

# How to Cultivate an Entrepreneurial Mindset | Linda Chiou | TEDxKerrisdaleLive

Video Transcript from Tedx Talks: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=niOV\\_jSVCKs](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=niOV_jSVCKs)

## Intro

Study hard and get good grades. Go to a good university, start a respectable, stable career, and make lots of money. Anyone who's grown up in a traditional Asian family like me knows these mantras well. They're ingrained in us from an early age, and it's an expectation—a given—that we'll follow it through. Our parents teach us that these are the foundations of early adulthood and will lead us to happiness.

Most people like me do follow these essential steps in our adolescent years. But it wasn't enough for me. Even though I checked all of these boxes off, I didn't feel happy or fulfilled. Something felt like it was missing, and I wanted more from life.

Although I diligently studied hard for years, graduated from a great university, and landed a competitive corporate job, I didn't feel fulfilled. It wasn't inspiring, and it just wasn't enough. To me, happiness is more important than a career or money. If your career is stressing you out and not bringing you joy, then for me personally, it's not worth the time investment.

Money is something that you can recuperate, regenerate, and rebuild. But time is something that you can never get back. So if you're in a job that is not bringing you joy on a daily basis, you need to ask yourself: What am I doing this for? And then ask yourself: If not this, then what?

What can I do to help me align myself more closely with my values? What can I do to help me take significant steps towards achieving my dreams? What can I do to make myself feel happier and more fulfilled?

Because ultimately, your job is your life and happiness—and that should be your ultimate priority.

Now don't get me wrong. I don't want you to leave this hall tonight, phone up your boss, and quit your day job right now. That would be a bold move. But what I do mean is that I want you to start thinking about what is possible, what your potential is, and what your definition of success and happiness is—and how you can achieve it.

And that's why I'm here talking to you guys today. This is the story of embarking on my entrepreneurial journey, and I hope that it can inspire and encourage you to chase your dreams—or at the very least, to get you thinking about how you define success and how you can feel more fulfilled in your life path.

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From a young age, I've always been entrepreneurial. I guess you can say it's like an instinct. When I turned 16, I did what a lot of kids do and I worked different jobs to bring in some spare cash. I worked at a pizza store, I did cold calls, and I worked retail. I was still working hard at school, and I was motivated to stick to my after-hours jobs because although they were pretty mind-numbing, they were giving me real-world experience and brought in the income I needed to invest into business ideas that I had dreamt about in high school.

Fast forward three years, and I'd started my first side hustle—an e-commerce dress store offering drop shipping, a contact lens brand, and a hair extension company. Now, they all failed miserably, but I was undeterred. I could feel myself growing and improving every day, so I kept myself busy by brainstorming ideas for new businesses as I continued my studies.

Soon after I graduated university and began working my 9-to-5 corporate job—an advertising role at a marketing agency—which was actually a dream job for me at first, but slowly and steadily lost its charm. I learned a lot from the team and I got some great experience, but after three years there, I felt completely stuck. I didn't have my own voice. I felt like I lost my spark, unmotivated, and there was limited room for growth.

The routine and ritual of the corporate world—it was driving me down into a state of habitual coma. I was just going through the daily motions, and I knew I had to get out.

But how?

I remember the day that I was not allowed to take time off for a wedding. This was a moment that I'll never forget. Was this job that valuable to me—to give up a once-in-a-lifetime, cherishable moment for someone very close to me?

I felt trapped, and I had a feeling of uneasiness that my job could ultimately dictate how I spend the rest of the days of my life. And I know this sounds dramatic, but I didn't want to work to live—I wanted to live to work. I yearned for the freedom that would allow me the opportunity to choose my own schedule and, at the same time, to do the things I loved while also traveling and working.

And I quickly realized that the only way to do that was on my own terms—and to be my own boss.

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So I decided to start another business. This time, it was swimwear. Now, an e-commerce swimwear company might seem a bit unusual, but when I was a kid, I was always sketching up different fashion designs, and I was fascinated by the fashion and beauty industry.

It just so happened that my best friend in LA at the time was the perfect partner to start this venture with. Although after graduation we'd moved to different cities, we still linked up for

tropical vacations. And it was actually on a trip to Mexico when we noticed there was a gap in the swimwear market.

Being petite Asian girls ourselves, we noticed that there weren't many bikini brands out there that flattered petite bodies. We also loved lace fabric, but there was only one other brand out there at the time doing lace in a flattering way that you could wear onto the beach. And so we found our niche—and our business idea was born.

She handled the creative content and photography, and I handled the manufacturing side, the operations, and the marketing. It turned out to be a great side hustle that allowed me to work after hours when I finished the daily grind of my corporate job.

So I continued loathing my day job and loving my online business for another year.

Now that my swimwear business was operating smoothly, I decided it was time to start another entrepreneurial adventure. I started this with another close friend of mine, who I actually connected with through a photo shoot for my swimwear brand.

For this one, our focus was on beauty. Our idea was to use her technical skills as a permanent makeup artist to train other aspiring artists in the industry—how they could start their own profitable beauty businesses.

So we created a course booklet, we put together a custom course kit, and our beauty academy was born. It was online-based, but we also had a brick-and-mortar store for training.

