

Laura Cox Kaplan:

Hey friend, welcome to She Said/She Said. Here on this podcast, I'm joining forces with top-notch guests to share life and career lessons, always with an eye toward insight, inspiration, and the drivers that help us build influence. I'm Laura Cox Kaplan, I've spent three decades mastering the art of influence, whether you're starting a business, raising money for a cause, advocating for a promotion or running your own household, understanding the different levers of influence will increase your chances of success whatever your goals may be. Listening to She Said/She Said podcast may just be the smartest, most efficient investment you can make in you.

Hey friend, welcome to the podcast. Learning to advocate for yourself and for things you care about is a key to not only getting what you want and achieving your goals, but also for developing influence. Today's guest has taken her skill as a successful trial lawyer and turned it into a full-scale coaching business where she takes what she learned in the courtroom about advocacy and helps clients apply it to their personal and professional lives. My guest is Heather Hansen. She's written two terrific books on the topic of advocacy, the first entitled *The Elegant Warrior*, and then more recently *Advocate to Win*. Both books include straightforward, actionable tips for becoming your own best advocate. Heather also hosts a podcast called *The Elegant Warrior*. I am a big fan of her podcast and you can find it on iTunes or wherever you listen to podcasts. It's terrific.

Now, in this episode, Heather and I talk about how mastering critical advocacy skills can help you build influence. We'll talk about her very relatable career pivot story, including coming to terms with a big shift in her professional identity. Something that I know many of you will find very, very interesting and relatable. Heather and I also break down this idea of elegance, which is one of Heather's favorite words. And we talk about how it contributes to influence. Heather is a big proponent of language and of understanding the root origin of the words that we use. And we had a particularly interesting conversation about the word influence. I think you're going to love Heather's perspective. As always, let me know which topics resonate most with you. I would love to hear from you so please be sure to send your feedback. But for now, here is my conversation with Heather Hansen.

Heather, welcome to She Said/She Said.

Heather Hansen:

Laura, I'm excited to be here. I'm really looking forward to this conversation.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

Well, I am too. I ran across one of your fabulous books and now I have read them both. They are terrific. And what a great way to start this new season of She Said/She Said where we're going to do a deep dive into influence and really look at the different drivers. And as I thought about this idea of advocacy, you immediately spring to mind. So I'd love for you to start by talking about what it means to be a self-advocacy expert.

Heather Hansen:

So the word advocate and advocation, it's both a noun and a verb, which sometimes gets a little confusing, but I think that that word is misconstrued. And I'm obsessed with words as I'm sure we'll talk about. But I think that the definition of the word advocate is to publicly support something. So I think people think it's out there for someone else, lawyers are advocates, or patient advocates who are people who are trained to advocate for patients. Or lobbyists who go into Washington D.C., those are advocates. But every time that a mother asks her child to eat their vegetables, she is advocating for the

vegetables. And every time that you go in for a raise or a promotion, you are advocating for yourself. So my definition of advocate is to help people choose what you want them to choose. And we need to be better at doing that for ourselves, especially women. This is She Said/She said so I know I'm talking mainly to women. We are so good at advocating for our children and our friends and our family and our colleagues and our businesses, and not as good at advocating for ourselves.

So I only say I'm an expert because I've been advocating in the courtroom for 20 years. I just recently started advocating for myself with the same intention, Laura, and it's changed my life. So I think that we are all advocating every day. And if we know that we're doing it, we can get a whole lot better at it and get more of what we want.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

Yeah. Your origin story, which you just alluded to is particularly interesting. You were a trial lawyer for many years, a couple of decades. Talk about this big career pivot that you've made and sort of why you became so focused on this idea of helping others advocate for themselves.

