

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 the podcast. Ever struggle with staying positive? Even for the most upbeat and optimistic among us, this past year has put our positivity to the test. Today's guest lives her yay every day and has literally written a book to help us do the same. Meaghan B. Murphy is the editor-in-chief at Woman's Day magazine, a magazine that even in the downturn of print advertising still reaches some 18 million readers each and every month. Meaghan is also the author of a terrific new book entitled *Your Fully Charged Life: A Radically Simple Approach to Having Endless Energy and Filling Every Day with Yay*, something frankly we all could use a little more of, I think. Many of you have seen Meaghan on morning shows, on Today, GMA, among others. She regularly dispenses home and life hacks. She's also the co-host of a podcast called *Off the Gram*. She and her husband, Pat, are the parents of three young children.

I actually read Meaghan's book, *Your Fully Charged Life*, on a flight back from the West coast. And literally, it made me smile almost all the way home. Now, that is saying something, because if you haven't flown across the country on a long haul flight during COVID, it is a lot less fun than it used to be. You are going to want to add this book to your summer reading list. I loved it, and I think you will too. The concepts in Meaghan's book, and really, this underlying notion of choosing positivity is a topic that we talk about a lot on this podcast. The power of mindset and remembering that we often have more power than we may realize in how we show up to the world. Choosing little things every single day to boost your energy, your creativity, and your positivity. So, with that, here is my conversation with Meaghan B. Murphy. Meaghan, welcome to She Said/She Said.

Meaghan B. Murphy:

Yay, thanks for having me.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

Well, I'm so happy to have you. I am a big fan of your book. One of the things that I think would surprise people if they follow you on Instagram, if they see you on all these morning shows, is that this idea of being the yay person, of being this constantly positive and optimistic person did not necessarily come naturally to you. You've not always been this way. Talk about that.

Meaghan B. Murphy:

Oh, no. I find this so amusing because I trained to live this way, right? I trained to live with optimism and joy. I trained to practice positivity and to prioritize positivity. So, in the same way I may have trained to run a 5K and then a 10K in the marathon, I trained to become an optimist. I trained to fart rainbows. This does not come naturally to me. I think it's amusing because my nickname was Grumpy as a child. I wore a necklace with Grumpy the dwarf, this gold necklace that my parents had given me. And I wore it so proudly, like yes, life sucks and I am the embodiment of negativity. Well, we even... I did a play in fifth grade, which was wonderful because that's how I learned I had a talent for performing and acting. But we wrote our own characters, and my character was Maggie. And that character was legitimately the

embodiment of negativity, and anything anybody said, I was like... And that was my character, and it was my entry into acting. And so now I'm really super happy for that.

But when I look back, I'm like, "Who was that kid? Who was that person?" And it led me to some really crap times, right? I mean, I was always just sort of... I was a kid with lots of emotions. I'm an empath, and I feel big. And as a young person, I didn't know what to do with that. And I would cry and laugh in the same breath. And it was just all these pixars of emotion, and I didn't know what to do with those emotions. And I can now look back and say, "Oh, well, I developed an eating disorder to stifle them, to quiet them, so I didn't have to deal with them." And I became a raging anorexic, and landed myself in the hospital. And I tell the story in the book, but my best friend and I, we were partners in this spiral. And she tragically jumped out of a car and died en route to be hospitalized with me. So, I had some crap, crap teen years. Those were hard times. Well, I can just look back at them casually now because I'm 45, I'm a mother of three, and so far past that, and it almost feels like someone else's life. But boy, was it hard to live that way.

I did therapy and outpatient treatment and a lot of work on myself. And I began to live a little bit more normally, right? I got over my eating disorder and all of the things. But I still wasn't a very happy person. I wasn't a very joyful person. And I think it wasn't until, and I talk about this in the book as well, that I was an editor at Cosmopolitan magazine, and I was assigned the story called the Seven Secrets of Happiness. That's what happens as a magazine editor, the boss was like, "Okay, happiness is trending. We need something on happiness. Seven Secrets of Happiness, go." And then as the editor, you're like, "Okay, let me figure out what the heck that means." You start to do your research, and you start to do reporting, and you turn that into a six page feature. And so, that's what I was challenged to do, and I turned it into this six page feature.

