

“One of the things that I've been thinking a lot about, is the idea that if you don't share your platform it eventually suffocates you and that your influence isn't just for you- it's for other people.” That was John Acuff and this is Stacy Julian with episode 11 of Exactly Enough Time.

John Acuff is the New York Times bestselling author of six books, including his most recent Wall Street Journal number one bestseller, Finish- Give yourself the gift of done. I'm going to listen to this book, because I need help finishing. But today, I want to talk to you about starting. Before I dive in, I want you to think of something you've been meaning to start. Bring that thing to the surface and let's chat. In my notes app, on my iPhone, I have a “podcast” folder. This is where I grab an idea or thought, a question, a quote or some other bit of possibility and I stick it, I write it down. So that I can come back to it later. Sometimes I am listening to a podcast or reading or doing the laundry and a notion, if that's what you call an “almost thought”- is it? I'm not sure. Anyway, whenever something super small and untethered skips across my mind, I try to jump on it, to hold it still for a moment, so I can put it in my notes. And then maybe, hopefully, find it later. I don't like losing loose thoughts, because loose thoughts, I've learned are the dots that we need to connect so that they can become bigger, more complete thoughts and those thoughts can begin to make sense or maybe even begin to look like a solution. I really like solutions. But for me and my life, solutions don't present themselves all neat tidy hair combed and complete. Solutions usually grow over time. As I secure the loose thoughts that dashed across my mind while folding dish towels. Speaking of solutions, dish towels, super inexpensive flour sack dish towels are awesome. I'm actually going to talk about them in an upcoming episode, I am.

But today, I want to talk to you about the importance of starting. I already said that. I had three episodes of this podcast recorded before I told anybody about it. This is because I didn't feel ready to tell anybody yet, so I launched with three episodes. I later learned that it's a good idea to launch a new podcast with a few episodes. Lucky me! I had to have my fourth episode all done and tied up and ready to publish earlier, at least earlier for me, because I'm a bit of a procrastinator. I needed it to be published while I

would be on a cruise, so I got that done. Those first few days after my podcast was public, I felt so super nervous- all day long. But the initial response seemed positive, so I felt some degree of relief. But then, I open the notes app on my iPhone, in my podcast folder, that I had created months earlier, it simply said “February is National Library Lovers Month” and I remember thinking that I wanted to record an episode that had something to do with my “library of memories” approach to organizing and scrapbooking, during February! Because that would be such a fun idea. I found the note again at the end of February and if I waited until I got home from the cruise it would be March, and I knew I would never keep track of that bit if I waited a year. Heck, I might not even be podcasting in a year. What to do?! Maybe, I thought, I could create a quick “bonus episode”. I didn't even know what a “bonus episode” was or if it was a thing. But I didn't want to lose that idea that felt so good. So I did it. Now I realize that this is only my 11th episode, so it's not like I have a crazy long history of podcasting. But still, I'm going to look back today and here's why. In just 11 episodes, I have already learned so much. I've discovered that in spite of my not knowing all the right things to do, I've done a few right things- intuitively.

On that cruise, I received an email from Seth Godin. Not Seth Godin directly, but you know, I subscribe to his email, so I got one. And I think you know by now, that Seth is one of my heroes. I love his blog and his books. This email was notifying me of something called “the podcast fellowship” which is an online course that had just launched the day we flew to Florida to board our ship. Apparently I had missed other emails about this course. I mean hey, I was busy starting a podcast and preping and packing. Suddenly I felt seasick and it wasn't the boat. It's like it hit me right then. I didn't know what I was doing. I had known for months, the better part of a year, that I was going to do this. I was going to create a podcast. But that didn't mean I have been studying how to do it. All I had been doing was pushing back the nudges while at the same time capturing a lot of loose thoughts. And there I was on this big boat, I had started this podcast and I was learning that there was a class that I should have signed up for. This is my mentor and he's inviting me to this experience. Inviting me to come and join a whole community. The email said there are 350 students signed up. It was a

whole community of podcasting hopefuls. I probably needed to do this, I thought. I probably should have done this before starting. Anyway, I joined.

