

E52 - How the Empowered Edupreneur was born.

Welcome to The Empowered Edupreneur Podcast. My name is Michelle Smit, and I am an ex-teacher turned online business coach for Edupreneurs, the owner of Digiteach and a six-figure entrepreneur. I am in love with empowering educators, just like you to create freedom filled online businesses and lives they love.

If you are looking to uplevel your skills, your finances, your mindset, and change the trajectory of your life as an educator. Then you are in the right place. Think of this podcast as your weekly dose of business and mindset development to help unlock the infinite potential within you to play bigger with your life and go after your dreams.

We are going to have so much fun together. So thank you so much for pushing play today. Now let's dive in.

Hello. Hello. Welcome back to my podcast and woohoo, today is the day that we are celebrating the one-year anniversary and birthday of The Empowered Edupreneur Podcast and I am so freaking excited and I'm so freaking proud and I know I've been talking about it for a couple episodes but really, it's been a year.

It has been a time and I am just so happy and proud, I just feel so good about this podcast and that I have been able to do this for a year straight and been giving you an episode every week and just maintaining that consistency. And this podcast has actually meant a lot to me.

And so, this is what I want to chat with you about today is how this podcast came to be, why it was birthed in the world and what was the catalyst and all of that. It's basically the origin story of the podcast. And so I did have an episode about this like a year ago, but I feel like it's been a year and when you reflect back and you look in hindsight, you see so much more.

Like a year ago, I was still in the thick of a lot of stuff. And I mean, it was just a rough time. And so now I've progressed a year and I can just look in hindsight and see a lot more and see just how amazingly valuable and transformational

and healing this podcast has actually been for me. And so there is a bit of a trigger warning because I am going to speak about death in this episode.

So just FYI, it's not going to be a super dark episode or anything. It's not fully about that, but it is going to be mentioned. Just wanted to let you know. So let's go into that. Let's go into the origin story of the Empowered Edupreneur. Why did I start this podcast? Why have I been delivering?

Episodes every week for a whole year just out of the blue. I think I'm just going to start with the real catalyst for the change and for the thing that really rocked my world and changed my life. Last year in on March 28th. One of my worst nightmares came true and my dad died, and it was a very Sudden and crazy thing.

But it was one of those situations where you are talking to them 15 minutes and then 15 minutes later, they pass away. And it was just absolutely devastating would be the word like devastating. And it came out of the blue. I mean, he was in hospital, but it was still very sudden and completely random and didn't make any sense at all how it happened.

And so, very shocking, very traumatizing, just fracturing of the soul is what I would like to say. Just cracking you open, basically. And before that, I had just come out of one of my best launches ever. I mean, we made \$69,000 and it was just a magical launch.

And I had this whole year planned out and I had my launches planned out. I had these big goals. I had this fiery ambition. I was like, this is what we're going to create this year. This is how we're going to do it. It was all laid out and just, I was in the six-month coaching container. It was a very. Full on and expansive, it kept me very activated, and I was very activated and just ready to take on the world, man.

I was driven and ambitious and hungry. And then, my world turns upside down in a split second. And, I mean, after that phone call, because I live in the Netherlands, and my family live in South Africa, so it really is the worst, your worst kind of nightmare phone call. But after that, nothing was ever the same again.

It was that moment, and then, everything was different. And I went through such a dark period of life of my life, and it was just absolute grief. It was just no

creativity, no ambition, dark thoughts, anxiety, sleeplessness fatigue, like chronic fatigue, the exhaustion was just unreal, and the physical pain was just on another level.

And so and the things that would bring me joy, no real, no longer brought me joy. And meant anything. It just felt very empty. And as I said, I felt my soul and my spirit was fractured. It was cracked and I felt very broken inside.

And it was the first time I'd ever, ever felt that way. So I'm very. And I'm thankful that I've lived a life up until I was 30 where I didn't have to face loss and grief and things like that. Very, very grateful. I know many people aren't as lucky. But it was the first big profound loss that I had really experienced.

And so, basically, I just could not recognize myself. So that's the thing. After this event, I just couldn't recognize myself. I couldn't relate to myself. I just was like, who am I? It was a whole existential crisis. My beliefs were completely broken down. So I had all these beliefs that, in that moment, just crushed. The beliefs did not stand a chance.

