

#44 – Mindset Matters – How Tami Adams Turned Job Loss Into Success

Donna Ferris: [00:00:00] Welcome to Bounce Back Stronger, the podcast that explores ways to find peace and purpose after difficulty. I'm your host, Donna Ferris, and today, our guest is the founder of TA Speakers Management, Tami Adams.

A little about Tami. Tami is a speaking events professional from Canada's West Coast with a remarkable passion for meaningful causes. When COVID 19 struck and the events industry experienced a major setback, Tami dusted herself off and founded TA Speakers Management, a boutique speakers agency that collaborates with transformational keynote speakers and thought leaders.

This pursuit allowed her to pursue her passion of sharing life-changing stories vulnerably and meaningfully. Tami, thank you so much for joining us on Bounce Back Stronger. I'm so grateful to have you on the podcast.

Tami Adams: Thanks so much, Donna. I'm so happy to be here. I absolutely love the podcast and what it represents and I'm excited, yeah, to just lend [00:01:00] some stories and some, some journey of my own.

Donna Ferris: Well, thank you so much. And we'll just start off, I mean, with the COVID 19 story, and how you started your business. I think this will be very helpful to a lot of people who face difficult times in their business and their career and how to overcome them.

Tami Adams: Yeah, for sure. So happy to talk about that.

So, like many during COVID 19 unfortunately I lost my job. So, I was an agent for a large agency representing speaking talent. And you just can imagine the first thing that goes during COVID is meetings and events, i.e. speakers. And so, working for a small business, totally understand that, you know, they had to make decisions.

And unfortunately, a big chunk of us were let go. So that was quite devastating. Not going to lie. Definitely. I think, you know, an interesting thing about life is it's not planned. So, everything could be going so good, and then something comes along, and you're like, life is [00:02:00] life. That's what I like to say when these things happen.

And I had the best year yet and then was really on this beautiful path and vision of having a kid and doing all that stuff. And then life had other plans. And so unfortunately lost my job. In terms of how I got into being an entrepreneur and inspiring and doing my own thing, the reality is, it's so interesting that this is what I do now because for so long, when I was working for others, I always felt I was meant for something bigger.

Like I just had this feeling in me that I was meant to do more, but I didn't know what that looked like on the flip side of that. I never thought entrepreneurship would be a thing because to me, entrepreneurs were the people that I worked with and represented. That was them. They were something extraordinary, which really they are wonderful.

Not going to lie. They're amazing. And they have special skills, but they're just people too. But I had not seen them as that. Like I couldn't see them as people, it was like, they had something extra that made [00:03:00] them, that made them special - able to do their own thing and build their own.

And so it's really interesting that this is what I do now. And so I think I was actually in denial for a little bit. Like I was like, I don't want to work for someone else. But I'm not going to commit to doing my own thing just because, you know, fear. Of the unknown and of the new and starting over, I had been at the agency for 10 years.

Like, that's a decade of doing something that, you know, every day and, you know, all of that. But then, through the encouragement, I have a beautiful community. So I say, I never got here alone, definitely the people in my community, the support, the people around me, my husband, the other speakers that I worked with, all of them, they really just kind of stuck by me and, and encouraged me and reminded me how awesome I am and that I can do it because sometimes we need that, right, we need that extra encouragement.

And cause we can get in our heads. And I always say your mind is a beautiful thing and also a very dangerous thing at times. And they encouraged me. And then honestly, little by little, it's [00:04:00] so funny because I was reflecting on my journey the other day. And I'm like, how did I do this?

How did I possibly get here representing eight speakers, really making a difference in the world, and so many other things, like bringing on team members, making it a women's enterprise, and just all these things? It's those little steps. It was like, okay, I'm going to focus and do this now.

Now I'm going to focus and do this. Now I'm going to focus and do this. Now I'm going to do this and many failures along the way and many lessons that also fail lessons. I call them that because they are lessons. I would say that courage came from my community. Really just kind of working on my mindset and, anybody can do anything they want. They just have to really put their mind to it, strive for it, and have the opportunity, which I did. Cause I do recognize that I had the opportunity in the moment as well

Donna Ferris: And it sounds like you also bit it off in smaller chunks too.

