**Episode 66: How to Cultivate Resilience During Turmoil and Change—PART 2 with Sky Jarrett**

Deb Zahn: I want to welcome you back to The Craft of Consulting Podcast. This is part two of my interview with mindfulness expert and coach, Sky Jarrett. And this is where we're going to be talking about resiliency We're going to get more into some of the techniques that you can use in the moment when you have to face adversity, threats, stress, or things that are going wrong in either your business or your life and how you now can draw upon the resiliency that you have cultivated to, again, help you get through those and come up better on the other side. Let's get started with part two.

Sky Jarrett: …You get grounded in your resourcefulness. You get grounded in knowing and believing that, "Whatever comes my way, I'll figure it out." You're grounded and knowing that you are resourced, that you are supported, that you have a network of people. And there's many of us that struggle with knowing, feeling, tapping into and trusting our own power, our own internal intrinsic power. And if that is too difficult for us to trust in the power of ourselves, then believe in the support and the strength of those around us, the people that we love and trust, right? And so I will tell you, in some of my weak moments, when, my gosh, my dad passed away, Deb, and six months after, I got the news that my mom had cancer, stage four lung cancer. And I will tell you, as much as I practice resilience, the wind was blown out of me. And I just felt, "How am I going to get through this? I just lost my dad six months ago." And it was believing that I have a family that I can depend on, that we are strong, that we support and love each other. And so identifying, who are our people?

Deb Zahn: That's right.

Sky Jarrett: Who is the tribe, that in moments when we question if we have the strength and the resilience to push through it, that we can lean back and they will catch us.

Deb Zahn: That's right. It reminds me of when they talk about resilience with kids who have experienced trauma in their lives, one of the defining characteristics of those kids being able to develop resilience is, was there one person in their life that they trusted, they loved, they felt safe with, and who wasn't one of the dangerous people in their lives?

And I think it's the same way when we're adults of experience the true trauma of many of the things that are happening right now or the things as you described in your own life. And then where is that love? Where is that trust, and how does that help me sustain the resilience that I have in this moment?

Sky Jarrett: Which, that's part of the muscle memory that we have to cultivate, and so getting intentional about building those relationships, right? And it's not just the relationship that you actually turn to. Sometimes just knowing that that support is there to fortify us can in itself be fortifying, right? It's like the kid who's going onstage to perform, and they can't see their parents. But just knowing that they're in the audience, right, just knowing that they're there, they feel relief and comfort and support that allows them to perform. And so sometimes just knowing that our peeps, they're there, they're in the audience for us. We have to invest in those relationships.

Sky Jarrett: And as consultants, I will tell you as a workaholic, sometimes my tendency is to choose work over my relationships. And so pay attention to that, right, because if you're not fostering, if you're not building the muscle memory of the friendships and the relationships that you can count on in the down moments when stuff is going well, then who are you going to turn to when stuff hits the fan?

Deb Zahn: That's right. Yeah. I think of when COVID first started to really pick up steam, and I knew several consultants who lost all their business overnight. And their business is their livelihood, so this is how they pay their mortgage, they pay their bills. And the ones who had that support system, even if they didn't tap into it, but who could even call as many people did and talk to me or to others and said, "I just lost everything, all my business in two days," and could have that conversation and not feel ashamed or feel ashamed and have it anyway, those were the folks that were grounded enough to make wise choices that help them solve that problem as they moved forward. The ones who panicked and didn't have a support system or maybe were too embarrassed to talk about it struggled. And I've seen folks continue to struggle today.

Sky Jarrett: Yep. It's about building our internal resourcefulness, right, that sense of groundedness, that sense that, "I got this," and I've chosen to nurture that in myself through contemplative practices, through sitting and enduring those moments of discomfort when gosh dammit, I have urgency to go work on something and sitting to meditate right now feels really uncomfortable because I feel like I'm wasting time. It's enduring that discomfort, right? That's what it means to build that endurance. That's what it means to build that resourcefulness.

Sky Jarrett: We build resourcefulness in ourselves. We build resourcefulness in our relationships and our support systems. We build resourcefulness in our business, right? We have contingency plans. We have a get well plan. It's building the resourcefulness in all of those facets that I think is really important, right?

Deb Zahn: Yep. I didn't lose business, but I had business delayed. And just because it's stuff that I have floating around inside of me, I started to panic a bit about money. And, luckily, because I've done some of the work that you're talking about, I said, "Honey, do the math. It's OK if you want to freak out, but let's find out if there's a reason to freak out first." And then inevitably, there was not a reason to freak out because I'm quite good with money. But that's because I had cultivated it previous to that experience to be able to know that in those moment, I need to say, "Do the math. We're going to do the math, and we're going to see where we really are."

