

EP138

Elaine Lou Cartas: What if I told you can have a business or career with calm and peace? Not one where you're constantly chasing, constantly hustling. We're already past halfway through the year, and I already surpassed last year's cash flow and increased my profit margins by twenty-four percent. And let me tell you some of the unim-impressive things I do.

One, I don't have a social media plan. That's because I've created my business where it is not codependent on social media. Look, one of my clients said it so well. I do not want to be in my fifties or sixties dancing or singing on social media. I might be Filipino, but unfortunately, God did not bless me with a dancing or singing gene.

So that is one. Two, as my podcast editor is currently editing this podcast, I have unfortunately not committed to my every other week podcast episode. I usually do two podcast episodes a month because there has been times where I had a lot of speaking gigs, and I was just really tired and exhausted. There was one month where I had one podcast episode, another where I had three months.

It was back in March when it's-- was Women's History Month that had so much speaking engagements. Sorry, Pete, I know he's editing this right now. So that has not been consistent. And then third, I only work with fifteen individual clients and five organizations. That's it. Made my business really simple. And Two weeks ago, it was just my nine-year business anniversary.

The old me, and when you mean old me, even just the business owner last year would've been freaking out because I am two weeks late to recording this podcast episode. But if you know anything about Filipinos, we are often late, so this is me meeting my stereotype. And I would've done it, like any business owner, you're gonna milk it, be like, "It's my nine years.

here are my lessons learned." And yes, I am doing it two weeks later. But I do wanna share, as a human being, not just business owner, a human being, what I did in my nine-year business anniversary. I went to therapy twice, met with my own coach, met with my bookkeeper and tax accountant, Evolved Finance twice, went to the Hollywood Bowl with my boyfriend.

We watched Beethoven Seven. Fun fact, I used to play violin. I was... And not just any violinist, I was a first chair first violin for middle school, so I was concertmaster playing the A string if anyone played violin or was in orchestra. And I also visited my parents, and I had this beautiful moment, you could check it out on my Instagram, where I saw this beautiful, red dragonfly.

It was gorgeous. But who am I? Who I was as a business owner when I started back in twenty seventeen, June of twenty seventeen, this is when I already graduated from my master's and realized, "Oh, I've been following what everyone's telling me to do and not what I want to do." And that's how I started, and this is my second business.

My first business was back in twenty, twenty ten when I was a fundraising consultant. So this episode, I'm sharing what I've changed and quit in my personal life to improve all aspects of my life, not just my business. And this episode is not just for business owners. It's for anyone who is a recovering workaholic, hypervigilant, working on themselves.

'Cause a huge thing I realized even when talking to my therapist, I shared this actually on my business anniversary. Yes, I gifted myself a therapy session with my therapist on the day of my business anniversary. That, oh, wow, my business for years has been a reflection of the chaos and trauma, and because of the healing I have been able to do, it is now Boring.

And I don't mean that in a negative way. I still love it, but I mean by that it's like it's calm and peaceful. All right, grab your coffee, tea, boba, or beverage of your choice, and let's drop the beat.

A few weeks ago, I met with a few former clients of mine. One of my former clients, Uchechi Kalu, who is a certified financial planner. Definitely check her out. I'll put her website into the show notes. We talked about the beauty in the inefficiencies versus efficiencies. We live in a world where we pay more for efficiencies.

And she was talking about the inefficiencies when she was doing a fellowship in Morocco and how she had to wait to get a ride and only do just a few things throughout the day. So she had to be completely present, which is the beauty of it. And I related because if you've been following me for a while, whether it's this podcast or you've joined my newsletter, which I highly recommend you join at elainelu.com/join.

That's J-O-I-N. I stopped back in December of twenty twenty-five doing Muay Thai kickboxing. And if you have been following me, I've been inconsistently doing it on and off for twenty-one years. And let me tell you the truth of why I stopped. I was tired of being in class with people who just wanted really cool combinations that they could put on social media.

I really cared about the techniques. So often when you're in a martial arts class, it doesn't just have to be Muay Thai, you often partner with someone. And I found myself probably majority of last year actually, where when I partner with people, I'm like, "Hey, I wanna go slow. I wanna get this technique down," which often is replied with a grunt and frustration because they wanna go fast and I obv-- I've been doing this for so long, but I wanted to go slow.

