

Discipline - From Structure to Flexibility: Navigating Life's Transitions with Sena Lauer

Kyle Johann-Baker (he/him): [00:00:00] hi, friends. It's Clifton Strengths Coach Kyle Johann Baker, and this is Love Your Strengths. Today, I am really excited to invite my friend and colleague, Sena Lauer, to the podcast. Sena is currently the Director of Brand Messaging and Client Services at Averson Creative, a Spokane based creative edu agency dedicated to small business branding and brand storytelling.

She found her professional home at Averson in 2020 when she merged businesses with two of her dearest friends. She loves the newfound challenge of building a small business culture that values relationships and people as much as outputting. A productivity. She is a words person through and through. She loves writing, conversation, and is a chronic oversharer.

She is also delightfully type A and loves a good calendar and organizational system. I mean, right, we all?

It's just us maybe Sena lives in Spokane, loves being physically active and spending time outside. She is happily [00:01:00] married and is the proud mama of a four month old daughter. Sena's top five strengths are futuristic, discipline, strategic, belief, and significance.

Sena and I have worked together. She is actually part of the team that helped do a lot of the brand, well, All the branding. Sena asked me questions and helped really distill this beautiful message along with the team. And so as part of the reason why I really wanted to make sure to highlight the wonderful work that the Averson team does and the beautiful strength that

Sena Lauer (she/her): Thank you Yeah We to this day your brand is So one of our favorites we use it as an example a lot So

Kyle Johann-Baker (he/him): Well, Sena. As you know, as I'm really excited to get to talk with you today with this podcast, we love to talk with folks about one strength per episode. What is the strength that you would like to talk about

Sena Lauer (she/her): yeah today I'm going to be talking about discipline

Kyle Johann-Baker (he/him): Okay. So as everybody knows, we love to start and ground ourselves with the [00:02:00] Gallup definition for what the strength is so that we have that grounding place. So, people exceptionally talented in the discipline theme enjoy routine and structure. Their world is best described by the order they create.

Now, Sena, this definition, it's a textbook definition. This is that starting place. We love to hear about how this actually shows up in people's lived lives. I would love to hear about what this strength means to you and how it shows up in your

Sena Lauer (she/her): Yeah absolutely the first thing I'll say is I think the the word discipline can have this for me has this negative connotation of we picture like I feel like I can still hear my parents saying like you're going to be disciplined when you're a child and I think yeah we think of it as like punishment or rigidity or just something that feels just kind of like boring and I'm secure enough and [00:03:00] comfortable enough with myself to know that I can absolutely be a stick in the mud That is like very on brand for me because I do I like I like structure I like routine I like these things but I think yeah for me I think there's just when I think of discipline as a strength it's yeah it's the ability to to commit to something fully and well often that takes the form for me of yeah habits structures routines plans but with the intention of providing more freedom so saying these are the things that I know I have to do How do I structure them in my life so that I can have freedom for the things that I don't have to do and want to do or the things that might surprise me or

Kyle Johann-Baker (he/him): you

Sena Lauer (she/her): the things that are a little bit like out of scope so to speak that yeah it's like how do I how do I build a structure so that I can Do what I want to around the things that I have to

Kyle Johann-Baker (he/him): [00:04:00] Yeah. Oh, what a great way to flip script so quickly. I think, I think there, there's probably very few people that would be like, oh, like structure so that I can do things are fun. Gross. I don't want that. Like, I don't want to have, like, be able count on having what I want in my day

Yeah, I think that's like such a fun way to even just start with framing that and flipping that script for folks about what it can mean to be, to have discipline and how it really benefits

Sena Lauer (she/her): Absolutely yeah again I know that yeah it's it's not a strength for everyone but that's okay There's other things that are definitely not my

Kyle Johann-Baker (he/him): Yeah. Yeah. I mean, I'd be curious to hear, like, when you talk about these structures, when you think of discipline, how does it actually like manifest in your life show up?

