Mel Robbins Keypoints — Full Archive

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This One Skill Makes Every Relationship Better

Date: 2026-10-17 · Duration: 0:42:16
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MSR5xBplRz8

KEYPOINTS

• Empathy is a practised skill, not a feeling of pity

Mel separates empathy from sympathy and pity. Feeling sorry for someone can land as condescending, while empathy is something you do. The people you love being around are the ones who make you feel seen and heard, which echoes Maya Angelou's line that people remember how you made them feel.

• Empathy means understanding, not mind-reading

The definition that changed Mel's thinking came from psychologist Dr. Stuart Ablon of Harvard Medical School, founder of the Think Kids programme at Mass General. Asked what empathy is, he answered with one word: understanding. It means grasping what someone feels, their perspective and what they're dealing with before you judge, jump in to fix, give an opinion or make up your mind. Mel admits she used to think it meant stepping into someone's shoes and guessing. She now says that's the mistake.

• Reciprocity is why empathy makes people like you

Making someone feel understood triggers the law of reciprocity. They want to give the feeling back, the same instinct that makes you hold a door after someone held one for you.

• Mirror neurons wire you for emotional connection

Mel's plain-language version: you well up when a movie character cries because watching emotion triggers a similar reaction in you, a 'neural bridge' to other people. The same wiring can push you to panic and over-fix when someone you love struggles. This is her simplified framing, not a detailed neuroscience claim.

• You get about nine chances a day to practise empathy

Mel cites University of Toronto researchers, published in Psychological Science, who found that on average people have at least nine everyday opportunities to act in a way that makes others feel understood and cared for. Most of these are small and right in front of you: a coworker who seems off, a kid who's upset, a friend with good news.

• Way 1, don't guess, ask

Guessing produces stories like 'I guess you don't care.' Asking ('You don't seem like yourself, is everything okay?' 'Tell me more about that') reveals what's really going on. You don't have to care about the thing as much as they do. You care about them, so it matters to you that it matters to them. Once you've asked, the job is to listen and understand, not to plan what you'll say next.

• Way 2, go first, because thinking about someone doesn't count

Taken from her Let Them Theory book: when someone comes to mind, reach out instead of talking yourself out of it ('I only have five minutes before the grocery store, I don't want to bother them'). The other person never knows you thought of them. Good intentions that never turn into action give no connection.

• Pebbling, sending small 'this reminded me of you' signals

Adam Grant explained the term on the show. Some penguins court mates by presenting smooth, shiny pebbles, and the modern version is a meme, link, reel or article picked because it fits the person. Grant says it isn't spamming. It's a 'memory flex' that shows you remember their taste. He notes multiple studies showing that a small pebble a week or a month after meeting someone, or to a dormant tie you haven't spoken to in years, is received far more warmly than people expect.

• Way 3, paper plates: show up without asking what they need

From therapist KC Davis: when someone is struggling, don't ask 'What do you need?' because that puts the burden on them. Just drop off paper plates, plastic cups and utensils, since the last thing an overwhelmed person needs is a sink of dishes. More broadly, if hands are full, hold the door. If a coworker is buried, take something off their list. If your kid didn't make the team, sit with them and ask how they're doing before you coach or console.

• Way 4, keep waving, because connection is built from tiny gestures

Mel's closing principle is that connection doesn't come from big gestures you keep waiting to make. It comes from small, repeated ones like a wave, a text or a remembered date. Empathy also covers good moments: noticing someone's big news or remembering their job interview day makes them feel celebrated, not just supported in hard times.

EXAMPLES

• Stanford's 'empathy perception gap' (5,000+ students)

Researchers surveyed more than 5,000 undergraduates. Students guessed about 87% of peers would help someone having a hard time, but 96% said they themselves would. People underestimate how warm others are. When students learned the real figure, they started reaching out more. Mel uses this to argue that your fear that a gesture will land awkwardly is usually wrong.

• The producer and the slipping editor

An editor on Mel's team suddenly started showing up late, with sloppy work and missed deliveries. Instead of assuming he didn't care, the producer asked if everything was okay. The editor had been caring for his sick mother and driving her to appointments while holding down a fast-paced full-time job. Asking turned a performance problem into a situation they could work around.

• Mel's fourth-grade son

When her son was struggling in fourth grade and they were learning he had dyslexia, dysgraphia, executive-function issues and ADHD, Mel jumped into fix-it mode, sure she knew what he needed. Looking back, she says he wasn't a problem to be solved. She wishes she'd asked, 'What's the hardest part for you? What do you think all the adults are missing?'

• Judge Frank Caprio's first day on the bench

In an interview months before he died at 88, Caprio described his first day as a municipal judge. A woman with a boot on her car owed a couple hundred dollars in tickets and said she had no money and four kids. Wanting to look tough, he refused to remove the boot. His father, watching from the courtroom, asked how he could do that: without a car she couldn't feed her kids or

get them to school. Caprio said this set the tone for 30 years of weighing each person's situation. His book's lesson was that being a judge is more about the person in front of you than the law.

• Roman, the four-year-old who kept waving

In a Steve Hartman story for CBS News, a lonely four-year-old named Roman in Concord, North Carolina waved at passers-by. A senior neighbour, Wade, started crossing the street to visit. More neighbours joined, and Roman ended up with a group of adopted grandparents from neighbours who hadn't known each other.

• The $5 grocery-store flowers and the sick weekend

Mel's husband brings home the cheapest bouquet in a mason jar, a pebble showing he thought of her on an errand. When she was very sick while 14 of his college friends were staying, they just took care of everything, so she never had to ask.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Script for someone who seems off

Try 'You don't seem like yourself. What's going on?' or 'Can you help me understand what's hardest?' Then stop and listen. Don't rehearse advice while they talk.

• Act within five minutes of thinking of someone

When a person pops into your head, send the text, meme or voice note right then. Short is fine. Remembering their humour or their big day is the point.

• Offer specific help instead of 'let me know'

Pick a concrete, low-burden gesture like food, paper goods, a task off their plate or a ride, and just do it. Asking an overwhelmed person to come up with a request adds to their load.

The Power of Reinvention: Switching Things Up at Any Age

Guest: Ina Garten
Date: 2026-10-15 · Duration: 0:54:58
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6KjH6Svur0o

KEYPOINTS

• Boredom can be a useful signal to leave

At 30, after four years at the White House Office of Management and Budget working on nuclear energy policy, Ina Garten felt she worked very hard and still nothing changed. She also believed no one would ever choose a woman to run OMB. She wrote, "There has to be something more fun than this," and says her low tolerance for boredom made her willing to take big risks to get out of it.

• "Do what you think is fun. If it's fun, you'll be really good at it"

Her husband Jeffrey said this when she told him about a newspaper ad for a food store. Ina reads it as a return to what you enjoyed at 10, before the "shoulds" (lawyer, doctor) took over. Jeffrey later admitted he thought he was just humoring her when he agreed to drive up and look at the store.

• Your past prepares you more than you think

Only when she wrote her 2024 memoir, Be Ready When the Luck Happens, did Ina connect the dots. In Washington she had taught herself to cook, renovated and sold old houses, negotiated bank loans and gone to business school at night. The store was the first job that combined everything she loved. She also sees cooking as science: you test things, but you end up with roast chicken instead of gibberellic acid.

• Jump in the pond rather than deciding from the edge

"Working scared" means you can't tell how cold or deep the pond is from the bank. You get in, splash around and see what's there, and from inside you may spot a better place to go. Mel ties this to John Grisham's "golden moment": a light goes on inside you, and following it changes the direction of your life.

• "Go as far as you can see; when you get there, you'll be able to see farther"

A friend passed Ina this line, attributed to J.P. Morgan. She never plans where she's going. She starts each day with a purpose, does the best job she can, and decides tomorrow's task before stopping. Mel says she wasted decades as an unhappy lawyer looking for her calling. You don't need the whole picture, only the recognition that the current path is no longer yours.

• Treat a business as an experiment and don't assume you know the answer

Her fancy dishes, like veal with morels and herb-covered roast chicken on large platters, didn't sell. The same chickens in red-and-white checked paper trays sold in ten minutes. Her conclusion: people have elegant taste but want simple, earthy food at home. She would put out five things and see what people chose. "If you decide in advance that you think you know what the answer is, you're wrong."

• Before you do something, decide how you'll do it better and your own way

For her first cookbook she set three rules: simple recipes that work every time, beautiful photographs and ingredients from the grocery store. She refuses to write "the cookbook that sells" or the one other people think she should write. Mel calls this getting clear on how and why you want to do something and blocking out the noise.

• Start the hard conversation even when you don't know the outcome

Ten years into the marriage, while running the new store, Ina told Jeffrey on a beach walk that she needed to be on her own. She didn't know if it was for now or forever. You can't control the response, she says, but the response shows whether the other person can bend. Jeffrey said, "If you feel like you need to be on your own," which made her love him more.

• Exercise your power like a muscle by asking

Ina quotes a line attributed to George Lucas: "We're all living in cages with the door wide open." Her advice is to ask for what you want, for example twice the salary offered, and accept that the answer may be no. Then ask someone else, or do it yourself. Mel tells her daughters that if plenty of less capable people have figured it out, so can they.

EXAMPLES

• The $87 first day

The seller, Diana Estrada, showed Ina how to cash out the register on the Thursday before Memorial Day weekend. It held $87 in gross takings. Jeffrey multiplied that by the days of summer and said, "I don't think you're going to make it here." By Friday night the store was sold out, so they bought flour, sugar and chicken at the grocery store and baked all night.

• The gold necklace

Customers ordered her around as if she were staff. Diana told her to wear jewelry so people would know she owned the store. She bought the gaudiest gold necklace she could find, and customers immediately asked, "Is this your store?" Her lesson: you can change the conversation by changing yourself, not the other person.

• Mel's six-hour bakery career

Stuck at a law firm she hated in Boston and inspired by Barefoot Contessa photos, Mel took a weekend bakery job. After six hours of carrot muffins, wiping counters and hauling 30 lb garbage bags, she knew she didn't want to own one. What she wanted was control over her time and a sense of community.

• Work there first

A friend who co-founded Burton Snowboards wanted a specialty food store. Ina had her spend a summer working in the Barefoot Contessa bakery first. She loved it and went on to open a successful store in Stowe, Vermont. At the end of Mel's arena tour, the top two "wild card" dreams among 9,000 people were writing a book and opening a bakery.

• Selling the store, then the hardest year

Working 6 a.m. to 1 a.m. with catering, and no longer challenged, Ina sold the business to her chef and manager and financed the deal herself, on her accountant Susanna's suggestion. She then had a year with nothing to do but "a manicure on Wednesday." Jeffrey pushed her to find another way into food, and the cookbook proposal she sent to a top editor was accepted

within a week.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Run a small test before a big leap**
  Take a weekend job, do a season's apprenticeship, or keep the old model running while you plan changes. Ina ran the store exactly as the seller had for the first summer and redesigned it over the winter. Ask the seller to stay on and teach you, as Diana did for her first month.
- **Use a start-and-end-of-day ritual**
  Begin each day with a clear purpose and finish by naming tomorrow's task. This replaces needing a five-year plan with steady movement and room for chances you didn't plan for.
- **Expect the middle of a change to feel like fog**
  Ina calls transitions an abyss where you may think what you left was the best thing you'll ever do. She says you keep moving. Going down the rabbit hole after separating, she took Jeffrey's advice to get up, take the train and be around friends, and he didn't try to fix her.

#1 Neuroscientist: After Watching This, Your Brain Will Not Be the Same

Guest: Dr. Lara Boyd
Date: 2026-10-12 · Duration: 1:11:36
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OojWAavwEyg

KEYPOINTS

• Experience is the single largest driver of brain change

Dr. Lara Boyd, a neuroscientist at the University of British Columbia who runs its Brain Behaviour Lab, says there is no drug and no magic bullet for rewiring the brain. What reshapes it is what you actually do, again and again. Her lab can map where the brain changes in response to practice, which is why she frames change as something you build rather than something that happens to you.

• Learning changes the brain in three ways: chemistry, structure and function

Chemistry changes fast. Neurotransmitters, the small chemical signals passed between brain cells, shift within minutes, and that is the basis of short-term memory. Structural change is slower and is what turns practice into lasting memory and skill. Function, meaning how brain regions work together, changes as well. Boyd's point is that you are changing your brain chemistry during an ordinary conversation, but making it stick takes repetition.

• The brain stays plastic until your last breath

Boyd calls this the biggest finding of the last 30 years: you can change your brain at any age. Mel asks about her 82-year-old dad and 89-year-old mother-in-law, and Boyd says yes, both of them can still change. Her lab trains people up to 85 years old. Labels such as dyslexia don't remove that capacity. People simply learn differently, perhaps on a different scale or time frame.

• There is a 'sweet zone' of difficulty where change peaks

If a task is too easy, the brain doesn't need to adapt. If it is too hard, people quit. Using a game while scanning brains, her team found the most structural change when success rates sat around 50–60%. That zone differs from person to person and from day to day, so an off day simply reflects where your brain is that day. As long as it feels like a struggle, you are changing.

• After a stroke, there may be a 30–60 day window of heightened plasticity

Right after an injury, the brain is less inhibited and more excitable, which seems to support neuroplastic change. That window appears to last about 30–60 days, which lines up with when medical rehab happens. Lost functions can be partly taken up by other regions but are rarely as good as before. How healthy the brain was beforehand also matters a great deal, so a 20-year-old and a 70-year-old with the same injury can have very different outcomes.

• Sleep is when structural change consolidates

Boyd's message to her medical students is that you can cram all night, but you won't have learned it. In studies where people sleep inside an MRI scanner, the regions used to practice a task during the day light up again overnight, almost like practicing offline. To check whether you really learned something, test yourself the next day after sleep.

• Exercise releases BDNF, which she calls brain juice

Any exercise releases brain-derived neurotrophic factor, which helps neurons reorganize. The best type is whatever you enjoy, even a walk around the block. She adds that timing barely seems to matter: before practice, right after or later in the day all appear to work.

• Cortisol blocks the brain's 'parking spots' for growth

Boyd's analogy: your brain has a limited number of parking spots. If stress-hormone cortisol is parked in them, the trophic factors that enable change can't get in. Sleep, exercise and stress reduction are her three easiest levers for rewiring, and gratitude, mindfulness and self-compassion count as what she calls 'cortisol reducers.'

• First-person visualization is a realistic form of practice

Imagining a presentation from inside your own body, looking out at the audience, generates predictions about how it will feel. That engages the cerebellum, which predicts and corrects errors, so it works better than watching yourself from the outside. On manifesting, she is careful: it is 'tricky,' but priming the brain does have measurable effects. Optimism and morning affirmations such as 'today is going to be a great day' may lower cortisol and release dopamine.

• Attention determines what you can change

When you suddenly see the green Rivian pickup everywhere after deciding you like it, there aren't more trucks on the road. Your attention has shifted. Because attention feeds both learning and neuroplasticity, choosing what you focus on shapes what your brain becomes.

EXAMPLES

• The patient who 'broke' her

In the early 1990s, Boyd was a physical therapist who spent three months trying to help a young man with a severe head injury walk again so his family could take him home. Despite expert help, it didn't work. She felt like 'a car mechanic who didn't know how the engine worked,' and within two weeks she quit and applied for a PhD in neuroscience.

• Nine minutes of HIIT before practice

Her lab has participants, including stroke patients and 85-year-olds, cycle for three minutes at 85% of maximum effort, three times, and then practice a task. In one study, the exercise and rest groups looked the same right after practice. After a night's sleep, the exercise group had improved significantly. That suggests exercise mainly boosts overnight consolidation.

• Runners vs. yoga practitioners in the MRI

Boyd, a runner, expected the runners to win. Instead, when shown stressful images, the runners' amygdalas 'lit up like a fireball.' The yoga group, who took only two or three recreational classes a week, also activated memory structures, which suggests they could observe stress without being taken over by it. An ongoing study has burned-out teachers practice loving-kindness meditation for 30 days, with significant early changes in burnout and brain measures.

• Third-graders with lower math scores

A large study found a less-developed brain area in children with below-average math scores. Boyd reads this as a sign of

readiness, not inability. Those brains may not have matured enough yet for that level of math. This is the field of educational neuroscience.

- **Mel's Spanish 'prescription'**

  Mel, who is dyslexic and remembers nothing from seven years of French, asks whether she can learn Spanish. Boyd says yes, but it's hard: languages are special, and adults who heard only English as children face a steeper climb. Because Mel learns by ear, Boyd prescribes full immersion, such as speaking only Spanish on the Camino walk she is planning with her husband, Chris. Boyd's own daughter entered late French immersion, came home in tears for weeks, and was speaking French by Christmas.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Daily brain-health routine**

  Boyd's day: sleep well, start with something positive (gratitude or 'today will be great, and here's why'), exercise ('pay yourself first' in the morning, like savings), keep cortisol down with mindfulness and self-compassion, practice something hard, and stay socially engaged, which is linked to lower depression and better plasticity.

- **Tune difficulty, not just effort**

  Aim for roughly 50–60% success. If you're nailing it, raise the difficulty. If you're quitting, scale back. Expect that zone to move from day to day.

- **Practice, sleep, then test**

  Learn a little, sleep on it, and check the next day what actually stuck. Repeat. The amount of practice needed varies by person, a challenge her research calls 'the dose problem.' She rejects the idea of a magic 10,000 hours: every hour and every attempt changes the brain incrementally.

How to Stop Being Overlooked & Start Getting What You Want

Guest: Marina Cooley
Date: 2026-10-10 · Duration: 0:58:29
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3SdOXtuPLiU

KEYPOINTS

• Being overlooked is usually an attention problem, not a talent problem

Cooley teaches the 'attention economy': about 1.3 billion things are posted to Instagram daily and 34 million to TikTok, and each of us sees roughly 6,000–10,000 messages a day while remembering perhaps three. Your boss lives in that same flood. Her point is that managers aren't ignoring quiet high performers out of malice; attention is the scarcest resource, so the work has to be made visible.

• Fear of being ignored is as powerful as fear of being judged

Cooley says putting anything out there, whether a post, a raise request or a meeting ask, risks two outcomes: you don't get it, or nobody notices. She describes social rejection as registering in the same brain region as physical pain. Mel admits she avoided hosting her own events for six or seven years not from fear of criticism but because she truly believed nobody would come. Cooley's answer is to use the rational brain: nothing actually happens if you're ignored, except you learn you weren't memorable yet.

• If self-promotion feels cringe, you are probably doing it wrong

Cooley frames cringe as anticipated social rejection, often because we've seen bragging done badly. Step one is pushing through the discomfort; step two is finding an authentic way to show up that won't keep you up at night. Sharing how your work moved the organization's goals forward is not bragging, and framing it that way removes most of the cringe.

• Make your idea sticky, or you are forgettable

Memorable ideas work like a Velcro hook. Cooley's own sticky hook was her failed nut-butter company: at Coca-Cola interviews everyone knew her as 'the peanut butter girl', and they told her they hired her because she had 'moxie'. The lesson applies to job applications, school admissions, dating and networking: ask what makes your conversation different from everyone else's.

• For women in the Catalyst study, communicating achievements was the one tactic that raised pay

Catalyst followed about 3,000 'high-potential' MBA graduates in corporate careers and tested nine advancement tactics, including finding a mentor, extra training, working long hours and voicing achievements. For men, bringing in outside offers and saying they would work long hours paid off. For women, only one tactic moved compensation: communicating achievements. Cooley calls this good news, since women who can't promise long hours at certain life stages can still advance by doing the work and making its results known. The common mistake is believing great work alone will get noticed.

• Spend two hours a quarter thinking strategically about your career

Before tactics, Cooley asks for two hours each quarter, and notes that most people spend that long on social media every day. Use the time to map the organization's priorities, identify who gets rewarded and which traits they show, and find the high-impact projects you can 'ladder up' to. Without that link, she says, you'll struggle to advance however hard you work.

• Share results before review season, and be the one who presents them

She says the time to communicate achievements is well before the performance review. Each quarter, gather your wins along with visuals that show them. At quarterly business reviews, volunteer to present results: people remember whoever shared the numbers, even if that person wasn't solely responsible. 'The person that volunteers to talk out loud deals with the pain, but they also receive the fruit.'

• You need a portable reputation

Average job tenure is now about three to four years, closer to two for young workers, so you can't rely on being a known quantity at one company for 20 years. Cooley borrows from brand marketing: Coke stands for refreshment and happiness, and Nike and Reebok or Dunkin' and Starbucks each carry distinct attributes. Decide which attributes you want attached to you (innovative, resourceful, tech-savvy, good at startups) and make sure they travel with you. She cites data that people look you up about 98% of the time before meeting you.

• Critical reasoning is becoming the rarest and most valuable skill

Asked what gets people hired in a brutal market, Cooley lists resourcefulness, effective networking, being tech-savvy and, above all, critical reasoning: spotting problems before they happen and trying to answer your own questions first. On AI, she recommends testing it on every task to reduce fear and build fluency. She warns that if prompting is all you can do, 'within 6 months AI can do that without you.' She ties critical thinking closely to attention span: set aside quiet, input-free time to think through problems.

EXAMPLES

• Go viral, get an A

For 30 days her class is split into 30 groups, and each group posts on a shared new account for one day after studying the previous groups' posts in class. In 2022, when the algorithm rewarded daily posting, the account hit 1 million on day 15 and finished the month with 10 million impressions and over 1 million likes. Her teaching ethos: 'Tell me and I forget, teach me and I remember, involve me and I learn.'

• The woman with nine careers

Cooley spent four years as a consultant traveling 46 weeks a year, launched flavored peanut butters (pumpkin, honey nut banana) that failed within about 18 months, felt 'behind' at 28, then earned an MBA aimed at a single target, Coca-Cola, and networked with every interviewer beforehand. After two babies she hit another wall. A former professor's email led to a nine-month audition teaching an adjunct class scheduled for Thursdays at 6:30 p.m., and it became popular.

• The student who asks what success looks like

At least once a semester a student asks her on day one, 'What did students who got A's do? Tell me what success looks like.' Those students, she says, always get one of the A's. Mel suggests asking a new boss the same question about being wildly

successful in the role and the company.

- **Mel's hiring reality**

  Mel says she has 10–12 open roles with no job descriptions yet because the team is too busy to write them, and repeats a statistic she believes is true: about 80% of jobs are never listed. Her advice is to stop mindlessly hitting submit and go talk to people. Cooley adds a sample pitch: write to the whole team, name the 10 books you've read and the next 10 guests you'd book, or simply do sample work and send it.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Run the 3-second test on your profile**

  Have someone look at your LinkedIn or online presence for three seconds and say what they took away. If they can't name what problems you solve (for example, 'film editor who helps small brands'), it isn't clear enough yet. The aim is to show the problems you solve, not to brag.

- **Prep one or two 'nuggets' for every meeting**

  Spend 10 minutes each morning reviewing the day's meetings: the goal, who will attend, and which one or two achievements or ideas are worth slipping in. Cooley says that alone puts you ahead of '98% of people'. In virtual work, turn your camera on. As an introvert who only speaks when she has something new to say, she relies on advance notes, such as a relevant statistic.

- **Get a hobby outside of duty**

  Cooley's parting advice is to build a 'third identity' outside work and family obligations. Hobbies make you look foolish in front of others, which is practice for putting yourself out there, and as Mel notes, they also make you more interesting and memorable.

The Ultimate Men’s Health Guide: Testosterone, Sex Drive, & Aging

Guest: Dr. Michael Eisenberg
Date: 2026-10-08 · Duration: 1:09:07
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kbx9iMmJWn0

KEYPOINTS

• Normal testosterone covers a wide range and declines about 1% a year

Stanford urologist Dr. Michael Eisenberg, who leads Stanford's Male Reproductive Medicine and Surgery Program, puts normal at roughly 300–900 ng/dL. Levels peak between 20 and 30, then fall about 1% a year. Weight and metabolic health also pull them down. Below about 300, the share of men with low testosterone is roughly 10–20% in their 40s and 50s, 20% in their 60s, 30% in their 70s and 50% in their 80s. That is why 'half of men over 50' is the figure people quote.

• Low-T symptoms are vague, so test rather than guess

The signs are low energy, low sex drive, poor mood, poor sleep, poor concentration and erectile problems. Clinical red flags include anemia, low bone mineral density and a history of chemotherapy. Eisenberg admits these are non-specific, but if they bother you or your partner notices them, get a simple blood test, ideally before 9–10 a.m. and fasted. One low result gets repeated before treatment is discussed. He suggests adding it to routine checks from around 40–50, or earlier with risk factors.

• Depression and low testosterone feed each other

Low testosterone can impair mood, and depression can blunt the hormonal signalling that drives testosterone production. Mel says her husband, Chris, openly struggled with depression about five years ago: low energy, shut down and low sex drive. Those general changes can point to something deeper.

• Sleep, weight and anything heart-healthy raise testosterone

Chronic short sleep (4–5 hours instead of 7–9), shift work and sleep apnea all suppress testosterone, and apnea and low T reinforce each other. Losing weight through a good diet and exercise, not starvation, improves levels. GLP-1 drugs and bariatric surgery reliably raise them. His rule: 'Anything that's good for your heart is good for testosterone.'

• Treatment comes in several forms, each with trade-offs

Injectable testosterone is oil-based and usually given into the muscle every two weeks, in the thigh or, with a partner's help, the buttocks. Some men feel the peaks and valleys, so doses are sometimes given once or twice a week. Longer-acting injections last months. Daily gels avoid needles, and pellets go under the skin of the hip. Mel notes that some experts on her women's-hormone episodes distrusted pellets, and Eisenberg says the right form depends on preference.

• Taking testosterone suppresses sperm production

Testosterone inside the testicle runs at around 5,000 or more, many times the blood level, and that high concentration is what drives sperm production. Testosterone from outside the body switches off the brain's signal, so internal levels drop and sperm counts fall. Other side effects include oily skin, acne, hair loss, breast growth (from conversion to estrogen) and higher red blood cell counts with clotting risk.

• The TRAVERSE trial eased heart and prostate fears

In this landmark trial, about 5,000 men were given testosterone or a placebo gel and followed over time. It found no increase in prostate cancer or in heart attacks and strokes, and Eisenberg says the FDA is moving to update warning labels. He compares it to the way fears around female hormone therapy are being revised.

• If your levels are normal, don't take it

Eisenberg warns about clinics that profit from prescribing and upselling to men with normal levels, exposing them to every side effect for no benefit. Men without working testicles need testosterone for life. Everyone else should treat it as a trial of about six months, adjusting form and dose to reach a therapeutic range. Men who see a clear benefit continue, and those who don't, stop.

• Erectile dysfunction is common and a vascular warning sign

According to the Massachusetts Male Aging Study, over half of men over 40 have some trouble with erections, roughly 40% in their 40s and rising with each decade. Even 15–20% of men in their 20s and 30s are affected. Erections depend on blood flow, via nitric oxide and cyclic GMP, so smoking, diabetes, high cholesterol and high blood pressure all show up here. About 20–25% of long-distance cyclists notice numbness, pain or erectile problems from saddle pressure.

• Sperm counts are falling worldwide and men are half of infertility

The largest recent update of sperm-count studies found declines on every continent, possibly speeding up over the last 20 years, alongside lower testosterone, earlier puberty in boys and more testicular cancer. A male factor is present in about 50% of infertile couples: 30% male only and 20% combined. Couples often rush to IVF without checking the man.

EXAMPLES

• The ED treatment ladder

First line is pills: Viagra (sildenafil, half-life of 6–8 hours) or Cialis (tadalafil, 16–18 hours, sold as the 'weekend pill' and suitable for daily dosing). Second line is a gel or pellet placed in the urethra 5–10 minutes before sex, which works 60–80% of the time and can cause tingling. Third line is penile injections, which work about 90% of the time. Eisenberg admits the needle is a huge psychological barrier, though GLP-1 users are more used to self-injecting.

• The 1980 lecture demonstration

Eisenberg tells how penile injections were introduced: a pharmacologist injected himself in his hotel room before giving a talk at a urology conference, then lowered his trousers on stage and walked the aisles inviting colleagues to inspect the result.

• 20 ejaculations a month and prostate cancer

A study of about 30,000 men followed for roughly 20 years found that men who ejaculated 20 or more times a month had about a 20% lower risk of prostate cancer. This held across age groups and in larger datasets, whether through sex or masturbation. The mechanism is unclear, and he stresses he is not prescribing it.

• Chris's testosterone hesitation

Mel's husband questioned starting testosterone because injections meant 'a lot of oil' for 30 years and long-term effects were uncertain. Eisenberg confirms the injections really are oil-based and says that is why the trial-period approach and choice of formulation matter.

• Waiting a year before checking the man

By the time men come to his fertility clinic, couples have often struggled for a year or more and don't want to wait. But sperm take 2–3 months to make, so any fix needs time. He argues this puts the burden unfairly on women.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Ask your doctor for a morning blood test

If symptoms fit, ask for a fasted test before 9–10 a.m., repeated to confirm. Add blood pressure, cholesterol and blood sugar, since many of these conditions affect longevity, not just quality of life.

• Both partners get checked early

For couples struggling to conceive, test the man immediately alongside the woman. Male fixes, including hormones, lifestyle, medications and other conditions, need months to show up in sperm.

• Nighttime urination and prostate screening

Waking three or four times a night is often due to an enlarged prostate narrowing the outflow. It is usually a quality-of-life issue, but it is treatable, so don't just live with it. Prostate cancer is usually symptomless and caught through PSA screening, typically yearly or every six months from the 50s, earlier with a family history.

• His one action

Take an internal inventory, recognize you have agency, be more active and get basic checks. Men's reproductive health is 'a window' into overall health. The pelvic floor muscles, which control erections, ejaculation and urinary and bowel control, deserve attention too.

7 Life Lessons (I Wish Someone Had Told Me)

Date: 2026-10-05 · Duration: 1:04:27
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=362Dmp_HU0Y

KEYPOINTS

• Move at least once, and treat the guilt as proof the relationship matters

To a listener torn between moving and staying near family, Mel says move, especially in your 20s. 'Your move isn't forever, but changing your environment changes you forever.' Family hesitancy is about them liking you close. Guilt doesn't mean you shouldn't go; it means your family matters. Physical distance can deepen emotional closeness because you stop taking each other for granted.

• Change starts with deciding you don't like how life feels

Mel says she missed this for decades: change is a choice. Autopilot lulls you into tolerating stress and a 'blah' life without taking the first step, which is admitting 'I don't like this anymore. I need a change.' Relationships, habits, jobs, location and mindset can all change once that decision is made.

• Passion is a feeling, and it's really just energy

Passion isn't a hidden job, calling or person to find. Swap the word for 'energy': a passionate chef, rodeo barrel rider or DJ is simply energized by what they do. So ask what energizes you, and list everything that lifts your mood, such as dancing, gardening, choir, museums, team sports or cooking for friends, without judging it.

• Adding something you enjoy can make an overloaded week feel lighter

Mel cites Wharton behavioral scientist Katy Milkman: when you're overwhelmed, scheduling something you enjoy (not a 'should') increases your sense of control over your time, because it signals you matter. It also gives a double boost of energy, once while anticipating it and again when you show up. Her prompt: ask 'What am I looking forward to today or this week?' to train positive anticipation.

• You cannot out-exercise a poor diet

At 55, after menopause, Mel realized 'the problem wasn't the fitness, it was the fuel.' She wasn't eating enough protein or fiber. Experts and her doctors suggested about 120 g of protein daily; she aims for 100 g and has never hit 120. She targets 30 g of fiber, citing Dr. Amy Shah's claim that 95% of Americans fall short. These are her personal targets as relayed from guests, not individual medical advice.

• Train to feel strong, not to look skinny

For about 50 years, Mel says, she exercised to be thin because she was driven by how she looked to others. Shifting to strength, energy, longevity and vitality changed her motivation. She wants to dance in her 80s and 90s rather than be 'thin and frail'.

• Swap 'should' for an intention

'Should' is pressure, not intention. Her intentions are to be someone who takes care of herself, to dance at her grandkids' weddings and to lift her own suitcase into the overhead bin. She cites research, particularly on women, that reframing exercise as the only time in the day that's just for you increases the desire to protect it.

• You can't think logically while flooded, so name it and pause

Using Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence director Marc Brackett's framework: (1) notice you're having an emotional reaction; (2) label it precisely (scared vs. lonely, angry vs. overwhelmed, hurt vs. incompetent); (3) practice not responding. Labeling slows the emotion and suggests the right fix, whether a hug, a walk, breathing or asking for help. Mel cites UCLA 'affect labeling' research showing that naming feelings reduces activity in the brain's emotional center, plus the '90-second rule' that most emotions pass if not fed. She links it to Viktor Frankl's gap between stimulus and response.

• A breakup is grief and withdrawal

The pain isn't a sign the right person got away; it means the time together mattered and the future you pictured died. Your brain is unlearning doing life with someone, which is why you can 'hear' their reply while driving. Like quitting alcohol, any contact such as voice memos, social feeds or old photos reactivates the wiring. She cites research that most people start feeling better around 11.5 weeks after a breakup.

• Your heart decides what, your head decides when and how

For a career change where the heart says yes and the head isn't sure, follow the heart for direction. Use the head for timing and responsibility, such as building a financial runway rather than quitting today.

EXAMPLES

• Kendall's move

Mel's daughter moved from the East Coast to Los Angeles for seven years, grew into a new version of herself, then felt the place 'wasn't as sparkly anymore' and decided to move again. Mel uses the story to show that outgrowing a place is a signal to act: 'If you change nothing, nothing changes.'

• Five books and why fiction builds compassion

Mel recommends Pierce Brown's Red Rising (her son Oakley's favorite, read to connect with him), Kristin Hannah's Firefly Lane (from her mother-in-law, about lifelong female friendship), Virginia Evans's The Correspondent (told in letters by a grouchy older woman), John Grisham's espionage novel The French Illusion (she credits his The Firm with showing her she didn't have to practice law), and Sarah J. Maas's A Court of Thorns and Roses series. Her point is that stepping into unlike minds expands compassion.

• Mel's daily routine

Her day starts with water plus 10 g creatine (she started at 5 g and increased after four to five weeks) and a 23 g protein shot. Then she moves: walks or hikes at least five days a week and lifts heavy weights for 30 minutes three days a week, crediting guests Stacy Sims, Gabrielle Lyon, Vonda Wright, Amy Shah and Eric Topol. Second breakfast is Greek yogurt with blueberries or eggs and salad. She delays coffee until 90 minutes after waking, eats salads with protein for lunch and dinner, takes a nightly bath and goes to bed early.

- **Naming overwhelm in real time**
  On a day with travel logistics, her daughter's breakdown, a missed work deadline and being sick, Mel felt the emotion rise 'like a volcano'. Others read this as hostility. Saying aloud 'I'm really overwhelmed right now' slowed it down.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Breakup recovery steps**
  From Let Them: 30 days of no contact; box up every visible reminder (no burning); refresh the bedroom with paint, new sheets or a furniture rearrangement; ask friends and family to check in; fill your calendar, since an idle mind ruminates; pick a proud-making challenge like a 5K. Ask: 'If the love of my life were around the corner, how would I spend my nights and weekends?'
- **The one-year heart test**
  Close your eyes and imagine life a year from now if nothing changes, then a year after making the change. If your heart expands, that's a yes even if you're nervous; if it contracts, that's a no. Then plan the logistics with your head.
- **Goal shielding for overwhelming days**
  Ask, 'If I could only make progress on one thing today, what would it be?' Write it down and tackle it before the day swallows you. Mel cites a Journal of Personality and Social Psychology study showing single-goal focus protects attention and boosts persistence. 'Busy means you did a lot; productive means you moved something important forward.'
- **Insert one enjoyable thing this week**
  For example, an improv class, a pickup game, a solo movie or a walk you've skipped. Anticipating it adds energy before it even happens.

How to Reinvent Yourself and Start a New Chapter

Guest: John Grisham
Date: 2026-10-01 · Duration: 1:09:07
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jez2pA6iFLA

KEYPOINTS

• Your current chapter is not your final one

Mel opens by explaining why Grisham matters to her. In 1991, miserable in her first year at Boston College Law School and feeling trapped by loans, she read The Firm. Learning that the author was a lawyer who also wrote gripping fiction gave her an epiphany that a law degree didn't have to define her whole life. The theme of the episode is that you can always write the next chapter, even when the current one feels finished or wrong.

• 'Golden moments' redirect a whole life

Grisham describes moments when a light goes on and you don't fully know why, and he says this has happened to him at least twice. Drifting at 20 after transferring between colleges, he watched a wounded Vietnam veteran tear apart a pro-war professor in a 1975 finance class. Afterwards the vet told him general business was 'crap' and to study accounting as preparation for law school. He took the advice on the spot and says he stopped drifting and became a different person.

• Looking back, the messy path connects

Seen in reverse, Grisham's detours (drifting, odd jobs, small-town practice) all fed the books. Mel takes from this that when you're overwhelmed and unsure of your next move, you don't need to know the whole path yet. You need the next step.

• One page a day beats big bursts

Grisham's core rule: if you're serious, stop talking about it and don't talk your book to death. Write at least a page every day. It might take 15 minutes one day and an hour the next, ideally at the same time, in the same spot, with the same coffee, which he still does after 50-plus books. He wrote A Time to Kill and The Firm over five years by getting up at 5 a.m. before practising law. It got easier with repetition.

• Know your ending before you start

Grisham doesn't write the first scene until he knows the last one, because if you know where you're going it's hard to get lost. He sees writers produce 50,000 words on inspiration, back themselves into a corner and throw it away. He outlines everything and refines each idea into a pitch of 30 seconds or less, which he tests on his wife Renee, who is brutally honest and shoots most of them down. Mel reframes this as clarity and alignment for any goal.

• Rejection is normal, not a verdict

His first manuscript went out to two lists of 10 agents and 10 publishers, and the rejections came straight back. Mel counts 28 rejections in total, and A Time to Kill was a flop when it finally came out. Grisham notes that almost every successful writer, and arguably every successful person, was turned down repeatedly. What sets his story apart is that he didn't stop.

• You make your own luck by staying in the current

Grisham calls The Firm's breakout a huge lucky break. Mel pushes back, drawing on a luck researcher she had on the show: luck is mostly the actions that put you in the current. Five years of writing, pushing past rejections and shrugging off a flop all set up the moment. He agrees it was a five-year journey he tends to downplay for a laugh.

• Every job is material

Grisham laid asphalt, sold underwear and changed colleges several times. He says every job you ever have teaches lessons you use for the rest of your life, so time that feels wasted in an ill-fitting job still counts.

• Being falsely accused shaped his lifelong sense of justice

At 19 a teacher pulled him into a hallway mid-exam, said his term paper was too well written for a student his age, accused him of plagiarism and gave it an F. He cried in the restroom, then failed the final and got a D-minus. Years later he realised how traumatic it had been and that it fed his writing about people who are wrongly convicted. Mel connects it to believing in yourself when someone else doesn't.

• Fight hopelessness locally

Grisham says he's still angry and frustrated at the lack of criminal justice reform. Mel's answer is that heartbreak means you still care. Ask yourself what one thing you can do today, in your home, marriage, friendships or community, that is part of a positive shift.

EXAMPLES

• The origin of The Firm

At Ole Miss in the early 1980s, a top-student friend kept visiting regional firms in Houston, Memphis and New Orleans. He came back once saying one firm felt weird, like the kind of place you never leave. Grisham kept the idea for years and wrote The Firm in two years straight after A Time to Kill. They joked the title would never stick.

• The $600,000 film-rights surprise

With the manuscript stalled at his agent in late 1989, a scout sent around 25 copies to Hollywood studios over Christmas without anyone telling Grisham. A bidding war started. His agent hoped for $400,000–500,000, and Paramount paid $600,000, which was more than Grisham had earned in 10 years of practising law. He and Renee sat down at the kitchen table to decide what to do.

• Becoming a 'big guy'

After The Firm hit the New York Times list in 1991 and he did a round of interviews including the Today Show, someone told him Stephen King and Michael Crichton publish every year. Grisham went home to Oxford, Mississippi and wrote around the clock so The Pelican Brief would come out in 1992.

• A first draft of nearly 1,000 pages

Typed up, A Time to Kill was almost a thousand pages. Grisham says he wasn't a writer and didn't know what he was doing, which is why he now outlines.

- **Into wrongful convictions**
  As a young lawyer he read a New York Times obituary of a man much like himself who had come within five days of execution in Oklahoma despite being innocent. He met the family and wrote the book. That work led him to the Innocence Project. He realised thousands of innocent people are in prison, and 20 years later he's still writing about it.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Pick a daily slot for your 'dream' work**
  Same time, same place, a tiny minimum such as one page or 15 minutes. Skip the announcement. Do the work quietly and let it add up.
- **Write your 30-second pitch first**
  Before starting a project or career change, say where it ends and why it matters in 30 seconds to an honest person. If you can't, you're not clear yet.
- **Treat rejections as part of the process**
  Plan for many 'no's from the start, keep submitting, and measure progress by pages and attempts instead of acceptances.
- **For drifting 18–26-year-olds**
  Grisham drifted until 20. Expose yourself to people and jobs, and listen for the advice that clicks. One conversation can redirect you.

If You’re Struggling With Money, Watch This

Guest: Vivian Tu
Date: 2026-09-28 · Duration: 1:05:09
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=78BsFkDrAr8

KEYPOINTS

• Money is power and freedom, and few money mistakes are permanent

Vivian Tu (Your Rich BFF) frames money as the ability to leave a bad job, a bad relationship or a bad apartment. Her opening message to anyone struggling: there are very few financial mistakes you can't come back from, and it's never too early or too late to start. She grew up without money and at 21 waited at a bar until her 12:01 a.m. direct deposit cleared to pay her tab.

• It's expensive to be broke, and trying to look not-broke makes it worse

Vivian's lessons from being broke: overdraft fees fall on the people who have the least, and money works as a 'moral measuring stick', so people overspend to prove they're fine. On a trading desk with a brand-name title but no family safety net, she compared herself to peers buying apartments. She says the thing she changed most was keeping up with the Joneses.

• You can't budget your way out of paycheck to paycheck

If you're genuinely spending only on necessities on a 40-hour job, Vivian says it's an income problem, not a spending problem, and she doesn't think it's fair. You have two levers: earn more where you are (negotiate a raise, get promoted, or job-hop for a better salary) or add a side hustle. She admits this is hard for people already exhausted by work and caregiving.

• But first, audit last month's spending honestly

Ask whether everything after taxes went to necessities or whether there were purchases you regret. Return what you can. Look for patterns like lash and nail appointments, sports betting, or front-row concert tickets when general admission would do. She's clear she isn't asking you to cut every joy forever, just to see where the money actually goes.

• Pay yourself first by automating the split

Instead of letting 100% of your paycheck land in checking, where you'll find a way to spend it, send 90–95% to checking for rent and bills and 5–10% straight to savings. If you can't change direct deposit, set a transfer for a set amount on payday. Freelancers should move 10% to savings and 30–40% to a tax pot when each invoice is paid. Mel's framing: broke you pays rich you every time money comes in.

• Keep savings in a high-yield account

Vivian puts the national average savings rate at 0.37%, so $100 becomes $100.37 after a year. High-yield savings accounts were paying roughly 3–4%, about $103 on the same $100. An emergency fund of around three months of expenses 'isn't sexy', she says, but it lets you sleep at night and turns a shock into an inconvenience.

• Ask for a raise with a 'brag book'

Vivian keeps an inbox folder ('Brag Book 2026') for every congratulation and win. She grinds from July to October, then meets her manager with receipts: a short recap of team success and examples of goals she hit, followed by the ask. The point is to make the case with evidence before budgets are set.

• Find your FU number: perfect-year cost divided by 0.04

Picture one perfect year (where you live, who you support, what you do) and price it, then divide by 0.04. The result is how much you'd need invested for investment income to replace work income, based on a 4% withdrawal rate. Mel's check: $1 million at 4% gives about $40,000 a year. Vivian says don't panic. Over-50s can make extra 'catch-up' contributions to retirement accounts.

• Investing cheat code: a robo-advisor

If account types confuse you, sign up for a robo-advisor, which takes about 45 minutes. Pick the account type, answer questions about income, savings, debt, how you'd feel about losses and when you plan to retire, and it builds and manages a portfolio. Use retirement accounts for retirement and an individual brokerage account for 20–25-year goals that aren't retirement.

• Buying a home is a values and lifestyle decision, not a milestone

Buy if you're sure about the place for at least 5–7 years. Rent if you'd hate fixing a toilet at 2 a.m. or paying HOA fees. Don't buy because your parents or friends did. Vivian also notes that home ownership forces saving and is a key route to generational wealth in the US, that a 20% deposit isn't mandatory (FHA loans and 'conventional 97' mortgages exist), and that you can buy an investment property somewhere cheaper while you rent.

EXAMPLES

• The German-cockroach apartment

Vivian's 'Sex and the City' SoHo apartment had a severe German cockroach infestation. Breaking the lease cost every dollar she'd saved in her first full year of working, which felt like 365 days on a treadmill. That was her belt-tightening moment: no weekly nails, eating out less. Mel notes that even that small cushion gave her the power to leave.

• The $13,000 baguette injury

On her 25th birthday Vivian cut off the tip of her finger on a crusty baguette and ended up at Mount Sinai's emergency department. The bill was $13,000, and her share with decent insurance was $1,600. Her emergency fund paid it immediately.

• Fighting a medical bill

Vivian says 80% of medical bills contain errors. Her steps: request an itemised bill, check prices on a tool like FAIR Health Consumer, and call rather than email because 'they will ghost you'. Ask about waivers, relief programmes and charity care, and offer to pay today in exchange for a discount. Negotiating works best if you're uninsured, since insured rates are usually pre-negotiated.

• Mel's $800,000 hole and the bounced $125 check

Mel remembers watching her daughter play town soccer knowing the $125 fee check had bounced. She got out of $800,000 of debt by working three jobs, cutting every expense she could, and putting 25 cents of each dollar into savings, later 50 cents, plus payment plans. It took seven or eight years.

- **The $100,000 vacation test**
  To check whether a couple's money values match, ask what each would do with $100,000 for the trip of a lifetime. Mel would choose adventure (Africa, India, or rafting the Grand Canyon). An eight-star resort with zero steps suggests someone who values status and luxury.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Living at home is a power move**
  Nearly half of Americans under 30 live with a parent, according to Federal Reserve data Mel cites. Vivian says thank your parents and redirect the rent you save into a 401(k) or Roth IRA.
- **Talk money before you merge lives**
  Couples who lay everything out early can defuse most hot-button fights. Partners don't need matching incomes, but they need matching effort and clearly defined roles.
- **Rewrite the women-and-money story**
  Vivian says single women own more homes than single men in all 50 states, carry less debt in every category except student loans, and that a Fidelity analysis found women's portfolios outperformed men's. Mel admits she once assumed her husband would earn all the money.
- **Start small but start now**
  Even 5% automated savings, a call to a hospital billing office, or a single robo-advisor sign-up begins shifting power back to you.

The Most Important Divorce Advice You Will Ever Hear (From #1 Divorce Lawyer)

Guest: James Sexton
Date: 2026-09-24 · Duration: 1:26:39
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XBmNRPx7kvQ

KEYPOINTS

• The pain is unavoidable, but the damage is optional

Sexton's framing is that divorce isn't weather that just happens to you. It's a process with many levers you control. Handled well, it costs less money, does less harm to the children and to you, and makes working with your lawyer easier. Friends, family and community form the 'fourth leg of the table' alongside you, your spouse and the lawyer.

• Ask whether your marriage is broken or just neglected

Many marriages aren't broken but have been left unattended so long they look like 'roommates running a daycare center'. The two problems need different skills. The early warning signs are flatness rather than anger ('anger still implies priority'), conversations limited to logistics, no real questions asked of each other, and contemptuous 'What?' or 'All right, whatever' replies. He calls that 'the smoke, not the fire'.

• Five situations where divorce is necessary

(1) Abuse of any kind, physical, emotional or financial, including threats around the children: 'you can't be loved if you're not safe.' (2) The 'false self', meaning 'one person and one costume'. (3) 'Stolen reality', where someone authors your life without consent, such as a liquidated 401(k), a second family or a three-year affair. (4) The 'unrepentant repeat', where cheating or using the 'nuclear codes' (weaponized intimacy) comes with apologies they've become fluent in. (5) The 'shrinking marriage', which demands you become smaller and quieter. Leaving these, he says, isn't a failure at love but a defense of it.

• Divorce moves through six stages

Pre-contemplative (unhappy but not connecting it to the marriage); contemplative (a '3 a.m. private trial with no defense counsel'); decision (now it's about timing, logistics and fear); taking steps (the private becomes public); the thick of it (Whitman's 'hour of lead'); and getting out. 'The paperwork gets done faster than your nervous system': grief often begins only when the papers are signed.

• Before blaming the marriage, look back 18 months

Grief from losing a parent, a child leaving for college, a pet dying or a job change can resurface about 18 months later 'in a different costume'. The spouse becomes the easy target because it's hard to be mad at fate or God.

• Confide in the right people, and not your kids

Avoid social media, the group chat and your children at any age, whether 8, 15 or 40. Instead see a challenging individual therapist (if you love therapy 100% of the time, 'you're doing it wrong'), one discreet friend with no stake, and a lawyer purely for information, which is protected by attorney-client privilege. Then possibly your spouse. 'Counsel' asks what outcome you want; 'take him for everything' is entertainment.

• Announce a decision; don't ask for a divorce

His suggested 13 words: 'I have given this a lot of thought. Our marriage needs to end.' Then stop talking, and own your part: 'I can't be the person you deserve… I apologize. I never meant to hurt you.' Tell your spouse before the children, and only tell the kids once you can answer their logistical questions, like where each parent will live and where the dog goes.

• Staying 'for the kids' is a choice about what they learn

Children remember what your marriage looked like, not whether you stayed. His father warned him not to smoke while smoking, and he started in high school. The test: would you want your daughter or son to have this marriage? High conflict harms kids whether parents stay together or divorce; that's about how you handle it, not divorce itself.

• You are restructuring a family you will co-own forever

'A divorce ends a marriage. It doesn't end a family.' He tells clients with toddlers that what happens at the negotiating table shapes their child's wedding 20+ years later. Write down your goals, give them to a trusted person, and have them read them back when you lose sight of them.

• Hire a skilled litigator to make court less likely

He advises against lawyers who sell 'friendly divorce' because they're afraid of court and fold when they hear 'Please call your first witness.' Two skilled litigators know each other's arguments and settle. Good lawyers try to steer you toward therapists and mediators and use a 'scalpel', not a 'chainsaw'.

• Get a therapist before a dating app

Rebounds skip the repair. He notes second and third marriages divorce at higher rates, especially when the new partner was an affair partner: 'a man who leaves his wife for his mistress just creates a job opening.' Treat divorce as one punctuation mark on your 'Wikipedia page', not the whole story. Stop chasing who you were before.

EXAMPLES

• Sexton's own divorce began with a question

He asked his wife, 'Are you happy?' She asked back if he really wanted to do this now. They agreed they loved each other but 'if sheer power of will could make two people love each other, we would love each other forever.' He says blindness is often willful: 'Don't look in that drawer' is the only drawer worth looking in.

• January 2nd rush

Divorce lawyers and gyms both fill up after the 'holiday ceasefire' and after kids go back to school, when strain from holidays, debt and family visits peaks.

• The 'you're my favorite person' payoff

Mel credits Sexton's four words from his first appearance with improving her 30-year marriage to Chris. The best end-of-life

line for a marriage, he says, is 'You helped me become the most authentic version of myself, and you're my favorite person.'

- **The joint announcement**

  He suggests both ex-spouses post the same message at the same time, saying the marriage ended, asking for privacy, saying 'there are no teams' and asking friends to treat both with respect as future co-grandparents. This heads off the social fracturing Mel has seen friends suffer.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **The 48-hour plan**

  Get the kids 'out of the blast radius', for example at their grandparents'. Don't share a bed or house that night; offer options (you take a hotel, or they do). Beforehand, copy key financial documents, secure logins and some access to money for counsel, and ideally consult a lawyer first.

- **Know your financial snapshot even in a happy marriage**

  Know roughly where assets are, how much is retirement versus liquid, the financial planner's name and the life insurance carrier, since a spouse could also die.

- **Schedule your grief**

  'Unscheduled grief deletes your whole day.' Set a time, such as Sundays at 1:00, to cry and play sad albums.

- **Supporting someone through divorce**

  Offer a menu of options, such as crying together or making them laugh, and say the choice can change. Admit words fall short and say 'I love you.' Ask to do something concrete like mowing their lawn, taking the kids out or cooking dinner, framed as a favor to you.

- **The 10-minute test**

  Try talking with your spouse for 10 minutes about anything but jobs, kids or the house. Crickets are a signal to have the awkward conversation now, before therapists, mediators or lawyers are needed. Question default habits too, like why you stopped going to the Saturday farmers market.

The Let Them Theory: How to Handle Difficult People & Take Back Your Peace and Power

Date: 2026-09-21 · Duration: 0:45:21
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=brVzDv0Ze-o

KEYPOINTS

- **The goal isn't to make a difficult person easy; it's to stop making your own life harder because they're difficult.**
  Mel says it's the question she's been asked most since Let Them took off: how to apply it to people you love but find frustrating. Her answer: 'Let Them' isn't abandonment. It's moving your energy away from their choices and toward what you control, meaning your responses, conditions and conversations. Both people contribute to any dynamic, so changing your half changes it.
- **The framework is Me, We, Them: three places to look in every difficult relationship.**
  Me: create space for yourself, starting with what's going well and then naming what's hard. We: decide what you want from the relationship and have one clear conversation about it. Them: let them choose, then respond to what they actually do. Mel calls it a dance. Using Let Them and Let Me 'changes the music.'
- **Mistake #1: expecting someone else to change.**
  You can't want something for someone more than they want it for themselves. People change when they're willing to do the work. Pressure and judgment usually push the other way. 'When you change what you do, absolutely everything changes.'
- **The 'we' conversation is a three-sentence script, then silence.**
  Mel credits therapist Terry Real, a past guest: 'This is what happened. This is the story I'm telling myself. This is what I need from you.' Then ask 'Am I understanding this correctly?' and stop talking. That's the hard part. You aren't diagnosing them or acting as their counselor. You're saying how the relationship affects you and making room for their side, which might surprise you.
- **Let Them has a safety limit: it applies when someone is capable and informed.**
  It doesn't mean abandoning someone, especially if they can't make safe decisions. But if an adult understands the consequences, can decide for themselves, and still refuses help, 'give them the dignity of their own experience' and take your life back. Your job isn't to make them happy or healthy.
- **Mistake #2: letting their behavior control your behavior.**
  Dad raises his voice, now you're shouting. Your sister sends one passive-aggressive text and your day is shot. Mel says the same thing happens with people from years ago: their behavior controlled you then, and if you're still shrinking yourself, it's still controlling you now. 'They don't control you. You control you.'
- **Sometimes the 'we' step is empty, and that's the point.**
  If the relationship is already over, as with a cruel former friend, there's no conversation to have. Cross 'we' off the list and put no more energy there. The work becomes 'let me' (act the way the confident version of you would) and 'let them' (let them be jealous, judge or misunderstand you).
- **With a controlling third party, change the conditions instead of trying to change the person.**
  You probably won't change a controlling stepparent. So change the setting: shorter visits, a hotel, a neutral meeting place, leaving when the yelling starts. Recognizing you have these choices is the boundary.
- **Mistake #3: thinking they 'should.' Ask whether they 'could.'**
  'Should' turns small things into stories about character ('you don't care'). 'Could' asks whether they're capable, and whether you've even asked. Each person is shaped by a past and present you can't see, even after 30 years of marriage, as with Mel's husband Chris. Assume they're a jerk and you'll bring it up like one. If they keep not doing what you asked, they either can't or won't, and those call for different responses.

EXAMPLES

- **Teresa and her 68-year-old mother**
  Teresa, a school administrator, also manages the health of her mother, who has diabetes and liver disease. Her mom lets healthy meals go to waste, cancels appointments Teresa took time off for, and gets infections. Teresa: 'I love my mom, but I don't want to be around her.' Mel's script ends with 'what help are you willing to accept?' If the answer is none ('I just want to eat burritos'), Teresa can say it's her mom's body and choice, she's stepping back, and 'if you ever change your mind, just ask.'
- **Terry's 27-year-old son with 'no ambition'**
  Both sons, 30 and 27, moved home after breakups, and the younger one works a dead-end job. Mel's 'me' reframe: he came home because he feels safe, and he's working in this economy. His parents' judgment is part of what isn't going well. The 'we' step is apologizing for the judgment ('you're on your own timeline'). Then let him figure it out. He has '50, 60, or 70 years' left.
- **Serena and a jealous 17-year friendship**
  Serena's friend of 17 years turned 'jealous, cruel' when Serena grew. Three years later, Serena still shrinks how she dresses and posts. Mel: the friend made you small then, but you're doing it now. Act like the proud version of you would.
- **The stepmother with rules on the back door**
  A family friend visiting her dad finds rules on the back of the front door: don't touch the thermostat, fold the towels just right. It's all correction and no connection. Mel: get a hotel or meet at a restaurant, leave by day three ('fish and family both start to stink after 3 days'), and ask Dad alone, 'Do you want a relationship with me?'
- **Seven water glasses**
  A listener counted seven empty glasses around her boyfriend's tiny apartment. 'He should know I'm not the maid' quickly became 'he doesn't care.' Mel's version: 'When I got home there were seven glasses… and the story I told myself is…'
- **Mel's own 'they should' realization**
  For years Mel was frustrated that someone 'should' treat her better. Talking with her therapist, she realized the person wasn't capable of it because they were struggling with a mental illness. She says making room for that truth (whether the cause is

addiction, mental illness or caregiving overload) changed how she responded.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Terry Real's script**
  Use it word for word, then ask 'Am I understanding this correctly?' and stop talking.
- **The three questions for any relationship**
  Me: what's going well and what's hard? (Get support. Don't carry it alone.) We: what do I want, and what will I say? Them: what are they choosing, and how will I respond?
- **Condition changes you control**
  Shorter stays, a hotel instead of the guest room, a restaurant instead of the house, leaving the moment yelling starts. None of these require the other person to change.
- **Should vs. could check**
  Before bringing something up, ask: have I actually asked? Are they capable? What past or present pressures might I not see?

Oprah Winfrey: How to Find Your Unique Purpose, Authentic Power, and Calling in Life

Guest: Oprah Winfrey
Date: 2026-09-17 · Duration: 1:18:18
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=adQyLViK_ZU

KEYPOINTS

- **Who you become matters more than what you acquire**
  Looking back at 72, Oprah says what she has acquired isn't as remarkable as who she has become, and she is most proud of the woman she is now. Her opening message: everyone has the power to fulfil 'the fullest expression of yourself as a human being.' She calls Earth a school where we all teach and learn, and believes everyone came here to serve. She also credits 25 years at number one to never seeing a difference between herself and her audience. She saw herself as their surrogate voice.
- **You have an inner GPS, and her first memory of hearing it was at four or five**
  Oprah describes a voice or feeling that guides her. Her only conscious memory of first hearing it is from early childhood in rural Mississippi, churning butter on the back porch while her grandmother hung sheets she'd brought home from the white families she worked for. When her grandmother said 'you better watch me, one day you're going to have to do this', a feeling told Oprah, 'No, you won't. This will not be your life.' She adds with a laugh: 'But don't tell her.'
- **The noise of fear and people-pleasing drowns the whisper**
  Oprah admits there were long stretches when she couldn't hear that inner voice because fear and the 'disease to please' were so loud. Her test for whether you're on track is flow. Getting off centre and not listening shows up as disorder in every area, including your house, closets and car.
- **Things happen for you without meaning you deserved them**
  When Oprah says things happen for a reason, she is careful to separate that from blame. She was raped at nine, and again at 10 and 14, and grew up poor in Mississippi where it was illegal for Black people to be on the street after dark. She says there is a reason for everything, but that doesn't make you responsible or mean it should have happened. A lonely childhood without validation at home drove her to become a talker and to excel at school, which became her calling.
- **Stop seeking 10-gallon love from pint-sized people**
  From a life class with T.D. Jakes that made her cry: some people are '10-gallon' people looking for 10 gallons of love, attention and acceptance from 'pint-sized' people who can't even carry a gallon. Recognising someone's capacity, rather than expecting what they can't give, is how she made peace with her mother long before her mother died.
- **Intention is cause and effect: what you put out comes back**
  In the late 1980s Oprah read Gary Zukav's The Seat of the Soul. Its chapters on intention, linked to karma, cured her people-pleasing. If you say yes to please people, they feel that intention. After 1989 every show was designed around one intention: give viewers an aha moment that could change their direction.
- **Bring intention to any job, even a boring one**
  If you're working just to make ends meet, Oprah says to let every step in that job be for the love of your family and never lose sight of that as you walk out the door. Purpose also lives in how you treat the person parking your car. That is your 'heart print'.
- **Ask 'What do I really want?' and get specific**
  After shows, women would tell Oprah 'I just want to be happy'. When pressed, they could only point to their children's happiness. She pushes people to define the dream they hold in their own heart, not the one Instagram, X or Threads decided for them.
- **You always have the right to change your mind**
  Oprah calls ending her show and launching OWN one of the biggest mistakes of her life. Her inner voice was so strong she'd wake at night unable to breathe, saying 'don't do it'. But she'd already signed. She reveals she kept her word to please people outside her, not because she wanted to. In 2012, one of her worst years, every headline was about 'the struggling OWN network'. She says the question is who you're keeping your word to, the outside or the inside.
- **Purpose is quiet, daily and bigger than you**
  Oprah says people stay stuck because they can't see their connection to something greater, and she insists your life isn't that small. People at church told her grandmother she had 'a talking child', and her purpose turned out to be using her voice. At 72 she asks 'How can I be used?' and treats life as if she has one solid decade left to deliver her message with clarity, love and no ego.

EXAMPLES

- **The on-air humiliation she never got over**
  On a live show, a man revealed in front of the audience that a woman was pregnant, and the audience gasped. Oprah apologised to both afterwards and says the woman's humiliation 'still abides with me'. She told producers 'never again'. Her lesson is that the worst thing you can do is humiliate someone, so never criticise anyone in front of others.
- **The car full of hair rollers**
  Driving a little Chevette, young Oprah did her hair on the way to work and threw the rollers in the back until the car was a wreck. Seeing it, she thought, 'This car represents my life right now.' She cleaned it out one roller at a time, finding quarters under the seat.
- **Caroline Myss and 'spirit' in 1992**
  During a show with Caroline Myss (Anatomy of the Spirit), Oprah saw the audience had tuned out and stopped to ask why. They didn't know what 'spirit' meant ('Jesus? Moses?'). That led to segments called Remembering Your Spirit, explaining that you have a mind, a body and a spirit.
- **Mattie Stepanek's 'heart print'**

Oprah learned the term from Mattie Stepanek, a young guest in a wheelchair who died at 13. Whenever you move someone, you leave a heart print. She pairs it with Maya Angelou's line that people remember how you made them feel.

- **Mel's 5:55 a.m. 'good morning'**

Mel tells of smiling and saying good morning to a woman trudging across a crosswalk with her head down. The woman perked up. Mel's point is that a tiny exchange of energy can flip a switch in someone else.

- **The Sphere moment**

Standing alone after U2's first show at the Las Vegas Sphere, Oprah felt the same feeling she had at five on the back porch. She takes it as a sign of being connected to the life force within her.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Run a weekly 'whisper check'**

Notice where your life feels out of flow (house, car, relationships, sleep) and ask what you're ignoring. Restore order one 'roller' at a time.

- **Before saying yes, name your intention**

Ask whether you're agreeing to please people or because you want to. Oprah's view is that the intention behind a yes shapes the result.

- **Right-size expectations of 'pint-sized' people**

Stop going back to people for love they can't hold. Accept their capacity, find the 10 gallons elsewhere, and make peace on your own terms.

- **Give yourself a decade**

Mel suggests stealing Oprah's frame at any age: what would you do with the next ten years if they were your window to deliver what you came to give?

NYU Professor: Do This for 2 Weeks to Get Your Focus, Motivation, & Life Back

Guest: Dr. Jonathan Haidt
Date: 2026-09-14 · Duration: 0:53:43
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DFcndrm7ql4

KEYPOINTS

• 2010–2015 was 'the great rewiring of childhood'

Social psychologist Dr. Jonathan Haidt (NYU Stern, author of The Anxious Generation) argues that something big changed when teens moved from flip phones (millennials went through puberty with the Motorola Razr) to smartphones. By 2015 nearly everyone had one. His goal is to return phones to being tools, like a Swiss Army knife you take out when you need it, instead of a constant feed.

• The timeline matters: features, not just phones

The iPhone arrived in 2007 with no app store. 2008 brought the App Store and push notifications, 2009 the share and retweet buttons, plus newsfeeds full of outrage and culture-war content. In 2010 came front-facing cameras and Instagram. Facebook bought Instagram in 2012, and that was when girls rushed onto it. Haidt says 2012 shows a 'very sharp elbow' in girls' mental health, while the change for boys was more gradual.

• Five hours a day replaces friendship rather than enabling it

The average American teen now spends about 5 hours a day on social media, mostly watching short videos rather than talking to friends. That time pushes out friends, sleep, sunshine and books. Kids need a few close friends. Platforms gave them 'quantity at the expense of quality': hundreds of friends they never see.

• Girls and boys are harmed differently but end up 'in the same pit of despair'

For girls, the harm comes through constant comparison about looks, skin, bodies, clothes and 'get ready with me' videos, with everyone commenting. That drove the early rise in anxiety and depression among older Gen Z, born around 1996–99. For boys, the thing to watch is 'quick dopamine' more than social media: from about 2015, games moved onto phones and high-speed porn became available anywhere.

• Boys carry 'a slot machine, a porn theater and a video game parlor' in their pocket

Haidt's image: a boy sits at the bottom of the ocean while 'fishing fleets' drop thousands of baited hooks around him: short videos, memes, porn, games and sports betting that kids get around age limits to use. The result is that boys lose executive function, the ability to make a plan and follow it. Porn addiction also makes it harder for them to talk to, flirt with or date a real girl.

• The biggest damage is to attention itself

Haidt calls the destruction of the human ability to pay attention, focus and pursue goals the deepest harm. Feeds are built like slot machines, with variable rewards that keep you pulling the lever. Screens 'expand like a gas to fill every available moment.'

• We overprotect kids offline and underprotect them online

Haidt summarizes the whole book this way: kids need huge amounts of unsupervised real-world experience but are left alone with anonymous adults online. A Pew report Mel reads from page 90 found that parents, on average, said kids should be 10 to play unsupervised in their own front yard, 12 to stay home alone for an hour and 14 to go to a public park alone. Haidt's group says plainly: no social media until 16.

• Quitting hurts for days, then 'your life comes back' in a week or two

There are about 35 'social media reduction experiments' that randomly assign people to cut use, often to an hour a day, for at least one to three weeks. Almost all of those measuring anxiety and depression find both go down. Dopamine circuits recover when the stimulation stops. The first few days can feel painful, like any withdrawal.

• Treat your attention as sacred

Turn off almost all notifications. Keep only the ones that give real value, such as Uber or Lyft telling you the car has arrived, and drop news, sports scores and everything else. Committing to never missing anything means you're never fully present, so you actually miss everything. 'If you can get larger pieces of it, your life will change.'

EXAMPLES

• Meta's settlement and Project Mercury

The episode notes Meta's roughly $17 billion settlement over claims that Facebook and Instagram harmed young people's mental health, a case Haidt's research helped shape. Leaked documents describe Meta's own experiment, Project Mercury, run around 2018: Facebook and Instagram users who stopped for a week saw their mental health improve. One internal comment called the result causal. Haidt says the planned larger study apparently never happened.

• Arturo Béjar's daughter

Béjar, who worked on Instagram, found that his 15-year-old daughter, who posted photos of restoring classic cars with him, kept getting creepy approaches from men. His internal survey from around 2017–18 found that about 15% of 14–16-year-olds, boys and girls equally, had received an inappropriate approach from a stranger in the past week.

• The college student who got 5 hours back

Haidt describes a student spending 10 hours a day on games and social media. Another 19-year-old moved apps from his phone to a computer, then deleted them, and got back 5 hours a day. He started working out, went out with friends, worked up the nerve to approach a girl in person and ended up in a long-term relationship.

• The eighth-grader's advice to parents

At a recent session with middle and high schoolers in New York, an eighth-grade boy told parents: impose the rules and 'let your kids blame it on you.' Then they can say 'I don't have Snapchat because my parents won't let me.' Mel adds that her daughters lost sleep feeling they had to be available to friends overnight, and the house rule gave them an excuse.

• Mel's own house rules

No phones at the table, not even to look something up. Her husband polices dual screens during TV time ('just go send the email, then come in'). Mel doesn't keep her phone on her body. It charges in the kitchen or bathroom, and when it isn't on her,

she doesn't reach for it.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Rule 1: no screens in bedrooms, ever**
  Keep computers and TVs in shared spaces. For kids who already have devices, all screens leave the bedroom by 10 p.m., or another set time, and don't come back until the morning trip to school. Overnight is when porn use and sexual predation happen most and when sleep gets wrecked.
- **Rule 2: stories are good, short-form is bad**
  Humans are storytelling animals. A regular movie night once or twice a week, watched together, is good: a two-hour film or a Harry Potter book holds attention. Keep it scheduled, not on demand whenever someone says 'I'm bored.'
- **For adults and older teens, move apps to a computer, then delete them**
  Taking apps off the phone breaks the always-on loop, and deleting them goes further. Expect a few rough days.
- **Take action**
  Haidt points parents, educators and legislators to anxiousgeneration.com and its 'Take Action' section, and to LetGrow.org for ideas on giving kids more real-world independence.

Stanford Psychologist: 7 Small Things That Make a Huge Difference in How You Feel

Guest: Kelly McGonigal
Date: 2026-09-10 · Duration: 1:12:20
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UL6h-OqJQh8

KEYPOINTS

• Joy is the opposite of a gut punch, and its job is to make you want to be alive

Kelly McGonigal defines joy by its opposite. Bad news makes your heart sink and leaves a heavy residue. Joy is the moment your heart lifts, you feel lighter, and your outlook on yourself and life improves, however small the trigger. "Joy would not exist if life were not hard." She calls it an uplift that pulls you out of feeling stuck or hopeless, a survival instinct rather than a reward for a perfect life.

• Joy comes from four consistent sources

From thousands of "joy reports" and research worldwide, McGonigal names four sources. The first is feeling close to someone, and laughing together is the easiest example. The second is doing something that makes you feel good about who you are: progress on a goal, a task you'd put off, acting on your values, helping someone. The third is noticing beauty, often nature; birds come up surprisingly often. The fourth is being absorbed in something you love.

• Stress symptoms are your body trying to help

Her best-known talk argues that people misread stress as betrayal. A racing heart delivers energy. Under stress the brain also gives more weight to signals from the heart, which she reads, partly as a metaphor, as a nudge to remember what you care about. Her suggested response: "Thank you body for trying to give me energy," then ask what you can do here that reflects who or what matters most.

• Muscles release "hope molecules"

Exercise science now treats muscle as a kind of pharmacy. Contracting muscles release chemicals that support immunity, heart health and blood sugar, and molecules that reach the brain to aid stress recovery and motivation, acting like antidepressants, as McGonigal puts it. You don't need a strenuous workout. Going from nothing to anything is the biggest step, and less activity means less of this effect.

• Resistance before a helpful activity is a sign you need it

Feeling low on energy or socially anxious before joining in, like hovering at the edge of a wedding dance floor, is real but easy to misread. You haven't yet done the thing that would give you energy or ease the self-consciousness. Rely on a commitment you've made to yourself, not on feeling ready.

• Memories are a resource you can draw on

Calling up a meaningful memory produces an immediate lift in hope. A follow-up question McGonigal learned from another psychologist makes it more useful: "What's an important thought or feeling this memory gives you?" The point is not only to feel better but to see who you want to be in the moment.

• Point your attention on purpose

Many people have a negativity bias. McGonigal compares choosing a focus to looking for a specific cereal in the supermarket: once you tell your brain what to find, it stands out. Prompts she uses include looking around for something that reminds you of someone you love, or for evidence that someone made your life better.

• Shutting down is a form of self-protection; train for courage outside the crisis

Dissociation happens when your body decides there's nothing you can do, so it makes you less present out of kindness. It can turn into a chronic habit. Start by recognising that part of you cares enough to shield you. Then practise courage in smaller, similar situations, and talk to yourself the way someone encouraging would.

• Hopelessness means change the approach, not the goal

Despair tends to spread from one strategy to life as a whole. McGonigal reads it more narrowly. If you've sent 300 applications with no response, the strategy is failing, not your future. A harmful relationship may be hopeless, but there is hope of getting out. As a Stanford freshman adviser she told students who failed premed that there are many ways to have a life worth living.

• Joy isn't selfish: "meet joy with joy"

She calls joy an act of care for yourself and others. People need company in their best moments as much as comfort in their worst. Her single most important practice is to treat someone else's good news as a chance to connect.

EXAMPLES

• Music: the two-to-three-minute dose

Listening to a song you love quickly releases dopamine, endorphins and endocannabinoids. Neuroscientists use favourite songs to study joy and to reduce pain during medical procedures. The smallest effective doses she found were two to three minutes. Her current favourite is a Madonna dance track with a lyric about everybody being a work of art.

• The spin class that trained her to fly

McGonigal had a lifelong fear of flying, with panic and dissociation. Her spin classes felt the same: a pounding heart and wanting to escape a sweaty room. She went back and practised staying on the bike, telling herself she was choosing a life where she could fly. She then flew to record this episode.

• Three hours on the shower floor

Two years ago her father was diagnosed with terminal cancer while her mother needed intensive care. Calls and texts poured in while she was showering, so she turned off the water and sat on the floor for about three hours. Over time she kept going by finding one moment of laughter or touch a day and recalling one highlight before sleep.

• Mel's shower and her NICU memory

During severe postpartum depression after her daughter Sawyer was born, one hot shower after 11 days in bed gave Mel a sense that things could change. She also recalls friends Robin and Lisa meeting her at the Mass General Brigham NICU at 11 p.m. when her five-day-old son Oakley was airlifted there. The memory reminds her she wasn't alone and makes her want to show up for others the same way.

• The global hope study

Asked what gives them hope when life is hard, people worldwide named helping someone, being thanked by someone they helped, and seeing someone help another person. McGonigal adds that letting others help you is an underrated act. It gives both people hope and creates a chance to say thank you.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Song plus movement when you feel flat

Play a song you love and do anything other than sit or lie down: dance in the kitchen, carry heavy things, walk down the driveway and back. If you can't move, move what you can or just listen, which activates the brain's movement areas.

• End each day with one highlight

Before your mind starts planning tomorrow's worries, name one good moment, one laugh or one sign you're not alone. It reminds your brain that good things are possible.

• Do an act of joy without waiting to feel joyful

Send an encouraging note, put something beautiful into the world or give someone a reason to laugh. You don't need to feel hopeful first, and you usually benefit too. Trust the things you love "beyond reason", like board games, knitting, fantasy audiobooks or pets, and don't justify them to anyone.

• Share your struggles and your wins

Not wanting to be a burden and not wanting to brag are two sides of the same habit. Mel was upset when her parents hid her father's brain aneurysm for a month: protecting her "denied me the opportunity to love you." Think in terms of interdependence.

This One Episode Will Motivate You to Change Your Entire Life | Gary Vee

Guest: Gary Vaynerchuk
Date: 2026-09-07 · Duration: 1:10:38
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g_wMpEGgc1Q

KEYPOINTS

• What you consume is who you become

Gary Vaynerchuk, entrepreneur and author behind VaynerX, VaynerMedia and VeeFriends, opens by saying listeners who chose positivity just made an important decision. His point is that the feed reflects you: 'The algorithm is exposing who you actually are.' If you don't like what shows up on social media, change what you follow and engage with.

• Stop needing to be understood

When Mel asks how to deal with feeling misunderstood, Gary's answer is not to want the world to get you. Nobody who isn't you, not your spouse, your mother or a coworker, can fully know you, so a stranger in the comments certainly can't. He learned this early as an immigrant who couldn't speak English, a 'ridiculously bad student' and someone who kept innovating in his dad's liquor store against outside advice. By 25 he had been told he was wrong for years, and that made the next 25 years easy.

• Status and stuff can't buy peace of mind

Gary argues that consumer culture is often a proxy: buying things to show the world you're fine when you're not. He suggests the money might be better spent on therapy. Anchoring self-worth to others' opinions means you will always be chasing them. He blames 'keeping up with the Joneses' less on social media than on decades of parenting that left accountability out.

• When is it no longer your parents' fault?

Gary separates real hardship from blame. His mother lost her own mother at 5, and her father was jailed in the Soviet Union for about 10 years when she was 9 or 10. She is still the most optimistic person in the family. He says many people get 'exhausted of pointing fingers' somewhere between 25 and 45. Mel says her own moment came at 41, when she realized nobody was coming to save her.

• Envy and jealousy quietly drain you

Gary says many people are exhausted because envy is 'eating up their soul,' after spending the summer triggered by other people's happiness. His counter is perspective and gratitude: 8.3 billion people, about 800 million without clean water, and the fact that you're listening on a phone that cost hundreds of dollars. Mel describes getting sick of being jealous of people she wanted to be happy for, and deciding she wasn't stuck as that version of herself.

• Live for your funeral, not for 'I wish I'

Gary's worst three-word sentence is 'I wish I…'. He promises that whatever you're scared of is far less scary than telling a stranger 30 years from now what you never tried. He leans on the odds he has heard of being born at all, about 400 trillion to one (while admitting 'I'm no scientist'), to argue that wasting the chance is disrespectful.

• You stop caring what people think by practicing

His answer to 'how?' is simply 'by doing it.' He was terrified of swimming and riding a bike as a kid and worked through those fears by his late teens. For people whose whole framework rests on other people's opinions, starting to exercise or opening an Etsy shop is terrifying, and he admits it is genuinely hard after 20–30 years of that habit.

• One action changes the momentum of a life

'Life is sports. It's momentum.' Gary imagines a 39-year-old listener for whom things haven't gone well, where one point, meaning one action tomorrow, changes the whole game and the next 50 years. Mel connects this to the moment of hesitation on the sideline, where 'the only one criticizing you is you.'

• Happiness has done a bad job at marketing

Gary says unhappy people treat nasty comments like a full-time job while happy people stay quiet. He pushes old-school values: humility, civility, holding the door and smiling at strangers. He calls a lack of humility the number one thing holding many listeners back.

• Own and adjust, and drop 'should'

Gary admits real failures, including being bad at candor and at firing people for about 20 years, and says some people are still mad at him. His method is to own it and adjust. He refuses to think he 'should' have anything. Working 15 hours a day for three years entitles you to nothing unless it brings value, so if something isn't working, ask whether it simply isn't good yet.

EXAMPLES

• The 5-1 tennis comebacks

Twice one summer, Gary was down 5-1 to a friend, Nate, in a set and came back to win 7-5 and 7-6. He changed the energy by talking out loud to himself and to his opponent ('I have a feeling I'm going to come back'). For years afterward, he would remind Nate of it. The lesson is that saying it aloud changes momentum.

• Mel's six-year podcast hesitation

In 2018, Mel watched Gary and others podcasting, despite her start hosting a Saturday-morning radio show in Boston, and told herself 'Gary's already done it.' It took six more years to stop talking herself out of it. Gary notes that he podcasted from 2007, had a top-100 show from 2014 to 2019, and Mel overtook him quickly because she did it better. A head start didn't matter.

• The college-is-not-for-everyone backlash

From about 2007, Gary argued that creative or entrepreneurial kids whose parents couldn't pay shouldn't take on $120,000 in debt for a degree. He says it drew the most public and private heat of his career for a decade, including attacks on his intelligence, until people came around about 15 years later. His point: if it's your truth, keep going even when you stand alone.

• Live shopping is 'where social was in 2014'

Gary says that within your first 15 TikTok scrolls you'll hit someone live-selling. Having made social-media content daily since about 2006–07 (Wine Library TV) and written a book on it in 2009, he sees live shopping on TikTok Shop and Whatnot as today's early opportunity. Mel's example is a mom worried about other parents' opinions at junior-high drop-off.

• Give five hours to the elderly

Gary thinks the last 30–40 years of technology taught people to mock grandparents. He suggests spending time with lonely residents of senior homes. Talking to a 91-year-old woman about her life is a real mitzvah, and 'it's going to do a lot more for you.'

OTHER RELEVANT

• Do the thing that's been 'sitting in your tummy'

Gary's challenge: tomorrow, do the thing you've been sitting on for a day, a year or likely a decade. Everyone starts at zero, and in a year your life can look completely different.

• Find your people through what you love

Needlepoint, gardening, tractor pulling or collectibles: there's a community for it. Gary describes strangers hugging at a 4-day collectibles show in Chicago. If the people around you are negative, find your people online. He tells Mel's listeners their biggest mistake is not interacting in the comments.

• Aim for aliveness, not perfection

Mel's takeaway: the goal of life isn't constant happiness. Gary says life can be 'awesome' even when you're $80,000 in debt or your marriage is struggling, because you still have the chance to change it.

• Cheer for competitors

Gary competes hard professionally, but he says he feels genuine joy when people competing with him win. That is how to take envy apart in practice.

Give Me 60 Minutes and I'll Eliminate Your Self-Doubt Forever | Benny Blanco and Mel Robbins

Guest: Benny Blanco
Date: 2026-09-03 · Duration: 1:00:54
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wzUxCN-ZFfU

KEYPOINTS

• Start now and move the idea 3.5 inches

Benny Blanco grew up in Virginia with no famous parents or money and says he isn't especially talented. His point is that most goals are reachable if you start. People stall on setup, like whether to use a typewriter, a phone or longhand, and three weeks go by. Pick the idea you're too embarrassed to tell anyone and move it "three and a half inches forward" today. What you start may not be where you end up. At 11 he wanted to be the world's biggest rapper.

• Fear of embarrassment drives the what-ifs

People hold back because they picture friends mocking a post, a video getting zero views, or being cut from a team or told they can't act. Blanco says fear of embarrassment is learned and doesn't match reality: "I fail every single day."

• Have "amnesia to failure"

A successful friend noticed Blanco wakes up after a flop and carries on as if nothing happened. His logic is that if you forget the failure, everyone else will too. He demonstrated with a whiteboard covered in the word "failure" that he wiped clean. Nobody keeps a scorecard on your life except you, "and if they are, they're an a-hole."

• Show up, then find the room

His first two rules are to show up every day and get into the room, physical or digital. If you're there when someone else isn't, you become the next best option, and being in the room means you either learn something or get a chance.

• You'll never feel ready, so go all in with conviction

Mel reads from his book: wait to feel prepared and "I will come back to check on you in 5 years and you will still be standing exactly where you are." He describes the pre-launch nerves as "it's about to happen" fear, not fear of doing it. If you can sell the dream to yourself and the people around you, things start moving your way.

• Rejection usually hurts less than you remember

Ask yourself honestly how bad the last rejection was. It's like being turned down for a date as a kid: embarrassing for a few hours, then forgotten. It will be harder than you expect and you'll want to quit, but quitting "just open[s] the door" for the next person trying the same thing.

• Success means giving everything, then learning

Blanco is competitive until the result is in. If he gave it everything, he counts it as a success whether or not it charted. His way of letting go is to ask, "What else could you have done?" He's only upset with himself if he held back. A failure stays a failure only if you didn't learn from it.

• Doing it and not doing it are both hard, so pick the hard that leads somewhere

Mel says sitting in self-doubt and watching others go after things is painful too. Blanco agrees that kids, relationships and jobs all get hard. If it's all hard, choose what could bring relief instead of "a hole of misery."

• The real skill is showing up for decades without feeling like it

Blanco still has impostor syndrome; he felt it walking into the studio full of crew that day. Mel's summary is that it doesn't get easier. You keep questioning yourself and show up anyway. On a bad day he says, "Today, I couldn't do it," and works harder tomorrow.

• Life is a three-legged stool

Name your three legs: Mel chose family and relationships, purpose and impact, and health. Wealth with children who hate you means the stool falls. Blanco says he got all three working only in the last five years and feels more stable than ever. When one leg wobbles, step back and fix it first.

EXAMPLES

• Cold-calling as "Jay-Z's people"

At 10 or 11, with no connections, his mom drove him to recording studios, where he waited outside and asked people who came out if they made music. Using the school library computer at lunch, he found out who represented Snoop Dogg or Tupac and called Interscope asking for Jimmy Iovine, claiming to call for Jay-Z. When he got through he'd admit who he was and get hung up on. But he befriended interns and receptionists, some of whom now run companies. He met his manager at 16 and has worked with him for more than 20 years.

• The East Side saga

After watching The Defiant Ones backstage at Gillette Stadium, Ed Sheeran asked, "What are we doing with our lives?" and then walked out to play for 75,000 people. Blanco decided to become an artist himself. Sheeran turned down a feature and Justin Bieber didn't reply. Halsey recorded her verse in about 20 minutes. Khalid signed on, then wanted to redo his vocals a day before mastering. A deal dispute held the song back about 10 months until one last phone call settled it. After a slow start it made what Blanco calls the longest climb to number one in radio history.

• Mel's rock bottom

At 41, with three kids under 10, Mel and her husband were $800,000 in debt with liens on the house and no job. After months of drinking, blaming and envy, she decided on a Tuesday morning in February 2008: "If I actually want to change my life, prove it."

• A fear of flying, worked around and faced

After rough flights in 2009 and a seatback TV that flew loose on a flight back from London, Blanco mostly stopped flying. He took trains, cross-country drives and tour buses, flying only a handful of times. To finish Ed Sheeran's Divide album in Suffolk, they took a 7.5-day boat trip from New York to London, watched Titanic on board and made much of the album there. He flew

again recently for his book tour, scared, and then "ate tacos."

- **The partner list**

With his therapist, Blanco wrote broad must-haves. First was "age appropriate," then kind and compassionate, then someone who generally wakes up happy or actively works on it through therapy, medication or yoga. If someone didn't meet the first five or six, he didn't pursue it. He knew Selena Gomez for about 15 years, working together twice, before she asked him out. He didn't realise the first date was a date.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Today's action plan**

List what you want to do, whether that's 1 thing or 20. Pick one. List the first steps it needs. Then move it at least a centimetre today and keep the momentum, accepting days when it stalls or slips back. "You can't fail if you don't quit."

- **Ask "what if it all works out?"**

Mel's counter to spiralling what-ifs: what if one more call or one more ask closes the deal? Blanco's mother never chased modelling or painting because she was taught to follow the script and "not make a mess." He wrote his book to push back on that.

- **Remember that their day starts when you walk in**

Blanco gets home exhausted at 8, and Selena's evening with him is just starting. Listening and connecting is another kind of success. Mel admits her husband of 32 years often gets the worst of her.

- **Write your own partner criteria**

Focus on how someone treats themselves and you, whether they make you laugh, and whether you'd happily skip going out to stay home with them. Mel adds that writing the list is itself a way of saying you're worth it, which helps if you tend to settle.

A Doctor’s Gut Reset: 4-Part Protocol to Stop Bloating, Boost Energy, & Feel Better Now

Guest: Dr. Rajsree Nambudripad
Date: 2026-08-31 · Duration: 1:16:43
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kQXdyL8GEC4

KEYPOINTS

- **Your gut works like a garden with four systems, and symptoms show up when any one of them fails.**
  Dr. Rajsree's model: (1) irrigation, or motility, the 'cleaning waves' that move food and bacteria along; (2) pollinators, meaning stomach acid, pancreatic enzymes and bile; (3) the garden bed, the integrity of the gut lining; (4) plants and weeds, the microbiome. Her approach is to work out which system needs support rather than chase one symptom.
- **The gut affects far more than digestion.**
  She says the gut talks to the brain (her gut patients often have anxiety, brain fog or insomnia). About 70% of immune cells sit under the gut lining, and the skin mirrors the gut. She reports acne, eczema and psoriasis improving with gut healing, which are clinical observations, not guarantees.
- **Bloating has three main causes, and constipation is the first thing to rule out.**
  Her first question is about bowel movements. Going every 3–4 days means backed-up stool alone can cause bloating, and her target is every day. The other causes are poor digestion (weak 'pollinators') and bacteria in the wrong place. Lying down and unbuttoning your pants keeps everything stagnant. Even a walk or a flight of stairs gets motility going.
- **Her two starting moves for almost everyone: magnesium plus a prokinetic at bedtime, and digestive enzymes with meals.**
  She uses a blend of magnesium citrate, glycinate and malate, usually 250–500 mg at bedtime, adjusted to bowel response. The citrate acts as a gentle osmotic laxative. A prokinetic isn't a laxative. It activates the cleaning waves. Ginger is a natural one, and she uses a ginger-artichoke formula overnight. High-potency enzymes taken before or after meals help break down protein, fat and carbs.
- **IBS is a label for symptoms, not a cause.**
  IBS affects an estimated 10–15% of people. The criteria are abdominal pain or discomfort, changed bowel habits (constipation, diarrhea or both), and relief after a bowel movement. She says about 70% of IBS is actually caused by SIBO, so a diagnosis should start the investigation, not end it.
- **SIBO is diagnosed with a breath test and treated in four phases, with killing bacteria saved for last.**
  You drink lactulose, a sugar you can't absorb, then collect breath samples every 20–30 minutes for 3 hours to measure the gas bacteria produce. Her phases: (1) motility: magnesium plus the ginger-artichoke prokinetic; (2) digestion: enzymes, plus betaine and pepsin for those with low stomach acid; (3) calm inflammation with a spore probiotic containing immunoglobulins; (4) herbal antimicrobials: berberine, oregano oil and allicin from garlic. She says conventional antibiotic treatment has high failure and relapse rates. Without a prevention plan, about 50% of patients relapse within 9 months.
- **Leaky gut means gaps between the lining cells, and repairing them takes 3–6 months.**
  She demonstrated with yoga blocks as the cells (enterocytes). With gaps between them, the immune system gets confused and overreacts. Her protocol: remove alcohol, gluten, dairy and processed foods (additives, emulsifiers) while healing, then try reintroducing them. Add L-glutamine powder, an amino acid that feeds the lining cells, and dairy-free immunoglobulins (IgG), which work like colostrum without the dairy proteins.
- **There's no single best gut diet. Common triggers are individual and usually temporary.**
  Some people thrive on a high-fiber vegan diet, while others get bloated on it. Her usual suspects for people with SIBO or bloating: beans and legumes, dairy (lactose or the proteins casein and whey), whole grains like quinoa, brown rice and oatmeal, and garlic and onions. The goal is always to heal and then reintroduce these foods.
- **How and when you eat matter as much as what you eat.**
  Her five habits: space meals 4–5 hours apart with no snacking, so the cleaning waves can run; eat mindfully without devices, taking a few breaths to shift into 'rest and digest' and engage the vagus nerve; eat only when truly hungry; walk or move after meals; and limit water at meals so you don't dilute stomach acid. She saves most of her water for about 45 minutes later.
- **Most 'reflux' she sees is actually the opposite problem.**
  She says that of 10 people who report reflux, about 7 have non-acid reflux from low stomach acid. Undigested food trickles up, causing phlegm and throat-clearing after meals with no burning. True acid reflux burns in the stomach or chest. The difference matters because acid-blockers can't fix too little acid.
- **Insulin resistance can show up years before blood sugar does, so ask for a fasting insulin test.**
  She says about half of Americans are insulin resistant, and fasting glucose and A1C can look normal while fasting insulin is high. Her three levers: a diet that stabilizes blood sugar (cut simple sugars, refined carbs and alcohol, keep some carbs like berries and yams), 30–45 minutes of cardio a day plus strength training 2–3 times a week, and supplements such as berberine, cinnamon and chromium.

EXAMPLES

- **Her own SIBO**
  Seven or eight years ago she had sharp evening abdominal pain and pressure that made it hard to breathe deeply and left her anxious. Herbal antimicrobials made her nauseous. Antibiotics didn't help, and her repeat breath test 'looked identical.' Her turning points were the prokinetic (she was finally passing trapped gas) and betaine and pepsin.
- **John and the 'histamine bucket'**
  A patient's 'healthy' day: sourdough with avocado and tomato, a sardine salad, then wine, sushi and soy sauce, all high in histamine. That night: headache, anxiety, no sleep, itchy skin. Six months earlier the same foods were fine. Testing showed SIBO and leaky gut. Overgrown bacteria were producing histamine and using up DAO, the enzyme that breaks it down. Fermented

foods like kimchi, sauerkraut, kombucha and bone broth can make this worse.

• Three leaky-gut patients in one day

A woman with a rash that didn't respond to a skin biopsy and steroid creams, whose skin cleared after gut healing. A 55-year-old with flaring rheumatoid arthritis. A 45-year-old man with near-daily migraines and sudden brain fog whose migraines 'reduced significantly' after treatment. All had leaky gut, according to her.

• A1C from 13 to 5.7 without medication

A vegetarian patient with an A1C of 13 (fasting glucose over 300) and fasting insulin around 35 refused medication. By following the diet, exercise and supplement plan for six months, she lost over 30 lb, her A1C reached 5.7 and her insulin 8. Dr. Rajsree calls it one of the most striking cases of her career, and it's a single case.

• The thyroid link

Hypothyroidism slows motility and lowers stomach acid, so constipated patients get thyroid labs, and hypothyroid patients are tested for SIBO.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Ask for the tests

A lactulose SIBO breath test, a stool microbiome test and a fasting insulin level. She warns some patients get antibiotics for SIBO without any testing. You want to know what you're treating. An integrative or functional doctor familiar with SIBO may help.

• Red flags that need a doctor now

Consistent blood in the stool (not a one-time spot after straining), persistent vomiting, or unexplained weight loss of more than 10 lb that won't stabilize.

• Quick bloating relief she suggests

One or two digestive enzymes (she says you should feel relief in 30–60 minutes), the ginger-artichoke prokinetic, and a short walk. Check with your own clinician before starting supplements.

