Mel Robbins Keypoints — Manifesting, Dreams & Spirituality

Mel Robbins Keypoints

Episodes in this pack: 14

World Leading Psychologist: How to Manifest Anything & Create the Life You Want

Guest: Dr. Cassandra Vieten
Date: 2026-08-10 · Duration: 1:11:40
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2WhnTeC0Ql0

KEYPOINTS

• Much of what you treat as fact is imagined

Clinical psychologist Dr. Cassandra Vieten, who directs UC San Diego's Center for Human Imagination and leads its Center for Mindfulness, says many of your beliefs about yourself, other people and 'how the world works' are stories you've imagined and then live as fact. Her example: 'the only way to be successful is a 40-, 50- or 60-hour-a-week job.' Some limits are individually or collectively imagined. Real constraints exist too, and the skill is telling the two apart.

• We are trained out of imagination, and we lose awe

Around ages 9–11, kids hear 'time to get real.' The pendulum swings too far toward the serious and rational, and people start filtering out awe, wonder and synchronicities. Vieten notes these are the moments people later remember as the most important of their lives. Her promise is that imagination can 'bring magic back into your life.'

• Most people feel they're reacting to life, not creating it

Mel cites a survey of her audience in which 70% said they feel they're just reacting to life. Vieten's three tools are visualization, manifestation and imagination. The third means tapping a part of yourself outside your usual way of being, which holds information and energy you can't access any other way.

• Mental rehearsal improves real performance

Vieten says athletes who imagine practicing basketball or soccer perform better than those who don't. Tennis great Billie Jean King would picture the ball coming at every angle before sleep. Adding imagination to rehearsal tells your brain 'I'm still training,' even while you sit drinking tea by the window.

• Manifestation is about who you'll be; magical thinking is about what you'll get

Magical thinking wants things you can't control to appear, or wants other people to change. Vieten's best use of manifestation is to picture how you want to show up: honest, supportive, authentic, setting boundaries, with different energy. Then imagine the results that might follow. Those are things you can actually do.

• Imagining the worst puts your body through it anyway

Vieten quotes the line often attributed to Mark Twain: 'I've experienced many terrible things, most of which have never happened.' If you brace all day for a layoff or for never finding love, you send your body stress signals as if it had already happened, even though today you still have the job.

• Everyone has an imagination profile, and all of them are strengths

Not everyone sees vivid pictures. Some people imagine through sound, feeling, smell or taste (chefs imagine flavors), and some are practical imaginers who know exactly how things will fit. Vieten says we need every type, so visualization works even if you don't 'see' images.

• Break out of your 'reality tunnel'

The term comes from 1960s consciousness circles around Timothy Leary: we each live inside a tunnel of what we think is real, possible and impossible. A stay-or-go 'tennis match' about a job or relationship can last for months, years or decades, though there are usually 10–25 real options. Her book, Mel notes, frames the antidote to despair as 'the skill to generate hope.'

• Diseases of despair run on stories you don't know you're telling

Vieten cites Columbia's Lisa Miller on 'diseases of despair': addiction, depression and anxiety, where the mind tells untrue stories you believe because you don't realize they're stories. Learning to notice the story is the first step to telling a different one.

EXAMPLES

• Vieten's own drinking and the call for help

During a divorce and rising stress, Vieten began drinking heavily and told herself it would be fine as long as she never told anyone, because asking for help would mean 'a black mark on your record forever.' Desperate, she called a colleague, who said 'I'll be right over' and told her she was off work for 60 days and everyone was behind her. She never imagined that response.

• Six months of writing down the house

When Vieten and her family couldn't afford a home in a town with great public schools, she wrote every night: we'll find an old house, we'll be shocked, it'll be beautiful, we'll paint it ourselves. After six months they found one not yet on the market: abandoned, with grass 27 inches high, and tied up in a family dispute. Her point is that it doesn't make the house magically appear. It keeps you looking and fights discouragement.

• The Veterans Imagination Project

At Arizona State's Center for Science and the Imagination, a colleague she names as Bob Beard has veterans with severe combat trauma and PTSD imagine their futures while an artist sketches them in detail. Participants come away saying they have hope, vision and a true north.

• Trevor Noah's driveway dream

Mel reads from page 73 of Trevor Noah's Born a Crime: growing up in Soweto, the dream was another room on the house, a driveway, maybe a cast-iron gate, 'because that is all we knew.' You can only dream of what you can imagine.

• The 1,000 women and mile 19

For shame-filled struggles, such as a kid in trouble or a loss, Vieten has people imagine 1,000 women standing in a semicircle behind them who faced the same thing. For exhaustion, she reframes 'I'm drowning' as 'I'm on mile 19 of a marathon I signed up for.' Mile 19 hurts, but you're the runner, and you can ask your pit crew for water.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **The '10 ways to make it worse' flip**

  Stuck in a hard job or family situation? Write 10 ways you could make it worse, then write the opposite of each. It forces answers you wouldn't get by asking 'What should I do?'

- **Ask your inner cheerleader**

  Explain your situation to someone who loves you completely, whether living, passed or fictional ('What would Mel tell you?'), and ask, 'What do you see as possible for me?' The answer tends to be short, kind and not an argument, which gets you past your critical, judging mind.

- **Meet your future self**

  After 5–10 minutes of breathing, music or nature, imagine your future self 5, 10 or 15 years from now opening the front door. Don't script the mansion and the Jaguar. Picture how they feel instead: free, balanced, vital, connected. Use that vision to guide today's choices.

- **Write 50 possibilities**

  To escape a stay-or-go loop, list 50 options, practical and wildly impractical. Small, real moves come out of the crazy list, such as a yearly trip with girlfriends instead of a family vacation.

If You Feel Stuck, Watch THIS To Manifest Your Dream Life

Date: 2026-05-14 · Duration: 0:49:24
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NiI8i20mKl8

KEYPOINTS

• Feeling stuck usually comes from one of three traps, and you have to name which one you're in.
Mel's three traps: (1) you're not ready to change, so you need a decision; (2) you're overthinking, trying to find the one perfect path; (3) you're waiting to feel ready, but 'there is no perfect day, no one is coming, motivation is garbage.' Until you know your trap, she says, you'll keep spinning your wheels. Start by naming the area of life where you feel friction, such as health, career or relationships.

• Trap #1: you're not ready, and the way out is a clear decision.
'Nothing changes until you change.' Wishing, complaining and feeling 'meant for more' aren't decisions. A decision is specific and committed. Mel's sample for a listener: 'I'm making a decision that 12 months from now I'm going to be working in a creative industry, full time, and I'm going to love what I do.'

• Regret is meant to teach you, not punish you.
Mel cites Daniel Pink's large-scale research on regret. Regret only teaches you something if you stop replaying the past and ask what it's trying to show you. 'As long as you keep looking backward, your life will never move forward.' The decision is to call this next chapter one of the best and to create it yourself.

• Trap #2: overthinking. There isn't one perfect path.
This trap 'will keep you stuck for decades': constant thinking, research and scrolling while others do what you're capable of. Mel draws on Stanford's Dave Evans and Bill Burnett, whose Designing Your Life course has run for over two decades and is taught at about 600 universities. Their Odyssey Plan rests on the idea that there are many possible good lives. Evans: 'There's no such thing as getting it right. Just getting it going.'

• Treat decisions like prototypes, not permanent choices.
Evans and Burnett call it prototyping: run small experiments. Try the class, take the meeting, apply. Mel argues no career path is stable anymore, because technology and investment are disrupting even 'safe' jobs. Everyone will have to reinvent themselves repeatedly, so experimenting is a skill, not a failure.

• Get structure back by shrinking the plan to 15 minutes a day, the 'hot 15.'
When a job ends and the daily rhythm disappears, a wide-open future is paralyzing. The number of options is the problem. Pick a direction, then reduce it to one action you can do in 15 minutes daily. Mel says the plan gives you direction and the daily 15 gives you stability, and the actions add up faster than you'd expect.

• Trap #3: waiting to feel ready. Your feelings follow action.
You'll never feel like it. Mel's rule: 'Shut your mouth, turn off your brain, and move your feet.' A new structure only starts to feel natural once you step into it. When you notice hesitation, count 5-4-3-2-1 and move.

• Let a time of day trigger the habit.
Researchers call this an implementation intention: pair the action with a specific time so the time becomes the cue. Mel's examples: 7:00 a.m. walk; 8:00 a.m. coffee plus 15 minutes of writing; post the video after dinner; Sunday at 4:00, a phone alarm for meal prep. Make it easier the night before, for instance by getting the coffee maker ready.

• Lasting change comes from focusing on identity, not the outcome.
Mel cites James Clear (Atomic Habits): instead of picturing the body you'll have after losing weight, focus on being 'the kind of person who takes care of themselves.' Each small action is proof to yourself of that identity, and the results follow.

EXAMPLES

• Jenna, 40: 'meant for more'
A mom of a 2- and a 6-year-old who also works feels an untapped creative side but is exhausted and pulled in every direction at home. Mel hears trap #1: she wants change but hasn't decided. The fix is a specific decision about a creative next chapter, with a 12-month horizon.

• Kristen, 42: the regret loop
A divorced mom of two, formerly a high achiever, who is '100% stuck in my head,' replaying whether she should have left her ex and barely getting by at work. Mel's prescription: decide the next chapter will be one of her best, and use Pink's question, 'What is this regret trying to teach me?'

• Nate and Alex: no stable path
Nate was laid off two weeks earlier from a small software and data engineering consultancy after learning to code, and he wants stability and predictability. Alex keeps starting over in careers that don't work out or end in rejection. Mel's answer for both: drop the myth of a single stable path, pick a direction, prototype it, and do your hot 15 daily.

