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Laura Cox Kaplan:

Hey friend, welcome to She Said/She Said. Here on this podcast, I'm joining forces with topnotch 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.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

Hey friend, welcome. Today, we're talking about the power of story and how harnessing it can be an important part of your influence strategy. I'm talking about knowing how to create stories that help you both attract and retain an audience, stories that help you build support for a cause, stories that help you get invited to dinner parties, stories that win deals. It's a skill. My guest today is a master at understanding and harnessing that skill, and helping you do the same. Kindra Hall is a professional storyteller. She started winning awards as a child when she captivated audiences with her ability to tell a story.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

She took that talent and turned it into a career, which includes, not only keynote speaking about storytelling and the power of story, but also online courses, a successful podcast, and two books so far. Kindra's first book is entitled, *Stories That Stick: How Storytelling Can Captivate Customers, Influence Audiences and Transform Your Business*. That book debuted at number two on the Wall Street Journal bestseller list, and Forbes Magazine said it may be the most valuable business book you will read. Pretty high praise.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

Her second book is slated for release in January, 2022. It's entitled *Choose Your Story, Change Your Life: Silence Your Inner Critic and Rewrite Your Life From the Inside Out*. I love the title, and while I have not had a chance to read the book, as of yet, I am really excited about it because it echoes a topic that we talk about on this podcast so much, this idea of mindset. Kindra will give us a bit of a sneak peek into that book, and I've included a link to both of her books in the show notes for this episode, which is episode 166.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

In today's conversation though, we're going to dig into the power of story and talk about how to harness it to build influence. But we also will talk about how Kindra took talent and turned it into something that provides unique offering for others, despite naysayers who questioned her along the way. It's a really important component of Kindra's story. And now my conversation with Kindra Hall. Kindra, welcome to She Said/She Said.

Kindra Hall:

Oh, thank you so much for having me, Laura. I'm just thrilled to be here.

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Laura Cox Kaplan:

I'm so thrilled to have you. I have been a big fan, not only of your book, the first book that was out, but also your terrific podcast called Success Stories, which I really enjoyed. I know you've transitioned out. We'll talk about that in a second, but I'm really happy to have you here today.

Kindra Hall:

Oh, as we were talking just briefly before, it's so great when two podcasters come together, so ...

Laura Cox Kaplan:

Female podcasters too.

Kindra Hall:

Exactly, even more so.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

Yes. Okay. Let's jump in. You are a professional storyteller.

Kindra Hall:

I am.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

And you help others master this craft. I'd love for you to talk about why storytelling, when it's done well, really matters.

Kindra Hall:

Yeah. I think that there are so many different layers to the power of storytelling, and more and more they're being revealed, I think, every day. Stories are how we connect to people. They're how we relate, they're how we make sense of ourselves and the world around us. I remember one of the first times, as we look back on our lives and we had these different moments, and it's only when looking back, we're like, oh, that was a moment. But I remember I was in the minivan with my family.

Kindra Hall:

I grew up in Northern Minnesota. I grew up in Minnesota and then we had a cabin in Northern Minnesota, so we would drive to the cabin on the weekends. My dad was listening to sports on the radio. My mother was trying to read a book complaining that my dad was listening to sports on the radio. I was reading a book, my sister was asleep. My younger sister, she always fell asleep, and my brother was listening on his little cassette Walkman to a tape. We didn't really know what the tape was. I wasn't really paying attention.

Kindra Hall:

But he just kept laughing out loud intermittently throughout the car ride. I'm an older sister, I'm annoyed by this. I'm like, why does this kid keep laughing? Eventually, it just became so disruptive, which, if

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laughter can be disruptive, that we took the tape out of his cassette player and put it in the cassette player for the entire van. And it was a tape that was recorded at the National Storytelling Festival, an event that happens the first weekend in October in Jonesborough, Tennessee, where storytellers come, people who all they do is tell stories. It's not with agenda or marketing or for sales, but just to share stories.

Kindra Hall:

Sure enough, that cassette tape started playing, and you had five different people, me, my brother, my sister, my mom and my dad, and we were young and they were old, and we all came to life from very different places, if you think, and I remember the whole car being united listening to these stories. It was one of those moments where you just realize, in the disjointedness of life and work and people and chaos, a story really is a thing that can bring people from all different walks of life. Now, of course, I mean, it was my family. We're similar in many ways. But that is a power that, no matter if you're in a minivan, no matter if you're in a boardroom, no matter if you are in the shower and you are talking to yourself, just in your own head about your stories of who you are and what you're about.

Kindra Hall:

Stories really, I mean, they run the world.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

Yeah. I love what you just stood there because you illustrated the power of a story with a story.

Kindra Hall:

I can't help it. I can't help it. It just is ... Yeah. Yep, there you go. You got me. You caught me.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

I love it. I love it. I'd love for you to talk a little bit about how you got your start. You recognized this power of story, but when did that moment happen when you knew this was going to be something for you and how did you get started?

