

The Future of Work podcast is a weekly show where Jacob has in-depth conversations with senior level executives, business leaders, and bestselling authors around the world on the future of work and the future in general. Topics cover everything from AI and automation to the gig economy to big data to the future of learning and everything in between. Each episode explores a new topic and features a special guest.

You can listen to past episodes at www.TheFutureOrganization.com/future-work-podcast/. To learn more about Jacob and the work he is doing please visit www.TheFutureOrganization.com. You can also subscribe to Jacob's [YouTube](#) channel, follow him on [Twitter](#), or visit him on [Facebook](#).

Jacob 00:41

Hello, everyone. Welcome to another episode of the future of work. My guest today, Luvvie Ajayi Jones, She's the author of several bestselling books, including I'm Judging You: The Do Better Manual, which, by the way, is a title that I love. And a brand new book called Professional Troublemaker: The Fear Fighter Manual. She's also a podcast host, speaker, and her TED talk on how to get comfortable with being uncomfortable is now approaching over 6 million views on Ted. So Luvvie thank you for joining me.

Luvvie 01:12

Thank you for having me.

Jacob 01:14

So before we talk about your book, I was actually doing some research and I wanted to ask you questions that a lot of other people have not been asking you. And so to start, I'm a big believer that a lot of who we are as people is shaped by those around us. And so I want to go back before we even start talking about you to who shaped who you are. So your philosophies, your attitudes, your beliefs, where did all that come from?

Luvvie 01:43

I think my beliefs and my philosophies have been shaped by a lot of people. But it started with my mom and my grandmother. You know, they're the people who I watched growing up, who infused their core values into me, you know, generosity and this, this, this form of service to the world, I think I've been raised with the idea that my life is not just purely my own, and that if I'm okay, then I got to make sure that other people are too and I think that's been a big part of me. Yeah, that's been significant.

Jacob 02:20

Yeah. Well, it's for my family as well. So I come from an immigrant family, they came from the Republic of Georgia. And it's, it's similar. And I saw that you, I think it was in your book, you talk about your your grandmother, and how she taught you how to take up space. And my wife actually did a video specifically on the women fairly recently, where she talked about how his young girls, they're always taught to not take up space to kind of shrink to be quiet. And she also is a big believer that you should take up space, let your voice be heard. So it seems like your grandmother had a lot of influence and impact on you as well.

Luvvie 02:58

Absolutely. I think my grandmother was literally the opposite of don't take up space. She was like take up space without apology. And it wasn't that it was even something she said it's just how she moved through the world. She was very clear that every room that she was in, they were basically being gifted with her presence. And, you know, she never shrank she wasn't in a room and was like, Oh, my God, no, no, I don't belong in here. It's, it was the opposite.

Luvvie 03:24

My grandmother was somebody who made a home out of any room that she was in. And I think it was incredible to watch because to see her, not shrink, gave me permission to not shrink. Women are absolutely told over and over again in different ways to be less than, to question themselves and doubt themselves to a fault. Women are told that if we take up space, were somehow being arrogant, or somehow not doing our part as nurturers and I think that's the wrong messaging. We've internalized such wrong messaging. And it is time for us to start stretching, to start letting ourselves be seen and heard. without feeling guilt and shame around it. We our voices are just as valuable as anybody else's.

Jacob 04:17

Yeah, I couldn't agree more. And you actually, I read you grew up in Nigeria, you left there when you were nine and ended up in Chicago. So what was it like growing up in Nigeria and then coming to Chicago? I'm really curious about your kind of the path that led you to where you are now.

Luvvie 04:36

Yeah, I had a great childhood. I, you know, I was always surrounded by love. We were not struggling. We I was I never worried about where my next meal is coming from. We moved to the US when there was talk of my sister to college. And my mom wanted her to really have a chance to go to school here, higher learning here. So that's why we moved on. I'm moving to, to US was a culture shock major culture shock. It was the first time that I was different. Here's the first time that my name sounded different. It was the first time that by the way, I talked with what was strange. So for me, that was a major shock to my system as a nine year old.

Luvvie 05:15

But the gift of it all is that kids adapt very quickly. Kids are resilient. So I knew that my accent sounded weird. And I knew that, you know, my name would be hard to hard to pronounce. So I actually lost most of my accent by just listening to my classmates speak. And I was like, well, I can do that. By high school. I didn't have an accent anymore. And yeah, but I think that transition. I didn't leave who I was behind, though. You know, I think the gift of it is that my first nine years being in a country where everybody looks the same fortified me in a way, that I don't even realize that probably is still under estimate. You know, it didn't make me question myself so much. I was very proud of who I was. And I had a deep sense of who I was.

Jacob 06:12

Yeah, my, my original last name is actually (inaudible), and so when my dad came to the United States from the Republic of Georgia, he wanted it to sound more American. So he changed it from that to Morgan, hence the Jacob Morgan. But it's really interesting. I mean, I love hearing about people's

stories and how you got to where you are. Okay, so you get to the United States, your a young child. What's next? I mean, what, what are the next few years of your life look like? And how did you ultimately get to writing a book to speaking at TED, to doing all these really amazing things that you're doing now?

