



## Bonus Interview: Anna Kaufman, Badass Coach

**Deb Elbaum:** Welcome to *In the Right Direction* podcast, where we believe you get to choose what's on your plate, you can manage the overwhelm, and that change is possible. I'm your host, Deb Elbaum, and I'm here to share insights and strategies to increase your happiness one baby step at a time. Let's dive in.

Hi everyone. It's Deb. Today's bonus interview is all about helping you feel empowered as a public speaker. I interview self-proclaimed badass and public speaking coach Anna Kaufman whose business is called Speak Like a Badass. She, of course, serves as chief badass. I met Anna in Toastmasters years ago and was impressed then with her poise, her energy, and her confidence. She's still one of my public speaking role models. In our conversation, we talk all about being a badass, what it means, how to start letting your inner badass out, and how Anna created a whole badass birthday month. Let's dive in. Hi, Anna.

**Anna Kaufman:** Hi, Deb.

**Deb Elbaum:** Chief badass. I love it. Let's talk about that word badass. What is it like walking around every day knowing that you're a badass?

**Anna Kaufman:** It's empowering. It's freeing. It's kind of a superpower in a way. And it's funny, the reaction to that word varies quite a bit because for some people, it's "Oh, no. Are you allowed to say that? Are you allowed to call yourself that? Is that okay? Is it a swear?" And, in other settings, it's very much embraced. I see it everywhere, especially now that I have a business that's called Speak Like a Badass. I seem to find the word everywhere. It exists in so much of our society now and in our culture, and I think the connotation has started to become more positive than it maybe was before.

**Deb Elbaum:** I'm imagining you strutting down the street as a badass, what's your badass walk?

**Anna Kaufman:** Well, I like my signature pink colors, and I'm often in high heels. There hasn't been a lot of leaving the house much for months, but when I do go once in a while, I still bust out the heels. It's a power- It's a walk of confidence, and of- Physically, I think of keeping my back straight, standing straight up, looking forward, fully comfortable in my skin and in myself. And I wish that for everybody. Whether they identify as a badass or not.

**Deb Elbaum:** Yeah, to be fully comfortable in our skin. Wow.

**Anna Kaufman:** I'm not saying that I achieved that goal 100% of the time. I'm only human also. And yet, it's something I strive for.

**Deb Elbaum:** Yeah. So, say someone comes to you, and they're really timid and nervous, and they hate public speaking, and you see that they have an inner badass. What do you say to them?

**Anna Kaufman:** It's about baby steps. Public speaking isn't immediately attractive to everybody, and yet we speak on a daily basis. Now we speak a lot over zoom and over other virtual platforms. And we speak with ourselves; we speak with our family; we speak with our friends. There's so much speaking even if it's not, quote unquote "public," and it's about taking those experiences and getting comfortable with the basics of that, to then translate it into other settings where we're not necessarily as at ease. For example, business meetings or client calls or pitches, elevator pitches, things like that.

**Deb Elbaum:** We are, we're speaking all the time, to ourselves and to other people. If you said-

**Anna Kaufman:** And writing is a form of speaking, writing emails, it's a form of communication.

**Deb Elbaum:** Yes. Speaking of, so the baby steps. What's the first baby step that you might have someone practice and bring to their- their speaking, say at work or in meetings or with colleagues?

**Anna Kaufman:** One of the coaching exercises I use is for people to think about how they want the world to perceive them, talk through some of the adjectives or words or nouns that they would use to have others describe them. Because if they know how they want people to view them. My word- One of my words is "badass," and a lot of times I've found it really powerful in conversations with people. Before they even know the name of my business, they'll use the word badass to me, and that demonstrates that I'm living that word. I'm manifesting that in some way, and people see that. I exude it without even having to use the word. I find that really powerful for people that if you become really clear on how you want others to see you, then it's much clearer for them, it's much easier for others to identify you the way you want to be identified.

**Deb Elbaum:** Absolutely, I like to say the clearer we are in our own head, the clearer we can be out in the world. And we get to tell people, what I hear you saying is, we get to tell people what conclusions to draw about us. So, if we're really clear and say, I have this intention, you're gonna see me as confident. You're gonna see me as energetic, and we have more chance than to be seen that way.

**Anna Kaufman:** Absolutely, of course, it starts with our own internal definition and our own identity. Because if we don't know how people want to see- want to see us or how we want to be seen, then there's no chance they'll see us in a way that's positive or that's helpful to us. We have to mold that into what we want.

**Deb Elbaum:** Yes, taking charge. We get to take charge of our persona, our perso-

**Anna Kaufman:** Definitely, and that doesn't happen overnight, either. It's all about those steps in that journey. When I started identifying myself as a badass, it didn't happen right away that people would call me that without realizing that's what I call myself. But it- When it did start happening, it made it clear to me that it works, and then over time that makes a difference.

**Deb Elbaum:** Do you remember one of the first things that you did once you assumed this identity of badass? Did you do something really crazy?

**Anna Kaufman:** When I started thinking about starting my business, it was around December a couple years ago, and my birthday is in December, and I decided to have a badass birthday month. And I planned out the whole month. Every single day, I would do something badass, something exciting, something new, something different, even just something that made me feel good. And it was something different every day, but sometimes it was making some kind of a bold statement or wearing something badass or going somewhere that made me feel like a badass. It was seeping myself into that. It was doing that every day, and I, for most of a year, spent- kept a journal, and every single day I would write what it was that I did that day that made me feel like a badass. Because that kind of repetition, that kind of consistency for anybody that does meditation or has any kind of consistent practice; it's so evident that that kind of ongoing repetition makes a huge difference. Repeating it to yourself, remembering it, is how you're going to be able to, months and years down the road, really keep it sustainable.