It was 10 p.m. or so when I read that email. But I left our little cabin and I went and I sat in the ship's library so I could get the best possible Wi-Fi signal. I clicked on the link in the email and I signed up. I paid the money. What to me felt like a lot of money, but I wanted in. The synchronicity of the whole thing seemed a little too obvious for me not to jump at the chance. By the way, I looked up synchronicity just to make sure I used to correctly. It is a concept, first introduced by analytical psychologist Carl Jung. Which holds that events are “meaningful coincidences” if they occur with no causal relationship, yet seem to be meaningfully related. Starting a podcast and then hearing about a podcast class led by Seth Godin, total synchronicity. I created my account and my user profile and I logged in to find that I was already three days behind in the middle of the ocean with very limited Wi-Fi. Plus, I was tired. I had to get up the next day and teach for 3 hours straight. But I decided to click through to the message board where each day's lesson would be posted.

The lesson for that day was entitled “your podcast description”. I thought, “well at least I have one of those, I'm not sure if it's any good, but I have one.” So I skipped back to the previous lesson, titled “what change are you trying to make?” Oops- not sure, I think I just want to tell stories and share what I've learned about trying to be present. About having fun and loving happy colors and stuff like. As I scrolled past dozens of responses, I began to feel very small and very unsure of my intentions and my preparation. I took a deep breath, ready (breathing deep) I clicked on lesson 2 which was called, “the magical power of starting small”. Yay! I thought. This is surely something I can feel good about. But when I clicked through, again scrolling through dozens and dozens of posts from other students, listing all of these super famous names. These were names of people that other students wanted to interview on their podcast. These were named like Brene Brown, Sir Ken Robinson, Susan Cain, Jonathan Ives, Michelle Obama, Jack Johnson. I am like, I am not in the right class! I slammed my laptop shut and I went to bed. Of course I lay there awake, for a while,

thinking, questioning and doubting. Sleep finally came and the next day and put the whole thing out of my mind. I taught my classes, I enjoyed my family and the rest of the cruise.

We returned home refreshed and of course, exhausted. After almost a week of recovery, I was ready to log back into the class and see what I had missed and if I could even hope to catch up or learn anything relevant to me about podcasting, from all of these obviously better educated, more experienced, certainly more culturally connected students. This time when I logged into the message board, I read the full description of lesson 2 “the magical power of starting small.” Here is what it said, “your first podcast guest should be the little kid down the street. Your second guest should be your sister. Your third guest should be your office manager.” It went on like that. The actual assignment for lesson 2 read, “Create a list of 10 people you'd like to interview on your podcast in order of most to least gettable. Get-ability depends on how busy or hard-to-reach people are. Your best friend is very gettable. Rihanna is not.” and then it said “Use the name of your least gettable guest as the subject line in your post, in your reply. Include a brief one sentence bio for each person.” Oh- so it's not that these people, these other students, had crazy impressive social groups or connections. These names that were the title of each of their response posts-these names were each person least gettable guest. Oh! Like their dream interview.

So by this time I was ten lessons behind. As I review the lesson topics I read “finding your voice”- “putting it out there”- “recording a Skype call”- “editing your introduction”- “introducing each episode”. I felt a sense of relief wash over me and I decided to spend an hour exploring what I had missed. I jumped around and I skimmed the lessons and other students questions and plans in progress. Many of these students were debating about decisions I had already made. Most were discussing nuances that I already knew they wouldn't fully understand until they jumped in. I looked up after a long while and I said out loud “you guys, you can't iterate something that doesn't exist!” Then I was like, add that to your notes, that sounded really smart. I thought to myself, I should do an episode on starting. Because here's the thing, I knew for months that I would create a

podcast- I just knew it. I finally grew so weary of those interrupting nudges, that I've already mentioned, that I finally took action. And I probably don't have to tell you that I have so much to learn. We all do. But you learn best by doing and when the doing comes with a deadline, as in- I've got to publish an episode every week- then you learn more quickly. I have always been a starter. For years I have said, "I'm going to invite the people and then plan the party" and for the most part this "make it up as I go" mentality has served me well. Now, I'm not saying I don't prepare, but I definitely give myself premature deadlines, which are incredibly motivating. I literally invite people to a party before I ever look on Pinterest to get ideas or recipes. So whatever it is that you've been wanting to do, I want you to do it. I have five thoughts to share with you.

Thought #1. The perfect time will never come. It won't. There will always be something on the horizon that you can use as an excuse to put things off. Your brain will give you all kinds of reasons that next week or next next month isn't going to work. This is because the perfect time to start something will never come. It will never be convenient to alter your routine and voluntarily add more to your plate.

Thought #2. I've already said it- you learn as you do and as you go. You won't always do your best. Last week was spring break at our house and I was immersed in a project with my daughter Addie. Remember on Episode 3 on "happy colors" I told you about how my mom had allowed me to redecorate my bedroom just before I turned 12? Well, last week I did the same for my daughter and it was so much fun. But it was also a lot of work. So when it came time to record my podcast I decided to repurpose content I had presented at the Close to my Heart Convention in Australia. It wasn't my best, it wasn't my freshest, but it was good stuff. I could have spent more time recording it but I didn't and that's okay. That's totally okay.

