

Ep #61: Making Excuses



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Olivia Vizachero

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You're listening to *The Less Stressed Lawyer* podcast, Episode 61. Today, we're talking all about making excuses. 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. How are you? Things are good over here in my neck of the woods. I'm all moved into a new condo. I'm getting settled. I think I haven't talked to you since I first moved in, so it's an exciting update. I feel like I've been here a long time. But I've really only been here a week, which is super exciting.

I moved in. I'm getting situated. The mastermind launch is going swimmingly. You've got until Friday, May 26, to enroll. So, if you're thinking about joining and you have questions, reach out to me. If you don't have questions, you already know that you're in, amazing. I can't wait to see you in Big Sky, Montana.

To learn everything you need to know about the mastermind, go to TheLessStressedLawyer.com/mastermind and all the details are there; the dates, what's included, the results you get, where we're going to be, what you're going to learn, everything. Okay? So, go there, TheLessStressedLawyer.com/mastermind, and get all the info. And then, get your application in before enrollment closes.

All right, now that that housekeeping is out of the way, let's dive in to talking about today's topic. It's actually inspired by a coaching conversation that I had with one of my clients earlier this week. It just really resonated with me because I used to struggle with this myself.

And as soon as it came up, in my coaching session with my client, I was like, "Boom! I've got to record a podcast episode about this." Because it's

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just such a common problem that people face. I see it happen all the time. And there's a way to operate your life without doing this.

So, what exactly am I talking about? I'm talking about making excuses. Now, what exactly do I mean by making an excuse? It's when we're in a moment, and we've done something that isn't us showing up how we would want to show up. And instead of being honest about it, we come up with an excuse, that basically provides a justification for the result that we've created. Okay? It's an escape hatch, to avoid taking responsibility for you creating the results that you ultimately have.

I'll give you a couple of examples here. I see this all the time when people are procrastinating on something. Someone might reach out to you and check in and follow up because you promised something, and you haven't delivered it yet. And instead of being honest about it, you come up with an excuse, and you offer that to the person instead.

“Oh, I didn't get to this thing because this emergency fell in my lap. Oh, I didn't get to this thing, because I've been really sick. I didn't get to this thing,” because X, Y, and Z happened. Whatever it is, you come up with an excuse.

And while you may be under the weather, I'm not saying that you need to push through even when you're not feeling well. But what I mean, in this instance, is you're using your sickness, your illness, as the excuse. Even though, deep down, you know it's not really the reason that you didn't get the thing done. Okay?

I had a client do this recently, and I just responded, I coached them through it. I was like, “If it wasn't that, what else might be the reason for this?” And as soon as I asked that question, we got to the heart of the matter and found out what was really going on at the root cause. So, you can ask yourself that question too, if you have a sneaking suspicion that you're making an excuse, and it's not actually your real reason. Because sometimes it's even tricky for us to catch on to our own b.s.

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So, we'll go back to the procrastination example. You've procrastinated, you've been doing other things in the meantime, it's not just because you're sick. You've been bingeing Netflix and scrolling on Instagram and talking to your friends and going to Sunday brunch with people that you know and going out to eat with friends on Friday night.

And you could have been doing the thing that you promised someone else that you'd do. But instead of doing it, you haven't been doing it. You've been doing everything else but that.

When they confront you about it, when they check in, when they inquire, instead of telling them the truth, "Hey, I haven't done that yet because I've been procrastinating. Because I don't feel like doing it. I think I shouldn't have to do that. It's just really boring and I don't I want to do it. I'm dreading it. I'm afraid that I'm not going to do a good job, so I'm pushing it off for that reason. I don't really know where to get started. So, I just keep putting it on the backburner. I think other stuff's more important."

Those are all the honest reasons that you might be procrastinating. Right? "I'm not willing to feel the negative emotion that I'd be forced to feel, if I forced myself to work on that." That's the honest truth. But instead of saying that, because I'm sure we would all have thoughts about how that might be received by someone, we make an excuse instead. And we offer them something that "sounds good".

