

CRAFT OF CONSULTING PODCAST

EPISODE 29: Managing Anxiety for Consultants—with Shann Vander Leek

Deb Zahn: I want to welcome you to Episode 29 of the Craft of Consulting podcast. I'm really excited for my guest today because I'm actually a fan of her podcast. I'm going to be talking with Shann Vander Leek, and she's the cohost of a wonderful podcast called Anxiety Slayer. And we're going to be talking about anxiety.

Now, the reason that that's on a consulting podcast is because a lot of either would-be consultants or consultants will experience anxiety. It might be something that they're generally prone to or it might be something that comes up because they're thinking of doing a big life change in becoming a consultant. Or it could be stressful things that can occur when you're consulting. So being able to recognize it and manage it is a critical part of not just being a successful consultant but also having the life that you truly want to have.

So we're going to talk today about ways that it can come up, things that you can do to actually manage it, and talk a little bit about how it's looked in our lives, particularly as we were transitioning into consulting and doing some of the things that we do today. So it's an absolutely wonderful episode. Let's get started.

I want to welcome my guest today, Shann Vander Leek, to the show. Shann, thank you so much for joining me.

Shann Vander Leek: It's a pleasure to be here. Thanks for the invitation.

Deb Zahn: So I'm really excited to have you on because I am a fan. I listen to your podcast, the Anxiety Slayer, and I know you also have a great business helping other people start podcasts too. Say a little bit to my listeners about what both of those are.

Shann Vander Leek: Oh, I'd be happy to. Well, I am the cohost of Anxiety Slayer. We are celebrating our 10th anniversary, and we just surpassed 6.25 million downloads. We've been supporting people who are struggling with stress and anxiety and PTSD and panic attacks for years. So we are in this partnership, my partner is Ananga Sivyer, to do everything we can to help our listeners feel more peace and tranquility in their lives.

Deb Zahn: Oh, that is...

Shann Vander Leek: Yeah. That's why we do the free podcast. That's why we created online courses, guided meditations, as well as anxiety breakthrough coaching.

Deb Zahn: That's absolutely wonderful. So I met you actually before I knew about your podcast. I met you on an online forum for podcasters. And you...Right before it

launched, when I was feeling quite a bit of anxiety...Yeah. I needed help because my podcast art wasn't working. And you stepped in, and instead of just giving me a bunch of advice that was making me more anxious, which is a lot of what happens on forums, you stepped in, solved it, and then didn't want to accept payment. So we made this wonderful bargain where you picked a charity and I was able to contribute to that charity.

Shann Vander Leek: Yeah. Yeah. That was a while back, wasn't it?

Deb Zahn: That was a while back. But it was a nice example of kindness from a stranger at a time where I definitely could use it. So I very much appreciate that, and I want to thank you publicly for that.

Shann Vander Leek: Oh, it's my pleasure. I was very happy to help you. The second business that I run is Podcast Bath. And it's all about supporting brand new podcasters from strategy, to marketing, to launch, voice work, music, artwork, the whole shebang. So when you came into that forum struggling with what was going on, I knew immediately what was going on. So it was a pleasure, absolute pleasure, to help you. It's so much fun to use all of the experience that I have with the Anxiety Slayer podcast and to be able to bring that forward for new podcasters.

Deb Zahn: Wonderful. Well, I love it. So what I thought today and why I wanted to have you on the show is that I know a lot of folks that are either already consultants or are thinking about it experience anxiety. And I'm one of those. I've certainly experienced lots of anxiety. I've had panic attacks, all of those things are true. And I'm a very successful consultant. So I want us to talk through some of the wonderful guidance that you give about how to manage anxiety and to get past it so it doesn't get in the way of your life, mainly so that folks who are interested in being consultants know that they can do it, and they can make it easier for themselves.

Shann Vander Leek: Oh, that sounds fantastic, and it's absolutely doable.

Deb Zahn: Yeah, definitely. Definitely doable. So let me start with this is. How and why did you start your show?

