

Ep #87: Hope (Is Not a Strategy)



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Olivia Vizachero

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You're listening to *The Less Stressed Lawyer* podcast, Episode 87. Today, we're talking all about hope. 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 don't know about you, but my December is A- flying by, and B- going so well. I don't know if you know this, I don't know if I've talked about it on the podcast before, but I take time off at the end of every year.

I was actually inspired to do this by one of my coaches, who early in my coaching career, early in the journey of starting my own business, I heard her talk about taking time off, she took a whole month off, and I just thought that was absolutely crazy. I had a lot of judgment of it, at first.

I thought it was sort of irresponsible. I had a lot of limiting beliefs about being an entrepreneur and being able to take time off, some of which I picked up from family members who are self-employed. I decided that I was going to work my way up to it. Now, I could only decide that after I made the decision that it's actually something that I would want to do at some point, to take a month off.

For the past couple of years, I've taken two weeks off at the end of the year, and it never quite feels like enough. So, this year, I've upped it to three weeks. This is my last real week of work before the end of the year. I'm taking two weeks off at the end of the month, and then the first week off in January. The podcast will still be coming out, so don't worry about that.

But I am so excited to relax and brainstorm, and do some behind-the-scenes stuff prepping for my business in the new year. I've got a bunch of exciting stuff coming down the line. So, I'm super thrilled to be doing that.

Ep #87: Hope (Is Not a Strategy)

I'm also getting ready to, at the end of this week, I'm heading to Savannah to host a content weekend for a bunch of my friends. What that looks like is we record content, we create video content. My videographer, Alex, is going to be there. If you've been to my in-person retreats, you already know Alex. So, he's going to be there, and we have a whole group of entrepreneurs who are coming in to record video content with him.

I also have a photographer coming in. She's a local photographer in Savannah, so she's going to be coming in for us to create static photo content as well. I'm so excited to do that. It feels like a fun way to kick off my time off, and a really neat transition from my typical work weeks into an extended vacation.

I hope you have something fun planned throughout this month, end of year. How are you celebrating? What are you doing for yourself? Are you doing anything fun? And if you have judgment, when you hear me talk about taking that much time off, I highly encourage you to explore that.

What's coming up for you? Do you have limiting beliefs about what's possible for you? Do you have thoughts that aren't serving you when it comes to taking time off? I'm actually going to do a whole episode on that now that I think of it. So, there's more to come on that topic. But just see what comes up for you in the meantime.

All right, speaking of the holiday season... I don't know that these things essentially go together, but bear with me here. I really wanted to talk about hope. This has come up on a couple of my coaching calls recently. I've heard some clients say some things back to me when I talk about this. They know how I think about hope, and I've gotten some pushback.

So, I wanted to record a podcast episode on this topic. I also think it's sort of timely, because I feel like holiday hope, miracles, making wishes for the holiday season, that kind of all ties in together. Are you spending a lot of time hoping and wishing? Today, we're going to talk about whether or not that serves you.

Ep #87: Hope (Is Not a Strategy)

Okay, so let me give you a little backstory on a couple of my recent coaching sessions with clients. I've had clients make comments to me, and they've used the word "hope." They've said, "I hope this happens... I hope that happens..." And more than once I've had a client say to me, "Well, I know you don't like 'hope.' I know you don't like the feeling 'hope.'"

Or I'll tell someone, just in passing, "Oh, I don't love 'hope' as an emotion. I don't love 'hope' as a feeling." and people will always challenge me on that. They're like, "Oh my God, why not? Why don't you like 'hope?' Hope is wonderful. Hope is lovely."

Because of the pushback I've gotten on this, I wanted to address this specifically. Because if you've heard me say this on social media before, or maybe elsewhere on the podcast, you might be confused why I feel this way about "hope." So, I want to get into it today and really explain to you why I don't like it. Why I think "hope" really isn't the emotion that you want to be cultivating for yourself and operating from.

I'm going to give you a couple examples here, but ultimately, my thesis on "hope" is this: The action that you take from hope isn't very powerful. I don't think that hope is a feeling that necessarily serves you. When you're feeling hopeful about something, you normally get really passive. You sort of throw your hands up in the air, you cede control over a situation, you really step into wait-and-see mode, you kind of cross your fingers, and wish and hope that things work out.