I'll give you another example of this. It comes up for people all the time when they're running late. You can watch people feed you drama and excuses when they're running late; when they're behind schedule, when they said they'd be somewhere at a certain time, and then they're not there when they said that they were going to be there. They show up quite a bit later.

So, in that moment, they could make an excuse, "Oh, there was traffic. I got stuck at work. Someone came into my office," there were all of these different things that could have happened that set them behind schedule. Those are the excuses. When the truth is, you left too late; you didn't plan

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well, you spent more time doing an activity, when you should have stopped yourself in order to leave and get to the place that you promised to be on time, on time.

You didn't have the uncomfortable conversation to say, "Hey, I can't actually talk right now, I'm on my way out." Perhaps because you were afraid that someone would be mad at you, or you felt guilty turning someone away.

The truth is that you were unwilling to feel that discomfort and have the conversation, tell them no, set a boundary, follow through on your original plan. Instead, you fell victim to that discomfort. You avoided it by people pleasing and doing what was more comfortable in the moment.

But we never tell people that that's why we're late. Right? We give them that excuse. "There was traffic. I got caught by a train. Someone came in and I couldn't say no, I had to talk to them. I didn't have a choice. A client called me. I had to respond." Lots of I had to-had to-had to-I can't-I can't-I can't-I must-I must-I must. I didn't have any choice or say in the matter, right? That's how we think about this. Instead of just being honest about what it actually was.

This comes up quite a bit in weight loss, too. I love weight loss examples, just because they're so commonplace and easy to see in our mind's eye. So, I've had clients do this before, where they're supposed to be eating a certain way, they decided ahead of time that they would eat following a certain protocol.

And then, they don't eat following that protocol. They eat off plan. They eat in a way that's not aligned with their goals. And then, they start to make excuses for it. "Well, I couldn't eat healthy because I attended this event. And this was the only food that was available. Well, I couldn't eat that way because I was traveling, and it just wasn't possible for me to eat as I planned."

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Now, the truth here, is that you didn't plan and prepare accordingly. And then, you defaulted to what was available, because it was easier in the moment rather than going hungry. Or just abstaining from the food that was provided, and then figuring it out later. No, I'm not suggesting you starve yourself. Don't go ahead and run away with what I'm saying here and really take it to an extreme.

But check in with yourself, are you making excuses when it comes to this? We probably do this with working out too, right? All the different excuses when the truth is you just haven't made it a priority. You haven't been willing to do the things that would make that activity a non-negotiable. That would ensure that you complete it, that you follow your plan.

I see this come up a lot with investments as well. We'll blame not having the money for the reason that we don't do something. And when you look at someone's spending, you very quickly can see, "Oh, no. No, you have the money. You just spent it this way instead of spending it this way."

But it's such a more comfortable excuse for us to tell ourselves, "Oh, I don't have the money." Or to tell someone else, "Oh, I can't do that. I don't have the money," rather than being honest about what it is, "Oh, I don't want to do this. Oh, I don't value this enough. Oh, it's not a priority for me."

I see people do this with investment decisions when they're thinking about investing in coaching. This comes up a lot. "Oh, I don't have the money. I can't afford to do that." And then, when you look at their spending, you can quickly see that's not true. This just isn't a priority for you. But most people don't want to admit that they prioritize their luxury car or a vacation over their personal development and solving some of the problems that they're encountering.

I've also seen this with some of my friends who will make excuses about not having the money, to avoid having to do things with friends. Instead of people pleasing them, they'll lie. They still don't move fully into integrity by just being honest and telling the person the truth.

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So, they settle for this middle of the road option where they make an excuse, “Oh, you know, I'd love to go on vacation with you. But I just really can't afford it right now.” When, if you looked at their finances, they could afford it.

They just don't want to go on vacation with the person for whatever reason. Maybe they don't think they're close enough friends. Maybe they don't think that vacationing with the person would be fun. So, they come up with an excuse. We do this when it comes to turning down social engagements all the time. We make excuses, instead of being honest.

Now, you can also decide that you don't need to offer an explanation. But you can just honor your knowing, rather than offering an excuse or an explanation. You can just offer your response, you can offer your answer, and leave it at that. But that tends to be really uncomfortable for people, so they don't do that, they make an excuse instead.