Kindra Hall:

It was, again, it was a series of moments. I would have these standout experiences that it started when I was very young. I told my first story as an assignment in fifth grade, and again, watched everybody, like I could hold them in the palm of my hand as I was telling them stories. I studied storytelling in college and for my master's thesis, examining the role of stories in organizational culture, like how it, and this was even before culture was such a big, an important word, or it was, but I feel like it's only gained more importance in the meantime, but watching, within an organization, how stories shape the understanding of who we are and what we do.

Kindra Hall:

At the same time, I grew up going to, after we heard that cassette tape of the National Storytelling Festival, I started attending the festival. I entered a competition where the prize was, you got to tell at this Storytelling Festival. Then I started going to storytelling conferences and more festivals and really seeing, and I think that's a big difference between myself and ... Because a lot of people now, especially

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in business, are recognizing and espousing the value of storytelling, but I didn't come to storytelling first from business or marketing. I came first from sitting in tents at the feet of great storytellers.

Kindra Hall:

But I think there are many moments where we realize that, oh, maybe this really is something and the distance between the realization and when it really comes to can be ... There could be a whole lot of space between those two places, but I think that one of the big moments for me was I was in a sales role, in a marketing role, and I had to deliver for my role at the company. I had to deliver a keynote presentation, and it was really my first one, but it wasn't my own. It was mine, but it was in this role. I really spent the majority of that time telling stories.

Kindra Hall:

Here was this motivated, hyper ambitious crowd. And you wonder, you second guess yourself, are they going to listen to the stories? They devoured it. I think that was one of those moments where I thought, maybe more people need to hear about this.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

Yeah. What do you think is the sort of oftentimes missing link? What is it that makes a story really resonate with an audience versus kind of that missing piece? Where do you find that magic? Because I personally, I think it's really hard to tell a good story. I think for a lot of people, yourself in particular, you have a talent and a gift. Part of that is captivating your audience, but it's telling and sharing a message that ties into a key point. But how do you learn to do that? And what is it about this craft of storytelling that sometimes people get wrong?

Kindra Hall:

Well, I think you could even see it right there. If you were to play back these first two responses that I gave, the first one, and I can criticize myself, I know, like I can critique myself, the-

Laura Cox Kaplan:

I think you did great.

Kindra Hall:

The first one I told the story and I told about the minivan and what we were feeling and what was happening. My guess is, Laura, you were, and the listeners too, you were in a mini ... Were you sitting in the minivan with me?

Laura Cox Kaplan:

For sure.

Kindra Hall:

You were picked, what color was the minivan?

Laura Cox Kaplan:

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Yeah, I could smell someone's feet.

Kindra Hall:

Yeah, exactly. Exactly. To answer your question, so that was a story. Then if you were to go back and listen to my response to your second question, when you were asking, when did you really get started? I didn't tell a story. I told maybe a mini, like the beginning of a story where I was giving a keynote at a sales conference, but I didn't ... You probably weren't in the audience with me or on the stage with me, and I talked about that I had these different credentials and this fascination. That's where people go wrong is ... But an average person would say that, that second response I gave was, oh, she was telling her story.

Kindra Hall:

No, I wasn't. I was just telling you about me, but you are not going to remember that answer the same way you remembered my first answer. That's where people miss it, is they don't tell a story. Can I share with you another story?

Laura Cox Kaplan:

Yes, please.

Kindra Hall:

Just last night, I had the opportunity to go see this show on Broadway called Freestyle Love Supreme. Basically, it is a musical improv. It was started by Lin-Manuel Miranda, and they use the audience. You yell out words and then the actors and musicians on stage acted all out. Well, at one point in the show, they call out to the audience and they say, "Give us a word. We need a word of something that you cannot live without, something that just you love, like is a part of your life." Now, this was coupled with a couple exercises before that. They were like, what are the things that are really bothering you right now? And one woman yelled out, pickpockets, which women ... Right? Like what? So, they did this whole skit about pickpockets, which was hilarious and amazing. Yes.

Kindra Hall:

Okay. However, this time it was supposed to be something you can't live without. The audience yelled, things like money, which they thought was funny, chocolate. There was like affection. They started yelling things out. And someone up in the mezzanine, from the back, yelled storytelling. I was there with my girlfriends and they all start elbowing me. I'm like, I have nothing to do with this. Then the actors choose one of the words. So, they could have chosen money, they could have chosen chocolate, but the one woman said, "I'm choosing storytelling." Then she starts ... They make up this song.

Kindra Hall:

There are three actors on stage. The first actor tells a story in musical form. He's wrapping it, about his family being in San Francisco while he's here on Broadway, and how every night, when the show ends, he races to the dressing room because it's earlier there to read his daughters a book over FaceTime. And now they've actually moved to New York, but they're trying to get adjusted and they miss their friends, and this whole ... So, it has ... You're picturing the daughters, you're picturing him backstage reading the book. Then the other two, and so it was just ... I can almost, I could recite it back to you.

