

She Said/She Said/She Said Podcast With Laura Cox Kaplan

EPISODE: 237

GUEST: Mary Giuliani, caterer & author

Title: "How mindset can help you manage chaos, career pivots, and dramatically increase your chances of success"

SHOW OPEN

Laura Cox Kaplan ([00:06](#)):

Building influence is something anyone can learn. It's an investment you can make in yourself, and it can hold the keys to achieving your dreams and having the life and impact you want to have. I'm Laura Cox Kaplan. I've learned a lot over three decades about building and sustaining influence and how using it and using it effectively can make a big, big difference in your life and career. Here on She Said/She Said Podcast , we're digging into the different dimensions that help us build and sustain influence. If you thought being an influencer was just for social media, think again. Whether you're starting a business, raising money for a cause, negotiating a promotion, running your household, or trying to connect with those who don't share your views, understanding and using the different dimensions of influence will increase your chances of success. Whatever your goals may be, listening to She Said/She Said/She Said Podcast is a smart, efficient investment you can make in you. I'm really glad you're here and I'm excited. We're on this journey together.

EPISODE 237 OPEN

([01:18](#)):

Hey, friend. There is something a lot actually to be said for the power that comes with how we think about and approach challenges, both the challenges that we see coming and that we know about in advance, and the ones that knock us over the head and surprise us. If you're normal and if your life is anything like mine, you have a healthy serving of both types and probably on a near daily basis. Our ability to navigate these challenges in a way that is positive, even when the outcome in the moment isn't, is often an important indicator of our future success and of resilience, but it also underscores an important element needed for building and sustaining influence. It relates to mindset. Now, this is one of the themes in this week's episode, the fourth in our collaboration series with the Southern cie. Already in this series, we've talked to author and former editor of Food and Wine Magazine, the fabulously creative Dana Cowan.

([02:32](#)):

We've talked to innovative business consultant and founder of Franklin West Ashley Miles, and we've talked to women focused venture capital fund founder Carrie Colbert of Curate Capital. Now we have a few more, including today's guest still to come in that collaboration series. Friend. You will find all of these conversations and the incredible wisdom, advice, and perspective wherever you listen to She Said/She Said/She Said Podcast or on my website at She Said/She Said/She Said Podcast .com, and you can learn more about the amazing Southern Sea via the link that I have included in the show

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notes for this episode. This is episode 237. You might also want to follow me and the Southern C on Instagram because we talk a lot about some of the takeaways from all of these great episodes. You'll find me at Laura Cox Kaplan and you'll find the Southern C at the Southern C.

[\(03:37\)](#):

Now for today, here is a bit about this week's fabulous guest. Mary Giuliani is an author, party, and lifestyle expert and the CEO of Mary Giuliani catering and Events. Mary launched her company almost two decades ago. In fact, she just celebrated her 18th anniversary. She has appeared regularly on shows like The Today Show, Rachel Ray, good Morning America, the Barefoot Contessa among others, and she's created amazing events for some of the biggest names in business, media and entertainment. She's the author of three books. Her third, which we talk about in this episode, is due to be published in May, and I have included a helpful link in the show notes where you can actually pre-order it. It's called How to Win Friends and Influence No One. I love the title Several things that You'll Learn from Mary in today's episode. The first is how her mindset, which she refers to as delusional optimism has impacted her journey and her success.

[\(04:52\)](#):

We talk about how her path shifted from aspiring actor to caterer and how she's begun to rediscover her path back to creative writer and author. Mary shares her tips for creating memorable events. We talk about the power of story in creating the most unique and customized experiences for her clients. Mary and I talk about how she boosts and recharges her creativity. We learn from Mary why she finds value in giving herself an annual report card and why it might be helpful for you to do the same. And Mary and I also talk about the power of not only mindset, but intention in dealing with the day-to-day chaos that can leave us burned out and depleted, but only if we let it friend Mary is charming and funny and delightful, which is why it damn near broke my heart that I actually screwed up my end of the audio in our conversation.

[\(05:57\)](#):

I'm not kidding, I debated the best way to fix this mistake, but I decided that I would let my editor, the fabulous Somnath, do his best to make it sound as good as possible and to use it as the following teaching moment for myself and maybe for you if you need to hear this advice. So what we've done is taken the audio that we have, we've increased the sound quality as much as we can, but it's not quite at the same level that it normally is every week. And I am really sorry about that. But here's the thing. The past couple of weeks here at She Said/She Said/She Said Podcast have been amazing. We've had lots to celebrate, including hitting some important milestones, including more than 250,000 downloads, five years of episodes published every single week, hundreds of hours of content, and you getting to share time each week with you, getting your feedback and comments about how you use this content.