Stop Wasting Your Time: How to Deal With People Who Won’t Change & What to Do Instead

Guest: Dr. Dolly Chugh
Date: 2026-08-27 · Duration: 1:04:18
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N5OjMuyqdJQ

KEYPOINTS

- **Two mental 'bodyguards' explain why knowing isn't doing**
  NYU Stern professor and behavioral scientist Dr. Dolly Chugh says two protective systems keep us stuck. The first guards our energy by putting most of life on autopilot. The second guards our identity or ego. Change threatens both, which is why you can fully understand what to do and still not do it, and why the people you love resist too.
- **Your mind runs 11 million 'little t' thoughts per finger snap**
  Chugh cites research suggesting that in a single snap we process about 11 million unconscious 'little t' thoughts, such as posture, temperature and how our clothes feel, compared with about 40 conscious 'big T' thoughts. Knowing something lives in those few big-T thoughts, while habits and reflexes live in the millions. That gap is why insight alone rarely changes behavior.
- **We protect our identity fiercely**
  She cites a study suggesting people value affirmation of the identities they care about more than their favorite food, time with a friend or even their favorite sex act. When feedback threatens how we see ourselves, the identity bodyguard pushes back, often by getting defensive.
- **You can't learn from a mistake you're still defending**
  Her biggest-mistake answer: we slip into proving ourselves instead of improving ourselves. Mel admits to 'a million examples' of defending why something was too hard. Real growth starts when you stop arguing for the mistake.
- **Be 'goodish' rather than good**
  'Good person' is a fixed state: you either are or you aren't, so every slip-up becomes a threat. A 'goodish' person is always trying to get better, which makes goodish 'actually better than good.' The idea leaves room for bad days and cuts the exhausting nightly self-judgment Mel describes: the text you regret, the party outfit, the 10 undone things.
- **Change requires unlearning, and unlearning feels like friction**
  Using a color-word Stroop test, Chugh shows Mel how two effortless skills, reading and naming colors, become hard when they conflict. Changing a habit is like being asked to 'unlearn reading.' The resistance you feel getting off the couch is the same friction others feel when you ask them to change. We want grace for our own learning curves but accountability for everyone else's.
- **You can model, invite and reward change, but you can't make anyone change**
  Model it by making your own effort visible. Invite it by giving grace to clumsy first attempts. If a partner trying not to snap at the kids tells an awkward story that drags on, don't say 'this isn't helping.' Reward it by saying sincerely what you noticed: 'I saw our daughter light up.'
- **Pull works better than push, but it takes longer**
  Push means directing, telling and forcing. It has its place, but we overuse it. Pull creates the conditions where people want to change on their own: you ask questions or act as a sounding board so they build their own plan and keep their sense of 'I am the boss of me.' It takes longer, but if it works, it lasts.
- **Feedback in adjectives invites argument; feedback on behavior gets change**
  'Not polished enough' could mean typos, animations, tone or clothes, so people argue with it. Instead, name the behavior: one slide says the client is in 'hospitality' and another says 'food and beverage,' which looks like the deck wasn't proofread. Specific, observable feedback is harder to dispute and easier to act on.
- **Rescuing can be about our pain, not theirs**
  Chugh's definition of hell is watching someone you love suffer and being helpless. Much of what passes for support, such as money or a place to live, is really us easing that feeling. That 'soft cushion' can stop someone from hitting the edge of their experience and facing the consequences of patterns they haven't unlearned yet. Mel calls this a central growth area of her life with adult children.

EXAMPLES

- **Gandhi and the sugar**
  In a fable Chugh tells while noting it may not be true, a family travels hundreds of miles to ask Gandhi to tell their son to stop eating only sugar. He asks them to come back in two weeks, then simply says, 'You must stop eating sugar.' Asked why he waited, he says that two weeks earlier he was still eating sugar himself. The first step in helping someone change is modelling it.
- **The 'standoffish' neighbor**
  Chugh took an audio-only work call on a walk with an AirPod in, didn't notice a neighbor waving, and later heard she was described as standoffish. Because being seen as warm is central to her identity, it bothered her 'a lot.' Someone else might not care, which shows how differently identity threats land.
- **The Sparkle Boys bunk room**
  Mel's 21-year-old son, Oakley, and his high-school friends run a window-washing and odd-jobs business, now in its fourth year and employing about 15 kids, and they use the family's Vermont bunk room. After Mel was away for 8 days, she came home to a mess and stuck to behavior and feelings ('after being gone for 8 days… walking in here doesn't feel good'). They answered, 'We can do better.'
- **Not reacting to the grade**
  Chugh and her husband tried not to react to their kids' grades. They asked only: do you understand what you did, do you understand what you got wrong, did you try your best? That later became her two end-of-day questions.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **The WAIT rule: 'Why Am I Talking?'**

  Before giving advice, check whether they asked. Talking at someone about their problem takes away their agency. If a friend complains about their partner of eight years but never acts on your advice, stop giving it.

- **Heard, hugged, helped or high-fived?**

  Ask what someone needs. Heard means they need to vent, hugged means they need to feel loved, helped means they want advice. Chugh adds high-fived, for when people, especially women, want someone to notice how hard they're trying. She says this works better in families than at work.

- **The 1–10 rule for disagreements**

  Ask how important this is to each of you on a scale of 1 to 10. Often the real 10 isn't the jacket on the floor but feeling heard or not being expected to clean up. For the other person, the 10 might be autonomy or exhaustion. Chugh and her husband have a rule: if both rate it 1–7, the higher number wins and they move on. An 8, 9 or 10 from either of them is worth discussing.

- **Two questions to end every day**

  'What did I learn?' and 'Did I try my best?' Judge growth, not success. Chugh's final ask is to be a lifelong learner and a lifelong unlearner.

30 Years of Marriage: 3 Things About Relationships I Wish Someone Told Me Sooner

Guest: Chris Robbins
Date: 2026-08-24 · Duration: 1:05:20
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3J5VcQIlAck

KEYPOINTS

• Lesson 1: 'You're my favorite person'
On their 30th wedding anniversary, Mel and her husband Chris Robbins, parents of three kids aged 27, 26 and 21, share three lessons they wish they'd known at the start. The first is four words Mel heard from divorce attorney James Sexton on the show: 'you're my favorite person.' She calls it both the reason relationships end, when you stop feeling it, and the lifeline back to the person you fell in love with.

• Ask two questions, not one
First: is this person my favorite person? Mel says that if they have fundamentally never been, you're in the wrong relationship. Second, and this is 'where the rubber meets the road': am I treating them like my favorite person? During hard years Mel could say 'of course he is, I just hate my life right now' while treating Chris like the person she blamed.

• Stress turns your favorite person into the person you blame
Early on, nothing had tested them, and everyone is everyone's favorite 'until it hits the fan.' Things shifted in their 20s in New York. Mel was a public defender at Legal Aid, Chris changed careers and launched a business that struggled, and they talked about moving into the basement of his parents' retirement home. Chris says that was when he began hating himself and 'stopped listening' to Mel because he was so focused on what he thought he should be achieving.

• The 'roommate' phase: great logistics, no connection
For roughly a decade, they did logistics brilliantly: kids, dogs, groceries, holidays. But 'you're my favorite person' stopped being the central organizing principle. Chris says it set in once two or three kids had arrived. Mel says small moments compound into 'massive distance and disconnection' that nobody intends.

• Lesson 2: you married the 8-year-old
You didn't marry the adult in front of you. You married the 8-year-old version of them. Chris retreats into his head and doesn't ask for what he needs because, as the youngest in a busy family, his needs went unheard. Mel vents, gets flooded and then apologizes. Seeing the child behind the behavior softens you instead of letting the world's hardness come into the relationship. They have worked with a therapist for five years.

• 'Normal marital hatred' is part of a real relationship
Mel plays a clip of couples therapist Terry Real, who says your partner is 'exquisitely designed to stick the burning spear right into your eyeball.' That crisis isn't a bad relationship. It's a real one. Partners land you right in the childhood wound you hoped they'd heal, what Real calls 'unfinished business.' The choice is whether to repeat the same pattern or wake up and do something different.

• Softening beats hardening, attacking or retreating
Mel's lesson: you can't solve problems you won't talk about, and you'll never process feelings you keep burying. Hardening won't improve anything. When you see hurtful behavior as wounds and accumulated small moments rather than intent, 'that's where you can go to work' together.

• A quiet partner is still feeling deeply
Chris, who shuts down when Mel gets flooded, says a partner who is quiet on the surface still feels 'deep, deep, deep emotion.' Her venting and his withdrawal fed each other: she felt more alone, and he shut down more.

• Lesson 3: simple intimacy holds a marriage together
In their good chapters, there are always small, regular points of connection during the week. Chris says he didn't grow up with much touch, and it took him 30–40 years to realize that Mel simply holding his hand or touching his shoulder is 'the greatest thing in the world' for him. Knowing what you need is part of the work.

• Don't isolate the relationship
A relationship cut off from friends and community starts to feel like 'me against you' or 'us against the world.' For their 30th, instead of a party, they prioritized seeing friends, including people who were in their wedding.

EXAMPLES

• Chris's hidden Post-it notes
For years Chris has hidden notes in Mel's wallet and belongings ('Me again. Just thinking about how much I love you') without telling her. Mel says the notes don't erase debt or the kids' struggles, but in that moment she feels like his favorite person and he becomes hers. It's free, and anyone can start today.

• What Chris wishes he'd done in the driveway
For years he could have paused in the driveway, taken a breath and reminded himself that Mel is his favorite person, life is hard, she is probably as scared and stressed as he is, and they would get through it together. 'You can be tired and still be kind.' He admits he wishes he had done it, not that he did.

• The weekly calendar meeting
One of Mel's 'resentful accommodations' is feeling it's all up to her. In a weekly calendar check-in, each asks, 'What do you need this week?' When Mel had a huge week, Chris offered to take all the dinners, something she would never have asked for.

• The rocking-chair vision
On their second date, Chris told Mel he wanted to marry her because he pictured them very old in two rocking chairs on an old porch. Thirty years in, they joke about aiming for a 75th anniversary, which would make them 102.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Four connection rituals**
  A weekly calendar meeting. Short walks two or three mornings a week. A couple of shared meals, ideally cooked together, with 'high and low of the day' (or rose, thorn, bud). Simple touch, plus hidden notes.
- **Name it a moment, not the marriage**
  Mel's coping line in hard periods: 'This is just a moment. This is not the whole marriage. We will get through this.'
- **How to know it's your person**
  Ask whether you could spend 30 years with them and whether they're willing to lean in and grow with you. For Mel and Chris, a shared interest in growth was clear from day one. With the right person, you feel like yourself and share a vision.
- **When a partner shuts down**
  Treat shutdown as emotion, not indifference. Notice your own flooding and soften rather than escalating. Mel describes her cycle of venting, being 'a jerk' and apologizing as one that leaves both partners lonelier.

The ADHD Doctor: How to Focus, Stop Procrastinating, Manage Your Emotions, & Feel in Control

Guest: Dr. Sasha Hamdani
Date: 2026-08-20 · Duration: 1:07:25
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nUPQImuDUng

KEYPOINTS

- **ADHD is a regulation problem, not just an attention problem.**
  Psychiatrist Dr. Sasha Hamdani describes ADHD as difficulty regulating attention, motivation, energy, emotion (which she calls 'a huge one'), sleep and appetite. If you only picture a jittery kid who can't sit still, you miss most of how it shows up, especially the emotional side, which doctors often put down to anxiety or depression.
- **The diagnostic criteria were built around hyperactive young boys, so women get missed at every life stage.**
  She walks through the pattern. A 13-year-old girl with mood swings and friendship struggles hears 'it's hormones.' Pregnancy's higher estrogen and dopamine can help, then the postpartum drop 'rocks your world' and gets labeled postpartum depression. Perimenopause brings another estrogen drop and brain fog, and the answer is 'you're hormonal, give it 10 years.' Mel says this described her whole life. She was diagnosed at 47 and says that once she found the right medication she finally 'felt like I was in my body.'
- **In the ADHD brain, feelings arrive loud and the brakes are slow.**
  In her deliberately simplified version, the frontal lobe (decision-making, judgment) is a bit thinner and less responsive, the amygdala (emotional alarm) is more reactive, and the connection between them is weaker. So you feel things strongly, and the thinking part is slow to filter the alarm.
- **There are three types, and girls usually show the quiet one.**
  Inattentive: daydreamers who are forgetful, disorganized, lose things and struggle to start or avoid big tasks. This is the most common presentation in girls. Hyperactive-impulsive: fidgeting, trouble staying seated, interrupting, blurting out answers. Combined: both. She herself is the combined type.
- **Untreated ADHD can look like anxiety and depression, and treating only those can miss the cause.**
  Constantly falling short of what you know you can do breeds anxiety. Bursts of energy followed by crashes look like depression. She has seen patients go through up to 10 medications with little relief, then improve dramatically once the ADHD was treated. Her analogy: giving a diabetic who's losing their vision glasses instead of treating the diabetes.
- **Masking is camouflaging your symptoms, conscious or not, and women are especially good at it.**
  From a young age, girls learn not to get in trouble or stand out, so they compensate. That makes ADHD harder to spot and more exhausting to live with.
- **Rejection sensitive dysphoria is common, and you can wait it out.**
  RSD is an intense emotional, and sometimes physical, flood in response to real or perceived rejection or criticism, or the fear of disappointing someone. She says almost everyone with ADHD has some version of it. Her tactics: move your body to get blood flow back to the thinking brain, and delay your reaction. She knows that in 10–15 minutes she'll feel different, so she sets an alarm and reassesses then.
- **Step 1 is to track symptoms for about two months before or during an evaluation.**
  Track three things in plain notes on your phone. Tasks: are you struggling to start, staying on track, or finishing? Sleep: how long, how fragmented, how hard to fall asleep. Mood: any format works. She wants enough data to cover two hormonal cycles so mood can be compared with your cycle.
- **Steps 2–4: see a qualified professional, discuss all the options, and use reputable sources while you wait.**
  She's biased toward psychiatrists because they're medical doctors who can rule out other causes. Options include medication, therapy, coaching, tools and systems, and being diagnosed doesn't automatically mean Adderall. Declining medication is 'a perfectly reasonable choice.' She found therapy to work out her own patterns and skills 'life-changing.' While you wait for an appointment, rely on journal articles or news that cites them, not random people online.
- **Stimulants work in peaks, while non-stimulants can cover 24 hours.**
  Stimulants (Adderall, Ritalin, Vyvanse) increase alertness and steer the brain toward reward, and she mentions a recent Washington University study on how they work. They're controlled substances, and coverage is short: about 2–4 hours for short-acting and usually 4–6 (up to 6–8) for long-acting, then they wear off quickly. Non-stimulants include some antidepressants and blood-pressure medications. Many act around the clock, and some help anxiety or depression at the same time. Medication decisions belong with your prescriber.

EXAMPLES

- **'Adderall for all the housewives'**
  When she mentioned her ADHD advocacy, another physician joked that she could 'give Adderall to all the housewives who need it.' She uses this to show the eye-rolls women get, even from doctors, for what she notes is classified as a protected disability in the U.S.
- **Suction-cupping herself to her chair**
  As a hyperactive kid who kept getting in trouble, she pressed her thighs into the seat and gripped the bottom of her chair to physically keep herself from getting up. That's masking.
- **A superpower you can't steer**
  Asked whether ADHD is a superpower, she says no. It's like being able to fly but not choosing when or where, so you 'blast off into space at any given time.' She credits hyperfocus for social media, a White House visit and book deals, but day to day she still feels limited.
- **Mel's timeline**

Years of anxiety, postpartum depression with 'sobbing as you're breastfeeding,' then perimenopausal brain fog. Hormone therapy helped other symptoms but not the fog. All of it was put down to anxiety until her ADHD diagnosis at 47.

• 'If I had 10 minutes left of my life'

For listeners who think 40, 50 or 60 is too late, Dr. Hamdani says she'd still want to know, because understanding your brain replaces years of guilt and shame and second-guessing with 'I did do my best.'

OTHER RELEVANT

• Two-month tracking sheet

Daily notes on task starting, staying on task and finishing; sleep length and interruptions; and mood. Bring it to the evaluation and keep tracking afterward to see whether treatment is closing the gaps.

• The 10–15 minute rule for emotional floods

Tell yourself 'I'm flooded,' set a timer for 10–15 minutes, move, and decide what to do after it goes off.

• Questions for a provider

Is this ADHD, anxiety, depression or hormones, or more than one? What are the stimulant and non-stimulant options? How long does each last? What non-medication supports are there?

Former CIA Spy: How to Read Anyone, Think Clearly, and Protect Yourself

Guest: Jonna Mendez
Date: 2026-08-17 · Duration: 1:05:39
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=duWUa9Md_tU

KEYPOINTS

• A life you think is "cast in stone" can change almost overnight

Jonna grew up in Wichita, Kansas, expecting to marry, have kids and work with books. A friend's wedding in Germany turned into never going home: she cold-called American banks from a Frankfurt station phone book (four calls; Chase Manhattan said come in), then married a CIA officer. Her summary: nobody else is going to change your life but you.

• Being excellent at a job is what gets you permission to do bigger work

She joined the CIA as a secretary, the role it hired women for, and rose to the director's secretary, a dead end with "no up." When she mentioned leaving for the Smithsonian, her boss steered her into agency photography training. Her rule from a male-dominated field: if you can do the work excellently, they will let you do the work.

• A mid-career pivot isn't starting over, because you carry every skill with you

Falling for India on a temporary photo trip, she took the only opening there, in disguise. The switch looked unwise but made her someone who could do photography, disguise and some forgery, the path to Chief of Disguise. Mel's point: each pivot built on the last. Jonna admits changes that cost salary or a move are genuinely hard, but calls change "the most refreshing thing any of us can do."

• People betray their country for four reasons: MICE

Recruiters (all nicknamed "James") had to find a flaw before the pitch. Reasons boil down to Money (in her experience, Americans), Ideology (Soviet recruits whose families were broken by Stalin), Compromise (blackmail, rarely used because it worked poorly) and Ego, "the big one": people passed over, sure their boss is stupid, nursing grudges.

• Charisma alone doesn't make a good spy, because the job offers no applause

The agency wanted officers who could charm a stranger at a bar, but those who needed constant praise didn't flourish: there were "no attaboys," no thank-yous, only the next job. Her top lesson from 30 years: you never accomplish anything alone.

• Good disguise is about changing every small detail, not just a wig

Her team described a target in fine detail (hair, makeup, ring, watch) and changed every element. Men were harder, so they added cologne, a gold chain or an extra open button and removed the ring. Officers wore a hated shirt from the back of the closet with a written character sketch, then were tested by eating lunch unrecognized beside their bosses in the CIA cafeteria.

• Courage isn't a trait you're born with; it comes from confidence built by preparation

Courage comes from knowing what you're doing and how you can affect a situation, which in the CIA meant near-constant training. "If I can have courage, anyone can." You build it by confronting things that scare you, including conversations.

• Intuition sounds like a clear statement; fear sounds like a stream of what-ifs

Jonna tracks hunches about people "like a newspaper story" to check if she was right. Her and Mel's rule of thumb: intuition gives a clear direction that pulls you; anxiety is questioning and noise. In the alley, fear said turn back; intuition said walk.

• Liars tend to try too hard, but eye contact is not a reliable tell

Her signs: nervousness, trying too hard to convince you, bouncing around in the story, refusing to let it go. Eye contact often breaks down, but she doesn't treat it as a lie detector. These are an officer's observations, not a validated test.

• When the world feels overwhelming, breathe and take small steps on one fight

Jonna worries about the planet and next generation: ingenuity exists, the will doesn't, and "nobody is calling balls and strikes," so individuals must pick a fight to support. Mel counters that most people are good and want to work together.

EXAMPLES

• The Mont Blanc pen camera and the microdot

A Mont Blanc-style pen took about 100 photos, letting an officer taking notes capture a Soviet meeting's agenda, the intentions satellites can't see. A microdot shrinks a page about 800 times to the size of a period; the agent reads it through a rice-grain lens held to the sun.

• Fooling President George H.W. Bush and the Secret Service

Wearing a colleague's face as a full-face mask ("I dropped 20 years"), she briefed Bush, a former CIA director, after softening him up with photos of his own old disguises. He circled her chair and couldn't spot it. The mask is now in the CIA basement and featured at the International Spy Museum; the tech made "twins" to shake surveillance in Moscow and could change ethnicity or gender.

• The real Argo operation

Six Americans escaped the 1979 Tehran embassy takeover and hid with Canadian ambassador Ken Taylor. Tony Mendez obtained genuine Canadian passports and built a fake LA film company, with ads in The Hollywood Reporter and Variety and staff answering phones, so the six could pose as a location-scouting crew. George Tenet declassified it about 19 years later; George Clooney bought the rights after Brad Pitt's interest made Tony "raise the price."

• The Billy Joel tape at a controlled border

A smuggler drove a key defector across a border, with the man and his 5-year-old hidden under a modified back seat and his wife in the middle front seat. The guard liked the Billy Joel tape playing in the car and asked for it for his girlfriend. The driver handed it over and they drove through.

• Walking through 20 armed men in a Latin American alley

After a cigarette run and a shortcut, she met a group of drunk, armed young men who probably took her for a narcotics agent. Her training said turning back would signal something was wrong, so she walked through them showing confidence, and later couldn't even light the cigarette.

- **The "mattress box" in hostile-interrogation training**
  In a 3-day course at the Farm, on half a cup of rice and a cup of water a day, the claustrophobic Jonna stood in a box too narrow to turn her shoulders. Using advice from Vietnam POWs, she escaped in her mind to the Flint Hills tallgrass of Kansas, and that got her through.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Build an "escape hatch" place in your mind before you need it**
  Jonna thinks anyone can use the POW technique, even for everyday stress. Pick a vivid real place with warm associations. Her invented sandy beach didn't work, but a real memory did.
- **If you've hit a ceiling, aim higher than you think you can**
  Her advice to women who feel underestimated: you know yourself better than anyone, so aim high and climb one step at a time, even if you might not get there.
- **Practice courage deliberately**
  Make a list of what scares you, including people and hard conversations, and approach them one at a time. Courage is exercised, not found.
- **Reinvention has no age limit**
  Jonna remarried at 46 and had her only child at 47, mid-career; at 81, Mel insists she still has another chapter to write. Her view: you end up where you're supposed to if you keep building confidence in your own ideas.

If You Feel Overwhelmed, Stressed, or Stuck, Listen to This

Guest: Kier Gaines
Date: 2026-08-13 · Duration: 1:04:55
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h9a553vDvU8

KEYPOINTS

• Build emotional fitness, not just 'mental health'

Therapist Kier Gaines calls his approach 'emotional readiness architecture', which he describes as a fancy name for emotional fitness: how prepared you are for life's slings and arrows. He argues modern life is engineered against your wellness and most people have no counter-strategy. Mel prefers the framing because it suggests strength. Mental health means being self-aware enough to notice when something outside is getting inside. Gaines says it's never too late to build these tools and he's a strong advocate for therapy.

• Resilience means you keep chopping your feet

Gaines's running-back analogy: between you and the end zone are 300-pound players trying to stop you, and sometimes you get stood up but not tackled. A good coach says keep your feet moving and push forward, even when you're hopeless, unsupported or can't see the end zone. He adds that this takes self-honesty about where you actually are.

• Insecurity has a source, so find it before you treat it

Mel reads from page 24 of his book It All Starts When You Do (chapter: 'Do you accept the uncomfortable truths in life?'). If you keep listening to the deep-down voice that says happiness, love and financial freedom are for other people, you'll never get them. Follow the trail of breadcrumbs to what you're insecure about, because that diagnosis is the first step towards trusting yourself.

• Someone else's situation is not a verdict on you

Mel admits that a daughter struggling in math once made her feel she was a failing parent, and that people nitpick a partner's weight because they're managing what others think. Gaines reframes it: there's a circumstance that needs attention, but it is not a reflection on you. What you do about it is.

• Troubleshoot cheapest-first, and trade blame for accountability

Catastrophic thinking jumps to 'the engine's dead'. Gaines checks the $10 fix (a leaking tube, a seal, the water pump) before the $2,500 one. In relationships and self-talk, ask what else a problem could be caused by besides your failure. Blame grabs all your awareness but doesn't help. Accountability says what's yours and gives you the power to act.

• Men's anger is often a primary emotion covering others

Speaking to men sent the episode by a partner, Gaines says anger is usually the first feeling. Sit with it and you often find disappointment, a secondary emotion, and under that, hopelessness. Treating only the anger is like taking allergy medicine for a migraine. Quoting one of his mentors, he says naming and managing feelings is how you become 'a comprehensive man'. He adds that the old model of masculinity has to adapt.

• Self-trust comes from proving it to yourself, alone

When others' opinions start overriding yours, Gaines's unpopular prescription is to spend time with yourself, by yourself, and practise being the person you say you are through small steps. Be undistracted: fly without headphones, sit in morning silence, stop filling space with words. That's how you stay 'updated software', not the shadow of who you were 10 or 15 years ago.

• With depression, progress can mean stopping the slide

Gaines, who is open about his own depression diagnosis, says you have to shrink your expectations to meet the moment, because you can't run at 100% efficiency. People think progress is going from 2 to 5 on a 1–10 scale. Sometimes it's going from " 5 to " 4, or only slipping to " 6 instead of " 8. Anxiety and depression usually show up together.

• How clinicians assess depression

From memory, Gaines says clinicians look at roughly 10–12 symptoms and you need to meet about five or six that can't be explained by something else. Examples are losing interest in things that used to bring joy, effects on relationships, work and self-care, withdrawing from people, and insomnia or hypersomnia. Feeling bad about your job alone isn't depression, which is why you need a licensed professional and often a screening inventory.

• 60-second overwhelm reset: pause, name it, don't fix it all

First, pause. When everything is urgent, nothing is. Second, name it and localise it: 'I'm overwhelmed in this moment.' Admitting it reflects your circumstances, not your incapability. Third, you don't have to fix it all now. Overwhelm is often a failure of the systems meant to hold you up, and you can't fix systems in a moment. Just slow it down.

EXAMPLES

• Brandon Jacobs and slowing overwhelm down

The New York Giants running back was 6'4" and 264 lb when most backs are around 210. Asked how to stop him, a coach said you don't stop Brandon Jacobs, you slow him down enough for the defence to catch its breath. Gaines says the same goes for overwhelm once you're in it.

• The $1,400 Buick Roadmaster

Gaines's first car, a 1992 Roadmaster from an auto auction ('a refrigerator on wheels'), broke down every other week. He learned to stop assuming the engine was dead and to work through simpler fixes first, which became his model for not catastrophising.

• Mel's jealous 40s

Mel says she was miserable in her 40s. With liens on the house and money tight, she burned inside watching friends build kitchens, take vacations and join clubs. She was only happy for others if she was doing better. She decided she didn't want to stay that person and wanted to celebrate others' success authentically.

• Gaines's own maintenance routine

He reads books he enjoys, eats alone and lets his thoughts wander, gets sunlight first thing, and goes to bed 'on purpose'

around 9:30–10 at a consistent time instead of falling asleep on the couch. Mel says her happiness and success track how early she goes to bed.

- **Cleaning his cousin's garage**
  Realising he wasn't spending enough time with family, Gaines helped a cousin in her 70s clean out her garage. Small acts like that prove to him that he is the family-centred person he says he is.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Ask people you trust 'What do you see when you see me?'**
  Gaines asks how he usually reacts to things. He admits it stings when they 'keep it too real', but it shows blind spots you can't see alone.
- **Ask yourself the uncomfortable question**
  Don't 'lollipop' yourself like interviewees who say their weakness is caring too much. Ask whether you're willing to pay the price of the comfort you get from avoiding hard truths.
- **Peel back anger in three layers**
  When you're angry, ask 'What else?' twice, for example anger to disappointment to hopelessness, and respond to the deepest layer.
- **Get assessed if symptoms persist**
  If several signs (lost interest, sleep changes, withdrawal, slipping at work) last, see a licensed clinician rather than self-diagnosing.

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.

How to Feel Better Fast: 5 Things That Shift Your Mood Instantly

Guest: Dr. Wendy Suzuki, Dr. Adam Alter, Chelsea Handler, Dr. Martha Beck
Date: 2026-08-08 · Duration: 0:59:02
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=knxzN5Y-_p4

KEYPOINTS

- **Five feelings came up again and again when Mel asked half a million people what they need help with**
  Mel asked Instagram 'What do you need help with right now?' and got over 500,000 replies repeating the same words: anxious, irritated, tired, stuck, flat. Her team grouped them into five states (drained, foggy, brain-fried, hard on yourself, heavy/lost) and matched each with one tool from a past guest.
- **The fastest way to change how you feel is to change what your body is doing**
  Neuroscientist Dr. Wendy Suzuki (NYU) says every bout of movement releases dopamine, serotonin, noradrenaline, endorphins and growth factors. She calls it a 'neurochemical bubble bath for your brain.' You don't need a marathon: a 10-minute walk starts it, and getting your heart rate up adds more. The growth factors reach the hippocampus, where new cells form. She adds that people assigned to exercise grow more motivated to exercise, and the post-workout energy likely comes from the same chemicals.
- **A single walk sharpens focus right away, and regular exercise raises your baseline**
  Suzuki says improved focus is the most commonly reported brain effect in exercise studies, involving the prefrontal cortex, likely via new synapses (the mechanism is less clear there). Common antidepressant and anti-anxiety drugs act on the same chemicals, so movement is a natural complement, not a replacement for treatment.
- **A cold finish to your shower is a natural adrenaline jolt for a foggy mood**
  For the 'dirty window' fog, Suzuki ends every hot shower on maximum cold; colder means a bigger boost, lasting 'easy the rest of the morning.' Stay only until you feel the shock. Mel does a warm shower, then about 20 seconds cold, instead of extra coffee or Diet Coke that wrecks sleep. It shifts body state; it won't fix big problems.
- **A fried brain may need different input, not more effort**
  Mel describes overload as a drawbridge that won't close: you lose sentences, forget appointments, walk into rooms and forget why, and snap at the nicest people. Scrolling, reacting, worrying and trying to keep up all count as input. Her reframe is that you may not need to focus harder; you may need to change what your brain is looking at.
- **Nature restores the attention that screens and focused work drain**
  Dr. Adam Alter (NYU Stern, Princeton psychology PhD) calls nature's effects 'among the most profound I've ever seen in any research.' Focused attention on screens and work drains you like a falling body-battery reading; apart from sleep, nature refills it, because birdsong, water and trees hold attention gently. He ties this to research on attention restoration.
- **Being your own cheerleader is a skill, and it will feel cringey at first**
  For people exhausted by holding everything together and moving the goalposts after every win, Mel says to stop waiting for someone else to pick you up, because 'the person that looks at you and says, I got you, needs to be you.' Not everything is that deep, and you're allowed shenanigans and fun.
- **When you're in a bad mood, the fastest way out of your head is to do something for someone else**
  Chelsea Handler says you can add value as a private person: smile at a stranger, help someone struggling at the airport, ask the bathroom attendant about their day. She says being generous when you don't feel like it is 'next level.' Mel's takeaway is to stop making the whole world about your bad mood.
- **If you don't know where to start, figure out where you're going**
  For the heavy, lost feeling, Mel argues that people spin in place because they only see where they're standing. Without an imagined destination, you can't plot directions. That leads into Dr. Martha Beck's ideal-day exercise.
- **Imagination and anxiety can't easily run at once**
  Beck, a Harvard-trained sociologist and life coach, frames it in left-brain versus right-brain terms. The verbal, counting, problem-solving side gets stuck in anxiety. Senses, place and imagination engage the creative side. 'Anxiety shuts down creativity, but creativity shuts down anxiety.' That framing simplifies how the hemispheres actually work, so take it as a metaphor. She says the things that bring tears to your eyes point to your real purpose, not career or money.

EXAMPLES

- **Mel's walk between tapings**
  Sluggish and burnt out, Mel took a 10-minute walk only after her executive producer, Tracy, pushed her. She got ice cream with her sister-in-law Christine under a blue sky and came back 'a fundamentally different Mel Robbins.' She says to keep your phone away so you actually notice things.
- **The hospital window study**
  Alter describes surgical patients randomly assigned to rooms that looked out on a lawn and trees, or on another part of the building. After identical surgeries, the patients with the green view needed about half as much pain medication and left the hospital about 3 days sooner.
- **Alter's five minutes on a rock**
  A runner who goes out 4–5 days a week, Alter made himself stop mid-run in a forest and sit by running water for five minutes. He calls it 'by far the most restorative' part of the day.
- **Chelsea Handler's mirror line**
  She reads from her book I'll Have What She's Having about becoming her own best friend, cheerleader, listener, mother and sister. Most mornings she tells her reflection: 'What shenanigans are we going to get up to today, you beautiful human being.'
- **Mel's ideal day in 2034**
  Guided by Beck to imagine 10 years ahead using only her senses, Mel hears waves and children laughing. She sees wide-plank, unshiny floors, a big beach painting and a closet full of flip-flops and Birkenstocks ('you have more than one house'), and

pictures walking the beach and reading on the porch with family. Beck pointed to her tears as proof it was real.

- **Beck on language and despair**

  Beck says psychologists trace humans' unique capacity for suicide to language: we can build an imagined future so painful it outweighs the fear of death. She says she lived that way for about 32 years before choosing to 'live in the awareness of that light.'

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Match the tool to the feeling**

  Drained: walk for 10 minutes. Foggy: end your shower cold. Fried: get 5 minutes of nature or water sounds. Self-critical: give yourself a mirror pep talk. Bad mood: help someone. Lost: do the ideal day.

- **City-proof nature**

  Alter says indoor plants, fresh flowers by your computer, a small fountain, an open window, or taking out your earbuds to hear birds or rain all stand in for the real thing. Aim for 5 minutes a day doing nothing else.

- **Run the ideal-day exercise with your senses, not logistics**

  Close your eyes, pick a year, wake on an ordinary day in an ideal life: what do you hear? Then look at floor, walls, window, mirror, closet shoes. If your mind asks 'how will this happen,' return to senses and notice what moves you.

- **Ease into cold exposure**

  Suzuki started with one shoulder, and Mel stops at around 20 seconds. Anyone with heart or other medical concerns should check with a doctor first.

Organize Your Life & Home: The Simple System That Gives You More Time, Energy, & Control

Guest: Clea Shearer and Joanna Teplin (The Home Edit)
Date: 2026-08-06 · Duration: 1:09:34
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BfW9ENoucyE

KEYPOINTS

• Polished organizing photos are the "wedding album, not the marriage"
Mel admits she taped in Boston because she was too embarrassed to host them at her Vermont home. She says The Home Edit's colour-coded pantries both inspire and shame her. Clea and Joanna call their Instagram a portfolio: a snapshot, not a standard to live by. Their goal is to lower everyone's standards for what organized looks like and remove the shame.

• You don't have time *not* to be organized
Physical clutter drains your mental energy, and searching for keys or a child's water bottle before school wastes far more time than setting up a home for them. Their joke is that "organized people are just too lazy to look for things." Organizing takes chores off a busy person's plate rather than adding one. It doesn't have to happen in one sitting.

• The edit is 80% of the job, and it costs nothing
Mel says she'll stop saying 'organizing' and start saying 'edit.' Editing means actively deciding what stays, rather than shuffling things around or hiding them in baskets. Containers and labels come later. Every item needs a home, but that home doesn't have to be a bin.

• The 80/20 rule: keep any space only 80% full
As with eating, you don't want to be more than 80% full. That 20% of breathing room brings more peace than colour-coding. The items you keep can't exceed the space you have, whether you live in a studio or a mansion. When there are too many pens, the scissors (or rolling pin, or potato masher) jam the drawer.

• Keep only what you need, use or love; sentimental items must be honoured
Plunger, need. Toaster, use. Love needs no justification. Sentimental is a red-flag subcategory. Either use the item or store it with care, in a keepsake box or a frame. A grandmother's sweater shoved at the back of a shelf isn't being honoured. Set a firm space limit for keepsakes, and remember that storage space costs rent or mortgage.

• "Should" is not a reason to keep something
Shoulds feel powerful, but they aren't a want or a need, and nobody is coming over to check on that tea towel. Grouping a whole category together makes the choice obvious. When Mel imagined all her family heirlooms on one table, she lit up at her grandmother's china on display and deflated at the doilies and broken 1920s costume jewelry crammed in a drawer.

• Clutter is not a character flaw
People link clutter to self-worth because they shame themselves, but clutter is 'a very solvable problem.' Much resistance is really avoidance of 'landmines.' Will these jeans ever fit? Are we having another baby, given the maternity clothes worn once? What about the gift I never liked? Busyness becomes the excuse.

• Start with one landmine-free drawer, never a whole room
A junk drawer is ideal because nobody is attached to a bent paper clip. A small win builds muscle memory and confidence. Bathroom drawers also work, since they're the first and last thing you see each day. A 'daily drawer' holds only your morning items: dental care, contacts, cotton swabs. Never take out more than you can put back the same day.

• Don't fight the tide in 'Grand Central'
In the entry or mudroom, first ask whether everything there belongs; dog food or a vise may belong in the garage. Then accept how your family behaves. Shoes and backpacks will land there, so add a shoe bin and hooks. Nothing goes on the floor except a rug. Look up for vertical storage, and give every flat surface a tray with a job (mail, keys) so it doesn't become an 'endless sea.'

• A me problem versus a them problem
If the glasses and keys on the kitchen island have no home, that's a me problem: create one. If people ignore a simple system, it's a them problem. Both women admit they remake their kids' beds. Standards that are too high break the system.

• Mess returns when systems are too complicated or there's only tidying
Use big floor bins for blocks, not micro-categories. Labels are 'a set of instructions for the household.' Organizing is like the gym: it needs maintenance, and a slip such as steak knives in the junk drawer just means you start again. If it works, it's enough.

EXAMPLES

• Mel's actual kitchen junk drawer, edited live in about 5 minutes
Everything came out: a rubber-band ball nobody uses, a missing cribbage card (dropped there out of frustration), a water-stained to-do list, nail polish, cuticle cream, Irish breakfast tea she dislikes, duct tape, a chopstick, a Tide pen, unclaimed bracelets and expired cat-food coupons. Mel kept only the black, blue and green pens; the rest go to a teacher. Box lids became free dividers, and birthday candles and matches went into their own little kit.

• The joker card test
Mel felt she 'should' put a stray card back with its deck, until she admitted she plays no game that uses a joker. Out it went: 'Take the word should out of your vocabulary.'

• Six pantry categories
Breakfast, dinner, snacks, baking, cooking and dessert are enough for a busy household. Add micro-categories only if you enjoy them.

• The 'no new hangers' rule
The self-described ruthless shopper of the pair buys no new hangers: her hanger count matches her closet, so new clothes mean something leaves. They also urge matching hangers and putting empty hangers back at the end of the rod.

- **No client has missed what they purged**
  Over their client work, they can't recall one person regretting a closet edit. For pricey items, resale services that pick up and sell on commission (they mention Poshmark and The RealReal) remove the barrier, but don't let selling stall the edit.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Item or space?**
  When you're stuck, especially in a closet, ask: do I want this, or the breathing room and the free hanger? Mel adopts it as a lifelong mantra. Do closets by category (pile all your pajamas on the bed), one day a week, and expect emotions.
- **Carry a 'relocation basket'**
  Put things that belong elsewhere in a basket and walk them to the garage or bathroom in one loop.
- **Small-space helpers**
  A three-tier rolling cart holds laundry, towels or a laptop. Over-door units hold shoes, and hooks use vertical space.
- **Low-bar lifestyle**
  Set the bar low enough to step over: 5 minutes of editing counts. Start with a space that's only yours, like your bathroom drawer, before tackling shared spaces where others may not follow the system yet.

If You Only Watch One Video This Week, Make It This One

Guest: Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce
Date: 2026-08-03 · Duration: 1:24:43
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ylswUDZVgWM

KEYPOINTS

• Excellence starts with a decision to leave average behind

Shelly-Ann grew up in Waterhouse, Kingston, sharing one room with her mother (who had her at 17) and two brothers. There, she says, 'dreaming is a luxury.' Her first instruction is to decide who you want to be and where you want to be in 5–10 years. Then, every morning, put one foot in front of the other. A champion mindset isn't just winning; it's 'trusting the promise you've already made to yourself.'

• Your own voice must be the loudest voice in the room

Stop asking permission to be great from people who don't know your gifts or what you're chasing. Outside voices, including 'too old,' 'too young' or 'you've had enough,' are white noise. Mel's version: maybe the problem is listening to the announcers calling the play. Shelly-Ann's line: those people 'are at the ceiling of their imagination, not yours.'

• A lot can change in a year, if you're consistent at small things

She went from relay reserve at the 2007 World Championships in Osaka to Olympic 100m champion in 2008. What changed was consistency: being at 5 a.m. practice at 5, not 5:30, and changing how she ate. 'For the person chasing mediocrity, one year is small. For the person chasing greatness, one year is a lot.'

• Owning your own outcome changes how you compete

In Osaka she cried when told she would run, terrified of failing three relay teammates. She ran the heats but not the final. She went home wanting to stand on the line where 'anything I lose, it's mine to lose; anything I win, it's mine to win.' In Beijing her dream was only to make the final, yet she had already told a teammate how she would scream if she won.

• Visualization is free preparation, and elite sprinters train it weekly

Fridays are mental training, not running. She rehearses races months ahead, down to the smell of the stadium and the starter's 'on your marks,' so on race day her body knows it's 'go time.' She claims the mind can't fully tell imagined from real, which is a loose summary of the research, so treat it as her experience. It wanders at first (she drifted to KFC and the beach), so she uses a cue to return: 'Greater is he that is in me than he that is in the world.' Rehearse a presentation or hard conversation the same way.

• Watching your competitors helps them win

'When you focus on them, you're helping them win,' and they are probably focused on you. At the line she ignores every lane: 'I've never seen anybody win going backwards.' To learn from people you envy or resent, use the Jamaican saying 'eat the meat, leave the bone': take what's useful and drop the rest.

• Motivation changes; standards are who you are

Usain Bolt has said her longevity makes him feel like an underachiever. She credits standards, not feelings: motivation tied to a person or grudge disappears when they do. Some days she doesn't want to train; she goes anyway. 'Show up in spite of.'

• Build standards in small, personal steps, not New Year's resolutions

For someone who feels knocked down, start with one thing, like getting up, making your bed, having coffee and visualizing for 20 minutes. Write it down, add something a week later, and let it become routine. Undoing years of habits takes time. Your standards must be yours. Resolutions made because everyone else makes them are forgotten 'by the second of January.'

• Failure shows you how; losing only becomes final when you quit

She calls herself 'an expert at losing.' Wins can make you think you've got it all figured out, while failure shows you what needs work. Her coach told her that crossing the line, even in a loss, gives you something to evaluate, like switching routes after 20 minutes in traffic. Champions say 'back to the drawing board,' never 'I quit.'

• Pressure is a privilege, and it grows when you live in the past and future at once

'Nobody stones green mangoes': pressure means someone, including you, sees more in you. It swells when you replay old mistakes while fearing what's next. 'Compete where your feet are': breathe, return to your why and prepare for what's coming.

• Stop negotiating your mornings

Don't bargain with yourself ('maybe next week'). Decide and commit, because 'everything changes downstream when upstream is done right.' The only dream that hasn't been met is the one you haven't started.

EXAMPLES

• 2008 Beijing gold

She became the first Caribbean woman to win Olympic 100m gold. She dedicated it to her community's girls, her mother and her grandmother, whose one word when she chose to stay in Jamaica for university (UTech) instead of going overseas was 'Go.'

• The broken toe bone before Rio 2016

After titles in 2008, 2009, 2012, 2013 and 2015, she fractured a sesamoid under her big toe, the bone behind push-off power. She couldn't get her foot into a spike, so she cushioned it, trained in the gym and pool, did rehab and won bronze, missing a third straight Olympic title.

• Doha 2019, two years after her son

Critics said a baby at almost 30 would end her career. Instead, she said, her son needed to see her chase her dreams so he knows he has permission to chase his. She won the world 100m, about 10.7, and celebrated with her 2-year-old on the track. A planned January 2018 toe surgery was dropped when she found out she was pregnant. The rest helped heal it about 80%, and she believes that 'saved my career.'

• Eugene 2022 at 35

In a sport where 28 is 'old,' she became the oldest world champion at 35, after a season with repeated 10.6-second runs. At the line she thinks only of her work, cues ('low at the block, drive powerful, get to 30') and past wins: 'You can't let the moment be

bigger than you.'

- **Mel's 2008 financial crisis**
  With three kids, liens on the house and a lost job, Mel says she screamed at her husband, Chris, for a year while replaying past mistakes. Change came only when she decided her purpose was to save the house and pay the debt. Then pressure felt like a push from behind rather than something crushing her.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Make a Friday-style visualization habit**
  Pick one upcoming moment, such as a pitch, a breakup or an interview. Close your eyes and run it with every sense, seeing yourself do it 'not perfectly but powerfully,' and choose a phrase to pull your attention back.
- **Rest is training**
  'Nobody shows up and wins on an empty tank.' Recovery is as important as the work.
- **When the moment feels huge, go back to your wins**
  On hard days, recall specific past successes as evidence of what you can do, and tune out the 'lights' you can't control.
- **You can be more than one thing**
  She rejects the idea that being a mother and an elite athlete means doing both badly. You decide what it means, and you leave a blueprint for the next woman.

MIT Longevity Expert: Do These 3 Things Now to Stay Young, Live Longer, & Keep Your Freedom

Guest: Dr. Joseph Coughlin
Date: 2026-07-30 · Duration: 1:18:44
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gstI93tsafM

KEYPOINTS

• Retirement isn't a short coda; it's another 8,000 days, a third of adult life

Coughlin, founder of the MIT AgeLab, splits life into 8,000-day blocks: birth to 21, 21 to about 46 ('midlife crisis'), 46 to 65, and 65 to about 85. People over 85 are the fastest-growing group worldwide. Set childhood aside, and the years after 65 are a full third of adult life, not a trip to Disney with the grandkids. He says about half of children born today are expected to live to 100, and that being unprepared isn't a personal failing: 'old age is quite new' and there's no map.

• Three questions to plan your later life around

(1) How will you get an ice cream cone, meaning the small, spur-of-the-moment things that make you smile? 70% of Americans over 50 live where not driving means not getting out. (2) What will you do on a Tuesday at 10:30, once work and caregiving no longer give your days structure? COVID showed that hobbies get boring fast and spouses tire of each other around the clock. (3) Who will change your light bulbs, meaning someone you trust in your mother's home, someone she'll accept, someone who checks on you?

• Build a social portfolio, because friends naturally fall away

Most people have only one to three friends who'd show up at 2 a.m. Death, illness, moving away and even grandchildren (who take over Friday nights) thin that circle, which is why Coughlin recommends always having 'friends under development.' He cites Julianne Holt-Lunstad's research linking loneliness and isolation to a health impact comparable to smoking 11–15 cigarettes a day, including higher risk of hypertension and depression.

• Aging means diminishing capacity, not counting birthdays

Coughlin defines aging as 'capacity diminishing over time.' Strength training, nutrition, learning and social connection add capacity and 'push out the clock.' The AGNES suit (Age Gain Now Empathy System) simulates the conditions that tend to come with age, such as arthritis, diabetes and vision loss. It's not your fate.

• Friction, fatigue and frustration explain a lot of 'cranky' older behaviour

Small resistance in every chair, stair and jacket adds up to fatigue. Frustration follows because people remember when it was easy, and Mel adds a fourth F, feeling frail. Slow shoppers often aren't slow; they're unsure of their footing. Pride matters too: people skip a Friday dinner rather than be seen struggling to get through a door.

• When the world gets harder to move through, it shrinks

If stairs feel daunting, you skip making tea downstairs and stay in bed watching TV. Coughlin cautions against removing all friction (a one-floor home isn't automatically better), because stairs are also exercise that preserves muscle. Use the railing at any age.

• Hard-to-use tech is bad design, not user failure

Phones are built for young eyes and fingers, and thinner bottles with smaller caps (better for the environment) are harder to open with weak grip. Grip strength is a key marker of aging. Tech is 'the only industry that dares to accuse the consumer of not being competent.' When it's hard, people quietly opt out and lose connection.

• Most people plan for retirement but don't prepare for it

A plan is like a grocery list; preparing means paying attention and acting, so the food actually ends up on the plate. The roughly 30 years of life expectancy gained since 1900 are 'a dividend to be cashed in.' Preparing is 'an act of love' for yourself and the people who will depend on you.

• The most important number in old age is your zip code

Neighbouring zip codes can differ by 9–13 years in life expectancy. Coughlin, who teaches urban planning, judges a place on intensity (things to do and services), density (close enough to reach without driving) and accessibility (physical and financial). Mel realizes her remote Vermont home works only while she can drive.

• Caregiving is where people are least prepared

The AgeLab and John Hancock built a longevity preparedness index with eight dimensions, including health, finance, home, community, life transitions, social life and caregiving. Caregiving scored lowest, at 42. About 70% expect a spouse or adult child to care for them, but only about 30% have discussed it. The care usually falls to a spouse, then the eldest daughter, which Coughlin attributes to social roles, not biology.

EXAMPLES

• Mel in the AGNES suit

The suit added a weighted vest (lost muscle), a bungee harness that restricts stride, ankle weights, foam-soled 'wobbly' Crocs (balance, neuropathy), a neck brace (neck rotation starts declining in your 30s, which is why older drivers say they 'can't see out of the car'), vision goggles, a helmet and arthritis gloves. Picking up socks meant bracing on her knee. Stairs felt 'like I'm injured.' She spilled a water bottle, held her phone 2 inches from her face to text Chris, and couldn't remove 2-lb weights.

• The low chair

Weeks earlier, Mel had urged her mother to try a comfy, low furniture-store chair. Her mother said she couldn't get out of it. In the suit, getting up felt like 'the 12th rep of a squat,' and Mel says she now feels 'like a jerk.' The same goes for low toilets and getting into cars.

• The 'panini generation'

People in their 60s care for parents in their 80s and 90s, while 40-somethings worry about both. One in four US families provides 25–29 hours of care a week, rising to one in three for those over 50. Women may leave jobs or turn down promotions to provide care, and they tend to outlive partners by 7–8 years, so they often reach their own old age underprepared.

- **Caregivers' top three challenges**
  First, health complexity: often seven medications a day, and a parent who says 'I'm fine' at the doctor's. Second, money: families talk about it less than health, and fraud more often comes from people close to the person. Third, transportation, which Coughlin calls 'the glue' of life and the third-biggest retirement cost for couples over 65, after health care in second place.
- **The hip-fracture timeline**
  Fall and break a hip on Friday, surgery by Sunday, and by Monday the hospital says 'Mom's coming home.' Without earlier conversations, families scramble.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Hold the care conversation in pieces: who, where, what, how**
  Who provides hands-on care, and who makes decisions if they can't? Where should care happen: at home, with family or in senior living? What are they willing to put up with to maintain or extend life? How will it be paid for? Have the conversation repeatedly. Ask caregivers 'How are you doing?', because nobody does.
- **Handle driving with patterns and alternatives, not Thanksgiving ambushes**
  Health and medications matter more than age. Coughlin would rather ride with a fit 80-year-old than a 30-year-old on allergy medication. Look for patterns rather than one knocked-over mailbox; mixing up the pedals is a clear stop. Line up rides and try ride-share before it's necessary.
- **Three levers for independence**
  Rebuild capacity through strength training and nutrition, rearrange the home to cut friction, and ask for help. Use AARP's Livability Index to score a zip code.
- **Structure your Tuesdays now**
  Couples over 65 average 4–5 hours of TV a day. Plan purpose, routine and lunches with friends before retiring.

#1 Women’s Hormone Doctor: Take Control of Your Body, Balance Hormones, & Feel Amazing

Guest: Dr. Sharon Malone
Date: 2026-07-23 · Duration: 1:15:44
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9tKZ3w-Gku8

KEYPOINTS

• Women's hormonal health is one continuous story, from puberty to menopause and beyond

Dr. Sharon Malone (board-certified OB-GYN, menopause expert, author of Grown Woman Talk) says puberty, reproductive years, perimenopause and menopause are linked: 'the sooner you know the story, the better you can craft a better ending.' Women rarely get more than a basic period talk, so perimenopause catches most 'flat-footed.'

• The pill is one of the greatest inventions for women, and its risks are small for most young women

Malone is frustrated by social media posts blaming the pill for depression or sexual dysfunction. Beyond letting women decide when to have children, it reduces heavy bleeding and the anemia that can come with it. It can ease PMS and menstrual migraines by smoothing the drop in hormones that seems to trigger them, and it's a first-line treatment for suspected endometriosis. There are about 20 pill formulations, so a bad reaction to one doesn't rule them all out. 'That's the art of it.'

• Birth control doesn't cause infertility; age does

If you take the pill from 20 to 35 and then struggle to conceive, 'it's not the 15 years of pills, it's the fact that you are 35.' Ovulation usually returns within about 4–6 weeks. The pill raises clotting risk about 2–3 times; pregnancy raises it about 6 times.

• 'Natural' birth control is essentially a modified rhythm method, and it's unreliable

Malone, who went to Catholic school, says she saw how unreliable the rhythm method was. 'Natural' isn't automatically better: 'Death and disease are natural.' Temperature rises only after ovulation, so tracking works in hindsight, sperm can survive up to about 72 hours, and irregular cycles make it worse.

• Choose contraception by timeline and by how much an accidental pregnancy would cost you

Long-acting reversible contraception (hormonal or copper IUDs, the 3-year implant, the 3-monthly Depo-Provera shot) removes user error and suits a horizon of five years or so. If you might want a baby within a year, the pill makes more sense. Condoms always matter for STIs. Ask what an unplanned pregnancy would cost you right now.

• PCOS has a new name (PMOS) but the same diagnosis, and research is what's lagging

PCOS means irregular or absent ovulation, so the body overproduces estrogen and makes too little progesterone. Excess androgens can cause chin or nipple hair, hair loss and acne, and insulin resistance can drive weight gain. Ultrasound cysts aren't required for a diagnosis. Malone wants focus on causes and new treatments, not names. Fertility is affected because ovulation may happen only a few times a year, but ovulation-induction drugs exist.

• Endometriosis affects about 1 in 10 women and takes 7–9 years to diagnose

Tissue like the uterine lining grows where it doesn't belong (ovaries, bladder, bowel, abdominal lining) and responds to monthly hormones with nowhere to shed. That causes inflammation, scarring, pain, painful sex and sometimes infertility. Malone calls it 'the great masquerader,' because symptoms show up wherever it lands and get treated separately by GI doctors and urologists. Lesions are often too small to see on scans, so laparoscopy confirms it and lets surgeons laser it.

• Fertility drops faster after 35, and family history is useful data

Peak fertility runs from the late teens through the 20s, with a faster decline from about 35–36 because egg quality has an unseen 'expiration date.' Perimenopause lasts 4–10 years before an average menopause at 51, so a mother's menopause at 42 could mean perimenopause in your early 30s. Up to about 50% of infertility involves male factors, which ICSI can address; unexplained infertility is common.

• Menopause is a life stage, not an event, and hot flashes aren't harmless

Women may spend 30–40% of their lives after menopause, and low estrogen affects bones, brain, skin and hair from then on. Frequent, severe hot flashes can signal later heart risk: night sweats disrupt sleep, which is linked to hypertension, type 2 diabetes and skipped exercise. About 20% of women have hot flashes into their 60s and 70s. Black women's perimenopause lasts closer to 10 years, with earlier and more severe symptoms, which Malone links partly to chronic stress.

• Hormone therapy is the most effective treatment for symptoms, with no fixed time limit

Estrogen is the most effective FDA-approved treatment for hot flashes, but fear keeps women away. Malone says you can start when symptoms bother you, often between 35 and 45, and stay on it as long as you like. The old 'lowest dose, shortest time' advice has been revised. Starting sooner brings more long-term benefit for sleep, weight and heart health. Systemic HRT isn't right for everyone, so the decision should be made with a doctor.

• Bone and muscle loss speed up after menopause, so test early and lift

Women lose bone and muscle and gain abdominal fat even at a stable weight. Estrogen is the only medication with an FDA indication for preventing osteoporosis. Most lost bone doesn't come back, but weight-bearing training helps keep what you have. Bone density screening is recommended at 65, yet the fastest loss happens in the first 5 years after menopause. Malone gets a baseline at menopause and a repeat 18–24 months later.

EXAMPLES

• The college 'hockey stick'

Mel shows a chart in which, within about a decade of the pill becoming widely available around 1970, women's college completion and law and medical school entry rose sharply.

• Mel's soaked sheets and HRT

Mel had night sweats for about seven years, 'as if someone threw a bucket of water' on her bed. About five weeks into HRT she felt like herself again: 'Why didn't I start this sooner?' She vows to wear her patch 'on my deathbed.' A listener poll found 98% felt hormones affected their mood, energy, sleep, weight or cycle.

- **The estrogen-patch shortage**
  Malone blames shortages on demand nobody planned for as women 'wake up.' Alternatives include transdermal sprays and gels, other patch doses, and oral estrogen, which she says supplies most of the data on HRT's benefits.
- **Vaginal estrogen versus systemic HRT**
  Local estrogen treats genitourinary syndrome of menopause (dryness, painful sex, urgency, recurrent UTIs) where it's applied, 'like a pimple patch.' It won't stop hot flashes. Skin loses about 30% of its collagen in the first 5 years of menopause, and topical estrogen can help locally.
- **Egg versus embryo freezing**
  Freezing eggs in your 20s gives the best yield, but you're less likely to ever use them, so Malone suggests the late 20s or early 30s. It offers 'the possibility, not a guarantee,' at tens of thousands of dollars. Embryos from a known partner are more successful than frozen eggs.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Ask your mother these questions**
  Did you have painful periods (endometriosis risk is higher in daughters)? Fibroids? Trouble conceiving? Your age at your last baby, and at menopause? What were your pregnancies like? Share the answers with your doctor to speed up a diagnosis.
- **Ask your doctor both sides**
  Ask not only what the risks of HRT are, but also what benefits you'd get and 'what will happen if I don't.'
- **Train for the fall you hope never comes**
  Build upper-body strength (to lift a carry-on), core strength and balance so a trip doesn't make you 'go down like a tree.' Malone, at 67, says she's having more fun than at 47, but 'you got to feel well enough.'

The Manipulation Expert: 4 Hidden Signs You’re Dealing With a Toxic Person

Guest: Dr. Leanne ten Brinke
Date: 2026-07-20 · Duration: 1:03:20
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ybrv66DM9Dw

KEYPOINTS

• Most people are good, but one poisonous person can cause most of your stress

Dr. Leanne ten Brinke, a forensic psychology professor who runs the Truth and Trust Lab at the University of British Columbia and author of Poisonous People, says about 10% of people endorse the self-report statements used to measure dark traits. That means nine in ten are honest, kind and helpful. The rest (the manipulative sister-in-law, the credit-stealing boss, the callous mother-in-law) divide people, erode norms of polite conduct and turn cooperation into competition. Mel calls them 'the one person causing 90% of the stress.'

• Personality is consistent, so watch how they treat everyone else

A personality is a consistent way of thinking, feeling and behaving, so people take it everywhere. Someone may build a beautiful future with you while being callous and dominating with everyone else. Ten Brinke warns that if you're the exception, eventually 'you're going to become part of the rule'.

• The four dark traits share manipulation at the core

The 'dark tetrad' is psychopathy, narcissism, Machiavellianism and sadism. Ten Brinke defines manipulation as a willingness to use other people for your own ends, pulling their strings and changing their perspective. Each trait runs on a continuum rather than being a yes-or-no label.

• Psychopathy: callous, manipulative, impulsive, antisocial

Following Dr. Robert Hare's model, impulsivity means responding to risk differently, often mooching off others instead of planning a career or family. Antisocial means breaking rules, whether laws, workplace conduct or social norms of fairness and politeness. The everyday high end isn't a horror-movie killer. It's someone who lies a lot and is superficially charming, whose conversation makes little sense when you think about it later, and who doesn't care. A lack of guilt and remorse is central, and grudges are common.

• Machiavellianism: amoral, strategic pursuit of status

Machiavellians want status, control, fame or money. They'll flatter to get ahead and are just as willing to spread rumours or lie. Unlike impulsive psychopaths, they plan, filing away something embarrassing you said to use later when they need to turn the screws. At work they subtly push people out and manage up. In families they create divisions and may become the drama-stirring favourite.

• Narcissism: entitlement plus exploitation, in two flavours

Grandiose narcissists have egos that can't be deflated and get furious at failures like a missed job, promotion or raise. Vulnerable narcissists have easily shattered egos, depend on ego boosts from others, and are hurt most by rejection. Ten Brinke uses a broken-mirror image: what you see isn't what you get.

• Sadism: an appetite for cruelty

Sadism centres on enjoying other people's pain. Ten Brinke once coded descriptions of sexual homicides for gratuitous violence as an undergraduate, but she stresses there are everyday versions too, such as relishing very violent sports or cruel videos online.

• No. 1 sign of manipulation: they're different with you than with everyone else

If someone wants your time, money or influence and acts like a different person around you, you're probably not seeing who they really are. Love bombing (constant texts, flowers, 'they want the same things I do') is a classic early version. Charm switches on when they need something and disappears once they've got it.

• Gaslighting is abuse, not disagreement

The word is overused for ordinary confusion or different interpretations. Real gaslighting tries to make you distrust your own mind, memories and reactions by creating a surreal environment. Because brains are 'prediction machines', constant feedback that your predictions are wrong is destabilising and breeds dependence and isolation. Research is relatively thin, but people high in dark traits endorse these tactics in romantic relationships.

• Don't expect change, so be strategic instead

Mel cites Dr. Ramani Durvasula: the real source of pain is the hope that the person will change if you bake more cupcakes, lower your voice or stay ten more years. Ten Brinke agrees. Research, mostly with incarcerated men, shows that sustained therapy can bring harm reduction, not a personality 180. Her advice is to pause, assess, then either avoid them or engage strategically, thinking about what motivates them.

EXAMPLES

• Paulhus's week-one vs week-seven study

Delroy Paulhus at UBC had students rate group-mates over a term. In week one, the most narcissistic were seen as agreeable, well-adjusted and competent. By week seven, the same people were rated arrogant, hostile braggarts who overestimated their abilities. The early sheen of confidence wears off.

• Spotting psychopathy in 5 seconds

Scott Lilienfeld and colleagues showed untrained viewers 5–10-second clips of incarcerated men in psychopathy-assessment interviews, along with a short definition. Their ratings correlated reasonably with trained psychologists who had full interviews and case files. The bad news, ten Brinke notes, is that charm still fools us in real life.

• Keltner's sorority gossip study

Ten Brinke's postdoc adviser Dacher Keltner measured Machiavellian traits in a sorority and asked who got talked about. The most gossiped-about women were well known but not well liked. They were highly Machiavellian and seen as holding status they didn't deserve. Gossip can be a warning system.

- **The chess-piece and puppet visuals**
  Ten Brinke illustrates Machiavellianism as someone knocking you off a chessboard, and sadism as a figure working a puppet on strings, saying she might add little knives.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Talk to others about the person**
  Ten Brinke says comparing notes is helpful. If many people quietly feel someone's status is unearned, or if you're treated as the exception, take the pattern seriously.
- **Be wary of early dazzle**
  Big confidence, instant chemistry and flattery are the same traits that cause problems later. Give it time and watch consistency.
- **Reality-check gaslighting**
  If you're starting to need someone else to interpret events for you, that dependence is the red flag. Reconnect with people who can confirm what you experienced.
- **Drop the fantasy**
  Decide how to deal with the person as they are now, with clear limits and less exposure, instead of waiting for them to change.

How to Master Your Emotions & Never Get Angry or Bothered by Anyone

Guest: Dr. Marc Brackett
Date: 2026-07-16 · Duration: 1:04:11
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SWvHZkkrAjc

KEYPOINTS

• Emotional intelligence is a set of learnable skills, and it decides who succeeds

Dr. Marc Brackett, founding director of the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence and author of Permission to Feel and Dealing with Feeling, defines emotional intelligence as skills that help you use emotions wisely to reach your goals. His Yale framework has reached more than 5,000 schools and over 10 million students. He tells his 500 Yale students that their CVs, grades and SAT scores all look the same. Just as height doesn't separate basketball players, intelligence won't decide who gets hired. Emotional skills will.

• Your mood quietly biases your judgments

In one study, teachers spent five minutes recalling their best or worst classroom day, then graded the identical essay. Grades differed by one to two full letter grades depending on mood, and the teachers insisted their feelings had no influence. Brackett's point is that emotions steer decisions all day without our noticing. The antidote starts with naming the emotion so it stops working unseen.

• It starts with permission to feel

Brackett grew up in northern New Jersey with a 'tough it up' father and an anxious mother, neither able to handle their own emotions, let alone his. He was abused from age 5 to 10 by his parents' closest friend, and he suppressed it until he was 48. The turning point was his uncle Marvin, a sixth-grade teacher and part-time band leader who practised a feelings curriculum with 11-year-old Marc in the backyard. Marvin was the first adult to ask him 'How are you feeling?', and Brackett says his whole career rests on that moment.

• Only about a third of people had an emotional ally

In Brackett's research, roughly one in three people say they had an 'Uncle Marvin or Aunt Maria' growing up, and two-thirds say they didn't. He calls the traits of these allies the 'big five': warmth, being non-judgmental, great listening, compassion and steady reliability. Brilliance, problem-solving and advice-giving aren't on the list. People fear being an ally because they can't fix things, but nobody is looking for a fix. If you didn't have one, he suggests becoming your own.

• RULER: recognize, understand, label, express, regulate

Brackett's five skills. Recognize that an emotion is happening, from your body, face and voice. Understand its causes and consequences. Label it precisely. Express it in ways that serve your goals. Regulate it. Mel rates herself 10/10 at noticing an emotion and 4/10 at knowing what it is.

• Precise labels point to the right fix

Anger is about injustice. Anxiety is about uncertainty about the future, so deep breaths and walks won't stop you ruminating. Stress is too many demands for your resources, so the gym brings only brief relief. You either accept that the job never ends or delegate and get support. Precision guides healthy regulation.

• 'Authentic self' isn't always your 'best self'

Brackett pushes back on reading permission to feel as permission to say whatever you feel whenever you like. Homes, workplaces and society have norms. Be true to yourself, but ask whether that's the most helpful self in the moment.

• Regulate with breath, then cognitive strategies

His sequence: permission to feel, then vocabulary, then deactivating your body (for him, a few breaths; for others, a walk or a short meditation), then a thinking strategy. His favourite is temporal distancing: 'How will I feel about this in a month?'

• The picture frame: watch the moment like a movie

When someone's energy turns hostile, as a relative of his did at family gatherings, Brackett imagines putting a frame around the scene so he is observing it instead of absorbing it. He fact-checks his catastrophic story ('she didn't actually say that') and chooses a response. Mel links this to her Let Them approach. Distance creates space to regulate, but you still have to regulate.

• Negative self-talk comes from outside, not within

Brackett argues self-talk starts early and is installed by other people. People don't want to self-sabotage, he says. They have been 'gaslighted' into it, which is why it helps to name where a voice came from.

• Ask how they feel, and offer yours first

After almost 30 years of marriage, Mel's most-asked question is 'What are you thinking?', which rarely gets an answer. Brackett says we're 'intimacy-phobic'. Model it instead: 'I'm in a weird place, an odd mix of frustration and overwhelm, and I want you to know.' Mel realised her husband's shutting down wasn't a power move. He felt there was nothing he could do.

EXAMPLES

• 'Your Uncle Marvin was my Uncle Marvin'

At a talk in New York State, a man stood up and asked whether Brackett meant Marvin Moore, the sixth-grade social studies teacher from Monticello. He was. Marvin had transformed his life too. After 45 minutes of conversation, the man asked Brackett: 'For whom are you an Uncle Marvin?'

• Students said 'stressed' when they meant envy

About 70% of Brackett's students (and 77% of high schoolers in a national study) report feeling tired, stressed and bored. When he had students journal the reasons, the real emotion was envy: peers who studied less and got better grades, better looks, better-connected parents. Counselling centres prescribe breathing and yoga, and he jokes that no yoga pose decreases envy.

• The $7 almond milk

Raised by a father who criticised spending, Brackett bristles when his partner buys organic almond milk. He walks down another aisle, breathes, and asks whether it's worth the relationship and whether he'll remember it in a week.

- **The bullying video at a conference**

  After Brackett spoke, the next presenter showed a video of a boy being bullied and joked, 'That was before he got his black belt,' in front of 300 people. Brackett says he regressed to age 12, and as a fifth-degree black belt he pictured a flying sidekick. His best self waited. Afterwards he told the man it was embarrassing for the whole community and would never happen again.

- **His niece Esme in kindergarten**

  Brackett brought his niece Esme home from Guatemala 21 years ago. In kindergarten a classmate called her skin colour 'disgusting' compared with her mother's. He had to tell her, in five-year-old language, that no one has the right to define her reality.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Daily RULER check-in**

  Ask 'How am I feeling?' and push past 'fine', 'tired' or 'stressed' to a precise word, then ask what caused it and what you need.

- **Before big judgments, name your mood**

  Grading, hiring, replying to a hard email: notice whether a good or bad day is tilting your call, and wait if needed.

- **Be someone's Uncle Marvin**

  Be warm, non-judgmental and reliable, and listen without fixing. Asking a kid or colleague 'How are you feeling?' can matter for decades.

Feeling Lost or Behind in Life? The #1 Happiness Expert Explains How to Find Your Purpose

Guest: Dr. Dacher Keltner
Date: 2026-07-13 · Duration: 1:06:21
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Lg2T5F-1nc

KEYPOINTS

- **What the happiness research points to is small, repeated moments, not big life overhauls.**
  Dr. Dacher Keltner, a UC Berkeley psychologist and founding director of the Greater Good Science Center, says the science of happiness 'exploded' over the past 30–40 years. Money and circumstances 'matter a little' (living in a democracy, having a healthy body), but what you can do right now is collect little moments of joy, beauty, laughter, gratitude, awe, love and kindness. Even five minutes a week savoring something beautiful helps.
- **Purpose comes from realizing 'this is in me and I'm serving some part of the world through it.'**
  For Keltner, purpose isn't a job title. He realized his was to teach (he comes from a long line of teachers). Once you see what you're serving through your actions, he says, purpose brings power and agency. He wants room for every kind of calling, including the struggling actress and the carpenter (his dad was one), not just perfectionistic achievement.
- **The first step out of feeling lost is asking questions, not changing careers.**
  He asks: What really inspired me as a child? Who inspires me, in my life or in history? What are my core strengths and values? He stresses 'this isn't about your career.' It's about where you come alive, even if that isn't what you do most of the day. Mel points out he didn't say to quit your job or adopt a 17-step morning routine. Just put a little of that into this weekend.
- **Your early inspirations work like a compass.**
  Drawing on narrative psychology ('we are stories, almost like books'), Keltner says the people and moments that moved you early point to what you care about. They can guide friendships, volunteer work, what you pursue, even which film you choose. He recalls the Dalai Lama telling a 2003 panel he was on that 'kindness is a basic state of human nature.'
- **When you're exhausted or purposeless, go back to kindness.**
  He says nearly every ethical tradition, from Confucianism to the Abrahamic faiths to modern philosophy, starts there. Practice it walking through the city, helping someone across the street, at work. He notes 30–40% of Americans volunteer. In his account, gratitude, beauty and kindness engage the vagus nerve, which calms the body and supports healthy immune function, and they involve dopamine, which he links to energy and purpose.
- **Awe is the feeling of meeting something vast you can't immediately understand, and it's easy to study.**
  His lab produces awe with music, big trees, national parks, art museums and thinking about inspiring people, then measures self-reports, brain activity, goosebumps and vagus nerve activity. He says it's 'actually pretty tractable' in the lab, despite people assuming it can't be measured.
- **In awe, the brain's 'ego network' quiets and the body shifts toward connection.**
  His description: the default mode network, where to-do lists, goals and self-focus live, deactivates, so 'your ego is no longer hassling' you. The vagus nerve slows your heart rate and makes you feel connected. There's 'a little bit of evidence' that oxytocin is released. Immune function improves, and your mind gets quiet and widens to the bigger picture.
- **A minute of awe a day is his top recommendation.**
  He tells audiences of doctors and nurses there's 'nothing better for your mind and body than a minute of awe a day.' He says it reduces depression, anxiety and daily stress, lowers exhaustion and loneliness, and increases energy and purpose. His recipe: pause, put away your devices, take a deep breath, and look for one of the 'eight wonders' his research found around the world.
- **The fearful story is always only part of the story.**
  He acknowledges stress is higher and young people are struggling. He has followed the data for 35–40 years. Citing Thich Nhat Hanh, he says that if you pause you can still smell the flowers, hear children laughing and see the light in someone's eyes. Mel connects this to the line that the good in your life depends on your ability to see it.

EXAMPLES

- **The awe walk study (with Virginia Sturm)**
  Participants took a weekly walk. Controls just enjoyed it, while the awe group looked from small to vast (bark to tree, raindrop to storm) and visited places of childlike wonder. Adults 75 and older reported less bodily pain, and he says a paper under review shows better brain health six years later.
- **Losing his younger brother**
  Keltner describes grief that 'dislocated' him. Despite being hardworking and purposeful, he felt exhausted and without purpose. His way back was looking for the moments of purpose in each day and committing to kindness. He also found comfort in Eleanor Roosevelt's nightly prayer to see 'the simple beauties all around me.'
- **The flowers exercise with Mel**
  With eyes closed, Mel touched flowers on set. They took her back to lying in her front yard as a kid in a small town in western Michigan, and then to her husband Chris, their flower beds and her grandmother. Keltner says that widening chain of connections is what awe does.
- **Mel's barred owls and Grand Canyon trip**
  Mel admits she's the one in her family who shushes everyone at dusk to hear barred owls calling ('who cooks for you?'). She was about to raft the Grand Canyon, a trip three years in the planning. Keltner says experiences 'beyond your frame of reference' like these are exactly what trigger awe.
- **His own reliable awe**
  An annual summer trip with his daughter Natalie and friends, where he feels 'part of the trees and the rivers and the fish.' He cites Darwin's phrase 'endless forms most beautiful.'

OTHER RELEVANT

- **60-second awe prompts**

  Look at the sky, which his undergrads love. Think of someone whose moral beauty inspires you and feel it in your body. Recall moving together with others (yoga class, a game, a concert). Look at a painting or a pattern. Play a piece of music that brings you to tears. Think about ideas you love or about the life cycle: we only have a little time here.

- **Purpose inventory**

  Write answers to: What inspired me as a child? Who inspires me? What are my core strengths? Then schedule one small expression of the answer this week.

- **Daily pause**

  Find a moment or two each day to slow down: a sunset, music, journaling. Treat it as maintenance, not a luxury.

How to Get More Out of Life: Make More Money & Build Something That Matters with Seth Godin

Guest: Seth Godin
Date: 2026-07-11 · Duration: 1:01:17
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IJq-SLEjdsk

KEYPOINTS

• Do work worth doing, not 'just your job'

Godin says that if you aren't someone who has to work today to eat tomorrow, you should raise the bar. Would you want your mom to see this work? Are you making excuses about the system or making it better? His line is 'You're not stuck in traffic, you are traffic': you take part in systems you complain about, and you can start your own thing instead.

• Every project starts with two questions: who's it for, and what's it for?

Name the smallest viable audience: how many people would be enough? Name the change you want to make. Mel's book succeeded not because of sales but because 'the right people bought it for the right reason.' Then take the leap of empathy: other people don't want what you want, see what you see or need what you need.

• If you're for anyone, you're doomed

Being specific lets you say 'Sorry, it's not for you' with no apology, and lets you refer people to so-called competitors. A truck driver who'll go anywhere is a commodity. One trained to move expensive collector cars becomes 'Get me Terry.' At first, being specific is harder because you have to be genuinely good.

• Being in a business is almost never about making the thing

To be in the granola business means storytelling, logistics, packaging, customer service, finance, supply chain and managing people, not cooking. Martha Stewart isn't making granola. Ask how you want to spend your day before starting. Avoid glamorous, buzzy businesses full of hobbyists, and pick one that solves a problem for people with plenty of money to pay.

• Freelancers and entrepreneurs are different jobs; the danger is the dead zone between

An entrepreneur uses assets, often other people's money, to build something that makes money while they sleep. A freelancer gets paid when they work and can't scale. Trouble starts when freelancers try to grow without leverage and keep 'hiring themselves' as the cheapest worker. That traps them in a zone of 8–30 people, doing every job, underpaid and stressed. Most people, Godin adds, will have happy careers working for someone else.

• Every time you're tempted to do a job yourself, ask: what am I hiding from?

He grew one of the first internet companies to almost 100 people, with 50 reporting to him. He loved spending all day answering questions, but he was hiding from the real work of finding transformative partnerships. In the three months before the sale, he made whole parts of the operation run without him. Fear explains the lack of discipline: it's hard to pitch new business or watch someone slower do 'your' job.

• Employees have a brand too: aim to be someone they'd miss

Every meeting sets expectations about what you'll bring. There's a shortage of people who make promises and keep them and who 'light up a room.' The goal is to be the linchpin. And if your boss doesn't deserve that, find another job.

• Familiarity doesn't sell; resolving tension does

Marketing isn't 'getting the word out' or posting until people give in. People buy to relieve a tension, such as fear of being left out or falling behind, or hope that this will work for them. One author got 40 million views on TikTok and sold four books, because entertaining people isn't solving their problem.

• Measure who you helped, and build boundaries against irrelevant metrics

Views, likes and followers invite 'compared to what?' and pull you into a hustle you never signed up for. If one-star reviews make you change a menu that's working, don't read them. Watch what customers actually do. Mel says she doesn't have logins for the show's download data, and she takes criticism only from people who care, who do similar work or whom she respects.

• Judge decisions by process, not outcome

Citing poker champion Annie Duke, Godin says a lottery win was still a bad decision. Ask whether a good decision-maker with the same data would have chosen what you chose. Mel adds that you can apologize for a decision's impact on someone and still stand by it.

• Quit honestly: look for the dip, and let go of sunk costs

From his book The Dip: quitting isn't shameful. Mel had to quit law. A dip is the hard stretch before it gets easier, like the gym in February before 'six-pack abs by June,' or year one for a real estate broker. Some paths have no dip ('you can't smoke your way through emphysema'). Your past blood, sweat and money are gone either way. Most people who walked away from sunk costs are glad they did.

EXAMPLES

• One-and-only niches

A hairdresser near Godin cuts only women's curly hair, about 10 clients a day. A New York broker works one luxury building. A local broker whose father had the business before him tours buyers past all 2,000 houses in town, even ones not for sale, and lets the Cub Scouts meet in his office. Another has built a following mostly among lesbian clients. A Ferrari dealer sends a carpool parent to a Volvo dealer.

• The $10-for-$5 exercise

Try offering a stranger at a bus station a real $10 bill for $5. It feels terrifying even though it's obviously a good deal. That's the fear behind 'my product isn't ready': it's fear of a transaction where someone might say no. Posting on Instagram is the safe dodge.

• 'What's your favourite Girl Scout cookie?'

Nine-year-olds shouting 'Want to buy cookies?' got walked past. When Godin had them ask everyone's favourite cookie

instead, people stopped to engage and sales 'went through the roof.'

• Choose your clients, choose your future

Stressed brides a week before a Hamptons wedding, line-item penny-pinchers, McDonald's stopwatch inspectors versus Danny Meyer's restaurants, sugared-up students versus Juilliard: whoever you serve decides how your days go. Freelancers can't get more clients, only better ones. Book-cover designer Chip Kidd does about 30 covers a year and nobody argues typography with him.

• Mel's mom's flavoured-coffee store

In the early '80s, her mother and her friend Susie opened a gourmet kitchen shop in Muskegon, Michigan, selling flavoured coffee before anyone drank it. Godin says it was never about coffee but about delighting a few hundred people like her in a town like hers.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Write three completely different business plans

Assume a spinner will choose one, so you think with your whole brain instead of defending a favourite. An example from snow: a snowman-building business, snow shovelling in Buffalo, or importing shovels. If you lack time for three plans, you lack time to start a business.

• Don't let a business ruin your hobby, and don't sell to friends

Once it's a business, it belongs to customers, who pick their best option. Leveraging friendship (the letter writer angry that friends didn't list with his wife) isn't service.

• Fire the 'world's worst boss' in your head

If a real boss nitpicked you and fed your fear, you'd quit. Find a circle by supporting two or three people online today, before sunset.

• Ship what's good enough

If it meets spec and helps someone, 'how dare you hold it back?' Stop tweaking the suburban pizza menu; organize the jukebox or the bus trips that serve customers.

8 Simple Reminders You Need to Hear Right Now

Date: 2026-07-09 · Duration: 1:00:51
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NlZCeOmKPP0

KEYPOINTS

• The word in listeners' messages is 'exhaustion'

Mel opens this solo episode by saying the word she keeps seeing in emails and comments is exhaustion: carrying too much, worrying too much, taking care of everyone while holding yourself to an invisible standard of having it all handled. Her lesson, which she says she has to keep relearning, is that you don't have to earn rest. The eight reminders are meant to steady you when your mind starts spinning and to make 'I can do today' feel true.

• Reminder 1: 'Twenty years from now, you'd give anything to be back in this moment'

The quote, from writer Rich Webster, continues: you'd give anything to be 'this exact age, this healthy, and back in this exact moment. Take a second and enjoy it.' Mel points out that your past self once dreamed of the job, partner or kids now stressing you out, and your 95-year-old self would give anything to return to today, with the people who won't be around then.

• Enjoy the now by noticing, not fixing

The skill is seeing the good in the middle of the chaos. You can be exhausted and annoyed that nobody else fed the dog, and still look at the dog and appreciate having one, the dog your 16-year-old self dreamed of. If you can't drop into the present, Mel says, small irritations will steal your days.

• Reminder 2: pausing to ask 'Is this worth my energy?' is an underrated life skill

Big crises demand energy. What drains you are the constant tiny moments when you hand it away without noticing: the urge to react, fix, explain, prove, defend or spiral. Her new skill is to pause instead of projecting or reacting, then decide whether this deserves your energy given everything that matters to you.

• Reminder 3: learning to take nothing personally will change your life

Most of what people do has nothing to do with you. 'Let their mood be theirs. Your life is yours.' The person in front of you is carrying their childhood, whatever just happened at work, whether they've eaten and how well they handle stress. That's why you pick up on a tone and feel you have to manage their mood. Giving away your peace of mind is one of the quickest ways to lose your power.

• Reminder 4: if you wait until you feel better to live, you'll wait forever

From the account Awaken One: if you're sad, do it sad. Anxious, do it anxious. Uncertain, do it uncertain. Healing, happiness and change come from doing things, not before them. Mel adds that every long stretch of feeling lost, broke or alone in her life was followed by a period of growth.

• Reminder 5: you are responsible for your own happiness

Reading from page 297 of The Let Them Theory: you can have the life, love story, money or career you want. 'The question is, will you let yourself do it because no one else can stop you.' You're responsible for your energy, for defining what matters, for telling the truth when it's hard and for paying for your life. 'Nobody owes you anything but you. You owe yourself everything.'

• Stop playing victim to your own life

The moment you stop expecting others to make you happy or pay for your life, you stop living disappointed and start living on purpose. Bad things do happen, but staying stuck is a choice: 'I may not be responsible for where I am right now, but I sure as hell am responsible for what happens next.'

• Reminder 6: you can't change what happened, but you can change what happens next

Mel says she hates 'everything happens for a reason,' because terrible, undeserved things happen and life can be cruel. Her version: everything doesn't happen for a reason, but you can find a reason to move forward. Look for the lessons and the strength the experience built.

• Reminder 7: maturing means realizing that what others do isn't about you

Mel says people misread Let Them as allowing disrespect. It's the opposite: a boundary. You recognize what someone is doing, accept that you can't control them, and take your power back by deciding how much time and energy they get. Even when you choose to spend time with difficult family, you walk in seeing it coming instead of gaslighting yourself.

EXAMPLES

• The 9:17 p.m. Slack

Your boss messages at 9:17 p.m.: 'Can you meet first thing tomorrow?' Mel's brain pops up 'like a gopher,' assuming the evening is ruined. That's the moment to pause and ask whether it's worth your energy tonight. The same goes for the family member whose mood makes your body tense up in the kitchen.

• Carla Harris: 'No one is in your way'

After recording her episode, Wall Street leader Carla Harris told Mel's team it's time to put your foot on the gas. Half the world is distracted and the other half is paralyzed and exhausted, so 'no one is in your way.'

• Five hours in traffic, one painterly sky

Mel calls an ordinary day spent in the car for about five hours a great day because she noticed a bluebird sky with puffy 'painterly' clouds, white and grey with pink underneath. That one good thing made it a good day.

• Your life is made of Tuesdays

Mel borrows MIT's Dr. Joseph Coughlin's line: life isn't the vacations, promotions or someday moments. It's average Tuesdays, so a good life is built from small choices on ordinary days.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Reminder 8: 'Today is going to be a good day because I'm going to make something good happen'

Say it each morning as a decision about attitude, energy and boundaries, not a promise of perfection. Mel says this puts you ahead of '99% of people.' She adds that on genuinely terrible days, being sad or grieving is healthy.

- **Make one good thing happen**
  Text someone you love, go outside for 5 minutes, clean the kitchen counter, say no to something draining, say yes to something that matters, or do one thing you're avoiding. A good day is created, not stumbled into.
- **Boundaries are for you, not them**
  Your nos, time limits and 'I can't make it' remind you of what you will and won't do. Set them and hold them without apologizing and folding when someone gets upset. Not every conversation deserves access to you, a response or an explanation.
- **Pick your reminder**
  Choose the one reminder that hit hardest today. Write it down, say it out loud, share it, and come back to the episode when you start spinning. Mel's pick is reminder one.

How to Master Any Conversation, Communicate with Confidence, and Deal With Difficult People

Guest: Oz Pearlman
Date: 2026-07-06 · Duration: 1:06:42
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dz23H7Cgylw

KEYPOINTS

• Skip the three autopilot questions.
Mentalist Oz Pearlman says 'Where are you from?' and 'What do you do?' put people's brains on autopilot because they've answered them a thousand times. Instead, notice something specific and ask about a choice they made: 'Those glasses are so unique, where did you get them, and what made you pick those?' People get to tell you something no one else thought to ask.

• The people you remember are the ones who made you feel interesting.
Think of the one person you clicked with at a party of 20 or 30. Usually they made you laugh, told good stories, or went past the surface to a shared interest. Mostly, they drew things out of you rather than talking about themselves.

• Turn nerves into preparation, and research the person beforehand.
'It's not cheating. It's called being prepared.' Oz says he wasn't especially nervous before performing at an event where President Obama spoke, because he converts nervousness into homework. He'd spent years thinking about his 'elevator pitch' for a moment with a president.

• In the first seconds, answer the other person's silent questions and get rid of the tension.
As a 14-year-old strolling magician in a restaurant, he noticed diners asking themselves in a split second: Who is this? Does he work here? Is he any good? Will he embarrass me? Does he want money? His job was to check off each one in as few words and actions as possible, then flip the dynamic so they didn't want him to leave.

• Frame your ask so a 'no' is hard to give.
With Obama he didn't say 'Can I show you a trick?' He asked, 'Are you ready for the most amazing thing you've seen? Not today, not this week, but this month. Do you have 30 seconds, sir?' That set a high bar and asked for a tiny amount of time. Once someone says '30 seconds,' you're already in, and it runs longer.

• Lead with what's in it for them.
He calls this inverting the value proposition. Don't tell a busy person 'I need time with you.' Walk with them down the hallway: 'I know you're really busy. Can I walk with you for 30 seconds? There's something important I want on your radar.' Better yet, use benefit language: 'I want to save you a gigantic headache because I see an issue brewing.' You don't need a 30-minute Zoom to make your case.

• Fear of rejection stops more people than rejection itself.
Oz was told 'Get out of here, kid' at table after table, and he says it crushed him. What he learned at 14 was to separate himself from the role. 'They don't know me.' They knew 'Oz the magician,' so the hurt went to that persona. He argues most people never actually get rejected, because fear stops them before they try.

• 'Fast-forward your feelings' to get through dread.
Dread usually feels worse than the task, and a day later you barely remember it. Feelings fade with nothing but time passing. So before something you dread, rate it 1–10, picture how you'll feel in 24 hours (about a 2), and decide to feel that way now. He says doing this a few times shows you 'all it is is perception.'

• Remembering names is a learnable three-step habit: listen, repeat, reply.
Repeat the name twice right away ('Caroline? Did I say it right?'). He says that alone makes you about 90% less likely to forget it in the next 15 seconds. Then lock it in by replying with a compliment tied to a visual ('Mel, I love your glasses'), a spelling question ('John with an H?'), or a link to someone you already know with that name.

• Trust your first instinct about whether someone's being straight with you.
There's no special lie-detecting trick. Oz says his first read has been right often enough to be 'a statistical advantage.' People talk themselves out of it, for instance about a first date that feels off. Mel calls intuition pattern recognition. Oz agrees, and says acting on it and gathering results is what improves the pattern.

EXAMPLES

• How 'President Obama opened for me'
Oz walked up and thanked Obama 'for the gift.' Obama asked 'What gift?' as 99 of 100 people would, and Oz said that since he performed 15 minutes later, Obama had technically opened for him. Obama laughed, recognized him from his Aaron Rodgers bit, and agreed to 30 seconds.

• 'Say hello to Marty for me'
Oz handed Obama a business card and asked him to think of someone he'd talk to in the next week, then told him to change his mind, so he'd later say 'how could he have known?' The back of the card read 'Say hello to Marty for me.'

• The landscaper call
Oz demonstrated with a dreaded call to a landscaper: rate the dread (a 9), set a phone alarm for 24 hours labeled 'dread talking to landscaper,' use Mel's 5 Second Rule to make the call, then check the rating when the alarm goes off. It's a 2, 'a one if I even remember it.'

• From teen restaurant magician to pro
He needed money for expensive magic tricks, talked his way into a strolling magician job half a mile from home, and hand-cut his own business cards. That led to kids' birthday parties and corporate events. Repeated rejection at tables built his resilience.

• Reading Mel's page number
In a live demonstration he narrowed Mel's chosen page down to 217, standing for February 17, the date she was thinking of. He's clear that his act is 'tricks' and that the illusion isn't the useful part. The people skills behind it are.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Better openers**
  Notice one specific thing, compliment it, and ask about the choice behind it. Save job and hometown questions for later, if at all.
- **Contact notes for names**
  After events, Oz writes notes in his calendar or an app about the people he met. Make a contact for your coffee shop or restaurant and describe staff so you can greet them by name.
- **The 24-hour dread alarm**
  Rate it, set the alarm, do it in five seconds, re-rate it tomorrow. Repeat until your brain trusts that dread fades.
- **Hallway pitch**
  'I know you're busy. Can I walk with you for 30 seconds? I want to save you a headache.' State the benefit to them first.

Create a Happier Version of Yourself: Redirect Your Energy for Positive Thinking

Guest: Oakley Robbins
Date: 2026-07-02 · Duration: 1:01:00
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bNEgsvoPQjQ

KEYPOINTS

• A four-question checklist tells you whether it's you or the situation that needs to change

Mel's 21-year-old son Oakley was 'the lowest I have ever seen' him for about 18 months of college, then came home bubbly. When the team pressed him on what had changed, four themes emerged: Are you comparing? Is your energy shrinking or expansive? Are you 100% in? Have you actually changed anything? Only if you can honestly tick all four and things still feel wrong is it time to change the situation.

• You can't open a new door while you're gripping the old one

Oakley had hated school until high school, where he blossomed. He knew most of the roughly 900 students, captained two teams, mentored freshmen and volunteered at a soup kitchen. He went to college mainly because 'everybody says you should,' and he started dreading it from move-in day. Every walk to class became 'this would be so much better if my hometown friends were here.' Mel says you cannot be content where your feet are if you keep comparing it to where you've been.

• Comparison breeds judgment, isolation and a fantasy version of the past

If you keep looking for reasons something doesn't measure up, that's all you'll see. Oakley noticed he had become 'very unlike me,' judgmental of new friends he'd given 'an unfair start.' Comparison also tells you the best days are behind you. Mel says past happy chapters do hold clues, though. The lesson isn't to recreate them but to apply what made them work, like saying yes and joining in, to the present.

• Check your energy: are you shrinking or expanding?

Crossed arms, leaning back, staying in on weekends and 'quietly quitting' a place, job or relationship are all forms of shrinking. Oakley says he was 'stubborn' and dreaded weekends, which felt 'like someone holding a mirror up to my face.' What's needed is the opposite: expand past your comfort zone and your stubbornness.

• Being right that the situation is wrong can feel safer than trying

Oakley admits it annoyed him that everyone seemed to know he just had to 'get off the floor.' When he did try (one club, one night out), he left early to prove it didn't work. Mel says one attempt isn't data: give it a year and try properly several times.

• It's unfair to judge a situation you're only 40% in

Having one foot elsewhere is like 'straddling two Clydesdales running in different directions.' Oakley's high-school girlfriend kept him commuting home, locking himself in his dorm for 7 p.m. calls and skipping weekends with friends. Mel kept driving back to Boston to see old friends instead of making new ones. Being elsewhere can also be mental, like a spouse who wonders aloud, after some wine, about a college ex.

• Close the exits

Mel borrows the phrase from Harville Hendrix's relationship work. Oakley and his girlfriend had broken up freshman year but kept talking, and got back together within two months 'because the exit was still right there.' Before his second semester, they ended it with no contact. He calls it awful at first, then 'a million times easier.' He admits he hadn't been a good partner while he was miserable anyway.

• If you change nothing, nothing changes

Ending the relationship made it feel like 'a disservice' to keep sitting in his dorm. Mel argues that every chapter is for the experience, whether that means learning you can make friends, finding inner strength or facing your own stubbornness. Your only power is in the changes you make. Whether that changes the situation or shows you it's wrong, both are breakthroughs.

• Letting go of the old chapter involves real grief

Oakley went back in January feeling both fear (no outlets) and excitement. The first weeks were hard. Mel describes saying goodbye to what was as 'almost like grief.' Sometimes we can't see a new chapter's opportunity because we aren't ready to say goodbye to the old one.

• Notice how long you're willing to tolerate unhappiness

Oakley's most unsettling insight is that he could live in sadness and loneliness for 18 months, became 'complacent and right about it,' and could have gone on longer. Mel says that's important self-knowledge. Life will bring more of these chapters, like friends scattering after college, breakups and new cities, so navigating change is a skill.

EXAMPLES

• Saying yes in January

Oakley rejoined the ultimate frisbee team he'd dismissed as unlike his high-school team. He went to every weekend invite, ate lunch with new people, and texted the 'mutuals' everyone says 'we should get lunch' to but never follows up with. The first one or two hangouts were awkward, and then they became natural.

• Four hours in the car in the rain

His turning point was an ordinary day: class, lunch with now-close friends, practice, then food with a friend. They sat in his parked car on campus in pouring rain for four hours talking about their lives. 'Oh my god, I did it.' He'd wanted a close guy friend for 18 months.

• Mel's miserable move to Vermont

After 26 years outside Boston, Mel moved to a town with 'more cows than people' and was sure it was a mistake, while Oakley was on cloud nine. She cried, bonded with two friends, Amy and Jesse, over hating it, and watched old friends on social media as if they were on a 'party barge in Boston Harbor.' She knew making friends would help but stayed in and complained.

• When it really is the situation

Mel's oldest daughter spent three years at a hybrid, international cybersecurity firm with an older workforce. She gave it 150%, starting a young-professionals group and getting a budget for it, and still didn't like it. She left with no regrets.