• Louise: from Toronto dog-walker to would-be writer
Louise left a successful dog-walking business in Toronto for a quieter place, so she's clearly capable of big decisions, but she can't start the book she's always wanted to write. Mel: the first step isn't a title, a chapter or a book deal. It's 15 minutes of writing every morning for 100 days, through sinus days, rain and houseguests. 'That would make you a writer,' even if you never finish.

• Angie in England: exercise like crochet
Angie wants to get fit after gaining weight, but it feels so big she 'may as well not start.' She loves crochet because she learned it in bits and pieces. Mel tells her to approach exercise the same way: adopt the identity ('I'm the kind of person who exercises… I love feeling stronger') and pick one small repeatable thing under 15 minutes.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Trap diagnosis
Ask: Have I actually decided? (If not, trap 1: write one specific decision.) Am I researching endlessly? (Trap 2: choose a

direction and prototype it.) Am I waiting to feel motivated? (Trap 3: 5-4-3-2-1 and move.)

- **The hot 15 menu**
  Ideas for your daily 15 minutes: writing, a walk, strength training, calling credit card companies about debt, or learning the AI tools your coworkers are using.
- **Implementation intention template**
  'At [time/cue], I will [15-minute action] at [place].' Set a phone alarm and prepare the night before.

Stanford Luck Researcher: How to Manifest the Life You Want

Guest: Dr. Tina Seelig
Date: 2026-04-20 · Duration: 0:58:32
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EvEsWpiT8WQ

KEYPOINTS

• Fortune happens to you; luck is what you control

Dr. Tina Seelig has a neuroscience PhD from Stanford, has taught there for more than 25 years and wrote What I Wish I Knew About Luck. She points to the 'apparently' in the dictionary definition: luck is success or failure apparently caused by chance. On the surface it looks random, but underneath are things you did to 'tempt good luck your way.' Fortune is the wind: good or bad things that just happen. Luck is building a sail to catch it.

• Life isn't fair, but you still have choices about how to respond

Mel pushes on discrimination, harassment and the cost of living. Seelig agrees people face very real, unfair circumstances, including medical problems and dysfunctional families. Her point is not that hardship isn't real. It's that you can either throw in the towel or ask, 'How do I respond, and what can I do here?'

• You're always one conversation away from a different life

Some of Seelig's closest friends and collaborators started as strangers next to her in line. If she hadn't started those conversations, 'that entire world would not have existed.' Each small move, like a hello, a question or an application, opens doors that inaction keeps shut.

• Her framework: build the sailboat, recruit the crew, hoist the sail

The sailboat is your internal work: core values, the story you tell about yourself, your risk profile and your goals. The crew is other people, since 'luck seldom sails solo.' That means asking for what you want, helping others and showing appreciation. Hoisting the sail is the right kind of hard work. Mel admits she has worked very hard 'spinning in place,' so effort alone isn't the point.

• Core values are the keel that stops you from being manipulated

Without clear values, Seelig says, people can be talked into unethical or illegal things, and after the first compromise the second gets easier: a slippery slope. She shares her own costly mistake (below) as proof that not thinking about values can make you 'unlucky.'

• Map your comfort with six types of risk, then stretch a little

She uses a 'spider chart' scored 0–10 on six risk types, including physical, emotional (telling someone how you feel), social (toasts, speaking up in meetings, being public), financial and intellectual (tackling problems creatively). Your scores reveal what you value and where your habits may be holding you back. Risk tolerance is a skill: someone who starts at a 2 can become a 4 and then a 6 with repetition.

• Generosity is one of the clearest traits of lucky people

When she asks people what made them lucky, a common theme is how much they help others, and that help 'comes back in wave upon wave.' Small kindnesses you've forgotten can have big returns. One of the biggest gifts is introducing someone to someone else.

• Make yourself easy to help and always say thank you

Asking for a 'five-minute favor' makes a busy person likely to say yes. Most people talk themselves out of asking: 'she's too busy, I'll be a burden.' Seelig calls not sending a thank-you note 'a huge missed opportunity' because so few people do it.

• Curiosity and questions capture luck

Before something is your passion, it's something you know nothing about. Instead of waiting to 'find your passion,' try lots of things, ask lots of questions, listen well and keep what works.

EXAMPLES

• Mel's bourbon at a 1994 benefit

As a new legal aid attorney in New York, Mel ordered a bourbon on the rocks in a plastic cup to sneak out of a United Way event. A voice behind her said 'Make it two.' It was Chris Robbins, and they're nearing their 30th anniversary. Seelig's take: he took a risk and she kept the conversation going.

• The plane seatmate who became her publisher

On an early flight Seelig chatted with a publisher and pulled out a book proposal, which he declined. She stayed in touch, invited him to her Stanford creativity class and later sent him student project videos. One or two years later, his editor asked if she'd write a book, and she handed over the same proposal.

• 'Are you a spy?'

In her first job after grad school, at a medtech company, her boss sent her to a competitor's conference in Chicago as 'Dr. Seelig from Stanford.' After she asked probing questions all day, staff cornered her, said they'd called her company, and escorted her out. She cried on the sidewalk and realized she'd never stopped to think about her values.

• The $5 challenge

At Stanford's design school, 14 teams each got $5 and two hours to make money. Some ran small lemonade-style ideas. One pumped bike tires on campus and made about $200, earning more once they switched to asking for donations. Another sold Palo Alto restaurant reservations. The winners sold their three-minute class presentation slot to a company wanting to recruit the students, for $650.

• The 'luck coach' who asked for five minutes

A young man emailed Seelig asking for five minutes. Afterward he sent a thank-you note plus a document listing ways he could help with her luck book. Nothing on it was quite what she needed, but his initiative impressed her.

• Nir Eyal's heat-pump referrals

Selling solar panels door to door, Nir Eyal kept hearing that people wanted heat pumps instead, so he recommended a local

installer he didn't know. That installer then began recommending him for solar, and his business boomed.

- **Mel's coffee-shop comeback**

  At 53, after moving away from a home of 26 years, Mel spent six months alone and depressed. She then made herself go to a coffee shop daily, compliment the barista, learn and use names, and make small talk. Over time she built friends and a community, plus 'more free croissants than anybody.'

OTHER RELEVANT

- **This week: 'stir the soup'**

  Seelig's one move for anyone feeling unlucky is to add something new to your life: apply for the job, or introduce yourself to the person in line.

- **Give one authentic compliment to a stranger**

  Mel's daily practice is telling strangers things like 'I love your nails.' Seelig agrees but says it must be sincere, never manipulative.

- **Score your risk chart**

  Rate yourself 0–10 on each risk type. Mel rated herself 6 physical, 10 emotional, 10 social for speeches (but about 2 on a Golden Globes red carpet), 0 financial after her debt years, and 10 intellectual. Pick one low area to stretch.

Do This for 1 Week to Manifest the Future You Want with Shonda Rhimes

Guest: Shonda Rhimes
Date: 2025-11-10 · Duration: 1:17:46
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J98NpA5sYf0

KEYPOINTS

- **Outward success can hide a very small, fear-run life.**
  Shonda Rhimes, creator of Grey's Anatomy and Scandal and executive producer of Bridgerton, had Emmys, Golden Globes and her own production company, Shondaland, yet she turned down nearly every invitation. She says many people live the same way: 'I wish I could do this, but I can't,' with no actual reason why. The reality, she says, is that you do have it in you.
- **The rule: for one year, say yes to everything that scares you.**
  After her sister's challenge (see examples), Rhimes made a rule and stuck to it. Her first yes was a commencement speech at Dartmouth, her and Mel's alma mater (Mel was class of '90, Rhimes '91), and she says she agreed only because of the rule. The insight that drove it was 'I am harming myself' by being too scared to show up.
- **You don't need a whole year: once a week, say yes to one thing you'd normally refuse.**
  For anyone not ready for 365 days, this is her minimum experiment. Notice what changes, how you push through the discomfort and whether it was worth it. 'I think it's that easy.'
- **Yes to yourself often means no to someone else.**
  In the beginning she became afraid to say no in case she missed out. She then learned to 'say yes to saying no' when a yes comes from being too tired, too scared or not wanting to hurt anyone. Her test: by doing this, am I saying yes to them or yes to myself? You usually already know, and she calls the restless feeling of ignoring the answer an 'itchy brain.'
- **Choosing their comfort over your happiness makes no sense.**
  When Mel voiced the fear of a friend's guilt trip or passive-aggressive reaction, Rhimes asked why you'd want someone else happier than you want yourself to be. If skipping a trip would end the friendship, 'that person's not your friend' and isn't interested in your happiness. Mel ties this to research she mentions showing social rejection registers in the brain much like physical pain, which is why fitting in pulls so hard.
- **Hard truths get louder once you admit them.**
  Rhimes got engaged and felt suffocated in a way that terrified her. She had always pictured being a mom, never a husband. People rejoiced 'like a war had ended,' more than for any award or her three children, and she feared losing herself by sharing another piece of her brain. The hardest part was admitting it to herself and especially to him. Once a truth is revealed, she says, 'you can't ignore it'.
- **Health changes stuck when she said yes to small instructions.**
  She went to her doctor and said she didn't want to be fat anymore. Then she said yes to doing what the doctor told her: drinking more water and learning what hunger feels like, which she says she had never once eaten from. Mel reads her line from page 282: 127 pounds thinner, 'several toxic people lighter,' closer to family, a better mother, boss and friend.
- **Accept compliments without deflecting.**
  People everywhere, from fifth-graders to executives, dodge praise ('I just got this on sale') so no one thinks they like themselves too much. Rhimes says you should like yourself that much. When Mel praised her near the end, she caught herself: 'I was going to say something self-deprecating, but I'm simply going to say thank you.'
- **Fear is information, not the enemy.**
  In new material for the 10th-anniversary edition (page 367, among seven new chapters), she writes that fear is your body's way of saying 'pay attention, something important is happening.' Some yeses were 'magnificent disasters' that taught her more than any success did. Over time she learned to tell a yes for growth from a yes made to prove something to people whose opinions shouldn't matter.
- **Believe you can change your own life.**
  Asked for the single takeaway, Rhimes says people lose the belief that change is possible and conclude 'I'm stuck here.' Saying yes is how she rebuilt that belief, one uncomfortable invitation at a time.

