

Ep #95: Understanding Your Passive Consumption Habit



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With Your Host

Kristi Angevine

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Welcome to Episode #95. I'm Kristi Angevine, and I'm here to help you understand why you do what you do, so you can be more intentional and live your life on purpose instead of on autopilot.

In today's episode, I'm discussing the difference between consumption of information and application of information. This episode is perfect for you if you're a consummate student, and you love, love, love to learn things, but you aren't making the changes or taking the action that you'd like. Let's get started.

Welcome to *Habits On Purpose*, a podcast for high-achieving women who want to create lifelong habits that give more than they take. You'll get practical strategies for mindset shifts that will help you finally understand the root causes of why you think, feel, and act as you do. And now, here's your host, Physician, and Master Certified Life Coach, Kristi Angevine.

Hello, hello, everybody. Thank you so much to those of you who've taken time to write a podcast review. I read every single one, and they really mean so much to me. If you want to take time to leave one, I would be oh, so grateful. It helps the podcast be more discoverable. It helps people find it. It helps people be able to listen.

So, in my life right now, I have just exited a very busy season. There's been lots of travel, going to conferences, speaking, going to retreats, lots of travel for kiddo's soccer staff, and just a bunch of needing to be places without much downtime in between.

Concurrent with all this, we got a puppy. I think I've mentioned it in the past. And we've had a variety of 'life being life' challenges. I'm going to be honest, it's been really hard. I'm great at pushing through things, and kind of not noticing or even acknowledging how challenging things are as I go through them. Frankly, as a way to cope.

Even as I know this about myself, I still experience it firsthand. So, now that things have slowed down, and the tendency to go-go-go and survive really isn't required right now, the difficulty of how things have been is so much more clear, and so much more palpable to me.

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Basically, I've had lots of opportunities recently to be with some uncomfortable and big feelings, and practice the very things that I teach on the podcast. In a future episode, I'm going to make a list of the top tools and practices that have been so helpful to me, that essentially have been a lifeline to me. So, keep an ear out for that one in the future.

Now, if you're new to the podcast, welcome. I'm so glad that you're here. If you listen every week, thank you so much for keeping me in your rotation. Today, I'm going to talk about a habit that I have intimate familiarity with, and it's the habit of consumption of information without application. Otherwise known as "passive consumption."

I'm going to define passive consumption. I'm going to tell you what the problem is with it, why we do it, and then how to change. So, what exactly is passive consumption? To passively consume things is essentially a habit where you consume lots of information via books, podcasts, programs, blogs, YouTube videos, and courses, but you don't take the things you learn and apply them.

You don't use the information to make a decision or take action. This is you if you find yourself saying, "Oh, I signed up for so many things, so many courses, but nothing's actually changed in my life." So, who cares? What's the problem with passive consumption?

When you passively consume without implementing what you've learned, it's the equivalent of buying a lot of cookbooks that you never use. You become a master at acquisition, without any skill at application. And without application, your really good ideas go stale. Nothing you want to change budges.

It's book smarts, without street smarts. You become very well educated, but stuck. Now, as someone who used to be a master at consuming things, I know this habit so well. So, let's discuss why we do this. And then, I'm going to move on to help you know if you're doing it.

Because sometimes it's really obvious. Some of you listening are nodding, you know this is you. And at other times, it's a sneaky habit. So, I'm going

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to flesh out what it looks like to have this habit, and then what it looks like to have a habit of implementation.

First of all, why on earth do we passively consume information without applying what we learn? There are several reasons. The first of which is, it's safe. It's comfortable to read and listen, and not try out an idea in the wild. We don't have to do anything. We don't have to risk the messiness of learning what works and learning what doesn't. We avoid failing. It's essentially auditing the class versus taking the class for an important grade.

Next, we passively consume because it actually feels like we're doing something productive. This is in part because some knowledge acquisition is useful. It's actually helpful for making change. So, we can actually mistake the knowledge consumption for productive action, and simply not appreciate that we're spending more time doing that than actually taking action and doing anything.

Then, we have to admit that it's, frankly, fun. Some of us love to learn; the more the better. We have this natural curiosity. We would be college students forever if we could. There's this intrinsic pleasure in absorbing information, making connections, and getting new ideas to noodle on.