I think it can feel very overwhelming, but it sounds like you took it one step at a time a little bit [00:05:00] too.

Tami Adams: Oh, totally. I mean, I had moments like in December when I was really burnt out. I was not fully, but I was on the verge of burnout and overwhelmed. And some days I still feel, you know, today was a little bit of a day where I was like, there's a lot going on.

It's okay. Focus, Tami, you know, it's a lot of self-talk and mindset work that you have to do like a muscle. Your mind is a muscle just like anything else. Right. You have to look at it as a big picture, especially as an entrepreneur, because you need to know where you're going, but then you need to just kind of focus and narrow in on certain things.

So, for example, getting a really good website done took six months for me. I had a temporary website, and then, over time, I could work on this, whereas if I looked at this massive project, I don't know if I ever would have even started, but I was like, okay, little bit by little bit.

So it's like taking it in little chunks, taking life in little chunks, and just doing our best. I mean, my mindset is the biggest thing that I have learned and focus on the most [00:06:00] because it is the thing that we have the most control over. And it really can change perspectives, help you suffer less, and get through many different things.

Donna Ferris: Yeah, I definitely would agree with that. And it's interesting because you went through a transformation, and then your focus is on folks with transformational stories. Can you tell me a little bit about some of the speakers and how you found those speakers? What do you look for in a speaker?

Tami Adams: I found them through various mediums, people coming to me, me looking up to them, people I knew already. So that's kind of how I found

them. But really, it's funny. I get this question a lot. What is your criteria? And so it's not like a, okay, check, check, check, kind of criteria.

I'm a big believer in instinct and intuition, so that's a big part that I use as well. I know it sounds fluffy for all the data people out there, but I would say for me, it's definitely a mix of intuition and gut, but also really looking at how they are going to transform the audiences.

What are they going to [00:07:00] bring? It shouldn't just be about the keynote spot; it really has to encompass the whole thing. And because I also come from an event planning background, I have that creative mindset to integrate the speaker.

And what is the transformation that you wanna see in your audience, and how can the speaker make that happen more? So I really look for people who are going above and beyond. Very service and value-oriented, that is; this will sound funny, but a decent human being with good values, goals, a good outlook on life, and a difference they want to make.

That's really important to me. And I have a soft spot for that, but definitely for entrepreneurs. I have a soft spot for the tragedy-triumphant story because I think the greatest learning happens in those failures. I saw a quote recently in a book I was reading, and it was like, yeah, you can't learn without failing first.

I thought that was really interesting. And obviously, a big factor is their ability to engage a crowd on stage. We have an elevated level of speakers; they are the [00:08:00] pros. So, we are definitely looking at their stage presence and their ability to engage in their ability to customize, too.

That's really important today. In the past, clients might have been okay with just being entertained by a keynote if that was the purpose, but now it's like, we want to be entertained, but we also still want to have those tangible takeaways because nobody has time to just sit around and be entertained anymore.

Like, there has to be something that they can easily draw out.

Donna Ferris: Makes a lot of sense. I think you want to have somebody who's been through a difficult time, and that's how we learn. I think that's, that's the only way we learn. It's if we're broken open enough to learn. And I think that's where your speaker can share what they've learned then people will get interested in the story and, and will listen. I think that, that sounds like that's what's happening.

Tami Adams: 100%. There's a huge focus right now on that authentic, genuine human connection story. Like the number one [00:09:00] thing that we hear the most is You're so real. You're so honest.

You're so human. Like they love that about our speakers. We hear lots of other great things too, but I would say one of the biggest is that they're just relatable and they're human, and it's that element where people can see themselves within that person and see their own journeys and take their own, skills and tools from it.

But yeah, it's been a big focus. So it's very important part of what we do for

Donna Ferris: Excellent. What are some of the biggest challenges you faced in starting your business and, really, in this business of speaking?

