

That's a Hard No

Transcript: S2:E1 "Finding the No (Still)"

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Heather: Welcome to That's A Hard No the podcast about saying no and setting boundaries.

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Sarah: So you can become the authentic and empowered you that this world needs.

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Heather: I'm Heather Drago.

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Sarah: And I'm Sarah Saunders.

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Heather: Before we start quick.

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Sarah: While I am a licensed professional clinical counselor, this podcast is in no way a replacement for 1 on 1 therapy with a mental health professional. If you notice the content in this podcast does trigger some big feelings, honor those feelings and also visit our website hardnopodcast.com for mental health resources and other helpful links.

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Heather: Thanks, Sarah, ready to get started?

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Sarah: I'm so excited.

00:01:04

Heather: Well, hello and welcome, we're back! Woo-hoo! Season 2!

00:01:05

Sarah: We are back!

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Heather: I'm so excited!

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Sarah: Me too.

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Sarah: So, it's good to see your face.

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Sarah: It's good to see you too.

00:01:09

Heather: For our listeners were recording in late January in the midst of a giant snowstorm. So, fair warning if you hear the thump of little footprints or barking dogs, bare with us were still recording at home.

00:01:23

Sarah: Yes.

That's a Hard No

Transcript: S2:E1 "Finding the No (Still)"

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Heather: And for those of you who are new to podcast, let's reintroduce ourselves, Sarah, and help everybody why we're here.

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Sarah: Absolutely, I'd love that. Heather, why don't you start?

00:01:33

Heather: So I'm Heather Drago, I am 52 years old. I'm a mom of two adult children, I'm a business owner, I'm a recent cancer survivor and my company. Clever Girl Marketing, located here in the Cleveland area, serves businesses and nonprofits of all sizes and we do all kinds of things like really cool websites and social media marketing and all kinds of stuff. I'm also a trained fine artist, went to art school. I'm actually an art school dropout and currently paying for my daughter to go to that same school and she will not drop out, let me tell you. and I guess that's about it. We can get into the podcast stuff later, but let's hear about you, Sarah.

00:02:12

Sarah: Absolutely, for those of you that may not know, I am a licensed professional clinical counselor. I own a private practice called Purposeful Growth and Wellness, which I do have a brick-and-mortar office which, funny enough, a week before the stay-at-home order went into effect, I had signed papers for the actual physical space.

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Heather: Murphy's law.

00:02:36

Sarah: Yes, and we finally opened for in person sessions in May of 2021. However, I still offer a hybrid model, so I do virtual and in person. So in addition to being a business owner, a mental health professional, I'm a mom of three little boys, Beckham is four, Anderson is three, Tristan just turned 19 months and when we recorded the first podcast, season one, he was 11 weeks, and so, yeah, now he is 19 months and I am expecting baby number four in March. So yeah, I'm eight months pregnant and I'm a wife to my wonderful husband, Justin. We actually recently moved to Hudson, Ohio. If any of you are familiar, we built a home and yeah, pretty much sums up me.

00:03:39

Heather: So you're pretty much kicking your feet up, doing nothing.

00:03:43

Sarah: Yeah, so much free time I like don't even know what to do with it! Which is why we're on Season 2!

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Heather: Of course, we added one more thing to both our plates. Yeah, yeah.

00:03:52

Sarah: Exactly.

00:03:52

Heather: So this podcast, if you couldn't tell from the name, is about learning to say no and

That's a Hard No

Transcript: S2:E1 "Finding the No (Still)"

why it's so damned hard to do, for most of us, how we can learn to overcome that, how we can retain our brains to not feel guilty or negative about it, how to stand-up for ourselves, how to, you know, be comfortable with feeling uncomfortable sometimes.

00:04:18

Sarah: Absolutely, and Heather, I definitely want you to share kind of where this all originated, I do think that it's really important listeners, we want you to understand it's not just about saying 'no', it's saying 'no' to allow for more yes' in your life, and so, as a mental health professional spending hours and hours and hours in therapy, meeting with just a spectrum of different people, oftentimes, the underlying issue that people are facing are lack of boundaries, and it's important to also recognize that boundary setting is actually a skill, and so if you struggle with this, you are not alone

00:05:07

Heather: Right.

00:05:07

Sarah: This podcast is going to help you exercise those muscles, strengthen that ability to set healthy boundaries, because there's also this very negative connotation with boundary setting. People feel that it's like this hard-line in the sand, and that's not it. We want to empower people of all ages to be able to set healthy boundaries so that they can have the healthiest relationships that they can in their lives.