Thought #3. Generous people will help you. I have two examples. When I got home from Australia I found an envelope with a beautiful handmade card inside from my friend Amy. I'm going to read you part of what Amy wrote. She said "Stacy, I absolutely love your podcast. I laugh, I learn, I cry. I come away from each episode with so much to

think about. I hope you're having as much fun creating it as your audience is listening to it. The one piece of feedback I have is to check your audio gain when recording. I listen off my phone in my car through my car's speakers and it is sometimes hard to hear. If you just boost the gain when recording, it will solve that problem.” What?! That is so awesome. How generous is that!? Amy clearly knows something about recording that I didn't yet know. And she took the time to let me know inside a beautiful handmade card. Ok, example number two. This one was just last week. I read a comment that said “love this”. This is a comment about last week's episode “Stories.” “Love this- stories connect us like nothing else. P.S. Elvis was born in Tupelo, Mississippi. I erroneously told you that Elvis was born in Memphis and even more interesting, I have told that story incorrectly for years. I'm usually pretty good at checking my sources, but I had been telling this for so long incorrectly that I didn't even think to check it.” I am so grateful for people who listen and care enough to help me out. Generous people are like that. They will champion what you are doing and what you are trying to do and they will help you learn what you need to learn. That is so cool! You know what else is amazing- I have already had some new and interesting opportunities come my way, just because of this podcast that is 11 episodes. That's crazy! Just this morning I read an email from a woman with a super cool idea and I cannot wait to connect with her.

Thought #4. Is the thought I had after spending time in the “podcast fellowship message board.” It's the thought that I had out loud, you can't iterate something that doesn't exist. There are a gazillion little decisions that have to be made when you're producing something like this or anything, really. But you won't know how to make those decisions until you're in the middle of it. Until you're immersed in the process, until you're creating- you won't know what decision is right for you and for whatever the circumstance is until you're in it. I hope you remember that. You cannot change or improve something that does not exist. Isn't that an empowering thought?! Doesn't that make you want to start?

Thought # 5. Starting something always invites criticism. Starting something, especially something that involves any public sharing, also invites critique and with that the possibility of criticism. I've spoken before about my girl, Persephone, she is my inner

critic. She reminds me often, that I am a day late and a dollar short. That I have got too much to do and so much to learn. She certainly keeps me on my toes. Actually, that reminds me, I want to share a comment from my friend and listener Monica, who wrote to me and said “I am so happy you are doing a podcast, Stacy. My negative inner-voice is hereby called Maleficent. Her name means “doing harm” and that is what that negative inner voice does. The talking back to the invoice concept. reminded me of something I do with my son. He is a worrier.” I've got a few of those in my family too, Monica. And Monica goes on, “we've talked about how his amygdala tries to protect him.” It's the flight mode, conveniently embedded at the base of all of our brains. She says, “even when he's not in real danger (they- Monica and her son- named his amygdala Bob) and when he gets worried he tells Bob. I've got this, I don't need you to protect me right now.” Monica says, “I never thought to use that same concept for myself, but now I will.” Yay Monica! So proud of you. So here's a quote from Meryl Streep. Merrill says “put blinders on those things that conspire to hold you back, especially the ones in your own head.”

I will put that quote in the show notes because it's so good. I think it's so interesting that we like to think that people like Meryl Streep don't have to fight the inner critic, at least any more. I mean, that's crazy, Meryl Streep?! But here's the truth, your inner critic will be your most demanding faux and your most dangerous battle. I do think that we can get better at not listening to her, or at least talking back. But we all do and we always will have to fight back the inner critic. Now, on occasion, you will also receive criticism from other people outside your head. I got my first one star review on iTunes this past week. If you're not familiar with ratings and reviews on iTunes, there is a set of empty stars- five of them. And so if you really like the podcast you can fill in all five stars and if you don't really love it, you can fill in a lesser number. But one star, that pretty that means you really don't like the podcast. So this is on a day when my husband was home for lunch and I was excited to share with him some of the positive things. He asked me “how's it going?” He came home and I was writing and you know, like some people have actually said super nice stuff and so and I pulled out my phone and I opened it up and I had to remember what I click on to see it and everything. But I found

it, I found where I can read the reviews. And I'm so excited to say "look at these nice things people say" but the one at the top was this one star rating and there was a review next to it and I didn't want to read it, but I did. It says, "I was so excited for this podcast but after listening to a few, this podcast is so child-like. I feel like I'm listening to a PBS Kids morning show." I mean, nobody likes criticism and it's never comfortable, but hello!-this beautiful person could not have left me a more appreciated and accurate assessment.

