

# WORTH EVERY PENNY *joycast*<sup>™</sup>

Sarah Petty: When Virginia photographer Amy Yang got into photography, her husband was deployed. And she was a new mama wanting to share images that made him feel like he was a part of their baby's life. Eventually, that love of photography turned into a high end portrait photography business. Once Amy took a hard look at her numbers, she realized that she wasn't charging enough. But there was one problem, she didn't believe in herself or believe she was worth the prices she needed to charge. Today, Amy is sharing her journey from underpriced and selling digital files to earning six figures in her photography business. And being voted by members of our Peak Performance coaching community as Sherpa/Coach of the Year.

So the real question is how are portrait photographers like us able to run a profitable business and still put our families first, without selling digital files for cheap and working all the time? I'm Sarah Petty, your host of the Worth Every Penny Joycast. And I went from a stressed out, overworked mama with three babies, to being named one of America's most profitable photographers, without working my kids' lives away.

Each week I'll show you how to find and serve boutique portrait photography clients in a world where we compete with free, thanks to everyone having a digital camera in their pocket. Take the first step to adding more joy and profit to your life, by downloading your free photography business tools at [joyofmarketing.com/podcast](http://joyofmarketing.com/podcast).

Welcome, Amy Yang.

Amy Yang: Hello.

Sarah Petty: I'm so happy for you to be here with me. And I know Amy is not the comfortable person talking about herself. And I know typically, that's the case with people who win awards in our community. They want to make it not about them. But today we're going to make it about you, Amy.

Amy Yang: Oh, fantastic.

Sarah Petty: All right. Listen, I want to share some of the things that people said about you. And I hope that you just let it pour over you. People saying, she's constantly shown up to lead Joy Sparks, which is our daily accountability program. And it has been the single most consistent Peak Performer thing in my life. I love her and her commitment.

# WORTH EVERY PENNY *joycast*<sup>TM</sup>

Amy's continually serving, by looking for needs of the community. One example... And this might be my favorite, Amy. Is how she saw the general overwhelm after Immersion. So when everybody comes to my city for two days, and everybody's so excited. And they go home and they're like oh, gosh. What do I do first? And so she just decided, I'm going to get with everybody Monday morning. And we're going to put together a plan-your-week. And it's so cute, Amy. Because one day someone goes well, I was at Amy's class. And I was like, what's Amy's class?

I didn't even know what's happening. And I was like, I just love this. When my leaders decide hey, this could serve me. And this could serve other people. And I'm just going to do it. And if someone doesn't like it, they can let me know. But I'll ask for forgiveness later. And I was like no way, dude. Let's just do this. And I just have a page and a half of gushing, gushing things. I'm going to actually send those to you too. I want you to put them in your tenacity journal, which all students have. Which is love, and great things people have said about you. So that if you're ever having a bad day, it's like, wow. I'm making such a difference in other people's lives. So I will send that to you. For everybody listening, you might be thinking, okay. Why should I listen to this podcast?

What's this about? And I really want you to just take a moment, and listen to Amy's story. Because, everybody in our community comes from a different background. Has different, what we call, head trash. Stories they tell themselves about why they can't make more money, or why they can't charge what they're going to charge. And I mean, Amy's husband was deployed. Had a little baby. Trying to figure all of it out.

So Amy, share with everybody a little bit about that time in your life when photography wasn't cutting it. And how were you trying to justify the work you were doing? What did your life look like back then?

Amy Yang:

Yeah. So I feel like I want to step back one step even further than that, and say that I was not the person that always carried around a camera. I don't have the story that, I've had a camera in my hand since I was five years old. And I always knew this was what I was going to do. I am not that person. I have two college degrees. I was a marine biologist. I was going to be a marine mammal vet. That was my path.

# WORTH EVERY PENNY *joycast*<sup>™</sup>

And then the army decided to deploy my husband, and my... Yeah. That all went out the window. So they deployed him, I had a brand new baby. And I started hiring photographers to take pictures of him every month. Because I was like, he's changing so fast. This is our first baby. Isaac has no idea what he is going to look like. I want him to have everything I can give him. So I was rapidly blowing through money. And my husband's like, hold please. That's a lot of money going out the window. Not out the window, but... So I was like, all right. Let me ask somebody, how do I get a camera up? I can surely figure out well enough to go in between the big milestones.