Tami Adams: I love this question. Which one do you want? I have to go back to the mindset.

Like, I know I keep talking about it, but that has been my biggest challenge. I've had opportunity and what I mean by that is I recognize that not everybody has the same opportunities as others or is in the same situation as others. You know, I don't have kids yet, I had a husband that supported me.

So, I had some opportunity that helped. But I, [00:10:00] I would say the biggest challenge was the mindset of like, just constantly having to put yourself out there vulnerably and authentically, because especially in what I do, it's really, I don't like the word sales, but it's relationship building, connecting with other people, i.e. sales. And showcasing the value of what we offer and to constantly do that, even as an extrovert to people who may ignore you for a while, or, you may not hear back, and you're just like to constantly do that. It really takes something because it's like, you have to really have this good mindset of like, you're offering value.

You're not bothering them because you're giving them something worth their knowing. You know the impact that the speaker is going to have is literally going to transform their people, and you just have to get through the noise. So it really takes a lot of self-confidence, self-work, and mindset work, so that's been the biggest challenge.

I think that's why I was burnt out in December. But in the new year, I started [00:11:00] doing confidence-building things like 30-day challenges, where I would challenge myself to do a task. One of them was really fun.

Because why not make it fun if it's going to be a challenge? And so one of them was actually to learn a new person's name. One thing about them and where I met them. For 30 days straight. I could write it down, but I had to remember the next day, and I actually did it. But it was so cool because I got to connect with people as well, and my husband's like, are you going to just turn to someone at a coffee shop?

I was like, yep, I can do it right now. And I literally turned to someone. I was like, hi. And then I told them what I'm up to and, and I said, tell me something about you. And they laughed. And then I learned that they're like an animator. It was so cool. And then I remembered their name.

Now, I'm way better at remembering people's names, but it's also a commitment. Not every day is easy to do it because you might get busy or forget and come up with excuses. But this commitment built my confidence and a bunch of other [00:12:00] things.

I think challenges will always come, and we will always have to overcome them, figure out ways, and learn something new. But if we ourselves can take care of ourselves—and that's another thing I was not doing, Donna—I was not taking care of myself. I was working extra for way too long.

I was burning myself out. But the reality is, you cannot be your best self if you're not at your best. When I recognized this need for self-care, I really made that a priority. So now it's a priority and I have very strict regulations on how late I'll work regardless of the work.

And it sounds interesting because then you almost get this: what's the word business imposter syndrome? This will sound funny, but I had people being like, “Oh, you're an entrepreneur. You must work till like 10 o'clock at night. You must work all weekends.” And I'm sitting there like, no, but then you almost feel guilty that you don't.

It's such a weird, weird thing.

Donna Ferris: Yeah. It's funny [00:13:00] you said it's like an imposter syndrome, and what I just heard recently is that imposters do not have imposter syndrome. I love that line. Isn't that a good one?

Tami Adams: Yeah, that's a good one.

Donna Ferris: And I think cause when you are trying to achieve, and you are driven, you know, in a passion project, you can get imposter syndrome. And I think it's just really important as part of your mindset to know that imposters can't get imposter syndrome.

We get it because we care so much about what we're doing and don't believe in ourselves at that moment.

Tami Adams: I like that one. And I think just to go to other challenges, I think another big challenge was just doing it all. That is because you're so divided, and you have to do it all.

And there's some things I really don't like, like, I really don't like doing the financial administrative stuff. Processing systems was not my forte, but you [00:14:00] learn, and I love doing standard operating procedures now. Cause I'm like, ooh, my brain on paper. So I don't have to repeat myself 10 times is the best.

The second biggest challenge was definitely doing it all and just being so divided and overwhelmed. And time is a big challenge. But then that led me to read some business books, which have been literally life-changing for me this year. That led me to hire a coordinator and a salesperson in addition.

So that's just very new, but, you know, it's been really beautiful to see other people want to be part of something that you've created. Oh, again, you're like, how did I do this? But to also get help and know that, you can kind of have some support as well.