As you can imagine, by this point I was building financial freedom—but my life was getting pretty hectic. My two side hustles were growing exponentially, and as a result, my schedule was getting really tough to balance.

I knew I couldn't grow my businesses without putting 100% of the time and dedication into them. So something had to give.

And as you can guess—that's right—I took a very deep breath and I finally quit my day job completely.

Now, don't be under any illusion. I didn't stroll out of the office that day on cloud nine with a spring in my step and a huge smile on my face. Quite the opposite—I was absolutely terrified. My corporate job was my only backup if these businesses failed. So now, my financial safety net was gone.

But I continually pushed any fearful thoughts from my mind because I didn't want to have that kind of mindset anymore.

### **Mindset Change**

That type of thinking had kept me in the rat race for too long already. So I replaced those negative thoughts with the idea that these businesses could not—and would not—fail. But I had

to be realistic too. I knew that all businesses have good times and bad, and I was prepared for those. I was prepared to deal with the stresses that would surely come because I knew I finally had a real shot at living my life the way I wanted to live it. And by working on projects I loved and for reasons that I felt were of real value—well, it worked.

And I feel so blessed.

Two years later, my beauty business expanded to offer over ten different courses, and we have classes in four different cities across the US and Canada, with eight talented instructors recognized in their fields. And my swimwear company really took off too. Two years ago, I achieved my goal of bringing my brand to Miami Swim Week.

Now, I don't have a fashion education—just a passion for design and a commitment to the business. So making it to Miami Swim Week really was a wish that became a reality. Since then, we've been published in print, shot by extraordinary photographers, and worn by influencers and talent across the world.

This has opened so many doors for me, and I've since started my own manufacturing and design firm as well. We've been supported by so many wonderful people in so many different ways. That help and support has been such a crucial element of our success—and it'll be a crucial element of yours too.

Being able to provide an individual with all the tools they need to become a successful and happy entrepreneur is truly rewarding.

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## Top 5 Tips

I'm so grateful that I'm in a position today to be able to give that gift to others—helping them build their own profitable businesses and hearing their success stories. How they've gone on to open their own brick-and-mortar beauty studios, or started teaching, or have become reputable artists in the industry—is indeed what drives me to do the things I do today.

It's also why I'm standing here today—to offer you my top five tips for cultivating an entrepreneurial mindset and for starting your own entrepreneurial journey.

**First**, let's start with the most important thing: your passion—your reason for being, for doing. Now, being an entrepreneur is not for everyone. As an entrepreneur, you'll be living and breathing your business 24/7. So it needs to be something that brings you joy, something that doesn't even feel like work, and something that you'll do regardless of the money.

The stress of being an entrepreneur can make you feel so overwhelmed at times, so it's crucial that you do what you love and love what you do.

**Second**, people always ask me, “When should I launch my business?” There really is no correct answer, and there is really no way to launch a perfect product from the beginning. So my second

tip for you is just to focus on your niche. Perfect your product or service as you go and learn from your customers. Just make sure that your brand's core business values and mission statement are always being honored. Stay authentic to your audience and find out how you can stand apart from your competitors.

**Third** is to build a trusted and talented team. Partner with individuals who have the skills and knowledge that you do not. Your success is dependent on what everyone can bring to the table. So communicate, collaborate, and elevate each other.

In addition, network and build a personal support system of like-minded entrepreneurs. Having a strong community around you is essential to open doors for you and to help you grow. Rely on your mentors for advice and support, and don't let pride get in the way of asking for help. Remember the mantra: *Teamwork makes the dream work.*

**Fourth** is to embrace failure. Failure will be a part of your journey to success. But when you feel like you want to quit, just remember why you started this journey in the first place. I have a lot of mentors who have guided me through my journey and role models who inspire me. You'll need them when times get tough and you feel like throwing in the towel. Have faith in yourself and hang in there. Learn from the losses and celebrate and appreciate the wins.

**Finally**, set small, achievable goals. It's easy to lose sight of the finish line when it's so far away. So to help you get to your destination, break down your huge tasks into more manageable to-dos. This way, you can hold yourself accountable and stay focused on making progress. Remember: *Consistency is key.*

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## Summary

So there we go—five things that'll help set you up for success in your own entrepreneurial venture. But of course, I don't have all the answers. I still make mistakes, and I'm still learning and growing. And I still have a lot of unfinished business. There's a long bucket list of things that I want to achieve in the future for my current businesses, and I've since started more new ventures.

But most importantly, I want to continue mentoring young women and help them achieve their entrepreneurship goals. As cheesy as it might sound, the freedom of working for yourself, doing something you love, and making a good living from it is truly priceless. And there's no reason why you can't do it too.

There will be a huge number of challenges, a lot of negativity from others, and periods where you don't see any growth and may be tempted to give it all up. But never let go of your dream. Don't be embarrassed by failures or care what others think of you. Instead, use each setback as a learning lesson from which you can grow and improve—and come back even stronger and wiser.

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**Outro**

And most important of all—don't underestimate yourself. There are plenty of people in the world who are ready to do that for you. Your entrepreneurial journey may be an uphill battle, but it'll be very rewarding. So don't forget to stop and savor the moment—and enjoy the journey to success.

Thank you.