

**EPISODE — EMILY LEY**

[INTRODUCTION]

**[00:00:04.1] ANNOUNCER:** Welcome to the Creative Empire Podcast. Each week, Reina Pomeroy, the life and biz success coach, and Christina Scalera, the attorney for creatives, are taking you up close and personal with successful influencers in the creative community and tackling your biggest business hurdles. Their mission is to help you, creative entrepreneurs, think beyond your daily biz so you can make the brave decisions that build your Creative Empire.

[INTERVIEW]

**[0:00:35.8] RP:** Welcome to another episode of the Creative Empire podcast. It's Reina here, and I'm here with Christina. Today we have an incredibly special guest here with us. I'm pretty sure you know Emily Ley, and she requires no further introduction, but just in case you've been out of the loop for a little bit, Emily is the founder and creative director of Emily Ley Papers and Gifts, and you probably know this Simplified Planner that everybody goes bananas over each time it launches.

She's also the author of a brand new and beautiful hot pink book called *Grace, Not Perfection*, about embracing simplicity and celebrating joy, and you need to check that out right now. We're super excited to be chatting with Emily about her new book and how we can better cultivate a life of grace, and not perfection. Emily, we're so super excited to have you here with us.

**[0:01:21.1] EL:** Thank you, I'm so excited to be here!

**[0:01:24.0] RP:** For those of us who haven't gotten the book yet, or maybe have the book but maybe haven't quite finished it, or just haven't read the whole thing yet, could you tell us about the book and what prompted you to write the book?

**[0:01:37.7] EL:** Yeah, absolutely. Let's see, it was about five and a half years ago when my son was born, and I was just neck deep in the throes of trying to create a business for myself for the sole reason of having flexibility as a mom. That's all I wanted. That was my number one goal,

and I found that I had the exact opposite. I was balancing or trying to balance work on one hip, a baby on the other, and still trying to have dinner on the table at six, and have perfect hair, and the laundry done, and just check all the boxes so that I can be that perfect person that I felt like everyone in my life wanted me to live up to. I hit a brick wall, literally, and found myself completely and totally overwhelmed, and really unhappy.

I was on the phone with a good friend of mine, and she was my business partner at the time, Lara Casey, and I stomped my feet and told her I'm done. I am so tired of trying to be perfect, of trying to have it all together, trying to be everything to everyone, and I told her I am going to hold myself to a standard of grace. She and I had this amazing conversation, and it just became the foundation of my company. From that moment on, left behind — I was doing a lot of work, because people told me I was good at it, and I could earn money doing it, so why not.

I was completely over committed, and decided I was just going to do some things that brought me joy and see where that took me, and the Simplified Planner was born. "Grace, Not Perfection" became the foundation of our company, and about a year ago, I was sitting in a preschool parking lot, and received an email from a publisher who basically repeated our mission back to me and said, "I understand this is what you are all about, and we think that it is a breath of fresh air, and that women should be told they don't have to be more."

I sobbed in the parking lot, and my little boy was so confused. Like, "Why are you crying, Mom?" Then I called my mom and I told her all about it, and eventually they came down to Tampa, and we got together and started putting together a book, and *Grace, Not Perfection* was born.

**[0:03:57.4] RP:** Man, so good.

**[0:03:59.5] CS:** Yeah, if for no other reason, it's such a gorgeous book. I think that this book is a game changer on so many levels, I am very confident that we are going to see just a whole — I think we starting to see a shift in the industry away from the perfect, and I think Instagram stories is helping to facilitate this, right? Because we can have our Instagram feeds, but then we can also have these really funny stories. Can you tell us a little bit more about how it's looked in your life, and if it's been an easy shift for you to embrace that, or if it was something that happened over time, if you still struggle with it, what that looks like in your daily life now?

**[0:04:39.0] EL:** I love that you say that you've seen a shift in the industry, and that's a phrase I've been using the last couple of weeks. I have noticed as well that this industry, by the way, didn't exist eight years ago. When I got started, and when many of us got started, Etsy was new. No one really knew what it was, and Twitter was the thing, and there was no Instagram, and it's funny how incredibly robust this industry has become, but because of the birth of all of these creative entrepreneurs, we've all found ourselves just swimming harder and harder to keep up with each other.