And the book I read is *Buy Back Your Time*.

Donna Ferris: My therapist says, where can you throw money at it? And, I do think that it's really helpful to remember that you can. You can throw money at something and have somebody [00:15:00] else do it so you can free up your time.

Tami Adams: Yeah.

Donna Ferris: What are three or four things that someone should do if they want to become a speaker and share their message?

Tami Adams: Yeah, I love answering this question because this is what I do a little bit through the coaching portion of my business.

The biggest thing is having a clear message. I really, stress that. I run into a lot of speakers; they're like, I can speak about anything. I've done everything. And it's nice. But then we don't know what you're an expert in, and you become an expert in nothing.

And it doesn't have to be super profound. It doesn't have to be a brand new concept. A lot of what the speakers talk about are actually similar, but it's about the way they position it and how they make themselves unique and different. And that could just be a marketing branding thing.

If you're talking about mental health, there are many speakers. But how do you stand out as a mental health expert? What is something unique or a unique way that you present the information? It's getting clear on that message.

I think that's really key first, and to get there, it might take you [00:16:00] doing some speeches here and there, just little opportunities that might come across your way to see if you like it. You know that's really important for us because it is not an easy thing to do.

And then test out a few things and see what resonates with people. That's a good way to do it. Once you have a clear message or idea, and obviously there are people who can help you do that, too, you don't have to do everything on your own.

Then it's really like, I call it the 90-person list because 100 just seems too daunting, and why not 90? And it's who do they know within their network that knows other people within their network, their friends, their family, you know?

That may be working at companies or organizations that book speakers that might be able to give you an opportunity. You start there because it's not the easiest going out in this world and getting through all the notes, so why not start with the people who love you and know you and like you already so that you can start getting that confidence built up and also get some, good, honest feedback because they tend to be the ones that will give you the good, honest feedback as well.

Tami Adams: Cause I always say that as Canadians, we're really nice. Yeah. And we don't know what we don't know before we know it. And so like, if somebody is watching a speech and they're like, oh, that was good, or that was really bad, but like, it's never like work on this, work on that other, unless you're doing what I do.

And then you're trained to look for that. But it's kind of funny. To get honest feedback, I think it's always important to have somebody that you really trust, and that is confident enough to give that to you. So definitely. It's a gift. And then tell the world, like start posting about what you want to talk about.

Start doing little videos. You know, LinkedIn is the best platform for business. So it is where all the clients hang out. And so, start doing little videos like that, little articles, blogs, just sharing your thought leadership on whatever the topic might be or the idea that you might have, and people will start to notice.

So those are three main ones, I guess. There are a lot more.

Donna Ferris: That was great. And maybe let's talk a little [00:18:00] bit about some of the stories you've heard over the years. What is maybe one or two stories that resonated with you that you got the chance to hear from your speakers?

Tami Adams: One of the ones that I really liked is from our recognition and culture experts, Sarah. She shares a story in some of her keynotes where her friend, unfortunately was diagnosed with cancer, a terminal cancer.

And she was going through chemo and all of that. And, while she was going through chemo at the hospital, I just love this story. She saw the nurses and this was during COVID too. When they were with the patient, they would be super happy and outgoing and like, really helping them.

But as soon as they walked away, you could see their shoulder slump, their burnout; you could see it in them. And she was like, “Well, I'm going through a crappy thing right now and I don't feel good. So how can I make myself feel good while making them feel good?” [00:19:00] And so she got a whole bunch of Sarah's recognition compliment cards, and I wish I had one I could show, but they're these little compliments that say I recognize you because you are good at this.

It's these little compliment cards—literally, there are 52 of them—that you can write a little kudos on. She started handing them out to the nurses, the doctors, and everyone, and it actually created this ripple effect where people were recognizing each other. She could literally see the transformation in them because of this little thing she did.

