# Win Every Day: Small Steps and Healthy Boundaries | Dr. Audrey Schnell Transcript

(Transcripts are generated by AI and may contain errors)

Hello and welcome. I am Christine Fontelis of Christine fontelist life coaching. i would like to welcome you to reignite your spark and create a life you love master series i am honored to be sitting here with my friend and colleague dr audrey schnell hi audry hello christine thank you for having me anytime anytime um Because you have such a varied background, why don't you give our audience a little bit of a taste of what you do and have done and will do.

Thank you. So I'm Dr. Audrey Schnell. I was a clinical psychologist and epidemiologist, biostatistician. And so I know my psychology. and I've been doing this for well over 40 years.

so, I am honored to be here. Oh, absolutely. I am so glad that we get to talk today. My jam is helping women in that third phase of life, if you want to call it.

Sometimes the kids have left home, I know that one. And then sometimes we either leave a career, change careers, like i'm doing or you know other bigger sadder circumstances come our way no fault of our own but at that point in life it i know a lot of women are sitting around going What do I do now?

What Do I want to do? And what should I Do? and you know, there's, we get so much input from the world's from people are in our lives that it's hard to sit down and hear our own voice and figure out who am I now and who Am I becoming?

Yeah. And all those voices, I think the most dangerous one is, because I just talked about it, our own internal head trash, which stops us from doing the things we want to do.

So we get in our way, we talk ourselves out of things, and It's even worse when you're smart. You come up with reasons that are really excuses. I'm too old, I am too inexperienced, and I don't have enough training.

And we get stuck in that and the clock is ticking. Time is moving and we're actually going backwards. We get in this numb state of what I call chronic unhappiness because we're not following our dreams.

We're sitting on the couch going, what do I want to do? And it's like standing at a buffet, like you go into gold circle and go, oh my God, I don't know what to eat.

Well, of course you don' We don"t know want we want for sure until we start trying. So we have to get out of that, you know, that cliche, whatever paradigm of be, do, have, and shift to do be have.

You don't find your purpose sitting on a couch. Yeah. No, You have go get feedback. And it's taking that action. Even the first steps, even when things don't work out, those actions, trying things, implementing things.

Knowledge is power, but action is information. And when we're doing things we get happy. We don' wait till we are happy to do things It's that I said I was gonna do this and I did it.

Increases our self-esteem. increases our self-trust, and makes us happy. Why do we want the things we, want more money, a better house, better relationships, to be healthier?

Why don't we those things? Because ultimately, they make us happen. And the cure for chronic unhappiness is to do the thing that make you happy, get out of that numb state.

And the first, I think the piece of that is just recognizing that what we thought was normal was probably chronic unhappiness that we just accepted. Yeah.

We can get in our own way. You know, we get so used to doing for others, whether it's in in our community, our

friends, or church, any organization. And we forget to look in the mirror and say, good morning, gorgeous.

You come first today. It's so natural for us, whether it's because we're women, which we've been conditioned, especially those of us that are sort of of a certain age, grew up in a certainly decades, that helping others, being useful was our currency.

What gave us an identity, what gave a self-worth? And you take that away, just like when men retire, and it's like, What now? What do I do? Why do we even want to do just taking the time either to figure out what you want, giving yourself the space to that, and then taking actions to even implement them.

And basically what I think, stop stopping yourself from doing that. Don't listen to the head trash. don't to listen the inner voice that wants to talk you out of everything.

And it's not a character flaw. It's just human nature. Our brain wants to keep us from danger because why? Danger will kill us. What's going right won't.

But what's wrong will. Everything that's new feels scary. So our brain goes Nope, I'm not gonna do that. And I want to give you excuses that sound like valid reasons.

Oh, absolutely. Yeah, we talk ourselves out of everything. Um, yeah. and, and happiness is on the other side of, of doing. whatever that is, whatever you got, go volunteer someplace, you know, do things that give you feedback of I like this, I don't like, this or gee I've always wanted to do this.

Or I wanted do it when I was 15 and now I'm 70. Well, You can still probably do, it or some form of it. Give yourself permission. Yeah. I think we need to give ourselves permission to go out and play and to As my daughter says, add some whimsy to your life.

Do something crazy, do some crazy shit, yeah. Yeah. And that makes us feel alive, and alive is happy. Yes. You know? Happy is, happy I think is different than a lot of the other words that we use for happy, like I thing happy is difference from joy.

And I can't tell you that I exactly explain the difference, but we say joy to the world. We don't say happy to world, we want to be happy. I want do what makes me happy Um, I think happiness is a full body experience.

