

Ep #3: Decrease Doubt and Anxieties with an Assumption of Permanence



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Kaneisha Grayson

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Hey there. You are listening to Scale Your joy with Kaneisha Grayson, episode three. Get ready.

Welcome to Scale Your joy, the only podcast that teaches high achievers with heart how to craft a life and build a business based on freedom, joy, self-expression, and social impact. I'm your host Kaneisha Grayson, a Harvard Business School and Harvard Kennedy School grad, author, essayist, and self-made entrepreneur. I did it and you can do it too. Let's get started.

Hello everyone. It's Friday for me and I'm taking it easy this week and moving really slowly. It's a week full of feelings for me. In just this week it is my ex-husband's birthday, my twin nephew's birthday and I'll tell you why that matters, and it's the third anniversary of my mom's passing.

So, the reason why my twin nephew's birthday is bitter sweet is that their birthday party was the last time I was with my mom, alive and interacting. I did see her after that, unfortunately, when she passed away in front of me, my sister, and my dad.

Which is a really sad note to start this episode on but I just want to be real with y'all that life happens, death happens, divorce happens, grief happens, and life goes on as well. And one of the important things for me in taking care of myself through a lot of loss these last few years has been to be really gentle with myself. To take it easy when I'm having waves of grief or weeks full of grief. And to also ask for support.

Whether that is going to therapy or letting my friends know like, "Hey, this is my mom's anniversary this week." Or just letting my boyfriend know, "If I'm really grumpy this week, I'm not asking for a pass to like be a terrible person, but just know that I probably won't be feeling 100% myself this week."

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And so those are just some of the ways that I deal with, and process, and give myself space to feel my feelings. So, that's how my week is going.

Today we're going to talk about how to stop hesitating and take your business and your relationships to the next level using something called an Assumption of Permanence. But first, our listener spotlight.

Our listener spotlight for this episode is Via. Via is one of my clients at The Art of Applying. And they are an awesome, amazing person that I have loved having in the program. And I can't wait to see their amazing results because I know that they're going to have lots of cool choices of where to go to grad school because they've been doing the work.

All right, so Via says, "I feel like I've been looking for this podcast for my entire life. For so long I've looked for stories I could relate to, but so often other business and entrepreneurship podcasts I've heard just regurgitated the same points over and over. I was hooked when you said this was not about tactics, but frameworks. After listening I wanted to assess everything going on in my life and cut out whatever isn't bringing me joy. I felt like someone finally put words to the complex feelings of what it means to be a high-achieving person with an imperfect history."

Love that. That was so beautifully worded and just kind of filled me up with a warm, happy feeling. So thank you for sharing that Via.

All right, on to our topic for today. An Assumption of Permanence. So, I only just learned this phrase. And when I heard it, I just felt a little "Ding" and felt like, "Oh, I must explore this and I must talk about it on the podcast. So, here's what happened.

A few weeks ago, I had a flare up of relationship anxiety. I mentioned that I have relationship anxiety in an earlier episode. And in short that means that whenever I feel any sense of insecurity about the future in my relationship or if I sometimes watch a television show and get triggered, I can fall into thought spirals of like, "Well, if we want different things in this area, what if

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we want different things in other areas and maybe we should just break up now.” And it’s really uncomfortable to suffer from relationship anxiety, but it’s also a wonderful place to grow in life and learn more about myself.

So I was having a serious bout of relationship anxiety, a lot of things were coming together at the same time. I was really missing my best travel partner, Leah. We had just been in Barcelona together and I was also really just missing my time in Barcelona, and also my period was about to start. So that was just a recipe for a lot of feelings.

And Tyler came over to hang out and I was like, “Tyler, I’ve just been thinking and I’m really worried that after the pandemic is over, I’m going to want to go on this world tour of traveling and that you’re not going to want to come. And then what if I just need to travel for like six months at a time? And I don’t think you want to travel for six months at a time. And so why don’t we just call this whole thing off right now?” And Tyler was like, “Whoa, what’s going on?” But he also knows that I have relationship anxiety. So he did not move into this space of freaking out with me, he held space for me to feel my feelings and for us to talk about it.

