

# EPISODE 1

[00:00:00] Hello, I'm Tricia Duffy. I'm a songwriter, a singer, a media consultant, and a podcaster. I'm also a mum, a friend, a runner. There are many human parts to all of us. This is a conversation about balance, about the ratios that exist between the elements of ourselves, and in particular, it's about giving ourselves permission, just for a while, to focus on how much time and energy we give to our creative selves.

I've called the [00:00:30] podcast *In Ten Years Time: How to live a creative life*, because I've been on a personal journey to live a more creative life. And through my experience and observing the experience of others, I have noticed that there's a magic in the combination of small positive steps coupled with long term thinking.

Together, these can have a profound impact. I'm appointing myself as the Fairy Godmother of Creativity and I want to use my research and experience to inspire you. [00:01:00] I've long been obsessed with the extraordinary benefits of long-term goal setting and the particular power of ten. 10 years is powerful because unlike a 3- or 5-year plan, it offers permission to our imagination.

We're liberated in our dreams by the perception of a longer, almost unimaginable time period. And this fascination started during my time working as a change management and strategy consultant in the media industry. I help creative [00:01:30] organisations such as broadcasters, streamers and television producers to achieve their creative ambitions.

And I've found that organisations with the longest-term vision, those that thought about their legacy and looked way into the future, were often the most robust in the present day. With the most satisfied staff, the greatest ability to react in unity when things changed and they achieved the most successful outcomes both in the short and medium term and in the long term.

So this got me thinking [00:02:00] about whether if we applied the same principles to our personal lives, we might get similar results. These successful organisations use their 10-year plans, their long term visions, as a decision making tool. Whenever an opportunity arises or a change happens, they can use their agreed direction to make daily decisions that ensure they stay on course.

Now, we need to have a little chat about success. What does success mean to you? The companies I work [00:02:30] with measure achievements in numeric terms. Yes, they often include the numbers of happy staff and customer satisfaction, but they give great weighting to the total number of customers, subscribers, engagements, or viewers, and, of course, the ever-present bottom line. And I can't blame them. We live by an economic system that wasn't of our making. A system that defines most businesses by financial metrics.

For individuals, success is more [00:03:00] complicated. It's loaded with social expectation for a start. It's really difficult to fight the societal pressure to succeed financially. Get a job, a home, keep the lights on, food on the table. And to be fair, these are prerequisites for most of us.

And they're not, in and of themselves, bad things. But after we've reached the level of enough, where do we stop? How might our quest for more actually be holding us back in other areas of our lives?

I have [00:03:30] options for how I use my time. I could make choices that would enable me to earn more money to spend on clothes, holidays, takeaways. For example, if I got a job for a bigger consulting firm and worked full time. But that would be a huge compromise for me, and would result in a reduction of my own personal measure for success.

I'd be trading my time for money, which I could exchange for things, rather than using the hours in the day on the activities that make me truly content. [00:04:00] Everyone has a balance that's right for them. I get a lot of personal nourishment from my consulting work and I strive

to hold about a 50:50 balance between my creative and consulting work. It suits me well for the time being. In ten years? Well In 10 years, I'd like to be spending more time on my creative work and seeing that balance shift towards 80:20.

And because I have spent time doing that thinking and I've written down that 10 year plan, I'm taking small steps every day to make that a [00:04:30] reality. Steps we will cover in this show. But ask yourself now, where do you see yourself in 10 years? In 10 years, how would you like to be spending your most precious commodity? Your time.

Besides the definition of success in financial terms, there is another success seduction lurking in the shadows, ready to pounce when our defences are low. This is what I call the 'who's the busiest' award. There's something about our society that [00:05:00] glorifies being busy. And I want you to think, just for a minute, about the last few people you've bumped into on the street, encountered in a meeting or caught up with by text or phone.

Did you, or did they, mention how busy they are? In a single week, I lose count of the number of times someone answers the question, how are you, with the word busy. When the topic comes up, I have to fight with every single part of me not to reply defensively with a, 'me as well', type statement. [00:05:30] Sometimes I manage it, sometimes I succumb to rattling off all the things I'm doing.

But the truth is that I am sometimes busy and sometimes not. And I try as hard as possible not to reward myself for being busy so that I can defend time to create, even if that's only a few minutes some days. When I can, I schedule my busy time into chunks so that I can protect larger chunks of time for writing, music practice, research, developing new projects, creating this podcast and giving [00:06:00] back to my creative community.