- **Tina Seelig's science of luck**
  Mel recalls the Stanford professor's point that 'lucky' people put themselves in the current of what they want through small actions, like walking into each room assuming your favourite person might be there.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **At a new job, audit your own outreach**
  Before deciding you're on the outside, count how many coffees, lunchtime walks, one-on-ones (even on Zoom) and non-job volunteer roles you've offered. Ask colleagues about their lives.
- **Tell the stuck person 'it's on you'**
  Oakley says what would have moved him sooner was hearing that no event or person would fix the chapter. He had to take the first step.
- **Run the checklist before you quit**
  Not comparing? Expansive? 100% in, with exits closed? Changed what you can for about a year? If you can tick all four and it's still wrong, change the situation and feel good about it. Mel closes with C.S. Lewis: 'There are far better things ahead than any we leave behind.'

#1 Brain Surgeon: What Your Dreams Are Trying to Tell You About Yourself

Guest: Dr. Rahul Jandial
Date: 2026-06-29 · Duration: 1:07:32
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GIGmGupeD_I

KEYPOINTS

• Dreaming takes up about a third of your life, not just a few minutes a night

Dr. Rahul Jandial, a neurosurgeon, cancer surgeon and neuroscientist, says newer measurements show dreams can happen in any stage of sleep, including as you fall asleep and as you wake up. That is why he now estimates a third of our lives is spent dreaming. His framing: sleep is rest for the body, but the brain is 'on fire', with blood flowing and electricity firing, so it is not an idle screen-saver.

• Everybody dreams; 'I don't dream' really means 'I don't remember'

When the show polled its audience, 26% said they don't dream or don't remember dreams. Jandial says recall can be cultivated. Editors at his publisher reported remembering more dreams while working on his book, almost everyone remembers childhood nightmares, and after caring for some 15,000 patients he says dreams tend to return near the end of life.

• At night the brain's 'CEO' quiets down and the imagination and emotion systems take over

By day the executive network runs the show: getting on the subway, getting the kids to school. In dreaming, brain scans show that network dampened while the imagination network (loose, creative dot-connecting he calls 'creative ideation') and the limbic system (amygdala, hypothalamus and other emotional structures) are more active. Total brain activity is about the same as when you're awake. It's just a different mix.

• Dreams may keep unused parts of the mind 'warm'

Jandial's view, which he presents as his belief backed by some scan data, is that emotion, creativity, sexuality and imagination get a kind of high-intensity training at night. Without that rehearsal those capacities might be less available when we face challenges during the day. When you dream of running, the same motor neurons fire as in real running. The signal just stops at the spinal cord, which may make dreams a true form of rehearsal.

• The brain cycles through N1, N2, N3 and REM, and REM is where vivid dreaming peaks

Sleep entry is N1, followed by deeper N2 and N3. Scientists used to believe dreams happened mostly in REM (rapid eye movement) sleep. Now they know dreaming happens across stages. REM timing is the most fixed, and the late-night REM periods give the most vivid, best-remembered dreams, which matters for the lucid-dreaming technique below.

• A nightmare is a specific thing, and a flare of nightmares can be a mental-health warning sign

By his definition, a nightmare isn't just a bad dream. It is terrifying and it wakes you up. Everyone has them. When people who think they're coping well suddenly get more nightmares, he treats it like a headache or pain: a vital sign that something unprocessed is going on and a prompt to ask whether you're really living well. He adds that nightmares are also linked to more serious risks, including suicide, so persistent ones deserve attention.

• Many common dreams seem built into the brain, but their meaning is often unknowable

Falling, flying and being chased show up in half to two-thirds of dream reports, across cultures and centuries, including before airplanes existed. Jandial takes that consistency as evidence the brain generates these dreams partly on autopilot. He's openly humble here. Asked why people dream of teeth falling out, he says 'I don't know,' noting only that it correlates a bit with teeth grinding.

• Some dreams are obvious and some are best treated as prompts for reflection

He describes several categories of dreams, starting with the 'obvious' one, like showing up naked to a talk you're anxious about. He doesn't decode symbols. He suggests that a dream caught in the morning offers another view of your own experiences, one a therapist can't have because it's 'in my head.' He calls it a free wellness tool and a kind of 'nocturnal therapist,' while admitting that PTSD dreams can keep trauma alive.

• The minutes when you're falling asleep and waking up are a creative window

Those 5–15 minutes carry electrical signatures of both waking and sleep. Jandial says he has used the waking window for decades as an idea generator, staying in bed without grabbing his phone. Artists have long described the same thing. The recall he means is subtle: a lingering emotion, an image, a different way of thinking about a problem, not a crisp replay.

EXAMPLES

• Dreams changing years before Parkinson's

In men who develop Parkinson's in their 50s, he says more than 90% show a change in dreaming roughly 15 years earlier: REM behavior disorder, where they physically act out their dreams. In Alzheimer's and Parkinson's, dream reports also shift toward animals, not pets but 'beasts.'

• Vietnam veterans and divorce

His example of dreams reflecting life stress: there were reports of Vietnam veterans whose war dreams returned when they went through a divorce.

• Erotic dreams and 'cheating'

Surveys put sex dreams near universal (90%+ when asked about 'erotic' dreams), and about 80% involve infidelity. Long-term studies of families show these dreams start even before puberty. For people in happy relationships he thinks it 'means nothing.' It's only telling if you're already wanting to cheat or are unhappy.

• His late father showing up at big moments

Jandial's dad died seven years ago. He says his 'pops' returns in dreams at major occasions, such as when one of his adult sons recently reached a goal. He links dreams of lost loved ones to processing grief, and in his cancer patients those dreams can move from fear to a welcome experience.

• Mel's watched-a-horror-movie nightmare

Jandial admits he falls asleep with Netflix on. Mel says she has watched a scary movie and then had a nightmare. He says

the content of the last 5–10 minutes before sleep does influence dreams, though not in a straight line.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Sleep-entry ritual**
  As you drift off, repeat: 'I will dream and I will remember my dreams.' Be deliberate about what you look at or think about in the last 5–10 minutes, because it can shape what you dream about. He cites Salvador Dalí's writing on using this window.
- **Sleep-exit ritual**
  Wake slowly. Don't move or reach for anything. Hold on to emotions, images and thoughts for 5–7 minutes, then jot them down (he uses his phone; Mel prefers a notepad by the bed so she won't get sucked into social media). Lower the bar: write down feelings and ideas, not a full dream plot.
- **Rescripting recurring nightmares**
  One treatment for recurring nightmares is to write a happier, kinder ending to the nightmare in a journal before bed, using the power of suggestion. Persistent or trauma-linked nightmares are worth raising with a professional.
- **Lucid-dreaming steps he favors**
  He favors this method because it was verified with brain measurements. Set an alarm 5–6 hours after falling asleep (bed at 10, alarm around 3–4 a.m.) to catch late REM. Stay groggy, then tell yourself 'I'm going to fall back asleep, but I'm going to be awake in my dream.' Watch for dream signs like a weird clock or extra fingers, and repeat on other nights. About a third of people lucid dream naturally. Researchers have confirmed it in labs, with sleeping subjects signaling through eye-movement codes.
- **His book: This Is Why You Dream**
  Two of its nine chapters cover lucid dreaming, which he says turned out to be the most rigorously studied dream type.

Change Your Body at Any Age: The Diet & Exercise Plan For a Longer Life

Guest: Dr. Rhonda Patrick
Date: 2026-06-25 · Duration: 1:26:50
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BPZBIzf39M0

KEYPOINTS

• Swap '10,000 steps' for '10 breathless minutes' a day.
Dr. Rhonda Patrick, a biomedical scientist, says the 10,000-step target came from a 1960s Japanese marketing campaign to sell pedometers, not from medical research. Walking beats sitting, but she argues intensity is where the big returns are. If you're time-strapped, 10 minutes of vigorous effort is more achievable than walking about 5 miles.

• Use the talk test to judge intensity.
Light: you could sing. Moderate: you can talk but you're breathy, like brisk walking. Vigorous: you can only get out a few words, like jogging, running, fast stair climbing or a hard set of squats. Vigorous effort is the zone she wants you in for those 10 minutes.

• One vigorous minute equals about 4 moderate minutes or 53 light ones.
She cites large studies that measured movement with wrist accelerometers. For the same drop in all-cause mortality (deaths from cancer, cardiovascular and respiratory disease, and other non-accidental causes), one minute of vigorous activity matched roughly 4 minutes of brisk walking or about 53 minutes of gentle walking. She calls the benefit of vigorous movement 'exponential' compared with moderate.

• Three 3-minute bursts of everyday vigorous activity add up.
In the research she describes, people who said they didn't exercise but did about 3 minutes of breathless everyday activity three times a day (about 9 minutes total) had roughly 40% lower all-cause and cancer mortality and 50% lower cardiovascular mortality. Examples: walk fast up the stairs, bike or jog a few blocks instead of driving, play tag with grandkids, chase a new puppy. These are observational findings as she reports them.

• 'Exercise snacks' are short structured bursts you can do anywhere.
One minute of bodyweight squats, jumping jacks, high knees or burpees, hard enough that you can only say a few words. Start with 1 minute a day for a week, then 2. It should get easier, and that's the point: your body is adapting to handle stress better.

• Hard effort trains your blood vessels.
Vigorous exercise makes your heart pump harder, creating 'shear stress' on the lining of your arteries and veins. She compares a calm river to a hurricane: 'You want the hurricane.' The endothelial cells sense that force and adapt. She adds that the discomfort of hard exercise sets off neurochemical changes and engages brain regions she links to resilience and possibly protection against neurodegenerative disease, with the caveat that she isn't a neuroscientist.

• Visceral fat is the dangerous kind, and it's also among the first to go.
Unlike fat under the skin, visceral fat wraps around organs like the liver and kidneys. She says it acts like an endocrine organ, pumping out inflammatory molecules, is associated with double the mortality risk, and is linked to higher cancer incidence. Excess calories, processed low-fiber food and refined sugar build it up. A calorie deficit and high-intensity or vigorous exercise are among the most reliable ways to lose it.

• If you're 'doing everything' and nothing changes, check your sleep with five questions.
Are you actually sleeping 7.5–9 hours, not just lying in bed? Do you get 15–30 minutes of bright light within 30 minutes of waking? (She says light resets your master body clock, the suprachiasmatic nucleus.) Do you wake at the same time every day? How close to bed do you eat? Do you drink at night? Alcohol may help you fall asleep, but it disrupts REM sleep and causes more awakenings.

• Lifestyle, not genes, drives most of how long and how well you live.
She estimates about 80% is lifestyle and 20–25% genetics. She cites a Harvard study of five factors: a healthy diet pattern, not smoking, 3.5 hours a week of moderate or vigorous exercise, limited alcohol (fewer than one drink a day for women, about one or fewer for men), and a healthy BMI. Starting at 50, women who did all five lived about 14 years longer (around 93 vs. 79) and men about 12 years longer, with more of those years free of disease.

• Her food priorities come from a 'healthy eating index.'
Two 4-oz servings of fatty fish (salmon, mackerel) a week, or an omega-3 supplement. Whole grains like oats, barley, quinoa, brown rice and farro, about 70 g a day for women and 90 g for men (she adds that 98% of people don't get enough fiber). Red meat at about 12–18 oz a week, and almost no processed meat (under one serving a week: lunch meat, hot dogs, bacon), which she links to colon cancer. Sodium no higher than about 2,300 mg a day, ideally lower.

EXAMPLES

• The one-minute squat test on set
Patrick led Mel, who was in dress pants and heels, plus the whole crew through a minute of bodyweight squats. Mel 'already can't talk' within seconds. Afterward she admitted feeling confronted by how out of shape she felt on camera. Patrick's point: a minute is much longer than it sounds, and that breathless state is the goal.

• Her daily longevity smoothie
Kale, blueberries, avocado, protein and a barley beta-glucan powder. Mel notes it has five ingredients, which she ties to the five lifestyle factors. Patrick says she drinks one daily as an easy way to cover several of her food priorities.

• Creatine dosing
Patrick takes 10 g a day, 5 g before and 5 g after a workout. She goes up to 20–25 g when traveling or sleep-deprived, citing research on brain benefits under stress. She says muscles take about 4 weeks at 5 g or more a day to saturate, so 'it's not magic juice.'

• Everyday moments that count

People in the studies said 'no' when asked if they exercised, because they didn't count racing up stairs to work or playing tag with grandkids. Patrick says those bursts absolutely count.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Her five supplements

Omega-3 (about 2 g a day to move from a low to a high omega-3 index), a multivitamin, vitamin D (about 4,000 IU a day; she says 70% of people are low), magnesium (she takes 250 mg at night and aims for about 350 mg total), and creatine. Check doses with your doctor.

• The #1 habit

Asked for a single action, she says 10 minutes of breathless, vigorous exercise a day, which can be split into snacks, done 'like you brush your teeth.'

• Sleep audit

Rate yourself on hours asleep, morning light, consistent wake time, late eating and evening alcohol, then fix the weakest one first.

Try it For 1 Week: Small Ways to Make Your Life Fun & Exciting Again

Guest: Priya Parker
Date: 2026-06-22 · Duration: 1:06:46
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IDqKUXp2ENk

KEYPOINTS

• Most gatherings disappoint because we plan the logistics and leave the people to chance

Priya Parker, a conflict-resolution facilitator and author of The Art of Gathering, defines a gathering as three or more people coming together, for a reason, with a beginning, middle and end. Hosts obsess over food, venue and table, then 'hope for the best' on connection, so people end up spending $73 on dinner and going home lonelier. 'There's almost nothing lonelier than being with other people and feeling alone.' She argues we need 'group help,' not just self-help, because many problems are shared.

• The biggest mistake is skipping the purpose: first ask 'what's the need here?'

The reason you visit your parents may change over 20 years. Once it was so they could bond with your kids; now it might be learning about their lives while you can. You don't have to announce the purpose. Just knowing it changes what you do. Mel connects this to her line: 'If you change nothing, nothing changes.'

• A good purpose is specific, unique and disputable

Specific, because meaning lies in specificity: one woman with a basil plant that bloomed too much threw a margherita-pizza party. Unique to this moment: turning 37 isn't turning 56. Disputable, meaning it sets boundaries and not everyone has to come. Over-inviting out of niceness 'dilutes our gatherings.'

• Sometimes talk is the enemy of connection

Families stuck on a couch become 'a cauldron' of short tempers. Mel notices less conflict on trips with things to do. Parker's mentor Hal Saunders, who created the sustained dialogue process, taught that dialogue isn't always the right tool. Sometimes people need a soccer game, a dance party, a walk, gardening or antiquing. Gatherings are 'like accordions': alternate dense shared moments with looser breathing room.

• Introverts often make the best hosts because they design structure instead of performing

Many people others named as great hosts called themselves introverts. One said she was so uncomfortable at most gatherings that she started designing ones she'd want to attend. They rely on structure, not their own 'tap dancing.' Examples include a quiet corner with two hammocks, or sending two relatives who don't know each other out for eggs so they talk in the car.

• Connection is threatened as much by unhealthy peace as by unhealthy conflict

Parker's parents never fought, and then separated. Her takeaway: 'there's great loss in avoidance.' Unhealthy peace looks like a hurt left unspoken until you ghost someone, a team everyone knows is launching a bad product, or a table looking down while an uncle berates a cousin. We swing between avoiding and 'burning the house down.' Mel immediately thinks of 'about five marriages.'

• Healthy heat is learnable, and conflict is a sign that you care

'We don't fight about things we don't care about.' Facilitators look for the 'relational longing' at the centre of a fight; people who truly hate each other just leave. Prepare your body first. Facilitator Prentis Hemphill says 'the most powerful body we have is a relaxed body.' Breathe, plant both feet and know your intention, even if your voice shakes. Then ask: 'Do you have a moment? Something didn't sit well with me.'

• The best way to change a tense family dynamic is before anyone enters the room

Find allies, the people who catch your eye across the table. Replace old formats that no longer work, and 'fight, but about other stuff.' Whoever holds social power sets the group's relationship to conflict.

• The first 5% of a gathering teaches people how to behave

A gathering is 'a temporary alternative world.' Give arrivals a role, such as 'wine minister' or 'water minister,' or set up a greeting committee that says 'We've heard so much about you!' On Zoom, which kills informal connection, be fully on from the start like a live sportscaster, warm up the chat and use playful rules.

• Most gatherings don't end; give them an 'honorable death'

Her improv teacher, Dave Sawyer, said good actors think about entrances and great actors obsess about exits. Walk guests out. Signal last call, for example 'Thank you for coming. For those who can stay, nightcap in the living room.' Close with shared reflection: best moments, best jokes, the MVP, what you learned.

EXAMPLES

• 'What's the naughtiest thing you've done that was worth it… before age 12?'

At a Florida restaurant, Parker's daughter asked her grandfather this 'magical question,' one everyone wants to answer and everyone wants to hear. Stories none of them knew came out, and it became a completely different lunch.

• Mel's 30th-anniversary weekends

Rather than one big dance party where she'd talk to nobody, Mel invited groups of faraway friends for separate weekends, including Chris's college friends for a nearby bluegrass festival (tents yes, dogs no). Her need: social lives 'deleted' since 2020 by hybrid work, moves and empty nesting. She also plans to host a viewing party for three foxtail lilies she has waited three years to see bloom.

• The family cooking championship

A family stuck in yearly political fights pre-assigned mixed teams of cooks and non-cooks to make each meal. They ended up arguing about the best salsa instead of politics.

• Hot-takes party and rose-and-thorn

Guests defend trivial controversial opinions ('There should be only one type of pasta,' 'Tuesday is the best day') to practise warm disagreement. A manager added 10 minutes of rose-and-thorn to weekly meetings for 10 weeks. By week eight the rest of

the meeting had changed, because 'thorns' had become normal.

• Sound baths, sunscreen and wedding dresses

A friend hosting in-laws for the first time at Thanksgiving booked a 90-minute group sound bath, so nobody had to talk. At a 40th birthday, each guest brought an offering for the group: favourite sunscreen, a childhood game, tiny chocolate bars. A 'wear the best thing in your closet' dress code brought three wedding dresses.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Keep magical questions in your pocket

What do you own that no one else here owns (Mel: a tractor)? What film could you never watch again (Mel: Jaws)? What outfit do you still keep, and why? What would your life's opening-credits song be? What's your favourite way to eat a potato?

• Meet your neighbours with a 'chair and share'

Slip analog flyers under doors inviting people to bring a chair and share their name. One woman drew 40 neighbours this way. Recruit co-hosts, and keep going to the same recurring events, because 'proximity and repetition create safety.'

• Hosting isn't an identity

Host something you'd love to attend, even with just one other person, and skip it if it feels like an obligation. Rotate who asks the weekly icebreaker question on team calls. If it all feels like too much, start by being a great guest.

The Best Relationship Advice That Everyone Needs to Hear (From the World's #1 Love Researchers)

Guest: Drs. John & Julie Gottman
Date: 2026-06-18 · Duration: 1:24:48
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sNzswsEIJ-E

KEYPOINTS

• It's not whether you fight but how you fight

Drs. John and Julie Schwartz Gottman have studied thousands of couples over 50-plus years. John started the work with his friend Bob Levenson 54 years ago, when, he says, neither had a clue what made relationships work. Their central finding is that conflict is normal in every relationship. Lasting couples are the ones whose conflict becomes calmer, gentler, more constructive and more compassionate. The aim of a fight is to understand your partner's world, not to tear them down.

• The first three minutes predict the relationship's future

With 15 minutes of a couple discussing a conflict, John and Levenson could predict with almost 90% accuracy whether the couple would divorce and how happy they'd be if they stayed. A lab member kept cutting three minutes off the data, and the prediction stayed accurate down to the first three. Couples headed for divorce or unhappiness open the conversation very differently from the 'masters of relationship'.

• The masters' rule: when your partner is upset, the world stops and you listen

If John had to boil 54 years down to one thing, this is it. When Julie says the 'four terrifying words', 'we need to talk', he slowly takes a 3x5 notebook from his back pocket, opens it and says 'Okay baby, talk to me. What's on your mind? What's on your heart?' He writes down what she says, and the more defensive he feels, the more notes he takes. The notebook slows him down so he doesn't react with something he'll regret.

• Flooding hijacks your thinking

Partners can look calm while one heart rate is over 100 beats per minute. That's fight or flight, and Julie says blood leaves the prefrontal cortex, so you can't think or listen clearly. Flooded people tend to repeat themselves louder, thinking it will be more persuasive. John's joke: '63 times later. Have I listened?'

• Horseman 1, criticism: blaming a problem on their character

'You're so selfish, lazy, inconsiderate.' In their role-play of a disaster fight, John attacked Julie as obsessive and needing therapy. She called him a slob. Both talked over each other, went straight to persuading, got louder, and nobody listened. John mimed the 'halo' of the partner who is always innocent.

• Horseman 2, contempt: the single best predictor of breakup

Contempt is criticism from superiority: sneering, disgust, scorn, mockery, sometimes sarcasm. Julie says the number of times a listener hears contempt in 15 minutes of conflict predicts how many infectious illnesses they'll have over the next four years. John calls it 'sulfuric acid for the immune system'.

• Horseman 3, defensiveness: counterattack or whine

Everyone gets defensive unless they have 'an ego of a rock'. It shows up as counterattack or whining ('I did too clean the kitchen!'). The repair they model is to name it: 'I'm really feeling defensive right now. I don't want to be, but the way you're describing me feels like a put-down.'

• Horseman 4, stonewalling is panic, not indifference

Stonewalling is shutting down for long minutes or hours. Physiology showed heart rates rising to 140–150 about 10 seconds before a person stonewalled. Julie says she had never seen stonewalling as someone panicked and overwhelmed. Levenson's startle studies, using a blank gun fired behind people, found women felt fear while men felt rage and a desire to get even, which keeps them physiologically aroused for longer.

• Take a real break of 20 minutes to 24 hours, and don't rehearse

A break needs at least 20–30 minutes and at most 24 hours. Don't replay the fight or plan comebacks, or you'll stay flooded. Read, watch TV, play with the puppy or go for a run. Say when you'll return ('Let's come back in half an hour when I'm calmer') so your partner doesn't feel rejected or think the issue will be dropped.

• Turning toward bids is the everyday glue

Graduate student Janice Driver coded small bids for attention in the lab. Each response was turning toward, turning away (ignoring) or turning against (irritable). Couples who had divorced six years later had turned toward only 33% of the time, while couples still married had turned toward 86% of the time. After a partner turns away, the chance of a new bid is just 22%.

EXAMPLES

• The 'love lab' apartment

The Gottmans had 130 newlywed couples spend 24 hours in an apartment with cameras rolling and no instructions, just eating, cleaning and watching TV together. They say observations there predicted with 94% accuracy who would still be together in six years.

• Busy couples: 35 minutes a week of talk

A UCLA Sloan Center study of dual-career couples with young children found they spent less than 10% of an evening in the same room and talked about 35 minutes a week, mostly about errands. Mel says that was her and Chris when their three kids were little. Their fix was a Sunday-night calendar meeting that made them a team, and Chris still leaves her little notes.

• Their 27-year kayak ritual

Every year for 27 years the Gottmans have gone to the same bed and breakfast for two weeks of kayaking and hiking, asking: What sucked about last year? What did you love about it? What do you want next year to be like? Julie says rituals can be small too: how you say good morning and good night, lazy weekend mornings, date nights.

• Raising lost attraction in a role-play

Julie prefaced it with 'I adore you... but', then spoke about her own experience: as he gained weight her libido dropped, and she missed feeling the muscles in his back. John took notes ('lose weight, get more sex') and agreed. The model is to lead with love, describe your feelings and say what you miss.

• The scratched red couch

Julie once treated a flooded client, about 4'10", whose 6'5" husband had cheated. After the session there were scratch marks on Julie's red leather couch, a picture of how intense flooding can be.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Start conflicts softly

In the positive role-play, the partner opened with 'What's going on, honey?' and responded with empathy ('That sounds like a terrible feeling'). Describe your feeling and need, not their flaw.

• Build your own notebook move

Find a physical way to slow yourself when you feel defensive, such as taking notes, asking a question or pausing, so listening comes first.

• Count your bids

Ask yourself whether you're turning away when they want to show you something or hold your hand. Aim for turning toward far more often than not.

• Schedule a weekly sync

A 10-minute Sunday logistics check-in can turn chores and calendars from a source of conflict into teamwork.

You Don’t Need to Solve Your Life Tonight: How to Quiet Your Mind & Sleep Better

Date: 2026-06-15 · Duration: 0:55:46
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_NwN9qXxfW0

KEYPOINTS

• Night is when unprocessed thoughts catch up with you

In this solo episode, Mel explains that negative loops show up the moment you lie down because the world gets quiet and everything you didn't deal with during the day surfaces: regrets, pressure, the to-do list, the fear you're failing. Fall asleep in that headspace and you wake up tired. Her fix is seven sentences to say in bed, built from past guests' research, to 'change the settings' in your mind.

• The framework: acknowledge where you are, then choose a helpful mindset

Mel builds the routine on Stanford's Dr. Alia Crum, director of the Mind and Body Lab and the researcher behind the famous milkshake study. Crum's two steps are to start by acknowledging the problems and goals you have, then ask what mindset would help you address those problems or reach those goals. For stress, that might be remembering that the body's stress response wasn't designed to kill you.

• Sentence 1: 'It's okay for me to feel overwhelmed based on everything that's going on'

This covers Crum's first step and draws on clinical psychologist Dr. Lisa Damour, who says mental health doesn't mean being happy all the time. Big feelings that match big circumstances can be a sign you're mentally well. Heartbreak after a breakup, grief after a loss and overwhelm when life is overwhelming are healthy responses. Mel notes this is the opposite of a culture that treats distress and mental illness as the same thing.

• Sentence 2: 'I can manage this'

This comes from Crum's cancer research with colleagues including David Spiegel. Her view is 'mind and matter', not mind over matter, so get the best treatment. 'Just think positive' and 'I'll be fine' can be denial. Instead, patients do better with the mindsets 'this is manageable' and 'my body is capable'. In trials designed to shift mindset, these were linked to better functioning and fewer chemotherapy symptoms like nausea and fatigue. Mel adds that you've managed everything else that's ever happened to you.

• Sentence 3: 'I don't need to solve this right now'

When you're lying in bed booking flights in your head or working out whether Tuesday is the 22nd or 23rd, you can tell your brain 'not now'. Pairing it with 'I can manage this' reminds you that you'll be a different, more capable person after a night's sleep.

• Sleep is the biggest lever, and small gains count (Dr. Rangan Chatterjee)

Chatterjee, who said this while running a big medical practice, raising two young kids and caring for his dying father, argues that moving a diet from 85% to 90% good won't matter if you sleep five hours. Going from 5 to 5.5 hours, or adding 20–30 minutes, makes a physiological difference the next day. It's not 'eight hours or nothing'.

• Sentence 4: 'I did my best today'

This one comes from Jim Kwik, author of Limitless: on days you only have 40% to give and you give 40%, you gave 100% of what you had. Mel says it works because it's true, given everything you were managing that day.

• Sentence 5: 'Now is my time to rest'

This is Harvard sleep scientist Dr. Rebecca Robbins's own line. After a day of giving to students, partner and kids, she tells intrusive thoughts 'no, not now, now is my time to restore'. She writes down anything still surfacing, does 4-7-8 breathing, reads a few pages and does progressive muscle relaxation, clenching on the inhale and releasing on the exhale from the toes up.

• Sentence 6: 'Tomorrow's going to be a good day'

Mel's reasoning is that you don't know how tomorrow will go, and worrying is betting on the negative. Since you're guessing anyway, bet on the positive and decide you'll make it good.

• Sentence 7: 'I give myself permission to drift off to sleep'

Worry amounts to telling yourself you're not allowed to sleep yet because some future problem matters more. Stop trying to fall asleep and give your body permission. Mel recalls Dr. Robbins saying it takes the average person 20–30 minutes to fall asleep, so lying awake briefly is normal.

EXAMPLES

• Baylor's to-do list study

Mel cites Baylor University research comparing people who wrote lists of what they'd done with people who listed unfinished tasks before bed. Those who wrote down what they still had to do fell asleep faster, and Mel says faster than with some medication. Getting tasks onto paper lets your mind stop bringing them up. She keeps a pad by her bed for 'popcorn thoughts'.

• The night Mel thought Chris was mad at her

Chris seemed off and said he couldn't talk about it, and Mel lay awake wondering what she'd done. She told herself she didn't need to solve it right now. The next morning she hugged him in his office and asked. He said it had nothing to do with her. It was about one of their kids.

• Crum's cancer mindset trials

Mel highlights the word 'manageable' in the clip and contrasts it with 'this is a catastrophe'. She notes that many cancers incurable 10–20 years ago are now curable, so the mindset sits alongside treatment, not in place of it.

• A busy anniversary week

With family coming in for her and Chris's 30th wedding anniversary, Mel describes mentally re-booking logistics in bed, the exact moment to use 'I don't need to solve this right now'.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Customise the seven sentences**
  Say them in order once you're in bed: overwhelmed is okay, I can manage this, not now, I did my best, time to rest, tomorrow's good, permission to sleep. Change the wording so it feels true to you.
- **Keep paper by the bed**
  Write down any looping thought or unfinished task instead of rehearsing it. The research Mel cites suggests a to-do list helps you fall asleep.
- **Add a body wind-down**
  Pair the sentences with 4-7-8 breathing, a few pages of a book and progressive muscle relaxation. If sleep problems persist, a clinician is the right next step.

How to Get Ahead When Everything Feels Uncertain: The New Rules of Work, Confidence, and Success

Guest: Carla Harris
Date: 2026-06-11 · Duration: 1:30:09
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NQtBfbQt_bM

KEYPOINTS

• In a moment with no rulebook, design your career instead of waiting to be told

Carla Harris, who spent 35+ years on Wall Street in the rooms where pay and promotions get decided, says the rules are being rewritten, so nobody has more of a playbook than you. Her point is that uncertainty is an opening: 'This is not the time to be dictated to when you have the opportunity to design.' Mel frames it as the playbook being 'out the window', so why not you.

• Fear and fatigue are the two things that hold women back at every career stage

Harris says fear has 'no place in your success equation' because approaching anything from fear makes you 'under-penetrate' the opportunity. She uses the old saying that fear is 'false evidence of things appearing real.' Failure, she argues, always brings a gift called experience, and very few things in life are truly irreparable; if one moment is gone, another will be served up.

• Fatigue is a signal to rest, not proof you can't keep going

If you're tired, treat it as a red flag that you haven't been resting. Harris admits she had 'no respect for sleep' for the first 20–30 years of her career. Her rule now: take two days off and the world won't end, or skip the rest of the to-do list this afternoon. Rest first, then decide whether you really want to quit.

• Breaking through the ceiling takes a fraction of the effort it took to reach it

Many women 20–30 years in can see through the glass ceiling but don't push because they assume it'll take another 25 years of fighting. Harris says it takes 'a small fraction' of what you've already done: push the elbow, the shoulder, put your head against it, and it cracks.

• Every decision about your career is made in a room you're not in, so you need a sponsor

Pay, promotions and new opportunities are decided behind closed doors. A mentor advises you; a sponsor (a term Harris says she coined in 1990) spends their own political currency arguing for you in that room. Keeping your head down and working hard isn't enough, because someone has to speak on your behalf.

• Build many relationships so no single person can block you

Promotions are rarely one person's decision. If one person is in your way, Harris's strategy is to 'make that person the outlier': when everyone else is saying you did great work, an insecure detractor usually stays quiet rather than go against the crowd. In effect your promotion gets 'crowdsourced.'

• Read 'required' on a job description as 'preferred'

People talk themselves out of roles because the listing asks for five or ten years or a master's. Harris says there's always an exception. In the interview, show you know what 'an A looks like' in the role, then explain why you're confident you can deliver it. She claims that combination gives you better than a 75% chance.

• Focus on the content of a job, not the title

Ask what you actually want to do day to day. Her example: MBA students who 'want M&A' usually want to learn how to value companies, which you can also do in equity research or credit. Pivoting gets easier once you see how many seats have the content you want.

• Call it evolution, not reinvention: midlife is your '3.0'

A former chairman told her 1.0 is academic preparation, 2.0 is excelling at career and family, and 3.0 is 'all about you.' Harris swaps 'reinvention' for 'evolution' because what you become is built on what you've done. At 50 you have data you didn't have at 20: proof that you can rise again, plus relationships and skills. The hard part is answering 'what is it now?' when you've spent your 20s and 30s working on someone else's agenda.

• Grow a passion from 5% of your day, not with a sudden leap

If what you love can't pay the bills yet, make room for it every day anyway. It gives you fuel for everything else and can grow from 5% to 15% to 25% of your day, until one day you ask why it isn't your main thing.

• Balance comes from something in each day giving you joy, plus being fully present

Some days Morgan Stanley got 90% of her. Harris doesn't keep score across the week; she makes sure each day holds something joyful and that she's fully present wherever she is, drawing on skills from 'all the Carlas' (banker, director, singer) when she's being Mom.

EXAMPLES

• The three-sheets-of-paper job design exercise

Sheet one: list your experiences and what you liked about each (teamwork, creating something from nothing, executing). Sheet two: what kind of people you enjoyed working with (smarter people? being the smartest in the room?). Sheet three: design a job, three to five bullets of what you'd do if money were no object, then take it to a friend, mentor or sponsor.

• 'Not tough enough': the 90-day reset

A big-voiced senior colleague told Harris she was smart and hardworking but not tough enough for the business. Because she'd always seen herself as tough, she took it as a sign 'the real Carla Harris wasn't showing up' and she'd lost her voice. For 90 days she deliberately walked, talked and spoke tough, and she says it changed how people saw her.

• The pandemic as an investment window

Her last trip was March 13, 2020, and she assumed she had two weeks off. By July 1, 2021 she had lost 25 lbs and launched an international speaking business. Her question to listeners: when this period ends, will you be tired and afraid, or will you have learned something new?

- **Using AI to prep a fireside chat in under 10 minutes**

  She got an author's book the day before an interview, asked an AI tool for chapter summaries and three questions per chapter, and was done in under 10 minutes, instead of spending the 6–7-hour flight cramming. With the time she saved, she went deep on the chapters she found most interesting.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Performance review script: bring your own report card**

  You're a participant, not a taker. After your boss's feedback, say: 'That's really interesting data. Here's how I was thinking about my year, where we intersect and where we differ,' then use the last 15–20 minutes on the gaps, perception vs. reality and how to close them. Or sort your year into exceeded, on the money, and 'did okay, working on it.' Spend one-third on what you did and two-thirds on what you'll do next.

- **Salary negotiation: know the market value of the seat**

  If the seat pays $200–250K and you're offered $150K, say you're excited and expect to excel, but you're 'not in a position to take this offer' because you know the market value, and they surely don't want to pay below market for excellence. If they offer within range, 'hit that bid.' Taking the low offer signals that you negotiate poorly, will take anything, and can be underpaid indefinitely.

- **Parting words**

  'Own your power, give yourself the chance to win, and don't count yourself out.'

The Hidden Reason You Feel Exhausted & How to Feel Better Now

Guest: Dr. Brennan Spiegel
Date: 2026-06-08 · Duration: 0:54:27
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bwQkIWf7rhE

KEYPOINTS

• Many everyday complaints may be forms of 'gravity intolerance'

Dr. Brennan Spiegel, a gastroenterologist and director of health services research at Cedars-Sinai, argues that gravity was here long before life and that every body is constantly managing its compressing force. When that management breaks down, he links it to fatigue, IBS, back pain, swollen ankles, anxiety and faster ageing. This is his framework from his book Pull, not settled medical consensus, and he repeatedly says to see a doctor for symptoms.

• The idea began with his mother-in-law lying in bed all day

In assisted living with cognitive decline, she was lying flat most of the day. Around the same time she developed slow digestion, stomach pain and depression, with no change in diet or medication. Spiegel's read was that she was 'giving in to gravity' and needed to get up and walk. He then wrote a paper called 'Gravity in the Gut', which he expected to be career suicide; colleagues told him it made sense.

• Your gut hangs like a sack of potatoes on suspension 'strings'

When you stand upright the gut hangs and opens up; slumping in a chair or over a phone pushes the shoulders and chest forward, drops the diaphragm and compresses the abdomen. Sitting all day, he says, is not a natural position. Mel admits catching herself slouching several times during the conversation.

• Stretchy joints may mean stretchy internal supports, and more gut trouble

His self-check: pull your pinky back, or bend your thumb to touch your forearm, or touch the floor easily without bending your knees. If you're 'stretchy on the outside, you're probably stretchy on the inside', so the gut's suspension sags and you may get bacterial overgrowth, gas and IBS-type symptoms. He frames it like a marionette whose strings are too elastic, and says it's a reason to talk to a doctor, not a diagnosis.

• About 95% of the body's serotonin is made in the gut

Spiegel calls serotonin a 'gravity management substance', not just a mood chemical. Gut microbes turn tryptophan from food into serotonin, which he says helps muscles, blood vessels and the lymphatic system pump fluid back up from the ankles. Babies, he notes, have little serotonin because their gut isn't colonised yet. The evolutionary story (the microbiome helping life leave the ocean) is his hypothesis.

• Gut feelings and some anxiety may be a built-in fear of falling

He describes the gut as having a kind of accelerometer. A roller-coaster drop feels thrilling because you're 'practising your death', while many people with IBS hate roller coasters and grip the bar because they already feel like they're falling. He suggests anxiety may partly be a 'neurovisceral fear of falling', a brain signal that is sometimes misfiring.

• Balance and grip are simple windows into whole-body health

Standing on one leg tests your inner ear, strength, tendons and sense of where you are in space. Grip strength, he says, has been validated in research as a marker of overall strength and even cardiovascular fitness. If you struggle, don't panic: work on yoga, strength and balance, or see a physical therapist.

• Exercise means constantly changing your relationship with gravity

He says randomised trials show exercise (strength training, swimming, running) is the most effective therapy we have for these problems, while stressing it isn't a cure-all. As we age gravity doesn't change but we get weaker, more bent and carry more weight, including emotional weight, so strength, balance, diet and hydration matter more every decade.

• Sleep is when gravity stops working against your brain

Lying down lets about five litres of blood shift toward the brain, which he says helps flush out amyloid. He lists dehydration, high sodium, short sleep and lack of exercise as all associated with cognitive decline, and floats the idea that Alzheimer's may partly be a consequence of them, a speculation rather than proven cause.

• It's not your fault, and you were built for this planet

For people who've blamed themselves for feeling off, his message is empowerment rather than blame. Babies learning to walk fall about 17 times an hour and keep getting up. You only compare yourself to yourself, so start where you are and build.

EXAMPLES

• Mel's staff thumb test

When the team tried the thumb-to-forearm test, more than half of the women among about 50 employees could do it, and the same people could easily touch the floor with straight knees.

• Live grip-strength test on a dynamometer

Spiegel squeezed 125 with his dominant hand; Mel, 'thinking of somebody I hate', hit 70. He says rough healthy marks are over 35 for men and 20–25 for women, varying by age (check an age table online). Mel credits hanging, heavy weights and farmer's carries for her score.

• The dead hang record

Hanging one minute makes you a 'gravity master'. He cites Japan's Kenta Adachi with a Guinness record of about 1 hour 20 minutes, up from a previous 16 minutes. Mel can hang about 30 seconds; the team installed a pull-up bar in the studio to try it after taping.

• Weighted vest and 20-lb ankle weights at work

Spiegel wears a roughly 12-lb weighted vest most of the workday at a standing desk ('practising life on a bigger planet'), which forces him to squeeze between the shoulder blades and open the diaphragm. He also wears 20-lb ankle weights, doing knee lifts and donkey kicks on Zoom calls, as a marathon runner who won't train by sitting.

• The 1960s 'visual cliff' baby studies

Babies asked to crawl to a parent across glass over an apparent drop refused, even before they had ever fallen, which he takes as evidence of an inborn sense that dangerous falls must be avoided.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **STACK 10 foods for tryptophan**
  Rotate a variety each week: S salmon, T turkey, A avocado, C chicken and chickpeas, K kidney beans, then T tempeh and tofu, E eggs, N nuts. Pair with exercise, sleep and sunlight, which he says also boosts serotonin.
- **10-second one-leg stand**
  Aim to stand at least 10 seconds on each leg. He says research ties this to survival, particularly in older adults.
- **Water target: 10–13 glasses a day**
  About 60% of body weight is fluid moved up and down by 'pumps and tubes', so he says low fluids make the brain tired. Drink enough to avoid light-headedness, but don't overdo it.
- **Gravitational breathing reset**
  Sit up without tensing, shoulders slightly back. Feel your body sink into the chair, then flip it: imagine the chair pushing you up (physicists describe gravity as upward acceleration). Then slow your breathing, which he says calms the vagus nerve and moves you from fight-or-flight to rest-and-digest.
- **Posture check whenever you sit**
  Notice the pressure of the seat, pull your shoulders back a little and engage the muscles between your shoulder blades so your belly isn't crunched.

Feel Better Immediately: Do THIS Today to Reset Your Life, Energy, & Happiness

Date: 2026-06-04 · Duration: 1:01:47
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Snuhd59cNP0

KEYPOINTS

• A mid-year reset can be two questions instead of a productivity overhaul.
Back from roughly three months on tour, Mel says she deliberately didn't want another episode about research and optimizing. Question one looks back: what have you done, experienced or gotten through this year that you're proud of? Question two looks ahead: what are you looking forward to? 'There's nothing you need to do,' she says. The point is to stop racing through the year and then look up in December wondering where it went.

• Stop measuring your life by what you haven't done.
Most people skip giving themselves credit because they're busy getting through the day. Her prompts: expecting your first baby, getting into grad school, surviving a breakup (and feeling a bit better 11–12 weeks in). Allow multiple answers, and include quiet wins nobody sees, like caregiving and simply continuing to show up.

• What Mel is proudest of is controlling her response, not anything she achieved.
The tour meant 16-hour days. At 57, she says it 'nearly killed me,' and she now wonders how musicians keep that pace for 100–200 days. Something went wrong every day. She chose to 'ride the wave' and deliberately stay calm, present and looked after. Because of that, she says, she enjoyed it and actually remembers it. Hard things you can't control will knock you down, but how you show up is up to you.

• Stress makes you miss the good parts of your own life.
'It's hard to have fun when you're stressed out… when you're constantly gripping the wheel of life.' Mel says that if she'd been fretting backstage, she would have missed the tour's best moment. Dwelling on what went wrong 'robs' you of celebrating what went right.

• Feeling flat often means your brain has habituated.
Mel draws on neuroscientist Dr. Tali Sharot (UCL's Affective Brain Lab, a past guest). The brain loves familiarity and learns patterns: same commute, same three meals, same scrolling. As things become familiar, it reacts less, including to the good stuff. That's why you can love your house, partner or dog and stop appreciating them, or have a life you worked hard for and still feel flat.

• Novelty and anticipation wake your brain back up.
According to the research Mel describes, something new on the calendar gives your mind 'somewhere good to go.' You get to time-travel out of the daily routine and toward something that reminds you who you are, and that life isn't only work, bills, caregiving and laundry. Anticipation itself is part of the payoff, not just the event.

• 'Nothing to look forward to' is useful information.
If you're 'just trying to survive the day,' that honest answer explains why days blur together on autopilot: wake up, answer texts, check social media, coffee, work, home, dinner. Mel treats it as a sign of what's missing, not a personal failing.

• The future you want starts today with one small step.
Pick a date, pick a thing, make a plan, send the text, buy the tickets, or organize the group for the hike. It doesn't have to be a big trip. A neighborhood barbecue counts. 'You deserve to have something in your life that makes you look up and go, I can't wait for that.'

• When something goes wrong, you get to choose your mindset.
Mel's recurring point through the tour and trip stories: assume no one meant to mess things up, tell yourself a story that helps ('this is a sign'), and save the laugh for later. That keeps a setback from wrecking the experience.

EXAMPLES

• The confetti that 'farted'
At Sydney, the tour's biggest show with 9,000 people, Mel hit the big finale cue and only one of six cannons went off. The confetti 'didn't even hit the front row.' She didn't snap at anyone, since no one did it on purpose, and the audience still had an 'electric' night.

• The 37th birthday in Vancouver
At the Mother's Day matinee in Vancouver, Mel's friend Sam, performing as her drag alter ego 'Melodrama,' went into the crowd and found a woman turning 37 who was facing cancer. A room of strangers stood up cheering, and tour director Marcus ran a signed book out to her. Mel calls it the highlight of the tour and one she'd have missed if she'd been stressed backstage.

• Lynn's shark onesie
On the 16-hour flight to New Zealand, teammate Lynn, who is terrified of flying and imagined surviving a crash only to be eaten by sharks, came out of the bathroom in a hooded shark onesie, shark slippers and shark-teeth glasses: 'If we're going to go down…'

• Birkenstocks at Baxter State Park
After 8 hours in the pickup, Mel realized her hiking boots were on the back porch in Vermont and all she had were Birkenstocks. They drove 45 minutes the wrong way to a farm supply store with one pair of stiff new hiking boots in her size. She declared them 'magic boots' and climbed Katahdin: '12 hours, zero blisters.'

• Cameron's brother 'forgot' his PhD
When producer Cameron asked her brother what he was proud of this year, he said 'nothing,' and had forgotten he'd gotten into a PhD program.

• The Grand Canyon trip and the 1986 backpack
Mel's planned trip, three years in the making, is a 9-hour hike into the Grand Canyon in 100° heat, then nine days rafting with

three families. Packing, she pulled out the Lowe Alpine pack she bought in Grand Rapids in 1986 before starting at Dartmouth. It's now 39 years old and feels like 'a seven pounder.'

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Question 1: What am I proud of this year?**
  Go back to January. List several answers, including what you survived and quiet ways you showed up. Ask a friend or family member, too, because they may have forgotten their own.
- **Question 2: What am I looking forward to?**
  If the answer is nothing, put one thing on the calendar this week: a concert, a hike, a dinner, a visit.
- **Fight habituation with small novelty**
  Change one routine (a different route, a new meal, a new place) to help your brain notice the good again.

How to Rewire Your Mind to Handle Anything, Turn Off Stress, & Calm Your Body

Guest: Dr. Tara Narula
Date: 2026-05-28 · Duration: 1:01:15
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ddCt_T7MNOA

KEYPOINTS

- **Resilience isn't bouncing back. It's keeping your wonder and engagement while moving in a new direction.**
  Cardiologist Dr. Tara Narula built her own definition from clinical work: the ability to 'retain your wonder, joy, excitement, investment, engagement in life despite what happens to you.' You don't return to where you were. You adapt. She frames it as a skill that can be strengthened like a muscle.
- **The honest answer to 'When will I be myself again?' is 'never,' but a different version can be beautiful.**
  When she tells patients they have coronary artery disease, or that their heart function is 20% instead of 50%, she says they all have the same look of fear and paralysis. Her answer: 'You will never ever be yourself again… but you can be a beautiful different version of you.' She cites Michelangelo carving marble 'to set the angel free.'
- **Stress isn't the enemy. A stress response that never switches off is.**
  Some stress pushes us to grow, but there's a tipping point. Citing Stanford's Robert Sapolsky (Why Zebras Don't Get Ulcers), she explains that the stress response evolved to escape a lion: heart rate, blood pressure and breathing go up, while digestion, reproduction and growth shut down. Today the same response fires for a bill, a comment at school or a tough boss, over and over all day.
- **Here's how to tell normal stress from harmful stress.**
  If you feel back to normal a few minutes after a stressor, that's probably fine. The problem is when the response stays on: clenched muscles, shallow breathing, a slightly faster heart rate, a mind that keeps cycling, repeated through the day. She notes acute stress can trigger a stress-induced heart attack, which women are more prone to, but chronic low-grade stress is the bigger concern.
- **You're not a victim of your stress response. You can deliberately turn it down.**
  Build in daily moments that take you 'from 10 to zero': a walk, music, meditation, exercise, breathing exercises, meeting a friend. Her own go-tos are getting her heart rate up and being in nature at her rural Connecticut home (birds, trees, fresh air). For in-the-moment calm, she mentions taking five slow breaths in and letting them out.
- **Acceptance comes first, because nothing else works until you stop fighting what happened.**
  Denial sounds like 'This can't be happening. I just got pregnant,' or 'I worked so hard, how am I losing my job?' Acceptance isn't giving up. It's the 'opening of the door' to every other tool. Resisting the change, by staring at the life you wanted, creates more stress. Her image: 'be the river, not the rock.'
- **Flexible thinking means moving the goalposts, not dropping your goals.**
  She cites resilience researcher Lucy Hone, whose 12-year-old daughter died in a car accident. Hone still had her husband and sons to live for, so she 'picked up the goalpost and moved it somewhere else.' Narula sees the same in medicine: she can't restore dead heart cells or a stroke-damaged arm, but patients can find a new path to meaning. Acceptance and commitment therapy, CBT and mindfulness can help with the 'but I don't want this' part.
- **Social support is underrated and within reach.**
  She points to former U.S. Surgeon General Vivek Murthy (she was his intern at the Brigham) on the harms of loneliness, and to Robert Waldinger's long-running Harvard study, where the quality of social connections best predicted quality of life. You don't need a big friend group. Mel admits she turns into a hermit under stress, which is when connection matters most.
- **Talk to yourself the way you'd talk to someone you're caring for.**
  Negative self-talk compounds stress. Resilience grows when you give yourself the same love and encouragement you'd give your child or spouse. Her line for patients: 'I don't know what's going to happen, but you're not going to go through this alone, and you are capable of managing this.'
- **Hope is found in small daily moments, and it's something you can practice.**
  Hope is the foundation of a resilient response, especially when the future looks unrecognizable. Writing intentions down ('I am capable of getting through this,' 'I'll carve out 6 hours a week for me,' 'I'll sing in the choir this fall') is a free way to push back against a world that shrinks your sense of what's possible.

EXAMPLES

- **The patient left 70% blind**
  A man went in for routine surgery, something went wrong, and he came out 70% blind. Six months later he had 'a lightness' and was smiling. He credited two things: acceptance ('I couldn't change what happened') and social support from friends.
- **'How do I not lose hope?'**
  A husband newly diagnosed with Parkinson's said he still had so much to write and so much to do with his wife. Narula told him to find hope in small moments: hearing 'I love you' each morning, writing his book each day, and the possibility of a treatment he doesn't know about yet. 'Fall towards the side of hope, not despair.'
- **Three caregiving wives in one month**
  In a single month, three women married to her male patients, one whose husband has Parkinson's, told her about the strain of caring for husbands, kids and everyone else. She told them they needed support and help to keep caregiving and to protect their own health.
- **The identity pie**
  A psychologist she interviewed has patients draw a circle and divide it: mother, writer, dog owner, athlete, baker, with only a small slice for the diagnosis. It shows them visually: 'I am not my diagnosis.'

• Her 10-year-old's vision board

Her daughter, about to turn 10, took her laptop and made a vision board of where she wants her life to go. Narula said 'This is great.' Mel's take: otherwise society decides for her.

OTHER RELEVANT

• The 10-to-zero list

Write down three things that reliably bring your stress down (a walk, music, five slow breaths, calling a friend, time outside) and schedule at least one daily, not only in a crisis.

• Stress self-check

A few minutes after a stressor, check: are your muscles still clenched, is your breathing shallow, is your mind still looping? If so, the response hasn't switched off. Do something on your list.

• Draw your identity pie

Useful after a diagnosis, layoff or divorce. Seeing all your other roles keeps one event from taking over your whole identity.

• Her book

The Healing Power of Resilience covers her full blueprint, including acceptance, flexibility, social support, self-talk, hope and purpose.

What Makes a Good Life? This Study on 26,000 Regrets Will Guide You for the Rest of Your Life

Guest: Daniel Pink
Date: 2026-05-25 · Duration: 1:09:14
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hnUVdqyaoc4

KEYPOINTS

• Regret is a signal to answer, not a feeling to avoid

Daniel Pink, a bestselling author whose TED talk has more than 12 million views, says we've been fed 'bad advice' to always be positive and never look back. Regret is an emotion we feel when we look back and wish we'd acted differently. Researchers have studied it for about 60 years and find it's one of the most common human emotions. His metaphor: regret is 'a knock at the door. Answer the door. See what it has to tell you.'

• Thinking through regrets on purpose makes people better at things

Pink cites evidence, including from negotiation studies, that people who systematically interrogate a regret improve next time. The key word is systematically. Replaying a scene and wallowing doesn't help. Burying it doesn't either. Mel compares carrying regrets to dragging a suitcase you never open.

• People's regrets around the world are strikingly similar

The World Regret Survey collected more than 26,000 regrets from 134 countries. Pink says the most surprising finding was how universal they sound: people everywhere regret the same kinds of things. Regret feels lonely and shameful, but it's one of the most shared experiences there is.

• Almost all regrets fall into four types

Foundation: 'if only I had done the work' (money, health, education). Boldness: 'if only I had taken the chance.' Moral: 'if only I had done the right thing.' Connection: 'if only I had reached out.' Pink argues that, read in reverse, these four describe a good life: a solid foundation, some boldness, goodness and love.

• Connection regrets are the most common, and relationships usually drift rather than blow up

The typical story is a friendship, or a relationship that should have existed, that faded away. Pink says we imagine relationships end in explosions, but most just drift. The fix is usually small: 'When in doubt, reach out.' In his interviews, reconnected relationships restart almost instantly.

• We hold back because we think reaching out will be awkward and unwelcome

Pink calls this a lesson for himself. We assume we'd be thrilled to hear from an old friend but that nobody else would, as if we're 'so special.' He says reaching out is learned behavior, not natural behavior. As a man in his early 60s, texting a buddy 'Hey, I'm thinking of you' doesn't come easily, but the second time is less awkward.

• Foundation regrets come from small choices adding up

One treated dinner is fine. Picking up the check five times a week for ten years leaves a person at 40 with no savings, living paycheck to paycheck on a good salary. These regrets erode the base of a life slowly, which is why they are easy to ignore until late.

• Boldness regrets grow with age because inaction can't be undone in your head

Boldness regrets come from choosing to play it safe over taking the chance: not studying abroad, not speaking up, not starting that business, and hundreds of dating regrets about never asking someone out. When people don't take the shot, Pink says, they overwhelmingly regret it. Regrets about something you did can be softened with a 'downward counterfactual' (imagining how it could have been worse). Regrets about what you didn't do leave only the open-ended 'what if.'

• Moral regrets are the smallest category but the most deeply held

These come from taking the low road at a fork, such as cheating or being unkind. There were fewer of them in the database, but people carried them heavily.

• Be fair to your past self

Mel makes the point that judging your 20s self with what your 57-year-old self knows is unfair. Pink adds grace for 'I wish I'd done it sooner' regrets: you did eventually act. As the proverb goes, the best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago, and the second-best time is now.

EXAMPLES

• Cheryl and Jen

A woman Pink interviewed had drifted from a close college friend for 20–25 years and wanted to call but never did. Pink got frustrated: 'Cheryl, you know what to do.' Five days later she emailed Jen, who was thrilled. They talked, met up, and Pink now gets a photo of them together every six months.

• Mel and Jodie

Mel's childhood best friend stayed in the Midwest when Mel went east for college. They went 20-some years without talking 'for no reason,' bumped into each other in Mel's mid-40s, and now text weekly. They line up work trips to share hotel rooms, Mel in Vermont and Jodie in Arizona. Mel calls it one of the greatest joys of her life.

• Mel's money regret

Mel took the credit cards handed out at college registration and entered marriage with about $20,000 in secret debt. She hid in shame through her 20s and 30s, and by her early 40s she and her husband were $800,000 in debt with liens on the house. It only changed once the pain forced her to deal with it. Pink compares that to waiting two years on a headache instead of seeing a doctor.

• Olympic bronze beats silver

In a study rating medalists' facial expressions, gold medalists looked happiest, then bronze, then silver. Silver medalists were stuck on 'if only I'd been faster,' while bronze medalists were glad they'd made the podium at all.

- **Where the book started**

  Pink, 61 and on 'the back nine of life,' got the idea after his daughter Sophia's graduation made him think about his own college regrets: wishing he'd been kinder, taken more risks and worked harder.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Inward, outward, forward: his three-step reset**

  Inward: treat yourself with self-compassion, the way you'd treat a friend. Pink says piles of evidence show harsh self-talk doesn't improve performance, while self-compassion does. Outward: get it out of your head by writing it down or talking about it. Forward: draw a lesson and decide what to do next.

- **Write about the regret for 15 minutes a day, three days in a row**

  Pink credits this to research by James Pennebaker at the University of Texas. Writing turns a vague 'phantom' into words you can examine, and people feel better about the regret afterward.

- **Talk to yourself in the third person**

  Pink says research finds people think more clearly when they ask 'what should [your name] do?' instead of 'what should I do?'

- **Consult your future self**

  Stuck on a big decision? Imagine talking with yourself 10 years from now, in 2036. Pink says that person almost always wants you to build a foundation, take the shot, do the right thing and reach out.

You’re Not Broken: Why You People-Please, Feel Anxious, & Never Feel Good Enough – and How to Heal

Guest: Kelly McDaniel
Date: 2026-05-21 · Duration: 1:08:09
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Li5PCbqEaEw

KEYPOINTS

• 'Mother hunger' is a yearning for a quality of love that one or more of three essentials didn't provide.
Therapist Kelly McDaniel says every child needs nurturing (to grow the brain), protection (to feel safe and flourish) and, later, guidance. Mother hunger means one or all of these went missing in your formative years. It's often mistaken for romantic longing, so people look for it in partners and friends and stay frustrated. She stresses it isn't about blaming mothers, many of whom did their best.

• She calls it 'the most primitive wound our body can sustain.'
A baby is 'already in love' with its mother at birth: her smell, her heartbeat, her body as 'our first home.' Infants are built to stay close for feeding, holding and sleep. McDaniel says it shows up across race and class because infant needs are universal, and early care teaches us whether we're worthy, lovable and safe.

• Common adult signs include people-pleasing and emotional monitoring.
Mel and McDaniel list perfectionism, harsh self-criticism, disordered eating, trouble sitting still, people-pleasing, monitoring everyone's emotions in the room, treating everyone's happiness as your job, and always putting others' needs first. McDaniel connects these patterns to early care. They aren't a diagnosis.

• An unkind mother can wound as deeply as no mother at all, because criticism creates shame.
If your mother died, it hurts, but you don't take it personally. A critical mother creates shame and rejection from 'our first love.' Her examples: cruel comments about a daughter's developing body ('you're too fat to wear that'), dismissing her interests, or being so unpredictable that the child never knew what would set her off.

• Parentified daughters become their mother's caretaker or best friend.
Some mothers punish daughters for not being like them or not 'building her resume.' Others become martyrs: 'Poor me, my daughter doesn't…', complaining to the family or friends until the daughter makes her feel better. A mother who needed a best friend and 'used you' instead of finding her own leaves the daughter feeling her mom is only happy if she's her twin.

• 'My childhood was perfect, but nothing works now' is a mismatch worth exploring.
McDaniel explains that an infant or toddler's body can't handle stress hormones like cortisol and norepinephrine, and that chronic early stress can affect the brain's memory center. So 'I don't remember much, but it was all good' makes her wonder whether the child was under strain. She only explores this with clients who are willing, and notes mother hunger doesn't affect everyone.

• 'Pathological hope' keeps you trying the same approach for decades.
Daughters of 'compromised mothers' hope the mother they have will become the mother they need. Hope is natural, but it turns pathological when all the evidence says it isn't happening and you keep trying a new angle anyway. Her advice: 'Let yourself off the hook. Relax. Quit trying. See what happens.' The same pattern applies to an ex, a boss or a difficult child.

• The 'apology ache' is waiting for an apology that may never come.
A real apology is 'I'm sorry I did that, and I'm going to do something different now.' 'I'm sorry you feel that way' doesn't count. Most adult women carry this ache and push it onto partners, friends and kids. Mel's point: we often want the apology because we haven't honored the truth of our own experience. You can heal without one.

• Healing starts with grief, then becoming 'the mother of yourself.'
Naming it lets grief thaw, and it may come as rage, blame, sadness or numbness, on its own timeline. Your 'first job' as the mother of yourself is protection: be careful who you tell. Siblings may have had a different mother (as McDaniel puts it, 'number two in line' versus 'number seven' when money was stable), and friends who don't get it can add shame.

• Be cautious about bringing this to your mother.
Unless your mother is doing her own work and has an 'open, willing, humble heart,' she probably won't welcome it. This is intergenerational: every mother was a daughter first. Mel sums up the goal: 'I still love my mom, she is who she is, I'm not going to ask her to change. If I do the work for myself, I change.'

EXAMPLES

• 'I want my mom' during love-addiction withdrawal
McDaniel found the concept while treating women recovering from love addiction. When clients stepped away from romance, she kept hearing 'I want my mom.' It looked 'biological,' a craving so strong they could barely breathe. The reasons their mothers weren't available varied: death, mental illness, addiction and more.

• Mel's apology to her daughters
Mel shares that she tells her daughters she was dysregulated, under heavy financial stress, and had postpartum depression that made it hard to bond with one of them as a baby. 'If I could change it all, I would. I'm responsible for that.' She finds saying it liberating. McDaniel calls it a gift but says only the daughters can say how it lands.

• The partner who feels like a parent
One sign in couples: 'I do as much for my partner as I do my children… I want a partner.' The partner receiving all that care may not see their own mother hunger at all.

• Marriages after healing
McDaniel has seen some clients leave marriages that triggered them every single day. Others realize the marriage isn't broken: 'I just need to quit expecting this partner of mine to be my mother.' Relationships improve, food gets easier, and cravings shrink, though addiction still needs its own treatment.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Three-need audit**
  Ask yourself separately: Was I nurtured? Was I protected and safe? Was I guided? Notice which gap matches the patterns you see in yourself now.
- **Building a safe place to talk**
  Ask a therapist or coach directly: 'I need a place to talk about this.' If they're unwilling, find someone else. Or start a reading group with friends who are working through the same material, which is free and can happen over a shared meal.
- **Spotting pathological hope**
  List the strategies you've tried for years to win someone's approval. If the evidence says no, practice stopping and watch what changes in you.
- **Her book**
  McDaniel's book Mother Hunger lays out the nurture, protect and guide framework discussed here.

Do THIS for 8 Weeks and Look & Feel 10 Years Younger: Dr. Vonda Wright's Proven Protocol

Guest: Dr. Vonda Wright
Date: 2026-05-18 · Duration: 1:15:35
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qQO-lL6gJSQ

KEYPOINTS

- **The biggest lie about aging is that you can't do anything about it**
  Orthopedic surgeon Dr. Vonda Wright (100,000+ patients, 44 research papers, author of Unbreakable) says the body keeps its regenerative capacity at any age if you use it. Her warning: 'we will age like our mothers if we don't step in front of it.' She wants people in their 20s and 30s to start caring about their future body, not just midlife women.
- **You can get stronger at any age, even starting from zero**
  She points to early studies of 90-year-old men in a nursing home who did chair exercises with tiny hand weights and improved function by 150%. Her own University of Pittsburgh research on active older adults found people retaining bone and muscle and, in a five-year study, executive brain function. Her line: there's never an age or skill level when you can't get stronger.
- **A hip fracture is a life-altering event for frail women**
  Per Dr. Wright, roughly 30% of frail, sedentary women who break a hip may die within the first year, and about 50% of survivors never return to their pre-fall function. That can mean a nursing home, moving in with your kids or full-time care, so it becomes a family burden too. Most of these breaks come from 'low-energy' falls (tripping from standing height) on weakened bone, not dramatic accidents.
- **Bone peaks around age 30, then perimenopause speeds up the loss**
  Peak bone density is built between puberty and about 25–30 through jumping, adequate food, and regular periods with enough estrogen. She notes she didn't get periods as a dancer and thought it was fine. After the peak, men and women lose about 1% a year, but when estrogen drops women can lose an estimated 15–20% in 5–7 years. Talk to your daughters about bone in their 20s.
- **The four-step plan: walk, lift, balance, heart rate**
  Start with walking only, ideally after your biggest meal. Then lift, beginning with body weight and progressing to light weights. Train balance by standing on one leg during everyday tasks. Finally, push your heart rate near max in short bursts: kettlebell swings, a rower, or running between lampposts. Don't think of it as four separate jobs; the sprints can tack onto your walk.
- **Begin with a 7-day walking streak, not the gym**
  For 'adult-onset exercisers' leaving the couch after years, she says don't lift tomorrow, just walk every day for seven days. Daily practice is what runners call a streak, and once you've built one you won't want to break it on day eight. That first win also shows you that you're worth the effort.
- **Strength progresses over months and then needs only two sessions a week**
  Starting with body weight and light weights, she says you can be lifting with a bar on your shoulders within 6–9 months. Once you've built strength, two total-body workouts a week will maintain it. Heavier, more specialized lifting comes later, not on day one.
- **Cardio isn't optional: heart disease is the number one killer of women**
  When Mel admits she dislikes sprinting, Dr. Wright insists: the plan is about 30-second bursts, about four times, getting your heart rate up, with recovery of roughly 2–3 minutes between them.
- **Muscle matters mostly for metabolism; looks are the bonus**
  Muscle burns more energy than fat. Her example: a 120-lb person at 50% body fat burns far fewer calories just living than a 120-lb person at 25% body fat. Muscle also helps blood sugar and nearly every organ system, and she links it to longevity.
- **The 'critical decades': inflection points at 44 and 60**
  She cites a recent paper finding biological aging speeds up around ages 44 and 60. From that she frames 35–45, while you still have all your hormones, as the decade to set your standards, and 45 to the early 50s, during perimenopause, as a time of faster aging. After that it's never too late, just harder. You get the fastest return by acting inside these windows.
- **Hormone therapy: decide from facts, not fear**
  Asked about HRT, she says it's each woman's choice, but it should be informed by the current data. If you don't want to read the studies, follow medical society guidelines such as those from the Menopause Society, which she says are clear and written in plain language. Discuss it with your own clinician.

EXAMPLES

- **Her 86-year-old mother curling Campbell's soup cans**
  Her mother, from a generation where 'women didn't sweat', had little physiological reserve. She became very frail after a serious illness during COVID. Living with her daughter and hearing all this advice, she started doing biceps curls with soup cans by the pool, and Dr. Wright uses her recovery as proof that it's never too late. Her 86-year-old father, a lifelong endurance athlete, never stopped training.
- **The answer to 'I don't have time'**
  Own your excuse. Sometimes you're truly that busy. But often you can't find an hour because you won't let anyone else do things your way. Her challenge: if you value yourself more than how clean the dishes are, step back and hand some of it off.
- **Balance training while brushing your teeth**
  Mel asks whether standing on one leg while brushing counts. Yes: one to two minutes, twice a day, adds up to real training, and so does working at your desk or doing kitchen tasks on one leg.
- **Alzheimer's and women**
  She cites that 70% of Alzheimer's cases occur in women, one reason she wants women thinking about brain health early and

not assuming they'll stay as they were in their 20s and 30s.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Protein target: 0.8–1 g per pound of ideal body weight**
  Her recommendation for building muscle and supporting metabolism, using your ideal weight rather than your current one. She calls about 100 g a day the bare minimum muscle scientists cite. Choose high-quality protein containing the essential amino acids, especially leucine, which she calls the most powerful trigger for muscle growth. No, it won't make you bulky.
- **The challenge: start your 7-day streak today**
  Her closing ask is simple: walk today and keep going for seven days. If you're already active, do something harder than you've done before, because the body adapts to challenge.
- **Book: Unbreakable by Dr. Vonda Wright**
  Chapter 10, 'Unbreakable Nourishment', covers protein and includes recipes.

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.

How to Eliminate Self-Doubt Forever & Build Unshakeable Confidence

Guest: Dr. Shadé Zahrai
Date: 2026-05-11 · Duration: 1:16:38
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jd80_EKVb1A

KEYPOINTS

• You don't eliminate self-doubt; you strengthen the parts of you that move through it
Dr. Shadé Zahrai, a behavioural researcher with a PhD in organisational behaviour and author of Big Trust, says the doubt never fully goes away. What changes is your ability to act anyway. She has advised about 150 Fortune 500 CEOs and found that senior, high-achieving people often have more self-doubt, because they feel they have further to fall.

• Self-doubt is largely a story you project onto other people
Her anchor is a Dartmouth experiment by psychologist Robert Kleck (see examples). People who believed they had a visible scar read normal conversations as cold and judgmental. Her point: the 'scar' you think everyone sees (your weight, acne, a firing) shapes how you interpret every interaction.

• Confidence rests on four A's: acceptance, agency, autonomy, adaptability
Acceptance: you're a work in progress and worthy without others' validation. Agency: trusting you can do the thing, or learn how. Autonomy: believing you have some control over your life. Adaptability: in the context of doubt, being able to handle the emotions that come when something doesn't work out.

• If you don't like yourself, start by acknowledging nothing changes until you accept yourself
For people who simply don't believe they're worthy, she suggests building acceptance indirectly with tools (care-less list, decline scripts, hobbies) rather than forcing affirmations. Writing fears down gives them 'a physical outlet'; she says evidence suggests making them real gives you something to work with.

• People low in self-acceptance tend to fuse their identity with their job or role
So a bad work day feels like a verdict on you. Mel admits she cried the previous morning although things were 'objectively going amazing'. A hobby, or for full-time carers, something outside parenting, reminds you you're more than your title.

• Imposter feelings are common and a sign you're growing
The original 1970s–80s term was 'imposter phenomenon', not syndrome; a phenomenon comes and goes, while 'syndrome feels like a life sentence' (Mel's phrasing). She cites studies finding up to 82% of people have felt it. Step one: when you think 'I don't belong', shift to 'what an incredible opportunity to learn'. Step two: talk about it openly.

• Low autonomy shows up as complaining, blame, resentment and clinging to a wound
Complaining replays the situation vividly and, she says, deepens the neural pathway so it becomes your default and you notice more to complain about. Blamers point at traffic, partners or the team; resenters think everyone else has it easier; some people retell the same hard story a 20th or 30th time because holding the wound feels safer.

• 'Should' shrinks your thinking; 'could' reopens it
She says research shows 'should' language cuts off divergent thinking and makes you feel controlled. Swap to 'What could I do right now?', which commits you to nothing, then pick one to three items for an 'I will' list and actually do them. That brings your locus of control back inward.

• You avoid action when you doubt you can handle the feelings if it fails
Before you ask someone out or say yes, your brain runs a checklist of how it could go wrong and whether you could cope with the disappointment or 'I'm a failure' feeling. Getting better at handling emotions is what makes taking the step easier.

• Healthy teams and people need both humanness and courage
On a two-axis 'four square', humanness covers warmth, empathy, humour and collaboration; courage covers ownership, decisions, clarity, feedback and goals. High humanness with low courage produces the classic people pleaser. She uses this scale with Fortune 100 teams.

EXAMPLES

• Robert Kleck's scar experiment
In the late 1970s–early 80s, researchers painted a noticeable scar between the ear and mouth on one group and let them see it in a mirror. Just before the conversations, they 'set it with moisturiser', actually wiping it off. With no scar, those participants still reported tense, judgmental partners.

• Ping-pong ball versus golf ball
Both represent the same doubt (for Mel, noticing her jowls). The ping-pong ball floats on the water: you have the thought but it doesn't sink in. The golf ball sinks, sits at the bottom 'like an emotional weighted vest' and spills water, showing how you lose part of yourself carrying the doubt.

• The Citigroup logo on a napkin
When Citicorp merged with Travelers, designer Paula Scher sketched the logo on a napkin in seconds. She said it took 'a second and 34 years'; the client reportedly paid $1.5 million. Zahrai uses it to show your experience is the value.

• Hobby research
She cites a study of more than 93,000 people across 16 countries finding people with hobbies have more self-acceptance and higher self-esteem, and a study finding Nobel Prize-winning scientists were 3 times more likely than other scientists to have a hobby and 22 times more likely to have a creative one.

• Mel's pen-in-the-teeth reading
Mel read a passage from page 219 of Big Trust with a pen held between her teeth like a dog's bone, articulating every sound, then read it again without the pen. The exercise makes your normal speech clearer and more confident.

• Elizabeth Gilbert lowered her standards
Writing Eat, Pray, Love, Gilbert was stuck on a running 'this sucks' mantra, writing and deleting. She realised she had

promised to write, not to write brilliantly, and made 'write' the goal.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Care-less list**
  Split a page into two columns. On the left, write everything you want to care less about (your looks, strangers' opinions, family comments about your acne or weight) and notice how it feels to see it written.
- **Decline without apologising**
  Give a reason rooted in your own needs: 'Thank you for thinking of me. This weekend I'm focusing on rest and recovery, but I'd love to see it when you're all set up.'
- **Scheduled worry time**
  Keep a worry list during the day. Around 4–5pm (not near bed), set a 10–15 minute alarm and worry on purpose. Called stimulus control, she says research finds it effective because later review 'shrinks the fear to size'.
- **Opposite action and 'lift the chin, let's begin'**
  From dialectical behaviour therapy: when there's no physical threat, do the opposite of what your body wants. Sit forward, look at the person, shoulders back. She cites a recent study suggesting chin-to-chest distance drives the confidence effect of posture, so lengthen it.
- **One small step today**
  Her single action: pick one thing self-doubt is holding you back from, break it into the smallest possible step and do it.

It's Not Just You: The Reality of Adult Friendship in 2026

Guest: Kasley Killam
Date: 2026-05-07 · Duration: 1:17:23
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CZYOy58RTl8

KEYPOINTS

• Social health is a third pillar alongside physical and mental health

Social scientist Kasley Killam, who has studied connection for about 15 years and holds a master's from the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, says decades of research across thousands of studies point the same way: connection predicts a longer, healthier life. She notes that the World Health Organization recently said social health matters as much as physical and mental health, and she wants it to become as mainstream a topic as mental health is now.

• Loneliness is common, so it's nothing to be ashamed of

She cites a study in which one in six Americans said they were isolated or lonely most or all of the time. Her first message to lonely listeners is that it's a widespread condition, not a personal failing, and that it can be changed with small, specific habits.

• We spend dramatically less time with friends than we used to

Per Killam, young people today spend nearly 1,000 fewer hours a year with friends than 20 years ago. Mel works out that's about 25 forty-hour work weeks. She adds that 67% of Americans never take part in any club or group, and 72% see the people they care about only two, one or zero times a month.

• Disconnection is a physical stressor

Killam explains that feeling isolated registers in the body as stress, releasing cortisol, which can increase inflammation and over time make you more susceptible to illness. Connection does the opposite. This is her framing of the research, not individual medical advice.

• 'Protecting your peace' can tip into isolation

Healthy relationships are sometimes difficult, and human connection is messy. If you cut out everyone who causes any friction, you can end up with no one. She suggests reframing 'protecting your peace' so it allows for normal friction.

• Most cancelled plans are excuses, not needs

Mel polled her audience and 73% admitted cancelling on friends or colleagues because they'd rather stay home alone. They sorted listeners' reasons into 'excuse' and 'need' jars, and the excuse jar filled up. Some reasons are both: 'I never get asked questions back' is an excuse to skip, but it also signals a real need for new friends. Social anxiety is valid and normal, but if you always use it as a reason to stay in, you won't meet anyone.

• People like you more than you think

In one study, strangers chatted and then rated how much they liked their partner and how much they thought their partner liked them. People consistently underestimated how much they were liked, while outside observers judged it correctly. In another set of studies, people underestimated how much a friend would appreciate a quick check-in. Killam treats this as reason enough to push past insecurity and reach out.

• Connection doesn't have to take much time to matter

77% of Americans work more than 40 hours a week. Her fix is 'go for connection first': when a meeting ends five minutes early or you're waiting in line, text a friend instead of scrolling. She says research shows a short text, a 10-minute phone call or five minutes of expressing gratitude can reduce loneliness.

• We've optimized for convenience over connection

Nobody looks up anymore, so organic meetings are rarer. The reliable way to make new friends is to join a local group you care about, so you see the same people regularly, then take action when you click with someone.

• Curiosity is the most underrated way to deepen a friendship

Ask questions and genuinely listen rather than waiting for your turn to talk. Opening up more yourself also helps.

EXAMPLES

• The hugs-and-cold-virus study

Researchers asked people every day for two weeks how supported they felt and how many hugs they'd had, then exposed them to a cold virus. People who felt more supported and got more hugs were less likely to get sick and had fewer symptoms if they did.

• Mel's 45-minute drive dilemma

Mel describes a day-long gathering of seven couples she's known for 30 years (four couples were at her wedding). After a big work week, 48 hours out, she could already feel herself wanting to stay on the couch in sweatpants scrolling short videos for five hours. Her point: everyone knows they feel better after seeing friends, yet 'I'm tired' is the easiest excuse.

• The 5-minute 'thinking of you' text

Killam's suggested script: 'I only have 5 minutes, but I was thinking about you and just wanted to say hi. How was your day?' Small moments like this keep a relationship alive day to day.

• An intergenerational conversation event

She paired 15 young people with 15 older people and gave them prompts such as 'Tell me your life story in 4 minutes' and 'What's a challenge you're going through right now?' She uses it to show how structured, curious questions quickly create depth.

OTHER RELEVANT

• The 5-3-1 formula for social health

Interact with five different people each week, keep at least three close relationships, and spend one hour a day connecting. The hour adds up across people and doesn't have to be deep: a minute with the barista, five with colleagues, 20 with your partner. Whether an hour sounds like a lot or a little tells you about your own preferences. Include people who differ from you in beliefs and background.

- **The four friendship styles**

  Butterfly: thrives on frequent, casual connection; easy small talk, great party guest. Wallflower: selective, infrequent connection, observant and empathetic. Firefly: enjoys lots of solitude, but skips small talk for deep conversations when together. Evergreen: wants a lot of deep connection all the time. Knowing your style explains why socializing drains you or comes easily.

- **Excuse-or-need check before cancelling**

  Before bailing, ask whether the reason is a real need (illness, genuine exhaustion) or an excuse. Feeling anxious is normal, but it isn't by itself a reason to stay home.

- **Your connection helps others too**

  Her closing: every conversation, smile at a neighbor or coffee with a coworker benefits both people, so caring for your social health changes your life and the world.

How to Become More Confident, Influential, and Communicate Better with #1 Harvard Business Professor

Guest: Dr. Leslie K. John
Date: 2026-05-04 · Duration: 1:08:54
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5R7EOZ5AbHg

KEYPOINTS

• Undersharing is a bigger risk than oversharing for most people
Dr. Leslie K. John, a Harvard Business School professor and behavioural scientist who studies honesty, disclosure, trust and regret, says the usual advice to keep things private is backwards. She describes the undersharer's life as one of missed opportunities: friendships that never blossom, colleagues who never quite trust you, romances that don't deepen. Her book is Revealing: The Underrated Power of Oversharing.

• People trust the person who reveals something bad over the person who hides
In her studies, the majority preferred 'the devil they know' over someone who refused to answer, even when the answer was unflattering. The reason was distrust of the hider. Revealing something sensitive signals that you trust the listener not to make a fool of you, and people reciprocate that trust.

• Opening up is good business, not just good therapy
She starts executive classes by showing how revealing slightly sensitive things makes others trust you more, which helps in negotiations and hiring. When leaders admit difficulties, she says, people don't think they're incompetent; they trust them more and want to work for them.

• Expressing feelings helps you process stress
In an older study, preschoolers watched a mildly scary film while researchers filmed their faces and measured palm sweat. Children who showed more on their faces were physiologically calmer. By kindergarten, boys had begun holding feelings in, which she frames as cultural conditioning to be stoic.

• Being talkative is not the same as being revealing
She calls it the 'extroversion illusion'. John describes herself as introverted but forthcoming, while one of her most extroverted best friends struggles badly with vulnerability. A useful audit: how much of your conversation with someone is feelings versus logistics?

• Secrets aren't neutral; they're an open loop in your mind
Mel reads from page 85 of her book: the more often people think about their secrets, the more they report inauthenticity, lower relationship satisfaction and worse physical health. John says secrets keep you constantly ruminating on 'should I say it or not?'. She stresses some secrets should be kept.

• Every unspoken moment is a missed opportunity
Her example: your boss says 'great job on the presentation' and you say 'thanks'. You could say 'You have no idea what that means. I was super anxious, I'm proud of myself, and I'd love more chances to speak.' She isn't saying voice every thought, which 'would be chaos', but notice the disclosure decisions you make by default.

• Not opening up reinforces the story that everything is on you
Mel says a demonstration in the episode made her feel the weight of believing 'it's all up to me', a story she's working to change. John told her husband she was exhausted by daily small decisions and asked him to just decide; she mentions a friend whose Mother's Day request was to make zero decisions. Doing this well takes self-awareness.

• We weigh the wrong side of the disclosure decision
People almost always list only the risks of revealing and the comfort of staying quiet. They rarely consider the risks of not revealing or the benefits of speaking, so the decision is badly imbalanced from the start. Her matrix forces all four onto the page.

• Leaders who reveal can destigmatise
She points to Magic Johnson's HIV announcement at a time it was highly stigmatised; studies comparing testing before and after concluded he likely prompted about 900 additional people to get tested.

EXAMPLES

• The STD dating thought experiment
Choose between two dates: one admits to having had many STDs, the other refuses to answer. Across thousands of participants, about 65% chose the one who admitted it. Mel's instant reaction to the refuser: 'that's because you have an STD.'

• Hiring the person who admits failing
Asked about their worst grades on an application, one candidate admitted failing and another opted out. About 89% of people chose to hire the one who admitted it.

• Mel and Chris in couples therapy
After about 26 years of marriage, Mel and her more introverted husband started therapy four or five years ago. Learning to share what he was thinking and feeling brought them much closer; she realised they'd had 'completely different experiences' while 'just doing life together'. When Mel says she feels unattractive, his reassurance makes it lose its grip.

• John cried mid-talk and called out the room
Facing belligerent questioning while presenting her research, she stopped and said she was crying because they were being rude, adding that they had a reputation and it had to stop. It wasn't career suicide: a faculty member who was there wrote a supportive letter for her promotion about 10 years later, and friends who presented there afterwards found the group reasonable.

• The relationship that has run its course
Working the matrix live: the risks of revealing are hurt and pain. The risks of not revealing are staying where love isn't mutual and keeping both people from finding the right partner. The benefits of revealing are self-efficacy ('I can do hard things'), kindness, honesty and self-respect. Seen together, staying quiet looks unkind.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **The 'I feel… I need…' rule, and banish 'fine'**

  When someone asks about your day, complete two sentences: 'I feel ___' and 'I need ___'. 'I feel' matters most because a feeling invites care and isn't debatable the way a thought is. If you're too tired, defer honestly: 'I'm exhausted and don't want to talk yet, but thank you for asking.'

- **The four-part disclosure matrix**

  For a big decision, list risks of revealing, risks of not revealing, benefits of revealing and benefits of staying quiet. She teaches it at Harvard and says practising on mundane decisions first makes it easier.

- **Turn and reveal**

  When something triggers a feeling, such as watching your kids' sport, say it and ask a question back. Mel: 'I really miss being on a team. Did you play team sports?'

- **The regret research**

  Cornell psychologist Tom Gilovich found 76% of life regrets are things people didn't do or say. Palliative care nurse Bronnie Ware found 'I wish I'd shared my feelings more' was the third most common deathbed regret.

Stanford Nutrition Researcher: Eat THIS to Transform Your Health, Stay Young, and Live Longer

Guest: Dr. Lucia Aronica
Date: 2026-04-30 · Duration: 1:03:46
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nVTEBaEJ46I

KEYPOINTS

• Food is information that changes how your genes behave, not just fuel

Dr. Lucia Aronica, an epigenetics scientist at Stanford School of Medicine, describes epigenetics as the 'software' that switches genes on and off, while your DNA is the 'hardware.' Her central image is that food is 'the pencil that rewrites your genetic instructions.' Every meal sends signals that affect energy, metabolism, inflammation and how fast you age, which is why she says your fork can matter more than your family history.

• Genetic risk is written in pencil, and you hold the eraser

She pushes back on fatalism ('genes load the gun, lifestyle pulls the trigger') by noting that not all genetic variants carry equal weight. In the 2016 New England Journal of Medicine study she cites, people at high genetic risk for heart disease cut their risk roughly in half with a healthy lifestyle: good food, regular exercise, no smoking. Meanwhile, people with favorable genes but poor habits still developed heart disease.

• Your body needs building blocks plus 'signals'

Beyond protein and other basics, she says the body needs 'epi-bioactives': compounds, mostly from plant foods plus omega-3s from fatty fish, that act as instructions to your genes. That's the science behind 'eat the rainbow.' Each color sends a different signal, so variety protects your genes from all angles.

• Broccoli's sulforaphane runs your body's own antioxidant system

Sulforaphane isn't an antioxidant itself. She calls it 'the boss of your body's antioxidant army' because it flips a master switch called NRF2, activating more than 200 genes involved in detox, inflammation and antioxidant defense. Vitamin C is gone within hours, but she says sulforaphane keeps those genes on for up to three days, so cruciferous vegetables two to three times a week is enough. The catch: cooking kills the enzyme (myrosinase) that makes it.

• Crush garlic and let it sit before cooking

Crushing or chopping garlic breaks the cell walls so its compounds mix and form allicin. Crushing the whole clove flat with a knife or spoon breaks more cells than chopping, so it produces more. Wait five minutes before it hits the heat so the reaction can finish.

• Choline is a forgotten essential nutrient most people lack

She says about 90% of people are deficient without knowing it. The target is roughly 450 mg a day, about four eggs' worth. You can mix sources: two eggs, 3 oz of salmon (the richest fish source), or just 1 oz of liver. She links choline to brain health.

• For most people, eggs don't meaningfully raise blood cholesterol

Per Dr. Aronica, only about 25% of people are 'high responders' whose blood cholesterol rises with dietary cholesterol, because of genetic and metabolic differences. For the other 75%, eggs don't significantly raise it. She describes Stanford research in which people on a weight-loss diet tripled their cholesterol intake and ate more saturated fat, yet their blood lipids improved: 'The problem wasn't the cholesterol. It was the donuts.' If you have lipid concerns, check with your doctor.

• Collagen declines with age; favor collagen-rich foods

She says collagen, the body's most abundant protein and its 'scaffolding' in skin and tendons, declines about 1% a year from age 25, and the loss roughly doubles after menopause. Rather than leading with supplements, she favors eating 'nose to tail': chicken and fish with the skin on, canned fish with bones (salmon, sardines), slow-cooked meats like short ribs or lamb, and bone broth (about 10 g of collagen per cup). Prioritize total protein first.

• Plant omega-3s convert too poorly to rely on

Flax, chia and walnuts provide ALA, which the body converts to EPA and DHA only 5–8% of the time in young women and 0.5–4% in men, and less with age, stress or inflammation. Reaching the roughly 2 g a day used in clinical trials would take a cup of flax or chia, or 2 lb of walnuts (about 2,000+ calories), daily: 'nutritional fantasy.' Eat fatty fish (salmon, mackerel, anchovies, sardines, herring) three to four times a week; she personally adds a quality omega-3 supplement.

• Fermented foods supply the 'three musketeers' of gut health

Prebiotics (fiber that feeds bacteria), probiotics (the bacteria themselves) and postbiotics (bacterial products such as the short-chain fatty acid butyrate, which signals to your genes). She cites research where fermented foods lowered inflammatory markers regardless of people's starting microbiome and increased microbial diversity, because they bring in new species rather than just feeding existing ones.

EXAMPLES

• The queen bee: same genes, different software

Queen and worker bees are genetically identical, yet the queen lives about 20 times longer, is larger and is fertile, while workers are sterile. The difference is diet: the queen larva eats royal jelly. Dr. Aronica uses this as her favorite illustration of nutrition shaping how genes are expressed.

• Her father and her mother

Her father, a dedicated physician, died when she was 14, which led her into science to support lifestyle medicine. Her mother, at 84, is her model of longevity: not a biohacker with complicated protocols, but someone who follows simple advice like getting protein at every meal.

• The glow-stick broccoli demo

On set she used a glow stick to show how breaking broccoli's cells mixes the precursor with the enzyme to make sulforaphane, the same thing chewing does. Mel immediately planned to chop the broccoli, set it aside, and then cook tomatoes in olive oil.

- **Tomatoes as internal sun protection**
  She claims red foods like tomatoes can boost your skin's SPF by about 40%. Cooking them in olive oil was part of the kitchen sequence she and Mel walked through. Treat this as a supplement to sunscreen, not a replacement.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Three broccoli tricks**
  Fresh: chop it, ideally about 40 minutes before cooking (even 10 minutes helps; smaller pieces make more). Frozen: the enzyme is already gone, so stir in about 1 tsp mustard powder or 1 tbsp prepared mustard per 3 oz of cooked broccoli, since mustard is cruciferous and supplies the enzyme.
- **Daily choline formula**
  Aim for about 450 mg, for example two eggs plus 3 oz salmon, or a small (1 oz) serving of liver.
- **What to expect in 30 days**
  She says a month isn't enough to rewrite epigenetic 'memories,' but you may notice steadier energy as blood sugar stabilizes, better sleep and skin as inflammation drops, and better digestion as your microbiome adjusts.
- **Simple starting rules**
  Protein at every meal, attention to omega-3s and collagen, a rainbow of plants, fermented foods, and slowing down to enjoy meals: 'channel your inner Italian.'

Nervous System Reset: Do THIS Every Day to Rewire Your Brain From Stress and Anxiety

Guest: Dr. Nadine Burke Harris
Date: 2026-04-27 · Duration: 1:10:46
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2aI8q3gE2-c

KEYPOINTS

• Trauma is the body's response to overwhelming stress, not the event itself.
Pediatrician and former California Surgeon General Dr. Nadine Burke Harris reframes trauma as 'the biological response to overwhelming stress.' Mel admits she always thought trauma was the thing that happened. Because it's a biological response, it can be wired in during infancy: 'You may not remember the actual event, but the body remembers.'

• Adverse childhood experiences are common and add up.
The 1998 CDC–Kaiser Permanente ACE Study surveyed about 17,500 people about 10 categories: physical, emotional or sexual abuse; physical or emotional neglect; and growing up with a parent who had a mental health disorder, substance dependence or incarceration, or with parental separation or divorce, or intimate partner violence. Two-thirds had at least one ACE and 1 in 8 had four or more. She says updated CDC data now puts it at 1 in 6 nationally.

• The higher the ACE count, the higher the health risks.
She calls it a dose-response relationship. Four or more ACEs meant 4.5 times the risk of depression, 7 times alcohol dependence, 10 times opioid dependence and 2.5 times heart disease. She explains that switching on the stress response also switches on immune activity and inflammation, which helps explain links to heart and autoimmune disease. These are population risks, not destiny.

• Your stress response is a bear alarm, and it switches off your thinking brain.
The amygdala sounds the alarm, triggering adrenaline and cortisol: your heart pounds, your pupils dilate, blood goes to your big muscles (and away from the 'itty-bitty muscle that holds your bladder closed'). It also turns down the prefrontal cortex, which handles judgment, impulse control and executive function, so you don't do something rash like fight the bear. The response can be fight, flight or freeze. If it's stuck on, you can know exactly what to do, like finish the résumé, and still not be able to start. That's biology, not a lack of willpower.

• Buffering is what keeps stress from turning into lasting harm.
Buffering is anything that helps the stress response switch off: above all a safe, regulated caregiver, plus therapy and sometimes medication. Her example from raising four kids: when something scary happens, you pull the child in, stay calm and say, 'You're okay. That was scary, wasn't it?' You acknowledge the fear, signal safety, and maybe give a hug.

• Buffering effects can pass down generations, as the rat studies show.
Researchers stressed baby rats by handling them, then returned them to their mothers. Pups whose mothers did lots of licking and grooming grew up more stress-tolerant, more exploratory and better on cognitive tests, and their stress response shut off normally. They then groomed their own pups more. Pups with little buffering showed the opposite, and passed that on too.

• The 'I'm here' effect sums up all the science.
She sums up buffering, trauma-informed care and regulation as a regulated presence saying 'I'm here.' That can be adult you showing up for the child who didn't get it, and adult you showing up for yourself today. She says giving yourself what you needed then changes your biology now.

• Step one: seven evidence-based regulators.
From her Surgeon General's report: sleep, exercise, nutrition, mindfulness, mental health care, healthy relationships and time in nature. Start simple, for instance a 20-minute daily walk. Her own mornings include mindfulness, journaling, a walk or a workout.

• Step two: deliberately build safe, stable relationships, and add therapy if you need it.
For some people the daily practices are enough. Others need therapy as well. She has personally used EMDR (eye movement desensitization and reprocessing), in which a trained therapist guides you through a memory with bilateral stimulation (she uses a TheraTapper) and then a corrective experience: what should have happened.

• Healing shows up as being less reactive and more responsive.
Early signs include catching yourself ('I reacted a little heavy-handed there, that's not the mom I want to be') rather than not noticing at all. In her clinical practice, she says adding buffering to standard treatment, whether for ADHD or a child who isn't growing, improves outcomes.

EXAMPLES

• The 7-year-old who stopped growing
A school nurse referred a boy for behavior and focus problems. He was 7 but at the 50th percentile in height and weight for a 4-year-old. His behavior problems and his growth both stopped at 4, when, his mother revealed, he had experienced a serious trauma (a sexual assault). An endocrinologist confirmed that stress hormones could do this, and the treatment was talk therapy, not hormones. With developmentally appropriate therapy, his stress hormones normalized and he started growing again.

• Her EMDR corrective experience
Going back to a memory of herself as a terrified child, she pictured adult Nadine walking in, sitting on the bed and saying, 'I'm here.' That moment became her shorthand for the whole science.

• 'Is that why you drink a bottle of wine every night?'
People often say their ACEs didn't affect them because they have a great job, house and spouse. Mel jokes back about nightly wine. Burke Harris's point: acknowledging the impact honestly is part of saying 'I'm here' to yourself.

• Holding a scared child

In her own family, the first move after a scare is to pull the child close, stay regulated and name the fear. That's buffering in practice, and the same thing an adult can learn to do for themselves.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **The 3-word reset: 'I'm here'**
  When you notice yourself reacting, shutting down or dreading, say it to yourself and follow up with one regulating act: breathe, walk, go outside, call a safe friend.
- **Daily regulation checklist**
  Sleep, movement, nutrition, mindfulness, mental health support, connection and nature. Pick one to strengthen this week rather than all seven.
- **Helping someone you love**
  Be a regulated presence first. Then witness their experience ('I can see how that impacted you'), tell them you love them, and tell them healing is possible.
- **'Infrastructure is love in action'**
  Her parting advice: build supports such as a circle of safe friends before a crisis hits, 'not waiting for the wheels to fall off the cart.'

