

You Have to Deal With You Before You Can Deal in New York



By New York real estate advisor and founder of [The Katzen Team](#), [Frances Katzen](#)

Everyone's got a moment where they almost walked away. Mine was early on. I was sitting with one of my managers and told him I wasn't made for this. I was in debt, I couldn't pay my bills, I didn't know how any of it worked.

I had come from a career as a professional ballet dancer, which, by the way, is another industry where people line up to tell you you'll never make it. I was trying to build something entirely new, with no net.

He looked at me and said, don't work for anyone. Be an independent contractor. You'll make more money than you'll ever know. I remember thinking, what a load of rubbish.

But over time, I watched my tax returns. And then I looked at other people's. The numbers were real. He was right. And I almost walked away from all of it.

Nobody gave me permission

My first manager said, you'll never make it. I sent her my first magazine cover a year and a half later. Just to let her know.

But here's the thing. That grit, that tenacity, it's necessary, but it's not enough on its own. Because you can hustle your face off in this city and still not build something that lasts.

The hustle confronts every dynamic of yourself. You cannot run from yourself. You cannot avoid yourself. You have to deal with yourself in order to have the life that you want.

I genuinely believe that. Otherwise, life deals with you anyway. You either take it on, clean your shit up, take ownership, or life does it for you.

The work nobody wants to do

People want to drink it, drug it, numb it, shop it. Not deal with it. But ultimately, it's about dealing with whatever's not being dealt with. And until you do that, you can't really have joy. There's always this sort of synthetic happiness, and most people can sense it, in themselves and in the people they're doing business with.

I'm a little too intense for everybody. And that's okay. I've learned to like who I am and stop apologizing for it. Throughout most of my life, I apologized for being who I am. I settled for less than good, less than healthy, as a way to demonstrate that I was somehow okay with all of it. And what I've come to realize is, no. No, we're good.

That takes time. It takes practice. And it takes choosing you over everything else, in a way. I know it sounds hard, but it's the truth.

And look, you can't just tell someone to believe in themselves. If someone is so disassociated from who they really are that they still don't know who they are, that advice is empty.

It's like saying, don't think of an orange, and then all you do is think of the orange. The real question is, what are you running from that makes it so uncomfortable to sit still?

People can tell

You can tell in two seconds if someone is comfortable in their skin or not. You're sitting across from someone and you can feel the discomfort, watch them fidget and not settle. And then there are people you sit with and you just go, I like her. She's cool.

It's all about connection. And if you're disconnected from yourself, if you're running from whatever you haven't dealt with, how can you genuinely connect with the people around you?

I think for a long time, the approach to sales was all about getting. You want to be the best, number one, make money. But that's a very grabby, very one-sided experience.

When I started, I remember looking at the bigger brokers and thinking, gosh, they're so aggressive. She'd eat her young for breakfast. And now I've become that broker. I didn't set out to. But in order to do this right, you have to over-explain so much that you become incapable of BS. You just cut to the chase.

That can come off rough. I know it can. My business manager once asked me, how do you see yourself in a high-intensity moment? And I said, I feel like

I'm running through with shrapnel and bombs dropping, and I've got my shield, protecting my team. But they're looking at it like a nuclear bomb's gone off. What I experience is very different from what other people experience, and I'm cognizant of that.

Directness is fine. I'm comfortable with directness. Where it gets dangerous is when it starts coming from ego instead of service. And you only know the difference if you've done the work on yourself.

This is the real barrier to entry

I work in an industry where every man and their dog can get a license. The bar is on the floor. But the barrier to building something that actually lasts? That's all you. It's internal.

It comes down to something pretty simple. The byproduct of having an income comes from operating from a place of giving. And I say that with real integrity, not as a buzzword.

When you care about what you do, when you're passionate about really delivering, people pick up on it. They just do. And the only way to stay in that place is to have done the work on yourself first.