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Kindra Hall:

The other two did a great job. However, what they said, the first said, I want to hear the stories from my grandparents. I want to be able to tell the stories from where I can from talking about storytelling. Then the third actor, all he just kept saying is, I'm telling my story, this is my story, this is my story. But just saying, you're telling a story, isn't telling a story. Again, that's the difference is, is where people get at it wrong is they think they're telling a story because they say, I am telling a story.

Kindra Hall:

But there is, there's more to it. It needs those. In stories that stick, I talk about the four key components that make a story great. It's having identifiable characters, which in the two story examples that I gave you, my own story in the van and the story of the guy on stage, like you were picturing his daughters, and you're hearing this secondhand from me. I'm barely, I'm trying to remember what he said last night, but I can. So, identifiable characters, authentic emotion. There needs to be real emotion in it, a moment, an opportunity for the listener to see themselves in the story, and then to drive it home very specific details.

Kindra Hall:

Even me describing the cassette tape, the Walkman, you were probably picturing that. The gentleman on stage last night said the title of the book that he was reading to his daughters. Now, I distinctly realize that his daughters are a different age than my kids, because it was a title of a book that I don't know, but other people were laughing about it because they have kids that age and they're all reading that book to their kids. Long answer, but hopefully, that helps to illustrate the biggest missed opportunity.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

Completely. Completely. I think it's the perfect illustration. I absolutely love it. Okay, so this season on She Said/She Said Podcast, we're doing a deep dive into the levers that help us build influence. Storytelling, I think is one of the perfect elements of this idea of how we build influence. But I'd love for you to talk a little bit about how you see that connection between personal influence and storytelling.

Kindra Hall:

I mean, I think that, because stories are programmed into who we are as humans, they are the most powerful, and at the same time when used for good and not lying. Okay, so storytelling is not lying. It's not making things up. But also the most authentic. If you think about the people that you are influenced most by, they are people that you feel like you know, and when we feel like we know someone, we trust them, or we don't, but if it's, let's go down the path of ... We feel like we trust them, we feel like we like them more. We can relate to them. Those are necessary ingredients for influence. In terms of outward influence, storytelling is an obvious choice.

Kindra Hall:

Additionally, I think some of the most, especially for women, the most important people we need to influence are ourselves, and to influence us to take that risk or to move in this direction, or to ... How do we ... Internal influence is equally as important, because if you aren't fully influenced by your own personal power and who you are and what you're here to do of anyone else, how can you ever

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effectively influence outwardly? I've found the personal influence, the internal influence is a journey or certain just like most things are, but that's what I would say how storytelling is important on those two, very different, but equally as essential levels.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

Yeah. I love that. It obviously takes us into your second book, which is "Choose your story, change your life," which I want to talk about in a second, but it's a really interesting lead up to that idea of the ... Leading to the stories that we tell ourselves.

Kindra Hall:

Yeah. I think that, and before going, to talk a little bit more about the outward influence as well, because I said the word and I heard myself say it, the word authenticity, which is a big buzzword in business, and one that women are paying very close attention to. We also have vulnerability. How do you show your humanness? I think that again, business is all about people, and instead of ... And the wholeness. So, you will be more equipped to influence people if they have a better sense for the wholeness of you as a person.

Kindra Hall:

The problem is we often edit that wholeness out, and a way to bring it back in our humanness is to be consciously sharing stories. I mean, almost systematically, to be like, oh, this week I have our weekly meeting, I need to make sure that I open it and/or close it with a story, a story about me, a story about something that happened that week, and maybe it ties into the key message of the meeting that week, but really seeing each one of those opportunities as an opportunity to re-inject humanness, which then only leads to more authentic influence.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

Right. I want to state something that I think should be obvious, but that I think often isn't, and it's that your story is not just a story to connect with somebody, even though that's a helpful thing, but it's a story with a purpose.

Kindra Hall:

Yes.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

There's a reason why you're telling the stories that you're telling and it's leading to a point. I think that, that's oftentimes the piece that sometimes misses, that people tell all sorts of stories and you're like, why the heck did they just tell me that story, right?

Kindra Hall:

Yep. Because yes, there are stories that are designed just for connection and then there are the stories that are strategically placed to illustrate a point to encourage and influence a particular behavior. Sometimes, I mean, most times, I find it happens that we will take more action. We are more persuaded by the stories we hear than by the list of logical reasons why we should take this action. And I also think that there's a really cool, it's a technique I like to use a lot, is that story gives you this opportunity to

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respond, and maybe even direct action, but doing it indirectly, almost like suspending your preferred path forward so that the other person has ownership in making that decision.

Kindra Hall:

You can tell this is unrelated to business, but I had a woman write me on Instagram. I had just taken my family to Hamilton. It was a big goal of ours. It was something very celebratory, especially having survived or continuing to survive the pandemic here in New York City, to be able to take my kids to Broadway to see Hamilton was a very big deal. A woman wrote me and said, "My son has been ... Loves every ... Knows every word, loves the show, like what? His birthday's coming, or his graduation's coming up or something, is this ... It's just so expensive. Is it worth it?"

