

## Ep #12: Banning the Badge of Busyness



### Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

**Ellie Frey Zagel**

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## Ep #12: Banning the Badge of Busyness

This is episode 12 where I talk about banning the badge of busyness.

Welcome to *The Family Business Leader Podcast*. A podcast for multigenerational family business leaders who want to become the leader they were meant to be. If you're ready to learn how to develop your own authentic leadership style, successfully lead your family business and create your own lasting legacy while still honoring theirs this is the podcast for you. I'm your host, Ellie Frey Zagel, family business leadership coach and third-generation family business leader. Let's get to it.

Well, hello my friends. How are you? I hope you're doing so well. Thank you so much for tuning in today. We are talking about a concept that I developed probably about four years ago, banning the badge of busyness. And the reason that I came up with this topic is I was experiencing a lot of busy in my life. And I was really sick and tired of telling my friends, anybody who asked, "How are you doing?" And I would automatically say without even thinking, "I'm so busy. Oh my gosh, it's been nonstop. I'm so busy." I'm like, wow, that's such a boring thing to say. I got bored with myself.

And I realized for as long as time I was wearing this badge of busyness. It was like a girl scout badge, some sort of piece of flair that Jennifer Aniston in *Office Space* may wear. And I was like, "This is not feeling good." So now that I'm a coach my clients as you can imagine in today's world are also saying the same thing. "I am so busy. This week has been so busy. It's nonstop." They say it just like that. And as soon as I hear them say that they are so busy I cringe because based on my experience I have banned the word busy from my own life. I'm only saying it now for this podcast.

I have banned it also from my coaching conversations. So let me explain. I never want my clients to be busy because if you think about it, if you truly think about how the word busy makes you feel, it's heavy. It feels terrible, hectic, and overwhelming. It's not a fun and exciting word. It's just like I am so busy, you kind of hear it in my voice. So instead, I invite my clients to think of their life as full. I invite them to think about their schedule as productive and focused on results and solutions.

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So according to Google busy means either an adjective, having a great deal to do. Example, he was too busy to enjoy himself. You kind of even say even in Google's example it's not a positive example. He's too busy to enjoy himself. Or a verb, keeping oneself occupied which is another issue, another podcast we can talk about where you're keeping yourself occupied. You're keeping yourself busy so you can't just sit there, and relax, and either meditate or just have some margin in your life.

And so again, that's what happened to me. I had no margin. I was running from meeting to meeting. I was telling everybody how busy I was and I was depleting myself. And I was depleted, and I was getting sick, and I was snapping at my loved ones. I ended up having to take a sabbatical from work and then leaving work altogether. So, the word busy is pretty sneaky. And a lot of people don't realize what it's doing. But it's showing up like going through a to do list without being intentional or purposeful. You're just crossing things out.

And that act of just crossing things out, no matter what it is, is enough. It shows up like running from one meeting to the next meeting, on one social function to the next social function. You know you're busy if you've ever been double booked, or triple booked in some cases. I know you're out there. It shows up like you're constantly going. You're constantly performing. You're constantly on, that's what I used to call it, I'm on. And you're also trying to remember what you have going on next.

You're also constantly trying to remember what's next. What's next? What do I have to remember? And you're packing your schedule because if you could fit it in or you can make it happen, or you can figure it out, then you can say yes to that person asking you and you can kind of feel like the hero. I get it. It feels so good to say yes because it's so good to be wanted, to get things done, until it doesn't. So, I'm a reformed busyaholic. I had dropped the badge of busyness in the trash. I have taken off that piece of flair because it just didn't serve me.

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And I created a new mindset for me and that I have also taught my clients because here's the problem. As I mentioned before, busy feels frantic, hurried, hustly, it's another podcast we can have, hustly. Alright, anxious, it feels anxious. It feels like you're behind, you're always trying to catch up. Yeah, busy feels bad. You're basically exhausting yourself with this busy mindset. This is what I was talking about before, trying to remember what you have next, and next, and next. And trying to keep all these things stored in your head.

You're not focused on results, just the number of things on your to do list. More often than not you are spending a lot of time constantly checking Teams, or your email, or social media, refresh, refresh, refresh. Instead of intentionally checking in a few times a day when you want to check in. It's almost like your phone, and your fingers just have a mind of their own and you're suddenly in social media again, even though you just checked. Or you're in email again and you just checked it five seconds ago, yes.

