ... do it. Go ahead.

MACY One of my favorite episodes on that is actually [Dave Hollis](#). We talked to him last fall, I believe. He's the husband of [Rachel Hollis](#) who's a personal growth teacher and coach and he left a very high ranking job at Disney. Um, I believe he was the president of worldwide distribution. To go, be the CEO of his wife's company, privately held, I think 10 employees at the time, maybe fewer. Um, and it's just been amazing to watch the trajectory of their company since we talked to him. We talked to him, right after they left the Disney job and moved to Austin and we're starting over and hiring a whole bunch of people. And um, it's been really interesting to watch their company grow.

Like they've had product on QVC. They've released a movie, they've had huge sold-out business conferences. His wife's books have been number one in the New York Times bestseller. He has a book coming out in March. Like there's just so much. Um, there's so much, I think anecdotal evidence for this idea that, um, when, when you take a step back, when you take a rest, like we talked about with Tiffany, like there's seasons, there's times to rest and that will fuel further growth if we can just have the discipline to do it.

WHITNEY I love hearing that about, [Dave Hollis](#). Macy, I know you follow [Rachel Hollis](#) and [Dave](#) really closely and I did not realize that, that step back truly has been a slingshot for him.

MACY It really has. I mean I think they made the bet knowing that, they could go further, faster if they did that. But I think they have almost 40 employees now. Um, it's just been astonishing to watch how quickly they've grown and how and how well, um-

WHITNEY Mm-hmm (affirmative).

MACY ... it's been really-

WHITNEY Uh, congratulations to them. That's fantastic.

MACY Yeah.

WHITNEY Okay, so that's number five. Let's do number six on and this is give failure, its due. And this one, huh, in some ways, this is my favorite one and I think it's because, um, if you think about failure, um we, and I have so many failures and I talk about this frequently, but I'll, maybe I haven't shared it here, so I will, you know, I've done things like bomb speeches in front of hundreds of people and, and people didn't like it. They hated it. Comment cards to prove it, you know, like it's just bad stuff. I've been fired. I've, I've backed businesses that have imploded, so I've failed a lot. And you failed a lot too. Like We've all failed a lot.

MACY Yep.

WHITNEY Um, (laughs). The reason, and I didn't mean just you, Macy. Like everyone (laughs) who's listening.

MACY No. I love it. I'm, I, I fully embrace it, I think it's great.

WHITNEY Yeah. And so I, and so the reason I say give it, it's due is because if you think about it, the up and the down is part of personal disruption. And, and the, the interesting piece for me, and we've got this great interview not only from [Kaihan Krippendorff](#) about, on failure inside of organizations and how they're not able to innovate. And it's in part because they're telling people to take the wrong, not the right kinds of risks. And he's basically saying, if, you take the right kinds of risks, you'll fail, but it'll be the right kind of failure. So that's, a great episode that you're going to be able to listen to. But there's also this lovely episode from [Maren Kate Donovan](#).

MACY Mm-hmm (affirmative).

WHITNEY Who was a founder of Zirtual and it just, it just went up in flames and she learned so many valuable lessons. And what I love is that she came on the podcast, obviously has been out in the public talking about this failure, what she learned and how she's given it, Its due, I think she called it her like \$5 million MBA, and now she's building, building another company where she's been able to take all those lessons learned, um, and, and build a company that's, that's thriving and, and, and growing. So, um, so the thing that I want to really stress to people as you're thinking about failure, um, is this idea of it's, it's shame that limits disruption. It's not failure because if you really reflect, you'll recognize that you all are... you fail all the time and we fail all the time.

The thing that trips us up is when there's some kind of shame attached to that failure. And so if you can say, okay, well what do, I do when I fail and I'm not ashamed and I'm like, what's my process? And then if there is shame, then do some of that inner work that's going to be required in order to start to believe. And this goes back to actually battle entitlement where you start to believe that you're fundamentally worthy.

'Cause entitlement isn't just you thinking you're better. It's also thinking that we're worse. And when we get to the point where we think, no, you and I, we are both fundamentally of worth, then we are able to not only battle our entitlement but we're also able to give failure its due and really see that 'cause... that failure as a constraint, it's a tool of creation and the failure can frequently be a slingshot forward that step back in order to grow.

MACY The shame I think is another word for fear.

WHITNEY Mm-hmm (affirmative).

MACY And I remember teaching school and these cute little middle school students, wanting to audition for musicals and, and things like that. And I've said this to grown-ups, I've said this to, to cute junior high kids, but they wanted to audition but wouldn't do it because they were afraid they wouldn't make the musical.