Kindra Hall:

I don't know how much money, though tickets are obscenely expensive. That's a judgment we all have to make for ourselves. I can't tell her what to do. I think it would make a great gift. Instead I wrote back with a story of a time in high school, someone gifted me tickets to the show that I knew every word to, it was rent. And that I still remember exactly what it looked like, what it felt like to be sitting in that theater when the curtains opened, and it's something I will never forget, and the gratitude is still tip of tongue.

Kindra Hall:

There, right there, I didn't say go the tickets. I was like, I can't tell you whether or not you should buy the tickets. Here's a story. And she was like, "Oh my gosh." And I think she probably went and bought the tickets.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

Oh, I love that. I love that. I love that. I think it's worth it too. But you're right, it is [crosstalk 00:25:40].

Kindra Hall:

There you go.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

I would love for you to talk a little bit about the process that you through, and you mentioned this a couple minutes ago, talking about the importance of reflection as you think about your stories. What's your process for developing stories and thinking sort of thinking through those points and generating that material that you can pull from, what kind of process do you go through for that?

Kindra Hall:

For me, it varies. I am constantly ... Right now, a lot of what I'm doing is watching the stories that are happening right in front of me. You really have two options when it comes to story materials, stories that happened in the past and you remember them or stories that are happening right here in front of you and you notice them. Actually, that story about the show I went to last night, I just remembered it when I woke up and jotted down, Freestyle Love Supreme, two people didn't tell a story, one person did, and I have a little notebook that I just like to keep. I keep my little stories in it.

Kindra Hall:

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There's one side of it where it's having stories available. In terms of the story process, I often think about, what is the theme? If I need a particular story for something, what is the message I want to deliver? Then, what is a story I could tell to illustrate that message. So, it's that combination. Remember, it's finding the stories, an event that has ... That there's a moment, that there's characters, that there are emotions. Sometimes it's harder to find than others.

Kindra Hall:

I was actually just trying to find a story just earlier today. I went out to the living room and I said to my husband, "Hey, I need story about this and I'm drawing a blank." Because a lot of times, our stories don't sound like stories to us. They just sound like life, and so we don't see them for ... If that can happen to me as the person who's a professional storyteller, it could certainly happen to you. But I went out to get that outside perspective. I said, what are ... Then he gave me a few ideas, and it was like, okay, now I can go back and find like specific moments, specific events in my life to use these stories.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

I love that. I think that's great. You also do an amazing job on your Instagram, your Kindra with an I, K-I-N-D-R-A, mhall on Instagram. You do a great job of illustrating this power of story through your Instagram, where you're telling little vignettes with some regularity. I love that. I think that's how I originally found you and then I found Success Stories, but I would urge folks listening to take a look at Kindra's Instagram because it's really terrific. Okay. Let's talk a little bit about building a career as a storyteller.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

I've heard you talk about the fact that when you first thought about making this a career, there were lots of people who second guessed you. Well, is that really a real thing? Is this a real job? How did you deal with that second guessing as you were trying to get your start?

Kindra Hall:

I mean, I don't think second guessing is easy for anyone when you're second guess about something, especially when I was just getting started, I didn't know for sure. I was making it up. I didn't know. It was hard. I remember at the time when these ... I had left my job. My plan was to start this company for storytelling, but I didn't really know what it was going to be or what was going to happen, and then a week after I quit my job, I found out I was pregnant. Of course, we were delighted, but it kind of meant then that my made up job, the baby took all of that brain.

Kindra Hall:

I mean, my son, my first born is brilliant. I think he stole it from me. Now that I think about it, I'm like, you took that, because here I was like, I wasn't working and I was trying to figure out ... So, I went through so many different iterations. Then, when I finally ... Then I had a second child and then I wrote a book of stories. I was trying to find my way. Then I finally decided that I was going to teach people how to do storytelling, and yes, I had friends come and say, who's going to buy that?

Kindra Hall:

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What even is that? I think that what I did, and this is something that I recommend to everyone, is I didn't know if it was going to work or not, but I was very aware. So, two things. Number one, in those moments of self-doubt, I would go back and very consciously look at my life and pull up some of those very key moments that sometimes just get lost in the ... They aren't key unless you identify them or peg them or choose them as key stories.

Kindra Hall:

But the time that I told a story on a whim for a talent show for the Minnesota State Fair Talent Show and ended up making it to the final round, and was telling a fairy tale to 15,000 people, and got second place because I went a little over time, and I do that from time to time. Or that my boss at the Outback Steakhouse, when I was in college, he was just this hotheaded Costa Rican guy, found out that I did this storytelling thing, and then he would have me tell stories to his key guests, which were the movers and shakers of Fargo, North Dakota, because the Outback Steakhouse was the fanciest restaurant there was.

