

Ep #56: The “Hard” Truth



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Olivia Vizachero

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You're listening to *The Less Stressed Lawyer* podcast, Episode 56. Today, we're talking all about the hard truth. Are 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 overwhelmed 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, greetings from Punta Mita, Mexico. I am soaking up the sun down here. I'm attending the Women in Trial Travel Summit hosted by Lauren Wood. And this is my first time attending this conference. It's been really, really incredible. First of all I'm loving the break from the cold weather, which funny enough, it's actually really nice in Detroit. Of course the week that I come to the beach it ends up being 80 degrees and sunny where I live, but I'll take 80 degrees and sunny anywhere. It's been absolutely amazing here, the weather's phenomenal, the pool's been just marvelous.

And the women have been next level. So there's over 100 women attending this conference. Like I said, it's my first time being here. And I love being in person with so many incredible women lawyers. It's been so much fun. One of the things that has constantly been coming up in the conversations that I've been having here by the pool or throughout the days, attending the speeches, at night with the dinners and the happy hours and all of the different things. Women keep talking to me about how refreshing it is to be in person with other like-minded people.

And I keep hearing them tell me that there's nothing else like this in the legal industry. And I just get so giddy and excited because that's not true. I host an event just like this, a conference in person multiple days where you're immersing yourself in a personal development environment. So you're learning and growing and transforming but you're also creating community and making new friends and really creating deep, meaningful relationships with people who are really similar to you.

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So it's been so exciting for me to talk to them about it and be like, “Oh my goodness, I do something so similar to this.” And it's just made me even more excited. I'm already excited, but it's made me even more excited for the next live event that I'm hosting which is going to be in Montana in August for *The Less Stressed Lawyer Mastermind*. So if you are like me and you're a conference person maybe you even attended this one that I'm at right now, you are at Women and Trial Travel Summit, you are in luck, there actually are a handful of conferences like this one.

So if you're hungry for community and connection and personal growth there are multiple opportunities throughout the year to be able to invest in yourself and put yourself in those types of containers which is what we call them in kind of the coaching industry, different group programs where you're able to be exposed to that kind of environment and that kind of community building.

I have an inkling that I'm going to see some of the familiar faces that I saw in Punta Mita in Big Sky, Montana for my upcoming event. And I can't wait to get to connect with some of the amazing women that I met here for the first time in Big Sky. I'm really looking forward to that.

Alright, now on to today's topic, you guys know I love to give you a little life update before I dive in, but let's dive in. So sort of like I did in the last episode, today's episode is inspired by some recent conversations that I've been having with people, specifically clients of mine. So in the last episode I talked about watering your own grass first and really prioritizing yourself, making yourself your top priority. And that was inspired by a recent conversation that I had had with a client.

Now, we're doing the same thing today but the topic's a little bit different. Today we're talking about the 'hard truth.' And that is a little bit of a play on words. Obviously, that's a phrase that we use like we have to give the hard truth to someone. I don't mean that. I mean the truth about something being hard. So one of the things that I notice when I talk to my clients and just people in general, I'm able to spot their go to sentences. One of the things that I see that's very common is that people have certain beliefs

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patterns that are repeat thought patterns that are just default in that brain of theirs.

So it's sort of like saying, um or like when you're speaking, maybe when you're public speaking. It's like they're your go to crutch words, they're fillers. And we do the same thing with sentences or phrases that we use day in and day out. Now, it would be amazing if these go to sentences or these filler sentences were positive sentences, positive thoughts that you practice thinking all the time, that would be incredible. But often that really isn't the case. Usually these go to thoughts, these negative statements that are fillers for us, they're negative thoughts.

And because our thoughts create our results, thinking these negative thoughts on repeat negatively impact our lives. So if you've got these filler statements, these filler phrases that you use as crutch statements in your life and they're negative, they're going to have a negative impact on your day-to-day life, on the results that you create throughout your life. So we want to create awareness as to what these negative filler thoughts are so you can start to see how they're impacting your life, how they're creating some of the results that you currently have.

And then from that awareness we can decide, do we want to keep thinking these common filler statements, these go to thoughts that we think on repeat that are a pattern for us or do we want to switch it up and replace them with thoughts that better serve us instead? So I could probably do a whole mini-series just on these common go to sentences. I see people have different ones in their lives. And not everyone has the same common go to thoughts. But if you have a sentence that you think on repeat you probably apply it in almost every area of your life.

