

This is the **DO IT SCARED PODCAST** with Ruth Soukup, **EPISODE #43**. In today's episode we are going to talk about how to stop the downward spiral of comparison and self-doubt.

Hey there, and welcome back to the Do It Scared podcast! 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.

And whether you are new and just finding me through this podcast for the first time, or whether you've known me for a while from Living Well Spending Less or Elite Blog Academy—welcome! My hope is that this is a place where you will find new inspiration and motivation to move past the things that are holding you back so you can create a life you love.

In today's episode, we're going to chat about a topic that I know a lot of people struggle with, including me, and that is dealing with what can often be a downward death spiral of comparison and self-doubt. It happens when we start looking around at the people around us—either on social media or in real life—and we start comparing our own place in the world to theirs, and that in turn makes us start doubting ourselves and our own ability, which then usually leads to more comparison, and before you know it, we are in this ugly loop of comparison and self-doubt that gets us completely stuck and feeling depressed and dejected.

And let's face it—that's not a good place to be. Because then, when we are in that place of feeling bad about ourselves, the world seems darker, and we start to lose our fire and our optimism and our willingness to put ourselves out there in the world, and we lose our courage to step outside of our comfort zone and try new things and go after those big goals and dreams.

But the truly ironic thing is that stepping outside of our comfort zone and doing hard things is actually what helps build our confidence and neutralize those feelings of self-doubt. The more we can face our fears, the stronger we become.

And that's exactly what this podcast is all about!

Because courage doesn't mean we are never afraid. Instead, courage is being scared but taking action anyway, despite our fear. It is putting one foot in front of the other, even when we're not quite sure where the path will lead us.

Okay, so one more quick thing before we dive into all the practical application today's episode—As always, I've got a super practical download that you can grab that will outline all the tips and strategies I'll be sharing with you today. You can get it, along with our shownotes, by visiting DoltScared.com/episode43. Once again, to get the shownotes and the corresponding download for this episode, simply visit DoltScared.com/episode43.

And while I'm handing out instructions, the other thing I want to make sure I do is invite you to follow me on Instagram. It's the place I share daily thoughts and inspiration, and the one social media account that I manage personally, which means it is also the best place to message me directly with your feedback, comments and questions! You can find me at [@RUTHSOUKUP](https://www.instagram.com/RUTHSOUKUP)—that's r-u-t-h-s-o-u-k-u-p.

Okay then, with that out of the way, let's dive in to the heart of today's episode.

Every person can stop the downward spiral of comparison and self-doubt by enlisting X simple but effective strategies.

Several months ago, at the beginning of October, I went to New York for a few days to connect with my Truth Club—Gry, Susie, and Laura. I've talked about them a few times before here on the podcast—in fact I did an entire episode on how to form your Truth Club, which was episode 13 if you missed it. Both Susie and Laura have also been guests here on the podcast—episodes 2 and 26—which you may remember if you've been listening for a while.

But in any case I met with my Truth Club in October, and for three days we talked business strategy and marketing and social media and then we each shared all of our best tips and expertise, and then finally we each took turns being on the hot seat.

Now normally, I like being on the hot seat. After all, it's pretty powerful to have a group of really smart people completely focused on you and your business for an hour. It never ceases to amaze me what sort of ideas and insights can happen during that time.

But this particular hot seat was a little different, because the feedback I got back was not at all what I was hoping to hear. You see, I had asked for some help and ideas for strategizing my upcoming book launch. Basically I wanted to get some good ideas for ways that I could set myself up for a successful launch in May. I wanted to hear their thoughts on how could do a better job of getting the Do It Scared message out there, and get people really fired up for what I think—at least I hope—is a pretty powerful book.

So I asked for help. But the answer I got back made me cringe. Because the consensus was that I needed to do more on social media.

“We think you need to put yourself out there more.” They told me. “You need to be more present. What would happen,” they asked, “if you would focus more time and

attention on social media, and especially on Instagram? Maybe do more live videos and put yourself out there more, and be more engaging. Have you ever really put a concerted effort into social media, and to being SOCIAL on social media?

The thing is, I don't love social media. I do enjoy Instagram, at least more than other platforms, but for the most part, I feel like it can easily turn into a big time suck, a distraction that keeps me away from doing actual work.

So I wasn't super excited about that advice. But I also realized that they were right—I had never really put a concerted effort into growing my social media presence, or especially into engaging on Instagram. What if they had a point? What if being more present on Instagram was really an essential part of getting my book out there? Maybe it really was an important means to the end that I was seeking.

And so I committed to giving Instagram an A+ effort through the end of the year. I would post at least 5 times a week, do more stories, and even do some live videos. Not only that, I would take some Instagram courses and learn everything I could about best practices and increasing engagement and growing my audience.