But in the process, I looked at the field of positive psychology and the work of Martin Seligman. I looked at neuroscience. And I started to have this awakening of sorts, that, well, happiness wasn't just this bullshit bumper sticker platitude that meant nothing to me, because it was so elusive and frankly annoying, but it was actually something you could actively pursue, actively do, make choices every day to inch toward happiness, to move the happiness needle. And that was intriguing to me, that there were these people who researchers would call who were flourishing and thriving and had a zest for life. And they lived differently than me. And I was intrigued by that. I was intrigued by the things they were doing and the action steps they were taking to live differently. And I sort of dabbled in positivity. And I dabbled in optimism. And I liked it, and then started to make gradual, gradual changes in living that way, and then figuring out why things were working, why things weren't working, living the science and testing it all out on myself as a guinea pig.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

Yeah. Was it hard for people around you as you began to make this pivot, and doing these small things every day, and really turning yourself into a person who has what seems like irrepressible positivity? You wear lightning bolts on your clothing. You have yay days. I mean, your whole-

Meaghan B. Murphy:

[inaudible 00:08:07] that I only have my lightning bolt necklace to keep me being subtle.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

But what was it-

Meaghan B. Murphy:

[inaudible 00:08:12].

Laura Cox Kaplan:

Was it hard for people who had been in your life to come along with you on this journey? It can be hard for us when we pivot and evolve as people for the people who have been with us sometimes to stay with us for that. It's weird for them.

Meaghan B. Murphy:

Well, frankly, it wasn't this black and white, night and day transformation. It was over the course of probably 15 years, right? It wasn't like, "Who is that? We don't recognize Meaghan anymore. She smiles a lot." It wasn't like that. It wasn't like, "Aha, happiness gates opened, and here she is." It was very, very gradual. And frankly, it was also in a time in my 20s and 30s, big growth years anyway, where we were evolving and changing. So, it wasn't drastic. It wasn't dramatic. It was gradually small. And I think that's the key in all of this. I will say this to people, your fully charged life is not a life overhaul. It's not a makeover. It's not even a guide or a plan. They are small things that you could do every day that might change the way you see things, change the way you feel things, change the way you do things, that ultimately make you happier and give you a little joy jumpstart.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

Yeah. Talk a little bit about the methodology that you came up with that you have now included in the book, right? I guess I should back up and say you came up with these theories. But maybe talk about which came first. Did you decide to write the book, or did you come up with the methodology? Which of those actually came first?

Meaghan B. Murphy:

So, I basically just lived a lot of life, realized a lot of what I was doing was working, and then backtracked and tried to give it a framework, and give it a name, and understand why it works, and support it with science. And so, the journey to the book was basically I lived all this life. And I changed, and so much for the better. And I have the tools and the resources to go through hard things more easily. When my dad was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer and was gone in five months, it sucked. And it was awful, but I have the tools to get through it, to move through it with grit and grace. And I wanted to share those tools with other people. Because at my core, I'm a service journalist, right? I've worked everywhere from Cosmopolitan, to Good Housekeeping, to Self magazine for nine years. I'm a service journalist. If I find something that works, if I find some news that I think you could use, I have to share it. That's what I'm compelled to do.

And so, when I was faced with yet another challenging time, and realizing, hey, wait a second, these tools in my toolkit, they're getting me through this. And it doesn't numb the pain, it doesn't close the hole in my heart, but I'm getting through this. And I'm getting through it more easily than I would have imagined, right? I'm moving through this. And so, it was really, I just felt very, very compelled to share those strategies. I think my skill as a journalist and as an author is simply that I'm able to, what I like to say is fun filter science, fun filter facts, so that I'm going to give you the action step that might actually work in real life. So, I might look at a concept like cognitive reappraisal and think, wow, that's genius. But if I tell the average person, "Okay, here's this thing called cognitive reappraisal, go," they'll

be like, "Okay, no, what are you talking about?" But if I say, "Okay, we're going to reframe what's lame. Here's how to change that stinking thinking. Here are three examples," I'm like a charm board.

And that's really my skill as a magaziner or a journalist, is these are lots of concepts that you've probably heard of or probably know, but I feel that they are fun filtered, and they're bite-sized action steps put into real world contexts, so that you're going to be like, "Oh, that's how I could do that. Oh, yes. That's might work in my own life. Great."