EXAMPLES

- **The Thanksgiving challenge**
  While her oldest sister, 12 years older and 'almost a second mom', was cooking Thanksgiving dinner at Rhimes's house, Rhimes bragged about invitations, including one from the king of Monaco. Her sister asked, 'Are you gonna do any of these things?' She said, 'Absolutely not,' citing three kids and her shows. Her sister replied, 'You never say yes to anything,' and the words stuck.
- **Seated with the President**
  As a new Kennedy Center board member, Rhimes arrived at a big event and was told she'd be sitting with the President and First Lady, whom she'd never met. She panicked, then had an amazing time, and realized she'd have said no if asked rather than told.
- **'I'm fitting out'**
  At three, her youngest daughter came to her in tears: 'Everybody else is fitting in, but I'm fitting out.' They made it a family value: 'Try to fit out as hard as you can.' Rhimes tells her girls the thing that makes them themselves is theirs to protect.
- **Golf at a beginner's level**
  After moving to Connecticut, she realized she hadn't had a hobby in over 20 years (she used to make jewelry). Her 9-year-old wanted golf lessons, so they both took them. After a year her daughter won the country club's biggest trophy and quit; Rhimes was hooked on being bad at something.
- **Pandemic floor-scrubbing**
  Suddenly at home and not working, she had the biggest panic attack of her life and couldn't stop scrubbing floors and making

cleaning products, 'trying to clean my brain.' It became an awakening about not knowing her own house or life.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Yes-for-me test**
  Before accepting, say: 'Is this a yes for me, or a no to me?' Picture the weekend trip with a group you aren't excited about. If it's for them, decline kindly and take the guilt as a feeling, not a fact.
- **Weekly yes**
  Pick one scary invitation each week, such as a party, a talk or a class. Afterwards, write down what it cost you and what you got from it.
- **Book**
  Year of Yes by Shonda Rhimes (10th-anniversary edition with seven new chapters).

Understanding This Will Change How You Experience Your Entire Life

Guest: Dr. Lisa Miller
Date: 2025-05-19 · Duration: 1:15:23
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H3Yir26FDok

KEYPOINTS

• Spirituality, as Dr. Miller defines it, has three parts

Dr. Lisa Miller, a Columbia professor and author of The Awakened Brain, says we are built to see into the deeper nature of life; that deeper nature is real, alive and guiding whether we ignore it or not; and every day we can choose to live in dialogue with it. Being 'in dialogue' means being an open observer of what life is showing you rather than trying to control it.

• Spirituality is innate; religion is one way of cultivating it

She argues everyone, atheist or devout, has the same capacity for what she calls an awakened brain. Religion is a gift of environment that gives that capacity language and direction. Words like God, Hashem, source or the universe differ, but she says she's never heard anyone argue for two sources of life.

• Twin studies suggest about one-third of spiritual capacity is inborn

Using the same twin-study method that separates inherited from environmental traits like temperament, she cites Dr. Kendler's research as the first published evidence of a genetic capacity for spiritual experience. Mel reads from the book that roughly one-third is 'inscribed in our genetic code' and two-thirds comes from upbringing, company and practice. So the wiring is given, but a lived spiritual life has to be built.

• Brain scans show one shared spiritual perception system

In her fMRI work, she says, the same neural correlates activated whether a participant felt God's presence in a childhood church or saw light on the ice in Glacier National Park, across Catholic, Hindu, Jewish and spiritual-but-not-religious people. Her conclusion: just as there is one visual system, there is one spiritual brain, which she says makes religious war 'obsolete.'

• It's a perception, not a belief

Dr. Miller describes spirituality as a seat of perception: sensing guidance, noticing synchronicities and feeling buoyant even when things fall apart. On page 102 of her book she asks whether the brain is less an idea generator than an antenna receiving a larger consciousness. That challenges the psychology model she trained in, where you mainly feel better by rearranging thoughts.

• Emotions are an accurate index of alignment

Guilt after cheating on a test or a spouse, or sadness, isn't pathological in her view; it is information about your relationship to reality and a knock on the door to course-correct. She ties this to Mel's Let Them idea: what we think we want is based on the past, and paddling with the river rather than against it takes you somewhere better than you planned.

• A sustained spiritual life is linked to a thicker cortex in the regions thin in depression

She reports a thicker cortex across 'awakened brain' regions in people who maintain a daily practice, whether nature walks, meditation, prayer or service, and says those are the same regions that are thinner in people with recurrent major depression. She also describes high-amplitude alpha waves on EEG during recovery from despair through spiritual awakening.

• She calls spirituality the strongest protective factor studied

Citing hundreds of peer-reviewed studies, Dr. Miller says a strong spiritual life is more protective against addiction, depression and suicidality than anything else examined in the clinical and social sciences, and that falling mental health has tracked declining personal spirituality. She also proposes that about two-thirds of depressions reflect spiritual hunger, a craving for meaning, which she frames as her hypothesis and clinical view.

• Many people threw the spiritual baby out with the bathwater

She attributes the crisis to confusion between spirituality and religion: people reject how faith was practiced at home and lose their own path too. Her line is that when a torchbearer doesn't walk the walk, the flame is still real, so look for other flame carriers, such as a parenting circle about 'walking with the Joneses.'

• Contingent love makes kids anxious; spiritual parenting is the alternative

She warns that 'radical achieving awareness,' constant questions about math tests and soccer wins, can be heard as conditional love, citing colleague Dr. Suniya Luthar's decade of studies linking it to anxiety and depression. Instead, spirituality should run through everyday moments, such as the car ride after a lost game or a college rejection.

EXAMPLES

• The table practice

Taught to her by the late Dr. Gary Weaver for skeptics: take five breaths, imagine a table, seat people living or dead who have your best interest at heart and ask if they love you; then your higher self, then your higher power, and ask what you need to know. Mel seated her husband, son, mother and therapist, and said ten years ago her higher self might have answered no. For a higher power she saw an owl, her Vermont view and Buckbeak from Harry Potter.

• The red door and yellow door

Recall something you wanted badly and did everything right for, yet the red door stuck. The forced turn led to a wide-open yellow door you didn't know existed, often pointed out by a 'trail angel' at the hairpin turn, like a stranger at a coffee shop or a grandparent's story.

• Eleven failed IVF rounds and a son found in Russia

Dr. Miller and her husband tried for five years, through about 11 failed IVF cycles that each felt like a funeral. Then came guidance: a man on a bus said she looked like someone who'd adopt, and her mother called about a neighbor's son adopted from Russia. At a Lakota Inipi ceremony in South Dakota her cousin Big Jane asked the women to pray for 'little Jane's' child; that night their son Isaiah was found in Russia.

• Statistics Mel reads from page four

From the book: 31% of American adults will develop an anxiety disorder in their lifetime; the WHO reports 264 million people

are depressed; 17 million American adults are depressed each year; and suicide linked to depression is the second leading cause of death in adolescence. Both agree the numbers have likely worsened since.

• Mel's lost church

Mel was raised Methodist but found it became more doctrine than spirit. The one place that felt like home was the church at Harvard when Peter Gomes was alive: open, affirming, with a big baritone voice. She's never found it again, and her kids also struggle to find community without doctrine.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Three routes if no house of worship feels like home

Keep looking for a congregation where you feel the presence, even across the country; or practice 'dharma,' taking what resonates from Buddhism, Catholicism or your childhood tradition, such as neighbors bringing food when someone is ill, and leaving the guilt and shame.

• Everyday spiritual practices

Shovel a neighbor's driveway, help a widowed elder, bring a new mother two nights of dinner. Notice synchronicities, thank them and act on them. Treat moments of oneness on a hilltop, or children seeing a grandparent who has died, as real rather than strange.

• Four ways to support a child's spiritual life

Be transparent about your own: meditate where kids can join, read poetry on a hike, pray aloud. Then let their path be theirs. Mel, who didn't raise her kids in a religion, realized she'd been doing much of this already.

• A path for seekers

Find the presence through meditation, prayer, pilgrimage or other means; build a practice to return to it; find your people; read your life on spiritual terms; and see yourself as a soul with a higher purpose. Curiosity alone counts as a start; she says seekers, not people with answers, are the ones research finds happier.

The Science Of Spiritual Experiences: How To Rewire Your Brain For More Happiness & Purpose

Guest: Dr. Andrew Newberg
Date: 2024-11-07 · Duration: 1:05:41
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zVXOyp0q9pA

KEYPOINTS

• Spirituality means connecting with something greater than yourself

Dr. Andrew Newberg, a neuroscientist and physician who directs research for integrative health at Thomas Jefferson University, works in a field he calls neurotheology. He uses that broad definition so it includes God or a universal consciousness, but also nature, music, creativity and caring for other people. He suggests writing down your own definitions of 'spiritual' and 'religious', since everyone's differ. Religion usually adds a tradition shared by a group, but he sees a great deal of overlap.

• His central claim: everyone has the brain wiring for these experiences

Newberg says we all have 'a pretty similar kind of brain', so spiritual experiences aren't reserved for a gifted few. He also says there's no separate 'spiritual brain' that switches on in a house of worship. These experiences use the same regions we use every day, which is why small everyday moments sit on the same spectrum as dramatic mystical ones.

• Quieting the parietal lobe may explain the feeling of oneness

The parietal lobe uses sensory input to place you in space; it's what keeps you on the sidewalk. In his scans of people deep in meditation or prayer, activity there drops. Newberg's explanation: the boundary between self and world fades, which people report as oneness with God, the universe or other people. He places this on a spectrum that runs from a good conversation to friendship, romantic and sexual bonds, family, and finally mystical union.

