

Laura Cox Kaplan:

Ready to add a big dose of positivity and empowered perspective to your day? You've come to the right place. Welcome to She Said/She Said podcast. I'm Laura Cox Kaplan. Here we tackle everything from imposter syndrome and confidence building to the best advice on how to lead yourself through life pivots, including the ones that knock you flat. For the past three years, I've talked to hundreds of experts about their stories. Here, you'll find their actionable advice and lessons as well as my own tools that you can put to use in your own life. Stick around. I think you'll find this investment in you well worth it.

Hey, friend. Welcome to She Said/She Said. For this week's guest, growing up in a military service family had a huge impact on how she views the world and how she's tackled challenges in her life and in her incredible career. Harris Faulkner is a six time Emmy Award winner and author and the anchor of not one but two daytime news programs on the FOX network. In my conversation with Harris, we talked about the unique experience of growing up in a military family, how that shaped her, including how she learned the value of curiosity and preparation. She's quick to point out, you may not always know exactly what you're preparing for, but that it's still important to be prepared. And she talks about what she means by that. We also delve into her best selling book entitled 9 Rules of Engagement: A Military Brat's Guide to Life and Success.

She talks about why finding your tribe or she refers to it as your special forces unit can mean letting go of some who are not prepared to go the distance with you. We also tackle race and she shares her perspective on the importance of showing both grace and space. On this Memorial day, it's the perfect time to recognize and remember families like Harris's. When a member of the family serves in the military, the entire family serves. These families and service personnel make a tremendous contribution to the freedom and security that we as Americans enjoy. I am delighted to bring you this conversation with Harris Faulkner. I'd love to know what resonates with you and which of Harris's advice you find most helpful. And now my conversation with Harris Faulkner. Harris, welcome to She Said/She Said.

Harris Faulkner:

Well, thank you. It's a pleasure to be one of the She's.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

Well, I am so delighted to have you. And so delighted to spend time with you today. You have had such incredible success in journalism. I would love to start by talking about how you grew up and how that shaped your approach to your life and your career.

Harris Faulkner:

Well, I was in a house filled with curiosity. I mean, I had a war pilot dad in the family. He served a couple tours in Vietnam as a combat pilot, and I was born and raised on a military base and multiple bases I was raised on. And there was always this point of curiosity in my household about worldly news. Being in a military family, you're part of the thing, the United States Military that loves clothes and takes care of more people than any other nation in the whole world. So you are part of what helps to make the world work and also to fight for the freedoms of others who cannot do that. I do really feel that that is internal to our home life. Curiosity has made me a better journalist, but we were also a point of curiosity for people who were civilians in our lives.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

Right. Right.

Harris Faulkner:

If people were curious, what's it like to grow up military and travel all over and is it hard to make friends when you move year after year in that sort of thing? And because we are such a small percentage even today of the total United States population, people are... they thank you for your dad's service or in the whole family really served. So we would get that, but we'd also get, so now we're having an event, are you guys allowed to come? What are the rules? And so it was... My mother always said it was great to peel back the curtain in both directions to let people into our bubble, but also to be curious about hours and to be open to trying all new off-post and all bait off-base things. So that's how I approached my professional life.

I assume I don't know everything about any particular event, even though I may know it well. Election night, I've covered many. 2016 and 2020 we're completely different than anything else I've ever covered and so it was 2012. So was 2008. So I get excited about just the knowledge that you gain when you open yourself up and ask lots of questions. I will be honest with you. I don't like where we are right now in the cancel culture, because it's not healthy. It's not a good space to come from shutting people down before they even get their question out because you are, well, I say this because they're afraid. I think that it is the reflexive nature of the intellectual coward to cancel people based on your disagreements with him or not just a disagreement, but also just to a narrative that might not fit yours. And so I don't like that we're going down that road and I'm hoping that we're going to snap back to where we can be curiosity seekers, because that's where I live.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

I love that. I love what you just said. It also strikes me too that this concept of resilience, which it keeps coming up again and again and again, whether we're talking about COVID or whether we're talking about the cancel culture, or we're talking about just this overall sense in the country that things are not as they should be. It's really, really, really a challenging and very difficult environment on so many different levels. Maybe let's dig into this idea of resiliency. You wrote about this in your book. It's a real theme for you. Maybe talk about how you think about that and how that can help us as we think about bridging the divide with people who have a different point of view than we have.