Laura Cox Kaplan:

Talk about how COVID enabled you to really test these theories. And where was the book at the point in which COVID hit? Because the book wasn't published until, I think, February of 2021, right?

Meaghan B. Murphy:

Yeah, it came out February. I finished the book in April. So, we went on... It was kind of a crazy time for me, because in March, right before lockdown, I was named editor-in-chief of Woman's Day magazine. So, I'd been an executive editor of Good Housekeeping for six years, and then I was named editor-in-chief of Woman's Day magazine. And then we went on lockdown. So, I never cleared out my Good Housekeeping office. I never moved into a new space. [inaudible 00:13:24] same company, it was still hushed and whatnot. So, they sent a computer home. They sent a monitor home. And then I, gradually as the year went on, built out a home office, because I had never worked from home in my life.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

Did you know the team though? I mean, were you literally-

Meaghan B. Murphy:

So, no, this is like that... So, I knew of some of them. So, my creative director, I had been in a meeting with in a room before, but we had never worked together. My deputy editor, who I hired remotely during the course of the pandemic, was somebody I had worked with prior at Good Housekeeping. And I was basically like, "Hey, listen, I'm going to be doing this thing. You want to do with me?" And she just took a leap of faith and was like, "Okay, yeah. Okay, I'll be your deputy." [inaudible 00:14:10]. It was crazy. I couldn't even tell her salary or the job title or anything. I'm just like, "You want to do this?" And then my art team and many of the people, I knew of them, but we'd never worked together before. And then we're tasked with kind of reinventing the magazine, refreshing it, redesigning it. I mean, we changed the logo, we changed everything.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

And that was happening COVID notwithstanding, right?

Meaghan B. Murphy:

It was happening-

Laura Cox Kaplan:

You were hired to recreate this, but then you're also doing it in the context of COVID.

Meaghan B. Murphy:

Yeah, very wild.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

What was that like?

Meaghan B. Murphy:

I mean, it was pretty wild, right? The joy and the beauty, and I silver line everything, so this is what you'll learn about me quickly. I felt like it was such a great opportunity because, hey, listen, if I fall on my face, if I really eff it up and do a terrible job, I'll just blame it on COVID. Well, it was a pandemic, what do you expect, right? So, I was like, "Let's just go for it. Let's just shoot for the moon because there's no failure in this, right? We got an escape goat. We got pandemic we can blame it on. Let's blow up the logo. Let's blow up the inside pages. Let's get rid of everything and start..." I just felt this immense freedom from failure because I was like, "We got an excuse team. Don't worry about it. Blame it on a pandemic."

Laura Cox Kaplan:

That's amazing.

Meaghan B. Murphy:

But it was pretty wild too, because simultaneously, I was homeschooling three children, right, because at that point, my three kids, I had a kindergartener, a second grader, and a fourth grader. So, I'm trying to get them onto Google Classroom this and Zoom that. And like at one point, I'm just making a paper sloth with my kindergartner. I am trying to do this new math where you don't carry ones. And I thought even carrying the one back in the day was hard, so now not carrying the one's really making my brain fall out of my ear.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

Amen.

Meaghan B. Murphy:

I have a book due. My book was due in April. April 14th, my book was due. It wasn't finished. And I'm making this new magazine. Oh, and I have a podcast, which I'm now doing in my attic, because there, it's a little bit quiet. It was very, very surreal. And there were moments where I was like, okay, I'm crying in the shower because I'm scared. I'm scared of the mail. I'm scared of my groceries. We can't leave the house. I'm scared of people. I'm scared of the world. I'm completely overwhelmed. And granted, we were lucky enough in those early days not to be sick. We ultimately did get COVID. And we were lucky enough to be healthy in the early days. It was a lot. It's fun to go back and be like, "We did that." I mean, there were so many beautiful silver linings during COVID.