It's not just up here. I, think of joy as more, maybe more intellectual, at least that's how I see it, but I them differently. Happy as, as also a choice.

And I'm not talking about if we've had, you know, abuse or, nine one, one trauma. But I know for myself that some days that are difficult, shitty, whatever reason why something, health reasons, spouse or whatever it is, a lot of the time I can still choose to be happy.

Not just grateful. I've never said this before out loud, but I think you can be grateful and still unhappy. People tell you, oh, if you're just greatful, everything will magically be better.

Well, gratefulness is good. But because emotions are complex and we can feel more than one thing, even opposite things at one time, I I think I've proven to myself at least that you can be grateful and unhappy at the same time.

So I don't think gratitude is the panacea that we've been told. Yeah. And happy is a choice, as you said. We can flip a switch if we have the right mindset.

and see things differently. I mean, that's a lot of what our coaching is, is yes, you're in a certain circumstance, and that a fact, but how you think and feel about it changes your actions at the end.

It does, it does. And just for those people who are sitting there going, But you can't always be happy. Well, I'm not talking about toxic, what we call toxic positivity.

You know, if you're deep in grief, you are deep grief. Deep in loss. But there are many times that we can choose happiness, or at least to recognize that happiness is our goal.

If we're chronically unhappy, that becomes our reality, our benchmark. and we don't see it. What we do repeatedly feels real and like that's all there is.

And so that when we need to make a choice and be really honest with ourselves. I know that was part of the process for me was being really with myself and going, This is making me unhappy.

What would make me happy? And it doesn't matter why it makes you happy. Can I give you a really simple, silly example? Yes. You can't see them, and hopefully people will know what they are.

But hanging outside my front door are what's called rain chains. Oh, yeah. And they catch the rain and you see it come down. Just looking at them makes me happy.

Can I tell you why? No, can I? Tell you, why watching the hummingbirds in my hummingbird feeder make me? Happy, but I can feel it. It makes. Me happy, it doesn't matter why.

do the things, we experience the thing that make us happy. Yeah, and that's a wonderful point because it doesn't have to be a grandiose thing. It can be the little things.

For me, the other day we had this little family of quail on our street. And they were trying to cross the street. So I stopped and it's like, you know, the parents and the little chicks were just this big.

And I'm like it was so cute. Yeah. I live on a homestead, which makes me happy. It's a lot of work. No joke. But listening to the chickens in the morning, taking care of the pigs, All even gardening as hard work as it is makes me happy.

And, and just to be real clear, I'm not talking about when I say happiness can be a choice. I've not saying you force yourself to. That's not what I am talking.

About. At this moment, do I have a. Can I be happy? Can I feel some happiness? Can have that attitude of happiness, looking for happiness rather than, I don't know, being unhappy, bitching about things, complaining about thing.

And once you start looking things that make you happy, Good news, confirmation bias kicks in, which means we look for the things that we're focused on.

It's like going, I just bought a red car and now all I see are red cars. That phenomenon used to your advantage. If you start looking for wins, if you started looking at what's right, If start to look at the thing that makes you happy, that's what you'll be drawn to.

You think it's magic, they all start appearing all of a sudden. But it is our ability to then notice them. They've been there maybe all the time, but we never really stopped and looked and go, oh, that is so fun.

One of the things if you've ever heard of it or read it, A Course in Miracles, is that the miracle, we all want miracles. The miracle is often being able to see something differently.

To see things from a different angle, to things we never saw before, and to opportunities. And one of the ways to do that, get your brain thinking like that for your audience, is to ask yourself first, what do I want?

And then if your brain goes to, well, that's not possible. Then say out loud, What would make it possible? I use this, you could say silly example of, I wanna sell a million books in a week.

I want to write a book, sell a million copies in week, that's impossible. Is it? Unless I appear on Oprah tomorrow,

then might sell 1 million in the week but it gets your brain thinking about what's possible and that energy, can bring you happiness.

Yeah, it also, doesn't it trigger like the subconscious brain to solve that problem? Yeah. It's like, you know, we're thinking all the time, but then there's the back guys going, okay, We can solve this.

And they're working that way. Something concrete. If you just stop at, oh, that's not possible. Oh, I want a new career. That's no possible, Oh I'm too old.

then we stop. Or my favorite is, I don't know. I know what I want. Yeah, usually usually they they kind of do. They're just afraid to say it. Well, they're afraid.

To say or they just stop there. It's like they hit a wall. We all do it I Don't Know What I Want. That could be for several different reasons. Is it because I really don't know?

