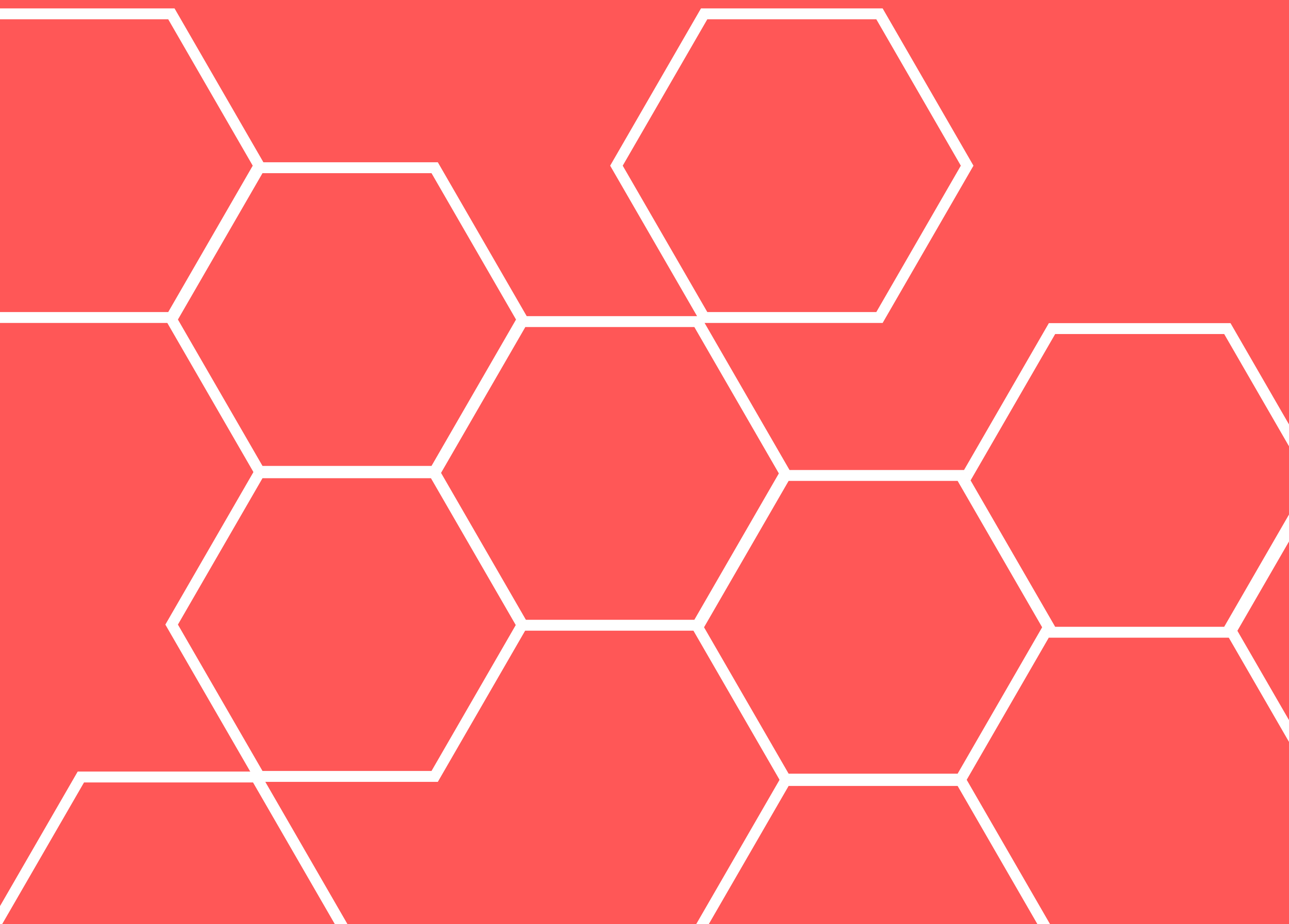


FOUNDERSPLACE.CO PRESENTS:

# FOUNDER'S

## FEAR



## HELLO,

Welcome to a Special Edition TODDcast where we talk about Founders' Fear. It sounds like the beginning of a good Halloween episode, the FEARcast where we play some haunted house music. But this is not a whimsical or lighthearted topic.

