

This is the **DO IT SCARED PODCAST** with Ruth Soukup, **EPISODE NUMBER 69**. On today's episode, we are talking with confused millennial Rachel Ritlop about having the courage to move past your biggest mistakes and how even the worst moments of your life can lead you to where you want to go.

Welcome to the Do It Scared podcast. I'm your host, **RUTH SOUKUP**, and each week on the show we will talk about how to face your fears, overcome obstacles, and, most importantly, how to take action and create a life you love.

Today's episode is brought to you by the Living Well Planner. I know that sometimes it can be hard to know exactly how to apply the lessons you're learning through this podcast on a practical daily basis. But the Living Well Planner is the tool that was created to help you do exactly that. It is the only planner out there designed not just to keep you organized and help you keep track of your schedule, but to actually help you proactively identify your biggest goals and then stay focused on them all month long. It doesn't just help you get more done; it helps you get the most-important stuff done. That is ultimately what will make all the difference.

And right now you can take advantage of our lowest price of the year on the Living Well Planner during our semiannual sale. You'll find it at [livingwellplanner.com](http://livingwellplanner.com). But don't wait. This offer is only available for a limited time and only while supplies last. Once again, you'll find it at [livingwellplanner.com](http://livingwellplanner.com).

Hey, there, and welcome back to the show. As always, my name is Ruth Soukup, and I am the founder of Living Well Spending Less and the Living Well Planner, as well as the founder of Elite Blog Academy, and the New York Times' bestselling author of six books, including my newest book, Do It Scared.

In today's episode, we are talking to blogger and podcaster Rachel Ritlop about having the courage to move on, even when you've screwed up so badly that redemption seems impossible. Rachel is the founder of the Confused Millennial, a site dedicated to helping Millennials live their best lives while they figure out this whole adulting thing. But today, she'll be sharing a story that she's never actually fully shared publicly before. It's a pretty shocking story, but I'm so grateful for her courage and daring to talk about an episode in her life that she's not all that proud of, in the hopes that it might help other people, too.

And ultimately, that's exactly what this podcast is all about. It's daring to look in the mirror and be honest about our mistakes and then make the necessary changes so that we can create a life we love, because in the end, courage doesn't mean we're never afraid; instead, courage is being scared but taking action anyway, despite our

fear. It's putting one foot in front of the other, even when we're not quite sure where the path is going to lead.

All right, so just a couple more quick things before we dive into today's episode. First, you can get all the show notes for this episode by visiting [doitscared.com/episode69](https://doitscared.com/episode69). Once again, that's [doitscared.com/episode69](https://doitscared.com/episode69). Also, if you haven't already, be sure to head over to [doitscared.com](https://doitscared.com) to take our free fear assessment to find out exactly how fear might be showing up in your life and potentially holding you back, as well as to discover exactly what you can do about it. It only takes a few minutes, and so many of our listeners have written in to let us know that this assessment has been life-changing. So definitely be sure to do that.

Also, if you have any questions or if you just want to share feedback on this episode, you can send me a message on Instagram, or better yet, tag me in your story, and if I share your post, we will send you a "Do It Scared" T-shirt.

And now, without further ado, here is Rachel Ritlop.

**RUTH:** Rachel, welcome to the *Do It Scared* podcast. Thank you so much for being on the show. It's so good to have you here today.

**RACHEL:** Thank you so much. I'm so excited.

**RUTH:** I know! This is exciting. So, I just want to start at the beginning with your journey, and talk a little bit about how you got to where you are now.

**RACHEL:** Yeah, I mean, I'll try to keep it short. In my short 29 years, I feel like I've lived many lives. Really, what happened was I was graduating undergrad with my degree in psychology. Being a confused millennial, I didn't know what I wanted to do, so I did an internship in law and one in counseling, and I left the law office every day feeling just dirty, sick to my stomach. But when I would leave the counseling center, I just felt great. And being a true people pleaser back then—I was, like, 19—when the director asked me when do I start, I just said August, and I kind of just fell into this path of going into grad school, getting my masters in mental-health counseling. Really, was quickly succeeding in that, landed my dream job with my dream company in our local area by the time I was 25.

Very quickly, my dream job turned out to be my worst nightmare. I started waking up every day in just cold sweats, work-related nightmares. I literally would convulse and shake in anxiety every time my phone would vibrate, thinking it was boss. I'd go in my office and cry every day. I was really just living this miserable, miserable existence. Even though I loved my clients, was great at my job, the bureaucracy and being an employee was not who I

was meant to be—the true outcast, to go off your fear archetypes. I just was not meant to be chained to a desk every day.

