



EPISODE 004 – The Priceless Pause

Hey there. This is episode four of the Fun and Profit for the Active Entrepreneur Podcast. We are talking about The Priceless Pause.

Welcome to the Fun & Profit for the Active Entrepreneur podcast. I'm your host, Paula G. Join me as we explore what it takes to get you out from behind your desk and endless to-do's so you're feeling more vibrant, alive, and engaged in your business and in your life.

Welcome back. Hello to those of you who are new. I'm excited to be here with Episode 4 and The Priceless Pause. I'll talk a little bit more about what that means and dive into the content in a second. First, a few administrative things related to the show, news around here. First bit is, now we've got transcripts for all our shows. If you want to revisit something or want to read on the go, on the individual episode pages, you will find show transcripts. I'm looking forward to making use of that both for you guys and for myself. I'm also excited to say that our first interviews with some really special guests are on the calendar and on the docket. Coming up within the next couple weeks, you will see those start to appear. My heart is all aflutter just thinking about having these conversations because I really love it. I love interviewing folks. My hand-picked selection of people, I hope, will please you as much as it pleases me.

Let's talk about the priceless pause. I stumbled upon that phrase today as I was reading the final blog post from Scott Dinsmore, who recently passed in a tragic accident. He was living one of his dreams, climbing Mount Kilimanjaro. I'll be honest. Besides listening to his TED talk, I hadn't really followed him closely. His final post really spoke to me. That phrase of "a priceless pause" really resonates because of the journey that I am currently taking both personally and in my business, that idea of how are over-connectedness, the way we shape our lives with technology and the choices we make of where we put our attention, and how that not only shapes our life, our experiences, but also our decision-making ability, how we feel, our wellbeing. If you've been listening or reading for any length of time, you know I'm pretty passionate about the art of taking time off. That was episode two's topic. If you haven't listened to that already, please do, because obviously within that is part of the quality of the priceless pause.

I'm going to go into this topic today from an angle, really an unexpected angle of the book that I just finished reading called *What the Internet is Doing to Our Brains*, called *The Shallows* by author Nicholas Carr. I actually found my way to this book in a circuitous route, listening to Tara Brach, who I have read her books and studied some of her work around mindfulness and Buddhism and such, via Tim Ferriss' podcast. That's the crazy world that we live in online. I'm grateful for those kinds of connections and discoveries. Yet as I read this book and I look at the feelings that I have around the choices I make each day on the internet, it's very -- it's a rich discussion. Technology is not going away, yet our choices around them are shaping, they're literally shaping our lives and shaping our minds.

This book basically goes through historic events and how that has changed and shaped our minds. Then it talks specifically about the internet. Even though this book was written a few years ago, even before social media was really truly taking off, everything it talks about and the science behind the brain is, of course, still relevant. I'm going to read a section here where it talks about media as not just being a channel of

information. The fact that his whole book is the premise that not only is **media a channel of information and supplies the things that we're thinking about, but it also shapes the processes of how we think.**

If you think about even before we had printed books the way stories were passed down, knowledge shared was the oral tradition. It's got several chapters in the book about that, about the importance of oral tradition and how they thought the world was going to end when books started getting printed because oral tradition would die. To some degree that may be true. How often do we just sit and story-tell or share in that oral tradition? Yet there's a great value in the books.

The Internet is built for, in my opinion, really **a lack of attention.** In other words, the impact it's had on our ability to pay attention -- and I see this in myself at times -- is significant. The web is built on hyperlinks. Simple, 1995 theology of the web. Hyperlinks are our experience and now they're being built into everything. Links are, in one sense, a variation of citations and footnotes that have always been a part of documents, but their effect on us is not the same because links don't just point us to supplemental things that we might consider, they force us there. **They encourage us to dip in and out of what we're doing.**

Think about this. Have you ever gotten onto the web and you want to do a little bit of research? Perhaps you're looking about how to grow your business. You're clicking and clicking and there's different things you see. You never finish the first article that you started. That article, you don't even remember how you got there, where it is. You probably closed that tab ages ago. Before you know it, through some series of links and choices, you find yourself watching a cat playing ping pong.

Then you think:

- How did I get here?
- Where did that time go?

- What was my question I was trying to answer to begin with?

Have you ever had that experience? I know I certainly have. I'm like: How did I get here? I am watching bunnies dance in hula skirts. I was doing business just a few minutes ago. It's a funny example but what about the implications? We're human. It happens. It's happening more and more because all we're doing is living in this hyperlinked world. We used to be able to just watch a sporting event. Now you've got to check the Twitter stream, the Facebook posts, and all kinds of other feeds that are happening at the same time.

What happens here -- and I'm going to share a section here from *The Shallows*, in "The Jugglers Brain" paragraph. It talks about how:

The information flowing into our working memory at any given moment is called our "cognitive load." [Think about that as your mental bandwidth.] When the load exceeds our mind's ability to store and process the information—when the water overflows the thimble—we're unable to retain the information or to draw connections with the information already stored in our long term memory. We can't translate the new information into schemas. Our ability to learn suffers, and our understanding remains shallow. Because our ability to maintain our attention also depends on our working memory—"we have to remember what it is we are to concentrate on" . . . a high cognitive load amplifies the distractedness we experience. When our brain is overtaxed, we find "distractions more distracting."

