

Episode Title: *Confidence Beyond Imposter Feelings*

Subtitle: Sitting with discomfort, acting through uncertainty

Lisette 00:07 (main intro)

Lisette, welcome to grow with me, a podcast and creative project from Garza consulting. I'm Lisette, an ICF certified coach and an organizational development consultant who works with thoughtful leaders, creatives and change makers, especially those standing at a crossroads, asking deeper questions, who they are, how they show up in the world, maybe even rethinking their sense of purpose. Each episode is a short coaching session between two people who are meeting for the first time and working together in the moment to explore a question or a challenge. Whether you're listening, learning or imagining yourself in the guest seat, you are a part of this, and I'm glad you're here.

Lisette 00:59

Welcome back to grow with me in today's episode, you'll meet Kalyani, a thoughtful, driven founder in the early stages of launching her business.

So let's begin what would feel meaningful to walk away with by the end of this session.

Kalyani 01:17

Thank you. Lisette, so I was thinking about the conversation, and something that I'm struggling with right now is bit of a self confidence issue, kind of interlinked with imposter syndrome, like I have that feeling that I'm starting my business, and sometimes I have to create the business plan, the pitch and things like that. And sometimes I feel like, am I right, or am I like, you know, doing justice for this? Am I do I know what I'm talking about and things like that. And lot of times I question myself a lot, but when I speak and when I explain, others do not give me the same reaction. They they say that they can see that I have studied things and things like that. So I don't know where this lack of self confidence comes from, but something that that would be meaningful for me to kind of explore and maybe understand it.

Lisette 02:29 (commentary)

it like many of us, Kalyani is navigating the tension between ambition and uncertainty. She came into this session wondering, why did I feel more confident. What unfolded was a conversation about imposter syndrome, avoidance and the quiet courage it takes to face the parts of ourselves we'd rather skip over. If you, our listener, has ever felt paralyzed by uncertainty, this session is for you. Here's a coaching pro tip, as you listen, notice the imagery Kalyani speaks in metaphor, and those visuals become quiet through lines in the session. Alright, let's begin.

Lisette

Just to be aligned with you, to explore why you feel you lack confidence, the imposter syndrome you spoke of, and perhaps why you second guess yourself a lot when it comes to building your business.

Kalyani 03:34

Yes, um, can I clarify that a little bit? I mean, I kind of know why? Because I have jumped my career and my experience and all of that. So that could be the why. It's more of, why am I not able to get over it? So it's more of, What's stopping me from feeling more confident.

Lisette 04:01

So by the end of this conversation, you want to maybe have that answer. What's stopping you from feeling more confident?

Kalyani 04:10

Yes, yes, correct.

Lisette 04:12

And Kalyani, what difference would it make for you to have that answer?

Kalyani 04:21

I Hmm. So if I know what's stopping me, perhaps I could, I mean, it'll, it'll just like, kind of open my mind. I feel like, right now, it feels very shut, like there's only one direction, and I'm kind of feel like I'm hitting a wall all the time. So if I, if I have that clarity, maybe it'll feel like a door that's opening the wall. And perhaps that would take me further to identify how I can overcome it.

Lisette 04:56 (Commentary)

Early in our conversation, Kalyani described the feel. Of hitting a wall in her hope that clarity might feel like a door opening. I love that image and how this metaphor quietly grounds the rest of the session as she begins naming what's really keeping the door closed.

Lisette

Opening this door, if it were open, what would that feel like?

Kalyani 05:24

I think I don't feel like I am. I am more in control of what I'm doing. I won't feel so lost. Sometimes I feel like I'm I'm navigating every day, but I don't know which direction I'm going, so it will make me feel a lot more clear and comfortable about what I'm doing.

Lisette 05:57

So that door open sounds like it would, it would change a lot. It would change a lot of what you're feeling.

Kalyani 06:08

Yes, yeah, it's something I'm struggling with for a very long time. Even in my previous job, I used to when I got a promotion, I started leading a team, I did feel the same like an imposter. Like, what am I doing? Do I know enough? And even today, again, when I'm starting a new business, I have the same feeling that, you know, what am I doing? Do I know enough? So it would give me a lot of relief.

Lisette 06:39

Sounds like you've been here before, yes, when you got that promotion and you were leading a team, yeah, and you said you felt some of that imposter syndrome. Did you ever overcome that in that role?