Harris Faulkner:

Well, first of all, I think that we have to think of life as something that's not just happening to us right now or tomorrow or the dates on the calendar that we can see. That our relationships and our experiences go far beyond those things that we have planned for, or can't plan for. A plan is great. It keeps you focused and it can sometimes help you find your purpose. And at the same time you want to be open to whatever's coming. Preparation is the most important thing. And I say a holistic preparation. My faith is part of that. My health is part of that. I'm constantly reading about things that I don't even know if they're coming up in the news, but I'm really glad that I had read a lot about mental health going into 2020. It was just one of those things that I didn't think we were investing enough, time, energy and resources in. As a nation, I was starting to see how the opiate addiction was affecting so many millions of people.

And then you hit the restrictive lockdowns and the necessities of having to live in a way to protect ourselves across the country and across the world. That was really an athema to how we're built as human beings. Even those of us who may not struggle in a prescribed way with mental health, we're feeling depressed. I know I was right. I've got two young kids in my household, two girls, a pre-teen and

a teenager. And I was watching their little personalities over the last year plus change and all virtual land. It was anxious to get them into an in person learning situation again. And anyway, I had read a lot about it, that I didn't know I was preparing for what we're going through now, but I think preparation is what makes you resilient. Because you can meet each situation with literally everything you know and everything you've got because you're always in ready mode.

I always tell people I like to stay ready, so I don't have to get ready. And I'm asked, "Well, how do you know what you're getting ready for?" And I'm like, "Have you lived 15 minutes of this life? it could be anything." And I was raised in a military family, as we've talked about, literally in war time, it can be anything and life can feel like war time sometimes when things aren't going your way, you lose your job, you get a medical diagnosis. How am I going to deal with this? And if you're coming at it with that mindset of, "Well, I know I'm capable of learning a lot. And I know that if I'm not prepared for this exact moment, I'm prepared for being open to it. And I know I've got my inner circle chosen, my special forces. I've got good people around me. I'm not going to tolerate the gossipers and the negative thinkers of my inner circle. I know I've got that. I've got that preparation. So I will be resilient when whatever comes comes."

Laura Cox Kaplan:

Yeah. Yeah. I think that's beautiful. Let's dig into that idea of your special forces unit, your network. Some people call them their board of advisors or their tribe.

Harris Faulkner:

It's tribe.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

I love this, yeah. Their squad. I love this concept. Talk about how you go about selecting those people and how you think about that. And I know you've been quoted, I'm pretty sure you have this in your book, talking about the fact that sometimes you have to let go of people at times, maybe talk a little bit about how you think about building that, that special forces unit.

Harris Faulkner:

Well, in 9 Rules of Engagement, the book that you're talking about, my first bestseller, I feel so blessed. It is where I start. Because if you don't have the right people around you, succeeding becomes extremely difficult. You don't need a million followers. You just need a few good people that will follow and lead with you. It's about membership and real friendship and real support, not just about a bunch of people who have some things in common with you and want to hang out with you or vice versa. It's being clutch for them and then being clutch in your life. And in my book, I talk about how to fire those people. Even sometimes when they're relatives that don't fit that mold. And they really have to, because if you have big lofty goals, like you put together your, She Said/She Said podcast, and you want it to be winning for both the She Said on your side and the She Said on the guest side.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

Right.

Harris Faulkner:

You want it to work, then you're going to need some people around you to set things up, to make sure that you were booking the right guests. You're going to need a support system. You also need that go-to support system once a few friends listen and watch to say, "Yeah, that worked. That didn't." And to really have your back. Gossip is a killer. It really is. And I don't tolerate it in my life. And sometimes I'll catch myself and I'll say a little something, or I'll let somebody say a little something in my presence. But the key thing for recruiting your special forces is you're putting all of your verbal, mental and physical energy into something that is part of your brand or your purpose. If you were tearing somebody else's down, you're giving away the resource of energy time and mental capacity on something that clearly does matter and can't help you and is counterproductive and besides that you never know who knows whom.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

That's exactly right.

Harris Faulkner:

You just don't. And you may think you really know those people in your inner circle until you hit a bump in the road, see how they act.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

Right.