One of the sayings that we have in coaching is, how you do one thing is how you do everything. and not everyone agrees with that, but at the bare minimum, how you do one thing is how you probably do most things. And when you have these common filler phrases you typically tend to apply them to most areas of your life. So they're going to come up a lot for you. And as a coach, I hear sentences that people say out loud and I know how

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to spot, that's a thought and that's a thought that's really not serving someone.

And when people repeat them over and over and over again, typically they're not aware that they're repeating a thought so frequently. But I'm able to catch it as their coach and highlight it for them. I'm able to point out the impact of thinking that thought repetitively and the effect it has on their life day in and day out and the result that it's creating in their life. So I could, like I said, do a whole series on all of the different go to sentences that I see my clients think repetitively?

But today I want to talk about one sentence in particular and the thought that people often have as a go to thought as a filler thought in their lives is the thought, the belief that something is hard. So this thought is very simple. It's just the thought, 'it's hard.' Now, the word 'it's' and I'm using air quotes here, you can't see me, but I'm using air quotes. The word 'it's' in that sentence is obviously interchangeable. It will vary. You're going to use, it's hard to refer to a lot of different scenarios and situations in your life.

But if you use this filler thought, this go to repetitive thought, 'it's hard,' you're going to use this to describe a lot of situations you encounter. So I wanted to give you some examples of things that my clients describe as being 'hard.' They use the phrase, it's hard to describe these different scenarios.

So you might tell yourself that it's hard to stick to your schedule or that it's hard to say no or that it's hard to set boundaries or that it's hard to work out or that it's hard to lose weight or that it's hard to ask for a raise. Or that it's hard to not check your email every 10 minutes or that it's hard to not answer the phone when someone calls you even though you're in the middle of doing something else.

Another very common area where I see people tell themselves that something is hard is specifically related to thought work, to coaching. So people will tell themselves that it's hard to change their thoughts. That's actually probably one of the areas that I hear people say it's hard most

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often. It comes up in a lot of my clients’ sessions, it comes up when I’m coaching in the mastermind group.

It actually just came up in Punta Mita. I was at the pool yesterday and someone was saying this to me, they were saying, “It’s really hard to change my thoughts and to think about that differently.” Now, here's why it's such a problem to tell yourself that something is hard. Remember the self-coaching model that I use in my coaching, I did a complete episode teaching you the model and I reference it a lot in these different episodes that I do. But it's made up, the model’s made up of five interrelated components, circumstances, thoughts, feelings, actions, and results.

And our brain serves us up thoughts about circumstances that we encounter. So it's hard isn't a circumstance, it's an opinion which makes it a thought, not a fact. Circumstances are facts, our thoughts aren't. Our thoughts are opinion statements. So we encounter a situation, and we tell ourselves it's hard. We think the thought, it's hard. And then when we think the thought, and remember our thoughts aren't true, when we tell ourselves that something is hard and we're thinking that thought, here's what happens next.

You end up creating an emotion with that thought. So you think something's hard, and you will typically feel a feeling like tired or discouraged or exasperated or challenged, but typically in a negative way, not in a positive way. And then when you feel those feelings, our natural inclination is to avoid them or to negatively react to them. So most often what I see as a coach is that people will feel these feelings and then they avoid that emotion that's coming up for them with inaction. They don't do the activity, the action that they perceive to be hard.

So they tell themselves that something's going to be hard then they feel the negative feeling, almost anticipatorily. They begin to start to feel that negative emotion and just like a game of hot potato, they run away from it. They catch it and then they toss it back. They try to escape it as quickly as possible. And then they don't do the thing that they perceive to be hard. So then what happens, because thoughts create results, they cause a feeling,

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the feeling drives the action and then the action produces the result that you have in your life.

So you don't create any evidence to the contrary, that's part of the result that you create. So it's very easy to continue to buy into the belief that what you perceive to be hard actually is hard because you don't prove to yourself that actually it's easier than you think it would be. And then when you don't take any action and furtherance of something, it is hard to create the result that you want. It is hard to do that thing when you're not doing it.

