



Episode 22

**How life experience and
mindset impact your
design business**



**Maria: [00:00]**

What are the words people use that come to you that, you know, when they are needing to work on their mindset? Do they understand something that's happened in the past?

Keri : [00:14]

No. People come to me and they have client problems. They have business problems. They have money problems. And what they don't understand is those are all mindset problems. It's not you against your client. It's not you against your bank account. It's not you against your business. It's you against you. And so every problem in your business that you are experiencing right now can always be traced back to your mindset and your thoughts about those things.

Intro: [00:22]

Welcome to the Designer Discussions podcast. Tune in each week where we discuss marketing, branding, PR and business advice for design professionals.

Maria: (01:01)

Hi, and welcome to Designer Discussions today. We're talking with Keri Peterson of KP Spaces and Design and Thrive Coaching. So, Keri, as a designer, I love to go meet with clients and like, whenever I meet them, I just really want them to like me and want to work with me. And I get to see their project, and I can picture it in my head and I start thinking, wow, this could really be cool. This would be a great portfolio piece. This would be a project that I could really grow my business off of, and I'm so excited to work with them.

**Maria: [01:33]**

And then I get back into the office and putting together the contract. I'm going off of a budget that they gave me and we're getting everything together. But then after I start working on the project, I start to realize that I can't give them everything that they really want for that budget. But I don't feel like I can go back to them about it. And then I start wondering if the timelines I gave them aren't quite right and their expectations are wrong. And I just start seeing that I'm having all these problems with these clients. And I don't know if I'm picking the wrong clients or if I'm taking on the wrong project. I just can't figure out what is going on.

Keri : [02:14]

Okay, great question. I would say that I would say to you, is that the first thing you said to me is I want my clients to really like me, and that is never, ever your job to be like your job is to be a trusted adviser who are going to get your clients from where they are to where they need to be. It is not to be like it is to be professional and trusted and to give them your best advice. So anytime you're working on, you want somebody to like you, that is a form of manipulation. So you are manipulating your clients to sign an agreement, you to get to work with you. But you are not going to be able to deliver what you said you were going to deliver. So that's where it all starts. And that's where it all goes wrong is that you have to decide I am going to present them my design process, realistic budgets and realistic timelines. And I'm going to give them the opportunity to say no. And that is okay, because there's going to be another client that will adhere to your processes, your budgets and your timeline. But you're not giving them the opportunity to say no because you skewed the project, the budgets and the timeline to fit what you think that they would want. And you actually don't even know because you didn't give them a chance to say yes or no.

**Keri : [03:33]**

Right. So it could be that if you presented a bigger budget in the beginning, that was more realistic, they would have said, okay, because you are the trusted adviser in this situation, right? So it all comes back to you. It all comes back to telling the truth, being open and honest with your clients about what they should expect and giving them the opportunity to say yes or no.

Jason: [03:55]

I love that we actually had Joyce on, and she had talked about sales. And one of the things that she had mentioned is that get the know out of the way. It's okay to say no. It's okay. So for the newer designers that are out there, how do they get past that mental block of the no? Because it's hard once you're new and you're having to present your services to hear the no, how do you get past that mentally?

Keri:[04:25]

Well, so you have to decide what no means, right. So if no means a fail for you, and that's always going to feel that. But when I'm coaching designers and they get to know because they presented a realistic budget and a realistic timeline, that's a win, right. Because they stood up for themselves. They presented themselves in an honest and open way, and they got a note. And that's okay. And the worst thing about a note is it's going to feel awkward and uncomfortable for a few minutes, and then that feeling is going to pass and no one's going to die and nothing's going to explode. And then we can move on to the next client. We're so afraid of feeling awkward and uncomfortable in life in general, which is why we avoid our feelings, which is why we eat and drink and scroll through Instagram. Right. We want to disassociate from that. It is okay for somebody to tell you no. And it's okay to feel bad about that and process that and then to move on. So I say no as a win.

**Jason: [05:25]**

I love that. And honestly, I wish I had you in my career about ten years ago.

Keri:[05:35]

I wish I had you in my career ten years ago, I would have been great.

Jason: (05:41)

Because it would have helped me, because one of the things is when I heard know the first time I was like, Well, what did I do? But then now I've earned if I hear nothing, that's perfect. So you don't have to now waste my time me trying to follow up with you over and over and over again because you're not interested. Now, I need to spend my time on someone else that is interested in what I have to offer. Yes.