Heather Hansen:

Yeah. I always say though, people always say leap and the net will appear. I have been creeping. So it's been a very slow transition, really an evolution. So as you mentioned for 20 years, I have been, over 20 years, a trial attorney specifically defending doctors and hospitals in medical malpractice cases. And I loved it until I didn't love it anymore. And at that stage, the question became, what was I going to do next? And I started doing quite a bit of television. I was a legal analyst for Fox and NBC and CNBC and MSNBC and CNN and all of the different channels. And then I became an anchor at the Law & Crime Network and I loved that, but it just didn't feel right. And then I became an author. As you mentioned, I wrote two books and I have a podcast, but ultimately what I'm doing now is sort of stepping into what I feel like is my highest potential, but for me to make the transition from trial attorney to what I'm now doing took a whole lot of self-advocacy. For a very long time, I was continuing to do something that I didn't love because I didn't know how to identify what it was that I wanted, how to ask for it and how to ask for it in a way that was effective so that I actually got it.

And I realized that if I started using the tools that I used in the courtroom to do that, tools like questions and credibility and evidence and perspective, then maybe they would be helpful and they were, and that's been the foundation of the work that I now do is helping other people use those tools to identify what they want and then ask for it in an effective way.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

I love that. Was there a moment that you can sort of go back to in your memory that really crystallized that it's time to do this.

Heather Hansen:

Yes.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

And also when you realized ... I have two questions, I think that moment of when you realized, "Okay, it's time to hit the go button and really do this." But before that, how did you deal with sort of letting go of something that you had worked so hard for, that you had aspired to, no doubt, right? It is not an insignificant accomplishment to get to the point where you were and winning all these cases and being a

success by anybody's definition, probably including your own, but how do you sort of get comfortable with that idea of acknowledging, "Okay, I'm having success but this is not what I'm supposed to be doing"?

Heather Hansen:

Oh my gosh. It's such a great question. And it's a process that I'm still going through. So I'll first speak to the moment and then that sort of feeds sort of dealing with the new identity, because it really is a new identity. The moment was I was already doing some television and specifically [inaudible 00:08:11] Philadelphia now and did at the time, I've had some little stops in Manhattan along the way, but I do Good Day Philadelphia quite a bit. And I had done it and it had been a great hit we call them. A great interaction on TV, I felt good about what the information I was sharing. And then I got into my car and I had to go prepare for another trial, which was out of town and I was going to have to stay in a hotel.

And then from there, I knew I had yet another trial and I didn't want to do that. I wanted to do more television. I wanted to write books. I wanted to start a podcast. And yet when I am on trial, I give everything to my clients in the case, it is all encompassing for me. And I was in tears because I didn't want to do these things anymore and I didn't know how to say that. And to your point, it's an identity change. How can you say, "I don't want to do this thing that I went to school with and I've trained on. I've earned a lot of accolades in this thing. I'm a partner at my law firm. I have clients who depend on me." And that moment in the car, I just had this epiphany that life was too short not to do the thing that you most wanted to do. And I had to find a way to start knowing what that was and asking for it.

And then it was a process. I mean, that was at least three years ago Laura. And it has been a process. I mean, my parents especially my dad who I love dearly really was like, "What are you doing? You're a lawyer. You're a partner. You know everyone in Philadelphia and they know you." I really had to keep going to what I call my elegance. The root of the word elegance is to choose. So I had to choose. My dad couldn't choose, my ego couldn't choose, my habit couldn't choose. The highest potential, the best part of me had to choose. And that part of me wanted something that was a little more collaborative and less conflict, wanted something that really spoke to something only I could do combining my psychology degree and my mediation training and my television work and my years advocating. And it has been a process. I am still a partner at my law firm. I still do legal work. I still am pulled into that world a lot. And it's funny that we're having this discussion today because today I took another step back and sort of took a little bit less of a hold on some of my cases this week. So it's still happening and I think that that's important for listeners to know that it doesn't have to be this sudden pivot, it can take time and in that time comes more clarity.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

Yeah. That's amazing. Has it been hard for your family now that this has been several years that you've been doing this? Is it still hard for them or are they able to see the vision that you had all along for yourself?

Heather Hansen:

I think that it's evidence, right? I think that they see it more the more evidence there is. My business is doing very well, financially and also I think they see how happy I am. But it's also hard to describe. Our world is changing so quickly and it's easy to say, "I'm a doctor." "I'm a lawyer." Even for me, what do you say you are? I am a lot of things. So there's no one easy word to say what I am. So it takes a little bit more time to have that clarity. I think my parents are so supportive and very proud of me, and yet I don't know what they tell people when people ask. I think they probably say, "Lawyer and an author."