So let me use the example of setting boundaries or saying no. If you think it's hard to set boundaries and say no, and then you feel discouraged or exasperated or challenged because you're thinking that it's going to be hard, you're going to take no action. You're not going to set a boundary. You're not going to say no. And then you're still going to have all of this resistance. It's going to feel very hard to do something that you're not practiced at doing.

So it's going to be easy to buy into the belief to continue to tell yourself that it's hard to set boundaries and say no. And then you make it harder on yourself. The same thing with losing weight, if you tell yourself that it's hard to lose weight and you feel challenged or exasperated or exhausted ahead of time and then you don't do anything to lose weight, you keep eating the same thing, guess what, you do make it hard to lose weight because you don't alter your behavior at all. You keep doing what you've been doing which hasn't been working.

And when you do things that don't work to produce the result you make it harder on yourself. The same thing with sticking to a schedule. When you tell yourself that it's really hard to stick to a schedule and you feel discouraged or frustrated or challenged ahead of time, you don't stick to it. You don't make a plan, so you make it really easy to stick to a schedule when you don't have a schedule to even follow in the first place. And then you do other things instead.

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So even if you do create a plan, you probably make the plan and then the plan goes out the window almost immediately and you do other things instead of the activities that you planned to do for the day. And when you do other things instead of what you've planned, it's very hard to stick to your schedule because you're not sticking to it. I know this reasoning sounds sort of circular, but again it really is a little circular and that's okay. Sometimes our thinking produces results that create that circular loop that we just get trapped inside of.

So when you think something's hard, you don't do it and then it becomes harder when you don't do the thing that you would need to do in order to produce the result that you want. Now, if our thoughts aren't true, which there're not and we can control what we think, because everything that we're thinking we're actually choosing to think. So if we can choose what we think, why would we choose to think that something's hard? That's a question that we want to start to explore and ask ourselves.

And I want to let you know that even though it might seem confusing or counterintuitive, it actually makes perfect sense. So remember, your brain is always seeking an escape route. It's always looking for a way to avoid doing the more challenging activity. It always wants to seek immediate pleasure, avoid instant discomfort, the most immediate discomfort that you perceive to be on the horizon. And it always wants to conserve energy. This is a survival mechanism. It keeps you safe.

It allows you to maintain the status quo, which even if the status quo isn't the result that you want for your life, your brain has decided that the status quo was safe enough to be beneficial and preferable than a perceived change because change is scary to the primitive part of our brain. So it wants to maintain what's comfortable, what's familiar to us even if it's not ideal, it's safe.

So one of the most effective ways for your brain to achieve these three goals, to seek pleasure, avoid discomfort and conserve energy. Is to tell yourself that whatever you're thinking about doing, whatever action you're contemplating taking, for your brain to serve you up the belief that what

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you're thinking about doing is hard, that it's going to be really challenging. Because when you think something's going to be hard you end up not doing it.

If you think it's hard to ask for a raise and you feel scared because you're thinking that it's hard or really challenged or really defeated and then you don't ask for a raise, you're not going to become more practiced at asking for more money. And then having those conversations talking about salary increases, having discussions around your income and making more, it's going to continue to feel hard to you. It's going to seem like more of a challenge than it might otherwise be if you were more practiced and more seasoned having those types of discussions.

So we want to create opportunities where we're gagging and going through the initial discomfort that comes up when you think something's hard. And you also want to be telling yourself, “Hey, how might it be not true that it's hard, how might the opposite be true?” How might it actually be easy to ask for more money, to be easy to set a boundary or say no, to be easy to lose weight? How might it be easy to not pick up my phone when someone calls me unexpectedly or when a call is unscheduled?

What if it's actually easier? What if hard is actually in maintaining the status quo and continuing to live with the results that you don't love currently in your life? What if that's what's hard? When we recognize that ‘it's hard’ is just a thought, it's just an opinion that we can choose to think or we can choose to not think, we start to get access to other thoughts to replace thinking it's hard. You can start to see how it might be easier than you thought it would be otherwise.

You also can start to see how your brain loves to conflate thinking that something is hard with something just being uncomfortable. So I always like to remind myself that whatever I'm thinking is hard, probably isn't actually hard. It's probably a lot easier than I think. It just isn't always comfortable and that's okay. We could embrace discomfort. You've survived every flavor of discomfort you've ever experienced.