• The limbic system flags these moments as important and stores them

Intense joy, awe or love lights up the brain's emotional centers in his scans, which signals 'this is different'. The limbic system also writes emotionally important events into memory. Newberg says that's why a near-death, psychedelic or religious experience can feel real, stay vivid for decades, and change a person's beliefs.

• His survey found five core elements

An online survey of a couple of thousand people's written accounts, analyzed by computer, found five recurring elements. Unity or oneness. Intensity, described in superlatives like 'the greatest love'. Clarity, as if a veil had lifted. Surrender, which he links to the frontal lobes going quiet after the effort of concentrating. And transformation: about 90 to 95% said the experience changed them for the better, including their relationships, their work and their fear of death.

• Small experiences count

Mel lists a quiet Vermont hike, a moving service, or holding a grandchild for the first time. Newberg agrees these carry 'a little bit' of each of the five elements and are valuable in their own right, not lesser versions. He notes that people who have big awakenings often conclude that 'life is the small experiences'.

• Feeling stuck may be your brain running only its familiar circuits

Newberg says he knows of no study on 'stuckness' itself. His view is that 'neurons that fire together wire together', which is how we learn piano or deepen a meditation practice, but it can also close us off to other options. Breaking those patterns takes energy that stuck people often lack, so it starts with a deliberate decision to change and then a new ritual or practice that shifts the brain's focus.

• He sees spirituality as one of four dimensions of health

Integrative medicine looks at the biological, psychological, social and spiritual parts of a person, and he says each affects the others. Illness can bring depression, and depression raises the risk of heart disease. Chemotherapy can cut you off from your pickleball game or church. Spiritual meaning shapes optimism, which he says a large study linked to longer life. He admits psychological and spiritual experiences overlap a lot and are hard to separate.

EXAMPLES

• Scanning people while they speak in tongues

Over about 30 years his team has scanned hundreds of people doing mindfulness, yoga, Buddhist meditation, prayer and speaking in tongues. For practices involving movement, he places an IV line beforehand, injects a tracer mid-practice without interrupting them, and scans 15 to 20 minutes later. The scan shows what the brain was doing during the practice. He jokes that an MRI is a good place to start praying.

• After a St. Ignatius retreat, brains were more sensitive to dopamine and serotonin

Newberg scanned people before and after an intensive retreat based on the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius. Afterward their brains were more sensitive to dopamine and serotonin. Serotonin is the system antidepressants target. Mel connects this to the 'afterglow' after a retreat, a moving service or a concert, and he agrees.

• The police officer he calls enlightened

In medical school, Newberg watched a police officer directing traffic who danced, waved his arms and blew his whistle in different rhythms. 'That's an enlightened being,' he thought. Enlightenment, in his view, is about how fully you engage ordinary life, whether you're a CEO or an Uber driver, not about doing something extraordinary.

• Mel's friend the former megachurch pastor

After a long talk with a friend who once led an evangelical megachurch, Mel realized that although they used different words, they described the same physical and emotional feeling from their beliefs. Newberg says scans show similarities across traditions, such as reduced parietal activity, while the specifics, like Jesus, Allah or universal consciousness, differ. Whether 'love', 'energy' and 'God' are the same experience interpreted differently is still an open question.

• Going back to church

Mel's sister-in-law, the company's COO, felt something was missing after years of kids, work and sports crowded out church. She asked herself when she had felt more connected and fulfilled, returned to church, and Mel says it has made a huge

difference. Mel's own rituals are daily nature walks and lighting a particular incense each morning.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Newberg's quick-start approach**

  First name your goal: less anxiety, connection with people, or something religious. Then research practices that fit your goal and your comfort level; there's no one-size-fits-all. If you have a religious background you value, start there. Otherwise try mindfulness, yoga or others. Keep going if it brings connection and good feelings, and change direction if it doesn't. 'Each person has a different lock and a different key.'

- **Use your past as a clue**

  Look for moments that had unity, intensity, clarity, surrender or transformation, like a hike, a song or a service. Build those back into your routine, ideally as a repeated ritual.

- **Benefits, with caveats**

  Newberg says the data show spiritual engagement helps reduce stress, anxiety and depression and may support immune function and help with chronic disease. His study of older adults starting meditation showed brain changes, so age isn't a barrier. He stresses there's no guarantee and you need patience: no single walk in the woods produces enlightenment. He also says neuroscience is unlikely to prove or disprove the spiritual.

#1 Neurosurgeon: How to Manifest Anything You Want & Unlock the Unlimited Power of Your Mind

Guest: Dr. Jim Doty
Date: 2024-10-24 · Duration: 1:16:29
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s-wONyk3RV0

KEYPOINTS

• Doty defines manifesting as neuroscience, not magic

Stanford neurosurgeon Dr. Jim Doty, founder of Stanford's Center for Compassion and Altruism Research and Education and former chairman of the Dalai Lama Foundation, rejects the 'law of attraction' and the prosperity-gospel idea that it's your fault if it fails. He defines manifesting as embedding an intention in your subconscious so it's most likely to happen. His book opens by saying the universe doesn't care about you, and closes by saying you are the universe.

• Repetition makes an intention important to your brain

Doty says roughly 6 to 10 million bits of sensory information reach us every second, but consciously we handle only 50 to 100. Repeating an intention through several senses (writing it with a pencil, reading it silently, reading it aloud, visualising it) builds neural pathways, following the principle that what fires together wires together.

• Salience switches on your attention and executive control

Once something is marked as important, Doty says the task-positive network takes over: the salience network files it as 'important stuff,' the attention network acts like a bloodhound scanning for opportunities, and the executive control network chases them down. It's why you hear your name across a noisy party, and why coincidences seem to pile up once a goal is embedded.

• Negative self-talk is also manifesting

The default mode network, active when your mind wanders, holds your story about yourself, including 'I'm never good enough' and rumination. Doty notes that someone on their third divorce may have 'married the same person every time' because the same thinking repeats. Each negative statement is a brick in a self-built prison, and everyone carries the key.

• You won't eliminate the inner critic, but you can stop obeying it

When Doty asks audiences who has negative self-talk, about 90% raise their hands, and he jokes the rest are lying. He still has it. Notice it, let it drift by, then practise self-compassion with affirmations like 'you're worthy.' Writing about what your childhood taught you to believe, alone or with a therapist, helps you see it as a story. Accept your shadow side rather than pushing it away.

• Fear mode undermines you; heart mode is where you function best

Doty contrasts the sympathetic fight, flight or freeze state, meant to fire briefly in the face of threat, with the parasympathetic state humans evolved to live in, where caring releases oxytocin and activates reward centres. He says chronic fear mode harms brain function, raises disease risk and shortens life, and that modern capitalist life keeps many people stuck there.

• Humans are wired for service

Small litters, children who need care for over a decade, and tribes of up to about 150 people (Dunbar's number) all made caring for others a survival imperative, Doty argues. He cites Dan Buettner's Blue Zones work and Robert Waldinger's 85-year Harvard study as evidence that life improves when you care for others.

• Distinguish what you want from what you need

Wanting to be a doctor so people admire you differs from wanting to be one to help people. Doty owns a Porsche and a nice house and says enjoying things is fine; the problem is needing them to define your worth. When people sit quietly with the question, he says, most realise they want security, food and shelter for their family.

• Hold goals without attachment

Things sometimes don't manifest through no fault of yours, sometimes arrive only approximately, and Doty has intentions he's been working on for 10 to 15 years. Start small (cutting soda rather than vowing to lose 100 pounds in a month), and don't spend most of your energy on the past or the future.

EXAMPLES

• The magic shop at 12

Doty grew up with an alcoholic father and a mother who had a stroke, was chronically depressed and attempted suicide. The family was evicted and on public assistance. In 1968, after riding his bike far from home, he walked into a strip-mall magic shop looking for a plastic thumb trick. A woman in her mid-50s minding her son's store talked with him for 20 minutes, then offered to teach him for six weeks. He came daily, partly for her chocolate chip cookies, and learned relaxation, focus, how to treat negative thoughts as untrue, and visualisation.

• The list of 10 things, all achieved, and misery anyway

His list included being a millionaire, a mansion, a Porsche, a Rolex and becoming a doctor. He got it all: Stanford professor, entrepreneur, a home over the bay in Newport Beach, a villa in Florence. Yet he says he was never more miserable.

• Losing $80 million and giving away $30 million

In the dot-com crash Doty lost about $80 million and ended up $3 million in debt with a $15 million loan, selling a Ferrari, Porsche and other cars. His lawyer said a charitable trust's paperwork was never completed, so he could keep the stock, which he admits was a tax move. After reflection he gave the roughly $30 million away anyway, funding clinics, HIV/AIDS youth programs and research. That set the stage for the Stanford compassion centre and meeting the Dalai Lama.

• His own caveat about privilege

Doty acknowledges that even on his worst day he was a neurosurgeon earning more than 99.9% of people, so his story isn't everyone's. He knows hunger, though, and argues that whatever your circumstances, belief shapes what's possible.

• Doty's daily routine

After 50-plus years of meditating, he sits on the side of the bed and breathes in through the nose for four to six seconds, holds four to six, and exhales through the mouth for a minute or two, then reflects on the joy of being alive. In the evening he writes his top three intentions, repeats them silently and aloud, and visualises them. His wife jokes they call him Mr. Compassion but he can still be a jerk.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Set up the conditions first**

  Find a quiet place without caffeine or mind-altering substances, breathe to shift into heart mode, acknowledge what you've already manifested, and tell yourself what happened wasn't your fault.

- **Write down three things you're grateful for**

  Doty cites gratitude research and notes that half the world lives on less than $2.50 a day, to put demoralising setbacks in perspective.

