

The  
Emotional  
Leadership  
Podcast

EPISODE 13

# The Big Results Formula

## FULL EPISODE TRANSCRIPT

Good morning, I am so happy to be here with you on the podcast today.

This episode and the few after it are going to be a little different. Instead of interviewing a guest, I'm going to take you a little more in depth on some of the fundamental concepts I've been talking about over the previous few episodes.

But don't fear, you'll still have an opportunity to hear from other fabulous leaders as I'm also going to be releasing some bonus episodes focused around specific management tools.

Life for me has been really fun recently. I had some coaching calls with some really great leaders and listening to their questions and their concerns about their leadership. It made me realize that most of us have a definition of leadership where we're thinking about how we can create everybody else doing exactly what we want them to every time, every moment of every day. So that we don't have to feel negative things. So that we don't have to feel inconvenienced. So that we don't have to feel frustrated. So we don't have to feel self doubt.

I'm super excited a few weeks from now to start bringing you more on that topic. I'm working on a brand new coaching program that I think will really address what sustainable leadership looks like. I am so excited about it. And as I said, I can't wait to be bringing that content to you here.

Today, we're talking about The Big Results Formula.

I introduced it in Episode One, and it has three parts: create clear vision, stop distracting yourself, and plan and take massive action.

Before we dive into each part, I want to start by reminding you that big results really come from a series of

small steps.

I spent years exhausting myself trying to create new habits and often never quite succeeding at them. Most of that was because I made the mistake of thinking that big results and massive action meant that I had to take big individual steps to get there. The rest was because I thought I could beat myself up into being a good enough person, a good enough leader, a good enough friend, a good enough daughter.

Every time I identified a new way I should be better, I put a huge plan into motion to accomplish it. I block out every moment of my calendar with the actions I thought I had to take to be good enough in the world now that this new opportunity to improve had occurred to me. It was completely exhausting and I wasn't hitting most of those goals. I'd stay on track for a few days or maybe a few weeks and then I'd find some other flaw of mine to focus on or get tired of the exhaustive action. Those actions I was taking to try to be good enough and I decided that I needed a rest.

The brain that made me really good at designing computer systems, and creating clear structure, and lots of rules. It was making me really terrible at my own growth. So I looked for a new way because that's what you do when your current approach isn't working, right? What I realized was that I didn't need a complete overhaul of my work. I didn't need to make up for some perceived fatal flaw. I was actually a pretty good manager. I knew that already.

Our brains are just better at noticing what's wrong than what's great. This was an important survival trait for a millennia. Now, it's one that just makes us unnecessarily mean to ourselves. The problem was that I was willpowering myself into complex new self management systems that I didn't want to have to run on willpower forever.

I just thought somehow, I would grow, I would improve, I would become good enough. But what it was really doing was creating habits I didn't want to keep going with. I was punishing myself with them.

So what would work?

I realized it needed to be small, ongoing, sustainable action, and that I needed frequent wins so that my brain felt motivated to continue. Making that change completely shifted how quickly I was growing and the relationship I had with myself.

So if there's one thing you take away from this episode, I want it to be that big things come from small steps. You need to start with small habits, small changes, and small improvements in small shifts. And how you focus and what you're working on in the little bit of extra time you make each day. Your wins will build up over time. You'll create new habits and you'll start to be able to use your intentional energy to focus on the next place you want to shift. And the next place.

What doesn't work is creating big structures where you plan to shift everything at once. You can't create sustainable results with willpower.

Big things come from small steps.

And the other part of this I really want you to hear: "it comes from small steps", not "it starts with small steps." I don't want you to walk away from this episode thinking, "Well I'll start small. And then I'll build up to the real big things that actually make a difference." That's not at all what I mean.

What I mean is exactly what I'm saying. Big things come from small steps. It's all the individual small pieces of work, small shifts you make, small ways you change your habits that add up to the big change. You're not just warming up.

So carve yourself out just a little bit of time. Expect simple, sustainable changes from yourself. And you'll find that your results compound. If you remember compound interest from school, you make a small investment upfront. And then you make another small investment every day, every week, every month into that account, and it grows and grows and grows with time. And the investments you made in the past earn interest, they pay you back as you go along. And at the end of the day, the money you end up with is significantly more than the individual time you put in. And often, those small little pieces of savings every day, the small investments that we make add up to more than the lump sum of money we would have been able to put into that savings account at any one moment in time. The reason it worked was that we paid in just a little bit every day to our own long term growth.

