

**Ashley Beaudin:** Hello, everyone. I am so honored to be with you and to have this opportunity to share a little bit about what it could look like to create a Gentle Business. I hope that, wherever you are, you are feeling supported, and that throughout this presentation, that you do whatever you need to do in order to make taking in this presentation feel really supportive and caring for you. If that means you need to go get a drink, if that means you need to prop up a pillow, if that means anything else, then I encourage you to do that right now because your care is priority, always.

Through this presentation, I am going to be sharing a little bit about what the Gentle Business model is, in five implementable strategies that you can utilize to help your business feel safer and kinder to you. Like I mentioned, something that has been powerful for me and that I really love to share with my clients is that anytime we're going to learn from someone else or receive information from someone else, to think about what can we do here to help us ground, to lean into what feels supportive, to stay connected with ourselves. Even if that's different or looks unconventional, let's say, "How can you honor yourself in the process of learning?"

If we haven't met yet, my name's Ashley. I am a Gentle Business coach. I help people build Gentle Businesses. I help people cultivate businesses that they can feel safe inside of, and supported inside of, so that they can start to see results in their work. I am a certified coach and a trauma-trained facilitator. Something a little fun about me is that I collect blankets, and I love hugs, long hugs, hug me, and soul talks. I've been in the online business industry since 2014, and it has been a wild ride, both for me and, I think, personally, witnessing the trends and such that come and go.

I also am autistic, and a lot of the information that I will share here will really come out of that lived experience place, of thinking about, "What is a model of business that would really support me well?" and really discovering that in Gentle Business?" I think that, for a really long time, I had a really hard time with a lot of the support around my business, that I received in the earlier years, and feeling like, "Things just aren't working for me." There were a lot of realizations that I had to come to, but, probably, the biggest realization I had come to was that the way that I had been taught business did not make me feel safe, and I needed to discover a different way that prioritized my sense of safety.

For me, at that time, I think that it led to a lot of self-sabotage. Self-sabotage simply just being things that were helping me feel safe but that, in the end, were not leaving me feeling good. It was like this light bulb moment of, like, "Oh my gosh. I don't feel safe here, and that's a problem for me, so what could it look like to actually create a business model that holds me, rather than harms me?" That really is the question that led me to reconsider what the concept of Gentle Business would become. That's exactly what we're going to look at here today.

What is a Gentle Business? What does that term really even mean? What am I actually saying when I talk about it? There are many models and approaches to

entrepreneurship. Unfortunately, some of the mainstream models and approaches to entrepreneurship can be very fast and harsh and tough and bypassing of our humanity.

Like I mentioned, Gentle Business was really born out of this desire to discover a new way. A new way to do this is because I felt so deeply called to this work. I felt so deeply in love with the business, online business industry, but the way that I had been doing it wasn't making sense for me, so I needed a gentle and kind way. I needed a way of business that held me more than it triggered me, which was a big ask, at that point, because I didn't see how that was possible. I didn't know how that was a thing, but I thought there must be a way.

The way that I really describe Gentle Business, or define it, is that it's a way of entrepreneurship where your sense of safety and your sense of care is so deeply centered that you begin to find immense ease and results in your business. You get to find that momentum that you may have been missing. The key here is that that momentum is true momentum, sustainable momentum, momentum not created out of force. I want to paint you a little bit of a picture of, "What does it look like when your sense of safety and care is really centered in your business?"

One sure way that I can tell that-- I'll use me as an example, that my safety and care have been centered in my business is, one, I can tell by my body. I can tell by my nervous system. "Do I feel grounded? Do I feel regulated? Am I sleeping well? Am I eating?" All those can be really important cues and clues as to whether I feel safe.

Another way to know if I'm not feeling safe at the moment is emotional reactivity. "Where are my emotions in the day-to-day of my business? Am I having moments where I'm having a lot of emotional spirals, I'm shutting down, I'm moving into this place of having these really big reactions to things that wouldn't always give me big reactions in the right context?" That's going to let me know that I might not be feeling safe in my business.

Another way is if I am operating in a lot of self-protection. If I'm doing things like procrastinating or trying to make things perfect or saying things like "It's not ready yet," or if I'm navigating a lot of shame, overworking, all of those things can let me know that I'm in a self-protective stance and, for some reason, I am-- or the setup of my business is not allowing me to feel safe. On the opposite end of that, we could look at it in the more feel-good sense of, like, "Is my nervous system feeling grounded? Am I feeling connected? Am I sleeping well? Am I easily accessing a state of calm and creativity? Am I connected with myself? When emotions are rising in me, can I move through those emotions, or are they overcoming me? Are they overwhelming me?"