One of my favorite things was my husband became a secret handyman. I mean, he was changing lights. I was like, "Oh, now that this little closet is my office, I'd really like the..." He's YouTube-ing and changing out light fixtures. And he fixed the plumbing leak in the sink. Next thing I know, he's got tools. I didn't even know we had all these tools. And he's under the sink watching a YouTube video and fixing the sink. So, that was one of the fun highlights and silver linings of COVID, is we realized that my husband is pretty damn handy, and the family dinners, and the more time with my kids. And then ultimately, as things eased up, we were going to put them in school this year, into a little private

Catholic school that went eight to three, which was beautiful. But it was a crazy, [inaudible 00:18:00] ride of a year.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

So, let me ask you a question, because I'm struck by the fact that you're writing this book on positivity and on charging your day and the little things that you can do all day long. And yet, you are faced with an existential crisis that everybody is dealing with at the same time. Did you struggle with imposter syndrome or self doubt as it related to just getting through this extraordinary period? Or was it really, as you dipped into your tools, was it something that you were like, "Wow, this really does work?" I mean, talk about how you... Because I can imagine writing a book on how to be positive and turn bad days into good ones when you're experiencing something that is just, no one had... We've never dealt with anything like this. How did you deal with that?

Meaghan B. Murphy:

Well, it was really kind of cool, actually. Three weeks before... So, I ultimately did finish the book around 4AM wake ups and furiously writing and all the things. But I ultimately finished the book, turned the book in, was ready to go, and three weeks before the launch, which is a big deal in author life, that's your media blitz, that's media tour, radio interviews, and all your TV appearances, and all the things. And I was supposed to do the audible. I was supposed to narrate the audible, and I got COVID. And my three kids got COVID, my husband got COVID, and my mom got COVID. I'm asthmatic, and I've been in the hospital for pneumonia before, so I was freaked out. I was like, "How is this happening? How is this happening? I cannot have COVID right now." And PS, I can't open my eyes. I can't stand up. My kids are 103 fevers and vomiting all over the house, and your husband is on the couch incapacitated, and I have to [inaudible 00:19:55]. Oh, my gosh, it was surreal.

But it was such a gift because if I had had any doubts, any imposter syndrome, any anything, I now got this gift of being able to completely lean into my toolkit, lean into all the strategies and all the things I talk about in *Your Fully Charged Life*, apply them once again, and come out the other side smiling. And so, I just... It was actually a gift to get to one more time, put *Your Fully Charged Life* practices into practice, and know how well they work. And it just reinforced how badly I wanted to give this gift to the world. This is my legacy. And so, I was really, really thrilled.

And I can just talk you through what some of living fully charged looks like in the face of any adversity. But for me, that day, I was diagnosed with COVID it was like, okay, what does a fully charged person do? They own the bad, right? You give yourself full permission to sit with what sucks, damn it to hell. I want to cry right now. I want to rage right now. I want to scream right now. And then I locked my bedroom door, and I was like... I had the moment of like, "It's my husband's fault. He shouldn't have gone to the eye doctor. Maybe he got it at the eye doctor. I shouldn't have gone to the grocery store. Maybe I got it from the produce section." You have the full rage, and anger, and blame, and tears, and fear, and everything. So, absolutely felt it all. Went through that full range of emotions. But I don't get stuck there. And so, instead of saying, "Why me? Woe is me," then I reframe it. Then I'd say, "Why not me? Why not me? Why not?" And then I will tell myself things like, "Hey, listen, you're an always strong and healthy person. You can do this." And then I will flashback to something hard I've done in the past, and realize I'm a person who does hard things, great.

I had pneumonia, and that wasn't fun, and being in the hospital on oxygen wasn't fun, but I got through that, and I will get through this because I'm a person who does hard things. And then I find purpose and I try to assign purpose and meaning to the struggle. Okay, how can I give purpose to this? Well, listen, I have neighbors and friends and people who had COVID and lied about it, and hid it

because there was this stigma attached to having had COVID. And I was like, "Hell to the no. I'm going to wear that scarlet letter C loud and proud, and let people know, you know what? COVID happens. And it happens to the best of us. And it happens to the most careful of us. And it's okay. And if you have COVID, get the help you need. Don't be embarrassed. There should be no shame in your game." And I helped to destigmatize that. I've got a loud platform, and I'm a public figure, for whatever that means, so I'm going to destigmatize it, and I'm now giving purpose to my struggle.

And I also felt that when I got COVID, I didn't know what to do. I called my doctor, I didn't get a response. I felt very helpless. And I didn't want anyone else to feel that way. So, it became very important for me to create a COVID toolkit, a COVID recovery toolkit. I was able to call a doctor that had been on my podcast. She mapped out a recovery toolkit for me, and I'm like, "Okay, I'm going to share that on Instagram. I'm going to put it in my highlights. I'm going to make sure that anybody who gets COVID has this same resource and support." And once I started to give purpose to this struggle, to flashback to things I've done in the past that were hard that I got through, wow, I started to inch forward. I started to get unstuck.