Sarah Petty: Hey Amy, what year was this? Was this pre-digital? Was it still film, or was it post-digital?

Amy Yang: No, it was 2010.

Yeah. 2009.

Sarah Petty: Okay.

Amy Yang: Yeah.

Sarah Petty: So digital was a thing, and cameras became more affordable. You weren't paying for film and developing. So you're like, I can get a camera for not too much. And I can just do this. I can figure this out.

Amy Yang: Yep. Yep. And so, that's what I did. I stayed up late nights on the computer, nursing my son. Constantly on the... There was online learning at that point, to some degree. And actually... I don't think I've ever told you this, Sarah. But I found you way back then. I don't know if I took an online course, or I had a printout of something about pricing. Because my friend started asking me hey, will you take pictures of my kid? And I was like well, I'm going to actually charge for this. So I actually started out as a print photographer. Because, somebody gave me good advice.

Sarah Petty: Good girl.

Amy Yang: So I started, got the business license. Did that for the remainder... My husband was deployed for 18 months. So for the remainder of that year probably, I ran the business in the place that I was. And then he came home, and we moved across the country. And I had another baby. And

# WORTH EVERY PENNY *joycast*<sup>TM</sup>

everything stopped for probably two years. And then I decided, okay. Maybe I'm going to start it up again. And I caved to the digital pressure. I was like oh, I'm just going to do digital files. It's easier. I don't have to worry about printing things. There's no overhead. All the reasons that we tell ourselves, this is what we need to do.

And so, that was 2013-ish. And so, started the business up again. Ran it purely digital for probably a year, year and a half. And then I was like, I really do want to add some product back in. Because, what are they doing with these files? Nothing. But I felt like I had to keep selling files and offer product. But most of my clients still just came and bought files. I'd rejoiced a little bit when somebody bought a canvas, but they were few and far between. And so, I built the business. Well... And then I had two more kids. I had twins in 2015. So we just keep adding to the pile. And when I had them, well life halted a little bit. Because, four kids five and under is a lot of kids.

But looking at the amount of time that I had and the numbers of what was coming in, I felt like I had grown the business as much as I could in the hours that I had. In the model that I had. And I just... Beginning of 2020 after that tax return came in, I sat down with my husband. I was like, this is impossible. There are no more hours to get any more money in. This is as good as it gets. And this isn't good enough for... I was paying a babysitter to be with my twins every day. And I was paying her more than I was paying myself.

Sarah Petty: God, that's when it's painful. Yeah. And you were working. You have four little kids, and you're working. How did you feel... How were you showing up in your life? As a mom, and a wife, and a leader of your family?

Amy Yang: Oh my gosh. Not. If I'm honest, not. Because I needed every second to be editing at the computer, or trying to figure out what's my next mini session going to be. Or nursing a kid, or... Yeah. So I was constantly up, not sleeping. Not because I had babies waking up in the middle of the night. I had that, but also because there was stuff that had to be done. There are photos to edit. There are emails to... All the things.

Sarah Petty: Did you ever think, I should just quit? Or what if I got a job? Did you consider either of those options as you were going along?

# WORTH EVERY PENNY *joycast*<sup>TM</sup>

Amy Yang: So I never thought, what if I get a job? But I did think, what am I even doing? There definitely came a point, it was 2018 where I was like, okay. I have to either go for this, and make a real run for this. Or I'm done. Because, it's too much stress on the family. I don't feel like I'm a good mom. I don't feel like I'm contributing enough for the amount that I'm away. So it's now or never. We're going to... And I went and got the studio, and that was my make it or break it. I gave myself a year to do it. And I did do that, to where I could sustain the studio and all of that. But then beginning of 2020, this was... Covid hadn't hit yet. But I was like, okay. I'm not feeling good about my contribution to the family monetarily, for this work. So I would like to actually make good money for what I'm doing, because I thought it was decent. I deserve to make a decent amount of money.

Sarah Petty: What was that, if I can jump in? In your mind, was it 50 grand? What number-

Amy Yang: Yeah. So I was thinking... Yeah. I was like, I have two degrees. If I went to work right now base, what would I make? 65K. That's entry level. So that was my number. If I went and used my degrees, this is what I would be making. So if I'm not going to use those degrees, that's what I need to be making.