Keri: (06:03)

Because when you make it so everybody says yes to you, you're really missing the opportunity to work with clients that are a hell yes. That are so in with you. Right. And so don't fill up your schedule with people you had to manipulate to say yes. Right. Then your schedule is full. You got to open it up, get all the knows out of the way. You can still use the schedule of people that are going to be the dream client, the aligned client, the one that like the soulmate client. Right. So we have to get through a lot of notes to get there. And that's perfectly normal. And it's a great thing.

Maria: (06:38)

I feel like so much of what I was taught as a teenage girl. You got to be nice to everybody. You've got to be friends with everybody. People really need to like you so that you can be popular. Then when I went into College that I could work well with a team, I could work well with anyone. I could keep projects pushing through no matter whom I was paired up with. Then I'm putting together my resume. I'm applying for design jobs. I'm going to want as many YESS out of that as possible.

**Maria: (07:07)**

So I feel like there is so much of this that is building up that is a behavior that I have been taught that I am seeing in design that's actually causing some of my problems. How is this impacting me as a business person?

Keri: (07:24)

Yeah, I agree with you. And I would say it goes back even further than that. It's just into childhood, especially if you were taught that success means that you are a good girl, right? And that you don't disappoint people and people are happy and you are a people pleaser. You're mitigating other people's feelings so that everyone is okay. That is going to run its way all the way into your business, and you're going to be that same person. Please be that same person that sticks their head in the sand about problems because confronting them means conflict, and it may mean chaos. And we want to do everything we can to make everything seamless and smooth and everybody is happy. But again, that goes back to the manipulation part of people pleasing is just another form of manipulation. And so we're never being our true selves. We are never giving our clients the actual product and the process that they deserve because we're just trying to be so good and being good never really got me anywhere to be honest.

Maria: (08:32)

So then the next thing I like to do is do like a practical application where I say something like I always feel like my clients. I can't come back to my clients and ask for more money whenever there's a budget. Sometimes I feel like my clients are setting the budget for me, and then I'm not able to successfully execute the quality of project I want to execute for them. Or I feel I'm totally limited by whatever it is, but I can see how I got here. I don't know if I just didn't see the red flag.

**Keri: (09:04)**

Well, my takeaway would be, yes, you did see the red flag. We always see the red flags. We just chose not to see them. We put our head in the sand about them thinking that, oh, it'll be okay or it'll work out all along. Our intuition is telling us this is not going to work out. And I think, too, that all of our client problems, they were usually our fault. We don't have bad clients. We have clients that we should have never hired in the first place or should have never hired us. And then we have great clients that were screwing up because of us because usually the designer needs to take all accountability, which is actually so freeing when we do that, because then we have some control. We like, let go and say it's everybody else's fault. There's nothing we can do about it.

Maria: (09:59)

I think it's very interesting that you mentioned the confrontation and the conflict. I feel like so much of our job is dealing with confrontation and conflict. I mean, when you're dealing with construction site work every day, you're dealing with someone who maybe didn't show up or there's a nail and a pipe or something that could be a major problem. And I find that a lot of people who are in our industry think it's going to be fun and easy and that we're helping people all of the time. But I feel like a large portion of what we do is dealing with conflict and confrontation.

Keri: (10:36)

Oh, absolutely. And we have in our what to Expect page in our client agreement that you will not always like the news that we have, but we will always be honest with you. So we prep people. Hey, we're going to sign together for the next nine months, and I'm going to give you a lot of bad news for the entire time. But I promise to always be open and honest and transparent and give you the latest updates that I have, even though those updates might not be totally accurate.

**Keri: (11:04)**

So let's just set the stage for that. And yes, I think so many designers think that they're doing it wrong because they have problems, but we will always have problems no matter what stage in your business you are. The thing is, can you enjoy yourself while you're solving problems every day? Can you have a great attitude while you're solving problems every day? Because whether I'm working here or I'm in a corporate office or I'm retired. There will be problems every single day, and problems don't necessarily that things are wrong. It just means that's life. And so this is a business of solving problems, and we're not trying to run away from that. We're just trying to enjoy it and sort of mitigate what we can. But, yeah, always present yourself as you're going to be the bearer of bad news a lot of times. But I'll have a smile on my face. I might bring in a bottle of wine. That's okay. No one's going to die. Fingers crossed.