I'm happy to say that she's now in remission. So, I love that story. I get goosebumps because there are so many, but that one really always stuck out to

me because it's such a beautiful example of never underestimating the power of a compliment and the message that Sarah puts out into the world in terms of our organizations and creating those happy, healthy, engaged workplaces.

So I really, really like that.

Donna Ferris: I [00:20:00] love that. Thank you. That's a great story. And I think it helps because sometimes we get really overwhelmed with what's happening in the world and what can you do? And this is something you can do. You can do this thing.

Tami Adams: These compliment cards are the best.

I have a pack. I gave a pack to my husband. So anytime we receive great service, we give it out. And often, the service providers are the ones who don't get recognized much for what they do because they're just expected to do it. It's cool. Like, I still remember this one lady at this Portuguese restaurant.

I could just tell that like, something was going on there. Like they were pissed at each other. Those two employees, like they were not getting along, and the lady just looked so miserable. And so at the end, I gave her a compliment card, and her reaction made me laugh because she was like, "This is for me? Do I get to keep it? Or do I have to pass it off?" And then she says thank you. And she cracked a little smile. It wasn't a big one, but it was like [00:21:00] a little. That was all I was looking for. If I can get her to crack, even like a smirk.

So, and then it was cute. She put it in her little pocket, and you never know. She'll reflect on that. I have people that come back to me like, Tami, I still have your recognition cards that you gave me, or there's a coffee shop I go to and I see it's posted up on their board that I gave them.

So it's like, yeah, that's just such a beautiful story.

Donna Ferris: Yeah, it is. And it, it just reminds us like everybody really just wants a little bit of happiness and a little bit of grace from each other. That's a really beautiful thing to remember.

Tami Adams: Yeah. There's a little bit of an empathy shortage in the world. And I think it's just because of everything that's going on. It's like you constantly get knocked down and constantly negativity. Well, what's going to happen is your empathy will go down. Right. So, yeah, it's one of those things that I think is just a beautiful way to bring more empathy.

And I [00:22:00] think that's why that transparent, honest kind of message resonates. It's because it's like showing empathy through your own story for others. And what they might go through,

Donna Ferris: Yeah. And it comes back to your mindset too, that you were talking about earlier that you need to have, you need to work on your mindset and, and that's all internal, what we take in and how we process it is all up to us.

Tami Adams: I will tell you, I have seen, I don't even know. I stopped counting because there are so many speeches that I've seen in my life. And the number one theme when it comes to thriving and surviving is that it's internal. It's not external. You don't get it from out there. You get it from in here. We just have to constantly remind ourselves and work on that.

Donna Ferris: Yeah. I call it the mind game. I'm just finishing a book I'm publishing now, and there's a whole chapter two of the idea of the mind game that you can decide how you're going to respond to any event. Not saying that it's easy. All of the things you talked about, you have to do the self-care, and you have to do all the other stuff [00:23:00] too, to make it possible that you can do that.

But it really is a thing that you can control, on a good day.

Tami Adams: I go back to when we learned to walk. It wasn't easy. We had to do it about 200 times before we even got it right. And even then, we were wobbly, funny-looking, unbalanced. But then we learned it, right?

Nothing is easy. Nothing worth it is easy. And I know that's like so overused and said, but it's so true. It's like, nothing is meant to be easy. And then when you get the things that are easy, it's probably because you've been through something that's not as easy. So to you, that's easy.

Yeah, it's that practice and that grit. And I definitely recommend anybody who wants to really just own their life and transform into an entrepreneur because you definitely learn a lot about yourself and grow. I'm a completely different person than I was three years ago.

Personality is [00:24:00] the same, but mindset is different.

Donna Ferris: And you've been living at the edge of your comfort zone, I would bet. So that, I think, there's nothing like that, that's getting on the edge of the comfort zone.

Tami Adams: Yeah, that's so true. There's nothing greater.

That's definitely true.

Donna Ferris: Is there anything that I should have asked or you want to share before we tie up?

Tami Adams: I think it's just the encouragement that if you want to do something, if you have an idea, if you have a business, it doesn't have to be a business.