I became the poster child for self-care. I'd wake up an hour early every morning, go for a run on the beach. I'd go to yoga on my lunch breaks. After work, my husband and I would walk on the beach and decompress from the day. I set rules, no email after 8 p.m., like, all these different things that you read and are told to do, but nothing was working. Ultimately, I found myself, two months after my 25th birthday, I just finished my masters, finally, I got fired twice in under a month. I got fired from my dream job, and the day I got fired from that, had landed a new one and got fired from that one three weeks later.

So, there was a ton of shame because I was this Type A overachiever, and all of a sudden, I'd never been fired from anything, and I was fired from everything.

**RUTH:** Wow. Can I ask why? What was it? Did they give you a reason for firing you?

**RACHEL:** Yeah. Both times it was because I was so miserable to work with.

**RUTH:** Oh my gosh. That's harsh.

**RACHEL:** Yeah, I was doing great. Like, on paper, my clients loved me. On paper, billing department, I was getting all of my insurance stuff taken care of. I was, on paper, your ideal employee, but my energy was just so low and I was so resentful about having to show up and sit there from nine to five every day that nobody wanted to work with me.

**RUTH:** Oh my gosh. What do you do from there, then? You get told, basically, you're a big, giant B, and we don't want you here. I mean, for lack of a better term, I mean, was that a wake-up call for you?

**RACHEL:** Yes and no, because the thing was I had white-knuckling it for so long, I really wanted to quit. I was just so terrified because I landed my "dream job" at 24. I was working for a company that most therapists locally would work for years trying to go work at. I thought there was something wrong with me. I literally had graduated with my masters in May, and I got fired the first time in July. I was, like, what else am I going to do with my life if I can't quit. So even though I knew I wanted to quit and I knew that I was going to get fired—I was like, there's no way this is going to last much longer—I really thought there was no other option out there for me. And I thought I had finished these years until I could become a licensed therapist and go into private practice. I

thought, what else do you do with a degree in counseling?

After getting fired that second time, I literally lived the South Florida retired life. My husband and I at the time, we lived on the beach in an apartment building that was not 55-plus, but it basically should have been.

**RUTH:** That's pretty much all of Florida.

**RACHEL:** Yeah, pretty much all of Florida. But I would literally wake up in the morning, I'd see the same group of women on my morning walk. In the afternoon, we'd all be reading our books underneath the palm tree on the beach, in the shade. I'd walk with my book back and forth in the pool, and I did that for two months.

**RUTH:** Oh, wow.

**RACHEL:** Yeah, full-on quarter-life crisis. I literally was, like, you know what, I'm just going to take two months of my life ... I'm just going to take time off in my life. I had been waitressing for seven years at that point. I literally had been waitressing up until the month before I got fired from my real jobs. I had built up a really great emergency fund, and I was, like, you know what, for the first time in my life, I'm going to just do something for me. I don't know where this is going to go. I have enough money. I don't need to worry about money until January 1st—we were in August at that point—and I'm just going to see where life takes me.

I had actually, the day I got fired from the second job, gotten a new job offer without trying to interview. I had built up a very good name for myself in the community. For the first time in my life, I said no, I can't take this. I can't go down the path that everybody wants me to go down to, because I was always just such a yes person.

**RUTH:** Yeah. And how did your husband handle that at that point?

**RACHEL:** Amazing. He's an entrepreneur, so he was in the middle of his startup, and he knew I was miserable. I was a shell of a person. We were still dating back then, but we had been together for about two years, and I used to be the girl that would come home, I'd cook dinner. I would just be full of life. And I was coming home every day, curling up on the couch and not moving until it was time for bed, and just ordering in food. I was not myself. For him, it was like okay, great. You take this time. However, with that said, by about two months, he's like, "So, um, are you ever going to do anything again?" I was like, "Yeah, I should probably figure that out."

What I kind of did was I took a step back, and I looked at what my skills were. Where was the low-hanging fruit for me to monetize, and I realized that I had built up a really great reputation locally as a counselor and that a lot of my clients were Millennials who were struggling during the transition from the substance-abuse facility back into the real world, for lack of a better word. And what I realized was that wasn't a substance-abuse problem; that was just something that so many of us struggled with. I would be teaching groups on financial literacy, and the 50-, 60-, 70-year-old people in the group were like, "Man, I didn't know any of this stuff." I realized that there was just a lack of basic life skills that we were all being taught.

