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Laura Cox Kaplan:

Hey friend. Welcome to She Said/She Said. Here on this podcast, I'm joining forces with a broad array of top notch guests to share important life and career lessons, always with an eye toward insight, inspiration, and the drivers that help us build influence. I've spent three decades studying and learning 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 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 redefine success for ourselves is often a pretty important part of our growth in evolution. And yet, I don't recall ever having someone explain that to me before I actually reached that point on my own. This theme often comes up as I'm talking to guests each week here at She Said/She Said podcast.

In fact, it was a big topic just last week in Episode 171 in my conversation with journalist and entrepreneur, Jenna Lee. Jenna left a very lucrative high profile career as a network journalist for Fox to create her own new startup. In Jenna's case, she's both redefining success for herself and creating a new way to think about how we consume news.

But redefining success also requires that we edit or rewrite our stories, including the ones we tell ourselves. I talked about this topic of rewriting our stories in a bit more detail in Episode 168, and specifically, how rewriting our stories can also mean adopting a new definition of success and what it means to us. I know for me, I define success pretty differently from how I did when I first started out. New people have entered my life who are incredibly important to me. But also, I found the need to challenge myself professionally in a very different way. Both of those things have actually contributed to and landed me right here.

But the way I think about success also had to shift as well. And if I'm being completely honest, there are things I miss about my old definition of success, even though I wouldn't change a thing. I suspect you can relate especially if you've made or making a big career or life pivot. The trick is to really own those pivots and to always be looking for opportunities to learn and grow and challenge ourselves and to be willing to rewrite the script, or as today's guest might put it, be willing to sing a different song as it were.

But there's another important dimension that we'll dive into today. It's the power of visualization, and the importance of visualizing both our goals and our ultimate success.

Today's guest is Emm Gryner.

Emm's story is a testament to the power of visualization. In our conversation, she talks about how visualization helped her go from small town daughter of entrepreneurs who ran a chicken

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newspaper to signing a major record deal and touring the world with the late, legendary David Bowie.

At the same time, visualization also helped her soften the fall of the many lows in her life --including losing that major record deal only a year after signing.

Emm has written her first book. It's entitled: *"The Healing Power of Singing: Raise Your Voice, change Your life. What touring with David Bowie, single parenting and ditching the Music Biz taught me in 25 easy steps."*

Even if pursuing a professional singing career is not in the cards for you... Emm's perspective on THE POWER OF VISUALIZATION shows us how it can help us take chances, find passion and purpose, survive setbacks, and turn downturns into opportunities.

Putting aside Emm's incredible resume, you'll hear much in our conversation that is both relatable and incredibly useful, and you'll also see how so much of her advice aligns with our conversations about INFLUENCE and the different levers that help us both build and sustain it to help us achieve our goals.

Here is my conversation with Emm Gryner.

Emm, welcome to She Said/She Said.

Emm Gryner:

Thank you.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

I am really happy to have you. I had a chance to dive into your amazing book, and really loved it. I know my audience will as well. We'll include a link in the show notes to your book. But let's start our conversation there. What motivated you to share your story, and particularly, some of the maybe less glamorous and gritty parts. There's a lot of glamour in your story. But there's also a lot of it that's not so glamorous.

Emm Gryner:

Well, my life has been a real balance of glamour and really just regular life. And when I became a mom and sort of took on that whole role, I really stepped into what I consider kind of a domestic life. And this was coming out of a time where I sang with David Bowie and I had my own record deal. So, it was really like a double life, kind of a culture shock. And I've always loved

that though. I've loved having both because I find joy in a lot of ... I love like living in a small town and just kind of having that normal life.

But for me, I think the fact that I start the book with this snapshot of me on stage at Glastonbury. And then I kind of come back to my early days where I just say, I just blurted out, I was a terrible singer. I was born terrible. I really mean that I was untrained and I didn't know what I was doing. So, in revealing that, I want people to know right off the bat that anyone can sing. So, that's kind of the upside of having both of those parts of life.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

Yeah, I think people listening would be, that's a bit of a head scratcher to me. And when you talk about that in the book, I also scratched my head a bit as to how you go from the standpoint of really not being able to sing or not considering yourself a singer or a potential future professional singer to where you ultimately end up.