Shann Vander Leek: Well, that's a really good question. Ananga and I've been talking about that a little bit for our last couple of episodes, as we celebrate our anniversary. She found me online right after...I guess it was a few years after I'd left the corporate world. I was in the midst of earning my yoga teacher training. I was doing a lot of writing. My umbrella company is True Balance International. Everything that I was doing was about integrating more self-care, self-love, all of the things that are supportive for people who suffer with and from anxiety. And she had been suffering from anxiety since she was in school as a young, young person and reached out to put together an anxiety relief kit and wondered if I might be interested in helping her do that.

Well, at the same time, another friend of ours, a writer and blogger, had reached out to me saying, "I really think that you would like Living by Design and Ananga Sivyer. Seems like you guys would hit it off." So we cracked up. We met. We put that course together and started to meet and talk about podcasting because I was already doing that. I thought, "Gosh, with my background and Ananga's background..." She's one of the first EFT practitioners in the UK. She wrote a book on EFT tapping and was a student of the original teacher, back in the day. It's so ahead of her time, her Ayurveda studies and, of course, all of the work that she did to overcome her own anxiety.

So we melded our coaching and yoga and tapping. And then, of course, my voice work lent itself to her music because she's a composer. And I think we made 10... maybe. I might be wrong. Around 10 guided meditation albums. So we just had this partnership that just... Almost every week for 10 years, we've met. And we've not been in the same room together yet. We're going to meet officially, chemicals in the room, in March. I'm visiting her in England.

Deb Zahn: Oh, that's wonderful. That sounds magical.

Shann Vander Leek: It is.

Deb Zahn: Well, the thing I like so much about the podcast is, it's extremely practical. So my husband works at a mental health organization and had been asked to share information about anxiety. And actually, he's now suggesting people listen to it because it is so clear that it's actionable and there's things that you can actually do to manage it.

So what I thought we'd do was thinking about anxiety in two ways. And the first, particularly as it relates to consultants or it certainly would apply to any profession, is anxiety about something that hasn't happened yet. So there's folks that are thinking about being consultants. They think that they want that life. And it can be a really great life, so I understand. But they may have anxiety that's stopping them in their tracks and stopping them from taking that leap. They may have narratives in their head: "Oh, I won't be good at it. I won't make enough money. I'm going to fail." So it's all this anticipatory anxiety. If you could share, what's some of the techniques you might suggest that someone could use who's experiencing that type of anxiety?

Shann Vander Leek: Oh, that's a really good question. I think it all begins with remembering the power of the little things that we can do to support ourselves so that when we start to feel tight in our chest or maybe our heart's racing or whatever the symptoms are that you have, that you center yourself and breathe deeply and slowly. We teach the long exhale all the time, where you ground. You get your feet on the ground. You take a nice breath in through your nose to a count of four, hold it for a count of two, and then exhale through your mouth slowly for a

count of seven. And you do that five or six rounds of your breath, and you start to really calm down. And it's such a little thing, right?

Deb Zahn: Yeah.

Shann Vander Leek: And then, of course, journaling, getting your thoughts on paper, what it is you're concerned about. Just letting the pen fly. Doing the things that you know are going to help you feel better because there's a certain amount of anxiety that's very natural when we step into a bigger arena. When we start something brand new. It's a very natural part of life. And then there's the kind that sticks. And we want to be able to do whatever we can to really make that as... The words I'm looking for are ease and grace. To move through that experience with as much ease and grace as possible.

And that's why it's important to research and become aware of things like lavender oil or lemon balm or to realize that there is soothing music and beauty and all kinds of lovely distractions going to a... For instance, just if you start to freak out in your office or you're somewhere where you feel like you're really closed in...And freak out's my language because that's...If I start feeling like that, I know that one of the very best things I can do is get to a window and look outside or, even better, get outside and get my feet on the ground. Just switch things up.

