



EPISODE 53 My Private Struggle With Starting This Podcast

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HF: Welcome to The Doctor's Crossing Carpe Diem podcast. Welcome to The Doctor's Crossing Carpe Diem podcast. If you're questioning your career in medicine, you've come to the right place. I'm Heather Fork, a former dermatologist and founder of The Doctor's Crossing. As a master certified coach, I've helped hundreds of physicians find greater happiness in their career, whether in medicine, a nonclinical job, or something else. I started this podcast to help you discover the career path that's best for you and give you some resources and encouragement to make it happen. You don't need to get stuck at the white coat crossroads. So, pull up a chair, my friend, and let's carpe that diem.

Hello, hello and welcome back to the Doctor's Crossing Carpe Diem podcast. You are listening to episode number 53. It's hard to believe, but this episode marks the one-year anniversary of the podcast. Woohoo. I never thought I would be here, but it's been a great year. I thought I would do something a little different to mark the occasion.

I want to tell you a behind the scenes story of why it was really hard for me to start this podcast. And it had nothing to do with the tech involved and the learning curve or

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having to produce weekly content. Yes, that has all been challenging in different ways. But the real challenge has been much more personal.

In telling this story, which feels kind of like a silly story, my hope is that there will be something helpful in it for you since I always want to give value for your time. But before I launch in, I want to give a special shout out to my team who have made this podcast possible as well as my amazing guest.

As far as my team goes, Amy and Nick are my editors and they're this adorable couple from Manchester, England, and they have these beautiful British accents. They do a great job with the podcast. They have become digital nomads. Originally when we began working together, they were in England and then they went to Portugal and now they're in Barcelona. So, you're getting this editing done from an international team. Nikola, who lives in Macedonia, does the transcripts for the episode. And he is just wonderful too.

Kati, who some of you know is my right-hand gal. She lives in Maine and she does all the behind the scenes work to get the podcast up on the website, find great images, and make sure it's all working well. She's fabulous too, and I'm just really grateful to this team.

My guests, many of whom are former clients, have been incredibly gracious to come on the podcast and share their stories with you. I've been humbled by their honesty and courage. I learned from each and every one of them. And I'm truly grateful for all the knowledge and the wisdom they impart.

And finally, I have to thank you, my listeners. If you weren't out there, there would be no reason to do this. Thank you for your support, your ratings and reviews, sharing the podcast, and also for giving me ideas for future episodes. I love you.



Now we'll get to my story. When I initially thought of doing a podcast, I had really mixed feelings about it. I had recently started listening to podcasts and I felt they were so helpful. I love Amy Porterfield. I love John Jurica's podcast. And I thought, "Oh, I really should do this for my folks." I have been blogging for 10 years. And honestly, I don't like to write. It was always this big hurdle to get over every week to get the blog out. And it took a lot of time and it didn't quite have the feel that podcasts do.

But to be honest, I've never liked my voice. I've had different issues with it since I was younger and I thought, "Oh, a medium where people just hear your voice and they don't even see you? That's not going to work well." It was intimidating.

Let me go back and sort of fill in the gaps to how we got to the podcast. I'll take you back to fifth grade elementary school. We were putting on the musical "Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat," and everybody got apart.

I was one of Joseph's brothers and I was singing away in the chorus. I wasn't a lead or anything like that because I really can't sing, but I didn't know how bad I was till I overheard the homeroom teachers whispering among themselves "How are we going to get Heather to stay away from the microphone?"

We were going to different schools to perform this musical. And I didn't realize that I was a liability. Well, on my report card from the music teacher that year, she wrote "Heather has not yet acquired an accurate sense of pitch". Well, I don't think I ever have.

And I know this isn't about speaking, but it started to develop in me this complex a bit about my voice and people hearing me. I left that school, and I went to another one for sixth grade. In sixth grade you had to try out to be in the glee club. And I wanted to be in the glee club.



To get in, we had to sing “My Country, 'Tis of Thee” in pairs while the music teacher played it on the piano. I was singing with Debbie Goff and she kind of carried the show. As I could I would eek something out and tried to do my best there.