Emm Gryner:

Well, thanks. And I don't know that I go around thinking I'm an incredible singer even now. But I do know that I'm more accomplished. I know that I'm stronger. And a lot of the book is about that. So, I think for me when you're younger and you just feel like, okay, I got to get out of high school, so I can live my life. And I've got all these plans, and I've got all these dreams. You're fueled by this kind of blind faith. And that fueled me more than my ability as a singer. So, it's a real exercise in realizing that if there's something you want to do, it might not have to do with how good you are. It might have to do with your mindset.

So, I mean, when I was younger, I had a lot of things in the way. And I talked about this in the book like ego and just trying things out because I was inexperienced. But what did work for me is that sense of like, yeah, I know I'm going to get a record deal. I know I'm going to get some recognition. And then I did. So, I think taking a little bit of that blind faith, putting it back into the equation is sort of, I think, helpful when you get older and you get a little too smart for your own good.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

Yeah. Was there something about the way that you were raised that helped you tap into that faith and really believe in yourself?

Emm Gryner:

Well, my parents were newspaper owners. They ran their own business. And as a youngster watching them do this was very interesting because I didn't think it was normal to have parents in the basement putting a newspaper together, like this archaic thing called a copy graphic, which sounded like five transport trucks in the basement and my mom like wax rolling whatever she printed out of it onto this sheet and then they go and would print it. But the bigger picture there was that they ran their own business and they did this for 20 years, and it was a newspaper about chickens.

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Laura Cox Kaplan:

Wait. What do you mean a newspaper about chickens? So, this was like a local farm report?

Emm Gryner:

You know it was more than that. Everyone's seen that movie, Best in Show, the Christopher Guest movie about the dog show. It was reporting on chicken shows.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

Really?

Emm Gryner:

Yeah, poultry. It was a real, I guess, it's a thing.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

And you grew up in Canada.

Emm Gryner:

Yeah.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

You grew up in a small town in Canada.

Emm Gryner:

Yeah. So, they purchased this paper from someone. It had been running since 1930. So, it wasn't like they started it, they took it over. And they created connections with people who like to show their chickens. And this was not abnormal to me. This was just like, okay. So, you're asking maybe where I got some of this motivated energy. I think I just saw that my parents, they didn't work for someone else. They were their own boss, even though it was kind of a bizarre upbringing. They were doing it all themselves. They were in charge of their schedule.

Our family telephone was like a business phone all the time. And they treated their customers and the subscribers with so much care, like their friends. And I think the subscribers and the chicken enthusiasts were really excited to see my mom and dad at these ... They'd have to go to poultry shows and report on it. So, to me, it created this feeling like you could have a job. You could do what you wanted. You could run your own show. And that I think paved the way for me kind of not answering to a lot of people along the way.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

How did you go from there to getting your start in the music business? That is a fascinating piece of your story. And I don't think I saw this in your book.

Emm Gryner:

I glaze over the chicken part.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

I love that. I really love that.

Emm Gryner:

Yeah, well, pre-internet, growing up in the '80s, there wasn't a lot to do. We had this life where we went to these poultry shows. And then, I discovered one day, Olivia Newton John. So, in my grade two class, there was a girl listening to the song, Physical. And I had never heard this kind of music before, because my dad was playing a lot of jazz at home. And then my piano lessons were all made up of classical music. So, I had never heard this. And I just became enraptured with it.

And I went home and where I live in Canada, where I grew up, was across the border from Detroit. So, I got all these amazing radio stations coming over with R&B and soul and American Top 40. And that really took over. So, instead of wanting to learn the classical pieces on piano, I started learning, Heaven by Bryan Adams, and just singing Whitney Houston and stuff. And that's where it all began. I just love the radio.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

Where was that big break moment? When did you actually get your big break as a singer?

Emm Gryner:

This is really funny. I was walking along this country road that I lived by. We live by Lake Huron. And I found a cassette tape on the side of the road. I put together this broken tape and I listened to this band. It was a Canadian band, a rock band, and I fell in love with this band. They were called Coney Hatch. They had toured with Iron Maiden and I wrote away to one of the singers and I sent him the songs I've been recording at home. And he brought me to Toronto, a lovely gentleman, just pure hearted music man, which I was very lucky that that was my interaction. And we recorded some songs. And that got me started. I heard my songs in the big studio. And I was like, "Yeah, I can do this."

Laura Cox Kaplan:

So, you talk about in the book the importance of visualization. So, as you're on the road, you discover what becomes your passion, which is music. You have this spark that is lit inside of you. Talk about the role of visualization and how you both used it in your own life and how you advise folks that you now work with, you're helping the sort of the next generation of singers to find their voices. Talk about the role of visualization and what you mean by that and how it helped you.