And I would always say. "Well by not auditioning, you're guaranteeing what you fear." You're not-

WHITNEY (laughs).

MACY ... in the musical now. Right?

WHITNEY Yeah.

MACY So you're basically guaranteeing that you're, (laughs). Your failure in advance and we don't, think of it that way.

WHITNEY Huh.

MACY We're so worried about that shame that's, going to come from showing up and doing the work, and singing, or being on that stage and then being, you know, severely rejected, or shamed, or something like that, that we are choosing what the actual results of failure would be. And, and you see that so often, um, just in everyday life and, and, and in business as well. And I, it's one of my favorite, um, accelerants also because if, you know, if you're not failing, you're not learning anything and I value learning so much that I'm just willing to face plant all the time. So.

WHITNEY Yeah, (laughs). I love that. Macy, 100% your 100% guaranteed to fail if you don't try. I love that.

Okay. Number seven, be driven by discovery. And this is, um, this obviously applies whether you're at the top of the S curve or the bottom. And one of the things that as you're all listening, you might realize like there is a sequence to this, but these also can be taken out of sequence and so, um, and mixed and matched in different ways.

Obviously we need to be driven by discovery at the top of the curve, the bottom of the curve and everywhere in between. And this is again, this idea of if you're a disruptor, if you're playing where no one else is playing, if you're creating a market, you don't, you have to be driven by discovery because you don't know what it's going to look like. You're going to have a purpose. Like you have a why, why am I doing this? So at least it's going to be a nascent why, but you don't know what it's going to look like.

Now this one is really, um, interesting. We've got a fun, fun interview on this one. So we've got Eric Schurenberg, this amazing, amazing executive. He's the publisher for both Fast Company and Ink. For any of you who are entrepreneurs, you obviously know about these magazines and so you'll want to listen to this interview with Eric. Fascinating, deep thinking, generous individual. The thing that I have had discovered about discovery being discovered, driven recently is this. I thought that I was really good at this and it's important to be good at it because, um, Korn Ferry did this study that said the leading, um, leading indicator of C suite success was this ability to deal with ambiguity and walk into the unknown. So I'm like, yeah, I'm really good at this. I'm good at this. And I bet a lot of us think we're good at walking into the unknown.

And then, and then I was preparing to [interview Brené Brown for our podcast](#). Reading all of her books, devouring all her books is probably a better way to say it. And she talked about, well, what's vulnerability? Well, vulnerability is the willingness to show up when the outcome is uncertain. Well, that's being discovered, driven. The outcome is uncertain. And then she said, here's what you want to do. You want to go to someone you trust and say, "what do I do when I'm feeling uncertain?" When I'm feeling like I don't know what's going to happen? When I'm feeling a little bit out of control? Ask them what you do. So I was like, okay, I'm going to do this experiment.

So I go to my truth teller, which is my husband. I'm like, "what do I do?" And he tells me in the nicest possible way, for any of you who have met my husband, you'll know he says things in the nicest possible way. He says, "well, first of all, you micromanage" as my children say, I nano manage. But secondly, you become hypercritical." Like, ugh, okay? Oh, okay, okay, that's not good that I micromanage and I become hypercritical. I don't like that at all.

And obviously those are derailers, those are entitled entitlement things. I need to work on those, but here's the gold in that information. Now I know that when I do those two things, at least in the foreseeable future, until I have licked them completely, that is telling me that I am on the, on the edge of my expertise. The edge of my understanding, I am discovering, I am being discovery driven. And so if I can see that and be aware of that, then I can say, okay, that I'm scared. And if I can recognize that I'm scared, then I can say, okay, you're doing it. Good job. Keep going. And so what I would offer to all of you who are listening as you're thinking about this, I want to be discovery driven. Maybe do that experiment.

Find out what you do when you're afraid and then work on it, which is something important to do. But then say, okay, those are indicators. That means I'm walking into the unknown. That means I'm disrupting. That means I'm trying to become a high growth individual and celebrate the fact that you're there. So this has become one of my new, I guess, you know, it's so funny, I love this [video series called "Don't Miss This"](#) with Emily Belle Freeman and David Butler. And they, every time they talk about some, um, some part of the new Testament, they're like, "this is my favorite part." No, "this is my favorite part." So now I sound like them. I'm like, this is my favorite accelerant. But what I would say is this as quickly becoming, um, one that I love because I'm realizing and connecting to this idea of what does really being discovery driven look like. And so that is, that is the seventh accelerant.