The Science of Achieving Goals: How to Change Your Life in 5 Simple Steps

Date: 2026-04-23 · Duration: 1:03:22
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MdwDd9NUITg

KEYPOINTS

- **Take back control by putting one meaningful thing into your week**
  In this solo episode Mel lays out five rules for setting and reaching a personal goal: lose weight, start meditating, sell your art, pay off debt, go back to school, write the book. The point isn't a huge overhaul. She wants you to pick something that matters to you and fit it into your life now, because each week you do that, life gets a little better. She calls the rules the skills nobody teaches but everybody needs.
- **Rule 1: Decide what you want and write it down**
  It sounds obvious, but Mel says almost everyone skips it because they manage goals in their heads, and 'you can't hit a target that you don't see.' She recalls Oprah being asked why so many people get stuck; Oprah's answer was that most people never take the time to get clear about what they want. Excuses like no time, exhaustion or the state of the world keep goals vague. Write the specific goal on paper, for example 'this week I'm adding meditation.'
- **Rule 2: Fire your family**
  Expecting your family to be your biggest cheering squad is, in Mel's words, the biggest mistake you can make. Your goals are for you, not them, and if they've never done what you're attempting they'll often ask 'What are you doing? Why?' Firing them means not needing their approval or support to keep going. It doesn't mean cutting them off.
- **You don't have to go it alone: build a team that shares the goal**
  After you're clear and doing it for yourself, ask 'If I did this with a team, what could that look like?' Mel spent two years getting clear before recording her first podcast episode: she wanted longer conversations with listeners and to learn from experts. Supportive peers, groups or collaborators can replace the cheerleading you wanted from family.
- **Rule 3: You need a will and a way**
  Mel bases this on the work of psychologist Dr. Elliot Berkman, co-director of the Center for Translational Neuroscience at the University of Oregon, who says any goal or change requires two things: the will and the way. Mel translates 'will' as your why. Without both, goals stall, which she says explains her own past struggles to stick with goals.
- **A personal why taps intrinsic motivation**
  When you know why something matters to you, it draws on intrinsic motivation, which she calls the purest form because it comes from inside you. Your why can be different from the obvious one: her husband's meditation circle wasn't really about meditating, it was about community. Your why is personal and can change over time.
- **The 'way' should be your way, broken into small bricks**
  There are many routes to the same goal. Mel's image is building a path one brick at a time: brainstorm small actions that fit your life and personality, then lay one at a time, day after day, week after week.
- **Rule 4: The 'Hot 15'**
  Spend 15 minutes on it, daily if you can, weekly if that's all you've got. The first bricks can be absurdly small, because you're building the routine of starting and the identity of being 'the kind of person who' does this. If you can find time to doomscroll, you can find 15 minutes: in a doctor's waiting room, on the subway, or first thing in the morning.
- **Rule 5: Don't quit; consistency beats intensity**
  There's no deadline and it isn't a race; the only way to lose is to stop coming back. Mel cites Angela Duckworth (University of Pennsylvania psychologist, author of Grit), who told her that grit 'doesn't look like intensity, it looks like consistency.' Consistency doesn't mean never missing a day. It means coming back after illness, injury, a breakup or a bad day, the way elite performers do.

EXAMPLES

- **Chris's Tuesday meditation circle**
  Mel's husband Chris realized his real problem was a lack of community. He decided to host a free one-hour meditation circle on Tuesdays at 5:30, posted it on a local Facebook group and found a venue. Mel notes libraries, community centers or a restaurant that's closed on Tuesdays might say yes. He has run it weekly for a year.
- **Sawyer's solo backpacking trip**
  Mel's daughter Sawyer dreamed of backpacking solo through Asia for about five months. Mel calls it her 'biggest nightmare' and admits she was the least supportive person in the family. Sawyer had 'fired' her long ago and went anyway, knowing it would haunt her if she didn't.
- **Chris's book, written without family input**
  Writing a book has been Chris's goal for about five years. He started not by writing a book but by getting clear he wanted to write more, which led him to an online writing group where people write together on Zoom, share work and do assignments. That eventually grew into a manuscript he's worked on for about two and a half years. Mel hasn't read a word or even learned the title, because he hasn't asked and isn't expecting family support.
- **How Mel writes her books with the Hot 15**
  Every morning she does 15 minutes. Some days she stares at the screen and writes nothing, and that still counts as a brick. On others she switches to handwriting: 'I don't know what to write. Why am I brain dead?' She says she has written every book this way.
- **Michael Phelps at 7 out of 10**
  Via Duckworth: Phelps, winner of 23 Olympic golds, didn't give 10 out of 10 effort at every practice, according to his coach. It was more like a 7 or 8, but he swam every day.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Tiny first bricks to copy**

Meditation: walk to your favorite chair with a cup of tea and sit; you don't even have to meditate. Walking: put on sneakers, walk to the end of the driveway, and come back, for the first 10 days. Money: 15 minutes reviewing your bank account for subscriptions draining money, or learning one thing about getting out of debt.

- **The five rules in one line each**

  1) Decide and write it down. 2) Fire your family. 3) Know your why (the will) and your way. 4) Hot 15. 5) Don't quit; there's no deadline.

- **When to do the Hot 15**

  Mel prefers first thing in the morning, but if you missed it, do it at night. Fifteen minutes a week still counts.

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.

Doctor Mike: The Health Lies That Are Keeping You Sick (and What to Do Instead)

Guest: Dr. Mike Varshavski
Date: 2026-04-16 · Duration: 1:24:06
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hNWa7zJIsko

KEYPOINTS

• The health system fails busy people the most.
Doctor Mike, a family physician who still sees patients at a community health center, says the people with jobs, several kids or aging parents to care for are the ones the system leaves behind. That includes passive patients without an advocate, and he notes minorities and people with less money face more barriers. He contrasts this with colleagues who move into concierge care once they're well known.

• Argue every medical bill.
'Argue everything. Argue every bill. You will get reductions.' Many patients assume a bill is final and pay it, sometimes heading toward bankruptcy, without knowing about underused financial aid programs. He hates adding 'fight the billing department' to strained patients' to-do lists, but says not doing it can be worse.

• A primary care doctor who knows you can catch what urgent care can't.
Relying on urgent care, ERs or minute clinics, or seeing a doctor 'once every 5 years' for a Z-Pak, means no one knows your history or notices when something is off. Mel points out we often blame doctors when we haven't given them a chance to know us.

• Distrust overconfidence. 'I don't know' from a doctor is often a good sign.
His main red flag is overconfidence. Good clinicians keep a 'differential,' a list of other conditions that could look the same, because people aren't identical, so they hedge. When a doctor says 'I don't know, we need to investigate further,' that's honesty and humility, and 'they're not interested in slimming your wallet.' Beware online claims like 'Headaches? You need pink Himalayan sea salt.'

• Fear sells, and chemophobia is a big part of it.
He criticizes videos where someone flips over a grocery product, reads the ingredients, then holds up something from a hardware store with a matching ingredient. 'This is basic chemistry.' Water and air are chemicals. He acknowledges real concerns like forever chemicals and corporate pollution, and says they deserve research funding, but warns against fearing every chemical. He calls fights over ingredients like titanium dioxide in Skittles 'PR wins,' not real health care progress.

• Longevity hype treats aging as a disease and sells preliminary science.
His two objections: aging isn't a pathology, and healthy aging is possible without that framing. And early research that should only offer 'hope on the horizon' ends up in headlines and online stores. He jokes that nearly every doctor is a longevity doctor, the one exception being palliative care.

• Good science tries to disprove its own theories.
He says misinformation sellers collect evidence to support their idea, while real science challenges a theory over and over. A theory that keeps surviving those challenges is a good one. In his practice, he sees parents refusing vaccines like hepatitis B despite strong population outcome data. Mel credits him for being clear that isolated risks exist without the benefit going away.

• To change a loved one's mind, lead with connection, and expect it to take time.
Don't 'put a stone' between you. Explain why the person matters to you and why you care. That's often more persuasive than the recommendation itself. Aim for 'truth-seeking together' and be open to learning something yourself. Beliefs tied to identity change in stages, like grief, not in one conversation.

• Nicotine hits the teenage brain harder.
Because the teen brain is still forming and pruning connections, he says nicotine affects attention, reaction time, decision-making and impulse control. Tolerance and dependence (withdrawal) develop faster than in adults. 'That is not to fear-monger. That is simply to tell the truth.' Doctors should ask teens specifically about vaping and nicotine pouches, not just smoking.

• Action comes before motivation, so pick the smallest one.
For anyone in grief: make the bed, take a shower, put on your shoes. He knows that when combing your hair is hard, even shoes aren't easy. He also notes that therapy and antidepressants aren't meant to stop you from feeling. They give you enough control to notice a rut and take steps out of it. 'Allow yourself to feel' bad when things are bad.

EXAMPLES

• The $100 heart attack bill
A healthy runner and teacher in Texas with good insurance had a heart attack and was taken to an out-of-network hospital. He was billed hundreds of thousands of dollars. After he took his story to the media, the bill dropped to about $100. Doctor Mike calls it proof of 'predatory' billing that you have to fight.

• Back pain that was really a heart problem
A patient came in for back pain and mentioned in passing an odd symptom from a few nights earlier. He dropped the back conversation and sent her to her cardiologist the next day. She'd had a heart attack, had severe blockages, and needed a stent. She now urges women to take chest pain seriously.

• The caregiver's pitcher of blue water
He poured 'effort' into cups for work, kids, aging parents, a spouse, hobbies, cooking, cleaning and laundry, leaving only a few drops for the caregiver's own sleep, joy and health. He added that in reality the cups are cracked and always need refilling, so if you don't refill your own, you can't keep helping anyone else.

• Putting on his shoes
After his mother died of CLL (a type of leukemia) during his first year of medical school, his small step was putting on his

shoes. That got him to the dog park, then a boxing class, and 10 years later to a professional fight on Showtime pay-per-view. His parents had immigrated in their 40s. His mother, who held a math PhD in Russia, walked 2 miles to work here to save bus fare.

- **'Surrounded' with 20 vaccine skeptics**
  On a Jubilee-style debate show, one participant said nothing could change her mind 'because I actually read and study.' He says that mindset makes you 'more immune to facts' than to disease.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Bill checklist**
  Don't pay on first sight. Call billing, dispute charges, ask about financial aid or assistance programs, and check network status.
- **Red-flag filter for health content**
  Be wary of certainty, one-cause-fits-all answers, fear about 'chemicals,' and a product link attached to preliminary research.
- **Refill your cup**
  Write down three good things at the end of each day, protect your sleep, and acknowledge that 'this situation does suck' rather than judging yourself harshly.
- **Ask teens the right question**
  Ask 'Do you vape or use nicotine pouches?', not just 'Do you smoke?' Then explain the brain effects calmly.

The Best Financial Advice You Will Ever Receive: 4 Money Rules That Will Change Your Life

Guest: Tiffany Aliche, Ramit Sethi, David Bach, Morgan Housel
Date: 2026-04-13 · Duration: 1:05:40
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pQjlJud3Tlw

KEYPOINTS

• This episode pulls together four money rules from four experts
Mel combines clips from past episodes into one plan. Rule 1, from Tiffany Aliche ('The Budgetnista'): know where your money goes. Rule 2, from Ramit Sethi: track four numbers. Rule 3, from David Bach: automate saving and investing. Rule 4, from Morgan Housel: define 'enough.' Mel's summary borrows Housel's line: spend less than you make, save the difference, be patient.

• A budget is a 'say yes' plan, not a punishment
Aliche says 'your budget is like your mom.' She's there to say 'yes, when, if, after,' so you can have what you want in a way you can sustain. Mel adds that most people have no idea what they spend each month on groceries, electricity, phone, streaming or subscriptions.

• First figure out whether you have an earning problem or a spending problem
Aliche says many people jump straight to trying to earn more, but you can't choose a fix until you diagnose the problem. Sort your expenses. If most of your money goes to bills you can't easily cut, you may not earn enough. If most goes to choices, you're spending too much, and that's where to cut.

• Her labels: B for bills, U for usage, C for choices
A 'B' is anything where someone comes knocking if you don't pay: rent, mortgage, car note, student loans, credit cards. Add a 'U' to bills that change with usage, like water, electricity and phone data. A rent payment doesn't get a U. Everything else is a 'C' for choices and cash expenses, like eating out, entertainment and grooming.

• Ramit Sethi: know four numbers instead of tracking everything
Fixed costs should be 50–60% of take-home pay. Savings, 5–10%: an emergency fund or money you'll need in one to five years, like a house down payment. Investments, 5–10% or more. Guilt-free spending, 20–35%, for desserts, a cashmere coat, roller skates or the gym. Some people won't hit these numbers yet, and that's okay. You now have the pieces on the table.

• Stop agonizing over $5 purchases
Sethi says 'so many of us shrink our lives' worrying about coffee, which is 'irrelevant.' With the big numbers set and saving automatic ('I don't try to brush my teeth, it just happens'), the guilt-free bucket lets you enjoy money without anxiety. He follows an 85% rule: get it 85% right and get on with your life.

• Small daily amounts compound into big sums
Bach says seven in 10 Americans live paycheck to paycheck. $10,000, the answer people most often give to 'what amount would change your life?', is just $27.40 a day. Invested for 40 years at 10%, which he says the stock market has averaged over 100 years, he claims it grows to about $4.42 million. Spending $5 a day is $150 a month and well over $1,000 a year. These are his illustrations, not guarantees.

• The 'automatic economy' either makes you rich or keeps you poor
Bach's warning: 'You either have a plan for your money or someone else has a plan for your money.' Your phone is a 'money magnet.' Companies want you on autopay for life (Netflix, the gym, vitamins, 'creams, lotions and potions'). He says the two 'escalators to wealth' are real estate and stocks, and that apps now let anyone invest a dollar at a time.

• Much of feeling behind comes from your expectations
Housel argues money is easy to measure (going from $20 to $25 an hour, a one-bedroom to a two-bedroom), so we chase it, while 'a good life' is harder to define. He's blunt about 'I'm bad with money': it's basic arithmetic, and saying you're bad at it is choosing not to get better. Mel's version of enough: a weekend trip with the kids, or buying something for herself, without guilt.

EXAMPLES

• The nurse called 'B'
Aliche once helped a nurse in a beautiful condo list her real spending. Both of them cried. Aliche kept tissues ready for this 'tears and tissue step.' The nurse said she hadn't realized how much she was overspending and had turned on the AC only because Aliche was coming. Aliche told her a fan was fine.

• Mel's debt years
Mel says she had only $20–50 a month left over, and every dollar felt like 'life or death,' so she said no to everything, even a latte with a friend or a day at the zoo in Boston with the kids. With the four buckets she'd have had a realistic payoff timeline and small amounts for enjoyment. Believing you don't deserve anything until you're at zero is 'the trap.'

• 'Start Late, Finish Rich'
At a Barnes & Noble signing, a woman in her 50s asked Bach for a book on starting late. He asked whether she and her husband could each save $20 a day more ('I would make him'). He said $40 a day invested for 15 years could grow to close to half a million dollars. His point: your 50s are 'a beautiful time to save and invest and catch up.'

• Bach's $10,000 brick
He brought $10,000 in cash to the studio to make the $27.40-a-day point concrete. Mel guessed it was 'a couple thousand dollars.'

• Mel's forgotten subscriptions
Right after Bach's interview, Mel called her husband Chris to say they had to get control of their money. When she checked, she found subscriptions she was still paying for but no longer used.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Aliche's money list**

  (1) Write down the words for everything you spend on, with no amounts yet. (2) Estimate each monthly amount using recent bank statements. (3) Total your monthly income from every source. (4) Mark each expense B, U or C. Doing it with a friend helps: 'get yourself a Linda.'

- **Find your four numbers in two short sessions**

  Sethi says the biggest obstacle is scattered logins, like an old 401(k) or a Fidelity account. Day one, gather everything, 'like cleaning the garage.' Day two, take 15 minutes to calculate. 'Do not overthink it.'

- **100-day savings challenge**

  For anyone without $1,000 saved, Bach suggests setting aside $10 a day (or even $1) for 100 days. A jar works well because you can watch it grow, like his grandmother's coffee can.

- **Audit autopay**

  Go through your credit card statements or use a tracker like Monarch or YNAB to see who you pay every month, then cancel what you don't use. To start investing small, Bach mentions round-up apps like Acorns and a broad index fund such as VTI.

#1 Neurologists: 5 Habits to Boost Brain Health & Prevent Alzheimer's

Guest: Dr. Ayesha Sherzai and Dr. Dean Sherzai
Date: 2026-04-09 · Duration: 1:22:27
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_BdY8JO6ups

KEYPOINTS

- **Dementia builds for 20+ years before the first symptom**
  Neurologists Dr. Ayesha and Dr. Dean Sherzai, authors of The Alzheimer's Solution, describe a preclinical stage with no memory problems while amyloid plaques, tau tangles, inflammation, vascular changes and atrophy may already be accumulating. Contributors they list include chronic stress, poor sleep, high cholesterol, loneliness, untreated sleep apnoea and unhealthy habits. Their message: the change is in your hands, whether you're 9 or 90.
- **Lifestyle can prevent or delay a large share of cases, with caveats**
  Dean says around 60% of people with pre-Alzheimer's or mild cognitive impairment (MCI) can be helped to prevent or significantly delay dementia, a figure he calls proven. He says higher figures like 90% are extrapolation and is careful to separate the two. Advanced dementia, he notes, is far harder to reverse, though it can still be slowed.
- **The NEURO plan has five pillars**
  N is nutrition, E exercise, U unwind (handle major stressors, mindfulness, deeper rest), R restorative sleep, and O optimise (challenge your brain, find purpose, stay social). Their claim is that the habits stack: in one study, doing one or two cut Alzheimer's risk by about 30%, and doing four cut it by about 60%.
- **Your brain is mostly connections, and you can keep building them**
  With string-and-knot props, they show that neurons can share tens of thousands of connections. Stress, poor sleep and inactivity cut those strings, which is what 'shrinking your brain' means, and once severed many never reconnect. Healthy habits let neurons sprout new connections, they say even at 80, 90 or 100.
- **Cognitive reserve is a buffer you deposit into over decades**
  In their marble-jar demo, each bad night or junk-food stretch pours marbles out. Someone who invested in brain health can lose some to a minor brain injury or years of caregiving and still have plenty left. Someone who didn't has little to spare.
- **Chronic stress literally shrinks the memory centre**
  Ayesha says bad stress releases hormones that block information from being stored, raises inflammation and oxidative damage, and keeps you in fight-or-flight even when you look calm. She cites studies showing smaller brains, especially a smaller hippocampus, under chronic stress. She distinguishes this from the good stress of learning new things.
- **Caregivers face their own elevated risk**
  Mel reads a passage from their book: partners of people who develop dementia had a 600% greater risk of developing it themselves than a matched population. The authors attribute this to shared lifestyle factors as well as the chronic stress of caregiving.
- **Head injuries count**
  A significant head trauma, or many smaller ones, raises later risk. The fluid around the brain doesn't cushion much, so the brain can bounce off the ridged inside of the skull. Their advice is to choose activities with that in mind.
- **Leg strength protects the brain at both ends of life**
  Older people most often land in the emergency room from falls; the Sherzais recently lost Ayesha's mother after a fall. They also call the legs a bigger pump of blood than the heart and say leg strength builds brain volume in younger people.
- **Creativity and 'idea density' are protective**
  Dean calls creativity the brain's ultimate purpose, and says people who keep pushing it into new things build their brains late in life. The famous Nun Study is their main evidence (see examples).

EXAMPLES

- **Normal forgetting versus a red flag**
  Walking into the kitchen and forgetting why is normal: with age, competing information means the memory never got properly filed. Forgetting close family members' names daily, or constant lapses, warrants a neurologist visit for imaging and blood tests that can catch quickly reversible causes like B12 deficiency or thyroid disorders.
- **The Nun Study**
  Several hundred nuns donated their brains and diaries to science. Some brains showed heavy shrinkage, amyloid and tau, yet the nuns had been cognitively normal; others had little damage but had Alzheimer's. The protected group's diaries showed complex language, larger vocabulary and high 'idea density'.
- **The leg-strength twin study**
  In people with MCI, one sibling did leg strengthening (leg press, lunges, squats) while the other stretched, for about 30–45 minutes, three or four times a week over six months. Dean cites a 47% lower rate of progressing to Alzheimer's; the figure was also described as 47% having normal memory tests afterwards.
- **Ayesha went to cooking school in scrubs**
  Realising advice had to work for someone standing at their fridge in South Central LA, she worked ICU mornings at Columbia Presbyterian, then ran to a New York cooking school at 7pm, earning the degree in two years, and now teaches patients to cook.
- **One handful of greens a day**
  They cite studies linking the MIND diet to 53% lower Alzheimer's risk, and one daily serving of leafy greens (raw, cooked or frozen spinach, kale or collards) with a brain about 11 years younger.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Brain-food list**

Mostly plants: leafy greens; broccoli, cabbage and cauliflower; walnuts and almonds; flax and chia; beans, lentils, tofu and tempeh; coffee and tea; spices. Any grocery store, nothing to buy from anyone.

• Brisk walk, 20–25 minutes, five days a week

Dean cites a Harvard study linking it to roughly 40% lower Alzheimer's risk and dismisses heart-rate 'zones' as program marketing. Doing it first thing in the morning also resets your circadian rhythm.

• Leg day in front of the TV

Stand in front of the couch and do 10 partial squats (about 60°, not 90°) during your favourite show, or mini squats for 60 seconds while the microwave runs.

• Fixed wake-up time

Wake at the same time every day; your body will gradually adjust when it needs sleep, so you don't have to force a bedtime.

• Optimise with real challenge

Learn something new, join a book club, or play games with children or grandchildren once or twice a week. 'A cathedral was built one brick at a time.'

The Secret to Building Wealth from Nothing (It's Not What You Think) | Barbara Corcoran

Guest: Barbara Corcoran
Date: 2026-04-06 · Duration: 1:06:13
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c62PQp9KukM

KEYPOINTS

• Real confidence comes from knowing you'll get back up, not from winning

Barbara Corcoran, an original Shark Tank investor who built The Corcoran Group in New York real estate, says success never built her confidence; most of her ideas flopped. What made it 'rock solid' was knowing she could outwork and out-try anyone and would always stand back up. You might fail again, but you trust that the next one will be a win.

• How fast you bounce back separates top performers from average ones

Her worst salespeople stayed home for about a week feeling sorry for themselves after losing a good customer. Her best lost customers constantly, dusted off and got back in the game. She says that habit alone divided people earning $3–4 million a year from the average salesperson earning about $60–62,000.

• Being underestimated can be an advantage

New York real estate was owned by well-connected men, and she hired 'everybody that nobody else wanted'. For about 10 years 'none of the big boys watched me', which left her free to try marketing ideas until she 'crept up on them'. She sees not being taken seriously as cover.

• She credits dyslexia with her success

A third-grade teacher told her she'd always be 'stupid' because she couldn't read, and it took her about 8 years to get past it. She was diagnosed late, as Mel was, when their sons were diagnosed. She says dyslexia gave her a different way of thinking: she daydreamed six hours a day in class and now 'can think of an idea a minute'. It also makes her over-prepare, about 7 hours for a 1-hour speech.

• Act like the person you want to be before you are her

At 23 she declared she'd be 'queen of New York real estate'. She then embodied it: she spent $330 of her first $340 commission on a Bloomingdale's coat to replace a ratty one and wore it for six years. 'You look and feel like a million bucks, you're going to act like a million bucks.'

• Your opportunity is in your own chest, not your boss's hands

Some people blame their 'cards' (bad leads, an unfair boss); others play bad hands fast to get a new one, or leave. She says employees are fooled into thinking the job defines their opportunity, when they could leave any day they chose.

• The one trait she fires for is complaining

She says she can fix ineptitude and even low effort by inspiring people, but not a complainer. She calls complaining 'a cancer' that is contagious and attacks positive people. Her company had about 1,000 staff, yet in an industry with roughly 60% annual turnover, she says no one left unless she fired them.

• It's never too late; count the years you have left

Corcoran plans to live to about 105 and counts forward, asking how many more lives she can pack in. She became a mother at 46 and had her biggest success in her 50s, 60s and 70s. She says hesitation comes from fear of failing in public, and the fix is to get moving on something, anything, and let the idea shape itself.

• Women undersell themselves and need to open their mouths

She says women do the climb, feed everyone and then credit the team, and rarely ask for help or money. 'Opening my mouth got me everything I got.' Mel adds a reframe: a friend asked why her goal was to be the number-one female podcaster rather than simply number one, and the show then hit number one for 81 days.

• Entrepreneurs need to enjoy risk and take a hit

If you're the type who says 'hit me again', you may be suited to running a business; if you hate risk and can't take hits, she says you're better off working for someone else, and she thinks the trait is hard to develop. On Shark Tank she mostly sizes up the founders, not the businesses.

EXAMPLES

• $1,000 and a breakup

A charming diner customer with jet-black hair and aviator shades became her boyfriend and lent her $1,000 to start a business together. He later left her for her secretary and said 'You'll never succeed without me.' Those words carried her through a stock-market crash, 9/11 and cash crunches. She sold the business for $66 million about 20 years later; he was out of business within three years. She left the cash in the bank untouched for three years.

• The $77,000 videotape flop that became an internet win

She spent her first $77,000 profit filming listings with salespeople in hair and makeup, but no one took the tapes. That weekend her husband mentioned the internet. On Monday she posted the videos online and registered her competitors' web addresses; they sold two apartments to London buyers in a week.

• Fired from Shark Tank before she started

After she signed, producers said they preferred another woman. Embarrassed, having bought outfits and luggage, she emailed the producer that her best luck always followed rejection and asked to compete for the seat. He invited both women, and she won the seat.

• Cousins Maine Lobster 'lied' and she loved it

The founders quoted monthly sales without saying they had been open about one weekend with one truck. But they had practised answers to three years' worth of Shark Tank questions, and she backed them for that preparation.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Her raise script**
  List what you were hired to do next to everything you now actually do (30 items if that's what it is). Bring both lists, say 'I'm doing these extra duties now, about 20% more', and name a specific amount. In roughly 1,000 staff, she says only two women ever asked her for a raise.
- **Don't accept 'it's not in the budget'**
  She says someone is always getting a raise. Make the appointment and make the case so it's you.
- **Business idea generator**
  In daily life, stop and ask 'Is there a better way to do this?', for example a slow checkout line. Then get moving with a prototype or drawing; she sees founders who start with that courage as likely to succeed.
- **Try on careers like coats**
  Expect to try many jobs to find what you're good at. She had 22 jobs before real estate.

#1 Celebrity Stylist: Do This Every Morning to Feel More Confident, Focused, & Put Together

Guest: Erin Walsh
Date: 2026-04-02 · Duration: 1:32:24
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CymU8nGrrjA

KEYPOINTS

• Before you open the closet, pause and ask: 'How do I want to feel today?'
Celebrity stylist Erin Walsh (Women's Wear Daily Stylist of the Year, author of The Art of Intentional Dressing, and Mel's Golden Globes stylist) builds her method on this one question. Mel admits she used to throw open the closet, think 'What am I going to wear?', paw through things that didn't fit, and end up discouraged. Just pausing to choose a feeling, before choosing clothes, changes what you reach for.

• Clothes are tools; style is the icing
Walsh calls herself something like a 'fashion therapist.' The clothes are the choices, and color, texture, silhouette, proportion and how each piece makes you feel tell the story. Trends and 'being a fashion person' aren't the point. The aim is to use what you wear to embody your best self, the 'supernova' version, the same way you'd use a morning routine or a mindset.

• Pick about three feeling words, and let them change with the day
Walsh finds three words useful. Her usual pattern is effortless, easy and elegant, but on some New York days she needs to feel like 'a boss' and reaches for bold energy. Bold doesn't have to mean bright color: it can be a strong silhouette, a big-shouldered jacket, suiting or structured pieces. Asking the question repeatedly reveals your own patterns.

• You likely already own the pieces; the question helps you see them
After learning the method, Mel saw clothes she never reached for that delivered exactly the feeling she wanted. No shopping required. Walsh's baseline exercise is to identify at least three pieces in your closet you feel great in. For her, one is an excellent pair of jeans.

• The method works on exhausted days too
Walsh stresses that she isn't 'fixed': she has three kids under 10, rarely gets a decent night's sleep and has a body that's 'not perfect.' On a 6:30 a.m. Tuesday with your energy on the floor, the question still works because it gives the day an intention.

• Start with the foundation: what goes on first
Mel, 57, confesses she has only worn matching bras and underwear for about a year, and asks why she clung to stained, stretched-out pairs instead of spending $10 on herself. Walsh says underwear is literally foundational, a small action that sets the baseline for everything else, at any age.

• Look better without losing weight: tailoring, proportion, structure
Asked how to look your best when you're not at your best, Walsh's first answer is tailoring, because most people wear clothes that don't fit their proportions. Even a bold-shoulder piece should honor the lines of your body. Structure means supporting your body's shape, not hiding cellulite, and you don't need a Hollywood tailor to do it.

• Stop hiding in clothes that don't fit, and let them go kindly
Mel had held on to a pair of pants for six years that her 'menopause body' no longer fit. Walsh's verdict: time to say goodbye, and that's exciting because you're becoming someone new. To ease the guilt about money spent, sell them, swap them at a closet party with friends, or donate them to a charity like Dress for Success.

• You need 'greatest hits', not a huge wardrobe
Look at the math of your week and month: how many work outfits do you actually need, and what's the story of your life right now? Build around the pieces you love most.

EXAMPLES

• Mel's Wonder Twins boots
During a production week of nine episodes in four days, while sick with a sinus bug and feeling 'ugly and puffy,' Mel skipped her uniform of the same black shirt and pants she'd worn for about 10 years. Instead she pulled on the knee-high boots from a Golden Globes event (worn often 'to get the price per wear down'). She felt 'invincible' and says that intentional choice carried her through the week.

• Leggings at the desk vs. pulling yourself together
Mel admits her exercise clothes are old and mismatched, and she'll sit at her desk in leggings all day, 'and then you wonder why you don't feel worthy.' On days she showers and pulls herself together, she feels different. The six-word question makes that effort feel like it matters.

• Jessie, nearly a year postpartum
A team member and new mom had been living in oversized, comfortable clothes that work for chasing a crawling baby, but she never felt she looked good, and she described the toll as unexpected. The weight 'isn't going to fall off tomorrow,' so she sees clothes and confidence as her starting point for the next year.

• The producer who 'dressed like an 11-year-old boy'
The episode's producer, empty-nester with 17 menopause pounds she isn't happy about, didn't want the assignment ('I'm not a clothes person') and owned 11-year-old underwear. She describes her old approach as a 'really low bar': whatever was clean. Trying the question changed how she got dressed.

• Cindy's pearls
Cindy, a grandmother, breast cancer survivor and recent knee-replacement patient who works flexibly on Mel's team, usually stays in pajamas until 9. After filming in her closet, she realized she reserved the pearls her kids gave her for her 65th birthday for nights out. She decided to wear them during the day: 'Why not?'

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Morning routine in three steps**
  Pause at the closet door. Ask 'How do I want to feel today?' and pick about three words. Then choose pieces, colors and silhouettes that deliver those feelings, starting from the underwear up.
- **Closet cleanout options**
  Try things on honestly. Sell, swap at a party with friends, or donate (e.g. Dress for Success) anything that doesn't fit your current body or life.
- **Quick fit fixes**
  Tailor key pieces to your proportions, choose structured garments that support your shape, and keep at least three 'feel great' items, such as excellent jeans, ready for low-energy days.

Reset Your Gut: A Harvard Doctor’s Step-by-Step Protocol to Transform Your Health

Guest: Dr. Trisha Pasricha
Date: 2026-03-30 · Duration: 1:32:01
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c2p6vKQWvFs

KEYPOINTS

• Gut problems are a hidden, widespread crisis
Dr. Trisha Pasricha, a Harvard gastroenterologist who directs the Institute for Gut-Brain Research at Beth Israel Deaconess, cites these figures: 40% of Americans say their bowels disrupt daily life, 15% have IBS, three in four can't poop in a public restroom, one in three struggle on vacation, and one in ten have unexplained pain every time they eat. In her lab, about a quarter of college students spent more than 10 minutes per attempt. Most of these people wouldn't call themselves sick.

• Your gut is also an immune organ and a 'brain'
Food usually leaves the stomach within about four hours (sometimes 30 minutes for soft foods like eggs), but the full trip can take days. About 70% of the immune system lives in the gut. Her field, neurogastroenterology, took shape in the 1980s–90s when researchers realized roughly 80% of vagus nerve signals travel from gut to brain, not the other way. That raised the question of whether gut dysfunction contributes to anxiety, depression and neurodegenerative disease.

• Daily isn't the standard; comfort and speed are
A Beth Israel study of Americans who considered their habits normal found anywhere from three times a day to once every three days is within the normal range. What matters is comfort: a bowel movement should take under five minutes, ideally under one, 'an in-and-out job.' Going daily but straining for 20–30 minutes isn't normal.

• Leave the phone outside the bathroom
In her study of people coming in for screening colonoscopies, those who took smartphones to the toilet were more than five times as likely to spend over 5 minutes there and had a 46% higher risk of hemorrhoids, which the doctors could see directly. Her rule: if nothing is happening, pull up your pants and come back later.

• Holding it in makes the next one harder
While stool waits in the colon, more water gets absorbed, so tomorrow's will be harder than today's would have been. She points this at people who clench all day at work because they won't go outside their own bathroom.

• Four symptoms of colorectal cancer to take seriously at any age
Abdominal pain, rectal bleeding, iron-deficiency anemia, and a lasting change in your bowel pattern (for example, new diarrhea or very thin stools). She cites a study finding that people with three or four of these had a sixfold higher likelihood of colorectal cancer. Anemia-driven fatigue in women is often blamed on periods, so push for an answer. If something new sticks around for about a week, see a doctor.

• Early-onset colorectal cancer is rising, and diet may be part of why
She calls the rise in cancer before age 50 one of today's most important scientific problems. Possible contributors she discusses include the spread of ultra-processed foods worldwide and Nurses' Health Study findings that people who drank more sugar-sweetened beverages as children and teens were more likely to develop early-onset colorectal cancer. She frames it as probably a combination of factors.

• Blood in stool is never something to ignore
Blood can look bright red (usually lower down), maroon (higher in the colon) or black. Unless you and your doctor have already identified a known cause like hemorrhoids, she treats any blood as urgent. Everyone gets an oddly colored stool now and then; a caramel-brown is the ideal.

• Two social-media gut myths: 'leaky gut' and universal probiotics
Increased intestinal permeability is real science, but she sees patients who self-treated 'leaky gut' with supplement regimens for a year while missing the real problem. Ask instead what in your lifestyle might be increasing permeability. On probiotics, she notes the American Gastroenterological Association does not recommend them for most medical conditions, despite marketing that implies every gastroenterologist does.

• Fiber targets, and her own shortcut
Women over 50 need about 21 g a day and under 50 about 25 g. Meeting them helps keep you in the comfortable range. The one thing she stopped doing was 'pretending' she'd reach that through food alone: with two kids and three jobs, the colorful lunches didn't happen every day, so she uses a fiber supplement.

EXAMPLES

• The knees-above-waist fix
For pelvic floor dysfunction, biofeedback physical therapy over 8–12 weeks helps 80–90% of people in studies. Quick fix: one study found that for about one in six people with apparent pelvic floor dysfunction, raising their knees above the waist with a stool, a stack of books or 'a pair of nice stilettos' solved the whole problem.

• Play-Doh poop and Pantone color cards
Mel's team built Play-Doh models of stool shapes. The smooth sausage is sometimes called the 'wipeless wonder,' though she says a fluffier stool from more fiber is fine too. Mel flashed Pantone cards of colors patients have reported; apple green looked like a breastfed baby's stool, and caramel was 'a thing of beauty.'

• Colleagues who never go at work
Mel mentions two colleagues who admitted they never have a bowel movement at work, despite 8–12-hour days, and friends who go seven days without one while traveling.

• Skip the expensive stool tests
Rather than buying third-party microbiome tests, she says your own observations are valuable data: shape and consistency

(how fast stool moved through), color, and how you felt before, during and after.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Bathroom rules**
  No phone; aim for under five minutes; don't strain; if nothing happens, leave and return later; raise your knees with a footstool; go when you feel the urge instead of holding it.
- **When to see a doctor**
  Any blood, or a cluster of abdominal pain, anemia and a changed bowel pattern lasting about a week or more, at any age.
- **Fiber plan**
  21–25 g a day by age; combine food with a fiber supplement if diet alone falls short. She also suggests pairing a supplement with other constipation measures.
- **Book**
  You've Been Pooping All Wrong by Dr. Trisha Pasricha.

This Simple Mindset Shift Will Change the Way You See Your Life

Guest: Dr. Maya Shankar
Date: 2026-03-26 · Duration: 0:52:35
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q6POJ8FWyNw

KEYPOINTS

• Ask how the future version of you will handle a change

Dr. Maya Shankar is a cognitive scientist with an Oxford PhD, a former senior adviser in the Obama White House, and author of The Other Side of Change. Her core reframe: when you dread a change, don't ask 'How am I going to get through this?' Ask 'How will the new version of me navigate this?' The person you are now won't be the one facing that future moment.

• Change is scary partly because of the 'illusion of control'

Our brains dislike uncertainty, and most people 'wildly overestimate' how much they control how life turns out. When a divorce, a diagnosis, a layoff or a death proves otherwise, it can make us question who we are. Shankar says the pain is real and there are no instant fixes. Small shifts in perspective still help.

• We're bad at predicting how change will affect us

We treat who we are today as the 'final, fully enlightened version' of ourselves. But as change happens to us, it also creates lasting change within us. So our forecasts about how unbearable something will be leave out the growth the change itself produces.

• Big changes slam doors on our 'possible selves' and open ones we fear

Psychologists describe three kinds of possible self: hoped-for (dreams), feared (anxieties) and expected (what's most likely). Shankar's example: she'd love to be the next Taylor Swift, but in five years she's likely still a cognitive scientist. When change hits, hoped-for and expected doors close and feared ones open. She argues our imagination for new possibilities is often too narrow, shaped by stereotypes and social norms.

• Identity foreclosure: locking in an identity too early

This means anchoring your identity to one thing before exploring other options. For her it was 'I'm going to be a concert violinist.' It's why losing a role, like star athlete, top student or a job title, can feel like losing everything. 'We don't know how much something has come to define who we are until we lose it.'

• Look for the essence underneath what you lost

Asking what drew her to the violin, Shankar realized it was a love of human connection, which she could express in other ways, including through conversations like this one. The grit, fearlessness, skills and knowledge from a lost pursuit carry over to what comes next.

• Cognitive reappraisal: change the story, change the feeling

Reframing a situation changes how you feel without denying the facts or the unfairness. Mel's example is grief expert David Kessler's swap from 'what if' to 'even if.' She used it that morning with her mom after a friend died suddenly, and notes it works for breakups too.

• Distraction isn't always avoidance

Shankar pushes back on the idea that distraction makes buried feelings come back worse. Research is more complex. If Netflix, a friend or a run brings you joy and you're not actively suppressing anything, it's likely a healthy tool. Reading also lets us try on other identities through characters.

• Discomfort is how the brain stays sharp

Every time you put yourself in an uncomfortable learning situation, she says, you're using neuroplasticity, the brain's ability to rewire itself. That's a reason to choose some changes even when they feel uncertain.

• Motivation dips in the middle of a goal

We get a burst at the start (New Year's Day, hunting for gym shoes) and another near the finish, like the final stretch of a marathon, with a lull in between. A year-long goal has a roughly three-month slump. Break it into week-long goals and the middle shrinks to a couple of days.

EXAMPLES

• Walking into Juilliard at nine

Shankar started violin at six on her grandmother's dusty instrument from India. At nine, her mother marched her into Juilliard uninvited ('what's the worst that could happen?'). Thirty minutes later she was auditioning for a teacher, who offered a summer boot camp. She got in that fall and later studied with Itzhak Perlman.

• One note at 15

Playing a hard technical piece at Perlman's summer program, she overstretched her pinky, heard a pop and damaged tendons. Doctors called it career-ending. In denial, she kept practicing through pain on heavy anti-inflammatories before accepting it.

• The gratitude list she didn't want to make

After six or seven years of trying to start a family, she and her husband Jimmy lost identical twin girls carried by their surrogate. Jimmy suggested a gratitude exercise and she told him to take his 'Instagram BS' and toxic positivity to the corner. When she finally did it, she realized tunnel vision had made her forget how rich her life was. Psychologists call this a self-affirmation exercise: write down every meaningful identity that the change hasn't threatened.

• Her dad's summer assignment

Facing college with no music major, her dad said she'd been 'wearing blinders for 10 years' and told her to spend the summer on documentaries, books, TV and other people's stories, with no end goal, so she wouldn't close doors early.

• Taylor Swift only at the gym

Her favorite tool is 'temptation bundling,' developed by her friend Katie Milkman. Pair a hard task with an immediate treat and allow the treat only then. She saves Taylor Swift's new albums for workouts.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **5 hours, 5 days, 5 years**
  Mental time travel: when something upsets you, ask how you'll feel about it 5 hours, 5 days and 5 years from now. If it still feels big, recall past moments when you were just as sure you'd never get over something.
- **Visual self-distancing**
  Take a bird's-eye view and coach yourself like a friend instead of narrating 'I'm a loser, I'm too old.' Shankar says she saves 'roughly 2%' of her compassion for herself, so this tool matters to her.
- **One minute a day**
  Want to write a Substack? Write for one minute a day. The gap between zero and one minute is 'seismic' because it makes you a writer, and the identity becomes self-reinforcing.
- **Hack the peak-end rule**
  We remember experiences by their most intense moment and their ending, and only the ending is in our control. So end on something pleasant. She eats a coffee chew after each 30-minute writing session. You could end a workout with a relaxing stretch.

The Most Important Conversation You'll Ever Hear About Women's Health | Dr. Rachel Rubin

Guest: Dr. Rachel Rubin
Date: 2026-03-23 · Duration: 2:08:43
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dB-4XuJxOzM

KEYPOINTS

• Most 'down there' problems trace back to changing hormones
Dr. Rachel Rubin, a urologist and sexual medicine specialist in Washington, DC, says recurrent UTIs, urgency, leaking, waking up at night to pee, dryness, burning, painful sex and low libido are mostly driven by hormonal shifts that change the tissue and the microbiome of the vagina and bladder. Women are routinely told it's aging, stress or 'all in your head.' She says that whenever you catch yourself thinking 'this is just how it is,' it's worth asking a clinician.

• Hormones shift throughout a woman's life, not just at menopause
The ovaries make estrogen, progesterone and testosterone. In a typical cycle, estrogen sits around 50 during your period and peaks at ovulation (150–300). Progesterone rises in the second half, and its drop triggers your period. Testosterone likely peaks at ovulation, driving libido. In perimenopause, the cycle swings like puberty in reverse, with cycles going from 28 days to 35 to 18.

• Many common medications and life stages lower these hormones
Birth control pills, spironolactone for acne, breastfeeding, breast-cancer hormone therapy, perimenopause and menopause can all raise the risk of UTIs and pain with sex, she says. One patient that week had urinary pain from birth control pills plus spironolactone. While breastfeeding, she says, 'you're in menopause' hormonally, a condition she calls genitourinary syndrome of lactation.

• Vaginal hormones cut UTIs by more than half, and she says we've known for decades
Rubin says vaginal estrogen or vaginal DHEA prevents urinary tract infections by more than half. The evidence dates to the 1990s and the products to the 1970s, yet few women hear about it. Her explanation: 'the two dirtiest words in the English language are vagina and estrogen,' and other specialties leave women's health to busy gynecologists.

• Vaginal hormones are a different category from whole-body HRT
They're micro-dosed and stay local. In a 70-year-old woman with essentially zero estrogen, she says, levels may blip to about 20 for a couple of hours and then return to zero. A typical man's estrogen is about 25. That's why she calls them safe even for people who fear systemic hormones, and suitable for life, 'for your great-grandmother in the nursing home.'

• Being on HRT doesn't mean your vaginal tissue is covered
Her favorite statement in the 2025 genitourinary syndrome of menopause guidelines (from the American Urological Association, which she spent about seven years advocating for) is number 11: people on systemic hormone therapy should still be screened for these symptoms and offered vaginal hormones.

• Four buckets of hormone care
Whole-body estrogen (patch, pill, gel or pellet) treats hot flashes and night sweats and protects bones. Whole-body progesterone protects the uterine lining if you have a uterus and may help sleep and mood. Whole-body testosterone mostly has data for libido. Vaginal hormones are separate from the other three. You don't need every bucket.

• Women have no FDA-approved testosterone
Men have about 27 options. Rubin says a roughly billion-dollar study showed five years of efficacy and safety for women's libido. Around the time of the 2002 Women's Health Initiative scare, the FDA asked for five more years and another study, and the product died. It's approved in Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and England.

• The two biggest causes of painful sex are hormones and tight pelvic-floor muscles
Hormonal changes cause a 'sunburn-like' pain, and the body guards against it by tightening. Fix the hormones and the muscles may still be clenched, so both often need treatment. She insists sex shouldn't hurt, and that advice like 'have a glass of wine' or 'just have more of it' is dismissive.

• The system, not just your doctor, is the problem
Appointments last about 10 minutes, and vaginal irritation won't make a doctor's top 27 topics. Women were understudied for decades, so research is about 30 years behind. Her advice is to be the CEO of your own care team, come prepared, and be kind to clinicians, who also want more time.

EXAMPLES

• Her mother's ICU fight
Her mother, a nurse, had a lung transplant after developing pulmonary fibrosis following COVID and spent about six months hospitalized with a catheter. Rubin asked to restart her home vaginal estrogen to prevent urosepsis. Staff responded, 'Little girl, don't you know it causes blood clots?' She brought data and convinced the team, then later had to make the case all over again. Her dad and brother then checked twice a week that the medication was given.

• A label removed on her mom's birthday
Her mother died in November. Rubin had told the story publicly in July 2025 and later stood on stage at Health and Human Services for the announcement. On February 12, 2026, her mom's birthday, the FDA removed the boxed warning on these products ('causes stroke, blood clots, heart attacks, probable dementia'), which she says never should have existed.

• Mel's UTIs and bladder surgery
Starting in her mid-20s, Mel had chronic UTIs. She blamed sex with her boyfriend, though Rubin suspects her birth control played a role. Two infections spread to her kidneys and put her in the hospital, and she eventually needed bladder surgery for leaking.

• The $13 tube
Rubin held up estradiol cream with a $13 cash price that lasts about two and a half months, roughly $7 a month for what she

says can halve UTI risk.

- **Clitoral adhesions in 23% of women**

  In 2017 her team reviewed thousands of clinic photos and found 23% of women had the clitoral hood stuck to the clitoris, which can cause irritation and reduce arousal and orgasm. In a 41-patient study of a simple office procedure, sexual arousal improved by 76%. She credits Rachel Gross (Vagina Obscura) with a viral 2022 article on it.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Symptoms worth raising**

  Urinary frequency, urgency, leaking, repeat UTIs, waking at night to pee, dryness, burning, pain with sex, low libido, and mood or anxiety that's worse than before.

- **Who might ask about vaginal estrogen or DHEA**

  Rubin suggests anyone on birth control or spironolactone, breastfeeding, on breast-cancer endocrine therapy, perimenopausal or postmenopausal, or already on systemic HRT. Discuss it with your own clinician.

- **Where to find informed clinicians**

  ISSWSH (the International Society for the Study of Women's Sexual Health) has a find-a-provider tool, and the Menopause Society has good content. She also recommends Dr. Heather Hirsch, Dr. Kelly Casperson's podcast and her own online course.

What Really Matters in Life? A Cancer Surgeon's Warning After 15,000 Patients

Guest: Dr. Rahul Jandial
Date: 2026-03-19 · Duration: 1:15:53
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B4CewOV9u7Q

KEYPOINTS

• The dying tend to split into two stories: 'I wish I had' and 'I'm glad I did.'
Dr. Rahul Jandial, a neurosurgeon and neuroscientist at City of Hope who says he has treated more than 15,000 stage 4 cancer patients, noticed a pattern. Patients stuck on 'I wish I had' ('…gotten screened earlier,' '…not smoked') cope poorly, even when they're medically doing well. Those who say 'I'm glad I did' cope well, even when they're doing worse. How you tell the story mattered more than the outcome.

• The most common regret is not being bold enough at life's turning points.
Patients whose kids have grown up tell him they wish they'd been bolder at life's pivots and trusted their hunches about changing direction. 'They never say, I'm glad I was practical and conservative.' They look back and say 'it's a short run, I should have taken a few more chances,' as long as it didn't mean hurting people or 'gambling it all away.'

• Younger parents with cancer pray for a finish line, not a cure.
Patients in their 40s and 50s with children often aren't focused on a cure. Their prayer is to live until the kids finish high school and leave home, so the kids don't watch their mother or father die while they're teenagers. Clarity about what matters arrives fast when time is short.

• Tie your self-worth to opportunities, not outcomes.
At 53, Jandial says he has felt lost whenever he chased an outcome instead of an opportunity. If you 'hitch your mental health or self-worth' to results, you'll either aim too low or keep judging yourself wrongly. 'There is no moment of arrival,' only preparation, strategies and coping skills.

• Sometimes you have to 'amputate' something, even when it looks bad from the outside.
Choices in the outside world and in your own mind can each be constructive or destructive. At 19, partying too much and facing other crises as his mother was diagnosed with breast cancer, he cut out school, leaving Berkeley to go home. He says amputations like that can permanently change relationships or careers, but it was the first time he felt he was 'driving my life.'

• Mentorship rarely just lands on you. You have to put yourself where it can happen.
While working as a security guard, he enrolled at Compton Community College, where an English professor became his mentor. That only happened because he showed up and signed up. 'You can't just wait for inspiration and mentorship to land on you.'

• In a crisis, pace your breathing so you don't panic.
He uses this in surgery and says Navy SEALs and deep divers do too. Directing attention to your breathing trains focus, which he calls 'attentional power.' Slow, deep breaths prevent hyperventilation: 'When you blow off the carbon dioxide, you will panic,' and then you can't do what you need to. He links it to calming an over-excited limbic system.

• The brain changes by repurposing what's left, which suggests a healthy brain can change too.
He's skeptical of loose 'rewiring' talk. After a hemispherectomy, removing nearly half the brain for uncontrollable seizures in children, the space stays hollow and fills with fluid. Nothing regrows. Yet a few years later many of those kids are walking, because the remaining neurons take on new jobs ('the dancer became the soldier'). If an injured brain can recover like that, he asks, what about a healthy one?

• Repetition literally builds the groove.
His image: neurons are 'microscopic jellyfish' spraying electricity at each other. When you keep thinking or acting the same way, the brain saves energy by wrapping those connections in fatty insulation (myelin). Like a groove down a mountain, the path gets easier with each pass, so the first efforts take the most energy.

• Caregivers aren't alone, but they need their private moments.
His message to family caregivers: the person next to you may not have been there yet but will be, or may already have survived it. Our struggles look similar at the brain level. Use the support available, and protect 'those private moments that you only share with yourself.'

EXAMPLES

• 'My life started at LAX'
He barely remembers his first eight years. One day he was in the foothills of the Himalayas in Kashmir, 'beautiful' and 'violent.' Twenty-four hours and a Pan Am flight later he landed at LAX with his parents and brother. His message to his 9-year-old self: you'll be underestimated and there will be pain.

• 'I know you'll do well, but I hope you do good'
His Compton Community College English professor wrote this on his work. He still has it. 'I caught fire.' He had once gotten by on CliffsNotes.

• The mother in Managua
On a surgical trip to Nicaragua with a friend who heads children's brain surgery in San Diego, he met a mother who had traveled a long way by bus with her shoeless child. She later told a nurse she had 'done it': she'd gotten her son to American brain surgeons. Her success was seizing the opportunity, not guaranteeing the outcome. The boy did well, though many children with cancer don't.

• Security guard years
After leaving Berkeley, he spent two years as a security guard in a cafeteria. His mother recovered from breast cancer and his family stabilized, the two priorities he had chosen. He says he felt proud of a bold step 'when the optics weren't' good.

• Patients who hide their cancer
Many patients in their 40s and 50s hate being asked 'How are you doing?' and wear wigs to hide treatment. He watches them

'write their own story in their own mind' instead of letting others define it.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **The 'glad I did' audit**
  List the moments you're glad you acted on. Then name one current hunch about changing direction that wouldn't hurt anyone, and take one step on it.
- **Paced breathing before high-stakes moments**
  Slow, deep, unhurried breaths before surgery, a hard conversation or a presentation. The goal is simply to avoid breathing too fast.
- **Opportunity framing**
  Define success as showing up for the opportunity (applying, signing up, getting to the right room) rather than controlling the result.

You're Not Lazy – You Just Need a Life Admin Day (Here's How)

Date: 2026-03-16 · Duration: 0:56:52
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yFEqqZXzkHU

KEYPOINTS

• You're not lazy; you're buried in 'life admin' without a system

In this solo episode, Mel defines life admin as the overdue appointments, DMV visits, two-hour hold times, bills, returns, receipts and battery boxes that quietly drain energy and make you feel behind. Her fix is one intentional day running the same five time blocks in the same order every time. She promises the payoff: 6–12 overdue appointments scheduled, 10–20 open items checked off, and your future weekends and evenings back.

• Step one: put a Life Admin Day on the calendar on purpose

Open your calendar, look at the next couple of weeks and designate a day. Valentine's, St. Patrick's and Groundhog all have a day; you get one too. Mel recommends a Monday if you can manage it. She addresses 'I don't have time,' whether you're juggling jobs, caregiving, grieving or facing a diagnosis: when you're already stretched, this backlog is exactly what's weighing on you.

• Four ground rules protect the day

1) No decluttering: it eats the energy you need for admin. 2) Make your space as quiet and empty as possible; if you can be alone, with no people or pets needing you, do it. 3) The day is about you first: handle your own admin before everyone else's, because doing others' first is why you run out of energy. 4) No shame and no moral judgment about how far behind you are or what you find.

• Do a brain dump the night before

Write down everything unfinished or bothering you: every errand, return and pile in the house. Mel's example: walking past the bag of summer clothes to donate three times a day and having it pop back into her head every time. 'If it lives in the paper, it can die in your head.' The dump becomes the day's raw list.

• Block 1 (9–11 a.m.): the call block

Two hours of phone calls and bookings that set future-you up. Bulk-book the year: hair, nails, dentist (this year and next), doctor, vet and dog grooming, and kids' physicals well before sports season. Sit wherever you're least distracted; for Mel that's the kitchen table, away from her computer.

• Why calls come first

Mel says decision fatigue is lowest in the morning, and calls give the biggest mental relief per minute. Many offices close at lunch and hold times grow later in the day. Knocking out calls you've avoided for six months builds momentum early.

• Block 2 (11 a.m.–1 p.m.): the errand block

Two focused hours on the out-of-the-house tasks that never fit into your week: drop off the donations that have been in your car for five months, get the oil change that's six months overdue, renew your license or registration, and complete appointments like TSA PreCheck or a Real ID. By lunch, three to five things that have haunted you are done; Mel says the day is worth it even if you stop there.

• Block 3 (about 1–3 p.m.): the money block

Mel remembers how much she and her husband avoided money during their struggles, so this block carries no judgment. Drawing on past guests David Bach, Morgan Housel and Tiffany Aliche, she boils it down to their shared rule: you can't control your money until you know where it's going. Find where it's going, then cut off people and companies drawing money they shouldn't have access to.

• Block 4 (about 3–4 p.m.): the email block

It comes late because it requires little emotion, and getting on screens earlier invites distraction. This isn't for replying to texts or emails. Clean the inbox: unsubscribe from the lists you landed on from old purchases or gifts (her example: snowboarding updates when you don't snowboard).

• Block 5 (4 p.m., five minutes): schedule the next one

Having seen the order (calls, errands, money, email, schedule) and how much gets done, you can book your next Life Admin Day for whenever suits you. Making it recurring is what keeps you from falling behind again.

EXAMPLES

• Baylor's to-do list sleep study

Mel cites research from Baylor University's sleep and cognitive neuroscience lab, directed by Michael K. Scullin. People who wrote down their unfinished to-dos before bed fell asleep faster than a control group who wrote down tasks they'd already completed. Writing it down offloads worry, which is why she has you do the brain dump the night before.

• Charlotte rescheduled TSA PreCheck eight times

A member of Mel's team kept rescheduling the appointment because she 'didn't have time.' When she finally went, it took about five minutes, and she was euphoric and asked why she'd spent so much time thinking about it and rescheduling it.

• The Real ID nobody understands

Mel says about 90% of her company either didn't know what a Real ID was or didn't have one and were still traveling with passports. She uses it as a classic friction item that costs time and money when ignored.

• Tie yourself to the chair

Because the call block is boring and you'll keep wanting to get up, Mel jokingly passes on an Instagram tip: loosely tie yourself to the chair with a leash, rope or belt so you notice every time you try to wander off.

• Stretched-out underwear as life admin

Mel includes replacing worn-out basics on the list, along with car service and the broken door knob, as small daily frictions that are easy to postpone forever.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **The day at a glance**
  Night before: brain dump. 9–11 calls; 11–1 errands; lunch; about 1–3 money; about 3–4 email cleanup; 4:00 book the next Life Admin Day.
- **Bulk-booking checklist**
  Hair, nails, dentist, doctor/well visits, kids' sports physicals, vet, grooming, car service, booked for the whole year in one sitting.
- **Hand it back to the adults in your life**
  Mel suggests sharing the framework with the grown kids and family whose admin you've been doing, so they learn to handle their own and you can focus on yours.

How to Build a Life That Matters & Get What You Want Starting Today

Guest: Seth Godin
Date: 2026-03-12 · Duration: 1:06:21
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cWZI2RyI9wM

KEYPOINTS

• Start where you are; resistance is a sign the work matters

Seth Godin, author of 20+ bestsellers and one of Mel's longtime mentors, says the only place to begin is where you are. If you wait to get somewhere else first, you never get there. Anything important brings resistance, and 'if you don't feel resistance, it might not be important enough.' This episode isn't about marketing; it's about why people keep postponing the life they want.

• Pick yourself instead of waiting to be chosen

His two words. The 'dominant system' trains you to wait for an invitation: to apply, to be cast, for the company to come to the placement office, for a publisher to call and ask for your novel. It feels awkward to say 'I picked myself. I made this.' But no one is forcing you to wait; you're choosing it, and waiting is 'a safe, lovely place to hang out.'

• Swap 'but' for 'and'

'I'm on vacation but it's raining' means the vacation is ruined. 'I'm on vacation and it's raining' opens the question of what to do now. Godin is careful to say bad things do happen to people who don't deserve them; the question is how you process them. 'But' does heavy lifting in the stories we tell ourselves, as in wanting someone to have the wedding they want but also wanting it to fit your budget and taste.

• Problems have solutions; situations don't

A situation, like the weather or a loss, has to be accepted and worked around. Most of what we call stuck, though, is a problem with a known solution we don't want to do: a breakup, caring for yourself, sticking to a budget, risking others' judgment. Name which one you're facing.

• You become who you hang out with, so build your own scene

Whether it was Chicago jazz musicians in 1964 or Silicon Valley founders a decade ago, people conform to their scene. If yours isn't taking you where you want to go, build a different circle, one that asks each other hard questions about relationships, books and the things you're making.

• We are experts at finding safe places to hide

Hiding is fine if it's working. If it isn't, stop. One modern hiding place is playing influencer: buying the hat and the lighting, waiting for 300,000 followers, posting free content that does the platform's work, and burning relationships by asking friends to boost you, while pandering to a crowd you don't know.

• Find the smallest viable unit of your art

Ask what small shift would be worth making. If you've been paralyzed for 20 years about going back to nursing school, volunteer at a senior home or hospital one afternoon a week; they won't turn you away. Two hours a week changing someone's life beats sitting at home wishing, and it tells you whether you want more.

• Comparison is a ratchet; ask who you seek to become

Wanting more than the neighbors, or the nicer Paris vacation, only exists because the bar keeps rising: 'No one went on vacation to Paris 300 years ago.' It's a carrot tied to a stick. To break it, name the motive out loud ('I'm paying $400 for sneakers I could buy for $50 because I felt left out in high school'), then choose what you 'rest your eyes on': what you celebrate and complain about at the dinner table.

• 'Merely ship it,' not 'just ship it'

Quality means three things: meeting spec (a 1984 Camry where every part fits), luxury (a Rolls-Royce isn't higher quality, just more luxurious), and the zero-defect perfectionism we use as an excuse. 'The point of perfectionism is not to make it better. It's to keep you from shipping it.' 'Just ship it' implies junk. 'Merely ship it' means it meets spec, so you put it out without attachment or argument.

• Authenticity is overrated; play a role consistently

Walking his dog he's 'small-s, small-g' Seth. At work he plays the role of the person who wrote 10,000 blog posts and 20 books, and his job is to play it consistently. Don't adopt a role that's opposite to who you want to be, which will burn you out, and don't use 'I was just being authentic' as a get-out-of-jail-free card.

EXAMPLES

• His mother's Sotheby's appraisal day

Godin's mother took over a Buffalo museum's tiny shop and, with her partner, grew it to 10 times the size; she also co-founded the Museum Store Association. Around 1973, before Antiques Roadshow existed, she brought in two Sotheby's appraisers to draw people who felt museums weren't for them. The night before, she worried no one would come, then said: 'If no one comes, no one will know that no one came.' About 5,000 people lined up. His lesson: if she'd done only what was in her job description, it would still be a phone booth selling postcards.

• The 15-minute raise conversation

His example of a problem with a solution: if you're willing to have an uncomfortable 15-minute conversation with your boss once a year about where you are and where you want to go, you'll make more money. If that's too scary, accept what you have.

• A blog under a fake name

For years he has suggested starting a blog, under an assumed name if you like. After 100 days you'll be proud enough to put your name on it. Sharing ideas costs nothing and gives you leverage.

• About 117 typos in The Let Them Theory

Mel says readers found about 117 errors in her bestseller after it went to print, and she's proud she shipped anyway. Godin's response: typos are a spec issue (New York publishing's standard is 'no obvious typos'), and the book's concept isn't an error.

• The six-year-old's C

A child brings home A, A, C, and parents fixate on the C because in 11 years they imagine 'famous' (not 'good') colleges. That shows what a household is keeping score of.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Two questions for any project**
  'Who's it for? What's it for?' Use them to cut through perfectionism and comparison.
- **Name the fear behind a purchase or a stall**
  Say it aloud: 'I'm doing this because I'm afraid.' Hearing yourself can show how little sense it makes.
- **His closing charge**
  Do work that matters for people who care. It can be a little work for one person; that's enough. Then do it again. Make a ruckus.

NYU Psychologist: The Truth About Why You Can't Stop Eating (and What Actually Works)

Guest: Dr. Rachel Goldman
Date: 2026-03-09 · Duration: 1:17:36
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pHxhceutGZg

KEYPOINTS

• Emotional eating is about the pause, not willpower
Dr. Rachel Goldman, a clinical psychologist, NYU professor and eating-behaviour specialist, defines emotional eating as turning to food to soothe any emotion: boredom, stress, sadness, anger, even happiness. It is impulsive and reactive. She compares it to a child's tantrum, where a timeout simply creates a pause; adults need an 'adult timeout' to tune inward before acting.

• Physical hunger and emotional hunger behave differently
Physiological hunger means your body needs fuel, so you grab whatever is there, like the fruit in the fridge, and go. Opening and closing cabinets after dinner signals you're searching for something specific that probably isn't in the kitchen. Food in that moment is 'a distraction, but not a solution'.

• Diet culture taught us to tie our worth to our bodies
Goldman says we've all absorbed messages that we 'should' be thin, shouldn't be hungry, or shouldn't eat certain foods. As a result many people link their self-worth to body size, shape and eating behaviour. That shame is what keeps people stuck, and her approach is deliberately shame-free.

• Restricting drives the binge cycle
'I was bad yesterday, so today I'll be good' means restricting, which leaves you so hungry that you later eat impulsively or overeat. Restriction also keeps your brain fixated on food, which she links to what people call 'food noise'. Many clients say 'I barely eat and can't lose weight', and she says that is part of the problem: cortisol keeps the body in survival mode.

• After a binge, eat something in the morning anyway
Evening binges leave you bloated, maybe with reflux, and not hungry on waking, so you're tempted to skip food to make up for it. The key, she says, is to eat something small, which breaks the overeat-then-restrict loop instead of restarting it.

• Watch for three warning signs of disordered eating
First, thoughts about food or your body are consuming your day (hating your reflection, comparing sizes). Second, rigid food rules, such as 'I can't eat before 10am'. Third, it affects daily functioning or causes distress, such as isolating, being late or skipping meetings with food. Any of these is a sign to seek professional help, and she says there's nothing wrong with you for needing it.

• Healthy habits can tip into orthorexia
Orthorexia, a term introduced in 1996, is when healthy eating becomes an obsession. She says it has surged with social media and wellness culture. The test is the thought behind the behaviour: 'I'm skipping wine because I want dessert later' is balance; 'I can't have this because I ate it yesterday' is rigid. Obsessive distress over a missed gym day, or weighing yourself repeatedly in a day, suggests it has crossed over.

• Eating regularly is part of treatment
Many people avoid help because they fear treatment will make them gain weight. Goldman says regular eating is often what stabilises things, and the shame keeps people from asking.

• Breakfast is a self-care signal, not just a meal
She frames sitting down to nourish yourself as setting up a positive cycle for the day. Running on caffeine and an empty stomach leaves you distracted by food until lunch. She would rather people celebrate 'I took time for myself and had breakfast' than 'I had the willpower to skip eating'.

• GLP-1 drugs are a real tool for obesity, but not a crash diet
For people with obesity or diabetes, she says these drugs level the playing field, because their weight didn't respond biologically to the same healthy choices others made. Using them to drop 5–10 pounds before a wedding, or via mail-order microdosing, is a diet in her view and not sustainable. Lifestyle changes, a dietitian and mindset work with a psychologist still matter. She rejects the idea that being body-positive means you can't change your body.

EXAMPLES

• The opening breathing exercise
She starts the episode with diaphragmatic breathing: in through the nose as the belly expands, then out through the mouth as if through a straw. On each breath they repeat 'I am confident', 'I am in control' and 'I can do this'.

• Mel's late-night work week
After working until 10:30pm, a decade ago Mel would have slept late and raced in on coffee. This time she went to bed, ate something before exercising, then had eggs, avocado and bacon. Hours into taping she says she hadn't thought about food once, and wishes she'd known this 40 years ago.

• The gym-day test
Someone who exercises daily misses one session for a work event and spends the whole day obsessing about it. Goldman uses this to show when a 'healthy' habit has become distressing.

• Chips in front of the TV
Mel's examples of mindless M&Ms and potato chips during TV illustrate eating that serves an emotional purpose, filling something in the moment, rather than hunger.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **The three kitchen questions**
  When you catch yourself searching the fridge, pause and ask: When did I last eat? Was it satisfying, or did I restrict? What's going on right now, and what am I actually looking for (stress, a hard call, loneliness)?
- **The 10-minute buffer**
  Get out of the kitchen and do something else for about 10 minutes, such as reading or walking. If you still want the food afterwards, have it mindfully. You probably won't beat yourself up, because it wasn't automatic.
- **Build your own coping toolbox**
  Have the breathing exercise (three breaths) plus at least two other tools that fit your life, for example a 10-minute walk outside. Have several, because a run isn't available in every stressful moment and no single tool works every time.
- **Slow-eating method**
  Take a bite, put the utensil down, and chew until nothing is left before picking it up again. Fullness signals take about 10–20 minutes to register.
- **How to raise concerns with someone you love**
  Don't lead with food. Use 'I' statements and open questions: 'I've noticed you've been cancelling on our dinners. I'm concerned about you. Is everything okay?'

The Most Eye-Opening Conversation on Marriage & Love You Will Ever Hear (From #1 Divorce Lawyer)

Guest: James Sexton
Date: 2026-03-05 · Duration: 1:32:13
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gaKQa9TuSmQ

KEYPOINTS

• Disconnection is the root cause of divorce, and it builds up in small steps.
Divorce attorney James Sexton, with 25 years in matrimonial law, says the things people blame (cheating, money, fights) are mostly symptoms. 'No single raindrop was responsible for the flood. But the flood's nothing but little raindrops.' Most marriages don't end with one catastrophe. They end with a thousand small, unnoticed choices.

• 'Falling feels like flying for a little while.'
Once couples feel they've 'locked down' their person, they coast and put their energy into kids, work and the world. By the time they notice the marriage isn't a good place, it's often 'real far gone.' He notes that marriage fails something like 50–70% of the time, and that asking someone 'why?' when they announce an engagement would be considered rude.

• Ten minutes a week of upkeep can keep many couples out of his office.
Ask your partner: 'Tell me three things I did this week that made you feel loved.' He says the answers will surprise you, because little things matter. If you can both agree to listen without getting defensive, follow up with: 'Where did I miss the mark? What three things made you feel less loved or less seen?' Keep it light too, for instance '…three things that made you want to have sex with me?'

• Infidelity plays some role in about 85% of his divorces, usually driven by wanting to feel seen.
His clients who've had affairs often say they never stopped loving their spouse, but their spouse no longer found them attractive or interesting, and the affair partner did. Humans need to be interesting and interested, to feel loved and to have physical connection. Constant criticism, even 'constructive criticism,' from your favorite person pushes them away. 'What's right in this connection is very often the cure for what's feeling wrong in it.'

• Social media is 'an infidelity generating machine.'
In his book How to Stay in Love, he argues that nothing before it, not swingers' clubs, chat rooms, workplace temptation or Ashley Madison, has bred infidelity the way Facebook, Instagram and YouTube do. If you're even vaguely unhappy in your marriage, he says, stay off social media. Most of what's there is 'unhappiness masked as happiness.'

• Affairs have 'last clear chances' to steer away.
Looking back on affairs, he sees many moments when someone could have said early, 'I feel like my eye is wandering. I don't want it to.' Naming it to your partner treats the marriage like what it is.

• Marriage is a job, and he means that romantically.
It has roles and responsibilities, you chose it over other options, and you can quit, so be good at it, since happiness is the pay. The spiral down works by tit-for-tat ('why should I, she doesn't'), and it reverses the same way, through small actions. Start by leaving a note: 'It was really fun hanging out with you last night,' 'I married the prettiest girl in the world,' or a thank-you.

• Small disconnections add up, and the phone is the big one.
Scrolling while your spouse talks says, 'You're not as important as this.' Responding with 'No, finish what you're doing on the phone' sounds accusatory. Meet each other halfway on physical connection too: if one of you doesn't like holding sweaty hands, put an arm around them instead.

• Learn to fight before you're in a fight.
'The worst time to learn how to fight is when you're in a fight.' Agree in advance on a 'safe word,' something unrelated like 'How about them Mets?', that means 'this isn't productive, we're stopping and will continue later,' with a promise that you really will come back to it.

• Ask for what you need, even though it feels vulnerable.
Two hard questions: if you can't name 10 things you love about your spouse, go to therapy and ask why you're married to them. And if you fear they won't reciprocate, 'what's scarier is we just won't even try.' He says aging has made it easier for him to say 'I need help.' Give yourself and your partner grace. He says he only understands himself about 75% of the time.

EXAMPLES

• His friendly divorce
Sexton can list 10 things he loves about his ex-wife, and she could do the same for him. 'She found the lid for her pot.' He says we need to normalize prenups, civil divorce and cooperative co-parenting, and that the loudest divorce stories come from people who were deeply wounded.

• The $100 million question
Would you take $100 million for your last 30 days with one of your kids? No, because short time makes it more precious. 'That's love.' Speaking as both a divorce lawyer and a 20-year hospice volunteer, he says we're losing everything all the time, and that's what makes it precious.

• The letter from his mom
He wrote a letter to someone he had unresolved pain with, then wrote the reply he needed. His 'letter back from my mom' said, 'I wasn't mad at you. I've been sick for a really long time.' She never said it herself, but writing it showed him he already knew. 'The wisdom you find on mountaintops is the wisdom you brought up there.'

• Marriage as a lottery ticket
'You're probably not going to win. But if you win, what you win is so fantastic. Why wouldn't you buy a ticket?' His point is that a great marriage is worth fighting for and protecting.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Weekly 10-minute check-in script**
  Three things that made you feel loved, three where I missed the mark, and one playful question. Agree up front that you'll both listen without getting defensive.
- **Agree on a fight 'eject' phrase**
  Choose something silly and neutral, agree on it while calm, and promise to come back to the conversation within an agreed time.
- **Two-letter exercise**
  Write to the person you're struggling with, then write their reply saying what you need to hear. Read it aloud, even alone. You don't have to send it.
- **Daily micro-connections**
  Leave a note, put your phone down when they talk, touch them in a way they like, and offer appreciation instead of 'constructive' criticism.

4 Small Decisions That Change Your Body, Energy, and Life

Date: 2026-03-02 · Duration: 0:55:49
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UftzI17LB2A

KEYPOINTS

• Four tiny, mostly automatic decisions shape how your day feels.
In this solo episode, Mel lays out four micro choices: what you reach for first in the morning, whether you decide it'll be a good day or a bad one, whether you run on fuel or fumes, and whether you scroll or sleep at night. Her point is that when you're worn out you don't need a 'fix your life' plan, just better defaults at these moments.

• Micro choice #1: what you reach for first, which is usually the phone.
Before you've even figured out what day it is, you grab the phone by your bed. Mel says reading the news isn't the problem. Doing it in bed before anything else is, 'mainlining it like it's your coffee or your vodka.' Her rule: no news in pajamas unless it's a Sunday after 11 a.m., after breakfast and coffee, and she has decided to lounge.

• Morning scrolling spends motivation you need later.
Mel draws on Harvard-trained psychiatrist Dr. Alok Kanojia ('Dr. K' of HealthyGamer). As she relays it, you wake up with a supply of dopamine, the brain's motivation-and-reward fuel that helps you do hard things and feel good when you follow through. Spending it on something 'dumb and easy and cheap' like your phone leaves less for the day's real work.

• Micro choice #2: good day or bad day. 'The story you tell yourself becomes the day you have.'
Decide it's a bad day and your brain looks for proof. You see traffic and think 'of course,' grip the wheel, and tense up when a coworker asks 'Do you have a second?' Mel cites Stanford's Dr. Alia Crum, a past guest whose research shows mindsets change what you feel and expect, what you're motivated to do, and how your body prepares and responds. 'These aren't just words. These are settings.'

• Choosing a good day isn't denial.
It doesn't mean pretending life is easy or the news isn't frightening. It means deciding, 'It's going to be a good day because I'm going to make something good happen,' and taking responsibility for the mood you bring to work and home.

• Micro choice #3: fuel or fumes. A lot of irritability is really hunger.
Mel cites Cornell's Dr. Karl Pillemer, whose Legacy Project has spent 22 years gathering advice from people in their 80s, 90s and 100s ('the elders'). One lesson: if you keep having the same serious arguments, 'the cure might be a sandwich.' He and his wife used to fight bitterly while traveling (who picked the bad hotel, why they missed the museum) until they realized they were hungry. He says research supports not arguing when you're hungry.

• Protein early may steady your mood.
Mel shares a post by psychologist Dr. Nicole LePera: cortisol peaks in the first 30 minutes after waking, which can leave you irritable without knowing why, and eating protein early helps regulate blood sugar and, with it, emotions. Mel says health is her top goal and protein first has been 'a huge shift' for her. This is her experience plus an expert's guidance, not a prescription.

• Micro choice #4: scroll or sleep. Night scrolling tells your brain to stay on guard.
After a day spent on everyone else, scrolling feels like reclaiming your time. Researchers call it 'revenge bedtime procrastination.' But headlines, disturbing videos and comment fights (some of the arguers are bots, she notes) signal 'stay alert, keep scanning.' Mel cites a PNAS study led by Dr. Anne-Marie Chang at Brigham and Women's Hospital and Harvard Medical School: reading on a light-emitting device before bed delayed the body clock and suppressed melatonin.

• You can train your bedtime cues.
If you reach for the phone even after a middle-of-the-night bathroom trip, you've taught yourself that scrolling is how you fall asleep. Replace it with cues your body will link to sleep: a hot Epsom-salt bath (Mel's choice), a book or relaxing audiobook, 2 minutes of stretching, a candle, fluffed pillows, dimmer lights.

EXAMPLES

• The sweatsuit bought in bed
Staying somewhere with the charger next to the bed, Mel reached for her phone first thing, opened Instagram, and bought a gray cropped-hoodie sweatsuit she didn't need ('really cute on the model') before even getting up.

• Skinning up the ski mountain at 6:30 a.m.
Instead of her phone, Mel reached for her skis, put on climbing skins and hiked up the local ski mountain for an hour with her husband. Other options she suggests: open the blinds, step outside even in pajamas, drink a glass of water, grab your gym bag or sneakers.

• 'When's the last time you ate?'
Mel admits her family asks her this when she starts bickering over 'something just so stupid.' Usually it's been five or six hours. Pillemer's suggestion: try a cup of tea and a biscuit before continuing the argument.

• The bad-day spiral
Mel walks through a day framed as bad from the start: traffic proves it, a coworker's 'Do you have a second?' feels like an attack, you smile and say 'Sure' while 'inside you're dying,' and then blame yourself for not having it together.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Phone out of reach overnight
Charge it away from the bed so it isn't the first thing you grab. Decide your first reach the night before: water, blinds, shoes.

• A one-line morning decision
Say out loud: 'Today is going to be a good day because I'm going to make something good happen.'

• Fight check
Before a tense conversation, ask yourself (or them), 'When did we last eat?' Have a snack first.

- **Wind-down routine**
  Pick two cues (bath, book, stretching, dim lights) and do them nightly so your brain starts linking them with sleep instead of scrolling.

#1 Dermatologist: The Ultimate Skincare Routine for Amazing Skin

Guest: Dr. Shereene Idriss
Date: 2026-02-26 · Duration: 1:16:21
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qVIdfSLFfSM

KEYPOINTS

• Skin is your biggest organ, not a vanity project

Board-certified dermatologist Dr. Shereene Idriss, who sees nearly 100 patients a week, says skin is the first visible feedback on your health and stress, and it carries real emotional weight. If your skin feels out of control, her first step is to calm it down before trying to treat the specific problem.

• Sleep, movement and diet do work no product can

She treats sleep like compound interest: one good night won't fix your face, but consistent sleep lets skin repair over time. Simple movement like walking gets lymphatic fluid and blood moving to the skin. Diet supports everything, though eating carrots won't replicate a topical retinoid. In her words, skincare on 'the crappiest diet' is a band-aid.

• Nobody needs a 12-step routine; consistency beats everything

As a mom of two running several businesses, she says the first point of failure is a routine you can't keep up. Her framework has three categories: a gentle cleanser that doesn't strip your skin (Vanicream is her drugstore example), a moisturizer to support your skin barrier, and daily sunscreen for protection and long-term change. She says she isn't paid by any brand she shows.

• Wash at night and often just use water in the morning

Cleanse at night to get the day off your face. She calls it 'the smallest act of kindness' you can do for yourself. In the morning, water is usually enough. Skip hot water: like hot water on a greasy pan, it strips your skin's oils, and adding cleanser on top over-strips.

• Read moisturizer labels skeptically

She holds up a moisturizer with 'collagen' in its name and says it's simply hydrating. Applying collagen to your skin doesn't replace the collagen you lose. Judge a moisturizer by texture and how hydrated your skin feels afterward. Sunscreen can double as moisturizer, so oily skin in a humid place like Florida may not need both.

• Sunscreen must be broad spectrum, and there's no such thing as a safe tan

UVB mainly burns, while UVA breaks down collagen. Both contribute to skin cancer, and a sunscreen that isn't broad spectrum misses UVA. SPF roughly multiplies how long you can stay out before burning: if you'd burn in 10 minutes, SPF 30 stretches that to about 300 in theory. Any tan, even a freckle, is a sign of DNA damage, so a 'base tan' only means damage has already happened.

• Most 'sensitive skin' is reactive skin

She says seven in 10 people describe their skin as sensitive, but only about one in 10 have true sensitivities, like an intolerance to a specific ingredient. Most are in a reactive state, often caused by over-stripping or overdoing products. That's why calming the skin comes first.

• With retinoids, consistency beats intensity

Retinol is the 'crown jewel' of active ingredients: the over-the-counter, inactive form of vitamin A, while prescription tretinoin is the active form. It builds thicker skin, boosts collagen and regulates cell turnover. People go 'wrong and strong,' burn their skin and quit. She'd rather you use the lightest over-the-counter strength five nights a week. Vitamin C helps with tone and brown spots and is needed for collagen, but check you're buying the active form (ascorbic acid).

• Adult acne comes from hormone swings plus slower skin renewal

She sees many women in their 30s and 40s with acne. Of four subtypes, hormonal acne shows up as deep cysts along the jawline, tied to sensitivity to testosterone-like hormones, and comedonal acne means blackheads and whiteheads. Skin cells turn over about every 28 days when young, and she says each decade adds about 10 days (38 in your 30s, 48 in your 40s). Oily hair products are a sneaky trigger.

• Faces change in two noticeable steps, and jowls aren't a skincare failure

Collagen starts falling about 1% a year from the mid-to-late 20s, which shows up as a vague flattening at the sides of the face. A second, sharper shift comes later, when the bone and structure underneath thin. Idriss noticed her own jowls suddenly at 38, after babies and breastfeeding.

EXAMPLES

• Products she'd skip

Makeup wipes as a daily remover just smear foundation into your pores, she says. Nose strips give satisfying but temporary results. Natural loofahs used on the face are too harsh for its thin skin. Sheet masks with actives like retinol under occlusion are 'a recipe for chaos.' A sheet mask should just hydrate.

• Mel's 'lizard' face

Mel admits she's 'a wrong and strong gal.' She over-applied tretinoin, looked like 'a lizard that had red skin' within a week, and quit entirely, which is exactly the pattern Idriss warns about.

• Melasma and a cousin's 'What happened to your face?'

At 34 or 35, after having a baby, Idriss's melasma flared. A younger cousin's reaction hit her 'like a dagger,' and she wanted to hide her face. Treatment usually means prescription hydroquinone with breaks. Oral tranexamic acid can help deeper melasma but isn't for anyone prone to blood clots.

• Mel's jowls at 57

When Mel says she hates her jowls, Idriss notes that the complaint is rarely the real issue. Mel admits sagging makes her feel old and scared about how much life is behind her.

• Sleeping in makeup after 40

Idriss says skipping a night's face-wash in your 20s and 30s isn't a big deal, but after 40 you 'look like the Crypt Keeper' the next day because skin can't bounce back as fast.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Three ways to support collagen

Eat a balanced diet with enough protein. Collagen supplements won't hurt but aren't the answer and can be expensive. Use topical skincare consistently, like retinol plus daily sunscreen. In-office procedures are the third option.

• Her three moves for this week

Simplify your routine, even to just washing your face. Throw out your magnifying mirror, because 'nobody is looking at you under a 10x zoom.' Do one thing that makes you feel put together, like mascara, a red lip or the jeans you love.

• Injectables, conservatively

Botox isn't meant to freeze your face. She's skeptical of 'preventative' Botox and says to start when lines genuinely bother you. Fillers should keep your proportions intact, not add new volume.

• Her one takeaway

'Your skin is not a problem to solve. It is a relationship to build.' Confidence comes from changing that relationship first.

How to Design Your Life in 1 Hour

Guest: Bill Burnett and Dave Evans
Date: 2026-02-23 · Duration: 0:59:26
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y29PQz239J8

KEYPOINTS

• You can't design 'your life.' You design 'your lives.'
Stanford professors Bill Burnett and Dave Evans, creators of the Designing Your Life course and book, say all of us 'contain more aliveness than one lifetime permits.' There's more than one of you in there, so there are many good lives you could live, not one right answer to find. Choosing one means saying no to others, and that's fine.

• Maslow's 'become all that you can be' is impossible, and that takes the pressure off.
They argue that Maslow's 1943 idea of self-actualization by becoming everything you can be is 'dead wrong,' because you're 'way bigger than your own lifetime.' 'I've buried plenty of people. None of them were done.' You won't finish, so stop treating every choice as the final verdict on your life.

• If you're in your 20s and lost, you're not broken.
They say the brain's executive and empathy circuitry isn't fully developed until about 27 or 28, later in men. They tell graduating seniors, 'You're not broken, you're 22.' That's their caveated way of explaining why your early 20s feel so uncertain.

• The Odyssey Plan: sketch three different five-year lives.
Life 1: change nothing, and assume it goes well. Where are you in five years? Life 2: that path disappears and you still have bills to pay. What's plan B? Life 3, the wild card: money is no object and nobody would laugh. What would you do? Three is 'kind of a magic number.' You need more ideas to get to your best ones, and fixating on one boxes you in.

• The wild card exists to quiet your inner critic.
The crazy idea (a Beanie Baby store, a button shop) isn't necessarily good. Writing it down trains you to quiet the critic, which they describe as the evolutionary voice that kept us from being eaten by saber-tooth tigers. Friends often add to it ('that's crazy').

• Next, prototype: try small, cheap versions of a life before committing.
Pick something on a plan you want to learn about and test it with a conversation, a class or a short experience. A 'prototype interview' means talking with someone already living that life, like a contact who built an underwater camera company. 'Make a move, learn something, make a move, learn something.' You have to be 'competent at your incompetence' about a future you haven't figured out yet.

• Small steps make change happen. Big resolutions don't.
'You're not going to change if you make something so big.' Their example is the 'I'm going to run a marathon' resolution, which fails unless it's broken into very small steps. Small wins build the confidence to keep going.

• It's almost never too late. Run the numbers.
When a 54-year-old woman asked if she was crazy to go to medical school, one of the professors did the math with her: a likely lifespan into her late 80s, wanting to work to about 80, a year of pre-med prep, a year applying, four years of school, and residency (where, he notes, much of the doctoring happens). She'd still have more than a decade of practice. 'Cut out the crap' and look at the time you actually have.

• Reclaim 20 minutes from scrolling to just be present.
Ask people what video they last watched and they usually can't remember. If you can't remember it, why not 'reallocate that time to something more interesting'? Sit with yourself for 20 minutes and see what comes up. One of them describes his own critic at the easel ('the world needs an older white guy painter?') going quiet if he waits it out, until ideas surface.

• The whole method in 10 words: get curious, talk to people, try stuff, tell your story.
Burnett, a former marketing guy, came up with this on Canadian live TV when told to summarize the book in a sentence. Curiosity means leaning into what's available. Talking to people is where the real information is. Trying stuff is prototyping. Telling your story means reflecting on and sharing what you're learning, which beats 'I binge-watched Game of Thrones again.'

EXAMPLES

• The stuck 57-year-old chiropractor
In a room of 600 doing the 12–15-minute Odyssey exercise, one man just stared at his blank page. The professor asked whether he wanted to still be a chiropractor when he died. 'I don't think so.' 'Then at some point you're going to do something else. Write that down.' 'He had it in him. He just had to get over himself.'

• From Stanford gymnast to Cirque du Soleil
A student whose parents wanted her in medical school negotiated a detour first. Her wild card became real: she has performed with Cirque du Soleil in China as a circus clown.

• Eulogies while you're alive
Evans has been in a men's group for 32 years, which he started when his son was born. After speaking at members' funerals, they adopted a practice: say 'I'm going to die next week' and everyone writes your eulogy and reads it while you lie quietly and listen. Nobody praises well-done PowerPoints or on-time budgets.

• A third book at 71
For one of the professors, saying yes to their new book meant giving up four years, from 71 to 75, and 'about 75 no's' to other things. He's happy with it: 'It comes in packages of yes or no. Choose your life.'

OTHER RELEVANT

• Odyssey Plan worksheet
Spend 12–15 minutes writing three five-year sketches (current path, plan B, wild card). Give each a title and note what excites you and what scares you about it.

- **One prototype this week**
  Choose a question from one of your plans and set up one conversation with someone living it, or take one small class or try a short experience.
- **20-minute pause**
  Swap 20 minutes of scrolling for quiet time with a notebook. Let the inner critic talk itself out, and write down whatever comes after.
- **Book**
  Designing Your Life by Burnett and Evans covers the Odyssey Plan and prototyping in detail.

This Conversation Could Save You Thousands of Dollars

Guest: Caitlin Sarian
Date: 2026-02-19 · Duration: 1:13:42
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jk6sD1TEJ4A

KEYPOINTS

• Getting scammed is a matter of 'when,' not 'if'
Caitlin Sarian, known online as 'Cybersecurity Girl,' says cybersecurity is for everyone, not just experts. Cyber scams are so big that if they were a country, she says, they'd be the world's third-largest economy after the US and China, larger than Germany and Japan combined. Most people are easy targets because nobody taught them the basics.

• The less you share, the less scammers can use
Her rule for any form asking for your birthday, real name or phone number: 'Why do they need it? Have they ever called you?' She signs up for things under an alias and never posts vacation photos while she's still away. Data brokers keep building profiles from what's public, so information you overshare can be used against you or your family.

• AI can piece together your life from public scraps in seconds
A firm she works with that specializes in open-source intelligence can use AI to assemble a profile of a person within 20–30 seconds from social posts, blogs, news articles and even wedding registries. Your mother's maiden name and high school are easy to find. That's why she answers security questions as a made-up persona with consistent fake answers.

• Free Wi-Fi isn't free
'If there's any free product or app, you are the product.' On public or plane Wi-Fi you're on someone else's network. Music and browsing are fine, but don't do banking or send things like a photo of your credit card. If you must use it, she recommends a VPN (virtual private network) or your phone's hotspot.

• Reused passwords are the biggest risk
'Password' is still the most popular password, followed by '12345.' When one site leaks your password, attackers run software that tries thousands of variations of it on your other accounts, then use those accounts to scam you or your contacts. She uses a password manager (LastPass, 1Password, Keeper or the iPhone's built-in one) and checks login activity and locations on her email and social accounts every couple of months.

• Scams run on panic
A common call claims to be the FBI or police: you missed jury duty, a hearing or a ticket, and they'll arrest you unless you pay. Callers know your address and your parents'. Any request to pay in crypto is a red flag. If your bank texts unexpectedly, don't click. Call the number on the back of your card.

• AI voice cloning makes a family safe word essential
Scammers clone voices from podcasts, TV clips or social media to fake a loved one in trouble. Agree on a family safe word ahead of time. It takes two seconds to ask for it, and she says it's the only reliable check.

• Use credit cards, not debit cards or payment apps, when you can
Debit cards, Venmo and Zelle are 'money in, money out' with little recourse. She avoids payment apps unless she has to. Credit cards give you fraud protection.

• Check what apps collect before clicking 'accept all'
She asks three questions: what data are you collecting, why, and who are you sharing it with? A name and email is fine. Biometric, sleep or menstrual-cycle data is a reason to stop. Mel pastes terms into an AI assistant for a summary. Sarian uses biometric airport screening because she travels every week but says she'd skip it if she flew twice a year.

EXAMPLES

• The $200 Venmo 'mistake'
A stranger sends you $200 on Venmo, then begs you to send it back because it was a mistake. The money came from a stolen card. When that charge is reversed, your payment back isn't, because you sent it willingly, so you're out $200. The takeaway: don't send it back.

• A dog named Archie
The AI profiling firm found a couple's dog's name from a wedding-registry item, a dog bow 'for Archie.' A pet's name is a classic security answer.

• Mel's mother-in-law
Mel's family recently had a scare when scammers almost got into her mother-in-law's accounts, which could have wiped out her savings and retirement.

• A teen athlete targeted by sextortion
A teenage boy spent three or four months messaging someone he believed was a girl connected to his friends, and they exchanged photos. The scammer then demanded money, threatening to leak the photos and ruin his career and Olympic hopes. Sarian says these scams especially target boys. He told his aunt, who works in cybersecurity, and it was resolved. Report cases at the FBI's ic3.gov.

• Instagram's location surprise
Mel describes an Instagram update that suddenly shared users' locations. Sarian says precise location is on by default for most people, and she estimates about 90% of users have it on.

• Fake Let Them Theory copies and impostor staff
Mel's audience has been sold counterfeit copies of her book on Etsy and Shein (misspelled, spiral-bound or a nonexistent US paperback) and emailed by scammers posing as her company's employees.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Her five essentials

(1) Use strong, unique passwords with multi-factor authentication. (2) Turn on automatic software updates for your phone and apps. (3) Freeze your credit at all three bureaus, which takes 5–10 minutes each, and unfreeze when you need a loan. (4) Wait 9 seconds before clicking any link and check the sender's address, or just call instead. (5) Limit your data online, for example with a deletion service like Incogni.

• Make a stolen phone harder to hide

Thieves switch on airplane mode right away so you can't track the phone. Turn off airplane mode access from the lock-screen swipe-down menu so they'd have to power it off, and it will eventually be turned back on.

• Protect your parents this weekend

Freeze their credit, update the passwords on their bank and retirement accounts, and set up multi-factor authentication with codes going to your phone so you notice odd login attempts. Brief them on current scams: hang up on any request for money and call a fraud helpline.

• After a data breach

Sign up for the free credit monitoring that breached companies offer, but freezing your credit is the main defense against identity theft.

Dating Expert: Why Dating Today Is Nearly Impossible & How to Find True Love

Guest: Logan Ury
Date: 2026-02-16 · Duration: 0:58:27
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q7SNC9fIF8c

KEYPOINTS

• Separate what's hard about dating itself from what's hard about the apps.
Behavioral scientist Logan Ury, formerly director of relationship science at Hinge (Mel notes Hinge didn't pay for the episode), says people lump together the psychological work of dating (putting yourself out there, taking risks, getting rejected) and frustrations with the technology. Blaming the apps for everything lets you skip the part you control. She also warns that 'I live in the worst city for dating' tends to become self-fulfilling.

• Some things matter less for long-term success than people think.
Looks: we adapt to them over time ('behind every hot person is somebody who's sick of having sex with them'). Money: it makes life easier but is a poor reason to pick a partner. Shared hobbies: fine as long as you give each other room for your own. Similar personalities: two of you would be 'way too much.' A partner who balances you is better.

• Other things matter more than people think.
Emotional stability: can they pause between stimulus and response? Kindness: how do they treat someone they don't need anything from? Loyalty: do they help friends move, and do they have friends from across their life? A growth mindset, so they'll tackle rough patches with you. Fighting well: not never fighting, but fighting as a team. Her favorite: what side of you do they bring out?

• Rate the date by how you felt, not by their résumé.
She calls it switching from an evaluative mindset ('Are they good enough for me? Do they make enough money?') to an experiential one ('How do I feel around them?'). Her post-date questions are below. They weed out people who look good on paper but make you feel bad about yourself.

• The spark is overrated. Look for the slow burn.
Ury cites research that only about 11% of couples experience love at first sight. A slow-burn person may be less charming at first but would make a great long-term partner, and they're often overlooked. If you like someone a bit more each date, invest the time.

• Dating apps tend to be crowded with anxious and avoidant people, who keep finding each other.
She estimates the population is about 50% secure, 25% anxious and 25% avoidant, but many secure people are already partnered. The anxious dater chases and tries to prove their worth. The avoidant fears being smothered and pulls away. Together they create the 'anxious-avoidant loop.' Ury says she used to be an anxiously attached dater herself.