And so I took about two months and wrote out a 200-page life-skills curriculum and just started, when people would ask, "Oh, what center are you at?" I'd be like, "Oh, I'm actually teaching life skills now, if you want to hire me to come in as a contractor and run a group." And so I did that for, actually, about a year, teaching life skills in group settings, working one-on-one with people that were overflow from facilities that needed more personalized attention, and I started to do business consulting because I was at so many different facilities that needed help with their program development. For that year, I was working about a third of the amount of time but matched by nine-to-five salary, so I was like okay, I don't know how I stumbled into this, but it's working.

Then again, I hired a business coach. I started getting that really heavy itch again, though. I was spending so much time in cars, traveling to all these different places, and I was like, this is not scalable. And so I hired a business coach, and that is an entirely different podcast episode, but the long and short of it is I realized once again I was building somebody else's dream and not my own.

In a blaze of passionate fury, I was crying to my husband one morning, and I was like, "I'm building this whole thing, and it just doesn't feel right. I'm just another confused Millennial that has no idea what they're doing with their life." It was literally like a lightning bolt had hit me, and I grabbed my laptop. I typed in "confused millennial," bought the domain. Well, I had to buy "the confused millennial" because at the time, confused millennial was taken, and literally launched a blog within 48 hours, wrote four blog posts, designed a logo, designed the website, and just hit publish. And three years later, it kind of took over my life is the long and short of it.

**RUTH:**

Wow. So you started this blog, then, without really even intending—it was almost like an instant decision, spur of the

moment. Did that finally feel like the right thing?

**RACHEL:** Yeah. It was the first time in so long that I had the freedom to do and say what felt right to me in that moment. And I have broken every single blog rule that they tell you. Like, I have not niched down. I was fortunate that the Millennial niche hadn't really gotten super crowded yet, so I stood out very well for brands because I was one of the few Millennials that was doing it well, but I really did not niche down. I wrote about whatever I wanted to write about. It was organized chaos, I'll say that. It wasn't just a total free for all. There was strategy behind it all, but it was finally the first time where I was allowing myself to color outside of the lines.

**RUTH:** Huh. That's so interesting. And so that sort of just took off. How long did it take you, after starting your blog, to get to a point where it was actually generating revenue for you?

**RACHEL:** When I launched it, I was still doing all of the other income-generating things with my life-skills program, and so for the first six months, I actually had set a rule for myself where I was not going to monetize it whatsoever. I knew myself, and I knew I had this tendency to get obsessed with, where's the next paycheck coming from? How can I funnel in all of the money? And there's never enough. I was still working through a lot of that conditioning. For the first six months, I said, "Do not even think about monetizing. Your only job here is to stay truthful to yourself and to build up an engaged community." And then once that six-month mark hit, it was off to the races, and within a year, it had matched what I was making from ... Or I had actually started to phase out all of my other clients and groups and things like that, and the blog slowly took over as pretty much, more or less, my main revenue stream. Then, by about two and a half years, it had generated six figures a year.

**RUTH:** That's awesome. Do you teach the same life skills that you were teaching as a curriculum? Is that sort of what you focus on on your blog, or it just is all across the board with different stuff?

**RACHEL:** So, yeah. So the curriculum started off as a lot of what the blog posts were. It's, obviously, built on that, but, yeah, it really is ... It's about helping others embrace more of who they are while we navigate this whole adulting thing. There's so much real talk, and there's so much raw vulnerability.

I just answered an email today, because some woman found my "fears about pregnancy" post because I was terrified of getting pregnant, and now here I am with a three-month-old. So it talks about those really raw, relatable things, but then it's also very

practical advice of, this is what I had no idea about a credit score. This is how I'm figuring ... Like this is everything I've learned and researched and kind of just explaining things in a much more easily digestible way, if you will.

**RUTH:**

Yeah. So what is it about adulting that is so hard for Millennials? Can you explain this to me? Why is this such a ... I mean, and it's not just Millennials, because I'm sort of just on the edge. I think I'm at the backend of the Gen Xers and just ahead of the Millennials. But it's almost kind of like a little bit of a joke for my generation—that makes me feel so old when I even say that—I'm like, oh my gosh, Millennials, with their struggle with adulting. So explain this to me. Why do you think this is such a struggle, and has it been something that you've really struggled with in your own life, too?

**RACHEL:**

I think what it is, is that Millennials are just more willing to be vulnerable and call it what it is, because I will be honest, I say this to my husband, and we notice this all the time with our parents, with just he recently ... He has his second company, and a lot of the board members and things are baby boomers or older than that. And you know what happens when you become an adult and you realize that nobody has any idea what they're doing and they're all just making it up as they go? But I think Millennials are the first generation to just call attention to that and poke fun at it, where I don't think it's necessarily that like ... I think there is a little bit layer of harder because we have social media and there's the whole Facebook effect and everything like that, where it's a little bit more amplified, but I really just think that we're okay with being more vulnerable.