So we've got seven, I'll just recap them quickly and then see where you want to take this Macy. So the first is you take the right risks. The second is to play to your distinctive strengths. And again, we've got in-depth episodes on these two, we'll have in depths on the other ones as time goes by. The third is embrace your constraints. That constraint is going to give you energy to climb your S curve. The fourth is to battle your sense of entitlement. When you're in that sweet spot, keep asking questions. What can I do differently? The fifth is sometimes you've got to step back in order to slingshot forward. Sixth is give, failure its due. Recognize that this is part of that learning process of becoming super, super uh, successful at growing and developing as a person, as a company. Um, and then seventh is to be driven by discovery at the top, at the bottom and everywhere in between. That is your framework of personal disruption. And that is, the framework for becoming a high growth individual that every organization, every company needs.

MACY

I love it. You know, as you were talking about being driven by discovery, um, and then talking about how it's scary so you know you're going the right way. I think one of the lines that resonated most with people from this book is that idea that if you're scary, if it's scary and you feel lonely, then you're on the right track. And so just back to the idea of we, relearn things and we, we go through these learning curves and go through these processes and circle back and learn things at a different level and a higher level. Interesting that you already had that idea and now you're

learning it in a different way as you continue to grow and your business continues to grow. Um, that was kind of what I was thinking as you were saying.

WHITNEY Oh, I love that insight. Macy. And then when you said that if it's scary and lonely, you're on the right track and yeah, that is something that people love. And when you were, you introduced that imagery of the roller coaster at the beginning, that means you're on the right roller coaster people.

MACY Yeah.

WHITNEY So stay on it. (laughs).

MACY Stay on it. Don't get off.

WHITNEY (laughs).

MACY I think just to wrap up, one thing I'd love to just, um, to- to, talk through is how these things work hand in hand. And I just wanted to kick that off by sharing the way that this has worked for me hand in hand, knowing where I was on the S curve and then thinking through how do the accelerants help me now make a decision about where I want to go next.

So, um, a couple of years ago, my husband unexpectedly lost his job and I was left supporting my family, which I was able to do. I ha- I work on a contract basis for, for people doing marketing and doing, doing a lot of different things. And I got a little nervous, um, and started looking for a full time job just because the pressure became very intense. Um, had to make sure we had health insurance, had to make sure we were, you know, meeting all of our obligations and we were doing it, but it felt like it was happening just barely. And, um, I had an opportunity to go back to a company I'd worked with doing their marketing for a couple of years. Um, and it would've been a promotion and it was an awesome opportunity and I was excited about it. I, um, but I, I remember being on the phone on the final interview and um, and one of the interviews you were, we really needed to step out for a second.

So they took a pause and I was texting my husband during the pause and, and just realizing I had this like impending sense of dread that if I took this job I wouldn't like it very quickly. And it was so enlightening. I realized in that moment like, Oh, I am near the top of the S curve with this job. There are some new things that I can learn, but I will learn them quickly and I will very quickly become frustrated again with some of the things that were happening, like inner- in the office that, I didn't have the ability to control that, that really frustrated me about that environment. And that's going to overtake that, that rush of learning and, and I'm going to, I'm going to be bored just way too quickly. Um, and I, I can't do that to myself. I can't go back to not being able to like learn and repeat and grow and, and learn new things.

'Cause that's something that was really a why and a driver for me. And so I ended up, you know, realizing where I was on the S, where I would be on that S curve. Um, if I did take that job and then, you know, just kind of thinking through, okay, you know, I, I'm not going to be leveraging the right kinds of strengths here. I'm not going to be, um, like the failure's not going to necessarily be imminent because I know, this job so well and I'm, going to just need to leap again, which is going to leave this, this group in a vulnerable state. Again, like not fair to go in and then six months later be bored and want to leave. Um, and they didn't have the infrastructure to know, continue to support that growth.

So anyway, it was just an interesting mental exercise to having been so immersed in what you teach and in producing the podcast and working with you for the last several years, it was really, um, it, it almost felt like this huge sigh of relief that, Oh, I'm so glad that I can see this framework working

in my life, (laughs). In this, in this moment, so that I can continue to grow in the ways that I want to grow and develop in the ways I want to develop.

So, um, that that was, you know, there've been lots of examples, but that's the most, um, front of mind I guess for me-

WHITNEY Mm-hmm (affirmative).

MACY ... on how, knowing where you are in the S curve and then taking a look at the accelerants and seeing where like, you know, when it comes to making a decision when it comes to, you know, just being self-aware. Um, these are such powerful tools.

WHITNEY Oh, I love that. Macy and I, I did not realize or remember that you had had that, that kind of conversation in your head when you were deciding whether or not to go take that full time gig or not. And boy am I happy that you didn't-

MACY (laughs).