For consultants as they're moving forward, here's what I know. People who suffer from anxiety can often be the most organized, resourceful, productive people on the planet. They have learned so much. They have been able to carry on through all kinds of stuff that other people might not ever understand because they've learned how to care for themselves and because they've learned that this too shall pass.

Deb Zahn: Yeah. That's right because panic attacks don't last forever. It feels like it when you're having one, but yeah. You've had to get really resourceful to figure out how to manage through a day if suddenly you're experiencing anxiety and you're in the middle of something. You got to figure it out.

Shann Vander Leek: Right. And that's why the small steps are so important, to just... What one thing can I do to support myself right now? Do I need to talk to a friend? Do I need to get some fresh air? Do I need to rest and cocoon? And to ask yourself, just like you would somebody that you love, "How do you feel, and what do you need?"

Deb Zahn: Yeah. That's wonderful because I've coached a lot of folks who just became consultants. So they were professionals, and they were successful before. And then suddenly, they're a consultant and it's almost like the rug got pulled out from underneath them. They're suddenly having to figure out how to navigate a new world.

Shann Vander Leek: I can so speak to that.

Deb Zahn: Exactly.

Shann Vander Leek: I was in the corporate world for 20 years with the fat paycheck, the vehicle, the insurance, the medical, traveling around the world, and on and on. All the trimmings. All of it. And when I left that... And that was the single hardest choice I've ever made in this lifetime so far, was leaving that job, and also the very best choice I've ever made so far. Well, besides marrying my husband. We'll be celebrating our 27th wedding anniversary this month. But as far as a professional choice is concerned.

But the reason why I bring that up is, I often joke now that I was quite arrogant to think that I could just roll out of bed one day and replace that lifestyle on my own as a consultant and a coach. Because my nature is "I can do anything" and really big energy and go, go, go. I just figured, "Well, I've been working at it. I've been setting things up. I've been following the 'rules.' I should be just fine." And thankfully, a lot of the choices that I made before leaving were smart and set things up well for my family. But I didn't get to where I wanted to be and didn't have...

Part of my identity was gone, Deborah. It was like, "Oh, I used to be this director of sales. What am I now? I'm a...Oh." That's a natural part of that transition as well, is to go through that second-guessing and "Did I make the right choice?" And "How am I going to support myself or my family? And the list goes on, doesn't it?"

Deb Zahn: Oh, absolutely. So if you were advising someone who was going to take that leap, give up all the perks, give up the security, and jump into the unknown, what advice would you give them?

Shann Vander Leek: Well, to start out with, I would do my very best to straddle two worlds for a while, so that you can... And that was one of the smartest decisions that I made as well, is I allowed myself time to move money around, to be more mindful of my investments, properties, what might need to be liquidated, how long I needed to be... Because I didn't want to stop living the lifestyle that I'd become accustomed to, but I also knew that I needed to be really mindful because it's the great unknown. So take your time. Look at your finances. Get really clear about what you're doing. Know that it does take time and that if you're meant to move on, the worst thing you can do is stay.

As soon as I decided to move on and made my choice, knew when my end date was, everything lightened up. I was able to continue to do the work without hating it. I was able to get back into the office without hitting the snooze button 100 times and just really do the best I could toward the end, while building up the other side. So straddle things for a while, and then remember that we're not meant to be comfortable for our entire life. We're supposed to go into these zones of discomfort. That's how we grow.

I've talked about it and written about it. My first book, *Life on Your Terms*, was all taking into account that there are four stages of transition. And the first stage is usually pain and discomfort.

Deb Zahn: That's right.

Shann Vander Leek: It just is. Right?

Deb Zahn: Otherwise, why would we change?

Shann Vander Leek: Right. And it has to be. And that's the thing, it gets to the point where it's so uncomfortable. I think about that now. I'm grateful, so incredibly grateful, to the leadership team, at the time, that they were making me crazy. I'm so glad they were because I might still be there. There are people I worked with that are still at the same place, and I'm not, hallelujah.

