

Extra Stitch Episode 1



Thinking about where I started as a maker, where I am now and where I want to be. It's super interesting to ponder and reflect on these key moments in my journey, that I often find myself in front of... Two of these sort of me versus me moments that I feel we as makers are typically and consistently seeking a balance. On the one hand, we're wanting and trying to competently take a leap in our decisions. Versus on the other hand, we're often fearfully not doing things and making excuses to ourselves for why things wouldn't work or couldn't work or shouldn't work, why we don't have the time, why we're tired, and the list goes on and on right. And so we never take the leap, we never just, as me and my friends say, we never just send it. Now, I don't know about you, but for me it's often felt like a balancing act, right, like almost this struggle between my confidence and my fear, between my courage and overthinking. But for this launch episode of Extra Stitch, I've decided to choose confidence and courage, to not overthink everything about my maker life and everything that I do in knitwear design and every aspect of my business, and instead I'm just going to send it. We're just going to do this and go for it. I'm Jewell, the knitwear designer of Northknits, OML community founder, and this is Extra Stitch - where we take a moment to knit our best lives by going deeper in convo and getting a little bit extra with who we are and what we do as makers. Okay, so we're talking about empowering ourselves as entrepreneurs and, yes, you are an entrepreneur, whether you are pursuing your business and your craft full-time, part-time or as a hobby business, period. But how do we really empower ourselves as entrepreneurs? Like what does that mean? How do we really launch our business, our endeavors within our businesses, with confidence? Because that's really key.

Starting a business can feel like stepping into the unknown. I know oftentimes, whenever I'm doing a new venture or taking a new path within my business, it feels really scary. I often can't see the full outcome right in front of me. It definitely feels like I'm stepping into the unknown, but it's essential to take that first step with confidence, because so many times we're holding ourselves back by fear of failure. We're so into our ego and our ego is controlling and that's manifesting itself as failure. But it's crucial to understand that failure is not the opposite of success and the fear of failure doesn't mean that you're not going to be successful. It's all a part of the journey. Every successful entrepreneur that I have talked to and I've experienced this myself as a businesswoman and running our maker life and running North Knits that every successful entrepreneur has faced setbacks along the way. We fail forward, right, we fall forward, but what makes someone a successful entrepreneur and how they set themselves apart is the ability to learn from those failures, because those failures will happen, but you learn from those failures and you keep moving forward. This reminds me of when I had recently launched OML and if you're just getting to know me, OML is our maker life. It's a meetup event for makers by makers that I launched with friends in 2016. So OML is launched.

We let our Instagram followers vote and everyone decided, hey, let's meet up in NYC. And me and my friends organizing were like cool, but none of us actually live in NYC. Specifically, none of us live in Manhattan. And just like that, mere months into launching this brand, I was faced with these two choices. I could lean into my fear, my fear of failure, and not move forward with event planning. I could say, hey, team, I live in the Midwest, some of us live in Canada. Some of us are on the East Coast. Kathleen was all the way down to Texas. We were all over because we didn't know everything about events. We didn't know a lot of things about event planning, but we all loved yarn and we all wanted to meet up in person for a really cool summer event.

The five of us had a vision, and I myself saw hundreds of us makers meeting up, even beyond the first Manhattan event and, as afraid as I was, I wasn't about to back down to fear. Now I would wake up and think okay, how do you plan an event, remotely, knitting and crocheting your best life from home to launch in one of the largest cities in the world? Well, honestly, I did a lot of failing forward.

I did a lot of figuring things out. I did a lot of trusting in myself and believing in my team and looking up towards the universe, hands clasped hoping that ways would be made out of no way. There was really no other option. For me, success was plan A, B and C and one of the keys to launching.

Whether it's your first time launching a business or something within your business, one of the keys to doing it confidently is to have a clear vision and believe in yourself, knowing that what you want to achieve and trusting in your abilities to make it happen will happen.

JEWELL - (YOUR FAVE POD HOST)

Surround yourself with a supportive network of mentors, advisors and fellow entrepreneurs who can provide guidance and encouragement along the way. And you know, I got a lot of guidance. I got a lot of guidance and assistance from fellow makers, from sponsors, from attendees, from guest speakers, and we ended up having a wonderful event in downtown Manhattan. It was beautiful. It rained a little bit in the beginning, but then the sun came out. It was just quintessential summertime vibes in New York. It was wonderful. We could have used a little bit better AV. Some of the windows in the venue didn't open, but by the end of that event, y'all, we were all together in a circle on the floor next to our yarn, cookies and lemonade close by, and we were just literally knitting our best lives.

