**20. How to Stay Positive in Uncertain Times & Get to Inbox Zero When You Have 1,446 Emails**

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:00:00] Happy New Year! Here's to a fulfilling, fabulous year. What do you want most this year? What would make 2021 your best year ever?

**Intro** [00:00:13]

Hello and welcome to ALSO in PINK. The podcast all about lifestyle design. How we live, the clothes we choose and how we organise our space. I'm your host, Alexandria Lawrence, a certified KonMari consultant and personal stylist. I'm here to guide you on your journey to live a happy, fulfilled life.

Every Tuesday, you'll get new insight on what it means to live well, plus actionable tips.

Redefine what's possible and create your ideal life.

This episode is all about you. Each month I do a special ask Alexandria episode where I answer your questions about life, KonMari and style. I'd love to hear from you, so please send in your question. Simply go to alsoinpink.com/askalexandria for a chance to have your question featured on the podcast. You have the option to submit a written question or record your message. I look forward to hearing from you. So, let's get started with today's show.

**About This Episode** [00:01:24]

Welcome to Ask Alexandria. This month's questions cover quite a lot of ground. They range from practical to fun and even a bit silly. We explore staying positive in the face of uncertainty. I have actionable tips for how to finally get your email inbox under control. And yes, you can even, KonMari your pets.

The first question today comes from Gareth, a teacher from London. He says, I have 1,446 emails in my inbox. I feel completely overwhelmed and don't know what to do. How can I get to inbox zero?

Well, Gareth, I hear you. Email can certainly feel overwhelming. I've been there too. But now is a great time to give yourself that fresh start. People often say new year, new you. How about new year new inbox? You don't of course need something like a new year to make a change in your life. But even if it's only in our minds, There is something special about the start of the year. Anything feels possible, right? So why not take advantage of that pioneering new year spirit and make this your time to tame those emails. Okay, so before I get fully into all things email, I'd just like to mention that I'm launching my first digital course this month. And it happens to be A digital cleanse. So my digital cleanse will help you fully organize all aspects of your digital life: email, photos, files and all the rest. It incorporates KonMari principles. And my digital cleanse will help you stay organized and maintain. Yes. Wait for it. Your digital joy.

So if you want this to be your year to take control and organize your digital mess. Sign up to get notified when my course goes live. There will be a special early bird bonus when the course launches. So don't miss out. Go to alsoinpink.com/digital-cleanse. And sign up to get notified. So, let's get back to your email inbox.

First of all, let me say, you're not alone. Gareth. A lot of us have a thousand or more emails in our inbox. I know a couple of people who have more than a thousand unread emails in their inbox.

But that's alright. No judgment. It's never too late to change the narrative.

So how do we let all of those emails pile up? Ever heard of decision fatigue. I talked about it on my KonMari kitchen deep dive. Briefly then, decision fatigue is something you might experience on some level every day. After all, we can only cope with a limited number of decisions before we say: sod it. I can't even choose which tea I want now.

So, decision fatigue is part of the reason your email inbox builds up into that small or large mountain of unanswered emails. You don't have the energy or capacity to deal with all those emails.

There are too many other decisions demanding your attention and email is what you sacrifice because you don't have an effective method for dealing with it. And it's a vicious circle. The more time that passes the harder it feels to tackle your email.

So, if you're looking to reduce your inbox from thousands of messages to zero. Let's look to the KonMari paper category for inspiration. And what's Marie Kondo's goal for papers. That's right. Discard everything. But that doesn't mean all your emails are going in the trash. The concept of discarding everything is like a reality check. It helps you break old habits and really consider what it is you want or need to keep.

Let's simplify your email folder structure. Instead of a complex maze of folders, keep it simple. You only need four top-level folders. Let's call them: action, waiting for, access often and access seldom. If you've used your inbox as a to-do list in the past, that's alright. But let's try a different approach. Repeat after me. My inbox is not my to-do list. My inbox is not my to-do list. Well done. So then you'll need somewhere else to manage your tasks. I'd recommend an app like ClickUp or Asana. They're both great for keeping track of tasks and you can manage projects and teams too.

However you choose to manage your tasks, I'd urge you to keep everything in one place. The trouble begins when you keep tasks here, other types of notes there. And then you write things on random bits of paper. I'm sure we've all been there. It easily spirals out of control and you're left with a big old mess.

So choose one place to keep track of everything. It will make your life a whole lot easier.