**Deb Elbaum:** You're building those new brain pathways, as I would say, those new neural pathways.

**Anna Kaufman:** For sure.

**Deb Elbaum:** Badass neural pathways. So, let's- People think you were born this way. I know that you were really shy when you were little. What would you- What would you say to your younger self than this you of today?

**Anna Kaufman:** I- It's funny for me to hear people say that they can't believe that I was ever shy. And it gets- I was. I was the kid that hid behind my mom's skirt for most of my childhood and didn't talk and didn't communicate well. I'd say there's hope then, for all of us because you don't have to be born with that. It's something you can absolutely learn, and some of us who are born with it still need practice and still need to take inventory of how we can get better at it. To my younger self, I would say it'll take time, but don't worry, you're on the right path, and I don't think that I would change anything necessarily. I don't think that I needed to become more outspoken, more bold, more badass in my youth. It happened the way it was supposed to, and my journey has been really positive.

**Deb Elbaum:** So, all in good time.

**Anna Kaufman:** Yes.

**Deb Elbaum:** We're- like we're on the journeys we're supposed to be on, and that's okay. And it probably makes you appreciate the transformation and the courage it took to be who you are now given your whole life.

**Anna Kaufman:** Definitely, if someone had told me at age 10, or 12, or 15, or even 20 that I would be doing the work that I do and coaching others to be bold and speak up in meetings, I never would have believed it. And that's okay. I had my own experiences that helped me get to this point, and everyone will have their own journeys. Some move at a different pace, and that's perfectly acceptable.

**Deb Elbaum:** I absolutely believe that. We're all on our own journey, and we get to own our journey. It's about- It's about really owning our story. Is there a badass phrase that you use all the time or that you- your clients hear you say?

**Anna Kaufman:** I don't know that there's one phrase in particular. I think the word badass almost speaks for itself in so many ways. And for some people it's an uncomfortable way to identify themselves, and they wouldn't want to use that for themselves, which is fine. And there are some that really own it and feel like, "Yeah, that could be me." And it's funny, I've done a few youth workshops with middle school/high school students, and in some cases, they embrace it, and they say, "Yeah, that's awesome. I want to be badass too." And others shy away from it, and it's less comfortable for them, and they think it's maybe a bad word, or curse. And it's so interesting to see because that word is obviously- has different connotations, and yet any word that we choose can have those- those different connotations. It might be more subtle, but we get to define what that means for us.

**Deb Elbaum:** Yes, words have power, and we want to find the right words that feel authentic to us. That's what I hear you saying, it's all about authenticity. Do you give people a certificate at the end of your work with them? I am officially a: fill in the blank with your choice of word.

**Anna Kaufman:** I've thought about that. It's so funny to think about the completion of that because it's- it's never really complete. I mean, some days I feel more like a badass than others, and some days I act more like one than others, and- and that's okay. We're human, and we some days do our best, and other days we do a little bit more and a little bit less. It's, in my mind, more about what we learn each day and giving ourselves permission to also say, "Today, I wasn't as much of what I thought I would be, or I didn't come across as well as I thought, and that's okay. Tomorrow, I have a chance to do that differently- or in the next meeting, I have a chance to do that more with intention or more as myself or more authentically."

**Deb Elbaum:** Yeah, every day is a new opportunity. And yes, I appreciate what you say about the growth mindset that life is about learning. Life is an experiment. We get to try things and

see what happens, and we get to give ourselves permission, permission to be human and to show up in lots of different ways.

**Anna Kaufman:** And sometimes it's in those moments where we learn the most. In those moments of "I wasn't a badass." That's okay, how can I learn from that?

**Deb Elbaum:** Yeah, what would I do differently next time? Who do you see in the world right now as a badass who you admire?

**Anna Kaufman:** In my personal life, definitely my mom. In so many ways, so much of what I've learned has been from her, about speaking up for yourself, about being true to who you are, about asking questions, and discovering and exploring in culture and society. Someone who- an actress that isn't alive anymore is Audrey Hepburn, who I very much look up to. I even have a couple of visuals of her in my apartment. It's her class and her grace that I always really admired. And in the world, living today, there's tons of examples. I'd say every day, anyone who commits to really being who they are and not backing down from their views and their opinions and their beliefs. Doing so in a way that's still respectful and still graceful, in a way, is to me a badass because I believe that everyone has an inner badass, whether they believe it or not, and as my mission for my business says, I'm on a mission to unleash everyone's inner badass.

**Deb Elbaum:** Yes. So, if people want to unleash their inner badass and find you, where can they find you online?

**Anna Kaufman:** They can find me at [speaklikeabadass.com](http://speaklikeabadass.com). I'm on LinkedIn as Anna Kaufman, and those are the best ways to reach me. I am happy to get in touch with people about what they're wondering about about being badass and also coaching and training. I offer workshops and programs and one-on-one coaching as well.

**Deb Elbaum:** For all ages?

**Anna Kaufman:** Hmm, definitely, and everyone's situation is different. Everyone's circumstances are unique, and I work with everybody in a very specific way to help them on their own journey.

**Deb Elbaum:** Wonderful. I always enjoy talking with you. Thank you so much. Thanks for being you, and thanks for inspiring me.