



The Music-Preneur Mindset Podcast

EP23: Stop Taking Sh*t Personally



You're listening to Episode 23 of the Music-Preneur Mindset Podcast.

Hey there! You're listening to Episode 23 - Stop Taking Sh*t Personally.

I'm your host, Suz - a mindset coach to help music-preneurs build sustainable careers in music by setting clear goals and creating time management systems that enable them to work smarter, not harder.

What is hard is being in an industry where you're constantly putting yourself out there and often times getting rejected much more than you're getting accepted.

Whether it's by fans who feel emboldened to tell you how they feel about a decision you made or a difficult client or an industry head who wants to remind you exactly how important they are, you will have your fair share of negativity thrown your way.

It's also difficult to ignore negative comments when they can be about something that's so personal to you, like your art - something that you feel reflects who you are as a person.

In order to build that sustainable career you have to be able to maintain a positive mindset and that's usually much easier said than done.

Let's face it, most of us didn't choose this route because of our thick skin, we chose it because we have a passion for creating and expressing ourselves.

I don't consider myself an artist, by any means, but as the face of a business I'm often expected to perform to a certain degree and put myself out there for the world to judge.

I've received all sorts of comments over the years that left me doubting my own abilities and/or my right to "sit at the table" as they say.

I've had to learn to not take it personally and to stay focused on finding people who do appreciate what I do and who share a similar vision/passion.

Outside of my time in this industry I've also learned a lot by working in retail. While it may not be considered artistic, working in any service industry is often a thankless job and coming into contact with so many people on any given day only increases your chances of crossing paths with a negative Nancy {or Ned}.

I learned a lot of lessons while working as a manager at Crate & Barrel, but two stories stand out to me when discussing taking things personally. The first happened around the Christmas holiday season.

I was working at their flagship store on Park Ave and 59th Street - prime real estate for people with too much money, too many people to buy for, and too much time on their hands.

It was always assumed most customers coming into our store had very little to deal with in terms of hardships compared to the people working in the store.

For instance, the only reason I was working there was so I could make money on a flexible schedule while being close to Sloan Kettering on the days I did have to work, as my father was there receiving cancer treatment.

Although I kept that fact from most of my coworkers, I soon came to realize I was not the only one working there while caring for a sick relative or simply juggling an incredible amount at once.

There were single parents, immigrants with multiple jobs, and college students with full class-loads who were also coming in every day to work.

Working during the holidays was tough. The store would be packed, merchandise would be trashed, and everyone was in a rush to get to where they were going.

You never did anything fast enough, well enough, or with a big enough smile. It felt like someone was always complaining about *something* and it was hard not to take it as a personal affront.

I remember a woman, clearly of Park Avenue pedigree, marching into the store amidst a large crowd of shoppers and demanding that someone take her right away to deal with a spotted spoon she found after purchasing a collection of silverware.

A collection, mind you, that averaged out to be approximately a dollar per utensil and she was upset a spoon had spots on it, which could easily be removed by placing it in the dishwasher.

I watched as one of our younger sales associates addressed her concerns, a new hire who was taught the customer is always right.

As it should be, but that doesn't mean the salesperson is automatically wrong. The woman's temper and disrespectful attitude was clearly getting to the young girl.

The interaction lasted only a few minutes. She got the woman a new spoon and apologized profusely, but when the woman walked out, the salesperson looked emotionally spent.

Watching this play out I thought, "Hmm, that woman's attitude about the spoon was so disproportionate to the actual situation that there had to be something more behind that."

There's no possible way that was all about a spoon and there's certainly no way her attitude had anything to do with the salesperson herself.

The girl was too young and too new to the sales floor to be able to separate herself from the situation. I totally understood the feeling, only a year in myself, I was still learning how to breathe more easily when confronted with difficult customers.

I would often get angry on the inside, thinking to myself, "You bitch, you're standing here giving me attitude about a casserole dish that isn't the right size and my dad is dying 4 blocks away."

I lost a lot of faith in humanity for a bit, dumbfounded at how disrespectful people could be, but I soon realized I was also making a lot of assumptions about the lives our customers were leading outside of our store.

Just as they didn't know the salesperson they were speaking to had an ill father, I didn't know what situation they just left before they came into the store.

In [Episode 20](#), Cipha Sounds and I discussed the book, [The Four Agreements](#), by don Miguel Ruiz. He mentioned how life-changing Agreement #2 was - "Don't Take It Personal."

Ruiz suggests you realize that when something is said it says more about the person saying it than the person it's being said to {aka you}.

It's not an easy thing to keep in the front of your mind, especially in the world of social media where people feel free to anonymously say things they would never say to someone's face, or, in the case of our Crate & Bar-

rel shoppers, a world where we're used to instant gratification and the customer is always right.

When people throw negativity towards your art or your performance of that art it's only natural that you'd take it in as a personal attack.

The truth is, and what this agreement is all about, is that people are naturally self-involved.

We often say things that reflect how we feel about ourselves, or act a certain way because of something else that may have just happened to us.

On the flip side, when we are told something, we automatically assign that comment or attitude to something having to do with us {whether it was explicitly said to be about us or not}.

The second agreement asks us to take a step back, and when negativity strikes us we should first question where the negativity is coming from and what might have motivated it, rather than assume we were powerful enough to motivate it simply by existing.

It's as humbling as it is empathetic as it is freeing.

It's humbling to realize that we're not that powerful. We can't make someone do or say something and there's more to a situation than what revolves around only us and what we're doing.

