

S2: E137: The Deepest Darkness I Ever Experienced... and What it Taught Me

Hey, hey, welcome back. Today I want to start out with a quick question for you. Have you ever felt a darkness so complete you weren't actually sure if your eyes were open or not? This was me a few weeks ago, deep below the earth inside caves called Linville Caverns in North Carolina.

We were on a trip to celebrate my parents 50th anniversary with my family and we're doing some sightseeing. And so in the cave, the guide asked us to make sure to plant our feet and he counted down backwards from five, four, three, two, and then click every lantern, every source of light in that cavern was off. I couldn't see my hand before my face, no faint glow anywhere, just a deafening black. My first instinct was of course a little bit of panic. Is the floor still there? Am I ever gonna, is the light gonna turn back on? But something unexpected happened, this beautiful sacred silence. I could almost hear everyone's heartbeat. There was about 10 of us in the cave. Just the silence, the light inhales and exhales, nothing else. It was so peaceful. And what was probably 30 seconds or less felt like an eternity. And then the guide snapped on a single headlamp. And it was this like cone of light that hit the cavern wall and a cathedral of stone revealed itself. And this beautiful awe replaced any bit of fear that was still lingering. It was truly the deepest darkness I've ever experienced.

Now I'm sharing this with you today because while I was reflecting afterwards on the flight home, I realized that this actually reflects entrepreneurship. Because we dive into say a launch, a pivot, a rebrand, and somewhere along the descent of making big changes, we lose all the light sometimes revenue plateaus, algorithm shifts, the world lurches through another crisis. We have all these things that we can't control. So we might freeze, we might flail, and we end up grabbing every flashlight in air quotes at once. A bunch of webinars, templates, AI hacks, all of the things, right?

But the thing is caves, just like brands, don't necessarily need these stadium floodlights. We need one deliberate beam, then another, then another. So the weight of the world is heavy right now. There's talks of wars, inflation, climate anxiety. I truly believe, however, Yes, I've always been an optimist, but I truly believe that this chaotic environment is happening because sometimes we have to hit some sort of rock bottom before we can fix things and turn in the other direction. And I truly, truly believe that love always wins. Now, by no means is this a political message. This is just my personal belief of where we're at right now.

And I'm not saying that it's going to be perfect. I'm not saying it's going to be easy. I'm not saying that there's absolutely horrible things with weather and other things happening.

However, it often creates a temptation to scale back or to freeze in entrepreneurs, maybe wait it out, shrink. I get it.

But the truth is there's always these ebbs and flows and there's always things happening in the world. Darkness is not a command to hide. I'm actually asking you to reframe it as an invitation to rise, to become the lamp that others follow, to be that tone of light in the darkness. So like I said on the flight home, I was journaling. I was thinking about the cave and the trip in general, and I distilled this cavern experience into five words that spell light. So if you listened last week, I talked about being in the room and I shared my acronym ACE that really helps you make the most of being in any room. So this week, I'm talking about being in the dark, right? And if you know me, I help all of my clients create their brands and create their ecosystems, but most of all, I help them create a signature framework. And a lot of the times I do that with acronyms and different things. So I can't help, this is just the way my brain works is to create tools that maybe spell something or mean something else because it makes it so much easier to remember. Now on top of this, I've been talking about brand energetics a lot lately. If you've been listening to this podcast or following me on LinkedIn, yes, messages, your message and your visuals of your brand are key to success, right?

Because the visuals and the words are the first thing people are going to experience when they experience your brand. However, none of this matters if you're not aligned energetically and strategically. And it's a little more difficult than normal to have that energetic alignment with all the chaos happening in the world. And I've been on my own journey, which I'll be sharing more about in the upcoming weeks and over time. But this acronym I created really is a beautiful way. And once I created it, I used it myself. And it's really helping me get clarity in my own kind of rebirth and journey forward as I'm leaning more into this brand alchemy work with clients. And of course, the other brand work will always be there.

However, I believe that this time calls us to truly step into the work that we're meant to be in, our true legacy work in the world. So here it goes, you're the very first to hear my newest framework that will help guide your next level of success. L stands for listen to the dark.

Most founders panic scroll when metrics or incomes dip. Instead, I want you to turn off your analytics, turn off looking at the bank account, turn off looking at comments on your social media, turn off any form of metrics for at least 24 hours. I would actually say a week which really helps you reset because I've been off social media other than LinkedIn for a good six months now and it's changed everything. Now I'm not saying you have to do that long term like I did. However, even if it's for a day or seven days and you're just listening, you're going to download more. So often we're so caught up in the hype, we're so eager to take in the

information. We save the posts, we print the emails, we put ideas into chat GPT. But we're not actually listening to what our soul wants us to do, what our business wants us to do.