Sarah Petty: Love it. Love it. But you weren't making that. Especially if you had a studio, that's an expense. So now you're putting more pressure on yourself. Okay. So then Covid hit. And what changed?

Amy Yang: Yeah. Covid hit and I was like well, fudge. How am I going to pay for anything? I need more clients. That's what you always say. Everyone's like I need more clients, Sarah.

Sarah Petty: I just. Everything's fine, I just need more clients. That's the solution.

Amy Yang: Yes. Because I can clone myself, and deal with those more clients. There's no more time for that. So I was scrolling Facebook actually, and one of your little ad things popped up. And I was like oh, yeah. I remember this lady's name. I remember, I read her Worth Every Penny thing a long time ago. Let me see what she's up to these days.

So I just popped it up. And it was to log in. To watch a webinar. I'm like, okay. I got nothing else to do. Might as well. And it was individual classes

# WORTH EVERY PENNY *joycast*<sup>TM</sup>

back then. So I was like, I'm only buying the one that's for finding more clients. And then I ended up doing Boutique Breakthrough after listening to the whole thing. I was like, all right. Maybe I do need to look at my pricing. Maybe I should go back to selling more product. Maybe she's onto something with this whole Prince Rock thing.

**Sarah Petty:** Yeah. So you jumped in, and what happened? What opened up for you? Because, it wasn't like you'd never heard of this model. You'd heard about it from me, whatever. 15 years ago. And then you're getting back into it, learning all the nuances of it.

Was it shocking? Did you feel reinforced? What was going through your head during that time?

**Amy Yang:** So I will be honest and say, I didn't 100% buy into the no digital thing. Even after Boutique Breakthrough. Because I was like well, we have family overseas. And I want to be able to share those images with them.

So that was a struggle for me. But my mom passed away during that Boutique Breakthrough class. And on the back of finding out oh, remember when we went and took these pictures? Wait. But where's mom? Mom's not in those pictures with us, because mom is the one taking the pictures. And realizing, gosh. I have pictures of my mom with my kids, because I made sure to do those every time we saw my mom. So I'm very grateful for those. But I don't have any pictures of me with my mom. So that started the change of, okay. These prints do matter. Existing in the photos do matter. And the photo can't live somewhere nobody else knows where it is. It needs to be out, for you to see every day. So that started my shift.

**Sarah Petty:** Got it. And so you started seeing that, and then you started getting bigger orders? What... Just summarize the progression. Was it one certain order that made you double down and be like, all right. This is the way I've got to go?

**Amy Yang:** Yeah. I don't know if it was one particular one, but a culmination of some of the clients that I've had in. I had a mom come in to do a photo session with her daughter. She has Lou Gehrig's disease. She knows she's going to die in the next 10 years. But she had this one baby who doesn't have the disease, and she wanted this for her. So we did a big canvas for her. Amazing. Changing lives. Some younger girl clients who have had issues.

# WORTH EVERY PENNY *joycast*<sup>TM</sup>

Knowing that they see that portrait has helped them with their mental health issues.

I've had... It's just a culmination of those type of clients that have come in, that have touched my heart extra that I'm like, okay. This is why I do this. Wait, this is why... You don't have to be terminally ill to know that it's important for your kids to be on the wall. For your kids to have a photo that they see, of you loving on them every single day. Just normal people need this, not just if you have some kind of extenuating circumstances. So I think that now three years later, yeah. I'm all in. You need this. No, you don't need a file that is going to live on your hard drive somewhere. And you're like, this is my... Lucas' first year in computer. And this is my... Or hard drive. You need it out where you can see it and be like, oh my gosh. Look at how chubby his legs were. And his hair was so blonde, he looked bald. And total old man. You need that.

Sarah Petty:

Yeah. And hard drives soon might be like, what's a hard drive? And how do I access it? I mean, technology changes so fast. And I think everybody listening can relate to the fact that they know there's some image or a file or something somewhere that they mean to go find, and have no idea where it is. And so, I love that you really articulated... Sometimes when I'm talking with students or potential students about the math... This is how you can make that living, instead of being a marine biologist that would start at 65K. This is the math to portrait photography. And it feels so math and yucky. And salesy. And for you, I love how you've really articulated that... What you're doing for people, and how you're changing lives. And how important that is. People have choices. A lot of choices of how they can spend money, and what they can pay for.