And I want to start a revolution to stop rewarding ourselves for running around like headless chickens trying to be everywhere and everything to

everyone. I want to give ourselves permission to breathe and exercise and stare at the wall thinking our profoundly unique thinks because this is where the ideas and the creativity and the originality of art and creative passion resides.

There has been much research into why we're [00:06:30] so addicted to being busy. Studies suggest that individuals connect how busy they are to their own sense of self-worth and to how others view them.

Adam Waytz for the Harvard Business Review comments that busyness has become a status symbol and goes on to observe that those who exert high effort are often considered morally admirable, regardless of their output. I will add a link to the article from Adam in the show notes if you'd like to read more from him.

Essentially, being busy makes us feel valued, needed, [00:07:00] important. It reinforces our social standing. For listening. The more we do, the more value we are bringing to society. The impact on our physical and emotional well being from being over busy can have dire consequences. But being just busy enough might actually be good for us.

We keep our minds alert and able, use states of productivity to drive action. As I mentioned at the start of this episode, it's all about balance. [00:07:30] There are two things to consider in this debate. One is the busyness trap, as we've discussed, and the other is the genuine limit on your time. We all need to ask ourselves whether the choices we make are as necessary as they appear.

Even the most busy and fraught people manage to clock up at least 45 minutes of screen time looking at Instagram on their phone. Something to consider. Yeah. Oliver Burkeman, the author of *4,000 Weeks: Time Management for Mortals* describes this mass machine [00:08:00] of social media addiction as "making you care about things you don't want to care about."

There are some incredible tips in his book, which I suspect we will come back to over the coming weeks. But on this topic, he suggests embracing boring technology, removing social media apps or switching your screen to grayscale. If that's too hard, and believe me, I totally get it, try switching off your notifications as a small step.

Without notifications, you get to choose when you check social media, not [00:08:30] the algorithm. I will add a link to Burkeman's book in the show notes if you'd like to read more. Another tool that I use, which may work for you, is a don't do list.

Alongside my to do list, I identify things that are not urgent and put them on my 'don't do' list. That could include changing the towels, they can wait another week, or cancelling a meeting or engagement that isn't serving me. Don't allow your creative self to be limited by the amount of time you have [00:09:00] available, because at the risk of sounding a bit like a YouTube self help guru, Pressure creates diamonds.

You can create if you set your mind to it in as little as 10 minutes. It's worth observing all the things you do in a day and analysing how you spend your time. You might be surprised the minutes you can find lurking in your lunch break or on a hungover Sunday morning. You can find time. Look hard. You are enlightened. So beware the 'who's the busiest' [00:09:30] competition and proudly protect some time to create.

Now, we've covered long-term thinking with a meander to what we mean by success in the busy trap and finding time. I want to talk a little bit more about using that time, the small steps part. I'm going to use running a marathon as an analogy. It would be very difficult to get up one morning, decide you want to run a marathon and just go out and do it. It takes training, that first 30 [00:10:00] minute run that leaves you breathless.

The times you feel you will never get there. The elation of your first 10km. The small steps we take being true to our longer-term goal are like training runs with every run, walk, rest day, we get better and more satisfied.

Let me share a little bit about my story. Prior to the pandemic, I was content with my consulting work. I got to get out to clients [00:10:30] and wield the flip chart and the flat edged pen, taking human beings on a journey to enhance their creative businesses. I was out and about every day. I had a fun music life on the side, writing and performing for Americana duo Duffy and Bird, but music took the back seat.

Like many people, the lockdown changed the way I thought about my work dramatically. Sitting on Zoom calls with no human interaction, it lost its magic. The thing that kept me going during the [00:11:00] two years of the Covid crisis and all its challenges was songwriting.

I found comfort in creativity, in music and words, and I became addicted to the feeling you can get when you hit flow state in a creative act. What I'm talking about is the act of doing. Whether you're a painter, a songwriter like me, a poet, a photographer, a glassblower or a potter, when the process aligns, everything comes together and it's magic.

[00:11:30] Sometimes the songs are great, sometimes they are less than average. That's not important. The important thing is how you spend your time. Now I want to emphasise something that we will come back to again and again. It doesn't matter one jot what your painting was like, what the quality of your song is, whether your photography was overexposed or how your pot wobbles or stands straight and proud.

What matters is the doing, the act of creating. It's all about the process, not just [00:12:00] ticking something off a list. If you have an aptitude or an interest in something, it will take practice and patience to hone your craft. But that doesn't mean you won't enjoy the journey along the way.