• Date the person, not the potential.
'People will show you who they are if you let them.' Chasing someone's potential, or acting as their mentor, leads you to excuse unacceptable behavior. A situationship isn't bad if both people genuinely agree on what it is. It becomes harmful when one person wants exclusivity and doesn't say so.

• Don't ghost. Send a copy-paste rejection.
She says ghosting is a major driver of dating burnout, and that 85% of people would rather be rejected than ghosted. Keep a note on your phone: 'Hey [name], it was great meeting you, but I don't think we're a romantic match.' Add 'I wish you well' if you like. Getting a clear no lets the other person move on.

• Ask the 'What are we?' question instead of hoping.
Her script: 'What are we? I'd be interested in deleting Hinge. Would you?' If you're on the same page, delete your apps. If not, now you know. Mel adds that many people complain about a lack of commitment without ever asking for it, because they're afraid of the answer.

• Your profile is your billboard, and matching is only the start.
Ask friends whether your profile really represents you, and use the limited space to show several sides of yourself, what you're looking for, and what dating you would be like. She also says to choose quality over quantity: many people collect matches they never message past a couple of exchanges, then ask where their partner is. 'He very well could be in your matches.'

EXAMPLES

• The anime-only profile
A client's profile talked only about anime. Ury told him, 'The person in front of me is a beautiful, vibrant, three-dimensional person,' and asked him to show the rest of himself.

• The perfect-on-paper doctor
Clients describe dates who are 'everything I wanted on paper' (Persian, a doctor, the right school, parents would be obsessed) but who make them feel worried and unable to be themselves. Her checklist would weed out exactly that person.

• Sophia, 21: hooked on the chase
A Boston college student spent four years in situationships and now wants to settle down, but loses interest when men get serious. Ury's prescription is the post-date questions, to reconnect with what she actually wants and how dates make her feel.

• Ury's own story
She met her husband because he started talking to her at a bar, which she uses as proof that people around you in line or out and about still count, even if you're on the apps.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Post-date questions
What side of me did they bring out? How did my body feel: stiff, relaxed, in between? Energized or drained? Is there

something about them I'm curious about? Did they make me laugh? Did I feel heard? Did I feel attractive around them? Captivated, bored, or in between?

- **Rejection text template**
  'Hey [name], it was great meeting you, but I don't think we're a romantic match. I wish you well.' Save it in your notes app.
- **DTR opener**
  'What are we? I'd be interested in deleting the apps. Would you?' Treat the answer as information, not a verdict on your worth.
- **Her book**
  How to Not Die Alone covers the research on choosing partners and dating habits.

Your Guide to Better Romance, Sex, & Love From the #1 Sex Professor

Guest: Dr. Nicole McNichols
Date: 2026-02-12 · Duration: 1:37:47
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qi45Jl46Py8

KEYPOINTS

• Sex is a health habit, not a treat

Dr. Nicole McNichols, a University of Washington professor whose human-sexuality course is the most popular on campus, notes that our language ('get lucky,' 'save room for dessert') frames sex as optional. She says satisfying, consensual, connected sex is linked to better cardiovascular health and protection against brain degeneration, and some studies tie it to longevity. These are associations she cites from research. She also says prioritizing pleasure builds 'ego resilience,' an upward cycle where you turn outward, seek more support and think more creatively.

• Sexual likes are learned, so sex can get better

From her book You Could Be Having Better Sex: we aren't born knowing what we'll enjoy, just as we aren't born knowing what foods we'll like. People with a 'sexual growth mindset' believe sex can improve through communication and experimentation. People who think 'married sex never changes' struggle. She says that mindset predicts satisfaction far more than any innate skill.

• Only 18% of women orgasm from penetration alone

The rest need clitoral stimulation, either alongside penetration or on its own. When she shows this in class, women stop thinking they're broken and men stop thinking they're failing. Not knowing it, she says, fuels widespread faking. More than 50% of women say they've faked an orgasm.

• Drop the 'penetration script' that creates the orgasm gap

The default script of kissing, touching, maybe oral, then penetration, his orgasm and done puts penetration on a pedestal. She says queer couples report more equal and higher orgasm rates because they don't start from 'sex equals penetration.' Most women who orgasm during intercourse do so about 10–15 minutes in, versus about five minutes for men. With masturbation, both sexes take four to five minutes, because people know what they're doing.

• The clitoris wasn't fully mapped until 2005

Its only known purpose is pleasure, with no role in reproduction, so medicine largely ignored it. Urologist Dr. Helen O'Connell used MRI to map its full internal structure in 2005, and it took about a decade to reach mainstream literature. It develops from the same tissue as the head of the penis. Most of it is internal, which is why 'vaginal' orgasms still involve the clitoris, stimulated from inside (the 'clitourethrovaginal complex' rather than a magic G-spot).

• Faking orgasms shuts down the communication that makes sex good

Good sex depends on feedback, not innate talent. She suggests phrases like 'guide me,' 'show me what you want,' 'is this feeling good?' and 'should I do more of this?', plus small shifts in position and sounds. After 20 or 30 years of faking, coming clean feels monumental, which is why it's better to stop early.

• Micro-novelty keeps long-term sex alive

Research she cites finds couples who add some novelty about once a month (12 times a year) report more sexual satisfaction. Novelty doesn't have to mean whips and paddles. Small, low-stakes changes count.

• A fantasy isn't necessarily a wish

Threesomes are the most popular fantasy in America, she says, but many who imagine them don't want one. Taboo settings like public places or an airplane bathroom are common. She also rejects the myth that people into kink were abused as children. Studies interviewing them found most weren't, and the draw is often novelty.

• Sexuality can be fluid

Bisexuality usually isn't a phase on the way to gay or straight. Women more often move toward identifying as bisexual. She says 23% of Gen Z identify as LGBTQIA+, and about 80% of that group identify as bisexual.

EXAMPLES

• Mel's 'what's wrong with it?' moment

Some years ago Chris told Mel one of his goals was to improve their sex life. Her first reaction was defensive: 'What am I not doing? Now I have to do more?' McNichols says many couples hear that kind of invitation as rejection, when 'the poor guy is just trying to connect.'

• Karen, 56: 'It hurts now'

A listener with dryness and burning feared intimacy. McNichols said it sounds like menopause and recommended talking to a doctor about hormone therapy and estrogen creams to rebuild the tissue, plus generous lube: 'the wetter the better.'

• Maya, 41, single and 'rusty'

About a quarter of 40-year-olds are single, she says, and the average age of marriage is 31. Her class data shows only slight gender differences in enjoying casual sex. Newly single older women often do well because they feel more confident asking for what brings them pleasure. She warns against telling yourself that going along with drinking and casual sex will lead to something meaningful.

• Two exhausted parents, zero privacy

Her answer: closing the door for 30 minutes shows kids that mom and dad have a relationship of their own, and the kids 'will be better off for it.' The partner who does less at home can help by noticing and appreciating the load. Feeling seen turns on desire.

• The double-sided sleep mask

An example of micro-novelty from the conversation: a sleep mask on the nightstand that means 'sleep' on one side and is a playful signal on the other.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Touch without an agenda**
  When one partner wants to kiss and cuddle without it 'leading' anywhere, she says to build regular non-sexual touch. Your phone shouldn't be the last thing you touch at night.
- **Sexual mindfulness for body-image anxiety**
  Airbrushed and AI-generated bodies activate the brain regions that need to quiet for pleasure. During sex, keep bringing attention back to your breath, the sensations in your body and your partner's cues. Expect your mind to wander, as in meditation.
- **For partners worried about size**
  Penis size 'does not matter at all' for the ability to pleasure someone, she says. Communication and clitoral stimulation matter far more.

The 24-Hour Turnaround: Start Today & Feel Different Tomorrow

Date: 2026-02-09 · Duration: 0:57:31
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jfLwabNA9IQ

KEYPOINTS

• Off days are normal; a stuck feeling that starts to stick is the signal

In this solo episode Mel says you don't need to turn every low-energy day into a crisis. But when being stuck starts to last, through doomscrolling dread, a routine that has collapsed, a toddler waking you at 3 a.m., or months spent focused on someone else, it's time for a deliberate reset. Her answer is a five-step '24-hour turnaround.' Each step takes about 5–10 minutes.

• The 24 hours start whenever you do step one

You don't wait for Monday, a new month, a birthday or feeling ready. If it's 8 p.m., you can do all five steps before bed; if it's morning or midday, start today. When you're thinking 'I don't even know where to begin,' you now have the answer.

• Confidence comes from evidence, not motivation

Her core principle: 'If you want to feel better, you have to move while you feel worse.' Affirmations and waiting for motivation keep you stuck. Small completed actions are proof to your brain that you can handle things, and that proof is where confidence comes from.

• Step 1: Clear mental clutter with a brain dump

Write down everything in your head without thinking or editing: 'the equivalent of mental vomiting,' or taking the garbage out. Much of what clutters your mind isn't hard or time-consuming; your brain just keeps holding it because you haven't gotten to it. Getting it onto paper lightens the load.

• Step 2: Clear one bit of physical clutter

Pick one spot you can tackle, often in under five minutes. Mel says even one chaotic area keeps an 'open loop' running in the background of your brain, like a browser tab nagging that something else is wrong. Clearing it gives your brain less to sort through, and seeing it clean tomorrow reinforces 'I can handle it.'

• Step 3: Move your body for five minutes

Not a full workout, unless you want one. Walk, step outside, or listen to the rest of the episode on a walk. Late at night, do 11 push-ups on your knees or against the wall, or 10 squats. 'Movement isn't something you do once you feel better. Movement is what helps you feel better.'

• Step 4: Make tomorrow easier by removing one bit of friction

'I'll deal with it tomorrow' just makes the future harder. After the first three steps give you momentum, ask: what one thing could I do now to remove friction I normally wake up to? Lay out tomorrow's clothes, for example. That way you wake up to momentum instead of a mess.

• Step 5: Claim one win before bed

Mel's favorite step. Give yourself credit for one thing you did. It seems small, but it trains your brain to scan the day for what went well instead of bashing you for what didn't get done. Wins can be quiet: not losing your temper when work upset you, resting instead of burning out again, eating a healthy lunch, reading a few pages of the book on your nightstand.

• Small turns change your whole direction

Her metaphor: a giant cruise ship doesn't spin on a dime. The captain makes one small adjustment to the wheel, then another, and the whole heading changes. The five steps are your hand on the wheel, and they take you from 'Where do I begin?' to 'I've already begun.'

EXAMPLES

• Mel's 9 p.m. closet overhaul

After heavy work travel, Mel had been home a week without unpacking. Her suitcase sat outside her closet, which drives her husband Chris crazy. One night after Chris went to bed, she did her brain dump at about 9 p.m. and then spent two hours redoing the closet she'd wanted to fix for months. She calls it 'cleansing' and 'transformative'; the clean space told her she could handle things.

• The 2025 clutter study

Mel cites a 2025 Journal of Environmental Psychology study led by Francis Quinn of Robert Gordon University. It surveyed more than 500 adults about how cluttered they felt their homes were and how they felt emotionally. Those who saw their homes as cluttered reported more negative emotions, such as irritability, stress and a sour mood, and lower life satisfaction.

• The American Heart Association's numbers

The AHA recommends 150 minutes of moderate activity a week (about 20 minutes a day): brisk walking, water aerobics, dancing, gardening, doubles tennis, easy biking, pickleball. It links that to heart health, sleep, balance, bone health and less weight gain, and says bouts of 5–10 minutes are a fine start. Mel is asking for five.

• Borrowing a stylist's question for tomorrow's outfit

For step four, Mel passes on a tip from stylist Erin Walsh: when you lay out tomorrow's clothes, ask 'How do I want to feel tomorrow?' and choose clothes as a tool for that feeling.

OTHER RELEVANT

• The five steps, start to finish

1) Brain dump on paper. 2) Clear one physical spot. 3) Move for 5 minutes. 4) Remove one bit of friction for tomorrow morning. 5) Name one win before bed. Each takes 5–10 minutes.

• Say 'I'm back' out loud

After your first small turnaround, Mel wants you to feel proud and say it, in the car, the closet or the kitchen while the coffee brews. Not back to perfect, but back in motion, with your hand on the wheel.

- **Reuse it any time**
  Bad week? Habits slipping? Run another 24-hour turnaround. It's meant to be repeated, not done once.

Strong, Fit and Healthy: How to Get Your Best Body & Increase Your Energy in 3 Days

Guest: Dr. Amy Shah
Date: 2026-02-05 · Duration: 1:16:46
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p2pepdvBPiU

KEYPOINTS

• The 30/30/3 framework: 30 g protein at your first meal, 30 g fiber across the day, three probiotic foods daily.
Dr. Amy Shah, a double board-certified physician in internal medicine and immunology with a nutrition background, built this as a framework for getting stronger and more energized, not a weight-loss diet. She argues women have been handed diets and weight-loss plans but never a simple rule they can remember on a busy day. She suggests mastering the order: protein first, then fiber, then probiotics.

• Protein does far more than build muscle.
Shah describes protein as amino acids, the raw material for muscle, hair, skin, nails, gut lining and neurotransmitters such as dopamine (motivation, focus) and serotonin. Mel admits she thought protein was only about muscle mass. In Shah's account, a protein-heavy breakfast also raises fullness signals she names as GLP-1 and neuropeptide Y, so you have fewer cravings later.

• Women need more protein as estrogen falls.
Shah says that from roughly 35 and into perimenopause, declining estrogen blunts the stimulus for muscle growth, so women need a stronger signal (more protein plus strength work) to keep the same muscle. She frames muscle as a longevity issue: in your 80s or 90s, a fall without the muscle to catch yourself and bones to absorb impact can be life-ending.

• Front-load protein instead of skipping breakfast.
Shah, who says she loves intermittent fasting, reports seeing 'study after study' in which people who skip meals and eat late in the day had worse health outcomes. People who eat protein early are, by her account, more likely to hit their daily protein goal, make healthier choices all day and have fewer cravings. Mel compares it to never sending her kids to school without breakfast. These are Shah's readings of the research, not individual medical advice.

• Daily protein target: roughly 0.7–1 g per pound, well above the RDA.
Shah calls 0.7 to 1 gram per pound of body weight the range for a high-protein diet, and suggested 0.8 g/lb for Mel because she is trying to build muscle. For a 150-pound person that works out to 120–150 g a day. That's why 30 g at each meal matters: two eggs alone won't get you there.

• Calorie-dense 'protein' foods can work against you.
Nuts are healthy but low-density for protein: Shah says you'd need about 800 calories of nuts to reach 30 g. Mel realized that still left about 90 g to go. Smoothie-shop drinks and many bars marketed as high protein are ultra-processed or loaded with calories, so you can be 'filling the protein gap' while working against yourself.

• Read labels for added sugar, trans fat and serving size.
Some smoothies, Shah says, have as much sugar as a can of Coke. You wouldn't drink a Coke first thing in the morning, but you'd happily order the smoothie. Fruit sugar still counts toward your daily total. After protein, she checks added sugars, total calories and fat, especially trans fats, which she calls the most dangerous kind.

• Fiber feeds your gut ecosystem, and most people get less than half of what they need.
Shah says fewer than 5% of Americans reach 30 g a day and the average is about 12 g. Fiber isn't just for constipation: it is the main food for gut organisms. She claims modern diets have left us with about 50% of the gut bacteria our ancestors had, and that these bacteria help regulate hormone levels and talk to the brain, so low fiber shows up as hormonal and GI problems.

• Each extra 10 g of fiber is linked to about 10% better longevity, by Shah's figure.
Mel had Shah repeat the stat: every additional 10 grams of fiber improves longevity by 10%. Going from the typical 12 g to 22 g, she says, can change someone's life, and a couple of tablespoons of chia gets you there. She cites it as an association from the research, not a guarantee.

• Probiotic foods lower inflammation and may lift mood.
Fermented foods existed in every culture as a way to preserve food before refrigeration. Shah says the immune system lets bacteria through when they arrive inside foods like kimchi, probiotic cottage cheese or yogurt. She points to an emerging field called psychobiotics, which studies whether improving gut health can help mental health conditions. She presents it as a promising area, not settled treatment.

• Blend, don't juice.
Frozen berries thrown into a smoothie keep their fiber; juicing strips it out. Shah's practical rule is to add fiber on top of foods you already eat, such as berries or chia on Greek yogurt or cottage cheese, rather than planning separate 'fiber meals'.

EXAMPLES

• Two eggs is only 12 grams
Mel's usual breakfast was two eggs. Shah pointed out that's 6 g per egg, too little, and suggested an egg scramble with one or two yolks, extra whites and veggies, with cottage cheese or Greek yogurt on the side to reach 30 g.

• The 'add a zero' label hack
Take the protein grams, add a zero and compare that number to the calories. A drink with 23 g of protein becomes 230, which is more than its 100 calories, so it counts as high-protein. Shah says it isn't perfect, but her 18-year-old son now uses it constantly to see through 'high protein' marketing.

• Cottage cheese and chicken benchmarks
A little over a cup of cottage cheese gives about 30 g of protein (half a cup is about 14 g). A deck-of-cards-sized chicken breast gives roughly 26–30 g, a visual Mel loved for lunch or dinner.

• The fiber table

A pear has 6–7 g of fiber, about double an apple (eat the peel). Raspberries have about 8 g per serving and are one of the highest-fiber foods. One tablespoon of chia seeds adds 5 g. Hummus, pistachios, carrots and kiwi were also on the table as easy add-ins.

- **Kefir in Greek yogurt**

  Shah's trick, which she credits to a gut-health researcher: Greek yogurt can taste dry, so stir in some kefir (more sour than yogurt) for a better texture and a double probiotic hit. Kimchi was the third probiotic she showed, which she admits is an acquired taste.

- **A sample 30/30/3 day**

  Breakfast: egg scramble with veggies plus cottage cheese or Greek yogurt. Lunch: a salad with black beans and another protein such as tofu or chicken. Add berries and chia for fiber, plus yogurt, kefir or kimchi for probiotics. Shah's challenge is to try it for 7 days.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Your protein math**

  Multiply your body weight in pounds by 0.7–1.0 and split it across meals with at least 30 g at the first one. At 150 lb and 0.8 g/lb, that's 120 g a day. If you have kidney issues or other conditions, check with your doctor first.

- **Fast fiber add-ons**

  1–2 tablespoons of chia (5 g each), a cup of raspberries (8 g) or a pear (6–7 g). Any two of these covers the 10 g that Shah links to the longevity benefit.

- **Label scan order**

  Protein (add a zero and compare to calories), added sugar, serving size, calories, then trans fats.

- **Book**

  Hormone Havoc by Dr. Amy Shah lays out the 30/30/3 plan with exact meals for those who want a full plan.

Stop Wasting Your Time: The Scientific Way to Stop Procrastination and Get Control of Your Day

Guest: Laura Vanderkam
Date: 2026-02-02 · Duration: 1:21:39
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ccY2DaPEB9s

KEYPOINTS

• Think in 168-hour weeks, not 24-hour days.
Time-diary researcher Laura Vanderkam points out that nobody actually multiplies 24/7: it comes to 168 hours. Take away a 40-hour job and 8 hours of sleep a night (56 hours) and you still have 72 hours for everything else. Those hours aren't free, since caregiving, housework and community duties live there, but asking 'could I find 3 hours to read or 2 hours with friends in 72?' changes what seems possible. A week includes both your Tuesday and your Saturday, so it's the real cycle of your life.

• Her nine rules were tested, not just recommended.
About 150 people learned one rule a week for nine weeks. Their overall time-satisfaction scores rose 16%, and satisfaction with how they spent 'yesterday' rose 17%. Vanderkam admits that doesn't sound huge but says feeling 16% better about your time is not nothing, and the gains build on each other.

• Rule 1: Give yourself a bedtime.
In her logs, people averaged 49–56 hours of sleep a week (7–8 a night) yet still felt exhausted. The problem was inconsistency: about a quarter of people had a 90-minute gap between Tuesday and Wednesday nights. Adults set wake-up alarms but rarely bedtimes, so work backwards: need 8 hours and a 6:00 a.m. wake-up, be asleep by 10:00. She says it's just math and has 'nothing to do with what kind of person you are.'

• Rule 2: Plan on Fridays.
The most important part is planning at all. Look at the next week and ask what is most important to you professionally and personally, roughly when it can happen and what logistics need to be worked out. If Sunday planning works for you, keep it. But Friday afternoon is usually low-value 'sliding into the weekend' time, you can still reach colleagues to fix problems, and Mel suspects Sunday planning feeds her Sunday scaries.

• Rule 3: Move by 3 p.m.
Short bursts of activity raise energy rather than draining it, so build some movement into the early afternoon before the slump sets in. A brisk walk counts; it doesn't have to be hard cardio.

• Rule 4: Three times a week is a habit.
Because we live our lives in weeks, 'daily' goals set you up to feel like a failure the first day you miss. Three or four times a week is doable and can still become part of your identity. It also fits Friday planning: if family dinner works on two nights, look for a third.

• Rule 5: Create a backup slot.
Borrowed from the rain date on an outdoor invitation, which admits that predictable things go wrong. If you want to work out three times a week, block Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday and Sunday. If the extra slot isn't needed, use it for something else. Things stop festering on your to-do list, and life feels calmer because what you plan usually does happen.

• Rule 6: One big adventure, one little adventure each week.
Routines make good choices automatic, but too much sameness turns whole years into 'memory sinkholes'; we don't ask where the time went when we remember it. A big adventure means a couple of hours, maybe half a weekend day, not a flight to Italy. A little one can take under an hour on a lunch break or weeknight.

• Rule 7: Take one night for you.
This is the rule busy people push back on most: roughly two hours a week for something that isn't work or caregiving and that you enjoy for its own sake. Vanderkam sings in a choir. If no one else could cover for you for two hours, she argues that's a fragile situation that needs a backup system anyway, and she says taking the time changes how you see time.

• Rule 8: Give little things less time by batching them.
Mid-task thoughts like 'did I send the permission slip?' and 'did I book the tickets?' wreck your focus. Write them down, get back to work, then plow through the list in one 30-minute block at a low-energy time such as 4:00 p.m. That protects your prime hours for work that matters.

• Rule 9: Effortful fun before effortless fun.
Effortless fun such as scrolling Instagram needs no planning and fills any amount of time. Effortful fun such as reading, calling a friend, a puzzle or a hobby needs a little activation energy. People say they have no time to read while their screen-time report shows 3 hours a day, accumulated in small bits at low-energy moments. She doesn't ban scrolling; just do a bit of effortful fun first.

EXAMPLES

• From 3 to 9 in five minutes
In a study Vanderkam loves (not her own), people who rated their energy at 3 out of 10 ran up and down office stairs for about five minutes and afterwards rated themselves around 9.

• The Da Vinci Code
About 20 years ago she somehow found roughly 10 hours to read it over three days. When something grips you, the time appears, which is why a page-turner beats a 'worthy' book for building a reading habit.

• Mel's library donation
Mid-conversation Mel remembered a donation form she still hadn't filled out two weeks later. It's a perfect example of a small task that should go on the batch list instead of derailing her.

• Pockets of joy

Read 30 minutes before bed, use 15 minutes of a lunch break for something fun, or take the 15 minutes before your family gets home to sit on the deck or by a favorite window instead of rushing laundry. Twenty good minutes of reading often sends people looking for an hour.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Friday planning questions**
  What needs to happen? What do I want to happen? When roughly can it happen? What logistics need solving? Add your three-times-a-week habits, a backup slot and one big plus one little adventure.
- **Bedtime formula**
  Wake time minus the hours of sleep you need equals the time you should be asleep. Keep it the same every night to avoid the 90-minute swings.
- **Book**
  Tranquility by Tuesday by Laura Vanderkam, where the nine rules come from.

This Conversation Will Change How You Think About Your Entire Life

Guest: Ocean Vuong
Date: 2026-01-26 · Duration: 1:26:55
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M6MzKYP9XeI

KEYPOINTS

• A meaningful life is about finding value where you are, not proving your worth

Ocean Vuong is a poet, novelist (On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous, The Emperor of Gladness), MacArthur 'genius grant' recipient and tenured NYU creative-writing professor. He says meaning is not a life used to prove to yourself or others that you're valuable. 'No one has to escape to be worthy.' Wherever you are, if you can still give and receive love, it's enough.

• Dignity means owning the parts others told you to throw away

Raised in Hartford, Connecticut, by illiterate women who worked in nail salons after leaving Vietnam, he came to see his family's struggles as 'sites of innovation and creative struggle'. Dignity, to him, is looking at what people said you should discard, realising it is always part of you, and being proud of it rather than carrying shame.

• Poverty makes people believe they are bad people

At 10 or 11, his mother apologised at bedtime that the family was 'so stupid': after 10 years in the US, other Vietnamese families had businesses and homes in Houston and LA. He remembers her counting how many tomatoes she could afford at the grocery store. He says shame runs through much of American life, especially for the poor.

• 'The hardest thing in the world is to live only once'

Mel asked about the first line of The Emperor of Gladness. Vuong says living once means you have to account for what you owe the people you love and your community, and live with that care. He contrasts it with 'YOLO', which treats one life as licence to 'smash it all'.

• He became a writer out of failure and shame

Expected to be his family's 'superhero' in business, the only English reader and the only possible college graduate, he dropped out of a New York business school after about four weeks. Too ashamed to go home empty-handed, he slept in Penn Station for two weeks, then enrolled at Brooklyn College. Now 37, he says half his life was 'absolute loss' and he's been 'in the whipped cream' of it for 20 years.

• Your younger self is the pebble; you are the ripple

He tells students to remember why they started: the moment a poem took their 'head off', as Emily Dickinson put it. Bring that younger person 'into the room', because they got you here without knowing what a professor or a CV was. When you wonder 'why am I in this rat race?', collaborate with them and thank them.

• Fear of cringe is crushing a generation's creativity

Having taught only Gen Z for 11 years, he sees graduate students arrive visibly beaten down and afraid. He blames meme culture, which turns 'a human being with a historical life' into an object for a group chat. He wants them to see failure as a necessary procedure of growth, not judgment as punishment, and not treat school as a factory that fixes weak poems.

• You can't hold self-hatred and compassion at once

He describes 'sequential thinking' from Buddhist psychology: you hold one emotion at a time, like a ball, and must put one down to pick up another. Holding your own suffering makes you suffer more; holding someone else's brings compassion. He admits some days he 'just doesn't have enough to go there'.

• Empathy as an endgame is a trap; kindness is empathy in action

Feeling for others can leave us complacent. Kindness is acting on 'our debt to each other'. He loves a religious line he half-remembers about being 'given ourselves'. Mel builds on it: purpose is recognising you've been given to yourself, then giving yourself to others through service.

• Ordinary lives are triumphs too

He wrote The Emperor of Gladness because the stories around him were only about poor people escaping. He wanted to honour people who stay, such as shift workers who pile into a van off the clock to watch their manager wrestle at a bar.

EXAMPLES

• His stepfather's screws

A refugee who spent seven days on a boat, his stepfather made the same screw for gas pumps for about 30 years until the company moved overseas. He then made a smaller screw at a Connecticut gun factory, working 3pm to midnight and hanging his uniform on a thumbtack in a rental they couldn't paint. Young Ocean thought 'that can't be me'; the retired stepfather calls it his triumph.

• Chicken nuggets in a McDonald's parking lot

His mother died seven months after a stage-four diagnosis. When he asked what her life had been, she named tiny moments, like eating nuggets with him in the car after work, a memory he'd forgotten. He started the novel seven weeks after her death: 'it's not about the big things.'

• The tobacco farm and McDonald's

At 15 he worked a tobacco farm for $9.50 an hour cash when minimum wage was $7.15. Living in Section 8 housing, his mother 'crunched the numbers' and told him he needed a McDonald's job at 16, far from the American-dream script of following your destiny.

• Mel's meditation in real time

Hearing him describe hoping his sister has a good day, Mel thought of her parents, who had just suddenly lost a close friend, and hoped they were surrounded by people. 'Everything self-centred disappeared,' and she planned to call them right after the taping.

• The rosebud and the rose

On day one he tells students they're in the unnamed space between rosebud and rose for the 14-week term. At the end, on a

count of three, they say 'thank you' to themselves aloud, because no one else will.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Copy out writing you love**
  When your inner language turns toxic ('I'm not enough'), hand-copy favourite poems or passages, his examples being Federico García Lorca, Toni Morrison and Mary Oliver. It puts you in someone else's head, like monks tracing psalms.
- **Radiating-outward check-in**
  When you notice self-focused distress, think of someone close and their struggle (his brother being yelled at in a retail job), say 'I hope they're okay today', then widen to your community.
- **Say thank you to your younger self daily**
  Each morning or writing session, picture the version of you who first set the intention and thank them out loud.
- **Define 'enough' by your values**
  If you wake up and drive your grandmother to her doctor's appointment, you have enough where you are, and that grounding in your values is where your power is. Mel says that's where she is now: when people ask what's next after the book and podcast, her answer is more time and presence with the people she loves.

The Science of Self Control: Find Motivation, Increase Your Focus, and Hack Dopamine

Guest: Dr. Anna Lembke
Date: 2026-01-22 · Duration: 1:19:23
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E4rTyhYfZhE

KEYPOINTS

• Dopamine is the brain's 'wanting' chemical, not a happiness chemical.
Dr. Lembke, a Stanford psychiatry and addiction medicine professor, describes dopamine as central to pleasure, reward and motivation. It evolved to push us toward food, shelter and a mate, and it makes us 'the ultimate seekers' who are never satisfied and always want more. In addiction, a drug or behavior hijacks that same reward pathway.

• Modern life has made almost everything more accessible, potent and novel, so nearly anyone can get hooked on something.
Her point is that the problem is not weak character but supply. Substances, gambling, social media, video games, online shopping, work and even other people have been made easier to reach and more intense. That is why she says we are vulnerable to getting addicted to 'just about anything,' and why constant quick hits from a phone leave people feeling out of whack.

• Pleasure and pain are processed in the same brain regions and work like a seesaw.
Her central picture is a balance. When you do something pleasurable it tips toward pleasure, then the brain works to level it by tipping an equal amount toward pain: the comedown, the 'one more' feeling. She uses the image of gremlins jumping onto the pain side to explain craving after the fun ends.

• Rule one: any shift away from balance is a stressor, and the brain will push you back to level.
You can get back to level two ways. You can wait for the gremlins to hop off on their own, or you can have more potato chips, which levels you faster. More of the pleasure is the tempting option because it works in the moment, and that is the trap.

• Rule two: with repeated use, the pleasure gets weaker and shorter while the pain afterward gets stronger and longer.
Over days, months and years the gremlins multiply ('Arnold Schwarzenegger gremlins') and eventually 'camp out' on the pain side. Your joy set point shifts, so you need more and stronger forms of your drug just to feel normal, not to feel good. Without it you walk around tilted toward pain: anxious, irritable and unable to enjoy ordinary things.

• A lot of everyday compulsive behavior sits below clinical addiction but still has a grip on you.
She sets out a middle range: you have lost some control, you regret it and you find it hard to stop, but you can stop if you really set your mind to it. Mel's examples include two hours of mindless scrolling, obsessively checking someone's location, or a lost evening on the couch with the phone and TV. Short-form video and social media activate the same reward pathway as drugs and alcohol.

• Willpower alone won't work, so plan ahead with 'self-binding' barriers.
If we have to choose between pleasure and pain in the moment, we will almost always choose pleasure unless we planned for that moment. Self-binding means putting physical, time-based or mental barriers between you and your drug of choice so there is a pause between wanting it and having it. The plan starts the night before.

• Leaning into discomfort on purpose can bring back natural reward.
Pressing on the pain side through exercise, hard tasks or even just getting out of bed may make the brain produce its own feel-good chemicals, dopamine included, so you 'pay up front' and get the reward later. Runner's high is her classic example: exercise causes minor cell stress and the body responds by turning up feel-good chemistry. She presents the gremlin model as a metaphor, not literal brain anatomy.

• A reset takes about four weeks, and craving means it is working.
Acute withdrawal brings anxiety, irritability, insomnia, low mood and intense craving, and for most people the worst of it lasts about 14 days. In her clinical experience about 80% of people feel better and crave less after three to four weeks, but many who stop at two weeks or less never get past the hump. She reframes a 'dopamine fast' as moving toward a better life, not denying yourself.

• Boredom is uncomfortable but valuable.
Boredom hurts partly because we are used to overstimulation, and partly because it raises big questions like 'why am I doing this?' that our distractions normally drown out. Boring activities like walking or stretching let the brain rest, and they let you get your attention and your presence back.

EXAMPLES

• Lembke's romance-novel habit in her early 40s
An expert in addiction medicine, she didn't see it progressing. She needed more and more graphic content, stayed up later, was tired the next day and was mentally preoccupied. She read between patients instead of documenting, stayed in the room through a family beach vacation, and hid in a room at a neighborhood party to read. She was less present for her family and her patients.

• Empty-nest texting
As a new empty nester she noticed herself reaching out to her kids to soothe her own discomfort, then ruminating when they weren't doing well. She says the subtle harm is that her kids can feel unable to tell her when things are going badly, because 'we have to be doing well for her to be okay.' Her test: am I reaching out to connect, or to relieve my own discomfort, the way I'd grab a glass of wine?

• Mel's audiobook spiral
Mel recognized herself in the story through graphic-audio adult fantasy series (she mentions the Court of Thorns and Roses books). She says Lembke's description of tolerance and preoccupation sounds like 'everybody's basic use of their phone.'

- **Teens quitting social media**
  Lembke cites studies where teenagers who got off social media felt less depressed, anxious and lonely, but only after about three to four weeks of abstaining.
- **Exercise during drug withdrawal**
  She points to studies where people withdrawing from alcohol and drugs who did vigorous exercise had fewer withdrawal symptoms, recovered more strongly and lowered their risk of relapse.
- **The 'just 15 minutes' video trap**
  After busy clinic days she plans to watch one video and is still watching two or three hours later. Her lesson is that exhausted days are exactly when to avoid cheap pleasures, because you won't be able to moderate them.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Night-before plan**
  No devices in the bedroom or within easy reach. Decide how you'll start the day with a little 'pain': get out of bed, then exercise, meditate or do mind-body work before any pleasure. Mel charges her phone in a kitchen spot, doesn't check it first thing, and says she follows her morning ritual about 85% of the time.
- **Phone barriers**
  Turn off notifications, switch to grayscale, and move apps you need onto a laptop so they're less portable. Mel started by simply not looking at her phone while standing in lines.
- **A 4-week abstinence trial on anything**
  Pick one habit, such as sleeping next to your phone, location-checking or ultra-processed snacks, and stop it for four weeks. Expect the first two weeks to feel worse. She is not saying never have a drink or a cupcake; moderation is fine once you're reset.
- **Undrugify your kitchen**
  Keep whole, minimally processed foods at home. Fat, salt, sugar and added flavorings create dopamine spikes that keep you eating past full.
- **Calm down without your drug**
  On draining days, plan a walk, a friend, meditation or stretching ahead of time instead of scrolling or watching TV, which she argues aren't actually restful for the brain.

5 Money Rules That Will Change Your Life & Create Financial Freedom

Guest: David Bach
Date: 2026-01-19 · Duration: 1:09:51
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uysZfSEmeRE

KEYPOINTS

• Either you have a plan for your money or someone else does

David Bach, author of The Automatic Millionaire, has spent 30 years teaching personal finance. He says seven in 10 Americans live paycheck to paycheck: picture seven of every ten houses on a street. The 'automatic economy' of subscriptions and autopay either makes you rich or keeps you poor, and whether yours works for you or against you is up to you.

• Making more money won't make you rich unless you keep some

He calls this the biggest money myth. His core rule is to pay yourself first, automatically, with the first hour of every workday's income. That's about 12.5% of gross pay, sent to a pre-tax retirement account (a 401(k) or IRA) before you ever see it. Because the money skips income tax, it costs you closer to 75 cents per dollar saved.

• There's evidence that ordinary people get there

Bach cites Fidelity data showing about 565,000 people are 401(k) millionaires, averaging $1.4 million. On average they took 26 years, are 59 years old, and saved about 14% of gross income (roughly an hour and 10 minutes a day) plus employer matches. 'You don't get rich in days. You get rich in decades.' He notes about $44 trillion now sits in US retirement accounts.

• Rip the band-aid off, or climb 1% at a time

Ideally you jump straight to 12–14%. He says you notice it the first month, less the second, and not at all by the third. If that's impossible, raise your contribution by 1% at a time. Even monthly 1% steps get you to 12% within a year, about four times what he says the average American with a retirement account saves.

• No 401(k)? Automate a Roth IRA yourself

Many workers lack automatic retirement plans, so you have to set one up. Pick a firm (he lists Fidelity, Schwab, Vanguard and others), open a Roth IRA, which he says has a $7,500 limit this year and grows and comes out tax-free, and have $50–$200 pulled automatically on each payday. Keep everything at one firm to make it easy.

• Build three automated buckets

Retirement is the first bucket, at 12–14%. Second, a 'security' account for emergencies, held in a liquid money market fund paying about 4% at the time of recording. Third, a 'dream account' for things like a trip to Mexico. 'The way dreams come true is you fund for them.'

• Keep investing boring

Most 401(k)s default to a target-date fund, a professionally managed mix of stocks and bonds that rebalances toward your retirement year. Outside that, he favors broad index funds such as Vanguard's Total Stock Market ETF (VTI), which owns about 3,500–3,600 companies, making you 'an owner of America.' He calls real estate and stocks the two 'escalators to wealth.'

• 'Take risks while you're young' is a myth

Young people hear that advice on social media and pour money into meme stocks, meme coins and NFTs. They lose it all, save again, lose again, and by their early 30s decide 'this game's rigged' and stop investing. If they'd bought an index fund, he says, they'd have something to show for it.

• Never cash out a 401(k) when you change jobs

People cash out small balances, say $10,000, for a trip, and lose much of it to taxes and penalties. He says that $10,000 alone could be worth $50,000–$100,000 in 40 years. Do a rollover into your new plan or an IRA instead.

EXAMPLES

• The Milwaukee couple

Middle-class savers in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. At 30, the wife decided she didn't want to retire somewhere 'so freaking cold' and wanted Florida or California. They followed an automatic plan for three decades to get there.

• Grandma, McDonald's and the ticker MCD

At seven, Bach's grandmother told him there are three kinds of people at McDonald's: consumers, employees and owners. Then she took him home, circled MCD in the Wall Street Journal, and helped him buy his first stock. He bought Disney at nine. Today his kids hold small ETF portfolios like his, a bit more aggressive.

• $12,000 of college debt

As a college junior, Bach had about $12,000 in credit card debt 'on stupid stuff' and remembers the room spinning when he opened a bill. Mel shares the same habit of not opening bills, which Bach calls 'total denial.'

• His father's death

Bach's dad died in August. He had handled all the money and brushed off pleas to 'automate everything so Mom's okay.' After the funeral, the family had to sit in his office and track down every account, card and bill. Bach, 58, has also lost three best friends in two years, which is why he says 'live rich now.'

• $27.40 a day

$10,000, the answer people most often give to 'what amount would change your life?', is $27.40 a day. Bach says that amount invested for 40 years at the stock market's historical ~10% average could reach about $4.4 million. That's his illustration, not a guarantee.

OTHER RELEVANT

• DOLP your credit cards

'Done On Last Payment.' Find out how many months each card will take to pay off at minimum payments. Then pay off the smallest balance first, even before a 29% card, to cut the number of cards fast. Stop opening new cards, including store cards, because late fees (~$30) and rate hikes are traps. Be careful with 0% balance transfers, since one late payment can spike the

rate. Ask card companies to move due dates to line up with your paydays.

- **Run the 'what if my spouse died tomorrow?' drill**
  Each partner should know every account, every password, any old 401(k)s left at past jobs, and where the bills are paid. Before suggesting a divorce, know where all the money is.
- **Expensive city? Buy the smallest place you can**
  If you want to own in a pricey city, buy a studio or the smallest place you can get into, even if it's 10 minutes farther out.
- **Have a money date**
  Bach suggests sitting down together to listen to an episode like this and then making your plan.

The Ultimate Guide to Menopause: How to Boost Your Metabolism, Build Muscle, & Balance Your Hormones

Guest: Dr. Stacy Sims
Date: 2026-01-15 · Duration: 1:07:24
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x8TAAzTQHmE

KEYPOINTS

• Menopause is one day on the calendar.
Exercise physiologist and nutrition scientist Dr. Stacy Sims calls it 'another birthday': the day that marks 12 straight months without a period. Everything before it is perimenopause and everything after is postmenopause. Her message is that it's a transition into a new biological state, and with the right tools women have another 40 years to thrive. 'Women don't die at 40.'

• Estrogen is a key in locks all over the body, so losing it shows up everywhere.
Sims explains that brain, muscle, gut and fat tissue all carry estrogen receptors. When estrogen falls, those receptors are 'looking' for it, which helps explain brain fog and mood changes. She calls progesterone the 'Cinderella hormone': rarely discussed, but it moderates estrogen. In perimenopause, estrogen can pulse daily and cycles without ovulation produce no progesterone, which drives cravings for carbs and salt.

• Muscle loss and visceral fat are mechanical consequences, not personal failures.
Estrogen drives satellite-cell development (the feeder for new muscle cells) and the strength of muscle contractions, so many women suddenly feel 'squishy and weak' and can't open a pickle jar. Fat also shifts from under the skin to visceral fat packed around the organs. That 'menopot' is deep, dangerous fat, not the easy-to-move kind, and the right exercise intensity sends signals to the liver not to store it.

• Hormone therapy helps, but it slows change rather than stopping it.
Sims believes menopause hormone therapy is a powerful tool every woman should at least discuss with a medical professional, including its risks and benefits. But replacement doses don't reproduce your body's own varying levels and pulses, so it only slows the rate of change. Strength training is her number-one tool on top of it.

• Start strength training with just 10 minutes, three times a week.
Beginners should 'move against load', using body weight or light dumbbells for functional moves like squats, push-ups and overhead presses. The early gains come from neural adaptation: your nerves learn to recruit muscle. Some soreness is a sign you're adapting. Then build toward the ideal over time.

• The ideal: heavy full-body lifting three times a week, with long rests.
Sims uses rating of perceived exertion (RPE): a set should feel like an 8 out of 10, about 80% of your max, and that number changes day to day. You rest a full 3 minutes between sets because you're training your nervous system, not chasing a metabolic burn. Each session focuses on one main lift, such as squats on Monday.

• Moderate-intensity cardio is the mistake.
Sims says many group classes keep women at moderate intensity for 45–50 minutes. That's 'too easy to be hard enough to invoke change, and too hard to be easy enough to recover from.' Women leave feeling smashed but end up 'tired but wired': poor sleep, no loss of belly fat, more injuries and higher cortisol, which estrogen and progesterone are no longer around to help break down.

• Use real intensity: sprint intervals or true HIIT.
Sprint interval training means going as hard as possible for 30 seconds or less (some people manage 20), then recovering for a full 90 seconds to 2 minutes so the next sprint is just as hard. True HIIT uses longer intervals of 1–4 minutes with variable recovery, and she calls it polarized training: hard, then genuinely easy. Either can be a 'finisher' after lifting, on an assault bike or battle ropes.

• Stressed, busy women usually under-eat, especially protein and carbs.
Sims recommends about 1 gram of protein per pound of current body weight, coming down as weight comes down. She also says women need more carbohydrate, not less. Cutting carbs often means cutting fruit and vegetables, which are food for the gut. Stress-driven cortisol makes the brain crave quick sugar when the body actually needs protein.

• Pick one of four buckets and work on it for 2–3 weeks.
The buckets are mindfulness and sleep, physical activity, nutrition, and community. Hormonal shifts keep the nervous system sympathetically driven, which blocks deep restorative sleep. Sims cites recent research suggesting cognitive behavioral therapy for sleep can be more powerful than hormone therapy or supplements, and mindfulness is the piece anyone can start on.

EXAMPLES

• The mid-40s client doing 'all the things'
A woman exercising hard and eating 'clean' was still gaining fat, so she cut calories and added training. Sims told her to train less and eat more. The client was sure that would make her fat; Sims says chronic under-fueling is the real problem.

• A squat day prescription
3 sets of 5 at 80% (an RPE of 8), each set started on a 3-minute clock with the remainder spent resting, then 2 sets of 3 at about 85%, close to a 9. That's 15 minutes of heavy work: 'If that's all you have time for, good. Out of there.'

• Mel's 150 g protein worry
Mel didn't want to eat 15 eggs. Sims suggested building a lunch salad with green peas, nuts, seeds, black beans, a little feta and some chicken for about 30–40 g. Do that a few times a day to reach about 120 g, and add a protein coffee to reach about 150 g.

• The overnight protein coffee
Stir protein powder into your milk of choice, add espresso and refrigerate it overnight. In the morning you have an iced coffee with about 30 g of protein that 'tastes like a smoothie' to take on a walk or the school run.

• Five minutes in the car

Sims protects early-morning quiet before anyone's up. She says you don't need a 4:30 a.m. alarm: sitting in the car with the windows up for 5–10 minutes after school drop-off works too.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Sprint finisher

After lifting, do 30 seconds as hard as you can on a bike or battle ropes, then 90–120 seconds of full recovery, for a few rounds. Skip long moderate classes.

• Sleep supplements she mentions

L-theanine and apigenin (a compound in chamomile), taken together before bed to encourage parasympathetic 'calm' activation and reduce anxiety. This is her suggestion; check with your clinician, especially if you take other medications.

• Talk to a clinician about hormone therapy

Sims wants every woman to understand the options, risks and benefits, while knowing that lifting, sprints, food and sleep still matter.

Married, Dating, or Single: The Best Relationship Advice You Will Ever Receive

Guest: Terry Real
Date: 2026-01-12 · Duration: 1:29:46
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YDIHSLf9qzw

KEYPOINTS

• We expect more from relationships than ever, without the skills to deliver it

Terry Real, a family therapist for 40 years and founder of Relational Life Therapy, says people now want to be 'lifelong lovers,' with intimacy and great sex in their 70s and 80s. They're trying to do it in a patriarchal, individualistic culture that doesn't cherish relationships. He'd like relationship skills taught in elementary school. Getting the love you want 'literally means being a pioneer.'

• Ask for what you want instead of criticizing what's wrong

His 'relationship technology' starts simple. Tell the truth. Teach your partner what you want ('I'd rather you do it this way, honey'). When they start doing it, reward them, even if it's a 'half-ass job.' Complaining about how miserable they've made you is 'about the worst way' to motivate someone. You wouldn't train a dog by only punishing it.

• Real intimacy means moving past traditional gender roles

Real describes two forms of control. 'One-up' control ('sit down, shut up, do what I tell you') is more traditionally male. Control from the 'one-down' (codependency, enabling, managing your partner) is more traditionally female. Men need to move into vulnerability, and women need to move out of 'resentful accommodation': going along with things while seething.

• Every relationship is harmony, disharmony and repair, and most skip repair

Disharmony is normal, though our culture treats a good relationship as all harmony, so we feel bitterly disappointed and aim it at our partner. Most couples cycle between harmony and disharmony with no repair, because repair takes skills nobody taught them. He adds that 'we all marry our unfinished business,' which is why relationships can heal us.

• The key question is which part of you is talking

Real's most important clinical question isn't what the stressors or patterns are. It's whether he's talking to your 'wise adult' or your 'adaptive child,' the strategies you built as a kid. The prefrontal cortex isn't fully developed until about 26, and when you're triggered, the younger part takes the wheel.

• First skill: relational mindfulness

Most of us tolerate the hurt of a rupture for about 10 seconds before falling into our automatic reaction, which doesn't work. When flooded, take a break: walk around the block or take 10 breaths. Agree in advance that either of you can say 'I'm flooded, see you in 20 minutes,' and let your partner go. 'Don't corner an animal.'

• Going one-up feels good and wrecks your marriage

When hurt, we jump from shame and helplessness into righteous anger ('What kind of person does that?'). Real calls it 'devilish' because grandiosity feels better than the wound. Quoting Gabor Maté: 'you don't see the wound, you see the scar.' Remedy: if you're one-up, yield and get vulnerable. If you're one-down, find courage and speak up. Aim for 'democracy,' a 'we.'

• Reparent yourself instead of demanding your partner do it

We marry people hoping they'll give us what we missed as kids, then fight when they don't. Real's 'new news': they won't. Speak to your inner child directly, as in 'Chris may be abandoning you right now, but I'm not. I got you, kid.' Maturity, he says, is dealing with your inner children instead of making your partner deal with them.

• Nagging can be a defense against closeness

To a listener who has become 'the critic' after 11 years, he asks who the complainer was in her family growing up. Picking at a partner can feel safer than receiving love, because closeness can itself be trauma-triggering. Once the behavior changes, you have to let the good in.

EXAMPLES

• Mel's resentful accommodation

During the Robbins family's financial crisis, Chris 'cratered,' feeling he'd failed as a provider and lost people money. As he collapsed, Mel grew more resentful, believing it was all on her to save them. She now says every big fight in her 29-year marriage traces to feeling 'alone and that it's all on me,' like 'clockwork.'

• The dead flowers

Mel's test case: coming home after 10 days away to dead flowers in dirty water on the kitchen island. Instead of 'You son of a...', Real coaches her to say 'I don't feel cared about' and to name loneliness and helplessness before anger. 'Take the feeling that comes first and put it last.'

• The forgotten pumpernickel

A client who grew up lying to escape his controlling military father kept lying to his wife. Real had him put his inner '8-year-old' behind him: 'You're not five anymore and your wife isn't your dad.' Sent for 12 groceries, the man came back with 11, and every nerve said to claim the store was out. Instead he took a breath and admitted, 'I forgot the goddamn pumpernickel.' The couple returned two weeks later hand in hand.

• 'Oh, that's Harry'

An older woman in a long, happy marriage told Real the first 15 were hell because she kept trying to change her husband. One day she looked at him and thought, 'Oh, that's Harry,' and they've been fine ever since.

• Chris, his mom and Mel's anger

One of Mel's biggest marital fights was over Chris confiding their struggles to his mother. Mel felt betrayed, as if she were now married to 'her son.' Real agrees you don't want your in-laws hearing your partner vent about you.

OTHER RELEVANT

• His four-step feedback script

'This is what happened. This is what I told myself. This is how I felt. This is what I want.' In step three, lead with the vulnerable

feeling and put anger last.

- **When you blow it anyway**

  Real says even he and his wife Belinda sometimes both lose their wise adults. Expect the wheels to come off. Then get back to your adult self, make amends, apologize and 'own your stuff.'

- **Train your friends to support the relationship**

  Venting to friends who cheer your righteous anger makes you 'more of a fighter.' Tell them 'I love him, I want this to work,' and choose friends who'll ask 'have you thought you might...?'

- **Helping a depressed partner**

  Real, who wrote one of the first books on male depression in the 1990s, says waiting for him to 'call the doctor' rarely works. Offer to make the call, drive together, or suggest couples therapy: 'We need help.'

The Science of Making & Breaking Habits: How to Change Your Life in 1 Month

Guest: James Clear
Date: 2026-01-08 · Duration: 1:26:19
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8dHEG7WxR4c

KEYPOINTS

• If habits aren't sticking, fix the system, not your willpower

James Clear, author of Atomic Habits (about 25 million copies sold), says bad habits repeat because your system is designed to produce them. 'Fix the inputs and the outputs will fix themselves.' Change the daily habits and you'll be led to a different destination.

• Think in '10 years and 1 hour'

Ten years stands for the big multi-year things you care about: a marriage you're proud of, a thriving business, the best shape of your life. One hour asks what you can do in the next hour that contributes to it. Hold a long-term vision with a bias for short-term action, and never let a day pass without something that benefits you in a decade. He says you usually see shocking progress within a year or two.

• Tiny improvements compound

1% better daily for a year is 1.01^365, about 37.78 times better; 1% worse daily drives you to about 0.03. Ten minutes of reading today changes nothing, but someone who always goes to bed a little smarter gains real wisdom over 10–30 years. Work consistently on almost anything for about two years and you'll likely be in the top 1–5%, though that won't put you in the NBA.

• Start with identity: ask 'who do I want to become?'

He pictures behaviour change as an onion: results on the outside (lose 40 pounds), actions in the middle (the diet plan), identity at the core. Instead of chasing the number, ask who could lose 40 pounds, perhaps 'the type of person who doesn't miss workouts', and focus on being that person.

• Don't confuse motion with action

Motion makes you feel like you're making progress; action is behaviour that can actually produce the result. Designing a logo for a new business is motion because it will never land a paying customer. The business still needs a logo, but know which one you're doing.

• Make it easy: lower the 'activation energy'

A goal of 100 push-ups a day needs lots of motivation at 9pm if you haven't done them; 10 push-ups is doable. He notes the 'same 24 hours' line misleads, since most people control only one to three hours a day. Starting small fits the time you actually have.

• Reduce the scope, but stick to the schedule

When a 45-minute workout shrinks to 15 minutes, he no longer skips it. He changes, goes to his basement gym and does one set of squats. He says bad days matter more than good ones because showing up keeps the habit alive, while a zero can turn one missed day into five days or three months. Ask 'what can I stick to even on bad days?', not 'what can I do on my best day?'

• Habits can change shape with the season

For his first three years he wrote two roughly 2,000-word articles a week, then spent three years on the book, and for the last five years has written a weekly newsletter. None of that, he says, was his writing habit failing. Give yourself permission for habits to shift with life.

• Every habit runs on cue, craving, response, reward

The four laws map onto that loop: make it obvious, attractive, easy and satisfying. Bad habits solve real recurring problems. Coming home exhausted at 5:30pm, one person scrolls Instagram for 30 minutes, another smokes, another runs; same root problem, different solutions.

• To break a bad habit: eliminate, reduce or replace

You can quit cold turkey, cut back to the level you want (most people's goal with phones) or substitute a healthier habit that solves the same problem. Being around people who already have your desired behaviours helps, even if you have to find the courage to gather that group yourself.

• Make it fun and be willing to be uncomfortable early

People who treat a habit as a chore quit when it gets hard. Mel struggles to motivate herself to exercise but finds classes fun, so asking 'what would this look like if it were fun?' changed things. Clear says the gym feels foolish on day one and like 'my territory' years later, and the only route is a little early discomfort: 'Are you willing to be uncomfortable for three minutes?'

EXAMPLES

• The baseball bat injury

In high school a classmate's bat slipped and hit Clear between the eyes, breaking his nose, both eye sockets and bone deeper in his skull. He was airlifted to hospital, put in an induced coma overnight, and couldn't drive for nine months. In college he came off the bench in year one, started in year two, was captain in year three and an academic All-American in year four, a five-to-six-year arc of small gains.

• Mitch's five-minute gym rule

A reader who lost more than 100 pounds and kept it off for over a decade began with a rule never to stay at the gym longer than five minutes. He would drive there, do half an exercise and drive home, which built the habit of showing up first.

• Phone in another room until lunch

Clear keeps his phone down the hall roughly 9am to noon, managing it about 70% of the time. It's only 30 seconds away, yet he never goes to get it, which shows how much use is driven by convenience rather than desire.

• Mel versus her husband at the gym

Mel's husband and daughter walk into a gym with zero friction, while she wanders around bored. Her motivation is hiking into

her 90s and dancing at grandkids' weddings; what actually works is a class, because it's fun.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **The two-minute rule**
  Shrink any habit to two minutes or less: meditate 20 minutes becomes one minute, read 30 books a year becomes one page, yoga four days a week becomes taking out the mat. He quotes Ed Latimore: 'The heaviest weight at the gym is the front door.'
- **Action relieves anxiety**
  Ruminating makes problems grow; one small action means you're shaping the outcome. Procrastination, he says, is 'choosing to delay a better future'.
- **Find the room with your behaviours**
  Join a group whose normal behaviour is the habit you want, or find the courage to gather one yourself.
- **Remember everyone's first attempt was bad**
  Your favourite athlete's first workout, chef's first meal and writer's first sentence were as bad as yours. Use low-stakes daily moments to build capacity, because at 70 you'd give anything to be 60 again.

7 Things You Need to Hear Right Now

Date: 2026-01-05 · Duration: 1:04:30
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-UYbtU-wRvU

KEYPOINTS

- **Being kind doesn't mean being a doormat. You can have a good heart and still tell people off. That's a boundary.**
  Mel says she used to confuse kindness with saying yes to everything and keeping everyone else happy while she was miserable. Covering every shift, hosting the potluck for the third weekend in a row, and always being the one who steps in isn't kindness. In her words, it's how you become 'a tired, resentful shell of a person.' The root problem, she says, is fear that people won't like you if you say no.
- **Resentment and snapping are signs your boundaries are missing.**
  Her warning signs: you're so 'nice' you end up snapping at the dog or crying in the front seat of your car from overwhelm. A boundary protects your energy so the kindness you do give is real, not forced.
- **'You're not lazy. You only have a certain amount of energy right now and you're using it all to survive.'**
  Mel calls this the best thing a therapist ever told her. When caregiving, deadlines, money stress or frightening news eat your capacity, low output isn't a character flaw. It's your energy going to survival. Calling yourself lazy on top of that is both unfair and inaccurate.
- **Giving all of a small amount still counts as giving 100%.**
  She borrows a line from brain coach Jim Kwik: if you only have 40% to give today and you give all 40%, you gave 100% of what you had. On a 20% day, showing up at all deserves 'a gold medal.' After a hard day she wants you to make room for compassion, not criticism.
- **Beating yourself up doesn't motivate you.**
  Mel's audit questions: Does criticizing myself help me feel better? Help me focus? Help me feel motivated to get through my to-do list? The answer is no every time. She frames self-criticism while you're already maxed out as 'torture,' not a strategy.
- **Everyone is going through something, so be kind, and being kind proves to you that you're still you.**
  Remembering that everyone is struggling, including rude people, withdrawn people and the ones smiling, makes you feel less alone and makes other people's behavior feel less personal. Small kindnesses in the middle of your own struggle signal to yourself that life 'has not taken my heart,' your values or you.
- **'I'm not everything I want to be, but I'm a lot of things I wanted to be two years ago.'**
  This reminder moves you from 'I'm not enough yet' to 'I'm improving, and that matters.' Once you're living in your new reality you stop giving yourself credit for getting there. Being unfinished is normal when you're building something new.
- **Take nothing personally. Don't let someone else's nervous system run your day.**
  Drawn from the second agreement in Don Miguel Ruiz's The Four Agreements, this one is aimed at sensitive people who read into a text's tone, slow replies, cancellations or facial expressions. Mel calls sensitivity a gift that can 'ricochet back and hit you in the forehead.' Other people's moods are theirs. Let them be, and you get your power back.
- **Becoming your best self comes with a lot of goodbyes, and most of them happen in the mirror.**
  You can't drag your old life along 'like a busted suitcase with a wheel that's stuck.' That means saying goodbye to draining habits, people who treat you badly, situations and jobs you've outgrown, and versions of yourself that kept you small. Mel stresses that most people get this wrong: it isn't mainly about cutting people off. The biggest goodbyes are to your own mindsets and habits.
- **'Keep in mind there's a clock ticking that you can't see. So love whoever loves you and enjoy your life.'**
  'Later' isn't a real day on the calendar. Calling your mom, apologizing, taking the trip, writing the book and saying 'I love you' all get pushed back. This reminder is meant to make life feel urgent 'in a beautiful way,' so you stop wasting time being annoyed about things that don't matter.

EXAMPLES

- **The over-giver**
  Mel describes a woman who cancels long-awaited weekend plans with friends she hasn't seen in six months because her brother forgot, again, to take their parents to the doctor. 'Someone has to' turns into chronic resentment.
- **Mel's two-year look-back**
  Two years earlier the podcast had just moved out of her house and off the road into its first Boston office, prompted by her sister-in-law. Now there are 55 employees and world-renowned experts coming through the studio, and she admits she gives herself no credit for it. She also says a newer business venture still isn't where she wants it, and calls that normal for something new.
- **Your own two-year inventory**
  She suggests scrolling back through your photos or social media to two years ago. Maybe since then you've lost weight, put yourself out there, written, meditated, learned some AI or updated your resume.
- **Small kindnesses**
  Holding the door for someone carrying groceries, complimenting a cashier's nails, telling a stranger 'I love your socks.' Mel calls these signals to yourself that you still have something to give.
- **Regrets at the end of life**
  Cornell professor Dr. Karl Pillemer, through the Cornell Legacy Project, interviewed thousands of people in their 80s, 90s and 100s. They don't regret not buying a bigger house. They regret not asking for forgiveness, not saying 'I love you' more, and letting relationships fall apart.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Put the reminders where you'll see them**
  Mel suggests using a phrase as a screensaver, a tattoo or a T-shirt so it interrupts the old pattern when you need it.
- **Temporal discounting**
  The tendency to assume you'll have more time, energy and motivation later, so you put off what matters. Naming it helps you act now.
- **Holiday reframe**
  You can spend the next 10 holidays trying to fix your family, or let them be who they are, and who they're not, and put your energy into loving whoever loves you. Mel admits that's not easy, but says it's a choice.
- **The Four Agreements by Don Miguel Ruiz**
  Published in 1997, over 15 million copies sold, 52 languages. Its second agreement is 'don't take anything personally.'

Your Body Reset: The Proven Protocol to Get Stronger, Lose Fat, & Take Control of Your Health

Guest: Dr. Betsy Grunch
Date: 2026-01-01 · Duration: 1:20:53
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JnFWrAA2oxM

KEYPOINTS

• Your spine is held up mostly by muscle

Dr. Betsy Grunch, a neurosurgeon and spine surgeon known online as 'Lady Spine Doc,' stresses that your back isn't just bones, discs, joints and ligaments. It's largely supported by your muscles, so strength and movement are your best protection. She says about 80% of people will have back pain at some point, including young people, and most of it can be managed at home.

• Four things she avoids to protect her back

First, no nicotine, which she calls one of the biggest accelerators of degenerative disc disease. Second, no sedentary lifestyle: move every day, even a 15-minute lunchtime walk. Third, no careless lifting: bend your knees and lift with your legs, even for an Amazon box at the curb. Fourth, no bad sleep posture, since we spend about a third of our lives in bed.

• Sleep on your back or side, not your stomach

The goal is keeping the spine's natural curves in neutral. On your back, put a pillow under your knees to take stress off your pelvis and lower back. On your side, keep a pillow between your knees so your pelvis doesn't twist. She was a lifelong stomach sleeper until pregnancy forced her to stop.

• Sitting still all day sets you up for failure

If you sit 10 hours without moving, your support muscles switch off. Get up every 30–60 minutes. She suggests an affordable desktop converter or a phone timer to remind you to stand, which keeps joints lubricated, blood moving and different muscles engaged. Sit with both feet on the floor, shoulders back and neck back. Crossing your legs is okay if you keep changing position.

• 'Tech neck' multiplies the load on your spine

Your head weighs about 10–15 pounds when upright. Lean forward to look at a phone and the force on your neck rises to as much as 60 pounds. Raise your phone to eye level and prop your monitor up, even on a box, so you look straight ahead. She worries about what years of slumping will do to today's kids.

• Extra weight means extra stress on the spine, hips and knees

Carrying 250 pounds instead of 150 adds load with every step. That's part of why she treats weight loss as spine care, alongside strength.

• Build your core, especially your glutes

Her top exercise is the glute bridge: lie on your back with knees bent and feet on the floor, then lift your hips. Strong glutes support your back. She also recommends the bird dog. Look up videos for form, and consider a session or two with a physical therapist. She sees one herself as a 'healthy 45-year-old.'

• Protein protects muscle

If you don't eat enough protein, she says, your body breaks down muscle to get it. Her target is about 0.8–1 gram per pound of body weight, so roughly 150 grams for a 150-pound person, which she admits most people don't get. That's her recommendation, so check what's right for you with your own clinician.

• Sustainable beats extreme

Crash diets, 30-day challenges and quick transformations aren't realistic. Her change came from habits she could keep forever, and setbacks are part of it. After four weeks off workouts, she ate Waffle House every day and then kept going. She stopped forcing morning workouts because she isn't a morning person.

EXAMPLES

• Her mother's crash

Her mother, one of the town's female police officers, was shot at by gang members on a 2 a.m. call. She swerved, hit a tree, broke her neck and lay undiscovered for about 15 minutes. The neurosurgeon told the family 'she's never going to walk again' and walked away. Now 65 and paralyzed for 30 years, her mom is her 'biggest social media fan' and her inspiration.

• 'A smart fat girl'

With the family focused on her mom, nobody asked how teenage Betsy was doing. She came home to Mountain Dew and Reese's cups, wasn't asked to prom, but was asked for homework help. She became everyone's helper and no one's priority, reaching 260 pounds at her heaviest.

• A postpartum disc injury

After a C-section with a nearly 10-pound baby, overweight and with her core 'destroyed,' she injured a disc and imagined a lifetime of surgeries. She called her doctor, took anti-inflammatories and rested a few days, and it healed on its own, as most disc injuries do. That was her turning point: 'Why wasn't I doing what I tell my patients?'

• The Peloton in the basement

Aiming to lose 100 pounds, she bought a Peloton and found an online community that made her feel less alone. Realizing 'doctors know nothing about nutrition,' she taught herself through books and podcasts. She lost more than 85 pounds.

• Mel's six months of not using the hotel gym

Mel admits she stayed at the same hotel for six months of tapings before trying its gym, then felt too intimidated by the equipment. Grunch's advice: front-desk staff will show you around, most gyms offer a free training session, and once you know your way around, welcome the next nervous newcomer.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Her typical day

Coffee, then eggs and oatmeal with blueberries for antioxidants. Protein and a vegetable at lunch and dinner. A protein shake or bar between surgeries. She preps meals ahead, because 'if I'm left to my own means it's dangerous.'

• Red-flag back symptoms

Bowel or bladder problems or numbness 'down there' mean the ER. Pain shooting down an arm or leg, weakness or numbness means seeing a doctor. She had triceps weakness from a herniated disc in her neck. See someone too if pain isn't improving with home care.

• If a doctor dismisses you

She sees medical gaslighting especially with young women ('you're too young for back pain'). If you feel dismissed, 'you're in the wrong office.' Find someone who listens.

Change Your Life This Year: How to Get From Where You Are to Where You Want to Be

Guest: Dr. Katy Milkman
Date: 2025-12-29 · Duration: 1:13:19
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iHpFwHYDnKE

KEYPOINTS

- **The biggest lie about change is that you just need to try harder or use more willpower.**
  Wharton behavioral scientist Katy Milkman says almost everyone has the wrong mental model: 'there's something wrong with me if I can't push through.' She treats changing as a learnable skill, 'like using an Excel spreadsheet.' It takes strategy, not grit. Most people approach a goal one-size-fits-all instead of designing a plan around what's actually blocking them.
- **Seven common barriers stop people from changing, and each needs a different tool.**
  Drawing on her Behavior Change for Good research center at Penn (co-directed with Angela Duckworth, with about 180 affiliated scientists), she lists them: getting started, impulsivity (wanting instant gratification), procrastination, forgetfulness, laziness (preferring the easy path, including old habits), lack of confidence, and conformity (copying the people around you). She stresses these barriers show up across age, gender, culture and country.
- **Fresh starts give you a burst of motivation to begin, but they don't carry you to the finish line.**
  New Year's, Mondays, birthdays, a new month or a promotion feel like new chapters. We sort time into 'before' and 'after,' feel a bit like a new person, and put distance between ourselves and past failures. Milkman says the reported 80% New Year's resolution failure rate misses the point: a fresh start only gets you going, and you still need tools to keep going.
- **Beat impulsivity by making the good thing fun.**
  'Temptation bundling' pairs something you should do with something you crave but only allow yourself during that activity, like gripping audiobooks only at the gym. Mel's takeaway was that people underestimate how much fun matters to sticking with something.
- **Commitment devices fight procrastination.**
  Put something at stake: for example, 'I'll fine myself $10 if I don't meditate three times this week,' and ask your partner to be the referee. She mentions websites such as Beeminder and stickK (she says she has no affiliation), or you can do it informally.
- **You don't fail because you don't care. You fail because you forget.**
  Economists call it an 'empathy gap': at night we're sure we'll remember tomorrow, then the morning swallows it. She cites 1800s memory research showing about 70% of memorized material is gone within hours. Fixes: checklists, calendar reminders, an email to your future self, and specific plans covering when, where and how.
- **Tie plans to a cue, and plan with someone else.**
  When a reminder can't be timed, link the action to a trigger, like 'when my daughter next calls, I'll do X.' In one study cited, pursuing goals in tandem with a friend worked better because it was more fun, added accountability and forced planning.
- **Use your laziness: make the good choice the default and the bad one hard to reach.**
  Set your browser's homepage to something other than social media, keep good things close, and put friction between you and bad choices. Habits grow out of consistent contexts like the kitchen in the morning. She points to Charles Duhigg's The Power of Habit and James Clear's Atomic Habits on the habit loop.
- **Giving advice builds confidence and helps the advice-giver too.**
  If confidence is your barrier, find someone you can mentor who's working on the same goal, or find a mentor who'll coach you and help you believe in yourself. Explaining what works to someone else reminds you that you already know a lot, and that builds belief in your own ability to follow through.
- **Build in grace and flexibility, because setbacks are normal.**
  There's no silver bullet. Practice habits with some variety, such as different gym times, so you're good at backup plans. A setback 'means there's something right with you. You are human.' Get back on track with a fresh start or a partner.

EXAMPLES

- **Google question that launched the fresh-start research**
  About 15 years ago at Google's Mountain View headquarters, HR leaders asked Milkman whether there's an ideal moment when employees are most open to using benefits like trainings and gyms. That question led to the work with her former student Hengchen Dai, now a UCLA professor, who was lead author. About 40% of Americans make New Year's resolutions.
- **Audiobooks at the gym: 56% more exercise**
  People randomly assigned to have access to tempting audiobooks only while working out exercised 56% more than people given an equally valuable gift certificate. In another study, just suggesting the idea produced lasting increases in exercise.
- **Eight minutes of advice-giving raised grades**
  In a project led by Lauren Eskreis-Winkler, high school students spent eight minutes writing study advice for younger students (how to avoid distraction, where to study, whether to play music). Their grades rose significantly compared with a control group, about one point on a 100-point scale in their target class and in math. Milkman says the effect is small but real.
- **Emergency reserves doubled success**
  Research by Marissa Sharif: people who set a stretch goal of meditating seven days a week with two 'emergency skip' days were about twice as successful as people who simply aimed for five days, even though the targets are identical.
- **Mel's own barriers**
  Hearing the list, Mel identified impulsivity and forgetfulness, which she called 'the bane of my existence.' She realized how often she hopes a change will happen instead of planning when, where and how.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Milkman's starter recipe**
  Set a concrete, measurable, bite-size stretch goal: stretch yourself 'a little, not a lot.' Plan when, where and how you'll do it, make it fun, then add whatever fits your barrier: reminders, a buddy, a mentor or someone to coach.
- **Diagnose before you prescribe**
  Ask which of the seven barriers is tripping you up. Willpower isn't the fix for forgetting, and reminders won't fix a confidence problem.
- **Use any meaningful date**
  Pick a birthday, a Monday or the first of the month to start, and line up your tools before the date arrives.
- **Books mentioned**
  Katy Milkman's own work on behavior change, plus The Power of Habit (Charles Duhigg) and Atomic Habits (James Clear).

You’ll Never See Your Family the Same After This Episode

Guest: Dr. Mariel Buqué
Date: 2025-12-22 · Duration: 1:12:54
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YxbJ-vVGncg

KEYPOINTS

• You're not broken; you may be carrying generations of pain

Dr. Mariel Buqué, a Columbia-trained psychologist and author of Break the Cycle, frames many stuck emotional patterns as inherited family pain rather than personal defects. Her hope is that you can exist in your family in a way that feels nourishing, even if relatives lack the capacity to do their own work: take what you can and leave the rest.

• It's never too late to start

'I'm too old' or 'I've always been this way' is, in her words, fear talking. Her oldest patient started therapy at 84. Mel notes she lived one way for 50 years and changed only in the last few, and Buqué agrees that age doesn't determine the healing you're capable of.

• No two siblings grow up in the same family

Birth order and gender change what each child experiences, so siblings can remember the same household very differently. If a sibling doesn't validate your memories, she says, learn to validate yourself rather than expecting it from them. Siblings who do the work together can make the path feel less lonely.

• Eldest daughters are often 'parentified'

She calls the eldest daughter the prototypical parentified child: the fixer who carries family burdens and parents younger siblings before she's ready. That can rob her of the childhood security of depending on others. Healing means deliberately giving herself what she didn't receive.

• Women tend to suppress, and men to externalise

Buqué links women's socialised emotional suppression to stress load and to conditions where women are over-represented, such as lupus, rheumatoid arthritis and some metabolic conditions. This is her view of a connection, not a simple cause. Men more often show anger outwardly, with hurt and grief underneath. At one point only about 3 of her 75–80 patients were men.

• The first step is naming the truth

Acknowledgement means taking family secrets 'out of the closet' and from under the rug. Confronting a parent comes much later: many clients want to bring their mother into the first session, but she says both people's nervous systems need preparing first.

• Nervous-system regulation is the first task of generational healing

She says small practices throughout the day engage the ventral vagal 'rest' response and settle the stress response. The aim isn't fixing your family but making you steadier in the same environment.

• The real sign of change is buying back one second

She says the brain can take in a triggering comment and bring it to conscious awareness within about 250 milliseconds. A one-second pause therefore gives you the choice between the familiar fight, flee, dissociate or collapse and a response that fits your values. You know you're breaking a cycle, not just talking about it, when you can do this.

• Hold compassion for parents, celebrate small wins, grieve the rest

No one has a perfect parent; it's a myth. Acknowledge what they could give and grieve what they couldn't. You can't expect a 70-year-old mother to heal at your pace, so notice micro-moments of insight or acknowledgement and let the rest go. Parents can feel guilty about not keeping up, too.

• Estrangement is sometimes needed, but often best as temporary protection

She thinks today's boundary culture can tip into walling off anyone who doesn't validate us. Protection matters, but often it works best for a period while you sort yourself out, before deeper conversations.

• You also inherit strength

Her concept of an 'intergenerational higher self' layers ancestors' wisdom and intentions on top of your own. Mel reflects that she comes from a long line of hardworking women who were breadwinners, a reminder to look at what you were given, not only what you missed.

EXAMPLES

• Imposter syndrome in her Ivy League doctorate

In her first semester, as a Black Latina immigrant from a working-class background, she faced hurtful comments about her background and nearly quit, doubting she could survive six years. Her mother, whom she describes as flawed, told her she came from a long line of people who persevered. She writes that imposter syndrome was 'an inheritance from generations of being marginalised', not her truth.

• Her sister's '4K' view of their mother

Now in their 40s, Buqué's sister often says 'I understand Mom now.' Behaviour they once labelled toxic and cut off from, they now see 'in 4K' as the inside of their mother's lived reality.

• Mel's husband's shutdown

After almost 30 years of marriage, Mel says her husband has only recently understood that his going quiet and self-isolating hides anger and pain from childhood. He isn't a yeller, while she admits she is.

• Mel from 'volcano' to calm

After three years of nervous-system work, Mel says she's a different parent to her two adult daughters and feels 'in a second marriage' with her husband. She used to be a 'barfer of emotions'. Now she finds staying controlled far more powerful, because people tune out screaming. Buqué says trauma leaves a loss of control, so regaining it shifts everything.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Five minutes of deep breathing**
  Not three breaths: at least five minutes, she says, so your nervous system can catch up. Out of 1,440 minutes a day, take five.
- **Rocking**
  Her favourite regulating movement; she says rocking triggers the parasympathetic calming response.
- **Practise tools before the family gathering**
  Build mastery when relatives aren't around, then use them at the table, such as a subtle breath when something triggering is said. Everyone else may say the same things; you are what's different, which disrupts the dysfunction.
- **Share it across generations**
  Mel suggests sending the episode to parents or siblings, especially the men in your life. Buqué's message to a parent who receives it: you can create a different legacy than the one you were handed.

#1 Mindset Expert: Simple Mindset Shifts That Transform Your Body, Energy, & Life

Guest: Dr. Alia Crum
Date: 2025-12-20 · Duration: 1:20:37
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oJAV0rtSrFc

KEYPOINTS

• Mindsets are 'settings of the mind': core beliefs about what something is and why it matters.
Stanford Mind and Body Lab director Alia Crum gives examples: is the world dangerous or safe, just or unjust, abundant or scarce? Is stress going to kill you or make you stronger? Are healthy foods disgusting or delicious? Is cancer a catastrophe or manageable? She says these aren't true or false. They're oversimplified judgments, but they shape our realities.

• Mindsets work by design, not magic, through four channels.
A setting changes what you pay attention to, how you feel, what you're motivated to do, and your physiology. All four then drive your behavior. A belief meant to protect you can end up creating the very outcome you fear.

• It's 'mind and matter,' not 'mind over matter.'
The total effect of anything you take or eat is what's actually in it plus what you believe about it. Crum is explicit that belief doesn't cure cancer: get the best treatment available, since many cancers that were incurable 10 to 20 years ago are curable now, and also pay attention to your mindset.

• Placebo effects are real biology, not just people saying they feel better.
Believing you've taken a painkiller can release the body's own opioids. Placebo Parkinson's medications activate dopamine systems. Immune responses can be conditioned. She explains placebo as three things combined: the body's natural healing, beliefs that you're in good hands (which prime those systems), and the social context, such as the doctor's words, bedside manner, white coat and how the drug is branded.

• With a scary diagnosis, the helpful mindset is 'this is manageable' and 'my body is capable,' not forced positivity.
After nearly 10 years of work with cancer researchers, Crum says 'just think positive' or 'I'll be fine' can actually be denial. What her team has seen help, including in trials that encouraged these mindsets, is viewing cancer as manageable rather than a catastrophe and seeing your body as capable rather than as having turned on you. It improves quality of life. Trials on whether it affects disease outcomes are still underway.

• Eating with a mindset of indulgence, not restriction, can lower craving and hunger.
Focusing on 'I shouldn't eat this, I should eat that' puts you in a mindset of restraint and deprivation. Crum says that when you let yourself enjoy what you eat, regardless of what it is, the setting itself reduces craving. She credits this shift with ending her own struggle with food.

• Healthy food is labeled as 'depriving' partly because junk food has better marketing.
Food companies spend billions linking burgers and branded products to taste, happiness, attractiveness and freedom. Vegetables get no such marketing. You can flip this yourself by describing and serving healthy food as indulgent and delicious.

• Trying not to think about food makes you think about it more.
Like the classic 'don't think of a white polar bear' effect, a goal to avoid something makes the brain keep checking on it, while hunger hormones are 'like, eat the cake, Mel.' Relabeling is more effective than suppressing.

• 'I blew it' mindsets drive the slide into inconsistency.
When Mel admitted falling off her resistance-training and protein streaks during busy stretches, Crum showed how 'I'm not doing enough, I'm failing, I'm going downhill' shapes attention, mood and motivation, until you skip the gym and your body follows. Her replacement: 'I'm doing enough, and I'm capable.' Repeating it makes being active more likely.

EXAMPLES

• The milkshake study (done at Yale)
People drank the same 350-calorie vanilla shake on two visits while connected to an IV. Once it was labeled 'Indulgence,' 620 calories, 'decadence you deserve.' Once it was labeled 'Sensi-Shake,' 140 calories, low fat. When they thought it was indulgent, their levels of ghrelin, a hunger hormone, dropped about three times as much, as if they'd eaten more food.

• It started at the Cheesecake Factory
At the end of a meal with her mother, Crum, who had been obsessively counting calories and had recovered from bulimia, refused dessert because she was well over her 2,000-calorie limit. She wondered whether simply believing the cheesecake was good for her would change how her body responded.

• A listener named Melissa got over a 10-year fear of flying
Melissa feared a medical emergency mid-flight after an incident 10 years earlier. After watching Crum's TED talk, she reminded herself that her symptoms felt real because she was working herself up, and she flew. Crum reframed the underlying setting as distrust of her own body, which led her to scan for symptoms, which in turn made her more anxious.

• The 30-pound dumbbell
Mel couldn't lift a 30-pound weight one-handed and immediately thought 'I'm weak.' After shifting to 'I'm capable,' she lifted it with one hand and said she felt stronger. Crum noted that some research suggests weights feel different depending on your mindset.

• V8 in a wine glass
Mel's mom served her vegetable juice in a wine glass with a lemon after sports, and it felt like a treat. Crum held it up as a model for how parents can present healthy food.

• The same cake, two descriptions
A cake in the studio stopped seeming appealing once Crum described it as store-bought, three days old, dry and made with Crisco, showing how the setting in your mind shapes desire.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Find the setting first**
  Ask what core belief sits under the fear or habit. For example, is it 'flying is dangerous' or 'my body can't be trusted'? Then trace how that belief steers your attention, emotions, motivation and body.
- **Indulgent framing for healthy food**
  Describe vegetables in terms of taste and pleasure, serve them nicely, and let yourself enjoy food instead of policing it.
- **Two phrases for health setbacks**
  'I'm doing enough' and 'I'm capable' for exercise lapses; 'this is manageable' and 'my body is capable' for a diagnosis, alongside full medical treatment.

Your Grief & Heartbreak Will Get Better the Moment You Watch This

Guest: David Kessler
Date: 2025-12-18 · Duration: 1:25:59
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uSZy6Ww3e6A

KEYPOINTS

- **If you can find a way to grieve fully, you'll be able to live fully.**
  Grief expert David Kessler says loss stretches your capacity for pain and also your capacity for joy and laughter. His goal for grief work is to eventually 'remember with more love than pain.' He reminds people that 'you come from a long line of dead people.' Every ancestor grieved, and something in us knows how.
- **We live in a 'grief-illiterate' world that expects grief to follow a TV script.**
  On TV, episode one someone dies, episode two we cry, episode three it's back to normal. Real grief 'has a longer shadow.' Kessler says people most often reach out to a professional around five years after a loss, after years of wishing it away, and the second most common time is just after one year, when they expected it to be gone.
- **Early grief lasts about two years.**
  If a friend seems to be 'taking too long,' they're probably still in early grief. Of roughly 18,000 listener emails, Kessler and Mel estimate about 99% described guilt or pressure to move on. People telling them it's time to move on usually haven't lost the same kind of person.
- **There are different grieving styles, and practical grievers aren't heartless.**
  Some people do a week or two of memorials and then want to move on. Kessler calls them practical grievers. They were practical about divorce and moves too, and they don't change during a big loss. Emotional grievers think practical grievers don't feel enough, and practical grievers think emotional grievers feel too much. Neither group needs to change the other.
- **Grief bursts and love bursts are both normal.**
  Something at work or a song can trigger a sudden wave of grief that overwhelms you. You'll also get sudden waves of love for the person, just as your feelings toward them varied when they were alive.
- **Don't compare losses. The worst grief is yours.**
  When we compare, we're in our heads, but 'we don't have a broken mind, we have a broken heart.' Grief isn't a pie where someone else's loss takes a slice of yours. A fiancée of three months and a spouse of 40 years are both grieving.
- **Numbness and denial protect you, and complicated grief goes in circles.**
  Kessler calls numbness a wise mind 'titrating' feelings, giving you only as much as you can handle. People who come to deal with a loss 5, 10 or 20 years later are 'ready now.' Complicated grief is like a big branch that falls into a river: the water starts to swirl, 'no longer evolving, it's revolving.' The fix is to examine the branch, be with it and talk about it.
- **The meaning isn't in the loss. It's in who you become.**
  There is no meaning in a child's death or a tragedy, and a loss is not 'a test, a lesson... a gift or a blessing.' Meaning shows up after you 'excavate the pain,' and choosing to live again is a decision.
- **Anger is pain's bodyguard, and guilt is grief's companion.**
  People who cry get tissues. People who get angry get treated 'like a porcupine,' yet they're in just as much pain and need a hug just as much. Guilt and 'if only' bargaining stick around because the mind would rather feel guilty than helpless: guilt offers a sense of control.
- **Grief has to be witnessed, not fixed.**
  Instead of 'Dad's always with you,' ask: 'What's it like to sit across from that empty chair tonight?' What they say will make you uncomfortable and you'll want to fix it, but no one is broken. Accept the person as who they are now.

EXAMPLES

- **Kessler's own losses**
  His mother died when he was 13, and he thought he was the only kid who had ever lost a parent. He later adopted two boys aged four and five. His son David, born drug-exposed, struggled with trauma and addiction as a teenager and died. Kessler was already a grief expert of decades.
- **The haunted-house moment**
  About a year after David's death, Kessler pictured teenagers in 30 years biking past a broken-down house with spider webs and saying a grief expert lived there who 'never came out again.' He realized that future was possible, and he chose to live.
- **The postponed wedding**
  Early in the pandemic, a roughly 20-year-old neighbor sobbed to him about her postponed wedding. A friend scoffed that he'd been to shootings and 9/11. He replied, 'You know so little about grief.'
- **Mel's husband's second-opinion guilt**
  Nearly 20 years later, Mel's husband, a death doula and hospice volunteer, still wonders 'if only I'd gotten a second opinion.' Kessler asked: if everyone got second opinions, would people stop dying in that hospital? No.
- **Changing the village**
  An Australian researcher described villages where, the night someone dies, every household changes something in their house or yard, so the family wakes up knowing that everyone recognizes everything has changed.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **The rule of threes**
  Show up at 3 days, 3 weeks and 3 months. Don't ask 'what do you need?' Bring food, take their car in, buy groceries, drive the kids to soccer. Kessler was moved to find a frozen lasagna someone had quietly left in his freezer for the night he'd need it.
- **What not to say, and what to say instead**

Avoid 'at least,' 'there's a reason for this,' 'they're in a better place' (fine from clergy, he says) and 'God needed another angel.' Try: 'I don't have the words... but you're not going to walk it alone. Angry, be angry. Sad, be sad. Stuck, be stuck. I'm here with you.'

• Gauging a loved one's room

Whether keeping a room intact is healthy depends on frequency, duration and intensity, and on whether it brings comfort or distress, not on a right or wrong rule.

• Finding Meaning

Kessler's book on meaning as the next step after grief, along with his support groups, including one specifically for older losses.

How to Make 2026 the Best Year: 6 Questions to Ask Yourself

Date: 2025-12-15 · Duration: 1:14:40
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GeD8tpOCyIY

KEYPOINTS

• A great year happens by choice, not chance, and planning starts with looking back.
Mel says the urge after a hard year is to say 'let's just put this sucker out' and only look ahead. Skipping the review means skipping the most important part of planning: you can't map where you're going without knowing where you're starting from. She and her husband Chris have done this year-end ritual for 22 years, and their three adult children have joined in for about the last 10.

• The six questions: low points, high points, lessons, stop, continue, start.
The first three are about looking back on the past 12 months. The last three turn those answers into decisions for next year. Mel says the questions are simple on purpose.

• Naming your low points is self-awareness, not drama.
If you've woken up with low-grade dread or constant worry about money, politics, war, climate, your kids, your parents or your health, Mel says that doesn't mean it was a bad year or that something is wrong with you. It means you're alive and paying attention. She cites a 2018 study from UC Irvine and Penn State that tracked what happens when people push down emotions after hard events instead of processing them. Her takeaway is that sitting down to face the low points gives your brain a chance to process them.

• Low points become personal reasons to change.
When your goals come from your own lows, like being lonely, always standing in the back of photos, sitting on the bench while your family hikes, or getting winded on the stairs, they stop being 'the internet says I should.' Psychologists call this intrinsic motivation: 'I get to do this because I want to feel better.'

• High points usually reveal what matters most, and for most people that's other people.
Every one of Mel's highs involved people she loves. That's an obvious lesson, she admits, but slowing down to look back 'sears' it in. She ties it to research: Cornell's Karl Pillemer and the Legacy Project found that the top end-of-life regrets are leaving things unsaid and not spending time with people while you could. The Harvard Study of Adult Development identifies relationships as the number one predictor of a good life.

• Good years are scheduled in advance.
Mel started the year celebrating her dad's 80th birthday because the family put it on the calendar two years earlier. She saw her parents, her kids one-on-one and her friends because she planned it. The lesson is to get out your calendar and book it.

• Deciding what to stop is strategy, not giving up.
Her examples include stopping going to a job that makes you miserable, stopping telling yourself the economy means you'll never find a job or that you'll never meet the one, stopping beating yourself up about your body, stopping trying to change your partner, dropping 'I'm too old or too young,' and no longer sitting home waiting for people to call. Take responsibility for your own social life, and stop doom-scrolling at night. 'Stopping becomes the lever that moves you forward.'

• Keep doing the habits that worked, even if you weren't perfect.
Mel is keeping her daily walk (she did it no matter where in the world she was), therapy with her husband, and the Let Them mindset, which she credits with making her less controlling and judgmental. She's also continuing resistance training and getting more protein, but more flexibly: 'I can walk. I can do Pilates.'

• Start something that scares you a little, because that's a sign it matters.
Start ideas from the episode include walking with a neighbor three mornings a week, starting a walking group (Mel's from when she moved to Vermont still meets), starting therapy, going to bed 30 minutes earlier with your phone in another room, speaking up in meetings, day trips, learning a language, dating again, picking up a hobby, saying no or yes more, and building a morning routine.

EXAMPLES

• The 2006 goals folder
In Chris's office Mel found their planning from 2004. On it: she wanted to get pregnant with a little boy, before their son Oakley was born, and she wanted to consistently get out of bed at 6 a.m. Chris's goals were mostly about health.

• A letter to your future self
Research from Cal State and UCLA, published in the Journal of Experimental Psychology: Applied, found that spending even a few minutes linking who you were, who you are and who you want to become makes you feel more connected to your future self.

• Mel's camera-roll highlights
Fly-fishing in Montana with Chris, the same thing they did on their honeymoon 28 years earlier; her parents' first sound-bath healing in Florida; a first-ever solo trip with her 25-year-old daughter Kendall; and morning walks in the park with her daughter Sawyer.

• Acting at 56
Her biggest highlight was a live tour doing mother-daughter skits with Sawyer and Kendall. She had never acted or done comedy. It wasn't fun until they found their rhythm, and she says she grew enormously from it.

• Leaning into AI at 57
Mel uses AI tools at work but admits she uses it personally 'almost like Google.' She cites an estimate that women are falling behind on AI by about 25% and compares avoiding it to refusing to learn email or use a cell phone.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Scroll your camera roll

Go back to January and scroll month by month with questions one and two in mind. You'll find both the lows and the forgotten small joys.

- **Write your answers down**

  Write out the six answers, ideally as a short note to your future self, so you have a plan to come back to rather than just a vague resolution.

- **Do it with family**

  Mel's family does it together every year. Sharing your answers makes the priorities stick and gives everyone visibility into each other's goals.

- **Ideas for what to stop**

  Doom-scrolling before bed, waiting to be invited, beating yourself up, and trying to change your partner.

5 Rules That Will Change Your Life Immediately

Guest: Mark Rober
Date: 2025-12-11 · Duration: 0:46:42
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RRHU-fvsNo0

KEYPOINTS

• Treat your life like an experiment: setbacks are data.
Former NASA engineer Mark Rober, who has about 71 million YouTube subscribers and around 20 billion views on science videos, says the thread through his work is thinking like an engineer even if you aren't one. Experiments are supposed to fail along the way, and each failure tells you one more way not to do it. Seen that way, a setback becomes information rather than a verdict on you.

• The Super Mario Effect: focus on the princess, not the pits.
Nobody falls into the first pit in a video game and decides, 'I'm such a failure, I'll never play again.' You think, 'There's a pit there; next time I'll jump earlier.' Because your attention is on the goal, the failures become lessons. Rober is clear it isn't a 'Pollyanna' attitude: dying on a hard level 'stings,' and the sad sound still hurts, but you pick the controller back up.

• If you're scared to start, make failing the goal.
His advice to anyone afraid of looking cringy or worried what friends will think: start small and set a target number of failures. Hitting that number counts as winning, which takes the pressure off and stops you avoiding the thing. Mel calls this subtle reframe genius, because it goes beyond 'failure is okay' to making failure the box you check.

• You shouldn't expect to be good right away.
You don't expect to beat a video game on your first try, so Rober asks why you'd expect that in life. He says you often learn more from failing than succeeding, especially kids. Mel links this to resilience: each time you fail and keep going is evidence you can figure things out.

• Hide the vegetables.
His north star is to reach as many brains as possible with critical thinking, curiosity and embracing failure. He hooks people with a spectacle that evokes a visceral response, such as laughter, excitement or suspense, and slips the science lesson inside the story.

• Keep your eyes on the rock in front of you.
Rober says he doesn't think of himself as 'the world's science teacher'. He's focused on the current project, and when a video comes out he's already on the next one. Mel calls that the secret to success: work tied to something you care about, aimed at its impact on others. The moment you obsess over view counts, you're 'looking at the wrong data.'

• Creativity is a muscle.
Rober cites work with Dr. Adam Green of Georgetown measuring alpha brain waves, which he says are highly correlated with creative problem solving. The finding, as he tells it, is that the more time you spend in that creative state, the more easily your brain returns to it. The best words in science aren't 'Eureka' but 'Huh, I wonder why that happened.'

• Build happiness from first principles.
Engineers planning a Mars mission start from basics such as how much energy you need. Rober's basics for happiness are relationships, living by his values and knowing what impact he wants to have, and being motivated by those from the inside. He says many people buy the fancy things before realizing they don't bring happiness, and he has turned down choices that would have brought more reach or money to avoid a 'flash in the pan.'

• Gratitude is the antidote to chasing the next hit.
When he feels he should be doing better or have more, he resets by noticing what he already has, because abundance and scarcity both exist at any moment and it depends which you focus on. He mentions the common practice of writing down three things you're grateful for before bed. His backup hack is to imagine something precious, like your partner, being taken away.

• With kids, be as inefficient as possible.
At work Rober optimizes everything, but at home he flips it: the phone goes down, you read the book four times without skipping pages and you play the game. Mel calls it the best parenting advice she's heard in a long time. Kids don't need you to cram 50,000 things into 15 minutes; when they tell a long-winded story, the point isn't the punchline but your undivided attention.

EXAMPLES

• The auto-bullseye dartboard
The board tracked a thrown dart, predicted where it would land and moved to catch it in 400 milliseconds, faster than a blink. It took Rober 3 years, and every setback made him more determined rather than more defeated. That's where he first noticed the Super Mario mindset in himself.

• Lose 10 chess games
He had stopped playing online chess because losing felt like a judgment on him, so he set a goal to lose 10 games (not necessarily in a row). It 'reset everything.' Mel admitted she quit playing after her son Oakley crushed her.

• Porch-pirate decoy packages
After a package was stolen from his porch, he built decoy packages (complete with fart spray) and eventually placed about 20 on porches in porch-pirate hot spots across America, tracking them and watching the reactions in real time. The spectacle hides the engineering lesson.