So how does this relate to the Big Results Formula? Well, what I really want you to remember as you're putting this formula into action in your life is that you just need to make one small shift every day every week, and it's going to pay huge dividends.

So, now let's look at the formula again. Remember, it has three parts: create clear vision, stop distracting yourself, and plan and take massive action.

So why is clear vision so important?

Well, it's critical because it creates the end state we're aiming towards. Have you ever worked for a company or a team that didn't really know what it was trying to build? It didn't really know what the company was about. It was really hard to make decisions. You didn't know what to put into the product because you didn't know who you were trying to serve and what problem you were trying to solve for them. We're working on our own projects is the same thing.

In Episode One, I walked you through all the questions you needed in order to create a firm foundation for your vision. We asked the questions "what's the problem you're trying to solve?", "who are you solving

it for?", "why is it critically important it'd be solved now?", "how will you know when you found a good solution?" In this episode's exercise, I'm going to show you how to flesh it out. You're going to make it really simple and then you're going to make really detailed and really rich. The simple version is a touchstone we can use to remind ourselves what we're working on and why it matters. The detailed version creates a rich picture so that our brains can start bringing it to life. There have actually been some fantastic studies that show us that mental rehearsal creates almost as strong a mental pathway as doing the action itself. So let's give it a try.

My vision is teaching leaders a new definition of success for leadership so that we can stop trying to control everyone on our teams and everything that happens around us at work in order to feel good enough. Now, that's one nice succinct sentence. It talks about what I'm trying to accomplish. It talks about why it's important to me. And it gives a little bit of a boundary for what a good version of that project would look like.

What's the vision for your project?

Now, can you say that in one sentence?

What about in fewer than eight words?

A healthy and sustainable definition of leadership?

What about three words: successful, sustainable leadership?

When you take your vision and you distill it down into the very core components, you create something that's so much easier for you to think about. It's so much easier for you to use as a guiding principle behind every decision you make in your project. And it's much easier to use those short, succinct phrasings to explain to someone else what you're working on and why it matters. And then I want you to really visualize in all the detail you can and all the senses you can, in your mind, what it's going to be like, once you've brought your big result to life? What's a problem or conversation you or your team won't encounter anymore?

What will happen instead?

In that moment, what are you going to hear?

What's going to be happening around you?

What will you smell?

Or taste?

Or touch?

How will you be moving?

The more vibrant you create this result for yourself the easier it will be for you to stay excited about creating it and the easier it will be for your brain to be your partner in making it come to life. As we talked about in Episode Two, our brain is driven by the motivational triad. It really wants to seek pleasure. When you spend time imagining how positive this outcome will be, how much pleasure, how much less pain, how much less effort will be in your life once you reach this outcome, your brain stops associating the project with difficult and work and effort and pain, and starts associating it with win and pride and joy and value and pleasure and easy. And that makes it much simpler for you to take the next two steps. Stop distracting yourself and plan and take massive action. Have you ever had the experience of being in the middle of a big project? Writing a presentation, writing a document, and then suddenly finding yourself looking at your email. You don't really remember making a conscious decision to switch to your email. And it definitely wasn't what you were planning on working on right now. You don't really know how you ended up there. But then the moment you go back to your presentation or your document, you're struck with this thought, "I don't know what to do next" or "this is hard", or, "I'm going to fail." This presentation will be terrible and the VP will think I'm not good at my job. This isn't at all surprising and you are not alone. Most of us have had a lifetime of habitually distracting ourselves from our emotions, because that's exactly what you were doing in that moment. When you found yourself in your email, or on Slack, or setting up your grocery order online. Instead of working on your presentation.

Your brain thought a thought like "the VP will think I'm not very good at my job." And then you felt fear or embarrassment or uncertainty and your brain immediately wanted that feeling to go away. In Episode Two, we talked about discomfort and we talked about why our brain wants emotions it doesn't like to just go away.

Why it will actually take us and completely shift our focus sometimes without our conscious approval in order to get rid of feelings that it doesn't like experiencing in our bodies. The trick is to learn to allow these emotions. To stop trying to get rid of them. To realize that they're harmless. That they'll spend a few seconds in your body and if you stop fighting them, they'll actually go away pretty fast most of the time. And then you can get back easily to what you were planning on doing.

This process is called allowing emotions. I talked in Episode Four about the four responses we have with feeling and emotion. Allowing is just one of them, but it's the healthiest.