You may also be allowing people to come interrupt you any time they want, this open door policy. An open door policy is wonderful but there needs to be some boundaries set because if you're allowing people to come interrupt you any time that they want, that means that you're not getting done what you want to get done. And it's furthering your feeling of being behind. And so, in your franticness to catch back up this is where that badge of busyness comes in. I'm so busy, everybody just interrupted me all day. I have so many things to do.

You can feel the energy coming through in my voice. It also is a problem because your mind is always on. Oh my gosh, that used to be the worst, it was always on, I was always on, always on and positive, and on it. And it wasn't usually productive processing. My brain wasn't productively processing interesting information. It was more like, it just was trying to remember to do lists and must remembers, I must remember this.

What I also found is that being busy or telling people, "I am so busy" also pushed people away, friends, new relationships, those people I was

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networking with. It's basically saying, "I'm too busy for you. I can't possibly meet you for a coffee and have a lovely conversation and discuss all of the world's problems. No, I'm too busy for that."

I also believe that this is a problem because you're not living by your priorities. Other people get you first, your priorities, your loved ones, yourself get you last, get the dregs of you, is what I often say. And busy people rarely put themselves first. And this is my favorite, I love this one. What I ended up doing is I started blaming my calendar and the people on my calendar for how tired and grumpy I was, it was their fault. I can't believe that person wants to have lunch with me.

Not taking at all any responsibility for the fact that I said yes to their request for lunch, or coffee, or meeting, or whatever it was. I just think that's hilarious. It was years, I was just so grumpy and tired of blaming everybody else because I was wearing this badge of busyness. So clearly I've been there. I know that some of you have too and I know that you know other people who are currently wearing that badge of busyness. They're running around like chickens with their head cut off. That's such a gross visual but you know what I'm saying.

So, here's what I invite you to consider. I invite you to ban the word 'busy' from your vocabulary, just ban it, just don't ever say it again. It's not necessary, trust me, I've been doing this for years, just banning that word. And instead replace it with a word, here's what I replaced it with, you might find another word that works for you. But I replaced it with full. My schedule is so full right now. My life is so full. It just feels so much better, at least to me, it feels more calm, and grounded, and intentional. It doesn't feel heavy and hectic that the word busy does. And just this quick word switch can make all the difference.

So now I'm going to share with you what I do with my clients when they come to me saying things like, "I'm so busy. I'm too busy for this. Work is so hectic." I start with them creating a bit of awareness of this busy mindset. Where and how does this mindset show up in your life? So, I ask

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them, “How does busy show up for you? List all the ways. How is it showing up?” For me as I mentioned it was showing up with that’s all I would talk about, how busy I am. I was running from meeting, to meeting, to meeting.

And it was causing problems because I wasn’t having time to spend with my friends, any meaningful time, or my loved ones. And my poor husband and son got the worst of me instead of the best of me. And I would also ask yourself how is this playing out for others around you? Maybe you feel you’re in control of your schedule, you feel you’re results focused or solutions focused. But the people around you, they’re in massive overwhelm and using the busyness everywhere, trying to maybe make them feel better.

That was another thing that I found for me, there was some sort of worthiness in doing a whole lot of activities and being busy. And it worked for so long. It probably worked for 10 years. This is awesome. Look at me. I’m serving on all these boards. I’m doing this. I’m speaking and engaged with that. I’m going to meeting to meeting. I’m meeting with all these people. I’m managing this organization, all of it. And then I crashed and burned.

So, it is very seductive, this busy, especially when it’s attached to your worthiness which is just something that I want you to become aware of if this is you think busy equals more worthy. You’re more worthy as a human. I just want you to be aware of that, without judgment, just be aware.

And the second thing I ask my clients is, “Decide if you want to consider a different way of doing things.” If this badge of busyness is working for you right now, rock on with your bad self. But if it’s not or if it’s starting not to, or you’re like, “No, there may be a better way.” I want you to consider a way that feels more relaxed and is more productive. Did you know that can happen? You can actually be relaxed, not hectic or frantic and incredibly productive. And so just by making this choice helps put you back in the driver’s seat.

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So, the next step is more of a practical step. So basically, you've created some awareness, you've made a decision to try something different. Now, in the spirit of creating even more awareness, you can either do this with your goals or you can do this with your priorities. And I have included in the show notes my priorities podcast, if you haven't listed your top five priorities I invite you to check out that podcast. But let's just talk about your goals for this. This is an example for – that we're going to work through right now.