Kindra Hall:

He would have me go to the tables while I was ... Have somebody else bring the diet Coke to my table and have me tell stories in the Outback. There have been time after time, after time of happenings in my life, and I think anybody, if you were to look back over the course of your life and look for these and see them as stories, that it was like, this was destined to be, like this is, and I'm a big believer in destiny and trying to find your way there.

Kindra Hall:

These were the, in the new book, I call them the bricks on my yellow brick road to whatever this Emerald City was for me. So, I would tell myself these stories of ... Listen, I don't know how much farther I have to go to the Emerald City. I'm not even really sure what it looks like, or who's there, how to get in. But I have these that are showing me that this is the path I'm supposed to be on. That was a key thing. I think that's really important anytime you're facing self-doubt or you're trying to build confidence, kind of like Dorothy in her shoes. It's in you already. You just have to choose to see it or that.

Kindra Hall:

Then the second thing that I feel like I've always been pretty good at, we all have our moments, I mean, 2020 being one of them is understanding these pauses, these questions, these, is that really going to work as the middle of the story. What if you did just stop reading in the middle and you're like, I don't know how that's going to ... Don't you don't you want to see? And yeah, the middle is the part where you want to see what happens next. I mean, you want to see where ... I mean, my husband and I are watching Gossip Girl, the original one for the first time.

Kindra Hall:

It's like six seasons long. Every season is 25 episodes. I mean, it's pretty cheesy for the whole thing, but I want to see how this thing turns out. I dedicate at least one hour, sometimes two, to getting through the middle of Gossip Girls so I can see how it ends. Don't tell me, I do don't know who gossip girl is. I have some suspicions. Don't tell me who it is. I know-

Laura Cox Kaplan:

I won't tell you.

Kindra Hall:

I know it's my own fault because I'm watching it 20 years later. So, those two things, finding those stories that you can use as evidence, as the bricks in your path, and number two, being like, all right, yeah, this is the middle. I don't know how this is going to turn out, and there's so much freedom in that suspension.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

Yeah. And just being willing to, to put faith in yourself, and in these moments, that's really ... It's really great advice. Okay, I'd love for you to talk a little bit about the COVID experience for someone who is a professional speaker. You do some other things too, but a big part of your business is professional speaking before large crowds of people. COVID happens and you're not going to be speaking in front of people. So, tell me about the last several months and what that meant to you and how you had to pivot.

Kindra Hall:

I mean, I think that for all of us now, however many months in, I stopped counting, I'm just going to round it all as year. It's all one year. It may be 2020 and 2021, or hopefully not March of 2022, but it's all just one year for me. Then it really is a great recalibration of, what do I really want for my life? What am I willing to sacrifice? What was important that isn't anymore? What wasn't important that now is? For me, COVID started and the effects of ... I'm very fortunate we didn't have any immediate family members pass away. Our family remained healthy, I think we probably had it December, 2019, honestly, but when March, 2020 hit, we did ... I watched hundreds of ... My entire income vanish overnight.

Kindra Hall:

We just didn't know what was going to happen. And then, on top of that, we were in New York City, the city was desolate. Had our kids at home trying to learn, but a big story for me that I'm always working on is money stories. I think money story is a big story for anyone. Money and then it ties to value and it ties to self-worth. For me, it was a big middle of the story moment because we just didn't know what was going to happen. Eventually, events started booking virtually and everything kind of evened out. But I remember one day having this one really big, important event, like a dream event. I just couldn't even ... I was so excited for it, and it canceled, and I was so mad.

Kindra Hall:

I took whatever, it was a lip gloss in my hand, so I'm kind of upset about, and ... Because lip gloss is ... When you find a good one, and I just threw it across the room, and I'm not really a thrower. I was in my bedroom and I got off the phone, finding out that this event had to cancel or go virtual, or whatever, and I threw it across the room. I just screamed and I just ran out of the house. I remember, I just ran into ... I ran to Central Park. I didn't even say goodbye to my family. I was like, if a bus hits me, fine. At least I don't have to worry about this anymore, and I sat down in the park and I yelled at the sky.

Kindra Hall:

I was sitting there crying pretty much alone. There weren't very many people there. I was like, what do you want me to do, God? I've been following, I've been laying these bricks, I've been building my

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company and you're just taking it all. Give me a sign. I'm not one to yell at God and ask for signs, but I'm like, give me a sign. I was just sobbing. This girl comes walking over and is like, "Are you okay?" I was like, "No, I'm not okay. I can't even talk to you right now." She was like, "My name is Anya, I know this is such a hard ... Do you need someone to talk to?" I'm like [inaudible 00:39:10]. Then she started telling me stories of her family who was in Spain and she had friends in Italy and what it means to be a New Yorker and that we're going to get through this, and enough for me to stop sobbing.