Kalyani 06:56

Yes, I did very it took me probably a year. I think it just happened very organically, though. I got very busy with work and, I mean, I think I just jumped into the role, and what felt like out of my depth, started becoming quite easy to maneuver after a year or so. It was also the confidence I think I received from my seniors and the leadership team. They told me that, you know, don't be so don't be questioning yourself all the time, and you're doing fine. And I think that gave me a little bit of reassurance. So you

Lisette 07:42

you sort of had these three factors happen organically. You jumped into the work and your leaders encouraged you and reaffirmed you. What else helped you in that time period?

Kalyani 08:00

I think the fact that I could achieve the targets that we had set up, you know, when I took over the role, it was like a beginning of the year for the company as well, and we set up certain targets. And when I started off, I wasn't sure if I'll be able to manage it. It was right in the middle of covid, and things were changing a lot, but by the end of the year, even my manager said that I kind of exceeded the goals that we had set. And yeah, I guess that's that's when I realized that, you know, maybe I was, I was doubting myself a lot, but things weren't as bad as I imagined them to be.

Lisette 08:48

So the other factor that you attribute to your success in overcoming this is achieving the goals that were set.

Kalyani 08:59

Yeah, maybe, I mean, yes, when you put it like that, I guess reaching the targets or seeing some results would be one of the factors.

Lisette 09:09

And how long did it take to in your role? And I know that it might vary by task, but when did you at what point did you start seeing that you were reaching your target?

Kalyani 09:21

Almost a year, because the first year was really tough and lot of uncertainty. So yeah, it took almost a year.

Lisette 09:32

It's easy to overlook how much can shift in a year for Kalyani, consistent action and quiet encouragement helped rebuild her confidence. By the end of that year, she could finally see the progress for herself. A year passed, you reach your target, you look back and what? What is it that you said to yourself?

Kalyani 09:55

I remember very clearly. It was 31st December, and. PM, 8:30pm we, we will be, did some exceptional milestones that year as a team, and it was a huge relief. And it was just like a wow, I could, I didn't screw up. I was like, Okay, I could manage to, you know, not just re complete the goals I had set for myself, but also not disappoint those who gave me that responsibility. So that was also weighing on me a lot, that was a right fit. Was I ready? And things like that. So that made me feel like, okay, I did manage to not disappoint anyone either.

Lisette 10:47

So do you like being challenged? Yes, in your work...

Kalyani 10:50

yes, a lot. But with challenges, I mean, it has to be exciting, but at first it also feels scary. So I'm, I think I'm going through that scary phase. So while it is exciting that I'm learning a lot and I'm getting to do a lot of things that are out of my depth, and I'm learning every day, it also feels a little intimidating that, you know, I have no experience or skill set of running a business, and I'm learning most of the things on the job. It's not like I have taken formal training of MBA or things like that, so I am even learning the basics and foundation of business management as I go along. So yeah, it feels a little intimidating.

Lisette 11:46

Let's, let's kind of think about what you're doing now. You said you're, you're working on your business every day. You're running your business. How confident do you feel that you are successfully running your business, zero, being no confidence at all, 10, being very confident.

Kalyani 12:07

because I don't have the so it's a startup that I'm working on, and it's not launched yet. It's a pre launch stage. I don't have the metric to measure the success part. But so far in the last five or six months, what I have managed to do, I feel fairly confident. So I would say about 50, 55% maybe

Lisette 12:39

not about a 5.5 on a scale of zero to 10, all right? And just to get on the same page, the scale is measuring your level of confidence as to how successful you are. You're at a 5.5

Kalyani 12:53

I feel Yeah, how successful. I

Lisette 12:57

What got you from? How did you get from a zero to 5.5 what would help you get there?

Kalyani 13:07

A lot of studying, a lot of reading. I spent some time training in this particular product that I'm working on. So yeah, hours and hours of studying, reading, practicing, reading lots of books, and creating, like the business plan and, you know, just trying to, just put something on paper which looks okay, maybe bad, I don't know, but I was, I've just been forcing myself to take action. Because initially I was too scared to even step out and meet vendors and talk to people and things like that. But now I just, you know, there's, there's a very there's a line that kind of made me push myself, which was, you can't steer a stationary ship. And this line, I just kind of kept in front of my work desk, and I kept telling myself that even if it's the wrong, wrong direction, I still need to take action. And now, over a period of few months, I am starting to see that, you know, the quality of my conversations, the quality of my negotiations with the vendors, the way I am pitching in networking events, it's slightly improving, and I wouldn't say it's gone like really great, but At least now I can hold a conversation comfortably without, I don't know, feeling anxious or shaking or something like that.

