

You're listening to the Called to Both podcast. I'm your host Joy Michelle, and today I wanna talk about the spiral, the spiral that we go through. We've all been through it. Now, I am not immune. You are not immune. But you know the one where business is down, like bookings are slower. Maybe you're getting inquiries, but they're not converting the same way.

You've just been on a streak, like a little bit of a down streak. You're in a little bit of a funk. You're questioning quite literally everything. You're on social media a little more because you have more time. You're kind of like peddling your thumbs being like, "All right, well, what's other... What's, what's this other person doing?"

What are they up to?" And then because of that, you're on a spiral. The spiral is I'm not sure people want this anymore. I don't know if I still have what it takes anymore. I don't know if my offers even make sense anymore. Should I add this thing that I see other people have added to their offers? Should I learn this new skill?

Now what? Like, you're in the spiral. Now what? And that is what I want to bring to you in this, this episode. I want to come to you mid-spiral and pull you out of it, pluck you out of it, sit you down next to me, pour you a cup of coffee and walk you through it. You're listening to Called to Both, the podcast for ambitious women chasing both business dreams and little ones.

I'm your host Joy Michelle. I'm a wedding photographer turned business coach and founder of Photo Boss. I have helped thousands of photographers and creatives grow their businesses. Here on the show, I teach about topics like visibility marketing, mindset, productivity, and going after your dream life. So if you're a photographer or an entrepreneur, there is something here for you.

This is not another business and marketing podcast telling you to do more, but rather how you can build your business and your income in less time and with greater ease. Join me here each week for bite-sized and actionable episodes that will encourage you on your Called to Both journey

This is top of mind for me right now because this week alone, I've had multiple conversations with my clients and with even prospective clients, like jumping on a quick call with clients to see if we're a good fit to work together one-to-one in business coaching. They've all been saying things like this.

Like, not all of them, but a lot of them have been saying the business is slower or that it... they feel a shift has happened in the marketing, in the marketplace

with their marketing, like things aren't landing in the same way. They know you have got to continue to iterate. If we're gonna keep up, we have to keep iterating.

And they're also in this, like, I would almost call it like a crossroads of business ownership. That I see anywhere from, like, the five to eight-year mark seems to be this window where you almost get this, like, this seven-year itch, for lack of a better term. But, like, you know they say, like, y- the seven-year itch in marriage where sometimes things can go sideways.

And I think the same type of thing can happen in a business. There's so many reasons for this, but if you've been in business for a while, you've been serving your clients, you've, you know, really built something, you layer on and you layer on and you layer on. And eventually, there's gonna be pieces of this that just, like, need to go.

But it's hard to discern what pieces do I need to shed? What's no longer working? What offers could I maybe simplify? You know that, like, this next era of your business is gonna look different, as it should. Your business is evolving. You are evolving. But sometimes it can feel like the business is, like, a little bit of a hodgepodge mess, and you get into this seven-year itch.

Like, that's what I'm calling it. Whether you're actually at the seven-year mark in your business is not the point, right? Like, the true part of this is your business will require some, like, pruning, and some really painful growing pains might actually take place right before you have a huge moment of growth in your business.

It's, it's so normal. It's so normal that, like, when you're about to experience the next level in your business, the business starts feeling really uncomfortable. You're questioning it. You're evaluating it. And in this time, if we're not careful, we can actually really start spiraling instead of pushing through a lot of that discomfort, being super discerning about who we're listening to, just being really intentional with those times of growth versus, "Okay, business is down.

I'm gonna start questioning everything," and potentially throw out something that's, like, actually perfectly good along with some of the things that are kind of messy. So i- if any of this is resonating with you, please send me a DM on Instagram. I would love to hear what's going on for you. A couple of episodes ago, I shared about, uh, the ambition trap and, as ambitious women, like, how we got duped into believing that that was gonna be enough to get us where we wanna go.