Sky Jarrett: That's right. That's the perfect breakdown, I think, just to recap what are the steps and the components involved in cultivating this resilience, right? It's the idea, why do we put a spare tire in the car? We're first accepting and admitting that, "Something could go wrong and I might just need this," right? It's assessing, "Well, what do I need? What size tire? Is a donut good enough or I need a spare? What do I need?" Right?

And so it's then arming yourself and putting that mechanism of resourcefulness in place. You know that when the economy goes and shifts in unexpected ways, one of your strategies is to look at the numbers, right? That's part of your plan. That's part of your get-well plan. You already have that upfront so that when the moment happens, you know how to respond without having to think it through. You can press the button and..

Deb Zahn: The do-the-math button.

Sky Jarrett: Right, do-the-math button. Right. And so that leads me to the final point of this process, which is adjusting, checking and adjusting. You've admitted that stuff can happen and you need to be prepared. You've assessed what you need to prepare for, right, whether it's, "What are my tendencies that I need to solve for? What's going to work for me? What contemplative practice is going to work?" It's assessing all of that. It's actually doing the work and cultivating the practice and building the resourcefulness by, for example, sitting through a meditation when you feel restless and discomfort.

Sky Jarrett: And then the last piece is checking and adjusting. “What's working for me? What's not working for me, right?” My sister and I talk about, ideally my morning routine is an hour and a half so I can do my 20 minutes of yoga, 20 minutes of meditation, 20 minutes of reading and 20 minutes of journaling, right? And then I go make coffee. But what happens on a morning like today when I started a session at 8:00 AM? I don't have that luxury of an hour and a half. So what's my plan B, right? You have to check and adjust. You have to make these adjustments so that your system can continue to work effectively.

Deb Zahn: Oh yeah. I love that. I love that. Let's say you have a moment. Immediate crisis pops up, so that's going to be a little bit different than the piece that includes preparation and having things in place. Some crisis confronts you in your consulting business or in your life that gets in the way of your business. What do you do differently in that moment?

Sky Jarrett: You take the same steps because guess why? You've trained for it. Now it's go-time, baby. This is the moment that you practiced for.

Deb Zahn: That's right. You ran the marathon, but now you can outrun the zombies, because you…

Sky Jarrett: Exactly. Right? This is the point, Deb. The system that you've been practicing, the steps that you've been practicing, when you need them the most, the moment when you need that resilience the most, you don't have time to think about what you're going to do. You build the muscle memory to just go. Let's rehash them. We accept and admit, "Holy crap! Stuff just hit the fan. I need to respond. Something has happened," right? I think my mom might have COVID.” Now I'm accepting this is what's happening rather than saying, "Are you kidding me? I've got three more meetings. How am I going to respond?" That's resisting.

Deb Zahn: That's right.

Sky Jarrett: I have to accept that life has been lifey. Welcome wave, right? Insert surfboard.

Deb Zahn: That's right. That's right.

Sky Jarrett: Insert surfboard, right? Then you activate, once you come to that place of acceptance, not resisting the situation, not resisting the difficulty, right? You can accept what it is and say yes to it. “Yes, the chaos is here. Let's go Plot twist.” Keep it moving, right?

Deb Zahn: That's right.

Sky Jarrett: You activate your resourcefulness, the same resourcefulness that you've been planning before. In this case, I might have less time to activate it. I don't have the luxury of a one-and-a-half-hour routine. But I know that for me, the breath is my power source. I spend every morning harnessing the power of my breath. What that means is I use the breath as the way to literally breathe through the discomfort. I'm feeling antsy because I have work to do, and it's really annoying that I'm trying to sit here and pretend like I don't have anything to do because I want to meditate and that feels really inconvenient right now. And I'm just going to breathe through that frustration, right? And I'm accepting that I'm just going to sit here for the 10 minutes, because it's allowing me to build this practice of resilience, right? So when you're in that, "Oh crap," moment, we can breathe through it still, right? We activate the thing that we've been practicing.

The breath for me is my power source, right? It's just, I plug into the breath. It's always there. I don't have to remember to have it. It's just there. Wherever I go, it's there. If nothing else, there are other supplements that people take. I use...It's called ashwagandha. It's a vitamin of sorts. It has a way of calming our central nervous system. And so even on days and I'm feeling high on life, I still take my ashwagandha. It's like taking your vitamins, right? And maybe that day, I don't have the ashwagandha, but I'm going to have my breath, right? It's always there.