I think when the industry began, we all started crafting these images that we wanted to put out there into the world, and I'll be the first to say, I was so caught up in it. Caught up in wanting to portray this image, not just to potential customers, or to industry peers, but to my family and to my friends. To say, "look at this incredibly ridiculously over the top birthday party I had for my son. I love him so much, and that's what that means". Brady's first birthday invitations are the — it's the best example of grace, not perfection in my own life, or one of them.

His first birthday invitations — because I was an invitation designer at the time — were absurd. It was a wooden cutout silhouette of his head, that had — I screen printed the invitation on the head, had custom made bowties and hair bows that we tied around the little neck, and then put them inside a custom box, with custom liner, that showed how to tie the bowtie properly, and then the box was closed. There was calligraphy and vintage stamps on the top. I think it cost me like \$10 to mail each invitation. It was ridiculous. You know how much my one year old cared about that? Not at all.

His fifth birthday party, I ordered the most beautiful, simple, Lego based invitations from Minted, and mailed them out with American flag postage stamps, and no one cared. You know what? Brady had a blast at the bounce house place. It was awesome. I think that it's probably taken me — it's taken me a very long time to learn how to embrace this idea in my own life, but it is so freeing, and I love that example, because how much easier is it for me to just throw a birthday party that's fun, and he loves, and he remembers, and he has the time of his life, and feels celebrated? That's joy.

The perfect invitations that really impressed my friends when I get them in the mail, that's not the point. Yes, it has taken me a very long time, I think to embrace it, and it's not something that I feel like I've mastered by any stretch. I still find myself in those places where I'm like, why can't my house just be perfectly put together right now? Never mind that I have three children under the age of six who really love to play, but why can't I have the perfect house that's perfectly cleaned up and spotless all the time? That brings me a lot of frustration, and I found that when I learned to just kind of sit in the mess of it all and let it be messy until 8:00 when everyone's in bed, and then pick it up and enjoy a spotless house for an hour, there's just a lot more joy to be found.

I am very grateful to my publisher that they let me write this book from a place of complete imperfection, and not from a place of I'm a master on the subject, and I can teach you all the ways, but from a place of it's hard and I've been there, I get it, you know?

**[0:08:05.2] RP:** Yeah, I think this book is like a perfect, like — just giving people permission to be okay with that.

**[0:08:10.1] CS:** I'm so glad you said that, yes. As you were talking, like that is the game changer, is that you and Laura are experts at this, at giving permission, and I think that's why Making Things Happen changes so many lives. This book is like a little dose of that in daily life, which is why it's so cool. Sorry, Reina.

**[0:08:28.2] EL:** Thank you so much.

**[0:08:30.3] RP:** No, I think we're both very resonant with this topic, and I'm a mom to a two and a half year old. I know about the messy house, I don't have three of them, but you know, it's still kind of the same.

**[0:08:41.5] CS:** Any of them, it's just a mess that you can't control.

**[0:08:44.9] RP:** Right, it's like the perfectionist, control like — wanting moms, or like, parent side, and then like knowing that's actually not reality.

**[0:08:55.6] EL:** Absolutely.

**[0:08:56.8] RP:** I'm curious about what grace has given you, like having that permission to not be perfect, to be able to sit in that mess, what has that given you as you're really in it?

**[0:09:07.6] EL:** I said this the other day when I was talking to a friend, and I just tucked it in my pocket, because I really believe it to be true. That grace has given me permission to be myself and that's it. It's given me permission to just be me, and to take care of myself, and to make myself a priority. How beautiful that is for my kids, and for my customers, and my team, and my husband, that I'm able to be a better version of me. That I don't feel like I have to be someone new.

I love — my friend Lara Casey has started wearing her hair really curly, and it's her natural hair, and I am so inspired by it. That she has just embraced who she is, and she's like, "I'm just not fighting my curly hair anymore. I'm going to figure out how to do it and run with it." I actually texted the other day and I was like, "Teach me. I have really wavy hair, and I'm tired of straightening it and trying to be something different. What if I just embraced the wavy hair?" She sent me all her tricks and tips.

It was great, but you know, I've also found that one of the secrets sauces to our business, with the Simplified Planner, and with our brand, is that — there's seven of us now, and we're all just very authentic, and we kind of embraced the quirks, and the funny parts of our personalities, and it just makes life so much fun. It makes business more fun when I don't try to hide different parts of myself to be this person, and it's been strange — not strange, it's been interesting releasing a book and having my name on lots of things.