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[\(06:58\)](#):

It has been and continues to be incredibly rewarding. Together, we have built a tremendous network and you continue to help me fine tune this content, and I am incredibly grateful. I love bringing this to you every week and thinking about all the ways that we can increase our influence and ultimately sustain that influence over time. And I love using that as a guidepost for my conversations and also for other topics that I think you'll find useful and important topics that I think have real value potentially for you in your respective journey. But while there has been so much good these past few weeks, it has been a bit more intense than normal, and I took on too many interviews and too many additional projects, and I crammed it all into a shorter and more compressed period than I normally do. So when I had some additional family things to deal with, not super serious things, but just things that I had to deal with, it pushed things to the outer limits, and it pushed me beyond my personal capacity to manage it all.

[\(08:13\)](#):

I dropped a ball actually a couple, well, more than a couple, I made a mess and I've been kicking myself a bit ever since. But here's the thing, and it ties in directly with my conversation today with Mary Giuliani. I could sit around and overthink these mistakes or I can remind myself of the importance of giving myself a bit of grace and of being a bit more careful to manage limited resources more carefully and of getting additional help when needed. But most importantly, not apologizing too much for having to pull a few things off my plate, at least temporarily to make all the pieces fit when the unexpected ultimately happens. Mary talks about managing the chaos in her own business, and I took some much needed comfort from our conversation, and I think you will too. Without further delay, friend, here is my conversation with the fabulous Mary Giuliani.

Episode 237 Conversation:

Laura Cox Kaplan:

Mary, welcome to She Said. She said,

Mary Giuliani [\(09:16\)](#):

It's my pleasure to be here.

Laura Cox Kaplan [\(09:18\)](#):

Well, I am thrilled to have you. I was a big, big fan of tiny little Hotdog. Wait, did I get the title right? Tiny little hotdog. Yeah,

Mary Giuliani [\(09:26\)](#):

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Tiny little tiny Hotdogs.

Laura Cox Kaplan ([09:28](#)):

And of course, you and I met through Lydia Fenet because Lydia connected me with the Southern C, and this conversation is part of our collaboration series with them, and then of course connected us with you. So I'm really, really happy to know you,

Mary Giuliani ([09:45](#)):

And that's how it all works. We all help each other. We, that's, Southern C was so inspiring. I think I start stead when I came out to the audience and looked out at just this room full of women that were just there to build each other and help each other. It just was so moving, so grateful to spend this time with you and so grateful to Lydia for connecting everyone. And she's so, she loves to do that.

Laura Cox Kaplan ([10:07](#)):

Amen. Amen. Amen. All right, let's jump into your story. Mary, I know you have become caterer to the stars, the rich and famous rubbing elbows with these amazing people, but that is not necessarily where you aspired to be and what you started out to do. So take us on this journey. What was your dream and what happened?

Mary Giuliani ([10:31](#)):

I always joke, if you can't join him, serve him. And that's exactly been my journey. So first of all, it's I'm happy to be on here today. Today is actually the 18 year anniversary of my catering company. I started my catering company 18 years ago today. Wow. So you're celebrating with you on a very happy day. Oh, happy anniversary. thank you. This was not my original dream. My original dream when I arrived to New York in 1997 was I was going to be an actress, specifically, I was going to be a comedic writer and performer and go straight to snl. That was my dream, and kind of auditioned and sl closed doors and closed doors and rejection. And really the last shot was I took a job at a catering company just to pay the bills and with no greater aspirations than to just keep my lights on.

([11:26](#)):

And I was there for all of about a month when I started to realize like, oh, wait a minute. This accident maybe is not an accident. This little temporary job could actually be something more. It sort of hit me very quickly that events were many theatrical performances. It was ways to alter reality. It was ways to be creative and inspirational and aspirational. And I was very quickly, I say before, it was cool to say pivot. I pivoted and realized that maybe your dreams can start one way and end up another. And so I really dug in. I worked for a catering company for two years in Manhattan, learned everything. I was so green. I used to call my mother and say, at events, mom, we know

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where does the fork go? Right, left dessert fork on the top or the bottom, a samovar. The boss was like, put the coffee in the samovar.

(12:22):

I had to call my mom and be like, mom, what's a samovar? It's a fancy urn for coffee. But there was something about it that felt right, and I just dug in and learned everything I possibly could. So I did that for about two years, and then in 2005, 18 years ago, I decided to take a leap, and I started my own catering company out of my living room with my husband and my dog, Stanley, my Beagle. And I'm so grateful 18 years later that we've really grown into a real, proper, highly functioning, highly respected catering company here in New York City. I

Laura Cox Kaplan (12:55):

Love that. I love that story. Mary, let's go back though to you. So you began to feel inspired. You felt this calling. There was something about catering and creating these amazing experiences for people that just resonated with you on a deeper level, but getting over the fact that, okay, wait a minute. This is a big pivot. How do I do that? Where did the confidence come from to actually plow through? You had to have had some degree of self-doubt. I mean, maybe you don't have as much self doubt as most people. Oh, no.

