

**EPISODE — NIKKI ELLEDGE BROWN**

[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]

**[0:00:35.3] RP:** Welcome back to another episode of the Creative Empire podcast. Christina and I are here today to chat with Nikki Elledge Brown. Nikki, if you don't know her already, is the communication stylist helping entrepreneurs communicate with clarity and competence, and she's also the creator of a course called "A Course About Copy."

Outside of her business, she's a proud military spouse, a mama, a former park ranger, and a college professor. She is also a new podcaster over at the Naptime Empires, which I'm loving, where she's sharing about honest stories and pep talks about parenting and entrepreneurship, and the intersection of those two.

Nikki probably doesn't know this, but she was like my gateway drug into the world of entrepreneurship, and I have admired her business from a far for so long. It's like a dream to have her on the show. Welcome Nikki, we're so excited to have you.

**[0:01:23.6] NEB:** Thank you so much, I'm totally honored by that. I don't know, do I want to take responsibility? It is a gateway drug. Once you're in here, it's like a whole rabbit hole. I feel like the internet swallowed me three and a half years ago, and I'm just now coming up to be like wait, what? What's going on.

**[0:01:38.1] RP:** That's pretty much how I found this world, so I'm excited about it. Well, you fill in the gaps to your official bio and tell us a little bit more about you.

**[0:01:46.5] NEB:** Yeah, well, let's see. I am currently living in Honolulu, although my months, my days are numbered here. My husband's in the Navy, which is why we live out here, and we love it, but we are going to be moving back to Texas. As we're recording this, in early 2017, we'll be moving back to Texas this summer.

But my background is in the social science of communication, how and why we communicate the way we do. I have a bachelor's and a master's in that. While I was getting my master's, it was on a scholarship, like a teaching assistanceship, so I got to teach people who were either my age, in some cases a little older than me, as I was getting my master's and I loved facilitating those light bulb moments. Just encouraging people.

A lot of it was public speaking. You know, my course is more geared toward writing, just objectively to have like a check, here's what happens when you take this course. Really, it's just about communication and how to show up in a way that is just really showcasing who you actually are. That's the core premise behind everything that I've done so far.

**[0:02:47.8] RP:** I absolutely love it. I think that so many people, entrepreneurship or otherwise, struggle with talking about themselves in a way that doesn't feel like "look at me." Whether it's in writing, or live, or in video, or something like that, what do you think are the best tips for strutting your stuff but not feeling so self-centered?

**[0:03:07.3] NEB:** I think it's okay to feel like you're strutting your stuff, right? Because there's no — I mean, you know, that Marianne Williamson quote I won't even try, but maybe you can stick it in the show notes. It's about shining your light, and who are you not to shine, and by you shining then you give everyone else permission to do that. I've really been coming to realize that lately, because there's so much talk about authenticity, which is great. I've always been like — because people want to roll their eyes at authentic. I think that's a great thing. If people are overusing it, that's great. I would much rather people be talking about really encouraging each other to show up to be themselves than the opposite, right?

But, what I'm realizing lately, and I can't remember lately, especially since starting the podcast and then having the Facebook group, and I'll go live and just kind of brain sneeze and share

stuff in there, and I can't remember where I've said this already, but I'm noticing lately how easy it is to be "authentic and vulnerable."

No makeup, just got home from the gym, hair's a mess and that kind of thing. It's so much easier to share that side than it is to share, "I'm feeling like I'm looking hot today. I look good today, and I want to share that." Unless I noticed this, actually I did, I recorded this on a podcast episode. That should be episode five of mine. Where I was like, when I was pregnant, I would share selfies and I would share things when I was like feeling really good, but for some reason, I'm like, "No, now that I don't have a human in my uterus I can't do that anymore."

I'm noticing what we feel like is easy to share and be authentic, it's like, you got to own all of it. It's okay to be like "look at me" if I have some value to share. I think that's a good thing. That's kind of like a twist, a new angle of this authentic piece that I'm realizing, because truly, my philosophy is in kind of how I got started with my business, I was like, "Alright, entrepreneurs, if I'm going to help you with communication, what do you want help with?"

I listed a whole lot of things, public speaking being one of those things, but everybody wanted help with writing, because like you said, it can feel uncomfortable to talk about yourself. We want to avoid feeling selfish. I do agree that it needs to be the most interesting people are often the most interested.

It is your responsibility, if someone's coming to your site, to explain what you are about. To me, that's your job, is to help people hear you before they hire you. It's literally, it's your responsibility to show up as you are. Not as you think they want you to be, but as you will actually be when they sign up to work with you, or they're on a customer service call, or they're on a client call, or whatever. It's your job to show up as you actually are. Again, that means all of it. The good, the bad, the ugly, the frumpy, the fancy, all of it.