00:05:42

Heather: Yeah, and and honestly, this is something you and I are working on each personally, this is just because we've done this broadcast for a season already, just because you're a mental health professional. That doesn't mean you know we've licked it. It's an ongoing process. As we progress, we'll come as we are and we struggle with things. I mean, just yesterday I was having a conversation with someone and they pointed out I wasn't setting a boundary and taking care of myself and I was like, oh, oh right, okay. So so you know, this is a safe space where we can all kind of freely talk about those things and share with each other and learn from each other.

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Sarah: Absolutely and I joke, but I am human first.

00:06:21

Heather: Right.

00:06:22

Sarah: Therapist second, and so I also want to offer, you know, struggles that I'm going through, things that I'm hearing in my therapeutic space, but then also authentic language and dialogue around what it is to be human and regardless if we have this, you know, heavy toolbox of all of these tools, there are times in our life that it is really difficult to utilize those skills. And so also offering ourselves grace and self compassion and just learning how to forgive ourselves and navigate through whatever season we're going through.

00:07:01

Heather: So let's talk about how we started this thing, because we're a couple of crazy ladies

That's a Hard No

Transcript: S2:E1 "Finding the No (Still)"

who just said let's add a second job, on top of everything else we're doing. I'm just going to briefly kind of revisit how this all started. But if you want to hear more detail, you can always go back to our pilot episode, where I spend a lot of time kind of explaining the journey, but I'll briefly touch on it here. So in 2018 my little business was growing exponentially and we were saying yes, yes, yes to a whole lot of projects that we maybe shouldn't have, and at the same time there was a family crisis going on, there was a fire and at my mom's house and a family member was severely injured, and there was just a lot going on all at once and partially because I took my eye off the ball, because I was distracted by the family issues, but also because I was afraid to say no to people. We took on way too much and at the end of the year I was burned-out I was evaluating financials and realized I'd paid everyone in my company more than I paid myself, even though we made more money than ever, I spent more money than ever. It just didn't pay off for the bottom line and I ended up finishing up the year with a whole bunch of bigger problems on my plate than I started at the beginning of the year, because I didn't say no. So I really had to rethink. You know what am I doing? What am I? Why am I doing this to myself? What is the goal of my company? Why, you know, what do I want? So, once I identified that everything stemmed from my inability to deal with confrontation, being uncomfortable, feeling awkward, saying no to people, even looking back in my personal life, like I need to learn to say no. So the beginning of 2019, I decided to challenge myself to say no to one thing every day, and it could be a very small thing, like not answering an email or not picking up the phone to a big thing. I fired a client, stopped hiring certain contractors, I turned down new business that wasn't a good fit, which was scary to do. But every single day I found one thing, I called it finding the 'no', and I kept track of it and I took note of how I felt when I did it. And at the beginning of the year I felt really terrible. I felt it was like literally anxiety inducing, you know, like panicky feeling, and it took me a while to really even get in the swing of doing that, even though it was a stated challenge, and so at the end of 2019, I decided that I wasn't done and I said: ok, 2020 is going to be no 2.0. And right after that I got diagnosed with cancer and a pandemic hit. One client joked it was like I was taking a graduate study course in saying no, because all of a sudden I had even more boundaries to navigate and it really just became a major focus and I kind of felt a little more liberated and a little more empowered and I started to see my business turn around. I started feel my physical health turn around because I was really really setting boundaries in order to take care of myself for the first time in a long time, and then, you know, we got challenged to start a podcast and I reached out to you and you took up the challenge and said: yeah, let's do it.

00:10:24

Sarah: Yes, well, thank you again for sharing your story, because I've heard it so many times, but honestly it resonates so well with me, with so many other people and just hearing that whole idea that this word, exercising the ability to say no, was then trickling into so many other areas of our life. It's just so powerful, it's so interesting you guys, because so I was seven weeks postpartum when Heather had asked me about this. And if you go back to season one and our first pilot episode, I kind of talk more about this that you can go back and listen. But basically I got this email. It was late at night, it was like two in the morning. I was breastfeeding Tristan, who is now 19 months, and I had on my vision board for a while that I wanted to do a podcast. However, I had a lot of, I call it, impostor syndrome. I did a lot

That's a Hard No

Transcript: S2:E1 "Finding the No (Still)"

of fear-based thinking and the fact that Heather reached out to me. I felt such a relief. It was almost this passion project, but also I felt like it was saving me from postpartum. I did not realize until my third child that I had struggled, very much so, with postpartum anxiety and postpartum depression.

