

## **E51: Falling Forward** **With NoorJehan Tourte**

**HEATHER DRAGO:** Welcome to That's a Hard No, the podcast about learning to say no and set boundaries to live our best lives. I'm your host, Heather Drago. You may think because of this podcast that I'm a boundary setting expert, but I'm not. I'm an expert at struggling to set boundaries, but you know what? I'm working on it and it is getting easier. Follow along with me as I learn from fellow strugglers and experts so that you too can start saying no without feeling fear, guilt, or FOMO.

**HEATHER DRAGO:** Is it better to be kind or respectful? Framed differently, is it better to be respected or to be considered kind? Of course, this is a false dichotomy. We should all be kind and respectful, respected and kindly regarded. But as women in our Western society, it often feels like these two qualities are at odds. If I'm at a restaurant and my food comes out incorrectly or low quality or something, will my server hate my guts for asking them to take it back? When I'm trying to get the attention of the store clerk because I have to ask them a question, how long should I stand there smiling before I speak up? Will I be considered rude for not just waiting to catch their eye? And it's not always as low stakes as self-advocating as a customer. If the first thing someone says about me in the workplace is, oh, Heather is so nice to work with. Does that mean they're not saying how strong of a leader I am? That I'm a creative contributor and run a tight ship? Will I get trampled on by my employees because I'm too nice? It's not an easy question to answer, and frankly, it's not a fair situation to be in, but it's one we all have to struggle with at some point in our lives. Personally, I set that kindness bar pretty high, and I try to help everyone feel liked and respected. Only a little people-pleasing, thank you very much. But I'm not afraid to be impolite, to be treated with respect. In many ways, our mission of preaching the power of setting boundaries is our little answer to this question, just saying no when you should and saying yes when you want to. Our guest today is NoorJehan Tourte, a senior VP brand strategist, a Sports Illustrated Swim Search finalist, and a young women's empowerment advocate. Her answer to this question is clear. It's more important to be respected than to be liked. She has made it her mission to get women excited about the prospect of falling on their faces over and over if it means they're making their one life on this earth count. With an MBA from Columbia University and an MPH from UCLA, she hopes to inspire women with her

message of empowerment, resilience, and living life to the fullest. Norja Hahn, thank you so much for joining us.

**NOORJEHAN TOURTE:** Thank you, Heather. Thanks for that intro.

**HEATHER DRAGO:** Well, we're very excited to have you on. I think our messages are very much in alignment. So let's just jump in and start with this question of, is it better to be respected than liked?

**NOORJEHAN TOURTE:** Yeah, I mean, that is my answer. I think it is more important to be respected than to be liked. I caveat that with saying that's what I've come to, that conclusion I came to as I've gotten older and as friendships have matured and as I've advanced in my career. So I do think that as we take on more responsibility and more accountability, that question of whether we need to be respected or liked matters more than what I would tell my younger self or younger children. But especially for the women that I talk to or the women that are on my team, right? They're in their 20s and early 30s and really finding their voice and finding their identity in their careers, in their relationships and their friendships. I do think you have to be respected because Everyone liking you doesn't necessarily get you to your dreams, but everyone respecting you can help you get to and achieve your dreams and your goals. And I say that without giving some kind of specific example, because I hope that in saying that someone is thinking about their drive, their goals, their dreams, and understanding that if you're respected, people will help you.

**HEATHER DRAGO:** Yeah, I know that I've struggled with this in my 30s and 40s and now I'm in my early 50s and it was this realization that I cared too much about people liking me and that was part of the reason why I wasn't setting boundaries and why I was so burnt out and feeling so taken for granted and you know all the things that we resent, right? But I was I was coming from that motivation of wanting people to like me. And so once I kind of got over that and decided that isn't what's important to me, there are going to be people who are mad at me or don't like me. And that's not my problem. That's not my problem. There are other people in the world. They'll like me. That it really made it a lot easier to say no and set boundaries and establish my wants and needs.