I know a lot of the Millennials I'm friends with or see, they're so much more willing to talk about things that previously would have been swept under the rug, hidden behind closed doors, and be kept "private." We don't hang our dirty laundry out for everybody, whereas today, we're more willing to say like, "No, I'm struggling with this problem. I'm going to share it because I know others are, too, and nobody deserves to feel alone in this."

**RUTH:**

Yeah. That's a good way of putting it. I've never thought about it that way before.

**RACHEL:**

I don't think we're just all flailing around like fish at the sea, here. Like, somebody come save us. Throw us back in.

**RUTH:**

It is a good point. It's the first generation to grow up with social media. I mean, I look back, and if I had lived the life that I did in my early 20s and had social media to document it all, oh my gosh, I can't even imagine how I would've ever recovered from that.

Thank God there was no social media for me back in those days because I don't think I would've had the wherewithal to have the filter. I was in such a bad, dark place that I wouldn't have had the wherewithal to not post those things, without realizing 20 years later, I don't want to put that all out there for the world to see, or I don't want that to be the thing that defines me.

I think it's scary from that standpoint. It's scary—and I think about that for my kids. How do you teach ... Now you have a baby. You're going to have to start thinking about that. How do you teach your kids to navigate a world where people document and share every single piece of their life, for better or for worse?

**RACHEL:**

It's something I think about often because for me, the Internet was taught about as this terrible, scary place where somebody was going to ... It was like the guy that pulled up in the white truck and offering you candy when you're playing on the corner, but multiplied by the masses and 15 other different scary things that you didn't think about. You're smart enough not to get into the van if somebody offers you candy, but who knows what'll happen online. Yeah, that's a whole other thing.

**RUTH:**

It is a whole other thing. Let's talk a little bit more about you and your story. One of the things that I say all the time is that there are no mistakes, only lessons. And I know just from my own experience, that's something that I've lived out personally and made a lot of bad life choices, but also things ... And you and I have talked about this before because I was lucky enough to be interviewed on your podcast, but how all the worst mistakes of your life can lead you to where you are now. So what are some of the hardest lessons or biggest mistakes that you've had in your life, and what happened, and what did that teach you?

**RACHEL:**

Oh gosh. Yeah, I mean, I love that, all mistakes are lessons. That's something I learned when I was, I want to say, 19 or 20, and it's been the mantra that I have lived by. I mean, for me, I grew up, and my childhood story, from an outsider looking in, would have looked ideal, but inside, I was kind of just, like, dying. I was struggling. There was a lot of trauma and abuse that, back then, nobody knew to classify as that. It was "okay, well, if you don't have welts on your back, then there's no real problem at home" type of thing.

And so, for me, I didn't understand so much, and that really played out. By the time I was in middle school, I was struggling with heavily, severely disordered eating. When I got to high school, I started to drink a lot. My drinking got really out of hand,

probably when I was about 17. I can give you so many different stories of what that looked like. I go into high schools and middle schools and elementary schools and talk. Can you be an alcoholic in high school? I'm always astounded by how in tune our youth are, because the majority of them will raise their hand and say yes. I didn't believe that to be true. For me, so much of my drinking back then was to escape my feelings and to escape my thoughts. I just wanted to be able to have an off switch.

I remember—March just happened, we're in May now—it was the first Saturday, senior year, and none of the girls in my high school would talk to me. And it was the first Saturday of spring break of my senior year, sorry. I remember waking up that day and just feeling totally alone, like I didn't have anybody. And I remember pouring myself a drink and being like, "Happy spring break," and [unclear 23:35] myself, if you will, that really depressing movie moment of somebody sitting in their bedroom.

I just remember feeling so empty, and it was a feeling I had grown so accustomed to at that point. I didn't realize I had been struggling with depression. I didn't realize that I had been having panic attacks. I didn't know what these things were that were happening to my body and to mind were actual diagnosable disorders.

That evening, I was in my car driving, and I hit another car, and two people passed away. I remember, that night, because I was in the hospital, and I remember just asking my dad to take out his gun and shoot me because I didn't want to live anymore. I didn't want to go forward. I didn't understand how—I was just trying to escape the hurt that I was experiencing and how I could cause hurt and pain to other people. I was really just looking to escape my own kind of living hell, if you will, and not really taking into account that I was possibly creating a living hell for other people.