Sena Lauer (she/her): I think probably the biggest way is I am Extremely routined and I am a creature of habit my coworkers would tell you that my family would tell you that anyone who knows me well [00:05:00] would tell you that sometimes to a fault So you know I'm the type of person that it is just like I like kind of having the same rhythm to my days or a you know I My preferences tend to be consistent My coworkers make fun of me cause I have very consistent boring coffee orders I'm just I'm just not one for spontaneity and variety which again I'm really selling myself here I know I sound very exciting and you all want to just spend endless hours with me right now but yeah

Kyle Johann-Baker (he/him): mean, but that consistency

like, I mean, one, know what like, huh.

Sena Lauer (she/her): So I think for me it's it's often in yeah it's in routine it's in habits it's in yeah really consistent behavior that yeah I think allows me personally to feel the word that actually comes to mind is feel safe Like I think it's just a way that I like ground myself and feel like I have the least I at least have the illusion of control I might be a just [00:06:00] tad bit of a control freak as well So it allows me to have that But like I said a couple of minutes ago it also just allows me kind of freedom to be flexible in the areas that I need to be or I'm asked to be because I know that I have structure in place for the things that you know are important to me or things that I need to do it allows me to say yes to things and no to things kind of according to how I have my priorities and my life and my to do's and all of those things

Kyle Johann-Baker (he/him): Yeah. I love that. Because what I think is cool is that you're presenting these, you started with this kind of opposing forces. Like we think of discipline as this like rigid, this is exactly what I do. But then what you're also telling us is that like, by having that,

Sena Lauer (she/her): hmm

Kyle Johann-Baker (he/him): rigid, like air quotes

rigidness, like you also are able to be flexible and like, you know, where you can be flexible.

Cause like, if we, maybe if we didn't have [00:07:00] this rigidness, we were like stressed all the time. Like we be flexible and it would only be this nature of like this. We can't do this always full of nose, but instead like by having your structures, by having your discipline, you know, how and where can say yes.

And. step into that and maybe like it's for others,

Sena Lauer (she/her): Mm hmm

Kyle Johann-Baker (he/him): but you know, where are those places

be

flexible. It's not all or nothing my way or the highway. It's figuring out what are the things that are my way or the highway then flowing

Sena Lauer (she/her): Absolutely Which is not to say that I Don't also struggle with rigidity or like I mentioned control freakness or whatever the the stereotypes can be true and the beauty can also be true

Kyle Johann-Baker (he/him): Yeah. You know, I'd be curious to hear if you have a story about how discipline has like helped you be successful or even like showed up in your life

recently. [00:08:00]

Sena Lauer (she/her): yeah I can think of a couple of ways both professionally and personally So I might just like rattle off a couple of of things here so professionally yeah you mentioned my like somewhat Vague elusive title at the top of the show but I yeah my official title is the director of brand messaging and client services at Averson but that client services piece is really just it's client relationships and maintaining relationships and liaising but it's also a lot of project management a fancy way of saying project manager and I've grown into that role That's not something I was doing a few years ago when we first started what's now Aberson Creative and we and I've grown into that role because I think we recognized that not only was I good at certain things like Process and yeah rhythm and holding clients to that and having an awareness of the [00:09:00] calendar and of timing and like building timelines based on kind of again like this discipline of like okay these are the things that have to get

done Where can we allow margin Where can we allow flexibility and yeah that's something that was Recognized and and something that I do on the daily now is it's yeah I'm I'm constantly trying to revise our structure and our process with my teammates but that's kind of the the area that I oversee So that again it has this element of like this is just where we're grounded and this is where we hold ourselves And our clients to the same standards every single time knowing that everything's always personal and kind of taken on like a case by case basis but again I can also get cheese for that Cause everyone's like Say no like we can we can veer from the process here We can extend a deadline or we can do like there's room

Kyle Johann-Baker (he/him): Silence.