**NOORJEHAN TOURTE:** I agree. And, and I will say when I, and I'm still coming to that conclusion, right? I'm still accepting and understanding that not everyone's going to like me, but no one's perfect. I'm far from it. That, you know, when you, I don't know if it felt like this for you, Heather, when you get to that conclusion that it's okay for everyone not to like me, I think I over indexed or I'm like, I really don't care if you like me or not. And so I think we have to find that balance of saying, yeah, I'm not. I'm not going to be consumed with why you don't like me, but I'm not also going to actively make you

dislike me." And I think that finding that balance, because it's so great to say, I don't care. And for me, I was like, yeah, I don't care at all. But in not caring, I had to check myself and make sure that I wasn't actually intentionally doing things to make people dislike me and just focusing on myself. And I know it's like, when I make the intentional choice not to go socialize or not to go out because perhaps the folks that are going to be out are just not the, not the people or not the energy that I want to be around that night, maybe because I sense that I'm not their cup of tea or vice versa. It's really empowering to say, you know, I think I'm just going to stay home. I think I'm going to stay home and be productive or just, you know, call up some of my friends and talk to them about all of our, all of our lives things. Yeah.

**HEATHER DRAGO:** Yeah. You know, it's so funny that we're having this conversation because I think about this a lot. And so in my pile, you know, everyone says, what are you reading? And the joke as well. What do you mean? What is the pile of books on my nightstand that I'm going to get to eventually? I just picked up this book. I don't know if you can see it. The Courage to be Disliked. So this is on my reading list that I'm going to get to. So if anyone's looking for a book to read and wants to check it out. Yeah, I think there's empowerment in there. You don't wanna be rude. You don't wanna actively go out there and offend people, but you also, you have to trust people to kind of get over it. And if you can't own their feelings, right? You can't make it such a big deal or I'm blabbering, it's Friday afternoon and I'm, are not coming out eloquently. But yeah, I feel like once you get past or beyond the worry about whether or not someone likes you, then you can really focus on what's important, what your priorities are, what your goals are, things like that. The other thing I thought might be fun to talk about for a second is the difference between being nice versus being kind. Are those two different things? And I think they are. I think someone who's nice that could be very superficial, but someone who's kind, like someone who's kind will tell you, you have spinach in your teeth, right? Someone, or there's something wrong, right? They'll be honest with you. And I think that's more kind than being superficially nice. I don't know what your take would be on that.

**NOORJEHAN TOURTE:** Oh, I love your take on it. That's a really interesting, my head went to, you know, if we were to pick apart, if there is differences that someone who's nice might also sometimes be perceived as someone who's weak, but someone who's kind, I don't necessarily think that they might be mistook, that kindness might be mistaken. I know some people thought that's a saying, but I think it's that when you describe someone as nice, they are someone who, um, you know, might be a pushover. Yeah, you can finagle them to finish a PowerPoint deck at 445 on a Friday, and they'll just say yes to it because they're nice. But someone kind might know exactly how to say no to you and protect their boundaries without making you feel offended and with giving you the reassurance that this will get done. next week before it goes to clients,

um, but it's not getting done at 4 45 PM on a Friday. Yeah. So that's, that's, that's where my, and I guess I'm in work mode too. So that's where my head met with the difference between nice and kind.

**HEATHER DRAGO:** Yeah. Yeah. Um, So on the topic of being nice, how do you, or being kind or being perceived, being likable, I, you know, I was snooping around on your social media and looking at some of the things you say, and one of them is like, being nice doesn't mean you're a bitch. Not being nice, I mean. Not being nice. Let me start that over. Noah, please edit me. One of the things you talk about is not being nice doesn't mean you're a bitch.