Emm Gryner:

Well, earlier, we were talking about blind faith. And I think that visualization is another form of just owning what you want to have happened. And we're no stranger to things like vision boards and writing your future self and all of that stuff. But I think it's when you take that visualization and put some action behind it, that's when things start to happen. And I did it with the book itself, the very book that we're talking about.

I had this idea to do a book about singing that wasn't a book that was out there. I wanted it to have some stories from the road. I wanted it to have tips. I wanted it to have action items and a list of secrets, secrets for singing. So, I mocked up a cover of the book. And it seemed maybe a little bit silly at the time, but having that book cover was visualizing as well. And it really helped me in my phone calls when I called people up. And I said, "I have this idea." It led to my book deal.

And then even later on when I was talking with the publisher about the design of the cover, I was like, "Well, I actually mocked up the cover two years ago. You want to see it." And they did go for it. But just having that, just for yourself to know that what you're dreaming could actually be real.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

Yeah. There are plenty of people who aspire to success, whether it's in singing, or journalism, or politics, or I mean, it could be any number of things. And they don't ever make it. You talk about in the book, the importance of preparing for success. Maybe dig in a little bit to what you mean by that. And you also put some emphasis on the importance of understanding your finances. And I think that's such an overlooked concept. Dig in a little bit to what you mean by the importance of preparing for your success.

Emm Gryner:

Yeah, that's a good question. I mean, there's so many different ways you could prepare for the greatness that you already have in you. And I think it's important to mention that sometimes when we talk about visualization or having a vision or goals, we think of it as outside of ourselves. And that's something that I've kind of realized lately is that once you think it's outside of yourself, it becomes harder to attain.

So, all of these things that we really want to have happen, I believe, are seeds that are kind of growing in us. But we do have to create, like I talked about setting the conditions for success, which is a term that I borrowed from a sound man that I work with. And he spends countless hours setting up a room before he mixes a band. And sure, it's a pain for some people. They don't want to open their doors early. He requires like utmost quiet.

But it's the same thing with whatever your creative endeavor, your work endeavor is. Whether it's if you're going to do a talk, which I talked about in the book, using my voice that way, who's in the audience? What messages are they hoping to take away? Who's talking before you? Could you tune into what they're talking about? It's almost a sense of being present, which

we hear about a lot, and how do we stay present all the time. But in terms of preparing, I just think stepping into the moment, taking a 360 view of either what's in front of you are what you're headed into, and how can you set yourself up for success.

So, if you want to be a singer, for example, what's the first step? Maybe for some people, it's quitting smoking or starting a cardio routine or something. And it doesn't have to be a big deal. You can start with one small thing and just kind of celebrate that success once you've kind of achieved what I call clearing the path.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

Dig in a little bit in terms of the financial piece as well, because you do emphasize that in the book. And I think it's such an interesting element because we oftentimes overlook the importance of considering that. Talk about what you meant by that. Why does that matter?

Emm Gryner:

Yeah. And you know what, Laura, I really love that you have so many different types of people on your podcast. Because in the artists world, we're not used to talking about money. Even today, when I talk to other musicians, there's an element of sheepishness about it. And I think we're just raised from the get go to know or expect that we're not going to make money.

And there's a part in the book where I start off a chapter by saying, what I get from a lot of people which is the phrase you make a living at that? Even before you can manage your money or understand it, or feel proud of it, or celebrated or whatever, you're already met with this doubt that you can pay for microwavable meal. So, you kind of have to push back against that.

But also, I think a lot of women are now really proud of building a business for themselves. And I'm hoping that really will apply to artists as well, and singers and musicians that we need to treat our art with the same importance as any other business or if we're working for a company or corporation. We tend to give so much importance to those sorts of businesses. But really, as we've seen in the pandemic, art and music, they're unfailing. They save us. They're a lifeline. So, if something is that important, why wouldn't you understand your money flow and take it seriously.

So, I talked in the book about the time I got audited. And you said at the beginning of this podcast, talk about some of the less glamorous parts of being a musician, and certainly being audited is not by the, we call it the Canada Revenue Agency, they never have great names, do they?

Laura Cox Kaplan:

You know it's going to be unpleasant.

Emm Gryner:

Exactly. And the great thing though about that audit, where they took three years of my life as a musician and really put it under the microscope, and they're like, "Where's the money for this?"