Luvvie 06:50

Yeah, so I went to the University of Illinois for college. My major was psychology pre med coming in, because I thought I was going to be a doctor. That's what the dream was. And that dream ended when I got a D. in chemistry 101. I got a solid D first and last of my career. And but it was a gift because it pivoted me. It made me realize I didn't want to be a doctor. It's just a dream that I had taken on because other people had given it to me. So it was like I don't even like hospitals. So I instantly dropped the pre med with still with the idea of doing psychology because I still loved it. I loved it, still love it. But that semester actually started blogging. My friends peer pressured me into blogging and starting this little back then it was called a weblog. And online journaling, Zenga, live journal,

Jacob 07:49

Good old days.

Luvvie 07:49

So some of us know that exactly like dating myself. And what that did was made me fall in love with writing outside of the classroom. When I graduated from college in 2006, I deleted my college blog and started, what is now awesomelyluvvie.com. The blog blessed to have, and I talked about the world as I saw it, you know, I talked about my thoughts. I talked about TV, you know, race, politics, feminism, whatever it is. And I made sure to just tell the truth out loud. But back then, nobody was necessarily thinking of blogging as a thing, right.

Luvvie 08:32

It wasn't a career that you could actively put credence into. And that was a gift because I was writing in the way that was truest to me because I had no agenda. I wasn't doing it because I was being strategic that if I blog, this thing will happen. I was just writing for the love. And what that did was it gave me the practice of speaking the truth out loud. The site got bigger and bigger as people would read my thing, my pieces and share it. You know, I wasn't advertising. I was posting on social sometimes. But people would be like, Oh, my gosh, you're saying what I was thinking. But I dared not to say.

Luvvie 09:11

In 2009, the blog won an award, best humor blog in the black web blog awards. So I'd go to work as a marketing coordinator from nine to five and I come home and write some random thing on this blog. And people will laughed and they said it brought them joy. In April 2010, I got laid off my full time job cause of budget cuts. And you know, I didn't take that as an instant sign that I was supposed to focus on writing as my career. I was still searching on LinkedIn or indeed and monster for new jobs. But in the meantime, I was doing marketing and branding consulting for small businesses and bloggers because that's what I was doing full time and I still not and I loved it.

Luvvie 09:58

So I was like, well, while I'm waiting for my full time job that I'm gonna get Next, I'll be doing this to make money. So, but the thing is, I never had a chance to get another full time job. You know, the blog took on a life of its own. It really started getting even more attention. And then 2012, beginning of 2012, February, I had credentials to the Academy Awards on the red carpet, and backstage, a lot of journalists and writers and media, people will have access to the red carpet. I also had it backstage, which was super special.

Luvvie 10:44

And I remember being there being like, I had spent all this time afraid of calling myself a writer. Because I hadn't seen a writer who was successful, doing what I was doing, which is ultimately I wasn't a novelist. I was not a journalist. I was just a girl writing her opinions and her thoughts. So for me, it felt too abstract. It felt too big of a title to take on. And I was like, you know, Toni Morrison's, a writer? How can I call myself the same thing as her? But when I was in that room at the Academy Awards, and I'm standing next to people who work for the BBC, and I'm like they got in here because of their words. I did, too. So how can I not call myself a writer?

Luvvie 11:27

And I feel like that moment convicted me and made me say you are a writer, it might not look like what you're used to seeing him but you're a writer, you are using your words, to touch people making impact. And you've been doing this thing for such a long time. You are a writer, and I think that's when I finally owned it. That's when I finally was like, Okay, yeah, this is this is the job. I'm not waiting for another job. This is the job. And yeah, a couple years later, I had my idea for my first book, after being plagiarized by a journalist who took three paragraphs of my work and dropped it in theirs without any credit.

Jacob 12:15

Really!

Luvvie 12:18

Yep. And I said, I tweeted, is there not a limited edition handbook on how not to be terrible at being a human? And I instantly was like, that's my, that's my book. That's how I come up with the idea from I'm Judging You: The Do Better Manual because I was like, we got to do better. I'm gonna write the manual for it.

Jacob 12:37

So this person, they literally just took your words and put it into their own book.

Luvvie 12:42

Yeah.

Jacob 12:42

Wow. That's pretty bold.

Luvvie 12:46

very bold, and ridiculous.

Jacob 12:48

Especially in a world, it's so transparent now. Can't get away with that stuff.

Luvvie 12:52

But that was a gift because I had the idea for this for the first book, and the book came out. And it was an instant New York Times bestseller. And it changed my life. It came out in 2016, September 2016. I've been a speaker, an author, a digital strategist, I'm a multi hyphenate, who is using her words, her brain power, her truth, to show up in this world, hoping to inspire other people that they also deserve to show up as themselves, and they deserve all the good things.

Jacob 13:37

It's really fascinating. Because just hearing you talk, it sounds like there were a lot of these sort of moments that were tough that a lot of people might get very upset by, for example, not calling yourself a writer or somebody plagiarizing your work. But you took all these moments and learned something from getting laid off. And you spun these moments around from being things that were negatively impacting you to looking at the bright side, and how you can actually use that to excel and grow.

Jacob 14:06

And I love that approach. Because I feel like a lot of times when bad things happen to us, we kind of just put our heads down. And we think, you know, Woe is me, it's kind of the end of the world. But being able to turn that around, I think is a very, very important skill. You talk a lot about obviously, the title of your new book is all about being a troublemaker. And we're always taught that being a troublemaker is bad. I even remember when I was younger, my parents and grandparents who say Oh, you're such a troublemaker, stop being a troublemaker. Why are you arguing that this is actually a good thing.