Mary Giuliani (13:26):

My whole life's been self-doubt. No, no, no. My self-doubt, doubt. My whole life's been a lot of self-doubt. But with a very, very, very generous portion of delusional optimism, which I believe comes from, well, first, the most inspiring person other than my mother and father to me were, I had an incredible grandmother that I think I spoke about at Southern Sea that I looked out, and she was a businesswoman in the fifties. She ran a hotel, basically empire out in, she pioneered the beach town of Montauk, New York as we know it today. And she was a piano teacher from Queens who saved her money and went out there and from one thing led to another and became this fierce entrepreneur. So that spirit was in me, and hospitality was in me. I think it was suppressed for a long time. So the confidence was there that just as a young girl growing up, watching her run this hotel, that women could do this, women could be strong, women could be. So I never had those barriers. And then I talk about in my first book, tiny Hotdogs, the Steve Martin film, the Jerk was very inspirational

Laura Cox Kaplan (14:33):

To me. I love this story. And in

Mary Giuliani (14:35):

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A really real way, the character, Nan Johnson, he looked at everything with this delusional optimism. He saw his name in the phone book for the first time, and he thought, things are going to start happening for me now. He saw, and I kind of made the decision very early on to approach as much as I could with that. The worst thing people could do is say, no, the worst thing you do is fail. So the leap of faith in 2005, I had wonderful support from my family, had wonder support, support from my husband who actually left his career to help me start the catering business because he believed in it and saw that was, I was good at it, and I enjoyed it. And what a

Laura Cox Kaplan (15:15):

Tremendous vote of confidence

Mary Giuliani (15:18):

It really was. And also, we were young and we have nothing to lose. You got to put it all right, it all on. But yeah, I think the confidence comes from this delusional optimism.

Laura Cox Kaplan (15:31):

I love that. Yeah, I absolutely love that. And it strikes me and talk about this in your book, tiny Little Hotdogs about having this delusional optimism. But it strikes me too, it's a version of, we talk a lot about mindset on this pod podcast, and it can make all the difference in the world with how you approach a situation. And so I sort of think of it that way. Does that resonate with you?

Mary Giuliani (15:57):

Oh, for sure. I mean, it applies to not only my career, but also I suffer from endometriosis, which is a women's fertility issue. Yeah. Oh, wow. Yeah. Well, we can do a whole other

Laura Cox Kaplan (16:11):

Podcast. Oh, for sure.

Mary Giuliani (16:12):

Yeah. It's actually, and it's actually marches Endometriosis Awareness Month as well, so Oh, I

Laura Cox Kaplan (16:16):

Didn't know that. Oh, good to

Mary Giuliani (16:17):

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Know. And in my next book, I talk about it a lot more, the connections between endometriosis and working women and stress and power dynamics within marriage. Anyway. Yeah. But wait, why was I telling? Oh, the mindset put the mindset. I had no more than 10, no less than 15 doctors tell me that I would never have a child. No, I had miscarriages and heartbreak and ivf, you know, I was in that IVF washing machine for so many years, and I refused to accept no for an answer. I felt like nobody can tell you no. There's got to, there's ways. There's ways, ways. So I have a seven year old daughter who's going to be eight this month. This month is a powerful month is a powerful month, certainly is, I'm realizing. But it's the mindset. I could have rolled over so many times during that process as so many women.

(17:14):

And then it's, it's so hard. But something kept making me get back up. And same with my business. When Covid hit, which I talk about in this book, I had been in business for 15 years. We celebrated how great that was, and then 10 days later, we had to lay off our entire company. And I really felt that was it. Then we were done. And it could have been, but there was something in that mindset of, no, no, no. What could we do? So I really think we do have a choice. I don't let my feet hit the ground in the morning until I find three things that I'm grateful for. And some, it could be as simple as breath some mornings, but you've got the power to switch that. And I think the quicker you harness that, and I didn't for many years, and so why I'm writing this next book, how to Win, how to Lose Friends and Influence, no one is switching that mindset and to be, we are more in control than we think we are. Yeah.

Laura Cox Kaplan (18:08):

I love what you just said because you illustrate that it is something that you're operating with intention. Maybe there is something that is inherent in you that's sort of naturally optimistic, but what you just said is very important because you talk about the intention that you're setting that intention for yourself, and you're telling yourself, this is how it's going to be, no matter what's falling apart around you, that this is what it's going to be. And I love that.

Mary Giuliani (18:38):

And it gives you that strength that you don't even know you have sometimes until you really harness it. And really, so yeah, I am grateful that I know how to get to that point.