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Heather: Do you mean you had it with all your pregnancies, but you didn't recognize it until the third time?

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Sarah: Exactly.

00:12:05

Heather: Oh wow!

00:12:05

Sarah: Yes, yes, and so I have always been a type A person. I joke, I'm a recovering, perfectionist and recovering people pleaser, which I will share more about that, people pleasing is actually a trauma response, and it actually is a protective instinct which we'll park that for and we'll talk about it later. But I was noticing a lot of anxiety and when Heather had asked me to do this, I immediately said yes, because I knew that this was something that I needed for my own mental health, but also I wanted a platform that would allow me to help other people know that they aren't alone and to reach more people. So immediately, you know, Heather and I got started on this and it was one of the best decisions that I made. I also feel like doing this podcast I have recognized more and more in my therapeutic work, again how I spoke in the beginning, that boundary setting is a skill and generationally and societally we have been conditioned a certain way. This is a skill that we have not been taught. Maybe it hasn't been modelled to us. So as we reflect on the past, it's never to shame or blame or judge or criticize, but just to recognize. Oftentimes we have this lagging skill.

00:13:37

Heather: Even societally. Not only are we not encouraged, we are discouraged from saying no, we're told yes, you can have it all or how you need to work harder and you need to hustle to have it all like, come on, it's you know it's it's unrealistic.

00:13:53

Sarah: Well exactly, and so I was definitely feeling burnout. I was feeling resentment. I was feeling that I don't know any mom's out there, like I just wasn't feeling myself and I didn't know why. And then, as I started to recognize, I was saying yes to things that I felt I should rather than things that were in alignment with me. It was then that things truly started to change. I remember sitting down with my husband, Justin, and just telling him like: I want to work. I am very career driven, you know, identifying what my goals were and how, collectively, how him and I could get to a place that we both felt fulfilled, and so a lot of that was delegating things, recognizing that I did need help and being able to say that without judging myself and giving myself permission to do that in setting boundaries, you know, with certain relationships, in order to do this podcast, I had to say 'no' to certain things to allow room for this.

That's a Hard No

Transcript: S2:E1 "Finding the No (Still)"

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Heather: Oh yeah, it's a lot of work. We have to block a lot of time, and so I should give everyone a little behind the scenes info. We've built a team for season two. We have our producer marketing coordinator, extraordinaire Maura, who is the glue that's holding us together. We have our producer, Noah, at Evergreen, that is supporting us, and we just determined like we couldn't do it all. And you know we had to set those boundaries, give ourselves boundaries, and respect our time.

00:15:34

Sarah: I want to like piggyback off of that, because it's so interesting. When you see final products, again, you see like the highlight reels on social media. You don't see the behind the scenes, and so Heather and I noticed yes, we were passionate about what we were doing, but also, I mean it was a very first season trying to, Heather was doing all of this editing, you know, trying to get content together. There was just a lot.

00:16:04

Heather: Yeah

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Sarah: And so, when I think of and when I talk with clients, I use some framework from growth mindset and part of what they talk about is FAIL, first attempt in learning. So we failed forward. The first season we sat down, we had a very candid conversation and I think it's important to also note that Heather and I had developed a relationship that we felt safe, sharing with each other some of the struggles that we were having, being very honest and open and it takes time to develop that.

00:16:40

Heather: Yeah.

00:16:40

Sarah: But we, you know, we both laid it out there and then recognized we still want to pursue this. So let's put our heads together, and what do we need to do?

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Heather: Yeah, how do we show up better? How do we make this even better? How do we provide the best content? We possibly can, the most helpful content, without killin' ourselves? You know.

00:17:02

Sarah: We needed a village.

00:17:02

Heather: We needed a village, and don't you remember this, Sarah? But at point we were texting back and forth and you texted me and you said on a scale of one to ten, how committed are you doing season too? Because I think you were worried 'cause you could see how tired I was, how mean it was a lot of work to do, the editing and the website and the social and all the stuff, as well as the content and everything. And I said, you know, 10, we just have to figure out how. How do we do it? So you know, now we've built our village, we're back. Hopefully our sound production will be better quality, more consistent. We've got Maura helping us do a bunch of things and specially keeping us on social.