Luvvie 14:38

I think it's an amazing thing, you know, to make trouble in this world is to disrupt what's happening. And let's be clear, a lot of things that are happening in the world are not okay. So being a disrupter for good is necessary. We need more of that. And troublemakers are people who are committed to elevating the rooms that they're in. They're committed to doing the work to build the world. They want to see you know, They want to do the thing that's necessary, even if it's really hard because they know that sometimes you have to do hard things.

Luvvie 15:09

And we need more people to lean into troublemaking, I think about the late great John Lewis, who I quoted in this book, who said, we need to be ready to make necessary good trouble. We have to be willing to do things that feel tough, say things that feel tough in this world, we got to challenge things that are happening that we're not proud of. We cannot be quiet and inactive in the face of injustice around us, whether big ones or even small things that are happening in the meetings that we're in, you know, at the dinner table that we're in, we have to be troublemakers, because that is how the world

evolves and changes for the better if we all just sit around and say Nope, nope, I'm just gonna wait until it's comfortable. Nothing gets done.

Jacob 15:55

Yeah. No, couldn't agree more. I'm curious from a lot of the work that you do speaking, writing, how would some of this translate into an organization because I feel like, you know, it's one thing around a dinner table or to be with friends to make trouble. But if you like a lot of people inside of a company, they feel very scared and hesitant to speak up. They don't want to make trouble. They don't want to get reprimanded. They don't want to look stupid. So how, how does this translate into a work environment where you're surrounded by your peers, your co workers, your managers who are judging you any advice for how to deal with it?

Luvvie 16:31

Yeah, whether you're speaking up at the dinner table, or in the meeting, it's the same type of fear of you not wanting to be the person that stands out too much, you don't want to be the one that rocks the boat. You know, we're afraid of being the one that disrupts it. But here's the thing. We're all sitting there uncomfortable, when somebody makes a joke, that's not good that we are not proud of that we would not laugh at it other people saw.

Luvvie 16:55

So when we're at a company, around a table with our colleagues, and they put forth an idea that's not thoughtful, that we would not be proud to attach our name to and we're quiet, what we're doing in that moment is choosing the fake harmony over the necessary truth that should be told, you can be thoughtful troublemakers, you know, and by just saying, Hey, I would love for us to rethink that idea. Because I want to make sure that it will make the impact we would like for it to make, that is a thoughtful way to make trouble in that room. Because you're saying, let's think about the questions we haven't thought about, let's think about the blind spots that we haven't thought about. Let's make sure that this messaging hits in the way it needs to hit.

Luvvie 17:37

And if you are at the table, you should be somebody who other people trust to hold them accountable, and to watch their back. Right? If I'm sitting at the table, you know that the work we're going to create is going to be as thoughtful as possible, because I will ask you about it if it's not. And it's not about interrogating you and it's not about making you look stupid. It's about saying, Hey, you know, all our heads are necessary to make this as good as it needs to be. So our questions are necessary. I think question asking and challenges are favors.

Luvvie 18:12

When you have a company of people who never challenge you, you're going to fall flat on your face more times than are necessary. Because if you create an environment where people don't feel like they can come to you with challenges, and they can come to you with questions, what they'll do is they'll just let you fail over and over again, as opposed to feel deeply invested and responsible for what happens. So I think it's for companies, it's not even a matter of whether you should tolerate troublemakers, you

shouldn't just tolerate them. Adam Grant, his book, think again, his book in my book, talk to each other, and we didn't even realize it. But he calls it the challenge network.

Luvvie 18:51

So what I call the troublemakers he calls the challenge network, you need challenge network in your life. Because how do you know when you're actually doing what you're supposed to do in the best way possible? How are people going to be around you and feel comfortable bringing their best selves if they don't feel like they can tell you the truth about an idea or ask you a question about it. Companies have to not just tolerate troublemakers and challengers, they have to celebrate them. Welcome them.

Luvvie 19:22

Like when I'm in a meeting. I'm the CEO of my own company. And when I'm in a meeting with my team, I don't ask who agrees. I asked who disagrees? I say does anybody think there are holes in here that we're missing? I asked about what I've missed, as opposed to ask for somebody to say yes, that's an amazing idea. I don't need that. I need the person who tells me Let's make this stronger. Or I don't think we should actually do this. Here's why. You know, and it makes me a better leader to be able to trust my team to do that for me, because I know that I can come with them to them with ideas half baked, and if they're half baked by the time when the meeting is done, it will be fully fledged. As opposed to me thinking I have to come to the idea with a full idea. Because if I don't, they won't tell me if it's still half baked.

Luvvie 20:15

I think the work is actually in welcoming the challenges welcoming the question and saying I would love to hear if you disagree with this, and how we can make this better. That will always get you better work than when you're asking for approval and cosigns

Jacob 20:33

Yeah, no, I love that advice. So I want to unpack those two things a little bit, because you gave a lot of, I think, fascinating pieces of advice. So first is if you want to be the troublemaker, it sounds like there's a right way and a wrong way to go about it. The wrong way would probably be, hey, this sucks. you're stupid, like you know that none of that makes sense. So you can be a troublemaker in a tactful tasteful way. Okay, which I think i think that's an important thing for people to realize that it's not just about causing problems. It's about identifying these things in a, you know, in an adult like way, as opposed to just complaining about stuff.