Laura Cox Kaplan (18:48):

Absolutely. So I imagine given your chosen line of work, I can only imagine how much chaos in catastrophe must sort of come attached to events. That's just a natural course of order. Stuff goes wrong. People don't show up, things get birthed, food gets birth or whatever. I don't know. I'm not a caterer, but

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Mary Giuliani ([19:10](#)):

So many things, many, you're good.

Laura Cox Kaplan ([19:12](#)):

Go wrong.

Mary Giuliani ([19:12](#)):

Right, exactly.

Laura Cox Kaplan ([19:15](#)):

So talk about how that mindset helps you in running your business and dealing with any number of things that could possibly go wrong.

Mary Giuliani ([19:24](#)):

Well, it's funny, it be early on in my career, and I was very lucky that things took off rather quickly, and I was be given opportunities that I could only dream of. And I remember I was at a being given the opportunity to do the Harry Potter premiere as a caterer. I mean, it was the greatest thing in town. And I was terrified. I was so terrified. I locked myself in a bathroom for 10 minutes, had a panic attack, was thinking about all the possible worst case scenarios that could happen. Some of them actually did. And then it was during that event though, that I realized this how you stay in this business and how you have to just learn how to put out fires really quickly and always be 10 steps ahead of everyone else. So I always used to say, I anticipated I had this sixth sense of anticipating everything that could go wrong prior to an event. And sure enough, but I will say it's a ginormous burnout B business. And for many years I went and it was always fight or flight a lot in events. And I think a lot of people that do events have that feeling. And so I had to, over the years, figure out how to manage that, how to delegate, how to find more of a balance between the stress and if the cake doesn't get there, is it the end of the world? Yes, it is for the event, but it's not really the end of the world.

([20:53](#)):

But I think we've gotten really good, and that's why we've been in business, because what I realized early on is I can't be everything, and I have own a wonderful team, and we delegate and we have our strengths and our weaknesses, and that's how we sort of cope. But when I was doing it all by myself with two other people, high burnout, oh, high burnout rates high, I used to have people come and ask me, I want to start a catering company. I said, okay, great. Here's what you got to do. Before you take that leap, put your most uncomfortable high heels on. Grab a tray of lasagna and walk around the Museum of Natural History 10 times while fielding calls from harried event planners

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and waiters around the city telling you that the cake's not there or the linens aren't there. If you can handle that, you should absolutely start a catering company.

Laura Cox Kaplan ([21:45](#)):

That's awesome. Mary, let's talk maybe tactically about, I know you're kidding. I mean, you're actually kind of serious, but how do you fight the burnout? I mean, we talked about mindset, which obviously is really important, but what else do you do to make sure you don't get to the point where you're just completely depleted?

Mary Giuliani ([22:09](#)):

So in my next book, which is coming out in May, how to Lose Friends and Influence, no One, I started by saying that during the highest point of my career, most success in business, big, hanging out with everyone we dream of hanging out with, I was at a really, really, really low point in my life. It had all sort of caught up to me, the stress, the health related issues that come with stress, the marriage dynamic play that comes in when the masculine and feminine is reversed in the traditional way in which you've, you think it should be. And I got to a place where I was low. I was also starting, I was going through the fertility journey. I was not to be crass, but I was having miscarriages in my client's homes, in their bath, working then realizing. And so I asked for help.

([23:07](#)):

I hit a low low because seemingly everything looked fantastic. And it's funny, it's around the time Instagram was really taking off too. And I would run into people I didn't know, and they'd be like, you're killing it. And I would like smile, and I wanted to just literally say, no, I'm killing myself. I am not, am pleasing everyone but myself. Why am I so good at taking care of others and providing joy for others? And so terribly bad at taking care of myself, health, physical, and mental health. So I went away. I went to a retreat per the advice of a friend. I start the book by the next book by saying that I needed help. I raised my flag. I asked people, I said, what should I do? Where do I go? And I went to a yoga and wellness center, which was really funny.

([23:57](#)):

I got talked into doing a seven day yoga juice cleanse. This is a girl who's written a book, cocktails and Tiny Hotdogs now was going to go check herself into a green juice yoga center. I lasted four hours in that program until I ran down the hallway and demanding. I was like, I got to go. This is not for me. And the woman at the front desk sent me down to another program. She's like, you can't get your money back. You're stuck here. They have hot dogs down there. They're here for a week. There's no hot dogs, but at least there's, but little bit more than juice. Maybe you have to chew a little bit. And I randomly walked into another program and was greeted by a woman, and I had no idea that I was entering basically a mindful connection seminar for a week where I cried with strangers, shared the most I've ever shared, really broke down.