But you don't take active action to ensure that something happens or goes a particular way. You become very passive, you relinquish responsibility for your results, you kind of put it in the universe's hands, or if you're religious, you put it in God's hands. You put it outside of your own control, your own responsibility.

When you do that, it doesn't create very powerful results. It typically leaves you still hoping that something turns out the way that you want it to. I often say, when you're thinking a thought with the word "want" in it, that want

Ep #87: Hope (Is Not a Strategy)

begets more wanting. The same thing goes for “hope.” Hope begets more hoping.

Here are a few examples of this. Think about time management. Let's say you struggle with time management, and it's something that you're working on. As you go to “work on it,” your thought that's fueling you forward is the thought, “I hope I get better at this.” When you think, “I hope I get better at this,” you end up feeling hopeful.

And, what do you do from feeling hopeful? You don't really do anything, you just wait. You “try,” and try just means not doing. So, you keep doing the same things, and you anticipate a different result. But that doesn't make sense, right? Doing the same things, crossing your fingers, hoping as a strategy, not doing something different as a strategy, that's all going to get you more of the same.

So, when you're thinking, “I hope I get better at this,” and you're feeling hopeful or optimistic, you don't take the action that would actually help you get better at this. Right?

What would that action look like? Following my process. Reclaiming control of your calendar. Planning your schedule accurately. Honoring your plan. Evaluating. Allowing the negative emotions to be there. Taking action in spite of them. Those are all of the things that you need to do in order to get better at time management.

Really studying yourself: Where did I reshuffle? Where did I procrastinate? Where did I plan inaccurately, and do the math wrong? Going through that process, and making decisions and changes little bit by bit at a time in order to get better at it. That is the process of actually getting better at time management. When you're hoping you get better at it you don't engage in those activities.

Take business development, as an example. Maybe you have the goal to bring in half a million dollars in revenue for your firm. Or maybe your goal is bigger than that, maybe it's a million. Or maybe it's bigger than that; how fun.

Ep #87: Hope (Is Not a Strategy)

If you were thinking the thought, “I hope I develop business. I hope I make \$1 million,” and you're feeling hopeful or optimistic, what do you do? You sit around, you cross your fingers, you hope as a strategy, you wait for clients to come to you, you don't actively market, you don't meet people, or you don't tell them what you do.

You don't add value ahead of time in a bunch of different ways through social media or through conversations with people, or you don't make offers to help people when it makes sense to do so. You just sit around and wait. Guess what? You take what comes, but what comes isn't going to get you to your goal. That strategy isn't going to get you to where you want to be.

So, you end up still hoping that you make a million dollars next year, that you develop a business next year, and you're probably getting discouraged in the process because it's not going the way that you “hoped” that it would go. So, you start taking less and less and less action, because hope isn't panning out, then you feel discouraged, and the worst you feel the worst action you take. Right?

Think about that. If you're feeling hopeful when it comes to business development, you're still going to be hoping that you get different results than the ones that you create. When you're using hope as a strategy, you also might be thinking, “I might hit my goal.” The sentence doesn't have to have “hope” in it. The thought doesn't need to have “hope” in it.

It might be, “I might hit my goal. Maybe I'll hit my goal. Maybe I'll develop business this year. Maybe clients will want to work with me. Maybe I'll sign clients. Maybe I'll develop a business. Maybe I'll make the amount of money that I want to make. Maybe I'll get the bonus I want to get this year. I might get the bonus that I'm hoping to get this year.”

And then, when you think any of those thoughts, you feel hopeful and then you relinquish control. You put the power of achieving that result outside of yourself. Again, you cross your fingers, and you wait. You wait to see what happens. When you wait and see what happens, and you passively pursue

Ep #87: Hope (Is Not a Strategy)

your goal rather than actively pursue your goal, you don't create the results you want.

Same thing if you're thinking about the circumstance of making partner. Maybe that's a goal that you have. When you're thinking the thought, "I want to make partner. I hope I make partner. Maybe I'll make partner. I might make partner this year," and you feel hopeful or optimistic, what do you do? You sit around and wait and see, rather than actively pursuing it.

What would it look like to actively pursue making partner? You're going to get very clear on what you need to do, what the firm expects of you, what the metrics are, that are considered in order for you to go from being an associate to being a partner, or from being a non-equity partner to an equity partner.

You'd get very clear on what you need to do in order to meet the requirements, and then you would get to work on meeting those requirements. You would hit a certain billable hour target, if there is one that exists within your firm. If you need to have a certain book of business, in order to be considered to make partner you would make sure that you devote time to developing that book of business.