I am a huge, as in capital letters H-U-G-E a huge fan of PBS. Mister Rogers- again, hello! I have even scrapbook my love for Mr. Rogers. His life story, the book The Good Neighbor is in my audible account right now, I'm about halfway through. It's a great book. I actually remember, I'm not even making this up, I remember being about 4 years old- this is like late 1960s guys- I remember being four years old watching TV. I was lying on our sofa and then Mister Rogers Neighborhood came on and it showed his face and he started singing the song, won't you be my neighbor. And I remember sitting up, sliding off the couch, scooting closer to the TV. Mr. Rogers was a master teacher and so gifted in reaching individual children through a medium, television, that is designed to serve the masses. And where do you think I even came up with this love of yellow-green, something that many of my friends referred to as "Stacy green" yep, Kermit the Frog. Sesame Street- I adore Sesame Street and so do dozens of other talented, mature adults, who have made cameo appearances over the years. I mean, who wouldn't want to be a part of Sesame Street? Girls, guys, people- anytime you want to compare me, little Stacy, to high quality programming for young, curious minds, please do! This review nailed it. And it reminded me that the 12 year old girl in my 50-something body is alive and well. And I am proud of that. You can expect to hear more from her. I say embrace the criticism and let it help you. I know that seems a little counterintuitive, I know. I know you've heard they're supposed to ignore the critics just don't listen, or do thought work that helps you put it in the right perspective, but I think differently. I think use criticism to get really good at honing your message and solidifying your brand. I **am** childlike, and if you don't like that, you probably shouldn't listen to my podcast. Isn't that awesome that I know that after 11 episodes.

There was a meme floating around Instagram this week that several of my friends posted to their stories. It was a reminder that you can't please everyone. Here's the deal you don't really want to. I mean sometimes we forget and we think that we do, but we don't. I've always loved the advice that Seth Godin shares to his influencers, which we all are. What we want to do is create, listen to this, the “smallest viable tribe of friends and followers who love and appreciate what we do. You create a tribe by showing up.” has Jon Acuff said in the beginning of this episode “your influence isn't just for you, it's for other people. Sharing your platform, your approach, your product, your passion, your project, will attract a tribe. When you find your tribe, take care of them, serve them, encourage them, celebrate them.” Aesop probably said it best, “if you try to please all, you please none.” followed by Aristotle “there is only one way to avoid criticism, do nothing, say nothing and be nothing. Be yourself, everybody else is taken.”

Check it out, I got this message this week through speakpipe and now is a perfect time to share it. “Hi Stacy- this is fancyscrapper- I just want to say thank you for this podcast, that you bring to our community of memory keeper's- memory makers, memory keeper's- your unparalleled enthusiasm is so refreshing in a world where people are just busy about business and kind of miss out on some of the joy and I think when you're a memory keeper, you focus a little bit more on the joy because those are the things we want to hang on to and come back to again and again. So, thank you for being you and bringing that aspect into our creative community. You make our community a better, happier, more joyful place with your contribution. Have an excellent day!” Okay, seriously thank you fancyscrapper, you're super generous and you're definitely in my tribe.

It has been so fun and curious for me to continue poking around the podcasting fellowship class, because most of the students are still deliberating. They're asking opinions, they're sharing what they heard or read, they're researching the best options and they are moving forward, but I'm publishing my 11th episode. Isn't that cool?! I decided to start without having all of the information and without knowing everything I

probably should have known. I am not better or smarter or more knowledgeable than any of these people. I am definitely not doing everything right. I still don't know exactly how to see how my podcast is even doing. There are ways of tracking this, you know. I just don't know yet exactly how all of that works. And I will want to find out someday soon. But guess what I am, I am now more experienced as a podcaster, than most of the hundreds of students that haven't started. I am. I am not a podcasting expert, not by a long shot. But I have podcasting experience. I am telling you, starting is magical! Starting is the key. Arthur Ashe says it this way "start where you are, use what you have, do what you can." I read that name and I thought "why does Arthur Ashe sound familiar?" So I looked it up. Arthur Robert Ashe Jr was an American professional tennis player who won three grand slam titles. Ashe was the first black player selected to the United States Davis Cup team and the only black man ever to win the singles title at Wimbledon, the US Open and the Australian Open. He retired in 1980. I think he knows what he's talking about.