Why don't you have these receipts? What do you do?" There's such a divide between government and art even in Canada, where we sometimes think those things are, they can cooperate.

But the great thing about it is that it was a wakeup call to take my finances seriously. And when you know where the money is and you have a good relationship with it, which I think that's the key, you can just start to really see the connection between your purpose and making money, which I think is the key. Right?

Laura Cox Kaplan:

Yeah, and understanding the value piece, that connection to value, which is really, really important. And I think oftentimes it's something that for whatever reason, historically, I don't necessarily think this is the case anymore. But historically, women were not proportionately raised to focus as much on money as men for a host of reasons. So, really, it's a very interesting data point, I think, such an important one.

So, you went on to have an incredibly successful solo career, really high highs, and then some pretty big lows. Maybe talk about that and how one of those lows lead you to yet another high. There's so many elements of your story and this idea of reinvention and bouncing back, maybe talk a little bit about that experience.

Emm Gryner:

Sure. So, I always dreamed of having a big record deal. And for some reason, I just knew I was going to get it. And when I was 21, I got it. And it was after a bunch of touring in Toronto, writing a lot of songs, getting out there. And I got signed to Mercury Records, had a big advance, a big album that I got to make in London, England with all my favorite people.

And literally within a year, right after my album came out, I got dropped. And it was an acquisition that Seagrams, they had a billion dollar acquisition where they took over PolyGram. And they dropped all these artists. They fired everyone who worked at the record label. They kept a few artists on like Sting. I guess they thought Sting could sell records, Sheryl Crow, people like that. But most people got dropped. And I think that in hindsight, I think it was pretty traumatic for me, but I was 22. I was thinking, oh, this is just a blip on the screen. I'm just going to keep going.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

So, even in that moment, you didn't necessarily internalize this failure?

Emm Gryner:

Well, that's the thing. I think when you're older, you can see clearly maybe what has happened and I really didn't process it. I didn't grieve the loss of the deal. I just kept going. So, I went and I recorded more. I recorded whatever I ... I made my own little album. And I say little because the budget was \$500 as opposed to a quarter of a million dollars, which was my first budget. And

oddly, that album did better than my major label album and had more of a chance to come out. People really liked the songs. But yeah, I was floating around.

And I think when I look back now, I was probably ... I know that other people thought it was the end for me. There are a lot of people in the music industry. They're like, "Oh, well, she's done" or "She was just a girl that got signed because [inaudible 00:25:39]," it was the time of the women or whatever. So, there was all that floating around. But I always rejected that. I just love making music so much that I figured there has to be something more. So, I just started touring places that I love to travel. And I came to New York and did some shows there. And I met the other members of David Bowie's band. And that's how that began.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

So, maybe talk a little bit about that experience. You had a friend who was already ... She was a backup singer for David Bowie. And you had a relationship with her, knew her. Talk about that connection and that moment with Bowie because I mean, that's incredible. And thinking about I remember watching David Bowie on tour in 1999, the appearance on Saturday Night Live, where you are featured. For those who want to Google that, you can pull it up on YouTube and see Emm there as one of the backup singers. Talk about that experience and how that felt to you.

Emm Gryner:

It was pretty amazing because, I mean, I'd never plan to be a backing vocalist. But there was everything about that experience with Bowie that was almost meant for me. I actually was listening to all the bands that were inspired by him like Duran Duran and whoever else. And then, it made me realize, oh, they're inspired by him. And it just opened my eyes to so much music. I love England so much as well. And he's so creative. It really mirrored how me bouncing back from my record label tragedy, I immersed myself in creativity and just continuing on.

So, there was that element. But there was also just like, you're kind of curious about fame when you want to be a pop artist. So, I hadn't achieved it myself. And then, I got this opportunity to see one of the biggest rock stars in the world just do his thing, whether it was rehearsal, having dinner, getting ready for a show, picking out outfits. It was such a rock and roll education for me. So, saying yes to things that you might not plan for but they feel right, I think that's what I took away from that.

And then, just he was lovely. He'd take you on stage and introduce you to the crowd, hold your hand. And he was just kind of like a fatherly figure and always really curious about art and music, which I loved.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

Yeah. What did you learn from him? Were there any specific lessons that you took away from the experience how he approached his audience and his fans perhaps? What was it that you really learned from him?

