

7: Stop Delaying Your Dreams and Choose Yourself in Life, Love, and Business



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Kaneisha Grayson

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You are listening to *Scale Your Joy* with Kaneisha Grayson, episode seven. You ready? Because I'm ready.

Welcome to *Scale Your Joy*, the only podcast that teaches high achievers with heart, how to craft a life and build a business focused 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. Do you ever accidentally work too much? Because that totally happened to me today. It is Saturday and I have been working on the podcast since 12:45pm and it is now 4:30pm. I have worked a whole half day on this podcast accidentally. I'm having fun but, you know, it's the weekend I should be resting. So I'm definitely looking forward to recording this episode for you. Then taking Zadie to the dog park. And then doing absolutely nothing the rest of tonight and all day tomorrow.

Actually, I just remembered my building has a mishmash dinner that we are doing to say farewell for now to our neighbor, Alex and her dog Syrup. Which you may remember their names from episode four, about the Texas snowpocalypse. Alex and Syrup are going traveling for the next three months across the US. And we're having a cultural mishmash dinner where all of us from the dog park are going to bring a dish from our culture. And I am bringing Black people banana pudding. It's going to be so good. I already bought all the ingredients and I think it's going to be a hit.

In today's episode we are going to talk about how to stop delaying your dreams and choose yourself in life, love, and business. Today's listener spotlight is a written submission in Apple Podcasts. Because the user's name has 47 in it, their username is 47dumplings, it makes me think that this is one of my friends from college. Because our college, Pomona College, uses the number 47. And I have in mind who I think this is, but I

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won't say their name to let them be private because they didn't put their real name. So they obviously want to go by 47dumplings, which actually sounds very delicious.

All right, so the person says, "I love this podcast. Kaneisha just oozes wisdom, and intellect, and warm humor and I could listen to her stories and advice endlessly. I'm clearly in the target audience of highly educated women of color, who aren't afraid of their ambition and want a mentor who can help me reach my full potential. She speaks to my soul. Can't wait to binge this podcast and learn more, both about Kaneisha's life and experiences, and how to reach the goals I didn't even know I could go after." What an amazing, beautiful listener spotlight. I love reading that. And thank you 47dumplings.

All right, you ready to learn? We are going to talk today about how to stop delaying our dreams and choose ourself in life, love, and business. Some things to know about choosing yourself is that choosing yourself doesn't mean you don't rely on outside help, support, advice, or encouragement. Choosing yourself doesn't mean you are eschewing, how do you even say that word eschewing? Somebody help me and tell me how to say that word. Is it eschewing or eschewing? It's such a beautiful word, I don't even know how to say it. I just read it.

It doesn't mean you're eschewing, or eschewing, any desire to have partnership in life, love, and business. It just means you aren't putting your dreams on hold while you wait for someone else to tell you that you are good enough.

Choosing yourself is an ongoing process. Sometimes we'll be better at showing up for ourselves. And other times we will feel that sense of inadequacy, that yearning for external validation, and that deep seated desire for recognition. And that's okay.

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First, I'm going to talk to you about choosing yourself in business. Then I'll talk about choosing yourself in your career. Then I'll talk about choosing yourself in love. And I will read a short excerpt from my book, *Be Your Own Boyfriend*. Which is all about choosing yourself in life and love. Then I'll give you some joy work so you can take these lessons, reflect on them, and put them into action in your life.

Choosing yourself In business. The beautiful thing about entrepreneurship, and one of the many reasons why I love running my own business, is that for many, many types of businesses, especially service businesses, coaching businesses, and consulting businesses, no one has to give you special permission to be in business. You can simply start helping people achieve a result in exchange for money. And if you want a reminder of how to do that visit, scaleyourjoy.com/2 and listen to the episode on Kaneisha's Coaching Business Cycle.

Now, of course you want to make sure that you are not legally required to be certified or regulated in some other way. But a lot of times we create internal barriers and make up reasons why we're not qualified enough, or we're not ready to start our business. Other times, people are less enthusiastic than we are about our business idea. And we let their lack of enthusiasm discourage us and make us not start or make us not move forward.

For example, I actually submitted the business plan for *The Art of Applying* to Harvard Business School had this option where you could submit a business plan to an anonymous Harvard Business School alum, who was an entrepreneur, and who had volunteered to provide feedback. And you would get anonymous feedback. Well, my anonymous feedback was that the business wouldn't work. I shouldn't start it, it wouldn't scale, don't do it. And I was a little bummed to receive that feedback. But I didn't let it stop me.

