

URL: <https://stvp.stanford.edu/clips/20-40-60-rule>

Threshold (formerly DFJ) Operating Partner Heidi Roizen talks about how preoccupied people are with the notion that others are always thinking about them, and how empowering it is to know that they actually aren't. Roizen underscores this fact with a concept she credits to actress Shirley MacLaine, called the "20-40-60 rule."



## Transcript

And the last thing.... Any Downtown Abbey fans in the room? Come on admit it.. Okay, a few.. This is Lady Grantham's mother.. Real name Shirley MacLaine, she is a very famous actor.. She is Warren Beatty's sister.. She has written some really interesting books.. She believes in reincarnation and a whole bunch of other interesting things.. She has walked the campestella.. She is an interesting person..

But she coined this thing called the 20-40-60 Rule.. And I'm going to close with this as just something I've learned in a piece of advice.. I love this rule.. And the rule goes like this.. At 20 you are constantly worrying about what other people think of you.. At 40 you wake up and you say I'm not going to give a damn what other people think of me anymore.. And at 60 you come to realize that no one is actually thinking of you.. Now I love this and I - if there is one thing I want you to remember today, I want you to remember this 20-40-60 Rule, because here's why, because nobody is actually thinking about you.. And I want that to empower you, because there is good news and there is bad news in this, right? The bad news is nobody is thinking about you, no one is waking up - nobody is waking up everyday going I wonder if Heidi Roizen is fulfilled in her job today.. I wonder if she's making enough money, I wonder if she is happy within her relationships..

No one is doing that, probably not even your parents.. Maybe a little bit your parents especially if they're still paying for you, but for the most part nobody is thinking about you.. Your boss is not thinking about you; your peers are not thinking about you, you need to think about you, you need to be your own advocate.. If you are in a job you don't like, you need to think about changing it.. You cannot sit in your office and wait for someone to come and bring you an answer.. If you are in something, you need to empower yourself to go do something else, because no one else is going to do it for you.. But let me tell you the flip side of that.. Nobody is really thinking about you.. We all torture ourselves thinking about what other people must think of us.. I'll give you an example..

As I said, I travel a lot, I used to travel a lot for business, I would inevitably get somewhere and I would have the wrong pair of shoes for the outfit or one time I actually had one blue shoe and one brown shoe because I'd bought two pairs of the same, but different colors and in the dark I put them in my suitcase, they were two different shoes.. My jacket would be wrinkled all the time, I get - pulled myself together and I kind of look a little scruffy.. And I would be so worried about that, I would be worried what are people going to think of me that I didn't pull myself together or whatever.. And then I thought to myself one day, it occurred to me, I thought have I ever been in a meeting with someone and halfway through the meeting I thought, well even though this person is really smart, they have a wrinkle in their jackets, so they must not be very good.. No, you never think that way.. You never think about this stuff, and the other thing we do and again not singling out the women, but a little bit we women worry about this even more.. Oh God what did I say in that meeting? Oh God did I raise my hand and say something that might have been dumb or did I make a faux pas, Oh my God I introduced that person and I used their wrong name.. I can torture myself for weeks over a mistake like that.. I used to torture myself for weeks over mistakes like that and I finally learned, you know what, nobody else is thinking about me that much.. They have got their own stuff they're thinking about..

So don't let it worry you that much.. My closing recommendation to you is you have to be your own advocate, but when you make mistakes, don't worry about it.. Because no one is thinking about you as hard as you're thinking about yourself..