Kindra Hall:

But I was still, and then she said, "It's all going to be okay." Then she just disappeared into social distancing world. I remember sitting there and saying to God, it's not good enough. Just some random woman telling me it's going to be okay. I know I asked for a sign, but I need something better than that. It was such an immediate ... But then I did feel this sense of calm, not the peace that passes understanding, by any means, but this calm, and it was again this, you will tell this story someday and see it for what it was. Again, you are in the middle of this thing right now, someday you will be looking back on this moment.

Kindra Hall:

I think the whole pandemic was that for me, continues to be that, and I've been just fascinated every day to be like, ooh, this is the middle of a story. Oh, this is the middle of a story. Oh, look at ... My daughter just had a, it's these lingering losses, she just had a big lingering loss. To say to her like, well, this is going to ... You will tell this story someday when you're on the other side of it.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

Yeah. You're giving her such a gift in helping her thinking about really reframing what's happening in that moment, that this is an opportunity to learn and grow. You don't know where that experience is ultimately going to take you. That your second book is coming out in January of 2022. We talked a little bit about that at the beginning of the conversation, but I'd love for you to talk about, why did you decide to write this second book?

Kindra Hall:

Yeah.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

I have to say I'm really excited to read it. I've been reading the little excerpts, but I'm really looking forward to reading it because it taps into something we talk about on this podcast a lot, which is a version of this idea of mindset, right?

Kindra Hall:

Absolutely.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

In your case, it's the stories you tell yourself, but it's also, it's the mindset that you're approaching the experiences that you're having with. Talk about why this book, when was that moment where you're like, okay, this is the book I have to write next?

Kindra Hall:

It's funny that you ask, because the book I planned to write next, that seemed like a very natural progression as I had released stories that stick. When you're a writer, you start thinking about what's next. I kind of, my thought was that I would write stories that stick, but like the leader, more in-depth on leadership, or even women, and how women, professional women can use stories. That's what logically made the most sense. But I started to notice, even when I was on stage or when I was posting on Instagram, or whenever I would talk about this idea of watching the stories I'm telling myself, or making different choices is in what stories I tell to help get me through a particular barrier or a limiting belief, that those were the messages that lit up.

Kindra Hall:

I would get all the response to it, and people started ... So, it was a little bit risky from a publishing standpoint, if I'm completely honest. I'm an author, I went in to have like a conversation with my publisher, hoping that they would sign me again, but it seemed like it is a slight deviation. It still is storytelling, but it's more personal development. Of course, the stories we tell ourselves definitely impact our careers and our professional lives. But they too, were like, this is exactly ... This was before 2020. They were like, no, this is the book that needs to be written. Now, of course, the challenge with that was, is I had been using it myself, this method. Helping my friends through it, my family, but I had a lot of catching up to do in terms of having a book ready.

Kindra Hall:

I felt there was a lot of self doubt, a lot of imposter ... Which let me tell you, it is really, it adds a little extra kick to it when your book deals a lot with the stories you tell yourself, and self-doubt, and imposter syndrome, and thinking the things that you said that you can't, and you're struggling with all of those things as you're fighting a book about ... So, it was very ... I mean, I'm exhausted. I will say that ... But yeah, I think it was really, it was the book that seemed ... It wasn't the book I was planning to write, but I think it was the book that needed to be read.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

Yeah. Can you share any of your tactics or tips, for lack of a better term, keeping your head above water as you're dealing with ... I mean, it is a ... Anytime you write a book of any kind, it's a deep dive into your soul and into to being vulnerable with an audience in a way that maybe you haven't done previously. Now, you have this previous book already under your belt, but this is a different one. Talk a little bit about what your tactics were beyond storytelling, how did you keep yourself above water?

Kindra Hall:

It's funny that you say above water, because a big metaphor or illustration that I use in the book is about the icebergs, that we have these masses of things that lurk under the water that seem to pull us down. Again, and it's going to sound so self-serving, but for example, just yesterday I was recording the audio book, that was my second day of recording. If you think writing a book that is much more or personal, as you just said, is hard to do, imagine then sitting in a booth, all alone, reading it out loud for six hours. And you're like trying to read it in a way that it's interesting to listen to, the tonation of your voice, but

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then you're reading things, and then you're like ... I got to a point where I thought, there are too many stories in here. There are too many of my stories in here. I started to get ... I don't know. I was saying the-

Laura Cox Kaplan:

Spiraling.

Kindra Hall:

Yes, I was spiraling. The exact thing that we all deal with, which is what this method is meant to ... That's the thing is it happens, even if you're ... This is a lifelong practice of changing and choosing better stories to tell yourself. In the moment, I couldn't really ... I was doing too many other things like reading and trying not to shift in my chair, so I squeaked and had to start over, making sure my stomach didn't growl because you got to start over if your stomach growls. But on the-

Laura Cox Kaplan:

It's amazing that that will be picked up on the mic.

Kindra Hall:

It is. The sound check will be like, can you ... Yeah, that was ... I heard that one. I was like, oh gosh.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

It looks like growling.