There was a little while there, I was actually at Making Things Happen when I was kind of in the middle of this, where I was like, Emily Ley is like a cartoon character sometimes. She's like this person I have to be. Sometimes I would get fearful, what if I don't live up to that? That people think I'm like this Martha Stewart person, and what if I'm not living up to that? It was so beautiful because I have had so many women come up to me at book signings and things and say, "We just love that you give us like you said, permission to be ourselves and to be completely imperfect and totally confident in that."

**[0:11:17.8] RP:** I have a question about — a lot of the listeners that we have are moms and business owners, and they're trying to grow a business. That's like a really big focus for them, and they have the frustration around "I don't have the child care", or there's just kids all over the place, and having to do both of those things at once. I'm wondering if you have any tricks or tips or just anything that you've...

**[0:11:43.4] EL:** Absolutely. When I wrote *Grace, Not Perfection*, I wanted to be really cognizant of the fact that every woman is different. Every woman is in a different season of life. Some have children, some don't have children, some are older, some are not, some are married, some are not. Some have the ability to afford help with childcare, and some absolutely do not. I've had a lot of people ask me.

We have a nanny four days a week, and she's amazing, and she helps me do life well. Her name is Ana, and she's a godsend. I completely recognize that's not everybody's case, and it wasn't my case for a long time. When Brady was born, it was just me and Brady, and we were at home, and I was trying to figure out how to be the stay at home mom, plus working to grow this thing that I really cared about, and it was so hard. That was where this phrase actually came from; where the Simplified Planner was born, because I was trying to balance.

I have lots of suggestions on this topic because I lived it, and one of them is rock it out during nap time. Just rock it out during nap time. Be all in. When you are with your kids, be with your kids. There were many days where Brady and I would do really fun things together in the early days like go to the park. I would bring my iPhone, and I would be on my iPhone the whole time. I knew it, and there had been times where I have chucked my phone across the park because I was so tired of being pulled in two different directions.

I did things when it was just me and Brady. Took my email off my phone. There was a long stretch of time where I did not have email or social media on my cellphone, because I needed to be available for my husband if he called me, or if there is an emergency or something like that. I didn't need to be checking my email when I was at the park with my son. I felt very convicted of that. I just very unabashedly, unapologetically separated the two, and I remember thinking,

“What if my business completely fails because I’m working part time?”, or “What if it fails because I’m not pushing it forward every minute of every day like it did before I had kids?”

Point blank, it does not. That does not happen. Your business will not fail because you don’t answer email 24/7, but what will happen is you will lose your boundaries, and other people that you work with will start encroaching in all of your time, in all of your space, and all of your — the white space in your brain that allows you to be creative and be your best.

My best advice is to separate work and family as best you can, and that doesn’t mean you need a big beautiful office in your house that you can escape to. Even if you have just a corner of the dining room table that is all yours and it is where you keep all of your work things, keep them separated from the family stuff. That makes a big difference. If you can trade childcare with a friend, have your friend bring their kid over and watch the two of yours, or however many together while you get an hour of work done.

Then you do it for her the next time. There’s lots of different ways that you can do it, and I think there’s also a season in business where it’s okay to work at night. It’s okay once the kids go to bed to work for an hour; don’t work for six when they’re sleeping. That’s silly and you will burn yourself out and find yourself in a bad place. I’ve been there, but it’s okay to have weird hours during certain seasons of life.

My kids require a lot from me right now, and there’s a lot of work days during the week when she’s helping, but there’s three of them, and so I end up helping, and playing, and having fun times with them as well, and I end up working at night a little bit, and that’s cool. That’s totally fine. Embrace the season you’re in, just go with it.

**[0:15:18.1] CS:** Thank you, Emily.

[BREAK]

**[0:15:21.1] CS:** On November 29<sup>th</sup>, we are really excited to have the opportunity to connect with you all, and the way that we are going to do this is via a live focus group. If you would like to join us, you can go to [creativeempire.co/focusgroup](http://creativeempire.co/focusgroup), and you will be given all the details to join us in

this live zoom call that we'll be hosting. In it, we are going to spend time just like we would if you are a guest in our podcast, taking the time to ask you questions, answer your questions, and get to know you a little bit better.

We want to know what it is that you're looking for out of the podcast as we approach 2017. How we can best fit the podcast to your needs and to your wants. Please take advantage of this, it's all free, and we would love to see you there. If you can't make it, please come over to [creativeempire.co/focusgroup](http://creativeempire.co/focusgroup), where you can also sign up to get the recording, and then if you have some time, watch that recording and maybe even respond to us via email. It's all going to be at [creativeempire.co/focusgroup](http://creativeempire.co/focusgroup), we hope to see you there.

