

Recap Series: Episode 4

[00:00:00] Hello and welcome. I'm your host, Tricia Duffy. This is the fourth episode of a special miniseries of the podcast I'm calling *In Ten Minutes Time*, diving into the back catalogue and giving you some bite-sized ideas on how to live a creative life. My philosophy is all about how to find a balance of creativity that works for you. But what if ten years feels too far away? I'm revisiting ideas we've explored in the show and combining them with new research and a new idea of how you can be creative right now.

Today, we're going to revisit a favourite episode of mine, Reframing Rejection. [00:01:00] Oh, wow, this was a powerful episode for me to research because it really allowed me to make some breakthroughs in my own creative life.

Just thinking about this now, I am positive I would not be living the life I am now if I hadn't embraced and reframed my relationship with the word no. The no has evolved though. When I first recorded that episode, I was looking for PR for this podcast and interest from record labels and publishers for my music. I even tried awards and got some surprising success from the gamification of the 'no's'. This year, I've been focused on my record, *Being Serafina*, and a new category of 'no-seeking' has come in the form of approaching record shops to carry the vinyl release.

A few have ignored me, and a few have responded asking for my trade terms. This is something I had to get quickly sorted. A learning for me was that I wasn't actually ready for the yes. [00:02:00]

Once the record is ready and I have physical copies, I face another challenge because let's face it, as painful as it is, getting a no on an email is one thing. Getting a no face-to-face is another matter entirely. I'm confident that when people see the record, its lovely cover and artwork, and I'm in front of them, it's probably more likely I'll get a yes or a quick no.

Always preferable to a long drawn-out maybe. But this is going to take a huge amount of bravery. I'm psyching myself up for a day trip where I visit record shops around my local area and ask them if they want to stock my album. Wish me luck. I'm going to need the game to help me with this for sure.

So let's jump back into that episode and see what else we can all learn on how reframing rejection can help us amplify our creativity.

RECAP START

Not everyone is going to like what we do. And we're not going to have success from day one. [00:03:00] It's probably the one thing we can be most sure of. We can actively avoid being rejected or we can find ways to embrace and deal with it to amplify our creative selves. But that doesn't stop it hurting. When we are rejected, it feels personal. It feels unfair. We feel misunderstood, maybe even attacked. Our ego is bruised. We think we shouldn't have bothered in the first place and our perception of our status in society is damaged. Now, I've been using myself as a highly unscientific experiment for this episode over the past few months, inspired by a theory presented in the aggressive world of photocopier sales. I tried to set myself a target to get rejected a hundred times for Christmas.

The whole thing started in July 2024 when I was invited to pitch some holiday songs for a Hallmark Christmas movie. I should share that it's one of my biggest ambitions to have a song in a Hallmark Christmas movie. [00:04:00] In the UK, at the end of October, these movies come on every afternoon on Channel 5, and I often work with them on in the background. There's something settling and comforting about them, and maybe I also like them because the protagonist often chooses a more creative life over conventional commercial success.

Anyway, I pitched the songs last summer with great hope in my heart. My dreams were on the verge of being fulfilled - exciting! - and my hopes were quickly shattered. It only took three hours for the response

to come in rejecting all four of the songs I'd pitched. What's even worse is that I can tell from the platforms I use whether my songs have been heard or not and the person I'd pitched them to hadn't even listened to them.

A year ago, I would have allowed this to really upset me because it feels so damn unfair. I'd fulfilled my side of the bargain, written the songs, got them produced to professional standards, submitted the songs as requested, at the right time, in the right format, and they didn't even have the courtesy to give me any feedback.

And at the very least, listen to them. I mean, how on earth does anyone get a break in this stupid industry? [00:05:00] For some reason I can't really explain this time, I didn't feel that way. What I actually thought was 'good.' The most successful songwriters in Nashville say if they're not getting rejected twice a day, they're not working hard enough.

I realised I hadn't pitched anything for well over a month and I'd never pitched any Christmas songs before. Songwriting is a numbers game. I realise I have to play the game properly if I wanted to succeed. I have a few songs with a sync library based in Northern Ireland. A sync library is one that licenses music for use in TV and film. I had a chat with the founder a few days after these rejections had come in and I told him I thought it was a good thing because it offered me a chance to reframe how I see rejection.

That I could increase my chances of success if I actively tried to get rejected a hundred times in the next year and refused to take it personally. This conversation was very important because I started to say these words out loud and hear the idea, which seemed helpful. [00:06:00] I felt supported by the idea of gamifying rejection.

Someone else I mentioned it to pointed out that a hundred a year did not seem very ambitious, given my claims about the music industry being a numbers game, highlighting that's less than two rejections a

week. And so I further reframed it and the one hundred rejections for Christmas idea was born.