Harris Faulkner:

And when you get ready to fire somebody, don't be cruel about treat them like you're going to know them for the rest of time. Like you might run into them again at a job interview or whatever. I say, do it this way. We are not yoked together in this moment for success. And I want you to feel the success and I want me to feel the success. I'm not quite certain that we're getting there together. So let's go explore some things separately and keep in contact. And after a few attempts or texts, what my 14 year old daughter likes to call ghosting, you may see that they depart you faster than you ever thought you depart them because when someone can't manipulate you and when that's their goal, or if someone can't share misery with you about other people, and that's their goal, you're not really useful to them anymore.

And then you've got to have the confidence in yourself to say, "I'm going to let them go." Because sometimes what we do is we think, well, maybe they were going to fire me first. Let me show them what they're missing. Don't go backwards. It's hard to go forwards if you're looking backwards. So you tend to run into things that weren't meant for you.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

Yeah. That's really, really good advice. Maybe play that out a little bit further with people that they are not part of your network, but because of the very visible role that you have as a television journalist, you're subjected to all kinds of scrutiny. Good, bad and otherwise and if it's constructive, but a lot of it is just mean. How do you develop that thick skin? Most of us will not ever face the kind of scrutiny that you face, but at the same time with social media being what it is, you're going to put yourself out there. You have to endure a certain amount of sniping here and there. So what's your advice for figuring out which is constructive, which is not letting stuff go, what's your toolkit for that?

Harris Faulkner:

So I try not to read very many of the responses to something if I post something. In fact, I usually turn the commenting off on Instagram because both my children are on Instagram with private accounts, but they can read mine and I don't want them to see it. I draw the line at death threats and racial slurs, and I'm quick to mute and quiet down accounts. I tend not to block people because I do think that that is, it can be insightful. I mean, they can get, "Oh my gosh, I got blocked," and then they'll take a picture of that and they'll put that on Twitter or whatever. And then the next thing you know, I mean, it's really nasty. Sometimes I will get back to somebody just saying, "I hope that you are going to try to be a better blessing to someone that you care about moving forward. Because you're damaging yourself by taking shots at someone you cannot touch."

Laura Cox Kaplan:

Do you get responses from people when you do that?

Harris Faulkner:

Usually other people who say, "Oh my gosh. That was a really kind way of putting what you must've been thinking," or whatever. But I very rarely respond. But when I do, I make sure that it is not in time. I do not tit for tat. I don't go there with people, especially people who, if somebody has 13 followers and they take a punch at you, why would you punch down at that? They are already hurting. By taking a swipe at you, they're trying to lift themselves up. So help them out. If you're going to respond, lift them.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

Right.

Harris Faulkner:

Have the intestinal fortitude to tuck away your own, whatever it is, offended, hurt feelings and say, "Look, I'm going to think you're having a day which nobody has smiled at you or prayed for you," hashtag pray for this follower or pray for this Twitter person or whatever.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

Yeah.

Harris Faulkner:

Yeah.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

Having that grace for each other is-

Harris Faulkner:

You have to.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

... important. Yeah.

Harris Faulkner:

And I say to people, "Grace and space. Grace and space." That's what we have to show each other. Because if we don't, we tend to argue about the things that don't matter. And our relationships are defined by shouting annexed and those things that physically make us ill and life is short.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

Yeah. We are at such a difficult period in our country's history, as it relates to race and the conversations that are taking place. I know you received particularly high marks for an interview that you did with them. President Donald Trump, just following George Floyd's death. I was doing some research on this interview and I ran across a quote that I thought was really interesting from a Columbia journalism professor who wrote about you. She put herself into the interview. She framed in her roles as a black woman, and as a parent, in a way that journalists rarely do with skill and care. I was curious what you thought of that description.

Harris Faulkner:

Well, first of all, a peer review like that, I believe that was from Bill Bruce Ken is really, really wonderful. And I'm so grateful that anybody would take a look at my work, would review it. I'm very grateful for that. And it's also very helpful because constructive criticism good and bad from your peers can be illuminating. It's very different than the wider public, because they actually have been in your shoes. And so they know what the challenges are in that moment. And when they give you feedback, I tend to listen to that.