I don' have any information, which could mean, oh, I got to try some things. Does it mean yeah, there's a voice in there that's telling me what I want, but it's so quiet or I'm so used to not listening to it that I do not hear it?

Yeah. One of the reasons that, I know this audience, our audiences are very, very smart. And so we're used to, and this is kind of what we just talked about, we are used solving problems with our brain.

But there are problems that logic can't answer. Silly example. If I have never eaten broccoli or cauliflower and they're both put in front of me and I say, which one do I want to try first?

Typically logic doesn't, even if I'm like, this has more calories than this, that may not really tell me what I wanna start with. You have to go with that intuition, first response that gives you information.

And that's where we fall flat because there are just questions logic can't answer. You just go for it. Yeah. Just, you know, go, be a little impulsive sometimes.

Try it, try doing different things. If you don't have enough information, experiment. Everything is an experiment, Yeah, it's that willingness to go out and play and try and yeah, like you said, experiment.

But a lot of times we hold back because we're adults now. We don't wanna look silly or we've kind of succeeded in one area of our lives. So we expect to have that result in every area almost instantaneously.

It doesn't work that way. No. And, and what I can share is that we were not, I don't believe that it's fear of success or failure that stopped us. I think it is fear or disappointment.

Because when you're little, when your five, you think not getting the toy you want is the end of the world. You're disappointed. And to a five-year-old, that might as well be the End of The World because they don't see beyond the moment.

So I think that kind of childhood disappointment, like the word will end if I don' get what I want, can keep us unconsciously from not trying, not because we're afraid of failure, but because, we are afraid, of disappointment.

Yeah. Disappointment never killed anybody. No, I mean, our feelings never kill us. They don't hurt, well, you, We think they hurt us, But it's, yeah, it is just something to live, You know, to learn to, control, not control but accept.

You survive. And feel and move on, yeah. We learn, I mean I can still remember the first guy that dumped me. I think I was probably 18 and I remember laying on the bed at my girlfriend's house sobbing, like, this I'm never gonna have a relationship, you know, too ugly, and too stupid, whatever.

and thinking my world was over. And now I say, oh God, Aaron, but for the grace of God go, I was a loser. Yeah, dodge that bullet. It didn't kill me. Now I know that.

You know, now, it hurt. There's a line from the Wizard of Oz that I still quote, hearts will never be practical until they can be made unbreakable. And yes, we'll hurt.

Hurting is not the opposite of being happy. It's part of, being human, part life, but happiness, getting out of chronic unhappiness by moving, by taking action, implementing, going for our dreams, and seeing what happens, seeing that we learn.

I like to encourage people to try new things, whether it's going to a different grocery store, going into a coffee shop in the town next door. You can start small.

you don't have to plan a trip overseas. No. It's the little things that can open your eyes a little bit to what's out there, you get to, maybe talk to new people, which is, I find fun.

Yeah, and whatever it is. Read a different book. Do something different. Try something new. Keeps us stimulated. And stimulation makes us happy. Makes us feel alive, feeling alive.

Sorry. Things are falling over here. No. But yeah, and permission to be disappointed. Most things don't go the way we think they're gonna go. And permission for that, to give yourself permission, To be okay.

Permission to BE happy. The world does not need more unhappy people. Yes, things are crappy in a lot of ways, but the world doesn't need More unhappy It needs people.

Yes, absolutely. And, and you. It's amazing how easy it is to in my brain to make a bad situation light with just jokes. Oh yeah. I mean, I was just in standing in line at the supermarket and it was like literally two checkers and everybody's like lines, you know?

And we just start chatting with each other and laughing. It's, like, what else are you going to do? You might as well have a party while you're waiting.

Yeah. Being able to shift like that, to go from frustration, we have so much more control over our feelings, especially our moods, our reactions than we think we do.

And learning what helps us shift. If you're stuck in traffic, you are stuck traffic. That's a situation where you can easily see how you could make another choice.

Turn on the radio. dance in your car, whatever it is. How can I see this differently? That's the question. It's a great question, And it gets your brain looking for possibilities.

It gets you out of infant mode, what I call toddler mode into adult brain, prefrontal cortex. How can I see this differently? What would make me happy right now?

Yeah, and you bring up a good point. And that is a major role of us coaches. yeah because we can see your circumstance and hear your words from a different perspective right and so we have the opportunity to point out to you what you're thinking and sometimes you don't even know it you think oh no we don t you know doing well and i'm happy but I'm complaining, I don't, you know, once we point out, well, because you're thinking this and saying this, and like, oh, yeah.