And I believe like you. To my death, there's no better place people can invest in... Once they have food and shelter. Obviously, you need to be safe. You need to have a home, and food for your family. But people are... That's not what they're wasting their money on. They're buying cars. And dumb things that in 10 years, they're not even going to have in their life. So I love that.

So Amy, how long did it take you, do you even remember? To pass that first 65K? Because that was that first number that you were like, I want to hit.

# WORTH EVERY PENNY *joycast*<sup>TM</sup>

Amy Yang: Yeah. So it was the second year. So the first year... I wasn't even in the program a full year, but I matched what I had made the previous year in the studio on the old method. And I was in less than six months of that year. And so the second year, the studio hit six figures in that year. Yeah. We've been six figures since.

Sarah Petty: Isn't that crazy, guys? Six figures from someone who is completely capable, but underperforming. I mean sort of like when you see athletes that are under coached, you're like, wow, you have so much talent, but you're at this small school. And you don't have... The coach is never there. And it's like if you actually got coached, and got in a better program, you could be an Olympic athlete. And I love that. It's interesting too, because... Maybe you could talk for a second about, it wasn't super easy for you. Everybody has their different place they struggle in the whole business. But the whole average sale thing. I remember sitting in my kitchen at my studio, your first time you came. And we're all eating, and hanging out. And you were saying, I'm just not... You said, "I'm booked for months, and I'm not getting the average sale."

You were still serving some digital file photographers. And I was like girl, you're getting booked. And you're not... Your average, you were fighting against that average sale number. And I think people maybe when they're listening to the podcast, they're like, oh. But it was easy for Amy. It has not been easy for Amy. That's where... As a coach, everybody has their different place that they need to be nudged or pulled a little bit. And I know for you, I'm like, gosh. Amy, your photography's so good. And you're serving people. But the digitals have to go, because... You got over that hump.

But then looking at average sale, and you start working hard again. And it's like, you could make... You just doubled your average sale, which is totally possible. You could work half as much, and make the same amount. Or you could work the same amount, and make twice as much. So will you talk a little bit about that progression for somebody who's listening who's like, oh my gosh. Charging freaks me out! I could never make that. I could never get that. Because, I think the hearing your story will help some people.

Amy Yang: Yeah. So I really fought against it for a while because I thought, I would never pay that. I would never be able to pay that. And what kind of a person am I if I'm asking somebody else to pay that much, when I

# WORTH EVERY PENNY *joycast*<sup>TM</sup>

wouldn't be able to do that? So I was hung up there for a long time. More than a thousand seems like a lot for people to be spending. And so I just thought oh, I'll just book more people at a thousand. And I'll be all gravy. But then I found myself in the same position where, okay. I'm making a little bit more money, but... Not a little bit. I'm making more money, but still. There's only so many hours. And I couldn't serve them the way that I wanted to. I'm a relational person. I like talking to people, and pouring into individual people.

And when you are, for lack of a better word, a mill, you can't do that. There's not enough time to get to know them. To have the conversation where the mom reveals why I'm here is because, I have Lou Gehrig's disease. I couldn't do that because I had to be like, okay. Great. We're doing your portrait session. Here's colors, etc...

And so when I realized that, that is how I am a photographer, do my best work. But also am fed as a person, I had to take a hard look. It's just math. It's the numbers. If I need three times as much time to do that, I need to charge three times as much money.

So that was part of it. And then the other part of it is just accepting that I am worthy of making a decent income. I am worthy of making money, no matter how much that is. That I do have a skill that is valuable. That really, I am giving my clients a gift. I'm not holding something hostage, which is how I used to feel. I am giving them a gift of breathing this moment for them. Of providing them a piece that they're going to cherish forever. And it's okay for me to make a living from that.

Sarah Petty:

Yes. And I love having watched this progression from a front row seat. But also, you mentioned knowing you are needing to charge more. But some of the changes with you were more strategic in how you photographed the session. The product mix that you photographed helped open up those orders instead. Because, you do some specialty things. And you're photographing for that one big image. But then, they were just buying that one big image.

And it's like if you actually do this series and this collection. And throw in the parents, throw in a sibling. Do a sibling session, or a sibling companion piece, you can double or triple just sheerly by what you're creating. Having a little bigger menu at your restaurant instead of, we only have steak. And that's all you can get. But it's like, what if you add

# WORTH EVERY PENNY *joycast*<sup>TM</sup>

sides, and salad? And appetizers, and all the things around it. So I feel like that took part in that growth. Do you agree?