I had this belief, just be positive and positive things will happen, which I now see as total toxic positivity as I've changed and grown. And I also believe that everything happens for a reason and so it was just a lot of things like that that were just crushed, and I was very naive, and I was a little bit like, I don't know, undamaged or not damaged from life at that point.

And then this thing happened, which just crushed all of those beliefs and made me very much like, I don't believe any of that to be true. And foundational things, I just no longer believed anymore. And I'd lost trust in so much. I just did not trust anything. I thought life, we were living in a rigged, which I do sometimes think that we're living in a simulation, and it's rigged and what is this life?

Just questioning all these big questions that came and just nothing made sense. Right? And just thought that there was no real light at the end of the tunnel. Let's say that. And I just thought we're all inevitably heading one way and that's getting older, and it wasn't a great time. It was a dark time, I had dark beliefs, it wasn't a vibe and that's where I was. That's what happened, I had the best launch ever, then this thing happens, my life changes, I go down into an empty dark hole, basically, rightfully so. I mean, what else are you to do going through such a loss?

But I mean thankfully my gosh, thankfully at the time my business model really supported me through that, So I ended up taking months and months and months off. So I did launch I just made it through a launch. It was very rough, but I made it through launch and then I literally stopped actively working for many months.

I think I took about five months off overall, and I didn't, I did the bare minimum. So obviously when you have a business, you can't do nothing, but I did the bare minimum. So I would send. I think an email once a week and I stopped Instagram. I took months off Instagram. I just delivered my programs.

I coached the people who I was already coaching. I didn't market myself. I didn't try grow the business. There was nothing right. I was in this maintenance mode or what I would call at the time survival mode. And I'm so thankful I could financially do all of this because with this online course-based business model that I have, that my business is built upon, it does not rely on me doing one on one sessions for income.

I run courses and I run group programs and I have big cohorts and I have launches and I have people buying digital products, but it isn't connected to my time. And so that was a real blessing. So I could really, I had the financial capacity to take months off. And so that was incredible. But anyways, back to the story.

In this period of time, I really wanted to quit my business. And I make jokes about this all the time. Are you even an entrepreneur, if you don't want to quit your business once a month? But this was the first time I ever really honestly thought about quitting. I always made jokes about it, but this time I was like, I literally do not want to have a business anymore.

It was the first time that I can really remember wishing for having a normal nine to five jobs where people could just tell me what to do and I just do it and I didn't have to activate myself. I didn't have to come up with the thing. I didn't have to be the one to create.

Or whatever. It's just, someone says, go do this thing. And then I go do the thing. I just do the work. And I have so many memories of just thinking about that. And that's the thing about having your own business, especially if you're going through grief. Or just dark times. The tough thing is the motivation in

business to actually do the things, to be the activated, to be the one who creates, who creates momentum.

You have to be able to create the momentum. You have to move things from zero to nothing. You have to take a concept in your mind, and you have to create it and bring it out into the world. That is a very activating, creative energy that you need. If you are going through grief and darkness, you don't have that energy.

So I couldn't bring myself to do the things I just didn't care. I didn't have the drive and I didn't really care for the money either. And although, I mean, if I look back, I did very well considering, because I even launched in that time, but I just really felt empty inside at the end of it.

At that point, I wanted someone else to make the decisions for me. I wanted an easy thing, easy job, no pressure. I didn't have to make money. I didn't have to do anything. I just went to the job, sat in front of my computer and mindlessly stared at my computer for eight hours straight.

And then I came home. That's what I wanted. And obviously that was not real. Because I was in a very traumatized, broken place. That wasn't real. It's not really what I wanted. It's just I was not in a resourced space at all. And I remember even thinking, oh, I would rather work at McDonald's right now.

How simple life can be to just go and work at McDonald's and just go home and just be done and not have to think about anything. Now that is a crazy thought. Obviously, When I think about that, it's wild, but I did. I had all sorts of crazy thoughts, dark thoughts, and I really even went as far as looking at exit routes.