Now, check in with yourself. Are you an excuse maker? If you are, I don't want you to judge yourself. I just want you to notice it. And I want us to explore, during the course of this episode, why you might do it. Okay? We get to decide, is it even a problem? So, that's always the first place that we start. I'm not going to assume that this is a problem. There's no moral judgment here. Okay?

This starts with deciding, who do you want to be? If you don't care about lying, about making an excuse when it's not true, about operating in what someone might consider a manner that is out of integrity, then it's not a problem. If you're like, “That's a white lie. No big deal. No one gets hurt. It's fine. It makes my life easier. Who cares?” Then, amazing. Don't worry about it, then it isn't a problem for you. And that's okay.

But if you decide that you want to be the kind of person who is honest and operates from a place of integrity, someone who doesn't make excuses in order to hit the easy button, take the escape route, then being a person who makes excuses isn't in alignment with that. But then we are presented

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with a problem because we essentially have dissonance, two things competing against one another.

To become someone who operates from a place of integrity, we've got to stop making excuses. And that begs the question, but how? But how exactly do we do that, Olivia? Well, let's dive in and talk about it.

First things first, when it comes to making excuses, you have to check in with yourself and make sure you're not believing your own excuses. So many people buy their own bullshit, they believe their own drama. They make an excuse, and they think that it's true. They're really in the narrative of their own victimhood, of their own helplessness.

So, if you do this, if your life feels very dramatic, if you feel like you're always dealing with an emergency, there's always something coming up at the last minute, you're always handling something unexpected, things are outside of your control, life is happening to you. If that's you, you're likely believing your own excuses. You're buying into the story that your primitive brain is serving up to you; you're thinking that it's true.

And if you think it's true, you're definitely going to say it and pass it on to other people. It's going to be how you communicate and what you tell them. Because you're going to see it as just being the truth. It's going to feel very matter of fact. So, you've got to be onto yourself here. And this is where having a coach really comes in handy, because we can't always see our own bullshit.

It really helps to have someone else point it out to us. For them to question, "Hey, is that actually true? What if it's not true? How might it not be true? What if this is actually true instead."

Some of my clients often say to me I'm such an expert at seeing how people operate, and understanding why they're doing the things that they're doing, and getting to the root issue at hand. Understanding why someone might make an excuse, being able to spot them, and understand why we're

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making it in the first place. And then how to stop making it, what to do instead.

So, coaching really does come in handy here. We just can't see our own blind spots. Having a coach helps us identify them, so we can create awareness. And then from awareness, we can decide whether or not we want to make a change.

An easy way to spot if you are making and believing your own excuses will be if you hear yourself, say very frequently, "Oh, I can't do that. Oh, I had to do that. Oh, I didn't have a choice. I didn't have a say in the matter. My hands were tied. It just is that way. It is the way that it was." All of these things are lies, lies, lies, lies.

If you've listened to the podcast before, you've probably heard me say there's only four things you need to do. I recently added a fifth one, after someone turned to me on to the fact that there is a fifth one. It's you need to eat, drink some fluids, sleep sometimes, and breathe. And you also need to use the restroom. So, if it's not those five things, you don't have to do it.

If you're telling yourself that you can't do something, or you had to do something, that's just bullshit. And you want to be onto yourself. You want to turn your bullshit detector on, and know that it simply isn't true. That instead what is true is that you always have a choice.

Now, you've probably heard me say this before, too. You may not always love your choices. The choices you have may have undesirable consequences. But you do have choices, nevertheless. So, you always want to remember that.

People love tricking themselves into feeling helpless by believing their own excuses. Now, why is this true? Why is this the case? Well, for starters, it helps them feel justified for whatever unintentional action they choose to make next. Whatever decision they make next. It helps you feel more justified, more resigned, more accepting of your decisions, rather than

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facing the uncomfortable truth that you do have a choice, and you're choosing the path of least resistance.