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I said, “You know what, I'm passionate about this. I've helped some people and people need my help. And I'm going to do it.” And so I actually went to my career coach at Harvard Business School, and she really encouraged me to go for it since I was so excited about it.

And can you believe that the same Entrepreneurship Center at Harvard Business School where an individual anonymously told me not to start it, that same Entrepreneurship Center, the Arthur Rock Center for Entrepreneurship at Harvard Business School, gave me a \$10,000 entrepreneurship loan reduction fellowship to help me in my first year of business. \$10,000 for free, a grant.

So imagine, would we even be here today with Scale Your Joy if I hadn't started The Art of Applying, and not listened to somebody who told me, “You know what? I don't choose you, I don't choose your business.” I chose myself.

So one way that you can choose yourself in business is to put yourself where the supposedly chosen people are. As you know, I'm not a big fan of how much entrepreneurship is glorified and overly focused on as only being tech startups and venture backed startups. I think those types of businesses are absolutely necessary. I use lots and lots of those businesses every day in my life. But that is not the only way to be an entrepreneur. And I don't even think it's really the most fulfilling way to be an entrepreneur, is to have some really big hyper growth startup. And also the failure rate is extraordinarily high.

I know there are lots and lots of you listening who are like, “But yeah, I still want to have that type of business. I still want to have a business that has lots of investors, is tech driven, and can have this huge IPO. You know, my business just blows up and I exit, and then I'm fabulously wealthy.” Okay, let's say that that is the type of business that you want.

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If you're absolutely sure that your business has to have outside investors in order to grow, or you just want venture funding, don't wait for a bunch of people to tell you that you have a great business idea. I want you to apply to lots of startup incubators and startup accelerators with enthusiasm and confidence, as well as clarity and the belief that you belong there.

And it's okay to take feedback. If you get rejected, which is probably going to happen. Let's say you apply to seven. That would be amazing apply to seven incubators or accelerators for startups, and you get rejected. So far you've been rejected from four or five of them, and you're still waiting to hear from two of them. It's totally okay. And I encourage you to read their feedback, listen to their feedback, and see what there is that you can learn from it. But don't automatically decide that a little bit of negative feedback, or even a lot of negative feedback, means you shouldn't move forward.

So if you have decided, you know what, I do want to have a venture backed business. Put yourself where those chosen people, meaning the investors that these venture capitalists decide to invest with, put yourself where the people they often choose to invest with are. And one of those places is startup incubators and accelerators. And geographically that's definitely San Francisco.

All right. Let's talk about a different way you can choose yourself in business is to be a bootstrapper. By bootstrapper, I mean, a bootstrapped business is one that is funded by its operations or by the founder or co-founders. You don't have outside investors, you may take on some debt, but you're not giving away chunks, lots of chunks of your business to investors. You are actually maintaining either entire control and ownership of the business or the vast, vast, vast majority of it, and funding the business through its own operations.

That is the type of business that The Art of Applying is. So I got \$10,000 from Harvard Business School for free. They're not an investor, they just

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gave it to me for free. Thank you. And then I also have taken on various sized loans, I think the largest one, I think I took \$100,000 loan and didn't end up using like, really any of the money. I was just feeling scarce and a little scared. And I just like gave it all back to the bank a few months later. That's not what you want to do. Because then you end up paying a bunch of interest that you don't need to pay. You want to use, usually a line of credit. But that's an aside.

The Art of Applying is a bootstrap business. But so are some really big companies that you may have heard of. I mentioned in the episode with my extraordinary executive assistant, Ellie, that Basecamp is the software that our entire business basically runs on. And Basecamp started out as a bootstrapped business.

I've also mentioned in prior episodes that my beloved Tyler is a software engineer and a hacker. And one of the tools he uses a lot is called GitHub. And GitHub was also started as a bootstrapped company. And then they were later acquired for billions. That's a B. Billions of dollars by Microsoft.

So a bootstrap company does not mean that it starts small and has to stay small. It's just about keeping things simple. So you can almost think of it as entrepreneurial minimalism.

Another way that you can choose yourself in business is to really focus on how you are qualified to do what you want to do, versus why you are not qualified to do what you want to do. For example, I never took an admissions consulting certification or an admissions consulting course. I knew that I had gotten great results for myself. Then I started helping my friends and family for free and helping them get great results. And then I said, "You know what? I'm great at this."

And so I chose myself and I said, "I don't need someone else to tell me that I'm allowed to do this or that. I'm good enough to do this. I know I'm great at this." And I started charging. And I did all the steps of Kaneisha's Coaching

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Business Cycle and grew my business from just me and a laptop to a million-dollar business. Then scaled it back to focus on my health and finding my beloved.