And then I went on another fully charged strategies I have, filling my house with fresh flowers. That is mood magic. There's great Harvard research around the power of fresh flowers to reduce anxiety and stress. And I called a very good friend, so I reached out on social. I had that human connection, which is so important. And I was like, "I need [inaudible 00:24:07]." I asked for help, which was also very empowering. Accepting help, also really healthy. My friend went to Trader Joe's and FaceTimed me and flower shopped, and then dropped off flowers in my front porch, and then I arranged flowers in my house in my sickest days. And damn, did that improve my mood. These little things, endlessly little strategies like these, all science proven, that can help you get unstuck. Because I think a lot of us are feeling right now is a little bit joyless. Even as we come out of these hard times, the future is scary, it's uncertain. And so, how do you get unstuck and get your own way? It's just creating positive momentum. And there's tons of little things you can do to begin to create that momentum.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

Yeah, it ties into a topic that we talk about on this podcast a lot, which is this idea of mindset, and how you show up to the world, and the fact that you can often, maybe not 100% of the time, but much of the time, you can choose how you show up, you can choose the actions that you take. And this book really reinforces that whole notion of, it's about choice, and little choices that you can make every single day. You have a daily yay list. Maybe talk about that, because I love this idea.

Meaghan B. Murphy:

So, gratitude is the secret sauce in life, right? Grateful people are happy people, that's all the research will say. The P in the PERMA theory of wellness was positive emotions, and gratitude is one of the key things that causes and creates those positive emotions and feelings. And I'm a person who I'm not very [inaudible 00:25:47] crystals on my pocket. I respect all of that, it just doesn't work for me. And it really feels homework-ey. I just don't stick with. So, as much as I know keeping a gratitude diary, keeping a gratitude journal, really beneficial and awesome, I can't keep that up. I can't do that. Maybe I'll do it for a day, and then it goes away. And so, what I really started to practice was the yay list. Now, I will ask my family, "When did you say yay today?" I will ask my kids, "What made you say you say yay today?" And it's a way of seeking out the good in the world, prioritizing positivity, appreciating the good in your day and the good in the world, and verbally documenting it, maybe you're documenting... I document it on social media, and ended up with my own account called The Yay List, which is just a positive community sharing good times and good thoughts with good people. That's our gratitude practice.

So, for me, I'm not going to say my kids, "What are you thankful for?" Because that feels like something you do on Thanksgiving, or something you do for homework in a gratitude diary. It just doesn't work for my family. But if I'm like, "Okay, guys, what made you say yay today?" they've always got something. Brooksie lost both front teeth within a two day span this week. And he's got a toothless front smile. And it's the biggest yay ever.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

Tooth fairy is doing double duty.

Meaghan B. Murphy:

Tooth fairy is doing double duty. The tooth fairy didn't have any cash either. Tooth fairy was in trouble.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

It's making it fun, though, right? It's taking these things that it's based in science. We know that it works. We know why you want to have these gratitude lists, and to be thankful, and all those things, but you're making it fun and accessible, not just for kids, but for grownups as well.

Meaghan B. Murphy:

I'll say this, so I have a fun filter. The only filter I have is a fun filter. And I filter all things through that lens. How can I make it more fun? How can I make it more enjoyable? How can I make it more doable because it is so fun? And that's really my secret sauce, is this kind of funness, right? So, we're just making gratitude fun. That's it.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

Yeah, that's amazing. Maybe let's talk a little bit about... Self talk is a big topic on this podcast. And oftentimes, for women whose... Women are my primary audience. I talk to women about topics that affect us and our lives and our journeys. Self talk can be something that we struggle with because we do tend to be really hard on ourselves. It's not that men are, but we really kind of hold the tough card as it relates to how tough we can be on ourselves. So, maybe talk about the role of self talk as it relates to living a fully charged life.