Lisette 14:50 (Commentary)

I loved this line. You can't steer a stationary ship. This belief and mindset has been Kalyani. Anchor, and it reminds her that confidence often follows action and not the other way around. Sometimes we forget and sometimes we need space to hear our own wisdom out loud, and that's what coaching is all about.

Lisette

So you're at a 5.5 in terms of your level of confidence. And the original question or goal was, What's stopping me from feeling more confident? So let's talk about, you know, perhaps, what is it that you can do to get from a 5.5 to a six.

Kalyani 15:44

I mean, the only answer that keeps coming back to me is you just have to. You just have to keep moving forward. You no matter how how scared you feel, or if you feel like you don't know enough, even if you make a mistake, you still have to try. And maybe trying would build that confidence. So doing, taking that action would build that confidence. That's the only answer I get. I don't know.

Lisette 16:20

keep moving forward, keeping moving forward. And it kind of reminds me, you know, of your prior experience as a in your your leadership role, where you said you you jumped in, and it happened naturally. Do you see the correlation there as well? Yeah. Um, in the way that you describe about like getting from a zero to 5.5 it sounds like that was your you know, that was your approach as well, right? You said you can't steer stationary ship. You just want it to keep moving forward. So you are proposing that you just continue doing what you're doing to get to a

Kalyani 17:12

six I mean, that's that's the only answer that's coming to my mind at the moment, but because I'm relying completely on the fact that this would probably give me more confidence, because even when I'm taking that action, I'm constantly like questioning whether I'm doing it the right way or not. But then if I see the results, perhaps after taking that action, I would be able to gage more clearly whether that action was right or not, and I'm hoping that will give me more confidence.

Lisette 17:49

So the would you say that the difference here is being able to see the results like, would that be a factor in moving you up in the scale.

Kalyani 18:12

Yes, it would be for sure. Yeah, or maybe I can make like smaller milestones that can look like some kind of positive result, because I don't want to wait till I see whether the business is successful or not, because that's in the future. And while I need to pitch the business to people, I need to show my conviction. So I don't want to wait till I feel like the business is successful, because that's too far down the line.

Lisette 18:45

Yeah, and seeing the results and hitting those milestones, what? What would that look like? What would be the indicators there?

Kalyani 18:57

Maybe I can, maybe I can sort of test it as like a simulation of a real scenario and see how I do it. And if that may be a pitch to to an investor or something like that, and if that feels good, it could be a milestone for me to or I could know where I need to improve or work on, or I can make, like weekly, small progress. I don't know, actions that would eventually lead me to seeing whether it's creating that impact or not

Lisette 19:44

so testing it and setting weekly small actions. What are some of the barriers that might keep you from doing those two things?

Kalyani 19:56

I mean weekly actions I can do. I can put it in my to do list, and. And things like that. But yeah, I mean again, the simulation part or testing, whether I'm confident or not, the barrier would be that I chicken out because I'm scared and I avoid doing it. Yeah, just kind of, you know, avoiding it and thinking, Oh, maybe I can do it later, or something like that. Yeah, the barrier would be my own fears that I don't address

Lisette 20:37 (Commentary)

Midway through our session, something powerful emerged. Kalyani realized that the root of her low confidence wasn't just self doubt. It was avoidance. She wasn't avoiding because she didn't care she was avoiding because sometimes the process of finding clarity can feel uncomfortable, and sometimes so is choosing, especially when none of the options feel certain.

Lisette

Would you be open for me to kind of take you on a maybe, like a visualization or scenario, I would be asking you to close your eyes and think through what I'm describing, sure that'd be okay? Yeah, all right, close your eyes. I want you to imagine that you've gone to sleep tonight, and while you're sleeping, a magic wand has been weighed. You don't know that it has been weighed because you're asleep. Maybe it's a year from now and you're going into your office or going into a meeting, an important meeting, and you have all the confidence that you need to be successful. You are in this office or in this in this meeting with your colleagues or the board. I want to ask you, being being in that space and being confident and having the certainty that you've been successful, what would be different in that room? What would others say about you?