Basically, I cared about the martial arts, the arts in martial arts versus the performance. And it is July 2026, and last month in June, I got back to doing Muay Thai, but I didn't go back to class. I'm now doing personal one-to-one coaching, and I basically told my coach, "Hey, I want to relearn the basics. I don't care about a crazy workout.

I don't care that it needs to look cool on social media." And the result is doing what a lot of martial art artists or people that would work out would think is boring. Working on my

balance with my two feet, because you're constantly moving your arms and your legs, the footwork, going slow, and then working on getting faster.

I actually just did a session earlier today. So how do these boring things have to do with business and work? Because it's actually about the basics. I get on calls all the time with my clients, even for myself when I get on calls with my own coaches and mentors, asking, "What more can I do?" I always have clients ask me this, "What more can I do?"

But a better question to ask is, what do you need to work on? Yes, I'm doing the pointy thing that's probably gonna make you feel guilty or bad. But for me, throughout almost a decade, it was not just learning how to make money, it was learning how to use it once I got the money. I think so often people think it's like revenue top line, but it's, okay, what are you gonna use the money?

Save it, reinvest it back to your business, reinvest it personally. Really understanding my P&L report. I'll compare it to sports, Muay Thai, obviously. It's me understanding the basics of balance and footwork. And maybe it's not martial arts, maybe you're not getting this, but it could be any sport, any art, any dance, learning the basics.

Sure, that's the mechanics, but then what people forget also, not just the basics, it's also the conversations you are having with yourself. How do you even want to run your business or career? Or, Are you just copying everyone else? I just had a call, actually two calls, with my bookkeepers and tax accountants, Evolved Finance.

They're amazing. They specialize in doing financial services for coaches like me, so they know all the numbers, the benchmarks. Highly recommend if you are a coach, a consultant, online business owners. And they were just so impressed with the financial growth that I have done in the past couple years, not just the revenue, but also profit margins.

And I always, 'cause I'm such a nerd, love asking them, "Hey, what themes do you notice on what's working and what is working with all of your clients?" And they share the trend, and I should probably have them back on my podcast. Let me know if I should. But back in twenty-twenty, twenty-twentyone, a lot of online businesses just blew up because COVID happened.

Everyone was stuck at home. And then twenty-twentythree was when things stabilized. Things were not going so well. And what happened for a lot of people that started their businesses back in '20, I started back in twenty-seventeen, but I will say I'm guilty of this. We wanted to copy and paste from others what they were doing.

"Okay, if this is the template they do, that's what we have to do." 'Cause here's what society and school taught us, to basically follow the career ladder. And if you're a millennial like me, you have now learned, whether you are in your thirties or your forties, what career ladder? Because I did everything, and I am still not happy.

I used to work in political campaigns, and after a special election where I was helping a congressional candidate, I remember my former boss, campaign manager, asked me, "So what do you want to do next, Elaine?" And he was very helpful, such a wonderful, not just boss and mentor, but friend. And it was in my early 20s, and I realized I did not know how to answer that question.

I just did what people told me I was good at. It's why I started my first business, my fundraising business, 'cause people told me I was great as a fundraiser. That business happened by accident, by the way. Then I got hired by a client to work as a full-time employee at Pasadena City College Foundation.

And I had an amazing boss who is now still a mentor. I just had brunch with her, so you could say that's what I also did for my nine-year business anniversary, Bobby, and she was the one that recommended me to go to grad school because she could see me become an executive director for a nonprofit or a foundation.

So the moment I graduated, I was like, "Ooh, this is not it. What do I want?" So you are listening to this. What do you want? And I told myself Or sorry, I should rephrase it. I finally heard and listened to myself. I wanna start my own coaching business. 'Cause see, I benefited so much in coaching in my twenties, being a young director.

I was the youngest, and I hired a coach 'cause I just was trying to navigate being young, managing, and leading people. Yet when I started this coaching business, I s- repeated what I did in my career. I wanted a specific model, copy and paste, people tell me what to do. It didn't make sense. I was also... I feel you know what, I am kinda going around in conversations, but you know what?