[INTERVIEW CONTINUED]

**[0:16:28.2] CS:** One thing that is really resonant — I love that you're saying all this. I actually don't have kids yet, and there's another aspect of your business that you touched on that make things happen that is kind of ringing true with this, where you're saying be yourself, do your thing. You built your business without debt, is that okay if I reveal that?

**[0:16:47.6] EL:** Absolutely.

**[0:16:48.4] CS:** Okay, I can edit that out if not, but I know that you revealed that at Making Things Happen, and I was in a season where I was not doing that and I was just like, "I don't know how not to build a business without putting some things on credit cards and whatever." I did it, and every time I pay off a credit card bill, I think of you on the phone, and I hear your voice. I'm like, I wouldn't be in this situation if I hadn't put this on the credit card, and so I'm moving out of that phase of my business, but a lot of us are in this place where we're like, "How do we get ahead? How do we afford a VA if we're not making the income to catch up to it now?", and so that's kind of where I was at last year, and it's gotten better.

But in your situation, where you didn't even have a product based business, that must have been really — first, I know that wasn't the easiest decision, and then second, what are some things that you did to help yourself, and how could some of our listeners maybe do that so that



they're blessed with the situation where they're not staying up late at night working and worrying about debt?

**[0:17:51.9] EL:** First of all, thank you, very nice of you to say, and it has not been easy, but it's the best business decision that we ever made. I say we because my husband is like our midnight CFO, he has an actual job in commercial insurance, but every other minute of the day, he helps run the company and helps make the financial decisions. When I started this thing, I was working full time in University Advancement at University of South Florida. I was unhappy in my full-time job, and I really wanted to create something for myself.

Brian and I both are big believers in Dave Ramsey, and we read *Entrée Leadership*, and we also read his other book, the name is escaping me at the moment, the big one, we just really believe in his theories of "live like no one else, so you can live like no one else". We did Dave Ramsey personally, we paid off everything but our mortgage, still working on that, and with the business, we just said, "Let's just do it right from the very beginning. Let's just not over-extend ourselves, and not take out loans."

Now, we do have a credit card, we use an American Express credit card that we pay off every single month. At the end of every single month, we pay one payment, pay the whole thing off, everything that we purchased, and this is probably a little bit against what Dave Ramsey says do. We like the points from it. We get the points, we pay it off, every single month. It's actually in our terms that we can't carry a balance, which kind of helps us down track, but it was hard in the beginning.

I had big ideas, and I had things that I wanted to do that I knew would propel the business forward and get me out of my full-time job. It was hard to say no, don't take a loan for \$10,000 to build a beautiful shop website, save up. And I saved up my \$5 Etsy sales, and I was selling little monograms on Etsy, digital ones that people could print their own invitations list, and I just saved up my five dollars every time we made a sale. I didn't take a paycheck for the first two years. I continued working at that full-time job, and the idea was that I could jump from that full-time job into a business that was debt free and could afford to pay me the same salary that I was making at my full-time job.

That was a beautiful goal, and it encouraged me whenever I started to feel discouraged wearing my skirt suit, sitting in my little desk at my full-time job. Little by little, we just kept moving forward, and kept moving forward, and any money that we had, we would have a goal. We're going to save up these \$5 sales, and we're going to — the first thing I did was build a beautiful website. It took me a year and a half to two years, probably, to save up enough to build, not a \$10,000 website, but a small beautiful website.

Then from there, we just continued to grow, and when it came to creating products — this is painful — we created, we started in very small batches, we printed them domestically, because with lower quantities you have to print domestically, and that was something that we did, and then eventually we produced them overseas to get the cost down. Our first shipment from overseas, I can't remember exactly how many I printed, but it was a \$6,000 order, which at the time might as well been \$60,000.

It was all the money I had because we were doing this debt free, and I took that \$6,000, paid it to our manufacturer, who we ended up working with for many years, he was wonderful, but the first shipment arrived and it was all wrong. It was the first Simplified Planners, back when they were in like, the binder concept. I had a production error, just because I was new at production, and didn't realize about pen matching, and pre-press production stuff. Just things that I know like my hand now, but when you teach yourself off YouTube videos, it's hard to know all the things to do.