So. Getting back to your email inbox. If you have thousands of unread emails, there's a decision you need to make. Is it worth your time and effort to go through each of these emails, one by one, and take the time to process them?

Here's a bold idea. What would happen if you chose a date and deleted everything in your inbox received before that date? Do you find that idea horrifying or kind of amazing. This approach won't of course work for everyone, but it's worth considering if you're feeling truly overwhelmed by your mountain of emails. What have you got to lose? If a mass delete isn't something you're prepared to do. If you decide to process all your emails, one by one. I have some good news for you. For each email, you only have five choices. One: delete. Two: file. Three: forward. Four: reply. And five: schedule. I go into detail about how this all works in my digital cleanse course, but I'll give you a couple pointers now.

Go through your emails with the concept of discarding everything at the back of your mind. Delete or discard is always where you want to start. Do I really want or need to keep this email. If not delete. If I do want or need to keep it, what action do I take next? Do I need to keep the email long-term or short-term? Does someone else need to get involved with this particular email?

So for each email, I'd say. If it takes less than three to five minutes to process. Do it now. Or not now, but when you're working through your inbox. If an email is likely to take longer than three to five minutes to process, create a task and move that email into your Action folder. Then when you, joy of joys, clear your inbox, all you need to do is make time every day or every week, depending on the volume of emails you get, to process everything. Don't let that mountain build up again. Inbox zero is within your reach. And now is the time to take action.

**Monthly Review Spotlight** [00:09:21]

And now for our monthly review spotlight.

This listener will get a free 20 minute session with me to pick my brain about life, KonMari or style. So… Congratulations to 48frhikqhj3rt. Wow. Who left a review on Apple Podcasts USA on December 21st. They say: artful and elegant. What a varied and creative take on the world of design. Listen in for Alexandria's soothing voice and insightful questions. Thank you 48frhikqhj3rt. That's slightly easier the second time. What a lovely review. I'm delighted to hear you're enjoying the show. Thanks so much for listening.

To redeem your virtual session just email me alexandria@alsoinpink.com. Let me know you left the review and I'll follow it up with a link to schedule a time for us.

**Question 2** [00:10:27]

Louisa, a paralegal from San Francisco says: I'm glad 2020 is over. But we still seem a long way from normal. How can I stay positive with so much uncertainty?

Well Louisa, staying positive in the face of uncertainty is a great skill to develop at any time, But it feels especially relevant now, doesn't it.

First of all focus on what you can control. So when it comes to the pandemic, What can you control? Well, you can do your best to stay safe and not spread the virus.

Wash your hands. Wear a mask. Keep up the social distancing. Don't meet with people outside your bubble. Don't put yourself or others at risk.

There's not really anything else you can do about the pandemic. Unless you've developed a vaccine in which case, thank you. Or if you're a frontline worker. Also, thank you. So don't dwell on what you can't control. Instead, focus on the positive things you can do. What's a daily habit or ritual that brings you joy?

Is there a book you've been wanting to read or a TV show you're desperate to watch. Take the time to read it or stream it. Do you want to get fit this year and come out of the pandemic in the best shape of your life? Well, it's not too late. Now is your chance.

I'm actually starting the Couch to 5k with my hubby this week. Okay. Confession time. I was super motivated at the beginning of the pandemic to do my daily workouts. But in recent months I've been so engrossed with building my business and podcast that my fitness goals have fallen by the wayside.

Time to get back on track. So I promise to update you on my Couch to 5k progress during the next couple Ask Alexandria episodes. Hey, would you like to do the couch to 5k too? Give me a heck yeah. And believe me. I'm literally the world's worst runner. So if I can do it, you can do it too. So I'm very curious to see what the next nine weeks we'll be like. After all that's how long it takes to do the Couch to 5k program.

And I've told you about it now. I've committed to doing the Couch to 5k. So I have to do it. By the way. That's a great way to motivate yourself to do something. Tell your friends, tell your colleagues, tell your community. Tell your lovely podcast listeners. You won't want to disappoint them. They will hold you accountable.

So, how can you get more positive energy in your life? Is the news getting you down? Are your social feeds getting you down? There's a simple solution. Disengage. Switch them off. Take a break. You know the old saying...

You are the five people or maybe the one to two media outlets you spend the most time with. So choose wisely. Spend your time with people who make you feel good about yourself. Engage with media that makes you feel good about life. That makes you feel like the world is a place of hope and possibility and wonder. Because it is. When you take the time to think about it. It's pretty amazing that we're here right now.