I think it's important for you to know that this was written by human and not AI. Yes, this is written by Elaine, not AI. So I've been doing this training called Internal Family Systems. It's-- Or you could look up IFS if you wanna Google or AI it, as I'm talking about AI. And I had a session with my mentor coach this past week, and she talked about how there's two ways to train a dog.

One is obedience, and two is behavioral. And in this world, society, in school, we were taught to be obedient, to follow the rules, and you will be successful. Yet as we grow up as adults, as we see everyone having a midlife identity crisis, we realize we want to be like kids again. And what I mean by that is, how do we honor ourselves and really ask ourselves, what do we want?

And it worked for a bit to finally get to the deeper real question and ask myself: What do I want? How do I wanna run this business? And for me, I learned now that, hey, what I have right now, this might change. Yes, I work with clients one-to-one. I have fifteen individual clients, five organizational clients all at one time.

So it-- Just wanna let you know that it took me a while to get here. Back in twenty twenty-three, I started making big changes. I made hard decisions to let team members go. I knew that I wanted to be a better coach. Shout out to former clients who gave me great feedback. So I became a certified coach at the International Coaching Federation.

It is highly respected and regarded. There's a lotta certifications for coaches, I'm putting air quotes, but I didn't-- I wanted one where it was actually respected and qualified and reliable. That is another tangent 'cause anyways, that is another tangent 'cause a lot of coaches be making like a lot of money from certifications but then is it?

Is it really good? Is it? Tangent. Save for another podcast episode. And also, I wanted to showcase more of my talking and speaking engagements. I wanted to be-- do more of that. So I would say when I wanted to transition being a keynote speaker, this is back in twenty twenty-three, a company asked for a speaking reel.

And I was like, "Sure, I will give that to you. Give me a couple of weeks." I did not have a speaking reel by the way. I basically pulled up past events that I did. actually I worked with one of my... Shout to Jerel of Feened Media. He is my brother from another mother. I've known him since I was in sixth grade.

He basically put the speaking reel together for me of different clips. And in the past two years I would say I've ha- had the biggest keynotes, one with Amazon, one with big retail companies, and I had those speaking engagements recorded. In fact, I am currently in the process of updating my speaking reel and I cannot wait to share it with you all.

And I would say another big thing I have done on top of getting the certification, on top of showcasing my speaking reel and doing more speaking gigs is May of last year, May of twenty twenty-five, I quit drinking alcohol. And five months later after that I went to Philippines and I had just the most spiritual healing trip and that was not the intention.

We were there for a family wedding, but I was just so present when I was at my motherland and I saw everything I personally needed to work on because I acknowledged what I deci-- and when I decided to dr- stop drinking alcohol and it wasn't like I blacked out it was just I was aware. I did not like how I felt in my body.

I did not like how it had to take me a day or a couple of days to recover because I always want to be present. But because I'm so present I think just that epiphany I had when I was in Philippines would not have happened in the awareness of, ooh, asking another deep question of what do I need to personally work on?

And oh boy, what a journey. I went back to therapy. That's when I decided to do a certification internal family systems. And just to explain what internal family systems is, it's a premise that we have different parts and all the parts good and bad. Think of it like inside out, even anxiety, fear, they all have really good intention.

So for example, if there is a fire that broke out next to you, the anxiety of you feeling like you have to run and actually run it is protecting you

And in modern day, that shows up with different conversations. And what you need to ask yourself, are you giving these different parts space to speak? And when I mean speak, I'm not saying be irrational and emotional and speak to the other person, but speak in your mind. 'Cause here's the reality. We live in a world full of dopamine hits.

You feel uncomfortable, you want to just, pick up your phone, and I was-- I do this all the time, if you watch House of the Dragon episodes where there are, like, gruesome scenes, and I just pick up my phone because I just cannot, I cannot watch some of these fighting scenes. Or if you had a difficult conversation, maybe it's like, I'm gonna go do work right now and not process it."