What could I do? It was a time, okay. And what the hell do you do when you have a big life event that shakes you to your core, changes you as a person, destroys all your drive and ambition, and then you actually have a business to run. So that's the thing.

When you have your own business. You are the, you are the person that is meant to run it, you are driving that ship, you are the activator, you are the creator. No one is saving you, right? So this is firstly, this was the first time in my life where I truly saw the absolute necessity of your business model guys do not screw around with this.

Make sure that if you are building a business, that you're building a business within a business model that can support you when the shit hits the fan. Okay. That means if you are trading your time for money. You've got to change that and find other ways of earning because life happens and it just, it happens, things happen, things will get rough.

It is inevitable. That is just the way it is. And you need to still be able to have a business that you don't have to actively work in all the time but can still make you money. So it has a passive aspect to it or a semi passive act aspect to it. Now online courses and group programs are the way forward for that and that is why I'm such a fan of this business model and I was a fan ever since I started, but especially after this life event of mine, my business supported me for months in the time where I needed it most.

It gave me all this time to be able to heal myself and come back to myself and rest and stuff. And that's not what a job you'll probably get what a couple of days off or a couple of weeks off maybe. But in my business, I had months off, and it allowed me to have months off.

And so, that is just something I want to side note there. Is your business model able to support you when shit hits the fan? If not, you may want to consider adding in a product like a course or something of that sort or a group program to maybe move away from that trading your time for money model and moving towards a more scalable model that you can sort of automate and get a bit more semi passive income through as well.

Anyways, so back to the story. After months off. I remember needing to get away into nature and I just wanted to be at the sea. So that is my happy place. It's very healing for me to be in water and around water.

I love water I'm like a fish. I just love it. I used to be a very good swimmer. I am still a very good swimmer I should just live in water basically. But what happened is we, me and Mike booked two weeks to Portugal because we want to move to Portugal, but we've never been to Portugal, but we just have this feeling that Portugal is the place for us.

And so we booked two weeks to Portugal. So we can try it on for size, feel the vibe there, see how we like it. And also for me to just go and be in nature. And up until this point I think it had been a good couple of months, I had been

doing a lot of art, I had been sleeping, I had been working, very, processing my grief, doing a lot of journaling, writing lots of different modalities, just did a couple of calls with people. And then eventually went to Portugal, and then after being in nature, and that was so beautiful.

I remember just having this Airbnb looking over the ocean and just feeling of connectedness, which was something that I hadn't felt for a long time. And that's the magic of being in nature is there is this feeling of connectedness, especially if someone has passed on, you just feel the energy and presence more in nature.

And I was just there, and I was sitting on the balcony with my laptop on my lap. I was looking at the ocean and I just had this big moment and feeling of I want to launch a podcast. I always thought about podcasting, but for various reasons I never did. And one of the reasons was it was a big commitment.

I felt I didn't have the capacity for the commitment. So that was fine. I was growing the business. I didn't have enough time and energy to do the podcast, which was fine. But the other feeling, there was this weird belief of not being good enough to have a podcast and that no one would really care what I have to say. Which is totally what your brain will tell you, some crazy thoughts that happen. Just irrational, weird thoughts, but that is something that I didn't feel like I had the authority to have a podcast for some reason.

But anyways, I knew that I wanted a podcast, but I just didn't know when and how, and I just didn't feel ready for it. But when I was sitting in Portugal on this balcony looking at the ocean, I remember saying to Mike, I want to launch a podcast. And really it was the first time I'd ever felt any form of creativity in months.

I actually felt energy for something and that something was a form of creation, I hadn't felt creative in so many months. And it was just amazing what happened. I remember sitting down, same balcony with the view of the ocean. And I had my computer in front of me and I just brainstormed podcast episodes.

And that was the first thing I did. I was like, okay, if I'm going to have a podcast, what can I talk about it? What can I talk in it? And then I sat down, and brainstormed episodes and I wrote out over 200 topics in less than an hour. And it just poured out of me, the ultimate flow state.

It just literally poured out of me with absolute ease. And then I also set out the whole launch game plan for the podcast. Like exactly what we needed to do when and the sort of order. And I didn't really know, I had to actually buy a program. I did a little bit later on how to launch. Just to give me a little bit more details of that.