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So when we get more accurate about how we describe situations or the potential activity that we would need to take to produce the results that we want to have in our lives, we're able to start to see the specific flavors of discomfort that we might be currently unwilling to feel, that we simply just need to embrace in order to produce different results. Specifically when it comes to thinking that it's hard to change your thoughts, this is such a common thought that my clients think. And it's not a thought that I thought when I was initially introduced to coaching.

People ask me pretty often, “How long did it take you to master these concepts that you teach and to apply them in your own life and to start to see results?” And frankly, it didn't take me all that long. If I'm being honest, I was so hungry and eager to learn a new way to look at the world, to embrace a new perspective that I didn't bring any preconceived resistance to thought work, to coaching. I was so hungry for a different way to look at the world, to process situations that I encountered. So I didn't think that it was hard to change my thoughts. I actually thought that it was easy.

And when I learned that you could change your thoughts, I didn't fight that. I embraced it fully. I basically thought, hey, if you've got a better way to navigate life, I'm all ears, I'll adopt this. I didn't fight it at all. So I was able to get really quick results and to make really rapid changes in my own life because I embraced it without any resistance. Now, that doesn't need to be the case for everyone. Everyone comes at coaching and these concepts that I teach at a different pace and that's okay.

Some of my clients are like me and they embrace the coaching concepts that I teach very quickly. They're like, “Hey, if you've got a better way or a different way to do life, one that makes me feel a lot better, I'm all ears, let me embrace it fully without any resistance.” But some people are a little bit more skeptical and that's okay. They come at this work believing that it's hard or believing that it's not as simple as I think that it is.

And if that's how you view this work, if that's how you view the model or your capability to change your thoughts, that you think that it's hard or it's easier said than done. I just want to offer you that that is just your opinion

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and it's optional to continue to think it. When you think that it's hard to change your thoughts and you feel challenged or exasperated or defeated or discouraged you don't put in any effort to changing your thoughts. You don't create awareness as to what you're currently thinking.

And when you don't have awareness as to what you're currently thinking it's much harder to gain access to thinking different thoughts. You just keep thinking the same ones that you've been thinking because your thoughts appear to be much more true to you than just an opinion, just a subjective statement that you are actually choosing, that you have control over changing. So we want to start to create awareness but when you're telling yourself that it's hard to change your thoughts, you never gain access to that initial awareness that you need.

So we just want to start to entertain the concept that it's not actually hard to change your thoughts. When you think that it's hard you don't gain that awareness and then you don't identify new thoughts to think. And when you're not engaged in the exercise of asking and answering what else could I choose to think instead, you don't end up finding new thoughts to practice, new thoughts to believe. And then it is actually hard to change your thoughts because you don't find new ones to switch to so then you don't change them.

And when you don't change them you keep thinking the same stuff that you've always been thinking because you're just going to think what's been familiar to you. You're going to keep repeating the same thought patterns over and over and over again. And when you do that the neural pathways that you have in your brain get deeper and deeper and deeper and more well-trodden. So it actually does become harder for you to think something new instead.

So what we want to do instead is to just simply start to entertain the possibility that it could be easy to change your thoughts because when you're thinking that it could be easy to change your thoughts, you're going to feel encouraged. You're going to feel capable. You're going to feel confident or compelled to do it, motivated and energized to put in just a little

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bit of effort. It doesn't take that much work, you guys, I promise. But you're going to feel encouraged and energized to put in some effort to debunk and dismantle some of the current negative thinking that you've been really attached to.

And then you're going to start to ask that question, what might I be able to think instead? What could I choose to think instead of the negative thoughts that I have been thinking up to this point? And you're going to start gaining access to new replacement thoughts, thoughts that serve you a whole lot more than the negative thoughts that have been repetitively going through your brain over and over and over again.

So you're going to gain access to new beliefs and then you're going to start, your brain is so clever when it identifies a new belief to think it goes to work gathering new evidence to support that new belief. So it makes it easier and easier and easier for you to build belief and to continue to believe that new thought, that thought that serves you a whole lot more. The same thing is true for the other examples that I gave you.