For me, the years that followed that were [unclear 25:04]. I think the most simplest lesson I could kind of boil that down into ... Well, there's two major lessons, which is, number one, I had to go to a place where I was unlearning everything that had been taught to me, whether spoken or unspoken. We're all constantly picking up these messages, like, okay, well, if I do this, then somebody'll think this about me. And did they actually say that to you? Maybe yes, maybe no, but that's how we're perceiving our realities. And I had become such a chameleon based off of what I thought people wanted from me. I thought if I looked a certain way, if I laughed a certain way, if I dressed a certain way, I would finally make everyone around me happy. For some reason, I had thought that

was my job, that I was in charge of everyone else's happiness. And in doing that, I was making myself completely unhappy.

And so it was, finally, when I took a step back and said, okay, does this bring me joy? Is this honoring my truth? Is this in alignment with me? that I kind of finally started to actually relieve myself of depression, relieve myself of anxiety. And you hear that playing out as recently as through my career journey. All of that came back to me thinking that this is what I was supposed to do. And so really getting to that place of finding my truth was a big thing.

And then the other big, big lesson was just that all victims become perpetrators. We are not responsible for the wounds that we have, but it is our responsibility to heal them. If we don't, we're going to become exactly what we fear in life and what we're trying to avoid and what we're trying to escape from.

**RUTH:**

So true. So how did you move forward from that?

**RACHEL:**

Oh gosh, so, I mean, right after the car accident, I would say I was a full-on zombie. I started, finally, going to therapy. I had asked to go to therapy a couple years earlier because I was like, there's something not right inside me. I'm not like the other kids at school. I need help. My mom did the best that she could with what we she knew and the resources she had, and she was like, you know what you're going through is normal girl, high-school drama, and I was like, okay, if that's what you say. You went through this, too. I guess so.

But I finally started going to therapy, and I started seeing a psychiatrist, and they had diagnosed me with dysthymic disorder. So basically, he thinks that I had had depression since I was, basically, four years old and that I was having another episode of depression off of my baseline depression, if you will. So I finally got put on medication, which helped with that. I started going to a therapist each week, and then I went to college.

And when I got to college, it was an interesting experience being on my own for the first time. It was like that first step of finding out who I was as my own person. I was at a place where I didn't know if I was going to be going to prison for the next 30 years when I went to college. They were building a case against me. I was waiting to hear back from everything. It's very much just like, go to college, live your life, we'll call you, and you'll come back to South Florida when it's time. I was like, okay.

So, I saw a weekly therapist there. I went to group therapy there. I became really involved in the counseling center where I started

doing something called biofeedback, which, if you have anxiety, is a fantastic tool where they put a little monitor on my finger, and I do these different computer modules. And I finally just learned how to breathe again, which may not sound like a huge accomplishment, but if you've struggled with anxiety, you know that so much of your life, you're either holding your breath or hyperventilating. Just learning to have a normal breathing pattern again was a massive shift.

Then, eventually, I got called to come back down to South Florida. I got arrested, was released to finish my undergrad degree, and then I had to go to jail after I finished my undergrad degree. Every single one of these experiences just kept teaching me something, and they kept leading me down this path of discovering who I am and releasing the conditioning.

And so it's not like there was just this one miraculous shift of working through it; it was constantly taking an interest in myself and prioritizing myself, which if you're somebody that has ... I mean, I think no matter what you've been through in life, whether it's heartbreak, causing others harm, just feeling like others are always causing you harm, whatever it is, if you can take a step back and prioritize yourself, that's a big step forward. And I don't mean prioritizing yourself in the way of just like, okay, I'm going to have chocolate today because that's my self-care. I mean truly actually digging into your mind and recognizing when certain thoughts and words are no longer serving you and actively looking to remove those and correcting your language when you're talking about yourself, when you're talking about others. Shifting that mentality from being a victim, that everything in life is happening to me, to an owner, where everything in my life is happening for me, is one of the most freeing things that we can do for ourselves.

**RUTH:** Wow. So you went to jail. How long were you in jail?

**RACHEL:** A year.

**RUTH:** Okay, how was that? What was that experience like?

**RACHEL:** Yeah, I mean, jail's a great preparation for motherhood, I will say that.

**RUTH:** That's an interesting statement.

**RACHEL:** I honestly feel like I've had motherhood so easy because of my schedule in jail. And basically, I wrote a blog post where I talked about how crazy my schedule was in jail. I didn't say like, "Oh, this is how crazy my schedule was in jail." I was just writing a blog

post about newborn life. I was like, "At one point in my life, this was what my schedule was like, where I would wake up at 3:30 a.m. for medication, 4:30 a.m. is breakfast. I had to get up at 6:30 to go to work, and then lunch was at 11:30." So as you can see, basically, every hour, two hours, your sleep is being disturbed. So in that sense, it was great preparation for motherhood.