Which is fine, because I am those things. But I think that they do see it as it becomes more clear. For me it was a vision that no one else could see. And that's a big part of the elegance, right? Is choosing that vision when no one else can see it and believing in yourself and that vision enough to chase it even if no one else can see it.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

Yeah. When did elegance become sort of the crystallizing focus for you? Because that's your word, it's the word that's in the title of your podcast, The Elegant Warrior podcast. It's the word that's in the title of one of your two books. Why elegance and when did that become something that you were like, "Okay, this is it"?

Heather Hansen:

So my grandmother had a huge bearing on my life, we were very close and she was to me the personification of elegance in all ways. We often think about elegance in the way that someone looks. And she certainly was that. It's funny Laura, I lived in Cape Cod with her in the summers and I waitressed. From the time that I was 13, I started as a salad girl. And when I would go to work, she would always check to make sure I was wearing earrings and lipstick, even if I was going to be in the salad room pulling apart lobsters. So in that way, in the appearance way, she was elegant, but she was a social worker at a hospital, which had her generation was sort of unheard of. And she chose to be kind and open and creative, all of the things that I imagined elegance to be.

So that word always has been part of my lexicon when I was thinking about my grandmother. And I started writing my first book and was probably more than halfway through. And I was on a run and the term Elegant Warrior just sort of popped into my mind because in the courtroom, there's this constant, it's constant fighting, we call stories, war stories, we call the rooms we prepare, war rooms. And yet I always wanted to choose ... One of the things that I say is even though I have to take a patient's story, I don't take their dignity. That's a promise that I made to myself when I started practicing law, and that's my elegance, that's a choice I make. I could choose and it has to be an intentional choice because sometimes you get caught up in the moment at a trial and it's easy to take someone's dignity. So that title came to me on a run. And then since then, it just so resonates with me. And in fact, I regret not naming the second book advocate with elegance. I went back and forth on it and many people think that elegance is more of a female term. One of the groups that I am establishing for the people that I serve is advocate with elegance, because I think that that is what I aspire to.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

Yeah. I love that. I absolutely love that. We've mentioned your two books, The Elegant Warrior and Advocate to Win, which is your most recent book. Both are terrific. I'd love to dig into those and to a concept that really got my attention for a number of reasons. You talk about this notion of your inner jury versus your outer jury. And I love everything about this because you're pulling what you've done before and really repurposing it in a completely different way. Talk about what you mean by these concepts and why they're so fundamental to your current practice.

Heather Hansen:

I love that you love it because it's such an important part of my work and also the things that have made me who I am. So if to advocate is to help people choose what you want them to choose, your jury is the people who are choosing, right? So your outer jury is if you are looking for a raise, it's your boss. If you're looking for investment money for your product, it is your investors. If you're looking for your kids

to eat your vegetables, it's your children. Your outer jury is whoever chooses, but your inner jury is the part of you that chooses. You have to choose first. So if you're asking for a raise or investment especially, you have to choose to believe that you deserve that raise, that you've earned that raise, that you have the value to support that raise or that your product or your idea is worthy of that investment. And if you don't believe it, it's very hard to prove it, I always say, "You can't prove it until you believe it." So the inner jury is the part of you that chooses. And the same tools that you use to persuade your outer jury to believe are the tools that you use to persuade your inner jury to believe. And you have to do that first in order to persuade your outer jury.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

Yeah. How does it relate to the concept of self-talk which my audience is well familiar with. We talk about it a lot. Many of us, maybe most of us, struggle with self-talk from time to time. How does this idea of inner jury relate to that?

Heather Hansen:

It's everything. So when I talk about the inner jury, people often assume that I'm talking about the part of them that is judgmental and nasty, and that is not at all true. In the courtroom, the jury doesn't speak, they're not judgmental and nasty, they listen and they choose. So the way that I picture it and the way I talk about it is your self-talk, you probably have one voice in your head that I would call the nasty attorney. That's the attorney that's saying, "You're not good enough. You're not smart enough. You're too old. You're too young. You're too fat. You're too skinny." Whatever the case may be. That's the nasty attorney. And then on the other side, you have the positive attorney, hopefully. And if you don't, then you have to work to create a positive attorney and give that attorney evidence. You want to at least give the other side a chance.