So when you're in that space, I want you to ask three diagnostic questions. And if you don't already have a pen and paper or you're driving, maybe hit pause or reverse a little to write down L is for listen to the dark. But these questions are really gonna help you to fine tune and think about some things that you probably haven't sat down to think about for a while. Number one is what conversation am I avoiding? Maybe it's a conversation with yourself. Maybe an offer is really no longer serving you or you're not loving it anymore and you need to have a conversation with yourself. Maybe you haven't been showing up and it's time that you do so. Maybe it's a VA or someone on your team.

Maybe it's talking to your audience and having a conversation about how you've shifted or changed. What conversation have you perhaps been avoiding? And most of the time, it's not going to be like you've been avoiding it consciously. It's typically unconsciously. But once you ask the question, you'll get an answer. Number two, what promise did I quietly stop believing I could deliver?

Is there a promise in your business? maybe a certain type of result that you want to provide with your clients and you yourself stop believing you could deliver it.

Not saying there is, but oftentimes there's something there lingering that we either need to circle back on, we need to shift gears, or maybe we need to get back in line energetically to ensure that we can really deliver on our promises. And number three, where am I pretending that maybe there's just a glitch instead of an actual decision to make? Like, oh, this too will pass.

But really, if we think about it deep down, maybe it is time to kill an offer, make a pivot, go all in on something. And it just feels a little scary, even though it'd be mind-blowingly amazing if you allowed yourself to do it. So one example of this is a recent client thought her plateau was a marketing issue.

After a listening day, as I'm calling this, that I asked her to sit down and do, she realized the darkness was actually resentment. She'd outgrown her original niche, but she was afraid to say so. She had grown and changed so much that those original people that she was talking to no longer were exciting for her to work with anymore. So one honest email to her list acknowledging the shift actually generated more revenue than perhaps three months of ads.

That darkness spoke to her and not only did she hear it, she acted on it because she shifted the tone.

So that was L, listen to the dark. Next up we have I, illuminate one next step. So again, picture that headlamp in the cave with a six foot beam. That's all you need to keep moving. Choosing a single micro commitment you can finish over the next 48 hours. Maybe it's rewriting a headline, schedule a listening call with your best client, or outline the first module of a dormant course that you've been neglecting to create really resist mapping the entire cave. I'm just gonna keep going with this cave analogy here because progress comes from those compounding beams, right? You can see six feet ahead, you take that next move, and then you'll be able to see six more feet. And so often we try to plan like this entire year, but especially in times like these, we don't know what's gonna happen in the next six months, three months, let alone three days sometimes. Now I'm not saying to completely ditch all of your plans. I'm just saying taking it step by step can make such a big difference and especially for the overwhelm that can often heat us as entrepreneurs. The other thing is to air quotes, name the beam. So for instance, you know, project six foot beam or something silly, you can name it whatever you want. Maybe it's project micro commitment project, you know, one day at a time because your brain loves knowing where it's heading. It wants to, it craves to. So if you create it as an experiment, like, okay, I'm not going to keep

We're worrying about this big overwhelm and the big map, just this one small micro moment at a time.

At least you are moving forward instead of just staying in limbo without any direction. And unfortunately, I've been witnessing a lot of business owners in this limbo space because they're overthinking every aspect of their offers, of their messaging, whatever it is. And so no momentum is made or they're busy learning or they're grabbing tips on social media and that makes them feel busy. But as far as their business is concerned, they're actually not moving the needle. Now again, this may not apply to you. You may be like, but I am, I'm moving the needle. That's awesome. Even myself though, it can be overwhelming even if you're moving the needle because you have so many things on your plate, right? So maybe you're not in limbo but you want to break it down into smaller chunks, right? So that is I illuminate one next step. The next is G, ground yourself. The thing is fear makes our vision jittery. In the cavern, the guide told us to widen our stance so we wouldn't wobble when the lights went out. And I thought that was so silly. I'm like, why would I wobble when the lights go out? But it was so true. It was such a deafening darkness that I could see where if somebody wasn't like solid in their stance, they could easily lose equilibrium. Cause I couldn't even tell which way was up or down or back or forward at that point. Right. So in business grounding can be physiological or practical.

So physiological, I love the practice of box breathing. So like inhaling for, holding for, exhaling for, holding for keeping that pace up until your pulse slows. If you feel yourself getting overwhelmed, grounding yourself is so key. And I know a lot of you listening already do this, already know this, but oftentimes we need that reminder, right? There's so much information coming at us. There's so much to do, especially during these summertime months. For those of us that have kids at home, there's a lot of balancing acts going. So you literally just have to ground yourself. Practically, I love to do a grounding walk and talk. I might just do it myself and kind of talk out loud. Maybe my neighbors think I'm crazy, but I don't have many neighbors. I live in the woods, so it's okay. Or sometimes I'll even call like a business bestie and walk a few miles, especially before making any big decisions. And this way you're clearing your head, but you'll get a solid yes or no. So I love doing this before I make investments and then I know I'm going back and I'm like, yes, this is a hundred percent a yes. Because oftentimes our brain will try to talk us out of things due to fear, right? And justify all the reasons we can't do something or vice versa. So the combination of that movement, fresh air and the external processing, I'm a verbal processor which is why I have a podcast, studies my light beam. So what is that for you? Making sure to ground yourself. And then next up we have H. H stands for honor the void. Our hustle culture despises emptiness. And especially as a business owner, right?