Meaghan B. Murphy:

Yeah, I mean, I think the only thing that really matters are the things we tell ourselves. And I have pretty in depth conversations with myself. I'm really big on mantras and keeping those positive messages front and center. So, you'll often see me wearing a message tank, a message sweatshirt. I have a mug, a designated grownup logo. Keeping [inaudible 00:29:11] in powerful, inspiring, motivational messages and mantras front and center. Because in order to get the message, you have to see the message, and sometimes I really need it drilled into me. I mean, when my dad was dying, I had a mug that said, "You're stronger than you think you are." And I had my coffee in that mug every morning. You're stronger than you think you are, you're stronger than you think you are, you're stronger than you think you are. I needed that self talk. And I think it's great when that self talk is quick, and simple, and on repeat. And then front and center too, whether it's on your mug, on your tank top, on your screensaver, on your phone.

My phone is this lightning bolt. It reminds me to stay electric, to stay fully charged, to stay present, to think, to live all of the mandates of a fully charged life. And I have a tattoo of the lightning

bolt because this is a power symbol to me that makes me feel connected to my mom, who's the OG bolt, who believed that everything was always possible and taught me that, and was relentlessly confident, something I always wanted to emulate. So, these symbols, these words that we surround ourselves, and these things we tell ourselves are chiefly important.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

Did you look at the science as to why that works? I don't take anything away from what you just said. I completely agree with it. But what is the science behind why mantras and symbols and reminders work for us?

Meaghan B. Murphy:

At its core, a lot of it has to do with our negativity bias and how easy it is to focus on the negative, to dwell on the negative, to ruminate or stew about the negative thing you heard or the negative thing you're thinking. And the only way to counterbalance that is to make the positive and the good stuff louder, right? And so, the only way to do that is to put that on repeat. I mean, think about it. If someone says to me, "Oh, I hate your scratchy voice," why am I repeating that versus the 10 people who are like, "Oh, you have a radio announcer voice, I find it very soothing." You hang on the negative. You dwell on the negative. Our negativity bias, our primal urge to prioritize negativity is pretty, pretty strong. And so, you have to do a lot of work, a lot of hard work at first, to counter that. And so, by telling yourself the good things on repeat, to putting the good things, the stronger messaging, making that louder and front and center and top of mind, it can counterbalance some of that.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

I love that. That's so well said. I want to dig in a bit more to your career journey, because we talk a lot about that, we talk a lot about the challenges associated with pivoting. There's so many people who are pivoting from one job to the next, or an awful lot of moms out there, probably dads too, but we're talking to moms, moms who are taking a break as a result of COVID, and just the overwhelm of trying to home school, or whatever the world looks like. Hopefully, we're coming out of this. But nevertheless, a lot of people are rethinking careers and professions and those sorts of things. You talk about something that I thought was so fascinating in the book that you refer to as job crafting. I'd love for you to talk a bit about that and the role that that's played for you.

Meaghan B. Murphy:

Sure. So, I think we often have more flexibility or freedom with any job than we realize. So, when I was the executive editor of Good Housekeeping, on paper, my job was absolutely to executive edit the magazine, to paper edit the articles, write the headlines, work on the cover lines, work on the text of the magazine. And I was good at that, and I was getting that done, but I had been doing that for 25 years and I was bored. The things I like about my skillset and I like to do is I have an acting background, I have a television background. So, how did I job craft? I started doing TV segments, and doing life hacking, and I love cleaning, I love organizing. I started videotaping myself doing that. I started doing more of that on my social media. And that got the attention of NBC. And I wound up being able to do this better ways life hacking series from my home as the executive editor of Good Housekeeping. But I was getting to tap into something I really like to do, and then doing that on the Today Show, Live with Kelly and Ryan.

So, that was not in my job description. But I made that part of my job, so that my job was more fulfilling, but it was also using some of these skillsets and resources that I enjoy, that I like to do, and ultimately, created more value for me personally in the role, because then there was also this forward

facing personality for Good Housekeeping who did all these TV segments and all this. But that wasn't part of my job description. That's not what I was hired to do. I continued to do the job I was hired to do, and I did well, but I created these additional outlets for me personally because I wasn't feeling completely fulfilled.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

It feels like there's an element associated with this, maybe a big one, related to innovation and problem solving, right? And you are in a sector of the economy that notwithstanding the incredible readership of Woman's Day magazine, which as I understand it is about 18 million readers a month, which is extraordinary, especially in this period of time in which print advertising is viewed as being a bit passe, right? You took this job knowing that and knowing that this was going to have to be a turnaround, maybe talk about how all those tools fit together, and advice for others who are looking for ways to innovate in sectors or in careers where we really have to look at something new and innovative and different.