You're going to make sure you have strong relationships with the people who make those partnership decisions if there's a committee that makes those decisions. So, you would go very intentionally about checking off those items on that list.

Rather than just crossing your fingers, using hope as a strategy, and waiting around to see what happens. Hoping that people look out for you. Hoping that people advocate for you. You take much more intentional action to ensure you do everything in your power to make it happen.

So, I want you to think about an area of your life where "hope" is coming up for you. Where are you feeling hopeful? And then, I want you to think about what action you take from that feeling. You've got to be really honest with yourself here.

Ep #87: Hope (Is Not a Strategy)

If you're someone who likes feeling hopeful, and you think that that's a good emotion to operate from, really get tedious here. Get very specific and identify what's the exact action you take when you're feeling hopeful. Then, get even more honest, even more candid.

Is that action guaranteed to produce the results you want? Are you taking the most intentional, most active action? Not to be redundant, but are you taking the most meaningful, logical action to create your desired results? Or are you being passive from that hope?

Here's the thing with hope, there's always a better feeling that you can move into in order to create the results you want, with more intention and more success. So, think about the examples we talked about earlier, the time management, the business development, and making partner.

If you were thinking, "I'm going to get better at time management. I am getting better at time management," you would feel encouraged. If you were thinking, "I can learn how to do this," you would feel capable. If you were thinking, "I'll figure out how to do this," you would feel committed and resourceful. If you were thinking the thought, "I will get better at time management, no matter what. I will not quit until I get there," you would feel determined, right?

Those emotions drive you to take significantly different action. Think about the action you take when you're feeling capable, committed, determined, resourceful and encouraged. How would you show up differently than just feeling hopeful? If you're thinking about developing business, if you shifted from feeling hopeful that you develop it to feeling determined and committed that you would develop it, feeling capable of developing it, feeling encouraged and resourceful, what would you do?

You would take that action that I mentioned a moment ago. You would meet people, you'd tell them what you do, you'd add value ahead of time, you'd make offers to help people, you would network, you would do virtual coffees, you'd go to in-person events, you'd post on Social media, or you'd

Ep #87: Hope (Is Not a Strategy)

offer trainings online. There's so much stuff that you would do, you would leave no stone unturned.

If you were feeling determined and committed and capable, you would really go for it. You'd be taking all of the active action; the massive action, not the passive action. Think about making partner; I gave you that list of things that you would do. That's going to come from feeling determined, committed, capable, and resourceful, not from feeling hopeful.

So, that situation you just identified a moment ago, the one where you have hope coming up for you, the one that you're feeling hopeful about, or where you're using hope as your strategy. You've gotten clear now on the action that you're taking from that hope.

I want you to be really honest. How would you change what you're doing if you were feeling determined and committed and capable and resourceful and encouraged? What would change? How would you show up differently? What action would you specifically take that you're not taking right now? Would you be waiting around to see what happened, or would you be making it happen?

You're going to be making it happen. If you're feeling those stronger, more powerful emotions, you're going to ensure your success. You're going to do whatever it takes to get the job done.

So, that's what I mean, when I say I don't love hope as an emotion, I don't love hope as a strategy. I want you to move into, if you think about emotions on a spectrum, feelings on a spectrum, I want you to move into a stronger, more powerful emotion. I want you to inch your way across the spectrum, going from hope to those more powerful emotions, that committed, determined, motivated, resourceful energy.

Another way to prove my point here, one of the ways that we accomplish goals, is I teach people how to reverse engineer their results. We do that by starting at the end of the model and working backwards. So, the model is the tool that I use in my coaching. It consists of five components: Circumstances, Thoughts, Feelings, Actions and Results.

Ep #87: Hope (Is Not a Strategy)

The premise is that we encounter circumstances. So, a goal would be a circumstance. And then, we think thoughts about it. Those thoughts drive our feelings, or cause our feelings. And, our feelings drive our actions. And, our actions produce our results.

So, what you can do, you can use the model to create awareness as to why you have the current results you have, while you're doing the things you're currently doing. You can use it to figure out what you would need to think, how you would need to feel, and what you would need to do in order to create your desired results.

You could just start by replacing the thought. You can say, instead of thinking, "I hope to make a million dollars," you can shift it to, "I will make a million dollars." You can see the difference that thought makes, how it makes you feel, or how you show up differently from that feeling, and the different result you produce from that action.