Actually, we'll have a little bit of fun, but we're going to talk about something that is really serious for founders. And that is the onset of fear.

Fear is the silent partner with you through every step of your journey as a founder, and fear manifests itself in a variety of untold and unexpected ways. And every founder I talked to over the last 18 months – and even before – all came in and said that fear played a major role in either getting them to where they are now or hindering them for their forward motion.

**So today, let's talk fear.**

## **Now, I am neither a psychologist nor a trained counselor...**

...but you start to see behaviors manifested through fear. You can draw your own conclusions. So today, let's talk about fear.

Fear starts in really three different ways. You can think of it as fear in the beginning, fear in the middle, and fear in the end. Let's break down what each of those are.

- Fear in the beginning would be your fear of failure.
- Fear in the middle is your fear to change.
- Fear at the end is your fear of success or your fear of an exit.

Now, each one is a different type of fear.

Each one manifests and it takes hold of you in different ways. And each of them helps you make irrational decisions that you may not even be aware of. Let's break those all down.

I think many people are aware of the fear of failure. But for the founder, fear of failure is really the fear to start. It's this fear to even take those first couple of steps. If you're a fan Paulo Coelho, who I always butcher his last name, or Joseph Campbell, you understand about the journey that happens for a hero. In here, the hero is the founder. That founder is a person that's going on this journey and trying to make something different of themselves. Now, for the founder, the thing I've found across the board is the founder has a compulsion.



# T O D D C A S T : F O U N D E R ' S F E A R

Think of it this way:

If you're in a normal job, a regular corporate role, you've carved out a perfectly fine life for yourself and most people in those roles are perfectly content. And there's absolutely nothing wrong with that. Their focus is in other areas.

**But for a founder, there's this compulsion to do something different. It's the same compulsion that an addict or someone in recovery has. It's a thing that draws them, it nags at them time and time again.**





## **For the founder, it's really a battle between compulsion and fear.**

You have to do this thing, but fear is standing in my way. Now, maybe you're a founder and you're doing well on your way and you've already overcome this fear. But for many people, there's this compulsion, this desire, this need to do something. That need to do what is different, bigger, extraordinary, and something that they have to tackle.

And fear is the thing that's standing in the way. If we go back to *The Alchemist* or Joseph Campbell – and he has become a bit like what happened to Sun Tzu with the *Art of War* after the movie *Wall Street*: often quoted but seldom read. But there's really something interesting with Campbell in his work of *The Hero of a Thousand Faces* from 1949 and all of his work around myths.

And it's this idea of a journey that the founder has to go on. And I think he puts it best as this quote, "We must be willing to get rid of the life we've planned so that we can have the life that is waiting for us." For every founder that's thinking about this journey, for them, it's almost always the same thing. Nice, comfortable life that they've carved and created for themselves. No matter what stage or age they are, things could go along perfectly fine the way they are. But they decided to go off and do something different, something radical.

# T O D D C A S T : F O U N D E R ' S F E A R

And in the process of doing that, they leave the comfort behind and go on this journey.

Now, the fear plays in on this idea of: I now have to go through this deep, dark jungle.

**I don't know how long that jungle will last, and I don't know what's in it. I don't know what will propel me through it.**

**And going off on my own while I may have this compulsion to do it is a scary, fearful place.**

# T O D D C A S T : F O U N D E R ' S F E A R

And what I've found across the board with all of these founders and all of these conversations is an amazing thing happens when the founders starts to take this journey.