Jason: (12:09)

Love your attitude. Love that attitude. What type of wine? Just on the side note, would you bring them?

Keri: (12:15)

Well, I try to do a little research beforehand when I'm in the discovery called, I'm like, hey, what's your drink of choice? Because I may be bringing it over to your house several times when I tell you that your sofa is not going to be here for yet another seven months or whatever. So, yeah, I do that research early.

Jason: (12:37)

Okay, good deal. So we actually work with a lot of coaches. So if you could tell the audience, what is it like working with you? And what should they expect in terms of working with you and other type of design? Yeah.



Keri: (12:53)

So I don't have a lot of knowledge of what other coaches are doing. So I only know about what it's like to be in my coaching space. And what we're talking about today with the mindset is really based in to every single thing that we do. Because I feel like I can teach you about business. I can teach you how to make money. I can teach you about processes. But without the proper mindset, at the first sign of an obstacle or distress, you will always revert back to the current story that you have about yourself and your talent and your ability to make money. So the first thing we do is we create our own new. I call it your North Star story about who you are as a designer, who you serve, your talent, your legacy. And so we get into a lot of detail about this self concept of who we're going to be in this business. And then every lesson that we go through, whether we're talking about client relationships or we're talking about marketing, we're talking about money. It always goes back to that North Star story. What is your true belief about money? What is your true belief about clients? What is your true belief about your talents? And it's something that we need? It's not something we learn once it's something we work on every single day. And the idea is that you become the gentle observer of your own thoughts as you are working through your business. So you begin to notice what are the stories that are coming up for me as I'm working with this client? What are the triggers that I'm having? Where those triggers come from, because usually it's not from the client you're triggered by something else that maybe happened to you 20 years ago. And recognizing those triggers, recognizing those stories, be able to sit with them and sit with the discomfort of it and then tell yourself a new story. Right. And so it's really just about, like I said, being the gentle observer, being really compassionate and intuitive during the whole process. And then again, just telling your story every single day. And eventually the story comes true. And that's the amazing part.



Jason: (15:03)

I love that. And what you're talking about is mindset, which is vital because I know for my own self, I held my own growth back just by on my mindset and how I thought so with your own clients. What usually is that AHA moment.

Keri: (15:21)

What's so interesting is everybody has a different AHA moment depending on what they experienced earlier on in life. For instance, some designers may have an instance at a previous job where they weren't trusted or where they weren't. Let go for a certain reason. And they might carry that into their own business, feeling like they're not good enough, right? Somebody else may have had parents who really send you with money and never spent a dime on anything. And so now they're afraid to spend money in their own business. So there's not one AHA moment. But I would say that there's a sort of collective understanding that happens that you are worth the money and you are worth having a beautiful business and that your services are valuable, that you really are changing lives. And that's a hard thing to come through. Most of us don't feel like we deserve any of our success. And so getting to that place where you're like, I deserve this. And I'm worthy of this exactly where I am right now that I don't need to spend the rest of my life trying to prove that no matter how much money I make, no matter how much success I have, if I don't believe I'm worthy of it right now, I'm never going to believe it. So we're going to start where we are total compassion for all of our mistakes, for our current situation, and then we'll go from there. But if you don't start with self love, anything you do, it's like you might get there. It's not going to feel very good, and it's not going to feel like enough. So what do we do right now that we actually get that success? It will feel like enough. That's what we're working on.

**Jason: (17:03)**

What are some hang ups that you hear? People say that, you know, it's time for them to get a coach and start working on their mindset. What would be two or three things that you can think of? That when you hear someone say those thoughts, you know that they're at a place where it's time for them to see a coach and start working through it just like we gave the example. I want them to like me. I want them to like me. I really want the project. It'll be great for my portfolio. It's all me focused things. And I didn't think about how that client would work into my work schedule. So what are some other things that you see?

Keri: (17:41)

I see money as really the number one thing it's easy to talk about because it's kind of low hanging fruit. We all have hang ups about money, no matter where you are, like, you get to a new level and then you have another hang up and then you get to another level. But I think because we don't have a set pricing schedule, we don't all charge the same, determining what kind of pricing and how you're going to charge your clients, how you feel about those invoices or those proposals that you sent. That's always the big one for people. So anybody who's having money problems probably needs a little bit of help and coaching and getting to a new mindset about money. And I've heard it said before, how do you do money is how you do everything, right. So how you do money affects every single thing in your business. So that's always, like I said, the low hanging fruit. I would say another one is not being able to put yourself out there. A lot of people have so many fears about putting I tell people, put your face on social media.