Because I'd never launched a podcast, so I needed to know what to do, right? When in doubt, just buy a course to teach you what to do. That's what I do all the time. And I said it all out and as always, Mike was game for it. He's always game for my ideas and always, he's like a yes man, which is great.

And then we got back to the Netherlands and just like that we launched The Empowered Edupreneur Podcast, and it was within the timeline we wanted. We created all the assets for it. We got our podcast jingle made professionally. I mapped out the vision and the brand for it and what I wanted it to do and mean and who I wanted it to be for.

I created all the images, mapped out the episodes, bought all the equipment. It all just happened in this big burst, and it just flowed. It was so meant to be, it was just this divinely created thing, there was no resistance. I didn't feel any resistance. It just happened.

And it happened with clarity and direction and certainty and all these feelings. And there's only one other time that I've experienced this magical ease and flow with creation. And it was when I built the Digiteachers Biz Academy, my signature business program, which is my baby. And that offer honestly just flowed out of me like this incredible divinely channelled thing.

It just came and it just flowed, and it just was meant to be. And there was just this ease and certainty with it. I knew that it was going to be something that I was going to have in my life for many, many years. I was in it for the long game. And the same happened with this podcast. And I don't often have that experience.

And so what happened is this podcast was born out of the darkest and roughest time of my life. And not only did it help me find my way back to myself, but it helped me find my way back to my business. So it allowed me to be creative again. Allowed me to share meaningful conversation with my

audience, which for me was actually a huge catalyst for actually staying in business.

It brought me back. It brought me back to joy in my business because I felt meaning again and purpose again. Because that's what was missing. I was lacking meaning. I was lacking purpose. I was lacking, obviously I was in grief. Which is what you have to just go through it. You can't do anything to speed it up.

You just have to sit in it and be in it and move through it. It is just what it is. But there was a point in my business where I just felt it was not deep enough for me, it wasn't going where I needed it to go. I wasn't affecting people or impacting people in a way that I wanted to impact them. I was doing Instagram and for me, that was quite superficial, and I could really not have meaningful conversation there.

It just felt superficial. And that was affecting my joy in the business. And without that, I just felt very difficult to want to continue, right? And so, the podcast gave me so much life. Life that I actually needed to keep going. And this podcast was really, I believe a turning point in my business because it took me away from thoughts of quitting.

And it led me into becoming a much more authentic version of myself. The conversations and what I share in the podcast is something that I don't talk about anywhere else, really. It's a different place for people to hear from me and hear different things from me than what I would probably share on Instagram.

Because Instagram, you only have a certain number of characters and then you have to capture attention and hook them in and this and that, there's all this stuff. And I just felt like you can't really get deep there. There's no depth. I struggled to get depth there.

And that I felt was my primary content form. And I needed depth, I needed depth, I needed meaning and this podcast gave me that and what a gift that has been. It really, really helped me heal in some ways, it helped me rediscover my voice as a business coach. But not only that it helped me realize that my business and all the stuff that we do in business is actually so much deeper than just making money it goes so far beyond that because I can tell you,

obviously money is magical and I'm so grateful for having money because I was able to take months off my business. I needed that money.

Otherwise, I wouldn't have been able to get to a place where I could come back to myself. I needed that time. So money is absolutely incredible and essential, but what happens when you've made all the money and you can't be driven by that? Or what happens when life throws you a huge span and you experience grief and money just has no meaning.

And so you're no longer driven by money. And so. The act of business is to make money, but if you are not driven by money, it's very hard to move yourself into an activated space where you can actually create and bring things into life and do stuff and take action. It's just so difficult when you aren't driven by money.

And what happens when the shit hits the fan and you realize that you don't have any meaning in the work that you do, or you can't see the meaning at least. And that's the thing. That's when you really need to dig deep and you. You have to find the meaning or you have to create the meaning yourself in your business and if your business doesn't have a deeper meaning than just making money because Making money is, not saying it's not deep, but at the core of our hearts and our humanness, making money isn't at the core.