Luvvie 21:27

Exactly. So it's not just you want to be the person that's pointing out was foolish. You offer solutions. And your challenging is not for the sake of making somebody sound stupid is to say, Hey, I'm just watching out. And I think, in this whole process, because so many people are not used to being challenged. Even your thoughtful question asking can still run afoul of people. So you're challenging cannot be based on how somebody will receive it. Because you cannot control that.

Luvvie 22:00

However, somebody will receive you saying, hey, let's rethink that. Somebody might be like, Ah, oh, my God, I can't believe how the person receives it does not make your statement less impactful or valid or necessary. So you have to remove yourself from the idea that you're saying it because the person is going to love this idea that you're going to put forward or love the fact that you're challenging them this way. You have to remove yourself, divorce yourself from how the person who's receiving this information is actually going to receive it.

Luvvie 22:31

Whether or not you're going to love what I say, I still have to say it as long as I'm saying it as thoughtful as possible. That's my job. And then after that, I just have to let it go. Which is why whenever I want to say something tough or something that it was just in a room, where I'm like, oh, gosh, I'm disagree with somebody. I asked myself three questions. And if the answer is yes to all three, I say it. So it's, do I mean it? Can I defend it? Am I saying it thoughtfully? If the answer is yes to all three, I say it, and then I deal with whatever comes somebody is hurt feelings might come, somebody's being upset that their authority is being challenged might come. That really has nothing to do with me. And it's not something that should keep me silent.

Jacob 23:16

I love that idea of removing yourself from the equation. Because it's, it's important when you remove yourself from the equation, you realize that there we should be speaking up far more times than than we actually do. And if you're a leader of a team, or a leader of an organization, you also gave, I think, a really important piece of advice, which I want to make sure we highlight and that is the types of questions that you ask to encourage your team members to be troublemakers. And one of them you pointed out was, don't ask everybody if they agree with you ask who disagrees, why they disagree and encourage that kind of behavior. Are there any other things that you think leaders can do a better job of to encourage those around them to be more troublemakers?

Luvvie 23:57

Yeah, I think how you operate really matters because some people haven't, some people stop being troublemakers or will be quiet. Because they've seen how you reacted to other people's questions. They've seen somebody else be punished or gaslit for asking a question. They've seen that in a room in a meeting, they an intern got shut out because they dare to ask for more, more information. So you also have to operate with this in a real way and create the environment that welcomes in doesn't punish it. So yeah, ask the question, be more affirmative in terms of you know, welcoming this and not just saying I'm going to tolerate it.

Luvvie 24:40

And then do not punish people who dare speak up. Don't do it. If you are saying I'm gonna welcome being challenged, and the person gets a terrible review because they ask too many questions in a meeting, then the messaging that you just sent out to everybody is you were just saying that for no reason you didn't even mean it.

Jacob 24:59

Yeah, no. I think it's great advice for leaders out there. So obviously, the title of your TED talk was really all about how to get comfortable being uncomfortable. And I talked to a bunch of CEOs on this podcast. And I always ask them, What are things that set them apart that helped make them more successful. And they always tell me the same thing. They run to the projects that everybody else is scared of. They take on the things that everybody else is uncomfortable with, they do things that they don't think they're quite ready for. So can you talk about the importance of why we should be putting ourselves out of our comfort zone, even though we might feel so safe if we're just doing things in our wheelhouse?

Luvvie 25:37

Yeah, our comfort zones are not the place where big things are waiting for us, they're not the place where the best life that we want to live is waiting for us. Because the reason why it's comfortable is because you've learned all you had to learn. There is nothing in there that challenges you. And there's no way you're going to grow, you just be. So you have to actually do something outside your comfort zone.

Luvvie 26:05

And usually, even one conversation that feels tough with a friend can take you outside your comfort zone. But at the end of the conversation, you and your friend might be closer because you find common ground. You know, you might be mad at each other. But you have this one conversation that you realize, Oh, we both just misinterpreted something, you end up, you had to go through the discomfort. But on the other side of it is understanding. The comfort zone is a trap. It is a trap, right? It is something that just keeps us there ground in the same place we've been in.

Luvvie 26:38

But to get bigger to get greater to unlock this audacious life that you want. It doesn't exist in your comfort zone. So you're gonna have to ask for the raise, ask for the promotion, go for that degree, have the tough conversation challenge the coworker or your boss, you know, wear something that's that you typically would never wear a different color, something and because on the other side, you will learn more about yourself. And the best case scenario is you might love that thing you did you might get an answer to the question you asked that says yes, you might get that raise and be able to afford the apartment you couldn't before.

Luvvie 27:21

My editor, Meg Leader of Penguin Random House after he edited my book, she asked for a raise. Because in the book, I have a whole chapter that says ask for more. And she got the raise and a promotion. Her assistant then gets promoted to an editor. And I'm like, that's what happens when we do the things outside of our comfort zone over and over again, you won't always get the Yes. But you will get more yeses than if you just say no, say nothing. You will you will absolutely win, because you're taking more risks.

Jacob 27:57

Yeah, I think is the famous quote he was was a Michael Jordan who said you're going to miss 100% of the shots you don't take. I think it was Michael Jordan, somebody can correct me afterwards if I got that wrong. But I love that approach. And actually, this one was particularly relevant and meaningful to me as far as getting out of your comfort zone. Because when I talked to my dad about how he migrated from Russia to the United States, he was telling me the story about how he lived in a low income housing area in New Jersey. And he had the option to live near a bunch of other Russian speakers, or to live next to people who spoke English.