Deb Zahn: That's right. That's right. What I like about what you're talking about too is... I was listening to it and thought those are also good, what I call, mental hygiene approaches, which are, "It's going to be uncomfortable. It's going to be scary. I know that there's going to be things that would trigger my anxiety. So what's the best possible setup that I can arrange to make it easier for myself?" So then I'm feeling anxiety about the unknown and other things, but I'm not feeling anxiety about everything.

Shann Vander Leek: Exactly. And you start to feel like you have more control over the pieces that you focus on because you do. A lot of people who listen to *Anxiety Slayer* don't like to travel or don't like to drive. And we often remind them that if they do their homework ahead of time, like: if they figure out where they can make certain stops, if they know exactly where they're going, where they're going to park, where they're going to stay, where these points are where they can take a break. Then they can put together a little *Anxiety Slayer* care kit in their car where they have maybe some *Rescue Remedy* and some lavender and, of course, a flask of water, just things to support yourself. It's amazing how these little things make such a big difference. Because you've planned it out, you've thought about it, you're taking care of yourself, so you're not being caught as much by surprise as you would be if you weren't prepared.

Deb Zahn: That's right. Because it'll be harder in that moment, if you're unprepared, to think, "Wait, what can I do?" Because it's really easy to get caught up into the narratives and whatever narratives are playing in your head, of "I'm not good enough. This isn't a fit for me. I don't know what I'm doing." All of that stuff, absent having the things around you that can interrupt that, it's going to be harder to do it in the moment.

Deb Zahn: So the other part of consulting is obviously the people part. *Hamsters* aren't really hiring us. So at the end of the day, it's going to be working with other

people. And for those that experience anxiety, those can be triggers. So you're working with clients. Maybe they're not happy with what you're doing or the timeline gets squished. That happens all the time. For many of us, it's often a different pace than what you had to do before. And your interactions with people are different because I know when I used to be the boss of something, I'd say, "That's what needs to happen," and that's what happened. And now, I'm a consultant and that's not the reality. The reality is that I'm giving my best advice, I'm helping implement, I'm doing whatever, but I'm not the decider anymore.

So what are things that you would suggest that people can do when faced with particularly those things that relate to being around other people in difficult situations? How would you handle anxiety around that?

Shann Vander Leek: One thing to remember, first and foremost, that you're human. That so is your client. That if you do your very best to be as crystal clear as you can be about strategy, expectations, follow through, those kinds of things, that when things blow up, or when things change, or what have you, you've been communicating all along. You've had this integrity all along, that "This is what I'm here for. This is what you brought me in for. This is what I've brought forward. Now, if you're going to change, take a different path, blow that up or whatever, then we need to take a pause and figure out where we go from here." Because what else are you going to do?

Often times... Well, I won't say often times. But it has happened several times in the last two years, where I've had somebody hire me to help them create their brand new podcast. And usually, it's 30 days or less to do this. And sometimes, clients will want to spread that out a little bit. Well, a couple of them never got to launch. Failure to launch. But I gave them everything that I've given everybody else every single step of the way. I had to get to a point where that's not on me. I can't force them to launch. I can help them look at the shadow that might be keeping them from doing so, that might be keeping them playing small, that might have them thinking they need to be perfect before they launch, those kinds of things. Stuff you felt just a short time ago.

Deb Zahn: Oh, sure.

Shann Vander Leek: Yeah. And to realize, "OK, well this is where we're at." I'm going to check in with them every so often, see how they're doing, see how I might be able to be of service and follow through on the very last piece that I help with, which is the launch component, and then let it go.

Deb Zahn: That's right.

Shann Vander Leek: Because I don't have control over their actions.