Of course we need it to live the life we want to live, and we need it to be able to impact other people, and it is something we need because we live in a world where money is what we exchange. But on a deep level, it doesn't bring you the purpose that I think we need or that we crave, is meaning and purpose.

Money isn't going to give you meaning and purpose. And so when the shit gets rough, and you've just based everything on just making money, you're going to have a tough time staying the course. And for me, The Empowered Edupreneur Podcast was an act of making meaning in a time that needed meaning.

I think it's normal to lose meaning in grief. I don't think it was anything wrong with my business. I think my business had a lot of meaning. I was impacting loads of people already. And I felt a lot of meaning, but obviously when you have a loss, you get shaken to your core and things change, and I had just lost the meaning.

And the podcast brought it back. So the podcast was an act of service to others primarily. There's no money being made from the podcast. I don't make money off the podcast. I don't have sponsored ads and things like that at the moment, at least. It's not with the goal of making money, although the podcast is going to have a huge return on investment for my business long-term, there is strategy.

It is a form of content strategy that I'm using obviously. But it's not like I get immediate reward from it, from making money. There's nothing to do with it. So literally, this podcast is of service to you and to the people who are listening to it. It was birthed from a place to serve you and with a place, from a place of desire to truly connect, truly share, truly be seen and heard and understood and to really change people's lives in some shape or form.

Now, I hope it does that. I get amazing messages from people who really love the podcast and that's really makes my day. But that's where it was birthed from. It was from a place of creating meaning and really of service, because if you can be of service to other people, that's what brings you meaning. To help someone else is to help yourself, right?

And that's what this podcast has been. And as I said, Instagram doesn't really cut it for me. Yes, I use it. But I can feel like it can be a little bit hard to get deep there and it's not real life. Instagram is all these fake curated feeds and all this positivity stuff when no one talks about anything.

Well, a lot of people don't talk about a lot of real stuff. But podcasting for me was different. And it opens me up to having deeper conversations with people and allows me to really connect in a deep way and be myself because I am actually a deep person. I like having meaningful conversation. And I was lacking that in my business.

And although I'm not talking face to face with you, I know that some of you listening right now will resonate and you will feel this message of this episode and you will, it will feel like we had a meaningful conversation, and you will walk away. Feeling some way, hopefully feeling inspired or feeling something shifts in you. This is what these episodes can do.

You just listen to the episode and maybe that creates an aha moment. And you have this amazing shift, or you have a burst of clarity, or you have this connected feeling that you maybe are craving in this business world, whatever

it is, and that is why I love podcasting and that is why. The Empowered Edupreneur Podcast was born.

And that is why I have been able to maintain an episode each week because it has been. Such a joyful thing for me to find myself again and to find my voice and to be more myself in this, in this modality of content. And I don't just want to help educators reclaim their power and take up space and start businesses and make bucket loads of money.

But I want them to be seen and understood and heard and truly inspired to be who they want to be, unapologetically in whatever shape that looks for you. And I want to help create meaning for them as well. So, I really think we need meaning and when we can live a life of true meaning and be ourselves and shine our light even lighter and take up space, then we can change the world in some way.

And I really think there is no greater magic than that. And so, that is the origin story. I mean, it literally was birthed out of what felt like nothing. And look what has emerged. If I look at all the episodes and I reflect back on all the episodes, it's pretty amazing how it just happened and was just channelled and just had had to come through and, what a joy.

And I'm so grateful for did you teach and the business I've built at this point in my life, so much gratitude. And I'm so grateful for the incredible people I've met online, through my business. So grateful for the thousands of students who bought my courses online and worked with me in some capacity. So grateful for all my DBA students and my coaching clients and all the amazing relationships.

I've developed in through this business And I'm so grateful for this podcast for bringing me back home to myself now. I am still a changed person. I'm not the same person as I was before this loss in this event. I will never be the same life will never be the same. But I have navigated this new way of being and I can say that I do feel more myself and more settled now in this new way that life looks. And in this new way of being.

And I really feel that this podcast just helped me week by week to get there somehow. Just to reclaim myself as a business coach and remind myself why I'm even doing this work and to create meaning again in the work that I do. And to find meaning in a time when there was no meaning and there was just

nothingness. And really it just is it makes me emotional even just thinking about it because holy shit. What a year it has been. What a year it has been.