**[0:05:43.0] CS:** Yeah, do you think it's possible though to share too much? Especially online?

**[0:05:47.2] NEB:** Absolutely. I recommend the TMI test, which is two questions of one, are you really comfortable sharing it, because I think that people are sharing, it can be like — I was just listening to Glennon Doyle Melton, and she was talking about sharing from your scars as

opposed to your open wounds and things, so like, when you're still working through something and there's not like a lesson in it yet to share.

I don't know, sometimes I feel like that's cool too, to share while you're actually in something. It's okay to not feel like you have to share everything. You don't have to share literally everything to be able to own all the parts of you.

Also, you don't have to share everything with everyone. Just because I want to say something doesn't mean I need to say it on my public Facebook page. Some things I like to just say in the group, where it just feels like, "Hey, these people raised their hands to hear about what's going on with this particular project." It feels like a safe protected space, maybe it doesn't need to be on the internet at all, because spoiler alert, even private Facebook groups aren't private. Somebody can take a screenshot of anything, even if you deleted it two seconds later.

The first question is, are you really comfortable sharing it, and two, would you be okay if it showed up on the front page of Google? You have to consider those things, and maybe something that you aren't comfortable sharing today, you will be comfortable sharing three years from now when you've healed from it or whatever.

I do think there's definitely such a thing as TMI, and it's just about being thoughtful and making sure your intention behind sharing it. I guess that's probably the litmus test.

**[0:07:16.7] CS:** Yeah. If you haven't ever shared much online, and you know, now that we have Facebook live, ads running on our TV constantly, and just lots of new platforms for us and voices for us to share, what are some good things that people might consider?

We hear like, blogging is dead. No, it's not. Podcasting is dead. No, it's not. Where should people maybe be placing themselves if they're just now getting their feet wet with entrepreneurship? Is it in their copy, or is it something more vibrant like a podcast, where you can actually hear their voice? Like you just shifted into that. What's been your driving force and why might someone that's new consider that as well?

**[0:07:55.3] NEB:** I would say you have to start where you're comfortable, and maybe nowhere feels comfortable yet, so you just pick one and you go there, but I do feel like the relief to me when I actually had my first draft of NikkiElledgeBrown.com going live, which was June 7<sup>th</sup>. It was the day before my birthday in 2013.

I had already literally — it's a crazy story, and we can link to a blog post where I explain it, but by that time, even before I had the first draft of the website, I already had over 90 people who had paid me money to work with me that summer on copy.

I didn't even have copy of my own website, it's just through emails that I was communicating with them, and through Facebook groups and stuff. I didn't have videos, either. That's the power of copy, when you're really communicating in a clear sense your way. People can feel like, "Okay, I want to learn from this person, I want to connect with this person."

There's a lot of power in the words when you're actually truly letting yourself come through the words. It's a relief — what I was saying is it was a relief because it was all in one spot, so even if you're doing a podcast, or you're doing Facebook live, or whatever, I do recommend having a basic, it can be so basic website, because then otherwise you feel like you have to explain yourself all the time.

If you have to be your about page to everyone who possibly meets you, that's exhausting. It's nice to have an about page, and a work with me page, and a contact page that you can just redirect people. Just give them the link, and they will go, and your copy can do the work for you, because otherwise if you don't have that home base, then you're always explaining yourself everywhere and that's exhausting.

I do recommend having like a super basic home base that is literally speaking for you while you sleep, while people are googling you and stumbling across this podcast, or this interview, and they want to find out who you are, then your website is being your storefront, your 24/7 storefront. That's why I do feel like that's important. Now, don't get me wrong and think, "I can't go on Facebook live, or I can't share anything until I have a fully functional website," because again, I just told you I didn't do that, but it's definitely something that as you — it's something to work towards, basically.

But otherwise, I feel like if you're comfortable just speaking, like, I love audio texting. For someone who has a course that's generally centered around writing, again, technically, I know it's really just about communicating in general, but I love audio notes, like Facebook message audio notes, and audio texting, and all of that. So to me, that's why it's a slippery slope with podcasting, because I'm like, "My gosh, I'm going to want to do like, a new episode every day!" But then I'm also a commitment-phobe, so I don't want to commit to doing that. I want to be able to do it if I could.

You have to find what's fun and comfortable for you. I also love doing video, but to me, that was just like, I was thinking about doing video for the podcast and I'm like, "I don't want to have to worry about a backdrop, and I don't want my guest to worry about that. I really just want to be able to focus on what we're saying," and so that's why I ended up just doing audio only, at least for this round.

Maybe I'll do video one day, but you have to go with like, what you got. With the resources and the energy that you have, and it's okay. My biggest message above all else is it doesn't need to be perfect, it just needs to be shared, and truly, it's easy to get wrapped up in the numbers, like how many people are listening, or how many people are reading, or how many people on my list, and all of that. That's legit, but truly, you have to think about like if one person liked your video, if one person said that's exactly what I needed to hear today, then awesome.