Jail's just, it's dirty. I think the thing with jail is there's two things always come to mind when I think about jail. Well, actually three things. Number one is just how conditioned our society is to fear felons. I remember I was having a conversation with a friend's girlfriend, and she had done some volunteer work at a jail in, I want to say Virginia or the Carolinas or somewhere, and I was like, "Oh, wow. That's amazing. Are you going to continue that work now that you're down here?" Her eyes just went huge, and she goes, "The worst prisoner from where I was is better than the best prisoner at the local jail here." I was like, "Oh, well, that's great, because I spent a year there, so thanks for telling me what you really think." You don't realize how often our society counts out people with legal histories, and you don't realize how we make it so hard for ... How it's set up. It's a system set up for people to fail. That's the reality of it.

I think a little bit of it gets lost in *Orange is the New Black*, the TV show. As that show's kind of gone on, I don't think people realize how much truth is in that show. When they watch it, we watch for entertainment. We forget that, oh, wow, they're actually cleaning with pads. That is the only resource they have to do certain things. To create eye masks, you use a pad. If you want to create floss, you get your canteen goodies in a plastic bag. You're actually having to pull and twist and pull and twist a strip of this plastic in order to create floss. Basic dental hygiene, you don't have access to there.

And I just don't think people realize that it is a system truly designed for people to fail, and then you add in other people's biases, which keep a lot of people feeling like they're not worth more in life, that they can't achieve more, they can't step out more, because most people are walking around with a victim mentality, and that's being reinforced when we turn on TV, when we're hearing conversations where people are saying like, oh, I'm scared of that person, or oh, that person has this that happened to them. Those secrets or those things that we don't understand, rather than approaching them with questions, we approach them with judgment because I think a lot of times we're afraid that our reality will shatter.

I know from my personal experience how hard that is, how many times people themselves have gotten into a car drunk but nothing's ever happened, and then all of a sudden, they meet me. They're like, but you look like you could be my daughter, but you look like me. How could this have happened to you? And that terrifies people because it means it could happen to them. To keep felons, to keep people that have had different hardships than we have been exposed to or understand, a lot of times I think people unintentionally keep them down with their language in order to stay in a safe little box, like, this will never happen to me.

**RUTH:**

Yeah. When you were there, how did you keep your spirits up? How did you go from getting either involved in a gang, or you know, like, all of these things that you hear about? I can't imagine. You've just graduated from college, your life is starting to be together, and then you have to have this setback. So how did you make it through that year with keeping yourself intact?

**RACHEL:**

So, like I said, I was a Type A overachiever before I went to jail. I remember going to all my undergrad professors. I was studying psychology, and being like, "What books do you suggest I read for jail? Is there a jail reading list somebody can give me? How do I prepare for this?" But one of my teachers, my abnormal-psychology professor, she told me to read *Man's Search for Meaning* by Viktor Frankel. I can't even tell you how many times I've read that book since then, but if you haven't read it, the idea, essentially, is that the last thing that—we have the choice to search for meaning. That people that went through the concentration camps and things like that, some of it was luck surviving but for those that survived, every single one of them, it was outlook and perspective on life. There was something that they were hoping for. There was something that they had found meaning in and that they were living for.

For me, that's how I really tried to approach my time in jail. Initially, I had had a court order where I was allowed to bring books in because I was actually still finishing my undergrad degree, distance learning for my last two classes. I didn't have enough classes where it made sense to stay up in college, so I had come back down to South Florida. That's how much of a Type A overachiever I was. I graduated a semester early so that I could start grad school on time as if I had finished my four-year degree as if it was a full four-year degree. I had literally never missed a beat, on paper.

I was bringing in big books, and I was able to bring in big books and hold 12-step fellowship programs. I was going ahead, and I

was helping them there. I was using the skills that I had learned to create a safe space. That was always really helpful, but I think the other thing for me was just recognizing that this was an opportunity in my life to approach things differently. I had begged the prosecutor. I was like, I will do public-speaking engagements. I will do this; I will do that. Please, please, please, just do not send me to jail. And she was like, no, you're going, and I'm like, okay.