Had a bad day? Go have a drink. Eat a cupcake. In my last therapy session, I told my therapist how mindful I was conditioned on wanting to get dopamine hits and how that has showcased throughout my childhood. Ooh, get the A, be valedictorian. And she remind me that dopamine is the, oh, give me more chemical, which obviously, unfortunately, aligns with capitalism.

But really, if we wanna talk about what to go after instead, it's serotonin and oxytocin. It's the I'm okay right there. It's the I feel safe here. It's that calm and peaceful feeling. It's exactly what I received when I was in Philippines in our, ugh, in this beautiful, balcony, just looking at the ocean, just hearing it, just being completely present.

And you're like, "Elaine, I don't have the money and time just to go to an island to do that." But what's been beautiful is that not only have I been able to do that when I'm on vacation, but even do it, in my day-to-day, where I feel comfortable and safe enough to sit and to feel safe, to feel at peace, to feel calm, even when crazy things are happening What I want you to hear is that I have learned to sit in the uncomfortable and be comfortable with myself, whether that's, that has been understanding, improving my relationship with money, acknowledging what I've been avoidant at, or things I need to work on, not be so hypervigilant.

I am so-- Look, I am the oldest. like I'm the fir- well, I wouldn't say my, I'm the oldest, but I'm the firstborn here in this country, and I feel a lot of energies. And I remember actually doing this practice session with a colleague of mine for internal family systems, and she's like, "Okay, what do you wanna work on?"

I'm like, "I'm just tired." And then we ba- went back to a moment sh- 'cause she asked me, "So when was this first feeling of feeling like a lot of expectations and being tired?" "Oh, when I was born. When I was born because I was born into my grandparents' house, which include my parents and my aunt and uncle, so you got six adults, and I felt the pressure of the American dream on me."

And my friend respond back, can you see how you could be really tired?" I'm like, "Yeah. Ugh." So it's been actually really beautiful to see how I have to pause constantly and ask myself, "Do I really need to do that?" And I'm not even saying that in work. I'm even saying that example, and my life is so exciting.

I'm being sarcastic. We So often I want bunching together in terms of cleaning. So if I have to clean the restrooms as well as vacuum, it would take me about four hours. But I know my max capacity is two hours. And recently, in the past two months, I have decided I'm gonna break it up. We don't need to do this all, all day for four hours.

I'm gonna do two hours of cleaning the restrooms, the other two hours the next day vacuuming. And I am happier. Why would I have to stack doing things when I could just break it up? And just like Mother Nature and the four seasons, I could create a season of things. And so what I have done is in my business, okay, Mondays.

Mondays are the days when I will meet with my coaches, when I will meet with my financial team, when I will look at my numbers, when I will just be, including be uncomfortable. And then Tuesday through Thursdays, I'll do calls. Wednesdays I'll start a little later. And then Fridays, I'm gonna have summer Fridays because it's summer, and I just-- even though I'm an extrovert, even though I'm leaning towards introvert, I just, I don't wanna talk to people.

Love people, but no, need a break. Anyways, if you need space on being uncomfortable, then I highly recommend for you to look for an EMDR IFS therapist. And I've had a couple podcast episodes with former clients and friends who are therapists. I'll put them in the show links. But if you wanna look for a therapist, look at psychologytoday.com to find one that is licensed in your state or country.

All right, so let me reel it back. I just feel like I am talking. Like I said, this podcast episode is written by a human. Even up to this day, and I am nine years as a coach, I'm still working on being a better coach. And that's not just through getting trainings like internal family system, but even going to therapy.

And this past year, if I had to sum it up, I have been unlearning and relearning a lot. So I have four bullet points that I wanna share. One, making sure I have time to pause and process before deciding. For example, I got asked to do a speaking engagement And I just asked them, "What is your budget?" "Oh, we don't really have a budget."

Now, this is our initial conversation. I was about to spend about an hour or two making this gorgeous proposal on Canva. I'm like, they-- "Elaine, what are you doing? They just told you they don't really have a budget. You're gonna spend time on that? No. Send them bullet points on an email." That's what I did.

We don't need to go hundred percent. You get to discern what's given a hundred percent, what's given ten, what's given twenty percent. And also, sometimes you just have bad days.

when I'm on my period, I straight up tell my clients, "Hey, I'm gonna have, an RBF. So just know it's not you, it's me." Or there's times where I'm like, "I need to turn off my screen."