[\(24:46\)](#):

And when the first day when they were there, she said, you'll never get more better advice than from strangers. And I was like, that's interesting. And sure enough, by the end of the week, we were family. We were all helping each other and giving each other this really pure, unbiased advice, how to get through things. There were people in there from all walks of life who had lost children, who had lost. And I felt like I really didn't have any problems in the grand scope of things. But also by helping others too, you come out of your own zone.

[\(25:18\)](#):

So it was imploring the tools. So what helped me, there was one pivotal question that the instructor told me that week, what do you love? And it was the first time in my life that someone asked me that and didn't tell me what I should love or who I should love, or how I should love. And that was the switch for me. What do I love? What do I love about this business? I don't want to throw it all away. I don't want to run away from it. I, there's good things about it, but what are the things that I love? And what are the things that I don't, how do I offset those? How do I put the right people and how do I not just throw everything away? And so that shift was really important to me. And just the really simple basic thing is, you know, can't go back.

[\(26:07\)](#):

There's no promise of tomorrow, which I think we all saw during Covid, right? All we have is today. So I really try to live that way, but it's taken, it took a total breakdown. It took finding tools, finding people to help me, and finding my voice. I was raised, I wanted everyone to love me. I want you all to love me, and not everyone's going to love you, and you don't die from that. If someone doesn't love you, if they're not the right fit for you in your life, you'll be okay. Yeah. So that's a big, big theme throughout this next book where I joke that my parents, I grew up Roman Catholic, so I was God-fearing, and I was also, and I still believe in the Lord very deeply, but I also, my parents were disciples of Dale Carnegie, how to Win Friends and Influence People, seminars, played, set tapes in our car. So I say by the age of 10, I was both God-fearing in the eyes of the Lord, and highly effective in the eyes of Dale Carnegie. And that worked for a really long time until it didn't. And just getting to the point where you're comfortable, and I think that comes with age. And I think having gone through Covid and knowing that age aging too, I feel is a gift and a privilege. But how are you going to live this next part of your life? And maybe not everyone's going to love you, but that's okay. Yeah.

Laura Cox Kaplan [\(27:36\)](#):

Oh, I love that. Sorry, that was a really long answer. No, but I love it. I love it. You weaved so many pieces into that. I want to dig into one in particular though, because it's a thread that runs through this podcast. It runs through every conversation that I've had, even though people, I think when they come on the podcast may not necessarily

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realize it, but it's this concept of influence, which I'm so thrilled is in the title of your book. The concept of influence resonates so deeply with me, and it was a thread that I discovered over time as I had these conversations and I saw these little micro things that people would do who were highly successful, that ultimately was the way in which they really had built their influence. I'd love for you to talk about why influence in the title. Was it simply Dale Carnegie and Osmosis, or was it,

Mary Giuliani ([28:31](#)):

I think it's because my influence is my lack of influence. I don't know. I think I've built a, it's funny, Lydia and I talk all the time where she's so good at going, being out there and promoting herself with pride and confidence, and I

Laura Cox Kaplan ([28:48](#)):

No self doubt.

Mary Giuliani ([28:49](#)):

I feel like I'm the opposite. I'm like, oh God, I'm still that insecure girl growing up that looked like Ralph. But this concept of influencers and influencing, and I think it's gotten a negative thing. I don't really talk about that too much in the book, but I also, I'm so proud of people who are so believe in themselves so much that they have really strong messaging. And I think a lot of good has come out of that. But I joke about the false reality of influencing on social media and all those things. I have a chapter, part portion of the book where it says, look at me. I'm writing. And for a while when I realize, okay, well, I'm not like that influencer who's going to wear a bikini and stand outside on a snowy thing, or I'm not, I have food influence, and I posted all the food stuff I could possibly post. And we have my business posts great food things and party ideas. And I was like, oh, I'm a writer, and I could post me writing. And I joke about that. A lot of my posts were like, look at me. I'm writing, and I would set up these beautiful environments and take a picture of my computer with a mountain behind me. And I said, if I had just been writing half as much as I had been influencing about writing,

([30:06](#)):

I would've read had three books already. So I don't know if I really answered that. But the influencing part I think is funny because we're living in this day and age where you can have a lot of positive influence. You could have a lot of negative in influence, but where I'm all at on it is be the truest version of yourself. And I think that's the greatest way to influence anyone.

Laura Cox Kaplan ([30:29](#)):

I love that. I absolutely love that answer. I think it's amazing, and I think this is why I think it's such an important topic, because for the reasons that you just said, there's the

negative connotation potentially to influence or it, it's become, in some respects, the notion of influencer. What does that mean? And is that your true self and all these sorts of things. But to me, it's the way in which we present ourselves to be the person that people want to work with and want to gravitate toward and have dinner with. And it's influence on a much more sort of core level as opposed to this idea that it has to be some big thing and sometimes influences something that maybe comes much later, potentially. Right? So I sort of think about it that way. But yeah, no, it's a big topic and lots of fun, and I'm just delighted that you've included it as a big theme in the book. It's very exciting. Okay. Let's talk sort of soup to nuts, so to speak, to use the vernacular. And let's talk about maybe some of your secrets for how you create an amazing event. Sort of start, where do you start with a client? Client comes to you and says, I've got these amazing clients that I'm going to be entertaining. Mary, put something amazing together for me. Talk about how you start your process.