You're choosing to make this excuse. You're choosing not to operate in integrity with what you promised yourself you would do. And that's an uncomfortable truth to handle. So, it's much easier to buy into this feigned helplessness, in order to escape that and to feel really justified in doing whatever it is that you end up doing, that unintentional action.

It's much more uncomfortable to be honest with yourself, and to go about honoring the commitments that you make. Right? Think about the food example. You can choose to believe that you just didn't have a choice, you had to eat that dish at that family function.

Or you can be honest with yourself and say, "Oh, I could have done it this way, this way, or this way. And all of that would have required me to plan, or me to turn something down, for me to miss out on something delicious, for me to feel deprived." All of which is uncomfortable.

All of that requires more of you than buying your own excuse, feigning helplessness, feeling justified, and then resigning yourself to the path of least resistance, that unintentional action that doesn't actually serve you. You're going to feel really okay and accepting of your choices, the choices that aren't aligned with the results that you want.

So, be onto yourself there. Being honest and honoring your commitments requires you to embrace the discomfort of honoring them. And to be intentional and operate from that place of integrity, in spite of and despite the discomfort, okay? That's not going to feel warm and fuzzy, you're going to feel uncomfortable. You're going to want to vom. It's not going to be a super pleasant experience, at first.

On the back end, you get the results that you want for your life. So, it is going to be more pleasurable, you are going to feel gratified and accomplished. But that gratification is going to be delayed, and you have to

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be willing to accept the delayed gratification, rather than requiring instant gratification, that temporary pleasure.

Okay, so the first step is understanding and recognizing your own b.s. From there, once we know that the excuse isn't true, we want to understand why we're making it. So, I talked about that a little bit a second ago, because it helps us rationalize our bad decisions and justify our bad decisions.

But we also do it to escape the discomfort of the truth. Being honest about why we do the things that we do, is typically uncomfortable. Normally, because we're judging ourselves for it, that's why we make it uncomfortable. We also typically perceive that other people will have a negative opinion about the truth.

So, we have a negative opinion about the truth, and then we think other people are going to have a negative opinion about the truth. So, we make the excuse to avoid all of that judgment; our judgment of ourselves and judgment from other people. Okay?

Think about it. We've got three options. You've got the option, where you don't do what you say you're going to do and you're going to be honest about it. What your reasons were, why you didn't do it, why you didn't stick to the plan, why you didn't follow through. You're just going to be honest and not fib, not lie, not make an excuse. That's uncomfortable as hell.

So is showing up as the version of yourself that you want to be. That's the second option here. That requires the most of you. Out of all three options that I'm going to talk about, that's going to be the heaviest lift. To embrace the discomfort of showing up and being intentional, and following through on your plans. And making the decisions that delay that gratification that I talked about a moment ago. That's going to be the highest level of discomfort.

So, we've got being honest, about why you didn't do what you said you were going to do. Then there's the option two; instead of needing to be

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honest about it, you just do what you say you're going to do in the first place. Avoid the whole scenario where you might feel like you need to make an excuse. Make the whole excuse part irrelevant by just doing what you say you're going to do. But that's also uncomfortable, it requires a lot of you.

Your third option is to not follow through, not be intentional, not do what you say you're going to do, but make an excuse about it. It allows you to avoid the discomfort of showing up as the version of yourself that you want to be. And it allows you to avoid the discomfort of being honest about why you didn't show up as that version of yourself. Okay?

So, it gets us out of all of this discomfort and lets us feel a little bit better about ourselves. Making an excuse, offering it to another person, allows us to feel a little bit more relieved, a little bit less judged, a little bit less inadequate, a little bit more secure, a little bit more accepted.

When we make excuses, we're really providing ourselves with this comfort, which makes sense why we pick it over the other two options. Now, if you decide you don't want to be an excuse maker, you've got to change the way that you think. And you've got to change your unwillingness to feel these negative emotions. You've got to be willing to feel this discomfort in order to operate differently, and to stop making excuses.

Now, one way to change your thinking, that will support you to stop making excuses, is that we make excuses because we assume people are going to have negative thoughts about us if they know the truth. And then, we think that when we give them our excuse, they change their opinion. we assuage our own worry, because we assume they don't think what they would have originally thought, they think something else instead.