**NOORJEHAN TOURTE:** Want to talk about that? I do. I think that goes back to this idea that we talk about, and maybe it's rooted in the negative connotation that I feel nice has, right? That it means you're weak or whatnot. But if you're not nice, then what does that mean for you? Does that mean you're strong? Right? Like if nice equals weak, what I just said, oops, I just moved my mic. Um, then does not being nice mean that you're strong, but then for women strong could mean aggressive and assertive equals bitchy or being a bitch. And I think that not So now that you've given me a great way to think about nice versus kind, I'll even evolve that to say not, you know, not being kind, maybe that we could argue about, okay, maybe that person is, um, erring on the, on the, on the definition of aggressive and whatnot. But I don't think like saying no to doing something at four 45 and protecting your boundaries to the point of, it does not mean that you are a bitch. And sometimes, you know, I find myself having to not be nice in the service of people I care about. And I'm like, how is it that I now feel like a bitch or I feel like I have done nothing but had to put on my boss hat and talk sternly, directly, and curtly to people? I feel like a bitch, and that's where that comes from. But I'm not. I know I'm not. I know I'm doing this in service of my team or my friends and protecting people I care about when I have to not be nice. And that's where that thought came from for me, that I have to always remind myself because lately, especially I think for women, when we take leadership roles in our careers, I'm in corporate America and in a leadership role, I lay my head down and the stereotype is true, where I have to think back on the whole day and wonder, did I say anything nice? Was I fun? Was there any levity to my interactions? Or was I incomplete? work mode of shutting down bad behavior or moving the work forward or giving hard but constructive feedback. And then I just look at myself in the mirror and I'm like, God, was I a bitch today? And then I have to say, no, I was just doing my job.

**HEATHER DRAGO:** It's almost like deprogramming, right? Sort of those cultural norms, cultural expectations, and just being okay with, you know, I don't necessarily have to be pleasing everybody all the time or being nice all the time. How do you deal with that

sort of inevitable overthinking that comes with setting boundaries? Like, how do you, what are the, how do you, we always say you should talk to yourself more than you listen to yourself. Like, how do you talk to yourself?

**NOORJEHAN TOURTE:** I think, so in that example, right, with like overthinking and wondering, am I just, is this who I am now? Just this, this more assert, you know, I don't know, whatever people want to describe it as. I also have to remind myself that I know my intentions and I also own my mistakes. That's how I deal with overthinking. So if something comes up in my personal life or my professional life and I realize like I messed up, I made a mistake and I messed up and I can't tell you like the kind of anxiety, the pit in my stomach that forms, it reminds me of, I don't know, like being, 14 and getting caught sneaking out of the house and, you know, my dad showing up at like the party I wasn't supposed to be at like that in your stomach, right? Like that, that still happens when I, cause I'm not perfect. No one is. And whether it's my reckless behavior or it's, you know, doing something. What stops me from overthinking is just reminding myself I'm going to own it. I'm going to apologize. I'm going to understand exactly what I did wrong. from their perspective, I'm going to apologize, I'm going to own it, and I'm going to work on not doing it again. That's the only way because I can't dwell, I mean, because I'll go down a spiral, right, of overthinking everything. And the other thing about if I have a hard day at work or I know that I've had to really be assertive in shutting something down or pushing something forward, I do remind myself, and I think everyone should, when it matters, when it comes down to humanity at work, I do put that first. I'd like to think that I don't dismiss humanity when we need it. And so I have to remind myself, I'm not going to expect someone to do something on a Sunday, if I'm not going to do it on the Sunday, I don't, I don't like to, um, I don't like people to think that I won't roll my sleeves up with them. So if we're, if we're, we're all in it for an all nighter, we're in it together. And I think those things remind me that, okay, I don't need to overthink that one interaction. I'm sure they must've thought I was being harsh, but, um, It is what it is because that same person knows I'll be by their side till midnight if needs be on a project.