• The 15-ton Jell-O pool
A swimming pool filled with 15 tons of Jell-O, which Rober says no one had ever pulled off. It's a classic case of hiding the vegetables: the giant stunt carries the science inside.

• Hair dryer and ping-pong ball
In the studio, a ping-pong ball floated in a hair dryer's stream and stayed there even when he tilted it. He explained it as the Coand 2 Vf`ect: air flowing around the sides of the ball 'cups' it in a low-pressure pocket, the same kind of principle behind a

curveball.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Set a failure quota**
  For anything new (chess, a language, a sport), decide how many attempts or losses count as success this month, and track them.
- **Gratitude reset**
  Write three good things from the day before bed. If that feels empty, imagine losing someone you love, then look again at the small stuff you're stressing over.
- **Free science curriculum**
  Rober is building a free 3rd–8th grade science curriculum for teachers, with videos, inexpensive classroom demos and standards alignment. It's a 3-year project that was about a year in when they spoke.

How to Reinvent Your Life Starting Today

Guest: Hoda Kotb
Date: 2025-12-08 · Duration: 1:22:08
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oAJnNf4RW_A

KEYPOINTS

- **You can 'stop the train' of your life at any age and decide whether to change direction.**
  Hoda Kotb says many people feel like they're on a train headed straight to the grave. Her point is that you can hit the brakes at 20, 40, 60 or 80, look at your life 'from 35,000 feet,' and decide. Your current job or relationship 'is not your destiny.' Otherwise you'll be 90 asking, 'What was I thinking?'
- **'Good enough' is not enough. Judge your life by how you feel, not by what you have.**
  Mel draws out the distinction: don't just scan the job and the house. Ask whether you feel respected and loved in this relationship, and whether you like how you feel in this job. Hoda moved from 'this is as good as it gets, I'm grateful' to 'there's more out there.' She stresses this isn't constant dissatisfaction. It's believing abundance is available and that wanting more isn't greedy.
- **Say the buried dream out loud, because staying silent keeps the door closed.**
  If you're convinced you missed the window, you're the one locking it. Hoda's two biggest life changes, she says, came from 'a whisper of not being afraid.' Saying it opens the door so 'the energy shifts' and possibilities show up.
- **Discouragement is the biggest obstacle.**
  Being discouraged means you've decided 'it's not possible for me.' Whether it's opening a flower shop or going back to college, Hoda's advice is to say it, try something and see, because sitting at home guarantees nothing happens.
- **Success comes from not quitting more than from talent.**
  Hoda doesn't think successful people are necessarily the most talented. What links them is that they never quit. Mel's summary: 'As long as you don't quit, you can't lose, because quitting is the moment you lose.' If you're still seeking, you're not stuck.
- **It's '27 nos and the one.'**
  Rebuilding after a divorce, a job search or any reinvention comes down to finding your one yes. If all you've heard so far is no, you just haven't met your 'Stan' yet.
- **What you tell yourself changes how your day goes.**
  Hoda tested the phrase 'Good things keep happening to me,' which she first dismissed as drivel, after a rough weekend. Saying it forced her to look for good things, and she came home a different person. Mel linked it to Alia Crum's research on mindset settings: 'the best advice is always cheesy.'
- **Take baby steps toward the jump: 30 minutes a day for 30 days.**
  Don't run off a cliff. If you want to open a coffee shop, spend 30 minutes today researching (Hoda suggests using AI to check local competition), 30 tomorrow on a business plan, and so on. After 30 days you have 900 minutes of data to decide whether it's really for you.
- **Be a beginner again.**
  At 61, starting a business with no experience, Hoda says it feels like being on the JV team surrounded by varsity players, and calls it 'one of the finest feelings in the world.' Her parting words: 'It's never too late. You're not too old. And everything happens right on time.'

EXAMPLES

- **Saying 'I want to be a mom' at 51**
  After breast cancer and a divorce, Hoda buried her wish for children because it seemed out of reach. On a beach walk, her friend Jen Miller casually said she'd never wanted kids, and Hoda realized she did. Once she said it aloud, she began the adoption process. While she sat at her desk sure it would never happen, a call came: 'She's here.' That was her daughter Haley. She now has an 8-year-old and a 6-year-old.
- **27 rejections, then Stan**
  After graduating from Virginia Tech, she borrowed her mom's car and spent 10 days driving around the Southeast. Richmond, Roanoke, Birmingham and Dothan all said no; one asked if she knew how to put the tape in the machine. Lost, she pulled into a CBS station in Greenville, where news director Stan watched the same 'worst tape in history' and hired her.
- **The paper-pieces exercise**
  Her friend Maria Shriver had her cut paper into pieces sized to how much time and energy each part of her life got: kids (biggest), work, visiting her mom, exercise, the dog, trips. Then she resized them to what she wanted, for example making work bigger, and was asked: 'That's your life. Do you like it?'
- **The top of the wave at 60**
  At her 60th birthday celebration on the Today show plaza, with family flown in and a painting from President George W. Bush, she had an out-of-body sense that 'this is the best it's ever going to be.' That feeling led her to leave at the peak of her career.
- **'Don't hog your journey'**
  While recovering from a mastectomy and wanting to hide her cancer, she flew home from a draining shoot in Ireland. A chatty stranger asked about her compression sleeve and told her cancer is part of her, 'like going to college,' and not to hog her journey because she could help others. That new courage led her to pitch herself to Jeff Zucker for the new fourth hour of Today.
- **The wheelchair trip**
  Hoda tells of a wealthy man she calls 'Cranky Ken' who kept buying bigger things, even the Seattle Seahawks, without lasting happiness. Then he helped deliver 75 wheelchairs in Bosnia, and one recipient said he wanted to memorize his face to thank him in heaven. Ken called it the first sheer joy and purpose he'd felt, and it changed his life's direction.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Stop-the-train check**
  Pause and ask honestly: Do I feel respected? Do I like how I feel in this job or relationship? Do I want to get off the train, change direction or speed up?
- **Six words to try**
  'Good things keep happening to me.' Say it through your morning and notice the evidence.
- **30 x 30 research plan**
  Thirty focused minutes a day for 30 days on a dream before you leap, giving you 900 minutes to decide.
- **Hoda's book**
  Jump and Find Joy, her book on letting go of what isn't working and going for what you want.

If This Episode Doesn’t Motivate You, Nothing Will | Mel Robbins and Wallo

Guest: Wallace 'Wallo267' Peeples
Date: 2025-12-04 · Duration: 1:17:34
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0pYim783TCo

KEYPOINTS

• Most people live in a 'cell around their brain'
Wallo spent 20 years in prison, from 17 to 37. When he got out, he decided there were more people imprisoned outside than inside, because most people are 'walking around with a cell around their brain,' too afraid to do what they want. He took that as a reason to be confident: if fear is the main competition, the field is wide open.

• Real change started with a moment of truth in the mirror
He says he wasn't enraged, he was hurt, 'because the truth hurt.' Looking in the mirror, he told himself he was doing all that time 'for being somebody you're not,' and promised that 'tomorrow is going to be better than yesterday.' Mel frames it as using the mirror not for vanity but to admit you're unhappy because you've been someone you're not.

• The wrong crowd costs you more than you think
He got into crime because he 'wanted things that I wasn't willing to work for.' He argues culture glamorizes the bad guy ('America loves the successful criminal') and that we twist ourselves to be accepted by people who 'breathe like you, got 24 hours like you.' His family shows the cost: in 1998 he shared a cell with his stepfather, and in 2005 with his brother, in the same prison.

• 'I'm not in prison, I'm in Princeton'
His mindset inside: 'I'm not in jail, I'm in Yale. I'm not in the state pen, I'm in Penn State.' It wasn't the prison's job to educate him, so he did it himself. He flipped through TV channels studying commercials, wondering why a Big Mac never looked like the ad and why car ads cast different people on different channels. That's how he taught himself marketing.

• Who you say you are isn't proven until you act
The scariest day of his sentence was the day they let him go. He had told his family he'd changed, but he was that person only 'of the mind,' not yet 'off of lived experience and action.' Temptation was waiting, and only daily behavior could prove the change.

• No one is coming to stop you, or to save you
Coming home to a world with 'computers in our pockets,' he was stunned at how easy it was to open a bank account, register a business or get a trademark. 'Who's going to stop me?' Nobody is worrying about you, he says, so nobody but you is in your way. His one-line takeaway is 'Yes to you and no to them,' and his blunter version is that you are the one in your own way.

• Live inside the life you want before you have it
Prison 'fortified' his imagination. Watching Anthony Bourdain travel, he pictured himself in those places. Mel links this to visualization: the brain starts to believe the life is possible. After his release he rehearsed the life deliberately (see examples).

• Strangers make you rich
Stop worrying about whether high school or college friends support you, he says. Michael Jordan, Bon Jovi and Michael Jackson weren't made by the 20 or 100 people they knew. You have to be willing to be talked about. Change is uncomfortable, and people who are 'too comfortable with being comfortable' repeat the same mistakes a second and third time.

• Forgiveness 'helped me breathe'
His brother Steve was shot and died in their grandmother Nanny's arms in the doorway of their childhood home while Wallo was locked up. He forgave the killer, not for the killer's sake but so he could celebrate his brother by living for him instead of holding on to anger. He never told the man directly. On the show he said, 'I forgive you, man.'

EXAMPLES

• Locked up at 11, sentenced as an adult at 17
His first arrest, for armed robbery in Philadelphia, came on June 30, 1990, when he was 11. He was locked up again the next week and spent about five years in and out of juvenile facilities. At 17, two armed robberies and two firearm charges brought a sentence of 19½ to 52 years as an adult. His grandmother warned, 'You going to realize one day.'

• Hot tea at the Four Seasons
After his release, he'd go to the top-floor bar of the Four Seasons in downtown Philadelphia, order a hot tea with lemon and honey to go, and look over the city as if he already belonged there. He'd also play Springsteen's 'Streets of Philadelphia' like theme music when he left the house, 'getting ready for the life that's waiting.'

• Googling himself and the '267' handle
Home around 2012 or 2013 with a used phone, he typed his name into Google, saw results pop up, dropped the phone and thought the feds were watching. When he set up Instagram, 'Wallo' was taken, so he added 267, his prison number (DG267), which is also a Philly area code.

• Free commercials for local businesses
He'd walk into shops and offer to make commercials for free, filling his page with examples. When his cousin Gil said someone wanted to pay $300, his reaction was 'I do them for free,' and Gil told him he'd done enough for free. That's when he started charging.

• An unpaid TED talk
He initially asked what a TED talk paid and was told just a hotel room. He did it anyway, speaking about forgiving his brother's killer in about 18 minutes. Strangers still stop him in airports to say they needed that video, an impact he values more than the paid bookings that followed.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Use the mirror for a moment of truth

Look at yourself and ask where you've been living as someone you're not. Name it, then commit that tomorrow will be better than yesterday.

- **Make one bold, practical move this week**
  Research how to set up what you've been putting off, like a business account, a trademark or an application, using the 'computer in your pocket.'
- **Rehearse your future life**
  Visit the places and do small versions of the things your future self does, so the life feels familiar before it arrives.
- **A heads-up on tone**
  This conversation has much more profanity than a typical episode. Mel flags that at the start.

The 7 Day Habit Reset: Start Today, Feel Different By Next Week

Guest: Charles Duhigg
Date: 2025-12-01 · Duration: 1:08:11
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QoEdYHWuqv0

KEYPOINTS

• Roughly 40–45% of what you do each day is habit

Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Charles Duhigg, author of The Power of Habit, says behaviours we think of as choices are often automatic: backing out of the driveway, grabbing the unhealthy cafeteria lunch, snapping at kids when you get home. He opens with Aristotle's 'we are what we repeatedly do', adding that slacking off and procrastination are habits too. Any habit, he says, can be changed.

• Every habit is a loop: cue, routine, reward

A cue triggers the behaviour, the routine is the habit itself, and every habit delivers a reward whether you notice it or not. Cues usually fall into five categories: a place, certain people, an emotion, a time of day, or a preceding ritualised behaviour.

• Keystone habit #1: exercise sets off a chain reaction

Duhigg describes research by Megan Oaten and Ken Cheng finding that on mornings people exercised, they used credit cards less, procrastinated less at work, and even did dishes about 20 minutes earlier. Nobody runs thinking 'I'll keep the Amex in my pocket', but the habit ripples into eating and spending. Any movement counts, he says, even standing up for 10 seconds every 35–45 minutes.

• Keystone habits work by changing your self-concept

Asked if she's disciplined, Mel says yes: she was in a 7am exercise class after getting up at 6:30. Duhigg's point is that your brain is impressed by the evidence and starts acting like a disciplined person elsewhere. It's not one day that matters but the pattern over time.

• Make decisions in a 'cold' mind, not a 'hot' one

Walking past an ice cream shop is easy after dinner and a U-turn when you're starving. In the moment ('hot mind') the brain grabs the easiest option because it hates deciding. So decide the night before, in a calm 'cold mind': the class, the route, who you're meeting. That's why plans with gaps, such as 'I'll figure out where to run when I'm out', fall apart.

• Rewards are essential and can be anything

A long shower, a treat, or a calendar check mark ('13 checks this month, I'm amazing') all work, but you must actually give yourself the reward. The typical failed start is saying 'I'll exercise tomorrow', then waking tired, hunting for shoes, running three or four blocks and getting nothing out of it.

• Keystone habit #2: a morning routine with ARC

Anticipation: spend 30 seconds thinking of one thing you're looking forward to today. Relaxation: let your nervous system settle, even 10–15 seconds in the shower or a quiet cup of tea. Connection: connect with at least one other person, whether spouse, kids, the dog or even feeding the fish, which he says makes you seek connection all day.

• Breakfast is a powerful morning ritual

He cites the National Weight Control Registry, which he calls the largest database of people who have lost weight, as identifying eating breakfast as one of two major factors. It stops you being ravenous later. Making room for it, by setting the alarm 10 minutes earlier for cereal, also makes you plan your day intentionally.

• Keystone habit #3: track something

Mel calls it 'the dumbest thing I've ever heard', but in the registry tracking what you eat or weigh mattered even more than breakfast. Tracking reminds you of your 'why' and turns behaviour into data rather than judgment.

• The Golden Rule: don't extinguish a habit; swap the routine

Trying to just 'break' a habit isn't enough. Keep the same cue and the same reward, and insert a new routine. Diagnose the real reward first, which is often not the taste of the food.

EXAMPLES

• Duhigg's habit plan on paper

He writes down cue, routine and reward. The cue: call his friend now to meet tomorrow at 9:30 on a set corner. The routine: a pre-planned route. The reward: the almond croissant at the café where the run ends. It takes about 20 seconds in a cold-mind state.

• Mel's 8pm 'wheels off' problem

After a perfect day of water, good food, movement and a made bed, Mel pours a Manhattan and eats popcorn. Working it through, the cue is boredom and the reward is novelty or distraction, not taste, which is also why she picks up her phone. The new routine is to call her husband Chris before heading to the pantry.

• Mel the 'liar' about bedtime

Mel claims she goes to bed early, but Duhigg suggests a notebook by the bed for bedtimes; it turns out it's more like 10:30 or 11:30. He says she already knew and felt bad. Writing '10:30' down is 'just data' from an experiment, not a failure.

• Tracking water and spending

Mel drinks four large cups of water a day because she has more energy. Duhigg spends 15 minutes a week reviewing downloaded transactions, which caught a forgotten two-year-old subscription he then cancelled.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Build as many cues as possible

For exercise: set the alarm for 7:00, put running shoes beside the bed, and arrange to meet a friend. Stack place, people and time cues.

- **ARC in under a minute**
  Each morning, picture one thing you're excited about, give yourself a few seconds of calm, and connect with someone. Add anything else you'll plan around, such as journalling, prayer, meditation, a call or a favourite comedian.
- **A simple tracking habit**
  Pick one metric (bedtime, water, food or weekly spending) and log it without judgment. Duhigg's spending review takes 15 minutes a week.
- **Golden Rule worksheet**
  For the habit you hate, write down the cue (boredom at 8pm) and the real reward (novelty), then choose a new behaviour that delivers the same reward.

How to Live a Happier Life: Do THIS Gratitude Practice Today

Date: 2025-11-27 · Duration: 0:41:29
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fEIIPN_89Yg

KEYPOINTS

- **Gratitude is a way to take back control of what your brain notices, not toxic positivity.**
  Mel admits she used to cringe at the word because of the fake smiles and pressure to feel thankful while life falls apart. Her reframe is that the world outside is constantly pouring 'garbage' into your mind, and deliberately choosing what to notice is 'an act of defiance.' What you focus on expands.
- **Negative experiences stick like Velcro, and gratitude helps them slide off.**
  In a replayed clip, stress expert Dr. Aditi Nerurkar cites psychologist Rick Hanson: under stress the brain holds onto the negative for survival ('danger, danger'), even when good and bad things are happening at the same rate. A daily gratitude practice, which she says takes about 60 seconds, is a form of 'cognitive reframing.'
- **Daily gratitude may improve mood, stress, burnout and sleep within weeks.**
  Nerurkar says studies show improvements at 30, 60 and 90 days, and that the practice quiets your inner critic by 'dialing down' the amygdala, the brain's alarm center. These are her summaries of the research, presented as encouraging rather than guaranteed.
- **Tool 1: the unsent letter, one page once a week to someone you're grateful for.**
  Be specific: What did they do? Why did it matter? How did it affect you? You don't have to send it, though Mel points out how much it could lift someone if you do. She likes doing hers on Sundays, her slower day.
- **Writing gratitude letters shifts you from scanning for threats to noticing what's good.**
  Mel explains the letter study's effect as changing the 'settings' of your mind away from a lifelong habit of scanning for problems. The benefit lasted after people stopped writing, which she calls an 'afterburner' effect.
- **Tool 2: the three-minute night journal.**
  Every night before bed, write three things from that day you're grateful for. Mel says she never goes to bed without scanning her day this way. Her examples: not losing it with her husband, lingering in a warm shower, and watching a deer munch the hostas outside Chris's office window.
- **Gratitude may show up in the body, not just the mind.**
  Mel reports the night-journal study found better sleep, lower inflammation, less physical stress and higher heart rate variability. She explains that higher heart rate variability means a flexible nervous system that handles stress and bounces back. She notes the study was small (70 people).
- **Tool 3: drop gratitude into your group texts.**
  Interrupt transactional chats about logistics and 'when can you get on the phone' with one appreciation a day: something that went well, a random kindness, a public shout-out. No extra commentary. Mel says replies come almost immediately and the tone of the whole chain shifts. Sharing gratitude is what makes positivity 'sticky' and contagious.
- **Pick the one tool you'll actually use.**
  You don't need all of them. The night journal, an end-of-day mental scan, a morning ritual, the weekly letter and the group text all rely on the same mechanism: training your attention toward what's good.

EXAMPLES

- **Indiana University letter study**
  Psychologist Dr. Joel Wong's randomized trial of nearly 300 people in therapy compared therapy alone, therapy plus expressive writing about stress, and therapy plus one gratitude letter a week. The letter group had significantly better mental health, with less depression and anxiety, during the four weeks and still 12 weeks later. They never sent the letters.
- **UC San Diego heart study**
  Dr. Laura Redwine's team studied 70 people with early-stage heart failure (heart-muscle problems but no symptoms yet), who are at high risk of developing serious heart disease. One group kept a gratitude journal most days of the week, reflecting deeply rather than listing generic items. The control group got standard care only. Stress, inflammation and heart rate variability were tested at the start and end of eight weeks. The journaling group had lower inflammation markers, improved heart rate variability and better sleep. Mel notes that low heart rate variability is linked to higher risk of heart disease, metabolic disorders, depression and anxiety.
- **Griffith University waitlist study**
  Psychologist Shelley Kerr randomly assigned 122 distressed people waiting for therapy to daily gratitude writing, acts of kindness with reflection, or neutral journaling (about 40 per group). After two weeks the gratitude group felt less depressed, had more positive emotions and felt better about life, and the gains were still there a month later.
- **Dr. Tara Swart's morning**
  The neuroscientist starts gratitude the moment she wakes: 'I love my silk pillowcase... my side-sleeping pillow... my wool mattress topper,' sometimes adding the room's temperature or quiet. Then she breathes deeply into her chest 'like a barrel,' scanning for tension, and gets herself out of bed by anticipating her cup of tea.
- **Mel's own group-text experiment**
  Mel noticed her family and work text threads had become almost entirely logistics: questions, documents to review, scheduling calls. She started slipping in one appreciation a day, like 'I'm really proud of you for this' or 'you did a really good job.' She says people responded almost right away and the threads felt warmer, and that it reminds everyone 'you have enough right now, even while you may be working on more.'

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Letter prompts**

What did they do? Why did it matter? How did it affect you? One page, once a week, sending it optional.

- **Night routine**
  Keep a journal by your bed and write three things from today. Specific beats generic: 'the deer in the yard' rather than 'my family.'
- **Supersize the group text**
  Send this idea to two or three favorite people, start a chain for one gratitude each a day, and hold each other accountable.
- **Morning version**
  Before checking your phone, name things you're grateful for in bed: sheets, pillow, quiet. Settle into gratitude before 'the rest of the world comes in.'

World Leading Therapist: Why You Feel Stuck in Life & How to Get Unstuck

Guest: Lori Gottlieb
Date: 2025-11-24 · Duration: 1:26:28
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JpgabAQo85I

KEYPOINTS

• People come to therapy wanting someone else to change

Lori Gottlieb, a therapist, New York Times 'Ask the Therapist' columnist and author of Maybe You Should Talk to Someone, says the request is the same whether it comes from patients, column letters or podcast listeners: 'they want to feel better' by changing another person. You can't change someone else, but you can influence them by doing something different yourself. She doesn't deny that difficult people exist. Her point is that we play a role in what keeps us stuck.

• The way you narrate your life shapes its quality

She calls that role our 'story.' Change the way you talk to yourself and you immediately change the story, which changes 'what happens on the next page.' Insight alone is useless, though. 'If you don't take action out in the world,' nothing changes.

• Many of our stories were handed to us

Childhood labels like 'the sensitive one' versus 'the easygoing sister' become roles we keep playing as adults without realizing it. Often the label reflects the parent's own story, for instance one who grew up in a family where feelings weren't allowed. Gottlieb reframes 'too sensitive' as 'a keen observer' who notices what the rest of the family denies.

• An outsized reaction signals a story underneath

Your feelings are valid, she says, but check their size. If it's 80° in the room, it's hot, but does it feel like 95 to you? If your 'thermostat is off,' some story about yourself is probably being triggered, like 'of course I can't find a partner who treats me well.'

• We collect evidence for our story and drop what contradicts it

Like a detective with a thesis, we fixate on what supports 'I'm being dumped' and leave out anything that doesn't. Her antidote is to deliberately look for counterexamples. Stories are rarely 'always' or 'never.'

• Offer wise compassion, not idiot compassion

She borrows the Buddhist term 'idiot compassion': avoiding rocking the boat to spare someone's feelings even when the boat needs rocking. Telling a friend who fears being fired 'you deserve a better boss' is idiot compassion if you know they haven't been trying. Wise compassion gently holds up a mirror: 'It seems like you haven't really been invested in that job.'

• The person you talk to most is you, so ask whether it's kind, true and useful

Mel guesses she talks most to her husband or her executive producer, Tracy. Gottlieb says it's actually yourself, all day long. She tests self-talk with three questions: is it kind, is it true, is it useful? For a 'never good enough' story, she suggests not globalizing one shortfall, finding a few counterexamples, and walking into the world assuming you are good enough.

• Change and loss travel together

Even good changes, like starting to exercise or moving, mean grieving what you're giving up, such as a familiar lifestyle or habit. Not expecting that grief is part of why people slide back. Her own therapist compared her to a cartoon prisoner shaking the bars of a cell that's open on both sides. Walking around the bars means taking responsibility, which means change.

• Anxiety is living in the past or the future, narrated as a horror story

Anxiety means you aren't in the present. We tell catastrophic stories: 'my boss doesn't like my work,' 'people are talking about me.' The alternative is asking 'this happened, what can I do about it now?' She describes feelings as a compass pointing to important information.

EXAMPLES

• Two letters from one marriage

A woman wrote in sure her husband was cheating: late-night calls with a coworker, distance. Her father had cheated with a coworker. Her husband also wrote in, details changed for privacy: his father had died, his wife wanted him to move on, and she couldn't understand because her own father had left. Each was trapped in their own story, writing to a columnist instead of to each other.

• 'John'

The first patient in her book is insulting and critical and thinks everyone around him is an idiot, even the person at the Apple Store. Underneath is family trauma and a story that he has to be 'the rock.' He cares deeply about loving and being loved. Readers who despised him at first end up wanting to give him a hug.

• The wedding invitation

A woman discovered two high-school friends were getting married only by spotting an invitation at one friend's house. Neither had invited her, though she'd invited them. Gottlieb thinks asking them directly would have helped. They'd likely have explained, and she'd have felt better even if not great.

• 'I'm such a bully to myself'

A patient insisted she wasn't self-critical. Gottlieb asked her to write down everything she said to herself for a week. She came back, scrolled through her notes and started crying.

• Mel's roadside rants

Miserable after moving from the home where she'd raised her kids for 26 years to small-town Vermont, Mel was nitpicking Chris. Her therapist had her pull the car over on drives from Boston, turn back toward the city and say everything she felt. Once the 'valve was released,' she could keep driving forward.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Fight one thing at a time

First, pick your battles: is this from my past, is it realistic, what does my partner put up with from me? Wait 15–30 minutes. If it still matters, raise it that day, not two days later, to avoid 'kitchen-sink fighting' with a mental list of 10 complaints.

- **Read your partner's owner's manual**
  One client needed 15 minutes in sweats before talking about her day. Another felt uncared for when her partner asked nothing. Learn how your person works instead of assuming.
- **When you dislike your adult child's partner**
  Criticizing pushes her toward him. She isn't ready to leave, or she would. Unless there's danger or abuse, stay close and invite her to things she used to love, like a museum trip, so she notices the contrast herself.
- **Boundaries are about your action, not their compliance**
  'If you comment on my appearance, I'll end the conversation.' When it happens, calmly say 'It was fun being with you. Talk to you later' instead of 'you didn't respect my boundary.' Do it 100% of the time. She says 98% doesn't work.

This One Study Will Change How You Think About Your Entire Life: The Cornell Legacy Project

Guest: Dr. Karl Pillemer
Date: 2025-11-20 · Duration: 1:22:37
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IF0QIfwYQnw

KEYPOINTS

• Older people are an untapped source of practical life advice.
After about 25 years as a gerontologist, Karl Pillemer realized in his early 50s that he had only studied 'older people as problems.' So he asked what they know that younger people don't. He points out that only in the last 150 years or so have people stopped going to the oldest person they knew for advice. Anthropological research shows elders, who knew what to do in a drought or famine, were key to human survival. Today's highly age-segregated society risks losing that knowledge.

• The near-universal lesson: life is short, so you can't put it off.
The older people were, the more likely they were to say 'life is really, really short.' One retired engineer said it passed by 'in a nanosecond.' A 99-year-old told him, 'next thing you know you're 100.' Knowing you don't have 50 more years narrows the focus to what matters.

• No one wished they had more things. People value people and experiences.
Not a single person among the thousands interviewed said they wished they had spent more time accumulating possessions. The things within your control: invest time in relationships, value experiences over stuff, and make a daily decision to set mindless worry aside.

• Stop worrying about what you can't control.
Picture '2,000 grandparents yelling at you' to stop worrying, because you'll regret wasting the time. You can't control exactly how your kids turn out, how your aging parents treat you, or how long you'll live 'no matter how much you believe in body hacking.' Focus your action on what you can control.

• Lesson 1: always be honest, 'fair and square.'
Mel admits it sounds like a cliché, but deception, and being betrayed, were deep sources of regret. Mel also connects honesty with yourself: admitting you're unhappy in your job, your major or your habits is the first step to changing.

• Lesson 2: unless you have a compelling reason to say no, say yes.
When offered a new responsibility or opportunity, let your default be yes even if it takes you out of your comfort zone. 'Thousands of people told me this': you are much more likely to regret what you didn't do than what you did.

• Lesson 3: travel more, and cram it in.
Travel, big or small, became some of the richest memories. Don't wait for retirement or the perfect time.

• Lesson 4: choose a partner with extreme care.
Don't rush. Take all the time you need to get to know the person and judge long-term compatibility. Pillemer notes that surveys still show most young people want a lifelong marriage, even if they marry later or live together first.

• Lesson 5: say it now.
Some of the deepest regrets were not saying 'I love you' more and not asking for forgiveness, 'a truly time-limited possibility.' Waiting for the right moment is like wearing a heavy backpack. Mel and Chris have a rule: don't go to bed angry. They talk it through and apologize first.

• Use 'anticipatory regret' to avoid family estrangement.
Many estrangements develop slowly from small cuts and resentment. Permanently estranged older people said, 'I need a time machine.' Ask yourself: if I let this happen, will I regret it? A sibling cutoff ripples down the generations, meaning cousins who don't know each other and no reunions. Pillemer says that where there's abuse or real danger, stepping back is right, ideally with professional help, but those are a minority of cases.

• Older people are happier on average, partly by choice, and your midlife habits matter.
Across hundreds of studies, people over 60 to 65 report more happiness than younger people, despite accumulating losses. Elders describe consciously choosing to be happy: focusing on what works and savoring small things. On health, he warns that the risk isn't dropping dead but spending a decade or two with burdensome chronic disease, so heart-healthy habits in your 30s to 50s count.

EXAMPLES

• The woman whose kids stopped calling
An older woman tapped the arm of her chair and said she never heard from her children. The estrangement grew slowly after she married a second husband the kids disliked, and they traveled and lost touch. At the end of her life it was her deepest regret.

• 'I don't have to think about why I don't talk to my brother Ed'
One man finally called his brother after 10 years of silence. The next morning he realized the 'backpack' was gone. Several people used that same image.

• Mel's math on visits
At 56, with her dad in his 80s, Mel realized that if you see someone a couple of times a year, you may have only a dozen to 30 visits left.

• Mel's motor-home summer
Her most vivid childhood memory is a roughly two-week motor-home trip to national parks, along with fishing trips an hour from home. They weren't fancy, but they lasted in memory, supporting 'travel more.'

• Small things elders savor
A colorful bird on the lawn, a phone call from a friend, the dog's silly antics. They treat time with loved ones as precious, not routine.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **30 Lessons for Living**
  Pillemer's book. The five lessons on page 193: always be honest, say yes to opportunities, travel more, choose a mate with extreme care, say it now.
- **Anticipatory regret check**
  Before a cutoff or a grudge hardens, ask: 'At 90, will I regret letting this happen?'
- **The relationship is your job**
  Mel's view as a parent of three adult kids: the relationship is 100% her responsibility, so she reaches out instead of waiting to hear from them.
- **Default-yes rule**
  Without a compelling reason to say no, take the opportunity.

How to Deal with Difficult People & Not Get Stressed Out

Date: 2025-11-17 · Duration: 1:08:25
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GtVPoYq7Rso

KEYPOINTS

• Most difficult people aren't people you want gone; you just wish you got along.
Mel pushes back on the social-media habit of 'cutting out toxic people.' The hard relationships in most lives are with a parent, sibling, in-law or friend you love but find exhausting, someone who is like 'hugging a porcupine.' Some people would rather stay angry, play the victim or complain than connect, and the Let Them Theory is about dealing with that reality without being dragged into it.

• Most adults are 8-year-olds in big bodies.
This line from Mel's therapist, Ann, changed how she sees it, and it appears in chapter 7 of The Let Them Theory. It explains why a mom pouts instead of saying what's wrong, why a friend gives the silent treatment, why a boyfriend sends passive-aggressive texts, and why a sister blows up then acts like nothing happened an hour later. Ann's suggestion: when someone triggers you, picture the second-grade version of them in the room.

• Emotional flooding is a survival response, not a choice to be awful.
Mel explains, drawing on experts from the show, that even small triggers can flip an adult of 25, 50 or 80 from rational to amygdala-hijacked, with adrenaline and cortisol flooding the body almost instantly. Emotions are also contagious: someone's tone, energy or body language can put you on edge before you notice. It's a reason to expect reactions, not to excuse every behavior.

• Hunger, fatigue, stress and alcohol make everyone more reactive.
When you or anyone else is hungry, tired, stressed, under the influence, lonely, angry or hurt, emotions run hotter. Mel says every time she has said something she regretted, stress, alcohol or hunger was involved. Knowing that helps her manage her own reactions at gatherings.

• Venting doesn't reduce anger; it rehearses it.
Mel cites a 2024 Ohio State meta-analysis of 154 anger studies that found no evidence venting reduces anger, and it often makes people angrier. Every rant ('My dad's always like this,' 'My brother never helps') is a mental rep: 'your brain is memorizing your outrage,' locking the anger into your nervous system so you walk back in more reactive.

• An emotional surge lasts about 90 seconds if you don't feed it.
Citing Harvard-trained neuroscientist Dr. Jill Bolte Taylor, Mel describes emotions as a chemical surge that rises and falls in roughly 90 seconds. Snapping, ranting or taking the bait keeps re-feeding it. The practice is to pause, breathe and not give the moment more power than it deserves.

• Decide why you're going before you walk in.
Ask yourself, 'Why am I here?' If the answer is 'I just want to be with my family,' you've 'won the lottery': you don't need to fix, control or manage anyone. Your only job is to go with the flow, be kind and flexible, and say thank you. Mel also reminds you that hosts mostly want their effort appreciated, while guests often arrive full of expectations about food, sleeping arrangements or how things 'should' be done.

• Let them: people change only when they're ready.
Let them be negative, bring their baggage, complain about the world or ignore the people right in front of them. If someone is self-centered, narcissistic or always the victim, they've always been that way, so expect it. Then you don't have to walk in braced for conflict. Mel says waiting to love someone 'when' they change isn't love; it's judgment.

• Let me: two boundaries are all you need, time and topics.
Time means deciding how long you'll stay: one night, two days or three, and whether you'll book a hotel. Topics means choosing what you won't discuss (work, money, dating, politics) so you don't get pulled into draining debates or silence yourself. If someone crosses the line, don't defend yourself; just redirect.

• Holidays aren't the time for unresolved business.
Everyone is tired, overwhelmed and in chaotic houses, so old wounds surface easily. Mel's blunt advice: if your family is so bad you have to 'armor up' with big boundary declarations to survive it, don't go.

EXAMPLES

• 'So, have you met anybody yet?'
A single person at a holiday gathering gets this from an aunt. It hits a nerve: you feel exposed and judged, snap or withdraw, reach for a second glass of red wine, vent later and lie awake thinking 'this is why I never should have come.' Mel's alternative is to let her ask, pause and let the 90 seconds pass.

• 'You haven't been here in a year'
Team members described arriving at grandparents' or parents' homes and hearing a complaint about past visits mid-hug. You can feel yourself triggered in seconds. Knowing your reason for coming lets you 'let your grandma be your grandma.'

• The sibling's partner you can't stand
When you vent about your sister's boyfriend, she feels the judgment even if no one says it, believes the family is against her person and clings to him harder. Venting about them pushes her away.

• Mom trashing Dad after the divorce
Mel's suggested words for this listener: 'Mom, I don't want to hear about Dad. I'm not available to talk about it, so let's talk about something else.' If it continues: 'I don't want to get into that today. Let's talk about your garden.'

• The Robbins three-day rule
Mel's family jokes that they're great for about 3 days, then everyone is stressed and blowups start, so three days is their time boundary.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Before the gathering**
  Write down why you're going, how long you'll stay and two topics you won't discuss.
- **In the moment**
  Picture their 8-year-old self, think 'let them,' then 'let me pause, let me breathe.' Wait out the 90 seconds before you speak.
- **Instead of venting**
  Skip the bedroom rant to your partner. Take a walk or change the subject so you aren't rehearsing the anger.

The Exact Words You Need to Hear Today If It Feels Like Nothing’s Working

Guest: Mark Nepo
Date: 2025-11-13 · Duration: 1:13:53
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1iSw8rrTdyk

KEYPOINTS

• When you feel powerless, start by admitting what's true.

Poet and author Mark Nepo says we often fear things that have already happened: 'I'm afraid of being lonely, and I already am. I'm afraid things are going to change. They've already changed.' Naming the truth stops you from spending energy dreading it. His shorthand, from one of his poems: 'Fear wastes air.'

• Life is always where you are. There is no 'there.'

Nepo calls the modern belief that real life is happening somewhere else (FOMO) one of our most menacing assumptions. 'There's only here.' He adds that the difficulty of any moment is only half of reality. The other half is what's still beautiful and alive right now.

• People learn by willfully shedding or by being broken open.

'If you don't willfully shed, don't worry, you'll be broken open.' Great love and great suffering are the two great teachers. Hard times are often what open us to grace, he says, because pain lowers our defenses.

• Ask a struggling person two questions: 'What's it like to be you right now?' and 'What do you care about?'

These are non-judgmental questions for loved ones and students who've lost their spark. Don't tell them they're stuck or to cheer up: 'Did that ever work?' Invite their story instead. The questions open connection both with others and with yourself.

• Love comes from tending your own soul, not reinventing yourself to be desirable.

In 'The Bee Comes' (May 19), which made Mel cry: 'The flower doesn't dream of the bee, it blossoms and the bee comes.' Nepo describes reinventing himself to seem more deserving of love, only to learn again and again that caring for his own inner life is what invites love in.

• Follow what makes you come alive, even if it keeps changing.

His mentor Joel Elkes told him: 'You have a gift. Honor it and let it be your teacher.' Nepo's friend Paul followed his aliveness from running an art gallery in Albany, New York, to sumi painting to apprenticing with a foreign-car mechanic. Your 'gift' might be watching the sky, cooking for friends or stamp collecting.

• A ritual is a habit done with an open heart.

The same act can be a dull habit or a grounding ritual depending on whether you're present for it. If you notice you're on autopilot midday: 'Stop. No judgment. Back up. Do the simple thing openheartedly.' Some days it will still feel like a chore, and that's being human.

• Do what matters first.

For years Nepo did the tedious things first and saved the sacred things for after. He calls that backwards. Starting with what matters widens your 'aperture of heart and mind,' and the tedious tasks lose their edge. It doesn't make them wonderful, but they become easier to carry.

• Aging is like a meteor: flaking off while getting brighter.

From his book The Fifth Season, on creativity in the second half of life: most meteors burn up, getting brighter as they shed until only light remains. At 74, with back surgery and arthritis, he sees each loss as flaking off while his light grows. Since more years are behind him than ahead, he says the real purpose of looking back or forward is to make that light brighter.

EXAMPLES

• The cancer that started The Book of Awakening

In his early 30s, just out of graduate school, Nepo was diagnosed with a rare lymphoma in his skull that had grown to the size of a grapefruit. He also had a rib removed. One night, vomiting every half hour from oral chemotherapy, he watched the sun come up and realized that somewhere nearby a baby was being born and a couple was making love for the first time. Life was still going on beyond his pain.

• 'The land where nothing is true'

At a retreat at the Sophia Institute in Charleston, a mother said she and her 28-year-old son, Jack, were 'stuck' because he thought nothing was true. Nepo suggested that if Jack had moved to China, she'd ask what it's like there and what brought him. So why not ask him, 'What's it like to live in the land where nothing is true?'

• Feeding his father applesauce

Nepo was estranged from his parents for many years and reconnected with his father, a master woodworker, in his 80s. His father lived to 93. After a stroke, in a noisy, beeping hospital ward, Nepo fed him applesauce with a spoon, a 'sad and beautiful and bittersweet' moment that felt like his whole life in a single act.

• Nepo's three morning rituals

He opens the blinds to let light in, takes care of something living by feeding his yellow lab Zuzu, and does something for someone he loves by making coffee for his wife Susan, a night owl, before she wakes.

• Two Monkeys Sleeping (June 6)

He read an entry about two monkeys at the Central Park Zoo sleeping peacefully with their heads bowed toward each other, while tourists tapped on the glass. Mel and Chris each keep their own copy of the book by their beds because they don't want to share.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Choose three simple rituals

Morning, midday or evening: open the blinds, water the flowers, make someone coffee. Pick three and stay present for them.

- **The Book of Awakening**
  Daily reflections, one per date. Mel reads a page most mornings. Nepo says it's fine to skip days, and an entry opened a month later can greet you 'like an old friend.'
- **Lines to keep**
  'Fear wastes air.' 'What's it like to be you right now?' 'Life is more than anything we could dream of if we truly meet each other and meet ourselves right here, right now.'

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).

How to Use AI to Make Money, Save Time, and Be More Productive

Guest: Allie K. Miller
Date: 2025-11-06 · Duration: 1:14:29
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=64qXq8AG_9M

KEYPOINTS

• AI is any system that tries to do a humanlike task, and it's already everywhere.
AI expert Allie K. Miller says AI covers everything from self-driving cars to your Roomba. The term has been around for decades. What's new is generative AI that you can talk to, and how accessible it is: 'We have never had tech be as accessible as it is today.' Mel notes her company already uses it everywhere at work, but she hasn't used it in her personal life.

• Women are adopting AI about 25% less than men, and the gap compounds.
Miller hopes women and other hesitant groups see AI 'as a source of agency and not of anxiety.' She warns that people who start now will build momentum that's 'really hard to catch up on in the next two years.' Many hold back because it feels like cheating.

• The biggest mistake is giving too little context.
'Plan me a family vacation' gets a generic answer. Tell it who your family is, where you've been and why you liked it, allergies, the length of the trip, and what each person wants. The more you give it, the more useful the answer. AI moves you from filtering Google results yourself to having a co-pilot.

• Go beyond quick one-off tasks.
Most people are stuck as 'microtaskers,' using it for things like a meal plan for 20 diners where two are gluten-free. Other ways to use it: as a real-time companion through live video or screen sharing, as a talking partner (she has spoken conversations while walking around New York to play devil's advocate on a problem), and as a delegate for big research and planning jobs you come back to 20 minutes later.

• Have AI interview you.
'Go full Mel Robbins on me. Ask me 20 questions.' Then ask: 'Here's my plan. What are five risks I'm not thinking of and how do I mitigate them?' and 'What are 10 crazy ways to make this more interesting?' Miller does this at the hair salon, whispering to it for 20 minutes and, she says, getting four hours of work done.

• Use it to become who you want to be, not just to write emails faster.
A sticky note on her desk says 'Use AI to become the person you want to be.' She calls AI 'a prosthesis for reinvention' and says getting stuck on speed is a 'productivity trap.' There are three levels: doing what you already do faster, doing it better, and doing things that are completely new. If she'd had it when starting her business, she'd have asked how to form an LLC, how to choose a lawyer and accountant, and what 20 questions to ask a first hire.

• AI makes mistakes ('hallucinates'), so verify what matters.
These systems weren't trained to recite facts, so occasional made-up answers happen. She says the best models are approaching roughly a 1% hallucination rate. Mel's example: searches recently claimed she was divorced and drove a Lamborghini. Miller also wouldn't trust AI over a map app if you're lost.

• Use it lazily and you'll get lazy. Use it actively and it makes you better.
On the MIT study about cognitive decline that Mel raised, Miller's view is that the people in it used AI to write essays and then couldn't remember them, because they hadn't written them. Like calculators and math, we still need to teach critical thinking, taste, creativity and writing. Do your own writing if remembering it matters, and use AI to interview you or critique your draft.

• Instead of 'AI is coming for my job,' think 'AI is part of my job.'
Every role, whether marketing, legal or finance, will be AI-supported, and the tasks within jobs will shift. If you're worried, lean in. Users also get a voice in demands for regulation and labeling of AI-generated content. 'It's still you': authenticity, confidence and trust remain human.

EXAMPLES

• Fridge-photo dinners
Miller calls herself a terrible cook. She photographs her fridge and pantry, and AI suggests recipes and an exact Trader Joe's list for missing ingredients. She says it saves hours and money, cuts food waste, and spares her the guilt.

• Board-game bar in video mode
With only 45 minutes, she scanned the shelves with live video and asked for an easy, fun game for two, instead of spending 20 minutes deciding. She also screen-shares with AI while shopping on Etsy for gifts and says having company helps her ADHD-style focus.

• Job search, step by step
Describe all your past roles and which tasks you loved and hated, even after nine years as an accountant, and ask what roles fit. Then ask for 20 changes to your resume, have it find 150 great example resumes, and summarize hiring blogs from companies like Google, Microsoft, KPMG or BCG into five best practices.

• Solopreneur leverage
Record an hour of video and get 15 clips with on-screen text. Translate Instagram videos into Spanish for a second channel. AI acts like '20% of a marketing person, 20% of a customer support person.' A follower with no coding skills built an automated morning summary of his kids' school emails with a calendar and action items.

• The empty apartment
After a three-year road trip and losing everything in a sewage flood, Miller cried on the floor of her empty New York apartment, eating dinner on the edge of the bathtub. Her therapist said, 'You have a dance floor in New York.' She threw a dance party and a New Year's planning session with sticky notes covering the floor.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Context checklist**

  Who's involved, past attempts, what you liked and didn't, constraints (dates, budget, allergies), and your worries. For a new apartment: photos, square footage, what bothered you about your old place (storage, light), and concerns like an unmade bed being visible.

- **Prompts to steal**

  'Ask me 20 questions.' 'What are five risks and how do I mitigate them?' 'What are 10 crazy ideas?' 'Review this from the viewpoint of [person].'

- **Privacy-hesitant? Try a local model**

  Miller says small models that run on your own device, without internet, take under five minutes to set up.

- **Coming soon**

  More multimodal tools that move between text, image, sound and video. Billion-dollar companies run by a handful of people. Miller even predicts we'll be able to talk to our pets within 10 years.

3 Questions to Ask Yourself to Figure Out What You Really Want

Date: 2025-11-03 · Duration: 1:02:03
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=APw7h-z2mxk

KEYPOINTS

- **Three questions from Stanford's 'Designing Your Life' course can show you what you actually want next.**
  Mel walks through the Odyssey Plan from Stanford professors Bill Burnett and Dave Evans, who have taught the hugely popular course for 15 years and wrote the book Designing Your Life. The questions: (1) What does life look like if you stay on your current path? (2) If that path disappeared tomorrow, what would you do? (3) What would life look like if nothing were holding you back? Her pitch is that you're capable, and your mindset is what's holding you back.
- **Q1: Project your current path five years out, honestly and without judgment.**
  If nothing changes about your job, home, major, friends, relationship and daily routine, where does it lead? Mel notes this isn't a dream-life visualization. It's a mirror, and she asks you to treat the question as neutral, like checking the route on a road trip. If you're grinding your teeth, waking up with a sore shoulder and running on 15 cups of coffee, picture that for three more years.
- **Many people 'slide' into a life they didn't choose.**
  Mel's example is a friend dating a genuinely good person after dozens of dates without a spark. Play it forward: a year later you're living together, two years later you feel you have to get engaged 'because here we are.' The same goes for staying in a major you've already paid for because you don't want to admit you've changed your mind.
- **Q1 can also confirm you're on a good path.**
  Mel ran her own habits forward: 100 grams of protein a day, resistance training, and reaching out to a friend daily. Five years out, she sees energy, aging well, being able to lift a suitcase into the overhead bin at 90, dancing at her grandkids' weddings, and staying connected.
- **Q2, the 'rug-pull' question, is meant to free you, not scare you.**
  If your job, business or role vanished tomorrow, what's the first step you'd take? Plan B is usually already there, but we wait for Plan A to blow up before considering it. Mel also applies it to caregivers: if the kids were at school and your parents were cared for, what would you want to do with your time? Freelance, start a business, learn a skill? Running this drill early gives you options before you get fired or a friendship fades.
- **Q3: if money, other people's opinions and guilt weren't factors, what would you do?**
  Mel says the single biggest obstacle usually isn't money. It's fear of what people will think. This is where the Let Them idea applies: let them laugh at your dream. Write the answer down even if it sounds silly.
- **You're happiest living by your own inner values.**
  Mel cites a 2015 study by Tim Kasser of Knox College, published in the Journal of Positive Psychology: people focused on contribution, connection, relationships and meaning reported higher life satisfaction and less anxiety than people chasing status or wealth.
- **Picturing your future vividly increases commitment and progress.**
  A University of Munich study in Current Psychology found that forming vivid images of your future boosted positive emotion, which helped people set worthwhile goals, commit to them and make more progress.
- **Change your path with one small habit, then test it cheaply.**
  Adding a single daily habit, like writing, walking, or 15 minutes researching something that interests you, changes where you're heading. Then try the dream out small: talk to someone who lives the life, take a short trip, or 'cruise' a town on Google Street View. Seeing what matters also exposes where you're wasting time and money.

EXAMPLES

- **Mel's own podcast decision**
  About six years ago she traveled 150 days a year giving corporate keynotes, including 51 for JP Morgan, about seven for Microsoft, and events for Starbucks, plus writing books like The 5 Second Rule and The High 5 Habit. Her rug-pull answer was clear: start a podcast. The excuses were 6 million podcasts on Spotify, few that make money, payroll and her mortgage. She let herself envision a Boston-based show anyway.
- **Chris's 5:15 a.m. writing**
  Mel's husband realized through the exercise that he wanted to write. He first added 15 to 20 minutes of daily writing. Now he wakes at 5:15, meditates and writes before walking the dogs. Mel's framing: 'Writing isn't a nice-to-have. Writing is who I am.'
- **Henry's farmhouse full of cats**
  A producer's friend named Henry imagined an old farmhouse full of cats named after movie stars, like 'the Great Catsby,' plus an 86-inch TV and a vending machine with endless free Italian ice. Mel's point: write it down even if it sounds ridiculous.
- **Plan B pivots**
  A woman blindsided by losing her corporate marketing job started freelancing social media for local shops and now runs a consulting business. A dancer with a career-ending injury now teaches kids' dance at community centers.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Write all three answers down**
  Spend real time on each question, especially Q3. Writing them out reveals your 'unfinished business.'
- **15-minute research habit**
  Look into flower farms (what the finances look like, how people start), online nursing or EMT programs, or a ski resort job, one small step a day.
- **Crowdsource the first move**
  Post that you're considering a pivot, for example becoming a yoga instructor, and ask people already in that field what their

first step would be.

- **Designing Your Life**
  The book by Bill Burnett and Dave Evans that the Odyssey Plan comes from.

How to Communicate With Confidence & Ease (From Harvard Business School’s #1 Professor)

Guest: Dr. Alison Wood Brooks
Date: 2025-10-30 · Duration: 1:12:49
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5yCqhY1D-VE

KEYPOINTS

- **Every relationship is a repeated series of conversations, so small improvements add up.**
  Harvard Business School professor Alison Wood Brooks frames conversation as 'a series of tiny choices' you make in every moment. If each conversation gets a little better, your love life, parenting, friendships and work all improve. It isn't about you alone. It's 'you plus the other person and what you can build together.'
- **Her framework is TALK: Topics, Asking, Levity, Kindness.**
  It grew out of her years teaching negotiation at HBS and research on emotions in conversation. She notes that even people at a school with an 11% acceptance rate find conversation hard, because it's cognitively overwhelming: you're listening, processing and coming up with something to say all at once. Prepping ahead reduces that load.
- **Topics: prep a few before you go.**
  We spend time showering, dressing and booking the restaurant, but only about 10% of people think ahead about what to talk about. In her research, people who brainstormed possible topics for even 30 seconds had better conversations than those who didn't, even if they never used the topics. Prepping also makes hard conversations easier to start. Most days you know who you'll see, so you can personalize.
- **Small talk is a launch pad, not the destination.**
  Small talk isn't 'evil or bad,' just often unrewarding. Aim to climb the 'pyramid' to more tailored conversation: personal disclosure or something the other person is excited about. A good launch question: 'What are you good at that you really hate doing?'
- **Asking: more and better questions, especially follow-ups.**
  Our inability to understand others' perspectives is a huge barrier to connection and to resolving conflict, and questions are the antidote. In her 'never-ending follow-up questions' exercise, each question builds on the last answer. Brooks also calls it a 'gigantic red flag' if a date asks you nothing after two or three dates.
- **Get credit for listening by saying what you heard out loud.**
  Listening has three steps: take in their words, voice and body language; think about it; then show them you heard. Nodding and eye contact are 'Listening 101' and can be faked. 'Listening 201' is using words: 'I heard you say this, and it seemed like you feel anxious about it. Can you tell me more?' She says this is where real charisma, competence and influence come from.
- **Levity is the antidote to boredom.**
  Levity includes humor but also 'unfunny moments of warmth.' Conversations fail not only through conflict but often by being dull. Laughter and lightness keep people engaged.
- **Admitting you don't understand can raise your status.**
  Saying 'You've lost some of us. Can you back up and define this?' shows confidence, signals you'll be honest when you don't know something, and brings everyone along. Brooks reminds people with low status in a room that everyone's status shifts constantly.
- **Kindness is effortful and constant, especially with people you live with.**
  Being kind to the person you see every day is a 'big ask' because stress drains your resources. It means getting past self-centeredness to consider what they want to talk about. With colleagues, ask 'What are you excited about lately? How can I be helpful?'
- **Interruptions aren't all bad, and nobody knows when to end a conversation.**
  On-topic interruptions, like finishing each other's sentences, are engaged and fun. Off-topic interruptions that hijack the conversation give interrupting a bad name. As for endings, people are almost always dissatisfied, wanting it longer or shorter, so accept the awkwardness: 'This was great. I can't wait for the next one. Bye.'

EXAMPLES

- **The never-ending follow-up demo**
  Brooks asked Mel what she had for breakfast (a smoothie), what was in it (protein powder, honey, two squeezed lemons, water), then what her dream breakfast would be. Mel said it depends on her mood: some days scrambled eggs, avocado and kimchi. Each question built on her last answer.
- **Topic prep help for aging parents**
  Mel says her calls with her parents are always 'How'd it go? How was golf?' A sister brainstormed better questions for people in their 70s in upstate New York with nine grandchildren—using an AI chat tool for ideas—then used those prompts to prep warmer conversations with their parents.
- **Mel's 'Are you listening?' fight**
  Mel turns her back while Chris talks, then repeats what he said word for word. He replies, 'I didn't ask if you heard me. I asked if you're listening.' Brooks says the issue is that her body language didn't match the listening she was doing in her head.
- **Walking out after 20 minutes**
  Brooks once excused herself to the restroom mid-date, looked in the mirror and decided she couldn't be with someone who, within 20 minutes, made her furious by showing no interest in her.
- **Eye-gaze experiment**
  People tend to look at the highest-status person, which makes others feel invisible. When group leaders deliberately spread their gaze evenly, lower-status members spoke up more later, without being cold-called ('Hey Sarah, we haven't heard from

you'), which Brooks calls mortifying.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Daily topic prep**
  Before the day starts, jot one or two topics for each person you'll see: your kids, your partner, colleagues. This is Brooks's single top takeaway.
- **Taming the person who holds court**
  For the 'Uncle Paulie' at family gatherings, use questions to pass the floor to others and an inclusive gaze to invite quieter people in. Brooks admits that as a big talker she has to work at giving others space.
- **When emotions run hot**
  Reframe or change the situation. It can take about 20 minutes for your body to calm down before a productive talk.
- **Colleague check-in questions**
  'What are you excited about lately?' 'What are you struggling with that I might help with?' These work by email and text as well as in person.

12 Minutes to a Better Brain: Neuroscientist Reveals the #1 Habit for Clarity & Focus

Guest: Dr. Amishi Jha
Date: 2025-10-27 · Duration: 1:20:08
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f0kgtH0pJ2A

KEYPOINTS

• Attention is the brain's boss, powerful but fragile

Cognitive neuroscientist Dr. Amishi Jha, author of Peak Mind, says wherever attention goes, the rest of the brain's processing aligns with it. Her metaphor is a flashlight: whatever it points at becomes crisper and clearer while everything else dulls. Attention can be captured by outside pings and by your own thoughts. Her hopeful message is that it's trainable.

• There are three attention systems: flashlight, floodlight and juggler

The flashlight is selective attention, or focus: narrow and directed, aimed at the outside world or inward at a thought. The floodlight is the alerting system: broad and receptive, as when you suddenly hit a school zone or brainstorm with all options open, and it only works in the present. The juggler is executive function, keeping goals and actions aligned, such as planning a trip to the airport.

• Flashlight and floodlight compete

Being narrowly focused and broadly receptive at once isn't possible; she says the two systems battle each other in the brain. Choosing which mode a situation needs, for example going into a social event warm and open versus locked on one task, is part of using attention well.

• Multitasking doesn't exist; it's task-switching

You have one flashlight, not five. Juggling several demanding tasks means repeatedly engaging and disengaging, which she likens to grinding car gears and calls 'a terrible way' to spend attentional energy. Her guidance: monotask as much as possible and don't treat multitasking as a badge of honour.

• Attention peaks from about 25 to 35, then declines

All three systems aren't fully developed until about 25, followed by a roughly 10-year peak. After 35 comes a normal, healthy-ageing decline, partly due to habits, she says. That vulnerability is why her lab focuses on training to keep attention in peak shape.

• Long stretches of high demand drain attention

Across her studies, attention gets worse over demanding periods: students over a semester just before finals, athletes over pre-season training before competition, and service members before deployment. Stress and depleted attention then feed each other with more distraction, irritability and mood dips. Mel recognised the cycle from a hard stretch of her own: more scrolling, procrastinating and irritability.

• Worrying about the future taxes attention like the real thing

Attention is internal as well as external, so mentally simulating stressful scenarios also depletes it. Mel summarises it as: rumination weakens your attention before the event you're worried about even arrives. Jha's phrase for it is 'don't deploy before you deploy'.

• Twelve minutes is the minimum effective dose

In early studies with military service members and firefighters, participants were told to do 30 minutes daily and log honestly. Almost no one did 30; practice ranged from zero up. Using objective attention and some brain measures, 12 minutes or more protected and strengthened attention, while less did not. More practice brings more benefit, like push-ups.

• The prescription: 12 minutes a day, 4 days a week, for at least 4 weeks

Follow-up studies prescribed 12 minutes. People complied far more than with 30, though most didn't manage seven days, and four days a week proved enough. Under stress, practisers' attention, mood and stress levels stayed stable while comparison groups declined. Without high stress, people improved beyond baseline. She declines to promise happiness, but says people become more aware and better able to steer attention.

• A wandering mind during practice is a win

Many expect meditation to feel blissful and are disappointed to find 'my mind is a mess'. Noticing that you drifted and bringing attention back is the exercise, which she calls the 'push-up for the mind': focus, notice, refocus, repeat. Over time you may notice what you tend to drift toward. She calls this developing a friendship with your own mind.

EXAMPLES

• Jha couldn't pay attention, as an attention scientist

In her first faculty job at the University of Pennsylvania, with a young child, a husband in grad school and a 100-year-old fixer-upper, she was the go-to media expert on attention yet felt she couldn't focus. Telling herself to 'get it together' didn't work, which sent her into the research on solutions.

• 'Don't deploy before you deploy'

Mel cites page 156 of Peak Mind: a service member's wife, Cynthia, kept telling her husband this because he was mentally gone weeks before each deployment, missing time with his kids and spouse while still at home.

• How 12 minutes was discovered

Most mindfulness programmes ask for 45 minutes, seven days a week. Her team assumed 30 would be more realistic, found that almost no one did it, and used the honest practice logs to find the 12-minute threshold. She compares it to needing about 150 minutes of cardio a week for heart benefits.

• Adapting for attention difficulties

For groups with particular needs, such as people with attention-deficit issues, programmes started with much shorter practices. They built up to 12 minutes only by the end of eight weeks, so the right ramp varies by person.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **'Find your flashlight' breath practice**
  Sit comfortably, alert and centred. Use the sensations of breathing as your anchor. When your mind wanders, notice where it went and gently bring it back. The goal is finding the flashlight again, not keeping it fixed.
- **Start at 3 minutes and stack it onto a habit**
  The best time is whenever you'll actually do it, so attach it to brushing your teeth or morning coffee. Mel plans to swap 22 minutes of social media and email with coffee for a 3-minute timer. Do 3 minutes, four days a week, then 6 minutes, then 12.
- **Use a timer, and consider a buddy**
  Set a timer to keep it simple, or FaceTime a friend at a set time, such as 9am, and both sit with eyes closed for three minutes.
- **Round out with the body scan**
  Her full four-week plan, written out day by day at the end of her book, adds practices like the body scan, which moves the flashlight systematically through the body.
- **Monotask**
  Batch and sequence demanding tasks instead of switching, to save attention for what matters.

Mayo Clinic Cancer Doctor: 5 Foods That Heal the Body, Starve Cancer, & Prevent Disease

Guest: Dr. Dawn Mussallem
Date: 2025-10-23 · Duration: 1:44:15
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WlxbVMfvir8

KEYPOINTS

• Dr. Mussallem treats food, movement, sleep and love as part of cancer care, alongside standard treatment.
She's a double board-certified Mayo Clinic physician, an integrative oncologist and a stage 4 cancer survivor. She stresses she followed her doctors' medical advice. What she added was 'tripling down' on the healthy parts of her life instead of fixating on the diagnosis. Her message isn't 'go vegan' or skip treatment. She wants people eating whole foods, mostly plants.

• Most people, including cancer patients, aren't eating nearly enough vegetables and fruit.
She says about 90% of Americans miss the recommended servings. When she studied her own Mayo cancer center, 95% of patients fell short. She checked for food insecurity and says it wasn't driving the gap. Busy lives and not making time were. In the research she cites, people eating five servings a day had a 10% lower risk of dying from cancer and 12% lower from heart disease.

• Exercise is her 'number one' for cancer patients, even during chemo.
She kept exercising through chemotherapy and felt better as the tumor shrank. She says exercise burns off stress hormones (her caveman versus saber-tooth tiger comparison), lifts mood and may improve how well treatment works. She cites breast cancer research showing outcomes improved by 'almost 50%'. You don't need a gym: 'five minutes counts,' even walking around the kitchen or dancing.

• Berries are an easy, cheap cancer-fighting food.
She cites the Nurses' Health Study: for breast cancer survivors, every two servings of berries a week was linked to a 25% lower risk of dying from breast cancer. Mel double-checks it's two servings a week, not a day. Frozen berries count, which keeps it affordable.

• Eat at least some cruciferous vegetables raw to get more benefit.
Broccoli, cauliflower, Brussels sprouts, arugula and cabbage contain an enzyme, myrosinase, that she says helps you absorb their protective compounds. Cooking cuts it back. Her fixes: nibble a little raw before cooking, add a raw arugula salad alongside cooked broccoli, or sprinkle dry mustard seed on top. If your gut can't handle one (some people can't tolerate broccoli), pick another from the family.

• Fiber is 'magic,' and protein hype is crowding it out.
She cites a recent umbrella review covering 17 million person-years. She calls it 'class one' evidence that fiber lowers the risk of dying from any cause, from heart disease and from pancreatic cancer. Another review linked fiber to a 22% lower cancer risk. Over 90% of people don't get enough, and fiber only comes from plants. To limit gas, start beans slowly and use simple swaps rather than adding beans to every meal.

• Soy is protective for breast cancer survivors, not dangerous.
Many survivors avoid soy. She points to the American Cancer Society's 2022 nutrition update, which covered soy safety, and a meta-analysis showing a 25% drop in breast cancer coming back. The benefit was strongest in estrogen receptor-negative cancer, but receptor-positive patients benefited too. She also uses edamame for menopausal hot flashes, citing Neal Barnard's research with half a cup a day plus a plant-based diet.

• Ultra-processed food is the first thing she'd cut, and the label tells you what you need to know.
She says processed meat (pepperoni, sausage, bacon, chicken nuggets, lunch meat) is a class one carcinogen. In the aisles, read the ingredient list. If there are words you don't recognize, put it back. 'Vegan' doesn't mean healthy. She told one patient to swap her weekly vegan ice cream for regular ice cream rather than eat 'the fake stuff.'

• Skip artificial sweeteners and go easy on sugar alcohols.
She describes a study in which sucralose (found in sugar-free drinks) seemed to reduce how well immunotherapy worked, possibly by disrupting the gut microbiome. She calls this suggestive. She thinks fears about erythritol are exaggerated but still on the watch list for making platelets stickier. Ingredients ending in '-ol' often cause bloating. Her green lights: dates, honey, maple syrup, stevia or monk fruit without additives.

• Sleep is medicine: 7–9 hours lets the brain 'take a bath.'
She says the brain clears toxins during sleep and the body regenerates. She links shift work to higher cancer risk and blames blue light after sundown for trouble staying asleep. Her 'three things' for every cancer patient are love (yourself and others), move and food. She notes that without self-love you won't show up for the other two.

• It's never too late, and perfect isn't required.
She cites research suggesting that eating better from age 20 could add about 11 healthy years for women and 13 for men. Starting at 60 adds about eight, and starting at 80 about 3.4. About 75% of healthy aging is modifiable. Nurses' Health Study data showed women who improved their diet after a breast cancer diagnosis also did better. Her 'speed limit' comparison: going 67 in a 65 zone won't get you a ticket if you're doing everything else right.

EXAMPLES

• Misdiagnosed for months in medical school
She was an athlete who climbed Camelback Mountain twice a day. One doctor said asthma, a second said use the inhaler more, and a third called it psychosomatic. It turned out to be stage 4 cancer: three months to live without treatment, 20 months with it. She says she met the diagnosis with acceptance, not a fight.

• Losing her husband, then needing a new heart
In 2007 her health crashed again. Shortly after, her husband died unexpectedly in his sleep, and their daughter Sophia was the one asking where Dad was. Later she spent over 12 months on the heart transplant list without a match. She says about

3,900 people wait for hearts and roughly one dies each day. On New Year's Eve 2021 she was hospitalized, and weeks later she received a 29-year-old woman's heart.

• The kiwi fix for constipation

She estimates 90% of the women she sees are constipated, some going 10 days. She says waste sitting in the gut leads to reabsorbing chemicals. Two kiwis a day for a week or two often helps, thanks to their soluble fibers. She adds that kiwi is also rich in protective compounds at the level of DNA.

• Hidden additives in a 'healthy' wrap

Mono- and diglycerides help wraps roll. She cites a French study of about 92,000 people followed for roughly seven years, which linked them to 24% higher breast cancer risk and 46% higher prostate cancer risk. Carrageenans, once common in plant milks, were linked to 32% higher breast cancer risk. A UK study tied every 10-point rise in ultra-processed food to 16% higher breast cancer mortality and 30% higher ovarian cancer mortality.

• Charcuterie without guilt

Mel worries about parties. Dr. Mussallem says she'd happily eat a couple of salami slices, alongside avocado, olives and whole-grain crackers. Don't throw away the whole meal over one item.

OTHER RELEVANT

• The five foods to lean into

Berries (frozen is fine), raw or partly raw cruciferous vegetables, high-fiber beans and whole grains, soy such as edamame, and kiwi. Ask a free AI chatbot for a list of cruciferous vegetables if you're stuck.

• Label rule

Shop the perimeter. In the aisles, put back anything listing mono- and diglycerides, carrageenan, artificial colors, or words you can't identify.

• Movement minimum

Five minutes counts. Walk, dance in the kitchen. Movement also burns off stress hormones that keep you wired at night.

• Caveat

These are her readings of observational and review studies, mostly about risk. Talk with your own oncologist before changing anything during treatment.

If You’re Feeling Overwhelmed, You Need to Hear This

Date: 2025-10-20 · Duration: 0:48:52
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8ZaRhjqCFQo

KEYPOINTS

- **Stress and overwhelm are different states.**
  Mel describes stress as pressure, like stepping on the gas. Taping days for the show, or racing out by 3 p.m. for a doctor's appointment or soccer game, are 'go go go' but manageable. Her image: stress is juggling a lot of balls, while overwhelm is juggling knives, so afraid to drop anything or get cut that you freeze.
- **Overwhelm comes from too little control, not too much to do.**
  In a clip, Harvard-trained psychiatrist Dr. K (known online as HealthyGamer) says overwhelmed patients feel life coming at them too fast: the boss, the kids, a sick relative, back-to-school shopping. 'You don't feel overwhelmed from dealing with too much. You get overwhelmed when many of the things you're dealing with are out of your control.' It isn't weakness; it's carrying too many challenges you didn't choose and too few you did.
- **Your brain tracks the ratio of passive to active challenges.**
  In Dr. K's framing, passive challenges happen to you: taxes, a spouse, child or parent getting sick. Active challenges are ones you choose, even hard ones like learning to bake sourdough. Whether you feel overwhelmed depends on the ratio of passive to active, not the total number, which he says is what most people get wrong.
- **Under strain, the amygdala takes over from the planning brain.**
  Dr. Aditi Nerurkar, a Harvard-trained physician who ran the largest stress-management clinic in the Harvard medical system, explains that normally the prefrontal cortex (behind your forehead) runs memory, planning, organization and strategy. Under stress, the almond-shaped amygdala, built for survival ('caveperson mode'), takes over. Short bursts are fine; when it becomes chronic, burnout can set in. Overwhelm is what she calls psychological flooding.
- **Step 1: Label it.**
  Name whether you're stressed or actually overwhelmed. Recognizing 'this is beyond stress, I'm flooded' tells you that pushing harder won't work and that you need to reset first.
- **Step 2: Breathe. It's the one system you can steer.**
  Dr. Aditi says breath is the only physiological function under both voluntary and involuntary control. Brain waves and digestion aren't, which makes breathing a gateway to resetting your stress response. When overwhelmed, your breathing and thoughts both speed up, often without you noticing.
- **Breathing toggles between two nervous systems.**
  Dr. Aditi explains there are two branches: the sympathetic system (fight-or-flight, powered by the amygdala) and the parasympathetic system (rest-and-digest). In her description they work like a light switch: when one is on, the other is off. Anxiety and overwhelm usually come with rapid, shallow breathing, and slowing your exhale is how you flip the switch manually. She adds that the goal is not zero stress, which is biologically impossible; your brain is built to handle short bursts well.
- **Mel's breathing cue: 'When life's too much, double in, then flush.'**
  Take a double inhale through the nose, then one long exhale through the mouth. It's known as cyclic sighing or the physiological sigh, which Dr. Andrew Huberman discusses, and Mel learned it from Dr. Russell Kennedy ('the anxiety MD'). One minute changes how you feel. Mel cites Stanford research suggesting five minutes a day reduced anxiety more than meditation.
- **Step 3: Do a brain dump.**
  Set a 10-minute timer and write everything you're carrying onto paper. Overwhelm doesn't need a complicated solution. Seeing it all on the page gives you clarity and evidence to point to when you need to ask for help or set a boundary.
- **Writing unfinished tasks before bed helps you fall asleep.**
  Mel says the mind keeps looping on unfinished tasks to make sure you don't forget them (she calls it the Zeigarnik effect). Once they're on paper, your brain can 'check, check, check' and let go. Her fix for lying awake thinking about emails and errands isn't lavender oil or white noise, it's the list.
- **Step 4: Add one thing you care about.**
  Dr. K's counterintuitive advice: when passive challenges pile up, don't drop everything you chose. Add one active challenge you control. Mel initially thought it made no sense, then realized it signals to yourself that you still do things that matter to you.

EXAMPLES

- **Baylor bedtime journaling study**
  One group wrote about what they had accomplished that day; the other wrote what they still had to do. The to-do group fell asleep 9–10 minutes faster, effectively sleeping next to tomorrow's list.
- **Dr. K's patients in crisis**
  People facing addiction, divorce, probation at work, legal problems or DUIs almost all start by taking control of one thing, such as 'I'm not going to drink today.' As they regain some control, their brains feel less overwhelmed and they handle the passive challenges better.
- **Mel's version of 'add one thing'**
  Searching for a job every day because you care about it, or picking up a book instead of your phone tonight. Small chosen acts tip the ratio back.
- **The Drano and the birthday text**
  Mel's own brain-dump items, tiny errands that loop in your head at night until they're written down.
- **Juggling balls versus juggling knives**
  Mel's test for which state you're in. With balls, you're busy but moving and can drop one without disaster. With knives, everything feels dangerous to touch, so you stop moving, which is why overwhelmed people often stall on even simple tasks.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Four-step overwhelm reset**
  1) Label it: stress or overwhelm? 2) Do one minute of double inhale plus long exhale. 3) Do a 10-minute brain dump, ideally at night. 4) Add one chosen thing you care about.
- **Daily breathing dose**
  Five minutes of cyclic sighing a day, per the Stanford research Mel cites. If you have persistent anxiety, use it alongside professional help, not instead of it.
- **Book**
  The Five Resets by Dr. Aditi Nerurkar covers stress and burnout in more depth.

Feel Better Now: Neurosurgeon Reveals the New Science of Healing Your Body & Stopping Pain Today

Guest: Dr. Sanjay Gupta
Date: 2025-10-16 · Duration: 1:08:16
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HcGGsCWNWM0

KEYPOINTS

• Chronic pain is common and isn't just an old person's problem.
Neurosurgeon and CNN chief medical correspondent Dr. Sanjay Gupta says one in five to one in four people in the U.S., more than 50 million adults, live with chronic pain. It includes migraines and other headaches, facial pain such as trigeminal neuralgia and TMJ, joints from shoulders to ankles, and especially the back and neck.

• Acute pain is an alarm; chronic pain is the alarm that won't switch off.
Touch a hot pan and you pull away: that's acute pain doing its job. Chronic pain persists after there's no ongoing injury. Gupta calls pain the most mysterious sensation humans have and says it must be treated that way.

• All pain is in the brain, and that doesn't mean it's imaginary.
Gupta stresses this isn't minimizing: 'If your brain doesn't decide you have pain, then you don't have pain.' In a split second the brain weighs the signal against context: has this happened before, how much did it hurt last time, is there depression or anxiety? That's why the same injury can hurt very differently on a Tuesday versus another day, and why patients can suddenly cringe in his office when nothing has happened to them.

• Your body is one integrated system, so 'baggage' turns up the volume.
Nociceptors (pain receptors), nerves, spinal cord and conscious processing are all connected. Stress, poor sleep, depression and anxiety (which he describes as 'baggage', not as a judgment) feed into how much it hurts. Gupta says the science is heading toward treating chronic pain holistically rather than just at the site.

• Neuroplasticity is neutral, so hyper-focus on pain can wire it in.
He cites the 1940s idea from Donald Hebb: 'neurons that fire together wire together.' The brain will do whatever you train it to. If you're hyper-focused on pain, that circuit strengthens. There's growing evidence the brain can rewire pain circuitry and reduce its intensity or duration, even for old pain. Mel was struck that this means old injuries aren't necessarily permanent sentences.

• Opioids crowded out older, effective tools for 25 years.
Kidney stones, dental work and hip fractures were all treated with opioids, so other methods got 'short shrift.' Gupta describes ERs now giving nerve blocks for hip fractures: about 10 minutes of numbing around the hip, pain scores dropping to zero and often no opioids needed afterward.

• Meditation measurably changes the brain and reduces pain.
Gupta calls himself a former skeptic ('I'm the guy who opens the head'). He says meditation causes measurable thickening in brain areas that help reduce chronic pain. His advice is to look at the data, without overselling or underselling brain training.

• Old injuries can be prolonged by everything that piles on top.
His friend Rich Roll, an ultra-endurance athlete, had front-and-back spine surgery and was shocked how long recovery took. Gupta says Roll's acute pain from 2012 had become wrapped in 13 years of accumulated baggage, which slowed healing.

• If a doctor says it's safe, movement is medicine.
Unless the injury is acute or a licensed professional has identified a structural problem, Mel summarizes, 'your back is your back but the pain center is in your mind.' Being afraid to move can keep you stuck. Gupta adds that surgery is right in some cases, but probably not about 90% of the time for many problems, and he's a surgeon saying it.

• You are the most reliable narrator of your pain.
Saying 'I'm in pain' to a doctor isn't enough. Get to know it: trace it, find hot spots, use as many adjectives as possible, even draw it. Track what makes it better or worse. Good pain doctors treat patients as active partners.

EXAMPLES

• Heat filaments and the MORE protocol
Eric Garland's team at UCSD placed heating filaments on the arm, hot enough that you'd drop a plate, and measured pain before and during a guided Mindfulness-Oriented Recovery Enhancement meditation. Gupta's own pain score dropped from 7.4 to 2, and unpleasantness from 5 to 1.8. The researchers compare that relief to about 5 mg of OxyContin.

• VR at Maimonides
At this Brooklyn level-one trauma center, where 120 languages are spoken, ERs are 'opioid optimized': opioids are a last resort, not a first one. A 76-year-old woman with severe knee pain wore VR goggles for 20 minutes on a virtual Indonesian beach, and her pain dropped from about 8 to 3. Gupta thinks it's partly distraction and partly lower stress across the integrated system.

• The rubber hand
A dummy hand is stroked in sync with your hidden real hand until it feels like yours. When someone smashes it with a hammer, people yank their real hand back and yell. It shows the brain decides what hurts. Mel flinched just hearing it described.

• Ceramic vase versus Tupperware
The same-sized object landing on your foot registers very differently depending on whether your brain reads it as pottery or plastic, which shows pain as a judgment about threat.

• Mel's TMJ
She had jaw surgery 20 years ago and wears a bite guard. She realized she grinds less when she prioritizes sleep, movement and stress management, which she had never thought of as chronic-pain care.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Pain journal**
  For a few weeks, log intensity, location, descriptors and context: sleep, stress, conversations, movement. Gupta's first step is finding triggers, like noticing your back hurts after certain calls.
- **Try a brain-training tool**
  Guided mindfulness meditation, or immersive VR if you have access, used regularly rather than only in a flare-up. Gupta says these work alongside medical care, not instead of it, so check with your doctor before stopping any treatment or starting a new exercise plan for a known injury.
- **Ask about alternatives**
  For acute injuries or ER visits, ask whether nerve blocks or non-opioid options fit your situation.
- **Book**
  It Doesn't Have to Hurt by Dr. Sanjay Gupta.

How to Create a Successful Mindset: The Science of Passion and Perseverance

Guest: Dr. Angela Duckworth
Date: 2025-10-13 · Duration: 1:31:46
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rmW3Afu9npY

KEYPOINTS

• Grit is passion plus perseverance for long-term goals, and you can build it.
Dr. Angela Duckworth, a University of Pennsylvania psychologist, MacArthur fellow and author of Grit, says it matters more than talent, intelligence or motivation alone. She describes four psychological assets that grow it: interest, practice, purpose and hope (a sense of agency).

• A growth mindset is just a theory about ability, and everyone holds one.
If you believe ability can change with effort and experience, a setback becomes 'What can I learn here?' and you move on. A fixed mindset treats ability as unchangeable, so failure feels like a verdict. Duckworth notes you don't need to be a philosopher to hold a theory; we all do.

• Talent is the rate at which you improve.
Rather than a mysterious gift, Duckworth defines talent as how quickly someone gets better at a particular thing. You may be slow at some skills and 'very agile' at others. Mel found that freeing, because she had always read 'talent' as something she lacked.

• Consistency is the heart of grit: do it more days than not.
Duckworth expected gritty people to be '11 out of 10' on effort all the time. Instead, like Michael Phelps's coach Bob Bowman, she found they were consistent. They do fall off the horse, cry and doubt themselves, but they get back on. Consistency doesn't have to mean an unbroken daily streak; it means more days than not, or at least starting again the next day. Phelps reportedly trained 365 days a year for about 10 years, which she calls unusual; trainers would say rest days are good.

• Interest comes first, and others often notice it before you do.
You can't grow passion without the seed of interest, she says. Watch where your mind goes when nothing is required of it, because 'that is where your mind lives.' Often a loved one or passerby has to point it out, and good parenting is largely noticing what your kid keeps thinking about.

• The 10,000-hour rule is widely misunderstood.
Anders Ericsson, whom she calls 'the world expert on world experts', studied chess grandmasters, prima ballerinas, World Cup soccer players and top Sudoku players. At a German music academy, the best violinists had about 10,000 hours of practice, the next group about 7,500 and the next about 5,000. Until he died about five years ago, Ericsson insisted it was the quality of practice that mattered, not just the hours.

• Deliberate practice has three parts.
Have a specific goal, give it complete effort and concentration, and get immediate feedback before the next attempt. Duckworth says it's psychologically costly ('it's painful') but free: 'There's no patent.' Her research with Ericsson found that people who are passionate and persevering about a long-term goal log more of these high-quality hours.

• Purpose turns a job into a calling.
She tells the parable of three bricklayers: 'I'm laying bricks' (a job), 'I'm building a church' (a career), 'I'm building the house of God' (a calling), and says there is modern science on calling. A doorway into purpose is to write about what irritates, angers or outrages you and what you think ought to be different. That's the first step to deciding you might make the difference.

• Agency grows most from small wins.
Duckworth draws on Stanford psychologist Albert Bandura's four drivers of self-efficacy ('I can do this if I try'): your physical state, encouragement from someone who believes in you, seeing a model who shows what's possible, and, most powerful of all, a mastery experience or small win. Olympic coaches know that an athlete on a losing streak needs a win, however small.

• Keep what you want within arm's reach and what you don't out of it.
About half the things we don't do, she says, are simply forgotten. Psychologists measure personal space at roughly 3 feet in every direction, so put reminders inside it and push temptations like your phone outside it. Her national survey of over 20,000 (approaching 30,000) teachers is finding that the stricter a school's phone policy, the happier the educators and the more on-task the students.

EXAMPLES

• Eight out of 10, every day
Coach Bob Bowman says Michael Phelps and Léon Marchand don't give him 10s at practice. They give him 8s, but they never miss one. Duckworth's version for the rest of us: even 1s, 2s and 3s out of 10 add up, as long as it's never zero.

• Lucy and the baking tabs
Her daughter Lucy hated homework and viola practice and was easily discouraged, but the iPad was full of baking videos like unicorn cookies, and by Monday she was planning Saturday's bake and reading cookbooks. When Duckworth said, 'I think you're interested in cooking,' Lucy looked at her like she was from Mars.

• Why jogging didn't make her Usain Bolt
Duckworth told Ericsson she'd logged enough running hours to be elite. He asked: Do you have a goal? ('Never.') Full concentration? ('I listen to podcasts.') Immediate feedback? ('Who would give me that?') That's low-quality practice.

• Banish 'should'
A friend challenged her to explain why she was taking on a task without using the word 'should.' Duckworth, ever the academic, defended 'should' emotions like shame, but she now works at it constantly.

• Bandura's watching children
In his studies, kids watched an adult play with a toy through a glass divider. Let into the room, they did exactly what they had seen, which shows how powerfully a model sets what we think is possible.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Pick one homework**
  Elite performers practice one thing at a time. Choose one: a curiosity conversation, a 24-hour ban on 'should', moving your phone out of arm's reach, or joining a team or running club you can quit if it isn't your thing.
- **Purpose prompt**
  Write about it: what outrages me, and what do I think ought to be different?
- **Book**
  Grit by Dr. Angela Duckworth.

It’s Not Too Late: How to Transform Your Life at Any Moment

Guest: Rich Roll
Date: 2025-10-09 · Duration: 1:18:02
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E9UU5N0k0XY

KEYPOINTS

• It's not too late; that's a story we've internalised
Rich Roll, an ultra-endurance athlete, author and podcaster now 58, read a post he wrote six years earlier: athletic peak at 43, first book at 44, podcast at 45. 'At 30 I thought my life was over. At 52, I know it's just beginning.' He calls 'I blew it at 25' or 'I missed the window' a story we delude ourselves into believing.

• People change when pain exceeds the fear of doing something different
He rejects 'people don't change', saying change is hardwired and the only impossible thing is not changing. The question is whether you'll have a relationship with your own internal arc of change. 'Change wants you to want it.'

• Rock bottom is whatever you decide it is
'If the elevator's going down, there is no ground level' until you're dead. He had jail, two DUIs within six to eight weeks and a marriage that 'exploded on the honeymoon', yet none of those changed him. The day he finally became willing was an ordinary hungover morning, though he believes the pain of earlier lows built up to it.

• Over-achievement can mask a deep sense of unworthiness
A shy, bullied kid, he found swimming felt 'womblike' and learned at 12 or 13 he could close a talent gap by outworking everyone. He got into all eight colleges he applied to, including Harvard and Princeton, and swam at Stanford, then the top men's programme. But he says chasing external rewards to feel worthy of love was 'jamming a square peg into a round hole'.

• Alcohol first felt like the comfort he'd always lacked
He didn't drink until 20 or 21, after a high-school routine of 4:30am practice, school, two more hours in the pool and lights out at 9. His first buzz made the lifelong 'low-grade dissonance' evaporate, like being wrapped in a warm blanket, and he wanted that feeling all the time. He's grateful his alcoholism was severe enough to leave no choice.

• Recognise the 'moment of willingness' and act before it passes
Before his 40th birthday he felt not just that he needed to change but that he was willing to, and wrote that such moments should be 'seized at all costs'. He says we're all visited by them. Cultivate awareness, and promise yourself in advance that next time you'll act rather than let it pass or commiserate.

• Mood follows action
Change is 'an action-based affair'; you can't ruminate your way there. Behaviour comes first and thoughts and feelings follow, as when you only feel energetic after making yourself go to the gym. If you say 'I'll start tomorrow morning', 'you've already lost the plot.'

• Go all in if that's you, but know most people aren't
His first step was changing his relationship with food: a seven-day juice cleanse as a reset, experiments with diets, and eventually a 100% plant-based diet that gave him energy he hadn't felt since his teens. He stresses he's extreme by nature and that his approach doesn't work for everyone.

• Self-care is the most selfless act
It's the oxygen mask principle: your capacity to serve others depends on how well you're living. He got into ultra-endurance not to win but because it's 'the perfect template for self-discovery'. The lesson: we're all far more capable than we let ourselves believe.

• With someone spiralling, love the person, not the behaviour
You can't make someone change, and he admits lines like Mel's 'Do you want to get worse before you get better?' wouldn't have landed with him. The instinct to rush in and rescue often backfires. Set boundaries: 'I love you. You're clearly suffering. What you're doing, I'm not down with.' His parents stopped talking to him, which he calls the most painful thing they had to endure.

EXAMPLES

• 100 days in treatment at 31
He got sober by checking himself into treatment for 100 days, 'no 28-day rinse and wash', which he jokes is a polite word for a mental institution. 'It saved my life.'

• The staircase at 39
The day before his 40th birthday, about 50 pounds overweight at 208 lb, he got winded climbing a flight of stairs. An existential crisis about his life collided with a health scare, and he recognised it as another 'big moment' like the morning he chose sobriety.

• From winded to elite endurance racer in about two years
Within about two years he placed top 10 in a 3-day, 320-mile race around Hawaii's Big Island, and at 43 was the top American finisher. The next year he did five iron-distance triathlons on five Hawaiian islands in about six days. Men's Fitness named him one of the 25 fittest men in the world.

• Driving garbage to a dumpster
Around 2012, with four kids, a podcast just starting and a book advance coming, the family couldn't pay $80 for waste removal. The bins were taken, so they drove their garbage in a beat-up minivan to a dumpster behind a grocery store, and could barely afford food. He calls it embarrassing, and proof that reinvention looks messy from the inside.

• Spinal fusion 47 days before taping
Roll recorded the episode 47 days after spinal fusion surgery that required opening his body from front and back. He describes needing his body opened up on both sides to be ready to hear the lesson it taught.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **'Mood follows action' as a phrase to repeat**
  When you think 'I need to stop vaping' or 'get off the apps', take one action now instead of waiting for motivation.
- **Pre-commit to your next moment of clarity**
  Decide now that the next time you feel the pull to change, you'll act that day rather than tomorrow.
- **Boundaries script for a loved one in addiction**
  Separate the person from the behaviour, state your love, name their suffering, and refuse to participate in or enable the behaviour.
- **Look for happiness clues**
  He notes that your happiest moments probably involve people you care about, doing something you enjoy, likely outdoors. Build toward more of that.

Try It for 1 Week: 6 Small Ways to Bring Back the Happiness, Energy, and Fun

Date: 2025-10-06 · Duration: 0:43:34
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9A5kNKzfpVs

KEYPOINTS

- **Adults have turned the volume down on fun**
  Mel opens with a viral post by a writer and editor at The Hindu, India's national newspaper: people are 'tired, polite, curated,' couples eat in silence, friends scroll reels while drinks sweat, and everyone is 'emotionally on airplane mode,' trading personality for polish. The post ends, 'Bring back the chaos... bring back the fun.' That it came from halfway around the world suggests to Mel the shift is global.
- **Fun is a necessity, not a luxury**
  Mel acknowledges there are very real problems in the world, but argues fun energizes you, helps you connect, lowers stress and makes you healthier. Exhaustion makes fun feel like work, which is exactly why it gets dropped.
- **Missing small moments of joy can contribute to burnout and numbness**
  Mel cites double-board-certified psychiatrist Dr. Judith Joseph, known for research on high-functioning depression. Her work finds small daily moments of joy, silliness and laughter are essential for health and resilience, that happiness is built by increasing them, and that their absence can contribute to burnout, numbness and sadness. Joseph prescribes these 'points of joy' to patients.
- **Laughter has measurable health effects**
  Mel cites the National Cancer Institute: regular laughter strengthens the immune system by lowering stress hormones and increases natural killer cells and activated T cells. She flags laughter as a topic for a future expert episode.
- **Fun has three ingredients: playfulness, connection and flow**
  From Catherine Price's book The Power of Fun. Playfulness is not taking yourself too seriously, or as Mel's daughter Kendall says, 'Mom, it's not that deep.' Connection means fun usually involves others, even for introverts. Flow means you're so immersed that time disappears, along with worries about the past, anxiety about the future and your to-do list.
- **Way 1: 'Wear the pink glasses' by making one small fun change**
  Mel swaps her black frames for neon pink aviators on air. Fun needn't be a production: different socks, a funny story before a meeting, 70s disco, Motown or a live concert track while doing dishes, a lunchtime walk with coworkers, a crossword or cards, a funky desk plant, the joke you usually swallow, or the funniest thing from your weekend instead of 'not much.'
- **Way 2: Say yes to fun, and 'do it for the plot'**
  Stop skipping the comedy show because it's late, the company outing because socializing feels like work, or the cake. Say yes to the dance class or the cringy speed-dating night. If you're nervous, ask what the main character of a movie would do; even a bad night gives you a hilarious story.
- **Way 3: Be bad at it**
  The person crushing everyone at pickleball or nailing every note like Whitney Houston is chasing perfection, not having fun. Mel argues social media has made us terrified of looking stupid or ending up on an embarrassing TikTok page. Being bad removes pressure and gives others permission to laugh at themselves.
- **Way 4: Drive the fun bus**
  Stop waiting for someone else to throw the party or crack the joke. One person dancing at a mellow concert, starting the wave or hitting the empty wedding dance floor breaks the seal, because seeing others have fun makes us want to join. If going first isn't natural, assign yourself the role for the day; pretending quickly becomes real.
- **Way 5: Let them judge you**
  Fear of being cringe is why most of us don't have fun. Applying her Let Them Theory, Mel says people who judge you for dancing first or laughing loudly are probably miserable or uptight, so let them. Focus on 'let me': let me have fun because it matters for my health and happiness. Unapologetic people are the ones everyone wants to be around.
- **Way 6: Stop saying you're too old**
  Kids jump in foam pits, sing loudly, wear costumes and decorate in clashing colors; adults turn beige for Instagram. Mel's list: a quirky hobby, a crazy haircut, a theme dinner, bad karaoke, a hip-hop class, glitter or nail art. 'You're never going to be younger than you are right now.'

EXAMPLES

- **The 1970s-legends golf scramble**
  Mel's friend Char, 'the ambassador of fun,' hosted four couples at a nine-hole themed tournament. Non-golfer Mel went as photographer Slim Aarons in 1970s ski gear; Chris wore a leftover red sequin tuxedo jacket. Others came as Ricky Bobby from Talladega Nights with a pit-crew wife and Evel Knievel, and Char played in a sequined minidress, wig and white go-go boots. Of about 100 players, roughly 12 dressed up, and Mel says they had far more fun.
- **Mel's dancing reality check**
  Mel believes she's a great dancer, until Chris filmed her and she saw how awkward she actually looks. She found it hilarious and keeps dancing.
- **Yuna's backflip birthday**
  For her 30th, producer Yuna rented a gymnastics gym with two coaches so friends could attempt backflips. One turned out to be a secret gymnastics prodigy, most face-planted, and the waivers said 'child's name.' As they left, a line of 5-year-olds dressed as mermaids and princesses walked in.
- **Mel's mom's pink living room**
  Visiting her parents in Michigan, Mel's mother explained her pink living room: 'Everybody's house is beige. It's so boring.'

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Test yourself: when did you last wear a costume?**
  Halloween doesn't count. If you can't remember, or can't recall your last belly laugh or board game night, Mel says that's a sign you need more playfulness.
- **Bring the games yourself**
  Mel brings yard games and after-dinner games to family gatherings, such as Salad Bowl, a charades-style game using famous names. At work, one colleague keeps challenging people to handstands, headstands and jiu-jitsu moves, which makes the office more fun.
- **Thank your fun friend**
  Think of the person who always brings the fun, with the playlist, the elaborate appetizer and the story, and tell them you appreciate it. Then copy what they do.

How to Use Your Mind to Heal Your Body With the #1 Harvard Psychologist

Guest: Dr. Ellen Langer
Date: 2025-10-02 · Duration: 1:21:20
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DZYFrWZz6lM

KEYPOINTS

• Mindfulness is noticing, not meditating

Dr. Ellen Langer, a Harvard psychologist with about 50 years of research, says meditation is a practice that may lead to mindfulness, but mindfulness itself is 'a way of being.' It means actively noticing new things, grounded in an appreciation that things are uncertain and could be otherwise. You can do anything mindfully or mindlessly: a podcast, tennis, caring for a child.

• Most of us are mindless almost all the time and don't know it

'When you're mindless, you're not aware that you're not there.' Rules we absorbed when young keep running us later, so your 15-year-old self ends up dictating your 30-year-old's life. Her example: 'Do horses eat meat?' feels like an obvious no, yet in some contexts horses do eat meat.

• Mind and body are one system

Langer prefers 'mind-body unity' to 'connection.' Wherever you put your mind, your body follows. She calls the placebo 'our most effective medicine': you take nothing, believe it's something, and it acts like something. Placebos get a bad reputation because people treat 'it was all in your head' as if the head weren't part of the body.

• Your beliefs about aging and ability are often rigged against you

She notes that forgetting is treated as decline at 70 but ignored at 20. When she asks Harvard students on Thursday what she said on Tuesday, nobody knows. Tests can be designed to make anyone look good or bad, so she urges people not to accept limits passively. One of her book's working titles was 'Who Says So?'

• Words carry expectations

'Try' builds in failure: you don't try to eat an ice cream cone, you eat it. In her study, people told to 'do' a task outperformed people told to 'try.' 'Hope' also implies doubt. She doesn't hope there's coffee in the kitchen, she expects it. She suggests saying 'cured' rather than 'in remission,' because she says remission keeps people braced and stressed for years. That one is her opinion, not a tested finding.