We accept that stuff has gone wrong. We admit to ourselves that we're going to have to just change course here, and then we activate our resourcefulness in that moment. And the first thing that it can be is our breath. And let me just speak for a minute on how powerful that is because in these moments when we're trying to figure out, "Oh my gosh, I just stepped on a grenade and I need to figure out how to ease my foot off of it in a way that I'm not going to explode. I'm going to have to make some decisions here," and when we are in a moment of threat and chaos and reactivity, the thinking part of our brain, literally, it goes offline.

Deb Zahn: That's right.

Sky Jarrett: We don't have access to the thinking part of our brain. Let's just take a moment to unpack that. We're in situation that requires our best thinking. And the thinking part of our brain is now online. Help me reconcile that, then. What are you saying? Well, we know from science that the breath is a very powerful way of calming our central nervous system and very kindly inviting our thinking brain to come back online. It's a way that we can plug the thinking brain back in and, voila, the bright idea comes. Now, it might take a few deep breaths to actually calm the central nervous system, depending on just how activated you are. But that is what is available to us.

Deb Zahn: I love it. And I also love...I'm going to use the marathon example again because I think it's really useful, is the maintenance, which there's probably a sexier word for that, but…

Sky Jarrett: But it's true.

Deb Zahn: If you train, you run a marathon, by the time you have to outrun some zombies, you don't want the last time you ran is eight months ago when you did the marathon. You want to keep essentially your baseline up so that it's always available to you and you don't lose that muscle memory.

Sky Jarrett: That's right. You keep training. You keep putting fuel back in the high, powerful, fast-charging car that needs to be refueled. The maintenance is very important. And a very important part of this, Deb, part of the posttraumatic growth, part of thriving instead of just bouncing back is taking the moment. If you've been through some crap, you better be better off because of it, right? And so we can do that. Harness the power and the gifts of the chaos.

Deb Zahn: That's right.

Sky Jarrett: Harness the power and the gifts of the chaos. Don't let yourself go through some crazy stuff and not have it be worth something. And we can ensure that we take something from that experience by pausing and reflecting and saying, "Wow, that was crazy. What did that tell me about myself, about other people, about life," right?

One of the most successful business leaders in the world, Ray Dalio, who founded Bridgewater, wrote the book *Principles*, right? The life principles and the business principles that have allowed him to be successful, these principles we pull from our experiences. Pain plus reflection equals a life principle, something that we can take with us from the experience and say, "Gosh darn it, if I ever see something like this again, here is a predetermined approach or philosophy or principle that I'm just plug and play." It's a best practice that we can just apply once for all because we've seen it. We know the drill, and why reinvent the wheel, right?

Deb Zahn: Yeah. My favorite, which my husband and I use all the time, is don't override, which is basically don't override what you know you're seeing and what the experience is. And actually I had a consulting experience of this where there was a particular client that we were after. My job was to go in and deliver and close the deal, which I'm very good at. And I knew in that meeting that we did not want this engagement. I knew we didn't want it. And I knew why. And I know that usually what you see is what you get. I believe in truth in advertising. And if it goes any direction, it only goes up. And, sadly, I was right. I was painfully, painfully right. And so don't override.

If I am engaging with a client and it looks like it is not an engagement I should do, we should do, because it's not going to be satisfying to us, to the client, we can't get them or the results, it's going to be painful, whatever it is, say no. And I know now to say no because I went through a painful experience. I reflected upon it and out of that came the principle of don't override. If what you see is what you see, believe it, and make choices based on it.

Sky Jarrett: That's right. That's right. And trust is a big part of this, right? I've not named it, but if anyone listening reflects on the way that our conversation has unfolded, there is trusting that we have the resourcefulness, trusting that we have the self-reliance to get ourselves through a difficult situation. It's trusting that we built meaningful relationships with people that we can rely on in the moments when we question if we're strong enough to get through it. There's an element of trust here. And so the more that we can train ourselves to trust ourselves is the more powerful we will be.

Deb Zahn: Once you get past building narratives or building a case that's false, you have no reason not to trust yourself.

Sky Jarrett: That's exactly right, Deb, and knowing that we don't have to believe our thoughts.

Deb Zahn: That's right.

Sky Jarrett: That we don't have to be victim to the negative stories and negative narratives that our mind makes up. And that's what it does. I talked about this with a team of leaders today, how not having all the right pieces of information leads us to fill in the blanks. And we tend to fill in the blanks with negativity…

Deb Zahn: That's right.

Sky Jarrett: ...because the survival mechanism of our brain wants to make sure that we're protected. It's going to forecast the worst case scenario so that, if that happens, we're ready for it.