Emm Gryner:

Well, I learned how to be professional. There are plenty of times, things would go awry, technically, whether it's on a TV show or even with the voice, like losing his voice, which he did a couple of shows at Roseland Ballroom. He just kept his cool. He really would just kind of be a bit scientific about solving problems. He didn't take himself so seriously, which is surprising considering he's so influential. If we made mistakes on stage, he just let it go. I don't know.

He really knew how to just kind of let loose but still capture the energy and the magic of music, which I think some people are really laser focused on being perfect with everything and I got to portray the perfect image. And there was a lot that was rough around the edges and that was okay. And it was almost great. Like Ziggy Stardust, there's stuff in there that's out of tune and tempos that shift and things like that. I know it's a different time now. But yeah, I think just having a little acceptance for who you are.

And then I talked about in the book how Glastonbury was so inspiring because we were rolling up to this major festival, 110,000 people. I think it was one of the biggest, if not the biggest concert of his career. And he said to us, he said to the band, he said, "Okay, guys, this isn't about us. It's about them." And that made us go, "What? Wait a sec, it's not about us?" Because when you're 20, I was 25 when I was touring with him, it was pretty much all about me even though I was touring with Bowie.

But it was true, because the size of the crowd, the energy of the crowd, it can't be about you when you're on stage. It doesn't matter who you are. It really was about them. And that sentiment, also, I think, applies so much in life. I kind of wish we had that sentiment more over the past couple of years, but we're very focused on ourselves still. So, that's what I learned.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

Yeah, that's beautiful. That's really beautiful. You talk about in the book the importance of making space in your life to say yes to things, to amazing opportunities that you may not know in the moment are going to be amazing opportunities. Talk a little bit about, dig into that advice a bit, talk about why that's so important.

Emm Gryner:

Yeah, I mean, clearing the space to use your highest and best energy. That is something that I don't know, when you're a mom and you're an indie musician, you just want to do it all. And you don't have to be either of those things to kind of approach life that way, that's for sure. We tend to feel like we have to do everything and be great at everything and then we burn out, which is really what happened to me in my marriage, where I just kind of ... I think actually stemmed back from being dropped from Mercury, where I was just like, "Well, I'm going to do it myself. And I'm going to do it awesome. And people are going to think I'm so fierce."

And I just kind of put that out into the world and just kept going. If you go on my Wikipedia, there's like 20, 25 records. And not a lot of people have heard of them. But to me, they're just like, my kind of show, my display that I could continue on no matter what. So, I'll put

out a record every year if I want to, because I can. And then, you throw parenthood in with that and then trying to be a partner with someone that you're not really aligned with, and there was no way that could sustain.

So, the end of my marriage signaled it was devastating. But it signaled the fact that I was going about it the wrong way. So, then you think about, okay, well, how am I meeting my needs, and I talked about that in the book, which is weird, because my book is about singing. But so many of us are feeling like we can't find our voice or we're falling short as a creative person.

And I think sometimes it's just a universal problem, where we're trying to find ways to meet our needs that aren't sustainable. So, once you clear the path once you realize, okay, well, that's not good for me. What is good for me? How can I do less but be more effective? And there's all kinds of action items in my book, so people can kind of start doing one or two things, because we feel overwhelmed.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

Yeah. You put it so beautifully in the book. You talk about your self-sufficiency was a big roadblock for you. And that self-sufficiency, to some degree, relates to control. And control, of course, relates to fear. So, maybe talk about how you got a handle on this. What you did specifically and maybe what advice you have for other women who are listening who may be struggling with this, whether they're pursuing a music career or something very different.

Emm Gryner:

Yeah, control. That's really interesting that you say that because that is where it's rooted. And if we can sort of realize that we don't need to have that necessarily or we don't have it anyway, that the universe is going to support us. But then sometimes it's confusing because you might wonder, well, how is the universe supposed to support me? Where do I start?

And it's interesting because I talked in the book about Chris Hadfield, who is a Canadian astronaut, who I collaborate with. And I asked him about fear and control and that sort of stuff. And I'm like, how do you deal with being in a rocket going into space? How do you deal with all the stuff that could go wrong? And his response was that it's about I can't actually control any of it, but I can control my attitude towards it.

So, I think part of it is a conscious mindset shift, but also just try something new. Like even what we're doing right now, Laura, two women exchanging our experience and our ideas. That is a powerful use of time. And sometimes, we can't really accomplish everything if we're stuck in this self-immersion, where we're just sitting around, ruminating or, I mean, journaling is great. But sometimes we need to engage with others and just admit that we need each other and we actually are better when we're operating as a community.

