

Day 1 – Talk 1:

Sherry Walling - ‘Origins, Identity, and Befriending your Future Self: Psychology Hacks for Freelancers’

Ask yourself why you work for yourself? What are the main benefits? Typically they include freedom, ability to use your own ingenuity, autonomy and the possibility to find and realise the meaning in your work.

But alongside these benefits there is also a dark or shadow side - think anxiety (including existential anxiety), stress, financial insecurity, ill health and relationship problems for a start..

Your business depends on you - on how well you function using your best assets. You need to protect you best asset - you need to look after yourself both mentally and physically. Quote: “You can’t outrun your own physiology”.

You need to invest in yourself and your own well being. This includes exercising radical self inquiry (know your own story - understand yourself), relentless self assessment and finding a tribe or community of people who can support you (and keep you accountable).

Knowing your own story

Its useful to sit back and ask the question - how did I get here? What led me to run my own business?

Typically founders of businesses have some or all of the following attributes:

- 1) They have overcome adversity in their childhood (although they were usually supported by one or more close relatives)
- 2) They feel the need to blaze a trail - to take their own path in life
- 3) They are self taught and self led
- 4) They often had time to play and tinker as a child. Building skills of independence and ingenuity for life.

Archetypes

This was probably the most interesting section of the talk. Sherry pointed out that founders typically identify with one or more of the following archetypes:

A) The Golden Child

Typically having supportive and nurturing parents. Their childhood is happy and they grow up with a positive outlook on the world.

Strengths: 1) they believe that mainly good things happen in life, 2) they have a strong belief in

their own ideas, 3) they have positive expectations of themselves and others.

Weaknesses: 1) They have limited experience dealing with haters, 2) they can be easily paralyzed by criticism, 3) they struggle to listen to the opinions of others.

B) The Loner

Likes to work on his/her own a lot of the time.

Strengths: 1) Can think, act, decide independently 2) Not addicted to praise or other people's approval, 3) can trust themselves to get things done.

Weaknesses: 1) Struggle to delegate, 2) Struggle to get into the head of the customer, 3) often fail to build networks around them.

C) The Pleaser

Often raised by one or more 'hard to please' parent. As a child (and an adult too) they sought parental approval but rarely received it. This kind of person will go the extra mile to please their customers.

Strengths: 1) Great at knowing what people want, 2) well liked by customers and colleagues, 3) produce high quality work.

Weaknesses: 1) Often have a lot of anxiety over conversations or choices that do not make people happy, 2) Reluctant to ship a product or piece of work until it is 100% perfect (and as a result they sometimes never ship)

D) The Survivor

This archetype describes a person who has been through significant struggles and difficulties from an early age. As a result of overcoming a lot of obstacles in their life they have developed the following strengths:

Strengths: 1) They're a tenacious fighter, 2) they're willing to try hard things and take risks. 3) they're able to pivot and make difficult decisions if needed.

Weaknesses: 1) They're often very aggressive and 'in your face', 2) they will fight too hard or too long for an idea that isn't working (and may indeed never work) and 3) they often fail to experience joy and satisfaction in their accomplishments.

Which of the above 4 archetypes describe you? You may be a mix of one or more of the above.

Other insights from Sherry's talk:

- Don't force what has never worked for you. If something is clearly not working despite your best efforts it may be time to change tack / pivot.

- Recognise your weaknesses and work around them.
- Be razor sharp about your specific super powers. Understand what you're good at.
- Stay close to your original values and motives.
- Entrepreneurial love and parental love are very similar in the brain. Sherry referenced a paper - **"Entrepreneurial and parental love—are they the same?" by Marja-Liisa Halko** (<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/hbm.23562/full>). As entrepreneur's our love for our businesses can make us blind (Love is Blind) which causes a suspension of self assessment.
- Find a tribe. Isolation is the #1 enemy of the small business owner. Social connection and support are key to your wellbeing and success.