

The Modern Editor Podcast – Episode 15: The Power of “Why?”

Tara Whitaker: [0:03] Welcome to *The Modern Editor Podcast*, where we talk about all things editing and what it's like to run an editorial business in today's world. I'm your host, Tara Whitaker. Let's get to it.

Tara Whitaker: [0:18] Hi, there. Welcome to today's episode. We are going to be talking about the power of asking the simple question—*Why?* So, this episode is going to be very short and sweet but super impactful because I want to get you started on practicing this one question, and then we're going to dive into things in later episodes.

Tara Whitaker: [0:39] So, at the time of this recording, it's November 2022. So, we are entering the holiday season. Whether it's Hanukkah or Christmas or Kwanzaa, or any of the many, many other holidays we've got going on in the next few months, there's going to be a lot of decisions that need to be made. And not even just around the holidays, but with our businesses as well. So, we're going to be looking at reviewing the past year, figuring out what we want to do in the new year, making decisions on what types of services we're going to offer, what our rates are going to be, and the list goes on and on. And with all of those decisions that need to be made, decision fatigue is a real thing.

Tara Whitaker: [1:22] But regardless of when you're tuning into this episode, this one question is going to be incredibly helpful for your business and your personal decision-making process. And I have to say, the inspiration did come from my daughter (who, at the time, was three), and if you have been any—in any—in the realm of a toddler or in the circle of a three-year-old, you'll know what I'm talking about. But she hit that epic *Why?* phase where every single answer to a question would be: *Why? Why? Why? Why?* And we all know how—let's just say—frustrating that can be. But it was also really helpful because I started applying it to my business, honestly, unknowingly at first because I was so used to hearing *Why?* that it was in my head all the time. So then when I started making other decisions outside of, you know, talking to my daughter, I heard myself asking myself, *Why?* And it was really impactful. And I never thought that, that those two would connect. So that's why I'm sharing this with you today because thank you to my then-toddler daughter.

Tara Whitaker: [2:38] So we're going to talk about why we ask ourselves *Why?* What can asking that question do for us? And then we're going to wrap up by just mentioning how far to take this questioning. So, let's start off with the why of *Why?* Now, as small business owners, entrepreneurs, freelance editors, whatever you identify with, chances are, you've got a lot of ideas. And when we are the CEO, the boss, the head person, it is completely up to us to decide when those ideas are just thoughts, or if they should be acted on, if they are things that we should actually move forward with in our business. And when it's only us, we can very easily get distracted; we can go down a totally different path than what we might have been thinking about. And sometimes that's a good thing, but sometimes it's not.

Tara Whitaker: [3:36] And the lesson is to try and figure out when an idea pops into our head, what we do with it. And there can be a lot of things we do with it. But asking us—asking ourselves *Why?* is that initial filter that we're going to put these ideas through. It's just a way we can help determine—in our current season of business, season of life—if we should move forward with the idea. If we should write it down and save it for another time. Or if we should just scrap it. Maybe it was just a fun, random idea that, you know, just popped in our heads, and it's not something we need to act on.

Tara Whitaker: [4:20] Now, notice that I did say it's the initial filter. So, asking ourselves *Why?* is a great place to start, and it's a great way to start practicing how we can stay intentional with our goals and how we can stay on track. But it is by no means the only way to help guide us with decision-making. So, I don't want you to get confused. This is not an all-encompassing how-to-make-decisions episode. This is just a small piece of the puzzle because we're going to tackle other options, other strategies, other ways of thinking in other episodes. I didn't want to overwhelm you with all the things in just one, so we're breaking it down into small chunks, which is how we roll around here. And we're just going to talk about asking ourselves *Why?*