Kindra Hall:

Yeah, and then you have that. Then I was trying to get outside, because outside affirmation helps. My sound tech, the other day, I asked him, I'm like, "Hey, so what do you think so far?" And he was like, "I don't read this kind of book." I was like, gosh, this is so bad. Anyway ...

Laura Cox Kaplan:

He should have been a she.

Kindra Hall:

I know. Exactly. That was the ...

Laura Cox Kaplan:

Was one of the problem.

Kindra Hall:

Exactly. I was supposed to have a female tech yesterday, but then her computer broke so I ended up having ... Anyway, the point being, so one of the stories I was telling myself, which is, so, I mean the meta, the many layers of this is really overwhelming. One of the stories I was telling myself was that my book had too many stories in it A, about me. The reason I bring that up is because Laura, you just mentioned, this is a much more personal book because it's a much more individualized personal topic. On my walk home, I knew that I had to directly attack that belief, that story I was telling myself.

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Kindra Hall:

I told myself stories of other books, this is one of those stories that I was using, of other books that were huge best sellers, because the author was sharing their own stories, was opening up. Like Glennon Doyle's Untamed. I mean, you could go back to Girl, Wash Your Face. I haven't read Tabitha Brown's new book, Mel Robbins book is a instant New York Times Bestseller, all of these women being very generous with their stories. That right there, I was like ... I told myself the story of watching these women and how I felt watching their success as confirmation that this is the right move.

Kindra Hall:

Then secondly, I went back through my catalog of memory and told myself the stories of when I've shared personal stories, even in a professional setting and how people respond so profoundly to that. Then, so I'm going through, and then you add all this to it, right? I'm a big believer in the universe talking back to you. So, I'm dealing ... I'm running home because I'm late after recording. This all happened yesterday. I have to then go back downtown because I'm going to the show. Then I'm sitting in the show still trying ... Shaking off the day and the doubt and everything.

Kindra Hall:

I am sitting in the show, and the woman, somebody, even in the back, yells out storytelling, and the woman on the stage chooses it as the word, and they sing a whole 10 minute number all about storytelling, and I was like, okay, I will take that as a sign as well. But then all of these, so then that becomes, that moment with watching the Freestyle Love Supreme Show last night, now that is a story that I can tell myself, that no, people are hungry for this. I don't even know what your question was, but apparently I feel very strongly about it. I hope I answered it.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

I love that. And you did answer it, because it was all about how you deal with these moments where you have that self-doubt where you start to second guess and question yourself, how do you continue to plow through that? When you're the person who's writing the book as the authority, it just magnifies that whole experience. I love that answer. I think that's perfect. I'd love for you to talk a bit about Success Stories, which was your podcast, an affiliation with Success Magazine. You have recently transitioned out, but I would really like for you to talk about how ... One of the questions that you asked guests was how they define success for themselves.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

I'd love for you to take that question and also talk about too, what you learned from the experience of hearing from these incredibly diverse and really interesting successful people, very different vantage points.

Kindra Hall:

Yeah. I think that the one thing I learned is how much better they are at answering that question than I am. I need to write down my answers so that it would be only fair. I'm going to pause that while I let the back of my brain figure out what my definition of success is, but at the time of recording those podcast episodes that, it was about a year, a year and a half, that I was hosting that podcast. It started in the

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middle of the pandemic. It started with me asking myself the question, okay, so I'm not going to be traveling, which used to take up so much of my time. What do I want to become instead? What do I want to do? Do I want to go back and get my PhD? What do I want to do?

Kindra Hall:

The next day I got a call from Success and they were interested in a partnership, and so the podcast was born. The reason I share that is because, like we've been discussing, the past 18 months, 20 months, however long it's been, has been this great redefinition, I think. So many of us are redefining, we're asking more deeply what success means to us. The thing that I heard over and over again from these incredible guests who I was asking this question is, is that the definition of success is entirely fluid and extremely personal. I think more than anything, it's a feeling than it is a ... For almost all of them. It was more of like a feeling than it was a checklist of items.

Kindra Hall:

I really had been trying to simplify success or quantify it for myself. And in years past, in different and phases of my life, setting certain financial goals was a huge ... That was my definition of success and it worked. It was very motivating. It felt very aligned with who I was and what I was trying to do at the time. That isn't necessarily the case anymore. If I'm totally honest, it's been kind of a free fall to not have something as concrete as money or numbers to cling to for success. But all of these incredible leaders reassured me that success really is it changes and it's different for every person.

Kindra Hall:

I think for me right now, success happens, I feel it in moments. It comes in flashes, and it's these right moments of, I am doing what me uniquely, Kindra, is here to do. Sometimes that's a moment with my children, sometimes that's a moment after having a conversation with a friend who needed it, sometimes it's a big stage moment with successes in these little moments is what I've found for me.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

Yeah. I love that. I love that. Okay. I have three lightning round questions.

Kindra Hall:

[crosstalk 00:55:09] Okay.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

Very quick. I didn't share these in advance, but I'm pretty sure you can handle them. Where are you finding inspiration these days? A book, a movie, a show?