The foolproof way to ensure that you will never make art you're not proud of is to never make any at all.

Every single artist, writer, singer, musician, baker had to pick up the brush, wooden spoon, guitar for the first time sometime. [00:12:30] It is a leap of faith. It is exciting. Scary. And your creative self will quietly eat away at you until you pay it the attention it craves. So why not start today?

If you have an interest, it's very likely you have a kernel of natural ability. Perhaps you'll get lucky and it will show itself immediately. Perhaps you'll have to keep trying for a while. The great news is that if you enjoy doing the creative practice, it really doesn't matter what the outcome [00:13:00] is. Living a creative life will enrich your spirit. It's all about participation.

It's worth us thinking a little bit about the journey. Oh, forgive me, that sounds so cliché. I'm a few years into my creative transformation, and one of the reasons I wanted to start this podcast now is because I have some transferable skills from my professional life, because I've gathered some insights recently, and crucially, because I'm still on the path.[00:13:30]

Let's say you're joining me here about the 10km running mark on my way to completing my first marathon. I know from personal experience it can feel intimidating to listen to advice from people who've reached great heights or mastery. Feeling like it's alright for them to say that, they're a world master painter, author, performer.

When you're at the start of your learning and creativity, imagining a place where you might meet those people as equals feels absurd. But they [00:14:00] too, when it comes down to it, are just humans. Think about the people you admire. Their rise to recognition seems to happen really fast. But pretty much every success story is made up of years of trying.

Of training runs, walks and rest days and setbacks and moments of elation. You only see the moment when they crossed the finish line and got given that medal. I want us all to imagine connecting with the people we admire [00:14:30] at the start or middle of their journey rather than at the heights of their creative success.

I'm an ordinary person. We are each other's equal. We are just as brilliant and creative as each other. Just as likely to be struck down by creative blockers, fear or social pressure and equally as likely to be able to live a creative life with all the joy and awe that that brings. By learning and experiencing this together, I hope that we can break down any [00:15:00] barriers that might stop you from taking the steps to your most vulnerable places to start living your creative truth.

I want to end each episode of this podcast with a recommendation, a challenge, and a question. So let's start with the question. I would love to encourage you to think about success. What is success to you? Without any judgement to yourself, spend some time thinking, and if you can, [00:15:30] journaling, writing down just for yourself about what success really means. Is it about how much money you have or is the way you spend your time more important?

Can you question the beliefs you've always held to be true and the assumptions you've made? How might your views of success change over the next 10 years? Do you compare yourself to others? What does that tell you about your relationship with the [00:16:00] idea of success?

Spend some time thinking about this. Your views are quite likely deeply held and it's not the work of a minute to reframe how you feel about success. But I want to be really clear. There is no judgement here. Seek what is right for you.

For the recommendation this time, I'd like to steer you to *The Artist's Way* by Julia Cameron. It's more than just a book, it's a 12 week programme. In her [00:16:30] book, she recommends weekly activities to help readers transition to an artist's life. I highly recommend her



programme to help you with some of the small steps towards your creative balance.

In her book she has an unbreakable rule that you write what she calls morning pages every day. I've been journaling or writing my morning pages most days for about two years now since I completed Julia's programme. These morning pages can be about anything but I try and take a few minutes out each [00:17:00] morning to reflect in gratitude and deliberate with myself about what I want to achieve each day. It helps me stay grounded and focused.

The challenge is to carve out some time. This might feel impossible on a day you feel rushed off your feet. But as I've mentioned, start by finding those small chunks of time, perhaps to do something creative, to paint or draw, write a song, a poem or prose, model some clay, bake a cake. [00:17:30] If you haven't yet landed on your creative passion, Spend some time journaling, reading or even taking a nap.

Something indulgent that's just for you. Challenge yourself to make the time. If you can do it once, you can do it again. There's a fun resource on my website to help you with this. A list of creative things you can do if you only have 10 minutes. They are just ideas. And there's a link in the show notes. Next week, we will be talking about finding or [00:18:00] amplifying your unique creative passion. And I can't wait. If you've enjoyed this episode, please find me on Instagram @intenyearstimeofficial. I respond to every direct message, full transcript and details of recommendations and research are in the show notes.

And there are free resources for anyone wishing to live a creative life on my website [intenyearstime.com](http://intenyearstime.com). Peace and love until next time.