So that's the side that's saying, "You are good enough. You're just the right age. You're just the right size. You're just the right everything in order to do this thing." And then your inner jury chooses which attorney wins. And a lot of times the problem is that the people I work with, the women I work with don't even have a positive attorney. They haven't given her any evidence, any stories, any questions to ask. So the only voice they're hearing in their self-talk is the negative nasty attorney. So the self-talk is so important to recognize that all of those voices are not telling the truth, they're just telling stories. And there's another story that you could be telling yourself and that you could be choosing.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

Yeah. Talk about the differences that you see, if any. I can probably answer this question for you, but talk about the differences that you see between men and women as it relates to this, to what you just said.

Heather Hansen:

Yeah. I think you'd be surprised at how often men have similar negative self-talk. I think that they just handle it a little bit differently. So women tend to, in my experience, with this negative self-talk, they allow it to keep them quiet and not doing the things that they most want to do, and oftentimes can't even identify what it is that they most want to do. I think men in general, and so much of this is changing with gender identification, and the way that our culture is changing, but men my age, so I'm going to be 49, men my age and older in general tend to overcompensate by sort of taking on that often wrong, never in doubt. They just seem to have no doubts whatsoever and they go in sometimes like a bull in a

China shop, whereas women doubt, doubt, doubt, doubt, doubt. So I think that the internal talk is often the same, it's just the response to that talk that differs.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

I talk to a lot of women on this podcast and also women who take my university course and this idea of being super hard on ourselves tends to be something that women tend to do more so than men. I mean, again, as you said before, these lines are much blurrier than they used to be. There's not a lot of research and data to really support this. Is it hardwired? Is it socialization? Who knows, time will probably tell. But it is something that is pretty fundamental to most of the women that I interact with.

Heather Hansen:

Yeah, absolutely. I mean, when it comes to advocating, we know that women are much better at advocating for others than they are for themselves and they will actually do things. There's a great study out of HBR that says that when a woman is negotiating, she will lie for someone else, but she won't lie if she's negotiating for herself. And men will lie for themselves before they'll lie for someone else. And I'm not telling anyone to lie, but to your point about us being so hard on ourselves and not giving ourselves what we give to others, if you're going to do something unethical, use anything that you're willing to do for someone else you should be willing to do for yourself. And I do think that we're very critical of ourselves, that we hold ourselves to this very, very difficult standard in general. And the more that we can release that a little bit, the better we're going to be, but a lot of that takes awareness, that that's what we're doing, and really doing the work to choose a different story.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

Yeah. Let's talk a little bit about perspective. You have written that one of the benefits of your work as a trial attorney was actually learning to see truth differently, which is such an interesting thing to say. Talk about what you meant by that.

Heather Hansen:

So truth, a lot of people don't like this, but here's the fact of the matter, in the courtroom, everyone has the same facts. The patient and the patient's attorney has the same medical records, the same depositions, the same exhibits, the same facts as the doctor and the doctor's attorney. And the witnesses for the patient and the patient's attorney, they get up Laura, they sit in the witness stand and most of the time they swear to tell the truth, and then they turn to the jury and they tell their story. And then our side, the doctor side gets up and they swear to tell the truth, and they tell their story. And nine times out of 10, I don't believe that anyone believes they are lying when they are telling their truth. I think that they believe that they are telling the truth. And then ultimately, the jury decides what is true. They decide which of these stories they believe and that becomes the truth of the case. And you start to realize that truth is a little less absolute than sometimes we think it is. And it really depends on a person's perspective.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

Yeah. Talk about how that can impact your advocacy strategy.