**HEATHER DRAGO:** Yeah, and on a personal level too, I think, you know, I have some family members facing health issues and there are times when, as the family member who goes in to be the second set of ears, you know, I'll start advocating and that physician or nurse or whatever may feel like I'm being bitchy, but I know my heart, my purpose in that role is to advocate for my loved one. Yeah. I'm going to do, I'm not rude, I'm not yelling at people, which I know is a problem in the healthcare industry, but I'm making sure that their needs are met and we're setting the boundaries and their expectations for my loved ones. So I feel like in the workplace and our personal lives and just advocating for ourselves. We're all programmed to be these people pleasing, you

know, everybody likes me, popular women, girls, whatever. And we just kind of have to understand where our hearts are and just move forward. And I love what you said about if I made a mistake, I own it and I take action. So I'm not just thinking about it all the time.

**NOORJEHAN TOURTE:** Yeah. It just deters your day and how you feel about yourself and impacts how you're interacting with people. It's funny you said that about your family members and advocating for them. We were just talking about this at work. I'm in advertising, right? And we're always presenting briefs and concepts and creative ideas to our clients. And we were having this back and forth debate about How much do we have to, like when we've presented an idea or what we call a creative brief, how much of it do we have to explain or how much do we just let the work explain itself? Right? And there's two schools of thought that when you are trying to, you present it and then you try to explain it for your clients, you are almost overcompensating, that it's not easy. If it's not easily, if it can't be understood on its own without your voiceover and your explanation, then that means you're overcompensating or you're defending the work. But if you just let it out and let it breathe, then perhaps it stands on its own. And there's back and forth debates. I fall in the camp of let the work stand on its own. And unless you're asked questions about it, don't explain it. because that shows that that's how confident you feel about the work. And that's how confident you feel that it is strategic and logical and rational. Right. And I feel the same way sometimes in our personal lives. My mother is not as outspoken as me. She's much more shy. But her father was being honored at a really wonderful, wonderful event. And my grandfather, he was a very famous uh indian music composer and there was a magical amazing amazing musical performance in his honor recently so she was the guest of honor because he's no longer with us and she's very shy and i know how much that night meant to her and so there was a lot of press and there was the red carpet and other folks were getting interviewed, right? Just, you know, people who came to the event or people who may have known my grandfather by proxy and other people were walking the event. I mean, it's not like my mother has a publicist, but I immediately assumed that role of being her publicist. And I grabbed her by the hand and I made sure that all the right folks were, you know, talking to her because they were looking for her. She was, they were like, Oh, we heard some, you know, we heard her, his daughter's in the, in the audience. And, and I remember someone watching me and making a comment to me that indicated that I was being pushy or that I was being too assertive or bossy about the whole situation. In that split second, I thought, do I need to explain myself to this person and why I'm doing this? Because I know my mother will look back and be so happy and it would hurt her. She would regret it if she looked back on this evening. No, it's not worth the explanation. It's not worth the explanation because then it seems like I have to defend my behavior when I don't feel like I have to defend this behavior. I know what I'm doing

and I know why I'm doing it. And I just ignored the comment and I went on my way. And my mom had a fabulous evening. I, I'm with you.

**HEATHER DRAGO:** I'm with you on that though.

**NOORJEHAN TOURTE:** Like, you know, your intentions and so, um, it doesn't need explanations and well, not everyone needs an explanation for your intentions.

**HEATHER DRAGO:** Well, with that, we're going to take a quick break and then we'll be right back with Noor Shahan. Hey there, welcome back. As Noor Jehan and I kept talking, we kept running into this hypothetical situation where we would do something like set a boundary or look for respect rather than to be kind and would inevitably feel like we were being a bitch. Noor Jehan got specific even about how she felt like she had to check herself that what she was doing was for the best when she was protecting her mom. Lord knows I've talked about just how hard it was for me to say no during my year of no. For weeks, I would be wracked with guilt every time I self-advocated. But here's the thing. That impulse to be sorry isn't serving you. And clearly, for me, it led me to set less boundaries, to be less happy. But over time, it got easier. And that only came from finding my no every day and slowly but surely setting boundaries for myself. Look at me now. I'm a total jerk. No, not really. All joking aside, personal growth is a huge part of learning to set healthy boundaries. NoorJehan and I talk a lot about growing in our conversation, and it's not always easy. And these situations were not hypothetical, let me tell you. It's taken a lot of falling down and getting back up to get where I am in life. And from the story you're about to hear, NoorJehan can relate. So I love this notion of, you know, falling on your face, that you encourage women to fall on their face as long as, you know, they're taking full advantage of this one life. Tell me more about that.

