

On Your Terms Episode 133:
Life Update

Sam Vander Wielen: Hey. Hey. And welcome back to On Your Terms. This is Sam Vander Wielen, your host of On Your Terms, in case you're new listening here. Welcome back, in case you're returning, I so appreciate you listening. And I so appreciate you listening and sticking with me the last several weeks, months, however long it's been since you've maybe listened because I kind of suddenly went out of office because I lost my mom.

So, in case you're new around here, every once in a while I do a little personal catch up, kind of behind the scenes. Part of this podcast is, yes, I teach you legal tips because I am a lawyer that teaches you how to legally protect your online business. But I'm also a person and I'm also a business owner. And so, I thought, you know, every once in a while it's just kind of fun to see how the vegan sausage is made behind the scenes. And so, I try to explain a little bit of what's going on either in the business or sometimes it's your life because, you know, sometimes there's more going on in your life and that kind of controls your business.

So, yeah, I don't even know what to say at this point. I'll tell you, because I remember recording something like this after I lost my dad, is that I'm still very much in it right now so I don't have a whole lot of reflection, I would say, at this point, just more kind of being honest about where I'm at.

In case you're new around here, I lost my dad a year ago. And my mom had - what do I even say about this? My mom had been struggling the last couple of years. Her and my dad were not together, but they were very, very close. They were like best friends. They were not together since I was a baby, but they were both, like, obsessed with each other as friends. And I would say, after my dad passed, my mom really struggled even more. And, basically, starting in January of this year, of 2023, my mom got really bad.

Unfortunately, I can't really go into the details about what happened with her and everything like that right now. I'm not sure if I ever will, but it definitely won't be for a while if I ever can. And I'm kind of not even in a place to talk about it that much right now. It's, I will say, very tragic and very - I don't know. I just keep coming back to the

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word tragic. That's what everybody who I keep talking to about my mom keeps saying because my mom was a force, my mom was a lightning rod in this world. And the fact that she's gone, I mean, forget me, I can't tell you how many people have reached out to me from all over the world being like, "I cannot believe that she is gone."

She was spunky and athletic and a diva. My mom and I were very, very different in many ways and very similar in many ways, I guess like most parents. But, man, my mom was the kind of woman who always wore high heels, but not too high because she thought really high heels were ridiculous, but she thought too low was also ridiculous. So, she was a solid, like, 2 to 3 inch, I would say, heel person. And everything had sparkles on it.

And, literally, one of her favorite sayings was, "Brassieres are meant to be seen, Sammy." So, she thought that all bras should be so pretty. She didn't mean to be seen by people in private. She meant so that people could see them when you're at the grocery store. She was hilarious. My mom also benefited very much so from being extremely beautiful. So, she could feel like - I don't know, I could just see her being able to have the attitude that everybody wanted to see her bra. I don't know. Oh, my God. She just thought I was so funny because I just wanted to have, like, nude bras. And she was just like, "What is wrong with you?"

Anyway, my mom was just a force. And she had had a stroke. This is not what ultimately happened, but she had just had a stroke recently and it really took her down a notch, and then she ended up having more strokes. And I was the person who had to make the decision at the end, let's just put it that way.

And I wouldn't put that on you ever. I would never want that for you. If I was your friend, I'd be like, "Do not do this. It is terrible." Nobody should ever have to decide whether their parent has to be removed from life support or anything. It's horrible. So, I'm very much still in shock because once I made that decision, which was in accordance with what she wanted, not me. I keep trying to remind myself it wasn't my decision, it was her decision. I was just carrying it out for her. But once I carried out her decision, it was

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pretty quick after that.

And now, it's been about three weeks since I lost my mom. And I'll tell you, coming on the heels of having lost my father, I mean, I feel like there aren't even words to describe what this is like, and what it feels like, and what this time period has been like. It is crushing. It's too much for one person. It's too much for any person. It's the weirdest thing.