But you can also work backwards. So, you can start with your desired result, and then you work your way up the model. You go from the result to the actions you would need to take in order to produce that result, then you go to the feeling you would need to feel to take that action, and then you go to the thought that you would need to think in order to feel that emotion.

So here, think about the result you want to create. If you want to develop business, if you want to master time management, if you want to make partner, if you want to delegate, if you want to stop people pleasing, if you want to travel the world, if you want to get married...

If you want to do anything in your life, think about the specific actions you would need to take in order to make that result happen, in order for that to come to fruition. Get very specific and list out all of the micro steps, all of the little actions that you would need to take, in order to produce that desired result.

Now, once you've got that list, work your way up the model again, another level. What's the feeling you would need to feel, in order to take that

Ep #87: Hope (Is Not a Strategy)

action? I promise you, whatever word just came to your mind, it definitely wasn't hopeful. And, that's what proves my point.

If you were to reverse engineer your results, you'd never pick hope as the feeling to fuel you forward. You would always pick something stronger than that. So, it goes to show that hope isn't a strategy to get you to where you want to go.

You choose to feel compelled, committed, convicted, determined, motivated, driven, empowered, powerful, encouraged, certain, assured, capable, confident, unstoppable, resilient, or relentless. Relentless is one of my favorite emotions.

I love taking action when feeling relentless. I love pursuing goals while I'm in that state, that emotional experience. It's so fun. It's so much different than hopeful, you can feel it in your body, just as you're listening to me right now.

I want you to check in with yourself. Try on what hope feels like in your body, and then try on what relentless feels like, what convicted feels like, what compelled feels like, what committed or determined feels like. And if you are having a hard time accessing that emotion in your body, think right now of a time where you felt any of those feelings before, and tap into it. Notice the difference. The energy of those emotions is completely different than the energy of hope.

So, working the model backwards really proves my point here. You'd never intentionally choose that as the emotion to fuel you to take the action that you would need to take, in order to produce your desired result. So, don't settle for hope.

Now, with that being said, I want to talk about an exception to my rule of not using hope as a strategy. I'm going to be really realistic with you, okay? Sometimes hope is all you have. If you're feeling, right now, if you're feeling discouraged, defeated, down, depressed, stuck, ashamed, guilty, frustrated with yourself, helpless, and really hopeless...

Ep #87: Hope (Is Not a Strategy)

If you're feeling those feelings, sometimes the furthest you can get yourself along that feelings spectrum is to get yourself to feeling hopeful. Optimistic is as far as you can get, at least for now. You'll be feeling hopeful that things might get better. Hopeful that the situation that you're dealing with is going to work itself out. Hopeful that you'll be okay.

Sometimes hope's all you got. And if that's where you're at right now, I don't want to diminish it. I want to hold space for you to just be there for a little while. And even better than saying hope's all you've got, think of it as hope is the best that you've got in this moment. And when that's the case, hope is a step in the right direction.

Again, I want you to think of feelings as a spectrum. Now, I don't want you to stop at hope; I don't want it to be your final destination. But if hope's the best you've got right now, then let it be a pitstop. Get yourself out of those heavier emotions, those feelings of discouragement, defeat, depression, feeling stuck, ashamed, frustrated, or hopeless. Get yourself to hope.

Ask yourself: What would I need to think right now to just access hope, even if for a moment, even if just for a little while? Get yourself to hope and stay there for as long as you can. And then, practice being there. Practice being in the emotion of feeling hopeful. Hang out there for a little while, until hope becomes your new normal.

From there, once you've shaken off those heavier emotions and you've been able to stay in hope, recalibrate. And then, work on moving your way further across the feelings spectrum to those more powerful emotions. There is no shame in taking a quick stop, or a long stop, at hope if it's the best you have access to right now.

And, you've got to be really honest with yourself. "Is that the best I have access to? Is hope as good as I can get to in this moment, in this season, for right now?" If it is, just let yourself be there and let hope be enough. And then, I promise you... You've got to be on the lookout for it and you've got to try on different thoughts.

Ep #87: Hope (Is Not a Strategy)

The longer you stay in hope, practice trying on a thought that would make you feel a little bit better than hopeful. Practice trying on a thought that would make you feel an emotion that would have you taking slightly more intentional action than hope would have you take. Then, let that spot, that emotion, be your new normal for a little while. And just keep inching your way along that feelings spectrum to get to those much more powerful emotions.