**NOORJEHAN TOURTE:** Yeah, I think where it started, not think, I know where it started is my birthday in 2022, we were at a really fun restaurant and it's one of those restaurants where the music's playing, you get up on your chairs and you're dancing and you're throwing the napkins around and it's so much fun. It's so lively. The evening had just started. Dinner hadn't even been served yet, but everyone was encouraging me, get up on the chair, dance, it's your birthday. And I do. And I fell off the chair. And I fell so hard. And of course, everyone's cameras captured it. I was so lucky not to get seriously injured. The way, I mean, I still have the hematoma staining on my legs from falling on the chair. Like it's a perfect straight line from the chair that like slammed right into my thigh and my entire thigh bruised. It was black and my cat, like it was bad. I stayed through the dinner and I enjoyed my birthday. And then when I got home, I was like, I think we need to go to urgent care. And I had to film my submission video for Sports Illustrated for their search competition. And I have this, I mean, when I wish I could show

you a picture, Heather, when I show you the size of this bruise and it was the bruises as black as my hair covered my entire thigh and my calf, it was bad. And I should have been focusing on the fact that I need to be grateful that I wasn't a more severe serious danger. But of course I was thinking, Oh my gosh, like I have to film the submission video. I've been working so hard to try to build relationships with the sports illustrated editors and, and, and make it to, you know, finals this year. Um, and I decided after dwelling in self pity for the day, I said, F it. I'm filming this video. I'm turning this into, you know, this is going to, this is, this is it. This is me in the video. And that's, luckily there was so much footage of me falling on that chair. And I use that in my, in my submission video. And I said, you know what? Like, wouldn't you rather stumble living life than squander it standing still? Like I'm living the life that I fought so hard for, right? I'm with all my loved ones. I created this life. And if I don't stop to appreciate it, then what was the point of it? So this is the life. And if that meant I fell off the chair, but I'm living and I'm enjoying myself, then so be it. And that was the platform for my video. And, um, I think that I just got really excited about that, that if I could look back, there's so many mistakes, even now, like I just, I just, I feel like a screwed up. with five days ago about something. And, you know, I'm, I'm regretful, I'm upset about it. I need to make it right. Or, you know, all of those things I'm going through the process, but I'm also telling myself, you know what you're living. you're living and you're going to make mistakes if you live. But if you just sit in your house and don't talk to anyone and don't try to form bonds with anyone or don't take a chance and try to trust people, then you're not living. So we're going to mess up. We're going to make mistakes. Um, but that is so much better than just standing still because you will not, you will not get a redo.

**HEATHER DRAGO:** I love that. And it reminds me, there's this saying that has stuck in my head. I heard a couple years ago, Glennon Doyle, if you're familiar with her. Love her. Yeah. She says, pain is a traveling professor. And I've sort of adopted that as failure is a traveling professor. We all fail. Everybody fails. Everybody messes up. I've been in business for eight years. I'm going to be 55. Oh my God. And I still mess up. I still do stupid things. I make dumb mistakes. I make the wrong choice, you know, and instead of beating myself up, it's my attitudes become, what can I learn from this? What can I learn? You know? Thank you. Yeah. What was their response? Did they comment on that approach?