You made a difference just by sharing whatever you felt was on your heart to share. That's really cool. It's easy to underestimate that and to get discouraged and think, "Well, because I don't have numbers like this, then it doesn't count." That's not true, it does count. One person counts. Drop the mic.

**[0:11:25.6] RP:** Drop mic. No, it's so spot on what you're saying that like you have to kind of do what you have right in front of you, right? We always future trip on what we don't have, or what could happen if we did it and we sucked at it, or we were too good at it, or whatever, and what you're saying is just do it as you are right now and just show up.

I loved watching you in the various stages, you used to do a lot of different types of videos, and the format has changed, but you're still Nikki. You're still sharing, and you're still educating in a way that is in line with your brand. I really appreciate that.

On kind of going back to the word "authentic" that you used, and I see like two versions of this word, and I'm kind of struggling with how to articulate this. There's like, you, being authentic and showing up the way that you are, and like making up words, and just being very much Nikki, the way that I've kind of grown up in like just watching your business.

Then there's like this other "authentic," which is sort of like a marketing tactic of like, extra vulnerability, I think we touched on this already, but it's like a marketing tactic of, "If I share this, then you will be more drawn to me," or I'm not sure if that question makes sense, but I think that your authenticity is a different brand of authenticity than the one that I described. It's not really a question.

**[0:12:51.9] CS:** I have to just kind of back you up on that Reina, I feel like I see that a lot, as like, people feeling like they're forced to share about things that they're not comfortable with, because that's been the trend, at least in our world on Instagram.

**[0:13:05.5] NEB:** Yes, I totally understand exactly what you're talking about. It makes me feel sad, because on one hand it makes me feel sad for those — when you can feel the energy behind it, that's the thing. You can't fool people into feeling like — either way, I guess if you're sharing something because you feel like "insert vulnerable story here" and it's a recipe for expressing yourself, it feels false. It feels uncomfortable, and it feels detached, and people will pick up on that.

Please, if you feel like you have to share something, please don't ever take anything that I'm saying about expressing who you are and owning all of that to mean that you need to share stuff that you're not comfortable sharing. That makes me sad, when people feel like they have to in order to get authenticity cool points to share like some really embarrassing moment or whatever.

I feel sad when people are sharing because they feel like that's what they have to do to be able to be vulnerable. The other side of it is like, a lot of people are sharing to a point where it does feel manipulative. Whether they mean for it to or not, it starts to feel like this is a game to play.

When I started my business, that was truly organic, I never had seen a strategy, it was not a plan of, "Hey, if I share how in awe I am at the fact that 90 freaking people just paid me money." I was genuinely in shock. As it was going on, I was sharing, and it was kind of like a perfect storm of all the conditions and everything.

When I see people, and it feels like they're trying to do that, but then I also don't want to knock them for sharing in the way, because everybody has to learn and you have to practice, so I also don't want to shame people into thinking, "I don't want to share anything, because then people are going to say I'm faking it," or whatever. I think the message and the whole point is like, again, who you really are. Following your gut with what feels comfortable and right to share at the moment.

Sometimes, it's like, "I'm freaking awesome!" To be honest, I have a hard time sharing that. I've kind of whispered into various closets that I've made over a million dollars in my business since I started it. I don't like to toot that horn. I do not toot that horn, because when I made six figures in my business, when I made my first \$100,000, it seemed to me life is a mirror. It seemed to me that all of the sudden everyone was like, when people talk about money, when people talk about six figures.

To me, that felt like is not safe to shine. It is not safe to talk about this, I am triggering other people, and that triggers me. One of the things that I've learned lately is that you may trigger other people, but you're triggering their growth. If they grow from that, great. If they don't, that's their path, but we cannot hide out and not own the amazing blessings that we have, and the amazing talents that we have, because we're scared of making other people uncomfortable or else, what?

Then we're just these little bitty, like not even dim little candle light things. You know what I'm talking about, the little votives? We're the battery-operated ones, and we're letting other people control the switch. Not how I want to live.



**[0:16:11.3] RP:** That's so insightful. Man, yeah. There's so many times when...

**[0:16:14.9] NEB:** That just came through me.

**[0:16:16.3] RP:** I love it. I think that so many times we dim our shine so that other people aren't triggered, or so other people aren't, I don't know — don't feel bad about their lack of success in that particular category, right? So good, thank you.

**[0:16:33.0] NEB:** I'm just realizing, I'm like, "Trigger me! Because that helps me grow." If I'm so freaking comfortable, which like all 2016, I feel like I was just hiding out, and I'm very thankful that I have Deacon as a marker of time, to be like there was a whole person, and now he's a year. I was actually doing something in the world, but I feel like in terms of my business I was just kind of like on pause, hibernating.

