

Ep #45: Dread



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Olivia Vizachero

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You're listening to *The Less Stressed Lawyer* podcast, Episode 45. Today, we're talking all about dread. You ready? Let's go.

Welcome to *The Less Stressed Lawyer*, the only podcast that teaches you how to manage your mind so you can live a life with less stress and far more fulfillment. If you're a lawyer who's over the overwhelm and tired of trying to hustle your way to happiness, you're in the right place. Now, here's your host, lawyer turned life coach Olivia Vizachero.

Well, hello there. How are you? I hope your week is going well. It's the weekend when I'm recording this. It is a pretty busy weekend over here, my friends. I am packing and have to run a ton of errands today. So, I am excited to record this and then get things rolling as far as my errand running goes. I've got a ton of stuff to prep for Cabo. I've got to get all packed. I have a very early flight, which is typically out of character for me, but it's the only direct flight from Detroit to Cabo, so I opted for it.

I've got to run some errands. And then, in addition to prepping for Cabo, I've got to get everything finalized for the mastermind in Charleston, which is literally the week after I get back from Cabo. I'm in Cabo for a week; I fly home on Sunday. And then, I leave Monday morning to head to Charleston. It's wild; I feel like every six months, I end up planning a wedding, so to speak, just with the hotel arrangements and the dinner arrangements and the flowers and all of that stuff.

I'm putting the final touches on that. It's a busy weekend. It was a busy week. It really was jam-packed. I even worked on MLK Day because I'm going to be off for my one-on-one sessions for a few weeks, so I wanted to make sure I got in a little extra client time after being off for the holidays.

Something actually happened on MLK Day that inspired this episode. If you know me, well, you know that I absolutely love my job. I think I have the best job on the face of the earth; I truly do. I tell people all the time that I became an attorney because I really wanted to help people. And I finally feel like I do that now as a coach.

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I get so excited to wake up every day and meet with my clients on Zoom, talk to them about what they're struggling with, and coach them to help them through it. It is my favorite thing, truly. And with that being said, I woke up Monday in my new condo.

You guys, I don't know what kind of bed this is; I'm trying to track it down; I'm asking the owners. It is the best mattress I think I've ever slept on. It's very dark in my condo because I'm in a loft, so there aren't any windows in my bedroom.

There are windows across my loft, but not really anywhere I sleep, so it's very, very dark. Even after the sun rises and it's sunny out, you can't really get a ton of sunlight in my bedroom, so it is ultra-cozy. And I'm using this weighted blanket; it is just like the most divine sleeping situation of my life.

Okay. It's MLK Day, I had sessions on the books, and my alarm goes off. I opened my eyes. I was sitting there, and I scrolled on my phone for a little bit. But it finally came time when I was supposed to get out of bed, out of this luxurious, comfortable, warm, cozy bed and this dark chamber that I'm sleeping in, right? And I had this sense of dread.

I dreaded getting out of bed. I noticed the dread, and then I breathed it in; I let it be there. I talked to myself and said, "Yep, that's okay. There is no problem to be solved here. It's fine for you to feel full of dread, to experience dread. Go about your day anyways. We don't have to do anything about the dread; you can just go about your business."

And with that, while feeling a sense of dread, I flipped back the covers, and I put my two feet on the ground. I walked across my room, and I started getting ready for my day, for my client calls. I did it while feeling dreadful. And this got me thinking because one of the emotions that I coach on the most with my clients is the feeling of dread.

Most people, when they experience dread, do not do what I just described to you; that's not how they talk to themselves. That's not how they act. Instead, they go immediately into a resistant or an avoidant pattern. Right?

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They don't go about their day, they don't go about their business, and they don't follow through and take the intentional action that they plan on taking. Instead, they make their dread a problem.

They try and solve for it by escaping it, by getting out of it, and by avoiding it, which leads to a really unintentional day. It leads to a really unintentional behavior. Behavior that will not produce the results that you want in your life. So, I wanted to spend some time specifically talking about dread.

I know that I've talked about comfort entitlement, discomfort avoidance, and following through on the podcast before, but I really wanted to highlight dread. Because so much of what we do brings a sense of dread with it. And a lot of us don't ever question this.

We think that dread's a problem, that we shouldn't have to experience dread. And then, when dread makes an appearance, as it is going to do, that's just part of the human experience. We think something's gone wrong. And we don't follow through; we don't take the action that we planned to take because we're consumed with taking issue with the dread that arises. Your dread is normal, though.