And friends, let me just tell you, I did in fact dive head first into all things Instagram. I took 3 different courses, did all sorts of research, and started following all sorts of influencers to see what they were doing. I hired a photographer to do a couple of lifestyle photo shoots so I'd have great pictures to use, and I learned how to map out my feed to create a visually cohesive grid. I also started sharing more stories and being more personal with the things that I shared, while at the same time I was representing the most important elements of my brand.

For a while there, Instagram was practically my full time job.

And thing is, there is a lot that I really like about Instagram! I love the visual aspect, but I also love the stories that allow you to be totally spontaneous. I love watching other people's stories, and keeping up on other people's lives. I love connecting with readers and podcast listeners and being able to have those quick fun messages back and forth.

But after a couple of months of immersing myself in the world of social media, I started to notice that I was feeling really down, and not only that, but really bad about myself. I couldn't shake this feeling that I was just a big fat loser, and that I was an imposter, and that everyone else is rocking it—rocking their life, rocking their business, while I just SUCK. And it didn't matter that this feeling had exactly ZERO actual basis in reality—my business was actually on track to have our best year ever, my team was doing awesome, and we were celebrating some really huge wins—but inside I just felt like a loser.

I was totally getting stuck in the death spiral of comparison and self-doubt. The more I saw other people doing and sharing amazing things, the worse I felt about myself, to the point where I just wanted to shut down my whole business and go crawl in a hole

somewhere because I felt so completely inadequate.

And even as I'm saying this out loud, I know that it sounds completely crazy right? And it is crazy. Even I can see that it was crazy, and my husband was also telling me I was being crazy. Objectively, I could see that there were so many things I had to be proud of, and to be feeling good about, and to be excited about in my business, and yet here I was just feeling like this big giant unqualified loser. Everyone else was smarter than me. Everyone else was more successful than me. Everyone else had something special that I didn't have.

And those feelings, even though objectively, anyone could see that they weren't based in reality, were totally and completely real to me. They were my perception, and my perception was my reality.

But I know it's not just me that struggles with this problem, or with this tendency to compare myself to the people I see around me, or to sucked into this death spiral of comparison and self doubt. I think it happens to all of us sometimes.

Your feelings of inadequency might not have anything to do with growing an online business or whether you are rocking it on Instagram. Maybe it's that you're feeling bad about your weight or the way your clothes fit, or your lack of fashion sense, and you keep comparing yourself to your super stylish best friend. Maybe it's that you can't seem to keep your house clean and yet your neighbor's house always looks like it should be in a magazine. Maybe you feel like you're barely holding it together at work, while your co-worker is always the shining star. Maybe your brother or sister is the successful one in the family and you feel like you'll never measure up.

And the thing is, I bet anyone who knows and loves you could easily list a dozen attributes that make you amazing, but all you feel is inadequate, and all you see are all the ways that you don't measure up.

Believe me, I get it.

I know just what a horrible place it is to be, stuck in the middle of that downward spiral of comparison and self-doubt, and to be unable to break free, and to feel that weight of inadequacy and insecurity just pressing down on you.

I know what it's like, but thankfully I've also experienced it enough times in my life that I now also have developed some good coping skills, and some practical strategies for breaking free and getting back on track.

And so that's what I want to talk about today.

STRATEGY 1: TALK ABOUT IT

The first strategy is to stop letting all those feelings just well up inside, and to actually talk about it. This might mean talking to a friend or to your spouse, or maybe even to

a professional.

But talking about it with someone—maybe even multiple someones—is important for a couple of reasons.

First, it gives you a much-needed perspective that is different from the very warped perspective that is happening inside your own head. In your own head, what you see is often a completely distorted version of the truth, a world where everyone else is better and smarter and prettier and skinnier and more successful than you. But getting another perspective can help you see what is ACTUALLY reality—that nothing is all good or all bad for any one person, including you.

Second, just talking about what’s going on inside your head can actually help alleviate those feelings of inadequacy. Author Brene Brown says that when we name our shame, we take away its power, and that’s kind of how it works here too.

When we start admitting the way we are feeling—those feelings of insecurity and self-doubt, we can actually take away the power they have over us.

I know that was definitely the case for me recently when I finally sat down with a friend and shared how I was feeling—she gave me the much needed perspective that I had been lacking (though to his credit, my husband did try!) but I also just felt better admitting it out loud. I don’t think up to that moment I had even fully realized myself what was going on, but talking about it, and actually verbalizing my feelings made me feel so much better.

So that is strategy number one—talk about it.

STRATEGY 2: TAKE ACTION

The second strategy for breaking free of that downward spiral is to take some sort of action in the right direction—EVEN WHEN YOU DON’T FEEL LIKE IT.

In fact, taking action is probably the last thing on earth you want to do, because you are feeling so self-critical and inadequate, and so full of self-doubt. But I guarantee that taking action—any action, however small—is the quickest way to overcome your self-doubt, because action is the antidote to fear.