They might have thought you were irresponsible and unreliable, but you give them the excuse of, "Oh, I was really under the weather. I was so sick. This emergency came up. I'm dealing with this family thing." Even though we both know, that really isn't the reason that you didn't do the thing you said you were going to do. But you offer that excuse to them.

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And then, you believe that their thoughts about you change. That they feel sympathy or empathy, right? They feel understanding or accepting that they're not having those judgments. And the truth is, you're not a mind reader. You're just making all of this up for yourself. It may or may not be true. It may be true, and great. But believing that it is the case every single time, feeds into this habit of you offering people excuses so you can control their opinion of you.

Now, you can choose to change the way that you think about this. If you want to stop making excuses, I highly recommend you adopt this mindset. One of the thoughts that changed for me, which got me to stop making excuses, because I used to be the queen of doing this...

My life was very dramatic. I was always dealing with an emergency. I always had an excuse. I used this religiously, to cancel dentist appointments or doctor's appointments at the last minute. There was always something that came up at work; I was perpetually late. And it was always someone else's fault other than my own.

I would offer some dramatic excuse, and then people would typically respond with, "Oh, I'm sorry," whether they actually felt that way or not. Who knows? I'm not a mind reader, but it would assuage my worry temporarily. And then, I'd get to feel better about myself, less irresponsible, less inadequate.

One day, I decided I didn't want to operate this way anymore. I didn't want to be untruthful. I didn't want to be a liar. I didn't want to be someone who was full of excuses. I always had some "good reason" for not doing what I said I was going to do. So, I decided to change the way that I thought about how other people perceived my excuses.

I really think this serves you more, it's not a super positive thought. But I do think it's a thought that serves you. It's definitely one that serves me because it drives me to act more in integrity. I choose to believe that people don't care at all why I didn't do what I said I was going to do. They just don't give a shit. It doesn't matter to them.

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What I choose to believe, is that the only thing that they care about is me not having done the thing. All they want, all they truly care about, is me doing what I said I was going to do. They'd like to know when I'm going to do it, and they'd like to know when it's done. Everything else, to them, is pretty much irrelevant.

The way that I think about this, and pardon me being crass, but I constantly say to myself, "No one fucking cares. No one fucking cares. They don't give a shit what my excuses are, they just want it done." I can communicate the fact that it's not done, people do want to know that because it provides them with certainty. And then, they want to know when it's going to be done, when can they expect it. And then, they want to know that I did follow through on that promise that I made. That's all people really care about.

And when you boil it down to that, you get so much more concise in the communications that you have with people. You strip your communications of all of the excuses. Your life becomes much less dramatic. It becomes much more matter of fact.

You save yourself the time of going through the process of making all of these excuses, and you can just put your head down and get to work. It's so much more effective, so much more productive, so much more efficient. So, that's one of the reframes that I've had.

The other reframe, is a self-concept reframe. This is really just a decision. You get to decide that you're a person who doesn't make excuses. Now, whether you offer someone the truth, or you communicate less information, but honest information, "No, I haven't done that yet. Haven't done that yet, I'll get it to you tomorrow," rather than offering all this word vomit, apology vomit, itinerary vomiting, excuses, excuse vomiting... Rather than offering that, you can just offer the simple information that's necessary in that moment.

Now, when you decide to become someone who does this, your path forward becomes very clear. You're going to have to feel these negative emotions. You're also going to have to stop being so perfectionistic and

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give yourself some grace; you're not going to do everything perfectly. And that's okay.

You're going to have to trust yourself to rebound and to improve over time. To take action imperfectly, to audit that action, and to adapt. You're also going to have to trust that other people are going to be accepting or that you'll be okay, even if they're not accepting of the truth. Okay?

You also have to decide to not judge yourself when you miss the mark. When you don't meet an expectation that you set. When you don't live up to your word. You've got to get curious. If you judge yourself, it's always going to be very enticing to go back to making excuses, because that is the land of comfort. Rather than being honest about what's going on, why you didn't live up to your word.