Sometimes you won't know how everything will turn out, but that doesn't mean that you can't have a clear vision to trust. A clear vision is the foundation of any successful business. It's what drives you forward, guides your decisions and inspires others around you to join you on your journey, developing that clear vision. It requires introspection, though. It requires strategic thinking, and you have to have a deep understanding of your goals and values. Because when those hurdles come, how will you leap over? By asking yourself what problem am I solving? Who's my target audience? What sets my business apart? Even if you want to do a little bit of benchmarking to see what sets your business apart from the competition. Even by answering some of these questions, you have more insight. It can release some of that pressure of the fear, and then you can really begin to articulate your vision and create a roadmap for success. Because at some point, if you're going to move forward with confidence and courage, you have to be willing to execute. Execution is where the rubber meets the road in entrepreneurship. It's where ideas are transformed into action and plans are put into motion. And so when you're executing with confidence, it requires careful planning, effective communication and the ability to adapt to changing circumstances.

I was recently at an event called Founded, started by Marissa Weber and Jacq Gould, and it's really why I'm sharing this confidence to launch and be okay with facing failure and taking the leap and making pivots and all of these things with you. It's really the foundation of why I decided to go ahead and hit record for this first episode of Extra Stitch. Marissa and Jacq aren't crafters ..Maybe I can convince them to vibe with some yarn but what they are passionate about is supporting women in business. They are passionate about making sure that we're leaning into and working on having a strong mental, emotional and physical so that we can show up as our best selves in our businesses and brands. Now Marissa also teaches yoga at the studio I attend and y'all. She's a powerhouse on showing strong body on the mat and how that leads to a strong mind off of it.

Their Founded event brought about 60 female founders together, women who really just want to immerse themselves in their industry across a variety of industries everything from health, wellness, beauty, jewelry and craft so that we could chat and inspire each other to do things within our businesses that our hearts are leading us to do. It was so inspiring! I got to engage with such like-minded individuals and women, not necessarily in that they have a really good yarn stash like me, but that they have similar hopes and dreams and fears and ambitions in their brands, just like I do with Northknits, just like I do with Our Maker Life and maybe like you do in your fiber craft business too. One thing we really leaned into is doing things fearlessly, even if that thing scares the ish out of you. A few more things that we talked about:

Look at hurdles in your business as missteps, not mistakes. This was really powerful to me because there's something that can create a self-limiting belief when it comes to viewing things as a mistake. Right, like, sometimes again we'll tap back into that ego and we might become more controlling and restrictive and more limiting in things that we decide to do with our businesses because of a mistake. It could be a mistake that we made, it could be a mistake that someone made against us and our businesses. But when you look at it as a misstep, it's almost like changing your mindset a bit, a mindset shift, and being like okay, it's still a step. Right, it could be a misstep. It could be me going down a path that I don't want to go and so I can reroute, but I'm still going forward, right.

They also talked about owning those missteps because, again, when you view things as a mistake, it may not be something that you are the quickest to want to own up to, that right, but you can really maybe lean in more so into owning a misstep, and nevertheless, OWN THEM. Don't let them defeat you or view it as something that we have to be defensive about. Right, if you made an error in a release pattern, for example, own that, acknowledge that you made the mistake, make your edits, re-release the pattern. Or let's say you're an indie yarn dyer and you made an oopsie in a release colorway. Own that it may be offered those skeins at a discounted rate. Let's say you are looking to do all the things in craft and you really understand the value and the intentionality between craft and designs that you're making and being a content creator right.

And so sometimes we go into content creation where we have all the goals. we want to batch, we want to have our calendar, we want to do three reels a week and carousels and stories and all the things, and we might start off really hot and then we face burnout and we lose that consistency on our content calendar. This is something that I have faced more than once in my business. So if you've lost consistency on your content calendar and now you're seeing the algorithm reflect that. Own it, say, okay, what can I do within my business to make it feel like a pivot but also an ownership of this misstep? Can I add in more calendar time management? What can I shift around in my calendar where I'm able to do more content batching or time blocking? Can I start to create content in a way where it can then be scheduled out so I can sort of set it and forget it but also feel really good about the fact that you know you're creating content and it's scheduled and it's ready to go? How can you pivot around things that you see as missteps, where you can nevertheless keep going?