But when the list came of who got into the glee club in my homeroom, my own teacher, Mr. Davies, who was just a lovely, lovely man. He got the list and he noticed that I was not on the list. And he said, no one in the history of Bear Tavern Elementary School has ever not gotten into glee club.

Now, I don't know how he knew that history, but apparently it upset him. And so, he leaves the room and he disappears. I think he was going down to the music department, which was pretty far away. And a fair amount of time passed. And then Mr. Davies comes back to the classroom, he looks disheveled. I'd like to think he was in a bit of a brawl with a music teacher, but he came back, and all he said was “You're in”. Mr. Davies got me into the glee club, even though they didn't want me.

After sixth grade, I went on to a different school to junior high. And there was this kid who he started teasing me about how I spoke and he would mimic me, but in a nasal really unflattering voice and say stupid stuff and acted like I was from the South. Like I had the Southern accent, but I was from New Jersey. And I didn't have a Jersey accent, but it started making me even more self-conscious about my voice.

Fast forward to after I'd graduated from college, before medical school, I was working for a veterinarian. I had taken some time to become a resident of the state of Texas. I was working for this vet and he was a really good vet, but there started to develop after about a year, some conflict in the office and just tension. And I guess, I don't know, I was absorbing it into my body.

When I answered the phone, it would sound like this. “Hi, this is Heather. Heartland Veterinary Clinic (not it's real name). Can I help you?” I remember the vet had actually



called in and he heard that and he said, “Heather, what’s the matter with you? Are you sick or something?” And I wasn't sick, but all this tension was in my voice and I couldn't speak properly on the phone. So, I started trying to avoid answering the phone, but you got to answer the phone. And other people calling in would ask me what was wrong with me.

I ended up quitting that job and I started a business just cleaning houses for people until I went to medical school. Then as time went on, basically the issues with my voice are that when I get stressed or nervous. I think I stop breathing and my vocal cords tighten up and all the muscles in my jaw, and it's hard to articulate and I can even sometimes stutter over consonants and different words and things.

I did see a speech therapist when I was in practice for a bit, but I was always so tired at the end of the day when I went to see her that I don't think I accomplished much. And she said, “You really need to just come when you're not so tired”. I kind of just let all that go.

Fast forward to this time when I was considering the podcast, I just told myself, “All right, you're going to get a vocal coach. You're going to figure this out and move forward.”

I found someone local in Austin to go to. And I'd go there and we'd do these different exercises. She was really trying to help me get the tension out of my body and learn how to breathe better and relax. We'd do some funky things. And it got really funky one day. And I was really frustrated because I felt like I wasn't really improving. And she was saying this can take years. And I'm like I don't have years. I got to do this podcast.

And so she goes, there's a quicker way to get the tension out of your body. She told me to get on the ground, like lie on my back and put my legs up in the air. And it was a really embarrassing pose. She had me do this weird breathing and I was doing this with my legs up in the air and I just lost it. I just started crying.



I said, if this is what it's going to take to get this tension out of my body, I'll live with it. And I was just really upset and I went a few more times and then I said "This isn't working".

I started Googling on the internet and I saw this YouTube video, this vocal coach, Judy Rodman. She's a singer/songwriter. And I really liked her. Right after the video, it was a Friday night or something. I just called her up. She's in Nashville, Tennessee. I said, Judy, I need help. And she was so sweet and so kind. She's like, I'll help you.

I started working with her and she started helping teach me more how to breathe from my abdomen and articulate better and speak more from the mask and all these things. And so, I started having lessons and doing lessons and time was going by, and more time was going by and definitely there were some improvements.

But this is another trap that I think we can get into, which I did, which was I sort of expected I could show up and do some of the homework and fix the problem. But there is a lot that we have to do on our own and someone can't just be a magician and fix the problem. I think I was doing some of the work on my own, but I think I could have been doing more. And so, she helped me a lot, but I still was telling myself "I'm not ready to start the podcast." I actually ended up just taking a break from her.

And in the meantime, someone who I was talking to about a podcast, her cousin, was a vocal coach as well, more for speech, not just singing, which was Judy's main area, singers, but this person really helped with speech. I thought, "Oh, well this is the person I need." This was Ryan O'Shea.