Heather Hansen:

I think that it's so important. In my cases, every single juror I've ever had has been a patient, not a doctor. I've never had a doctor on one of my juries. I've had a couple of nurses. So that means that every single juror sees the world from a patient's perspective, they don't see the world from a doctor's perspective. So the patient's story, the patient's truth is probably going to resonate with them more thoroughly. My job as a defense attorney is to help the jury to see things from the doctor's perspective and to allow that truth to resonate with them. And I believe that you can't change someone's perspective until you understand theirs. So I work to understand the jury's perspective so that I can speak to it and allow my truth to resonate with them so that they can choose it. And anybody listening can do that as well, you have your jurors, we've talked about that before. What's their perspective. How do they see the world? And how can you craft an argument, use your evidence, ask your questions, build your credibility in a way that resonates with them so they want to choose your story.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

Maybe play that forward as it relates to negotiation, whether you're negotiating for a higher salary, negotiating for a job, negotiating for any number of things that you may be ... Negotiating in your own household, potentially. Talk about how that idea of perspective informs a negotiation strategy.

Heather Hansen:

I will tell you a great story, that's not my story, I am trained as a mediator, I'm certified as a mediator through Pepperdine. And this is a story that they told us in this training but it speaks to exactly what you're talking about. These two parties are in this big battle, big negotiation over an orange. And it's a whole day long affair, the mediator's earning his or her money, sweating it out, back and forth, shuttle diplomacy, trying to get the two sides to somehow agree to who gets the orange. And they talk about various ways to, "Well, I'll give you the orange if you give me money." And it's just not happening. And then at the end of the day, the exhausted mediator goes into the first room and says, "Why do you want this orange so badly?" And the person says, "Well, I'm a bartender. And that orange has a perfect rind. And if I could use that perfect rind on the edge of the drink that I'm making, it would allow me to win this big bartending contest."

And the mediator has this "aha" moment and goes into the other party and says, "Why do you want this orange so badly?" And they say, "Well, I have a juice company and the juice of this orange would be so helpful to me because I can use it in all of my juices." And now that he sees things through each side's perspective, they can both get what they want, one person gets the rind, one person gets the juice, day over. But it's not until you really see things from another person's perspective that you can know what it is that they want and how to give it to them so that everyone wins. I think that we often assume that we know the other side's perspective and what they want, and you don't know until you ask. And when you assume, you oftentimes just make people more mad.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

Yeah. What's your advice for the best way to do that? I mean, I see the resonance of what you just said, you don't know unless you ask, you don't know unless you sit down with that other person who potentially has a very different point of view, but how do you go about that? What's your advice for sitting down with someone and figuring out what is it that their non-negotiable is?

Heather Hansen:

I think that it's another tool that I talk about in the book, in the first book, if I remember correctly, and it's not my tool, it's just Rosemarie Aquilina's tool. She is a judge, she was the judge in the Larry Nassar

case, Larry Nasser is that gymnast doctor who was accused of molesting so many of those young gymnast. And one of her question that she used in that trial, and I don't want to take up too much of our time on it but I'll just give you a little bit of background. At the beginning of that hearing, it wasn't really a trial, only a few women intended to come forward and most of them didn't intend to use their names or faces. By the end, over 100 women came forward and used their names and faces.

And I happened to be anchoring at the Law & Crime Network. And as I watched this, I attributed it to one question that she asked these women. She didn't say, "Why are we here?" She didn't say, "What happened to you?" She didn't say, "Tell me what I need to know." She looked at the women and said, "Tell me what you want me to know." And I think that question gives so much power to the person who is answering it and allows you to see things from their perspective. So I use that question a lot in my keynotes and in my talks, and that question more than any other. And it's Aquilina's, it's not mine. She's become a friend and she knows I use it all the time. That question has changed people's lives because if you're negotiating with your spouse about something in the household, "Tell me what you want me to know about why you feel so strongly about this. Tell me what you want me to know about your experience with this." It allows you to see that other person's perspective. And it's a very open question which allows them to tell you whatever it is they want you to know in the way they want to tell it.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

The flip side to this because I've read your books is that she specifically also says, "Don't ask the question why." Talk about why "why" shuts down the person on the other side potentially.

Heather Hansen:

So it's funny because for the first book we have the tell me story. And then I went back to her for the second book because I was like, "Listen, if everybody likes her so much, why not include a little bit more of judge Aquilina." And she told me that she doesn't like the question why. And at first I kind of pushed back on her because I feel like why is so curious, and curiosity is one of the tools of an advocate. But she rightfully, I think, pointed out that why puts people on the defense. And think about it from her experience Laura, she does a lot of these sexual assault cases, why did you wear that dress? Why were you drinking that night? Why were you out so late? Why were you walking alone? Those questions would absolutely put a woman on the defense in that setting and she believes it shuts things down.