That's a Hard No

Transcript: S2:E1 "Finding the No (Still)"

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Sarah: And this is just a little plug for any of you out there that you have attempted something and then you realized, man, it's not working the way that I want. Press pause, reevaluate and if it is still something that you want to do, continue to do it looking through another lense, but also give yourself permission to change your mind.

00:18:04

Heather: Right, absolutely, and there was a moment where, like well, do we really want to keep doing this? Do we have it in us, you know, and that was a fair question.

00:18:11

Sarah: And bringing in, you know, my fourth child, which I can't believe, Justin and I, we just planned a trip for August and we had to pick our jaws up off the ground when we were like 'family of six'. We're like, oh my gosh, but you know I really had to reevaluate and Justin and I sat down, and what each of us needed to support the life that we wanted and the podcast was definitely something that I wanted to do. So just know that Heather and I are here to serve all of you and we've had to set boundaries and say no to things, so we can best show up for you.

00:18:48

Heather: Yeah! So the theme of saying no will be the same, but I think our approach is going to be a little different because we have a team. Maura is helping us find these amazing guests, and so we're going to be really talking about indepth topics related to boundary setting with experts. It's going to be a little less personal narrative and a little more like practical indepth tips to help people build that tool box so they can, you know, strengthen the muscles and practice saying no and and really think about what they're doing in their lives and be mindful.

00:19:25

Sarah: We've done a lot of background work to ensure that the people that are coming on, they are educated in, in their field, and so we want to make sure that we're giving you professionals and people that have lived through things, but then also have the educational background.

00:19:44

Heather: Correct, let's talk about some of the topics we're going to cover. I know one you're very passionate about is how physical health relates to mental health, or gut health equals brain health and things like that.

00:19:55

Sarah: Absolutely a big one too, is social media. I think we are just flooded with social media right now and so being able to set healthy boundaries around that, when are appropriate times to use it? How do we know if it's effecting our, our mental health?

00:20:14

Heather: Yeah, another big one, I know for you and me personally, is just entrepreneurship and mental health. It's hard. It is hard to walk away from my desk at a certain time every day, because the work never stops, it's always going on, and so how do you set those

That's a Hard No

Transcript: S2:E1 "Finding the No (Still)"

boundaries and how do you, how do you navigate everything that comes with being a business owner?

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Sarah: Motherhood across the lifespan I am very passionate about. So, whether you are trying to conceive, you are prenatal, postpartum, in the thick of motherhood, that is something that I'm very passionate about and something we'll be educating listeners on more.

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Heather: Right, and then boundaries and finding balance around complex needs, certain health issues, chronic illness or pain. There's a lot of self-care that has to happen.

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Sarah: Trauma is going to be a big topic as well as addiction, addiction I am not trained in, when we talk about trauma and I will be elaborating on this more. But you have your capital 'T', trauma and your lower case 't', trauma. So trauma is not always this horrific event, something that has happened to you, but understanding that trauma is what happens within you and especially when we lack boundary setting, it can create this internal conflict, which can be very traumatic.

00:21:36

Heather: Yeah. So another, another big topic we hear about a lot right now with a lot of people, is burnout. I mean speaking of trauma, I mean we, we basically are starting year three of traumatic global pandemic. It's traumatic. It's, it's really hard, it's affecting every part of life and a lot of people are really burned-out and they're re-evaluating their lives and their jobs and where they live. And you know how do you navigate? How do you recognize burnout? How do you take care of yourself to get over it? You know how do you prevent it? Things like that and even small things right, Sarah, like even just the day-to-day small things, of just getting in the mindset of feeling ok about saying no to something, even if it's like a little playdate invitation or something like. Every woman I talk to about this, some men too, but mostly women. Every woman I talked to about boundaries, says they struggle with this, it's it's this, Oh my gosh, let me tell you, oh yes, that's me too, like every single person I talk to. So I think I mean we're going to hit a whole lot of different topics, but everything's going to touch on this difficulty with setting boundaries.

00:22:45

Sarah: And it's a lot of unlearning that is going to have to happen in order for us to learn what it is that we want, and so again, it's not always so much. I have to say no to this. What do I have to say no to to leave room for the yes that I want and, as we were re-evaluating back on season 1, one of the things specifically that I also want to provide, is we are going to be providing minisodes and really helping you guys understand, how do I find a therapist? How do I know if I need therapy? What do I do if there's, you know, a loved one? How do I approach that conversation? So a lot of these very practical tips and strategies, but things that you guys can really apply. And we're also, we're very, very open to feedback and serving you in the best way that we can, and so we would really encourage you to make sure to

That's a Hard No

Transcript: S2:E1 "Finding the No (Still)"

follow us and get in touch with us on social. We have our handle @HardNoPodcast on Instagram, Facebook and Twitter. We'll be right back.