- **Improve one person's life every day**

  His parting habit: a hello, a hug or a shared meal. Everyone wants to be seen, and how others treat you often reflects their own baggage, so give them the benefit of the doubt.

Near Death Experiences: The Ultimate Truth About Your Soul’s Purpose, Consciousness, & Oneness

Guest: Dr. Zach Bush
Date: 2024-08-01 · Duration: 0:42:59
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xSDQWuTqDFQ

KEYPOINTS

• Bush redefines a 'near-death experience' as a moment of feeling whole

Dr. Zach Bush, a triple board-certified physician who worked in hospice and palliative care, uses the term less for clinical death than for any moment when you step out of your fearful, performing mind and feel complete. In his view, you were whole at the start of life and will be whole at the end. Feeling incomplete in between is a mistaken perception, and he says these moments let you feel what wholeness is like now.

• Many people only realise this on their deathbed

Bush says the most common realisation he saw among the dying was 'the whole thing was not the chase.' Hearing this, Mel felt a wave of sadness that most people only see what matters in their last few breaths.

• The top regret of the dying, in his experience, was performing instead of being themselves

Bush says the number one regret he heard was 'I was performing the whole time and was afraid to be me.' As the end approached, patients felt themselves as whole and wished they'd known sooner, so they could have stopped performing and really tasted their morning coffee. He calls the shift from making others proud to being proud of yourself one of the most fundamental changes a person can make.

• Everyday 'mini' versions happen when something pulls you out of autopilot

Bush argues that most of us cling to routines like coffee, lunch-packing, the school run and our inboxes out of fear that we're incomplete. Moments that break through, like goosebumps when a child or elder says something profound, eye contact with a wild animal, or awe in nature, are in his view brief experiences of wholeness, a 'soul speaking'.

• He believes children lose that sense of wholeness around age two

Bush suggests babies start out in a state of oneness and around age two begin learning they're separate from others: 'I'm the kid, that's my brother.' He sees the emotional storms of the 'terrible twos' and threes partly as a child adjusting to the painful idea of being incomplete. This is his interpretation, not established developmental science.

• Fear of death, he says, comes from feeling there's something left unhealed

In Bush's view, people fear death because dying 'incomplete' suggests a brokenness that never healed. Mel's husband Chris, a death doula and hospice volunteer, has told her that people near death often seem more at peace than afraid. Bush's deeper invitation is to go beyond pride altogether: you were valuable before you achieved anything.

• He sees death as a kind of rebirth

Bush compares us to twins in a womb: one watches the other disappear down a dark tunnel and grieves, not knowing it has been born into a beautiful world. He invokes the first law of thermodynamics (energy can't be created or destroyed) as support for the soul continuing. Mel shares a similar belief: not knowing what comes next doesn't mean nothing does.

• No partner can make you feel complete

Bush calls looking to another person to make us whole the 'deep dysfunction' in relationships, reflected in phrases like 'my better half.' No human can fully see you, so relationships struggle under that expectation. He suggests looking for that sense of being seen in nature instead.

EXAMPLES

• The crash Bush walked away from

In 2010, Bush was a depressed University of Virginia faculty physician developing chemotherapy. He earned $70,000, had a couple of hundred thousand dollars in school debt, and watched pharmaceutical companies use blocking patents to keep drugs off the market. In a 22-inch snowstorm, after hurting his ribs chopping firewood, he fainted at 60 mph from what he believes was a vasovagal episode.

• Seven minutes, then a river

He woke up in his brother's four-wheel drive in a river, in a state of bliss and free of pain, and at first wondered whether heaven had snow. His phone showed he'd been out for about seven minutes, far longer than a typical faint. A state trooper showed him the tracks: the car had jumped a snowbank, dropped about 30 feet, driven nearly a quarter of a mile along the slope and through the only gap in the trees into the river. Neither he nor the car had a scratch.

• Back to work, then Haiti

Bush drove to the hospital and worked a 12-hour shift, and by evening he felt the experience slipping away. At 6 a.m. the next day, the US Navy called: after the Haiti earthquake, he was on a list from his Hurricane Katrina relief work. Six hours later he was on the hospital ship Comfort, where he says he cared for 780 women injured in the earthquake. He later left academia and admitted about 80 hospice patients a week for four years.

• Mel's fear of flying disappears

Mel used to perform rituals before flights, scanning the gate for babies, soldiers or pilots with military haircuts so 'the universe' wouldn't let the plane crash. One day she realised she'd done none of it and wasn't nervous. She credits years of therapy, meaningful work and making amends, and being proud of who she'd become. What's left is sadness at the thought of missing out on more of her life.

• Mel's moments of wholeness

Mel's examples: Chris turning to flash a huge smile as she stood at the end of the aisle on their wedding day; fireflies in Vermont; and a black bear on their logging road locking eyes with her until 'sound and time disappeared', before her next thought was 'oh my God, the dogs.'

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Let a tree 'see' you**
  Bush's practice: lie under a tree, watch the leaves move and the clouds pass, and let yourself simply be there. He says healing begins when you let nature take you in as you are, without any performance.
- **Build regular moments of wholeness**
  He mentions breathwork (Chris is training in holotropic breathwork), cold plunges and time outside, and notes that cultures around the world used chant, dance and storytelling around the fire for similar purposes.
- **Notice when you're performing**
  Ask whether you're acting for others' approval or in line with your own values. Then, as Bush suggests, practise remembering that your worth doesn't depend on what you achieve.

The Neuroscience of Manifesting: 4 Steps to Get What You Want

Guest: Dr. Tara Swart Bieber
Date: 2024-04-11 · Duration: 1:28:08
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uzt-Woc3CVk

KEYPOINTS

• Manifesting, in Dr. Tara's framing, is neuroplasticity aimed at a goal, not quantum physics or waiting for the universe

An Oxford-trained psychiatrist with a neuroscience PhD who lectures at MIT, she was a complete skeptic through her medical years, when she was diagnosing magical thinking. Writing her book The Source, she went looking for a cognitive-science explanation that kept the power inside your own brain rather than out in the universe.

• Left alone, the brain is geared for survival and loss aversion, so abundance has to be trained deliberately

In the cave you had to fear the saber-tooth tiger more than you wanted the apple, so the brain weighs losses more heavily than rewards. The aim isn't to erase that, since you still need to be safe, but to balance it so you can take healthy risks instead of living from scarcity.

• 'Magnetic desire', meaning repetition plus emotional intensity, is what drives the brain to change

A goal held because of peer or parental expectation carries little charge. A childhood dream makes you push through rejection. Her example is two people learning Spanish, one for a holiday in Mexico, one for a Spanish boyfriend. The second learns faster and keeps going, and she says that is the difference between people who manifest and people who almost do.

• Selective filtering, selective attention and value tagging explain the 'new car everywhere' effect

The overloaded brain filters out what isn't needed for survival, notices what is left (the Jeep you're shopping for), then ranks it on a logical list and an emotional list. Daily reminders of what you truly want push it up the emotional list, so you start spotting related opportunities.

• Her four-step process: raise awareness, focus attention, practise deliberately, stay accountable

Awareness is '50% of the battle': work out why you self-sabotage, for example partying to meet someone instead of taking fertility supplements. Focused attention means at least a month of watching your own patterns before you act. Deliberate practice is trial and error, and it's where most people quit. Accountability, through a coach, a journal or an app, runs across all of it.

• Old wiring can't be undone, only overwritten

Three mechanisms, easiest to hardest: myelination speeds up repeated pathways (picking up basic vocabulary), new synaptic connections link existing neurons (speaking in sentences), and neurogenesis grows new cells (fluency). You can't delete a negative belief. You beat it by repeating a new thought with enough emotional intensity that it becomes the brain's more efficient pathway.

• Affirmations only work when they target the belief underneath a recurring thought, in your own words

Take 'things like that don't happen to people like me' and keep asking for your evidence until you reach the root, say that no one in your family has been to college. Then answer it with something like 'I could be the first.' Mel felt it land because it opens a possibility rather than claiming certainty. Swap it in every time the old thought comes up.

• A vision board is an 'action board', a daily reminder to act, not a wish you wait on

She doesn't believe you can sit on the couch waiting for the cheque or the partner to arrive. Keep the images somewhat realistic and look at them daily, then close your eyes, feel the goal through all five senses and add gratitude. She says this releases dopamine and oxytocin, which sit on a seesaw with cortisol. Because novelty is the brain's biggest threat, rehearsing the goal makes you likelier to take a healthy risk when the chance appears.

• Chronic stress puts the brain in 'low power mode' and lays down stubborn belly fat

Constant cortisol makes the brain assume starvation, so it stores stubborn abdominal fat that diet and exercise won't shift. A tighter belt can be the sign. Cortisol also wears down immunity and diverts blood from creativity, problem-solving and emotional regulation. She cites presenteeism costing businesses more than double what absenteeism does.

• Stress is contagious, and it flows downward through a hierarchy

Cortisol is a steroid hormone. In her account it leaks through sweat about a foot around the body, the same mechanism she gives for menstrual synchronisation. As with silverback gorillas, a stressed boss or parent affects others more than peers do. Meditation, yoga, nature, journaling and gratitude lower your own levels and protect you, but she says to address the root cause too.

EXAMPLES

• The Rio de Janeiro snorkeler

She once glued a picture of a tanned girl snorkeling onto her board. Years later she and her best friend picked Rio for a holiday only because it was the one flight her air miles could buy. Then she checked the board and found 'Rio de Janeiro' written in tiny letters under the image.

• $35,000 on the bathroom wall

After quitting medicine to coach, broke and without clients, she put the exact income she needed on her first board and hung it in her studio bathroom. Friends who saw it offered help, and she doubled the figure each year for three years.

• The people who never glue the board down

Clients admitted they had laid out their boards months earlier but couldn't glue them. Her read, which brought tears, was that they didn't believe they deserved it. Mel suggested gratitude while gluing, and Tara agreed.