And so I started finding places to pitch my songs, places to pitch this podcast, places to pitch myself as a public speaker, to talk about creativity. I did it with hope and generosity, but with a specific aim to get a rejection. And the strangest thing happened, I didn't get rejected at all.

Now, I didn't necessarily get accepted either, but mostly I got ignored. The overwhelming trend was that people either responded positively with a yes, or they ignored me. In the first month, I pitched song 17 times and the podcast 12 times, and I only got one no, which [00:07:00] ironically was for another Christmas pitch.

I'm assured it's pretty normal for journalists receiving cold PR pitches, the podcast press release mainly got ignored, but three of the twelve came back with a positive response. Now, after a time, I reframed those no responses as a rejection, so they all counted towards my ambitious goal of a hundred by Christmas.

But what it taught me was that I didn't have to steel myself for the physical pain of rejection daily. I could rely on the most likely outcome being nothing at all. Which neither hurts nor inspires me. It's actually quite neutral. Yes, it's frustrating, but I have to remind myself that it's not about me.

We're all guilty of not responding to emails. And when it comes to music, I'm in a highly competitive industry. And I know that many people simply don't have the time to respond to every single pitch. It's not about me or even about the quality of my songs. The thing I did realise though, was that I was never going to get to my hundred rejections target if I didn't start upping my game, both in terms of volume and ambition. [00:08:00]

Then I thought I'll pitch the idea I have for a book on the *In Ten Years Time* philosophy to a literary agent. I only sent it to one agent, and she responded two days later, asking for the first few chapters of the *In Ten Years Time* book. I thought, what's going on here?

Now I'm still on the journey and I have a long way to go. I need to start pitching even more often and more ambitiously. I still have to work my day job, so the opportunity cost of my time is a factor I have to consider.

One of the key learnings is that I find I get better results with carefully worded bespoke contact rather than broad brush mailouts. So I'd like to share with you now the process I use with the hope that it inspires you to do the same. Let's all see what happens when we try to get rejected.

The first thing you need to do is decide how you're going to track your pitches. I've created an Excel template for you, which is available on my website, but you could use a Google sheet too. [00:09:00] If you want to create this yourself, you will need the following columns: number, because you need to track the number of pitches if you're going to challenge yourself to get a hundred rejections. Date: The date of the pitch. The item: The thing you are pitching. A painting, a song, a book. The where or the who. Who you're pitching the item to: which organisation, person, gallery, press department, blogger, awarding body or competition.

Rejected: Yes, no or ignored. Learning: This is important if we're going to learn from our rejections and recalibrate for the next pitch. For example, the interest I had from the literary agent fell apart after I sent her the first four chapters. And looking back on it, I could have predicted that because I rushed to finish them.

That's on me. I need to hold off approaching agents about my book until I have something I am happy to share with them. There's no rush. But what this made me realise was that I should finish the next two

series of the podcast as a priority. Because researching episodes [00:10:00] like this gives me much better foundations for a book which I can write later.

And then notes for anything that comes up or that you need to record as a reminder, such as asking you to check back later. Every time you pitch or share, add it onto this list. Aim to add something at least once a week, more if you can. Although if you're starting from a place where you really don't feel like you know how to pitch effectively, I would recommend take your time to begin with and make individual contact with people.

As I mentioned, a carefully worded email to one person will do a couple of things. First, it creates a much greater likelihood that you'll get a positive response, but it also gives you a chance to practice your elevator pitch over and over again. Trying different words to become more comfortable with your own story about your art, creativity, or your craft.

RECAP END

[00:11:00] So let's think about the challenge for In Ten Minutes Time. What's the quickest way you can get rejected in ten minutes so that you can practice reframing the way you feel about it?

I asked my husband if he wanted to go for a walk when I knew he was about to join a work call, and I ask every shop I go into if they offer a student discount.

If you're not a student, just ask for a discount and enjoy them saying no or the discount if they surprise you by saying yes. That does actually happen. Have fun with it. The question is this: literally, what is the worst that can happen if someone tells you no? Think about no in-person versus on an email.

I'm mulling on this question myself, and I think for me it might look like smiling and understanding their perspective. It's usually for a good reason, after all.

And the updated recommendation is this: if you have the time, have a listen to some episodes from Elizabeth Day's How to Fail. There are some great interviews, and they all highlight the power of rejection.

Somehow listening to successful people speak about all the knockbacks they faced over their personal and professional life makes you realise no one is immune from rejection. [00:12:00]

I have a new recap episode coming next week, which takes us back to an episode that really resonated with lots of you, why your friends don't support your art. It still hurts, right?

Until then, find me on Instagram or Facebook @intenyearstimeofficial to keep chatting or join a workshop or email me via the website at intenyearstime.com if you've enjoyed this episode and you know someone who needs this, please send them a link. I'm sure they will appreciate that as much as I will. Until next time, peace and love.