We have this hustle culture. know so many of us are healing and moving through it and getting past it. This masculine energy, this go, go, go. Yet nature has seasons, right? We have winter. Not right now, but we have it. The rust, the emptiness, the void. And so after you shine the light, right? So we've started out with listening to the dark, then illuminating that next step, making sure we ground ourselves before we actually start with movement. We want to linger, sleep on the idea, maybe journal a couple of pages stream of consciousness, treating the void like fertile soil. Although nothing visible is happening yet, you can trust that roots are starting to grow underground. And I'm saying this, of course, as like the ideas and those next steps that you're planning. So I like to take a 24 hour integration day, say, after I go to an event, or maybe you're making a big decision in your business or a big pivot, taking an integration day, maybe it's one hour a day that you take an integration moment for yourself. That one habit has prevented of so many extra quests because you can let the insight settle before you move forward. And you can truly make sure that you're heading in the right direction. However, you just don't want to linger in that too long and create a procrastination cycle, right? So that is also led to some of the most innovative ideas, masterful pivots and quantum leaps in business.

So once you honor that void after you're grounded, you take the space, then, and only then, you want to transform when that vision returns, when the light is back on, right? So we started out in the darkness. That's what T stands for. Because there's a moment always when the dark starts to lighten up and clarity becomes real and you're like, oh my gosh, this is it. This

is the next step. It's so clear. That's your cue to leap. Maybe it's to raise the prices of your offers, kill the outdated offer like I mentioned earlier, maybe hire a strategist. One client spent two years perfecting his pitch before he came to me. He wanted to reach corporate clients and he had been just trying to perfect the pitch for two years. And after a VIP day together, looked, he came of course to perfect his pitch. And I said, you know what? Yes, we can work on the pitch, but what I'm seeing here is a long procrastination spell. So yes, we worked on the pitch, but the biggest thing we did was decide that he had to pitch it that week.

Or he needed to completely ditch the idea and move on. No more stalling. And guess what? He booked three calls and closed two corporate contracts. And his offer refined itself through action, not theory. So this is just one quick example of what can happen when you use this light methodology, I guess we could call it, framework of really listening to the dark. Where is that dark in your business that maybe you don't have that clarity? Allowing one next step to be illuminated, making sure you're grounded, honoring the void, and then transforming and taking action once that vision returns.

So I'd love to offer you a quick mini version of this method while we're here today. Now, of course, if you're able to, if for some reason you're driving or something, pause and do this later. But I'd invite you to close your eyes and ask, where do I feel the darkness? Where do I maybe feel a little blind in my business right now?

And simply let your higher self or your business speak to you. And what do you hear? And then I want you to ask, what single beam of light? is going to reveal the path? What is going to move you out of this darkness?

Now, hopefully you get an answer right away. And if not, go back, remember this light method. Come back to this episode as needed. And I'd love you to imagine.

Practicing methodologies like this and going deep to take your next quantum leap in a curated circle of 20 founders. If you've been listening, we talked about being in the room last week. If you missed that episode, I highly recommend you go back and listen to it. But this is the time when the world needs us to stand up most, to be a light, to make the change that we are here to create. And that's what we're going to be doing during Brand Alchemy, the live experience in October in my hometown. Well, not my hometown actually, but where I live now in Michigan. It's beautiful in the fall. It's gonna be absolutely amazing. And we are gonna do two transformational days together plus a third integration morning.

This event is highly curated, so it's by invite only or application and spots are already filling up. of course are most going to get most out of it when you come in person. However, there are some virtual spots. The virtual spots are actually almost full, but there's a few virtual spots left and then we have a handful of spots.

also open to be in the actual room. We are going to alchemize all of the darkness out of your business and create a path so stunning that you are going to just be so excited about moving forward in your business despite any circumstances in the world. And that's the energetics that move mountains in business. So.

Early bird investment is only \$597 because I want it to really be a no brainer for the people who are ready for this work. And you'll know if you're ready. So let's go ahead and recap really quickly.

The light methodology, listen to the dark, illuminate one next step, ground yourself, honor the void, and transform when vision returns. And if you're ready to alchemize that darkness completely, go ahead and go to yourlegacybrand.com backslash brand dash alchemy.

You can easily grab that link in the show notes as well below or visit my LinkedIn. And I've been talking about this and before we wrap, I'd also love to just invite you that if today's cave story sparked a glimmer to share this episode with a founder who needs a beam of light, needs an awakening. And until then,

Until next time, illuminate that one next step and we'll see you next week.