I don't know, it's like in a weird place, but I'm like, I want to grow, I don't want to be — yes, I love comfort, but I don't want to be so comfortable because I have so much more to give, to share, to express, and when I'm sitting here like in my comfort zone and nobody is triggering me, because I'm just not letting myself see other people shining and doing awesome things, then I am just going to stay here and never actually do the work that I was put here to do.

That's just something I'm realizing, because that was a big thing for me. Truly, like I said, at that point in early 2014, and then I had my first launch right out of the gate, again, a bit of an outlier, \$50,000 launch. My first launch with a 1,200-person list, that triggered a lot of people, so that I just slammed right back into a little clam shell.

Then I had a six-figure launch, and I slammed right back into my clam shell, and then so yeah, I've been trying to figure out like okay, what does this really mean to step into it, and not just be playing at 10%, you know?

**[0:17:54.5] RP:** I think I was following you in one of your first or second launches, and I was not one of those people that got triggered. I was so inspired by your story, and I mean, that's why you were the gateway drug to me, even falling into this world, and I'm just so grateful that you

continued to share, even if it was scary. I just want to applaud you and thank you and keep tooting your own horn.

**[0:18:15.2] NEB:** Thank you. My five-year old would be like, “Haha!”

**[0:18:21.9] RP:** Yeah, mine too. Can we just shift a little bit into — we are talking a lot about different types of things and just business. One of the things I think you’re really good at is branding, and when I say that, I’m not saying your visual brand, because it is beautiful, but it’s beyond that. It’s your personality, it’s your writing, it’s your videos, it’s all consistent and seamless. Can we talk a little bit about...

**[0:18:50.1] NEB:** I’m sorry, I just have to laugh at the idea of my business being seamless, but I really appreciate you saying that part. Like you know, the personality piece, because that’s the one thing for sure, I am consistently me.

**[0:18:59.6] RP:** Right. I think that that’s my point is that how can we make sure that our personalities come through in our copy, or other platforms, other modalities, I guess, that help you to shine and actually sound like you?

**[0:19:15.1] NEB:** It’s weird to think that it takes practice, and some more than others. I started my business after — I’ve always loved like, talking, entertaining, being the baby of the family, and whatever. I used to be super shy, and like afraid of public speaking in my early school days, and then something switched in ninth grade when I took a public speaking class and I loved it. It was like, I want to be a news anchor or something, actually just speaking in front of people, and I love teaching.

That made me a weirdo in ninth grade, because not many 14, 15-year olds will be like, “I’ll go first! I’ll go first!” Then that’s what ended up me checking that box at my freshman orientation to choose to study communication. I have been comfortable communicating for most of my life. If you haven’t been, please don’t put that pressure on yourself all of the sudden to come right out of the gate and just feel super natural at being yourself and just taking that through.

On the flip side of that, give yourself permission for it to come really naturally, because truly, all I'm asking and encouraging you to do is to show up as you show up when you're like, walking on the street and you see your neighbor, or you're talking to somebody at the grocery store, or whatever.

I just like to encourage people to be that human who is like, walking around planet earth actually interacting with people face-to-face. It's easy, and this is the thing about "The Course about Copy," I named it that because copy was a word that everybody was all in a tizzy about, apparently. That's why I wanted to sell them on it and give them what they need, right?

The encouragement is just like, you already have a voice. It's not about finding your voice, it's just about clearing all the clutter in the way that's keeping it from coming through. You already have a voice, and when you find – like, I have this amazing friend who has never considered herself a good writer, but when she's been doing — we've been doing a lot of personal development work together, and she's finally realizing that what she's really passionate about, and reflecting on these stories that were like turning points in her life.

When she wrote about this one, I was like, "Oh my goodness, this is amazing. You are an amazing writer," because she's writing about something that is purely from her. I feel like we don't give ourselves permission to do that, because we think everything has to be three actionable tips or it's not valuable to people. That is bull honky, because sharing stories that changed your life or helped you understand something differently, not only is that human and really attractive, but it's the one way to ensure you have no competition. Because that's stuff that can only come from you. It's a bit of both of like, understanding and being patient with yourself.

There's also a really great — I'm just loading you all up with links for the show notes, but there's that Ira Glass video that's about like, everybody sucks at the beginning, that kind of thing for creatives. I do believe everyone is creative, it's just that somehow it gets knocked out of us after a while and we forget that. It's like, give yourself permission to kind of suck at it at the beginning, and to feel awkward and a little clumsy. Trust and know that inside of you is this voice that is perfectly comfortable, and worth sharing, and worth hearing, because the right people are going to be so drawn to it.