A big piece of this, for me, too, is like the sensory overwhelm in my business is-- It effects the sensory overwhelm, and then, if there is, then that's going to really affect how safe I feel, and they're like, "Am I sticking to the sort of boundaries in place or care pieces in place, in order to help with that?" Another way to look at this, if it's easier, is, "What are the effects of safety, and are those present for you and your business?" What

I always say is that, because, sometimes, it can be hard to answer the question, like, "Do I feel safe? What makes me feel safe?"

We can look at things like the effects of safety, like being relaxed, feeling calm, feeling creative, feeling confident, feeling aware of resource. All of those things are accessed through the sensations of safety, so if those things are present, you're likely feeling safe. If those things are not present, or the opposite of those things are, then there might be aspects or parts of you that are not feeling safe. This is just a broad framework of the Gentle Business. I'm not going to go into the specifics of these, but just to give you a greater context, before we move into the five strategies.

Firstly, we want to discover our sense of safety and center it. What is going to make us feel safe? What are our integral safety pieces and how can they be prioritized in your business? Number two, supporting your nervous system and working with your nervous system, tending to it, making sure that your nervous system is well cared for, in your business. Number three, creating structures of care in your business. A lot of this could look like systems, ways of marketing, client systems, daily routines, et cetera, that are going to make you feel connected to care.

Fourth, layering support in your workday, so how are you actually leading yourself in your work, and everything from working style to motivation to, "Are you honoring your brain in the way that you work?" et cetera. Then, lastly, deepening your leadership of self and others, allowing yourself to settle into a space of leadership. Like, you get to do this your way. You get to do all of this the way that feels good to you, and that is a really important aspect, sometimes. Sometimes, I think it takes a bit of deconditioning in order to get there, but it's really beautiful when we can.

For those who are watching, if you want to drop in the chat, any questions, even, that you have with these or any one that really pops out to you, I'd love to hear it. Why does the general business model work? Well, if I have not convinced you yet, number one, it helps you heal yourself from sabotage because it prioritizes your safety. Before I was doing general business, I was helping people heal self-sabotage. We will do-- I was finding this pattern when I was working with people, one-on-one, where we would really help them heal, help them connect to things that would help them feel safe, but then the minute that they would get into their business, they would go back to those same patterns because the very setup and model of their business did not center their safety.

Number two, by centering our safety, it heals the ways we protect. Also, it helps us build something sustainable and something kind. It honors us on a humanity level, and there's something really beautiful about that. Three, it helps you take action because of a sense of ease, which gets you more results and it removes the overwhelm which keeps a lot of us in inaction, which then allows us to see more results, see what's going to work, what's not going to work, et cetera.

One thing that I want to say, is that I am so sorry if you've ever been shamed for not performing when what was really happening for you was that you were fighting to feel

safe. If there's anyone, anyone who's listening to this, and that has happened to you, where you weren't performing or you weren't getting the results and you were ashamed, I just want to send so much care to you. Okay, we're going to look through these five strategies.

Number one, deciding on a business model that holds you, not triggers you. Just because it works for them doesn't mean it works for you. What kind of business model is going to do a really good job at holding you, at centering your safety and care? Even if we look at things like, "Is it going to feel safer and more full of care for you to do a service-based business model, for you to do a digital product-based business model, for you to do a brick and mortar-based business model? What is really going to help?

The thing I want to mention here is, sit with the question, "What are the things that help me feel safe?", make a list; we'll call this your safety list, your safety pieces. Out of that safety list and those safety pieces, what business model is going to make the most sense for you? For example, let's say my biggest three safety pieces are a close connection with people, a predictable schedule, and recurring income. Then it's going to make so much sense for me to do a one-on-one service-based business model.

Two, focusing on one to two marketing streams where you feel safe, connected, and alive. The safer you feel, the more you'll be able to show up consistently. This is not where I'm going to tell you, "Get outside your comfort zone," like, "Lean into growth," because I'm just not going to do that piece. I want you to think about, "Where is it going to feel easy? Where is it going to feel safe? Where is it going to be easy to really tap into that space of creativity and aliveness and peg those to really focus on?

In a way, throw out everything that, maybe, you've been told about where you should be and what time you should post and what it should look like and "video is king," et cetera, to really discover what this is for you. Maybe it's that you feel really safe and connected when you're writing, so maybe the marketing streams that you want to pursue are things like blogging or carousel posts on Instagram.

Let's say you feel really safe and connected on video, then maybe you really want to look at something like YouTube or Instagram Reels or TikTok. Let's say you feel really safe and connected when you are nurturing a small group of people, can you look at things like doing referrals, doing affiliates, et cetera? Number three, can you income stack with recurring revenue in order to create a secure relationship with your business? This was a really, really big thing for me.