**Suddenly, in that deep dark place, a variety of people suddenly appear: advisors, mentors, helpers, people that are on this journey themselves or have done this journey before them. They've done it multiple times. They advise and help other people along the way. These sage counselors come in and help the founder through that journey, and help them through that deep dark place.**

Now, that jungle may last for six weeks, may last for six days, or it may last for six years. And for each person, the journey that they go through to get to that better, brighter place they're trying to create, can last as long as it needs to. But there are people along the way to help you through that journey.

Once you're through it and you're at this place where you're supposed to be, you're living the life you are supposed to live, you look back and the jungle is not scary anymore. You wonder why you didn't leave the safety of your secure environment beforehand and you now have a group of mentors, advisors who are often sticking with you and helping to propel you going forward. And you never would have found those people had you not taken those first steps and not gone into that proverbial jungle to begin with.



# T O D D C A S T : F O U N D E R ' S F E A R



Now, I know we're starting to sound a little like Nietzsche and looking into the abyss. **But there's certainly something to be said about going in and taking those steps, the first leap into that deep dark place. You have to realize that this is going to be the thing that helps to propel you forward** and gives you the strength, courage, and wisdom to be able to be a successful founder.



## **Fear of failure is the thing that stops us from even starting in the first place.**

I think we're all pretty familiar with that. But here's one that seems to be a surprise for most founders and it's the next step. It's the fear in the middle. You've gone through that journey. You've started down this path and you started building something new and unique. And now there's this fear of change. Fear of change comes in one of two ways.

**It's either the fear to change at all, or it's fear that causes you irrationally to change too quickly. So think about it as “I'm on a path and I will never get off that path” or “I'm on a path, but I'll quickly jump to the next path as soon as I feel like.” Now, the hard part is there's balance in the middle.**

There's healthy change, there's change based on data. There's change based on insight. There's change based on what the market will bear, what the audience or the customer's really going to look for. But that's not the change we're talking about. We're talking about irrational change and the problem with irrational change is you seldom know that it's a irrational change. The first one is: fear of not changing at all. It's also called **Sunk Cost Fallacy**.

# T O D D C A S T : F O U N D E R ' S F E A R

Now, Sunk Cost Fallacy is the same thing that is called The Gambler's Dilemma. It's this belief that the outcome that you have created will be better than the path that you're on today. And what really happens is you believe that you will get something greater by sticking with where you are. The challenge is you've made emotional decisions about the investments you've already made. You have made an emotional decision that you must continue to double down on the path that you're on and never really make the change or pivot that you need to.

**This idea of Sunk Cost Fallacy causes us to stay on a path because we've already invested in that path. And if we just go a little bit further, if we just do a little bit more. If we just invest a little bit more in this, we'll find the results that we need to.**

The problem is this is an emotional decision, not a logical decision. We're basing our future outcomes based on our prior past behaviors. Think of it this way: you've made an investment, you're down a path and you are not going to change no matter what because you've already put time, effort, and energy. You've brought people along for this journey. They're coming along for the ride and you are going to see this through come "hell or high water."

You are tenacious. The problem is, that's an emotional decision, not a logical one. And you're often going to repeat those same behaviors and take you down a path that leads to limited results. The second one is pivoting too quickly. We see this happen all the time out here. As soon as something doesn't quite go right, it's redirecting, readdressing, going in a different direction. It's having thoughts of: "I'm not making enough money," or "I don't have the right customers," or "this isn't moving fast enough."



**What do I  
do?**

## Some of these just take time.

**They take the right seeds to be planted for things to actually take off and work the way that they should.**

I talk to many founders who said, "I stuck it through and I was in that jungle again – that deep, dark place, and I just kept putting one foot in front of the other. Lo and behold, sure enough, the path that I was on was the right one. I had faith in my advisors, I had faith in my mentors, I had faith in my data, I asked the right questions, I looked out in the marketplace and it led me to the place that I needed to be."

But here, unfortunately, in Silicon Valley, the quick result mentality takes hold. And this isn't relegated just to the area between San Francisco and San Jose. This is certainly around the world where if I'm not getting the result that I need, then I have to go in and pivot and make a change as quickly as possible. Again, healthy change is good based on data, research, and insight. But shifting, pivoting, swaying back and forth, trying to find your footing is a recipe for disaster. It is because you're never really finding the right opportunity to match what the needs of your audience or your customers are.