• Stress comes from predictions, not events

Stress requires predicting something awful, and prediction is an illusion. She argues stress is 'our major killer.' She believes, without the data yet (a planned study of hundreds of cancer patients in China was derailed by COVID), that stress levels will predict the course of disease beyond genetics, nutrition and treatment. She's careful to label this as belief, separate from her research.

• Paying attention to variability helps with chronic illness

In her studies of people with multiple sclerosis, chronic pain, arthritis, Parkinson's and stroke, participants were simply phoned and asked: how is the symptom now, is it better or worse than last time, and why? Noticing that symptoms vary ('nobody is anything all the time') gives people a sense of control and helped 'across the board,' she reports.

• Don't agonize over decisions, make them right

You can never test the road not taken, so you can't know the alternative would have been better. Flip a coin or go with your first thought, then make the choice work by looking for how it helps you grow. Langer calls regret 'mindless,' because it assumes the other option would have turned out better.

• Things aren't good or bad in themselves

This isn't toxic positivity or even optimism, she says. Once you see that events are neutral until you interpret them, you're less overwhelmed and more open to possibilities. Michael Jordan would beat her at 100 free throws, but in a single shot, anything can happen.

EXAMPLES

• The 'counterclockwise' retreat

Langer had men around 80, some so frail she wondered if they'd make it through the day, live for under a week at a retreat retrofitted to 20 years earlier, acting as their younger selves. Their vision, hearing, memory and strength improved, and they looked noticeably younger, all without medical intervention. The study was even referenced on The Simpsons.

• Hotel housekeepers

Women cleaning rooms all day said they got no exercise, because exercise was something you did after work. Half were taught that their work was exercise ('making a bed is like the machine at the gym'). With no change in diet or effort, that group lost weight, improved waist-to-hip ratio and BMI, and lowered their blood pressure.

• Rigged clocks

People with type 2 diabetes played games while watching a clock running at double, half or real speed. Their blood sugar tracked perceived time, not actual time. In a newer study with a minor inflicted wound, wounds healed according to the clock's time: faster when it ran fast.

• The eye chart flipped

People expect to struggle about two-thirds of the way down an eye chart. When her team started the chart with smaller letters at the top, people read letters they 'couldn't' see before.

• Honeymoon pancreas and lifting the armoire

In Paris, Langer thought she was eating pancreas, felt sick and vomited. It was chicken, which she loves. More recently in Mexico, a giant armoire fell on her partner, who hit her head on the concrete floor. Langer lifted the armoire, which weighed twice what she does, enough for her to escape. She rejects the 'it was adrenaline' explanation: 'it's all one thing.'

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Notice three new things**
  Next time you're with your spouse or best friend, notice three new things about them. Do the same on a route you take daily. You'll find you didn't know them as well as you thought.
- **Tragedy or inconvenience?**
  When stressed, ask which it is. A spoiled meal, a missed appointment or a dented car is almost never a tragedy. Then ask how it might actually be a good thing. A delayed surgery means someone else handles your meals and you get no phone calls.
- **Rewrite the recipe**
  A recipe is just someone's idea. Make it your own. If things always turned out as expected, it would be 'like a hole in one every shot,' with nothing there.
- **Treat health claims as her views**
  Some of her stronger claims, like stress outweighing treatment in cancer, are beliefs she has not yet tested. Use these ideas alongside medical care, not instead of it.

This Shocking Truth About Other People Will Change Your Life

Guest: Dr. Todd Rose
Date: 2025-09-29 · Duration: 1:27:57
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=asojiVtJ7F0

KEYPOINTS

• A collective illusion is groupthink where you're wrong about what the group thinks

Dr. Todd Rose, former Harvard Graduate School of Education professor and CEO of the think tank Populace, says most people privately reject a norm but go along because they wrongly believe most others accept it. He argues we're the first generation dealing with these illusions at scale, because of social media.

• Your brain punishes you for disagreeing with the group

In a 2009 Dutch fMRI study, agreeing with the group triggered a reward signal in the same areas hard drugs activate. Disagreeing fired an 'error signal' that disrupts memory and attention, telling you to stop because you might be in danger. Most people later shifted their own ratings toward the fake group without realising it.

• The loudest 10% make the extreme look like the majority

He cites research that about 80% of content on X (formerly Twitter) comes from about 10% of users. Pew found that group isn't remotely representative and is extreme on almost every social issue. If 10% hold a view but you think it's 80%, you self-silence, feel alienated and resentful, and lose trust, producing a 'false polarisation' that becomes self-fulfilling.

• Privately, most people want the same things

Populace's large private-opinion studies, which ask what people admit privately rather than say publicly, found Americans agreed on eight of the top 10 national aspirations. Examples included individual rights, free speech, treating each other with respect, and high-quality healthcare for everyone. People still disagree on how, for example Medicare for All versus other models, but share the destination.

• Our public definition of success isn't our private one

Publicly people assume success means fame, a big house and a fancy car. Privately, across demographics, the top 10 priorities were contributing through work, relationships, family, character, growth, and being engaged in community. Community involvement was the least achieved of those priorities; more people reported being debt-free than involved in their community.

• Living by your private priorities raises life satisfaction

People are currently achieving about 50% of their own priorities, he says, and modestly raising that has a large effect on life satisfaction. Achieving on what you secretly value, not on what you think others value, is what makes the difference.

• Self-silencing is bad for your health

He cites longitudinal research, which tracked women because they self-silence at much higher rates, linking self-silencing to dramatically higher cardiovascular disease, stroke and high cholesterol. His proposed mechanism is cognitive dissonance that keeps cortisol elevated and damages blood vessels. Treat this as his summary of the research rather than settled causation.

• Self-silencers have far lower trust in others

Social trust, meaning trust in strangers, is in his view the single best predictor of a healthy democracy, and good things happen above about 50%. The US is in the low-to-mid 30s. People who self-silence sit in the low 30s, while the roughly one-third who don't have levels rivalling Scandinavian countries.

• Authenticity is a process, and it's never too late

You never finish being authentic; a flourishing life keeps growing, so locking in who you are today would make you inauthentic later. He says research shows the benefits accrue quickly at any age. The only truly bad decision is violating your values to conform to a group that didn't want that from you in the first place.

• Illusions collapse fast when people start living in truth

Czechoslovakia's Velvet Revolution in the late 1980s fell after about 12 days of protests. Months earlier Václav Havel had said he might not live to see change; three months later he was the first democratically elected president. 'If a poet can overthrow communism', imagine your own life.

EXAMPLES

• Mel's midweek glass of wine

Mel had a rule of no drinking on weeknights, but when a colleague asked 'Want a glass of wine?' she said yes on reflex. Rose explains it as belonging pressure plus a stereotype that non-drinkers aren't fun. If she'd said 'I'm not drinking during the week', the colleague likely would have skipped it too.

• Six years of Sizzler

As a boy Rose loved Yahtzee sleepovers with his grandparents, but they began going to Sizzler once a month for six years. On her deathbed in 2015 his grandmother said she knew Sizzler mattered most to him, and admitted she and his grandfather never liked it. Nobody wanted to go; everyone thought the others did.

• From a 0.9 GPA to Harvard

Rose failed out of high school in rural Utah with a 0.9 GPA. His girlfriend, later his wife of 29 years, became pregnant; they were on welfare with two kids by the time he was 20. It took seven years to reach a Harvard doctorate and seven more to become a professor, by asking only 'what's the next step?'

• The book that changed his life

On a lunch break from a Circuit City job he found Nathaniel Branden's The Six Pillars of Self-Esteem in a Barnes & Noble. Its idea that self-esteem is the alignment of beliefs and behaviour made him realise that his beliefs, which were religious in his case, not his behaviour, might be what needed to change.

• Tragedy reveals common ground

When Rose lost his wife a couple of years ago, people he thought he had 'beefs' with showed up. Mel adds that family members divided by politics for years come together in a health crisis.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Ask 'why' about what you believe**
  Your genuine beliefs come with reasons you can state; Rose's example is human dignity and human rights. If you can't say why you hold a belief, it may just be a social norm you never questioned.
- **Say the true thing in small moments**
  One honest statement, like 'I'm not drinking this week', gives others permission and helps dissolve illusions. Small acts become habit, then identity.
- **Read The Power of the Powerless**
  Rose recommends Havel's essay, which he says is about 80 pages, on how ordinary people 'living in truth' bring change.
- **Happiness spreads**
  He cites research that when people in your network become happier you get about a 25% boost, so your authenticity helps others too.

How to Build the Life You Want (Even When You Feel Overloaded, Exhausted, & Uncertain)

Guest: Kellie Gerardi
Date: 2025-09-25 · Duration: 1:07:17
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EUJ85tlfybw

KEYPOINTS

• Adjust the 'limiter' on your imagination
Kellie Gerardi, an astronaut and bioastronautics researcher, says ordinary people can make themselves capable of extraordinary things, and it's never too late. Take your current vision board and zoom out 30, 50 or 100 times; the only one applying the limit is you. Ask: if every limitation were removed and everything went right, what would my life look like? Mel adds: who made up the rules anyway?

• Get close to what you want, even in the humblest role
Fascinated by space as a student in New York, she took a coat-check job at the Explorers Club. Its members were first to the North Pole, the South Pole, the Moon's surface and the deepest point of the ocean, and she hoped some of it would 'rub off by osmosis'. Mel's takeaway: get as close as you can to what interests you, paid or not.

• Give 150% to unglamorous work and you design your reputation
She treated coat check seriously, with a system, remembering names and staying organised, because you must 'seek the important work, not just the glamorous work'. It showed follow-through, attention to detail and readiness for more responsibility. Mel's version: 'How you do anything is how you do everything.'

• When you hit a brick wall, change the approach, not the goal
She applies this from her career to her personal life. Through dashed hopes and failures she keeps the destination fixed and keeps changing tactics.

• 'Why not me?' is quiet confidence, not entitlement
She has trained her inner monologue to ask 'If I work hard enough for long enough, why not me?' She stresses it's not 'I deserve this' but a blend of humility and confidence. It gives her permission to pursue the whole vision board, not one quadrant at a time, accepting that she has to toggle between areas.

• Seeing Earth from space forces a perspective shift
After more than a decade of preparation, she focused first on getting her science team's data on her one shot. Then she looked out the window and felt awe she still can't describe: Earth as a planet, and herself 'not on the same planet as my baby'. It made 'don't sweat the small stuff' concrete and gave her an inner peace; she calls it her mental screensaver until she dies.

• Mothers get told to shrink the dreams they were raised on
'We have astronaut Barbie dolls… we want our girls to know they can be anything, until they grow up and become mothers.' She gets online criticism to 'pick one, motherhood or space'. Her mother grew up when US women weren't eligible to fly to space, then watched her daughter's flight a generation later. She shares the juggle openly, including when 'the scales don't perfectly balance'.

• Suffering in silence is a rule worth breaking
After nearly eight years of secondary infertility and recurrent loss, she's been pregnant five times but has one child. She has tried every approach: silence through an early loss, and waiting the 'safe' 12 weeks only to unannounce in the second trimester. She rejected the idea that loss is a private burden. Mel argues that bracing in silence doesn't spare you pain, because 'there is no assurance in life'.

• Hold grief and hope at the same time
About 10 days from her next IVF transfer during taping, with another research mission planned for 2026, she keeps moving both forward. Her test for whether to continue something is whether it energises her and gives her a spark; if yes, she keeps trying.

• You can reserve the right to reinvent yourself
The dream she crystallised at 20 doesn't have to be the edge of her 'visual field'. At 36 she sees further stars from a new vantage point. To find a direction, start by noticing what drains you and what energises you, so you can at least rule things out.

EXAMPLES

• Coat check to the board
Her reputation led the Explorers Club to ask her to chair its biggest event, the annual dinner, which she calls New York City's longest-running charity event. About a decade later she was appointed to its board of directors and executive board.

• About 150 microgravity research flights
While earning a master's at the International Institute for Astronautical Sciences, she ran research on parabolic flights with partners at the National Research Council of Canada. Each freefall gives roughly 20–22 seconds of weightlessness to study fluid dynamics and human health. Researchers dream of minutes, and of flying their own experiments.

• Reading her own pre-flight obituary
Before launch she came across an obituary prepared in case the mission failed, never meant for her eyes. Seeing 'she is survived by' with her daughter's and husband's names made her feel her family's perspective, but she still felt confident in the engineers and the cabin converted into a suborbital lab.

• Twenty-six eggs, one embryo
Hormone medications made everything 'technicolor in the worst way'. One retrieval yielded 26 eggs, then attrition through fertilisation, day-5 blastocysts and genetic testing left a single embryo. She later miscarried at 8 weeks after a transfer, shared in real time with more than 10 million followers, and faced comments that she'd announced too soon.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Zoom-out vision board exercise**
  Write your current goals, then imagine them 30 to 100 times bigger with every limitation removed, and ask what one path toward that would look like.
- **Drain/energise audit**
  List what currently drains your battery and what sparks you, cut what drains you, and keep investing in what energises you.
- **Advice to her 20-year-old self**
  The trick with big dreams isn't figuring it out as fast as possible but keeping yourself moving forward on several fronts at once.
- **'Why not me?' self-talk**
  Pair the question with effort and time ('if I work hard enough for long enough') so it builds confidence without ego.

The Best Financial Advice You'll Ever Hear

Guest: Morgan Housel
Date: 2025-09-22 · Duration: 1:19:16
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ai4iNmW2A1c

KEYPOINTS

• Doing well with money is about behavior, not intelligence

Morgan Housel, author of The Psychology of Money and The Art of Spending Money, says someone who never finished high school but is patient, thinks long term and keeps expectations in check can do very well, while a Harvard MBA on Wall Street can go broke. That never happens in open-heart surgery. His 'kindergarten list': focus on your own goals, live slightly below your means, save, invest and be patient.

• Use money as a tool, not a yardstick

The core idea Mel takes from Housel: money can buy a better life, or become a measure of yourself against others. Comparison is harder to escape now because the comparison group is no longer neighbors and coworkers but the most sophisticated algorithm on Instagram or TikTok. His nine-year-old's definition of rich is a private jet and island from watching MrBeast; in Housel's childhood it was a new pickup truck.

• 'All happiness is the gap between expectations and reality'

Housel starts with empathy: many in their 20s to 40s really are behind previous generations on home ownership, and rising costs and medical bills have derailed retirements. But he says many people who saved less than planned spent years chasing who they thought they should be, with nicer apartments, travel, clothes and dining. He calls himself out too: every book began with looking in the mirror.

• We chase money because it's easy to measure

'Be a 10% better dad' is hard to track; going from $20 to $25 an hour or one bedroom to two is easy. Without a clear picture of a good life, more money becomes the default goal. He cites Will Smith's memoir: poor and depressed, he believed money would fix everything; rich and still depressed, he lost even that hope.

• The number one thing that keeps people broke is keeping up with others

Housel calls it a treadmill with no end: there's no raise or wardrobe at which comparison stops. Mel notes most of us wear about 12 pieces of clothing regularly. From The Psychology of Money: 'The hardest financial skill is getting the goalpost to stop moving,' because if ambition rises faster than satisfaction you feel behind and take bigger risks to catch up.

• Every dollar falls into one of two buckets

Ask whether a purchase will make you and your family happier, or impress other people, most of them strangers. Food is clearly the first; a new car or clothes may be the second. Housel isn't arguing for living like a monk, and says some spending in his household has been well worth it.

• Debt sells your future; savings buys it back

Every dollar of debt is 'a piece of your future that somebody else owns,' and a sweater bought on credit gives a day or two of joy but years of payments. Every dollar saved is independence you own today: $100 of peace and better sleep. So saving isn't delayed gratification. He quotes Nassim Taleb: his metric of success is how much time you have to kill.

• Rich is not the same as wealthy

Rich means you can afford your mortgage, car and dinners out. Wealthy means money you haven't spent, giving you financial and psychological independence. Housel's grandmother-in-law had little money but was beholden to no one, while some billionaires are controlled by others' opinions; money can be a financial asset and a psychological liability. He asks: would you take $70,000 with admiring kids, a great marriage and good health, or $1 million with a fifth divorce and lawsuits?

• Compounding rewards time and patience over brilliance

$100 at 10% earns $10, then $11, then more as gains earn gains. Warren Buffett, already a billionaire at 60, accumulated 99% of his net worth after his 60th birthday. 'Average for an above-average period of time' can put you in the top 1%. Housel says the 'fee' for market returns is enduring volatility and not knowing when returns will come; a savings account has none, and lower returns to match.

• Optimize for sleeping at night, not the spreadsheet

Housel keeps only about half his net worth in stocks, less than most advisors would suggest, because of a 'prepare for the worst' streak; the rest is a house, cash, bonds and shares of Markel, where he's on the board. His stocks are low-cost index funds bought monthly or quarterly and never sold. Simpler portfolios are easier to stick with for decades.

EXAMPLES

• The valet who wanted to be the driver

Parking cars at a five-star Los Angeles hotel from about 18 to 22, Housel admired every Ferrari but never the driver; he imagined people admiring him behind the wheel. He realized nobody thinks about you as much as you do. His wife cares whether he's a good dad and spouse, not what he drives.

• Mel's debt

Mel entered marriage with $10,000 of credit card debt she hid from Chris. At 41, his restaurants failing took their house and savings; she was $800,000 in debt with liens on her home and spent 15 years paying it down. Owning her bad decisions gave her relief: if she could make dumb ones, she could make better ones. She now feels afraid of any risk.

• Ronald Read and Housel's parents

Read worked his whole career as a janitor and gas station attendant, saved $10 or $20 at a time, invested and left it for about 70 years, and left millions to charity. Housel's parents, with no financial background, invested monthly for 40 years without selling and would rank among top professional money managers.

• The Vanderbilts and Anderson Cooper

Cornelius Vanderbilt was worth roughly half a trillion dollars in today's money. Heirs received half-billion-dollar trust funds and

were expected to spend lavishly; Arthur Vanderbilt's Fortune's Children shows them miserable and controlled, down to who they married. The money is mostly gone; Anderson Cooper, the first heir without a big inheritance, has called that probably a good thing.

- **Stephen Hawking's expectations**

  Asked by the New York Times for his secret to happiness, Hawking said his expectations were reduced to zero at 21, when he got his diagnosis, and everything since had been a bonus.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Check your bank balance every day**

  Housel says most money mistakes come from ignorance, not low intelligence: people can't say what they earn or spend each month. A 10-second daily check builds awareness; he has known his balance to the dollar since 16 or 17.

- **Treat savings as a fixed expense and automate it**

  View savings like rent, because life, careers and the economy are more fragile than we admit, and the odds that your income will drop to zero at some point are near 100%. Automate a transfer such as $50 per paycheck. Mel adds a 10% rule: save $5 from $50 in tips or $10 from $100 of dog-sitting. Anything beats nothing.

- **Try the 'deserted island' test**

  If nobody could see your house or car, what would you choose? Housel says most people would shift from status to utility. He also counts not buying an unaffordable house in his early 20s as one of his best decisions, since renting let him move where the jobs were.

- **Find the hole you're trying to fill**

  For binge spending used as stress relief, start 'on the therapist's couch': ask what you're trying to achieve and whether past purchases changed your happiness. Gratitude is how he keeps the expectation gap narrow.

4 Things You Aren’t Responsible For: How to Let Them & Take Your Power Back

Date: 2025-09-18 · Duration: 0:56:36
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c1orPqt6Wr0

KEYPOINTS

- **There are four things you are not responsible for, and each one has its own 'Let Them' phrase**
  Mel names four places people take on responsibility that was never theirs: others' happiness (let them be unhappy), rescuing people (let them learn from life), making people understand your choices (let them misunderstand you), and proving your worth (let them underestimate you). Underneath all four: the one thing you can never control is other people.
- **Making everyone happy is a recipe for feeling worse yourself**
  You will never put your own happiness first until you can let others be unhappy or disappointed. Mel separates the healthy desire to make people happy from the imagined full-time job of keeping everyone happy, which is the part that wears you down.
- **Check why you're saying yes: do it because it makes you happy, not to stop someone being disappointed**
  Doing nice things is fine if being that kind of person makes you feel good. Doing them to prevent someone's disappointment means you're managing their expectations and ignoring yours, a 'double whammy of negativity' that breeds resentment, like blaming parents for guilt trips you've made yourself responsible for.
- **Rescuing people tends to backfire, and it costs you too**
  Mel says the experts she interviewed agree that solving someone's problems for them usually makes things worse. You can advise, pay and throw 'a dozen lifelines,' but people change only when they're ready to do the work. Rescuing also creates problems for you, and you matter too.
- **Helping takes two people; when they won't take part, it turns into enabling**
  If someone isn't accepting your help, or isn't meeting the terms you gave money or support on, you're doing all the work and they've stopped participating. That's when Mel says 'let them struggle.' She frames it as loving: 'I believe you can change, and when you're ready, I'll be right there.'
- **Let people face real-world consequences**
  Reading from the chapter 'The More You Rescue, the More They Sink' (p. 231), Mel quotes Harvard psychiatrist Dr. Robert Waldinger: 'Don't shield them from the consequences of what they choose.' The passage mentions a night in jail or losing a job or license in addiction cases. It's Mel's framework, not a plan for any specific situation.
- **Avoidance is a normal habit, so don't remove every hard thing from someone's path**
  The same applies to homesickness, anxiety and self-doubt. A Harvard clinical psychologist told Mel that avoidance is a very common coping habit; people move away from hard conversations and changes, and clearing obstacles for them can keep that going.
- **You can't make people understand you, so stop over-explaining**
  Everyone filters you through their own experiences and biases, so explaining '10 different ways' rarely works. 'Save your energy for living your life, not defending it.' Her pairs: 'Let them be confused and let me be clear,' 'Let them have their opinions and let me have my boundaries,' 'Let them talk. Let me live.'
- **Self-worth comes from liking yourself, not from being liked**
  Wanting people to understand your choices differs from needing them to validate your worth. Your job is showing up with integrity, consistency and effort because you deserve to be proud of how you live. 'The secret isn't getting more applause. It's caring less about who's clapping.'
- **Giving up responsibility for other people is freeing, not uncaring**
  Mel calls it 'not a condemnation. It's a liberation.' Taking power back means owning your life, demanding more of yourself because time is ticking, and spending nothing on what was never yours to manage; she admits she wasted decades on these four.

EXAMPLES

- **Carnegie Mellon study of 'over-givers' (Vicki Helgeson)**
  Led by psychology professor Vicki Helgeson, it tracked college students for 10 days. Those who constantly cared for everyone but never asked for help ended up drained, stressed and emotionally worse off; the more they managed others' emotions, the worse they felt.
- **The unicycle on a New England highway**
  On a rural two-lane, 45 mph road by a river, Mel passed someone riding a unicycle along the highway. She had no idea why and didn't need to. Others will view your choices the same way, and their confusion isn't yours to fix.
- **Nicholas Epley's research on how badly people understand each other**
  Per Mel, a study in the Journal of Personality and Social Psychology found that even when people genuinely try to see your viewpoint, their own perspective gets in the way, so you can explain 'until you're blue in the face.'
- **Moving away, quitting to start a business, getting sober**
  When friends ask why you're leaving town: 'I'm moving because I'm moving.' Parents fret about security and benefits when you quit to launch a business. Mel predicts doubters will brag about your business in two years and your sober lifestyle will inspire friends in three.
- **Two studies on motivation and self-worth**
  Christopher Cerasoli's team reviewed 108 motivation studies (tens of thousands of people, in Motivation and Emotion): internal motivation raised performance and quality; cash, praise or approval dimmed it. Dr. Kristin Neff's work (Self and Identity) linked self-worth tied to external validation with emotional instability.
- **Babysitting your sister's untrained dog, again**
  Mel's examples of habitual yeses: the extra shift, watching your sister's untrained dog yet again. Say yes if it makes you

happy; doing it out of obligation is 'the worst reason to do something.'

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Ask: 'What is the problem I'm trying to solve, and is it mine?'**
  Use it when someone you love is struggling; most problems aren't yours, and crossing that line often makes things worse.
- **Pair each 'let them' with a 'let me'**
  Name what you're releasing, then what you'll do: 'Let them be disappointed, and let me make decisions that make me feel good about myself.'
- **Support from the sidelines with an open door**
  Say it out loud: I believe you can change and I'll be there when you accept help, but I won't solve this for you. Get professional guidance for addiction or mental health crises.
- **Source: The Let Them Theory book**
  Mel reads pages 79 ('Let Them Think Bad Thoughts About You'), 226 and 231, and credits clinical psychologist Dr. Nicole LePera for the point that not everyone is ready, or able, to get better.

#1 Longevity Doctor: 7 Toxic Products Destroying Your Health

Guest: Dr. Eric Topol
Date: 2025-09-15 · Duration: 0:44:16
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YaaUpw6JZmI

KEYPOINTS

• Topol adds the environment to the usual lifestyle factors

Dr. Eric Topol, author of Super Agers, calls his approach 'lifestyle plus': on top of diet, exercise and sleep, you have to account for air pollution, microplastics and nanoplastics, and forever chemicals. He believes these have had far too little attention given how strong the evidence is becoming. He describes them as speeding up aging and inflammation in the body.

• Forever chemicals (PFAS) don't break down, and almost everyone already has them in their blood

Topol says there are more than 10,000 PFAS chemicals. They share a fluorine–carbon bond that makes them non-degradable, which is why they're called 'forever' chemicals. He says 97% of people have detectable levels in their blood, and that some of these chemicals are used to make plastics. We take them in through food, air and water, and they build up in the body.

• Microplastics have been found in arteries and the brain, with inflammation around them

Topol calls an Italian study of neck (carotid) artery plaque one of the most important plastics studies in years (details under Examples). Under the microscope, researchers saw plastics such as polyvinyl chloride surrounded by 'profound inflammation.' Separate studies of the brains of people who had died found plastics throughout, with marked inflammation wherever plastic sat. His conclusion: 'you can't say that this is innocuous.'

• He suspects a link to cancer in young people and falling fertility, but says it isn't proven

Topol has seen people in their 20s and 30s with colon and breast cancer and no genetic risk. He also points to falling fertility in both men and women while these particles reach the testes and ovaries. He admits critics are right that cause and effect hasn't been proven. His case is that the chemicals inflame tissue and can cause mutations, and that the trend keeps getting worse. He calls it a 'flashing yellow light,' not settled science.

• How long food sits in plastic matters, and heat makes it much worse

Topol's main kitchen rule is to cut 'dwell time' in plastic, or skip plastic altogether. Food sitting in plastic absorbs more of it. Microwaving in plastic is a 'double whammy' because heat releases far more nanoplastics into the food. His swap is glass instead of plastic containers.

• Non-stick pans and plastic utensils get into your food

Topol says Teflon and other non-stick coatings shed microscopic amounts into food, more the longer you use the pan. Mel adds that heating a coated pan while stirring with a plastic utensil is the same problem as microwaving plastic containers, and he agrees that heat increases how much ends up in your body.

• Personal care products and scented items can carry forever chemicals

Going through Mel's bathroom products, Topol's rule is to look for anything fluorinated, meaning ingredients that combine fluorine and carbon. A hairspray listing a hydrofluorocarbon was 'horrible,' because you're 'spraying forever chemicals on your head.' Products with no ingredient list at all worry him even more.

• Clean air is part of protecting your health

The tiniest air pollution particles (PM2.5) are the most toxic and travel through the body causing inflammation. Topol recommends good filtration, such as HEPA filters, and plenty of fresh-air exchange, and points to MERV 11–13 filtration in workplaces. He notes the CDC announced a move toward 'healthy buildings' but says little has actually been done.

• Topol's three biggest steps: awareness, cutting your exposure, and pressure on industry

Asked for the three things that matter most, Topol said: first, accept that air pollution, forever chemicals and micro/nanoplastics are very likely harming us. Second, cut exposure where you can as an individual and a family. Third, push industry and government to stop using these ingredients and to label them.

• Kids have been exposed their whole lives, which is why Topol thinks the timing matters

Mel, 56, figures she had little microplastic exposure for her first 20–25 years, while her children (26, 24 and 20) have had it all their lives. Topol says how long you're exposed over a lifetime matters, and that waiting another 10 years for proof of cause and effect is 'much too long.'

EXAMPLES

• Italian carotid artery study: four-fold risk

Topol says more than half the people studied had plastics in their artery plaque. That group had over four times the risk of heart attack and stroke.

• A 'spoonful' of plastic in the brain

Topol describes studies of brains from people who had died that found plastic throughout, which he and Mel describe as a spoonful's worth, with local inflammation wherever it appeared.

• Going through Mel's cabinets with Topol

Tupperware: avoid plastic containers. Hairspray listing hydrofluorocarbon 152A: out. A bright blue 'ocean mist' scented candle with no ingredients listed, which Mel could smell unlit: troubling, because it may be releasing chemicals into the air you breathe, and the color may signal artificial ingredients. Deodorant and perfume: check for fluorinated ingredients and prefer brands that list what's in them. A non-stick 'titanium' pan: food picks up the coating.

• The 3M forever-chemicals exposé

Topol points to a New Yorker article in which a 3M insider blew the whistle, saying the company knew these chemicals were harmful and did nothing. He uses it to argue that companies relying on forever chemicals, like the ultra-processed food industry, aren't fixing the problem on their own.

• Menstrual products and diapers

When Mel asks about menstrual products and baby diapers, Topol says a large review found many menstrual products had

significant forever-chemical exposure. Some manufacturers use safer components, but most don't.

- **A plastic-free school lunch field trip**
  On a marine biology field trip with his 11-year-old grandson, Topol noticed many parents had packed lunches with no plastic at all. He took it as a sign that 'some people are getting the memo.'

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Kitchen swaps**
  Store and reheat food in glass. Never microwave in plastic. Skip plastic water bottles. Unwrap produce instead of leaving it in plastic bags in the fridge for weeks. Use cloth or paper bags.
- **Label check: fluorine plus carbon**
  On cosmetics, sprays, deodorant and perfume, avoid fluorinated ingredients and be cautious with products that list no ingredients. Topol prefers simpler or organic options.
- **Home air**
  Use HEPA filtration and good ventilation. Topol says better filtration cuts both fine-particle pollution and the spread of respiratory viruses.
- **Keep perspective**
  Topol says you don't need to throw out your whole kitchen. Reduce what you can, and keep doing the proven basics in Super Agers: sleep, exercise, less processed food and staying socially connected. Much of the plastics evidence shows links, not proven cause and effect.

8 Things To Tell Yourself Every Morning

Date: 2025-09-11 · Duration: 1:03:46
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RLnqVG7Ashc

KEYPOINTS

• If you don't program your brain on purpose, it still gets programmed

Mel's premise is that headlines, your past, your to-do list and a critical inner voice, often a parent's, have been on repeat since you could talk. Your brain runs whatever programming it gets, so: garbage in, garbage out. Eight short sentences said first thing in the morning are her way of putting something better in.

• Sentence 1: "Today is going to be a great day"

Mel says psychiatrist Dr. Daniel Amen, who has scanned nearly 300,000 brains, says this every morning and then asks himself why today will be great. He calls it directing your mind: it seeks what you tell it to seek. Mel stresses this isn't denial. On the day of a funeral, it could mean hugging people tighter, sharing happy memories of the person, or taking a hike afterwards.

• Sentence 2: "Something cool is going to happen for me today"

Instead of bracing for bad news, this builds anticipation and turns the day into a "mental scavenger hunt" for good things. Mel argues you notice and enjoy cool moments more when you've primed yourself to look for them.

• A good attitude for no reason is a learnable skill

Most people slip into a bad mood without cause, and others give them a pass. Mel calls being in a good mood for no reason her single best skill, and says she trained it deliberately. She cites Stanford- and Harvard-trained psychiatrist Dr. Paul Conti on how repeated negative self-talk ("I'm an idiot," "I always screw things up") sets your default, and Stanford neuroscientist Dr. James Doty on simple sentences changing the brain.

• Sentence 3: "No matter what happens today, I can handle it"

Mel defines anxiety as a moment of uncertainty where you doubt your capacity to handle something, so this sentence targets that doubt directly. Her example: an email from your boss saying "I need to talk to you today," with no details. Your brain jumps to getting fired. Since you have no evidence yet, why not assume you can handle it?

• Morning anxiety has physical drivers

Mel struggled with morning dread for decades. She points to the cortisol awakening response, a sharp rise in cortisol within 30–45 minutes of waking that normally boosts alertness but can feel like panic in a worrier. She also lists circadian rhythm, stress, poor sleep, diet, past trauma and hangovers, saying she learned only at about 50 that processing alcohol overnight can trigger next-day anxiety. Waking up in a suggestible state is also why she says not to check texts or email first.

• Your brain's filter lets in what you mark as important

Mel describes the reticular activating system as a filter, like a hairnet, that keeps you from information overload. In her telling, it lets through your name, threats, signs someone is interested in you, and anything you've told it matters. Repeating these sentences tells it that reasons for a great day matter.

• Sentence 4: "An exciting new chapter in my life is starting today"

Why wait for something to end before starting fresh? Saying this can prompt small changes: finally signing up for the class, updating your résumé, calling a friend, taking a different route home, skipping the after-work drink.

• Sentences 5 and 6: give yourself credit, and allow yourself to be unfinished

"I need to give myself more credit for how hard I'm trying": you can get 115 things right at work and dwell on one comment nobody responded to. Effort counts even when results are slow, and if others don't acknowledge it, let them; give yourself the credit. "I'm allowed to be a work in progress" works against perfectionism and waiting until you feel ready.

• Sentences 7 and 8: keep showing up, and you matter

"If I keep showing up, life will reward me": doing the boring daily reps builds stamina, and the people you admire simply didn't quit. Mel loosely paraphrases a Jay-Z line about not quitting being the genius move. "I have an important contribution to make to the world": you are one of eight billion, and Mel thinks her biggest contribution is the warmth and positivity she brings to people day to day.

EXAMPLES

• Ben's croissant text

Picking up the team's coffee before taping, producer Ben confirmed Mel's ham and cheese croissant order and signed off, "And it's going to be a great day." Reading it changed her mood.

• The 30-year-old bridesmaid joke

Mel's college roommate, whose daughter is getting married, found the silk-flower garter necklace she made her bridesmaids wear 30 years ago and texted a photo to all of them. A hilarious thread followed, including Mel making one out of notebook paper. It was the kind of unexpected cool thing the second sentence trains you to notice.

• The green pickup truck

To explain the brain's filter, Mel used the example of noticing green pickup trucks everywhere once you want one. It turned out producer Ben had visited a dealership the day before to look at exactly that. The trucks were always there; his brain just hadn't marked them as important.

• Errors in The Let Them Theory

That morning Mel read an email about mistakes readers keep finding in her book, including some of the editions in its 63 languages printing the wrong URL for the free downloads. The old Mel would have spiralled. Now she says it's a work in progress and focuses on the roughly six million copies sold and the people it has helped.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Say them out loud, or write them

Speaking engages more of your brain. If you're shy, think them. Writing them by hand is even stronger, because involving

more senses tells your brain you mean business.

- **Commit to 30 to 60 days**

  If 30 to 60 days sounds too long, Mel calls that reaction proof of your negative programming. You learned to worry and doubt yourself over a lifetime. Repeat the sentences until they become automatic; her family now tells each other to have a great day.

- **Make your good mood your contribution**

  Start with your energy: a kind word to the barista may be the only nice thing they hear all day. Bring your trained good attitude to work, to family dinner, even to hard days.

How to Design Your Life (A Full Step-by-Step Process)

Guest: Debbie Millman
Date: 2025-09-08 · Duration: 1:09:16
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yKkjU63iAVY

KEYPOINTS

• Design your life around what is possible, not what is probable.
Debbie Millman, a designer who has taught a life-design course at the School of Visual Arts for over a decade, says most people only plan for the likely outcome, which keeps their ambitions small. Her process gives you a way to make decisions about what you want even if those wants change later. Thinking in possibilities lets you start experimenting with what different lives might feel like before committing to one.

• The core exercise: write a detailed essay about one ordinary day, ten years from now, in a life where you got everything you wanted.
You write from the moment you wake up until you close your eyes at night. Millman learned a five-year version from designer Milton Glaser and now uses ten years. Mel, at 56, imagined herself at 66; a teenager would picture their 20s. The point is to be specific about a single day rather than listing abstract goals.

• Focus only on the outcome. Asking 'how will I do this?' kills the exercise.
Millman insists the essay is your dream, your fantasy of the life you'd have if you could get everything. Working out logistics while you write pulls you back into probability. She is clear it won't get you everything, but she says it will get you more than you have now, and that part she 'can guarantee.'

• Start with your surroundings and let surprising images be clues.
The first question is where you live and what's around you. Mel immediately saw the ocean, even though she doesn't live near it now; Millman called that 'a cue.' If what you picture makes no sense with your current life, don't edit it out. That mismatch may be pointing to something you want but haven't admitted.

• Most people aren't unclear about what they want; they're afraid to let themselves imagine it.
When Mel asked whether people get stuck because they don't know what they want, Millman pushed back: the real problem is fear of wanting. Admitting a desire makes it real and puts you at risk of disappointment. For some, it also conflicts with family expectations, like realizing you may not want kids, may not want to live in your hometown, may be gay, or may not want the career your parents chose.

• Saying it out loud is the most powerful part.
Glaser made his students read their essays to the class, and Millman does the same: students get a week to write, then come back and share. Some charge to the front eagerly; others are shaky and scared. She believes declaring what you want somehow folds it into your intentions, and hearing other people's dreams encourages everyone in the room.

• After writing it, read it, put it away, and read it again in a year.
Millman doesn't recommend pinning it up or checking it every day. She suggests putting it away and revisiting it a year later. When things start coming true, she says to notice it privately as reassurance that you did something meaningful for yourself, rather than announcing it publicly.

• Self-sabotage shows up as the things you tell yourself you can't do.
One of her prompts is 'What are you telling yourself you can't do that you can?' She says people answer with 'breathtaking self-sabotage': they'll never meet the right person, never get the house by the ocean, never run their own business. These 'circling restrictions' keep people from even trying.

• Not being in the mood is not a permission slip.
Millman asks her students what matters more: keeping a promise to themselves or watching the new season of a TV show. Her view is that finishing things you start is a form of accountability to yourself, and that our stories about not finishing are part of what life design brings to the surface.

• You don't have to pick just one thing.
Millman has worked in design, branding, teaching, writing and podcasting, and doesn't regret not narrowing down; she says doing only one or two things would have limited her creativity. If you know you want to be a doctor or a skater, focus. If you don't know, she encourages trying as many things as you like.

• 'Make it till you make it,' don't fake it.
Millman rejects 'fake it till you make it' as pretending and inauthentic. Making it until you make it means you are actively building, which is intentional design. She also turns hope into action: instead of praying or being desperate for something, you create the opportunity to try. Nothing is guaranteed, but she argues trying gives you far better odds than waiting.

EXAMPLES

• Millman's own 2005 essay largely came true.
In Glaser's class she wrote about teaching at the School of Visual Arts, being a leader in the American Institute of Graphic Arts, writing a book and curating an art exhibit. By 2006 she was teaching at SVA, had her first book deal and was on the board of AIGA's New York chapter, even though she had forgotten writing most of it.

• Milton Glaser taught the exercise for about 50 years.
The designer behind the I &e NY logo and the famous Bob Dylan silhouette poster told his class this exercise was the most important thing he did with his life. Millman was struck that such a famous designer cared most about it.

• What people picture changes by decade.
In her classes, people in their 20s usually write about a job, a relationship and a place to live. In their 30s it's family, children and mastering their work. In their 40s people want to create more and to have more time and balance.

• Mel's producers found it stressful.
Several producers in their mid-to-late 20s tried it ahead of the episode and found simply imagining waking up ten years older

very stressful. Millman says that difficulty is exactly the fear of wanting she's describing.

• Students write back years later.

Millman has run the exercise in roughly 45–50 classes of 18–25 students each. Former students send emails and cards saying that 5 to 15 years later they got the most important things, or everything, on their list, or learned what they didn't want and redesigned from there.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Prompt questions to answer in your essay

Where do you live, and what's around you? How do you define happiness? What are your career goals? What kind of love do you need? Describe who you love most and why. Describe your physical self: how is your health and how do you take care of it? What are you telling yourself you can't do that you can?

• Open-ended prompts if you prefer less structure

Her other set of prompts is deliberately abstract, like 'Imagine immensities' and 'Make the impossible possible,' for people who want to wander in directions they hadn't planned.

• The 100-day project

Millman has students make something every day for 100 days, without a client or anyone to please. It builds a body of work and shows you what you tell yourself about finishing.

• How to run it

Give yourself about a week. Write in the present tense from waking to sleeping. Read it out loud to at least one trusted person. Put it away, then reread it in a year and redesign as needed. In Millman's words, redesigning is as much fun as designing.

How to Get Things Done, Stay Focused, and Be More Productive

Guest: Cal Newport
Date: 2025-09-04 · Duration: 1:10:15
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x3OA9Q6u9EU

KEYPOINTS

• Busyness is 'pseudo-productivity': visible activity standing in for real value.

Cal Newport, a Georgetown computer science professor, argues that knowledge work never developed a clear way to measure output. So workplaces fell back on a crude rule: the more you look busy, the more productive you must be. That rule produced today's busyness epidemic, and he says people got fed up with it during the pandemic, when many started reacting badly to the word 'productivity' itself.

• If the word 'slow' makes you nervous, that's the problem.

Mel admitted she has an aversion to slowing down because she is so used to being busy. Newport says that reaction is exactly why he developed 'slow productivity.' The aim isn't doing less with your life. It's doing work you're proud of, spending time with people you care about, and not being anxiously overloaded.

• Principle 1: do fewer things at once.

Every yes brings 'administrative overhead': emails, meetings, check-ins. Your hours are fixed, so as commitments pile up, more of the day goes to overhead about the work and less to the work itself. Eventually you're always busy and finish nothing. The key words are 'at once': you can still do lots of things over your life, just not all at the same time.

• Principle 2: work at a natural pace and stop writing fairy tales.

We imagine getting the MBA, the house project and a new skill all done in six months, fall in love with that ending, and then fall apart trying. Newport says to give things the time they actually need, maybe one at a time. Looking back, nobody cares how long something took; they just see that it's done.

• Principle 3: obsess over quality, which isn't the same as perfectionism.

Caring about how good your work is does two things. Busyness starts to look less appealing, because it gets in the way of good work. And as you get better, you gain leverage and freedom to turn things down, like skipping meetings or, in his case, dropping corporate speaking once the books were doing well.

• Your to-do list is really a wish list.

Mel described planning to do 90 minutes of errands in 11 minutes. Newport says we picture everything done and feel good about it, not noticing we just put three days of work into one. The fix is to see how much time you actually have before deciding what fits.

• Time-block your day: give every task a time slot.

Each workday morning, Newport fills in his calendar around fixed meetings, for example 9–10 on one task, 10–10:30 a call, 10:30–noon another task. This lets him put hard work in open morning time and batch small errands into a 45-minute gap between meetings. It also stops the constant inner debate about checking email, because email already has its own slot later.

• When the day falls apart, re-plan at whatever level broke.

Newport doesn't treat a blown schedule as failure. When something throws him off, he simply redoes the plan for the rest of the day, or at a bigger level if the disruption is bigger. The schedule exists to make you think about your time, not to be followed perfectly.

• Focus is trainable, like interval training for your brain.

Newport says he has taken distracted undergraduates to 90 minutes of locked-in focus by the end of a semester. The method is simple: short timed blocks that restart if you glance at your phone, gradually lengthened. In his experience, 90 minutes of real focus gets more done than eight distracted hours. Most people focus best in the morning; he jokes that the 'midnight to 4am' people usually don't have kids.

• You can't just quit distraction; you need something to fill the space.

Young people told him they couldn't use their phones less because there was nothing else to do. So Newport now pairs cutting back on screens with building a life worth paying attention to, starting with practicing being alone with your own thoughts.

• If you feel behind, focus on the process, not the outcome.

The stories we tell about other people's success, often based on Instagram, are usually wrong. We don't see how hard it was or what they regret. Rather than fixating on an exact result like a number one bestseller, commit to the process of doing good work.

EXAMPLES

• Isaac Newton and Jane Austen worked slowly.

Newton worked on the book that set out calculus and gravity off and on for decades. Austen worked on her novels in the background and didn't finish them until her early 40s. Newport's point: we remember the work, not how long it took.

• Chris Robbins's seven-year MBA

Mel's husband wanted an MBA while they both worked and had two kids under five. He took one class a semester, and it took seven years, but he finished. Mel uses it as a model for 'not now, but slower.'

• Mel's wish list

Mel listed things she keeps carrying: learning guitar (everyone else in her family plays), house projects, and a picture wall she keeps mentioning. She found writing them all down sobering. Newport's advice is to pick one and give it a realistic timeline.

• Newport's own trigger

With three boys entering elementary school, he realized they needed every 'dad hour' possible. That pushed him to figure out how to stay successful without the busyness.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Focus-interval protocol**

  Pick a demanding task, such as studying, writing, reading or paying bills, and set a 20-minute timer. If you check your phone or open another tab, restart the timer. After about two weeks, once it feels comfortable, add 10 minutes. Keep going until you reach 90 minutes, then take a break.

- **Morning time-block routine**

  List everything you want to do. Mark your fixed meetings. Assign the open time: hard work in your best block, small tasks batched into gaps, and email at set times. When the plan breaks, re-plan the rest of the day.

- **Agree on a deep-work ratio with your boss**

  Ask what split of focused work versus admin tasks (invoices, client meetings) would create the most value in your role, such as 50/50 or 30/70 for admin-heavy jobs. Then track it. If meetings shrink deep work to 20%, bring that number back to the conversation.

- **Practice being alone with your thoughts**

  Start with 15 minutes at a time, one walk or one errand without your phone. Newport admits it feels terrible at first.

If You Only Watch One Video Today, Make It This One

Guest: Emma Grede
Date: 2025-09-01 · Duration: 1:26:23
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jImgnkT-YNM

KEYPOINTS

• Two foundations: take responsibility and choose your thoughts

Emma Grede, co-founder of Good American, a Shark Tank judge and on Forbes' self-made women list, calls her career a blueprint for what happens when you take responsibility for yourself and manage your thoughts carefully. She frames it as a constant practice of being the woman she wants to be. She adds that you won't "manifest your way out of anything": vision has to be paired with hard work, and "there is no secret."

• Let go of blame that isn't serving you

Grede grew up somewhere she says blame was part of the culture, and she had anger issues she has worked on in therapy since 19. She acknowledges real reasons to be angry — she's a woman, Black and grew up poor — but asks whether what you're holding on to is working for you. Her way out was acceptance: "This is what it is, and I'm still going to move forward." Things fell into place around 19, when she realized "nobody owes you nothing."

• "How you do anything is how you do everything"

Her core principle is excellence in small things. When she made deli sandwiches, she made the best sandwich; packing clothes at a PR agency, her tissue was perfect and the sticker centered. That pride, she says, has an "invisible magnetic pull" that draws people to you. Mel connects it to Terry Crews, who, broke after the NFL and working as a custodian, asked himself how he'd sweep the floor if paid a million dollars.

• Excellence is internal; perfectionism is external

Grede says everyone has a different measuring stick, so define excellence by your own standard, not social media's — "it's you against you." Mel's distillation: perfectionism measures what others will think; excellence measures whether your effort is good enough for you. Grede adds that perfectionism comes at women from every angle, and the danger is letting it get inside.

• Talk to yourself like a good friend

Citing her friend Diane von Furstenberg's idea that your most important relationship is with yourself, Grede says your inner voice must be kind, compassionate and empathetic. When a friend messes up you say "let's talk about what happened," not "you silly cow" — do the same for yourself after mistakes.

• The rule of thirds

If you're chasing something hard, expect to feel happy about a third of the time, so-so a third, and terrible a third. Grede uses it almost daily: bad days mean you're on track, not failing, and good days call for humility. Mel jokes it also describes a marriage.

• If you don't know your passion, pursue yourself

Grede says you need something to strive for, but it doesn't have to be grand: work on eating better, exercising and building habits. She quotes Warren Buffett, "the more you learn, the more you earn," and says despite severe dyslexia, not diagnosed until her early 20s, she's always gobbling up information.

• Your 20s are for trying things

Looking at friends now in their 40s, she sees a line between those who took risks and worked hard in their 20s and those who kept partying. Her arc: try things in your 20s, put in hard work in your 30s, become proficient enough in your 40s to choose. People overestimate a year and underestimate a decade. At 42, she says she has only loved her work for about five years.

• What you're good at gives you energy

Grede's test for strengths: if something energizes you, you're good at it; if it drains you, you're not. Contract negotiations, even bad ones, set her on fire; a spreadsheet of numbers makes her want to die. Lean into strengths instead of chasing an abstract passion or purpose.

• Your real network is the people around the work

Stop waiting for networking events or a mentor. Grede's capital came from former clients, and her early advice came from questions asked after client pitches. Your network is your factory, vendors, banker and lawyer. Also, "if you can't take out your phone and show someone a photo of the thing you did, you haven't done anything."

EXAMPLES

• Leaving home at 16

The oldest of four girls raised by a single mother in East London, Grede ironed her sisters' school shirts and packed their lunches, sometimes skipping school herself. She left home at 16 for a high-rise with no fridge, keeping milk on the balcony, and dropped out of the London College of Fashion at 17 because she couldn't cover train fare and food.

• Hand-delivering letters for unpaid placements

When no one answered her letters asking to work for free, she delivered them by hand, assuming they hadn't arrived — never that she wasn't good enough. Five years building catwalk sets connected her with lighting designers and riggers, who led to corporate clients like Volvo. At 24 she founded an entertainment marketing agency that grew to offices in London, New York and LA.

• Good American's sold-out launch

Grede saw a gap: she cites 68% of American women being above a size 16 while malls offered few, often ugly options. She practiced her pitch about 50 times before meeting Pete Nordstrom and knew every jean price on Nordstrom's floor. Launch day hit $1 million, but by 10 a.m. sizes sold out and she learned she was "off calendar" with no fabric or vendors to restock. She personally phoned customers to say their jeans would arrive in about 13 weeks.

• The AI bonus that came from accounting

Two years ago Grede offered bonuses to departments that put AI to use. The winner wasn't marketing but accounts, which systematized chargebacks and saved hundreds of thousands of dollars.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Pitch with story, timing and homework**

  Tell a narrative rather than listing features; don't pitch at a party, ask for five minutes later; be confident, even a little arrogant, as long as you know your competition, price and distribution cold. Rehearse aloud and take feedback, like her habit of speaking too fast.

- **Be honest about whether you should start a business**

  Not everyone should. If you thrive on predictability, or have kids, a mortgage or parents to support, an ambitious corporate career may suit you better. If you go for it, commit to roughly ten years.

- **Learn how AI will reshape your field**

  Grede urges especially women, who she says missed the first tech boom, to learn AI tools specific to their job, not just as a search engine.

- **Find the glimmers in a job you don't love**

  Every role teaches something: customer service at the deli, mornings on a paper route. Doing the bad jobs is what she says makes her a better leader.

4 Steps to Unlock Your Creativity & Feel More Inspired Every Day

Guest: Phil Cook
Date: 2025-08-28 · Duration: 0:55:12
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HpreATdUSZA

KEYPOINTS

• Creativity is the exhale to all the information you take in.
Musician and songwriter Phil Cook describes daily life as one long inhale of noise and distraction. Creativity is how you breathe some of it back out. He ties it to intuition, the inner voice that can guide decisions 'like tuning a guitar string to exactly the right pitch of you.' The two feed each other: intuition shapes what you make, and making things sharpens your intuition.

• You're already creative; you just don't count it.
Cook pushes back on 'I can't draw, I'm not creative.' The song you cranked on the drive to work, the sandwich you knew would hit, the way you've learned to do Friday pizza night with different toppings on each half for each kid: these are all choices that express you. Making something that wasn't there before, even dinner, is creating.

• Many 'I'm not creative' stories come from small childhood wounds.
Someone made an offhand remark in elementary school, or you watched a person play Beethoven and decided it would never be you. Cook calls these 'micro traumas' that harden into 'this is never for me.' Part of creativity is noticing those stories and questioning them.

• Principle 1: shed the weight of expectations.
For Cook this is about worthiness. Notice what keeps calling to you over the years, like woodworking or a pottery class you keep saying you'll take 'someday,' and ask why you haven't. Usually the answer is a story about who you're allowed to be.

• Parents often hand their unlived creativity to their kids.
A common pattern: you quit piano in middle school, later regret it, then sign your kids up instead. Cook says the kids feel the recital pressure and also the weight of your regret, which turns many of them off. The better move is to take the lessons yourself.

• Principle 2: lower the stakes and assign your own value.
Mel admits that when she hears 'creativity' she thinks about the finished product and how people will react, and that's why so many people edit themselves out. Cook calls your inner creative life 'your realm,' outside society's clock and judgment, where you decide what something is worth. He notes the critical 'drill sergeant' voice lives in there too, and you have to stop letting it set the stakes.

• Principle 3: bring yourself to the work, limitations included.
Cook is clumsy ('my gross motor skills are gross') and trips in public, so he walks looking down, which is how he started noticing rocks. Now he keeps trays of them, and calls them 'not work to me.' He knows that after he dies someone might toss them back on the ground. Mel's point: they were never for anyone else.

• Principle 4: find your sanctuary, a place where the world falls away.
It doesn't have to be a studio. It could be cooking, a walk, three minutes singing along in your car, or a rock in your pocket that reminds you of something meaningful. Cook says what counts as sanctuary is whatever it means to you.

• Start with the landscape you live in.
Whether your life is city hustle, desert, countryside or ocean, Cook says that environment is what your senses are reading every day, and it's where your material comes from. Begin by paying attention to what you notice.

• Creativity can be healing, in a different way than therapy or exercise.
Cook's closing advice is to know that you belong to yourself and to talk to yourself the way a good friend would. Therapy, meditation and running help, he says, but making things gives your soul a different kind of expression. These are his personal beliefs about meaning, not clinical claims.

EXAMPLES

• The worry stone carved by firelight
Cook had always wanted to work with wood. His grandfather's carving knife sat unused above his mantle because he assumed he'd cut a finger off. Last fall, up all night at a fire with his friend Daniel, he talked about worrying for his girlfriend, whose father had just died suddenly, while whittling by feel in the dark. By the end of the hour he had carved something shaped to the inside of his hand, with a smooth groove for the thumb, and he gave it to her.

• A family chain
Cook realized the carving connected him to his grandfather, who had given him a worry stone as a kid. At 45, he felt his intuition had 'taken care of it' once he got out of his own way. He now makes them privately, including one engraved with an M for Mel, and says he'll never sell them.

• The 98% to 2% creativity figure
Mel cited a 'landmark' 1968 study in which 98% of five-year-olds scored very high on creativity but only 2% of adults did. She paired it with Picasso's line that all children are born artists, and the problem is staying one. She cited the figure without details on how the study measured creativity.

• Pizza night as creative work
Cook's everyday example: you find your own way to make the family pizza, feed your kids, and their hunger is satisfied. Something that wasn't there before now exists. Recreating a dish your grandma made is the same impulse.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Find what's calling you
List the things you've wanted to try for years, like pottery, woodworking, singing or piano. For each one, write down the story you tell yourself about why you haven't done it yet.

- **Do it badly on purpose**
  Cook happily admits other people can whittle a perfect loon while his pieces are crude. Make things that are only for you, with no audience and no standard.
- **Build a tiny sanctuary**
  Pick one daily window, like a walk, a song in the car or cooking, and protect it as time where nothing else happens. Even three minutes counts.
- **Don't pass your regrets to your kids**
  If you're tempted to sign your kids up for the thing you quit, consider taking it up again yourself first.

Do THIS to Boost Your Metabolism, Lose Fat, & Feel Better Now With Dr. William Li

Guest: Dr. William Li
Date: 2025-08-21 · Duration: 0:46:32
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AjwaE0WozfE

KEYPOINTS

• Metabolism is simply how your body takes in fuel and burns it

Dr. Li skips the textbook 'sum of all chemical reactions' definition and uses a car: food is the fuel, calories are just the unit of measure (like gallons or liters), and body fat is the fuel tank. Like driving, you mostly don't think about fuel until the gauge drops and you go looking for a 'filling station' — the dinner table, delivery, or the chip drawer. That moment of choice is where he says metabolism gets derailed or supported.

• Fuel quality matters over time, not on any single day

Filling up with cheap gas once won't hurt a car, he says, but doing it every fill-up, week after week, means the car won't run as well or as long. The same applies to food: an occasional low-quality meal is not the issue, the daily pattern is. He adds that people who choose better fuel tend to take better care of the 'car' in general, too.

• Myth one: we don't have different metabolisms

Dr. Li argues everyone is born with the same metabolic 'operating system', the way two identical laptops boot the same out of the box — just as we're born with the same kidneys and brain function. What changes is what happens afterwards. He tells listeners to stop comparing themselves to a sibling or friend who 'can eat anything' and compare themselves only to themselves.

• Myths two and three: teenagers don't have sky-high metabolisms, and middle age doesn't automatically slow you down

Mel admits she repeated her mother's warning to her own kids ('enjoy that hamburger now'). According to the research Dr. Li cites, metabolism actually declines from age one to 20, and holds flat from 20 to 60 once excess body fat is accounted for. He calls that flat line the 'mic drop' finding: on hardwiring alone, '60 can be the new 20'.

• Myth four: body fat slows metabolism, not the reverse

The common story is that a slow metabolism makes you gain fat. Dr. Li flips it: carrying excess body fat is what slows the metabolism down. That reframing underpins his whole message that the engine itself is intact and can be brought back toward its baseline.

• Fat is a vital organ that forms around your blood vessels

In the embryo, he explains, blood vessels form first, then nerves, then body fat — before you have a face or a waist. Fat wraps around vessels like bubble wrap because it is the fuel tank and should sit next to where fuel arrives. Fat cells can stretch about 300%, three times their normal size, as they fill with energy from food.

• Weight gain starts with hidden visceral fat — first in the tongue

Before the 'muffin top', fat accumulates inside the body. Dr. Li says the back third of the tongue is already a pillow of fat to help swallowed food slide down, and it is one of the first places new fat appears, even in thin people (he cites Scandinavian research). A fatter tongue relaxes during sleep and partly blocks the airway, so new snoring or startled waking is his 'warning bell'.

• Chronic stress quietly blocks fat burning

A brief fight-or-flight jolt (an intruder, a near-miss in the car) actually burns fat. But stress hormones that stay high all the time interfere with burning body fat, which Dr. Li links to depression, PTSD and chronic stress. He believes this — plus less time for exercise in your 40s and 50s — explains why people gain weight even though their hardwired metabolism is stable. Addressing stress is one of the most powerful resets he names.

• Alcohol and poor sleep compound each other

Alcohol is carbs, changes body chemistry and hormones, makes you less eager to exercise the next day, and degrades sleep. Dr. Li says you need deep, good-quality sleep to reach the 'real fat-burning part' of the night. Mel, who says she used to drink to take the edge off stress, jokes that stress eating is the fallback — and he notes all these factors conspire together.

• Counting calories can backfire because it adds stress

Calories are only a unit of fuel and amounts do matter, but Dr. Li discourages tracking calories, macros or hourly blood sugar because the constant calculation is stressful, which works against fat loss. He declines to give Mel a target number, saying any figure might not fit the listener and could leave them feeling like a failure. If you overeat one day, simply eat less the next.

EXAMPLES

• Herman Pontzer's lifespan metabolism study

Dr. Li describes a study led by Herman Pontzer at Duke with about 90 researchers across 20 countries, measuring roughly 6,000 people from 2 days old to 90+. Participants drank water with tagged hydrogen and oxygen, so breath, blood, urine and sweat revealed energy use. Raw results looked 'all over the map' until researchers adjusted for body size and excess fat — 'like pulling the cloak off the statue of David'.

• The four phases of metabolism

Per that study as Dr. Li presents it: 0–1 years, metabolism runs about 50% above adult levels (so what babies are exposed to, from microplastics to pacifiers, matters); 1–20, it declines toward adult levels; 20–60, it is flat; 60–90, it slows by only about 17%.

• Mel's daughter Sawyer

Mel shares (with permission, as it appears in The Let Them Theory) that Sawyer has long felt it was unfair that her younger sister could eat anything while she struggled. Dr. Li's answer: everyone's underlying metabolism is the same and can be reactivated, so measure your own progress, not someone else's body.

• Three foods plus a bonus

Beans cooked in extra virgin olive oil, which feed the gut microbiome he calls '39 trillion trainers'; tomatoes, for lycopene, which he says burns harmful fat; and onions, rich in quercetin, which he says activates brown fat to burn white fat — caramelize them in olive oil if raw onion is too strong. Capers, hand-picked Mediterranean flower buds sold in jars, are his favorite quercetin 'bombs'.

• Even fidgeting counts

Dr. Li says studies show leg-shaking and tapping burn some energy, as do laundry, making the bed and scrolling. Still, nothing replaces real motion: a 30-minute walk, a run if your knees allow, swimming (easy on bones and muscles) or dancing.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Use your overnight fast

Dr. Li's first step is intermittent fasting, which he frames as the natural fast that happens while you sleep — periods of not eating let the body switch to burning stored fat. Protecting good sleep strengthens it.

• Quit the clean plate club

You don't have to finish what's served; eating half the plate is fine and guilt-free. Not putting the extra fuel in is, in his words, 'the easy way', since otherwise you carry it for years.

• Walk with a friend, and picture something that makes you content

Walking with someone adds social bonding, which lowers stress. He also suggests deliberately focusing on one thing that makes you happy, since even imagining it can lower stress that otherwise blocks fat burning.

• Be patient and skeptical of rapid-loss promises

Fat accumulated over years — 'extra gas cans on your pickup truck' — takes time to burn. Claims of losing a set number of pounds in 10 days or two weeks aren't sustainable, he warns. If you want numbers, he suggests even a one-off consult with a nutritionist who tailors them to your height, weight, activity and health conditions.

The Real Reason Boys and Men Are Quietly Giving Up & What They Need to Hear

Guest: Jason Wilson
Date: 2025-08-18 · Duration: 1:13:46
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0LM4-TqhiaA

KEYPOINTS

• Many men are losing an internal war while looking fine

Jason Wilson has mentored boys and men for 22 years at the Cave of Adullam, a martial arts mentoring program in Detroit. He says most men he knows are fighting depression, unresolved anger and childhood wounds behind a 'Superman cape' that is strangling them. If they lose that inner battle, it turns into external wars: divorce, distance from their kids, or giving everything to work and coming home with nothing left.

• Boys need healing, not scaring straight

His program began as discipline-based, including scared-straight work, until he realized retraumatizing boys can't heal trauma. He shifted to a safe space that still pushes the boys but lets them share what's heavy. His line: 'You cannot defend what hasn't been disciplined.' Many fighters are 'a black belt in the dojo but a white belt in life,' able to choke someone out but unable to handle job stress or a wife's emotions calmly.

• Anger is the surface; dig to the hypocenter

His 'earthquake of emotions' exercise treats anger as the visible damage at the epicenter. The real cause sits deeper. When a boy wants to fight him, he says, 'Dig deeper, Christian. It's not me.' That boy then cried about his father dying and then his grandfather. Men default to anger or silence because both look strong. Hurt, sadness, loss and even a wife saying she misses them all come out as anger.

• Men use 8 crayons out of 64

His crayon analogy: men stay in the eight-crayon box and use about four, while women draw from 64. When a partner asks for violet, he only has purple. The fix is to name the hurt instead of the anger. For example, saying 'When you don't trust me with the finances, it hurts, because my father never trusted me with responsibility.'

• Tired often means 'I need rest', not sleep

He reads from his book: sleep is an unconscious state, while rest is 'a conscious state of freedom from anything that wearies the soul.' Performance-based living and slogans like 'no pain, no gain' wear men out. You wouldn't send a quarterback with a torn Achilles back into the game. He calls it self-maintenance rather than self-love, because men understand maintaining things.

• When worth equals work, men stop caring for themselves

If you're only valued for what you provide, why see a doctor, take a nap or ask for anything for Father's Day? He watches older couples where the wife is lively and the husband is on a walker after a lifetime of proving himself. He used to jump up from naps when his wife Nicole came home. 'I'm good, nothing's wrong' can be a warning sign, and men hugging at funerals and saying 'stay strong' teaches each other that weakness isn't manly.

• The masculine male versus the comprehensive man

The masculine male hides his emotions behind a facade and is only the provider and protector, which leaves him exhausted, angry and isolated. The comprehensive man expresses emotion without fear of judgment and makes room to be a nurturer, a 'human being, not a human doing.' His example: an ex-Marine friend with severe PTSD who was helped by a Shih Tzu. Jason loves flowers for what they do for his mind, 'but test me if you want.'

• Run toward what hurts most

His assignment for men: accept you're worth more than what you do, practice saying 'no' and 'not now' (the living room can be painted next month), then go deep into the childhood wounds that show up in arguments. He recommends intensive off-grid retreats. He healed his father wound at one called the Crucible. 'You're not tired of living, you're tired of not living.'

• Young men are scared and lack mentors

With 20-something sons who seem to be failing to launch, he says the world tells them to 'be a man' without showing them how. Gaming or building something that doesn't pay may be the only wins they can find. Instead of criticizing, surround them with men. If dad is too busy, ask an uncle or cousin to take him to work, even if you have to pay them.

EXAMPLES

• A family history of violence

His grandfather was lynched in 1936, a pain his aunts and uncles never released. His mother's first husband beat her and hit Jason's older brothers with the flat side of butcher knives. His brother Larry was murdered in 1973, and his mother told Jason that without him she would have taken her life. He cites men dying by suicide at 3.5 times the rate of women.

• 78% improved a letter grade without tutoring

He describes an in-house finding that over 78% of students raised their GPA by one letter grade, just by being allowed to express what was weighing on them and learning to breathe. He says it helped even boys with ADHD symptoms who couldn't sit still for two minutes.

• The car in the grocery store parking lot

After 26 years of marriage, Jason expressed himself to Nicole without yelling for the first time. Later, she slammed a door after calling him 'the most emotional man I ever met.' He nearly went back to his old angry self, then decided, 'I'm not going back.' They still do intensive marriage therapy.

• The friend who looked at his gun

Two days before the interview, a joyful-seeming friend told him he had considered taking his life and hadn't called because 'I know you got a lot going on.' Mel shared that men at Chris's Soul Degree retreats almost universally say they come last, and that she says about 95% of inquiries come from women.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **End the day with the four Rs**

  Reflect, release, reset, rest. Keep what you need to reconcile, like being sharp with your daughter. Release anything toxic, then rest. 'That's what tomorrow is for.'

- **Keep a childhood photo of your partner**

  He looks at a photo of Nicole as a child during conflict, because it's often the 8- or 10-year-old talking. He suggests wives do the same: 'Is this little Dave right now?'

- **Reach shut-down sons with presence**

  Respect their world. Lie down and read in his room without a word, or take phone-free walks. Ask yourself 'what could I live with?' before deciding to just let them be. Fathers and sons can sit knee to knee, holding hands and looking into each other's eyes. The father usually cries first.

- **Open the door without forcing it**

  Send him a reel that might strike a chord. When he opens up, listen as you would to a best friend, say little, and 'never try to change the weather' with 'it's not that bad.' When he raises a concern about the kids, validate it instead of automatically siding with them.

5 Powerful Questions to Ask Yourself Right Now

Date: 2025-08-14 · Duration: 0:56:51
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KTvI4yUnJjY

KEYPOINTS

• A solo check-in, framed as a walk with a friend

No experts or interviews here: Mel goes back to the podcast's format from two and a half years earlier, when it was just her at a microphone in Vermont, recording in her closet or above the garage. She records straight after her morning walk, still in workout clothes. Her premise is that you already know what's working, what drains you and what brings you joy, but busyness hijacks you. Pausing to ask good questions brings that clarity back quickly.

• Question 1: How are you really doing right now?

Skip the automatic 'fine.' Close your mouth, breathe through your nose and ask more than once, because the answer comes in layers. Name the feeling (overwhelmed, content, restless, frustrated) without trying to fix it. If the answer is good, that's a clue about what to keep doing. If it's bad, saying it out loud is the first step to whatever comes next.

• Problems feel lighter outside your head than inside it

Mel cites a New York Times piece by clinical psychologist Dr. Lisa Damour, whose work changed how Mel relates to her adult kids. Damour wrote that adolescents, like adults, feel relief just from putting their worries into words, and that psychologists say problems feel better outside than inside. Many big problems can't be solved, Mel adds, but having one isn't nearly as bad as feeling alone with it.

• Question 2: Who have you spent time with lately, or wish you had?

Looking back over 56 years, Mel says the periods when she put family and friends first felt clearly better than the ones when work or school came first. The question surfaces people you take for granted because 'they're always there.' She cites Dr. Robert Waldinger, director of the 84-year Harvard Study of Adult Development: relationship quality is the strongest predictor of lifelong happiness and health, not money, success or status.

• Stop waiting to be invited, and keep connection small

Mel is annoyed by families waiting for a formal invitation: call and say 'I miss you, how about this weekend?' Put a date in the calendar. She also argues that connection doesn't need a big weekend or a $10,000 trip. A six-minute call while running errands counts, and one visit often leads to the next.

• Question 3: What brought you joy recently, and how can you do more of it?

Joy is usually something small, not the promotion or the renovation. Mel argues joy can happen on purpose, so build it into your schedule: keep a puzzle on the coffee table, a deck of cards or Bananagrams handy. She treats joy as a life raft, not a mood you have to feel all the time.

• Small doses of joy can help during depression and burnout

For listeners too burned out to know what brings them joy, Mel points to NYU psychiatrist Dr. Judith Joseph, whose research looks at how small moments of intentional joy can be a lifeline even in hard periods of depression. Finding joy when things are going well is easy. Mel calls building it in when they aren't a superpower.

• Your camera roll shows you what used to bring you joy

If you're drawing a blank, scroll back through your photos. In her worst burnout years Mel had to scroll back several years to find herself content: running road races with girlfriends, a book club, singing in a church choir, meditating, scrapbooking. You can even feel 'jealous of a former version of yourself' who made time for those things. That's your evidence of what to bring back.

• Question 4: What have you been putting off that's draining your energy?

It's usually something small that nags you every time you see it: a dentist appointment, an overdue bill, school physicals, the couch you meant to list on Facebook Marketplace, a car registration. Mel's challenge is to pick one, set a timer and time how long it actually takes, inspired by a TikTok account called How Long Does It Actually Take?, where a young woman named Christy times tasks she has put off.

• Question 5: What's something new you can try during the week?

Saving all the fun for weekends backfires, Mel says, because you sleep until 11 and the day disappears into errands. Try a weekday dance, cooking, art or online class, with bonus points for bringing or making a friend and extra points if you expect to be bad at it. Having somewhere to be also gives you a reason to leave work instead of drifting back to the laptop.

EXAMPLES

• Bodie and Homie's reunion

Mel's brother Derek had never visited her Vermont home in four years, partly because his wife, Mel's business partner, visits three or four times a year while he stays home with their twins. He insisted on a nearly 15-hour drive from Chicago so their Australian Shepherd Bodie could meet his littermate, Mel's dog Homie, for the first time since they were eight weeks old. The two dogs ignored the other dogs for four days. The families played cards, cooked and hiked.

• Harry Potter Monopoly in house-elf voices

With all three adult kids home, the family played 'high-low' at dinner (everyone shares the day's high and low), then a Harry Potter Monopoly game her daughter picked up at Walmart. They read the cards in character voices. Mel, a proud Gryffindor, was told she sounds like Dobby.

• Deadheading and the lupine seed pods

Gardening is Mel's other big joy. After her morning walk she does a three-minute loop around the house to deadhead flowers. She, her daughter and her daughter's boyfriend pulled hundreds of lupine seed pods in the field and scattered them along the driveway, hoping for blooms next spring.

• Mel's three put-off tasks

A placemat drawer that has needed sorting for four years, sometimes with pasta sauce still on the mats. Carpet in Oakley's room that Mr. Noodle the cat peed on for months after he left for college; a carpet cleaner told her to rip it out. And a basal-cell

spot she has had covered with a Band-Aid for two weeks. She commits to booking the Mohs appointment, which she estimates takes five to ten minutes.

• The Oxford juggling study and her 5:30 hip-hop class

Mel cites an Oxford study in which half the participants took a juggling class for six weeks. Their visual and spatial brain regions became thicker. Her own new thing: a 5:30 p.m. hip-hop class, despite being dyslexic, bad at choreography and 'the person who turns the wrong way' in wedding line dances.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Bookmark the five questions for when you feel off

Use them when you feel lonely, can't remember the last time you laughed or feel adrift. There are no right answers. Mel's own answers shifted between the first time she asked and the recap, and that's part of the point.

• Act on question two immediately

Send the episode to the person who came to mind with a note asking for a date or even a 10-minute call. If no one comes to mind, flip through your contacts. Mel keeps a printed contact list by her desk and sends texts or voice memos between Zoom calls.

• Cheap concert tickets on the day

Mel now sees two concerts a year because live music brings her so much joy. Her tip is to wait until the day of the show, when resellers often slash prices for good seats.

The Best Advice I Wish I Knew in My 20s

Guest: Dr. Meg Jay
Date: 2025-08-11 · Duration: 1:20:01
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2wSrcr91JYA

KEYPOINTS

• Your 20s are the most defining decade, and often the hardest one.
Clinical psychologist Dr. Meg Jay says the idea that your 20s are the best, most carefree years is 'empirically not true.' It's a decade of firsts and worsts: first and worst jobs, relationships and breakups. Older adults see no mortgage or kids and wonder why 20-somethings are stressed. They miss that work, love, money, brain development and emotional stability are all uncertain at the same time.

• The brain reads uncertainty as danger, so many 20-somethings live in low-level chronic stress.
Without adult sources of security, everything can feel risky, from talking to a roommate (people text instead) to talking to a boss. Jay presents this as normal for the stage, not a personal failing, and says confidence comes from building experience.

• Life usually gets better after your 20s, if you put in the work.
Jay tells crying clients, 'If the 20s turn out to be the best years of your life, something has gone terribly wrong.' She says studies show life gets better on average with each decade of adulthood. In 25 years of practice, no former client has told her they wish they were back in their 20s. Mel agreed, calling her own 20s her worst decade.

• Build your career one piece of 'identity capital' at a time.
Identity capital means anything that adds value to who you are: the best job you can get even if it isn't great, a degree, a certification, a skill. You don't need to know at 24 who you'll be forever. Young adults average nine jobs by 35, and many end up in careers that didn't exist when they were in college. Treat early jobs as getting paid to learn, because the learning curve slows after your 20s.

• Doing nothing isn't safe; underemployment is sticky.
Jay says 75% of underemployed 20-somethings are still underemployed a decade later. The good news is the other 25% get out, and people who already have a few directions to test can move quickly. Her image: 20-somethings are like planes just after takeoff, easy to correct. The hardest cases are people whose lives never took off after college.

• In college: go to class, map every deadline, and get an internship.
Jay teaches at UVA and says parents shouldn't assume their kids attend class, since technology makes skipping easy. Going to class gives structure and can lead to relationships with professors. Put every syllabus, reading and deadline into one calendar, which most students don't do. She calls an internship one of the biggest predictors of whether college pays off: 'the best preparation for work is work.'

• Staying single through your 20s usually doesn't feel good.
Jay cites a study that followed people from their early to late 20s. Among those who dated or hooked up but avoided commitment, 80% were unhappy with their dating lives and only 10% didn't wish they had a partner. Men who stayed single throughout their 20s showed a significant dip in self-esteem near 30.

• Decide what you want before asking 'who wants me?'
Many young adults date by seeing who picks them. Jay compares this to grocery shopping hungry: you grab things without knowing what you came for. Her '29 conversations' cover marriage, religion, money, kids, and work after kids. You should have them with a partner, but first with yourself.

• A partner turns life into a three-legged race.
Who you partner with shapes where you live, your job, vacations, even paint colors. When the relationship is going well, you're doing well; when it isn't, you're not. That's why Jay thinks choosing a partner deserves as much intention as choosing a career.

• Growing up in an unhappy family doesn't rule out building a happy one.
Many clients believe 'happy families are for other people.' Jay says people who grew up with adversity are often the most motivated and the clearest about what they do and don't want. Part of the work is shifting them toward 'you get to do it differently.'

• Often what feels like social anxiety is really social uncertainty, and the fix is skills.
'I'm worried other people don't like me' is the most commonly endorsed item on a questionnaire given at student health centers nationwide. Jay separates clinical anxiety from uncertainty, like not knowing if what you said was stupid or whether you'll have plans Saturday. Her motto is 'skills over pills': medication or not, everyone needs social and work skills, and confidence follows.

EXAMPLES

• Mark, 25, three years as a barista
A listener took a 'temporary' barista job that lasted three years. He wanted to try architecture or graphic design but felt that trying and hating it was scarier than not trying. Jay's answer: inaction is the dangerous choice. Pick one direction and start testing it now.

• Hannah's fear of never finding the same life goals
A listener worried that no one she wanted would want the same things, or not until it was too late. Jay said this is so common she added the '29 conversations' chapter to the updated edition of her book, and told Hannah to slow down and get clear on her own answers first.

• The numbers Jay leads with
80% of life's most defining moments happen by 35. Earning power is largely set in your first ten years of work. More than half of people are married to, dating or living with their future partner by 30. The brain and personality change more in your 20s than at any other time.

• Waiting for kids isn't automatically a win

Jay, who had her kids in her 30s, says having a baby is a beginning, not an end. Once you have kids, you want to be around for them as long as possible, so pushing it to 40 or 42 has real costs that people rarely talk about.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Help a stuck 20-something start thinking about change**
  Jay draws on research about how people change: the key shift is from not even considering change to thinking about it. Give them something to think about, like a book or a podcast, rather than a lecture.
- **Ask yourself the anxiety-or-uncertainty question**
  Is this clinical anxiety, or am I just uncertain whether people like me? If it's uncertainty, build skills through practice. If it's more, get professional help.
- **Collect identity capital on purpose**
  Choose jobs for what you'll learn, add credentials you can build on, and test two or three interests before your mid-20s instead of waiting to be sure.
- **College checklist**
  Attend class, use office hours, keep one master calendar, and get at least one internship.

Reset Your Mind & Soul: How to Find Peace When Life Feels Overwhelming

Guest: Diego Perez (Yung Pueblo)
Date: 2025-08-07 · Duration: 1:12:53
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c3v9VK3T-WE

KEYPOINTS

• Healing depends on facing emotions, not on time

Diego Perez, who writes as Yung Pueblo, says the biggest factor in healing is your ability to face the emotions you used to run from. Craving distraction is often fear of feeling. He uses a pen name because it gives him the freedom to be honest about his own suffering. Mel adds that most of us aren't so much afraid of our emotions as unwilling to deal with them, because the joint, the gummy or the beer is easier than sitting with boredom or loneliness.

• You don't need a rock bottom to change

Diego hit his own rock bottom, but he's watched his wife and friends transform after a simple moment of awareness: "I could do things a little better." Mel asks whether his crash made him want to notice warning signs earlier, and he agrees. For him it was change or die.

• Addiction as a search for your own attention

His poem: "I was never addicted to one thing. I was addicted to filling a void within myself with things other than my own love." Growing up poor after immigrating at age four, he watched his parents fight over rent and food and had no way to process the anxiety. Once he began giving himself attention and accepting his emotional history, he says, alcohol and cocaine lost their hold.

• Feel the truth of an emotion without letting it drive

You can feel sadness without acting in ways you'll regret, and feel anger without letting the story in your head create "fake stress." He calls this subtlety: peace lives in the gray area of observing rather than reacting. Suffering doesn't have to mean a dramatic low. It can be a life of constant friction over small things.

• Inner peace sometimes just means not adding to tension

His poem says inner peace isn't always pristine calm; sometimes it's accepting the tension inside you without reacting or reinforcing it, then moving gently through your day. If you're still angry about yesterday's conversation with your boss, acknowledge it, be careful with your words and don't let it snowball. Mel noticed mid-conversation that her shoulders were up by her ears and dropped them, since relaxing the body gives the mind some peace.

• If you're struggling, you're probably fighting change

After two 45-day and three 30-day silent meditation retreats, and about 13,000 hours of practice, Diego says the main thing he observes is that everything changes. Attachment, meaning craving for things to stay a particular way, is like standing against a river's current: you'll get knocked down. Mel's image is punching ocean waves instead of climbing onto a raft.

• Relationships aren't supposed to be easy

Romantic comedies teach that love fixes everything after one hurdle, but feeling love is only the beginning. Knowing how to care for someone means learning each other's emotional histories, triggers and how each of you likes to be supported. Waiting until you're perfectly healed could take a lifetime. What matters is whether both people are willing to grow when the relationship holds up a mirror.

• You can't connect deeply with someone disconnected from themselves

The clearest sign of a disconnected partner is real difficulty being vulnerable or sharing highs and lows. Mel realized she has few close friends from high school, college or law school because she was distracting herself with constant relationships. Diego notes that how distant someone feels often mirrors how far you are from yourself.

• Boundaries shouldn't become walls

A boundary is what you will and won't accept, such as disrespect or someone who only takes. It becomes a wall when you use it to avoid problem-solving. Boundaries need reviewing as your needs change year to year. People-pleasing isn't compassion: Mel ties it to being unable to bear the feeling of disappointing someone, and Diego adds an ancient fear of being kicked out of the tribe.

EXAMPLES

• The night on the floor at 23

From roughly ages 20 to 23 in college, Diego reached for a joint, a drink or a party whenever sadness or anxiety rose, and made sure he was never alone. It escalated to pills and cocaine. It ended with him crying on the floor feeling his heart break. A doctor he saw a week later said it sounded like a mild heart attack. He describes it as a slow car crash.

• Five minutes on the bed instead of a joint

The first time he slowed down, he sat on his bed as anxiety rose and challenged himself to feel it for five to ten minutes, before he knew anything about meditation. His emotions had felt like the monster under a child's bed, but facing them was "way less scary" than he'd imagined. His rule became to do the opposite: feel instead of run, tell the truth instead of "everything's fine," and build strength instead of sickness.

• Building a home within yourself

He read a piece he wrote for Mel about building a home with another person several times and watching each one come apart in storms, until he realized he needed "a palace of peace" inside himself. You're seeking a home in someone else if your happiness feels fully dependent on them. Wanting marriage is fine; it's richer when you already enjoy your own company.

• His small gratitudes

Asked on the spot, he named natural spring water and his reliable Toyota RAV4, which he can't bring himself to give up. The point is that gratitude works best when it's small and specific.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Watch for one red flag and three green ones

The red flag is someone who overestimates their capacity, promises things and doesn't show up, which he reads as a struggle to face their own truth. The green flags are growth, kindness, and compassion in the sense of stepping outside their own perspective to see yours, which he calls the key to resolving arguments. Your people are those who make your heart feel seen and your nervous system feel calm.

• Practice his three healthiest habits

First, be grateful for little things. Second, when your nervous system is overwhelmed, say no to anything new that would take energy: covering a shift, an obligatory fundraiser, or an emotional invitation like a partner's after-work irritation or gossip. You can listen without joining their tension. Third, don't hide your love. Mel adds that you should go first in saying what you admire about people, and it comes back tenfold.

• Tell intuition from fear by how it feels in your body

Diego says intuition is bodily, comes from your core and tends to point toward your next chapter; craving ice cream isn't intuition. Mel's version is that fear is loud, specific and depleting, while intuition sits in the gut or heart and feels expansive even when it makes you nervous.

• Make space for rest, because good work doesn't come from exhaustion

Your next great thing will come from a reservoir of rest, not exhaustion. You don't need a vacation for clarity: silence, a short walk or pouring a cup of tea can be enough. His recipe for a good life: follow your intuition, build with people who love to grow, take responsibility for your healing, forgive, and never stop being kind.

How to Become the Person You've Always Wanted to Be

Guest: Chelsea Handler
Date: 2025-08-04 · Duration: 1:18:04
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FcEehRZvoiw

KEYPOINTS

• Let yourself want what you want, without apologizing

Mel's main lesson from Chelsea Handler's book I'll Have What She's Having is that most of us see something we'd love, like a first-class seat, a beautiful house or being a good dancer, and immediately decide 'people like me don't get that.' Handler adds a second step: don't just decide you deserve it, also stop apologizing for wanting more. She notes that men rarely apologize for ambition, while women struggle to claim what they want and to talk about what they got.

• Seeing what you don't want can be just as clarifying

Handler, the youngest of six, grew up with money problems: phones were cut off and there was no extra. In a Wall Street Journal op-ed she wrote that the two people in charge of her family were the two she had the least confidence in. Mel points out that most people look around and say 'I want that.' Handler looked at her home and said 'I don't want that.' By six or seven she had pictured a fierce, independent woman who would lead rather than follow.

• You are never too far gone

Whether you're in a marriage, job or city you don't want, or even sick, Handler says you can still take control of your life and stop tying your happiness to other people. 'No one is unrecoverable. You're never cooked.' She adds that you aren't responsible for other people's happiness. She chooses to spread joy on stage, but nobody can require it of her.

• Mel's definition: confidence is the willingness to try

Mel says Handler models confidence as simply being willing to try: wanting something and going after it, having a problem and moving. Proof that you're capable comes from the trying. Handler separates this from banging your head against the same wall. Be willing 'to make a fool out of yourself one time,' because it might work out. She says real confidence took her more than 25 years of stand-up to build.

• Your worst mistake can open a door

Handler's DUI at 21 led to 48 hours in jail and a DUI class where everyone had to tell their story. Terrified of public speaking, she hid at the back for about 12 weeks until the last session, when she told her story and the room laughed. Classmates told her to try stand-up. The next week she waited about 24 hours in line at the Laugh Factory for a three-minute set. She is clear she is not proud of the DUI.

• One failure doesn't decide your future

After bombing her big showcase at the Montreal Comedy Festival, Handler sat in her hotel room wondering if she would have to work in an office. Within about 72 hours she had crushed a set at Luna Park for an NBC executive who hadn't been in Montreal, and she got her first development deal. Her lesson is that you only need one person to say yes, and that 'lightness and darkness follow each other around like partners.'

• Anger is usually hurt in disguise

Handler's brother died when she was nine, and her father 'fell apart at the seams.' Her nine-year-old brain heard her brother's 'I'll be right back' as a lie. She covered the grief with anger, drugs, alcohol and bombast, and she didn't cry about him until she was 40. In therapy she learned that anger is a shield against vulnerability, that resentment usually means you're hurt and never said what you needed, and that annoyance and judgment say more about you than about the other person.

• Growth can feel like losing yourself for a while

Therapy with Dr. Dan Siegel, whom she met when he was a guest on her Netflix talk show, lasted about two years. One lesson was 'you don't have to be everyone's entertainment.' She went quiet at dinner parties, and friends said they wanted the old Chelsea back. For about two years she felt ungrounded and questioned everything: whether she was unlovable or a narcissist, and why she didn't want a husband. She stopped gossiping, lost some friends and gained better ones, and took about six years off stand-up after burning out in her 30s.

EXAMPLES

• The 10-year-old's hard lemonade stand

On Martha's Vineyard, a regular lemonade stand made her about $17 to $20. She fired her sister Shauna for refusing to sell spiked lemonade to adults, knocked on doors asking for 'other 10-year-olds,' and hired a neighbor kid named Nelson as her barback. By week three she had hundreds of dollars and paid Nelson a 1% commission. She then posed as a 15-year-old to run a babysitting business through Edgartown hotels for three years.

• Seat 2C at age 13

Ever since walking through first class at 10 ('This seems like my group'), she had saved her money. At 13, on a family trip to California, she bought her own first-class ticket from a travel agent on her street without telling anyone. She sat in 2C in kitten heels while her older brothers Glenn and Roy sat in coach. When one came up to protest that she should have given the seat to them or their mom, she told him to go back to his section.

• Leaving home with four new tires

Her dad, a used-car dealer, was thrilled to put four new tires on an old Audi Quattro so she could drive to California. Her mom handed over her sister's birth certificate so she could get into bars. She landed with an aunt and uncle in Los Angeles: nine kids, four dogs and a parrot in a two-bedroom house.

• Dinner with Jane Fonda

Fonda emailed asking Handler to come talk about 'a couple things,' that same night. Over dinner she told Handler she had been awful, obnoxious and under a dark cloud at a party at Fonda's house. Having just started therapy, Handler didn't defend herself, thanked her and called it real sisterhood. Fonda told her: 'Go find out what your problem is because your gifts are plentiful... make your environment be a product of you.' Handler borrowed a line from Maria Shriver: make the first time the last time.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Tell a friend the truth when it's inconvenient**
  Instead of writing someone off or venting about them, offer a clearer picture of who they could be, as Fonda did. Handler now does this for others, more carefully after therapy, knowing not everyone wants her directness.
- **When resentment shows up, ask what you never said**
  After a weekend with people she loves left her resentful, Handler sat with it for three days and realized she had never told them what she needed. Mel takes the same question for herself: did I actually ask?
- **Catch judgment and turn it back on yourself**
  Each time Handler notices herself judging, she asks what she isn't feeling good about in herself. Her goal is to be someone who is judgment-free and just gets a kick out of people.

You Learn This Too Late: Understanding This Will Change the Way You Look at Your Relationships

Guest: Dr. Aliza Pressman
Date: 2025-07-28 · Duration: 1:21:49
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M4KtRNFlQuw

KEYPOINTS

• Getting parenting 'largely right' takes a few simple, science-backed habits, not perfection.
Developmental psychologist Dr. Aliza Pressman, who directs the Mount Sinai Parenting Center, says the research boils down to small things done more often than not. Mel admitted she feels she 'royally screwed up' her kids, because the 56-year-old she is now isn't who she was at 29, 30 and 34 when they were born. Pressman's message: these principles apply to every relationship, including with your own parents, your partner and your friends.

• The five principles: relationship, reflection, regulation, rules, repair.
Relationship is connection, the umbrella for attunement and attachment, and 'kind of everything.' Reflection means thinking about and understanding what's happening; Pressman calls it an unsung hero because it creates a pause. Regulation is managing your own emotions and actions. Rules are boundaries for physical and emotional safety, yours and other people's. Repair is for when you mess up, which you will, over and over.

• Kids borrow your nervous system, so start with your own regulation.
Parents often come to her saying their child needs more self-control. Pressman redirects them to what they can control: how is your regulation going? A child developing a sturdy nervous system needs one nearby that has capacity. She says parents who work on themselves see their kids' self-regulation improve over time.

• Best parenting advice: all feelings are welcome; not all behaviors are.
A toddler can feel rage but can't hit their brother. A teen can be furious about being told no but can't steal the car to go to the party. Kids need to know there are no wrong feelings, while limits on actions stay firm.

• Early childhood matters a lot, but it isn't destiny.
Early attachment shapes how we love and experience being loved, Pressman says, but relationships keep changing and 'there's always hope.' She also says parenting is the most powerful environmental influence on a child. A child in the worst circumstances who has one steady, loving, safe parent is very differently placed.

• Temperament differs: orchids, tulips and dandelions.
Drawing on Thomas Boyce's research, which she says to take 'with a grain of salt,' Pressman describes a range. Orchid children bloom beautifully in great conditions and struggle badly in poor ones. Dandelions do fine almost anywhere. Siblings can differ, which is why the same approach doesn't work for every kid.

• The resilience myth: being sensitive to your child isn't coddling.
Parents tend to swing between two extremes: ignoring hard feelings so kids 'learn,' or clearing every obstacle. Neither builds resilience, she says. You can be as attuned as you like to your child's feelings while still letting them face difficulty. Clearing the path is like trying to control the weather; kids need to learn to check the sky and put on their own raincoat.

• Over-sacrificing for your children doesn't help them.
Pressman highlights Carl Jung's line, 'The greatest burden a child must bear is the unlived life of its parents.' She criticizes the 'martyrdom' in how we praise mothers who 'gave up everything.' A parent with no life of their own is often miserable, and kids feel that weight.

• Repair is the parent's job, even with adult children.
You can't have a close relationship without repair, and you can't repair without first messing up. If your own parents hurt you, Pressman says reconnecting is their responsibility, never the child's, at any age. What is yours to decide is whether to offer forgiveness and compassion, which you can do even if they're gone.

• High-conflict co-parenting harms kids.
Pressman says research shows that more conflict between co-parents, especially when kids are pulled into it, is linked to worse intellectual and emotional development and weaker executive function. Trashing your ex insults half of who your child is.

EXAMPLES

• A four-year-old afraid God was angry
Pressman's daughter, now 18, once came to her terrified because she'd had a 'horrible thought' about her sister, who had broken something. Pressman told her she's allowed to feel and think anything; what matters is how she acts. The girl was hugely relieved. Pressman found it sad that a four-year-old didn't know she was allowed to think 'I hate you.'

• A week of noticing meltdowns
For a child who melts down constantly, Pressman suggests spending one full week changing nothing, just noting what comes before each meltdown and how you respond. Often the pattern is that meltdowns happen when you're rushed and spinning inside. The fix starts with slowing yourself down, so the child meets you where you are.

• Introducing a new partner after divorce
Pressman says research suggests waiting about a year with young kids, and admits nobody likes that answer. With joint custody you can date freely on your own time. If it becomes serious enough that you're planning to marry, you can move it up.

• A repair script after a bad divorce
If you badmouthed your ex, Pressman suggests telling your child at any age: 'That was about me. I was having a really hard time, and the way I talked about your parent wasn't your fault and wasn't okay. I'm so sorry; that wasn't your burden to carry.' Then keep working on it.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **When your partner isn't on board**
  Share resources in a spirit of 'I found this interesting, what do you think?' rather than 'I know better than you,' for example by sending them an episode or an article.
- **Pause before you react**
  Every pause before responding to your child counts as reflection and regulation in action. Pressman says self-compassion about your own parents' limits helps you let it go and do a bit better.
- **Let kids handle the weather**
  Instead of removing every obstacle, let them notice the problem and solve it with your support, the parenting version of letting them put on their own boots.

How to Move On, Let Go of Past Mistakes, and Reinvent Yourself

Guest: Carl Lentz
Date: 2025-07-24 · Duration: 1:04:23
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7a-FiD6QPLo

KEYPOINTS

• You can only get so far on an untreated 'fracture'

Carl Lentz, former pastor of Hillsong's New York church, compares unaddressed problems to an athlete playing on a broken ankle. You can numb it and get through a season or two while other parts of you overcompensate, but it shortens your career. 'Your problems don't go anywhere. You either fix them or they destroy you.' The only open question is what your life looks like when it cracks.

• Living a double life means the good parts keep working while the rest burns

Mel describes the state Carl was in: parts of your life going brilliantly while something burns to the ground in the background. Carl admits his public success and his private dysfunction ran side by side for years. Mel adds that when you're in the middle of it, you assume everyone knows.

• Ask yourself what you're afraid to get checked out

Carl's test for whether you have a dangerous 'fracture' is whatever you're avoiding looking at, like not going to the doctor because you don't want the diagnosis. He pushes back on men calling major trauma 'just being a man.' His point is that it's dysfunction, and it can be fixed.