And I got some really meaningful DMs from some of you guys about how that just resonated. And so this is almost like the next part of that, so really thinking about what happens when the business is in question. What happens when you start spiraling and you know there are things that are not working mixed with things that are, and you really have to start to, like, pull that apart.

So the very first thing that I think is so important when this happens is you need somebody to sit you down and sort through the muck with you. That can hold up a mirror and remind you who the heck you are, what you have accomplished, how far you have come, and how much you really do know. Because if you're in a spiral, chances are you've lost sight of who you are.

Like, to some degree, you really have forgotten how far she has come. But I'm, like, pointing at you, like how far you've come, all the things you've done, everything you've overcome, the money you've made, the clients you've served, the five-star reviews. You've forgotten her for, for like to some extent. It doesn't help that AI is in our ear.

I mean, not like it's like involuntarily happening, but like a lot of my clients have told me, and I've definitely done this too, where it's like we're riffing with Claude, we're riffing with ChatGPT, and then it's helpful until it's not. It's helpful when it's helping you do some quick math, get to some analytics, you give it some information from your business.

If it's running a, like, some sort of long process and helps you, like, sort through data, amazing, helpful. That's, that's great. But when you're starting to outsource the knowledge of your clients and the next step and you to AI, that's when the wheels fall off. Because AI really only knows... Like, the chat that you're using really only knows as much as you're giving it, and it will do you a massive disservice in being able to reflect to you how skilled you are.

It simply cannot do this. And in a lot of instances, my clients have come to me and, like, they're at a place where, like, they don't really even trust themselves anymore. They're not trusting their, their conviction around where... what kind of content they wanna be creating and who they're best situated to serve and what parts of their brand just, you know, they're not fitting anymore, they're falling flat because they're a little out of...

What is the word? It's like when a muscle atrophies. They're out of practice in creating content that feels inspired, that's connected to their audience. They've just outsourced so much of that to AI in an effort to just do it faster. You know, I don't think there's anything, like, dishonest about it for, for my clients.

Like, they're not trying to cut corners or be dishonest at all. I think I work with some of the most integral women on the planet, truly. I truly believe that. And I know that people who listen to this podcast do the best work, have the best clients, and have the best hearts. They do. And they're not here to cut corners, lie, cheat, or steal to get somewhere.

They first and foremost want to serve. So anything they're doing on AI is just to, like, be smart and utilize these tools and figure out what they could be doing better. But in doing so, it can lead to a lot of, like, confusion that you did not, you were not equipped to sort through that information. So I think especially when you are spiraling, when you are questioning, when you need high-level advice, you need high-level human advisory, not a computer. That's my two cents.

And hey, if you're like, "I completely disagree," send me a DM. I would actually love to hear your take on this because this is my opinion, and this is a pattern that I have seen with my clients over and over again. I'm seeing it more and more often. The more regular business owners are adopting AI, the more confusion I'm seeing come out the other side, especially when it comes to their content, their client confidence and brand position and authority and knowing who the heck they are.

That part is what starts to get a little shaky, and that's where I really want you to check what you are outsourcing to AI and not outsource the confidence, the clarity, and the knowing of you and the direction that your brand is going in. So you've sat down with someone real. You're processing this information with a human.

You've reminded yourself where you're going, like where you've been, who you are, and where you're going. I also think it's gonna be very valuable to just be open-handed with the pieces that don't work anymore. I've been so guilty of holding on to identities and offers longer than they actually brought me joy, were working, or felt like they should even be on my website or in my business.

Like it can be so hard to kill your darlings, you know, to bring a writing term into it. It's, it's so hard to bring something into the world, put your, your mark on it and then say, "Thank you, and I'm done with you." So being willing to let things look different and to grow into this next era also means there's-- there could be some things that you're doing and offering and selling that just they're not it anymore. Another thing that I see during this s- business is slow, we're reevaluating everything, things start to feel shaky, is a lot of times a thought around is this...