If you are feeling down on yourself because of the way you look, then sign up for a gym membership, or for a personal training session, or for weight watchers. If you’re frustrated at your lack of organization or the fact that your house doesn’t look like a showroom, start by cleaning out your closet or making your bed. Do something small. And then do another small thing.

Before you know it, those small things will turn into slightly bigger things, and then even bigger things.

So get moving. Do something. Take even the smallest step in the right direction, and let that step in the right direction be the motivation to take the next step, and then the next step after that. Do it even if you don't feel ready. Do it even if you don't feel capable. Do it even if you're terrified.

Do it scared.

And that's strategy #2—take action.

STRATEGY 3: PUT YOUR BLINDERS ON

The third strategy is to put your blinders on. Because if you are struggling with comparing yourself to the people around you, and if that comparison is leaving you paralyzed, then it is time to STOP LOOKING.

The thing is, taking action and following through, without allowing yourself to be distracted by comparison, is always the hard part. Because let's be real here--it is downright scary to put your faith in a plan that might not work. But the secret to success that so many people never realize is that as long as you keep those small steps in one direction, you will get there eventually.

The problem for most people is not that they chose the wrong path; instead, the problem for most people is that they keep leaping from path to path, every time they hear a new idea, or get swayed by what someone else is doing. And so rather than create momentum in one direction, they end up spinning around in circles or moving back and forth, never actually getting anywhere.

Regardless of what you're aiming for, the pattern is almost always the same when it comes to big goals. There's that first initial period of enthusiasm and energy—the part that feels all exciting and new. This is the part where you feel almost supercharged, like nothing can stand in your way. It's that initial burst of adrenaline that comes from stepping outside your comfort zone. It feels exhilarating.

But it never lasts.

Because, you see, next comes the messy middle—the part where it gets real, and perhaps even painful. This is where the hard work happens, and it is the part that is often messy and frustrating and exhausting—but also totally necessary.

And because it is hard and because it is painful, this is also where people start looking around for something that feels easier or more fun and exciting. They compare where they are at right now—their messy middle—to someone else who has already done the work and made it to the other side, or to someone who is in that first stage of energy and enthusiasm, and they want to go back there.

Even if it means starting over with something new, and never actually getting anywhere. And so many people who start comparing themselves to others get stuck

or frustrated in the messy middle and then decide to just keep starting over, again and again and again.

Don't let that be you.

Once you've got your goal in front of you, put your blinders on. Stop looking around, and stop comparing. Unfollow the people on social media who bring out those feelings, or stop spending time with those type of people in real life. Surround yourself with messages that uplift you and build you up, not make you feel like you can't keep up.

At the same time, trust the process and understand that it is supposed to be hard, and you are supposed to feel inadequate and insecure sometimes. If it were easy, everyone would be doing it.

So that's our third strategy—put your blinders on.

STRATEGY 4: CHANGE THE SCRIPT

Have you ever heard of limiting belief?

I talked about limiting beliefs in episode 3 but if you missed that one, it is basically a thought or belief that holds you back from achieving your full potential. In other words, it is that little voice in the back of your head that tells you that you can't.

We all have that voice.

It might be telling us we don't deserve to ask for that raise, or it could be saying we aren't as talented or witty or well-spoken as the people around us. It might be whispering things such as, "You're not a good mom," or "You're a terrible housekeeper," or "You'll never get organized," or "You totally suck at math." It could be a voice that's telling us we'll never make a lot of money, or saying we're not smart enough to be successful. It could be telling us we are too busy to go after our big goals and dreams, or that we don't have time to read or learn or do something for ourselves.

That voice might be warning us not to try new things or take a risk because we might fail. Or the warning might be that we don't want to reach out and ask for help because we might get rejected. It could be telling us not to put 100 percent of our energy and efforts into pursuing our dreams because we're not sure what the people around us will say. "What if they don't understand," it whispers, "or what if they make fun of me?"

Whatever your voice is saying, and whatever your limiting beliefs may be, I guarantee they are there. And while we can't always stop those limiting beliefs from popping up or that voice from whispering in our ear, we can refuse to listen to those words!

The reason our limiting beliefs have so much power over us is because we don't actually realize that what we are hearing inside of our head isn't necessarily based on

truth, but based on fear.

We just assume that the message we are hearing—the voice, the thought, the limiting belief—is our reality, when the truth is that it is nothing more than just that—a voice or a thought or a limiting belief. Just because the voice in our head is telling us something is true, doesn't mean it actually is true. In fact often—almost always, I would dare to say—it's not at all true.

It's just a thought.