Deb Zahn: That's right. I saw something out of the corner of my eye. I'm pretty sure it's a saber tooth tiger, and I'm going to prepare it.

Sky Jarrett: Right, and I'm not going to look back to check if it is, right?

Deb Zahn: That's right.

Sky Jarrett: I'm just going to run. For example, an economic crisis has hit. I'm wondering if my business can sustain. I'm not going to go back and check the numbers. I'm just going to freak out and just operate from fear, right? We have to check and adjust. We have to validate that is the realness of what we're experiencing actually true? Do we have a reason to freak out? Because then we're putting unnecessary stress on ourselves that we just don't need.

Deb Zahn: That's right. And you can't make decisions when you're swimming in unnecessary stress, or you're going to make decisions that are based on panic and you will make the wrong decisions, which your business will suffer.

Sky Jarrett: It's another thing...I'm not quite sure where this fits into the conversation. I think somewhere in resourcefulness, because I'm making this up and you mentioned not being able to make decisions. And what I'm noticing about my own experience, and I'm noticing in my clients is the inability to make decisions, right? One, because we're operating in a state of perpetual threat. And again, when we're in threat, our central nervous system freaks out, the thinking brain goes offline and we just simply are not efficient in decision making, so that's part of the science behind it. But the second thing, too, is we experience decision fatigue. And so notice, for example, for those of you really tuning into this, how much more difficult is it for you to decide what to have for dinner when you spent the day problem solving and making decisions the entire day, right?

Deb Zahn: That's right.

Sky Jarrett: You're probably more fatigued. We're probably less able and capable to decide what we want for dinner and much less to make a serious decision. And so I think it's just important to know that, acknowledge that, recognize that, see what our own patterns are and to the best of our ability, take certain decisions off the decision list.

Deb Zahn: Yes.

Sky Jarrett: Take things off the decision list, right? For example, I mean, this is a very simple one for me that I've been practicing. Is there something that I can wear for the next three or five days that I don't have to wake up? I mean, I'm working from home. This is just probably TMI for everyone. Unless I'm showing up to the same client day after day after day, I'm probably going to wear the same dress three days in a row.

Deb Zahn: Right, or you swap out the top. That's what I do.

Sky Jarrett: Or you swap out the top, right? But it just makes it easy. I mean, it's like Simon Cowell, whatever his name is, from the American Idol that he just wears a white v-neck shirt every day because it makes it easy. And so maybe you're not wearing the same exact dress. Maybe it's just the same kind of thing. But you get the idea.

Deb Zahn: Yeah. I have the same breakfast every morning because I don't want to start my day making a decision about breakfast. That's what lunch and dinner are for. But I want to save my executive function because I know, particularly as an introvert, that my executive function will get taxed throughout the day until I'm a wobbly-bobbly mess at the end of the day.

Sky Jarrett: Very well said. Very well said. Limit the exhaustion on the executive functioning by deciding ahead of time. The decisions that can be made ahead of time, make them upfront and then just press play, right, as you go through the week.

Deb Zahn: That's right. I love that. Well, I have to tell you, we could talk about this for ages.

Sky Jarrett: It's what we do. It's what we do.

Deb Zahn: It is what we do. But this is the stuff that I truly believe and I know makes the difference between having the life that you ultimately want but also being successful as a consultant or not because this type of...and I actually just did a video on how important self-reflection is and self-reflection is a muscle just like resilience and other things that you have to develop over time. But the better you are at this, you're going to have a better time getting clients, you're going to have a better time engaging them and keeping them happy, understanding where they're coming from and all that, and you'll make better business decisions. Even though this is great to do whether you're a consultant or not, for consultants, this should be how you're developing your baseline all the time.

Sky Jarrett: All the time and equipping yourself in a way that you are enabled to do the consulting work that you care so much about doing. This is the practice of putting the oxygen mask on yourself first so that you can serve the clients that you care so much about and the problems that excite you so much, that you're best equipped to go do that work.

Deb Zahn: I love it. I love it. Well, Sky, thank you again for joining me. This has been absolutely fantastic. And I, of course, am going to have you back because I can't resist but thanks again.

Sky Jarrett: I cannot help myself. We have too much fun when we get together.

Deb Zahn: It's so true. All right. Thank you.

Sky Jarrett: Absolutely.

Deb Zahn: Thanks so much for listening to this episode of The Craft of Consulting Podcast. I want to ask you to do actually three things. If you enjoyed this episode, or if you've enjoyed any of my other ones, hit subscribe. I got a lot of other great guests that are coming up and a lot of other great content and I don't want you to miss anything. 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.

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