You're not investing, you're just panicking. A panic person is the one that meets a disaster. The calm person finds their way through. Fear takes hold in panic.



# T O D D C A S T : F O U N D E R ' S F E A R

**Now, let's go to the last one: Fear of Success.**

Now, this one we talk about a little bit, you hear this told, it sounds like a first world problem. It's that fear at the end. Fear of success, fear of the exit. Well, fear of success manifests itself in a variety of different ways and it doesn't always happen at the very end. It can happen at the beginning of this journey where you start to make self sabotaging subtle attempts to make sure that you never reach that final destination.

**Now, psychologists had done a lot of research of late and what they found is there's a connection with fear of success that almost mimics PTSD.**

That there's this belief system that if I come to become successful that I get everything that I wanted, that I won't know how to handle it. And there's an emotional trigger that happens with that.

## **This causes self sabotage. It causes procrastination.**

It causes people to make decisions that they may not even be aware of that lead them down a path where success becomes more elusive.

You may not be intentionally sabotaging yourself, but you may stop doing the things that lead you on a path to success. You tend to procrastinate, or spend time on things that sway you and take you in broad, different directions instead of focusing on where you need to go. And then there's also this fear of the exit.

“What am I going to do after? I've now gone through this amazing journey to find my way to become an amazing founder and to build this company. What do I do now?” This is a bigger problem because now you are faced with the mindset of ... I have to start this all over again. You're afraid what would happen to you when all these things are gone. You're asking yourself if you will start over again?

Where you decide to take your journey from this stage is up to you and that's a very personal decision. Do you go take off and live on an island someplace or do you go start it all over again?



# T O D D C A S T : F O U N D E R ' S F E A R

**Even though you have the money, the success, the things that you've all looked for, most founders have that compulsion to start it all over again. They have the urge to do this one more time.**

It's amazing you hear a person saying: "If I had the success that a person had, I'd go buy an island and live on it," and often that's not the key motivator for a founder..





**The  
motivator is  
the journey.  
It's the thing  
that we  
create.**



## So now that you know the journey, you know the steps...

...you know these pivot points, that there's failure that plays a role as a silent partner in the beginning, stops you from starting even in the first place. It's thinking as "if you never start, you can never fail."

Then you have fear in the middle telling you that you either need to stay on the path that you've been on because you've already invested so much time, effort, and energy. Or you need to jump around and find the thing that works because it's just not happening fast enough. And then the last is the fear of success. How do you deal with success? And then what do you do when you achieved it? All of them are difficult, all of them are challenging, all of them are personal.

And again, you hear the same story over over again through 70 in-depth interviews. You hear people say that they've walked through the same thing time and time again. What I'd say is for these steps of the journey, realize that as soon as you take that leap, there are people that appear seemingly out of nowhere every single time to help you on that path. And it's because you're open and willing and interested in having those conversations.

# T O D D C A S T : F O U N D E R ' S F E A R

**That as you get to the middle, there are a team of people who can help you with the irrational thinking. And as you get to the end, realize that there are opportunities for you to sabotage your success.**

**Be aware that you may be doing those, question why, and then understand that you have some decisions to make as to what the end of this journey will look like and where you go from here.**

So that's it. And we've talked about fear. We talked about Joseph Campbell, we talked about journeys, and the different stages. Hopefully, along in your journey, you have decided that there's one or two places where fear is playing that silent partner role with you. You can either turn your back and ignore it where it will pop up and vex you from time to time, or you can embrace it and realize that fear is going to be a part of this and then you have different points along the journey where fear will play a greater role and how do you deal with it.

**If you're interested more in the conversation around fear, please check out the book Beyond Product.**

**It's now available as an eBook.**

You can also follow us along on [FoundersPlace.co](https://foundersplace.co) – the place where exceptional founders grow.