And I think that in 2021 we're going to be somewhere between, let's say 600k to a million-dollar year. You remember, you heard on the other episode, Ellie really wants it to be a million-dollar year. So we'll see. I do too. I do too.

All right. So those are some ways that you can choose yourself in business. Let's talk about choosing yourself in your career. If you're feeling unfulfilled and unappreciated in your current career, I encourage you to look at how you can make yourself feel more appreciated and fulfilled, rather than waiting on your boss to pat you on the back. Is there a project you could take on that might provide value to the organization and light you up?

I'd also encourage you to read inspiring content and listen to inspiring content or even consider hiring a career coach, like my friend Lisandra Rickards, who's the founder and CEO of Soul Career. Somebody who can work with you, either one on one or in a group setting alongside other people who share your goal, to help you figure out if you're even in the right career for your personality and psychometric profile.

Lisandra and I are crazy about psychometric profiles, personality tests, and all those kinds of things. We think that they're really fun, but they're also very revealing and help provide structure and validation to people who feel like, "I just feel weird and like a misfit." Or my favorite term that I love to use, "Like a wild card. And I just I don't understand why this is somebody's dream job, but it's just not mine." Well, guess what? I give you permission to choose yourself in your career and choose your fulfillment over the idea of living up to other people's expectations.

That's not me saying go and quit your job right now. But I'm giving you permission to take a deep look at how you're showing up at work, how you

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could show up differently at work, or how you can transition into work that's a better fit for you. Choose yourself, don't wait for the institution you work for to give you a raise, or to give you the promotion you feel you deserve. Make a case to the decision makers that be, why you think you do deserve that higher position, more responsibility, or more pay. Choose yourself.

Choosing yourself in love. Y'all I wrote a whole book about this. My book, *Be Your Own Boyfriend*, is a motivational book aimed at women. And I'm sorry for the heteronormative language. You know, I love alliteration. But if it feels better for you, we can totally call it *Be Your Own Boo*. So you can substitute out boyfriend for boo.

And *Be Your Own Boyfriend* or *Be Your Own Boo* is a book for people who put lots of their self-image and their self-worth into their relationship status. And in the book, I talk about all the ways we put our lives on hold, waiting for our "real life" to start once we're in a serious relationship, or once we're married.

And the book itself is a great example of me choosing myself. I didn't wait for an agent to say I was a good enough writer to deserve them representing me. I didn't wait for an agent to sell my book to a big publishing house. I chose myself, I self-published my book to an extraordinarily high quality. I'm so proud of my book. And hundreds of people from all over the world bought the book, read the book, have read the book and enjoy the book. Including some of my neighbors right here in this building, which is super fun.

And because I chose myself and self-published my book, I now own the book 100% outright and all the rights to it. No one has the rights but me. Although I'm totally open to selling the film rights. If anyone is out there and is thinking they want to change *Be Your Own Boyfriend* and turn it into a movie, I'm open to it, let's talk.

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But yeah, because I don't have to ask anyone for permission, I can share an excerpt with all of you today without having to get permission or be told I have to sign away this waiver or whatnot. So here's a little excerpt from my book, *Be Your Own Boyfriend*, which is literally the result of me choosing myself. And is also about choosing yourself.

This is an excerpt from chapter nine. And the title of chapter nine is *Change Starts on the Inside*. And we start with a quote from Maya Angelou which is, "We delight in the beauty of the butterfly, but rarely admit the changes it has gone through to achieve that beauty."

All right, here's chapter nine, *Change Starts on the Inside*. Just an excerpt from chapter nine.

Everyone wants to know the secret to getting what you want. Let me tell you this. Getting anything you want in life starts with knowing yourself and what you really want. For many people knowing what they want, or admitting to themselves what they want, and then honoring those desires is the most difficult part of all. Knowing yourself before the one.

One of the most important life decisions we make will be with whom we choose to be in a romantic relationship and life partnership. Of course, since this book is called *Be Your Own Boyfriend*, I want you to first focus on making sure the life partnership you have with yourself is strong and healthy. But when all is said and done, most of us are very excited about falling in love and meeting the one.

While all relationships have valuable lessons for us, not all people we are mutually attracted to are meant to be our romantic partners. A good relationship is one where each of you lives in integrity with your own values, while building up supporting and loving each other. A bad relationship is one where you frequently hurt each other and routinely destroy one another spirit. In a bad relationship neither of you are living in integrity with your individual values.