You've got to be willing to come at 'not living up to your word' from a place of curiosity. If you judge yourself, you're going to have a really hard time continuing to be honest. It's just going to be too uncomfortable, too unpalatable.

When you make this decision to be someone who's honest and operates from a place of integrity and doesn't make excuses, once you're decided, then you get to put that decision into practice. You get to implement it, and you get to practice meeting moments. You're going to see the fork in the road, you're going to see the path where you can make an excuse.

Or you can see the path where you've become very honest, and you tell the truth, and you don't make the excuse. And when you live there, when your only two options then become, do what you say you're going to do or be honest about why you didn't do it, you get much differently incentivized to follow through and do what you say you're going to do.

Because between those two options, when you take the most comfortable option, the excuse making, off the table and you're left with those two types of discomfort, the most uncomfortable version, I believe, is going to be

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sitting in your inadequacy, and being honest about why you didn't do what you said you were going to do.

Then, the discomfort avoidance shifts. You associate more discomfort with having to be honest about your failings, your shortcomings, so you choose to show up as the version of yourself that you want to be, when it's 'be honest or bust'.

You end up following through. You end up becoming more intentional. You show up as the version of yourself that you strive and aim to become, which in turn increases your competence and has all these other amazing benefits, right? This simple decision, of being someone who doesn't make excuses, really just pays dividends over and over and over again.

The other thing that I want to highlight here, is you want to be careful. There are some other subtle reasons why we make excuses. And one of the main subtle reasons that I see people do this, is because they get to feel important. It is fun to have a more exciting, dramatic story. It makes us feel significant.

When we tell the story, when we offer our excuse, we know that it's likely to elicit a certain response. Either concern from someone or shock or surprise or understanding. We get that, "Oh, I'm so sorry. Oh, my goodness!" Right? People commiserate with us. People feel sorry for us. We get their compassion, their empathy, their pity.

And even though that might not be where you want to be, you might prefer to have their admiration and to have them revere you. Right? To have them respect you. Doing the things to get admiration, reverence, and respect. That's a heavier lift.

It's easier to default to making the excuse and getting their concern, worry, pity, compassion. Okay? If this is you, if this is one of the reasons that you're doing this, just check in with yourself.

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What needs are you satisfying here? And what would it look like for you to not use making an excuse to satisfy it? To not need other people to respond a certain way for you to feel a particular emotion? What if you were able to just sit in your own discomfort yourself? Or what if you were able to provide that emotion to yourself, without needing to make an excuse and elicit that response from another person?

Okay, I've given you a ton of food for thought, when it comes to making excuses. I want you to take a few minutes today, and check in with yourself. Where are you making excuses? Where are you not being honest? Where are you not following through? Where are you not showing up and acting in integrity?

Check in and find those areas in your life where this is happening for you. And then decide, do you want to be someone who makes excuses and does this? Or do you want to be someone who's honest and shows up as that highest version of themselves?

If you choose the latter, number one, you've got to find your excuses. And you've got to stop believing your own bullshit. That's step one. You might need a coach to help you with that. If you do, you know where to find me.

Second, you've got to get clear on what you're going to do instead. There are three options: Follow through and show up as the version of yourself that you want to be. Be honest about why you didn't show up that way. Or make the excuse, take that third option off the table, and be willing to feel the discomfort of either of the other two options.

There's not a moral hierarchy on which one's better. You get to decide whichever one's right for you, depending on the moment that you're meeting. But you want to embrace the discomfort of either of those two options, and not settle for the temporary comfort and instant gratification of that making excuses third option, okay?

Go to work, find those excuses, and start eradicating them. You're really going to love who you become in the process. You're going to feel so much

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more authentic and proud of yourself when you become the person who takes excuse making off the table entirely. I can't wait to see what you get when you decide to implement this for yourself. It's going to be so exciting.

All right, my friends, that's what I have for you this week. If you're sick of making excuses and you want to master the art of not making them, and being someone who shows up in integrity, come inside *The Less Stressed Lawyer* mastermind. You know how to do that. Go to TheLessStressedLawyer.com/mastermind.

And other than that, I will talk to you in the next episode. I hope you have a beautiful week.

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.