• The banker dad who wouldn't run

He felt guilty taking 90 minutes a week from the son he'd had late in life. Once he saw running would make him a better dad, since he might not otherwise see his son turn 18, he started and lost the weight. Her point is that the biggest barrier to change is a deep belief that you shouldn't.

• Her morning and evening anchors

Her phone stays out of the bedroom. She wakes by mentally thanking her silk pillowcase and bedding, breathes deeply to check for tension, takes a probiotic and savours her tea. She eats only between noon and 8 p.m., and her vision board is the last thing she sees at night.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Head, heart, gut check

Hands on your forehead: logically, do I want this and why? Write it down, take five deep breaths. Hands on your heart: emotionally, why? Five more breaths. Hands on your belly: intuitively? If the three don't line up, rethink. One client found she wanted a baby but didn't need a partner first.

• List what you offer, not just what you want

Next to your partner wish-list, write what you bring. The gaps become micro-habits around self-worth and boundaries, and knowing your value makes it easier to refuse bad behaviour. Stuck at ten things you love about yourself? Ask a trusted friend for their list.

• Micro-habits in quarters

Rather than one big New Year goal, she sets 12 micro-habits, tracks three a quarter in an app until they're automatic, and usually ends the year with about ten that stuck.

• Brain-first eating and magnesium

Her four food groups: dark-skinned produce, hydrating foods like leafy greens and melon, good fats (oily fish, eggs, avocado, nuts, seeds) and fermented foods. She bathes in magnesium flakes, saying stress uses up magnesium and a twitchy eyelid signals a deficiency. These are her own views and habits.

• Train intuition by journaling decisions

She sees intuition as a lifetime of learning stored in the limbic system and gut neurons. Note whether each decision came from logic or gut, review the patterns every three to six months, and expect your gut to be harder to read when you're stressed or bloated.

3 Ways To Brainwash Yourself for Success & A More Meaningful Life

Date: 2024-04-01 · Duration: 1:00:33
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0oGOUIcTbxs

KEYPOINTS

• Seeing meaning in coincidences is a choice

In this solo episode, Mel argues that writing off a coincidence as 'just a coincidence' amounts to declaring your life has no magic in it. Calling it a sign is what gives life meaning. You get to choose what events mean: the rain stopping just before your first job interview on Zoom, your parents' wedding song playing on a date, or a house numbered 508, the area code of the state you're leaving.

• Research links noticing synchronicity to life satisfaction

Mel cites a new study in Frontiers in Psychology titled 'An underexplored pathway to life satisfaction.' In her summary, simply being aware that synchronicities exist was associated with greater life satisfaction. Her three-step system is her own translation of research by Dr. Bernard Beitman of the University of Virginia School of Medicine, whom she calls the leading researcher on synchronicity.

• Why it matters: resilience and depth

Mel gives two payoffs. First, spotting signs when life is hard helps you keep fighting and stay optimistic. When she moved to Vermont and hated it, she saw evidence everywhere that it was a mistake. Second, results feel more profound when they aren't just luck or hard work. She tells listeners that out of roughly 150 million podcast episodes, they picked this one because they were meant to.

• Skill one: state it, then claim it

According to Mel, people who experience many synchronicities score high in 'referential thinking,' the belief that what happens around them has to do with them. So say what you want before it happens, like 'I want a line to open up' at a supermarket with seven people ahead of you. When it happens, smirk and tell yourself, 'I made that happen.'

• Expecting the worst doesn't help you find anything

Mel admits you won't always find the dress or meet the perfect contact. But walking into a networking event thinking 'this is a waste of time, I'm shy' can't help you, while expecting something good gets your mind to 'conspire to help you.' It spots the dress on the pajama rack. Before an event, state something like 'I'm going to meet someone who can help with my job search,' or 'someone who needs to buy a house' if you're a real estate agent.

• Skill two: match your energy to what you stated

If you say a line will open while staying angry and scrolling your phone, your energy contradicts what you set in motion, and Mel says that blocks it. Ask whether how you feel right now fits the outcome actually happening. If not, imagine the moment it does, like the next lane opening and three people moving over, and bring that feeling into the present.

• Skill three: find the bigger meaning

Treat synchronicities as guidance from a force, whether you call it intuition, your higher self, God, or a loved one who has died. Mel suggests choosing a sign, such as a hummingbird for your mom, stating that you'll see it today, expecting it, and taking it as confirmation when it shows up in real life, on social media or on a menu. Doing this on ordinary days, not just big ones, deepens the practice.

• Connect the dots backward too

Looking back honestly, Mel says you can see why the painful breakup or the school rejection had to happen, and spot the 'just know it' moments when life was already steering you. She mentions knowing a relationship had to end six months before it did, leaving a job before the company folded, or skipping a train where everyone got sick.

EXAMPLES

• The caterers from Naperville

Paul and Julia, Mel's caterers in southern Vermont, discovered during a production-day lunch that they had graduated from Naperville High School in Illinois the same year as Mel's sister-in-law Christine, COO of 143 Studios. The school was so big they'd never met. Mel took it as a sign the sisters-in-law were meant to work together.

• The Sawyer wedding quilt

About 24 years ago, wearing baby Sawyer in a carrier, Mel told herself she would find a red-and-white Shaker-style antique quilt at the Brimfield antique market, then walked about 40,000 steps without luck. As stalls closed, she spotted a stained quilt under some cutting boards. The dealer explained it was a wedding quilt signed by the guests, and the name Sawyer appeared on it again and again. 'The hair on my arms stood straight up.'

• The dress on the pajama rack

Mel's colleague Amy took her daughter Jane to TJ Maxx to find a winter version of her favorite summer dress. The formal rack was a bust, but Amy kept saying they'd find it, then spotted a matching dress stuck on a pajama rack. The dressing room was closed, so they took it on trust, and it fit perfectly at home.

• Oakley's Vermont campus

Mel's son didn't want to attend the Boston-area public high school his sisters went to. He toured the public school in southern Vermont, where his grandmother lived, 'just knew,' and kept saying 'I'm going to school here' for an entire year of 'no.' The family ended up moving to try it.

• The 5 Second Rule launch glitch

After 18 months of writing and nearly a year of marketing, an Amazon glitch meant the self-published hardcover couldn't be bought for the first 30 days. Mel kept saying 'this is going to be a bestseller,' used music to shake off depression and embarrassment, and kept marketing. Buyers turned to Audible. It became, in her words, the most successful self-published audiobook in Audible's history and led to 143 Studios' partnership with Audible, now on its seventh original production.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Make a shopping scavenger hunt**
  Before walking into Marshalls, TJ Maxx, a flea market or a garage sale, say exactly what you'll find, picture finding it, and keep saying it even when the racks look sad.
- **Build a mood-shifting playlist**
  Pick about a dozen songs, or even one, that put a 'pep in your step' no matter what. Play them in the long line, notice how the shift feels, and learn to recreate that feeling without the music.
- **Pick a sign to watch for today**
  During the episode's break, Mel asks you to name an area of life where you'd like confirmation you're on the right track, and what that sign would look like. Then watch for it.

How to Live a Life of Purpose According to World-Renowned Psychic Medium | The Mel Robbins Podcast

Guest: Kim Russo
Date: 2023-10-05 · Duration: 1:21:44
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zOGJ85J7gsA

KEYPOINTS

• Mel asks skeptics to suspend doubt for the episode, and admits she's one

Mel says she wants to believe in psychics but has 'a massively healthy dose of skepticism' and wonders whether readers simply Google people. What persuaded her was a detail she says couldn't be Googled (see examples). Throughout, the spiritual ideas are presented as Kim Russo's beliefs and experience, not as established science.

• Russo says everyone is intuitive

Russo, an intuitive psychic medium with an A&E show and appearances on Oprah, dislikes the labels and calls herself a 'teacher of energy' who is science-minded. Her argument: wild animals use instinct to sense danger and find food, so why wouldn't humans have the same wisdom? She says schooling and parental conditioning teach us to suppress it, and that her work is about unlearning those blocks and letting go of control.

• Resonance: when something rings true in your gut

Russo calls Mel's sense that the message was 'the truth' resonance with the soul's higher knowing, and says that's how we should live. Mel adds her own theory: animals run on instinct with no words to argue themselves out of it. Humans' language, what makes us 'intelligent', is also what buries intuition, because we use words to talk ourselves out of change when we're afraid.

• Don't brush off nudges, even ones that defy logic

Russo's examples are an urge to skip your usual route to work or to cancel a pricey 60th-anniversary trip. She says such signals show up in the gut or as a pounding heart, and that 'you cannot put faith and logic in the same sentence'. Her line 'nothing changes if nothing changes' sums up her case for stepping out in faith. Fear and control, which she calls ego, are the main blocks.

• There are different ways of receiving, and feelings count

Russo describes clairvoyance (seeing), clairaudience (hearing) and clairsentience (feeling), and says most people have one that's stronger. Clairsentience is walking into a beautiful room and sensing something is off, perhaps after an argument. She says many messages only make sense later. She also says people can be 'a medium in the moment', like suddenly telling a friend 'you're not going to be with this guy' without knowing why.

• Her 'drive-thru' view of manifesting, and its limits

Russo compares asking the universe to ordering at a drive-thru: you expect exactly what you ordered, and doubtful thoughts cancel the order. She adds a limit: the universe won't give you something that takes from someone else, and she believes you may not be able to manifest a loved one's remission if their soul 'contracted' an exit point.

• Soul contracts and the 'law of balance'

Russo believes souls make agreements before birth. Her example: a soul that misused power in a past life might come back to empower others. She avoids the word karma because it sounds negative and calls it the law of balance, which is why she's known as 'the happy medium'. On decisions like where to move, she says there's no right or wrong answer; ask what experience you want, because you have free will.