Mary Giuliani ([31:47](#)):

Yeah. I think for me, so when I was working for a catering company prior to starting my own, we were really kept in a box. It was very white glove catering. What catering, when you hear catering, what you think it should be, silver trays, doilies, fancy d'oeuvres. And that was nothing like me. And so when I started my own company, it was really, really important that I myself served things that were both approachable and inclusive and nostalgic and fun, and on different types of trays, weird trays in different settings. I decided there was no rules as it pertained to entertaining throughout the Martha Stewart book. I appreciate it throughout all those, this for me was entertaining, was going to be some sort of fantasy or some sort of journey, some creative escapism at its finest. And so that's where it started with me. So I think why, we've been in business for 18 years, so all of our planners, when we get an event, we sit around a table and we brainstorm together about, okay, no idea is silly.

([33:00](#)):

What are we going to do to make this one special? What are we going to do this? It's a different, and inspiration comes from everywhere. I mean, I confession don't have an office in my, I don't have a desk in my office. My inspiration comes from walking around this city. I walk everywhere in Manhattan every single day. Ideas popping out. There's things happening everywhere we go. Inspiration comes from, for us that we talk about, from old movies, from records, from record cover albums. We've done a whole theme of a party just based on that. So it's not putting yourself in this perfection box and really thinking outside of that box. And so that's what we do. So what we love to do, we like to say we're the greatest food and beverage storytellers ever. So we meet with a client and we want to, they're celebrating this specifically. We ask them if it's a private event, great questions. What are your favorite restaurants? What are all the basic stuff? To get a sense of who they are, and then come back to them with ways to tell their story throughout the event, through the food and beverage and environment. And so that's

what I like to say is that I'm really proud of, in business, we're very creative food and beverage storytellers.

Laura Cox Kaplan ([34:17](#)):

I love that. That's amazing. That's absolutely amazing. What do you do, Mary, to make sure that part of the creative process, whatever industry or sector you may be in, and I'm a big believer that creativity is something we all need. Whether you're making widgets or doing accounting or catering or painting pictures, it doesn't make any difference. You need creativity, but it also means that you have to create the conditions that are going to help you be creative. Because if you're under the gun and you're got your checklist and your chicken things off, it's really hard to be creative. How do you create the conditions that allow you and your team to optimize your creativity?

Mary Giuliani ([34:59](#)):

Yeah, I think environment is a really big thing. I always say to everyone sitting at this desk from, and that was one of the, there's covid was horrible, but then the resurgence of it, we learned a lot, I think. And I think environment is a very big part of your creativity, for sure. And so for me, I can't sit at a desk all day. That's not a creative place for me. Some people, they can only create at a desk. So we sort of give free reign to where people feel most creative, whether it be in the office, whether it be outside. When people travel, we ask, when they come back, what'd you see? What did you, what'd you feel? So I don't think you could put confines. I also think that to be both creative and functioning are big things. And especially in a business, when you start a business, you could have the most incredible ideas on the planet, but if you can't execute them, that's a problem. So for me, very early on, my husband used to stay, I'm a balloon that could fly away. And every once in a while they'd have to pull me down and be like, yeah, but in theory, that's not going to work. So if you are more creative, then you find that person, that partner that can help execute. If you're both, which actually my business partner is, she's both creative and detail oriented, she's incredible. Then that's great, but understand your strengths and understand the limitations to your creativity, and also accept help in where needed.

Laura Cox Kaplan ([36:37](#)):

Yeah, yeah. No, it's, it's absolutely great advice. I was just thinking about how, what your advice is for understanding how you operate. I mean, that may sound like a stupid question, but the reality is oftentimes it's sometimes hard for us to know ourselves and our limitations perhaps. So maybe advice for how you do that.

Mary Giuliani ([37:02](#)):

Yeah, I mean, really in the simplest possible forum, when I started this company, it was me. It was literally me and my husband, of course. But he was doing more of the paperwork, the back of house, the bills stuff. I was the creative, meeting the clients, working at the budgets, working at the plans, talking to the vendors. And then as we grew, I still was holding onto that. I was still like, Nope, I could still be everything, even though we have two more people now, or three more people. And I realized that there'd be really no true growth unless I let go a little bit. And I knew what I was good at. And I, you'd be surprised to hear this as an event planner with a catering company. I'm not a detailed person. I'm not necessarily, like I said, I could dream without limits.