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While not every relationship is going to be easy going all the time, it definitely makes life easier to have more good relationships than bad ones. Strangely, many women are accustomed to filtering potential boyfriends with a checklist of the physical and material qualities they want in a man, such as height, build, salary, level of education. But they haven't concluded with the same precision what kind of emotional, spiritual, and interpersonal qualities they want in a relationship.

A great guy in a bad relationship is a world of heartache for a woman in love. In addition to knowing what kind of man you want, be sure to know what kind of relationship you want. Following this paragraph are some of the qualities in a relationship that make me feel loved, accepted, and secure. While some of the points are more important than others, knowing what I want out of a relationship helps me be honest with myself when a relationship just isn't working.

So we have a little section called Kaneisha confessional. And the confessionals throughout the book are parts where I share candidly, in the first person.

Every time I date a new guy, I get clearer on what I want out of a partner. And here's what I want. He is emotionally ready and available for a serious, committed relationship. He enjoys spending time alone with me but can also have fun spending time by himself or together as a couple out on the town. He supports and encourages my dreams and harebrained ideas, rather than discouraging me or giving me reality checks when I'm having fun brainstorming.

I can trust him to tell me the truth. He does not put himself in social situations that would compromise our relationship. He is dedicated to his physical, spiritual, and mental health. He will enthusiastically participate in activities with me that help us have strong minds, bodies, and spiritual lives. I am physically and emotionally attracted to him and he to me. We

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have a fun, active, monogamous sex life. He is able and willing to travel around the country and abroad with me. He knows how to relax while traveling and will call me out when I'm getting too uptight about sticking to our vacation itinerary.

He enjoys eating my cooking and will help me cook and or wash the dishes afterward. He will watch movies that we both enjoy and won't give me a hard time when I watch my beloved indie romance movies alone. He will enthusiastically discuss books, articles, art, and current events with me. He gets along and has fun with my loud, fun, and sometimes difficult family.

Now it's your turn to make your list. Afterwards reflect upon these areas in the relationship you have with yourself. In other words, how many of the experiences you want to have with a partner do you provide for yourself?

All right. That's the end of the excerpt. And for a recap, today we talked about why it's important to choose yourself in business. How to choose yourself in your career. And how to choose yourself in love. And I read an excerpt from my book, *Be Your Own Boyfriend*, or *Be Your Own Boo* if you prefer that title.

And we remember that choosing ourself doesn't mean we don't rely on outside help, support, advice, or encouragement. Choosing ourself doesn't mean that we let go of desires to have partnership in life, love, and business. It just means that we don't put our dreams on hold while we wait for someone to tell us that we're good enough.

Choosing ourself is an ongoing process. Sometimes we'll be better at showing up for ourselves and sometimes we'll struggle. Choosing ourself means we are clear on what we want. We admit what we want, and we give ourselves permission to pursue what we want.

All right. Time for your joy work. I want you to journal doodle and noodle on these questions. Where am I waiting to be chosen when it comes to my

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career or my entrepreneurial endeavors? Where am I waiting for someone to choose me in my personal life or my love life? And what are some simple actions I can take to choose myself in my career, in my entrepreneurial endeavors, and or in my personal life and love life?

And so far, we've been journal doodling and noodling, but today I want to introduce make a beautiful mess. And we can also refer to it as imperfect action. And that's going to be where we take the lessons from each podcast episode and we also combine them with our journal doodling and noodling. And then we actually start to take imperfect action in the real world.

We want to move beyond just listening to the podcast. We want to move beyond journal doodling and noodling. And we actually want to take action, imperfect action in our lives. Because the only way that we're going to see real change in our lives, more joy, more impact, more abundance, more self-expression, more authenticity, is if we get out of our heads, off the page, and actually in the real world, taking tiny steps towards our dreams.

So here's the imperfect action I want you to take this week. I want you to choose one of the simple choose yourself actions that came up in your journaling. And I want you to do it. Don't worry about being perfect. Don't worry about what other people will think. You are the primary beneficiary of this imperfect action.

And what's really interesting is that you'll eventually find the more and more that you choose yourself, other people will follow your lead and start choosing you for career opportunities, for friendships, for business deals, and business dealings. Living your most authentic life and scaling your joy is not about getting people to notice you, getting people to choose you, making it onto fancy lists, or covers of magazines. It's about noticing yourself, recognizing yourself, choosing yourself, and making your own dang dreams come true.

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Thank you for being on this choosing myself journey with me. This was Scale Your Joy with Kaneisha Grayson episode seven. And I'll talk to you next week.

To celebrate the launch of the show. I'm giving away a Scale Your Joy audio book eBook 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.

The way you enter is you subscribe, rate and review scale your joy on Apple podcast. 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.