

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 are 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.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

Hey friend, this is our last episode for the year 2021. And I am looking forward to a little break and spending some quality time with my family over the holidays. I hope that you're planning to do the same. Breaks are so important and so necessary, especially when we're really pushing ourselves. The quality of the work tends to suffer when we don't take that time, even though it can be incredibly hard to unplug. Now, admittedly, I have never been particularly good at this, but I've recognized the value of taking these breaks, especially as I've gotten older. And working in a role that requires much more in the way of deeper content development with fewer folks to support these efforts means that I actually need those breaks more.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

Earlier this year, I took a month-long sabbatical over the summer to recharge and reflect. And I think the quality of what we were able to produce here at She Said/She Said Podcast this fall really showed that value. I felt it and I hope you did too. This idea of taking a break is really about making an investment in ourselves, an investment in refueling in order to be the people we need to be to fulfill our purpose, the people we need to be to add value to the world, and to be and do the things that are important to us. Now, you get to choose what those things are, but there's a much greater chance that you'll accomplish them when you build in some time for recovery. Again, I'm trying hard to take my own medicine. It's not easy. And for those of you who know me well, you know this, but I'm doing it. And I hope that you will too.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

The idea of breaks, and for the purposes of this conversation, a year-end break, is also directly related to another important topic that I want to talk to you about today. It's one that I've mentioned a couple of times in the past, but it's worth sharing again. It's the idea of a personal year-end review. Basically, an evaluation that you perform on yourself to reflect on what you've accomplished over the past year and to highlight some things that you want to work on. Maybe they are goals, maybe they're habits, maybe you need to rethink an allocation of your time or set different priorities. All of those things are great to include in this exercise. And to add maximum value to you, it should be very personal to you and your circumstances. So let's talk about why this matters.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

This kind of exercise actually sets the stage for goal setting and it enables you to really take advantage of all of that great advice that we've heard from several podcast guests, folks like Professor Katy Milkman in episode 169. You'll recall that she wrote that great book, *How to Change*, and talked about the science behind making our goals stick. If you missed that episode, be sure and go back and listen to it before you start setting your goals for the new year.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

Now, for me, I want to give you an example of how I tackle my personal year-end review. Yours should be personal to you, but I'll share sort of what I do. I pull out my calendar and then I open up a Google Doc and I write a basic narrative based off the top of my head those accomplishments that really jump out to me. And I divide them in into a few buckets, personal, professional, family, health and fitness, and growth. Then I often include some subcategories under each one. For family, for example, that would include both my kids individually and my relationship with my husband. Under my professional bucket, especially since I'm involved with a lot of different projects, I have a number of subheadings for individual projects, my podcast, my teaching, my board work, public speeches, et cetera.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

I then assess my performance in each category and I attempt to be as objective as possible. It's great to get external input on this exercise, but actually I find it helpful to first really level set on my own how I think things have gone and what I've learned, including and especially those lessons that I've learned through trying and failing and trying again. This piece of being honest about failure and looking at it for what I've learned has been so critical for building and sustaining a mindset that's focused on growth. This isn't easy. This has never been entirely easy for me and I suspect it's not easy for most people.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

We've talked about this concept many times on this podcast, but if you're new and you're looking for a deeper dive on the topic of this idea of a growth mindset, one of my favorite resources is a book by Stanford professor, Carol Dweck, called Mindset, or you can just binge listen She Said/She Said Podcast for a lot of other examples of this.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

So back to my personal evaluation exercise. I go through all 52 weeks of the year to remind myself of what I was working on and where I spent my time. And I actually make a list so that I have good solid data to work with about the hours that I spent engaged in various activities. That data allows for a great opportunity for visual comparison of where I'm spending my time. Now, there's lots of different ways to do this, and you may have an even more efficient way. And if you do, I'd love for you to share it. But this one has worked pretty well for me for more than a decade. It's not fancy. There's not a lot of bells and whistles, but it does allow for some great self-reflection.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

Now, I would also say I've never completed this exercise or this review in a single sitting. Instead, I carve out a few minutes or maybe an hour over a period of sometimes a week or so, depending upon the insanity of my life and what I'm dealing with. The good part about doing this over a period of days is that it actually allows for more reflection. As I go back and review what I wrote a few days prior, I'll then have other thoughts and observations to build in. Now, by the way, I've just started this exercise for 2021. Actually I started it last week, but I haven't finished and I probably won't finish until closer to January 1.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

As I started my process of reflection for this year, the process led me to review all 42 episodes of She Said/She Said Podcast. Now, I'm listening and reviewing more for how I can deliver a better product to you and how I can work to be a stronger host. And I'm looking at our download numbers and which

episodes you liked more than others and all those sorts of things, but at the same time, I also loved reviewing all those little nuggets of wisdom that come from each episode and the ways that my guests often spark my own curiosity and yours as well because you send me feedback and you let me know that. And the ways that my guests lead us to develop content that we might not have otherwise considered.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

So I decided it to pull a few of my favorite nuggets into our year-end newsletter, which actually hit inboxes on Friday, December 17th. If you missed it, you can find it on my Facebook page or in my Instagram bio or on the She Said/She Said Podcast website under blogs. And be sure to subscribe on the website. I promise I will not spam you. Spending time on reflection and having a dedicated practice for reflection is also an excellent investment in yourself. Like this podcast, making investments in you in ways that boost your creativity, that inspire you, that help you see different dimensions to the world, that make you think, or that motivate you to take action. For all of these reasons, making investments in yourself should always be on your to-do list. It's under my growth tab in my personal year-end review.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

Now, when I say that I'm very realistic, when I say this, I like you am really busy, but I find that when I make time for my personal investment strategy, which includes listening to podcasts like this one and reading books and spending the time thinking and reflecting, it yields powerful returns on my investment of time. Just like your financial investment strategy, investing in yourself in this way is important as well and it deserves your time and attention. Often we can feel like investments in ourselves make us too self-oriented or too selfish. And let's face it. If taken to an extreme, such activities can be selfish and unhelpful, but when done in the spirit of personal improvement and to increase your capacity to make the world a better place, there's nothing selfish about that.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

Investing in ourselves also relates to influence. Now, for those who have been listening, you knew I would get there, didn't you? Influence of course has been our focus this fall and I think you've enjoyed this topic as much as I have. The reason I love it so much is because the levers or attributes that make us influential are also the secrets to getting along better with others, of getting what we want, and most importantly, they are the keys to making the world just a little bit better and a little more peaceful.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

On that note, I'm going to say goodbye for now. I am truly grateful that we are on this journey together, and I'm grateful for your continued support and engagement with She Said/She Said Podcast. I hope you continue to find our time together a valuable investment in you. I wish you and yours a joyous, safe, and happy holiday break and a beautiful start to your new year. I'll see you mid January, 2022 with some amazing new content and guests. In the meantime, if you start to miss us, please go back and check out our She Said/She Said Podcast archives. I've had amazing guests and I for one have learned something from every single one of them. Check out the episodes that you may have missed and let me know what resonates most with you. Until 2022, take care, be safe. And I'll talk to you soon.