They arrived to my house — we have a warehouse now — but they came into my garage, we pushed these pallets up the driveway, I opened the boxes, and every single one of them was wrong. Not only did I have to schlep every box to the curb, I had to call the recycling company and pay them to come and get them.

It was so painful, and I remember thinking, this is it, no more debt free, we're going to just have to do it like everybody else does it and go take out some business loan. I have failed, either that or I have to go get a corporate job again, and leave this behind. It was my husband who said, "Get up, dust yourself off, be a big girl, and figure it out.", and I did. I just went, and I got some new branding clients, and I made some more wedding invitations, and I did the things I knew how to do, and I made enough money to go and print them again. It was probably about six

months later that I was able to actually put them into production again, delayed everything majorly —

Probably delayed me leaving my full-time job, but it was all fine, it all came together, and being debt free to this day eight years later is the best decision we ever made.

**[0:22:55.9] RP:** Wow, thank you so much for sharing that. I think if people have been following in that story before, I haven't heard it, but I think that that's so incredibly powerful to hear somebody who has — in a lot of people's eyes — made it, and to hear that you have had the same kind of failures, maybe bigger failures than some of us have, and to know that we all make mistakes and the fact that you didn't give up, that's huge, right?

**[0:23:22.8] CS:** Absolutely. Surround yourself with people that will tell you to get up. One thing that you said was interesting is that your husband really encouraged you to get back into the game, and you know, fix this, figure out a way to make it happen. What are some other influences that you've had in your business aside from your husband, aside from Laura, what are some things that people could maybe — they buy your book, they could consciously surround themselves with, I guess, maybe leaders or influential people that could support them and encourage them in some way?

What are some outlets or some people that they could maybe look towards, or read about, or whatever that's influential or has been helpful for you? That would be great to hear.

**[0:24:06.0] EL:** Absolutely. I really believe that community is so important, and I didn't always believe that. In the beginning, I think I thought that I could just go it alone and be fine, and none of my friends at the time understood what I was doing. I think they all thought I was a little bit cray. I just moved to Tampa, so these were all new friends too, so that was interesting, but when I started really putting myself out there, in an imperfect and authentic way, I started to make friends with people who were in similar situations, if they weren't creative business owners, or women who were becoming mothers, or whatever.

I made friends with people who, at their core of who they are, believed in the same things that I did, and really — were just good people and they encouraged me so much along the way, and I'm still friends with those people to this day.

Going to conferences like Making Things Happen, or joining Facebook groups even of just people who are there to lift others up and not put others down, to be of service to the community, that's so very important. Even to this day, I'm just baffled at the incredibly deep and meaningful relationships I have in my life that are newer. They're not people that I went to high school with, they're not college roommates, or any of that.

I still have some of those friends, but these friends are newer, and I found them in seasons of my life where I've been very imperfect and myself to them. I think that that's key when forming those relationships, but they're very helpful in traveling this journey.

**[0:25:38.9] CS:** Yeah, I love that you said that there were a lot of people that thought you were crazy, because that's something that I bump in to all the time, and I'm sure Reina and our audience, that happens all the time, someone's like, what do you do? It's kind of a pet peeve question of mine, but putting that aside. What do you do, and I try to explain, well I have an online business and a podcast. They think that I'm just kind of like a high school player.

**[0:26:03.6] RP:** Playing around.

**[0:26:05.0] EL:** Yeah. Within our small creative, well it's not small anymore, within our creative industry, that question makes people's hair stand on end, because just like, how do you answer it? How do you get respect from people when you say, "I make planners for a living." We started a company recently called Playbook and it's kind of a lot of how-to on how we've done business, and branding, and different things like that, but there's a workbook that goes along with one of our master classes called *The Willow Brand*, and in this workbook — I was actually working through it the other day preparing for a key note presentation I'm giving this week — and I was working through it myself.

One of the questions we laid out — it's one page, and there's three questions, and I think you have to prepare yourself for this question, and it's worth it for all of us to actually write it down.

When someone says to you, “What do you do for a living?”, and you’re like seated at a dinner table, or you’re somewhere where you have lots of time, write a paragraph of what you do. Cross it out, edit it, make it sound really good, and rehearse it so that you’re ready when that moment comes.

Then you need like a shortened version of that meeting people at a party, and you have like one minute to tell someone what you do. You get like two sentences. Wrap it up, say it, make it sound really good, and then you need like one answer. One or two word answer for someone, and it doesn’t really matter if they know your whole life story or they know exactly what you do, you’re meeting them in passing, and to that I say I’m a graphic designer. That’s it.