Also, like, it's easy to feel like, you all saying this, and I so appreciate your words of encouragement and affirmation in seeing that I have a voice and a personality, because you don't recognize you're blinded by the familiar. Like a fish to water, you don't realize that you do actually have a personality. That may sound so silly, but I do feel like I don't like to knock on vanilla, because I say vanilla is a flavor. Vanilla beans are a thing. Vanilla is a flavor. Plain, like plain yogurt. Sometimes I feel like I'm plain, and it's just like, blah.

Whenever people reflect back to me, and they're like, "No, actually, I could tell if you wrote something. I could tell if you wrote it." Then I'm like, "Right, okay." We all have that. We all have that own unique flavor. Don't force it, be patient with yourself and trust that you do have a voice. Don't overthink it and separate yourself from feeling like, "I have to learn how to do video or I have to learn how to write." No, you're literally just opening the faucet and letting yourself fall out.

[BREAK]

**[0:23:28.6] CS:** How would it feel if someone laid out a business plan, a road map or some kind of strategy that would get you started and get you closer to the goals that you dream of accomplishing in your business? Well, Reina and I actually have done this. All you have to do to get this totally free resource is head to [creativeempire.co](http://creativeempire.co), and click on free work book. We will deliver to you 50 of our most potent, powerful strategies and proven tactics to getting our businesses visible, booked, and profitable.

If you would like to have this in your business for totally free, you can grab that at [creativeempire.co](http://creativeempire.co). We'll see you there.

[INTERVIEW CONTINUED]

**[0:24:13.2] CS:** One thing that's striking me is, you know Vanessa Van Edwards. She basically teaches based on psychology, but I feel like you guys are like at opposite ends of the spectrum. I've heard her speak before, and she's like, very introverted, self-admitted awkward person I think is what she calls herself. She has built an entire business on the science of body

language, essentially, because she knows that she can walk up in front of a crowd of people and exhibit a certain body language.

Her speech is going to go fine. She's given some of the best talks I've ever heard. You guys remind me of so much of each other, but then not at the same time, because I feel like your approaches are so different. You know, for the people that are out there, because I was once this person that was just telling themselves, "I can't do it. You know, I'm too shy, I can't do it."

It's just a story that we're telling ourselves, and so I think it goes into what you are saying about like, you're telling yourself that you're plain yogurt, but really you're bubble-gum flavored or whatever. So I don't know, how do we get out of the mindset though where we're like, we just have the same thing to say as everybody else. I guess we're going to keep doing the same thing.

Do you do any activities, maybe being a mom helps, I don't know. Are there certain things that you do to remind yourself like, it's creative playtime now, or this is what I'm going to do for myself today, or something else that maybe helps you remember that you're not just plain Jane yogurt?

**[0:25:39.5] NEB:** I'm not that.

**[0:25:40.1] CS:** Because you're not, sorry.

**[0:25:41.9] NEB:** Thank you, and neither are you. Yeah, and this was my favorite thing when I was working one-on-one with people, because we'd be working on whatever we'd be working on, in a Google Doc together. By the end of it, I would always start my session, I sent them questionnaires before we would start, and I would read them of course, but I would still ask them the same questions at the beginning because I would just be like, "I want to hear it in your voice."

I would just want to hear, and I would literally just type as they were speaking, and then I would pull those nuggets into whatever we were working on, and they'd be like, "Yes, this is so good!" I'm like, "Right, you said it. You said it not when we were like, 'Let's write an about page,' but

when we just said, ‘So tell me about what you do and who you love to work with.’” I’m writing down these nuggets, and then we would style them up a little bit, for sure.

But it was like, “You said it, you have this value.” That was my favorite part. At the end of the sales page, I’d be like, “Dude, you have got to share this. This is amazing. You need to raise your freaking price. That’s too cheap for what you’re offering.” That was my favorite part. It’s to have this private session with someone, and then patting her on the back and sending her back out into the world to be like, “Yes, you have a value. Please share it, we’re all better for it.”

Also, just having friends. I call them my cabinet of “friendtors,” but having friends that I could go to and can go to when I’m feeling like poop, and I’m feeling like, “What the F am I doing, doing a podcast, and am I going to be clumped into-“ especially with that Naptime Empires, “am I going to be clumped into the mom blogger group, and do mom bloggers even like that title? Am I going to be boxed into talking about business stuff, when there’s so much more that I want to talk about?”

And so it just takes having those friends who can believe in you and be like, “So what? Change the category next week, if you want to change it from self-help, to business and marketing, or back, and whatever.” Having friends who can be the figurative slap in the face, like pull yourself together man, or a splash in the face with some water like, “Stop. You’re fine. You’re enough just as you are.”