Amy Yang: Oh, yeah. For sure. Knowing the strategy behind... I would feel like, okay. If they're coming in for this type of session, that's all I'm photographing. But then the rest of the family is there. And so it's an easy switch to then be like, okay. We've got sister all done up. Let's throw little brother in there, and do a few of them together.

And the parents love those. And it's not... I would always think, that has to be a separate session that they would book me for. But that's not the case. So I wasn't using my session time to its greatest potential either. Yeah.

Sarah Petty: Love it. So how do you feel you're showing up as a mom and a wife and a leader of your family, as your orders are going up? And yes, you're making more in that regard. But how do you feel different as a person?

Amy Yang: I actually am proud of myself and what I do. I always was like oh, yeah. I'm a photographer. But didn't really want to talk about it. And now I'm really proud to say that. I was able to pay for my family to have a week long beach trip last summer, which we had never done before. And the kids know hey, that's because mommy made the money to do that. And our little... So we get trophies for our different... Well, I got my trophy for Sherpa of the year. And my daughter, we took her to dinner last night. And in the back of the car, we're building a built-in shelf in my office. And she was like, oh mommy. You got to put your trophies on there. She was like, you got to put both of the ones you got for the Sherpa of the year, and also for your 100K plus one. And she was like, you are just the best boss in the world. And you have a mug that says that.

Sarah Petty: That is so cute.

Amy Yang: Just knowing they're proud of me too, it's amazing.

Sarah Petty: Yes. And having that time. I think that was the biggest game changer for me, was feeling like I was showing up as an exhausted mom. And not as my happy, normal self. And have you felt that too? Of, I'm actually present. And I can sit and have a conversation. And not be like kids, you got to get to bed because, I got to retouch.

# WORTH EVERY PENNY *joycast*<sup>TM</sup>

Amy Yang: Yeah. No. I'm like oh, do we want to... You want to stay up? Last night, we stayed up the next extra half an hour. Let's read books. What are we working on? Some mouse with his mystical robot, or whatever. That wouldn't have happened before, because I had to... I can only stay awake till 11:30 tonight. And I have got to get this session edited. So peace out, have a good night.

Or just having the time to take her to dinner. We just asked the kids hey, daddy and I want to go have dinner. Which one of you would like to come with us? One, we wouldn't have been able to afford to go to dinner by ourselves. But two, having the time to just be like, which one wants to have extra time with mommy and daddy tonight? Let's go have some dinner. That's something that I know they're not going to forget. That they will remember that we were there to do those one-on-one things with them. And that's not something I could have given them before.

Sarah Petty: Oh, I love that. So guys, if you're listening to this and you've been telling yourself this story that you can't run a business and have a happy family life, look at Amy. You can. Amy, thank you so much for being here and sharing your story. And being vulnerable. We all go through hard things, so thank you.

Amy Yang: Yeah. Of course. Of course.

Sarah Petty: Guys, Amy's one of those students who I've seen completely transform before my eyes over the last few years. From someone who wrestled with her worth and believing in herself, to someone who has stepped into such a big leadership role in this community. And she's been voted by her peers, as Sherpa of the year. Amy, I'm so proud of you and what you have accomplished. And the example you're setting not just for our community, but for your family. So thank you so much.

Amy Yang: Thank you.

Sarah Petty: Hey, photographer. It's Sarah again, with a quick question for you. Do you ever wonder why some photographers make \$300 a session, and others make 3000? I know I did. So I dug deep into what's going on, and I wrote a book for you called Worth Every Penny. You can get a free copy at [joyofmarketing.com/free-book](http://joyofmarketing.com/free-book).

# WORTH EVERY PENNY *joycast*<sup>™</sup>

Inside this book, you'll learn four ways to price your photography. And why there's just one pricing strategy that attracts the best clients. What to do when you need clients. And why paying for ads doesn't work. And what to do instead, that's way cheaper. The dos and don'ts of social media. What most photographers are doing wrong, that lowers their profits. And what to do instead. I'm not sure there's a book on the planet that more photographers have read. 23,124 photographers have it already, so I want you to have it too. Grab your copy of the hardcover book free here. Just pay a little for shipping and handling, at [joyofmarketing.com/free](http://joyofmarketing.com/free) book.