This won't necessarily feel like a big thing to everyone, but for anyone who is listening, this might be a big thing for you, feeling like, every single month, "I don't know where the money is coming from," of getting stuck in big months, low months, and it's being incredibly unpredictable. That can really elicit a sense of not feeling safe, and it can create a relationship with our business that is not secure, that is maybe anxious or avoiding, like we don't want to look at it, or we're just like, "Oh my gosh, I'm feeling resentful now." We want to just bring support to that, and look at how can we set up

recurring revenue streams in your business, through multiple income layers, AKA income stacking.

What are the recurring revenue streams in your business? Whether that be one-on-one payment plans, extended payment plans, memberships, group programs, subscriptions, products? Not all products need to be this, but I think that having one or two or three or more, it allows a greater sense of a secure relationship with your business and predictability, which can really help where we have neurodiverse brains.

The fourth one also flows into this a lot, to you, of that need for predictability. Predictability can really create a sense of safety and care. I know, for me, with someone who has autism, predictability, for me, brings me so much safety. It brings me so much care. It allows my nervous system to feel relaxed and to ease in and settle. There are a lot of different ways that I personally do this, whether they're through morning routines, weekly routines, et cetera. The deeper question, I think, is to really look at "What would help create that sense of predictability and how can you use systems and processes to create that sense of predictability?"

For example, even if you-- which a lot of you watching likely have some of these things in place, but I think it's a good example of, like, "When a client signs with you, what's the process?" That creates a process of predictability that now helps you. If you do not have that in place, what can often happen is that, let's say, this client is like, "I'm in," and then the person's like, "Oh my gosh, I'm so overwhelmed. What do I do next?" Having that process in place, that creates a sense of predictability, that, for you, you know this is what's going to happen next. Your body knows, "Okay, this is what happens next."

How can we start to bring that in other forms, whether those are centered around business or centered around care? For example, I know that one of my predictable processes is that I swim before I start meeting with clients, unless it's the dead of winter. [laughs] For about eight months of the year, I go swimming. That has been a beautiful way to create predictability. Another one could be that I know before I get on a call, that I'm going to light a candle, and I'm going to say an affirmation. That gives me a little bit of a process of predictability that can really help.

Predictability, I feel is one of the most underutilized resources in our businesses because the nervous system loves predictability. Loves, loves, loves, loves it, and it can really restore and bring about a sense of safety. Lastly, really looking at your internal leadership, how do you lead yourself? Can you cultivate leading yourself with compassion and with care? How are you, with you? You can set up all the safe things in your business, but if the way that you speak to yourself is not kind and is not compassionate and is not loving, you're not going to feel safe, you're not going to feel safe anywhere.

What could it look like to begin to explore deeper ways of meeting yourself with care, in the way that you speak to yourself, the way that you motivate yourself, and the way that you lead yourself? The biggest thing I would probably want to say here is, sometimes,

we really need to learn how. That was definitely my story. One of the easiest ways I started practicing compassion was by validating.

Instead of meeting myself with harshness or force, I would say things like, "It makes so much sense that you're overwhelmed right now. It just makes so much sense. I see you. I see that you're overwhelmed right now." Even just that validating was a really big resource for me, then being able to shift it into different levels and layers of care was the best thing ever. Oh, there are six. Oh, why did I say five?

Six, working with your nervous system to heal and expand. The thing about this is that if you've been in business a while, or a long time, like in my story, and you have not felt safe, this nervous system also needs space to heal. A lot of the work around the Gentle Business is about meeting the nervous system and meeting the body and creating a felt sense of safety, a sensation of safety in the body, not just in the mind. One of the most beautiful ways that we can begin to do this, is simply by noticing the sensation in the body, how is the body checking in with it, et cetera.

Sometimes, that can be both the biggest piece and, sometimes, the scariest piece, but there can be a lot of wisdom there, in simply noticing. I laid out a bunch of different strategies here, and what I would love to ask you is, "What do you think is most important for you?" Do you think it's making your safety list? Do you think it's tending to your nervous system, mapping out your nervous system? Do you think it's setting up a predictable process? Do you think it's creating a recurring income strategy? What do you think would be most helpful? Drop it in the chat, and I would love to take a few minutes to really stay with you and see what we could help create for you.

The last thing I want to say here is that, if you want to learn more about this, one of the resources I have on my website is the self-sabotage quiz. In that quiz, it will help you identify if self-protection is going on for you, what are the ways that you might be keeping yourself safe, and how can Gentle Business meet you there? Feel free to check out that link and take that quiz. It sends you a hefty playbook on all of that, so you'd hopefully bring some compassion and healing and Gentle Biz steps forward. Thanks so much for being with me. It has been more than a joy, and I'm looking forward to connecting with you.

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