Sena Lauer (she/her): Yeah so that's something professionally Personally it's funny that this would come up [00:10:00] right now because yeah as mentioned I am a new parent and It turns out that Infants don't run on Schedules like adults do They do kind of run on schedules ish That's I think part of the like code to uncrack but they yeah It's just kind of a free for all most days and for someone who loves again habit and routine and generally prides myself kind of on my strong will I think that's where that discipline element shows up Like I can I can say this is what I'm going to do today and I will Do it And if I don't do it I can be a little bit harsh like toward myself and what yeah parenting a baby has taught me thus far is that that kind of just all goes out the window And sometimes the goal for the day is just exist like just eat just sleep just like [00:11:00] maybe get dressed in those early days but there really isn't this And and if you make a to do list and you make a plan and you have again this like strong will and determination of like this is what we're going to do today that will probably just go awry at some point something will happen that you're like okay I did not see that coming And we are now pivoting And I think it's really challenged this part of me because I I so badly want to be able to say like yes this is the structure we are holding to This is the habit We are holding to like this is the plan And instead to be honest with you most days I feel I know that I'm a capable person and a capable parent but I feel somewhat incapable and inadequate because it's like I haven't accomplished the thing that I said I was going to accomplish today Or it felt really messy and chaotic and not like this nicely structured contained rhythmic flowy process that I like to build [00:12:00] so Yeah it's it's an interesting time to be talking about this strength because if I'm being honest it doesn't feel like a strength right now It feels like something that is just really it's like oh yeah I think in a former life that might have been something that was really really true of me and now I'm kind of learning to just let go and go with the flow a little bit more which I think is also part of part of the journey And yeah there's good in that too

Kyle Johann-Baker (he/him): think that's such an interesting example because I hear a couple of different things as you're talking about this, and I think the one thing I want to, like, pull back to is, like, how, like, you had made a statement of, like, some days, like, you dress. You eat food, you

Sena Lauer (she/her): Totally Right

Kyle Johann-Baker (he/him): get out of bed, and, like, it's just like these, like, this list of, like, necessities that happen, but in this way, also, I hear, like, what's [00:13:00] possible, maybe, is that, like, it's a standard of what's happening in a day, like, it is no longer the, like like the, I often think of because, like, right now, like, my husband and I, like, we're double income, no kids, with a dog, we're deep

wads, like, we live a deep wad life where we have, like, a

Sena Lauer (she/her): Yes

Kyle Johann-Baker (he/him): to do list, and

we through that, and that, like, that's the type of discipline, like, that you had before, and now it's, like, we're going through, even thinking of, like, the group development, like, stages of, like, forming, storming, norming, performing, like, we're getting this, like, Great reset of like, well, what does this like now?

And it's kind of in a way. I hear a little bit of like, you're starting from a beginner of like, how do I, how do I bring discipline back into the glory that like, made me like, helped feel secure and like I was doing what I wanted

[00:14:00] and

Sena Lauer (she/her): hmm Absolutely Yeah I like what you said about standards because I think that is that's exactly it is It's I don't necessarily like the term lowering the bar because that makes it sound like I'm underperforming but

Kyle Johann-Baker (he/him): Mm hmm.

Sena Lauer (she/her): But yeah just shaping reshaping the way that the expectations that we place on ourselves and being really realistic about yeah about what those expectations are and what the to do list is and what the must dos are versus the want to dos versus you know like I think I think there's more gray area there than I've Sometimes accepted and other points in my life and it's

like yeah sometimes today the must do is yeah we must eat We must yeah get out of bed A baby does make quite possible quite quite a requirement in fact but sometimes you're out of bed at times when you're like nope I don't want to do that This was not in the plan Thank you but yeah I think I think just adjusting those [00:15:00] requirements and expectations of ourself to say I actually am doing enough and I'm doing it well it's just maybe not was 6 months ago

Kyle Johann-Baker (he/him): Yeah, no, and I think like, Even a little bit of, like, what I was hearing is, like, this thought of, like, is discipline actually, like, a weakness or is it a weakness kind of? And I think that this is, like, a real question sometimes is because, like, they're, like, with any strength, there's, like, the, like, dark side of the strength like and the dark side can come from us like under utilizing it or like over utilizing it so that like it, it dictates everything that we do or like we don't, it's being underutilized in this way where instead like right now it's like discipline. May, when it comes to like your family, when it comes to like adjusting life with a baby, like discipline is not quite yet back to its like place where can be used in its full likelihood. It still is like a [00:16:00] natural way that you think perform, you find success, but like. In the world of a baby, like, maybe discipline isn't the answer, unfortunately, because it's like, served you so well in these other places, it's like, I bet there's this moment betrayal of like, I thought

discipline, like, what happened?