Last of all, we might not even realize that we are doing the habit of passive consumption. This is because it feels so comfortable. It might even seem like part of our identity, and we don't even see that we're doing it. We may simply think that we are just very detail oriented, we're meticulous researchers, or we take a long time to make decisions. That's just us. That's who we are.

When really, it's not some genetic predisposition. It's not some fixed personality trait so much as a learned approach, repeated over and over and over, such that we don't even notice it. But there comes a point of diminishing returns, where consumption of information shifts from important to a substitute for taking action.

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When we do this chronically we intellectually know a lot, but because we don't implement or apply things that we know in the wild, without action these great ideas remain just that, good ideas in your mind. Basically, unactualized fantasies. Any goals that are related to that information also remain unactualized.

So, let me give you an example. Say you want to refine your public speaking. You want to go from being frozen and nervous to speaking regularly with ease. Maybe you want to do a TED Talk, or have speaking nationally just be a regular part of your work.

To passively consume would look like reading blogs and books about speaking. Signing up for online public speaking courses. Studying different speakers, and not doing any public speaking.

Versus, application would look like some consumption, but it would be paired with actively doing the act of speaking. Giving talks locally. Giving talks by Zoom, and doing webinars. Applying to do talks. Applying to do workshops. Doing live public speaking classes, where you actually have to practice with other humans. And, finding real life ways to work on things.

So, maybe you already know that you have a penchant for passively consuming, or maybe you do it, but like I referenced, it's not so obvious. To help you appreciate where you might have a passive consumption habit, here are some hints that you might be doing it.

You sign up for a ton of things, but you don't see real life change. You have a lot of podcasts that you listen to, a lot of books you buy, a lot of books that you read, but you haven't tried the ideas in them for maybe more than a day or two, if at all.

You get really, really excited when you hear about a new resource. Your initial excitement about something wanes about one third to halfway in. You can generate lots of cool ideas, but you haven't acted on any of them. Analysis paralysis is one of your signature moves. You do more pondering and wondering and hoping and reflection than actually taking action.

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You might be a master planner. Frankly, you prefer planning to overdoing. You fantasize on the perfect execution of the perfect plan. Or you try to apply something, you make a few mistakes, and you think, “Oh, I can't do it,” and then you stop. You see the tedium of doing things as a reason to not do it.

You wonder why nothing has shifted, despite all the things you've learned and all the programs you've done. You perpetually feel like you need more time, without actually taking advantage of the time that you do have. In your view, small actions seem really too silly to be meaningful.

When it comes to time to start something, tomorrow, later, in a while, are always better times to start than right now. When you think of starting, you have a habit of getting overwhelmed, and ultimately doing nothing. Or perhaps procrastinating or buffering with scrolling or food or drink, or all of the above.

Does this sound like you? We passively consume because it's safe. We avoid difficulty and failure. It's fun, it seems productive, and we might not even notice we're doing it. But as much as it enhances our intellect, it does nothing for our real life.

So, what does it look like to shift passive consumption to a habit of implementation? Check this out. With implementation there's a balance between learning and doing. A balance between learning and applying. You apply things regularly. You take lots of action towards your goals. And as you do, you make tons of mistakes.

You anticipate the obstacles to taking action, you anticipate the mistakes, and you plan for what you're going to do with these obstacles. You plan for how you're going to think about these mistakes. You get to work on your ideas by trying, messing up, doing, and adjusting.

You evaluate what's going well, what's not, and you're very clear on what you're going to try next time. In doing this, you normalize mistakes. You, frankly, expect them. You're okay with them. As the lovely Corinne Crabtree

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once said, “You are solid in the idea that you're not fucking up, you're failing up.”

Instead of a to-do list, you have very clear tasks scheduled on your calendar, and you approach them with the same non-negotiable commitment that you would have for getting to work on time, picking up your kids at school, or making a dentist's appointment. You don't daydream or wonder about things without also making a decision and executing on it.