Is it time to pivot? Should I change some of my offers? And what might that look like? How do I know if it's time? And I want to do a whole episode on this and break this down a little more in depth. So I am gonna do that. I'm actually, um, I have notes on my desk for this right now. But I wanna give you just a little bit of an overview of one way to know which part isn't working in the business, and if a pivot of any kind, like a little pivot or a huge pivot, might need to take place.

I'm, I'm like still like hashing this out, I guess, for lack of a better term. But it's really helpful for me to look at my business, 'cause I've gone through some pivots, you guys. Like, I've let's go of some things, I've changed some things, I've added things, I've tried things. And in doing so, one thing that has really helped me is to go through the like who, what, when, where, why questions.

And what I like to do is when I'm just not loving my business, I like to ask, is it the who that I'm not loving? Is it the what that I'm not loving? Like, is it the, the work itself that I'm not loving? Is it when I'm working? Because that was a big one for me as a mom. It wasn't so much the work, it was the when.

It was what the work required of me to leave, to be gone, to be booked nights and weekends, that just didn't work anymore. And so when a big, like, identity shift was happening for me, identifying that, like, there was nothing wrong necessarily with the work or the who or the what. It was the when and it was the where that really became like, "Oh, okay."

If I could do amazing things, but I get to determine the when and the where, oh, my gosh, like let's follow that." And that really helped me in my pivot. And then the last one is a why. My why... When you lose sight of your why, that will cause all sorts of feelings of being just, like, untethered, and like you're floating.

Like, "W- why am I doing this? Do I even like this work anymore?" When you lose sight of your why, it is so difficult to create content, to show up with consistency, to get on a sales call, to serve well, because you're not even sure why you're doing it anymore. And it is completely normal to have a different why today than you did the day you started your business.

That is completely normal because you are different today than the day that you started your business. So if the old why just feels really flat, like, "I just wanna be able to document people's lives," or, "I just wanna make their, like, memories come to life. I wanna tell stories." If that feels flat to you now, it might be time to come up with a new why, and that's totally okay.

It doesn't even mean that you have to change how you're doing business or who you're doing business with, right? The pivot could be more in terms of your brand positioning and really getting rooted in the business that you have today, falling back in love with that business so that all the outward stuff starts to actually make more sense, like your marketing and your, your content.

So the who, what, when, where, why, I'm gonna do a whole episode on this because I think this is life-changing. I think it can be very helpful because we have... When you're in a spiral, feels like a lot of thoughts are flying around, and this can be super helpful, super anchoring, and it can be a very helpful exercise to actually do on paper.

Hit Subscribe. If you're not subscribed, you're not gonna wanna miss that episode. I think it's gonna be a breakthrough for a lot of you. So If you've felt a little spirally in your business, you've had a lot of questioning thoughts, you're feeling like a lack of clarity and a bit discouraged because business has been down, I want you to know that you are absolutely not alone.

This does not mean that this is gonna be the future of the rest of this year or what's next for you in business. And in fact, I think a lot of times that feeling of discomfort and discouragement can come right before a huge, incredible breakthrough. If you're looking for any kind of one-on-one support, I do have a little bit of space left in my calendar for this year, for 2026, and I would love to invite you to reach out and hear more about what that could look like.

You can send me a DM on Instagram, or you can inquire through my website at joymichelle.co. But I want you to know that you've gotta remember who the heck you are. You gotta remember who she is and what you've done, and that you're not done and you're not finished yet. Thank you so much for joining me in this week's episode of Called to Both.

Um, I would love to hear your thoughts over on Instagram, and as usual, I will be back next week with another episode. Bye for now. Thank you so much for listening to the show. If you enjoyed this episode, please help me get the word out about the Called to Both podcast by taking a screenshot of this episode right now and sharing it on your social media.

I would also appreciate it if you would subscribe and leave me a five-star review. Thanks again, and I'll see you in the next episode