Jacob 28:32

And he decided to live next to all the English speakers even though he didn't speak a word of English. And I said dad, why wouldn't you want to live in a neighborhood where you're surrounded by other Russians who you can communicate with. And he said, because that's too comfortable for me, I left Russia to get away from that. And I want to assimilate to American culture. I want to understand American society and life and learn how to speak the language. And I'm not going to do that unless I push myself out of my comfort zone.

Jacob 28:58

And to me, that sounded terrifying because he was here in the United States by himself. The rest of us were in Australia, because they were migrating in the in the process. And so he's here alone. In a neighborhood, low income, doesn't speak the language doesn't have any money. And I just hear those types of stories. And it's amazing the types of things that people can accomplish when when they push themselves out of their comfort zone.

Luvvie 29:22

I love that. I love that story. Your dad did something that allowed him to grow that he knew his clarity. And that he basically ran towards the thing that was uncomfortable. He was like I will put myself in that's so admirable. And we have to start doing that more often. We got to start doing it because the life that we want to live literally on the other side of our comfort zone. Yeah, but we just is because we see it's almost like the bridge, right? But you're afraid to cross the bridge. It's like if you cross the bridge, the treasures are right there. Just cross the bridge.

Jacob 29:54

Yep. So I have one follow up question. I want to ask on that before I jump into one of your stories that you talk about what happens if you fall off the bridge? Because this oftentimes does happen. We speak up and then we say something stupid, we take on a big project and we fail. We take on an opportunity to speak. And, you know, maybe, you know, comedians, they get booed off stage all the time, or they get heckled. So how do you deal with that negativity that might come your way? Because that's a huge fear for a lot of people is I don't want that the backlash?

Luvvie 30:31

Yeah, I think, um, we think about the bridge as the 300 footfall that will kill us. But it's not. The comedian that gets heckled off the stage. It doesn't ruin their career, when they get heckled off one

stage, they'll get back on a stage the next day, they might get heckled off that they'll get back on the stage the next day, every comedian that you know, has been heckled of at least 10 stages...

Jacob 30:58

Oh at least yeah

Luvvie 30:59

At least, right. So imagine if they were afraid of being heckled, they would never become the icons we know now. So you have to think about life as that we're always thinking the bridge is going to destroy us. Falling off the bridge will destroy us, you will fall off the bridge, guaranteed, you will fail on the way to doing something audacious you will absolutely fail. Anybody who lives a life of note will fail will fall off a bridge, but the bridge will not end your life doing that will not end your life, it will not destroy you. You know, I think fear. Fear keeps us from physical harm, right?

Luvvie 31:37

We don't put our hands in fire because we know it'll burn us. We don't jump out of a plane without a parachute. Because we know we will fall flat to the ground and lose our lives. But that same thing is what keeps us from asking for that raise, right? It's what keeps us from getting on that stage and trying a set out. And it's like everything is not the disastrous Bridge fall, you will expect to fall. Give yourself permission to fall. Because it'll give you freedom to do more. Right? It'll give you freedom to say, even if I fall, I'll stand right back up. Or maybe after it stops being sore, I'll be able to stand up, you know, remove the idea that every failure is destruction.

Luvvie 32:26

Remove the idea that you're not supposed to fail, because there's no way that if you want to live a life of note, you won't fail. If you're not, that means you're not doing anything of note. So that's why I wrote the chapter fail loudly in this book, because I'm like, it's not just that you might fail is that you will fail. You won't know when it's necessarily coming. When you do one, do not then say, this is my fault for trying to be bold. You were supposed to. But when you fail, the only real reason it might be a fail is if you learned nothing from it.

Luvvie 33:01

If you actually fell flat on your face, and then were able to realize ah I know exactly what went wrong. I know exactly what I was supposed to learn from this. It wasn't a true failure. It was a pivoting experience. It was a growth moment where you needed a lesson that you didn't currently have. So you have to go through that experience. I've absolutely failed. You know, I've gotten in trouble for saying things I've said. And each time it's made me pivot, and be more thoughtful and be more elevated as a thinker and feel more responsible. So I think we should kind of just make friends with failure. It's tough. Mind you, like in the moment of the failure, it hurts your feelings hurts your heart, ego bruised, you might lose some money. But on the other side of it, you end up being like that's why that was supposed to happen.

Jacob 33:49

And I think it's also important, and you talk about this as well that the goal isn't to eliminate fear because you can never get rid of fear. But it's to know how to approach fear and to use it as something that could be channeled in a positive way instead of something that can be keeping you from achieving the things that you want. So is that right? Should we not be trying to get rid of fear?

Luvvie 34:12

Yeah, because fear is a lifelong thing. It's a very universal emotion. It is as natural as love and joy. Fear is here to stay. What we have to commit to is not using fear to make our decisions. It's not letting fear be the thing that makes us say yes or no to something an opportunity, a conversation a challenge. It's understanding that to be fearless is not that you're not afraid. It just means that you're not letting the fear make you do less.

Luvvie 34:43

So you will always move forward regardless. If you are if you know you're supposed to do this thing. Just because it makes you anxious. Has you doubtful. Has you fearful does not mean you're not supposed to do it. You know in those moments, you have have the responsibility to choose courage.