When you believe that it's easy to stick to your schedule you're going to feel really confident and capable and energized and empowered to stick to your schedule. And you're going to start looking for evidence that it actually is easy to stick to your schedule. You're going to start to recognize how much agency you have over the decisions that you make all day long when it comes to your schedule. You actually get to choose whether you attend a meeting or not or whether you answer a call or not or whether you open up and respond to an email right this second.

Or do you stick to what you planned to do for the day instead? And you can turn to those items later at the time you allotted to devote to those tasks. That's how you stick to your schedule, you have to believe that you can. You have to believe that it's easier than you might have otherwise thought it would be. The same thing with setting boundaries. When you believe that it's easy to set boundaries and say no, your brain is going to go to work finding all the evidence that it actually is easy to set boundaries and say no.

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You literally just have to say no, that's not that hard to utter those words out of your mouth. Now, like I said earlier, you might be conflating ease with comfort here. And it may be uncomfortable to set boundaries. You may have to feel a little guilty, a little worried, a little scared that someone isn't going to love the fact that you just set a boundary, but it is easy to do. You just do it, kind of like Nike. Just do it.

The same thing with losing weight, I used to tell myself that it was so hard to lose weight. But when I recognized that it's hard is just a thought and it's an option to think it, that I could choose to think something else instead. I started to ask myself, how might it actually be easy? What if it is easy to lose weight? And then my brain went to work solving for that. It started to search for all the evidence that it actually is easy to lose weight.

And what I realized is that it's pretty easy to just figure out what I need to eat in order to support my weight loss goals. And to just eat that every single day. In fact, that's easier than coming up with new things to eat every single day. It requires less mental energy. It requires less decision making. You just make decisions one time and then you honor them consistently as time passes. That is what is actually easier.

If you tell yourself, how might it be easy to ask for a raise? You just ask for it. You just sit down, but schedule a meeting with your supervisor, with your boss and you ask for the raise. How might it be even easier to make that possible, to make that happen? You come up with all the reasons why you're deserving of one. When you make a really compelling argument that you're deserving of a raise, it's going to be a lot easier to ask for one than when you tell yourself that it's hard and that you don't deserve it and that it's going to be a really hard ask, a really hard thing to get an employer to get behind.

So I want you to take a second and do an inventory. Do you think the thought it's hard? Is this a go to repetitive thought in your life? If so, where might you be thinking it? Where does this thought come up for you? I bet it comes up in at least one area but probably more than just one. And I want you to find the areas that you use this thought, that this is a go to thought

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for you. Where in your life are you telling yourself that something is hard? How is that impacting the results that you have in that area of your life? How is that thought making you feel?

What do you do when you feel that one word emotion? Do you feel discouraged or defeated ahead of time? Do you feel challenged or out of control or exasperated or exhausted and tired? Do you feel let down? Figure out how you feel in that area of your life when you think the thought, it's hard. And then ask yourself, get very clear, what do you do when you feel that way? How do you show up in this area of your life? Do you make it harder for yourself to get the results in this area of your life that you want?

Chances are you do, you do make it harder on yourself when you tell yourself that it's hard. We want to make this area of your life easier. And the fastest way to do that is by telling yourself that it's easy, whatever action you need to take, try telling yourself that it's easier to take than you think that it is. And your brain is going to go to work solving for that. Searching for evidence that it is in fact easier to do the thing that you've typically had resistance to doing.

What would become possible for you, what becomes available to you when you stop telling yourself that taking the intentional action you need to take is hard? Your resistance to doing that activity is going to melt away and you are going to make your life so much easier. You're going to make creating the intentional results you want so much easier. Becoming the person that you want to become is going to get easier so long as you stop telling yourself that it's hard.

Thinking something's hard is optional and you get to stop choosing that thought right now. Recognize that your brain's serving it up to you as a defense mechanism, as a protective measure to conserve energy, avoid discomfort and seek temporary pleasure. But you can handle the discomfort that comes with creating a life you're obsessed with. That's what we're here to do together. That starts, embracing discomfort begins by you no longer telling yourself that taking that action is hard.

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Go out there, keep telling yourself that it's easier than you think it is and you'll be amazed with what you do next. That's what I have for you this week, my friends. I hope you have a beautiful week. I will 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.