We're making ourselves unhappy by our own trash talk. Yeah. And that's when we all have blind spots. Knowledge is never enough. I've got 40 plus years of knowledge and I still don' see my blindspots.

Yeah. And knowledge is just never enough. What's stopping us is in our blind spot. We think we're taking action. we think, we need more information. Because we, think it's true, but we don't see what's in our blind spots.

We don't see that what we think is the problem is our reality, and that's the problems. It's not a, we don' see the bigger picture, the big reality. Yeah.

And that takes practice too. Most of the time it's no flipping a switch and your life changes. Because it's, it keeps wiping. Yeah, It's the openness, you know, and, And, do we trust?

That's why, You know you, if you need somebody who can trust or believe to say, what, I know You think you're a failure, but you are not. This is the evidence that you aren't a Failure and it will hold up in court.

That's always a good one. Yeah, I know. I love that one, the court of life. The court. And it's really it. It's what I use a lot when people say, you know, oh, God, and a failure or this will never work.

What evidence do you have that that's true? And will it hold up in court? Yeah. We come up with all these labels for ourselves. Um, And this is like just really on my mind because I just did a webinar on this.

Um, we come up with all these labels for ourself. I'm a procrastinator, I am a perfectionist. Distractable, whatever it is. And, and we believe it. We believe that and, how it works in science and true science is we never prove anything.

we only look to see if it's disprovable. what's called unfalsifiable. If I think I'm a failure and there's at least one instance where I wasn't, if I never finish anything, and if there is one instant where actually finish something, blows my theory.

I've disproved it. There's a good lesson in there for everybody. Yeah, yeah, we tend to minimize our successes and our wins, no matter how big or small, and we focus on what we haven't done right, what haven' done yet.

And then we look for everything that's wrong instead of what's right. Again, I just said to a whole group of people, have you stopped counting the easy wins?

We only you know it's not that the 11th commandment is you now shall only count the hard wins many things were hard and now they're easy and we don't give ourselves credit for it.

And that's such a disservice because we're not giving ourselves the very thing we want. The feeling of success, the motivation, The momentum, the happiness that we are going for because We stopped counting the easy wins.

Yeah. And then that is a shame because Why would we do that? Well, it's because by nature, we're programmed to look for what's wrong, not what is right.

And especially once you start doing that, that confirmation bias kicks in again, and we look at what was wrong. Why? Because we want to be right! Yeah.

Or we like to run around fixing things. Right. We are steering clear of danger, you know? Fixing, avoiding disappointment, all that stuff. And all it does is keep us focused on what's wrong.

Many years ago, somebody gave me this image of what I was doing. She said, It's like you've got this handful of rocks and diamonds and you're only focused on the rocks.

And that has stayed with me for more decades than I'd like to admit. But that's what we do. That's human nature. It is not a character flaw. Not a personality problem.

How our brains work. And, you know, it's nice to know we do get to control our brains. Yeah. And sometimes it takes getting back into practice of that and having somebody stop that pattern, as you say.

I heard one of my coaches say, we all have a second gear. that when things are hard, we can put it in second. Downshift. And downshift and move forward.

Yeah. All the time, maybe not, but that doesn't matter. What's true is that sometimes we do that and that's what matters. I was just gonna point out speed does not matter Because there's no race in life.

I mean, if we're racing to the end point, we know what the endpoint is. Why are we racing there? But I will say, for me, and I'm guessing for at least some of the audience, it's time to stop getting better and just get faster.

Yeah. Take that action. Yeah, that's the first step. Faster is not racing against anything, yeah. We're not raising against time, we're racing not against anybody else, what matters is just get started.

Don't wait until you're in the mood, don't you wait till you are ready, Don' wait untill you've, you know, covered all your bases because you never will.

No, the 1st step, 1 step I agree. Best time to plant a tree was 10 years ago. The next best time is today. Today. That's right. Oh, thank you. Oh Audrey, I always love talking to you, as you know we can talk for hours.

We could, we could and we have. And we will again. Absolutely. I so enjoyed our time together and I know that you have a free gift for everybody out there and i'd love you to say a few words about that.

Sure. My gift to you is my win every day, 10 ways to have healthy boundaries and win everyday. One of the things that make us happy is by having clear boundaries.

What we say yes to, what we no to. Especially to ourselves. When we can hold our internal boundaries, do what say we're going to do, take care of ourselves, happiness is a byproduct.

So my gift to your audience is how to win every day. Love that. I love having winners out there. Oh, well, thank you, everybody, for joining us today.

We had such a good time. I hope you are able to take a lot away from this and the help we can connect soon. All right. Take care. Thank you. Be happy.