00:24:36

Heather: And we're back, so, Sarah, let's go back to boundary setting 101 and talk about finding the 'no' daily challenge and also just a little bit more where people can get information about boundaries if they want to start thinking about it. And then I have a little idea about decluttering. So the first thing I want to encourage everybody: if you haven't already go to our website, there's resources page and the first section of that there are some downloadables, and one of them is called our 'no' score sheet, and this is little helpful worksheet that you can use. You can pin it on your bolting board or stick it in your binder, wherever you kind of keep your daily notes, and literally challenge yourself to find one thing every day to say 'no' to, it could be something you shouldn't eat. It could be someone asks you to do something and you're not really feeling it. You know it's okay to say 'no' if you just don't want to. That's OK. You don't have to have an excuse.

00:25:36

Sarah: And there's a lot of research behind this too. This is one of those, you know, brain exercises, that the more that we can bring our awareness to it and the actual tracking and then, as Heather mentioned in her journey and the score sheet also has this same concept is saying the 'no', identifying what it is and then following it up with. How did you feel?

00:26:02

Heather: Right. And at first those little 'no's' might feel really awkward and uncomfortable, and that's okay because, as Sarah said, it's, you're building a muscle, you're developing a skill and it's not always going to be elegant at first. I mean that first year when I was saying 'no' to people, I kind of stumbled and fell. I insulted a couple of people, hurt some feelings. I mean, it's just I was learning, you know, and I had to give myself grace and say, well, okay, I could have done that better, but now I know.

00:26:32

Sarah: And sometimes in our mind, we think it's much more of a big deal than it actually is, and so then also being able something that we may have been anxious or worried or scared or nervous about, we recognized 'Wow' like that really wasn't as big of a deal as we thought.

00:26:49

Heather: So this little score sheet has little places for you to write them in. You know the the day of the week, what your 'no' was, how you feel. It also has sort of little lists of types of 'no's' and ways to say 'no'. But you could also keep track if you have a planner you write in or if you have a little tracker app on your phone. There's lots of habit tracker things. However you do it, just try to find one thing to say 'no' to, and I'm going to give you a little secret that I haven't really told anybody about of one of the ways I made myself say 'no', even when I was uncomfortable. I have two friends and I really admire and respect them and they're very good boundary setters. And so when I was in a situation where I was like, I feel like in my gut sick thinking I'm going to say 'no' about this, I would say: well, what would they do? What would so and so do? If she was in my situation I don't think she'd have a problem saying 'no', she'd stand-up for herself, and I was like: well, okay, if she can do that, I

That's a Hard No

Transcript: S2:E1 "Finding the No (Still)"

can do that. I don't know if there's a psychological term for that, but it was kind of getting outside of myself and realizing you know other people can do this. If they can do it, why can't I do it?

00:28:03

Sarah: And it's externalization, so externalizing it.

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Heather: Is that what that is? ok.

00:28:07

Sarah: Yeah, and what you can do, and if you do, listen back to season one. I talk about this, but I have a shitty committee that meets in my head.

00:28:20

Heather: Yes! The shitty committee is back!

00:28:20

Sarah: And then I have my positive posse. And so you can create these kind of characters and you know someone who is really good at setting boundaries and is really empowered. There's a technique called the empty chair technique, and basically you can talk to that person and so you know, asking them for advice, what would they do. But just again, bringing your awareness to that pattern of thinking. Is this pattern of thinking serving me, getting me closer to those yes' to where I want to be? Or is this pattern of thinking actually making me feel paralyzed? Or it's debilitating.

00:29:02

Heather: Do I resent it? Do I resent? Am I going to resent doing this thing that I said yes to, or am I agonizing, laying awake all night, wondering, "why did I say yes to that thing?" and "I really don't want to do it", and you know you have to listen to your gut.

00:29:17

Sarah: And I also love, I tell clients this all the time: play out the movie, just play it out without judgment, without criticism. Play out what the movie would look like if you did say 'no' to that thing. What could that look like and how would you handle that? What if you went against what it is that you want? How would that feel? What would that look like?