Deb Zahn: And I think that control piece is really critical. Because I know a lot of times when I've experienced anxiety, it is when things feel out of my control. And then I learned, well, guess what? A lot of things are out of your control and that's normal. And you have ways that you can respond. You have ways that you can try and anticipate and manage expectations. Because that's often it, is clients will sometimes hire consultants, and same way you just described, and they're not really clear what they want in their head or their expectations are wildly different than what you think. And I've learned how to do some of those things up front. That's just some of the skill that you gain as you go through and you do it a bunch of times and, usually, struggle a few times.

Shann Vander Leek: Oh, no. Yeah. No question. No question. I finished up recently with somebody that the last conversation was, "You know what? Basically, I'm going to scrap everything. I'm going in this direction now. And I'm going to have a cohost, and I'm going to have... And it's going to be... la, la, la, la, la." And all the voice work was done. All the artwork was done. It was all done. I said, "OK, well, fantastic. When you've got that figured out, let me know, and we'll take it from there." Because what else am I going to do?

Deb Zahn: Yeah. Well, a lot of folks would take it on.

Shann Vander Leek: "Well, you said you were going to do this." Like, well, apparently something changed. It's possible that there was some excitement involved, and I was hired sooner than later, too soon, or just in that place of excitement, where "I want to do this. I'm going to do this podcast." And then, all of a sudden, something changes. Well, so what? That's their prerogative. They get to change their mind. So do I.

Deb Zahn: That's right. And you don't have to take it on and make that yours.

Shann Vander Leek: No, I don't. And where I was working with other folks, doing any delegation or any work that wasn't in my wheelhouse, they're going to have to invest in that again because, again, that's not on me or my part of what my offer was. They're the ones who are switching things up, so there might be an additional investment. And nothing crazy, but a very fair exchange of energy.

Deb Zahn: That's right. That's right. And sometimes clients won't understand that because they'll think, "But I paid for the outcome," as opposed to you're paying for the work to create the outcome as you originally articulated it.

Shann Vander Leek: Well, and that's why we get approval steps along the way. When you're told "Oh, that artwork is great. That's it," and then you move on. Or "That script is great," or that whatever it is we're talking about, that plan. Documentation. Clear communication. It's amazing to me how many entrepreneurs, consultants, and coaches are still not communicating as clearly as they could be, not following up as much as they might want to be for bigger picture results. And

because I was a sales director for so long, that's just a part of my makeup, is "OK, what now? Where do we take this conversation from here? How can we move this forward? What's the next place?" That kind of thing. Not in an obnoxious way, but, hey, if you're going to be running your own business, you need to keep moving forward every day with communication with your prospects and your clients and your coworkers and all of that.

Deb Zahn: That's right. And that isn't what everybody necessarily had to, again, do before. But if you're a consultant now, then that's... If there was one quick skill that I would say "acquire this soon," it would be that ability to communicate and deeply listen. So if things start to shift, it's not always a huge surprise. Often, there has been signs and signals. And you can stop and say, "Hang on, it sounds like we might be going a different place. How are you feeling right now?"

Shann Vander Leek: Exactly.

Deb Zahn: And that can reduce any surprises that would throw you off or end up being in a really awkward client conversation, which is tough. Especially when you're new and you haven't gotten used to those yet. That's great.

Now, overwhelm is another thing that I know a lot of consultants experience, particularly if they haven't really developed their business pipeline well enough, and they end up in that feast or famine mode. So when they're in the feast mode, then overwhelm can be a really powerful trigger, obviously, for anxiety. How do you suggest... Is there anything in particular you suggest for dealing with that overwhelm feeling?

Shann Vander Leek: In the beginning of that feeling of overwhelm, it's sometimes really hard to know what's going on and what's in your best interest. Everything might feel like it's all too much. So I think that if you have a list of resources or tools or tried-and-true methods that you know help you, those are the things that you're going to want to go back to and revisit so that you can gain some control and start feeling some relief. Meanwhile getting yourself in a better place to pare down what might need to be pared down, to address or adjust what you might need to address or adjust. It might be something really simple as just needing to get out of the house, get out of the office. It might be taking a hot shower. It might be just allowing yourself to reset your mind and body so that you can say, "OK, now that feels a little bit better. I'm a little bit more comfortable. What do I need to do next?"