Okay, if you're used to using hope as a strategy, this is your sign to stop. I want you to challenge yourself to move your way along the spectrum to get to those more powerful commanding emotions. But if hope is as good as you can do right now, if hope is as good as it gets for this moment in time, give yourself some grace and just let yourself be there.

If you're not there, get yourself there. Do the work to just get to hope. Ask yourself: What would I need to think to feel hopeful, even if for a minute? And practice that thought as often as you can. All right? Inch your way along the feelings spectrum, and as you do this, you're going to create more positive emotions and more intentional action.

Ultimately, as a result of all of that, much better results. I hope this helps you make sense of what I mean by 'I don't love hope as an emotion.' If you've heard me say that before, hopefully this clears up some of the confusion.

My hope for you, as we close out this year and we head into a new year, we head into 2024, is that you don't just settle for hope. You don't just hope that next year will be better than this year. I want you to ensure it for yourself. I want you to commit to it, that next year will be better than 2023.

The best way you can ensure it is by coming to work with me. There are two ways that you can do that in 2024. You can decide to attend The Obsessed Retreat. Join me in Miami, in March; March 20th through the 23rd; for three and a half days, in person.

Where we immerse ourselves in solving the problems you're facing, developing the skills you need to have to create the results you want, and

Ep #87: Hope (Is Not a Strategy)

then making your plans for the future, for all of 2024 and the next several years. So, you've got a clearer picture of where you're headed.

That way, we don't just hope to get there and create the results we want, but we ensure it. Because we're going to reverse engineer those results, and create a roadmap that you can follow to get exactly where you want to go.

Remember, when you attend The Obsessed Retreat, you also get access to lifetime monthly coaching calls. So, you're going to have continued support after our time in Miami, and lifetime access to those calls to get all of the support you need, to get the results that you want. That's the first way to work with me in 2024.

The second way is to join Lawyers Only. The Obsessed Retreat is open to everyone, whether you're a lawyer or not; you're welcome to come to that. If you are a lawyer though, and you want to join a group coaching program that consists entirely of lawyers facing the exact same problems you are facing, I am getting ready to launch a monthly coaching subscription for, you guessed it, lawyers only.

Now, the monthly subscription consists of weekly group coaching calls. We'll meet once a week as a group, and you'll get a chance to get coached by me and work through the problems that you're facing. You're also going to get access to a member portal. There's going to be courses on demand; courses in there on time management, on how to do the thought work that I teach, and I'm going to continuously be adding courses as time goes by.

So, we're going to kick off with those two courses. But the next course I'm going to add after that is going to be a business development course. And then we'll go from there by continuing to add on how to manage a team, how to delegate, how to set boundaries, how to do all of the things that you need to know how to do, in order to have the life you want to have, the career you want to have, and the personal life you want.

In addition to that course content, that you get to binge on demand, and consume on demand as much of it as you want at a time, you're also going

Ep #87: Hope (Is Not a Strategy)

to have access to written coaching. You'll be able to submit issues in writing, and I'll be able to respond to you. You get to do that in between our weekly calls. So, you have all the support you need whenever you want it.

You're also going to have access to a community platform where you get to engage with all of the other attorneys and lawyers only. You can cheer each other on, problem-solve things together, and celebrate each other when you're achieving the goals you set out to accomplish.

This program is going to have everything you need to have the practice and the life you want. It's going to be so good. So, enrollment for both of those programs is getting ready to open. Like I said, don't let hope be your strategy for how to have a better year. Ensure that you have a better year in 2024 than you did in 2023. Ensure that you do next year better than you did this year.

Come work with me. Enrollment opens for both of those programs very soon. The way to stay informed and up to speed on when doors open for both The Obsessed Retreat and Lawyers Only is to head on over to my Instagram, there's a link in my bio there. My Instagram handle is @thelessstressedlawyer, or you can go to my link tree link, which is linktr.ee/thelessstressedlawyer.

I'll repeat that one more time, and you can just type it in your browser right now. linktr.ee/thelessstressedlawyer. All right, go there. The first two links are the interest list for The Obsessed Retreat and for Lawyers Only; go sign up for either or both. I can't wait to work with you in the new year. We're going to make 2024 the year you go from hoping things happen to making sure you do.

All right, my friends. That's what I've got for you this week. I hope you have a beautiful week, and 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.