Okay- starting to wrap up. As fun and confetti as all of the sounds, starting does require effort- consistent, committed effort. And when the honeymoon is over and you decide to keep going, you have to keep going. What are you going to do instead? What are you going to miss out on by not giving it a go- a really good intentional and focused go. Who knows, this may be your thing and that's so exciting to find out.

Remember thought #1- the perfect time will never come. You are going to need a deadline and I want to help you create a deadline. So let's do it right now, as long as you're not driving. I want you to open up the calendar on your smartphone or open up your planner or walk over to the calendar hanging on your wall and I want you to pick a day that you will start that thing that you have been wanting to start. It doesn't matter what it is. Circle that day in red or create an event and then set some reminders and decide right now that what you need to do is begin. What can you do today in order to be ready for the starting line that now has a deadline. It's a starting line that is a deadline.

When I was in high school, in my senior yearbook, they invited us to write a little paragraph of life goals and dreams. I remember sitting in the cafeteria with my good friend and we are laughing and kidding about it and kind of writing our list. And I had this thought that I want to run a marathon and I put it in there and they published it at the back of the yearbook in 1983. I'm telling you right now that maybe 15 people read that little synopsis of what Stacy Hall wanted to do right after she graduated from high school. But I knew it was in print, I knew I wanted to do it. Then lots of years went by, I was approaching 40 and I had a bunch of kids and a busy magazine to run and there was never going to be the perfect time for me to decide to run a marathon. I mean I was a jogger. I could knockout three miles, three or four times a week. But a marathon?! But I decided I needed to do it, so I got online and I found a marathon on a Saturday, eight months from then and I circled it and I called my sister and I said are you in and she said "yes!" and the minute we did that then guess what became important the next day? It became important for me to start jogging and to start jogging farther and to get some better shoes and my brain immediately responded and began to put necessary tasks and milestones in order so that I could show up at the starting line on September 18th. Now, will it be easy? No! Will there be hills? yes! Will you have to stop and walk a bit? Of course! Will you finish? Most likely. Will you be sore and exhausted? You bet! Will you ever regret making the commitment to do it- to start- to show up at that starting line? Never!!!

I have one more story related to the marathon. My sister and I got to the starting line on that day very early in the morning and I immediately spotted two women who looked super svelt. They were in shape, they had on the coolest running shoes, they had on the coolest running outfits, they had a towel and water bottle and a big bag. I just was like, "dude, they know what they're doing. We're going to just watch them front off ahead of us. Then the other person that I thought that was so cute with this probably 75 year old grandpa looking guy and he was there with other people around him and I thought "that is so cute, grandpa has come to run the first little bit of the marathon with someone in his family." So, eventually it's time and we all line up and the gun goes off and we start running. At six or seven miles, Darcy and I are just you know cruising along at our

little pace and guess who we see just up ahead? The two girls. And they're walking, which is totally fine. But we passed them up. Then I'm probably like mile 22 and I'm in so much pain, I didn't know you can create in your body. And I hear this really steady and kind of uneven, I could sure hear these footsteps and I was too tired to look behind me. I just kept running. Then sure enough, those footsteps came right up behind me and went right by me. As he passed me, the cute grandpa, the 75 year-old grandpa said "keep going, you can do this! It will be worth it!" I saw him at the finish line and they went up to him and I said "who are you? I'm Stacy, this is my first marathon. Is this your first marathon?" He said, "oh heavens no, this is like 275- I pretty much run a marathon every other weekend. It just keeps me in shape" What?!?

You cannot judge a book by its cover. You cannot look at someone next to you or across the room and compare yourself to them. You can't. All you can do is show up at the starting line and do your best. That's that's it-that's all I have to say. The most important step in all of this is the first step. I challenge you to do it. Take the first step. You have exactly enough time. Thank you so much for listening! I will be back next week and you know what- I need your help. I'm working on what I think will be a fun episode dedicated to little life hacks. Little things that you do that make life better or easier. So if there's something, whether it's at home or at work, something you do to create more time for yourself or less hassle or just a happier and healthier environment around you in your home, for your family, I want to hear about it. I want you to use the orange speak button that's in the show notes for this episode and all episodes. I want you to use that button to record your life hack and send it to me. Don't make it too long, like 30 seconds to a minute, tell me what you do. And I am excited to compile several of those and share them on an upcoming episode. See you next week!