Because otherwise it’s a cruel yucky place between your ears sometimes, and it takes a lot of work to be able to recognize that they are stories you are telling yourself. It’s not true with a capital T, and that’s definitely something that I’m geeking out right now in this particular moment, of like, in a cocoon of discovering of what do I really want to share, what is my real message, and I can see sprinkles of it. So even then, we’re always going to be evolving, we’re always going to be changing authenticity. Authentic you today may look different in 2019. You’re going to grow evolve, and change.

The only way you can really grow, evolve, and change though is if you actually take action and do something, because if you sit there and think about it and think about it, I promise you, just a little bit of movement can make the world of difference. Like just a teeny-tiny bit of momentum, it

can change the whole freaking world for you. And so especially, if you are in that thinking mode, and I know, because I have been there.

Again, I just went through it in 2016, just thinking, thinking. Taking a little bit of action and then stopping, and a little bit of action and then stopping, and that's okay. There's seasons for everything, but when you're just stuck there and you're not actually acting on anything, you will never know. You can't think your way into clarity, that I know for sure.

**[0:29:02.6] RP:** You need that sounding board and the tribe to pull you out of that dark spot, and also people to celebrate with you when you are kicking ass, right? For them to say, "Why aren't you celebrating? You just did an amazing thing!" Those people, the people who aren't triggered by your success, are the keepers. I don't know if you found that but the people who are willing to share with you the big moments have been my biggest cheerleaders.

**[0:29:29.6] NEB:** Exactly, and even when friends are like, "Oh my gosh, that triggers me so hard, I'm so happy for you!" and I totally want that for myself, and just realizing that. We talk about triggers a lot, that's why. If you're triggered by something, it's because it's possible for you, but you're not yet taking whatever action it is that would get you there. So that's why it's ticking you off a little bit, because you're like, "oh," and you're mad at yourself for not doing whatever it is that you know you could do or be capable of doing.

So again, life is a mirror. I thank my buddy Susan Ferraro for helping me realize this, and she's leading the way for all of this personal development that I have been doing, to just realize that it's a mirror. If you see it in someone else, that's because it's possible for you. So when you have friends that will keep just holding that up for you like, "Yeah, okay here we go," then that's invaluable. It's priceless.

**[0:30:17.6] RP:** So good. I totally agree with that. One thing, I just wanted to go back to a little bit, was you were talking about there's this style of writing you have to do. Like you have to do this three bullet points of things that you need to cover. There's this other group of people, I used to be one of them, people who's used to writing APA, or I don't know, some other academic type of writing, or maybe it's the high school five-paragraph essay format that they feel like they have to write.

I'm raising my hand, and just opening your mouth just the way that you said it, and writing down how it would actually come out of my mouth, and using my tribe to do that. I think that was actually one of your pieces of advice, and I followed it. I just opened my mouth to somebody, and they typed it out, and that was the beginning of my about page. So yeah, I appreciated you saying that, but I think that there's another group of people, my past-self included.

**[0:31:14.4] NEB:** Well, me, and "A Course about Copy" is full of recipes, because here's the thing, here's how I reconcile that, and I'm okay with saying both. Like here's a recipe, and be yourself, because it's so easy. I know this, this is why I feel really passionate about "A Course about Copy," because I feel — well, sometimes I feel like I do feel passionate about it, sometimes I feel like I don't, but when I do feel passionate about it, it's because I am realizing as entrepreneurs, there are so many other things that we could be doing at a given time.

The last thing anyone needs to be worrying about is the order of events for what to put where. So that's why with "A Course about Copy," because I could tell everybody is freaking out about the about page and whatever, when I was working with people one-on-one for example, the about page was the number one concern, but I work on all these other pages with other people, and after working on so many, even in all different businesses, I noticed these patterns of how we present information.

So that's where my background comes in, with it's just about what makes sense. So I don't consider myself like a copywriter. I always say that it's really about presenting information in a way that makes sense. So I would always tell my students, "Please don't stand up in front of the room and say, 'Hi, I'm Nikki. and today I want to talk to you about blah-blah-blah,' because nobody is listening yet. No one is listening until you've given us a reason to listen, which is why we start with an attention getter. "

So that's why I do feel like it's valuable to have a recipe, because it's just about presenting like, the order of events, but fill yourself into each step. So I never want to tell people "use these words," but I do say, "Start with an attention getter, let them know you get what they're going through, then introduce yourself. Tell them what to expect, and tell them what to do." That's the recipe in a nutshell, for example, and that takes a load off, because it can be so overwhelming



to think, “Well, there are a million different ways I could write a particular page, so how am I going to do it?”