So, take a second and think about where dread comes up for you. I'm going to give you some examples in a second that are really common with my clients, so maybe you can start to spot dread yourself. But one of the things that you want to do when you're allowing a negative emotion, which is what you want to do with dread, instead of resisting and avoiding it, you want to allow it.

The way that I describe allowing a negative emotion like dread is think about letting it ride shotgun with you in the car. Or, you strap it into the car seat in the back rather than letting dread dictate what you do, which would be letting your dread drive. And in that case, that's when you resist it and avoid it, and you don't follow through and take that intentional action. You just want to allow dread to come along with you.

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And I want you to think about what dread feels like in your body. Whenever you're allowing a negative emotion, you always want to understand what it feels like inside of you. Remember, all of the emotions that we experience are just vibrations that we experience in our bodies.

So, there's going to be a specific vibration that you experience when you feel a feeling like embarrassed or a specific vibration when you feel bored. Or, when you feel anxious, or when you feel nervous or scared or angry, right? There's a specific vibration in your body.

I'm not super woo-woo, but I do really encourage you to spend some time and find it in your body. Even if this feels silly to you, it's so important to understand what the vibration feels like because that is literally all that's happening.

When you're experiencing an emotion, you're experiencing this vibration; nothing else is happening. Nothing else is going wrong; you just feel this little vibration in your body. And you can proceed in spite of and despite it. You don't have to do anything about the little vibration; you can just let it be there.

So, for me, dread feels like a heavy blanket. Not like the delicious, weighted blanket that I'm using to sleep with. But like an X-ray blanket that you kind of drape over your shoulders. It's just this general heaviness; it feels like lead. Right? That's what dread feels like for me. And I feel it in my shoulders, and kind of on my torso, and it just weighs me down a little bit. And that's all that's happening when I'm experiencing dread.

I want you to think about what happens when you experience dread. What do you do? How does it feel? What's that vibration feel like? You want to be acutely aware of it because once you're acutely aware of it, you dismantle and take away so much of the power of experiencing that emotion. If it just feels like wearing an X-ray blanket or a weighted blanket, what's the big deal? It's just carrying around a little extra weight with you.

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You can go about everything that you planned to do today while feeling that vibration. Just like I had to feel it, feel a little weighed down by my dread, while I flipped back the covers, got out of bed, and started getting ready for my day. Okay? That's all that's happening here.

Now, why are you experiencing that feeling of dread? It's just your primitive brain doing what it's designed to do. Our primitive brains are always attempting to get us to seek instant pleasure, avoid instantaneous discomfort, and conserve energy in the most immediate moment.

Long-term, avoiding dread, escaping dread, and getting out of dread don't serve you, and it probably makes your life more challenging, more difficult, and more uncomfortable. But not in the short term. That primitive part of your brain is really only logical in like two-minute increments; it's just thinking about what's right around the corner, what's right in front of us.

And in that moment, what's right in front of you is going to be avoiding the dread; that's going to be the most comfortable thing. That's going to be the way that you can serve the most energy. If I were to avoid the dread, I'd get to stay in my comfy, warm, cozy bed and not expend the energy of getting ready for the day, going to work, meeting with my clients, and coaching their brains, right?

So, the primitive part of my brain that's always trying to keep me comfortable, because comfort is safe, at least to that primitive part of your brain it is, the primitive part of my brain that's trying to keep me comfortable is going to conjure up and cultivate that sense of dread to get me to stay comfy-cozy.

It's doing the same thing in your life, right? Wherever you're experiencing dread, that dread's bubbling up to the surface, so you seek instantaneous gratification and comfort. So you avoid that instant discomfort. So, you conserve energy in the most immediate moment.

Now, I just had a client tell me that she thinks that this is really unfair. She was like, "Olivia, I don't understand. Why have we not evolved past this

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primitive tendency to seek pleasure, avoid discomfort, and conserve energy?” And if you're listening to this, and you feel the same way, listen, I get it. It can be frustrating, right?

Obviously, frustrated is a feeling that we cause with our thinking. But it's easy to think thoughts that cause us to feel frustrated about this. It'd be so much “easier” if we didn't have to constantly be in battle with this primitive conditioning. With our primitive brains that are constantly creating this discomfort, so we seek pleasure and conserve energy.

Now, if I had a magic wand and could get rid of this primitive conditioning, I would do that. And I would sell you all copies; I'd be very wealthy if that were the case. Because this is really everyone's battle, constantly fighting against this primitive conditioning and this tendency to avoid immediate discomfort.