Think about this. As I read that, it just hit me as an aha. A fairly scholarly book -- I don't know what it is with me lately. As a side note, I've been reading these scholarly books that make my brain hurt, with my morning tea. **Our distractions start to feel more distracting until suddenly all you are is distracted.** Here's an example, for me anyway. I find that when I'm struggling or I have too much on my mind, my mind can get so exhausted and I find myself mindlessly clicking on things., mindlessly clicking,

adding things to my Twitter stream. There is very little presence or ability for me to make a fine decision to be productive, to do what I most need to do, or to even be present in the moment. It's like a way of numbing out, but not a conscious numbing out because I'm so mad or in pain. It's simply overload, **cognitive overload**.

When we experience that overload and mental fatigue, can take no more, if you think about it, you can make nothing good come to the decisions you make from there and your experience suffers. Your productivity suffers. Your quality of experience suffers. I thought this was pretty darn profound stuff.

The other thing that the way our lives and the expectations are created is a way of multitasking. I know some of you out there are multitasking fanatics. I used to be, too. I've retreated to more and more wanting to multitask less and less. Scientifically in here, this head of cognitive neuroscience spoke about how:

“Does optimizing for multitasking result in better functioning—that is, creativity, inventiveness, productiveness? The answer is, in more cases than not, no. [The gentleman's name is Jordan Grafman.] The more you multitask, the less deliberative you become; the less able to think and reason out a problem.” You become more likely to rely on conventional ideas and solutions rather than challenging them with original lines of thought.

Think about this. Innovation, creativity is very important in business. Yet by multitasking, you're literally shooting yourself in the foot and decreasing your ability to do this. He even goes on to say that:

. . . we may “overcome some of the inefficiencies” inherent in multitasking . . . [By doing it a lot and practicing basically.] “but except in rare circumstances, you can train until you're blue in the face and you'd never be as good as if you just focused on one thing at

a time.” What we're doing when we multitask “is learning to be skillful at a superficial level.”

That, to me, is a biggie. **Do you want to live a superficial existence, a superficial life?** I wonder in some ways, the way that our expectations are created, the choices that we make online, are we headed down a black tunnel towards superficiality? We see it in offerings people make and the way people show up. To me, I don't want to live a superficial life. I have always been about the deeper conversations. I'm not interested in the cocktail conversation of life. Maybe that's why I don't do so great in this light conversation mode. I'd much rather get into a deep conversation with just a few people. In some ways we have created unfair expectations and impressions that we need to be connected all the time, doing everything, reading everything, multitasking, getting it all done.

Is the ability to pause, to take a priceless pause, because, man, that's where the good stuff is, disappearing? Is it disappearing? I believe it is disappearing unless we consciously take the time to bring it back.

How I do that is you've got to limit yourself to your time online. It can be like a black hole. Then suddenly you find out you're living in someone else's life, in some superficial, clicking some stream of altered reality instead of the actual life that's right in front of you, or you're busy reading other stuff about other people instead of really just anchoring in on your business and creating what you want, or taking time to do it rather than think about it. It's like the difference between looking at a picture of a hot fudge chocolate brownie sundae and actually diving in with your spoon and tasting it and savoring it and feeling it. But don't eat too much or you'll get that big sugar rush, too. The internet, it's a little bit like this big sugar rush.

I'm by all means not anti-internet. I build websites. I help with internet and online strategy. Yes, you need to be visible and there are things you need to do, but you are a

human being first. Until the day I die, I will preach the gospel, if you will, about living meaningfully, mindfully, doing what matters. That always comes to the top of the pile for me. Today was a little bit more musing than some others. I really just finished up this book *The Shallows* and I really feel like it put science behind what I'm feeling and what I hear and read, and with a historical perspective of how our minds and our capabilities and our behaviors have changed over time historically. We went back to Gutenberg and the press. Like I said, it's not an easy read, but it's worth scanning through and seeing and realizing and making that choice for yourself.

Do you want to live a life of scanning or do you actually want to live a little bit more deeply?

I'm sure there's a time and place for scanning, but when it comes to thoughtful, intentional business growth and how you choose to spend your time, I'll take a little bit more of the brownie sundae in front of me than the brownie sundae on the page.

With that, I will link up both to Scott Dinsmore's post and the book *The Shallows* in the show notes and anything else that I might have missed. In the meanwhile, I've got a handy video. If you've been dying to subscribe or rate this podcast, I would really greatly appreciate rating and reviews. I've got a little video showing you how because it can be confusing on iTunes. That link is also within the blog post. Stay tuned. I want to hear from you. Please do reach out. We'll be back with another episode soon as well as some special guests. As I always say, create a great day and bring some priceless pauses to it.