There was also, I mean, I liked that particular writeup because it was very balanced and it talked about areas as well she should have pressed harder here because you want that, right? You want somebody to be honest with you, but that made me at least leave that particular series of interviews that I was doing after the death of George Floyd. Because that was the first time that the president had sat down since the death of George Floyd and all the protesting and the calls for confederacy symbols to be taken down in the country. We were just at a real flashpoint of race relations and struggle and fast forward and we still are.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

Right.

Harris Faulkner:

But that was the initial moment in his presidency where we were. And so to get that feedback was helpful to know that I was asking the right questions. Now the one thing that no one knew when the president and I sat down was where he was on all of this. He had said a couple of things, but he hadn't sat down and really gotten into it. And so there was a point, well, just from the top of the very top of the conversation, I said, "This is a moment in history where people are going to look back and they're going to decide who we were based on the decisions we made. Were we successful? Did we do all we can do?"

Are you the president for this moment to bring the country together?" Now that's a pause and an opening. That's a moment for grace and space. I didn't want to rush the president. I wanted him just to think about it. I would never have cut in. And he answered very calmly, "I think so." That got a fire response because networks are watching this real time and the tweets are going out real time, blah, blah, blah. And because we're sending out clips real time, the interview was not live, but we're able to release clips very quickly. And you'll see that sometimes it's just a print Reuters or associated press will

say Harris Faulkner, sitting down with the president, he just said. That sort of thing was happening. And there was just this response of the presidents and say yes to that right away. Or the president didn't say no to that right away. Either if he knows he can do it, or he thinks he can't, he wants to change some things.

But what I really liked about that moment was that it was real. And I think that's what people who reviewed the work later really saw. I don't do got you. I don't think it helps a wider public. We were at the height of the pandemic. In fact, the next day, within 24 hours after leaving that mega church in Dallas, Texas, where we interviewed, I had flown in there wasn't a lot of masks wearing where we were. Texas began to really see a spike and to have to do some things in response to that within 24 hours. So there was a lot. It wasn't just the unrest in the streets of several American cities, the president was at a point where he was being cold. And I had a lot of questions and we sat there for quite a bit of time for a president's schedule, I thought, and there were moments that got picked up from that interview.

For instance, we talked about the black community. What do you say to these protestors? And he said, "Well, some of them are riders," and we went back and forth on his definition for that. And why he would seem to threaten when the alluding starts, the shooting starts, what did he mean by that? But at one point, he got to the declaration that he had done more for blacks in America than president Lincoln. And it wasn't until I had seen it on several networks of broadcasts that works broadcast and cable networks later. The clip from that, and my answer of, "Well, we are free Mr. President," that it really dawned on me that this was an interview that was changing the conversation a bit about race, about the president, about the country. Somebody had had a real back and forth with him on this issue. And it wasn't easy, but it was honest.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

So interesting. When you think about the topic of race, how would you suggest that people approach these conversations? Because it feels like there's an awful lot of talking past each other. What's your advice for having good candid conversations with others around these topics?

Harris Faulkner:

I tend to have this conversation with people who look like me more than not right now. And their responses is sometimes negative when I say this because I'm often accused of being too Pollyannish and not black enough because I don't get. I'm not woken up. I don't get it. Trust me, I am. I get it. I'm 55 years old. I've been black my whole life. It didn't just start at this point. I've been pulled over driving while black. I've had things happen, of course. But I was raised by someone, my father and mom who saw this nation with its signs up in the South, where I was born in Georgia, that said they could not have things based on the color of their skin and then he went and fought for this country because he said it had the most potential and that he loves America and that it is resilient.

So when I say to people who are color, who asked the question, "Well, how do we get beyond this point?" I say, "Well, you have to come at it with love." You cannot come at it with hate, because hate is already being served by those who would want to divide us further. So if you meet hate with hate, you only have more of it. At some point you have to come at it with something different. And I don't mean to be redundant, but it is about grace. And it's also about the space of allowing yourself to feel whatever you feel. When George Floyd called mom, he called my name. I am a black mom. He called my name. I told that to the president of the United States. I said, "It hits you differently, president Trump than it hits me." He called my name. So of course I heard, of course, I'm angry. The man was tortured on camera.

Laura Cox Kaplan:  
Right. It's horrible.

Harris Faulkner:  
And I spent many years on the air as a main anchor in Minneapolis. So it hits me in a lot of ways.