And I hate to see anyone spinning her wheels, frustrated, lost, confused, and then just running away from it, as opposed to just get it on the page. Get your first draft out there, use this recipe as training wheels, when you’re comfortable, take them off and then throw them back into the garage. If you’re feeling a little wobbly at some point, then scale back, come back to the recipe. You know that you have that as a safety net of no matter what I’m saying in each of these steps, this is going to help her understand how I can serve, how I can help, what I’m about, and so I do feel like both sides of that. I just want to give people the scaffolding that they can hang their words on, but I do want it to be their words for sure.

**[0:33:33.5] CS:** And using their words is this something that they could apply beyond about pages? Is this a formula they could use in their newsletter every week? Is this something that you would recommend for sales copy, or is sales copy different? I guess my question really is around how does the copy voice change? Are we more aggressive during sales copy? Is that more effective, or are we maybe gentler and more vulnerable or something like that?

So in your experience, you have a lot of experience styling communications and copy, what are some ways that we could tweak our voice a little bit more sophisticated as an entrepreneur, and realize that there’s a difference on these different pages or platforms?

**[0:34:12.1] NEB:** I think, as annoying as this answer will be, there’s not a right way to do it, and there’s no one right answer. I’ll be the first to admit that too, but I feel like the most important thing you can do is just get clear on the purpose of whatever it is you’re putting out there. What do you want people to know, what do you want them to feel, or how do you want them to feel, and what do you want them to do, and if you can just use those as your guiding questions before you say, and again, not that you always have to think about it.

But I do feel like purposeful communication is respectful, valuable, but sometimes off the co-stream of consciousness is also really valuable. So I don’t know, but I do feel like if you can at least narrow it down to what you want people to know, how you want them to feel, and what you

want them to do, that can provide a whole lot of clarity and sometimes, the sales message. Like, my first five sales, five G's from "A Course about Copy" came from a P.S.

I literally didn't have the course created yet. I didn't have a sales page, I had a PayPal link, and I felt like somebody was ready to buy it, even though it wasn't actually going to be ready until mid-February when it launched and actually started, but in January, I had emailed my interest list of what, at the time, was like 50 people or something before I actually started the launch videos, and five people bought just from that little PayPal link in the P.S.

Then I did the whole, "Okay, now I've got videos, now I've got emails," as I'm going through my first launch, and blah-blah-blah, and I have launched it different almost every time that I have done it, and it's worked differently every time, but I think that the key ingredient has been my energy, and my interest, and my belief behind it, like how valuable do I really believe this is, and that's going to change. I would never recommend aggressive, because nobody wants to feel that way, but passionate.

If you feel like, "Dude, what are you doing? You do not need to overanalyze this." I literally have recipes for every freaking page of your site. I have bonuses for design, for legal, for mindset, everything you could possibly think about is right here, one click away. If you have something to sell in your business, you will absolutely make your money back, why, why are you resistant? If I really believe in it, then I do feel that, of course, I'm going to be more passionate about it. If I just want to share and I'm like, "Oh, this would be cool," then that's cool too.

It just depends on the purpose. You have to believe in it. That's one thing that I remember saying from the beginning. If you are not a 100% confident in what you're selling, you've got no business selling it. Like literally, you've got no business, because you're probably not selling it. So I do believe that piece, that you really have to believe whatever you're offering is of value, and sometimes you don't know or really believe in its value until you've offered it.

I started off with free sessions, and there's no shame in that game. I needed that confirmation. I knew college students or their parents would pay for my tips and help with communication, but I didn't know if real people out in the world would pay for it, and as soon as I did my first 30-

minute session when she was like, “Amazing! Cool! How can I work with you?” I was like, “I don’t know, let me figure that out.” That was the confirmation I needed.

I did 24 free sessions, got amazing feedback from them, and then like I said, in the next two months I had 90 people signed up. I know that that’s a weird and crazy story, but it’s true. There’s no shame in that game of just building your confidence before you really put it out there, you know?

**[0:37:17.5] RP:** Amen to that, I totally agree. I think that this is a good message for somebody who’s really looking to start now, and if you have been researching and in analysis-paralysis mode, hear Nikki’s call and just start. Just start.

**[0:37:34.1] NEB:** Yes.

**[0:37:34.7] RP:** So Nikki, if you were to go back to day-one Nikki, and to start building your creative empire again, it’s funny that both of our podcasts have empires in the name, but if you were to build your empire again starting from day one, what would you say?

**[0:37:50.6] NEB:** I would say follow the excitement, and know that it’s not always going to be easy, but when it’s easy, that’s when it’s right. So what I mean by that is, when I was starting my business, and I was going on pure inspiration, and I had chosen faith as my word of the year, which is what inspired me to be like, “Oh, I have a gift for connection and storytelling and communication, and I feel called to share that in a bigger way,” I was really inspired and part of me was thinking of doing a blog.