So instead, and it's a little more work to think of other words, how did you feel? What allowed you to make that decision? It takes, I think, a little bit more creativity in your questions, why is easier oftentimes, but it really does run the risk of putting people on the defense. And when people are on the defense, you're just not going to get the same kinds of answers that are going to help you to see things from their perspective.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

Yeah. I think it's such an interesting observation, I loved that because I had the same reaction you did when I read that part of your book and I was like, "Oh, I love why." We use why all the time like, "Find your why, it's part of your purpose." But this is a different context. And we're talking about how you reach that middle ground with someone. You figure out where they're coming from and you calibrate that against where you're coming from and then you look for that middle ground. It's a very interesting way of thinking about that. I really love it.

Heather Hansen:

Well, and let me just add to that, even when you're talking to yourself, "Why did you do that Heather?" I often think ... In the book I talk about I lost 100 pounds a long time ago and no one ever says, "Why did you lose weight?" They always say, "How did you lose weight?" But they often say, "Why did you gain weight?" So even in talking to yourself I think that if you're using why a lot in your self-talk, ask yourself if that's serving you, or if it's making you feel defensive and sort of bad, because sometimes even using why with yourself can be dangerous.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

Yeah. Yeah. I mean, we have to dig into this question about losing 100 pounds. That's amazing.

Heather Hansen:

There's a lot of things I could say about it, I am grateful. I will say this, I am so grateful that I had the 100 pounds to lose because it has allowed me to have so much credibility with myself. I know that if I make myself a promise, I keep it for the most part. And if I set myself an expectation I meet it, and that is in large part because I did something hard, not just losing it but keeping it off. And it's been a huge gift. And it's definitely one of those things that is life-changing and was tough for a long time. I think with weight loss, maintenance is often harder than losing because you stop getting that positive reinforcement all the time. But I have actually finally reached a place where it's no longer a major thought in my head every day as to what I'm eating and how much I'm working out.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

So for the person listening out there who may be struggling with this, maybe it's not 100 pounds, maybe it's more like 20 or 30, maybe it's that COVID weight that I can't seem to shed because my butt's sitting in this chair as opposed to out on the treadmill or walking the trails as much as I should be. But how did you go about losing that? What was your process?

Heather Hansen:

So I think that I can tell you about the logistics of it. I started, this was in the '90s, so low fat and all of that, but let me lay the foundation for you first. It all comes down to credibility for me. I had to find something I could believe. I could not believe at the beginning that I would lose 100 pounds. So if I told myself, "You're going to lose 100 pounds." I was like, "No you're not. Let's have another Oreo." That's just not going to happen. I could not find the belief in that. What I could find the belief in ... So my mom knew that I wanted to join the gym and she wrote me this beautiful note, and in the note she said, "Don't use this money to join the gym to look a certain way or to fit into your jeans, use this money for the gym to feel good in your body and to have more confidence and to feel more strong." And those things, Laura, I believed I could do.

So as long as I believed it, I could prove it. I can feel stronger in my body and I proved it. I can feel more light, more energy, more charisma, and I proved it. And then as I started to lose the weight, I was like, "Oh, I've lost 20 pounds. I do believe I could lose 40." So it was in small steps of what I truly believed and then proving it and then believing bigger and then proving it. So it's small steps, one pound at a time, which isn't a lot of fun, but I think it's more fun to think about what do I believe I can do right now today, and then starting there and then making your belief grow.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

I love that. I want to get back to one of the tools that you recommend in the book for getting better at asking for what you want and you refer to something that's called the "question journal". What is that and how does that work?

Heather Hansen:

I think that we are reluctant to ask questions. In fact, we know that women think that asking questions makes them look stupid. And the truth is that people think you're smarter when you ask more questions. So we need to get in the practice of asking questions. So I often ask my clients to keep a question journal and write down at the beginning of the day three questions that they want answered by the end of the day. It can be by someone else, it can be by their internal voice, it can be things that their inner jury has to answer. And then at the end of the day, ask themselves whether those questions have been answered and whether some new questions have come up. I think that what we focus on grows, and if we focus on questions, over the course of the day we will find more of those answers.