But this is what we are dealt with as humans. These are the cards that we're dealt, and you get to decide what to do with that. I'm actually going to record an entire podcast episode about fighting battles you can't win. This is one of those battles that you cannot win.

You can be at war with the fact that it is uncomfortable to do the things that create the results that you want. Or, you can stop being in that argument. You can stop being at war with the way that you were conditioned as a human, with the way that you're built as a human being, and you can just accept it.

Do you know what happens when you get out of your resistance model and into an acceptance model? You're able to be so much more productive. You're able to get so much more done because you're not expending energy arguing with something that you cannot change, arguing with something that you cannot fix, right?

So, I highly encourage you to take stock and take an audit of all the areas that you're making an argument against something that you cannot fix, like your human conditioning. When you move past arguing with the way that

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you're created, with the way that you're made, then you can just get to work with so much less struggle, with so much less discomfort. Because you're not in an argument that you cannot win.

So take a second and give this some thought. What would your life look like, what would be different, what would be easier about your life if you accepted that dread is going to come along for the ride? And a lot of the action that you take that's just part of the way that it works being a human and getting stuff done and accomplishing tasks and achieving your goals?

Dread is going to be a part of it. What would be different if you just accepted that? And instead of waging war against that reality, if you were just willing to feel that heavy, weighted, lead X-ray blanket and go about your business, what would be different? I promise you everything would be different.

Your experience, each day, would be different. You would accomplish so much more. How exciting is that? How exciting is it to think about your life, where you're in less of a struggle, where you're in less of a battle, where you're experiencing so much less resistance because you stop resisting reality? That's this amazing gift that you get to give yourself. Alright?

So, let's talk about some examples of when dread makes an appearance in your life, and how you probably typically respond to it, and how you want to respond to it instead.

Okay, the first example is getting up in the morning. And I want to put an extra caveat here because when I worked in big law, and I was really in a state of burnout, I had dread. But it was like to the 400th degree of what I'm talking about now. Now, I love my job, truly. And I still feel a sense of dread in the morning.

When I hated what I did, I was paralyzed and crippled by anxiety in the morning. All of the stress and the overwhelm that I was experiencing. And really, in a state of burnout from not sleeping properly and overworking.

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This was a very different experience; it felt almost impossible to work through. I eventually did get up and get going; it just took a lot longer.

I have since learned the tools that I teach my clients now. So, I want you to be really honest with yourself, are you dreading something that you like doing? Are you dreading something that you hate doing? And if you're dreading something that you hate doing, you want to check in with yourself and ask yourself, why are you choosing to do it?

Now, when you dread getting up in the morning, and you want to get up because you want to go about your day and accomplish things, and you don't hate your job, you just want to notice the dread. Instead of avoiding it and staying in bed, and maybe scrolling on social media or hitting the snooze button, right? It's okay for you to feel dread and get up anyways.

I think another great example of this would be working out, right? So many people dread working out, myself included. And that's a great way to distinguish between your work dread, whether it's a normal amount of dread or whether it's, "I absolutely hate this; this is something that I don't enjoy doing at all. It's totally out of alignment for the life that I want to live."

A lot of us want to be the people that work out, but we still dread it, or, and we still dread it. I think "and" is a really intentional word to use here; we want to work out, *and* we still dread it. It's okay to feel that sense of dread and go and work out anyway, right? Working out serves us, for sure. It helps us maintain a healthy lifestyle. But you might not always feel like doing it.

Now, maybe you're in the minority here, and you love to work out; amazing. Then you don't have dread that comes along for the ride with you on this one. You might have dread in some other area of your life. But if you're like me and you dread working out, you want to understand that dread's just going to be a part of this experience.

I just had a client say she wanted to start going for walks in the morning. And the part of the world that she lives in, it's cold in the morning, just like it

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is where I live right now. It's really cold in Detroit; I don't know that I'd be too inclined to go for a walk. But if you want to walk in the morning, regardless of what the weather is, and you know it's going to be colder than you might like it to be, you're going to feel a sense of dread. You're going to wake up and feel dread.

Then you get to decide what you do with it, what you do in response to it. You can let the dread deter you, and you can stay in bed, you can sleep in, you can not go for your walk. Or, you can expect the dread to be there.

Now, my client wasn't expecting the dread to be there. One of the things that she asked me was, "Olivia, how do I get myself motivated to go for a walk outside when it's cold out?" I said, "You don't get yourself motivated to do it. You just have to do it while feeling full of dread."

You're going to feel dread. You want to expect there to be dread there. If you don't expect there to be dread there, you're really going to be caught off-guard when it makes an appearance, right? So, you want to be on the lookout for it; you want to know that it's coming.