(37:44):

I have all these things, but I have really, and I knew I had to delegate that part of my life to others. And even if something as small as if companies can't afford to hire, just making a list, what I do every once in a while, a couple years, is I give myself a report card and I'm like, what are the things I'm loving about my life? What are the things that just bring me dread? What? And then I try to figure out ways to offput the things that are giving me dread or accept help for those things. But I think you to can't be at all. And finding where your strengths are finding, and I think your strengths come from what brings you joy. Start there and then kind of think about how you can ask for help or accept help. And yeah,

Laura Cox Kaplan (38:33):

I love that. I love that. And it strikes me that that advice also applies as you think about potential career pivots. Soon as you think about what you might want to do next, or you outgrow a position or a job that maybe you loved at one point and you have to reinvent yourself and you are not quite sure what to do. I mean, what you just said is a great place to start in terms of how you think about, okay, what might I want to do after this?

Mary Giuliani (38:58):

Yeah, actually, this is not original at all. It's actually Martin Short, the actor Martin Short, I read his book, he had a great book years ago. He talks about the love of his life. This is his wife who passed. But he talks about that he actually really does every single year give himself a report card. And I started doing it, and it's amazing. I love that. It starts, look, so, you know, do it the day, January one, you sit there and you go, okay, relationships with friends, boom. How was I this year? B, C, a relationship with family, give yourself that relationship with work with health, fitness, with. And you go through this whole thing and you're like, oh gosh, that was like a D minus here. And then based on that, you sort of look at the next year and say, okay, maybe this isn't working, or maybe this is working. Great. Yeah. So I love that to be a self, to check in with yourself and are, we're our toughest critics, but we could also be our greatest friends too. Yeah. We got to make room for it.

She Said/She Said/She Said Podcast With Laura Cox Kaplan

EPISODE: 237

GUEST: Mary Giuliani, caterer & author

Title: "How mindset can help you manage chaos, career pivots, and dramatically increase your chances of success"

Laura Cox Kaplan ([39:59](#)):

Yeah, absolutely. Do you use that report card? I mean, I do something that's similar. It's not really a report card, but it's sort of a version of that. It's more like a long-winded, disorganized word document. That's my sort of year in review, if you will. And then it informs my quote, plan of action for the following year. So it's sort of what I use in place of it is goal setting, but it's more like directional. Is that sort of how you use your report

Mary Giuliani ([40:26](#)):

Card? It's funny, my dad, who I adore and he had so much positivity, talk about positivity, I would go downstairs to his, he had a home office, and I would go downstairs and he always had these big sayings, get out there and lead or get behind and follow or just get out of the way. All the best is yet to come. But he would spend all day on January 1st, writing out on a yellow legal pad, all of his goals for the following year. He would never look back. He would always look forward. And it was always what they would be. And he spent all day and he had great handwriting and handwriting. Thank God he still with us. And that to me was, I don't do it to the extent he does, cause I do the more of the check-in. Cause I think I like to, but goals are important.

([41:18](#)):

And even just seeing something in writing like a dream. Yeah, I've been playing a lot around with a lot that too. In this next book, I say dreams have no expiration dates because we think once we as, and also, I'm an aging woman, so there's certain things I still want to do. And I don't think any of us should say, whoa, I'm getting older. I can't do that. Yes, there's practicality. We have to pay our bills, we have to make sure our family's taken care of. But stop, I think once we stop dreaming, things get a little sad. So dreams and goals are beautiful things to have. And so I think that's part of my momentum.

Laura Cox Kaplan ([41:57](#)):

I love that. And I, I'm struck by what you just said about your dad and really the influence that he had on you. He was setting that example, but you watched him engage in this practice too, right? It's your daughter, you have a daughter, right?

Mary Giuliani ([42:12](#)):

Yes, yes. Daughter

Laura Cox Kaplan ([42:13](#)):

Does. Do you share this? She's young though, right? How old

Mary Giuliani ([42:16](#)):

Is she? So she's turning eight this month. And okay, so what we do at night before bed, we say prayers, but we also do what was great that happened today. And so we always try to find something even wasn't a great day, what was great that happened today. And she'll, what we do in, it's kind of my version with her of gratitude and my version of goals and just staying positive and staying, she'll come home and say to me, I'm not good at this, and it'll be something she's not good at, whether it be a subject at school or a sport. She tried and I go, okay. I said, that's fine. Okay, let's put that there. Give me, give me five or six things you are good at. And then she'll say, well, I'm really good at gymnastics and this and that. And I'm like, okay. So it's one thing you're right now not that good at. Look at the six things you just listed that you're great at. So it all balances and we're not all good at everything. And that's okay. That's what, what a great lesson. Different. That's what makes this world so fun is that we all are not great at everything.