You and I. It's a great privilege to be alive at this moment in time. Yes. Even in the midst of a pandemic. Right here, right now. We're here. And we can make a difference. We can put our positive energy out there, and good things are bound to happen. So look for daily joy. You may surprise yourself.

And normal doesn't always mean good. Getting back to normal maybe isn't always the best outcome. We can learn from what's gone well this past year and what hasn't gone so well.

Has the pandemic brought any unexpected positives to your life? Has it made you reconsider how you want to spend your time? Who you want to spend your time with? How you want to live? Have you had any kind of lockdown realization that's changed your perspective or your priorities?

In many ways, the beauty of life lies in its uncertainty. It makes every moment we have precious. Cherish every day, every moment, live life on your terms. Take the time to imagine how you really want to live.

I've been surprised at how many of my podcast guests have said how they enjoy the changing nature of life. If you haven't listened to the recent Roundup episodes yet, that's a great way to get a feel for each guest and hear what they love most about life.

**Review Ad Spot** [00:15:45]

Well, hello. Can I just say, thank you. Thank you for listening. And if you're enjoying the show, it would mean the world to me if you'd rate and review ALSO in PINK. I'll make it super easy for you and you can even win a prize.

Submit your review on Apple Podcasts, or wherever you get your podcasts, for a chance to win a 20 minute one-to-one virtual coaching session with me. Pick my brain about life, KonMari or style. I'll announce the monthly winner on each Ask Alexandria episode. So be sure to listen out to see if your review gets picked. All you need to do is: go to ratethispodcast.com/alsoinpink. And rate and review the show. Want tips on how to win? Write something genuine. Be thoughtful and let your personality shine through. Bonus points for a dash of charm.

And for your weekly dose of podcast joy, subscribe to ALSO in PINK, so you never miss a show. Thank you so much. You really are a star.

**Question 3** [00:16:57]

And finally, Effie an artist from Brighton says: I have 35 pets. Can I KonMari them?

I'm not entirely sure this is a serious question, but hey Effie, I like it.

So, how do you KonMari your 35 pets. As always, let's start with your vision. So, what does your ideal life look like? Give yourself the space to imagine. Close your eyes.

You have limitless time. You have limitless money. What does your life look like? Where do you live? Do you have lots of outdoor space? Who do you live with? Do you live alone or with others? And. How many pets do you have in your ideal life? Are there pets in every corner of your house? Or do you have so much outdoor space that they can roam freely, prancing through the tall grass? Being playful. Chasing one another in circles. Ooh, look at that gray sheep-like poodle thing. So fluffy. Oh off, she goes chasing after that scruffy brown dog. Oh, and there's a little ginger cat. Look at them fly. Take a moment to watch all the animals playing outside. Look at those tails and paws scurrying through the tall grass. And there's a large cat sunning himself on a stone seat in a corner of the garden.

You can just feel the warmth of the sun on his thick, shiny coat. Look, how his fur glints in the sunshine? There are flashes orange and white and black. The large cat slowly opens one eye as that scruffy brown dog scurries past. But it will take more than that to move our cat from his warm, cozy home.

So when you're ready, open your eyes.

How many pets did you see in your vision of your ideal life? If the answer is still 35, I'd borrow a phrase from Marie Kondo and say: keep them with confidence. But let's say the number's gone down, maybe significantly. If you have say five pets in your ideal life. What happens to the other 30? This is a surprisingly wonderful way to see the KonMari method in action. Yes, we may be talking about live animals, but the same basic principles apply for books and clothes and anything else you no longer really want in your life. Always discard responsibly.

Give your 30 unwanted pets, or 30 unwanted books, good homes. Thank them for being part of your life and wish them well on their new adventures. In the end, you're doing what's best for those animals, those books, and what's best for you.

You can pour all your love and care into the five pets you really want to keep. And those remaining 30 will bring joy to their new homes, their new people, and be cherished in return.

Yes, obviously it's going to take considerably more effort on your part to find good homes for 30 pets, than the comparative ease of donating 30 books to your local charity shop. But hey, that's what responsible discarding is all about.

**Finale: Quick-Fire Questions** [00:20:40]

To end the show, there's a quick fire round of questions for me. This month's questions are inspired by Vogue's famous 73 questions, but don't worry, we don't have nearly that many. And they are asked by my friendly assistant Gus, who may or may not be real. So take it away, Gus.