And during our conversation, one of the things that he said that really impacted me, and he said it in a light, joking way, but he said, “Well, if you want to travel for 360 days a year, yeah, a lot of that travel will be without me, but we’re just going to get ourselves an amazing Zoom account.” and I was just really struck when he said that. And I know he said it in a light, joking way, and no I don’t want to travel for 360 days a year, that sounds extraordinarily exhausting.

But when he said that I was so struck by how he was coming at the conversation from such a different place than I was. He was coming to the conversation from the place of, “We’re in this together, and we’ll figure it out together. And there is for sure a solution to our desires. And maybe you have a much higher desire for travel than I do, but we both have a really

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strong desire to be together and build a life together, and so we can figure it out.”

And my approach to the conversation was like, “Well, in a hypothetical scenario I might want this hypothetical thing that’s really different from what I imagine you would want. So why should we even keep moving forward?” And those are two very different approaches.

For those of you who have read attachment theory books, my favorite one is the book Attached. You may recognize our two separate attachment styles. Tyler presents and operates from within a more secure attachment style. And I present and operate and move through life in a more insecure attachment style, or anxious attachment style. So I’m much quicker in romantic relationships to be very hyper vigilant about how things are going, afraid that things aren’t working, afraid that things won’t work. I get nervous when we have conflict.

And it’s maybe very interesting to those of you listening to this to be like, “Well, that’s really different than the really confident, outgoing, outspoken Kaneisha that I know.” And I would say that’s all the same person. That’s not me putting on a show pretending to be confident and outspoken, it’s that in this realm of my life I deal with a lot of anxiety.

So, that is just your micro introduction, not even micro introduction, that is my micro mention of attachment theory. But I was so struck by the different approach that Tyler and I both brought to that conversation and it really gave me something to think about.

You would think that maybe, and maybe for other people this is what would happen, you’d be ready to move on from that fear. But the way my anxiety is set up, no. I did not let the issue go fully. So a few weeks later I was having a call with my mentor Kerry Ann. You’re going to hear more about Kerry Ann in future episodes and hopefully you will hear directly from Kerry Ann in a future episode.

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And so it was Kerry Ann, myself, and a new friend, Rebecca. And I was talking to both of them about this fear that I had, and this grief I was feeling around, “Well I just want to travel so, so much and so frequently. I was a digital nomad before the pandemic. I was going to move to Spain, I was going to immigrate to Spain. And then now I live in Austin and I have a dog, and I have this wonderful boyfriend. But it’s just really different than what I thought I was going to do. And I just have this fear that if I fully, full commit to my romantic relationship and fully commit to my Zadie.”

Obviously, dogs can get on planes, boyfriends can get on planes as well. But fully commit to building a stable life in one place with them, that I’m going to miss out on all these amazing expat life opportunities. And so I brought that question to Kerry Ann and Rebecca and I asked them, “You two are both in long -term partnerships, talk to me about how you deal with the idea of missing out on certain experiences, or what you do with your grief about the experiences you might not have because you have fully committed to your life partnership.”

And Kerry Ann thought for a moment and a smile kind of moved across her face. And she’s very slow to begin speaking, she always leaves space for other people to speak, and then she’ll begin speaking when it’s clear that the floor is clear and that there is space for her to speak. And when that happened, she pointed out to me that it sounded like I was really falling into the trap of either or thinking, and possibly grieving unnecessarily and grieving too early.

One really beautiful thing she said to me is, “Kaneisha, from what I know of you, you are a person that when you want something, you’ll find a way to make it happen. You are not a person who encounters obstacles and then just takes a seat and gives up.” And that was very encouraging when she said that to me. It’s really nice to have people mirror back to you things about yourself that you may forget about yourself or never even thought, “Yeah, that’s who I am.”

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And then she talked to me about how, yeah, there are things that she likes to do a lot more than her husband likes to do. And travel is one of those things. And they are at very different ends of the spectrum when it comes to travel. Kerry Ann is more like me, loves to travel, loves to stay there for a while, wants to just see every place in the world. Whereas her husband is more of a, "I like to be at home, I like to be in my place that I know. And I don't understand what this need is for gallivanting around the world." A little bit closer to Tyler.