• Lessons she says she's heard from people who have died

From what she describes as tens of thousands of readings: life on Earth is 'a blink' compared with eternity, so don't sweat the small stuff. We're reunited with loved ones afterward. Forgiveness matters, and much of what kept people stuck was 'bondage of your own thoughts', seen through 'two little slits' with no aerial view.

EXAMPLES

• The Air Force pilot behind Mel

On Mel's daytime talk show (Russo was booked after another guest cancelled), Russo described a man in a decorated military uniform, then the letter K, then Ken, Mel's late father-in-law Kenneth Robbins. Mel said he was never a pilot. Chris confirmed from the control room that Ken had been in the Air Force Reserves and dreamed of flying but was colorblind, a fact Mel had never known.

• 'Trust your son'

Russo said Ken was upset about something at a school and that Mel had to trust her son. Privately, her son had been fighting to go to high school in Southern Vermont near his grandparents, and Mel had refused to move from Boston. Chris said 'I'm not going to argue with your dead father-in-law.' His mother had just offered to sell the house she and Ken built. They bought it, and three years later Mel says she's the happiest and most content she's ever been, and says the podcast wouldn't exist without that message.

• Russo's childhood

After she was electrocuted on Christmas Eve by sticking a safety pin in a socket, which badly burned her arm, Russo says five unsmiling figures in Depression-era black stood at the foot of her bed every night. She slept with the covers over her head and kept her sister awake asking her to spell words like 'elephant'. She later read a book saying many mediums had high doses of electricity before age 10, and as a Catholic she worried the work went against her faith.

• The teacher who wouldn't take no

Holly, a medium Russo met at a lecture, called a month later saying Russo was a medium. Russo, a skeptical New Yorker and stay-at-home mom of three boys, declined because the class was in the morning. A year later Holly offered evening classes. Russo went to 12 but never joined the practice readings. Then, she says, voices came while she blow-dried her hair ('Hi, my name is Lisa, I died in a car accident'). Holly told her 'you can't' stop them.

• The barred owl on Mel's anniversary

Driving home in pouring rain on her 27th anniversary, Mel saw the car ahead hit a barred owl. She jumped out in heeled boots, stopped traffic, and says the owl turned its head and held eye contact for about 25 seconds. She wrapped it in a stranger's towel, held it for 30 minutes on the drive home, and a Woodstock, Vermont rescue says it will survive but likely can't be released. Russo links owls to wisdom and a new chapter.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Russo's two practices for building intuition

First, meditation in any form: a phone-free walk on the beach, or her own hot bath alone with grateful thoughts. Second, open the heart through gratitude, compassion, volunteering, joy and forgiveness. To her, forgiveness means seeing that someone acted from an unhealthy 'program', not excusing what they did. If you don't know your purpose, she says, make helping someone your purpose.

• A psychometry exercise to try with a friend

Give someone an object belonging to a person you know well, such as a grandmother's ring. Have them write down every color, feeling or image that comes to them without filtering, then compare it with what you know. Russo says children are especially good at this before they learn to doubt.

• Empaths need boundaries

Russo warns that empaths without boundaries attract 'psychic vampires', including narcissists, and can feel anxious in crowds or on planes. She suggests imagining a protective bubble and speaking your truth. She also links people-pleasing to thyroid, voice or breathing problems; that's her spiritual view, not medical evidence.

Train Your Mind: Understanding Synchronicity Will Change Your Life | Mel Robbins Podcast

Guest: Dr. Tom Myers
Date: 2022-12-08 · Duration: 0:48:02
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=exfSl-tWwMM

KEYPOINTS

• Synchronicity is a 'holy crap' moment of meaningful timing

Dr. Tom Myers, who wrote his PhD dissertation on synchronicity, describes it as the moment you step back and wonder how you could possibly be in this place at this time. Examples include meeting someone across the world who turns out to be your neighbor, or thinking of a friend just as they text. The idea goes back to Carl Jung, who Myers says wanted a physics framework before putting forward his theory. Myers stresses that his own focus is psychological, not physics.

• Three signs you're having one

First, it's 'acausal', in Jung's term: it comes out of the blue and you didn't set it in motion. Texting a friend and getting a reply doesn't count. Thinking of them and then running into them at the grocery store does. Second, it's meaningful to you personally, even if to no one else. Third, the timing feels exactly right, like 'I needed this today.'

• A coincidence can be explained away; a synchronicity carries meaning

Myers's example: a blue balloon drifts down onto him while he mows his lawn in the country. He decided it was probably from a birthday party down the road, so it was a coincidence. Mel's twist: if your late father loved blue balloons and it happened on his birthday, the same event becomes a sign. What makes the difference is the emotion and wonder it brings up.

• Common signs include numbers, hearts, lyrics and animals

Myers lists signs with emotional pull: seeing 11:11 or repeated threes, a heart in the clouds when you feel low, an article turning up just as you search for it, or a song lyric that shifts your mood. Animals count when meaning is attached, like a mother who said she'd return as a butterfly. Mel thinks of a red-tailed hawk over her Vermont property as Chris's dad or her grandmother.

• The idea rests on a belief that people are connected

Myers argues all people and matter are connected, and that we pick up 'vibrations' from one another. Mel's everyday version is feeling a grumpy stranger's mood hit you in a coffee line. Mel goes further, citing the 2022 Nobel Prize in physics for quantum entanglement research and suggesting thoughts may influence people far away. That leap is her interpretation and the guest's framework, not something the physics research itself claims.

• The benefit is confirmation and confidence

Myers says synchronicities confirm your value and tell you you're on the right path. People in his research kept saying 'it just feels right', which he ties to trusting your gut. Mel says believing in it, whether as faith, energy, alignment or physics, makes her more confident.

• For skeptics, think of it as alignment

Mel suggests people who don't believe in a higher power think about times life flowed versus times everything felt like friction. Wrong people, the wrong relationship or the wrong job create resistance. When your inside matches your outside, things click, and she thinks that's what synchronicity feels like.

• Step one: supercharge your attention on what you want

If you don't know what you want, Mel suggests writing down five dreams, big or small, every day as part of your morning or evening routine. Put your attention on what you want instead of complaining about what you don't have.

• Step two: open up to the early coincidences and feel them

Drop the cynical filter that says 'my phone is listening and serving me ads' or 'they only want something.' Myers says synchronicities often come in clusters of three, four or five linked events. Once you start seeing them, they seem to show up everywhere.

• Step three: call out the sign and walk toward it

Mel says signs get 'bigger and brighter and louder' when you name them and give thanks. Grab one small sign as a toehold and act on it. She ties this to the reticular activating system, the brain's attention filter: deliberately looking for something trains your brain to notice more of it.

EXAMPLES

• Myers's own existence

Around 1990, as a ski-racing coach training on Swiss glaciers, Myers met a Massachusetts coach whose father had died in a rare glider accident in Warren, Vermont. Myers knew the story. Their fathers had been best friends in the late 1950s, a ski patroller and a ski instructor named Roger. Roger had introduced Myers's father to his mother.

• The anonymous tuition donors

In 1988 Mel's Dartmouth boyfriend Howie lost his father, and his and his sister's college was in doubt until an anonymous benefactor paid their tuition and housing. Around 1995, visiting the Princeton home of Chris's best friend Raymie, Mel mentioned Howie. Raymie's mother nudged his father to tell her: they had been the donors, because Raymie's father and Howie's father had worked together at Bristol-Myers Squibb in Evansville, Indiana.

• The double rainbow at 5:27

A year to the day after their close friend Fred died (he had coached their daughters' soccer team with Chris), Mel drove home from a match in pouring rain. As she rounded the corner into town, the rain stopped and a huge double rainbow appeared over a church steeple at 5:27, the exact time of his death. She pulled over and took a photo.

• Strangers in a workshop

In Myers's workshops, strangers get three minutes to find a deep connection. In Nice, France, two skeptical engineers with arms folded discovered they had taught at the University of Montana a year apart.

• Eliza's heart made of coral

Just as the episode wrapped, an email arrived from a listener named Eliza. She said she had been on the verge of ending her life, that the podcast had helped keep her here, and that after days of looking she had finally found a heart, in a piece of coral.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Do the heart scavenger hunt

Mel's assignment: after listening, find a naturally occurring heart in a cloud, a leaf, coffee foam, or a spot on a pet. Mel's puppy has a heart on his nose. Tell yourself it was put there for you. She frames everyday signs as guardrails that can make you feel less alone during what she calls an epidemic of loneliness.

• Name the connections in your own life

Mel's recent examples: meeting a media executive in New York whose best friend had just moved to Mel's corner of Southern Vermont, and realizing her new executive producer Andrea had worked on Mel's small radio show 15 years earlier. Saying 'this happened for a reason' out loud is part of the practice.

• Start with a quiet mind

Myers's first practical tool is quieting the mind so you can notice patterns at all. Mel says the practice applies whether you're chasing the biggest deal of your life or just trying to get through another day.

Manifesting for Beginners: 4 Simple Steps to Manifest Anything You Want | The Mel Robbins Podcast

Date: 2022-11-14 · Duration: 0:57:53
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8uzxTdlHMQM

KEYPOINTS

• 'How do I start?' has two parts, and only one is hard

Mel says the doing part is easy: search Google or YouTube for your goal and you'll find millions of results listing steps. What actually stops people is the second part, self-doubt, perfectionism and low self-worth, which convince you not to take those steps. So mindset has to come first.

• Manifesting means training your brain and nervous system to believe in something that hasn't happened yet

Mel's definition is deliberately not wishing, the Law of Attraction or blowing out birthday candles. She frames it as a neuroscience-backed tool used precisely and systematically to clear out self-doubt, fear, perfectionism and other people's expectations, like pregame training that prepares you to act. Thinking and wishing for years, as one listener had, isn't manifesting.