**NOORJEHAN TOURTE:** And no, I didn't even make it to interviews that round. I didn't like I didn't even I didn't even advance that. So I really don't know what they thought of it.



**HEATHER DRAGO:** But you got something out of it, which is even more important. I really did.

**NOORJEHAN TOURTE:** I really did. And I say that, but I'm so happy that I submitted that video and it didn't deter me. That's still a dream and a goal of mine and I still very much love that community and I enjoy getting to know those editors. And that just wasn't my time. And but I also don't think, oh, it wasn't my time because I fell or I didn't. I'm like, OK, that wasn't my time. But I really did. I don't know. It just it fueled me.

**HEATHER DRAGO:** Yeah. You turned something that someone might get into that wallow in that self-pity and oh, woe is me and this thing happened to me. And instead you said, I'm going to use this. I'm going to learn from this. I'm going to empower myself with this. I just think that's phenomenal.

**NOORJEHAN TOURTE:** Thank you.

**HEATHER DRAGO:** So I'm intrigued because we're both in the marketing and advertising world. You know, I own a marketing agency. I deal with brand strategy all the time. I personally have taken myself off social media for a couple of years now just because I just felt like it was an energy suck, like an energy vampire, basically. Yeah. And I'm so busy trying to build, I just don't need somebody taking something or someone taking energy away. And so as we're talking about comparing to others, I'm thinking about social media and stuff like that. What are your thoughts about you know, how we should talk to ourselves if we're using social media or how we should set boundaries around social media or just your general thoughts.

**NOORJEHAN TOURTE:** And this is like coming from experience. When I look back, I feel like my, um, the age group that I'm a part of, we very much were young adults prior to Instagram and then post Instagram. Like I've, I've, I think I'm in that era of people that were not influencers and then became influencers. And so we've seen both. And so when I look back, I think that whenever you're starting to have negative self-talk as it relates to social media, we might have to ask ourselves, what is it about real life that is not going right, or that there's discontent or gaps where you're feeling unfulfilled, because then you're more susceptible to negative self-talk from scrolling on social media. But the more content, those phases of life where I felt more content in my real life with my health, my career, my personal relationships, I wasn't getting sucked into negative self-talk around social media. I also felt less need to consume. social media. And so when we are in those circle, uh, in those patterns, that's when I think we have to, and I think it's much harder for younger children. I, and I can't speak on that because I do not have children, but as young women, you know, if you're in your, I would look

back and say, yeah, but if I was not in a good place in a personal relationship or in work, it was much harder for me to be on social media. And, you know, Heather, what I did, I've always had like a private Instagram account for almost all my life. And I think, you know, having a public account is part of this, like, you know, putting myself out there for Sports Illustrated, swim search competition, but then also pursuing things like what I'm doing right now with you, right? Like I've always had this on my bucket list and I was like, I want to get into speaking and connecting with people and talking. I remember when I started doing it, someone had given me advice. You need to make a public Instagram. And the first comment I said, I have so much respect for content creators and influencers. That's not my goal. That's not my talent. And that's not my goal. So how can I do this? Where where's the balance so that I don't get sucked into that and forget that that's actually not what I am. I'm a storyteller. I'm a writer. I'm I'm these things. I'm a strategist. But I always had a private account and I kid you not, I started a new role in this new year at my corporate job. Oh, good for you. And it's taking a lot more responsibility. I am now, you know, co-lead of our entire strategy group. And I take it very seriously. I'm really proud of that achievement. But something just came over me and I said, you know what? It's time. And even though it's a private account, I had about like 300 followers. I just For me now, it's a photo journal of my entire life because I posted a lot of our trips and whatnot on it. I just removed all the followers. I said, you know what? I don't know. I just felt like it didn't serve anything in that moment anymore to have everything out there or to keep consuming content and putting it out there. And it was really freeing. I feel so productive. I still obviously have this public account, but I do feel productive. And it's just been a week, but when I know I need, when it's someone's birthday, I'm looking at my calendar or it's actually giving me a lot of clarity of who are the important people in my life that I am texting, that I am keeping in touch with, and that I'm doing it intentionally. That's my word for 2024, intentional. Very nice.