Laura Cox Kaplan ([43:27](#)):

Yeah, absolutely. I mean, what a great lesson to share with her. That's so important because we can get so fixated on those things that we don't do so well and so fixated on the fact that maybe we say, well, I'm not talented at whatever. When the reality is like, have you worked at it? I mean, is it really something that you've committed yourself to learning how to do? Again, it goes back to that idea of mindset that we talked about earlier in the conversation.

Mary Giuliani ([43:54](#)):

I've had it totally, and I've had so many people now that I've written, and again, I, I'm so blessed to have written three books. That's insane to me that the ninth third book is coming out. And I've had so many wonderful people with great stories come to me and be like, I want to write. And then I ask them, I'm like, so what stops you? Or, and well, I don't sit down and do it. I'm like, okay, well you have to, even if it's a cup during your cup of coffee in the morning, jot down a couple things. Or I've heard, I sit down and write, but then that voice comes and it's like, who cares? And I'm like, that, I have that every single day. Who cares? I mean, this book's coming out. I'm like, who cares? But some people do. And I think, again, we're our toughest critics and we just have to be kinder to ourselves when it comes to things like that.

Laura Cox Kaplan ([44:44](#)):

Let's talk a little bit about your writing process. You sort of gave us a little bit of insight, but if you have a particular practice or a discipline that you adhere to, because obviously you're balancing a lot. You're a mom, you're running a business, you're a wife, you've got lots of friends. I mean, you've got a lot of stuff going on. So where do you make the time for the writing

Mary Giuliani ([45:05](#)):

Process? Yes. So when I went away, when I recently to that retreat to sort of find myself and be like, why do I not have joy when I should have nothing but joy after? The question is what do you love? When she said, what is the one thing that you do that you go into your zone, which is just brings you total happiness, you lose track of time. It could be a workout. It could be like, what is it for you? And I realize for me, it's always been writing for me is traveling without going anywhere. When I am alone with that computer, no matter where I am, I can go to a million different places. And so for me now as a mom and having my career and my life and all the other stuff, I've learned to get up very. So my practice, my writing practice is I get up at five 30 in the morning because I know once seven o'clock hits, I am in full mom mode.

(45:53):

It is running around, getting dressed, getting to school, but five 30 to seven, no one's awake. My clients aren't awake. They work. Emails aren't coming in. My daughter, my family's sleeping, and I pour myself that amazing first cup of coffee and I rise with the sun and I write from five 30 to seven, and that's when I just, no restraints. I just let it all flow. I have no idea what's going to come out. Some days it's nothing great at all. And then I'll go back after my daughter goes to sleep at night, I'll go through what I played with in the morning. I sometimes write at night. It's rare, but what I'll do is I'll review what I got into in the morning so that the next morning I know I've either got something or we're going to start again. And so that's been the process of what's worked for me.

(46:47):

Over the last, I would say I've committed myself to this other real dream that I've had, and this is kind of where I want to go in the future, is I just want to write these silly stories and hopefully make people laugh and make people feel like they can do it anything. No matter what it is, it brings me great joy, and I really only came to it at the age of 32. I think I was. I love that. What do you know? Again, I love my catering career. I love my business. You can have multiple dreams. You can dream and still be do the things. So again, that's really with this next book, I want people to really walk away feeling like whatever it is, no matter from small, big, just take that leap. Try. Just try.

Laura Cox Kaplan (47:38):

Yeah. Yeah. Well, I can't wait. Mary, what a joy. It's been so fun to talk to you. I loved this.

Mary Giuliani (47:44):

Oh, Laura. Well, I will tell you, you are a friend, I do not want to lose, but I will send you this next book and please, it's been so lovely speaking with you and connecting with you, and thank you for having me.

Laura Cox Kaplan (47:57):

She Said/She Said/She Said Podcast With Laura Cox Kaplan

EPISODE: 237

GUEST: Mary Giuliani, caterer & author

Title: "How mindset can help you manage chaos, career pivots, and dramatically increase your chances of success"

Absolutely. Anytime, Fran, thanks so much for joining us today. A quick reminder, this week's episode, episode 237 with Mary Giuliani is the latest in our collaboration series with the Fabulous Southern Sea. You'll learn more about the Southern C via the show notes. In this episode, you can also pre-order Mary's latest book, which is called How to Win Friends and Influence No One. You'll find that link in the show notes as well. I am so grateful for you friend, and I hope that you found today's episode valuable and a good use of your time. And I also hope that you are finding ways to give yourself a bit of grace when you drop a ball or two. I have done until next week, you take care and I'll talk to you soon.

She Said/She Said Podcast is produced weekly by She Said/She Said Media.

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