So I don't want to make it sound like Tyler or Kerry Ann's husband don't like to travel at all but Tyler and I have been together during a pandemic so our travel has been very limited. We've had fun with a tiny, tiny bit of travel we've been able to do safely and responsibly, but there was still that fear in me and that pre-grief in my that the pandemic is going to end and I'm going to want to move back to Spain and he's not going to want to. And so why are we even doing this?

So Kerry Ann and her shared to me about how she and her husband navigate their different levels of interest of travel and other things that they don't have a huge overlap in interest, is that they operate from an Assumption of Permanence. Now I love a good phrase, so I was immediately intrigued when she said that. And so I asked her to help me understand more. And so I'm going to share more about that with you.

So an Assumption of Permanence, this is my definition that I've created based on what Kerry Ann shared with me, and then my own reflections, and a little bit of Googling. So, an Assumption of Permanence is when you operate from a mindset that the relationship, so this might be a friendship, this could be a romantic relationship, or this could be a relationship between you and your career. A relationship between you and your business.

Okay, so an Assumption of Permanence is when you operate from a mindset that the relationship is a living, breathing, evolving entity to which

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you are deeply committed despite the inevitable challenges, hardships, and disagreements that the relationship will encounter over time.

So that's what an Assumption of Permanence is. It basically means I'm all in for the long haul, even when it gets hard. That is what we would think of, right, when people make their marriage vows. The marriage vows are a really good example, it doesn't happen all the time but it's a very good example of an Assumption of Permanence.

What are the benefits of engaging in an Assumption of Permanence with the most important relationships your life? Well, one, you're more thoughtful and intentional about what you commit your time, energy, and attention to. If you apply an Assumption of Permanence to your desired career, to your dream business, to your life partnership you're going to be a lot more thoughtful about who you decide to call your girlfriend, boyfriend, partner, life partner, right? You're going to be very careful about what kind of business you start because this is something that you want to be a going concern.

A second benefit when you engage in an Assumption of Permanence is that you become less interested in short-term wins and more interested in the relationship winning. So a great example is I have been friends with some of my friends for a really long time. I have known my friend Alexis her entire life. Our parents have been friends since they were kids. I have known my friend JJ since sixth grade. I have known my friend Meghan since tenth grade and we're still great friends.

And so we have an Assumption of Permanence in our friendships, all those people I just named. And so if you think to yourself, "Okay, we're going to be friends for the next 10, 20, 30 years, the rest of our lives, our friendship has an Assumption of Permanence. Is it really worth it to me to win this argument about who said what in 11th grade Spanish class? Or is this something I can let go for the good of the relationship and the friendship?" Although me and my friends, we do love to argue. And we love to Google

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things to see who's right. But sometimes there's nothing to Google, you just got to let it go.

A third benefit of engaging in an Assumption of Permanence is you don't spend a lot of time worrying about temporary problems because you know, and you accept that even healthy relationships, or healthy businesses, or healthy careers ebb and flow. They ebb and flow in their ease, the amount of energy it takes you to maintain it or the amount of energy it gives you, and in its abundance.

So a good example might be your business, the money that you have coming in might ebb and flow, but you have an Assumption of Permanence with your business so you don't freak out when you have a down month or even a down quarter. You do something about it, you acknowledge it, you work towards a solution. But you don't just throw up your hands and say, "Okay, it's just time for me to quit." Because you have an assumption that this is something that you're committed to in the long term despite the ups and downs.

The fourth benefit of an Assumption of Permanence is that you can take risks within that relationship, within that business, within that career, within that romantic relationship with trying new things, or doing things differently, or letting go of things that don't serve you within that relationship because you and all the parties involved know that you have the core foundation of permanency of the relationship to fall back on.