Laura Cox Kaplan:  
Sure.

Harris Faulkner:  
All of that though, cannot rob us of the ability to show grace and to say, "Well, not every police officer is like those who would do such horrible things to human beings, that we have to look away and fall to our knees." That those protectors, those potential lifesavers, when you call 911 and they come, they are worth the benefit of the doubt and from their perspective, so are we as people of color as Americans in general. And we must get to the point where we can sit down and at least agree on that.

Laura Cox Kaplan:  
Yeah.

Harris Faulkner:  
And again when I say this to other people of color, they sometimes will tell me not everybody. "Well, don't you say that first there has to be justice before there can be peace? I said, "Why can't there be both?" That's what I say when people ask me that always. I'm like, why do we have to be so monolithic in our abilities and accomplishments? If you've ever had a new board, you know you got to be able to do a lot. You might have to nurse and change that poop that... It's amazing. It's coming out of both ends. It's happening and you're like, "What?" Sometimes you have to multitask.

Laura Cox Kaplan:  
Yeah. Let me ask you one final question. I'd love for you just to reflect for a moment on your incredible body of work so far and the impact that you hope you will have had. You've been such a role model, but I'd love to hear from you what that impact looks like from your perspective.

Harris Faulkner:  
Well, thank you. That is so, so amazing for you to say that. I'm really grateful to you. I hope the impact is that people follow their dreams because that's all I did. I'm just a girl who decided to go for it. Actually have a little sticker of that in my office. It's one of those... You can have something and it's like this big now on your wall and you don't have to frame it, but that's all I am. I'm really simplistic in that way. Every now and then I'll get the urge to go do something again, just go for it. I'm raising now a tennis player. She just made the tennis team in high school, my 14 year old.

Laura Cox Kaplan:  
Congratulations.

Harris Faulkner:

Thank you. And a competitive gymnast who through COVID and everything else, it's like, nobody can ever see her perform anymore. But I got to see one competition this past weekend. And there were, I think, 15 people allowed in the venue and you get in there and she made it to state. So it was the only competition. They usually have 10 to get there and they were able to have one. And if you could hit one score, you could make it to States. Other municipalities and States were able to get there with several, but in New Jersey, it was a little bit more complicated, New Jersey and New York.

And right before she went to go do her thing and her thing is the beam. She turned around and she said, "Any last words?" And I said, "Yeah. Just go for it. So leave it all out there." And I hope my body of work as a journalist communicates to people that if you prepare to listen, your questions will always be amazing. If you prepare to be early, when things are happening, you're always first when the unexpected happens. And if you prepare to be open to the opportunity and the possibility that what you thought might happen is completely different than what is unfolding. You will always lead the news because you had no narrative. Those are the technical lessons that I would hope that people get from my work. But the life ones are, follow your dreams. Go for it.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

I love that. I love that. Your girls are lucky, lucky to have you.

Harris Faulkner:

Thank you. I'm blessed to have them and blessed for this conversation. And after that diaper change and nursing conversation, it can't be [inaudible 00:30:33].

Laura Cox Kaplan:

Exactly. This is why She Said/She Said. It's such a pleasure, Harris. Thank you so much for the time today. I really appreciate it. Friend, thanks so much for joining me today. I hope you found this conversation with Harris Faulkner interesting, and that her advice resonated with you as deeply as it resonated with me. To learn a bit more about her, check out the show notes for this episode, where I've included a link to Harris's terrific book, *9 Rules of Engagement: A Military Brat's Guide to Life and Success*.

As always, I'd love to know what you thought about this or any of our She Said/She Said podcast episodes. It's a huge, huge gift when you all reach out with your feedback and your perspective and to tell me which parts of these conversations resonated with you. I also love your suggestions for other guests that we should have on She Said/She Said podcast. So be sure to reach out to me.

You can contact me via the contact link on the website at [shesaidshesaidpodcast.com](https://shesaidshesaidpodcast.com). You can also contact me via the various social media platforms, Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn, I'm Laura Cox Kaplan on all of those. So please reach out, let me know what you're thinking, what's working for you and what questions or problems you're struggling with. I'd really, really love to hear. Until next time, I hope that you found this little investment in you well worth it. Take care of yourself. I'll see you next week.