I realized that I was there for a reason. And when I took a step back and stopped looking at everyone there from the lens that so many of us look at, people in jails and prisons, as like, oh, they must've deserved it, and actually took the time to get to know them and hear their stories, you realize, again, how our system is meant to keep people down. It's not always that like, oh, this person wants to go ahead and start selling drugs; it's a choice between, okay, I'm going to start selling drugs, or I'm not going to have power or be able to feed my family this week because I can't get a job. There's no jobs, and even the jobs I can get aren't going to cover enough for me and one or two other people. And we're not talking about the person that had 10 kids here and was just irresponsible. We're talking about just very average, basic things that we all should have access to in our country today.

I mean, I'll never forget. I think this story really kind of just encompasses it for me. When we had outgoing mail, we would put our letters through the jail-cell bars for the deputies to walk by and pick up. I remember I had put a letter through the bars, but it had accidentally fallen out onto the floor of the other side of the cell. This woman, who was so, so, so tiny—she looked like she was 12 years old even though she was, like, 20 years older than me—she was like, "Oh, don't worry, I'll get it," and starts sticking her tiny little arm through, and she goes, "You know how there's bars on your windows at home? My mom used to always put me through them to unlock the door from the inside." I just remember being like, "No, I don't know how there's bars on the windows at home." That is the reality that this woman knows for everybody.

What do they say? Like, you are the sum of the five people you spend your most time with. That is what you see as your maximum potential in life. And when you take a step back and think about that, that is what the maximum potential in life is for her. It just makes you realize, how can we sit here and judge the people in our prison systems, most of who are in there for petty drug charges or petty theft charges. They're not necessarily in there for these big huge things. And I'll be the first person to admit that I'm a white woman of privilege, and if I had a different color skin, I probably would've been in prison for 15 years, or

definitely a lot longer than I was.

**RUTH:**

Wow. That's really powerful, actually, when you think about that. I mean, just that story of going, yeah, you know how everybody has bars on their windows. No, everybody doesn't. It's incredible. What an amazing perspective that has given you in your life even as you move forward. I mean, that's something that will stay with you forever. So thank you for sharing all of that.

So, can we talk a little bit about the role that fear has played in your life and your business? I know you mentioned you're the outcast archetype, so you took our fear assessment. How has that played out in your life?

**RACHEL:**

Oh gosh, yeah, I mean, for me, I was just honestly terrified of ... The fact that this is my business today is so strange to me because I was so afraid of actually just going online, being an online presence. My mom always raised me like, whatever you put online, you can never take back. And so there was this fear of permanence. Then on top of that, after my car accident happened—well, before my car accident happened, I had faced a lot of digital bullying. Girls would send me instant messages from made up—I don't know if anyone remembers AIM days, AOL Instant Messenger—they would make up these things and send me messages anonymously, being like, you should just kill yourself; nobody would miss you anyway. Things like that. It was like my pre car-accident days. And then after my car accident, different websites, hate websites, started popping up about me, anti-Semitic hate websites.

I remember just being like, the Internet is not a safe place. Do not go online. I had a live journal back in the day, in high school. And then I remember one of my therapists, after I had gotten fired twice, he's like, why don't you start a blog anonymously and just write about these things? And I did that a little bit, but it just didn't feel quite right.

And so the fact that I had literally just abandoned all of those fears in that moment because I just had this drive inside of me, something inside of me, like I said, it was like getting hit by a lightning bolt, and I just went forward. And for me, I had to kind of do it not worrying about what rejection there was going to be and not worrying about what other people would think. It was kind of like the culmination of that lesson where I had to forget everything that had been taught to me or conditioned into me up until that point, and just do what felt right. That was what everything came down to.

I honestly think it ended up being as successful as it was because it was the first time I didn't overthink things. It was the first time I didn't try to strategize something. I didn't have a goal in mind. I was like, I just need to put this out there. I just need to hit publish on this, and I can't worry about what anyone's going to think. I cannot worry about what the strategy is, if this is an income generator. I can't worry about all of those practical things that we're told are metrics for success in our society.

**RUTH:**

So good. Let's just do a couple ... Just to finish up, with a couple rapid-fire questions because I want to be respectful of your time. This has been so good. I feel like we could just keep talking forever about it. I have so many more questions I want to ask, but I do want to be respectful of your time. Rapid fire. First of all, are there any rules that you consistently break or ignore? My motto is, rules are for suckers.

**RACHEL:**

Yeah, I mean, I break all of them at this point. I literally ... I hate rules. Part of being an outcast is you don't like authority figures, right? I hate rules. I finally have given myself permission these last few years to just not worry about them.