Or if I'm feeling my client's energy, I'm like, "Hey, I wanna honor your energy. If you're not feeling, we could turn off the screen." Second thing that I've unlearned and relearned. When I am feeling uncomfortable with a conversation or a situation, rather than suppressing it, that feeling, that emotion, I make sure I have time to sit with it.

So in the moment when I'm having a conversation with someone that might be difficult, "Hey, I really want to honor your time and mine. I need time alone just to process it, and let me get back to you tomorrow." And, I ask myself what I need, and usually what happens, what I need, and I'll give a little neuroscience, is you just need to self-regulate, and you need to breathe.

Because the reality is, whatever that difficult conversation, unfortunately, our amygdala, which is our lizard brain, it's like the smoke detector that does protect you, will bring you back to when you're a child that's gonna say, "Hey, this is danger." But for you to think logically and strategically, you need to get to your prefrontal cortex, and to do that is to breathe.

Another exercise, just learned this from my therapist, highly recommend and suggest you do this with a therapist. It's called this ACT River technique. So what you don't wanna do when you're having a difficult conversation or there's a situation that just happened is put a story or meaning behind the emotion or moment or memory.

So what you wanna do when you're feeling unregulated, you just had that situation, that conversation that happened, is you wanna visualize a river, and then wherever you're feeling, acknowledge where are you feeling in your body. Is it your throat? Is it your head? Is it your chest? Is it your stomach, solar plexus?

However you're feeling, I want, instead of a story, move that feeling and that emotion into a leaf that is just streaming away, and you're just breathing. You're thinking about this river, and that feeling or emotion just moving away. You're just getting to a place of regulation. What you don't wanna do is create meaning behind it, because that comes from your lizard brain.

You're not able to think logically. That was such a great exercise that I literally did with my therapist a week ago, which actually goes to the third thing of when you're feeling unregulated, you don't have to give meaning to it. And the fourth, how can I make things more simple? When I see even a small issue happening in my business, I ask myself, "Okay, how can I make this easier?"

What is one small edit?" For example, I was finding in the beginning of the year that a lot of people booking a call with me, they were just not a good fit. So I made some minor edits in

my confirmation email and form. In that way, they know, and we could cancel the call, so we could honor both our times. So what can I make things...

How can I make things more simple? All right. Three books that have changed not just my business, but life this past year. So the first book that I have, I feel like I've been talking about every week since I have read this book. It's by Sarah Hirsch Bordeaux called Autoimmunity and the Good Girls. It's free to listen to if you have Spotify Premium, and it was so good because I listened to it on Spotify Premium, then I bought the book.

One of my clients who has an autoimmune disease referred this book to me, and it's not just a woman's empowerment book, it's also based off research, which I appreciate. And I've been going to say it out loud, but I wanna manifest Sarah as my podcast guest, so I will put her book in the show notes. The book was so good.

In the first five minutes of me listening to it on Spotify Premium, I was screaming, and I was applauding. And then I don't ever read the acknowledgement chapter, which is the... It's after the last chapter of the book where they're doing thank yous, and she was writing thank you to all the female women generations before, and I just, I cannot stop crying.

The second book is because yes, I joke around, even though I did get the Phil- Filipino genes of being a singer and dancer, I actually do consider myself as an artist, as a writer, doing this podcast, being a martial artist, playing violin. I'm not trying to go out here to win a Grammy or Oscar, but it's a book by Rick Rubin called The Creative Act of Being.

He's a producer for Beastie Boys, for Adele, who's my favorite singer. But reading this book and I would be-- I am shocked because I am a different business owner, just human. But before, tracking all of my numbers, even though I did spit out the data, I don't think I did actually. I have a sixty-two percent email open rate, a two point five six percent click rate.

Like I know my numbers, but even though I know my numbers in my business when it comes to my email stats, my podcast stats, even my social media stats, like how many number of followers, that doesn't guide me on how I write. I wanna make sure I am writing, I am recording this podcast as a human, as an artist, 'cause I know it resonate, not because I wanna try to get X number of people to listen or to read it, so I could have X number of clients and blah, blah, blah.