As long as those people around you are people who lift you up, people who you trust, people who have something new to offer or a new way to look at things. That's kind of where it started for me is it actually started with podcasts. Going on long drives on tour and being totally lost in my personal life, and being open to new concepts and hearing other people share ideas.

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Laura Cox Kaplan:

I love that. That's so you.

Emm Gryner:

You're saving the world. In case you hadn't been reminded [crosstalk 00:36:51].

Laura Cox Kaplan:

You are so kind. Well, you actually found us. I'm curious how you found She Said/She Said.

Emm Gryner:

Well, you had Dr. Samantha Boardman on.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

I did.

Emm Gryner:

Yeah. And I am just a new fan of hers. And see, there you go. Just like, women sharing ideas and her book is incredible.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

Yeah. It's funny that you mentioned her. As you were talking, I was thinking about one of the things that she talks about in the book, her amazing book is called Everyday Vitality. And she was on a couple of episodes ago. And she talks about the importance of recognizing when self-care becomes selfish. We've taken it to such an extreme in some cases that it becomes almost selfish. And that when we pivot that and focus on giving outwardly that it has a real impact on our vitality. And I just thought there were so many things that she talks about in her book and in the conversation that are so brilliant.

So, if folks haven't had a chance to listen to Dr. Samantha Boardman, go back and listen to that episode, too, after you finish this one. Yeah, after you finish this one, because we've got lots more to talk about. So, you mentioned Chris Hadfield, and I believe you're credited, the two of you, with recording the first, if not the only, music video and recording from the International Space Station. He was there. You were in Canada. Talk about how that came about.

Emm Gryner:

I just had my daughter. She was five months old. And I had known Chris for a while we're both from the same town, Sarnia, Ontario. And we had done some music already. He's a musical guy. He performed at my concerts before. And when he became commander of the International Space Station, he called up, which is thrilling, calling from space. "Hello, Chris Hadfield calling from space." Yeah, it was a great call to get.

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Laura Cox Kaplan:

That was amazing.

Emm Gryner:

And he said he wanted to collaborate on music. And when you're a new mom, you kind of jumped out knew something other than changing diapers and being housebound. And I said yes and he wanted to record a version of Space Oddity. And conveniently, I sang with Bowie. That was a song we had not done though before and it was one I always wanted to do. So, it was really interesting for Chris to approach me about it and he wanted to change the lyrics, which was a bold move for a Canadian.

Because in the original, the astronaut dies. So, he wanted to change the lyrics and he did it. He did it, but I came up with the [crosstalk 00:39:46] for that piece of music. I started the tone for it on piano, kind of drew from my love for Peter Gabriel and some of his ballads and shot it back up to him and space and he sang it in his little bunk, closed the sliding door in his bunk. He sang on an iPad. And then, we just went back and forth like that.

And it was kind of thrilling, but also we didn't know what we're doing. He was really unsure about whose permission we need to record in space, because copyrights a little bit shady up there. Don't know what the rules are.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

That's so interesting. I never thought of that. That's so interesting.

Emm Gryner:

But he did want David Bowie's permission. So, I was the person to connect the astronaut and the rock star. And it was really thrilling, because this is a song that is so iconic.

It was really funny. In one of his emails, he said, "How can we help the astroman?"

And it turned out to be this beautiful thing where Chris shot himself singing Space Oddity, this new version in space and released it to the world two days before he came back to Earth. And it was so great to hear Bowie's kind of ... I felt his glow about it. So, yeah, I was really proud of just being a part of that kind of connecting these two other worldly people.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

Yeah. And it's yet another great example of saying yes to those incredible moments and having the space in your life, although I'm not sure how you did with a five-month-old, basically newborn baby at home. Nevertheless, so your life has been filled with many pivots and real highs, real lows, more highs, more lows. Right?

Emm Gryner:

Yup.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

How did all of this and particularly sort of the extreme highs and extreme lows, how did all of that prepare you maybe or sort of impact how you faced something like the pandemic, which we've all been talking about? What have we learned from this experience? Maybe talk about did your life experience prepare you in a different way perhaps?

Emm Gryner:

That's a great question. And for the first year of the pandemic, I would say I was better prepared than anyone, because a musician's life is uncertain. We're isolated half the time. We don't know what the heck's going on. We're just fueled by doing what we love. But I think as time went on, I realized that we were all thrown a curveball and that no one was really prepared for it. And we can say, obviously, we all have endured it differently and have different feelings about it.