I also think it's really powerful, before a meeting or a first date, to write down three questions that you want answered in that meeting or in that date or in that lunch, if you're doing a networking lunch, because it makes you more curious. Curiosity is an underrated skill. I do work, I'm creating an advocacy program for residents, medical residents. And one of the things that we're talking about is how important it is for medical residents to be curious and how do you measure curiosity. And I think that there's something there with the number of questions you ask. So the question journal sort of gets you in that habit.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

Yeah. That's amazing. That's really amazing. So much of your story has been about learning to take control and the impact of the world around you rather than really be affected by the world, meaning like taking control of your circumstances versus just reacting to things that happened to you. What has been your most powerful tool for learning how to do that and also coaching your clients to learn how to do that?

Heather Hansen:

I mean, it's many of the things that we've talked about but I think that primarily it's perspective and elegance. So I've mentioned, the root of the word elegance is to choose your only choice oftentimes. Circumstances are what they are. You could be in the most terrible of circumstances, your only option is to choose how you're going to think, talk, act about those circumstances. And it is a choice. Sometimes in my coaching, people get mad at me and I have gotten mad at my coaches when they tell me, "You know that thought is a choice." And I'm like, "No, no, that's the truth. For me, that is the truth. I'll tell you when it's a choice." But that's where your power lies, right? If you're familiar with Viktor Frankl's work, Man's Search for Meaning, he talks about, and I'm going to mess up the quote, "Between the event and the outcome, there is a choice." There's a space in there where you get to choose what you're going to think, the story that you're going to tell, the way that you're going to act and that might be your only power, so why not use it? And it oftentimes takes someone to help you to see that you're choosing thoughts that don't work because they feel so true, but when you do recognize that you are no longer at the effect of the world.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

Yeah. That book that you just mentioned, Man's Search for Meaning is one of the most powerful around this concept of sort of what we now refer to as mindset, right? And the fact that you can choose how

you react to your circumstances and how you think about them and whether you look at them as an opportunity to learn and grow, or whether you're just affected by them. So it's a super powerful book. For those who haven't read it, it's an old book obviously, but it's a fabulous, fabulous read.

Heather Hansen:

I highly agree. It's one of my most gifted books.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

Yeah. Yeah. Part of our reboot this season is talking about helping listeners to really build greater influence needed to crush goals. Heather, I'd love for you to talk about how you define influence and how it relates to your work.

Heather Hansen:

I love that you're focused on this Laura, because when you told me that and I read your Instagram post about it as well, I'm obsessed with words, they're one of the 10 tools in the book Advocate to Win. And I always look at the root of a word, where did it come from? Because I think sometimes we change definitions so much, so I want to know sort of that foundation. And the root of the word influence is to flow, and it goes on, we were talking about this a little bit before we started, but it's also an emanation from the stars that acts upon one's character and destiny. I mean, that is such a great word. And to me, when you are in flow, when you are doing that thing, whether it emanates from the stars, whether it comes from source, whoever you want to think about it, that is what you're most meant to do, you are stepping into your elegance and you are achieving your highest potential. So I think when you are in that flow, you are much more likely to be influential, to be an influence on the people around you. And it's easier. Everything sort of flows more easily when you're in that space.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

Yeah. I love how you articulated that. It's just beautiful. Heather and I had such fun because you guys didn't have the benefit of the conversation before we actually hit the record button. But Heather and I had a great time talking about this idea and how we each think about the idea of influence and how broad it can be, which is part of why I think it's a great place for She Said/She Said to really focus time and energy is thinking about this idea of influence and Heather illuminated my thinking around the fact that it also relates to flow, which I also love. So more to come on that for sure.

Heather Hansen:

I mean for sure. It's funny too that it's emanating from the star, some of my favorite words, so charisma, the root of that word is often the God within and enthusiasm is also the God within and then emanating from the stars. I mean, whatever you believe in, it's this spiritual piece of what we're talking about and how important that can be.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

That's really amazing. That's really amazing. Okay. I'd love to ask you for actually a couple of lightning round questions which relate to our tagline, inspiration being one, talk about how you think about and find inspiration.