Because usually, the overwhelm comes from piling on, and women especially like to do this. At least that's been my experience in all the years that I've been coaching and working with women, is we feel responsible for everyone and everything and then some more, and then we think about ourselves. Often, that's how it is... We're at the back of the line. So I always invite you to put yourself at the front of the line. Figure out what it is that you need and to remember, piling on doesn't do you any good.

If I were to list the things that I need to do for the rest of the day and the evening today, I could stress myself right out because I'm not feeling 100% today. That's honest. So in that not feeling 100%, that's when your mind starts to really come in and the inner critic starts to beat you up and "Really should do this," or "You should do that," or "Have you taken care of this or that?" And it might be for business or home or your children or whatever. And it's like, "No, no, no. Stop. Stop the presses. Stop it. Knock it off. That doesn't serve me well. What do I know that I absolutely must do today, no matter what? What can I delegate? What can I put aside until tomorrow if I need to? And that's enough. It's good enough." If I've made promises to you, I'm going to do everything I can to show up. Beyond that, mm-mm (negative).

Deb Zahn: Because I find that anxiety is tricky. It's a trickster.

Shann Vander Leek: Oh, yeah. Without question.

Deb Zahn: I'm pretty confident. Generally, pretty confident. I know what I'm good at. I know what I'm not. And I'm generally quite comfortable with that. So I feel like anxiety had to get creative to still figure out a way to get to me. So it will show up as piling on, which is "No, no, no, I can handle that too. No, I can do this." And I, at the beginning, would say yes to clients too many times, as opposed to what I do now, which is, if I can't do something, I say I can't do something. If I'm not available, I say I'm not available. And to me, that's about keeping my baseline good. Because if I don't keep my baseline where it should be, my mental baseline, my spirit baseline, then things will get out of control. And then, I'm not giving my best to my clients, and I'm certainly not giving the best to myself or my family or anybody else.

Shann Vander Leek: Right. I think the other thing to note is, it's so beautiful to have support systems in place. My husband is amazing at that. He will say, "Hey, hey, you're piling on." Or if Ananga and I are feeling stressed, one or the other, we'll be able to talk it through and get our heads right. We have people. You need people that you can count on, that you can reach out to, that get it, that gets you. And don't feel bad about it because we're human. Sometimes we need support. It's OK to ask for help.

Deb Zahn: Yeah. I love that. My husband's very good at that. Before I'm going to say yes to something, suggesting I think through what it's going to be like on a daily basis. Because I think about the thing and the accomplishment and the puzzle that has to be solved, which I love puzzles. But I don't think about "What's that going to be like on a daily basis? Am I going to be able to cook, so I'm putting good food in me? Am I going to be able to exercise, so I feel whole in my body?" If I don't pause and think about that... This is why he's great at bringing it up and saying, "No, no, no, take a beat and think through that before you say yes to something."

Shann Vander Leek: Yes. That is such a great point because we love to say yes. Women love to take on more than they really, really want, if you think about. Oftentimes, we'll take on so much. And then, what happens? The martyr comes out. "Sure, I'd be happy to bake 48 cupcakes for the whatever event." And then you're cursing that you're..."If I don't make all these cupcakes" I can laugh about it now because I don't do that kind of stuff anymore, but I remember being in a place where I felt like I needed to say yes, versus wanting to say yes. And now, if it's not a "hell yes," it's a no.

Deb Zahn: That's great. Yeah. And just giving yourself that agency alone changes what's going on in your mind and your body.

Shann Vander Leek: Without question.

Deb Zahn: I love that. What other things do you do or suggest for others to keep your baseline in a good place? The daily things.