Episode Seven, we focused more on how to allow emotions. And in last episode, Episode 12, we talked about how to allow particularly strong emotions. What I want you to remember from this episode is that

building the habit of allowing emotion, and building the habit of focus, that allowing emotion opens up for you takes practice. Just like we talked at the beginning about small steps, creating big results. This is one of those places where you need to increase your tolerance for emotion. You need to increase your habit and allowing it and then intentionally shifting back to what you were planning on working on. Noticing. The moment you refocus on your work, that same thought is going to want to come up. You're still going to be worried. You're still going to feel uncertain but that you can let that feeling sit next to you, and choose to focus back on your work anyway.

This is what it means to stop distracting ourselves. It doesn't mean we never engage in distraction consciously or unconsciously. It means that we get better every day and noticing it when it happens. Understanding what it is, what emotion we're distracting ourselves from. And then making a conscious choice that that emotion can't hurt us and that it's totally fine and totally safe to focus back on our original project and our original goal.

And finally, planning and taking massive action.

Massive action, by the way, just means taking action until you reach your goal and not stopping along the way no matter what else comes up in your path. No matter what your brain suggests. For reasons this project is a bad plan and you'll never get there. No matter when other people tell you no. Or if your first approach fails. It means seeing failure as learning that you can incorporate into the next try. It just means taking smart action over and over and over that doesn't wimp out.

The most effective approach is to create a clear vision, plan specific next steps, put each step on your calendar with an explicit deliverable for the time block, and then show up in that moment and do what your calendar says each day. Episode One also has a quick start framework for planning projects this way. I want to take a quick moment to just differentiate between massive action and the idea of having to take big steps in order to get somewhere that's a big result. massive action means you just take action until you reach your goal. It doesn't say anything about the size of those steps.

I think the most efficient effective way to really create huge sustainable results in our life and in our work is to create a series of relentless small steps every day paying in to create that massive final goal.

This week, I want you to practice each of the three parts of the big results formula. We're going to do it the same way we do each week, by setting aside 10 minutes on your work calendar every day to practice and grow. On my calendar, I call it growth. If you don't have that time on your calendar yet, stop and do it right now.

First, you're going to write very succinct and then very detailed versions of your vision. Just like we talked about earlier - a single sentence, eight words, three words. This requires you to focus on just the most important parts and to get to the essence of why they matter. And then you're going to get as detailed as

you can. Make sure you're focusing on the end result not the path. You'll never know the true path you use to get somewhere until you're done. What matters is that you're creating the end result as vividly as possible. Next, you're going to increase your awareness of how you distract yourself from working on this goal. Just three really simple questions here. What's one moment today when you distracted yourself from your planned work?

Go ahead and answer it now.

What did you distract yourself by doing?

What emotion were you avoiding?

I want you to know that I'm intentionally not asking you what action you'll take to fix this distraction. Just being aware of it will help you decide in the moment whether that distraction is serving you or not, where it's coming from, and decide if you want to refocus on your work. And for most of us, making plans for how to be better involves a lot of self judgment and berating. So I want you to practice noticing when you're distracting yourself without beating yourself up about it.

Finally, you're going to practice planning and taking action. What's the next result you want to create in your project?

What do you need to do? And how long will it take?

You're gonna put that specific outcome on your calendar for exactly that length of time. Now, when you show up and you do that work, if that approach doesn't work, what are the next two approaches you'll try?

I love that last question because it's the massive part of massive action, we keep taking action until it works.

Several years ago, a therapist suggested I set up 10 first dates in two weeks. Her point was it would make me worry less about how any individual date went. I wouldn't be feeling scarcity.

Knowing ahead of time the three to 25 next plans you have in line behind this one does the same thing for your project. It helps us keep an experimental mindset instead of fixating on getting everything perfect every time.

If this plan doesn't work, no big deal. Experiment failed. On to the next plan.

All right, that's all. Remember, lots of small steps are what creates big results.

Make sure you grab this week's podcast guide where I've got all that laid out for you and the questions

written down each day that you can print out or fill in on your computer. You can grab it from the episode page in the show notes.

Have an amazing week! Remember that lots of small steps towards your big vision is what creates sustainable, big results. Watch out for all the ways you're trying to use willpower or self judgment to fuel the sorts of big changes that don't last. And start instead taking the small steps that compound over time and really work. See you next week!



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