Again, like I was saying in the beginning, I haven't processed this yet, so I don't try to talk about things until I really have. And so, I'm not going to get too deep into it. I'm just being honest about the fact that I think it's so much that something must happen with your brain. I think your brain just, like, shuts down. That's where the extreme, extreme tiredness must be coming from, I'm assuming.

I can't remember the name of anything. I can't perform most basic functions. If you follow me on Instagram, then you know I've been sharing every day that I do some sort of movement every day. And it, literally, takes all of my energy, all my might to go and play tennis, or go to the gym, or show up for my trainer. And anything that I've had scheduled, like when I have a trainer or when I go to play tennis, I have a tennis pro that I play with for an hour, I've showed up to. When it's been classes and stuff that I've signed up for, I have canceled a lot of things, which is okay. I'm totally okay with that.

But I basically expend all of my energy doing that one thing per day and then I kind of pass out. I walk the dog. I make food. It just so happens that our whole house is under construction right now because we're doing the addition, but then that's just having all these trickle effects throughout the house. And then, they've ripped out the backyard and put in a deck and blah, blah, blah, all these things. And so, if you've ever done home renovations, that could be a job in and of itself, so I've just been kind of focusing on that and thinking like, "Okay. I'm going to get this wrapped up while I'm still a little slow with work and all that kind of stuff."

I have another extremely major thing that happened literally, literally the day that my

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mom passed away, I got the biggest news of my life. The biggest news that you are going to freak out about, I'm so excited because this is just as much for you as it is for me. But I can't tell you quite yet. By the time you hear this episode, I don't think you'll hear the episode telling you about the news. If not, then you'll know what I'm talking about.

But it's been like the weirdest thunderstorm. I haven't even really celebrated - no. Let me say, I have not celebrated at all. I have not done anything. Not even a dinner, not even a cake, nothing. Because I was just like, "Yay!" I mean, getting that kind of news the day your mom dies, on the heels of your dad dying, honestly, I don't know anybody who would just be happy about that.

So, yeah, I've just been kind of taking care of the house stuff and literally just kind of my basic functions day to day, making sure I'm eating. My eating stuff has followed the same way I was with my dad too. I guess it's the benefit to having just gone through this is, now, I'm not too freaked out about it. But I wasn't hungry for the first week and then I got hungry again, thank goodness because I love food. So, yeah, I'm just trying to eat and drink enough water and move my body every day, get some sunshine.

I feel like I need one of those, you know, when people have babies and they have one month, two month, three months, and they hold up these little signs that are likes, dislikes, I feel like people who are grieving should have, because it really does feel like you get rebuilt from the bottom up, to be honest.

I think losing your parents in particular, it's almost like you're starting from scratch. Or it's been like an outer layer that's peeled off and you feel so exposed and raw and like there's something new. It's a very weird feeling. And I'm only three weeks into it, but I can tell you that losing both of your parents feels very starting over. Literally both of my parents are gone, I feel so untethered to the universe. Both of the people who brought me in, both the people who decided to have a child, knew me the longest, all of those things, they're gone. That's just so weird.

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And especially for me right now with what I'm going through, when I walk around the world, I just want to scream at everybody, "Don't you understand? I lost both my parents." And people will sometimes come up to me and say, "I'm so sorry. I heard about your mom." And just on the inside I'm like, "It's not just my mom. I lost both of my parents. Don't you get it? It's crazy. This is crazy." I almost feel like I'm trying to convince myself of how crazy this all is in feeling so exasperated by everybody else and their attitude towards it or something. I don't know, maybe that doesn't make any sense, but it makes sense in my head, which is an admittedly jumbled place right now.

If I was making one of those baby signs, it would say that I do not like talking to people right now for the most part. Every once in a while, I have enough energy to talk to someone or have a conversation, but then I'm wiped out for the rest of the day. But talking to people - I don't know - chit chat, I don't have the energy for that right now. It feels too weird. It feels like people don't know me. They don't know what's going on. It's like you've had this giant thing happen to you and the person doesn't even know. It's really, really weird.