Like, why do you scorn me

Sena Lauer (she/her): Well and it can have this kind of this is where I think again like the more negative side or assumption of the word can have this like kind of ownership like it feels like I just have to be disciplined Like I cannot break from What I have planned or the routine and what I have set out to do or kind of whatever the thing is that you're being disciplined about It's this like I must do that and again that's that can be an amazing strength because when I'm on teams or when I'm yeah when I'm working when I you know have things to get done or when I need to figure [00:17:00] out how to put a bunch of to do's kind of like a cluster into like some sort of structure or flow I can typically do that and again be fairly reasonable with myself but It can also own me a little bit and it's learning to just have that like okay you know what today this did not get done or we took a very different turn than we expected And that is also okay And that is also enough but I think that's where it feels like but I'm not being disciplined This is like this is being free spirited I don't know what that's like or or yeah just just being too Too too flexible That's a thing Flexibility is not a strength of mine really in in personality or in strengths as we define them here

it's also not a physical strength of mine at all I've had to like work my entire adult life to touch my toes so like it's just not a word that me well Nobody would describe me as flexible[00:18:00] and And yeah it's it's like I said I think this chapter in my life is encouraging me to Lean into that

Kyle Johann-Baker (he/him): Yeah, you know, so I mean, like, that kind of leads me into my next question, I'd be curious to hear in this season life, like, what are ways that you're investing in discipline or like that you maybe want to try investing in discipline to help it feel like a strength again, and like really help it like, adjust and grow with like what has right now

Sena Lauer (she/her): Yeah absolutely So I think kind of circling back to the thought about just adjusting our expectations something that I haven't quite utilized in this season as as much as I would hope to yet but it's something that's kind of on the forefront of my mind that I would like to start The other thing I should mention that's happened So not only yeah so I I had a baby four and a half months ago and then I was off work for three and a half months So it's been I [00:19:00] think this is like my fourth ish week back at work And that is kind of a transition within a transition because I had this massive personal life transition where I Was able to kind of like yeah throw some things out the window and find this new rhythm and pattern for my life And then I have now had to integrate my work life back into this new personal life and that has been really challenging for like that might even be more challenging than just the like there's something as we were saying there's something it's kind of It's a different form of discipline but you can kind of be disciplined when you're like at home focusing on one thing it's like all right here's here's what needs to happen and here's how we're restructuring this But when you're trying to merge the efficiency and productivity of the work and necessity of the workplace with this like and I'm awake at 1am and again at 2am and also I'm working from home and Now the baby needs me in the middle of the day when I was [00:20:00] supposed to be doing this other thing or you know like when there's like those types of things happening and you're trying to merge the two that's what's been really really challenging so as I'm kind of like trying to sort through the pieces of this and figure out where where can I provide structure for myself but make it gracious structure structure that has like space and breathing room and not just because I will just kind of like I like you know you you can't like you can't not do this or it's it's not optional and you I have to kind of take a step back and breathe and be like okay actually let's think about what's required here but one of the things that I would like to integrate and a philosophy that I have held to for several years now or have learned about for several years now is just kind of this idea of Like picking one thing that matters like picking what matters and then Letting what matter kind of roll off your back and knowing like I don't have to be disciplined about all of it Like there are things that are going to