**RUTH:**

I love that. How do you personally practice self-care in your life and business?

**RACHEL:**

Oh gosh, yeah, so for me today, I mean, that looks different all of the time. I think the big thing for me is just always learning. I used to always get made fun of by older people on Twitter like, "What are you confused about?" [unclear 44:36] I thought they were being cheeky. And I was like, no. And I have a blog post on the meaning behind my blog name, but for me, that is self-care. Being confused means that we're asking questions. It means that we haven't gotten to this place of complacency where we're just robots showing up through life. It means that we're asking questions. We're striving to be better.

For me, obviously, there's all the normal things like, oh, I took 20 minutes and went to the pool by myself yesterday without my three-month-old and just had a me moment. There's those types of things, but for me, it's the fact that I ask all of the questions I want to ask, and I flip over all of the stones to make sure that I'm finding not just only an answer that serves me. I remember I had somebody on my podcast once, and they said this, and it has always stuck with me, all of our questions deserve answers, but all of our answers deserve to be questioned. That, for me, has become the ultimate form of self-care.

**RUTH:**

That's amazing. I have never thought about it that way, but I love

that so much. I ask that question on every podcast, and nobody has ever said anything even close to that. I'm kind of in awe of that answer right now. That's amazing.

**RACHEL:** Oh, thank you.

**RUTH:** Okay, so what are you working on right now that's got you really fired up?

**RACHEL:** Oh gosh, honestly, with a three-month-old, I actually—no, I do have an answer to this.

**RUTH:** That's what you're working on right now.

**RACHEL:** I do have my three-month-old. No, I actually just started really focusing on my YouTube channel, which has been really fun. It's a hot mess, but it's fun because the perfectionist in me would have never actually started to do the videos and stuff like that. It's nice to just be able to see me, like, okay, well, I learned this from doing that, and that doesn't mean I'm not going to publish it because I see how I could've done it better, but I'm still going to hit publish on this, but I've learned it for next time. Whereas in the past, I would just totally scrape it and be like, okay, well, I learned that, so I have to redo this now because clearly, it's not the best it can actually be. So for me, YouTube has felt very freeing. I'm super excited about it.

**RUTH:** That's awesome. That's awesome. So, what is the best piece of advice you ever received, and why?

**RACHEL:** Gosh, I don't even know. People ask me this question all the time, and I feel like I should have a good answer for it by now. I don't know that there's a piece of advice that I received that's the best piece of advice, because, again, so much of my journey in this life has been about just trusting my own intuition, becoming my own mentor. Yesterday was Mother's Day, and I wrote that for years before becoming a mom, I had prayed that I would learn to become my own mom, because I have a very strained relationship with my mother. For me, the best piece of advice, actually, I don't know that it comes from anyone else, it's just literally figuring out how to trust my own advice.

**RUTH:** I love that. Okay, final question. First, is there any ... There's two parts to it. Is there anything else you want us to know, and then, where can we find you online?

**RACHEL:** Oh gosh, no, I feel like we've covered so much. You guys can find me at [theconfusedmillennial.com](http://theconfusedmillennial.com), same on Instagram and YouTube

and all that fun stuff.

**RUTH:**

All right, thank you so much, Rachel. Just thank you got sharing your story and for being here and for your honesty and transparency with everything. I know it's going to help so many people, and it's amazing to think that you're only 29 and that you really, as you said at the beginning, you really have lived a couple of lifetimes in those 29 years. Just thank you for being here today.

**RACHEL:**

Thank you so much for having me.

Okay, so don't forget that if you'd like to get all the show notes for this episode along with all the links to everything we just talked about, you can find it all at [doitscared.com/edpisode69](https://doitscared.com/edpisode69). Once again, get all the show notes and the links on our website at [doitscared.com/episode69](https://doitscared.com/episode69). And while you're there, be sure to also take our fear assessment to find out exactly how fear might be holding you back.

And then, before we go, I just want to say, as always, that I love hearing from you. So if you have any questions about what we talked about today, or any other topics that you would like to see addressed on the Do It Scared podcast, any guest that you would like to see interviewed, please feel free to reach out either via email or just by messaging me on Instagram.

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And then, speaking of upcoming episodes, be sure to join me next week as we con-

tinue our “summer of courage stories” with another amazing interview. We’ll be chatting with miner-turned-freelance-writer Gina Godeen about finding the courage to forge a whole new path, and learning how to turn your passion into a profitable new career. She’s got a ton of insight to share along with some pretty practical advice, and hers is a story you definitely won’t want to miss. And I will catch you then.