• Step 1: Tell the truth about what you want

It doesn't work if you're fuzzy or lying to yourself, because your brain knows when you're 'BS-ing' yourself. Having an itch is reason enough: you get to want things. If you're too shut down to know what you want, Mel suggests writing five things you want each morning as part of your routine.

• Step 2: Visualize the steps, not the finish line

Mel cites UCLA research showing that visualizing yourself performing an action stimulates the same brain region as doing it, 'socializing' your mind to act and tapping into procedural memory, the long-term memory that makes habits like brushing your teeth automatic. Rehearsing the tedious, annoying steps strengthens those connections before you ever take them.

• Vision boards backfire when they only show the end goal

Making a board pulls a dream out of your head and grounds it, and Mel ties this to the Zeigarnik effect, which keeps it on your mental to-do list. But a collage of a beach house, a Maserati or $1 million viewed from a studio apartment or your parents' spare room just rubs in how far away you are and lowers motivation. Put the steps on it instead.

• Step 3: Feel it in your body, like Olympians do

Olympic teams call it imagery: an aerial skier said you have to smell, hear and feel everything, rehearsing every twist, bump and jump. Mel says your brain doesn't distinguish vividly imagined events from real ones, so you're warming up for what you'll actually feel. Team psychologists also use imagery for anxiety when athletes return from injury. As a Legal Aid trial lawyer, she was taught to 'put the jury at the scene.'

• Your fears are manifesting too, in reverse

Playing back a listener's list of worries (alone in a new city, broke, jobless, regretful), Mel points out that she has rehearsed the worst case so often that her nervous system resists the move. Listening, you may feel your own chest tighten. The fix is to ask 'what if it all works out?' and rehearse that instead.

• You're not an impostor; you're a beginner

To Mara, who wants an interior design business with no experience beyond her own home and parties, Mel says to drop the phrase 'impostor syndrome.' Being new means you're a student figuring it out. Also notice when you laugh off or downplay a dream; admitting it is step one.

• Step 4: Manifesting isn't selfish, but you owe the work

Cynthia, raised to feel she had to give something back when she asked, fears something will be taken away. Mel calls manifesting self-love, and says what you owe the universe and yourself is action: the cold call, the U-Haul, the 5 a.m. run. You lay one brick a day until you've built a path.

• The final mistake is impatience

People quit one audition or one breakthrough away. Give up the 'when' and stay focused on the why and how. Mel acknowledges luck, privilege and bias are real, but overnight success doesn't exist. Ask whether you'd work 10 years for it, and expect 100 hours of cold calls before someone doesn't hang up, or years of Anne Lamott's 'shitty first drafts.'

EXAMPLES

• Megan's move from Tampa

Megan, 32, single, no kids, in her third job, with her lease ending, has wanted to leave her hometown since college. Her parents, who never left Tampa, say you need lots of savings and why leave family. Mel scripts a new rehearsal: packing the U-Haul, feeling anxious alone, going to an event anyway and making a friend, her mom saying she misses her, landing a new job through new contacts.

• Rehearsing marathon training

Instead of picturing the New York City Marathon finish, which Mel has run, visualize lacing up in 10-degree weather, mile 13 alone with dead earbuds six miles from home, or a 5 a.m. pouring-rain Saturday alarm. Months later, when it happens for real, your body has already been there.

• Lyndon Rush's shower runs

The Olympic medalist bobsledder told the New York Times he runs the whole track, or just its technical corners, in his mind while showering or brushing his teeth, so he never starts at square one.

• Mel's current manifestations

The podcast took two years of rehearsal, so her first episode felt like she'd done it for 10 years. She's picturing specific beach houses she plans to write letters to, her daughters traveling and writing music, and team member Charlotte with a clipboard greeting the Dalai Lama at the new Boston studio while Mel has stress diarrhea upstairs.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **The 'Mel moves in with you' exercise**

  Imagine Mel joined at your hip for a year as your offensive lineman, handling your parents and finding the apartment. Whatever dream you'd pursue then is the one to name in step one.

- **If you can't picture yourself, borrow someone**

  Use 'the power of objectivity': visualize a person you admire, such as a favorite designer, taking certifications, staging a friend's apartment, networking with realtors. Then have them turn, extend a hand and say 'it's your turn,' and picture yourself doing the work alongside them until you can do it alone.

- **Visualize the no's**

  Rehearse rejection and failure as well as effort: publishers saying no, falling down and picking yourself up, then feeling pride. Training yourself as someone who keeps going gets you through the 'quitting day.'

Your Dreams Are NO Joke: It’s Time to DREAM BIG Again & 3 Ways to Get Started | Mel Robbins Podcast

Date: 2022-11-10 · Duration: 0:58:35
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G_XhrNkJmEg

KEYPOINTS

• Your dreams are serious business

Mel opens with unusual urgency: your dreams are not 'fluff' and not 'self-help.' She believes you were born with dreams wired into your curiosity, imagination and creativity, and that what you're drawn to or repelled by is a clue. She says the flame inside you can't burn out while you're alive. Your job is to fan it.

• Your dreams are your responsibility

Mel says it's on you to claim your dreams, argue for them, believe in them and work for them. She describes years when she smothered her own flame with excuses, fear and self-doubt, which only made her miserable. Accepting responsibility for your dreams, she says, is how you take responsibility for creating meaning, momentum and purpose.

• Comfortable is fine, but small isn't

Mel's central line to Barbara: 'It's okay to be comfortable if that's what you want. It's not okay to be small.' After teaching her science-of-dreaming course to more than 200,000 people, she says the most common problem is putting a lid on your own potential and telling yourself 'meh is okay.' She argues that being the loudest voice against your own dreams is a major source of feeling lost and unhappy.

• Jealousy and longing show your dream is still alive

Mel says the pull you feel when you see someone else doing your thing can feel like jealousy, longing or even inferiority, and sometimes you push the dream away to protect yourself. She felt it for 11 years every time Howard Stern came on or another podcast launched. She reads those feelings as evidence the dream is still alive, not proof that it's too late.

• Three ways people put out their own flame

First, downplaying: joking about your dream or saying 'I'm not that serious about it.' Second, excuses: no money, no time. Third, fear that shows up the moment you honestly let yourself want it: what if it doesn't happen? Mel's reframe is that the dream isn't what hurts. What hurts is the energy you spend avoiding it.

• Step 1: get honest and claim what you want

Mel says that if you 'don't know what you want,' it's usually because you're too afraid to let yourself know. Honesty comes first and can be sobering. She points to her own 11 years of brushing off a podcast as an example of how much those excuses can cost.

• Step 2: decide every day whether you're for or against your dream

Each morning, ask 'Am I for or against my dream today?' Mel says there's no middle ground, because neutral counts as against. Being for your dream means staying in touch with it and treating other people who are doing it as 'lights on the path' rather than proof your flame is out. She says dreams matter even more during hard times, because they remind you the struggle is temporary.

• Dreams are a direction, not a destination

Mel argues you're not necessarily supposed to 'achieve' your dreams. She calls them an inner GPS or lighthouse that pulls you through fear and self-doubt and helps you grow. She also says not to seek validation from people who aren't pursuing their own dreams, since they can't cheer you on.

• There's no deadline

The sunk-cost thinking of 'I've been an accountant too long,' 'seven years with this person' or 'I'm too old' is what Mel calls a major mistake. Her list of possibilities: start a business at 18, go to nursing school at 42 after raising kids, adopt a child single at 39, launch a podcast at 54, marry for the first time at 63, skydive at 71, run a first marathon at 82.

EXAMPLES

• Coaching Barbara on stage in Los Angeles

At a live event with podcaster Cathy Heller, Cathy's sister Barbara, a comedian and actor, did a birthday impression of Mel. Barbara had wanted to act and tour as a comic since 18, worked at it for over 25 years, came close many times, and at 46 had moved back to South Florida, where she felt 'safe and comfortable.' She kept deflecting with jokes and fears about debt and crime until Mel said, 'You are funny, but being unhappy is not funny.' Barbara admitted she wanted to go back to Los Angeles and choked up when Mel predicted 'the best damn Netflix special.'

• Mel's 11-year path from radio to podcasting

In 2007 Mel took a part-time Saturday call-in radio job in Boston and knew right away it was what she wanted, fueled by years as a Howard Stern fan. She went to CNN as a legal analyst in 2011. In her TEDx talk, now at 29 million views, she said her goal was to be the number-one radio host in the world. At 54, four weeks into launching the podcast, she says she's closer than ever.

• Her daughter and the Taylor Swift text

When Mel texted her singer-songwriter daughter that Taylor Swift had taken all 10 spots in the Billboard top 10, her daughter replied, 'Please don't send this stuff to me because I'll never be able to do that.' Mel calls that someone who is deeply in touch with a dream but terrified of it.

• The daytime talk show that wasn't the dream

Mel spent a year making a daytime TV show with CBS and Sony, following the model of Ellen and Oprah, then lost it when COVID hit. She realized she loved the people but disliked the product, and says every setback can teach you what you actually want.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Write five dreams every morning**

  With your coffee or tea, write down five things you want, without judging or shrinking them. They can be big or small, repeated or new: a Gucci bag, a puppy that stops pooping on the rug, a stadium tour, healing your relationship with your mom. Mel says this unblocks the 'highway' between your heart and what you let yourself want.

- **Why writing them down helps: the Zeigarnik effect**

  Mel credits psychologist Bluma Zeigarnik, whose first paper on the idea was published in 1927, with showing that the brain keeps a mental checklist of what matters to you and keeps working on it. The same principle drives app progress bars like '64% complete.' Writing your dreams down every day keeps them on that list.

- **Try Cathy Heller's blank-check exercise**

  Imagine writing yourself a check for whatever you want to earn this year. Whatever number you wrote, Mel asks who set that limit, and why not $5 or $10 million. She says to start from what you desire, not just what seems possible.