So, my clients and I, we identify the quarterly goals. If you traction, like your rocks. And then you're going to align them with your activities. So, as I mentioned before, a lot of time the busy is just the number of things you cross off. You haven't necessarily made the connection between the items on your to do list and the results that you get based on the goals that you've set.

I mean oh my goodness, I used to have post-it notes, after post-it notes, after post-it notes of just this to do list of things that just came to me in my head. I'm like oh my gosh, this would be so much fun to do. I wrote them down. And then they ended up on my to do list without any connection to the result that I wanted at the end of the year. So, as you look at your calendar, you're going to look at your meetings, you're going to look at your to do list. And you'll start asking yourself questions as you go line by line.

Does this activity help me reach my goal? Does this meeting help me reach my goal? Which goal does it help me reach? What results am I going to get by doing this activity? Can I measure that result? If it's just sitting in a meeting to look pretty, okay, just know that that's what you're doing. That was an expression. I don't know if I've shared that with you. That was an expression from my family. Hopefully, I didn't offend anybody.

But what I mean by that is are you just sitting there because you haven't thought if this is a meeting you actually need to be in? Or if there's somebody else that could do it for you. That's really the next question is do I need to be in this meeting or do I have to be in the whole meeting? Can this meeting take 15 minutes or even less if structured differently? And

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what this does is this thinking hopefully will create some margin, some white space in your calendar. I don't want you to freak out.

Some people freak out, they're like, "Oh my goodness, I've got blank space in my calendar today. What am I going to do? I must fill it with something." And that's a different coaching session. But it's really good for you to know that you personally are having an issue with having a margin, having white space, having free time in your calendar and all your thoughts that you have about margin, white space, and free time.

If this is a committee or board commitment that you've identified on your calendar, does this activity fulfill you? Is it a priority? Do you love to do it? Or did you say yes out of obligation or did you say yes because somebody you liked asked you? Or did you say yes because you can fit it in, sure, why not? But meanwhile it takes up your precious time and energy, especially things we do out of obligation.

So, the next thing that I work on and I've already hinted on is to really think about how you can be here. I work with my clients on this, how they can be results focused instead of just counting the number of things they did today. I invite them to try focusing on the result, ask themselves, what results did they achieve today. Where did they move their goals forward? And how were they intentional about moving their goals forward?

You can see that if you just start focusing on creating the space, thinking of your day as full versus busy, just really focusing on what results am I getting and are those results matching up with the goals that I have? You can see how productive, how much you can achieve in a really short amount of time. I just want you to think about that. How results focused are you right now? Maybe some of you are like, "I'm amazing." If so I want to hear from you.

And some of you are like, "Yeah, I'm just crossing things off my to do list without even thinking about it. Just getting that dopamine hit by crossing things off."



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So now comes the fun coaching part, I did share with you a little bit of the coaching that I did with my clients. And of course, consider doing all those exercises that I just shared with you. It's a little bit interesting because sometimes I realize the work I'm doing is better, but sometimes I talk about it like I'm talking to my clients. And sometimes I share things like I am talking to you. So, sorry, if that's a little bit confusing. I'll work on that. I realize that can be a little bit jarring. Hopefully, you can just overlook that for right now until I figure that out.

So, here's the fun. If you've bought into this and you're like yeah, I want to explore it. And you've created this awareness and you're thinking yes, I want to be results focused and you're looking at your to do list, and you're looking at your meetings, and you're going through all of it. I want you to identify what obstacles are standing in your way from banning the badge of busyness. What's coming up for you? You might be thinking, I can't possibly do it because of x, y, and z.

I want you to know that's the only thing, x, y, and z, your thoughts about x, y, and z are the only things standing in your way from banning the badge of busyness in your life, from creating this full non-hecktic, not busy life. So, if you have the obstacles, if you've written down those obstacles I want to hear about them, email me at [ellie@successfulgenerations.com](mailto:ellie@successfulgenerations.com). Or share them with your coach. And if you don't have a coach reach out to me. I'd love to talk to you.

Alright, that's it for today my friends. Have an amazing, and full, and results focused week. I'll talk to you next time.

Well, there you have it. Thank you so much for listening to *The Family Business Leader Podcast*. If you've enjoyed today's episode, be sure to share it with someone who needs it. If you'd like more information about family business leadership development, please visit [successfulgenerations.com](http://successfulgenerations.com). I can't wait to connect with you again next week, until then.