Kalyani 22:19

Would be different? One thing that I would hope that they would say, and something that drives me, is they'll see that I am, I'm clear about the purpose, and I'm driving the business with that clarity of purpose and how and where I would like to take it, in terms of its growth, in terms of business expansion. I think today, I feel unsure, because I don't know which direction the business is going to take and what will work what won't. So I'm still at the product market fit stage, and I don't know what would be the right fit of that product. So maybe in that meeting room I saw that I was very clear what that PMF would look like, and that reflected through my body language and the way I could explain the whole business to somebody.

Lisette 23:35 (Commentary)

Bearing the end of our session, we did a simple visualization and what surface was striking. She imagined herself a year from now, speaking clearly, grounded in purpose and embodying confidence through her presence.

Lisette

You said you'd be clear about the purpose, but at this time, you're currently uncertain, because you don't know what direction the product or the project will go in. Is that right? Is that sort of like the tension that you have right now? Yes, about that.

Kalyani 24:11

So I mean, I because I'm at the launch stage, I don't know what is going to work, and I'm starting with a very tiny step of how I want to expand the business, and I don't know, and it's kind of a territory where I don't know if the Indian market would accept it or not, and things like that. So there's a lot of uncertainty around, around the whole concept. And when I'm talking about it, I think that confidence is not coming through is because I am also not clear on what will work what won't. So, yeah, the purpose and clarity of what problem I'm trying to solve through through my business, needs to be really, really clear.

Lisette 24:59

You've said you've already designed one step, right? But you're not sure...

Kalyani 25:04

But it's like, it's, it's, you don't know what it will turn into. It's like a prototype, and it's a, I'm starting with a very small, small investment, small business plan and things like that. And I eventually want to go into

certain innovation that will differentiate it. It's just I have two or three ideas and I don't know which direction I want to take the business forward, and that makes me very confused.

Lisette 25:36

So you have two or three ideas and you want to pick the one that's probably the most that would be the most successful. Is that, right, definitely. And so for in terms of like that, that visualization, that scenario, you know, you said a year from now, you'd be very clear. People would see it in your body language. You'd have a lot of you'd be clear about the purpose, and people would say that as well, right?

Lisette 26:12

So when you think about the the two or three ideas for the next step, what, what is sort of, what do you think needs to happen in order for you to feel that that confidence in, in the direction that you take it to?

Kalyani 26:33

Yeah, the one thing I think that I have been avoiding, or rather putting off is sitting in the discomfort of trying to figure out which direction feels the most appropriate at the moment, at least, to start with, it may not work, and I, I am comfortable to pivot to another direction later on, but today, I'm not ready to commit to a direction which is what is probably the first step that I I need to work on and just sit with it and decide which is the first growth metric. I need to pick out of those two or three ideas,

Lisette 27:26

yeah, you're starting something in your self confidence, in your imposter syndrome have surfaced, and I don't remember your exact, your exact bringing, but it sounded to me that that there was some avoidance there too, right?

Kalyani 27:49

So when I don't know the answer, or when things are not clear, I sometimes avoid getting myself into that situation just because I can't explain it or I don't understand it. So the more I avoid it, the more it stays at the back of my mind, and that makes me uncomfortable and like I said, like not confident, but then I don't address it to sort of move forward, so I sit with it perhaps and yeah,

Kalyani 28:38

that avoidance probably makes me feel like maybe I'm avoiding things because I don't know enough, rather than taking charge of it

Lisette 28:51

I am. What comes to mind for me is a question about where, where does this avoidance intersect with what you talked about earlier, about, you know, jumping into your new role previously, and things organically happening, I imagine, and because you you described it As such, but let me know if this is not correct, that you there were probably things that you were also avoiding earlier on in that role. Yeah.

Kalyani 29:30

I mean, yeah, I had to be told, for example, to delegate more. And I was avoiding doing that because I thought maybe I can handle it and get it done faster. So yeah, those things that are new, yeah, it takes time to kind of get used to the change. So yeah, I think to answer your question, yes, I'm sure I was avoiding a lot more. Than just that, maybe some tough conversations, and

Lisette 30:05

yeah, so you were avoiding a few things, but, um, but you, you jumped into it, and you organically became, or were successful, even if you were avoiding

Kalyani 30:21

things, because eventually I couldn't avoid it anymore. I had to, sort of, there was a time where I had to have those conversations. I had to start delegating. Yeah, so yeah, after a point, I couldn't keep avoiding it.