If there's something that you want to do, stop getting in your own way. I think that's my advice. It really is because I am a big example of someone who still, at times, gets in our own way with certain things. No one's perfect, and I think we will never be perfect, but if we can figure out that we are the ones preventing us from achieving what we want to achieve, we will.

And obviously, like I said, opportunity circumstances do take place. So, we might not be able to do it at the rate of other [00:25:00] people. Also, stop comparing. Comparisonitis is so dangerous, it really is. I still remember in my first year, I saw a post, and it was from somebody who started a business.

And she was like, I just reached a hundred thousand in my first year. And I literally was judging and comparing myself to someone that I know nothing about; I have no idea how she got there, when she got there, what her resources were, like nothing. It was irrational to compare, but we did it.

I have some book recommendations if you're open to that. I just read some really good books recently. The one I mentioned briefly was *Buy Back Your Time* by Dan Martell. It's a really good one. It is designed for entrepreneurs, but it has a lot of messages that can relate to others.

And then *Never Split the Difference* is another one. I can't think of the author's name right now, but it is so good. It is a negotiation one, but it's really about human psychology. It's actually about human psychology and how negotiating and getting anybody on with your [00:26:00] ideas with anything, whether it's sales or you want to present a new idea to your team or whatever, is all done through emotion.

So it was really, really interesting. Then I'm reading *Diary of a CEO* right now, and he's just got some really cool lessons about life and different things that helped him as a CEO. And the first one—guess what it starts with? You. Self-

care. So I thought that was kind of funny because that's his first section of the book, and it's all about you.

Donna Ferris: And I think that's true of, like, C suite and corporate America. I think that part of the reason they get there is because they found a self-care regimen because you have to.

Tami Adams: You have to. It's non-negotiable. Because what's gonna happen if you don't put it first is you're just gonna burn out and get sick, and then you're gonna literally have to recover from that, and who knows how long that's gonna take.

I wrote an article, and it was for the events industry because event professionals tend to be really terrible at self-care. We're getting better, but we burn ourselves out and also we have really long hours that we have to work at certain [00:27:00] times.

But it was, self-care doesn't need to look a certain way. And again, no, no comparing, it really doesn't have to look a certain way.

My message was that it just needs to exist. One thing I might have time for is going outside in the sun, and I stand like this with my eyes closed for like a minute. And so I'm in the city. Some people think I'm crazy. But then they also think it's normal, so it's like, you know, I don't care.

Like to me, I call it sunbathing. And it's because I grew up in the wilderness. I grew up outside. To me, that makes me happy. If I get some sun, I literally feel the difference. And there's also science behind that as well, for those science people out there. So that's like one thing. Or I might just do a 10-minute walk or read one chapter of my book. Whatever it is, there's just something that I do each day that has just, it could just be the smallest thing.

Because I'm as busy as many out there, it doesn't have to look someday; it just needs to exist.

Donna Ferris: That's a really good [00:28:00] piece of wisdom to share and end with. And it doesn't have to be big. It can be just the smallest thing, but it's making sure you're taking care of yourself in the moment you give to yourself.

Tami Adams: Yeah, 100%. 100%.

Donna Ferris: Awesome. Thank you so much for making the time and sharing all your wisdom with everybody. If anybody's interested in Tami and the Speakers Interagency, we'll have those links in the show notes.

Tami Adams: Yeah. And thanks, Donna, for creating spaces like this, that we can share, you know, and help each other.

I love the podcast overall. And I think, yeah, you're going to continue to help many, many people through other people's stories.

Donna Ferris: Thank you. That's the hope.

Tami Adams Thanks, Donna.

Donna Ferris: That's all for today. If you want to learn more about Tami and TA Speakers Management, the links are in the episode notes. Thank you so much for listening. I hope this episode was helpful. If it was, please subscribe, drop a review, or share it with your friends and family. That's the best way to get it in the hands of [00:29:00] those who may benefit. And if my daughters Sienna and Sylvie are listening,

I just want you to know how proud I am of you, and I love you so much. Bye now.