**Gus:** [00:21:01] What's your secret talent?

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:21:04] Juggling three balls. It's literally the only thing I remember learning in middle school. I practiced and practiced and practiced until I could do it. I'm a little rusty now, but can still get a few rounds in before dropping something. Or maybe my secret talent is making tiny cats out of modeling clay. Marzipan also works pretty well and makes for a festive cake decoration.

**Gus:** [00:21:30] Heels or flats?

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:21:33] Oh flats. Absolutely. I always marvel at people who can walk or especially dance in heels. I love to dance by the way. Swing dancing is my thing, but I'm all about flats. I have one pair of beautiful teal boots with a short heel, but even that I don't entirely feel comfortable with. It feels a bit wobbly and I guess I like to firmly feel the ground. Besides, there are all sorts of fabulous flats. If you love heels, great. But if you don't, there are many, many stylish heelless out there. So, go hunting. Yay.

**Gus:** [00:22:12] What’s one thing people don’t know about you?

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:22:16] Well, I was obsessed with jello in high school. I shocked myself and others by winning my junior high school science fair with a project called ready, set jello. Yes, I really did test about 80 small tubes of jello with different types of fruit. Kiwi for instance has an enzyme that prevents the gelatin from setting. So top tip. I think the judges were in forensics and I guess liked all my little test tubes.

**Gus:** [00:22:46] Blow-dry or air-dry?

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:22:48] Oh, air-dry for sure. You know, it took me 36 years to realize that my hair is naturally quite wavy. It's amazing what a little curl gel and air-drying can do. Maybe I'll use a diffuser if it needs some extra zhuzh and I'm feeling fancy.

**Gus:** [00:23:07] What's the best advice you’d give your teenage self?

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:23:10] Learn to dance. I was kind of out of the social loop in high school, so never went to any kind of school dance. But a few years later, in college, I discovered swing dancing, which I became completely obsessed with. Dancing is so much fun. And it helps you feel at home with your body. So I think is a great way to get over any teenage awkwardness.

And swing dancing is completely joyous. Yeah, it's one of my favorite things in life.

**Gus:** [00:23:41] What's your favorite app?

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:23:43] I love, love, love Masterclass. One of my favorite ways to relax in the evening at the moment is to watch a few Masterclass lessons in the bath. Yes. In a bubble bath. Sometimes I'll have to watch them again though, if I want to take notes, but it's worth it. Masterclass is amazing. Such high quality content from fascinating people. I literally want to watch everything. You know, even things I didn't think I was particularly interested in... like magic.

**Key Takeaways** [00:24:15]

Well, hope you enjoyed this Ask Alexandria episode. Is there something you'd like to ask me? Simply go to alsoinpink.com/askalexandria for a chance to have your question featured on the podcast. You have the option to submit a written question or record your message. And if you'd like to come up with your own quick-fire questions to ask me, please submit five or six questions for next month's Q&A. I look forward to hearing from you. So here are some key takeaways from the show today.

When it comes to email, simplify your folder structure. After all, you only need those four top level folders. Action, waiting for, access often and excess seldom. And remember. Your inbox is not your to-do list.

If this is your year to take control and organize your digital mess, sign up to get notified when I launched my digital cleanse. And catch that early bird bonus when the course launches. So sign up to get notified now. Go to alsoinpink.com/digital-cleanse.

And in order to stay positive in uncertain times, it's important to focus on what you can control. Focus on the positive things you can do. Take a break from the news. Take a break from social media. Spend your time with people who make you feel good about yourself. Engage with media that makes you feel good about life.

Be on the lookout for daily joy and you may surprise yourself.

Remember normal doesn't always mean good. Getting back to normal might not always be the best outcome. Has the pandemic brought any unexpected positives to your life? Has it made you reconsider how you want to spend your time? Who you want to spend your time with? How you want to live?

Let's imagine a better world post-pandemic. What small thing can you do to make our world a better place? Take the time to imagine how you really want to live. And imagine what kind of world you'd like to live in.

**Outro** [00:26:54]

That's our show then. Thank you so much for listening. I'm Alexandria, and this is ALSO in PINK. The podcast, all about lifestyle design. If you enjoyed the show, please subscribe to ALSO in PINK, wherever you get your podcasts. And the absolute best way to show your support is to write a review on Apple Podcasts or iTunes. This really helps more than anything to promote the show. And, of course, tell all your friends. Thank you so much for your support. Until next time, have a wonderful week. Redefine what's possible and create your ideal life.