There have been so many kind people in my life who have reached out, and called, and texted, and sent beautiful flowers and gifts and food, such good food. And I have been so appreciative and it feels so overwhelming the amount of that kind of support.

I guess I also want to shoutout to anyone who's gone through this before. I feel like there are always these painful moments, too, where there are people in your life who don't show up. And I'm somebody who tends to focus too much on that. Like, when there are a lot of people who are around me who are really trying and helping and calling, and I'm still not answering, I'm not getting back to them, but I'm then sitting there and obsessing over this one person who's really disappointed me.

But there is still a lot of truth and - I don't know - validity in you feeling that disappointment that somebody didn't show up for you, whether you've lost somebody or not or just gone through something really difficult in your life, or whatever, there's a lot of valid disappointment in people who don't show up for you the way that you thought that

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they would. And then, there are people who surprise you and show up way more than you thought they would.

I also find grief very humbling because it makes me think of all the times that I didn't show up the right way for people when they were going through this, when I was younger, even recently, even right before my dad. Or I think about friends whose parents died a long time ago, maybe before I even knew them, and I don't reach out to them or I didn't use to reach out to them on Father's Day and Mother's Day to say, "Hey, I'm thinking of you today." It's a shitty day. I get it." Now, I'm like, "Oh, my gosh. I can't believe I never did that before."

I also see how we support people when things initially happen. And then, as it gets further away from when the event happened, how we, as a society, just kind of naturally move on. And so much of that makes a lot of sense to me because I'm not the center of anyone's universe. You're not the center of other people's universe. The person that I was the center of their universe is gone. That's my dad. But it's not to be expected. People can't sustain this level of support. And I think that most people really do mean well.

And I think a lot of times, too, we think about people and we have them in our hearts and our minds. But the other person doesn't always know that, so we on the hurting end are like, "No one's reaching out." But people are thinking of you more often than you probably think.

And so, I've spent a lot of time just kind of in this duality of feeling like, "Okay. People are doing the best they can and I'm also doing the best I can. I'm also not picking up or getting back to people very quickly or sometimes at all because I can't. I just can't." And so, I'm also trying to have that same compassion for myself that I have for other people that they're got their own stuff going on. I can't be the center of their situation.

So, yeah, that's kind of where I'm at. I would say, I'm surviving the best I can at the moment. It'll be really interesting to look back on this time period and to check back in

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with you in, like, a month, a couple months to share how I'm doing. Because I know right before my mom passed away three weeks ago, I was really seeing a difference in my grief from six months, nine months, twelve months prior about my dad. And it still hurt terribly, but I was still having some days or some hours that were starting to get to be okay-ish.

Whereas, it was really, really hard in the beginning for, like, the first solid nine, ten months probably, about a year. Yeah, about a year. I would say, almost when it got to a year, I was starting to feel a little bit better and then this happened. So, I don't know if this will follow a similar trajectory.

But, honestly, I've been scared to come back and to do this because I'm like, "This just sounds like such a downer." The reality of my life right now is that I'm very sad, and that I'm hurt, and exhausted, and questioning a lot of stuff, and being really angry. I just completely feel like I got flatlined by the universe. And that's not super sexy. It's not going to make a good reel. It's not going to be a catchy email with a cute lesson. There's no neat bow I can tie on any of this. But this is just the reality of my situation.

And when you have a business like this, I truly believe that you don't need to share everything with everybody, and you can share as much or as little as you want. And I think it's totally fine to take time off and all of the things. But I have chosen to share certain parts of my life. It always makes me laugh when some people think I share everything or they think like I've gotten certain passive aggressive comments from people before in my life about sharing things. And I'm like, "You know, like, one percent of what's actually happened." I just went to Chicago for the weekend, and I didn't share it at all until I got back.

So, I actually have gotten a lot better with that. I feel like as you grow in your business, you learn what to hold close to you. And trust me when I tell you there's a ton that I'm not sharing here. And I'm sharing only what I'm comfortable sharing. And I encourage you to do the same.