**Keri: (18:11)**

Your face is your best branding tool. Do not be afraid. And that is really hard because so many of us, especially women, have so many insecurities about how we're seen in photos and video. I know I've had to do a lot of work on myself and being able to have confidence to get it on camera look like an idiot sometimes. And that's also okay. It's a couple of minutes of embarrassment. I usually don't faint or die or explode, and then I'll just move on from that. But we have so much confidence, and I think it really holds us back from reaching people that actually need our help. There are so many people that need our help, and we have this very unique set of skills that can help them. And even further, we have a certain way that we execute those skills. I do design differently than everybody else. And so does every other designer. You have a unique take on that. And there's this unique set of clients that are perfect match for you. But if you don't put your face on social media and you don't start talking, they're never going to hear you, and they're never going to get help. Right? So we're doing our clients and the public a disservice by hiding. So that's probably the other one to do is money and just being able to put yourself out there confidently and tell people about your services.

Jason: (20:10)

I love that because that was a hang of a lot of our own clients have is that they hate being on video. And I tell them all the time, I do a podcast, I do all these odd things, and I hate to hear myself. I hate to see myself on camera.

Keri: (20:27)

I've never posted a picture, and I'm like, wow, you look so good. I'm like, why is my head so big? Can everybody see that? What is the actual issue here every single time? And then I got to get over it. And I got to post the picture anyway, because my business and I want to get the word out so they can. And all here I come, I can help you.

**Jason: (20:50)**

So how long did it take you? Because I just say for me, it took me hearing myself about four or five times seeming myself on video a while, and then I just have to attitude. Oh, well, that's just what it is. But at the end of the day, I'm helping people. So how long did it take you to actually get comfortable with hearing yourself and seeing yourself on video?

Keri: (21:12)

Well, let's just say it's never comfortable. Like, there's a lot of things about my business that are just easy and that are comfortable, and I have no problems with it. I still know that every time I post something that has a picture of me or I'm talking on something that I will feel several minutes of shame, and I just recognized that is coming through that's happening, and I'm going to get over it. So I'm very easy on myself now. I'm like, all right, Shane carries coming at me. That's fine. But then on the other side of it, I'm going to be okay. Yeah. And that's okay. It's not a bad thing that I'm still dealing with it right. There's still things that I work on in my business every day that I haven't gotten there yet. I'm not going to be the poster child for being confident on camera, but it's not going to stop me either. And that's where my progress is. I'm going to keep going despite my own feelings about it. And that's okay, too. That's a fine place to be. And that still feels like a win for me.

Maria: (22:19)

So I'm in a lot of the interior design Facebook groups. And it really is a bubbling pot of people coming in and sharing their drama and their experiences. And I think the further along you get down your path where you start self realizing what's going on and how your behavior is impacting the outcome of what you're seeing in your life. You start to see that there's a lot of things that are posted in these Facebook groups where people think that what they're saying is completely harmless and that they are not impacting or causing any of the behaviors that they are seeing in their business.

**Maria: (23:09)**

I'm just so grateful that there are people out there that are actually helping people to make real changes and get out of these, like, thought loops where it's like, obviously that person was terrible to work with to start off with. Or it was the project of my dreams. And it's perfect for my portfolio. And I need a great project for my portfolio. And, like, even in our podcast, we talk a lot that even the dream project you think is going to be great for your portfolio may not ever get finished. So it's got to be a fun experience, and you have to be compensated for the work. It's not a solution to go at it from the hope that it finishes and that it does become a portfolio piece for you. So have you participated in any of the Facebook groups? Have you seen any of my face?

Keri: (23:50)

Oh, my God. The drama on these Facebook groups, it's like a Housewives or something. And everybody's always so shocked. How could this client do this to me? This came out of nowhere, and then everyone's like, oh, my God, that's terrible. I feel so terrible for you guys. We all saw those red flags early on. I saw you posting about this earlier when you wanted to get that project, and my thinking was like, don't take it. And, you know, you shouldn't take it either. And you did. But it's like we're all hyping each other up saying, like, these clients are all so horrible, and these situations are all so terrible. No, we're making all the situations. We are fully in control. We have full autonomy. We are making these choices all day long that are resulting in these drum situations. Interior designers of Beverly Hills that were all worked up about it's just a lot of negative energy. I'm, like, couldn't we use this platforms for something different? Can we just all post about something that happened and then how we took accountability for it and then how we're going to do better in the future. That would be super helpful for me.