Meaghan B. Murphy:

So, I think at my core, I'm an expert problem solver. When I took over the job of Woman's Day magazine, I really looked at this global problem. We were all in this state of angst and panic and fear. The world was crashing and burning around us. And so, the way I reimagined this magazine was what if this is the escape? What if this is destination celebration, no holiday left behind from Taco Tuesday to Christmas? And what if this is a place, this joyful escape for people that allows them to put happy on the calendar, and even in hard times, celebrate? Find some moments of levity and light, because guess what? That's really necessary, and that's going to carry us through. And so, that's the way I reimagined and repositioned the magazine. And it was really just noticing a problem, feeling what... Taking the temperature of the world around me, and then trying to come up with a solution that would help hug it out, right? I really wanted this magazine to feel like this big hug in this moment.

And it was kind of selfish. I needed to create this thing because that's how I was feeling. And I wanted to get excited about National Donut Day. I wanted to get excited about watermelon because it's National Watermelon Day. I wanted to be able to give myself permission to find joy in hard times. And I want to give the readers permission to put happy on the calendar.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

Do you think that the COVID experience really helped you crystallize, or were these ideas that you already had percolating at the point in which you took the job? Because you took the job in March, and then COVID happened shortly thereafter, we shut down shortly thereafter. But maybe talk about how your vision maybe changed or evolved, or maybe that was the vision and COVID just helped reinforce it.

Meaghan B. Murphy:

It's interesting. So, I almost would say I fully charged the magazine, right? Everything that is happening in the magazine are basically principles and strategies and thoughts from the book. It just became clear to me and I got to that realization more quickly, perhaps, that that's what the magazine needed to lead to. I might not have had the same freedom to just throw out a logo that had been kicking around for 100 years, right? I might not have had some of the same freedoms. I might not have come to the decisions quickly. And I might have felt a little bit more hesitant of being like, "Okay, I'm fully charging the magazine." Am I really allowed to fully charge the magazine like that's my personal brand and book? Am I allowed to do that? And I was like, "Screw it. I'm in survival mode. The magazine and the book is one. I

just need to find a yay. And I'm going to find the yay everywhere I can." And so, I got to it more quickly, perhaps.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

Yeah. Maybe talk about any stories that you can share of folks that have read the book or have noticed these major changes in the magazines and employing these principles and tools and practices to their own lives and changes that they've seen.

Meaghan B. Murphy:

That's one of the most fun things for me as an author and magaziner, is when people will send me a page that's highlighted, or a sticky note, or send me a DM. And some of the things that people are doing, it just like the simpler strategies. In the Extra Charge chapter of the book, I talk about dopamine dressing, and how our clothes are very powerful, and we need to dress the way we want to feel, So, I call it dress up to feel up. And that can look different for everybody, right? For some people... For me, it's lighting bolts, and bright colors, and emoji patterns. My kids call me a kid child, kid mom. They all say, "You're cringy, you dress like a teenager." But I dress up to feel up. I always have an arm party of 92 bracelets because it's my security blanket, and it never comes off. But I get all these DMs on Instagram of people being like, "Look at my dopamine dressing. Look at my outfit." And I was like, "Oh, my God." A person who had only worn black started dabbling in a pink statement here, or a fun sock, or a great shoe, and was like, "It changed the way I felt about my day."

People will often send me their bouquet of flowers and be like, "I buy myself flowers on Mondays now too, and it's changing my mood." A big thing I talk about is in the Love Charge chapter, is the power of weak ties. And how you treat one person is how you should treat all people, and how important it is to recognize people like at checkout. I call it check in at checkout. Register someone else's humanity at the register. And what a difference that makes if you look up, put your damn phone away, and be like, "Hey." Of course, she's wearing a name tag. "Hey, Anne, how are you doing? Good morning." Having that small exchange with someone else, how that can spark so much life energy. I'll get these messages of like, "I took your advice, and now I learned the name of the person who stocks the produce, who I see every single Tuesday, and now we're buddies and we exchange pleasantries, and it feels so good to be connected to something bigger than myself and have a sense of community in the produce aisle."