Luvvie 35:04

Because you have to have the fear before you can have any type of courage. So to be brave to be courageous, you got to be afraid first. Because if it was easy, everybody would be doing whatever that thing is. The difference is that there are some people who commit to doing it in spite of the fact that they're scared.

Jacob 35:19

Yeah. Couldn't agree more. So one of the stories that I was hoping you could share, and I'm using you as an example, because a lot of the things that happened to you, I think, are very highly exaggerated. In other words, the things that happened to you because you're in a very public life, it's never gonna be that extreme for, you know, a mid level manager in a company who speaks up in a meeting.

Jacob 35:41

But you were sharing a story of how you sent out some tweets. And then you got criticized, people were writing about you, you were called anti American, anti black American, and people were just plastering your name everyone really going after you. So can you share a little bit about that story and how you were dealing with that? Because that is, like I said, a much bigger fail to deal with than somebody who might just get laughed at in a meeting. Yeah, you have the whole world watching you.

Luvvie 36:08

Yeah. And I want people to read chapter seven for the full details of it. But I think for that moment, yeah, like I wanted to show what it was like to fall off a bridge. Okay, to fall off the bridge, in a very public way. Something that is a lot of people's greatest nightmare. And I got up, you know, it knocked me off my square for a bit, but I got up. And it's important to talk about that part. Because Yeah, being troublemakers and being opinionated and being people who show up, right, you will absolutely fall, you will absolutely run afoul of people, you will absolutely say something that maybe you shouldn't have

said, but it won't destroy you, no matter how painful it is, it does not ruin you, no matter how much you think it's about to.

Luvvie 37:02

And I use myself as an example, because as a black woman who is moving through this world, who does deal with hypercritical people, because of the fact that I'm just black and woman. I'm like, see what it could be like, if you do fall on your face, and know that it is possible for you to still stand up through it. But yeah, it was a moment for me to understand that like, in the troublemaking, you will also get some trouble. But it doesn't mean you stop doing the thing. It doesn't mean that your words are no longer necessary or your voice is no longer necessary.

Luvvie 37:41

It might mean you know what, reset yourself recalibrate, get smarter, get, get more thoughtful, and know what your platform is and understand that. Yeah, you're you're shifting to a new level. So you have to have certain things in place that you might not have had before.

Jacob 38:02

How do you deal with trolls, because there are people out there who genuinely just want to see you fail, they just want chaos? Yeah, I've had to deal with my fair share of trolls earlier on in my career where when I was trying to build a personal brand for myself, I had these trolls they would message my wife who was my girlfriend at the time, and they would say breakup with Jacob is going to be bad for your career. They would email conference organizers. And they would say you don't want to book this guy. I mean, they would, they would go out they would leave angry comments on my blog. And it caused a lot of tension between my wife, my then girlfriend and I, because we were living together, we were arguing about this stuff. And we spent probably a solid year of our lives, just trying to defend ourselves as much as we can arguing with these people publicly right tweets going back and forth. And then finally, we just stopped. And we didn't give them any more spotlight. We didn't give them any more fuel, we stopped engaging with them. And they disappeared.

Jacob 38:58

And at least for me, I learned a very important lesson, which is don't feed the trolls. Because they just, they just want that. And I realized that nobody who is actually booking me to speak or buying any but I mean, nobody cared about who these people were, they only knew about them because I was giving them attention. So how do you deal with trolls with people who like, genuinely want to see you fail and they want to come after you leaving you negative reviews telling you you're stupid? Do you ignore them?

Luvvie 39:27

I mostly do. Yeah, I absolutely mostly do. I think for me feeding them is not useful. So I always tell people that my platforms are a dictatorship, not a democracy. You can say whatever you want to say about me on your own platform, but you won't be on mine. Saying crazy things about me. I will block report as spam and delete as I need to. So I also try not to give them the Access to do it, they can create 15 accounts, I block off 15 each time you create an account, I'm gonna block that one too. And for me, that's a rights that we all need to have.

Luvvie 40:11

We are not obligated to take on other people's crap. We're not obligated to listen to people when they're like, Oh my god, I can't believe you blocked me, why would I not block you? It's like me welcome you into my opening the door to my house. And then you're standing in my living room yelling and cursing at me. What? No, get out my house. So for trolls, don't give them air get block and delete, which pisses them off. And then, you know, there are a few times when I might respond to a couple, but I respond and then I block, we do not need to receive everybody's crap. We don't.

Jacob 40:47

What if it's in person, you know, you're at a company. And they're always those people at a company who are maybe they're backstabbing you, they're trying to sabotage you. And you have to see these people day to day. Any suggestions or recommendations and how to deal with those types of toxic people,

Luvvie 41:02

Toxic people, I try not to be around them, I really try not to be around them. Because there's just nothing you can gain from it, they will just suck all the life out of you. And it is not worth it. So if it's a co worker, doing as much as possible to not be in a room with them, if you have to do in a meeting, don't sit next to them. And then maybe being honest and telling your your boss here's where we find it tough to work with this person. Here's where I've been undermined and lied about a few times. Here's the thing that makes this hard for me to be productive while they're on my team being honest.