00:29:39

Heather: Yeah, and you know, I've had a lot of conversations lately with a lot of people relating to the COVID situation and the boundaries they have to set, and you know family members resenting them. I've, I've even encountered a little bit of that and it's hard. It's hard to navigate some of this stuff and one of the things I remember saying to someone recently was like: well, if someone is mad at you because you're choosing to take care of your family and protect yourself, and they're mad at you, is that reasonable? Is it reasonable for them to be mad at you for that? So you have to learn that sometimes people aren't going to like when you say no. I mean one of the things I came to terms with as a business owner is like every day, no matter how nice I am, how accommodating, how fast, how hard I work, someone's going to be still waiting for something from me or mad at me and I can't really

That's a Hard No

Transcript: S2:E1 "Finding the No (Still)"

control that. So it's learning to just be OK with saying 'no', and that's why you have to do it every day. You have to build that muscle.

00:30:40

Sarah: Exactly, and I don't know about you, but 'no', I mean it's two letters, it's one word, and so often we think these simple things should be easy. Simple doesn't mean easy, but we can get to a place where it doesn't feel so intimidating. So Heather, I am curious because you shared a tidbit with me that I have started to apply in my own life.

00:31:08

Heather: Oh good!

00:31:08

Sarah: And I know we've talked a lot about again these multiple tabs open in your head that this physical clutter can lead to mental clutter. So will you share your your hack?

00:31:22

Heather: Well, let me let me back up for a second, so I was feeling really burned-out and over stimulated with just this barrage of stuff coming at me all the time. So I've severely limited my social media, severely limited my news media to a very specific amount of time and where I get that information from, because I just was feeling and correct me, if I'm wrong, Sarah, I was just feeling really, I think, burned-out well like overstimulated, like just too much coming at me and I couldn't handle it. Is that burnout?

00:31:53

Sarah: Well, I'm going to pause for a second any time that you are feeling an intensified emotion. So if you think of emotions like a thermometer, the more heightened our emotion, the hotter our temperature. It's like our check engine light is going off.

00:32:08

Heather: Yeah!

00:32:09

Sarah: So I really want you to honor that feeling, over stimulation is so real. Overwhelm burnout, so check engine light goes off and then do a brain dump or just identify what's underneath the hood.

00:32:26

Heather: Yeah, what's stressing you out? You know? So, as you can tell, Sarah has all the theoretical academic knowledge and I'm like: what are you stressed out about anyway, so I really identified, I was just getting too much stuff and a lot of it was coming via email, and so I saw this little tip and I tried it and it's just so easy. So basically go into your email, go into the search bar and search on the word unsubscribe.

00:32:54

Sarah: You guys I did this.

00:32:57

Heather: And it's incredible right you're like holy cow. How was I subscribed to all these different newsletters?

That's a Hard No

Transcript: S2:E1 "Finding the No (Still)"

00:33:02

Sarah: I just didn't even know that you could search unsubscribe and then all of these things that somehow subscribe to just show up.

00:33:11

Heather: Right, like every shoe store target, everything from way back like it's amazing, they just clutter up your email. So, so once you search on unsubscribe and they're sitting there, you just start at the top and you know, DSW shoe warehouse, whatever you open up, that first one, scroll down to the bottom, click on subscribe and then delete all those DSW shoe warehouse.

00:33:38

Sarah: This will be on your 'no' tracker.

00:33:40

Heather: Right.

00:33:41

Sarah: I'm saying 'no' to subscribing.

00:33:44

Heather: And it can be, I mean, when you see how many there are, it can be daunting and you're like 'This is going to take me hours'. Honestly, I spend five minutes a morning. I have like a little routine. Where I come, I have my coffee, I sit-down I open the New York times, I do the mini crossword, do the the word bee. I spend five minutes deleting emails and unsubscribing from emails and then I'm just like slowly cutting down that volume of stuff.

00:34:10

Sarah: And I love that you said five, because as you guys continue to hang out with us, I am all about using my hand as a tool.

00:34:20

Heather: Yes, she is!

00:34:20

Sarah: and so, even if you can't do five minutes, unsubscribe to five things.

00:34:27

Heather: Yeah, yeah, it's it just takes a few minutes and then it's like you're you're doing something proactive, right, instead of just ignoring. I guess one of my things I've identified is I avoid conflict or avoid problems, but then the stuff's just accumulating and getting bigger and bigger and bigger and you end up having a, you know, a more traumatic situation in the end. So yeah, I'm really working on that and so I'm trying to think of. You know, what are the proactive things I can do to kind of declutter my brain, and so that's my little tip.