But I think, yeah, I mean, it helped me sort of surface level in the first year to have that kind of resilience that I'd already kind of fostered in my life. But then as time went on, I think it was one thing started to open up and I got to play live again, and I got to see people again, see my fans again. Then I realized, I've been missing a lot. And it was a real wakeup call to me that I wasn't actually doing that great during it.

I was kind of again, telling myself a lot of stories that I can handle this or whatever. And it's inspired a lot of honesty, very, very inspired to make music again and connect with my fans again. So, yeah, it was surprising to me. I thought I kind of had it all worked out.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

Yeah. Did it inspire you to write the book? Or was the book already underway before the pandemic?

Emm Gryner:

The book was underway already. I'd started, well, it was around 2019, the start of 2019 when I brought this idea to a friend, who eventually passed it on to the publisher. It gave me something to do for sure. I was worried I wouldn't be able to get the book done in the pandemic. It's sort of like when you're given that time, that pause, I think I was like, "Oh, what if I don't finish it during the pandemic? I'll never be able to finish anything." But yeah, it was nice to have something to kind of hunker down and work on when things were quiet.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

Yeah. And to be able to really shift your energies and your focus, and maybe your fear is concerned about what was happening in the world. Yeah, I'm a big believer in finding something to focus on. You have also engaged in a more recent career pivot where you are spending a lot of your time and energy teaching and coaching others. You talk a bit about that in the book as well. Talk about what teaching and coaching had meant to you?

Emm Gryner:

Well, it's interesting because as a musician, as someone who's wanted to be a full-time pop artist, teaching to me seemed like a career failure. I did not want to do it. When people would say, "Oh, you should teach," I would just be like, "Well," I felt insulted or something. But what happened was a girl in my town came to me for singing lessons, and I half-heartedly said, "Yeah, all right, let's do it." And it was amazing what happened. I look past myself. And I think a lot of people who teach and guide people must have the same experience.

But I look past myself and I saw, I don't know, I just got really engaged with helping this girl, Emmy Fink was her name, great name, find her voice. And I realized that I had something to offer as well. So, it's like when you're talking about Samantha Boardman's book, when you give back, it's bringing vitality into your life, that's exactly what it was. It was getting out of my own head, sharing something that I actually didn't know I had to share and seeing the fruits of that for her, for this girl.

And then, more people came to me for singing lessons. And it grew into mentoring, because I realized then all I have this 25-year career as a recording artist that people want guidance on. So, I did that. And then I got my certification as a coach. And now, the vocal part of it is actually quite small. And I'm helping a lot of women find their creative groove in their lives, a lot of professional women who have put it off or who have felt undeserving of a life in the arts. And that's so amazing to me to have that running alongside my music career, because I wish I had that as I was growing, right?

Laura Cox Kaplan:

Yeah. How do you coach them on dealing with self-doubt, which I think is just a running thread for so many people, but it's a topic that comes up so frequently on this podcast? I'd love to know how you help them tackle that?

Emm Gryner:

Great question. Because it is so pervasive, and I think part of it is maybe accepting that we will always have it and it is not about getting rid of it. Because I've seen it. I've seen it in someone as great as David Bowie, just the sense of like, "Oh, I'm not sure about this," and you need the support of people around you. It's not like you need to be validated externally and that's it. But I think there's something to be said about that sense of community. So, we need support. Nothing gets done alone.

So, sometimes it's about finding ways for my clients to find that support in a way that feels good to them. Because you can go off and take a course and it doesn't stick. Or you can talk to your friend down the road and you just get kind of misguided. So, it's also about finding that support that's aligned with your energy and what's going to be sustainable for meeting your needs.

And then sometimes, it's about saying maybe that person needs help dealing with past trauma. And that's not something I do. So, it's about maybe helping them find support in

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another area of their life or maybe it's about rerouting the neural pathways. So, some people really take to meditation and mindfulness. So, it's just different for everybody. There's not one recipe for one person.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

Yeah. How about advice for dealing with those forces in your life that may not be as supportive?

Emm Gryner:

That's such a good question, because that has been kind of like my last five years. The people around you that you swear they love you, you swear they have your back and it's not always the case. It's really, really hard. I think sometimes you have to try your best to communicate with those difficult people. But you have to also follow your instincts when you know that you've tried as hard as you can try, and it's not getting better.