I don’t even explain it, because it’s not worth it sometimes, but when it is worth it, and when I do want to explain the whole story, I’ll tell people that I own a brand and we make day planners and organizational tools for women. I’m also a brand new author of a book called *Grace, Not Perfection*. In all my spare time, not — I’m a mom to three wonderful children, but that all goes into my what I do for a living. I think having that written down, it’s really key for our confidence.

**[0:28:05.9] RP:** I love that so much, my goodness. This is like very pertinent for any time you go to a family gathering, or like a reunion, or any kind of like gathering where people know you from real life, right?

**[0:28:19.6] EL:** Right. You have to have it all written down. A long answer, a semi-short answer, and then just a one word. It doesn’t matter, I’ll just give you an answer.

**[0:28:27.5] RP:** I love it, I’m going to do it, Christina, hold me to this.

**[0:28:29.9] CS:** Okay, yeah, this is definitely something that we’ll have to work on, because I still don’t have an answer, and it changes every month which is what’s — I know, right?

**[0:28:39.1] RP:** Because we wear a lot of hats, I think that’s just the nature of this online entrepreneur/living life business. All the hats.

**[0:28:47.1] CS:** I know, I think I need to take online out because every time I say that, people think I’m in like multi-level marketing.

**[0:28:53.0] EL:** I agree.

**[0:28:55.8] CS:** I don't know what to do. I think it's funny, because we create these stories in our mind that at a certain level of business, certain problems disappear, and it's just not true. I would love to hear what it's like for you now as someone who is — you know, you're an author, you have the Simplified Planner, you go to the national show every year. This kind of stuff is a big deal. Back in, I guess it was 2012 when you had Making Brands Happen and — you were still working up to this point and you're looking forward, what did you see and how does that — I guess, how does reality now compare to what you thought it would be like?

I think a lot of us, I know myself, I'm speaking for my own experience and speaking to some of the people that listen to this show, we have this idea that once we become that conference speaker, once we are published, once we do this thing, everything's going to be different. Everything's going to change, and I just, after some of those things have fortunately happened, it just hasn't been true, but you are at a whole new level. I would love to hear what your perspective has been on this.

**[0:30:04.8] EL:** I recently read a book by Shauna Niequist, and it's called *Present Over Perfect* and I had the joy of meeting her in person, and it belonged to her. I sat next to her and I said, "Shauna, you wrote this chapter in your book about chairs, and it punched me in the face quite literally. She says in this book too, talking about two pastors, and these two pastors are talking to each other, and I guess she was in the room. One was an experienced pastor of a very old church, and one was a new pastor of a very quickly growing new church. The new pastor was saying, the church just grew and grew and it got really big, we don't know what happened, it just kept going and getting bigger.

The old pastor said, "No, don't say that. You get to say you built a very large church", and the young pastor was like, "No, it just had nothing to do with us, it just kept growing and the old pastor said, "No, you kept putting out the chairs. You built a very large church", and when I heard that — Lara Casey actually sent it to me and was like, I almost drove off the road listening to this on Audible, you have to hear it, it's your life. Hers as well.

I cannot relate to that enough that many years ago, probably five years ago, a friend of mine said to me, “Emily, what do you want for your business in your life? A or B? Do you want A, a very large business with your own warehouse, and tons of stores carrying your product, and your name in lights, and all these things, do you want that, or do you want to have a business that allows you to be flexible, and to be room mom, and provides a decent income for your family, which one?”

I, for many years, said B. I don’t want A. That sounds like a lot of work, and that sounds like exhausted Emily, I don’t want that. A year ago, looking around at my life, I got A, and it sounds amazing, and it’s also really exhausting. I didn’t realize that by saying yes, it sounds very obvious now but by saying yes to so many good things, I would get myself to a place of complete burnout, and that’s where I was.

I realized that just because you’re good at something, or people tell you you’re good at something, or even because you enjoy something doesn’t mean you have to do it. It took me really sitting down and saying what matters? What does success look like to me? Does it look like a giant paycheck, or does it look like being able to be Brady’s room mom at kindergarten? That’s an easy answer, I’m Brady’s room mom. I signed up for that in August, and it’s pretty much the best job I’ve ever had. I had to say no to a lot of things in the past year, a lot of good things, a lot of things that could have propelled our company forward, and been great for our brand and my resume, I guess, but the end of the day I want to be a really good mom.