And no, it wasn't the year that I wanted and it wasn't the year where I hit all my ambitious goals and I didn't break through my income ceiling that, not income ceiling, didn't break through my income goals and do all the things that I set myself out to do but a lot of other good stuff came and it isn't related to money at all. But so many wins, so many wins and so many magical things to celebrate.

And I feel this podcast has helped me so much to do that. And you guys honestly. Just being there and listening you and sending me messages and telling me how you How you're loving it and how it's helping you and how it's impacting you that is what keeps me going guys I'm not lying. That is what keeps me doing this thing because I'm doing it for that reason.

It's a ritual for me. Like I'm talking now, but I'm thinking about talking to you. And it's this amazing way that I can channel what I need to share, and you can hear it and you will hear it at the right moment at the right time. And it will help you. And isn't that fricking amazing.

I love that when people are listening to episodes and they're like, oh my gosh, I needed to hear this so badly right now. This is what I needed. And then they can make a shift or a change or take action and do whatever they need to do after listening. That is amazing. And that's the ripple effect I believe of this podcast.

And I believe it's going to continue just growing and getting bigger and having more impact. And I'm just so fricking happy that I started this. I should have started it sooner. But that's it. There are probably so many lessons that you can extract from the story.

I'm not going to share those lessons with you. I feel you can just extract whatever you need to extract out of this as whatever you need. And there is a podcast episode a year ago when I started the podcast, I think around this. And it would be so interesting to go listen to that I should probably go listen to that and then listen to this and see how much has changed. But I felt, after a year of being here and connecting with you, I thought, let's go back to that origin story because so much has evolved.

And when you look back in hindsight, you just see so much better than when you're in the thick of stuff. And I feel I'm out of the thick of it and I'm looking back, which is pretty epic. So maybe this will give you whatever you needed it to give you. On this day when you're listening to it. I hope it was inspiring in some way, or it just helped you in some way know that eventually the darkness does evolve into light.

And after every sunset, there is a sunrise. And after every storm, there is sunshine. At the end of every tunnel, there is some light coming. I needed to know that. And I think many people do need to know that and just be reminded of that. And that's just what I wanted to share with you. And I'm so stoked about this being the year birthday.

And I'm going to do a fun giveaway because of this celebration. Okay, so podcast giveaway for the year birthday. I'm going to share with you now. I'll also post it on Instagram. But basically, I would love it for you to share your favourite podcast episode of The Empowered Edupreneur on your Instagram, you can share it in your stories, or you can post it on your grid whatever you want but share your favourite episodes.

So you can screenshot it and then share it. And on that, I want you to share your big aha moment or the thing that you love about the podcast or how it's helped you or anything like that. Share that on that post and then make sure to tag me @_digiteach_ and then as soon as you do that, I will see it and then I will enter you into the draw.

And once you do that, someone will eventually win. A free one on one 60-minute business coaching call with me valued at 350 euros and we can work on whatever you need worked on in your business. Or even if you haven't started your business and you want to launch a course, we can work on that, and I can help you get there faster.

And I get some clarity at least. And so that's it. All you need to do is share your favourite podcast episode on your Instagram by screenshotting and sharing share a big aha moment or thing you loved about the podcast and then tag me @_digiteach_ and then you'll enter the draw, and you can win that coaching call. So that's super fun. I would so appreciate it. And I hope you have an amazing rest of your day, and I will chat to you again next week.

Thank you so much for listening to today's episode in celebration of the first birthday of The Empowered Edupreneur Podcast, I am doing a fun giveaway.

If you do these three things, you will enter a draw to win a one on one 60-minute business coaching session with me worth 350 euros. All you've got to do to enter is number one: screenshot and share one of your favourite episodes in your Instagram stories. Number two: tell me why you love the podcast or even share an aha moment that you've had with it.

And number three: tag me @_digiteach_ and one other friend who would enjoy or be interested in the podcast. And that is it. I will announce the lucky winner in a few short weeks.

I appreciate you so much and I can't wait to connect with you in the next episode. In the meantime, go create a business and life you love.