If you don't enjoy going for walks when it's cold out, dread is going to come along as you get up and start to go about preparing for that walk. And you have to be okay with dread being a part of this practice, being a part of this process. So, you're going to wake up, and you're going to have a sense of dread with you. And then, you're going to have to get up feeling a little weighed down by that dread.

And you're going to have to go put on the clothes that you want to go for a walk in while feeling full of dread. And you're going to have to lace up your tennis shoes while feeling full of dread. And then, you're going to have to walk through your house and out your front door while feeling full of dread.

Now, right around the time that you get started walking, it's going to start to shift. You're going to start to feel a sense of pride, a sense of accomplishment because you're doing the thing that you planned to do. You'll be actively in the process of following through, and that's going to

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feel good. You're going to be able to gain access to a lot of really positive thoughts about yourself as you're following your plan. But right up until that point, you're going to feel dread. You have to be okay with that. You have to accept it and just allow it to be there.

In the work context, think about where dread comes up for you. There are a ton of my clients that if they're responsible for entering their billable hours, they have a ton of dread when it comes to that task. And what they tend to do when they experience dread around entering their time, they tend to avoid it by avoiding entering their time.

And they end up creating a world of hurt for themselves because they normally wait all month, and then they have to play catch-up at the end of the month, or the first day of the new month, in order to get all of their time in. It creates a total disaster.

I know this firsthand because I used to do this all the time. And every month, I swore that it would be different. But it never was different because I never learned how to process and allow myself to experience that feeling of dread. Every single day I would dread putting my time in, and then I'd avoid the dread and not put it in.

Instead, what you want to do is expect to feel dread when it comes to entering your time and put it in anyways. Right? Same thing happens when people are working on a big drafting project. Whether you're typing up a contract or typing up a brief, if it's something that feels big and heavy for you, you're going to have a lot of dread associated with completing that task.

You just want to expect it to be there. If you make not feeling dread a requirement to getting started, you're not going to get started. You're going to keep avoiding it. You're going to keep procrastinating. So, you want to accept the dread on the front end. That's how you're going to get started.

You're going to feel a sense of dread starting on the project, and you're going to start anyways, in spite of and despite that sense of dread, that

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vibration in your body, that heavy lead feeling, or whatever dread feels like to you. I want you to really practice identifying dread the next time it comes up for you.

And describe the vibration in your body, so you know what it feels like. So, the next time you feel it, you're like, "Oh, this is dread. I remember this vibration. I know what this feels like. I remember this. I can feel this vibration and take the intentional action that produces my desired results."

Okay, so when it comes to big projects, and obviously, "big" is a thought here, right? Whether something's "big or small" is a subjective opinion. It probably doesn't serve you to think of projects as "really big" projects because you're just going to dial up your resistance to them. But if that's a thought that feels really inescapable, it's fine to think that the project's "big."

Just know that you're going to have resistance to doing it. You're going to experience a sense of dread. And you can get started while feeling dreadful.

Anyways, I also see people experience a ton of dread when it comes to marketing themselves. However you choose to do this, for most people, it's marketing on social media these days or it's attending in-person networking events.

You know, for me, I do a monthly webinar series; I record my weekly podcast. And I'm going to be honest with you, I love talking to you guys each week and coming at you through your speakers, but I have a sense of dread every time I record this podcast or right before I record this podcast. It weighs on me; I have some resistance to doing it. I just have to feel the dread and get started on it anyways.

And I noticed, just like going for that walk, as soon as I get started recording it, as soon as I record the intro, the dread starts to dissipate, and I get into it. I'm able to get through the recording and send it out to my podcast publishers, the people who edit this and produce this for me. And it

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is okay that I feel dread. It doesn't mean that I shouldn't record a podcast or that I shouldn't do a webinar.

So many people experience dread when it comes to business development, and then they don't develop a business. They don't network; they don't market it; they don't publish content. And then, they don't produce results of business developed, right? So, you just want to expect that dread is going to come along for the ride. And you want to allow it instead of resist or avoid it by procrastinating, by putting off the action that you want or need to take to produce the results that you want.

Another super random anecdote. I always dread weddings. I don't know why. I shouldn't say I don't know; I do know why. I have negative thoughts about the weddings. And then, my brain, because of those thoughts, conjures up a sense of dread. And I always go and have the best time.

I'm really working on changing my thoughts about this. That instead of telling myself I don't like going to weddings, I tell myself now that I do like going to weddings, so that's helped the dread dissipate a bit, but I know I really dread going to them.