I worked with her for a period of time and she helped me and we also worked on my intros to the podcast. And when she first heard them, they were pretty bad. She's like, "Okay, we need to work on these" because I was having a lot of trouble with consonants,



like “Carpe Diem” or “Doctors Crossing” like the crossing, the Qs and Ds, they get caught in my throat. So, I worked with her.

And so, by this time I had spent thousands of dollars and all this time and I still felt like I had issues. But finally, one day I just said, “Heather set a date, do the podcast. It’s not going to be perfect. It’s not where you want it to be, but just do it”. And that’s what I did. I set the date, I ended up pushing it out I think a couple weeks.

But the podcast started and yes, I still have issues. And there are things that my editors edit out. And sometimes I drink some whiskey, seriously, before I do a podcast. And I blow into a straw in this glass of water and there’s lots of stuff I do.

But people are getting value from it. I feel like my voice is getting better and I’ve made my peace with it. But the reason why I wanted to share the story with you is first of all, to offer encouragement, to any of you who want to do something, but you’re telling yourself you’re not good enough. Someone else could do it better.

Maybe you don’t think you look good enough to be on video. Or maybe you don’t think you write well enough to have a blog or publish a book. Maybe you’re thinking you don’t have what it takes to get a nonclinical job. You could also be telling yourself you’re too old to find a soulmate, or you’re not entrepreneurial enough to start your own business. Maybe you have some ADD and feel like that’s going to limit you.

Whatever it is, we can always let it be the reason why we fail to do something we want to do. But the only real failures are when we fail to try something. That is a hundred percent failure rate. Everything else can be put in the category of learning and getting information.

Secondly, we can also let perfectionism really slow the process or stop it all together. You might be wanting to start a business, but delaying things because you think you need



some fancy office with all sorts of staff when you could actually just rent a room in someone else's space.

Maybe you've recorded a bunch of videos for an online course or YouTube, but you keep finding things you need to do before putting them out there. You might be endlessly searching different career directions, but none of them are quite right. There are always reasons why they're not going to work.

I found it helpful as I mentioned above to set a date, by the time I need to do something. And if you make it public, all the better for that accountability. So, give yourself a timeframe.

And lastly, I find it helpful to embrace a perspective that sort of loosens you up, lightens your spirit, where you don't take yourself too seriously.

The other day I asked this friend how he dealt with stress on moving forward. He had gone through a really bad divorce with custody issues. Then there was some problem with his practice. And I said, how do you just let this stuff go? And he said, "I just tell myself I'll be dead in 40 years." And we both had a really good laugh. I really love that because I tell it to myself now on a regular basis. That just puts things in perspective.

We have this one life. If we're worrying about everything and what everybody's going to think, and this and that, we don't really live our life. And then we are dead. When I was a kid, I came up with this phrase that my mom reminded me of, which is, "It's a little thing in a big life". You just tell yourself "Whatever this thing is, it's a little thing in a big life" and we can just move on.

Lastly, we also can get so wrapped up in what could go wrong that we don't let ourselves imagine the good stuff. The possibilities. For example, I never in a million billion years



imagined that anyone would actually listen to the podcast because they like my voice. And I have N of 1, Kevin Gendreau.

You may remember him from his amazing podcast that he did with me. We were talking on the phone and he told me he loved the podcast. And I said, what do you love about the podcast? And he replied “Your voice.” And I thought “Well, Kevin's a really nice guy. I don't think he would just make a mean joke like that, but I can't believe that's really true.” And he said, “Yes, it's true”. So, I have an N of 1.

But it really is something I think a lot of us do is we're so focused on the problems that we don't allow ourselves to imagine when things go right. And that's the fuel that we need to get going. That's the hope, that's the inspiration. So, don't cheat yourself out of it.

I think it's time to wrap things up and I really want to thank you for listening and for all of your support. I'm very, very excited about our second year. So please share this podcast with others. Send me your ideas for upcoming episodes. And of course, if you want to say it with me, don't forget to carpe that diem, and I'll see you in the next episode. Bye for now.

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Podcast details

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