At the Founded event, we also talked about making pitches and doing that with confidence. I've talked to a number of makers in this community and industry who don't have pitch confidence. They have ideas for launches that they want to do. They have ideas for collaborations they want to do. They don't have the confidence to make the pitch. They don't have the confidence to approach the indie yarn dyer. They don't have the confidence to approach the brand or the influencer or whomever. But it was wonderful to be in a room of like-minded individuals where we could talk and encourage each other and get to a point in that conversation where we all agreed that we're no longer going to negotiate against ourselves. If there's someone that you want to pitch, to be it a brand or an individual person in this industry, go ahead and make your pitch, pitch yourself to maybe do a virtual Zoom call, coffee chat, write that email, even if you're not at the point where you want to hit send yet. Can you write the email? Even if you've written the email, can you take off the " I'm sorry, I was just hoping anything that may have a voice and an aura of lack of confidence. Marissa and Jack hosted their founded event here in downtown Chicago, near my home. It's their second one. They're going to be having another event meetup later this summer and you all, I just left that event feeling so refreshed and I walked into it without many expectations.

I walked into it feeling rather confident, as far as like I wasn't going to be nervous, even with the fact that I didn't know anyone else attending. And I walked out of the event feeling so refreshed as a woman, as a maker, as a woman and maker of color, and it has really just inspired me to be like. You know what I'm going to do things with even more confidence. I'm going to do things with crazy confidence. I am going to hit record on things that I wanna do in my life and my brand, and I hope that this is a bit of encouragement to you to hit that gas, to hit go, to say let's do it. Sometimes, even if it starts with you giving a yes to yourself, that is a step forward, because it is so easy for us to say "no, I can't, I don't have time right now, or it wouldn't work this way, or I need all of this set, set, set, set, and then I'll hit, go, and that hit go day may never come. So I hope that this encourages and inspires you.

One of the things that I love to share in my extra stitch newsletter is my favorite things, and I want to share a little bit of my favorite things and just yarns and patterns that I'm really, really loving right now.

JEWELL - (YOUR FAVE POD HOST)

So my first favorite thing is **Sewrella Yarn**. Tell me you've heard of it? If not, I'm really excited to share this yarn with you. Sewrella yarn is a whimsical world full of yarn. It is led by Ashleigh. She releases these amazing collections and her spring tonals are currently in stock. I was able to get an early preview of these yarns and I've already started to design a scarf with them, and they are really amongst my favorite yarns that I have in my stash now.

This year's spring tonals in the Sewrella yarn line included five new tonals and the set of tonals are inspired by the French countryside, and the original 10 colorways evoke images of fresh blooms and charming towns and textures like wallpaper and pottery, and I was really excited to get my hands on these hand dyed yarns by such a talented dyer like Ashleigh. I was immediately inspired when I started to knit up with the mini skein palette of the spring tonals and I'm currently designing my French light scarf. I can't wait to share the design with the world. I've shared and teased a little bit on my socials. The Sewrella spring tonals is such a beautiful palette. I've been having so much fun knitting up the yarns and designing with them. I am so excited to release my French light scarf soon and I knit up my first sample with the spring tonals and I also really enjoyed Ashley's winter ballet collection. So I'm also making my second sample with those yarns and it is on like this beautiful pinks to cream, to blue fades. It's so gorgeous. I will be sure to share the link so that you all can see some of the yarns.

And if you have not explored Sewrella Yarn, please check out Ashleigh and her yarns. She has released beautiful collections from the Winter Ballet Collection. She also had a rocking Library Collection where I also got a sample of those yarns. She had a colorway called Graduation which was inspired from the Fourth Wing book series and I am a book lover almost as much as I am a yarn lover, so that library collection really spoke to me. Ashley is currently dyeing the library collection. The spring tonals are currently in stock and you can check out [at sewrellayarn.com](http://sewrellayarn.com).

I'm also really loving and vibing with the **We Are Knitters** cotton yarn at the moment. Now, I have been a longtime lover of We Are Knitters. They provide all the happiness in the kit. It's literally written on their kits and y'all. It's true, they're all about knitting. They also support crocheters and those that like to indulge in petite point. The yarn is natural, so you can explore sheep wool, baby alpaca, merino and pima cotton. They offer 100% natural fibers made in Peru and the highlands of Peru, close to the Andes, is where the animals live over 14,000 feet above sea level, which I think is pretty cool. Local families live in the area too, taking care of the flocks.