Tara Whitaker: [5:08] So, here's how we practice. When you think of an idea or think of a decision that needs to be made—doesn't matter if it's business or personal, you decide—you're simply going to ask yourself, *Why?* You're going to be that three-year-old toddler—*Why?* Now, some of these might be very straightforward, and others, you might need to dig down a little bit more. So, I'm going to give you two examples. And these are going to be very simplified, but I'm doing that just for purposes of illustration. Rarely are things cut-and-dried, right? There's always nuances; there's always deeper things to dig into. But for now, we're going to take these two just to give you an idea of how this works. So, let's say you have an idea, and you're like, *Oh, I want to add a new editing service to my business.* Okay. *Why?* *Well, I really want to serve more clients; I want to broaden my client base.* Okay. *Why?* *Well, at the end of the day, this is a business, and I need to make more money.* Okay. *Why?* *I need to pay my rent. I need to pay my mortgage. I have bills. I have food to put on the table.* Okay.

Tara Whitaker: [6:18] So, that's fairly cut-and-dried, right? Nothing else goes into that. However, on the flip side, it could also go something like this, which, in my experience, it usually does. But everybody's different, right? So, let's take the same idea, the same thought, *I want to add a new editing service to my business.* Okay. *Why?* *Well, I'm not getting enough business right now.* Hmm. Okay. *Why not?* And then we can do some digging and some thought processing. And we might come up with *Uhh because I'm not doing anything to promote my business right now.* Mm-hmm. Ah, so it's not actually adding services that's going to help you. It's going deeper and promoting what you actually have on offer right now instead of attempting to throw spaghetti at the wall by adding a new service.

Tara Whitaker: [7:11] Now, again, that was a very quick example, and the TEARA process, which I talked about before, definitely will help going through this. But getting that initial *Why?* can really show some things that you were not expecting. And it's really great. And, of course, some other examples, you know, *I want to start posting on social*

media more. Ask yourself, Why? Or I want to stop posting so much on social media. Why? You get the picture, etc., etc.

Tara Whitaker: [7:45] Now, the important part of this is how far to take it. Because obviously, you can really work yourself into a deep spiral, or a rabbit hole, or run around in circles if you keep asking yourself *Why?* without any end in sight. I mean, you're just going to go bananas. And that's not the point. We don't want that. So, remember that this is just a step in the process. So, if your answers start becoming ridiculous, or you're getting exasperated with yourself, or if you are a caregiver with that toddler and you start saying, *Because I said so*, or just *Because*, those are pretty good indicators that you're done and you need to stop, and the process has taken its trip. It's done. We can move on to different things.

Tara Whitaker: [8:31] So, the next time that a decision comes up, give it a go. Give it a practice. And just ask yourself that simple question *Why?* And you'll maybe be surprised at what you come up with. And again, like I said, we're going to dive into this more later—into different other processes or other strategies to help you with decision-making, especially because we're coming up at the end of the year. But for now, practice and let me know how it goes. I want to know what you ask yourself and what you come up with. So, like I mentioned, practice on your own, but if you do need some extra support, ask a friend, ask a colleague, and you can also always ask me. This is part of business coaching. This is exactly what we can talk about during a coaching session. And I've actually just updated and completely revamped my entire website and all of my offerings. So, if you want to get on the waitlist for 2023 for coaching, go to tarawhitaker.com/coaching. You can learn more about it, or you can book a free 15-minute coaching session with me, and we can talk more about asking that *Why?* question. And maybe you asked yourself, and you came up with something, and you want to dive a little deeper, or you're trying to figure out what the heck you're doing with that *Why?* question, go to tarawhitaker.com/call, and I would love to talk through it with you. So, like I said, this was short, sweet, to the point. Again, let me know how this goes. I would love to hear what that three-year-old toddler question does for your business. And until next time, keep learning, keep growing, and know that you've got this!

Tara Whitaker: [12:42] Thank you so much for tuning into today's episode. If you enjoy *The Modern Editor Podcast*, I would be so grateful if you left us a review over on iTunes. And as always, you can head to tarawhitaker.com to connect with me and stay in touch. We'll chat again soon.