Luvvie 41:43

Because we spent so much time at work so much time. So imagine somebody making your life a living hell, while your work, and you can't tell anybody out. If it gets me fired that I say, hey, this person has really made a tough me do my best job, then. It's not the company I'm supposed to be in.

Jacob 42:01

Yeah, yeah. No, I think that's great advice. Have you ever dealt with imposter syndrome? Or how do you deal with imposter syndrome if it ever comes up?

Luvvie 42:13

Yeah, I think imposter syndrome is a universal issue. And I've absolutely dealt with it. You know, I have a TED talk that now has over six, over 5 million views

Jacob 42:25

Getting close to six, it's very close,

Luvvie 42:28

Very close. And I said no to it twice. I didn't think I was ready. I thought I didn't have enough time to prepare, you know. So in those moments, I think knowing that imposter syndrome can be a driver of good things or stunted, right? So we should use our imposter syndrome to make us stay on our toes and get better at our crafts. Right. But what it could also do is it can make you say no to yes,

opportunities make you think that you are not enough. Or you're not qualified for a role, or you're not gonna handle this new title well. I think imposter syndrome is such a universal issue. It just shapes shifts as we move around in our career. And it's something we have to constantly be cognizant of, is that like, I might operate from a place of imposter syndrome, or am I do I actually not think I'm ready for it.

Jacob 43:21

Can you actually share and I know you've talked about this so so much with so many different podcasts you've been on, you're probably sick of sharing your stories. Can you share your TED Talk story because like you said, You got invited twice, you turned it down. My wife was listening to a podcast where I think you said that you rewrote your speech fairly recently before you went on. And for most people who to hear that they'd be like, Oh, my God, that sounds terrifying. But you did it and killed it. So share it share that story.

Luvvie 43:53

Yeah, so I was asked to the TED talk first in March, May 2017. I turned it down. Because it was the year after my first book came out. And I was on the road a lot. I had 50 speaking engagements that year. So now as to TED Talk, I'm very clear that TED does not play about their talks, like it's almost a part time job. Because they get you a coach, they make you like edit your script, a whole lot of things. So I was like, yeah, definitely not gonna have time to add a TED talk to my already nuts calendar, because I was afraid that if I didn't have the preparation that they would want me to have. I would bomb. Like, I was afraid that I wasn't ready to take that stage and show up in the way I needed to.

Luvvie 44:43

So a few months later, they asked me to be on a panel at TED. And I was like, I can do it. I'm actually emceeing and keynoting a conference that day. So a couple of weeks before TED, I think three weeks for TED. I was like, You know what? Don't have to be at the conference. I'm emceeing until the day after. So you know what I'm going to go for the first day cuz I can go cheer on my friends. And when I reached out to them for a day pass, they were like, well, if you can come, we want you to speak. I was like, Whoa, that's three weeks away. And I was about to turn out for a third times, I was like, I definitely can't get to talk together, memorized and be able to kill a stage in three weeks. That's madness.

Luvvie 45:25

And I called my friend Unique Jones Gibson. I was like, so Ted wants me to do this talk. It's in three weeks. Everybody else has already had a coach. They've had their talks figured out. And I'd be coming in with none of that, you know. And my friend said, everybody's not you. She's like, you've been on stages every other day, that's been your coach, you've been speaking for eight years, that's been your coach. So basically get off my phone and go write this talk. And I did just that I got off the phone.

Luvvie 46:00

The next morning, I was going on a different to a different city for a flight. Because I was speaking. And I wrote the TED talk in an Uber. I turned it in as a as Uber pulled up to the airport. I was expecting them to be like, you know what, you're right. Nevermind. So I landed in the city that I was going. And their email was like, Oh, my God, we love it. We only had a couple of edits. And it was like not even major

edits. So yeah, the day of the talk came, I basically memorized it. In the 12 hours before the talk. And I stepped on that stage and gave this talk like I had been doing it 1000 times that exact talk. It was like an out of body experience.

Luvvie 46:49

The talk that you all see is a talk I gave there were no there was no editing magic necessary. There was no pause, there's no let me go revisit my script, it just poured out of me. And that talk was featured on the TED homepage. A month later, the first one from that event. It now has over five and a half million views. I've had 1000s of emails from people all over the world who've said what that talk did for them.

Luvvie 47:19

And I've had so countless speaking engagements from that talk. And it really made me think about how I almost didn't do it because I was afraid because of imposter syndrome because I didn't want to bomb because I didn't think I was ready. And I almost did not do it. But between Pat Mitchell, the tech curator, and my friend, I wasn't allowed to say no. And they're the reasons that I get on that stage. They're the ones who did not allow my nos to stand. And I'm so thankful for it. And I'm just like, knowing that knowing that we operate in that way a lot, we have to be more intentional not to, we have to be clear that our fears are standing in the way of the lives that we want to live the life that we say is our biggest wish. So we have to acknowledge the fear, and then move past it, move forward anyway.

Jacob 48:14

As I was actually going to ask you, do you ever wonder what would have happened if you never gave that talk? And how different your life would be? If you never got on that stage?

Luvvie 48:24

No, because I'm like, that's a domino down. You want to think about that butterfly effect. But there's so many moments that we've said no to something we should have said yes to now. And that would have been an expensive No.

Jacob 48:39

Yeah, very, very expensive no. We only have a few minutes left. And there was one other topic that I want to make sure we touch on. And that's this theme of boundaries. And I know this is a very, very important topic, personally and professionally setting boundaries with coworkers, even with family members with leaders. Can you talk a little bit about the importance of boundaries and how you go about or how you recommend people go about setting clear boundaries in their lives, whether it's personally or professionally?