Maybe you're like this too, especially for any introverts listening. You might tell yourself that you don't like leaving the house, or you don't like making plans, or you don't like being in groups of people, right? The more you tell yourself things you don't like, the more dread you're going to experience. And then, you're going to create so much more resistance to doing any of those activities.

What would it look like for you to tell yourself that you actually do like them? And to find evidence that it's true that you like them, you'll create such a different emotional experience for yourself. If you do that, again, the main reminder here, the main takeaway for you, is that you don't need to solve for the dread. If dread arises, if you start to experience that vibration in your body, you start to feel that feeling; you don't have to solve it. It isn't a problem. You just got to let it come along for the ride.

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You want to pay attention when you experience this feeling. And then, you want to pay attention to how you talk to yourself when dread makes its appearance. That's the other big thing that I notice is different between me and some of my clients who really struggle with allowing themselves to experience dread. The pep talk they give themselves when they experience dread is totally different from the pep talk that I give myself.

So, you want to make sure that you're talking to yourself in a way that allows you to move through the dread. Allows you and facilitates you taking action in spite of and despite dread being there. Okay? When I experience dread, I'm telling myself that "Nothing's gone wrong. This isn't a problem we need to solve for. This isn't a reason to not take action. It's not a reason to avoid and procrastinate. That I can still get up and go about my business."

Are you saying that to yourself? And if you're not, you get to start right now. The next time dread makes an appearance in your life, you get to give yourself that type of pep talk rather than saying that you should stay in bed.

Or, you should not do the thing that makes you feel uncomfortable, that it's better to do it later. That you have all the time in the world. That you can do it tomorrow. That you'll get to it in an hour, right? That you don't feel like it right now. And that you need to be motivated or feel focused in order to get started.

None of that's true. What is true is that you can absolutely get started right now while feeling full of dread.

And maybe you're not full of dread; maybe you're, like, half-full of dread. Whatever amount of dread you're experiencing, you can get started with it in your body right this second, okay?

And remember, your primitive brain creates dread because it thinks it's protecting you. Like my client said, "I wish this wasn't the case. I wish we would have evolved out of this, but we haven't." So, you want to expect your brain to create dread, to drive you to instant gratification and pleasure,

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to drive you to conserve energy and not take action. This is very normal. It's just part of the human experience, and it's never going away.

Now, the more you take action, in spite of and despite your dread, the more practice you get at allowing your dread to be there and doing the intentional things you plan to do in spite of it, the more your dread will lessen over time. It will become a smaller monster, a smaller beast for you to deal with. But it's never going away. It's always going to be there. And you want to make sure that you know that and anticipate that.

So, when it makes an appearance, you're like, "Oh, hello, Dread. Right on schedule. I expected you. I've been waiting for you. Where have you been all this time?" And then, you and dread can get in the car. Dread can be in the passenger seat, and you can go about doing what you want to do. All right?

You get to decide. You can consider your dread a problem, or you can make peace with it and let it come along with you as you go about accomplishing whatever it is you want to accomplish. I strongly, strongly suggest you choose the latter option. You'll be so thankful you did.

Alright, my friends, that's what I have for you this week. One more thing before I sign off. If you haven't already, would you pretty, pretty, please do me a favor and, first of all, subscribe to the podcast, so you don't miss a single episode. I make these episodes as valuable as possible. I give away all the goodies in these episodes.

So, make sure you don't miss a beat; subscribe. And then, if you would love, love, love me, which I hope you do, please leave me a rating and a review. It helps me get this really helpful information in the hands of more people. I'm on a mission to change the way lawyers practice law, so if you could leave me a rating and review and let me know what you think of the podcast, it would mean the absolute world to me.

Also, if you've got friends, share the wealth; y'all shoot this episode to a friend of yours. Say, "Hey, I listened to this; it helped me. I think it'll help

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you, too.” And give them a little bit of this wisdom. Share the wealth, all right? Don't gatekeep; we don't want that.

If you found this podcast helpful, I bet someone else in your life will find it helpful, too, so shoot it to them. Let them give it a listen. And maybe they'll be so kind as to leave me a rating and review, too. It's like you're doing me a double favor and doing them a double favor. Everyone wins, and you get to feel good in the process.

All right, my friends. I hope you have a beautiful week. Thank you so much for listening, and I'll talk to you in the next episode.

Thanks for listening to *The Less Stressed Lawyer* podcast. If you want more info about Olivia Vizachero or the show's notes and resources from today's episode, visit www.TheLessStressedLawyer.com.