You make lots of decisions, and you trial-and-error things with an air of experimentation. As you do this, you risk mistakes, you risk failing, you risk missing the mark, not getting what you expected, getting messy. To paraphrase Brené Brown, ‘you're getting out of the stands, out of the cheap seats, and into the arena where you're being brave with your own life. And on occasion, you're going to get your ass kicked.’

So, what's the benefit of quitting the passive consumption habit and shifting to application? Well, first, the irony is you actually learn more from application than you do from passive consumption. You can enhance the very learning you love. You also move the needle on things that matter most.

You have a goal and you go for it. You don't half-ass your way toward it, limping along slowly for 20 years. You double down, and with a focused, serious laser ‘eye on the prize’ commitment to doing, you give it a go. It is so much more efficient. Yes, it takes guts, but the payoff is so much better than feeling stuck, or risking the regret of not going for something that deeply matters to you.

So, with all this said, how do you shift the habit of passive consumption to one of active application? Well, first, you need to know what you want. What is your goal? You need to know what this is, and make it very specific.

Then you need to know why you want this specific thing, and know several compelling reasons why. Knowing what you want, gives you a landmark to point toward and reasons to keep going.

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Next, you need to commit to deciding and executing. In other words, you need to prioritize taking action. And knowing that mistakes are the inevitable part of learning. That's it.

Know what you want, know why you want it, and commit to action. And if all this sounds hard, that is totally normal. Just do something. Make a commitment to a tiny, doable action.

The social scientist and researcher at Stanford, BJ Fogg, advocates for tiny habits. He famously said, "Don't tell yourself that you're going to floss all your teeth every day. Just start by flossing one tooth a day." So, you start, by starting. You make it easier to start when you start with a tiny action.

Now, you have to anticipate and monitor for things like overwhelm, freezing, stopping action in favor of returning to passive consumption. So, you need to have a plan, so that when that happens you aren't sideswiped, and you don't get stuck in it.

Let's recap. Passive consumption keeps you in one place, slows your progress and ensures that you're going to have unactualized dreams. It makes sense that we passively consume instead of taking action, because it feels safer. At a deep level in our psyche, safety is paramount.

To implement and apply information requires an openness to mistakes, to messiness, and to failure. And to shift from the habit of consuming to applying, you need to know what you want, and why. You need to commit to taking action, no matter how small. And have a plan for when you don't want to keep going.

Lastly, I want you to consider what you would need to think and believe in order to do this. Maybe something like, "Mistakes are okay. Mistakes are inevitable. Failure paves the path forward." Like I said in Episode 93, "Everything counts, especially the small things." Or, "I get closer to my goal when I let go of trying to achieve perfection."

I like reminding myself, "Imperfect is safe, and things don't have to be perfect to be effective. I'm either winning or learning. And learning, it's just data."

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So, are you in for changing passive consumption to the habit of making decisions and taking action? My last way of persuading you to consider the shift, is to think about when you are in the last few months or the last few years of your life, what do you want to look back on? Boatloads of action? Or volumes of unactualized ideas that you never went for?

Have a beautiful week everyone and I'll see you next week.

If you enjoyed what you listened to this week, let me know. Find me on Facebook at *Habits On Purpose* Facebook group, and consider scrolling down before you listen to the next episode. Let me know what you thought of this podcast with a short review. Literally, a sentence or a phrase about the podcast helps more than you know.

It helps other people find the information here. And, your word of mouth endorsement is better than anything that I can do alone. I know your time is valuable, and I appreciate that it's no small thing to take a moment to do a review. So, thank you so much in advance, it means so much to me if you do it.

If you're listening, and you're thinking you would like help bridging the gap between consumption and application, that's what coaching can do for you. My coaching comes in two flavors, private coaching, and an intimate small group coaching program, with CME, for women physicians.

To learn more about private coaching, go to HabitsOnPurpose.com/private. Or to learn more about the *Habits On Purpose* for Physicians small group coaching program that's going to come up in early 2024, go to HabitsOnPurpose.com/waitlist, to get on the waitlist and be the first to hear about when enrollment opens.

Thanks for listening to *Habits On Purpose*. If you want more information on Kristi Angevine or the resources from the podcast, visit HabitsOnPurpose.com. Tune in next week for another episode.