

## Ep #15: Taking Back Control



### Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

**Ellie Frey Zagel**

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Hello, this is episode 15. And today I'm talking about how you can get back to feeling in control.

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, my Family Business Leaders, I am so excited to be with you today. Thank you so much for tuning in. Today I want to just give you kind of a down and dirty look at what you can do and what happens when you're feeling stuck, or overwhelmed, or lost and you're having a really hard time making decisions. We're going to dive into this idea of control.

And then I'm going to share with you the one question that when my clients come to me feeling lost, feeling overwhelmed, feeling like they're failing, they can't make decisions, they're completely stuck. The one question that I ask them and oftentimes is their homework to help them start feeling more in control over their life and at their leadership abilities. So, without further ado let's jump into this.

Recently I had a president CEO client come to me just very upset. There was a lot going on in the business, her thoughts are chaos. I can't solve anything. I don't know what to do. I can't make a good decision. I am failing. I am stuck. It's too much. I can't do this. All of these thoughts were just swimming, swirling just in her brain. And she was just not showing up as a leader that she wanted to be. And her feelings were – sometimes I talk about below the line feelings and above the line feelings, all of her feelings and emotions were below the line.

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She was feeling, as I mentioned, stuck and anxious, and scared. Scared that the family business was going to fail on her watch. Scared that she couldn't solve the problems she desperately wanted to. That she couldn't coach her team, overwhelmed, angry. And so, what was also happening is that the result of these emotions is that she wasn't able to sleep. She just felt sick, again, she wasn't able to make decisions, she just was really shutting down.

And so, when she came to me, and this was not her normal state, this president CEO can lead in adversity like it's something that she does every day. She's very, very strong, and usually she's able to keep a clear level head and is able to lead really strongly. But for some reason just everything came together and she called me up, which I'm super proud that she called and she reached out for help.

And we were able to get her back into some more of her leadership power. It wasn't fully in her leadership power, but at least instead of spiraling down she actually reversed the trend. She was actually much more calm and could really see what she needed to do, the next step and what she needed to do. Because oftentimes when you're in this stage of overwhelm you have no idea, everything seems like a priority. You have to do everything now, you're failing everything.

And so, it's really difficult to see what is the one thing that you need to do in order to make a difference, or to take that next step, or to get yourself out of this spiral down. So, the question that I was able to pose to her was, "What can you control?" Because essentially she felt like she could control nothing. She felt very out of control. And her thoughts about feeling out of control were not productive thoughts. So, like well, if I can't control anything, I'm useless, or I'm going to fail, or I can't solve anything.

Everything was happening to her and it was just completely shutting her down. And I use her in this case, it could easily be him. I know, I've told you before that I completely change the identities of the anecdotes that I share. But they all do happen, the examples I do share are all either they're my

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stories, or my clients stories. So, in this case it's my client's story. And she was not able to even see anything that she could control, no agency whatsoever. And that's such a disempowering space for anybody to be, much less a leader.

And so, what we did was we got her breathing again, because often if you're in overwhelm, and you're angry, and you're stressed, and you're anxious. Maybe you're only shallow breathing, so just the upper part of the lungs, and not taking deep breaths and almost hyperventilating. She was just maybe even – I'm not a doctor or anything like that, but I could easily see was steps away from a panic attack.

So, what we did is we got her to start breathing again. We did some box breaths, so in for the count of five, hold it for the count of six, and then exhale for a count of seven. And so, we just did, I think that's what a box breath is. I don't know what, people use the word box breath for a couple of different things. So, I'm just going to say that's a box breath. If I'm wrong about that let me know, please. But it's basically the breath exercise that I used with her, is in for a count of five, hold for a count of six and then exhale for a count of seven.

And this is something that you can do anywhere and everywhere if you're starting to feel anxious or you just needed to breathe and take some deep breaths. And I also like on the exhale, that we're exhaling all the air in our body. So anyway, just a quick down and dirty breathing exercise for you. And it helps my clients to kind of okay, get back into their bodies, get out of the overwhelm of their minds and start on the path again to control.

So, now my client has taken some deep breaths, now we are going to maybe do a thought download. And a thought download is going to be something that you just get all of the spinning, everything that's in your brain and you just get it out on a piece of paper. You just basically, excuse this, just basically throw up all of your words in your brain on a piece of paper. And what this does is it basically helps you become aware of what your brain is trying to tell you.