WHITNEY ... because that means you're on this S curve of learning with the Disrupt Yourself Podcast and for everybody who's listening. So Macy is the executive producer of the podcast, but then she also is, um, she's kind of like MacGyver. Like she can do anything and also works on our social media, and then helps with our book launches and no, please do not go steal her. She's awesome. Um, I'm so glad that you are on this S curve in that we get to be on this S curve together. We learn lots and lots of good lessons. Um, so yeah, thank you for sharing that. That's, that's really fun. And I would encourage everybody who's listening is, you know, if you haven't already get out a piece of paper, maybe Macy, we can include in the show notes like an actual image of the S curve so they can look at it while they're thinking about this, but are maybe like the personal disruption framework. We can put that up for people. That's right.

MACY Yeah, we can put it in the show notes and actually I'm, the new website will be, the new refresh of the website will be up by now and it's on the homepage as well. And there's an illustration of S-curve,

WHITNEY Oh, fantastic. Okay. Which everyone she built as well, so that's awesome. Okay. Yeah. So I think that, that's what I would encourage all of you to do is think about like where are you on your current S curve, and of these seven accelerants, which one or two could, You do? You already do really well and can lean into, and then, which one or two if you really focused on those, could help you grow faster and move up that, ask her faster so you can learn faster and then leap faster and, and grow faster. And, and the whole why of all of this - when you are learning, you get dopamine and dopamine makes you happy.

And so this really is about you all, all of us being happier. And so when we can disrupt ourselves, when we're learning, we're able to be happier, which is really the whole point of life isn't?

MACY It really is. And there's so many ways, like even if you're thinking, I'm just really fine at work, I things are great. There are so many things in this book that can apply to all the different roles in your life. Um, if you're a parent, there are, there are ways that you can use this framework in helping you grow and progress and become better in that role.

Um, as a friend, there's just so many, you know, in your personal improvement, personal growth, there are so many applications. And so, you know, if you're listening, we're so glad you're here. I hope you'll share this episode of the podcast so people can learn a little bit about the book, um, and a little bit of what it's about. But I really think even if you've got a copy of *Disrupt Yourself*

already, this is a great book to give to someone. Um, whether they're graduating from college, whether, uh, they, they are kind of approaching a new, um, you know, vista or, plateau on their S curve and don't know what to do next. Um, we hear all the time that this is, this is, this book was given to someone, you know, they, they came across this work because the book was gifted to them. Or, um, the, it's a book that they give to people and I would just encourage you, you know, if you haven't pre-ordered already, you know, the book launches today, um, think of someone you can give it to, and share it with, um, whether it's someone you work with or someone you know.

**WHITNEY**      Awesome. Yeah. And then a, let us know what you did, who gave it to, what happened. We want to hear. And, and just so you all know, if you ever email us at [wj@whitneyjohnson.com](mailto:wj@whitneyjohnson.com), um, I answer every email we want to hear from you and, um, we'd love to hear from you, um, and back over, and you Macy to, um, to, to wrap us up.

**MACY**            Yep. I'll do that. Thank you so much.

---

Thank you so much for listening to this episode of the Disrupt Yourself podcast. We hope you've enjoyed the conversation between Whitney and I, and want to thank those of you who have taken the opportunity to pre-order Whitney's book *Disrupt Yourself*, which as a reminder, re-launches today, November 12.

We are going to be holding a webinar in December for those of you who pre-ordered the book and then went to our website at [whitneyjohnson.com/disrupt](http://whitneyjohnson.com/disrupt) and registered to receive your invitation. Those invitations to the webinar will be going out next week. So, as a special bonus, we are going to extend the sign up time for that webinar. If you pre-ordered the book and you haven't had a chance to sign up for the webinar, please take care of that as soon as you can. Signups will be ending this Friday, November 15. So if you haven't had a chance to pre-order the book yet and want to get in on that webinar – which is unlike anything we've ever done. We're going to be talking about how to build a high-growth company, how to become a high-growth individual. Whitney's even going to take some time and do coaching for folks who are on the webinar. We're just really excited about it and want as many of you that can sign up to be here. So if you haven't had a chance to sign up for an invitation, please go to [whitneyjohnson.com/disrupt](http://whitneyjohnson.com/disrupt) once you've pre-ordered the book from Amazon or from any other place where you love to buy your books.

So thank you again to Whitney for being our guest and letting me interview her. To sound engineer Whitney Jobe, manager / editor Macy Robison, content contributors Emilie Davis and Nancy Wilson, and art director Brandon Jameson.

On behalf of Whitney Johnson, I'm Macy Robison.  
And this is Disrupt Yourself.