Shann Vander Leek: The daily things? Please be mindful of your caffeine intake. Please, please, please, if there was one thing I would invite you to change, especially if you're prone to feeling anxious, is to get rid of it altogether if you can or back it down, like I have. I have one cup of coffee a day. And I don't get caffeine from any other source. It has made such a big difference, especially from a time where I could've had two, three, four cups of coffee, have some in the afternoon. And I know there are a lot of people who have sodas and diet sodas that have caffeine or, God forbid, Red Bull and all of those.

Yeah. The thing is, between the sugar and the caffeine, it is just setting you up for suffering. So I will say that. Replace it with water wherever you can. Stay hydrated. I drink so much water. I have mason jars because a regular glass isn't big enough, and I just keep them full. And if I'm not drinking water, I'm drinking tea, usually herbal tea. So that's one piece.

I think the other is make sure you're getting good rest. Make sure that you have a bedtime routine where you're giving yourself some space from screen time, whether it be Netflix bingeing or whatever it is you might be doing on your computer or on your phone. It's become such a part of our world. It's attached to us, the screens. We need to have downtime in between screens and bedtime. So there needs to be some sort of sweet way that you can care for yourself, and then you'll get a much better night's sleep.

Deb Zahn: Oh, that's wonderful. Yeah. And that's just good daily mental hygiene that will just make everything else easier. So even if something stressful happens, you're not starting at this high level. You're at a better baseline, so you're going to be able to handle it better.

Shann Vander Leek: Right. If you don't care for yourself, of course the train's going to run off the tracks. That's just what happens and especially in our world today with so much coming at us. We have data flooding our systems. It's a wonder that more of us aren't suffering with all of this intake. So take a breath. Step back. Notice where you might be able to make a change. I know caffeine is a tough one, but even if you can back off by one cup or back off by one drink or whatever that might look like. And please make sure you're getting outside and getting some fresh air, moving your body. Enjoying yourself, taking in positive information, not the news and maybe depending on the kind of movies and things that you take in. Just be mindful of what you're bringing into your mind, body, and soul.

Deb Zahn: That's right. Because we absorb it, whether we think we are doing it or not. Yeah. I love that. So is there anything that you, in particular, do? Because obviously, you have the wonderful podcast that you do. You have your own business that you're running. So what do you do to bring balance into your life?

Shann Vander Leek: I put myself first always.

Deb Zahn: Good.

Shann Vander Leek: So I haven't always done that. That's why you hear the giggle. But my calendar starts with what I need, followed by with what my family needs, followed by with what my business needs. I'm very, very good at setting boundaries and keeping them very clear about how much spaciousness I need in order to show up the way that I show up. Because if I'm cramming myself into these little bits of time in order to make all of these things happen, then I'm not enjoying myself. If I'm not enjoying myself, what am I doing? Because I absolutely love podcasting. I love teaching people how to podcast, how to share their voices, how to get bigger with their energy and put themselves out there.

But I'm not going to do so because I have five clients a day back to back to back, followed by my voice work, followed by editing, followed by running to the grocery store, making dinner, coming home, cleaning the house, blah, blah, blah, go to bed. I mean, I'll stress you out right there just listening to that. How many of us do that? Right?

Deb Zahn: No, I'm feeling it. I'm feeling it. Yeah. Because you've described some of my days.

Shann Vander Leek: Right. It's just too much. It's too much. So I allow myself to get up as naturally as I can every day. I allow myself to just chill for the first hour of the day, whatever that might look like. I might read. I might just sit by candlelight. I might have a conversation with my husband, depending on how long he's been awake. Sometimes I'll work. Sometimes I'll go right to work because I put something off that needed to be adjusted or taken care of immediately, but I don't stay there. So I'm just really mindful of that stuff. I know when to take breaks. I create a lot

of space in the calendar to do that. I just won't get myself all tied up in knots over making promises, over promising. I'd much rather under promise and over deliver every time.

Deb Zahn: And clients like that too.

Shann Vander Leek: Oh, they love it so much.