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And your brain is trying to tell you a lot. And it's basically it's trying to protect you it just needs you to give it some awareness that you see that it's trying to protect you and that you've got it. So, a thought download is so brilliant on so many different levels, but especially when you're in overwhelm. If you can get all of your thoughts out on paper and see them, that will automatically give you some relief. Now we're telling our bodies we're good, we've got you. We're kind of providing some safety for our bodies.

Then I asked the question, "Okay, now that we're here, hopefully you're a little bit more calm. What can you control?" And I try to have my clients tell me one to five things that they can control. And sometimes this is difficult. Sometimes they're like, "I don't know, I have no idea. I can't control anything." It is really difficult because our brains are so used to just thinking about all the things that they can't control. They're in that mindset. I can't control anything, that it's very difficult to turn their brains around and get their brains to think about what can they control.

But if you're ever in this position of feeling like everything's happening to you, you have no control over anything, you're just starting to shut down and decisions are taking longer. I want you just to quickly take out a piece of paper before too much time has passed, if you can catch it early, it's even better. And just be like, "Okay, what can I control?" And just get one thing down. You can control getting on the phone with your coach. You can control your schedule.

And I know you want to argue with me on that one, so maybe that's not the best one to use. But trust me, you can control your schedule. And you can control if you go home early. You can control if you just take a pause and you do a quick five minute meditation. You can control if you get up and you go to the ladies room, or the bathroom and regroup. There are so many things that you can control. In your business, you can control that upcoming meeting, you can control that agenda. There's so many things you can control.

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And so, getting yourself back into the space where you can start to remember that you do have control well again, should help provide some relief. And now you've written down one to five things that you can control. So, the next step, even if you just get there I want say, you're awesome, congratulations. Just stop there, and you should automatically feel better. You should be feeling better by now if you've taken these three steps.

And they should literally take you no more than 10, 20 minutes tops. I mean, between the breathing, the thought download, and the identifying these five things that you can control.

The next step that I did with my client was I had her identify the one thing she wanted to do next. So, five things that she can control. If she did one thing would her week be successful, just that one thing? If she found one thing that she could do that if she did it she could count her week a success. It's a little bit of a win. So that is a little bit – that might be harder to do unless you've started to take back control over your life.

If you're not able to get to control you're probably not going to get to the one thing that you need to do, your brain is like, no, I need to do 100 things. That's why I'm in this mess to begin with." And so, I say that getting to that one thing is amazing if you can do it. But if you can't do it, don't beat yourself up. I just want you to go back to the breathing, go back to the thought downloads, do them every day, do some every hour depending on where you are, just get everything inside out, and start breathing again.

And then when you're ready ask yourself that question: What can I control? And then if you're feeling ready, ask yourself what is one thing, just one that if I did it, the next couple of days, my week would be a success, or if I did it right now my week would be a success. Maybe it's a conversation. Maybe it's getting an agenda out. It doesn't matter. But what I want you to start doing is start building some wins within yourself so you continue to get yourself out of the spiral down.



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And I don't mean, spiral down, I don't mean that as a negative, everything is lost. I just mean spiral down in the sense that you start at one emotion and then all of a sudden you're lying on the floor holding yourself crying. And if you've never been in that position that's awesome. But you know what I'm saying. Maybe you start with oh, and then all of a sudden you're angry. And because your brain had a whole bunch of thoughts about what just happened, and it may have started with, that's weird. And then ended with, I can't believe it and I'm so angry.

And so that's the spiral down that I'm referring to. I don't mean it as anything negative, I just want it to be an awareness of this is happening. Because you may be – you might start in, okay, this is hard, kind of that lost feeling. Or if you don't get yourself out of that fear, that trickle of fear of this is heading out of control. You're going to end up in overwhelm. And when you're in overwhelm it's very difficult to make clear and decisive actions, to make decisions that you want to make.

Okay, let me know if you have any questions on this. But that is basically when you're feeling like you're out of control, I just want you – those are the steps to help you get back into control. Alright, my friends, have an amazing, amazing week, I'll talk to you soon.

Hey there, if you would like some additional resources on this topic of taking back control of your life during tough times. I would like to offer you a PDF that I created with around 25 different exercises that my clients and I have done. They have been tried and tested. They work. And I created a PDF with all of those exercises, each of them explained in that PDF.

So, in the show notes you'll see a link to that PDF, you can also find it above the fold on the homepage of my website [successfulgenerations.com](https://www.successfulgenerations.com). And I invite you to print it out and use it as often as you need to. Alright, my friend, I can't wait to connect with 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

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share it with someone who needs it. If you'd like more information about family business leadership development, please visit [successfulgenerations.com](https://successfulgenerations.com). I can't wait to connect with you again next week, until then.