**Keri: (25:06)**

I would love to go on that platform and hear other people's stories about how they switched it and made it different? That could help my business immensely. But as a new designer coming on, all you see is that clients are a problem. Projects are a problem. Money is a problem. And so then as a new designer, you take on that energy, like, oh, I guess clients are going to be terrible. And I guess money is going to be hard to come by. And I guess people are going to try to steal and cheat and take things away from me. That's the lens that you start viewing your business. And sure enough, that's what happens, right? I feel like those of us who participate in those groups have a responsibility to be honest about our own mistakes, to help the designers that are coming in, not make those same mistakes to start taking some accountability and stop being the victims in our business and serving grown ups, to be honest. So I do appreciate being on the sidelines and tuning in to the drama every once in a while. But I don't spend a lot of time in those groups just for that reason. It's just like I don't need that vibe in my business. I'm currently trying to work on my own negative stories and be the observer of those. I don't need everybody else's stories and everybody else's energies as well. So I kind of have to keep that at Bay.

Maria: (26:29)

That's awesome, because I do think that it is a very victimized group of people when they all get together, and it's hard for people to see how they're involved. And so I think that's excellent. I think people need to start seeing that there are other ways and that you don't need to reiterate to yourself that your problems are the same as everybody else's, and that that's what this industry is riddled with. Keri, thank you so much on that. I appreciate that so much because I've been in those groups and I've seen it, and I can kind of see the downward spiral that sort of comes from the group of people gathering and feeding into the drama.

**Keri: (27:12)**

Is there anything out on Facebook that's more uplifting supportive? I haven't found it. I have not found it. We have a private Facebook group in our group, and so it's just small, but really we are posting our wins, which is how we just got over ourselves that day. Like, what did we do to get over ourselves, get over our own drama and be the grown up in our business, and that's more of our focus and just to encourage, right. Like, if there was a group that was just about encouraging people telling people you are worthy and you can do this and everything is figure out a ball, even though it doesn't seem like it right now. That's a group that I would want to be a part of. But there's not a lot of encouraging it's just vomiting your problem, getting validation for what you are, you as the victim and then moving on.

Maria: (28:10)

Everybody else explaining, yes, you are the victim. I had the same thing happen to me. Yes, you were the victim. I had the same thing happened to me, and it's highly drama filled victim.

Keri: (28:22)

Yeah. And I don't blame people, too, because I do. But I can see how it is because a lot of us earlier on, especially in childhood, were the victims. We were legitimately the victims. And so we have that in our own sort of self concept and mentality. But as adults and especially as business owners, we are victims by choice. Back then, we never had a choice of whether or not we were going to be a victim. But now we are sort of co creating our own experience in life, and we have a choice whether we can walk through it as the victim or the Victor. Right. And as the victim, it's just a sad story. And as the Victor, it's empowering. People get help, lives get changed. You can be healed. And I'd much rather work on walking through my business as the Victor, right? As the main character is the hero of my own story.

**Jason: (29:24)**

This has been an amazing talk. So if anyone in our audience wants to get in contact with you, how do they do so?

Keri: (29:22)

Well, you can definitely find me on Instagram. I'm at KP Spaces, and that's where I'm hanging out most of the time. And then you can just hop over to my profile and I have some links for interior designers that talk about my coaching program and then follow me. I'll call you back, and we can be encouraging to each other because we all need it, especially now. It's a hard time. There's a lot of problems in interior design. We are up against things we've never been up against. I've been in this business 15 years. Never seen what we're seeing today. So we need to be really big on encouraging each other because we're all in the battlefield together. We're all doing this. So. Yeah. Let's be as helpful as we can.

Jason: (30:19)

Keri, thank you for your time, and we hope to see you all next week on designer Discussions and have a Merry Christmas.

Outro: (30:29)

We hope you enjoyed this episode of Designer Discussions. What was your takeaway care to share your thoughts and tag Jason, Maria and Mirjam on social media? You can find them on all platforms at designerdiscussions.com. Don't forget to like subscribe and leave a review or comment for this episode from wherever you are listening.



DESIGNER DISCUSSIONS

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