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I know for me, if I don't share a little something, it's kind of like a dam that I need to break. Like, if I don't share a little something, I can't talk to you about contracts. I can't come here and be like, "So, this is how you sign a contract." I can't do it if I don't break a little of this because it feels phony baloney to me. And one thing I am not is phony baloney. And so, I can't show up here and talk about nonsense when that shit feels like the dumbest stuff in the world right now to me, even though I know that that shit is super important to other people right now. It's just, such is life.

And so, I don't know, maybe this is helpful to you, maybe not. Maybe you just wanted to check in. If so, I appreciate it. I hope that this will encourage you to be gentle with yourself as a business owner. When you have a lot of stuff going on in your life, it's just impossible that this doesn't impact your business, and how you show up, and your creativity, and all of that. So, I guess I'm just trying to, honestly, share how I'm going through it and also showing that it's safe to take a little bit of a quieter season in your business.

And I've set my business up in a way that my business has continued to make sales and run because you can get legal templates from me, you can get the Ultimate Bundle, you can buy things. You can get what you need for your business right now on my website, samvanderwielen.com. You can go get whatever you need, and I've set up my business like that because of all the hardship that I've gone through in the last several years. My dad was sick. My dad had cancer. I took care of him. Then, he passed away. So, like I set this all up on purpose. I didn't anticipate all this back to back to back, but I am glad that I did.

And so, I hope that this was helpful to you in some way. If not, you know, just hit delete and go listen to something else. I appreciate it. I really appreciate you listening and I can't wait to get into my regular episodes with you.

I've done a lot, a lot, of YouTube sleuthing. And I think I read the New York Times, like, cover to cover for the first couple of weeks after my mom passed. And there were just so happened to be so many good marketing articles and features on different

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businesses and all this kind of stuff, and it gave me so many ideas of things I want to talk to you about that help your business. And so, I am going to share a bunch of just kind of random thought episodes that I hope are helpful about your business. You have that to look forward to.

I just genuinely miss chatting with you and miss being here. So, if you listen today, if you liked it, send me a DM on Instagram. I'm at @samvanderwielen. I would love to know what you thought about today's episode. I just appreciate you catching up with me.

And one thing I just wanted to remind you as we close today is something I always keep in mind, is that, while I'm having this difficult period right now, somebody else is having a great time. Maybe they're even out on vacation with their parents, or their business is just doing amazing and they've got tons of energy and tons of creativity and they're pouring all that into their business.

And I was very cognizant of the fact that the only focus in my life was my business, and I had tons of energy and creativity coming out my ears, and I had both my parents, somebody else was mourning the loss of theirs or somebody else had had something happen in their life that made it so that they couldn't show up for their business.

And I don't know, maybe this doesn't speak to you, but for me, something about that just kind of relaxes me and takes some of the pressure off of you don't have to be operating on high at all times. You might be having your moment and your moment can last however long it needs to. It doesn't need to last a moment. And you're going to have your other moment, your good moment again someday. And then, you're going to cycle back through and that's okay.

And somebody else might be having theirs right now and just let them have theirs because they're also going to have their down moment. So, they might be in their peak, they're going to have a valley. You might be in your valley, you're going to have a peak.

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So, if I could impart any advice or wisdom to you, it's that when you're in the valley, I think you really have to just surrender a little bit, lay back, pretend you're in the ocean, just let the waves come over you, because you almost have to store up the energy to come back, to be able to, not only climb back to that peak, but to be on it. Because being on a peak takes a lot of energy too.

So, with that, I hope that this somewhat makes sense and is remotely helpful. I apologize, this is like when they have the thing at the bottom of the email when you write it from an iPhone saying excuse me for the typos, mine says excuse me for the typos because I thought that was hilarious. I hope you'll excuse me for the typos because my brain is not completely functioning right now, but I just missed you that much. So, with that, thank you so much and I'll chat with you later this week.

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