But when we name the fear that is behind the limiting belief or the voice in our head, once we've recognized a limiting belief for what it is—just a thought that is holding us back—we can take away the power it has over us and move past it. That's when we can say, "That voice in my head is telling me I'm not smart enough to be successful, but really it's that I'm afraid of making a mistake. But even smart people make mistakes, and that is how they learn."

It's called changing the script.

You know—that self-talk message that is stuck playing in your head on repeat, over and over again. The one that keeps telling you you're not good enough, or smart enough, or pretty enough, or that you'll never succeed, or that you'll never get organized or that you can't write or that you shouldn't even bother trying.

It's the script that keeps telling you that you can't.

If you want to stop listening to that message, then you need to figure out some way of replacing it with a new message.

Think about it. If the self-talk that is currently going on in your head is programming your brain to believe things about yourself that are untrue, then the best way to reprogram your brain is to start replacing those negative self-talk messages with something new. Something that actually is true.

We have to start changing the message that is being played into something that is not so self-defeating.

And this doesn't mean telling ourselves lies or things that we know aren't true, but instead taking whatever message is currently playing, and reframe it in a different, more positive, but very specific way. And it needs to be scripted with honesty, so that you can reset your truth and actually begin to internalize and believe the new message.

Change the script and you will change your outlook, guaranteed.

And that is strategy #4.

STRATEGY 5: PRACTICE GRATITUDE

But, of course, when it comes to stopping that downward spiral of comparison and self doubt, there's one more essential technique that can make a tremendous difference, no matter what stage of the journey we happen to be in.

It's practicing gratitude.

There is nothing more humbling or perspective-giving than taking the time to think about the things you are grateful for.

In our everyday lives, comparison almost always leads to discontentment—this feeling that what we have, or what we've accomplished, or where we are at right now isn't good enough. And while not all discontentment is bad—sometimes we need that gentle nudge to encourage us to face our fears or make a change—the angst that comes from feeling that what we have is lacking in comparison to someone else is not generally a good thing.

But gratitude turns that all around.

Instead of focusing on what we don't have, we focus on what we do have. Instead of beating ourselves up for what we haven't yet accomplished, we celebrate the little milestones along the way. Instead of only looking forward to what still on the horizon, we also look back to acknowledge how far we've come.

We can't always control what happens to us, or how other people treat us. But we do have control over how we decide to respond. And practicing a continual attitude of gratitude is the best way to avoid the victim mentality, and to stop feeling like everyone else somehow has got it better than we do.

And just like courage is a muscle that gets stronger every time you exercise it, so it is with gratitude—the more you practice it, the easier and more naturally it comes, until it is just a part of you.

And you can do this in SO many super simple ways. Keep a gratitude journal or just make a habit of recording your wins. You could institute a family dinner tradition or use a gratitude app, or just make it a point to always acknowledge kindness whenever you see it. It's not hard. But it is SO powerful.

But the BEST part about practicing gratitude? It's pretty much instant happiness. Because it is pretty much impossible to feel discontentment or insecurity or self doubt when you are focused on the things that you are grateful for.

Creating a life you LOVE starts with appreciating the life you have.

The trap of comparison and self-doubt is a downward spiral that I am all too familiar with, and I have been there more times than I would care to admit. But through the years I've

also learned how to overcome those feelings of inadequacy and insecurity by applying a few practical strategies. The first is to talk about it. Being honest with someone you trust about how you are feeling helps to bring a new perspective, as well as remove the shame. The second strategy is to take action. Action is the antidote to fear, and sometimes you just have to do it scared. The third strategy is to put your blinders on. If you feel like you don't measure up, stop looking! Fourth, change the script that is playing in your head. Stop letting that little voice whisper lies, and instead create a new truth. Finally, practice gratitude. It's the one thing that will change everything almost instantly.

Okay, so don't forget that if you would like the worksheet that goes along with this podcast—that will walk you through the steps I shared and also include links to the resources I talked about, you can get it, along with our show notes, at doitscared.com/episode45. Once again, that's **doitscared.com/episode45**.

Before we go, I just want to say, as always, that I LOVE hearing from you! 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, please feel free to reach out, either via email or just by messaging me on Instagram.

And that about does it for this episode of the Do It Scared with Ruth Soukup podcast! Thank you so much for joining me today! If you liked what you heard, you can leave a review on iTunes, or, better yet, share this episode on your Insta story and tag me to let me know! If I repost your story, we'll send you a do it scared t-shirt just for fun!

Also, be sure to subscribe, either on iTunes or Stitcher or wherever you like to listen, to be notified of new episodes!

And speaking of upcoming episodes, be sure to join me next week as we chat with blogger, depression survivor and mental health guru Faith Hawks about finding the courage to manage anxiety and depression and still kick some serious butt on a daily basis. Faith has such a great story to share, and one that offers so much hope and encouragement for anyone who struggles with depression or anxiety!

I'll catch you then!