Lisette 30:36

So for this project present day, do you think it'll be similar, where, if you if you end up not spending time in that discomfort and continuing to avoid but at some point you'll have to take action or or face it, do you imagine that that might happen here too?

Kalyani 31:00

Yes, for sure, and I know that I will somehow figure it out at the last moment when I have to face it and things like that, but I would rather plan and do it better than you know, just leave it at the last moment and just do an okay job of it. I mean, I don't want to avoid and

Lisette 31:26

what difference would that make?

Kalyani 31:29

I think the difference would be in the quality of work done on things that I'm trying to avoid. For example, for this part that I mentioned that if I don't have clarity on where the business goes forward and I address it at the last moment. Maybe it's not as well thought out as I would want to do, or I may not have all the clarity or answers and I don't want to blabber in front of somebody when I'm like that meeting that I visualized, I imagined myself to be very clear with what I was doing. So if I prepare and not let it just be at the back and I keep avoiding, I think I'll be at least I'll get a lot of peace of mind, if nothing else.

Lisette 32:22

So sitting in that discomfort from a scale of zero to 10, how easy is that? How likely is it that that you do that today, this week or in this month?

Kalyani 32:40

You know, now that we've spoken about it, I have blocked some time tomorrow morning to just go through the business plans. I think, instead of focusing on on marketing or something else, I think I will address this first, because, yeah, it's important, and this will kind of shape everything else, if I have a little more clarity on how I want to which direction I want to take business forward. And you know what's on my mind, but somewhere unclear, I think it's just coming forward at the moment. And yeah, while it is still fresh in my mind on why I'm doing it and what, what am I avoiding, I would rather, I'd rather address it right away, when it's still fresh. I think it will help a lot.

Lisette 33:34

So we are, we are at time for our official end time, but I still have some minutes. Our initial goal was, What's stopping me from feeling more confident, or what's stopping me from feeling confident in this in this project? How do you feel that this conversation has supported this goal?

Kalyani 34:05

I think I have. I have an unexpected answer of clarity that I didn't imagine. I I kind of thought that okay, maybe it's just taking action and doing the things and blah, blah, blah, but I think the conversation has helped me realize that I'm the reason why I'm not feeling confident is because I'm avoiding the

uncomfortable tasks. And maybe that's what that's that's the reason why I'm kind of hesitating to speak up when I speak to somebody and pitch my business plan. So if I, if I address that discomfort first, I feel like maybe I'll be able to open that door. Or through that wall.

Lisette 35:02

Is there anything else that's connected to this, to this goal, this conversation that you that might also be helpful?

Kalyani 35:13

I had actually written the word imposter syndrome on on my notebook, because that's something that I relate with a lot, and I think I'm just connecting the entire conversation to that word right now. And I'm, I'm just realizing that the reason why I internally feel like I'm, am I good enough or not, is because I know that I'm avoiding the things I need to do, and somehow that creates that persona of me running away from things, running away from things that I need to do. And maybe that's what makes me question myself a lot more.

Lisette 35:57

really interesting. Yeah,

Kalyani 36:00

yeah. Yeah, it's a, it's an unexpected realization, I think, for me.

Lisette 36:10

But yeah, I'm so glad that you, you've had some of that clarity before we we say goodbye. Is there anything else that you want to talk about, a question that you have that would round up this conversation, maybe a question that you wish I had asked.

Kalyani 36:31

Think I have, I think I'm I have already pretty much rounded up the conversation, and I think I've got the clarity I wanted. So no nothing additional from my end. But thank you so much. It's been very helpful.

Lisette 36:50

Thank you. I appreciate you doing this, Kalyani.

Lisette (Commentary)

As we wrapped our session, Kalyani landed on something that surprised even her. She came in asking, why don't I feel more confident? And left realizing that avoidance was quietly fueling her doubt, not a lack of passion, not a lack of skill, but the very human instinct to steer around the discomfort which shifted wasn't a to do list, it was a sense of direction, a choice to show up for the hard parts. Now that's the quiet power of coaching, not fixing, but facing. If something in this conversation resonated, I'd love to hear what landed. And if you're in your own season of uncertainty, keep going. You're not alone until next time. Thanks for growing with me.