Luvvie 49:13

Yeah, I think boundaries are important boundaries are self care. It is. Oh, man, they're they're so necessary because we cannot have everybody having access to us. We cannot. We cannot because then we won't be able to focus on the things we're supposed to focus on. Because if everyone has equal access to us, how do you know what's priority, right. Like how do you know what actually

matters? So boundaries professionally and personally, are a form of justice for ourselves? Because we have to take care of us in this whole process.

Jacob 49:54

I find that the boundaries aspect that work can be hard. Right. How do you say no to a leader? How do you say no to a co worker who's asking you for things because you want to be viewed as that go getter employee who's really excited to be there who can do anything. But at the same time, when you say yes to everything, you burn out, you get disengaged. And then bad things happen. I don't know if you've ever been in a situation where you've said yes to too much. But how do you? How do you make that that work boundary?

Luvvie 50:26

I absolutely have said yes too much. I think it's important to say, Hey, no, I can't be able to do it. Or maybe no, I can't do it right now or no, not on that deadline. Every no is not a permanent no, sometimes, uh, no, I can't do for today. But I can't get it done for tomorrow. You know, we have to make sure that people don't forget that we're still people. We're not just employees, and CEOs and just numbers and in the company. We are still people. And when our bosses and our and our, the people we report to don't honor that, that means they're not honoring us as people.

Luvvie 51:03

I tell my team, hey, I have this deadline for you. Is this realistic? Because I want you to be able to tell me, No, it's not. Next week is more likely than I go, okay? Because I just want to know the expectation. Any person who is asking you to constantly self sacrifice and like, work yourself to the bone purely for the well being of the company is not thinking about you as a person. So us as leaders have to also make sure that we are given people permission to draw boundaries.

Jacob 51:33

Yep. So maybe last question for you before, ask where people can go find you and connect with some of your content. Well, two last questions. One is, what are your biggest fears currently?

Luvvie 51:50

Hmm.. my biggest fear...(pause)

Jacob 51:54

Okay, good. I feel like I'm asking you something that not everybody has asked you in every other podcast, so

Luvvie 51:58

That's a good one. biggest fears currently. Ha, that's a good one. Yeah, no, that's a really good one. Because I'm just saying, I don't have an answer readily available for you. Because I don't think I've been operating in a space of fear recently, because I've been pretty much like, leave it all out on the field. Because I'll tell you, you know, when professional troublemaker was coming on, when it was about to be launched, my fear was that I was not going to hit the New York Times list because as a black woman whose book is considered prescriptive, prescriptive in the How to and trailblazing.

Luvvie 52:34

Because there's Oprah and Michelle Obama are the only ones who look like me who in this category. I wanted this book to hit the times list, not just because it is an amazing book. And I deeply believe it's transformative. But because I wanted to make sure it opened the door for people. And if I didn't hit lists, what would that messaging say to publishing would it now make it harder for somebody else who looks like me to get a book deal that's not a novel, or that's talking about, you know, race. So my fear was that I was going to be letting down other people if this didn't happen, so I put everything behind me. I basically wore it as a coat and said, I'm gonna do this.

Luvvie 53:17

So two weeks ago, my, my fear would have been like, I'm afraid I'm not gonna make this list. And I'm in a category. That's the toughest category, you know, in the whole thing, because cookbooks end up in this list. Okay, like random books. You just like what? But yeah, I think I'm always afraid of not using my power in service of other people.

Jacob 53:40

That's a good one. And last question is, what is the big the big takeaway, the best piece of advice or the most important action item that you hope people walk away with after either reading your book, or listening to this as far as it pertains to trying to conquer fear and being a troublemaker? What's your last piece of advice for everybody listening and watching?

Luvvie 54:08

My piece of advice is that normalize being afraid, don't feel bad that you feel fearful, or you're anxious about speaking up. That's normal. What you have to do now is intentionally choose courage in those moments. It is a decision not a personality trait, a decision to choose courage when it is tough when fear is easier, and when your comfort zone feels tempting. So I just want people to just keep choosing courage on purpose.

Jacob 54:41

Yeah. Well, Luvvie, where can people go to learn more about you or connect with you? I see your your book back here. Maybe you can grab your book and show it to people who might be watching the video here. There we go. That's a good looking book right there.

Luvvie 54:57

Professional Troublemaker: The Fear-Fighter Manual. It is available everywhere books are sold. I narrated the audio book which just got an earphones award audio for our magazine. So I'm excited about that nice and I'm all over the internet Luvvie is my handle on all the platforms, L-U-V-V-I-E really easy to find, have my own social platform called love nation calm. And I am around. I'm constantly trying to use my voice for the greater good.

Jacob 55:30

Yeah, you're you're pretty easy to find with a simple Google search.

Luvvie 55:33

So easy. So easy.

Jacob 55:34

Well Luvvie, thank you so much for taking time out of your day to speak with me. I really appreciate it.

Luvvie 55:40

Thank you for having me, Jacob.

Jacob 55:41

Oh, of course. And thanks, everyone for tuning in again. My guest today has been Luvvie Ajayi Jones make sure to check out her brand new book professional troublemaker, the fear fighter manual and we'll see you next time.