That's what it's about, right? That's what it's really about. So, those are just some of the little tips and tricks and strategies. And that's the big thing about the book. It's not a life makeover. There are going to be things that work for you and things you roll your eyes at, but the things that work might be game changing. And they're going to be small. I've got the Health Charge chapter, which really teaches you how to prioritize sleep, to sleep train yourself, and how you might sleep train a child and create a routine around sleep. Movement, how important movement is mood magic, and how you can build that into your life more seamlessly. You have to move your body. How you move your body is up to you, but you have to move your body. It's not emotional.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

Yeah. We're at an interesting time. I don't want to talk about politics, but I want to acknowledge the fact that we're very divided as a country. People feel very polarized. There's a lot of people that are perfectly comfortable to snipe and spew all sorts of awful stuff on social media. Maybe talk about how to respond to the haters, as you refer to them in the book.

Meaghan B. Murphy:

Yeah. And I think it's really challenging, right? People hate what they don't understand. People hate what's not like them. And I think the biggest thing is just creating a force field of positivity, and not allowing yourself to get sucked into that. Negativity loves company. And we're all guilty of it. If you are surrounding yourself with toxic people and toxic energy, there's going to be that moment when you start to get sucked in. I fully admit that I've been in a circle of toxic women who are gossiping, and I will catch myself joining in, and then be like, "Whoa, okay, these are not my people. This is not my jam. I need to hide from the energy vampires and the toxic people." You need to surround yourself with the sunshine community, and people who feel like sunshine so that you can create this kind of force field of positivity from some of that hate. You can't get sucked into it. And I will meet any of that negativity with kindness.

People who actively hate on me, I think that hurts for a second, but I understand that's about them, not about me. Because how do you hate someone you've never met who's trying to give you some strategies that are based in science to live more positively? I mean, I don't harm puppies. I don't like... I'm a good human who espouses kindness. So, if you hate me, then it's absolutely about you, and not about me. And I will let you own that. But I will not, not get sucked into that negativity. I will always meet a hater with kindness and compassion. Or just simply [inaudible 00:43:35]. But I think it's very interesting. Because if I were to look at any of my social media platforms, I don't have any trolls, I don't have any haters, because it is such a place of positivity and good energy, that that is very clear that haters not welcome.

And there's a lot of good research about that, even when we look at Facebook. And it's like you get that one negative comment, then you get five more negative comments. But if everything is positive and on the up and up, that hate's not going to sneak in. And that's the key, is that creating a place of... And this is not that you're going to deny what sucks, but you're just not going to broadcast it. You're going to put it front and center. You're not going to indulge it. And especially not in a public forum. Just like... That's just not productive, especially just pure nastiness based on nothing.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

Yeah, yeah, absolutely. Oh, my gosh, I love that so much. Okay, where can people find you on Instagram and elsewhere?

Meaghan B. Murphy:

So I'm pretty busy on Instagram, and that's @meaghanbmurphy. It's M-E-A-G-H-A-N B Murphy. And then I do something called The Yay List. The Yay List on Instagram, which is just a community of good news and good people celebrating, and I like to call them [inaudible 00:45:00]. Woman's Day magazine is on the newsstands every month. And it's the number one selling magazine on newsstands. And also, a podcast called Off the Gram. And we're part of Dr. Oz's OZtube network. So, I'm very proud of that.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

Yeah. Awesome. That's so awesome. Okay, final question, if you had to boil it down to one single piece of advice that you go back to over and over and over again that you want to leave our audience with, what would that be?

Meaghan B. Murphy:

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Oh, my gosh, there's so much good stuff out there. And I would think that the advice that's working for me changes every day. But I think something that my mom raised me with from a little kid was always ask forgiveness, not permission. And that really gave me a lot of courage to do bold things.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

I love that. Meaghan, I am grateful. Thank you very much. This was wonderful.

Meaghan B. Murphy:

Yay, thank you.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

Hey, friend, thanks so much for tuning in today. I hope you enjoyed this conversation with Meaghan B. Murphy as much as I did. You will find links to her terrific book, *Your Fully Charged Life*, in the show notes for this episode. I'd love to know what resonated with you from today's conversation. You can reach me via the contact link on the website at shesaidshesaidpodcast.com or on any of the social media platforms. I'm [@lauracoxkaplan](#) on Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter. As always, I hope you found this little investment in you well worth it. I'll see you again next time. Take care.