00:35:01

Sarah: And this could also be something that you do in regards to unfollowing people on social media. If you're noticing that you're again check engine light is going off. I'm not feeling great when I'm you know, seeing this content. Do a quick audit of what are things in your life? Are their contacts in your phone? Are there, you know handles on social media?

That's a Hard No

Transcript: S2:E1 "Finding the No (Still)"

You know, are there pieces of clothing? Whatever it is. That is just not, I don't want to use Maria Kondo's ya know, does this spark joy?

00:35:32

Heather: Spark joy, yeah.

00:35:34

Sarah: If it's, if it's not in alignment with what you want right now, and you have permission to change your mind, start with five things. So, speaking of social media, I have been asking followers to share some of their questions for our podcast and we've gotten some really, really great questions. I would love to take a few minutes to answer some of those.

00:36:01

Heather: Yeah, thank you for doing that, Sarah and and listeners, part of our plan for this season is to be much more interactive. We're here for your questions. We want to bring you information that you really want to hear, so keep sending us questions, whether it's through social media or through our website. We want to hear 'em, so here's one: how do I navigate an argument with my spouse when his immediate reaction is avoidance? oof.

00:36:30

Sarah: That's a tough one, that's a really tough one, but it's also very common. So I have extensive background in marriage and family therapy. I am trained in couples work and this idea of this pursuer/distancer dynamic. The framework comes from John Gottman, who he provides research-based approach to relationships. You can always look him up, but basically this is not uncommon. What happens is that oftentimes are upbringing, we learned this growing up from our childhood, and so if you're noticing this dynamic of I'm constantly pursuing, and then there's avoidance or there's distancing. My encouragement is to just really use 'I' statements to when the timing is right we want to ensure, as I talked about earlier, our emotional temperature when emotional temperatures are heightened, this is not a good time to have a conversation, but it is important to also not feel dismissed or that your needs are being minimized, because that can absolutely lead to resentment. So my encouragement, if you're noticing there is a topic of conversation that you want to have in your spouse is not being attentive, you can actually write them a letter. You can write to them on what it is that you want to say. You can also sit-down with them and just let them know. Listen I, again, using those 'I' statements, I just want to bring to your attention something that has been bothering me. This is a topic that is difficult to talk about, however, I want to continue to grow together. It's important that we use also a lot of that 'we' language so that we can remember when a conflict is arising, we are to work together rather than against each other. Any time that you use the language of 'you'. "You keep walking away", "you keep doing this", "you're not doing that" automatically, it creates a threat response to the other person, and that is then when they go into that fight, flight freeze or fawn response, and so we really want to be intentional with the way that we're delivering this information, so that it is received. But again, you know, just to keep it simple, as simple as possible, recognizing what's happening inside of you when your significant other is being avoidant, allowing your emotional temperature to lower, and then using some writing. There is so much research and you have to write it out to get it out. It can also help you to navigate the language that you want to use. Again, when I talk to couples about this, they're

That's a Hard No

Transcript: S2:E1 "Finding the No (Still)"

like, oh my gosh, that feels like so much work and in the beginning it can feel like a lot of work to have to do that, but the more that we can exercise that muscle and practice that, it's going to start to come more naturally.

00:40:05

Heather: You know, I learned a lot from you last season. You talked about emotional temperature and recognizing that, knowing when to put a pin in it, come back and use those 'I' statements. I've used that worksheet that's on our website. A couple of things I'd love for you to elaborate on: Fawn response. I've heard fight, flight, freeze. I've never heard Fawn, so I'm very curious about that. One of the things I've done is when temperature was high. I said: let's let's come back to this. I want to talk to you about it tomorrow or whatever. I would sit-down and write it out and I didn't necessarily then hand the letter over or read it verbatim, but it just helped me organize my thoughts and also just kind of like dump the anger out.

00:40:49

Sarah: Absolutely!

00:40:51

Heather: And just get it out somewhere, and then, and at least then, I could clarify what is the problem, what is it I need so, that I was calm and I actually had kind of thought through the issue before opening my mouth.