So, sometimes that's the most painful thing we have to do is really look at not only how that negative energy is coming into our lives, but how we contribute to it as well. Are we enabling it by upholding our part in the connection. I don't know. So, yeah, it's a lot of soul searching.

But you know what, I think when you bring other people into your life, who lift you up, who get you, who make you feel greater than you are or see the real you or see your potential, then it's almost like you can see those people side by side and you start gravitating towards that good energy. So, maybe it's some of that.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

Yeah, maybe offsetting the bad in some respects. Sometimes you can't always get rid of the people that are-

Emm Gryner:

That's true

Laura Cox Kaplan:

... negative energy. And so, offsetting them can be one way to do that. I'd love for you to share, because influence is a big component of what we talk about on this podcast and the different dimensions of what makes someone influential and how each of my guests think about influence in her life. Maybe give us your thoughts on what does influence mean to you.

Emm Gryner:

That's a great question. And I think, even with the book, I had a few drafts of it before I settled on what I felt was the best version. And those previous drafts had some solid singing tips and some really impressive stories. And at some point, actually, I do know when this was because I met my current partner, who is a writer and an editor and a poet. And I realized I was not telling

everything. And I think when it comes to influence, you need to tell everything that makes sense to you to share.

So, in the context of this book, there's a lot of embarrassing moments that I share, admitting I wasn't great with money. That's never good. Talking about the end of my marriage and how brutal that was for me. But honestly, when I talk to women who have read the book, that is what resonates with them, and they share their stories with me. So, it's less to me about like, how can I be influential and be wealthy or successful or be on this great podcast, or be on the show or be a best seller, when a woman comes to me and says, "This is what happened to me," that to me is the kind of influence that matters to me.

And I honestly think that I had the bravery to share because other people were doing the same around me. They were showing the good, the bad, the ugly, everything. And that's how we move forward. And that's how we move out of this place of dwelling. And I was in a place of victimhood for so long. After my marriage, I was just angry, I was left. And you know what, it's, these things happen. And we can turn them into just life changing, brilliant, wonderful moments, and they can start a whole new life for us, which has happened in my life, and I'm so grateful for it.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

I love that. What an amazing answer. That's really beautiful. Okay, one final question I have for you. If you could go back and give 21-year-old Emm one piece of advice based on this incredible life that you've lived. What would you tell her?

Emm Gryner:

Well, that's a great question. And I would have answered that differently even a couple of weeks ago. And now, yeah, now I would say nothing. Don't do anything different. Because everything that I did, I was meant to do. And that might seem a little bit like I was on the right path the whole time. I know that it took me longer to get to this place in my life than maybe it should have. But that's how long it took for me. I needed to feel that long marriage, go through the whole thing. It needed to end when it needed to end. I needed to sit there with my four-year-old and my six-year-old and explain to them what was happening.

And I can only say that because life has turned such a beautiful corner that, and I hope that people who are listening to this who might be struggling with something can kind of have we're talking about blind faith, maybe a little bit of that blind faith to know that it can completely turn around. And I never in a million years thought I'd be an author or that I'd have a beautiful new life with a new partner and making a new album.

So, yeah, I think it's all meant to be. And I think we let ourselves off the hook big time when we say that, because then we don't beat ourselves up for all the stuff that we think we did wrong. Because there's a lot that you could consider to be terrible that you did. But what's the point in thinking that really?

Laura Cox Kaplan:

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Yeah, yeah. And you've learned from every experience it's brought you to this point where you are today.

Emm Gryner:

Yeah.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

That's really beautiful. I love that. And what a pleasure. So nice to be with you today.

Emm Gryner:

Thank you so much.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

Thank you.

Emm Gryner:

I'm so honored to be on your podcast. It's so great to meet you.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

Thank you. So nice to meet you, too. I really appreciate the time.

Emm Gryner:

Thank you.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

Hey Friend,

Thanks for joining us today. To learn a bit more about Emm Gryner, and to grab a copy of her new book be sure to check out the show notes for this episode, episode 172.

As I reflected on this conversation with Emm, I did a bit more research into the science behind visualization and why it works. We'll be talking more about that in a coming episode.

For now, I'm grateful you joined us, and I hope you found the investment of your time worthwhile. As always, I'd love to know what you thought and what resonates with you.

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You can reach me via the contact link on the website or message me on Instram or Linked In -- you'll find me [Laura Cox Kaplan](#)

Take care, and I'll talk to you again soon!

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