The yarn that I'm indulging at the moment is their mini cotton. Again, this fiber is composed of 100% cotton and it's amazing for knitting or crocheting. I have long loved the cotton yarn. The mini cotton is very, very similar. At one point I believe they had this brand of the Egyptian cotton, so I noticed an ever so slight difference and I think it's almost like the ply or a little bit of the durability, between the mini cotton and the regular cotton skeins. But both are wonderful. I've created many designs with the cotton yarn and I just love using and exploring it, and the mini cotton is no exception. It offers exceptional softness, lightness and durability. It's really an ideal fiber that you can use throughout the year, especially around this time of the year in summer and spring. It's definitely one of my favorite fibers and you can also use it for petite point kits as well. I'm indulging in this really hot pink bubblegum yarn and I love it.

Again, 100% cotton. In the mini cotton skeins they're 25 grams. You get about 0.9 ounces, 53 meters or 57 yards. They do market it as a DK weight yarn and the recommended knitting needles are 5 mm or a 5 mm crochet hook. If you want to work up a knitting gauge swatch in stockinette, it's recommended that you will get about 18 stitches over 23 rows for four inches. If you're crocheting in single crochet, you will get about 17 stitches over 20 rows for four inches. I love this yarn. I was randomly inspired to create a tee design using the bubble gum mini cotton skeins and I'm hoping to release and share that soon. If you want to explore this cotton yarn and all the happiness in the kit, make sure to visit weareknitters.com.

And my last favorite okay, have you heard **h+h Americas**? Well, I'm going to put you on. conference and craft trade show is just around the corner. The conference officially opens on April 30th and hh Americas 24 will be taking place from May 1st - 3rd of this year. I really love h+h Americas. This will be my third time attending. I have been a keynote speaker for them, I have taught learning labs in collaboration with h+h Americas and we are knitters and it is really a place where creativity meets business. I really love attending h+h every year. It always inspires me to live my best girl boss life for knitting, for fiber, just for the love of the craft and creativity altogether. So this year's h+h Americas will again be taking place at the Donald E Stevens Convention and Conference Center in Rosemont, Illinois.

So if you are close, you still have time where you can get an exhibitor ticket and just there are a myriad of options of summits and classes and a whole host of things that are really going to be taking place again that support craft, fiber, yarn, crochet, knitting, business content creation, influencing, all of the things. I'm registered, my badge is locked and loaded and I'm so excited to once again meet up with great brands, great vendors, great fellow makers in the industry and to also really indulge in some wonderful conversation that takes place at h+h. I'm really looking forward to their State of the Industry panel and their conversation about sustainable practices for craft businesses, as well as conversation around AI and SEO, which is really going to be talking about how we, as crafters and fiber enthusiasts, harness the power of tech for creative businesses and e-commerce. So I'm really looking forward to that. There are also going to be some book signings. I'm especially looking forward to the one with Tony Lipsy of TL Yarn Crafts and a host of other things, as well as a really cool ice cream social sponsored by Berocco and h+h Cologne, and I'm looking forward to it all.

h+h Americas is a premier event for the North American handicraft industry. Again, it's the sister event of h+h Cologne in Germany, and it is one of the world's largest trade fair for the craft sectors. It's designed for the B2B community. This trade show is unique as it offers a physical trade show in combination with a digital marketplace that's really open to professionals of the craft industry. So this is a great opportunity to really lean into courage and confidence and face your fears and literally get out there. Put yourself out there. If you want to learn more, check out hh-americas.com. All right, friends, I really enjoyed hanging out with y'all this first time.

As we wrap up, I wanna leave you with a powerful reminder and something to really think about: How can you launch a business or things within your business that really will push and encourage you to pursue your passions, where it's not just about personal successes, but it's about making a positive impact within yourself, for your heart and mind and in the world around you? Whether that be for positivity within yourself, or through sustainable practices, philanthropic initiatives or simply just fostering a culture of inclusivity and diversity.

How can you take the leap for yourself that will ultimately be such an encouragement for people around you? I want to again give a special thank you to Marissa and Jacq for letting me be a part of your wonderful Founded event. I have been so encouraged and inspired ever since, and thank you all for listening to this first episode of Extra Stitch. I appreciate you so much. If you did find today's episode inspiring, be sure to subscribe for more empowering and encouraging content that encourages us to knit our best life. You can find me on all the socials, @northknits and northknits.online, and I will talk to you all in the next one!