[00:21:00] be messy and unstructured but what is one simple thing What is a way that I can just pick like whatever it is And again this is where my brain starts to be like but I want to pick all of them And that's why I haven't quite implemented this yet but practicing just one habit Every day or every week or every month like whatever the rhythm is like okay this will be the signifier Like this is something I can count on This is something I can hold myself to This is something I can expect So for me like some of those things that have services like Like getting outside every day or like moving my body in a meaningful way every day like right now before this I like enjoyed running recreationally or spending like that would be something that was easily integrated into my life pretty much every single day and now it's like oh man I just have Again with just weird schedules and unpredictable schedules and sleep schedules and work schedules and a tiny human that demands me I can't just like leave my house and go for a wrench It's not big enough to run the stroller [00:22:00] yet Like there's all these like elements of that It's like okay so what do we do Can I go for a 10 minute walk every day Or like how do I how do I just turn that into something that's like way like smaller more achievable and yet still allows me that kind of like touch point of like okay there is and I think similarly with even like again like work practices you know it's it's like Oh you know here's the to do list of like 17 items that all need to get done or whatever And it's it's paring that down and saying like okay what is like the 1 thing What is the 1 priority today that like if this doesn't happen this like we're going to be a little bit like lost or you know Off off the beaten path so to speak but what are the things that it's like okay we can we can rearrange how this all looks and there are optional things and then there are required things And yeah breaking it down into really really small steps and small bites and not I think something that goes along with my [00:23:00] Strength of discipline is just this desire to do a lot and to kind of think big and to take on a lot as you were describing like for you and Matthew like it's just this like we just want to do it all and I totally get that And I think just breaking it down into smaller bites and smaller pieces and forming you know that's how like habits are formed is it's like by taking these really really small steps at the beginning and not just saying like Again for me running and like activity metaphors are often apt So it's like you don't it's the whole cliché Like you don't start running a marathon like you go run for one minute and then you run for two minutes and then three you know it's like and slowly over time you train to something bigger So

Kyle Johann-Baker (he/him): love that thing approach. That sounds like such a, I mean, going back to that, like that providing yourself. And even like, there's another coaching community that I'm a part of where like they were [00:24:00] practicing a like one your one thing for week? Like if else gets done, what's that one thing?

And it was such a, it was a new. Approach for me because I was like always the like, 50 things I need to do and try and do as many of them as I can. And the one thing, yeah, it was different. And it's a way that again, like you said, with those, like, I always think, I mean, I'm a big believer of like those small, intentional, like, Habits that you're working to build one step at a time and knowing that there's regression is like a natural process.

I may not be able to do it every day, but like, I'm building up to where I want to be and giving myself space so that I can really grow in

Sena Lauer (she/her): I think often it's almost certainly for me but I think for a lot of people it's almost offensive Like if the one thing feels small then it's probably the right thing you know like even when I said like for a 10 minute [00:25:00] walk like that's probably too much if I'm if I'm being honest Perhaps your one thing in a day if you're trying to like you know connect with a certain number of people or something you know if your if your work includes relationships and you're trying to like network with people maybe it's sending one email per day not 20 emails but one or it's yeah it's getting one project or proposal out the door or it's you know it's making one really cohesive list of what needs to get done Like maybe that is the one thing you know again or it's something enjoyable It's like will take I will enjoy one cup of coffee today without any like I will not pick up my phone or whatever Like that is just like the thing that is going to help keep me grounded so I think yeah we often Even the one thing like we get in this like yeah I just need to I just need to like finish my to do list every day And that's my one thing And it's like well that nope that's 22 things but yeah

Kyle Johann-Baker (he/him): hmm [00:26:00]

Mm

Sena Lauer (she/her): But I'm but I'm speaking to myself by saying cause that's exactly how my brain works And that's why I'm saying I'm being vulnerable and sharing this because I'm not doing a good job of implementing this in my life right now but I want to

Kyle Johann-Baker (he/him): Yeah. No, and it's something that, like, it takes time, like, that graciousness, like, for yourself and having these conversations with these people that you work with on it, it's the ways that you can, like, get that support and really, and even this is another practice that I heard recently of, like, talk to yourself, like, you would talk to a friend, like, if your friend was, like, telling you this story, like, Literally say to yourself like what you would

say to your friend is one of those ways that you can have that like self compassion and or just like be like Amanda like get over here and help out please and you know Amanda is going to

be like, okay, talk and I'm here

to support

Sena Lauer (she/her): Absolutely Yep. 100%.