Literally I had a list that was like “smoochies and spreadsheets.” I was trying to think of something that was mom plus work, because I was working at the time. I was working from home, I didn’t have a business, but I was working from home two part-time jobs, and so part of me felt a call to do that but I was like, “No, but what would actually make money? It doesn’t have to be a business, what would actually make money?” Then I saw entrepreneurs who were obviously struggling with their written communication, feeling like they had to sound a certain way, and I was like, “Oh, people!”

So that's where I ended up going, and that was really exciting for a bit, but then I feel like I sapped all the fun out of it. I packed my business up in a vacuum bag, and then sapped all the fun out of it, because I thought I had to do it in a certain way now, and I have to set everything on Evergreen, and I have to be distanced from people, and I can't be accessible now because I have this course. Anyway, I told myself all these stories and I sucked all the fun out of it.

I feel like there's so much value, especially early on. It's such a special time when you're just getting started. There will never be another first time when you are starting your business to use that as fuel, and know that even though the excitement and the energy behind it is going to change, you can always find another way to recharge that battery and find that spark again, and it's going to be when you're doing something that really lights you up.

And even if it's scary to change and shift course, if you're doing it because that's what feels right and that's where your heart is, I just have to believe that the money is going to manifest. That there is going to be a way for you to receive value for that, because I don't feel like there's — it's easy to try to think, "Well, this bit, this is what makes money, so I could just be like no, 'A Course about Copy' forever," but no. I feel pulled to share in a different way.

It's still communication. I still believe in "A Course about Copy," I still want people to benefit from it. Several hundred people have, but I also want to explore what's next and see. You have to be able to give yourself permission to follow what feels fun.

**[0:40:11.7] RP:** And is that what's next for your podcast, or is there anything else that you can share with us?

**[0:40:17.8] NEB:** I don't even know, and I feel like I shared this in a Facebook live in the group yesterday, that I feel like what I'm realizing lately is that I'm on a scavenger hunt. Naptime Empires is a like a field of dreams for me. The idea, I don't even know what I was doing when the idea for Naptime Empires came into my mind. It might have even been in 2014. I know for sure it was 2015.

I don't know, the idea just came into my mind, but I was like, "Huh, interesting. I don't know what I would do with that," and then step-by-step, it's like, "Okay, I'm going to eek it out." Like I was

on – John Lee Dumas had invited me back for his Freedom Journal launch, and I just dropped Naptime Empires in there, and I knew that podcast was going to go live in January 2016. So I just hid it like a little Easter Egg in there, and then people would ask me about it, and then I finally put the landing page up and started asking people, “What would you like?”

“A course? I don’t know what I would teach in a course. A book? A podcast?” And then I had a vision of a visual I wanted, so we went and did a photo shoot for it. Step-by-step, fill the dreams, and so I feel like right now I’m on a scavenger hunt, and I don’t know that Naptime Empires is going to be my thing. I just feel like it’s my next thing, and that my next clue is hiding in the feedback of Naptime Empires, that’s truly what I feel like.

Once you get the podcast out there and you hear what people are saying, you’re going to see what lights you up based on that feedback, and then the next step is going to become available to you then. So it’s like the Amazing Race, but my life and my business right now, which is interesting timing, to be doing this when we’re about to be getting out of the safety net of the military and dependent on my income, but we have a lot in savings.

I’m very thankful to frugal Nikki and Jeremy from years ago for giving me this space, which is my word of the year, to be able to explore and follow my nose on this, because it’s fun. I don’t know where it’s going to end up next, but all I know is that I am doing a podcast and I’m really excited about connecting with people and hearing what they think about it.

**[0:42:04.8] CS:** Yeah, for sure, and where can people find that podcast? Where can they find you, and what’s the best way to connect with you on Instagram or Twitter? Where are you at?

**[0:42:13.9] NEB:** So naptimeempires.com has all the links for the podcast, and nikkielledgebrown.com is — I don’t know what I’m going to do with it. I don’t know. I feel like eventually it may just be a basecamp. I don’t know, but I have a whole lot of blog posts and content there too, and then if you want the copy tips and “A Course about Copy” information, that’s at [acourseaboutcopy.com](http://acourseaboutcopy.com). But on social media everywhere, I’m Nikki Elledge or Nikki Elledge Brown, depending on how many characters they give me, and if you Google it, then Google will correct you, which is pretty cool.

**[0:42:44.3] CS:** Yeah, for sure. So thank you so much for coming onto our show today, Nikki. Everybody out there listening, I hope you've been inspired. Please feel free to share what you felt or what you learned in this episode with us on iTunes. We're also on Google Play, and Spotify, and Stitcher, and all the things. So be sure to follow us somewhere, listen in and let us know. Go follow Nikki, check her out. Her stuff is amazing, if you somehow have not heard of her before, and we will connect with you next time on the next episode of my Creative Empire.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

**[0:43:16:7] 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]