**HEATHER DRAGO:** So yeah. Yeah, I agree. I find that I didn't make any big announcement. I didn't turn off any accounts or anything like that. I just kind of just stopped going on personally. Of course, my agency and we do client work and stuff. But the people who matter to me know how to get a hold of me and I know how to get a hold of them. And even if there's something posted on Facebook, let's say someone would be like, hey, I thought I'd share this with you. And then they'd text it to me. So I don't miss it. I really don't. Yeah. I picked up on something you were talking about a second ago about storytelling. You love to storytell. You love to weave these pictures. And I saw this post you wrote where you said every human should write her autobiography. They should direct their own narrative. And I thought that was really powerful. So tell me more about your thoughts on that.

**NOORJEHAN TOURTE:** Yeah, that was, um, I keep a journal and it keeps me honest and it holds me accountable. And I think that's where that thought came from that. Wouldn't it be wonderful. So I, again, we all have our goals and our visions and, and, um, our vision boards and what we aspire to. And, um, I was, I was trying to manifest. that maybe one day I'll be sitting across from Jay Shetty and we'll be talking on his podcast. And that's he always asks a question to his guests at the end of every episode. If you could make one new rule for the world, what would it be? And that would be my rule or my law that everyone needs to write their own autobiography as if like you can't you can't graduate to the next grade in school until you've written that year's pages. And and why? Because I do think you know, if you write down what happened, then you're controlling the narrative and you should control your own narrative. But also you're able to reflect in the moment that, oh, this is how I felt about a certain situation. What am I going to do about it moving forward? Or it also helps you get a lot of clarity about things that you think were a really, really big deal when you write them down. How bad is it or how good is it? So when I, when I write my journal entries, I do them. every day's entry. And then I read the previous year's entries for that same day. And it keeps me so honest. Isn't that interesting? Yeah. So tonight I'll write my January 2024 entry. I started keeping this journal in 2015. So then I go back and I keep it on Evernote. That's the app I use. And then I scroll through that day to get to that 2015 page. And I read January 12th. from 2015 all the way back up to 2024. And I always write today's entry first. Cause then I get real good clarity of have I progressed? Yeah. Am I still complaining about the same thing? Am I more excited at work? So even if I had a bad day today, but I read my entries of where I was at 2015 and then it just makes you appreciate your progress more. It makes you appreciate your wins because we always don't see them because we're living them. And I think that's why I say everyone should write their own autobiography because no one's going to appreciate your success more than you, but you don't get a chance to really sit back and appreciate it. And sometimes only when it's too late.

**HEATHER DRAGO:** What a great idea. I never would have thought of that, but I love that. I love being able to say, you know, how far have I come since this time last year or the year before? Or seven years ago. Yeah. That's great. I love it. Nine years ago. Yeah. So we're kind of getting to the end of the conversation and I'm wondering if you could crystallize some of the thoughts we've talked about and thinking about if you were to give advice to someone in their 20s, someone, a young woman who's starting out in her career, what advice would you give them?

**NOORJEHAN TOURTE:** Don't apologize. Yeah. That's the advice I give. It goes back to you can not apologize and still be a very kind person. And that is the advice that someone had given to me. My first manager happened to be a female and happened to

be amazing. When I started my first corporate job coming out of grad school, my first day on the job, and it was just autopilot apologizing. I hadn't even messed up. It was just asking for clarity or not understanding something or not knowing what a word meant.