Kyle Johann-Baker (he/him): So I [00:27:00] mean, last question is like, I'd love to know what you're looking forward to, whether it's

Sena Lauer (she/her): Mm

Kyle Johann-Baker (he/him): business or life, like what's coming up for

Sena Lauer (she/her): Yeah. Like I said, I'm just transitioning back into work. So it's been a really exciting season. Yeah, I, I'm quick aside. I'm just so grateful to be a part of a team in a culture. That supports me as a human as much as they support me as a colleague and teammate. Because I was truly able kind of step away from work and from my role during maternity leave and in stepping back into that what I've.

Which is both beautiful and offensive is that the show kept going without me We're maybe not as important as, yeah, we think we are sometimes, which is not to say that I haven't been welcomed back with plenty of work, but it's just like, it's kind of this weird mystery. And in stepping and in, in so doing, like in coming back, I've just really enjoyed getting [00:28:00] to know new clients that we've had and, and kind of just Almost having an objective seat to our work again, and I'm just feeling really reinvigorated by that in terms of like, yeah, this is cool.

Like we do have processes and systems in place and we're offering clients something very tangible and and different in our own way, you know, I mean, we're in the world of branding. So it's all about like, what makes you different? There's plenty of people who do what we do, but what makes it different in the way that we do it.

And so I'm personally just looking forward to yeah, kind of settling back into my role seeing how it. Evolves and yeah, getting again, getting to know new

clients again, taking on new projects. Yeah, and helping businesses explore their stories and tell those. Well

Kyle Johann-Baker (he/him): Huh. Mm hmm.

Sena Lauer (she/her): I'm trying to think, was there a 2nd part of your question? And I'm trying to think if there's anything I would add to that.

Kyle Johann-Baker (he/him): No, no, I think you're good. So folks want to, like, stay in touch [00:29:00] you or learn more about, and Creative. Like, where do you hang out on the internet? What's the best way to get in

Sena Lauer (she/her): Yeah. So you can learn more about Averson and our story and our services at Averson creative. com. So A V E R S O N creative. com or on Instagram, we're on Instagram at Averson dot creative. There's a little dot in the middle there. And then, I mean, similarly, like I, Told Kyle before we jumped on, it was like, for me, a lot of professional life is.

It's not that it is but it's like, I try to keep those parts of myself very interwoven. So I don't share about work a lot. I share about my family and my baby and myself a lot, but I'm also on Instagram and those types of things. But but yeah, I, I'm pretty transparent. So

Kyle Johann-Baker (he/him): Well, thank you so much for being here for... being vulnerable with us for telling us about where you [00:30:00] are and also like getting to hear the realness of like what strengths look like, especially as we're navigating big life changes. I really appreciate you. If you are looking for somebody to support you with branding, copywriting, really narrowing it down, what your business is, who you are, what you do.

Take a look website, look at everything on there. Like, nearly everything is curated, put forward, and really, ultimately, in the end, inspired by the work that I did with Averson Creative. And I'm grateful to have them in my

Sena Lauer (she/her): are yeah, perpetually gracious about that. And we are Very grateful for you, Kyle, but also grateful for the way that you've served our team in terms of helping us learn more about our strengths, talk to, talk through our strengths, even some of this role, I should have mentioned this earlier, but even some of this role evolution that I've alluded to has come from conversations that we've had with you where [00:31:00] it's like, Hey, you got it.

I don't enjoy doing that and I'm not good at it, but you do and you are. So how can we divide this up a way that is allowing everyone to live into their strengths? So you're listening to this and you're on the fence about whether or not you should work with Kyle. You should probably do it. exactly.

Kyle Johann-Baker (he/him): I

mean, yeah. Well, thank you, Sena. I appreciate you, and I hope you have a wonderful day.

Sena Lauer (she/her): We'll talk to you soon.