00:41:03

Sarah: Absolutely, absolutely so, I just want to very briefly share the brain and body connection. So what happens when we get triggered is it activates our amygdala, a part of our brain that it's almost like a fire siren is going off. So if we are having a conflict and we're feeling triggered, our amygdala goes off. When our amygdala goes off, it then sends signals to our prefrontal cortex, which is all of our executive functioning. So our rationale our reasoning our problem-solving that all shuts down. Amygdala goes off our prefrontal cortex that shuts down, which then disregulates our nervous system.

00:41:51

Heather: Our physical response, yeah.

00:41:54

Sarah: Exactly, and so not only is our brain not able to rationalize and reason, but then our sympathetic nervous system is completely disregulated, and so that is then when we go into, there's a lot of different uses of this, some people call it the anxiety response, trauma response, threat response, but we are disregulated. We then go into that fight, flight, freeze, research has recently coined a new response as fawn.

00:42:29

Heather: oh okay.

00:42:30

Sarah: Which is a people pleasing tendency.

00:42:31

Heather: Ding Ding Ding Ding! Then that's why I was like: wait a minute, tell me more.

That's a Hard No

Transcript: S2:E1 "Finding the No (Still)"

00:42:38

Sarah: Exactly, but what's interesting is to not judge these responses but to just bring our curiosity to it. Because these responses actually have served us at different times in our life that sometimes that fawn response actually was a protective response. So when it comes to this writing it out to get it out, it is important to recognize that when we're in this emotional state, when our amygdala's going off, our emotional temperature is so hot, it's blacking out our executive functioning and then we're getting disregulated, our body's feeling disregulated. We don't, even though our tool box is full of tools, in that moment, that is not the place or time to be having this, this type of conversation. And so being able to recognize that is key and then being able to reflect, release it, and then repair and reconnect.

00:43:48

Heather: Yeah!

00:43:49

Sarah: Afterwards.

00:43:51

Heather: It seems to me, as I'm listening to you elaborate on that, that you know if you're in a relationship with someone and you're in an argument, it's still important to have empathy for the other person and understand you're both having this emotional, physical response and everybody responds differently. You know my husband and I came from extremely different backgrounds and extremely different family make up, and so his experience with conflict and mine are completely different and sometimes he'll respond in a way, and I just think that is just bizarre, but really it's not. It's just different, that's just him, and I've had to learn to just have empathy and remember why I'm in this relationship in the first place.

00:44:41

Sarah: Absolutely, and so, instead of "why is he responding in that way?" "why is she responding in that way right?" Help me understand what's going on for you.

00:44:52

Heather: How are you feeling right now?

00:44:54

Sarah: Exactly exactly.

00:44:57

Heather: Are you ok? Yeah, yeah, I've yeah, and as I get older and mellow I'm, I'm finding. You know, I've always believed empathy kind of does a lot. It can, it can carry a lot of the load.

00:45:10

Sarah: Absolutely.

00:45:11

Heather: Even more so now.

00:45:12

Sarah: This is a very loaded question, as a lot of these questions have layers.

That's a Hard No

Transcript: S2:E1 "Finding the No (Still)"

00:45:18

Heather: It's a good one, what a good question. Yeah, I mean, I'm sure we'll talk more on this topic, but it's a great first question to kick-off for the season. That's it for today. Thank you so much for listening. Visit our website hardnopodcast.com for this episode show notes, past episodes, downloadables and links to resources. You'll also find links to each of our websites clevergirlmarketing.com and purposefulgrowthandwellness.com.

00:45:48

Sarah: You guys, I love hearing from you and interacting with you, so please, please, please, reach out to us on social. We are @HardNoPodcast on Facebook Instagram and Twitter.

00:46:04

Heather: Yeah, and please do us a huge favor. If you liked what you heard here. Please subscribe, rate, and review our podcast wherever you listen, so others can find us too.

00:46:16

Sarah: Thank you to our friends and our families, our villagers that I like to call them for listening and for the continued support.

00:46:25

Heather: 'That's A Hard No' is a joint production of Clever Girl Marketing and Purposeful Growth and Wellness.

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Heather: Our marketing and production coordinator, Maura Del Rosario.

00:46:35

Heather: Production support: Evergreen podcasts Noah Foutz, producer.

00:46:40

Sarah: Music by GG Riggs.

00:46:42

Heather: Until next time. Thanks for listening!

00:46:45

Sarah: And remember saying no isn't just OK.

00:46:48

Heather: Saying no is the key to living an authentic, fulfilling life.

00:46:52

Sarah: So do it, find your 'no'. Then say it unapologetically. That's a hard 'no'.