Kindra Hall:

You know what? I am finding inspiration on the streets right now. In New York, just seeing people back on the street, there really is something about being out in the community, and not even necessarily having to talk to anybody, but just having other people around, that is feeling ... I think I was really hungry for that and didn't even realize it. That's where I'm finding inspiration.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

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I love that. What's your favorite way to refuel or recharge?

Kindra Hall:

There's two things. We have a house out by the beach. I never really thought of myself as a beach house person. That was more a dream of my husband's, but, like my parents would drive us in the minivan to our cabin in Northern Minnesota. There's something about this particular, we go out to Montana, this particular house that every time I go, I feel very recharged. Now, that's a big one soul cycle, makes me feel that way. That's a place where I just feel 100% me present. And building Legos. I love building Lego sets.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

Now, eventually your family's going to age out of that. You may have to find something-

Kindra Hall:

No. [crosstalk 00:56:43] I haven't aged out. No, no. I buy my own sets. They have Legos for adults.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

Oh my gosh, seriously.

Kindra Hall:

I have a Lego typewriter that's so cool. I have all the Lego, all the Legos. Yeah.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

Okay. I'm impressed.

Kindra Hall:

[crosstalk 00:56:59].

Laura Cox Kaplan:

That's very impressive. Okay. Last one. Single piece of advice, life hack, or mantra, maybe it's something that you wish you could tell 24-year-old Kindra, or maybe it's a life hack that you especially like, or it's a mantra that you tell yourself, what would be yours?

Kindra Hall:

Mine is definitely, and it sounds cliché, but go with me here, it's to be you. In so many different ... When you're the storyteller, that doesn't make any so sense to people. When you're a really enthusiastic person in a world that everyone wants you to be muted. I remember, even back at the beginning of my, as I was hoping to become a keynote speaker, watching videos of other speakers to see what they were doing, and of course, it was usually videos of men because there weren't that many female keynote speakers.

Kindra Hall:

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Even the way they moved across the stage, I was like, how do they move like that? And I'm like, oh, because they're in loafers, and I feel most powerful in heels. But when I was trying to ... I mean, success leaves clues. So, it's to watch others and gather and gather that information. But what I've learned time and time again is, while there may be clues from other people, I still have to be me. Even if it doesn't make any sense to anyone else, I have to be me. Now I've gotten pretty good at it. I'm like, this is me. I'm pretty good at that. But at 24, I would tell my 24-year-old self because she needed to hear it.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

Yeah. I love that. What a perfect answer and a perfect way to end this great conversation. I've so enjoyed getting to know you. Thank you so much.

Kindra Hall:

Oh, thank you so much for your great questions and this. Thank you so much [crosstalk 00:58:59].

Laura Cox Kaplan:

Thank you. I really, really appreciate it. Oh, Kindra, I almost forgot you have a special offer for pre-orders of book number two, which is coming out soon. It's available for pre-order now. Tell us about that offer.

Kindra Hall:

The book is Choose Your Story, Change Your Life. You can pre-order the book now, Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Indie Bookstores. And then, once you do that, go to the website, chooseyourstorychangeyourlife.com. Enter your info. You'll need to just upload the screenshot of your order, and then we have a whole ... You'll immediately get a mini course that helps you dive into the first step of the choosing your story method. I'm going to be hosting a 90-day series where every week we'll be attacking one of the big limiting beliefs that people have. So, make sure, if you pre-order the book, to go to chooseyourstorychangeyourlife.com, so you get to take advantage of all of those things.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

I love that. We will include all of that information in the show notes as well. Kindra Hall, thank you so much for being here today.

Kindra Hall:

Thank you.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

To learn a bit more about this week's guest, Kindra Hall, check out the show notes for this episode, episode 166. You'll also find the links that Kindra mentioned in our conversation, including links to both of her terrific books. Now, remember, you'll receive some bonus material for pre-ordering a copy of her soon to be released second book entitled, Choose Your Story, Change Your Life: Silence Your Inner Critic and Rewrite Your Life From the Inside Out. I especially love how Kindra uses everyday stories and details to make her messages more memorable and to stick.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

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What's so amazing about her message is that storytelling is available to each and every one of us. The stories she told in our conversations so perfectly illustrated her points. They were relatable and based on real world experiences. Undoubtedly, Kindra has an incredible gift for finding those stories and for weaving in the lessons and messages that she wants to impart. But I hope you found her advice and best practices for how to do so in your own storytelling to be helpful and a good investment of your time.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

Friend, I am delighted that you joined us today, and I would love to hear what you thought of this or any of our She Said/She Said Podcast episodes. You can send me an email via the contact link on the website at shesaidshesaidpodcast.com, or message me on Instagram, Facebook or LinkedIn. I'm @LauraCoxKaplan. I'd truly love to hear from you. Also, you may have noticed that we have a new look, and I'd love to hear what you think of that as well. Until next week, take care. I'll see you soon.