Just it's been so lovely to read. And Rick talked about how often we chase getting that creative high, but it's actually not the creative high we should go after. It's how do we create the environment we're in, so we could constantly be in a place of creativity, in a place of being, in a place of being present.

All right. The third book I recommend, and it was the first book I read this year, is Atomic Habits. I think so often people wanna, fire down their business or their job, but really it's just taking the small little edits Like, I share this in a, another podcast episode, but when I started going back to yoga, the first day I went back to yoga, I forgot my yoga mat.

I was like: Okay, I forgot it. What's one small edit I could do to make sure I don't forget it? Put the yoga mat by the door. One small edit. Something about these three books, it's exactly what I have needed in this current chapter in my life. Get it? I said books, current chapter. I know, it's funny. The, the slow down, the appreciating the small things from, just being around my nephews and nieces, the amazement of the world they have, and sitting down with the different parts of me that feel really uncomfortable and unlearning it.

Last week, when I met with my coaches and mentors, they've all shared. I'm like: "Hey, so what have you noticed that has worked really well for me? I just wanna make sure I don't repeat past mistakes, because this year is just my best year ever." Elaine, actually, it's because you're more at peace and calm."

That's right. I have a lot of serotonin, oxytocin, not the dopamine hits. It just feels so different. It's not this hustling like I once did. But I'll be honest, that need to wanna do things, goldie shiny object syndrome, 'cause I see other people doing things It comes up. I feel guilt that I, should be doing it, but I don't.

Remember, our human development and brain is so critical in our first five years of life. And even when my-- with my clients, when they're starting to wanna change something, I remind them and I remind myself, "Hey, we've been functioning like this for the past decades, so don't be hard on yourself when you're trying to do something new and rewire your brain."

One of my meetings with my financial team, Evolve Finance, I asked, "What else should I watch out for? What do you notice with clients where you see stagnant or they decline? 'Cause I'm doing really right now." And Parker, the co-founder, shared, "Make sure that you are still hungry and satisfied." And I appreciate that because when I look back in the end of twenty twenty-one and twenty twenty-two, I was so burned out from my business that sure, it doubled overnight in twenty twenty and twenty twenty-one, but both my grandmothers passed away.

I was not hungry. I was not satisfied. I was in freeze mode, and it wasn't until twenty twenty-three where I was like, "There needs to be something that changes." And happy to report that I am happy and satisfied, and I know that's reflected not just in my P&L report and numbers right now, but the deeper inner work I am doing, being courageous enough to pause.

And I would say, and some of you will be shocked, like I said earlier, it feels nice. It feels so nice to not be obsessed with the hustling and the numbers because I just wanna be human. I wanna be present. And if there's anything that we've learned in this AI world, is that the more human you are, the more you attract.

So some simple questions to ask yourself. I told you this is not just a, this is how I grew my business podcast episode. Maybe I'll do another, like, how to scale your business. I'll do another podcast episode for that. But for right now, this is just an internal reflection. It's a, a verbal live journal saying, millennials, you know what I'm talking about.

But some questions, four questions to ask yourself: What do you want? What's not working? How would your business or career look like if you were happy and satisfied right now? And fourth, what do you personally still need to work on?

If you enjoyed my vulnerability and reflections on this episode, two things: One, share this with a friend or two. Send them a message on why they would benefit. Two, leave a rating or review because my team and I created this podcast episode for... as an accessible resource. So if you leave a rating or review, it will let other people find this, podcast.

And if you are wanting to work with me because of how real I am, the three hundred plus client reviews that you could check on YouTube, LinkedIn, and my website, then schedule a call with me at elainelou.com/call. That's E-L-A-I-N-E-L-O-U.com/call. And also wanted to quickly announce I will be increasing my pricing on September one, twenty twenty-six.

So if you wanna work with me with my current pricing, then schedule a call with me. And just wanna say thank you. Thank you to my clients, my former clients, my mentors, my ancestors. I'm so blessed and excited to celebrate nine years for the growth and the learning. I know there will be more, and I can't wait for ten to come up