So those are some of the benefits of an Assumption of Permanence. If there are so many benefits then why don't we just all engage in an Assumption of Permanence with every relationship in our entire life? Well clearly we don't want every relationship in our entire life to last forever. Every friendship, every job, or even every business. Every relationship can't last, human beings' brains can't handle that many relationships.

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So there are some drawbacks and limitation of an Assumption of Permanence. And here is tow that I thought of. One is, sometimes the relationship is going to win out over your individual preferences and desires in the moment. Here's an example from my business. If I sign up 100 students in my company's Application Accelerator program I can't just up and decide on day that me and my entire leadership team are going on a two-month team retreat to the beach in the Philippines, because I'm responsible for serving the clients that I made commitments to. I can't just take all the key team members and get on a plane and go to the beach.

We could do that if we planned for that, but an Assumption of Permanence is I made promise and a commitment to these clients and I need to deliver on that promise and commitment, even if my feelings change. Even if I decide I'd rather be two months on the beach having a team retreat.

A second drawback of an Assumption of Permanence is related to the first one, which is that you are accountable for fulfilling any promises or commitments you made when you made a commitment under and Assumption of Permanence. So that actually applies to the first example I gave as well. But a good example in a personal life might be if you are married and you and your partner have children, even if you get divorced you had the children under an Assumption of Permanence of the marriage. Now the marriage is no longer a thing but you still need to work together to co-parent the children that you two created together.

And so there are some drawbacks to an Assumption of Permanence because we cannot actually control the permanence of things, right? We can make decisions out of an Assumption of Permanence but there might be circumstances of experiences that come our way that make that permanence no longer a thing.

Let's talk about what an Assumption of Permanence is not. An Assumption of Permanence, according to me, is not a formal commitment to never change, leave the relationship, or to never part ways. Because a marriage,

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I believe, has an assumption or permanence built into it, right? Built into the vows, built into the institution. It's a legal arrangement in addition to a romantic partnership arrangement. But an Assumption of Permanence as a concept is, it has the word assumption in it, it's a way of thinking that underlies decisions that you make.

So, I just want to say it again, an Assumption of Permanence according to me, is not a formal commitment to never change, leave, or part ways, it is a way of thinking about your relationship. Your relationship romantically, friendships, to your career, to your business. It's a way of thinking about your relationship on a daily basis so you are optimizing for the long-term health of the relationship over short-term, or maybe even over mid-term comfort.

An Assumption of Permanence is not an excuse to stay in unhealthy relationships or untenable situations. An example would be also an unprofitable business endeavor that has no path to profitability.

So the Assumption of Permanence only works in a beneficial way if the underlying relationship is a healthy one built on shared values, mutual commitment, and mutual ability to show up as a partner in the relationship. You do not want to use an Assumption of Permanence with a career where you feel like it's eating your soul and that you have to show up in a way that is not in line with your values. Why would you even want an Assumption of Permanence with that career?

So it has to start with a healthy foundation, and it needs to be a mutual two-way street. You give to your career; your career gives back to you. You pour energy, time, and attention into your business, your business actually generates revenue and profits.

Speaking of businesses, I want to share about how having an Assumption of Permanence has transformed my business over the years. The first is I went from timidly taking owner's distributions out of my company and just paying myself random amounts of money at random times to incorporating

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my business as an LLC and an S Corporation so that I receive a W-2 form every year, I get an employee salary. I'm an actual salaried employee of my business. Right now, in 2020 I paid myself, well it's 2021, but in 2020 I paid myself I believe \$100,000 as a salaried employee and then I also took out a lot of money in terms of owner's distributions, which are the profits of the business.

But having that Assumption of Permanence helped me stop feeling so timid around, "Well, can I pay myself? I don't know. I don't want to run out of money. I don't want the bank account to get too low." Instead, I figured out how much money does my business need each month to operate, and then the profits are above that. How much can I pay myself, and make my pay a part of that operational budget? And then also something extra for me on top of that in terms of owner's distributions from the profits.