It's empathetic to realize that someone may be going through a situation that has caused them to say something caustic or acerbic towards us. To be hateful you have to first hate yourself on some level.

And, it's freeing to realize that we can feel empathy or pity for what someone may be dealing with without taking the negativity on ourselves, continuing to live the life we were living before their negativity entered into it.

As I said, this isn't an easy agreement to master, but I'd like to share a story of when this agreement truly clicked for me; the moment when I was able to digest it and start practicing it in every day life.

I had read *The Four Agreements* sometime after my dad had passed. A few months later I had contracted Lyme disease and was on medication for 6 weeks to manage the extreme lethargy and aches and pains.

I was managing the stock room at the time, but to help make life easier for me the GM put me on the sales floor, overseeing the staff and walking around with minimal physical effort.

It was August and it was the last day of our major furniture sale. The place was packed, more than any day over the holidays. We had long lines at every register.

At some point a security guard called me over and asked me to help this woman who seemed distraught about a pillow she wanted to buy.

I'm not going to lie, the medication made me a bit loopy, you may even say high. I was feeling pretty good and sailing through life at that very moment.

What would normally cause me to brace myself - a new customer with an already angry face - didn't effect me in the least and I greeted her with a big smile and the confidence that this could all be resolved rather easily.

She explained to me that the pillow's pattern was not even and she'd like to see additional samples of the same cover.

Even though I knew these cases were mass-produced and that's just how the pattern was, I graciously went to the stock room, pulled down a pile of 20 of the same cover and brought them to her so she could see for herself they were all going to look that way.

As she was looking through the cases a couple who didn't speak English approached me trying to ask where the bathroom was located.

As I attempted to point it out, the woman, seeing that I had averted my attention to someone else, threw all of the cases in the air and yelled, "You were helping me!"

The whole store stood still. I have to admit, and this was the meds talking, I came close to busting out laughing. I could not have predicted that reaction if I tried.

Mind you, if I was of my normal state of mind my heart would have dropped and I would have been immediately frightened of this woman.

I guess the security guard went on a mental break as well, because I was clearly handling this one on my own.

In that moment, I thought of Agreement #2. This had nothing to do with me. This woman was clearly in pain and I don't think it was about the pillows.

I calmly picked up the pillow cases and explained to her that I was with her and willing to stay with her until we found the cases she was happy with, but she instead screamed in my face demanding to see a manager.

Being that no one else was moving in the store, I turned in a circle and introduced myself as one of the store managers. Clearly I was not the manager she was hoping to see.

She then decided to take the original pillow she had when we met and threw it at me as she told me what a horrible manager I was and that another manager would have to come right away.

I could take a guess or two as to why another manager had not yet appeared. I was on drugs and barely able to tolerate her.

I took another deep breath in and explained to her that we could figure this out but that she couldn't throw pillows at me as that was a highly unproductive use of our time.

She then through other merchandise at me, yelling at me to stop speaking to her.

At that point I gave up and another manager approached and eventually escorted her out of the store. The GM suggested I take a break from the floor and sit in the customer service office and cover the phones while the CS team had their meeting.

Wouldn't ya know the lady called the store demanding to speak to a manager about the way another manager had treated her.

I decided to not tell her it was me and empathetically asked her to describe me to me, basically, and explain what had happened. She told me a very funny story that never happened and I told her a manager would be in touch.

While the drugs certainly helped, I sat thinking about Agreement #2 and was so thankful I had read that book before that customer came in.

Rather than waste the rest of the day feeling horrible about myself, wondering what I did to bring on that type of reaction I wasted the rest of the day retelling the hysterical story to my friends.

They all kept asking me how I stayed so calm. Again, drugs, but in all honesty I really was confident in knowing it wasn't me and that was a new feeling for me.

I told them all about the book I had recently read and how I was able to identify in that moment a deeper pain in that woman's eyes.

Jokes aside, she was clearly having a bad day. It had nothing to do with the pillows. Maybe she had someone getting treatment at Sloan that day and all she wanted was to find a pillow that looked "right" to her.

Maybe she just needed something to go right that day.

Like I said - humbling. empathetic. freeing.

I kept that lesson with me and each time I trained someone new I advised them to imagine that the people walking into the store may have just lost a loved one, may have just been fired, may have just been dumped, or may have just had one of those days where nothing seemed to go right.

We were taught at Crate & Barrel to "wow" the customer. It always sounded cheesy to me, but I began to think about it differently after that. I decided to treat it as aiming to be the experience that went right for somebody that day.

I know this story wasn't about getting up on stage and dealing with hecklers or putting a new song on display for people to judge, but being in the music industry means you're in the service industry.

No matter your role we provide a service to others. When you're sharing music with your fans, be the thing that goes right for them that day. If

you're met with negativity, understand that that's on them and the day they're going through.

It doesn't need to define you or cast a shadow on the day you're going through.

If you're currently feeling bad about a recent situation and need to work it out so that you no longer take it personally, head on over to www.therockstaradvocate.com/ep23 and download my It's Not Me, It's You Workbook to begin unpacking what the situation was really about so you can move forward in a more positive light.

If you enjoyed what you learned today, you can access all current episodes using your preferred podcast app, including iTunes & Spotify, or by visiting www.therockstaradvocate.com/podcast.

If you're looking to get clarity on your next steps, find time to balance everything on your plate, or if you'd like to learn how to stop taking things so personally, let's talk!

As always, feel free to email me at any time: suz@therockstaradvocate.com.

Until next time, Rockstar! Have a wonderful week and I hope to see you back here next Wednesday so we can get grounded to get rising! Take care.