Deb Zahn: Yeah. I like that. I've been trying to incorporate little breaks throughout the day. And one that you mentioned of putting things on a calendar. And that's one trick I heard somewhere, where you treat your calendar as your tool for managing your life. So I have actually been putting in breaks, walk, lunch. Meditate is on there. I rescue cats, so there's a bunch of stuff on there about that.

Shann Vander Leek: Yay! Good for you.

Deb Zahn: Because what otherwise would happen is, it would all be listed as free time. And then people can book things with me, and then my day is gone, and the only time I have to go to the bathroom is if I have a mute on my phone.

Shann Vander Leek: Right. And who wants to live like that? You don't need to live like that. Carve it out.

Deb Zahn: And I know that I love color coding because I'm-

Shann Vander Leek: Oh, me too. Me too!

Deb Zahn: -a nerd. So I color coded it. Me too. And just because I want to color code it, I'll do it.

Shann Vander Leek: Of course. Of course. Well, and that's the other thing too, it helps you, especially when you're running your own business. All of my clients are green. Time for meditation, nature, yoga, those kinds of things are purple. My husband has a color, my daughter has a color, that kind of thing.

Deb Zahn: Oh, that's great.

Shann Vander Leek: I'll be able to look at that sea of green. Is there enough green in that calendar? Am I serving enough people to enjoy being an entrepreneur, to enjoy the lifestyle that I want to live? Or am I getting a little bit too comfortable and not having enough green on that calendar? That kind of thing. I pretty much know how much I'm willing to do now, and it's taken a while to get there. November 6 will be my 13-year anniversary as an entrepreneur. Yeah, lots of anniversaries right now. My goodness. Anxiety Slayer...

Deb Zahn: Yeah, you do.

Shann Vander Leek: ...The entrepreneur, the wedding. It's like "Wow. Lots of things happened in October in my world, October/November."

Deb Zahn: That is exciting. I love that. So any final words of wisdom for consultants as they head off to this, and anything related to anxiety that could help them?

Shann Vander Leek: Be gentle with yourself and allow yourself to learn. This is a new hat you're wearing. This is a new experience. And all of the experiences you've had before this one will inform it, but you need to be patient. You need to practice. You need to do your very best to set up systems that will support you so that you don't feel like you're flying by the seat of your pants. More than anything though is that peace of just remembering to breathe, remembering to care for yourself. Because if you're not caring for yourself, you're not going to be able to show up as the kind of consultant that you want to be. So you put yourself at the front of the line, and then take it from there.

Deb Zahn: That's wonderful advice. Well, thank you so much for joining me on this show. This was just wonderful.

Shann Vander Leek: It's been a pleasure. I'm so glad that I got to be here and to celebrate my 10-year anniversary with Anxiety Slayer. Is it all right to make a mention of a special offering that Anxiety Slayer has?

Deb Zahn: Absolutely. And I can put a link to it in the show notes as well.

Shann Vander Leek: Oh, that would be great. Well, because we're celebrating 10 years, we are offering 50% off of all of our online courses in the Anxiety Slayer Academy. Everything we've ever created is half off. We've never done this before, but we've also never been at 10 years before. So if you go to Anxietyslayer.com, you'll see a big banner on the front page, and that will take you over to the academy. And you can check out all of the courses. You can see all of the materials and things before you make your choice. But for half off, I figure, why not check it out?

Deb Zahn: Absolutely. And it'll be well worth it. Again, as one of your fans, I will say that I can't imagine that those courses aren't going to be life-changing for folks.

Shann Vander Leek: Thank you so much, Deborah. And thanks again for the invitation to be here today.

Deb Zahn: Absolutely.

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But the other two things that I'm going to ask you to do is... One is if you have any comments, so if you have any suggestions or any kind of feedback that will help make this podcast more helpful to more listeners, please include those. And then the last thing is, again, if you've gotten something out of this, share it. Share it with somebody you know who's a consultant or thinking about being a consultant. And make sure that they also have access to all this great content and all the other great content that's going to be coming up.

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