The second one is adding a guarantee to the Application Accelerator program that my company The Art of Applying enrolls people into. We didn't use to have a guarantee. I thought, "Well, if I take on people and I guarantee that they'll get in somewhere, what if they don't? And then I have to work with them again next year, I don't want to do that. What if I want to change my mind and become like a coach who helps you pick out the best shoes to wear on your first date? Like, what if I decide I want to be the first date shoe coach and I don't want to be the CEO of The Art of Applying in three years?"

And then I decided, I didn't know the term, but I decided to take the approach of having an Assumption of Permanence and I said, "You know what? I've been in business at this point, I think, 10 years. We have amazing stats, our client's dreams are coming true, they're getting all these scholarships. We can put some measures in place to give people a reasonable guarantee that if they do all the work in the program and they apply to the number of schools that we commit to applying to together, that we can guarantee that they'll get into one of those schools. And if they don't, we'll work with them again the next year for free.

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So we call that our green light guarantee. And when we introduced that green light guarantee it became so much easier to get people to commit to the program because they felt such a higher level of trust and certainty. This is a two-way street; I'm not just going to pay and maybe not get a result. I'm going to pay and I'm going to get a result and if I don't get a result the first year, we're going to work together again the second year.

And that Assumption of Permanence and that guarantee was a huge game changer in my business. This guarantee came after our million-dollar year. So it's after the big, big, big revenue year. It was the lower revenue year, 2020, our I think 580K year, but much more profitable because we were able to increase the price of Application Accelerator, take fewer clients, give them a lot more attention, all as a result of the guarantee. So I actually made a lot more money in my 580K year than my million-dollar year.

A third way that an Assumption of Permanence has helped me in my business is it has really encouraged me to take time to properly legally protect my business and its intellectual property. I own the trademark for the name of my business, The Art of Applying, I owned the trademark for the name of our signature program, Application Accelerator. I own the trademark for one of our most popular packages, application intervention, and so on. I actually take the time to go through the process of trademarking things that matter to the long-term health of my business. It's protecting what I've built.

So those are some of the ways that having an Assumption of Permanence have actually helped me in my business.

All right, so if you have found yourself feeling fearful about making a deeper commitment, or fearful about the future of your career, your business, your friendship, your romantic relationship, I invite you to reflect on how engaging an Assumption of Permanence might help you.

As a recap, an Assumption of Permanence is a mindset and internal commitment to nurturing and navigation a relationship which is treated as

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living, breathing, evolving, entity that you want to keep alive for the long-term, “permanently”. An Assumption of Permanence should only be used in the context of healthy relationships, non-toxic workplaces, and businesses that have a clear path to profitability.

There are a lot of payoffs to engaging an Assumption of Permanence, but there are also something drawbacks and you need to be aware of those. The ones I named or the ones that I haven’t thought of that maybe might occur to you.

All right y’all, time for your joy work. I want you to journal, doodle, and noodle on these questions. Do I engage an Assumption of Permanence in my career? In my relationships, and in my business? If so how does that show up? If not, why do I not engage in Assumption of Permanence and what do I gain by holding back and engaging an assumption of temperalness, or an assumption of ephemerality? That’s a completely made-up word, I was trying to say ephemeral and then make it into like a noun, I don’t think it worked.

All right, other questions for you to doodle and noodle on is, what might I gain if I did engage an Assumption of Permanence? What risks might I take? And what deepening in the relationship and what benefits might I enjoy?

And so this was Scale Your Joy with Kaneisha Grayson, episode three. And I hope that you enjoyed learning about an Assumption of Permanence, just like I enjoyed very much talking about it with you. And until next week I hope you have a beautiful week.

To celebrate the launch of the show I’m giving away a Scale Your Joy audiobook e-book bundle. These are five hand-picked books that I have read and I love. They’re about life, joy, and entrepreneurship. And five lucky listeners will be chosen to win.

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The way you enter is you subscribe, rate, and review Scale Your Joy on Apple Podcasts. It doesn't have to be a five-star review, although I sure hope you're loving the show. I want your honest feedback so I can create an amazing show that provides tons of value. Visit scaleyourjoy.com/welcome to learn more about the contest and how to enter.

I'll be announcing the winners on the show in episode 11.