Heather Hansen:

So it's a similar thing to what I just talked about. I think that that comes from the light within, it comes from the inner jury, my inner elegance, however you want to phrase it, it's that part of you that is not entirely human, maybe it's your soul, but that's where the inspiration comes, it's the thing that you're meant to be in your highest potential. And I think that tuning into that is the hard part, especially right now with the phone and the computer and everything being so busy, my puppy who's out there doing Lord knows what in the other room, it's so hard to tune into it, but you have to. If you want to be inspired, you have to find moments of silence during the day. I read a study recently that said that they can measure creativity somehow. And our creativity as a nation has consistently gotten worse, especially in the last few years. And one of the reasons is we spend so little time alone with our thoughts, and that's where inspiration happens. So for me, finding that is really making the time to be alone with my thoughts sometimes.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

Yeah. And that aloneness, I think too, I think of that as a proactive pursuit as opposed to sort of sitting back and letting inspiration happen to you. I mean, by consciously taking a pause, which look, let's face it, I have the hardest time of probably anybody alive taking a pause, even though I know how important it is and I know the benefit that I get from creativity standpoint, from an inspiration standpoint when I take those breaks. Even if it's just a short one to close my eyes and just be without thinking. It's super, super hard, sometimes harder for some of us than others, but it is a proactive thing that you have to be intentional about.

Heather Hansen:

That's right. And you have to choose to see it as important as the time you spend emailing or creating your calendar or making phone calls or responding to those clients. It is as important to your business, to your family, to your mental health as any of those other things.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

Yeah. Yeah. Let's talk about another sort of lightning round question is this idea of impact. How do you define impact in your work and what you're doing now?

Heather Hansen:

It's the effect you have on people. And ideally, it is the positive effect that you have on people. When I think of that word, I think of that moment of strike, an impact when a car hits a car or when a fist hits a punching bag, it's that moment and your impact might only be available to you in a moment. So how are you going to capitalize on that moment? How are you going to make sure that you make the most of that moment so that the person that you are impacting or the cause or the group really fills the full effect of what you want them to feel. I guess the word I would say when I think of impact is opportunity.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

Yeah. I love that. I love that. One final question, if you could go back and give 24 year old Heather a single piece of advice, what would that be?

Heather Hansen:

It would be the word believe. I mentioned earlier, you can't prove it until you believe it. And sometimes, it just takes time. I feel like I'm just hitting my stride and I feel like most of the women I serve are just

hitting their strides. And I think that Maya Angelou said something to the effect, "Your 50s are everything you've been meaning to be." And I'm not yet there, but I'm almost there. And I think about that a lot. And I think that the things that I've been meaning to be I didn't believe that I could be in my 20s. So the sooner you can believe the better because you will make more of an impact. But I think that you just have to find ways, use evidence, do all the things that you can to believe in yourself and to believe yourself so that you can have more influence, be more inspiring and make a better impact.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

Heather, I love this. What a great way to kick off this new season or She Said/She Said podcast.

Heather Hansen:

Laura, I knew I was going to love talking to you and I was right. And thank you so much for having me.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

Oh, my pleasure. I really enjoyed it.

Hey friend, thanks so much for joining us today as we get into this new season and our focus on the leavers that help us build influence. I hope you enjoyed this conversation with Heather Hansen as much as I did. You can find links to Heather's website, her books, and some additional perspective on this episode in the show notes for episode 161. Whether you're advocating for your ideas, your career, or just your own potential, this conversation with Heather is sure to leave you with plenty of elegant warrior inspired strategies to really help guide you on the path to getting what you want. As always, I hope you found the conversation a good investment of your time. If you enjoyed the conversation, please do me a favor and share it with a friend who you think would appreciate this great advice. And if you're feeling extra generous, I would also be especially grateful for a nice review on iTunes or just some feedback directly to me. You can message me on Instagram @lauracoxkaplan. Until next week, take care and I'll talk to you soon.