**HEATHER DRAGO:** Literally apologizing for asking a question. Yes. Right? Yeah.

**NOORJEHAN TOURTE:** And she stopped me right then and there. And when she gave me that advice, it just stuck with me. And I wish I'd done it more in my personal endeavors as well. But if you're starting out in your career, I almost say it so that we can feel the shift. Because what happens, Heather, is for women, as we progress through our careers, you own your own marketing agency. When we finally stop apologizing, suddenly that's equated with us being the bitches. But if the young women in their careers start out that way, then there's no comparison. I was like, oh, well, they used to be so nice. They used to be so kind. Now suddenly they've become, no, just start out that way. And hopefully that's changing the perception and the narrative and the commentary of what it means to be a strong, capable, confident woman in the workplace.

**HEATHER DRAGO:** Yeah. I totally agree with that. I recently, just within the past few weeks, we're growing and I hired a new young woman to join our team. And we were going back and forth and she had questions about the contract. And she kept apologizing for having these questions and she needed certain, not accommodations, but like some nuances made to the contract. And she kept apologizing. And I said, you need to stop apologizing. don't be sorry, I actually respect you more. You're this young woman, this is your first job out of college, and you're telling me what you need and asking questions and making sure all the expectations are set before you even start. I actually respect you more and I'm even more happy with the selection I've made because you've asked these questions. So stop apologizing, you know? She kind of went, oh, okay. So yeah, I mean, I think the newer generation, they're a little bit better about standing up for themselves, a little bit better about setting boundaries. That societal expectation is just something that's very hard to unlearn.

**NOORJEHAN TOURTE:** Yeah. Yeah. And, and if we do, it's great because then every time we do apologize, we know it's genuine and it's, it's, it's merited. It's not a reflex. Don't, don't, don't stop all apologizing altogether. But yeah, hopefully we weed out the ones that are just reflexes and then they mean more when we say them.

**HEATHER DRAGO:** So tell people more about what you're up to. And I know you like to get out there and speak and encourage others. So how can people find you and engage with you?

**NOORJEHAN TOURTE:** You can find me on that public Instagram account.

**HEATHER DRAGO:** And we'll put a link to that on our show notes.

**NOORJEHAN TOURTE:** Thank you. That's, that's where you can find me at Noor Jehan Tourte. And I just, you know, I'm on there. I love sharing when I'm on podcasts with awesome folks like you, Heather. And, um, yeah, I'm going to gear up and go back out for Sports Illustrated and see if third time's the charm. And, um, Yeah, it's going to be a fun 2024. My husband and I started a plant-based protein bar company. So we're, you know, launching some new flavors. That's fgpbar.com. Um, I know we didn't talk about that, but it's like, like we said, just go for it, go for it. Whatever you're, whatever you want to do, go try it. That's what we decided to try. Very cool.

**HEATHER DRAGO:**, thank you so much for this great conversation. It's really been inspiring to me personally. And you've really opened my eyes to a few things, a few new things. So I'll be ruminating on those for a while.

**NOORJEHAN TOURTE:** Oh, well, that means a lot coming from you, Heather.

**HEATHER DRAGO:** Thank you.

**NOORJEHAN TOURTE:** I love what you're all about. I love what you share. So thank you so much. Oh, thanks.

**HEATHER DRAGO:** Okay, so that's it for now. Thanks for listening. That's a Hard No is a production of Clever Girl Marketing, my little agency in Cleveland, in partnership with our friends at Evergreen Podcasts. Many thanks to our amazing team, including Maura Del Rosario, our production and marketing coordinator, Noah Fouts, our amazing producer, editor, and composer who wrote our theme music and performed it with his band, The Big Leagues. and our new video producer and editor Kay Holmberg. You can find show notes and resources on our website, and you can find other fun stuff on our socials. We're Hard No Podcast, and we're now on YouTube, so check us out there. Make sure to like and subscribe on your favorite listening platforms, but especially Apple. Can you please do us a favor? Give us a rating and review so more people can find us and learn how to say no. So until next time, thanks for listening. And remember,

saying no isn't just okay. Saying no is key to living an authentic, fulfilling life. So do it. Find your no, then say it with me.