I know that when I’m 80 years old and I look back at my life, I will say I was a good mom and that’s what matters. Not that I built some crazy, very large business, which was what was happening. We’re in 750 stores around the world. That’s a lot, and we’ve had to cut back, but it’s been completely and totally worth it. To answer your question, it doesn’t look like I thought that it would. I think what like what you said, we often think that once we reach a certain level of success, the problems all disappear, but what really happens is they get bigger, and they start to cost more, and they start to be — include more risk.

I’m grateful that Shauna wrote that book. I’m grateful that I read that chapter, because at some point, it’s time to start taking down the chairs.

**[0:33:47.9] RP:** So good, and I think that what you're saying too is like, what is your version of enough, too? What's your version of success, but also what's your version of enough? It sounds to me like being Brady's class mom is enough, and it's important, and it's meaningful, and to strive for that rather than chasing all those dollar signs, or chasing the Instagram followers, or whatever the indicators of typical success is.

I'm wondering, for somebody who is starting out, and maybe has 500 followers on Instagram and is really like, worried about her image. How could you encourage her to kind of find her version of enough, and also live in grace, not perfection? Does that question make sense?

**[0:34:29.3] EL:** Absolutely. I think once you define what matters most to you, like really define it, not just the pretty answer that sounds good that everyone else is saying or mom wants you to say, but what really matters to you at the end of the day. When you're able to define that for yourself, you know the core of who you are, and you know the core of a business-like heart. When you have a business that's built on your heart and you know your heart, it makes making those big and small decisions every day really easy. My best advice would be to get to know yourself and be confident in that person.

**[0:35:09.4] CS:** Great advice. For those of our — I guess, with what you can reveal, obviously there's a lot going on behind the scenes that is fun to reveal on a big launch day, but you know, in five years, two years, just a little bit down the road, not like terribly far, what would you say that with the Simplified Planner or the *Grace, Not Perfection*, what does that empire look like to you? How does that relate to your personal life? Are you still room mom?

**[0:35:38.5] EL:** In five years, I don't think I'll be room mom every year. I always said I wanted to be his room mom in kindergarten, and so I'm really glad that I did it. I don't know that I'll be able to do it every year, and that's okay. The perfect answer would be to say I hope I could be his room mom every year. I know that life is — it happens in seasons, and the twins will eventually go to kindergarten too, and life will be even more busy. In five or so years, what I see our empire looking like, my goodness. I hope that it includes lots of breathing room, and I hope that it inspires lots of other women to embrace the same thing.



I'm really glad that I built this business on this heart, and that our followers know the authentic me and our authentic team and brand enough to go with us into different seasons. We are moving out of a season of building. Building a business, building my family, just building. Build was like my word for a long time, and now I want to throw it out the window. I think I'm moving into a season of slower, richer, more meaningful everything and that's okay.

I think that there is a season for building for all of us, and I think I'm just moving in to a newer season of richer, more meaningful everything, and I hope that in the next five years our empire — I hope that it just inspires other women to embrace their imperfect selves to let grace wash over them, to know that it's okay to just be who they are, that they are enough. Yeah, I feel honored to do this work and I hope to write more. I've had so much fun writing. I think there's more of that on the horizon.

**[0:37:24.1] RP:** I think we're excited about it. Well, thank you so much for joining us, Emily! Where can people find you if they aren't already following you in all the places?

**[0:37:33.5] EL:** Absolutely. You can find me on @emilyley on Facebook and Instagram, you can also find me @simplifiedplanner and @ELPlaybook on Instagram as well.

**[0:37:44.2] RP:** Awesome! Well thank you so much for being here, and for enlightening our listeners to embrace grace, not perfection.

**[0:37:51.3] EL:** Thank you.

**[0:37:52.9] RP:** Absolutely. For all of you listeners, go build your Creative Empire.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

**[00:37:59.0] ANNOUNCER:** Are you ready to build your own empire? For more information, show notes, downloads, and tips on how to do it, head to [www.creativeempire.co](http://www.creativeempire.co), where you can find out more about this week's episode and the two lovely ladies behind it all, encouraging you to build your own creative empire.

If you enjoyed this week's show, it would mean so much to Reina and Christina if you could take two minutes to go to iTunes and leave a review. It's a little thing that makes a big difference for the show.

[END]