• Dread builds on itself, so face it right away

'Whatever's causing dread demands an immediate confrontation.' Carl says dread compounds: something dreadful today is twice as dreadful tomorrow, and two or three years of putting it off leaves your life 'suffocated.' Much of him back then, he says, was taken up with the 'maintenance of dread.'

• Putting off the truth 'to protect people' is a selfish story

When a therapist asked why he didn't come clean sooner, Carl said he didn't want to let people down. She replied, 'Oh, isn't that sweet? So you've made yourself the hero.' He now sees delaying honesty as robbing both himself and the people who need the best of him.

• He takes full ownership and doesn't blame the marriage

Carl says people assume an affair means a bad marriage, and in his case that wasn't true. He loved his wife, Laura, and had 'a phenomenal family'; he was 'extraordinarily broken.' He admits that when Laura sensed something, he lied to her by leaving things out, telling a different story, or overpowering her until she doubted what she saw.

• Rock bottom wasn't one moment; he 'moved into' it

After the confrontation, telling his family and being kicked out of a friend's home, Carl calls it a place he lived for a while, not a single moment ('Rock Bottomville'). His story also set off a domino effect across a network of connected churches, and he accepts he was partly the trigger.

• You prove you've forgiven yourself by investing in who you are now

Saying 'I forgive myself' is step one. The evidence, Carl says, is putting time and effort into the better person you're becoming. People who are stuck show lots of evidence of who they were and none of who they are now. For him, the turning point was faith: if God had forgiven him, it was 'ridiculous' not to forgive himself.

• Shame keeps the focus on you; healing is the alternative

Carl calls 'You should be ashamed of yourself' a selfish idea, because it asks you to keep staring at yourself, and 'everybody loses.' He describes the body language of shame, shoulders and head down, and contrasts it with healing, grace, mercy and change. Some people want him to stay visibly broken, he says, but that says more about them.

• Forgiveness isn't 'fairy dust'; expect aftershocks

Almost five years on, Carl says the light came slowly and has to be fed every day. Forgiving someone, even someone who abused you for years, doesn't mean the feelings disappear or that you have to have dinner with them. When the old feelings return, he suggests saying it honestly: 'Today is a day where I'm struggling to follow through with the forgiveness I've given.'

EXAMPLES

• Building Hillsong's New York church

Mel describes Carl as one of the most recognizable megachurch pastors in the world, in leather and skinny jeans with rock music blaring. In Mel's telling, he co-founded the first Hillsong church in America with his wife and grew it to almost 150,000 members, and he was a fixture in the news in 2017–2019.

• A brain scan and a warning he ignored

While accompanying a struggling friend to a brain doctor, Carl had a scan himself. Dr. Amen called him in and told him to resign and get help because his brain wasn't functioning correctly: 'if you haven't made bad decisions yet, you will.' Carl's reaction was that it would never happen, and he kept running on the fracture.

• The day it came out

His assistant and a close friend on staff confronted him. He told Laura that day and says he never wants to forget her face, because he never intends to be there again. They told their kids, roughly 16, 14 and 11–12 at the time, because the news would become public. He told his daughter Charlie, who was getting mental health treatment, over Zoom.

• Two U-Hauls and nowhere to go

Having just sold their New Jersey house, the family was staying at a friend's Brooklyn apartment. When the news broke, the friend texted that they had to be out by the end of the night. With paparazzi outside, they loaded two U-Hauls and drove without a destination; some people wouldn't return his calls. A friend named Kim offered her home. His young son Roman asked, 'Dad, where are we going?' and Carl answered, 'I don't know, man.'

• 'We're not rebuilding our marriage. We are on a fresh one.'

Carl says his healing meant going back to his 'sexual wiring' after being sexually abused as a young child, which isn't fixed in a day. He and Laura have ups and downs. Mel jokes that second marriages are great, 'particularly when it's with the first person.'

OTHER RELEVANT

- **The dread test**

  List what you're dreading or avoiding getting checked out. Carl's rule is to confront it now, because every day you wait makes it heavier.

- **Self-forgiveness in two steps**

  First say it: 'I forgive myself.' Then back it up by investing visibly in the new version of you: habits, relationships and work that show who you are now.

- **Get professional help**

  Carl credits a therapist with exposing the 'hero' story he was telling himself, and says deep issues like childhood abuse take long, ongoing work.

- **Pick up 'the pen of ownership'**

  Mel's closing: others can encourage you, but nobody else can write your next chapter. Ask who you might become if you invested in that person.

Try It For 1 Week: 3 Small Habits That Change Your Body, Energy, And Life

Date: 2025-07-21 · Duration: 1:08:50
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zXZo0u_6ies

KEYPOINTS

• Three habits came up most across 53 expert conversations

To cut through 'wellness whiplash' (keto one day, carnivore the next, cold plunges, supplements), Mel and her team reviewed 53 past episodes with doctors, scientists and psychologists. The three habits that came up most were moving your body, getting off your phone, and prioritizing relationships. She points out that sleep, water, diet and supplements didn't make the top three, and that none of the three require buying anything. The episode revisits clips from four of those experts.

• Habit 1: Exercise, framed as the main anti-aging tool

Mel says 18 medical guests named exercise the number-one habit. Cardiologist Dr. Eric Topol, founder of Scripps Research and author of Super Agers, says it's 'the only thing we know that lowers our biological age'. He adds that cancer, heart disease and dementia take more than 20 years to take hold, which leaves time to prevent them, especially for people at high risk. Mel stresses this isn't about weight loss or a perfect body.

• Topol's minimum: 30 minutes of continuous movement, five days a week

His prescription is at least 30 minutes of 'constant motion' that raises your heart rate, five days a week and ideally daily. Add cheap resistance bands for strength and stand on one leg for a minute at a time on each side for balance. With patients, he works out the practical details first: what time of day, at a gym, at home or outside. He says within weeks people notice better fitness, posture and balance.

• Your body is built to move

Orthopedic surgeon Dr. Vonda Wright, who has treated more than 100,000 patients at the University of Pittsburgh, says if we were meant to sit we'd be built like a mushroom or Jabba the Hutt. Instead our strongest muscles are below the belly button. Mel adds that if you use a wheelchair, you have arms to roll yourself. Wright's core message is that getting older doesn't have to mean getting weaker.

• Wright's plan: brisk walks, lifting twice a week, daily balance

Walk at least three hours a week, split into about four 45-minute sessions, briskly but not so fast you can't talk. Lift at least twice a week, starting with your own body weight and working up to 'heavy', which she says is individual. Practice balance every day, for example while brushing your teeth. She says there's no age limit and cites women who started in their 60s.

• Habit 2: Put the phone down

Mel cites NYU researcher Dr. Adam Alter's estimate that the average person will spend about 20 years of their life scrolling. She also cites Pew data that 31% of Americans are online almost constantly. She describes a recent peer-reviewed study in which restricting smartphone access for 72 hours changed activity in brain areas tied to impulse control and cravings, and she says it reset dopamine and serotonin systems. She calls herself a recovering phone addict. The habit is about removing something, not adding one.

• Kids copy what you do, not what you say about phones

Clinical psychologist Dr. Shefali argues that teenagers aren't equipped for the scrutiny and cruelty strangers bring through social media. Handing it over without limits, she says, is like letting an eight-year-old travel the world alone. Instead of lecturing or confiscating, parents should show up with genuine curiosity and full attention. 'You have to become the energy greater than the phone.' Children, she says, 'will blossom under your gaze.'

• Habit 3: Relationships may matter most for long-term health

Dr. Robert Waldinger directs the Harvard Study of Adult Development, which began in 1938. The finding Mel highlights: how satisfied people were with their relationships at 50 predicted who would be healthiest at 80, without anyone measuring cholesterol, steps or BMI. She says warm relationships help regulate stress and lower the risk of chronic diseases like diabetes and heart disease. She calls loneliness 'a signal, like hunger', not a personal flaw.

EXAMPLES

• Wright's 'Start' class

For nine years in Pittsburgh, Wright ran a twice-weekly class for beginners who started with about 51% body fat and couldn't hold a plank or walk around the track. After three months of weight-bearing exercise they completed a 3.2-mile walk-run and held a two-minute plank.

• The 11 push-up challenge

Wright says every woman should work toward 11 regular push-ups, because upper-body strength is critical for women. Mel says about 60,000 people posted videos trying it. Mel managed only four on her knees at first, though she could do 11 against the wall, and she's now up to 11 on her knees. Her tip: set an alarm for 11:11.

• Mel's phone rule

Mel doesn't keep her phone on her and leaves it in a corner of the kitchen. People complain they can't reach her, but she says she's far more present and less stressed, and calls it as life-changing as exercise. She and Chris also take a 12-minute walk down the driveway and back every day.

• Strangers on the train

Yale's Dr. Laurie Santos describes University of Chicago researcher Nick Epley paying commuters a $5 Starbucks gift card to talk to a stranger on the L train. People expected it to feel awkward, but those who chatted felt more positive, energized and less lonely than those who sat alone. Introverts got the same happiness boost as extroverts; they just predicted it would go worse.

• Making friends in a town of 3,000

After moving in her early 50s from the place she'd lived for 26 years to a tiny town where she knew no one her age, Mel rebuilt her social life by complimenting people, asking questions and greeting everyone. She compares warmth to popcorn: once you're 'popped', it spreads and comes back to you.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Make exercise simple**

  Walk whenever you can: when you're overwhelmed, after dinner, when you're frustrated with your partner. Start push-ups against a wall or on your knees, even just one. Balance on one foot while you brush your teeth or wash dishes. Mel quotes the familiar line that you never regret moving your body. With the average person sitting about 10.4 hours a day, she says, even 15 minutes between meetings helps.

- **Start with one phone-free hour**

  Put the phone in a drawer, basket, purse or car, keep it off the table at meals and morning coffee, and set an alarm as a reminder. Alter calls the payoff 'time dilation': fully present moments with people you love feel much longer.

- **Be the one who waves first**

  Epley's line, via Santos: 'Nobody waves, but everybody waves back.' Compliment people, ask what they're reading or ordering, smile and say hello, and make the plan instead of waiting for an invitation. Mel adds that some of your favorite people may be ones you haven't met yet.

How to Stop Doubting Yourself & Get Anything You Want in Life

Guest: Will Packer
Date: 2025-07-17 · Duration: 1:22:11
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e_9UHSj0qE4

KEYPOINTS

• Ask yourself 'Who better than me?'

Will Packer, producer of 10 number-one films including Ride Along, Girls Trip, Stomp the Yard and Straight Outta Compton, uses this four-word question daily. Mel notes the question assumes its own answer. Will calls it a challenge: you aren't asking someone else whether you deserve it, you're daring yourself to name anyone who deserves it more. In his experience, the most successful people don't have rare talent. They believe they deserve success and that it's coming, even when it hasn't come yet.

• It's never too late, because the third act decides the movie

Hollywood wisdom says audiences judge a film by how they feel at the end. Will compares it to life: act one gets attention, act two builds investment, act three brings it home. Many people in their second or third act still judge themselves on act one. Mel adds that if you don't like how your story feels, you're not at the end yet.

• Healthy arrogance means knowing you belong in any room

Will separates it from toxic arrogance ('I'm better than everyone'). Healthy arrogance is quiet, inner confidence in what's unique about you, plus the belief that the room is better because you're in it. Mel notes it rests on your presence, not your skill, which makes it useful for people with impostor syndrome.

• Confidence is a muscle, not a personality trait

Will says nothing in his upbringing suggested success was in the cards. He built belief deliberately and lets 'what if I succeed?' outshout 'what if I fail?' He acknowledges fear, depression and anxiety are real for everyone. Every morning he holds a 'Will Packer pep rally' in the mirror, partly because it may be the only encouragement he hears all day, and partly because his own voice is the one that matters most.

• Create momentum on purpose

If the goal is to climb a mountain, step one is buying climbing shoes and step two is driving by the mountain. Count each small win: slow progress is still progress. Will says this tricks your brain into seeing a cycle of positivity.

• Keep the main thing the main thing, and sometimes that's you

In 30 years of producing, Will says he has never gotten a call that everything on set was fine. He handles only the fire burning brightest. Sometimes the brightest fire is you, because if you're not okay you can't help anyone. On some days your dream is the main thing, even while the kids, job and house call out 'what about me?'

• Bring people into your dream by listening to theirs

Will says people's favorite subject is themselves. When you listen for what matters to them, you often find overlap with your goal. 'Don't take a me versus them mentality. Take a we and an us.' He says this takes being flexible, not rigid, about how your idea gets made. Rejections become information too: every no tells you what the other side actually needs.

• Disasters aren't failures, so ask what you can control

Quoting Rudyard Kipling's poem 'If', Will treats triumph and disaster as impostors and keeps an even keel, because panic makes you useless. When the unexpected happens, ask what you can control and focus on the biggest fire.

• Be a doer, not a talker, and beware 'preparation paralysis'

Will was told 'be a doer, not a talker' as an intern, when handing producer Warrington Hudlin a VHS of his student film made Hudlin take him seriously. He says an idea is like perfect shoes at the start of a marathon: nothing counts until you run the 26.2 miles. You'll never be fully prepared, so get as ready as you can and go. He also says to define success for yourself.

EXAMPLES

• The $75,000 first movie and the family motto

Will couldn't raise his $750,000 budget, so he set a deadline instead: whatever he raised by the end of June would be the budget. It came to $75,000. He made the film anyway, which proved to others, and to himself, that he was a filmmaker. He and his team drove it city to city handing out flyers at nightclubs and churches. That fits his family's motto (he, his wife and four kids are 'the six-pack'): if you want what others won't have, do what others don't.

• Chocolate City and the empty front row

For his student film at Florida A&M in Tallahassee, Will required black tie and invited studio heads, and Oprah at his mom's urging, with a plus one. No one from Hollywood replied. The reserved front row sat empty in a standing-room-only auditorium of students in rented tuxes and gowns. His lesson was to stop stepping over the people already in your corner. Mel's take was that acting as if helped lay the groundwork: Will now has multiple shows on Oprah's network.

• Stomp the Yard pitched as a sequel

Every studio rejected his college stepping movie, most of them twice. One studio, Sony, had a dance hit the year before. Will pitched his film as its sequel, with one of their stars teaching his dance style in a new world. It ended up as its own film and became his first number-one movie.

• Beyoncé said no five times

For the thriller Obsessed, with Idris Elba already cast, Beyoncé passed but explained why. Will revised the script, schedule and other elements and came back. She told him not to make changes for her, and he said he was doing it for himself. She said yes on the sixth look. Will says it was a better movie than if she'd agreed the first time. His framing was always that it was fine to say no, but please look once more.

• Kevin Hart, Carmelo Anthony and a police escort

Mid-shoot on Ride Along, the biggest budget either man had had, Kevin revealed a filmed Madison Square Garden special and talked Will into flying to New York with him. After the show came an afterparty with Carmelo Anthony. Will had to beg his way out and get a police escort to Teterboro, and they made the Saturday shoot. The movie opened at number one.

• The 2022 Oscars slap

Will and Shayla Cowan were the first all-Black team to produce the Oscars, after a year of planning. When Chris Rock went off script and Will Smith walked on stage, Packer first assumed it was a bit. Once it was clearly real, he switched to 'finish the show': cue the next presenter, go to break, and ask Amy Schumer for some levity. He later took pride in the show's milestones, like the first deaf actor to win an Oscar.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Use the 'one more look' approach when you get a no

Ask why, revise if the feedback makes the work better, and come back with real passion while making it clear no is acceptable. Mel compares it to a realtor showing a house a 15th time because they truly believe in it. Mel's gut check: if this really mattered to me, how would I show up differently?

• Choose your cast wisely

Will sees people as either adding to your energy or draining it, with nothing in between. He credits his wife and family as his rock and says to protect your circle where you can.

• Start where you are

Will moved to Atlanta about 30 years ago, long before it became, in his words, the busiest on-location production hub in the US. Mel sees not being where everyone else is as an opportunity.

You Can Change Your Brain: Neuroscientist Explains How to Rewire Your Mind & Stop Negative Thoughts

Guest: Dr. Caroline Leaf
Date: 2025-07-10 · Duration: 1:08:05
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CESqNpTK1S8

KEYPOINTS

- **Leaf's core idea: your mind drives your brain, and your brain can change.**
  Dr. Caroline Leaf, a cognitive neuroscientist who has researched the mind-brain connection since the early 1980s, says 'this brain does absolutely nothing except what you tell it to do with your mind.' She calls the mind '99% of who you are.' You can't change your story, she says, but you can change how it sits inside you and how it plays out in the future. These are her framings; the conversation didn't get into how other researchers view them.
- **She challenged the 1980s view that brain damage was permanent.**
  As a young female student in a male-dominated lecture hall, Leaf put up her hand when she was taught that after brain injury or trauma you can only teach patients to compensate. Her argument: people constantly learn and grow, and the brain hosts the mind, so the brain must be able to change. Neuroplasticity has since become mainstream.
- **She calls anxiety and depression 'emotional warning signals,' not things.**
  Leaf argues these labels aren't like diabetes. They're signals that you're out of alignment and need to pay attention. Her analogy: if your hand is on a burning stove, all the ibuprofen in the world won't fix it; you have to move your hand. She also claimed '95% of lifestyle diseases come from our thought life' and called it established fact. Treat that figure as her claim, not consensus. This isn't a reason to stop treatment or medication.
- **The Neurocycle has five steps: gather awareness, reflect, write, recheck, active reach.**
  Leaf calls it a formula rather than a technique, meant to trace warning signals back to the thought and its root, then reshape it. She notes people tend to be good at the early steps, like breathing and naming feelings, then crash. She compares that to years of therapy spent getting good at talking about problems without ever moving to solving them.
- **Before starting, calm your body. The 10-second pause is her go-to.**
  Any visualization, breathing or meditation works, eyes open or closed. For anger, she suggests breathing in for 2 counts, holding for 2, and out for 6, silently saying 'let' over the first three counts and 'go' over the last three. She says the conscious mind works in roughly 10-second bursts. Mel pointed out how neatly 'let go' lines up with her Let Them idea.
- **Gather awareness with four questions.**
  What am I feeling? Answer in one or two words, like nervous or frustrated. Where do I feel it in my body: tense shoulders, racing heart, sweating? What am I doing or about to say? What's my perspective right now, for example 'this is going to be a lousy day, I can't handle this'? Answering in order, she says, brings 'order out of chaos.'
- **Then reflect, mindstorm on paper, and recheck.**
  Reflect means sorting the who, what, when and why. The writing step is a messy 'mindstorm': dump the 'tsunami' on paper (my boss, another mistake, I'm a loser, never good enough). Recheck means looking at what you wrote for the pattern. On day one, simply noticing the link may be enough.
- **Active reach: do one small thing to get through the day.**
  If you don't know what to do, start with a short phrase you repeat, like 'It's okay to be a mess' or 'Well done, I'm starting to see something,' possibly paired with an image such as a flower. The point is a daily, deliberate action that starts to build the new pattern.
- **Changing a deep pattern takes about 63 days, not 21.**
  Leaf says the first 21 days are hard and up-and-down; the next 42 stabilize the change into a habit. People tend to quit around days 14, 21 or 28 because they feel better, and then slide back. She recommends one Neurocycle a day.
- **In a spiral, name it out loud, with a 'because,' immediately.**
  Her '63-second' reset starts with acknowledgement: say out loud or in your head, 'This text makes me feel ___ because ___.' She says keeping it in 'builds up the wrong hormones,' like holding back tears in grief. Adding the 'because' often surfaces a solution or shows that the other person's reaction is their perception, which you don't have to take on.

EXAMPLES

- **The teenager thrown from a car**
  In the 1980s, coma beyond 8 hours was considered irreversible brain damage. The girl's parents begged Leaf to work with her. Over 8 months, during which Leaf developed the five-step process, the girl regained function, made up most of 12th grade, graduated with her class, excelled at math despite having been a C-and-D student, and earned a university degree. Physical damage to her larynx and walking remained. This is Leaf's own account of a single case.
- **Mel's walk to the 17th floor**
  Mel ran the steps live on her law-firm job in Boston, which she took after leaving her dream job as a New York public defender. She recalled the train, the pit in her stomach, the walk past Dunkin' Donuts, saying hello to Ralph at the front desk, and the elevator to the 17th floor, noting there was no 13th. Naming the 'pure and utter dread' was enough for day one.
- **The 'we need to talk' text**
  Leaf's example: the text hits and your heart races. Say, 'This text makes me feel terrified because I think they're going to break up with me.' Mel did the same with a business email that made her feel she was in trouble, and traced it to a familiar old 'I did something wrong' thought.
- **Wiggling your toes in a tense conversation**
  When someone says something awful and you can't respond in kind, Leaf suggests wiggling your toes to stay grounded, silently repeating what they said, or pretending to take notes and writing down what they said. No one has to see the paper.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Let-go breath**
  In for 2, hold for 2, out for 6, saying 'let' for counts 1–3 and 'go' for counts 4–6. Use it before the Neurocycle or in a heated moment.
- **Daily Neurocycle checklist**
  Calm the body. Answer the four awareness questions: feeling, body, behavior, perspective. Reflect on who, what, when and why. Mindstorm on paper. Recheck for the pattern. Pick one active-reach phrase or action. Repeat daily for 63 days.
- **Caveat on the bigger claims**
  The '95% of lifestyle diseases' figure and the coma recovery are Leaf's statements. Use the tools as self-management practice alongside, not instead of, medical or psychological care.

Don’t Learn This Too Late: 5 Things Top Heart Surgeon Says You Must Avoid to Live Longer

Guest: Dr. Jeremy London
Date: 2025-07-07 · Duration: 1:11:49
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sMmYWoKv_PM

KEYPOINTS

• Heartburn that eases when you rest can be a heart warning sign.
Heart surgeon Dr. Jeremy London, with 25 years of experience, ignored his own symptoms for that reason. It felt like reflux or spicy food disagreeing with him, and it settled when he stopped moving. Mel said she would have assumed the opposite. London's point: chest discomfort that comes with exertion and goes away with rest is a classic red flag, not reassurance.

• Heart attacks often don't look like the 'TV heart attack.'
London says symptoms can be an upset stomach, jaw or elbow pain, slight shortness of breath or getting tired easily, not just crushing chest pain down the arm. Pain at rest or pain that keeps getting worse is a 911 call. He says women's symptoms in particular are often atypical, and the medical research has had a male bias for years. As he put it, 'women are not little men.'

• Smoking is the single most damaging habit, and nicotine of any kind adds risk.
London says he can't name anything that harms every organ as much as cigarettes. He includes vaping, and says nicotine pouches like Zyn, while likely less harmful and free of the cancer risk from tobacco, still constrict blood vessels and can cause mouth problems. He admitted to having used them himself.

• Don't drink red wine for your heart.
London calls alcohol toxic to every cell and recommends limiting or avoiding it. Red grape skins do contain resveratrol, a polyphenol that may make blood cells 'slippery' and widen blood vessels. But he says the amount of wine you'd need for any effect is far beyond what's healthy. Some early human studies on concentrated resveratrol supplements show a possible benefit. His rule: drink red wine if you enjoy it, not because you think it's medicine.

• Alcohol-based mouthwash may be an overlooked risk.
London says the gut microbiome starts in the mouth, and harsh alcohol mouthwashes wipe out its bacteria. Mel, who uses mouthwash morning and night and had never checked the label, was surprised. He suggests alcohol-free versions, which he says work just as well.

• About 80–90% of what we take in from the outside world comes through the mouth, so start with a food journal.
London says writing down everything you eat shows the easy wins, like 'filler' snacks, empty calories and soft drinks. Mel added that research links food journaling to weight loss. He's realistic: about 80% whole foods and 20% processed counts as a win, and holidays happen.

• 'The longer the shelf life, the shorter your life.'
His shopping rule is to stick to the outside edges of the store and avoid the aisles of canned and jarred goods, which often hide preservatives, coloring and sugar. When you do buy packaged food, read the label and pick the best option.

• What London eats
He skips breakfast when he isn't hungry, because he doesn't like eating when his body isn't asking for food. Lunch is greens with protein, 'colorful.' Before a midday workout he has fruit and a handful of nuts, or a smoothie. Dinner is protein front and center with more greens, kept light because he sleeps better that way. He uses intermittent fasting as a tool, not a strict rule.

• Heart disease is mostly a plumbing problem in three territories.
The heart is a pump that needs its own oxygen and fuel, delivered by blood vessels on its front, side and back surfaces. Blockages in those vessels are coronary artery disease, the most common problem he still operates on. His own blockage was 99% in the artery at the back of his heart.

• You can't outrun your genes, but you can move the needle.
For people whose parents had heart attacks or high blood pressure, London says inherited risk is real and some people are born with high cholesterol or blood pressure. Lifestyle and treatment can still meaningfully change those numbers, which is why he pushes people to know their numbers rather than give up.

EXAMPLES

• London's own heart attack
At the family cabin, his wife Tracy said he 'didn't look right.' On a dog walk on December 4th in 30-degree weather, the 'reflux' came back and he was sweating and peeling off layers. That evening he was deer hunting with his 15-year-old son, a quarter mile from the truck with no cell service, when crushing chest pain dropped him to his knees. He thought, 'He's going to find me dead in this field.'

• He told no one, then it came back
Once home, he took an aspirin and a beta blocker, went to bed and said nothing. The pain returned the next morning on the stairs. Tracy called it 'the most selfish thing you have ever done to me and the boys,' and he agreed. A cardiologist friend said 'there's no way.' Within minutes of arriving, London was taken to the cath lab, where they found the 99% blockage.

• His priorities changed overnight
He woke up grateful, and things that mattered 24 hours earlier 'didn't even make the list.' Only family, friends and the people who care about him remained. He says he now truly understands patients who describe crushing chest pain.

• 'Clear my browser history first'
When he posted his home-alone heart attack checklist, the most popular joke reply was about clearing browser history before calling 911. London's response: 'Are you kidding me?'

OTHER RELEVANT

• If you think you're having a heart attack alone

1) Call 911. 2) At night, turn on the porch light. 3) Unlock or open the front door so EMS can get in if you pass out. 4) Lie down, ideally with your feet raised, or sit, so a faint doesn't cause a head injury. 5) Call family or a friend. Chew a 325 mg aspirin unless you have bleeding risks such as GI bleeding problems.

• Two-week reality check

Keep a food journal, check your mouthwash label, and count your weekly drinks and nicotine use. These are the easy changes London says most people overlook.

• Caveat

This is general advice from one surgeon. Symptoms, aspirin use and blood pressure care should be decided with your own doctor.

How to Talk to Difficult People: Proven Strategies to Stop Arguments & Feel Connected Again

Guest: Charles Duhigg
Date: 2025-07-03 · Duration: 1:03:16
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b1AEf83W2W8

KEYPOINTS

• Every conversation is really one of three kinds.

Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Charles Duhigg, author of The Power of Habit and Supercommunicators, says researchers can now watch the brain during conversation. They've found that most discussions mix three types. Practical conversations are about plans and problems, and the goal is a solution. Emotional conversations are about feelings, and the goal is empathy. Social conversations are about identity, how we see ourselves and others, and the goal is acknowledgment. All three are legitimate, but if two people are having different kinds at the same moment, they can't really hear each other.

• Social conversations are the most common, and hot topics live there.

Duhigg says statements like 'the way I see this as a mom…' or 'what's going on with Jim? He seemed weird in that meeting' are social conversations. Politics, religion and family opinions usually fall into this category too. Because the goal is acknowledgment, you don't need anyone to admit they voted wrong. You need to hear 'I hear that this matters to you and plays an important role in your life,' even if they then disagree.

• Super communicators ask far more questions, and deeper ones.

According to Duhigg, the best communicators ask 10 to 20 times as many questions as the average person. They're usually what psychologists call deep questions, which ask about someone's values, beliefs or experiences: 'This seems really meaningful to you. What is it about it that matters?' The answer also reveals whether the person is in an emotional, practical or social frame of mind.

• Loop for understanding to prove you're listening.

The technique has three steps: ask a question, ideally a deep one; repeat back what you heard in your own words; then ask, 'Did I get that right?' Duhigg says that last step asks permission to acknowledge that you were listening. Because of what he calls social reciprocity, people who feel heard become automatically more likely to listen in return. It feels awkward at first, but the brain quickly turns practised skills into habits.

• More evidence makes opinions more entrenched.

Duhigg says study after study shows that the more evidence you throw at someone, the more ingrained their view becomes, and shouting means nobody is listening. Most people don't believe anything 100%. Asked honestly, a Mets fan will admit they were terrible two seasons ago. The aim is to reach that gray area, where you can start to influence each other.

• Arguments turn toxic when we try to control the other person.

When we feel threatened, Duhigg says, we instinctively grab control of the person in front of us. We dictate topics ('I'm not talking about your mother'), timing ('I've got five minutes') and even their emotions ('you shouldn't be upset about that'). Better options are to control things together, such as when and where to talk and what's on or off the table, and to use the urge for control on yourself. Holding back a jab feels good and virtuous.

• Three rules for a hard conversation.

First, acknowledge upfront that it might be uncomfortable. Duhigg says research shows naming the discomfort lessens it, because we mostly avoid conversations out of anxiety about the unknown, the way 'I have some bad news' helps someone prepare. Second, state your goal, which is often to protect the relationship, and ask what the other person wants from the conversation. Third, loop for understanding. If either of you gets riled up, that doesn't mean the conversation is failing. It means it's working as expected.

• Small irritations are rarely small.

Duhigg says that if something bothers you, it isn't actually small. He's genuinely unbothered that his wife signals turns earlier than he does. Who walks the dog, by contrast, may really mean 'you see my time as less valuable', which turns a practical complaint into an emotional one. That often requires a conversation with yourself first: why does this bother me so much?

• You never have to have a conversation you don't want.

Choosing topics is part of being a good conversationalist. Duhigg's neighbour has a different political sign on his lawn, but they talk about the pothole they both want fixed. You can say plainly, 'We're going to get bogged down, so let's talk about Thanksgiving instead.'

EXAMPLES

• Venting to his wife

Duhigg's book began with a recurring fight. Working at the New York Times, he'd come home complaining that his boss didn't appreciate him. His wife would sensibly suggest taking the boss to lunch, and he'd get angrier because he wanted outrage on his behalf. He was having an emotional conversation while she offered a practical one. The fix is to say 'I just need to vent', or ask, 'Do you want help solving this, or do you just need to get it off your chest?'

• Mars versus Venus

To keep politics out of it, they role-play an angry relative convinced Venus is better than Mars. Rather than calling Mel wrong and dumb, Duhigg asks what makes it so meaningful to her. He then loops it back: Venus represents self-improvement and agency, values he shares, even if they disagree. His stated goal is understanding, not winning.

• Megan's divided family

A listener named Megan wrote that her Democratic kids and nephew call her Republican mother, sister and brother-in-law's views 'unforgivable' and want her to intervene. Duhigg suggests starting with the kids by asking why this issue matters so much to them. Their answers may show the real hurt, such as feeling Grandma doesn't accept them. Teachers are trained to ask a similar question: 'Do you want to be helped, hugged or heard?'

• Dad's new girlfriend, Cindy

In a role play about a divorced dad whose girlfriend is taking over, the opening names the awkwardness and says the goal is their relationship. When asked, the dad wants them to stop judging Cindy. After looping his feelings back, the child explains that the parents' marriage was their model. The divorce rocked their world, and they already have a mom. Duhigg says feeling heard calms fight-or-flight and lets the prefrontal cortex do the thinking.

• Guns and shared goals

Duhigg's book describes bringing gun-control advocates and gun-rights enthusiasts together using these skills. They kept their positions but found common ground: both were worried about their kids' safety, and a hunting enthusiast agreed guns don't belong in schools.

• 'What was your dad like?'

When Duhigg's father died about seven years ago, he came back to New York from the New Mexico funeral and people offered condolences, then moved on. He wishes someone had asked what his dad was like. Now he tries to lean in when people share something vulnerable, rather than shying away.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Name emotions without the word 'emotional'

Telling a parent 'you seem really emotional' backfires. 'What I hear is that you're really offended by how we're treating her' does the same job.

• Avoid 'kitchen sinking'

This is when a fight about one thing becomes a fight about everything. Agree upfront to set side issues aside, like Mom or money, and decide only the Thanksgiving plan.

• Move the 2 a.m. fight

Suggest picking it up at 10 a.m. after sleep and breakfast. That's controlling the setting together.

• Anyone can learn this

Duhigg says super communicators often struggled at first, studying how kids talked in high school or playing peacemaker between divorcing parents. Wanting to connect and practising is what makes the difference.

Feeling Lost in Your 20s? You Need to Hear This

Date: 2025-06-30 · Duration: 0:53:21
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3ZLWq1uDCZ0

KEYPOINTS

• Feeling lost in your 20s is normal, and the research backs it

After asking her Instagram followers what they struggle with in their 20s and reading thousands of replies, Mel opens with one message: feeling lost now is normal. She cites the Harvard Study of Adult Development, running for over 80 years, as showing that the 20s are one of the most uncertain and anxious decades of life. She frames three hidden forces as the cause, so the struggle reflects your circumstances, not you.

• Force one: the Great Scattering

Mel coined the term in The Let Them Theory, co-written with her daughter Sawyer, and reads from pages 158 and 161. For about 20 years, school, sports, dorms and calendars kept you in step with peers. Then everyone scatters to different cities, jobs and timelines, the structure you measured yourself by disappears, and loneliness hits. She adds that 60% of 20-somethings in the U.S. live back in their hometown, and that hybrid work removes the after-work social life she had at that age.

• Scattering keeps happening, so learn to measure by your own timeline

Friends scatter again when people marry, have kids, move to the suburbs, divorce, retire or become empty nesters. When a friend gets engaged or promoted, Mel's replacement thought is: 'I'm not behind. I'm on my own timeline, and it hasn't happened yet because it's not supposed to happen yet.' Naming it as 'the Great Scattering' makes it feel less personal.

• Force two: so many options that you're paralyzed

In her 20s Mel had no feeds showing what anyone else was doing; her choice was 'this or that.' Today, dating apps offer 500 matches in two minutes, LinkedIn shows 5,000 jobs and Instagram shows a hundred countries. She compares it to a grocery store stocked with 10,000 brands of milk, where you end up buying the one you always buy. Feeling paralyzed by that, she says, is a sign you're mentally well.

• Force three: pressure to cram everything into one decade

Mel's generation was pushed to pick a career, climb the ladder and save for a house, and job-hoppers were seen as 'freaks.' Now the pressure runs the other way: staying in one job looks like losing, and adventure, constant change and 'performing your life' are glamorized. Recognizing that the pressure is an external social construct, she says, lets you separate from it. She expects it to get worse as AI-driven accounts glamorize lives no one is actually living.

• Truth one: you don't have to do it all in your 20s

Your 20s are about one-eighth of your life. Mel suggests keeping a lifelong dream list in your notes app or saved-post folders, with no deadlines. She already has a wedding folder for daughters who aren't engaged. 'You can have everything, you just can't have it all at once.' She warns that putting a deadline on a dream is the fastest way to kill it.

• Truth two: there are no wrong decisions if you learn from them

Mel argues the skill to build is making a decision, not making the right one. A decision that solves your current problem or teaches you something is the right one, and no decision is still a decision. Her tools are the 5 Second Rule (count 5-4-3-2-1 and decide) and the six-word question 'What if it all works out?', which bets on your ability to figure it out either way.

• Truth three: commit to a one-month project on the thing you dread most

Pick the part of your life that makes your stomach drop and go all in for a month. For work, show up like it matters or start your resume. For loneliness, text first and plan the night. For money, skip the daily latte, sell something on Depop or open a budget. For love, go on two dates a week. For mental health, start therapy, get outside or quit social media for a month. Mel says momentum comes from facing one thing you've avoided, not from a haircut or a move.

EXAMPLES

• The paradox-of-choice jam study

Mel cites the Columbia and Stanford grocery-store experiment. With six jams on the sampling table, 30% of shoppers bought a jar; with 24, only 3% did. People were 10 times more likely to buy with fewer options. She applies it to how many ways a 20-something could spend a single afternoon.

• Stamping papers for dinner

Mel's first job in her 20s was a year of temp work in a windowless law-firm conference room, hand-stamping class-action documents 12 hours a day. She and the other temps stayed until 7 p.m. because the firm would then buy dinner, and none of them had money.

• A career built from 'wrong' decisions

Mel lists her path: public defender in New York City, a law firm in Boston she hated, two tech startups (fired from the second), ad-agency business development she was bad at, coach training through MIT, radio host, a cancelled reality show, CNN, speaking on the 5 Second Rule, author, a cancelled daytime talk show, then the podcast. She calls each one right because she learned from it. The hated law job, taken to pay bills because she wasn't licensed in Massachusetts, taught her a read-and-write desk job wasn't for her.

• Life after 30

In her 30s Mel and Chris took their six- and eight-year-olds on a week-long backpacking trip in Wyoming's Wind River Range with rented llamas carrying packs. In her late 30s they owned a paint-your-own-pottery studio that 'didn't make any money.' She got serious about social media in her late 40s and learned a backflip at 48. A friend from Chicago lived in Tanzania until her son was six.

OTHER RELEVANT

• If you don't know where to start, make it your health

Mel's default one-month project is your body: 30 minutes a day of a streamed workout or a walk, meal prep, a food journal, no

drinking or vaping, in bed by 9 reading, and something green daily. Her logic is that you feel different, then think and act differently, and your body has to carry you through every other change.

- **For parents of 20-somethings: swap orders for support**

  Barking 'get a job, get a boyfriend, stick to a budget' makes it worse. Mel suggests saying that it's normal to feel overwhelmed by endless options, then asking how you can help and offering to sit with them while they work on a resume or applications.

- **Ask for company on the stuck tasks**

  If you're in your 20s and frozen, Mel suggests asking someone to sit with you while you tackle the resume or applications. A little support creates momentum.

The Ultimate Guide to the Female Brain: Neuroscientist Reveals How to Boost Mood, Energy, & Focus

Guest: Dr. Sarah McKay
Date: 2025-06-26 · Duration: 1:15:16
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-M6T9k3Mb8o

KEYPOINTS

• Your brain isn't broken; it adapts

Oxford-trained neuroscientist Dr. Sarah McKay, author of The Women's Brain Book, says the cultural focus on brain fog, 'baby brain' and burnout tells a story of what goes wrong. Neuroscience, she says, shows brains are adaptable and resilient at every life stage. She clarifies that she's talking about biological sex, not gender identity, while also noting how gendered experiences shape the brain.

• 'Female brains are wired for emotion, male brains for logic' is false

McKay rejects the idea of a male brain wired one way and a female brain wired another. Men feel emotions and women are logical. Intuition is a human trait built from experience and wisdom, not a sex difference. Many supposed differences, she argues, are shaped by how society treats girls and boys.

• Three forces shape your brain: bottom-up, outside-in and top-down

Based on the biopsychosocial model, she describes three streams. Bottom-up is your body: hormones, food, muscle tension, gut signals. Outside-in is your senses and surroundings: daylight, people, your environment and your phone, which has become a big influence in the last decade or two. Top-down is thoughts, expectations and past experiences. They affect each other; loneliness, for example, can shape depression.

• The brain builds itself fastest in early childhood

Growth in the first year of life is about five times faster than in the next five years. By around age five, the brain is at roughly 80–90% of where it will be for life and contains almost all the neurons it will ever have. After that, development is mostly about the connections between neurons (synapses).

• Sleep is when memories are filed away

During sleep, the brain sorts the day's experiences and moves memories from short-term into long-term storage. McKay says poor sleep is a risk factor for poor mental and brain health, raises the risk of almost every health condition, and is linked to higher mortality. She notes that one bad night makes everything harder, including looking after yourself.

• Your brain responds to your cycle, but the experience varies widely

Women have roughly 450 periods in a lifetime. Daily brain scans show networks becoming more integrated and specialized when estrogen peaks around ovulation, with a lag of a couple of days. Before a period, as progesterone rises, different networks interact more with each other. Hormone levels follow similar patterns in everyone, yet some women feel 'an absolute emotional roller coaster' and others barely a ripple.

• The pill flattens natural hormone swings, and McKay says it doesn't harm the brain

McKay calls the oral contraceptive pill an excellent form of contraception. It flattens your natural hormone pattern and replaces it with steadier, higher pill hormones, depending on the formulation. Asked if it hurts the brain, she says no; the scans show a shift in brain networks, not damage.

• Pregnancy reorganizes the brain for motherhood; 'baby brain' isn't the right story

Little was published on this until around 2017. Scans now show roughly 4% brain volume loss during pregnancy. McKay frames it as streamlining and pruning, like the thinning seen in teenage brains, not damage. Mothers' brain networks look more flexible, efficient and responsive. She argues 'baby brain' often covers for a lack of support and the mental load mothers carry.

• Menopause brain fog may come largely from disrupted sleep

In perimenopause, the ovaries' signals to the brain become erratic, then estrogen flattens after menopause. Estrogen helps set the brain's temperature 'thermostat,' which narrows, so a small rise triggers a hot flash. About 70% of night-time flashes disrupt sleep, even if you don't remember waking. Mel summarizes McKay's view: the fog builds up from months or years of broken sleep, not only from missing estrogen. McKay says HRT can reset the thermostat and is one of the best treatments for hot flashes.

• Other people may be the biggest factor in your health

McKay warns that focusing only on hormones, which we can't always change, takes away agency. Research often finds that other people are the strongest determinant of health outcomes. Her advice on connection applies to men too; she gets emotional imagining her teenage sons lonely.

EXAMPLES

• 2023 study: nearly 8,000 brain scans across 29 countries

Researchers ranked countries on gender equality (Denmark and Sweden high; Brazil, Turkey and India lower). In more equal countries, male and female brains were more similar. The difference came from women's brains in unequal countries; male brains looked the same everywhere. Researchers suspect access to education and the stress of structural sexism.

• Who's 'super smart'? Kids aged 5–6 vs 7–8

In research from a New York group, five- and six-year-olds picked their own sex as 'super smart,' and all wanted to play the game 'for super smart children.' By seven or eight, both boys and girls picked the man, and many girls said the game was 'for the boys.'

• '28 and Me' and '28 and OC'

Women scientists, whom McKay calls 'the Marie Curie of neuroscience,' scanned their own brains daily for a whole cycle, taking blood samples to track hormones. They repeated it on the oral contraceptive pill.

• Scientists who scanned their own pregnancies

In 2009, three women researchers in Spain asked what happens to the brain in pregnancy, found no research, and decided to study themselves. Their work, plus a more recent study of one researcher who scanned her brain all the way through pregnancy, opened up the field of the maternal brain.

• Waking up in a puddle

McKay, at 50, says night-time hot flashes feel like being woken by a fright, with adrenaline, because the brain has to wake you to cool down. Mel describes soaked sheets on her side of the bed.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Check all three forces

When your mood or focus dips, look beyond hormones: sleep and body signals, your environment and screens, and your thoughts and expectations.

• Push back on 'baby brain'

McKay's suggestion: instead of blaming your brain, look at where you need support. It shouldn't be up to the mother alone to ask for it.

• Protect sleep in midlife

If night sweats are breaking your sleep, talk to a doctor about treatment. McKay calls HRT one of the best treatments for hot flashes, and better sleep may ease the fog. Speak to your own clinician.

• Invest in connection

Relationships may matter more than hormones. Prioritize the people who keep you from feeling lonely.

Once You Learn THIS, You Will Never Be The Same (Life Lessons From 88 Year Old Frank Caprio)

Guest: Judge Frank Caprio
Date: 2025-06-23 · Duration: 0:47:09
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qAbfWI5gz6Q

KEYPOINTS

• The core lesson: lift people up, often with just a hand on the shoulder

Asked what 40 years on the bench and 88 years of life taught him, Judge Frank Caprio says to help other people, especially the poor, disabled, hungry and those in crisis. It rarely takes much. Put a hand on someone's shoulder and tell them you love them and believe in them. What's a small effort for you can feel like lifting a mountain for them.

• Authority calls for more compassion, not less

Caprio says some judges put on the robe and believe it entitles them to excesses. He always pictured the person in front of him, a working man with four kids or a trembling mother, scared of what would happen. He rejected the 'I'm the boss here' posture and put himself in their shoes.

• Everyone needs a second chance

His question back: who doesn't? Think of every break you've been given. He says 'compassion' and 'understanding' are just pleasant words until you practice them. 'I'd rather go overboard with compassion than go overboard with punishment.' If someone deserved a six in sympathy, he gave them a ten, hoping it might change their life.

• Being a judge is more about the person than the law

After a hard lesson on his first day, Caprio always tried to find out what was really going on with the person in front of him. He considered how his ruling would affect their whole family, such as whether paying a fine meant the kids wouldn't eat that night. He says he never repeated that first-day mistake in more than 30 years.

• Children rise to the expectations you voice

Caprio deliberately focused on children in his courtroom, which can terrify a 12-year-old with its robes, armed officers and oak paneling. He told them he expected them to go on and do great things. He believes he became a lawyer and judge because his parents told him he could, and that encouragement beats berating every time.

• Teach by example, not speeches

His father never lectured about generosity. Young Frank simply watched him quietly pay customers' milk bills. Caprio says he learned morality by watching his mother and father and his 18 compassionate aunts and uncles, and he calls the family the basic unit of society.

• Be honorable and tell the truth

His most important advice is 'just be honorable.' He asked everyone who came before him simply to tell the truth, and he says it pays off in the end. He criticizes public figures who preach charity and service without practicing them.

• A good life is family, friends and service

Caprio's definition: be a good family person and have good friends. Wealth doesn't confer special privileges; 'we're all in the same boat.' He takes great joy in helping people. For older or retired listeners, he recommends civic involvement, such as volunteering at a home for the elderly or driving people who need rides.

EXAMPLES

• The milkman who wouldn't stop the milk

His father, Antonio Caprio Jr., was an Italian immigrant and one of 10 children. His family peddled fruit from a pushcart, and he couldn't afford college. His company stopped deliveries after two unpaid weeks, but he refused to cut off families with children and sometimes put a dollar or two of his own toward their bills. He woke Frank and his brother at 4 a.m. to ride the route despite the 'No Riders' sign.

• The autograph book

When Frank left sixth grade, his tired father stared at the book for minutes before writing: 'The street is wide, the road is long and very bumpy and very tough going, but I know that you will proceed along it honorably with your head held high to the end of the highest learning.' He signed his full legal name. Caprio still keeps the book in the right-hand drawer of his desk.

• 'You can't charge poor people like us'

At 12, in a cold-water flat heated by a potbelly stove with the oven door open, his father said, 'You're a good talker; you're going to be a lawyer.' He added that Frank must never charge poor people like them, joking that he'd make it up with rich people. Caprio says his law office has never charged a poor family. He taught high school and coached wrestling for six years while attending law school at night for four, once hitchhiking to class.

• The first-day boot case

Newly appointed and 'full of myself,' Caprio refused to remove a boot from a mother's car over a few hundred dollars in tickets, even though she said she had four kids to get to school. His father, watching from the courtroom, asked how he could do that, since she might not be able to feed her kids that night. 'You weren't brought up that way.' The case still bothers him.

• 'Guilty'

Caprio liked inviting children up to help decide their parents' cases. A 10-year-old whose family had arrived from Africa six months earlier was asked if his father was guilty of speeding and immediately said 'Guilty,' bringing the house down. Caprio dismissed the case because the father had four children, was just getting started and was respectful. He also dismissed $500 in tickets for a woman with a bullet still in her leg so she could pay medical bills.

• Facing pancreatic cancer

Treated by teams at Dana-Farber and in Miami, Caprio calls his diagnosis incurable but says he hasn't given up. It has drawn him closer to the people he loves and to prayer as a practicing Catholic, and has pushed him to examine his life and make

amends. His advice to others facing a scary diagnosis is to follow expert medical advice and ask doctors to be honest.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Before judging, picture yourself in their seat**
  When the news feels overwhelming or kindness seems pointless, Caprio's practice is simply to imagine you're the one sitting there, since it could happen to anyone tomorrow.
- **Say 'I believe in you' to someone today**
  Encourage gently, especially your children. He says one minute of belief can change the course of someone's life.
- **In marriage, nobody is the boss**
  Married to Joyce for over 60 years with five children, Caprio says marriage is give and take and nobody should act like the judge at home. They still have small disagreements and go quiet for a day or so, but they've stopped having skirmishes.

This Life-Changing Conversation Will Help You Make Peace With Who You Are

Guest: Mon Rovîa
Date: 2025-06-19 · Duration: 1:13:14
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rN83hi9QxUM

KEYPOINTS

• Moving on starts with looking honestly at your past

Singer-songwriter Mon Rovîa says you can't let the past 'take you out of the world that you are meant to be a part of.' For years it did that to him while he 'wallowed,' blaming himself. Acceptance took years, not a moment, and he says you have to make quiet spaces, away from 'the loudness of the world,' to sit still and look at the truth.

• 'Find another day' to quit

On days he couldn't face his survivor's guilt or his feelings about his mother, he told himself to find another day to quit: not today. Mel points out why it works better than forced positivity. It admits how hard things are and gives permission to quit later, while still choosing to keep going today. He calls his whole life 'the art of continuing.'

• Being adopted doesn't mean you've 'been saved, so you're good'

Mon says many adoptive families assume a rescued child is fine. His, he stresses, was amazing, but being pulled from your land, language and people leaves damage that a child has no words for. He didn't speak to his adoptive family for a long time; they thought something was wrong. Decades later he still dreams of being chased by child soldiers.

• You can fall in love with your suffering

Mon believed 'I deserve bad things.' Falling in love with suffering, he says, is when you stop hearing the people who whisper 'don't say that about yourself.' Looking back, he felt he 'wasted a lot of time doing absolutely nothing for what my story deserves.'

• Notice the hands reaching toward you; you can't heal alone

His turning point came from accepting help he had refused before. People often push helpers away, he says, out of fear that their darkness will swallow them. His advice is to notice who has stayed with you through dark nights, and to 'look to the helpers.' His song 'crooked the road,' which he performs at the end, is about accepting help.

• Turn guilt into growth, in small steps

Mon felt survivor's guilt that he was the child chosen to leave when his sister or brother might have 'made more of the opportunity.' His reframe is to let growth take guilt's place. It doesn't happen overnight; even drinking one fewer beer one day counts. Mel describes it as moving from blaming yourself to seeing it as a gift, because you're meant to be here.

• Holding back isn't the same as not being able to speak

When Mon said he wasn't a good speaker, Mel suggested he hadn't felt safe saying what he needed to say, and he agreed. He calls himself a 'watcher,' someone who steps back to protect himself. Music and journaling became the safe places where he could finally say it, and the lyrics often turn into something that helps others.

• Owning your whole story can bring peace

Learning the painful truth about how he came to be gave Mon peace, because 'from violence still beautiful things can come.' Asked 'Who am I?', the question that haunted him, he now answers: 'John J Monrovia, son of Maria from Liberia, West Africa.'

EXAMPLES

• Chosen at seven

Mon was born in the middle of Liberia's civil war. Many of his siblings died during the war, and his mother died in childbirth, leaving his grandmother to raise the children. His older brothers fought as child soldiers between the ages of 5 and 10. An aunt took him to a missionary family working in Monrovia. 'It could have been my sister... my other brother,' he says, and that became the source of his guilt.

• Rock bottom on Lookout Mountain

Living with roommates in Georgia, he was drinking and using drugs heavily, doing odd jobs and unable to pay rent. He texted his dad's friends asking for money, which got back to his father. His father had offered help before; this time Mon took it: 'Dad, I have nothing else.'

• Tearing down a house to rebuild himself

In Dana Point, California, he helped his father build a house. Alone for hours pulling nails and breaking down walls, he saw the link between tearing down the home and rebuilding something new, and asked whether he could do the same with himself. That alone time, he says, is what healed him.

• Weeping after a sold-out show

Driving back from a tour with his manager, he called his older sister and asked about his mother and father. Hearing how it had happened, he wept in the back seat, letting out tears he'd held in for years. His managers just gave him space and didn't ask questions.

• From a cheap ukulele to Newport

He won a people's choice award at a music event at Covenant College but still felt 'this is not for me,' partly because he never saw anyone who looked like him in singer-songwriter music. He wrote over rap beats until 2022, then picked up the ukulele his parents had given him (he'd wanted a guitar). He took the name Monrovia, Liberia's capital, in 2019 to stay grounded in his roots. Mel notes he was on Spotify's 2024 artists-to-watch list and has more than 1.5 million monthly listeners.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Script: 'Not today. I'll find another day.'

Use it on days when quitting feels close. It acknowledges how hard things are and buys you today. If you're having thoughts of ending your life, contact a crisis line or professional right away.

• Make a quiet space for the truth

Set aside time away from noise to look at your past clearly. Mon found his through physical work, music and journaling.

- **List the people who stayed**
  Write down who has kept reaching out. Answer one of them instead of pushing them away.
- **One small growth step**
  Replace one guilt spiral with one small change today; Mon's example is having one fewer drink.

6 Powerful Mindset Shifts That Will Change Your Life

Guest: Sawyer Robbins
Date: 2025-06-16 · Duration: 1:05:01
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bysKZ2IU9Ts

KEYPOINTS

• A tour is a different animal from a speech

Mel spent a decade as a keynote speaker, once in front of 27,000 people, so she assumed her first live tour would be easy and told the production team as much. But a corporate speech is someone else's event: you get a clicker and an hour. On tour, she was responsible for everything. The first leg covered Boston, New York, Toronto, Chicago and London, and she calls it one of the highlights of her life precisely because it stretched her so far.

• Lesson 1: What if you did it bigger?

The team behind stadium tours for major musicians included Marcus, who told her she could walk out and give a great speech, or bring her stories to life as theater and leave people "gobsmacked." She chose theater without understanding what it meant. Her point is that you can't know what you're saying yes to when you've never done it bigger. Most of us are waiting for someone to give us permission to swing harder, so she dares you to.

• Expect the stretch to hurt, and get to your "Saturday night"

After a messy opening night, Mel called her husband Chris on Friday morning saying she hated it and wanted to cancel. By Saturday night she loved it so much she wanted to quit everything else and just tour. If you stop where you think your edges are, she says, you never reach your Saturday night. Do the new thing at least three times before deciding how it feels.

• How it feels to you won't match how it looks to others

Her 143 Studios team called the first show unbelievable and hilarious and told her not to cut anything. Mel thought it was too long and wondered whether anyone had laughed. Discomfort is your inner experience of growing, not a verdict on how you're doing.

• Lesson 2: Bring the fun

On night one she was "stiff as Frankenstein," focused on hitting marks and remembering lines. Reminding herself she wasn't performing heart surgery helped her loosen up, and by night two she discovered she loved physical comedy, crawling across tables. Fun is contagious. The stadium crew said it was their favorite tour ever. Her view is that people under less tension don't slack off; they show up with more care.

• Lesson 3: Start with the end

Before beginning, picture what you want to have happened once it's over. Her answers weren't sell-outs, money or viral clips. She wanted to create a surprising, moving experience, have the show get better every night, and have fun with the crew, venues and audience. These became guardrails rather than promises about how it would feel. After the Friday panic, she called a meeting, asked for feedback, cut lines and got coaching on being more physical.

• Lesson 4: Things will go wrong, and you'll be fine

Live theater went wrong in ways keynotes never had, almost every night. The fix is usually simple: acknowledge it, laugh, adjust, or try again. Her twist is that when something bold feels wrong, like a new outfit, you're probably doing it right, because that's what stretching feels like. The nerves are part of the ride and don't go away.

• Lesson 5: Fear means it matters

Co-author Sawyer Robbins was petrified throughout. Her sister Kendall, an experienced singer-songwriter who joined to sing one song, rolled into rehearsal in sweats unbothered because, as she said, it wasn't her tour. Yet Kendall is nervous about a festival side stage with a smaller crowd, because that one matters to her. Nervous about a presentation? You care about work. Afraid to ask someone out? You probably like them.

• Lesson 6: Do it because you think you can't

Sawyer's on-stage line is that completing something you told yourself you'd do, however small, feels "better than love." Mel argues you become someone who handles scary things by handling them, and that "can't" is often code for "I've never tried." You won't feel ready beforehand. You do the thing first, then you believe you can.

EXAMPLES

• Rehearsal day at Boston's Wang Theatre

Mel showed up Wednesday afternoon expecting a quick run-through with her clicker. Instead she found 30 crew members, hundreds of equipment cases, an LED screen covering the stage, haze machines, a bed platform, three cinema cameras and a director calling cues, and she didn't know her own lines. She had stress diarrhea for three days. On opening night the show ran more than half an hour long, the slides stuck, and she disconnected her own mic.

• The 10-minute coughing fit

On the third night, in front of 3,500 people, Mel inhaled what felt like a cotton ball and coughed for about ten minutes. Sawyer riffed with the crowd while crew members threw lozenges and made tea. Mel says that once the wheels came off, the show got even better, because after surviving that you swing for the fences.

• Sawyer's five minutes became 50

Sawyer, who ran the tour's logistics for three months, agreed to a five-minute co-author cameo. Her last time on stage was playing the crow in a fifth-grade Wizard of Oz, and college speeches to 15 people left her drenched in sweat. Mel kept adding scenes until Sawyer was on stage for about 50 minutes. Before every show she was hyperventilating and reapplying lip gloss 15 times.

• Sawyer's 75 Hard

After college, at her unhealthiest, Sawyer completed 75 Hard, a 75-day challenge of five daily tasks where missing a day sends you back to the start. Mel has never finished it. Sawyer says her pride came from finishing something she didn't think she could, not from the physical results.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Make it right in the moment**

  If you drop a barbell at a new gym, laugh and shrug. If you fart in yoga, joke about dinner (Chris, a yoga instructor, says it happens a dozen times a class). If your slides won't load, close the laptop and give ten minutes of bullet points before taking questions. If you bomb at an open mic, sign up again.

- **Add fun on purpose**

  Build a new running playlist instead of the one you've used for three years. Bring a friend to dance class so you can look silly together. Pick a walk-on song before a competition. High-five people and crack jokes during a high-stress project.

- **Pick a deeper measure of success**

  Before an interview, decide what you want people saying after you leave, and let that shape your energy and preparation. For a 30-day posting goal, measure whether you posted, not followers or views.

- **Use "I can't" as your to-do list**

  If you think you can't get the job, apply. Ask someone out in person instead of hiding on the apps. Or walk up to a gym's front desk and ask someone to show you a simple 30-minute routine. Doing the opposite of what self-doubt tells you is the fastest way to quiet it.

Tiny Fixes for a Tired Life: 7 Habits That Make Your Life Better

Date: 2025-06-14 · Duration: 0:55:27
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IatBMvg9AcI

KEYPOINTS

• When you're depleted, the fix is tiny habits, not caring more

Mel opens by confessing she missed a good friend's birthday: the card was stamped and on her desk, she thought about her all day, and still didn't mail it, call or text. She'd been missing birthdays and gifts lately, not from lack of care but from exhaustion and overload. Her argument is that the gap between caring and showing it closes with small, doable habits, not a life overhaul.

• Habit 1: replay the good stuff

Open your camera roll and scroll back through favorite people and memories for about 30 seconds instead of checking headlines. Mel cites a UCLA study finding that viewing photos of loved ones activates a sense of social support and reduces stress, and a UK report by behavioral psychologist Joe Hemmings suggesting looking at old photos is almost as relaxing as a bath.

• Photos of loved ones can speed recovery from distress

Mel plays a clip of University of Michigan psychologist Dr. Ethan Kross describing research in which people recalled painful experiences, then looked at a photo of their own loved one or someone else's. Seeing their own 'attachment figure' sped up recovery. Kross says he then filled his office with family photos.

• Habit 2: turn your kitchen into club night

Instead of flipping chicken with one hand and answering texts with the other, put on energetic music while cooking or doing dishes. Mel favors Motown or disco, wedding-dance-floor songs that get grandparents and kids moving. The rhythm snaps you into the present and lifts your mood without effort.

• Dancing stood out for dementia risk in a long-term study

Mel cites a New England Journal of Medicine study that followed older adults for 21 years and compared about 11 physical activities, from cycling and swimming to golf and tennis. Dancing was the only one associated with reduced dementia risk, which she attributes to its mix of coordination, rhythm, memory and social interaction stimulating neuroplasticity.

• Habit 3: get on a first-name basis

Ask a name, say it back immediately, then ask a question using it ('So, Marcus, how long have you worked here?'). Mel calls it one of her secret weapons for feeling connected and seeming warm and engaged. She cites research from Rutgers Medical School showing hearing your own name activates brain areas tied to identity, memory and attention.

• Habit 4: show up, especially when you don't feel like it

Mel says you never regret forcing yourself to go to the funeral, party or track meet. She cites a study in Psychological Science by researchers at UT Austin and the University of Chicago: people writing short gratitude notes expected recipients to feel awkward, but recipients felt surprised and deeply valued, and writers' own well-being rose too.

• Habit 5: cheer like it's yours

Psychologists call responding actively and enthusiastically to good news 'capitalization.' Mel cites Dr. Shelly Gable at UC Santa Barbara, whose research on married couples found responses to good news predicted relationship satisfaction more strongly than responses to hard times. Silence or a flat 'cool' reads as disinterest or disapproval.

• Habit 6: be an eight-minute friend

Dr. Robert Waldinger, director of Harvard's 80-plus-year study of adult development, warns about the 'time surplus' fantasy that you'll reconnect in some future with more time. Mel borrows the eight-minute call from a New York Times piece by Jancee Dunn: call hands-free between errands to say you were thinking of them. She says about half her eight-minute calls lead to an in-person plan, and cites research that brief sincere interactions release oxytocin.

• Habit 7: take a three-minute awe walk

Step outside and look for something that makes you say wow: the sky, an old tree, birds in formation, a mural or building. Mel says research shows a few minutes of awe lowers stress, lifts mood and makes you less self-focused. With practice, your brain starts noticing awe more often, even from a single note in a song.

EXAMPLES

• Kirby's wedding album

Mel scrolled live to an album from her cousin Kirby's wedding, saw her late uncle, who died a year earlier, and Kirby arriving in a wagon pulled by Clydesdales, and caught herself smiling and stopping a guilt spiral about not having seen Kirby since.

• Harrison, Marty and the notes app

At a Boston spot Mel frequents, she learned the names of the parking attendants Marty and Harrison and greeter Thomas, then saved notes like 'Harrison, big smile, bald, my age, gives the best hugs.' She rereads them before walking in. On the Let Them tour, all 35 crew members wore name tags.

• The text to Rich Roll before back surgery

Panicking at her first tour stop, Mel saw ultramarathoner and podcaster Rich Roll's post about a spinal fusion the next day and texted that he'd be protected and loved, with 'you do not need to respond,' then followed up with a funny back-flip meme. He later sent a voice memo thanking her.

• Changing a friend's baby's diaper

Visiting a friend with a newborn, Mel offered to handle a diaper change, one mom to another, as a small way of showing up for the moment rather than out of obligation.

• Charlemagne tha God's backyard awe

Mel plays the Breakfast Club co-host describing taking his shoes off, putting his forehead or back against a tree or lying in the grass with no phone, and promising 'some type of release.'

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Admit when you've forgotten a name**
  Say you're embarrassed and working on remembering names, ask again, and write it down in front of them. Mel says that leaves a better impression than faking small talk.
- **Celebrate the win that stings**
  If your sister gets pregnant first or a friend finds love while you're mid-divorce, be the first to clap and text 'tell me everything.' Mel used to feel others' wins as her losses and calls changing that life-altering.
- **Don't overthink the note**
  Whether it's a text, voice memo, card or paper plates left for someone after surgery, Mel's rule is that it's always okay to send it and it won't be as awkward as you fear.
- **Pick just one**
  Mel doesn't claim the seven fixes will solve everything. Choose one today as a way back to what matters when life has gotten too busy.

What Every Dad Should Know: Lessons From Literary Legend James Patterson

Guest: James Patterson
Date: 2025-06-12 · Duration: 1:04:58
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mbad2F4fvCc

KEYPOINTS

• Many dads feel lost, and fathering starts with believing you're lovable.

James Patterson, who has sold 400 million books and has 67 number one New York Times bestsellers, says many men are overwhelmed and no longer the breadwinner they expected to be. What changed him was realizing he could love someone deeply and that 'this core guy is actually lovable.' He believes that if more men got there, they would have better lives, and so would their kids and partners.

• Being a parent is the most important job you'll ever have.

Patterson says that looking back, nothing else compares. Simply realizing that, and letting it drive you, is in his view the most important thing a person can do. He wrote his dad book to be read in about an hour because 'a lot of guys will not read the 400-page book,' and he calls compressing information one of his gifts.

• 'Be there': attention, not just showing up.

One of his writing tricks is a note at the top of the page that says 'Be there,' meaning put the reader in the scene. He applies the same to parenting. Life is full of distractions, from the internet and Netflix to Zoom calls with the in-laws and the NFL draft. You can't always give full attention, but whenever you can, set other thoughts aside. To a kid spotting you in the audience at a school show, 'you're the miracle.'

• Saying 'I love you' is a strength, not a weakness.

Patterson's only memory of hugging his father is on his father's deathbed. His message to the 'I'm not an I love you kind of guy' dad: 'Says who? Who passed that law? Your dad. Your dad's dad.' You can change at least a little, and say it often enough that kids stop groaning when you hug or kiss them. He and Mel ended by saying it to each other.

• Help your child be fully themselves, not 'so-and-so's kid.'

Patterson and his wife Sue focused most on making their son Jack comfortable being Jack, accepting that who he was at 12 could change. With famous-adjacent classmates at prep school and college, Jack's friends who didn't lean on their parents' status were the healthy ones, Patterson says.

• Make a plan for your life the way you outline a novel, but stay open.

Patterson writes 50–70-page outlines, unlike writers such as Michael Connelly and David Baldacci who don't. He isn't a slave to them, though; sometimes he decides a villain he meant to kill off should come back. He says life works the same: have a plan, don't obsess over it, and be open to change.

• Aim for better, not perfect.

Patterson's test for a hard day is whether today is better than yesterday in some way, even if a lot isn't working. He encourages dads to argue with the book, cross things out and star what works, since picking up two to four useful ideas is a win.

• The messy years go fast.

Legos on the floor and diapers to change are hard. Patterson says that 15 or 20 years later 'you'd give a million dollars to have that experience back.' His book includes a funny chapter on changing diapers ('hold your nose') and a more poignant one on how quickly it all passes.

• Read to your kids, and know that early reading is in crisis.

He and Sue fund literacy work. He says reading aloud boosts brain power and gives kids new worlds, though he admits it isn't everyone's thing. He argues many schools adopted reading methods that don't work, and says fewer than half of kids are reading well in many states, including Massachusetts.

EXAMPLES

• A phone call before the war

As Patterson's father was about to go off to war, a stranger named George Hazelton called from Port Jervis. George's parents had just told him he was adopted, and he said, 'I'm your brother.' That's how Patterson's father learned he had a brother. His father had grown up in the Newburgh poorhouse.

• The grandfather in the bar

After the war, the uncle tracked down their father, who had abandoned them and was known as a drunk. Patterson's father refused to go: 'I don't want to meet the bastard.' The uncle went alone, sat in a small bar by the Hudson for about 20 minutes drinking a Coke and watching the man, and left without introducing himself. Patterson only recently learned his grandfather's name was Robert.

• Jack's surprise message

Mel secretly recorded Patterson's son Jack, who said his father's greatest strength was 'helping me confidently be my own person.' Jack had sometimes felt trapped in his dad's shadow; people even called him James, which isn't his name. He said being seen only as someone's kid 'can really eat at you.'

• A reading program that raised scores

Patterson described a University of Florida program, largely a return to phonics, now in about 13 Florida counties and popular in Canada. He says it took some schools from around 10% of kids reading at grade level into the 50s and 60s, and can reach the 80s. He sat in classes for an hour and found the kids genuinely excited. He's making a documentary about it.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Your own 'Be there' note

Pick one daily window, like dinner, bedtime or the drive to school, where your phone is away and your attention is fully on your kid.

- **Break the 'not an I love you guy' pattern**
  Say it daily, out loud, even if it's awkward. Patterson's line: 'Was that so hard? If it was, say it again.'
- **Not a dad? That's okay too**
  The book has an essay, 'You're not a dad, and that's 100% okay,' for uncles, mentors and father figures, who can apply the same ideas.

Finally Feel Good in Your Body: 4 Expert Steps to Feeling More Confident Today

Guest: Dr. Judith Joseph, Dr. Ashwini Nadkarni, Jake Shane
Date: 2025-06-09 · Duration: 1:06:11
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=krnRy54f2rk

KEYPOINTS

• Body shame often hides behind the wish for connection: a deeper need to feel worthy.
The episode grew out of Mel's conversation with comedian Jake Shane, who said what he wants most is a relationship. When she asked how it would feel, he couldn't say beyond wanting it to make him confident. Mel's takeaway is that it's hard to ask for what you want when you don't believe you deserve it. Avoiding mirrors, hiding at the back of photos and laughing off compliments are self-protection, not just insecurity.

• Step 1: you weren't built to look at yourself this much.
Mel shares the 'mirror fallacy,' a concept popularized by a viral video: humans were never meant to see their own faces constantly. Our ancestors rarely saw themselves. Now we have Zoom, FaceTime, selfies, TikTok and reflective glass buildings. Mel says this pushes people into curating and judging themselves, and that it's exhausting.

• Your brain's judging system is meant for other faces, and now it's aimed at you.
Psychiatrist Dr. Judith Joseph explains that we evolved to read other people's expressions, like a frown or a sad look, either to connect or to get away. Staring at your own image turns that system on yourself. Mel notes Stanford researchers have studied 'Zoom fatigue.' Joseph's point is that it's not just tiredness: watching yourself makes you lose perspective and start judging.

• Step 2: look back before you move forward. Self-criticism was taught to you.
Both psychiatrists stress that nobody is born picking themselves apart in a mirror. Mel says it may have come from a classmate mocking your nose, a family member's comment about your weight that 'stuck like glue,' or someone always fussing over how you looked. Tracing where your critic's voice started helps you see it as learned, so it can be unlearned.

• Negative self-talk grows from a few core beliefs.
Dr. Ashwini Nadkarni, a Harvard Medical School psychiatrist with nearly 20 years of practice, says that whatever patients bring in, whether anxiety, depression, trauma or panic, core beliefs sit underneath. She describes them as the trunk of a tree that negative thoughts branch out from. The three most common are 'I am unlovable,' 'I am unworthy' and 'I am helpless.'

• Turn the critic on the critic.
Using cognitive restructuring from cognitive behavioral therapy, Nadkarni has patients question the thought: What's the evidence? Am I thinking from facts or feelings? What could I think instead? She describes it as two negatives making a positive. Everyone needs at least one alternative belief; hers is 'Keep going.'

• Step 3: use a meaningful mantra you actually believe.
Nadkarni's rules: it has to be something you believe right now ('We're not gaslighting, we are reprogramming'), and it has to bring a feeling of relief. 'I love my body' fails because your brain answers, 'We've criticized ourselves for 20 years; I don't believe that.' Repeat it daily. You've practiced the criticism for years, so give the new pattern more than a week.

• Step 4: exposure. Live as you are now instead of waiting.
Nadkarni compares it to a fear of spiders: you can't convince yourself spiders are okay until you're around one. She says self-criticism is rooted in the older, fear-driven part of the brain, so you have to act, not just think. Exposure gradually desensitizes you to the underlying beliefs.

• Self-acceptance, not appearance, is what predicts happiness.
Mel says research shows the top predictor of happiness and fulfillment is self-acceptance, not weight, skin or success. If you can't be kind to yourself now, with acne or at your current height, you won't magically be kind later.

• Stop delaying happiness until you're 'fixed.'
Dr. Joseph says her research shows that people who wait to be happy until they're taller, clear-skinned or 5 to 10 pounds lighter still aren't happy when they get there. Her alternative is small daily shifts: notice and use small moments of joy now.

EXAMPLES

• Jake Shane's mirror ritual
Shane told Mel he pulls back the skin at the sides of his face in the mirror, dislikes his chin, thinks he has a bump on his nose, and hates being short. 'When I go to bed, I don't feel happy in my body.' His followers were shocked; Mel says it's 'all of us.'

• Nearly 30% considered cosmetic fixes after video calls
Nadkarni cites a COVID-lockdown study of nearly 7,000 people. After constantly seeing themselves in video meetings, almost 30% were so anxious about returning to in-person meetings that they were considering corrective steps like plastic surgery.

• The beach exposure exercise
For someone ashamed of their body, Nadkarni would bring them to the beach and have them count how many people are actually judging them. Usually they find people aren't, and then she asks them about the evidence.

• Mantras Nadkarni uses
'I'm getting better every day.' 'Today is going to be a good day.' 'I'm proud that I'm trying to be kinder to myself.' 'I can do things that feel difficult.' 'I can stop criticizing myself.' 'I deserve to feel good about myself.'

OTHER RELEVANT

• Cut down self-viewing
In practice, Mel's step one means noticing how often you look at yourself. On video calls, consider hiding your self-view so your judging brain has less to work on.

• Three-question thought check
When a harsh thought hits, ask: What's the evidence? Is this fact or feeling? What could I think instead? Then switch to your

mantra.

- **Pick one exposure this week**

  Get in the photo, wear the swimsuit, go to the event without hiding, and notice how little anyone actually reacts. These are general tools; persistent distress about your appearance is worth raising with a professional.

The Exact Words You Need to Hear Today

Guest: Bryan Stevenson
Date: 2025-06-05 · Duration: 1:33:15
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z4RNQk77Qro

KEYPOINTS

• Justice is ongoing work, not a place you arrive

Bryan Stevenson, founder of the Equal Justice Initiative (EJI), which has won reversals or release for more than 140 people on death row, describes justice as how we handle conflict in a world where some people have less power. Like a relationship, it needs constant checking in: was that fair, could we do better? People with more power have an obligation to make sure others aren't harmed more than necessary.

• Mercy depends on who you are, not on someone else earning it

Stevenson used to think mercy was for people who showed enough remorse. He now believes you give it even when you don't see the regret you'd like, because wanting mercy for your own mistakes means giving it to others. He's clear this doesn't mean giving up accountability or letting people walk over you. It means not looking for the worst in others or building 'us versus them' walls.

• Getting close to people changes what you understand

His grandmother told him you can't understand important things from a distance. Stevenson applies this beyond poverty and injustice: good leaders, parents and teachers have to be close to the people they serve, because from far away 'we judge'. He says that if he's helped anyone in 40 years, it's because he 'got close enough to a condemned man to hear his song'.

• Each of us is more than the worst thing we've done

A liar isn't only a liar, and he argues that even someone who kills isn't only a killer. Legislators talk as if they can 'put crimes in prison', but they can only imprison people. His example: a woman abused for 20 years who finally reacts violently is someone surviving decades of abuse, not just a 'violent offender'. He says he has never represented anyone who was only their crime. Mel adds that people can also become more than their worst act.

• Be a 'stone catcher'

In Just Mercy he retells 'let he who is without sin cast the first stone' and asks people to catch stones thrown at those who fall. Catching one helps the target and also the thrower, who is spared the consequences of harsh judgment made in fear and anger. He believes each stone you catch makes the next easier, until it becomes a way of life.

• Children are always changing, so treating them as adults is a mistake

Stevenson says 13 US states have no minimum age for trying a child as an adult, and he has represented eight- and nine-year-olds facing 50- and 60-year sentences. He blames the 1980s 'super predator' label pushed by criminologists and policy makers, along with zero-tolerance policies and the pipeline from school to jail. His view: our commitment to children shows in how we treat poor, abused and neglected kids, not gifted ones.

• Decisions driven by fear and anger produce harm

Before the 1970s, he says, fewer than 300,000 people were in US jails and prisons. Politicians of all parties then treated drug dependency as a crime, and today there are about 2 million, the highest incarceration rate in the world, while opioid addiction rates stay among the highest. He argues addiction needed a health-care response, not punishment.

• Hopelessness is the enemy of justice

Stevenson calls hope 'our superpower', the thing that makes people stand up when told to sit down. Quoting Václav Havel, he says it isn't preferring optimism to pessimism but 'an orientation of the spirit': being willing to stand in a hopeless place and bear witness. He can't give clients hope he doesn't have himself.

EXAMPLES

• The man who sang 'Higher Ground'

As a Harvard law student frustrated by classes that ignored the poor, he spent a month with the Southern Prisoners Defense Committee in Atlanta. Sent alone to death row in Jackson, Georgia, he told a man, born the same day as him, that he faced no execution date within a year. The man could now let his wife and kids visit. They talked for three hours until guards roughly re-shackled the man, who closed his eyes and sang 'Lord, plant my feet on higher ground.' Stevenson then 'couldn't be dragged out of the library'.

• The client who struggled to say thank you

Courts told an intellectually disabled client it was 'too late' to raise his disability. On their last call, the man stuttered too badly to speak, and Stevenson remembered his mother making him apologize to, hug, and say 'I love you' to a boy he had laughed at. The client finally said 'I love you for trying to save my life' and was executed. Stevenson says that night he realized he does the work 'because I'm broken, too'.

• The 14-year-old held in an adult jail

A boy under 5 feet and 100 pounds, with no record, believed his mother's violent boyfriend had killed her and shot the man. Because the man was a deputy sheriff, the boy was tried as an adult and was sexually assaulted in jail over several nights. Stevenson got him out the day he visited and later won his release. The boy became an engineer, and for 18 years he has called on the 11th of every month at 8 a.m. to say he's doing great.

• Walter McMillan and Miss Williams

McMillan was convicted in Monroeville, Alabama, even though 30 to 35 people, including a police officer who bought a sandwich from him at a fish fry, placed him 11 miles from the murder. A coerced witness was recorded saying 'you want me to frame an innocent man'. The jury chose life, and the judge overrode it to death. During six years of death and bomb threats, Miss Williams was turned back by a police dog that reminded her of Selma in 1965. She came back the next day saying 'I ain't scared of no dog' and stood up in court to declare 'I'm here'.

• A jar of soil from a lynching site

An older Black woman collecting soil for EJI's exhibit of about 800 jars was approached on a remote road by a white man in a pickup. She told him the truth: a Black man was lynched there in 1937. He read the memo, dug with his bare hands, and wept, worried his grandfather might have taken part. He followed her to the museum in Montgomery. Stevenson adds that he isn't naive about this: telling the truth doesn't always end so beautifully.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Treat learning about hope as an action

Stevenson trains for hope the way you'd train for a race, by learning stories of people who stayed hopeful against the odds. He didn't talk about his enslaved great-grandfather, who risked his life to learn to read in the 1850s, until he was in his 40s. Now he draws strength from that history all the time.

• Concrete ways to help

Volunteer with local groups helping people leave prison with clothes, jobs and counseling. Many have never used an ATM or a cell phone. Support education for kids with fewer resources, push prosecutors to set up conviction integrity units that review innocence claims, and sign up for EJI's free daily history-of-racial-injustice calendar.

• His one-line takeaway

Get proximate, change narratives of fear and anger, stay hopeful, and be willing to do uncomfortable and inconvenient things. When someone is struggling, saying 'I'm here', like Miss Williams, can matter even if you have no answers.

A Powerful Mindset Makes You Unstoppable: How to Train Your Mind & Unlock Your Full Potential

Guest: Steve Magness
Date: 2025-06-02 · Duration: 1:13:54
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UlOEJC9rqK4

KEYPOINTS

• Winning the inside game means security, not achievement

Performance coach Steve Magness, author of Win the Inside Game, cites a meta-analysis of about 70,000 people. It found that prioritizing external markers over internal ones is 'universally detrimental' to well-being. The inside game means being clear about who you are, defining success for yourself, and finding real belonging. That security is what lets people take risks, rather than achievement giving them confidence.

• Real effort is relaxed; you can't pressure your way into flow

A mentor who coached Carl Lewis told Magness that most people misunderstand effort. Watch Lewis or Usain Bolt at full speed and their cheeks are bouncing and they're almost smiling. 'Real effort is quiet.' Trying too hard creates tension, and too much pressure blocks flow and can feed procrastination.

• Mental toughness is handling the spiral, not gritting through it

Magness compares adult stress to his almost-2-year-old's tantrums: overwhelming feelings, then a meltdown, then shutting down. Adults add a negative inner voice. The brain then looks for the fastest way out, such as slowing down in a race or putting off a dissertation. The old 'ignore your feelings and push' approach works on easy things but backfires on hard ones, because what you resist persists. Toughness means noticing your feelings, changing your self-talk and focus, and stopping the spiral early.

• A three-step reset after failure or rejection

First, admit it hurts. 'It just sucks,' and faking otherwise doesn't help. Second, get out of 'stress and protect' mode by spending time with people. Magness points to research that socializing releases oxytocin, which may counter stress hormones, so he tells athletes who lose to go get pizza with friends. Third, rebuild evidence with an 'evidence journal.' Write down that you trained five days a week or slept well before the interview, and list past hard things you got through, to counter the brain's negativity bias.

• The winner and loser effects

Research going back to the 1960s found that animals who won contests kept winning and losers kept losing, regardless of skill. Magness explains that winning tends to raise testosterone in men and women and encourages a 'challenge response.' Losing, especially stewing in the loss, raises cortisol, so the brain pre-loads stress to steer you away next time. Mel connects this to dating after a breakup or interviewing after a layoff.

• Adjust both sides of the equation: expectations and capability

The brain weighs demands against what it thinks you can do. You can lower expectations ('it's a first date, I'm not trying to set the world on fire'; 'showing up is the win'). You can also build capability through practice in a safe setting, like role-playing date conversations with a friend or doing mock interviews, so your brain registers 'I've been here before.'

• Don't put your whole identity on one goal

Magness cites Michigan State research on Nobel Prize-winning scientists. Compared with peers, they were 22 times more likely to perform as amateurs (dance, sing, act), 12 times more likely to write creatively, and about 7 times more likely to do crafts. Entrepreneurs who keep their day jobs early and athletes with broader interests show similar patterns. Having several things that matter makes you more stable, like a tricycle compared with a unicycle.

• Consistency beats intensity

As a college coach, Magness tracked attendance and found a strong link between showing up and improving. The runner who missed the fewest practices went from about 99th of 101 as a freshman to qualifying for the first round of nationals as a senior. Mentally tough people stack solid days, including partial workouts on bad days.

• Ask 'Who do I want to be?'

Magness says performance is performance. He learned that interviewing Taylor Swift's drummer Matt Billingslea, who barely drums before a concert. Instead he loosens his body and mentally rehearses song openings, the same way Magness prepared for races. Prime your environment and decide who you're showing up as. Aaron Judge describes being '99' on the field and Aaron at home.

EXAMPLES

• Sara Hall let go of the record to break it

The American marathoner had her breakthrough in her late 30s and early 40s. A month or two before the race where she set the American women's half-marathon record, she dropped her fixation on the record because it was 'stealing my peace.' She focused instead on the feeling of racing among women who bring out the best in each other.

• Four minutes and one second

In high school, when only about five U.S. high schoolers had ever run a sub-four-minute mile, Magness had the goal written on his bedroom wall. He watched the clock lap by lap, then saw 4:01 on the results board. The failure drove his search for the mental side of performance. His lesson was that if every race felt like life or death, he couldn't reach his potential.

• Blowing the whistle at Nike

At 26, Magness became assistant coach of the Nike Oregon Project, the best-funded pro team in the sport. Within months he saw documents mentioning testosterone medication. It took him months to quit and months more to email U.S. Anti-Doping, against advice from friends, lawyers and a judge. Reporters followed him, and FBI agents knocked on his car window in his driveway. The case took about 10 years. The head coach and head doctor were banned, and Magness says support from loved ones is what got him through.

• Kobe Bryant on the sideline parent

At his daughter's youth practice, Bryant told a parent who was shouting instructions that the child was learning to be alone in

their head and negotiate with themselves. That, he said, is where toughness is built.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Coach yourself with an action and a narrow focus**
  Telling someone to relax doesn't work. Instead, give yourself an action ('shake out your arms') and one target, like a kicker staring at a spot. Talk to yourself in the third person: 'Mel, just focus on the phone call you need to make.'
- **Start with minimum viable progress**
  To get finances under control, cut a daily latte to two days a week. For running, walk and then jog the last block home. Small wins build motivation.
- **Train discomfort with your phone, and spend time alone with your thoughts**
  Magness says about 90% of people experience phantom vibrations. Leave your phone in another room for an hour and let the anxious alarm fade. This week, pick something to do with no phone, alone with your thoughts.

The Ultimate Guide to Women’s Hormones: Use Science to Reset Your Body, Balance Mood, & Feel Amazing

Guest: Dr. Jessica Shepherd
Date: 2025-05-29 · Duration: 1:41:04
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pawDZoLP6ic

KEYPOINTS

• Hormones are chemical messengers, and receptors are everywhere

OB-GYN Dr. Jessica Shepherd describes hormones as chemicals released to deliver instructions to receptors throughout the body. For women, the key ones are estrogen, progesterone, testosterone and thyroid hormones. Cortisol sits in a separate 'metabolic' family with insulin and glucose. Estrogen, which she calls the 'vitality hormone,' has receptors in the brain, heart, muscle, bone, skin and fat cells, not just the pelvis.

• Periods are starting earlier, and stress may be part of why

Shepherd says the age of first periods has dropped over recent decades. She points to environmental factors, food and cortisol responding to early-life stress and 'entering the scene' too early. She calls it something that deserves research for its possible effects later in life. You're born with these hormones; puberty is when they ramp up to run the menstrual cycle.

• Irregular cycles, bad PMS and heavy bleeding call for 'peeling back the layers'

Before reaching for medication, Shepherd asks what else is going on: work, relationships, and chronic stressors such as racism or poverty that many of her patients of color face. The brain is the control center that tells the ovaries what to release, and stress distracts it from sending those messages properly. Her first lifestyle levers are cutting processed, high-glycemic and sugary foods and soft drinks, adding exercise, and addressing stress.

• Hormonal acne is often testosterone-driven

It tends to show up under the eyes and on the chin because of where hormone receptors sit. Testosterone stimulates the sebaceous (oil) glands; buildup plus bacteria leads to breakouts. Dermatologists often refer these patients to OB-GYNs, who commonly prescribe birth control pills to calm the hormonal surge.

• Coming off birth control: give your body three to six months

The pill suppresses the hormones your body would otherwise use to release an egg each month. When you stop, your body seeks homeostasis again and may swing high and low. Expect possible changes in cycle length and flow, skin, and hair shedding. Shepherd usually advises giving it three to six months; some patients take nine months to a year. After 15 to 20 years on the pill or a hormonal IUD, you may be seeing your natural pattern for the first time.

• Fertility and estrogen decline in steps: 35, 40, 42

Egg quality and the chance of spontaneous pregnancy drop after 35, again at 40, and again around 42 as estrogen and progesterone fall. Testosterone declines more subtly. Women who have babies later often slide into perimenopausal symptoms soon after delivery. That isn't pregnancy causing it; the body was already headed there, and postpartum recovery can take nine months to a year.

• Perimenopause can last 3 to 10 years and rewires mood and the body

Symptoms include occasional hot flashes and night sweats, irregular periods, weight that won't budge on the same routine, and fat migrating from the hips and butt to the belly. Muscle mass shrinks as fat increases. Shepherd says diagnoses of anxiety and depression peak between ages 45 and 55. She cites a roughly 30% drop in dopamine receptors after menopause, and estrogen loss makes responses more emotional and less prefrontal.

• We now live decades past our estrogen

Shepherd notes that average life expectancy was once in the high 50s while menopause hits around 51 to 52, so bodies rarely had to function long without estrogen. Now women live into their 70s and 80s, facing more heart disease (the number-one killer of women), osteoporosis and dementia. She notes 70% of Alzheimer's cases are women and calls estrogen one of the body's best anti-inflammatories. The plaque process can begin in the 50s, decades before symptoms.

• HRT: earlier conversations, fewer absolute no's

Shepherd says the early fears from the Women's Health Initiative study about 20 years ago have been largely revised. She now offers hormone replacement during perimenopause rather than making women 'prove' menopause. It's recognized for hot flashes and night sweats and helps bone health, though it isn't first-line for osteopenia. Typical exclusions are a personal history of hormone-receptor-positive breast cancer or a significant clot such as a pulmonary embolism, and even those call for a nuanced conversation. A family history is where the conversation starts, not where it ends. The old cutoff of age 60 or 10 years past menopause has also loosened.

• Sleep depends on estrogen, progesterone and cortisol

Cortisol drives the circadian rhythm, with releases around midnight and 5 a.m. Night sweats from falling estrogen wake you up. Progesterone, the 'comfy' relaxing hormone, fluctuates too. Poor sleep is linked to heart disease, obesity and other problems. Shepherd's tools include HRT where appropriate, meditation to reduce rumination, no screens before bed, less alcohol, processed food and sugar, and carefully sourced CBD or CBN. She believes you can train yourself into better sleep.

EXAMPLES

• The 67-year-old still having hot flashes

A nervous patient long past menopause agreed to a three-to-six-month trial of HRT. She's still on it and asked, 'Why was I living like this for so long?' Shepherd notes that starting later may not give the same bone and heart benefits but can still improve brain fog and sleep.

• PCOS is at heart a metabolic condition

Polycystic ovary syndrome involves extra follicles, higher testosterone and irregular cycles. Some of Shepherd's patients go nine months to a year without a period. She sees insulin, glucose and gut health at its core. She isn't a fan of treating it only with birth control and works with functional nutritionists, sometimes prescribing a GLP-1 to address the metabolic side.

- **Endometriosis affects about 1 in 10 women**

  Endometrial tissue, the lining shed in a period, implants elsewhere, such as on the bowel, causing pain and infertility. It's underdiagnosed and more likely if your mother or sister had it. Treatment targets estrogen through birth control or estrogen-lowering drugs, and sometimes minimally invasive surgery to remove nodules and adhesions.

- **Skin and hair after estrogen falls**

  Estrogen supports collagen, the skin's scaffolding, and blood flow; that's why skin and hair often look great in pregnancy and worse postpartum. Shepherd's evidence-backed options include topical estrogen creams, HRT, retinoids and occasional laser treatments. For thinning hair, check thyroid, medications, diet and stress. Minoxidil works but only while you use it. Folic acid helps but won't solve the problem.

- **Tai chi and lifestyle for vasomotor symptoms**

  Shepherd cites studies showing tai chi can reduce hot flashes and night sweats, and research suggesting Asian women experience shorter, milder symptoms, which she links to diet, lifestyle and movement practices.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Protect the 'pie chart' with weights and protein**

  You can't stop hormonal decline, Shepherd says, but nutrition and exercise help the body compensate. Strength training preserves muscle that uses glucose better; cut processed foods and sugar.

- **Eat for skin and gut**

  Her picks: protein, antioxidant-rich blueberries, nuts and omega-3-rich salmon. She cautions against 'power food' thinking and suggests a nutritionist because responses vary.

- **Ask your doctor directly about HRT**

  Even with a family history of breast cancer, past age 60, or more than 10 years after menopause, ask whether it's an option for you rather than assuming it isn't.

The Secret to Stopping Anxiety & Fear (That Actually Works) | The Mel Robbins Podcast

Guest: Dr. David Rosmarin
Date: 2025-05-26 · Duration: 1:06:06
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FJ5tXuBi4EM

KEYPOINTS

• Most anxiety is a normal emotion, not a disorder

Harvard Medical School psychologist David Rosmarin, author of Thriving with Anxiety, argues that society is over-medicalizing a normal human emotion. Treating everyday nerves as if they were clinical anxiety, he says, has made us 'allergic' to them and feeds today's anxiety epidemic. He points out that his centers have treated more than 10,000 patients and none has died from, or 'gone crazy' from, an anxiety attack, even though it can feel that way. He also notes that real harms can travel alongside anxiety, including substance misuse and self-injury.

• Fearing anxiety makes it worse

When you read clammy hands or a nervous stomach as proof something is wrong, your adrenaline spikes and the anxiety builds on itself. Rosmarin says he spent years asking himself 'David, what's wrong with you?' on stressful days. During the COVID pandemic he realized that feeling anxious in a hard time is a sign of health. Mel describes nearly 30 years of being 'afraid of my anxiety,' trying to drink it away and outwork it.

• Anxiety has three parts: thoughts, body and behavior

The cognitive side is worry and catastrophic stories, like 'if I wear the wrong thing on this date I'll never have another date.' The physical side is adrenaline: sweaty palms, cotton mouth, labored breathing and a sense of dread. The behavioral side is usually avoidance, sometimes checking. Mel adds a definition Rosmarin endorses: anxiety is uncertainty combined with doubting your ability to handle it.

• Nerves show that you care

Rosmarin asks why newborns scream. A healthy baby facing light, air and noise freaks out, and a baby who doesn't is a reason to call a neurologist. In the same way, a little apprehension before a hard workday shows you are connected to the work and the people. If you felt nothing, you might be disconnected from what matters.

• The four steps: identify, share, embrace, let go

Identify: dig down to what you truly fear instead of shutting out the symptoms. Share: talk about it with someone, telling them what you need ('just hear me out'), so it becomes connection instead of loneliness. Embrace: do the thing that makes you anxious, when you are ready and at a pace you can handle. Let go: accept what you can't control, since anxiety always revolves around control.

• Rate your anxiety from 1 to 9

Nobody is at zero, and 10 would be catastrophic. Rosmarin calls 1 to 3 low, 4 to 6 medium and 7 to 9 high. At 7 to 9 the anxiety is usually disrupting sleep or causing avoidance, and he wants people getting therapy or medication, not relying on self-help alone. Many people function reasonably well at 4 or 5, especially during a breakup, a new baby or medical school. He warns that promising to get anxiety down to a 1 and keep it there isn't even helpful.

• Rosmarin criticizes a zero-cutoff anxiety screening

Rosmarin describes a federally funded physician panel that recommended screening patients for anxiety at primary-care visits using the two-item GAD-2. He says he supports screening. His objection is that, as he describes it, the cutoff was set at zero, so any worry in the past two weeks could flag someone for clinical treatment. He believes this leads to overdiagnosing ordinary stress.

• Gender differences show up in how anxiety is handled

Rosmarin says women have about twice the rate of clinical anxiety as men. He links it to women being harder on themselves for feeling anxious ('something's wrong with me'), while men tend to suppress it, which shows up as higher rates of substance and alcohol abuse. Mel mentions research she has seen suggesting that women who lose a job turn the doubt inward and take roughly a 25% pay cut in their next role, while men's salaries hold steady.

• Underneath most fears is the fear of being alone

When Rosmarin keeps asking patients what they're afraid of, he says it usually comes down to one thing: being alone or abandoned. He knows he has reached it when they start to tear up. You don't let go of that fear. You use it to connect with other people, and you let go of the idea that you can control it.

EXAMPLES

• Mel's son and the fear of throwing up

Mel's 19-year-old son still gets anxious about vomiting. Her instinct was to reassure him ('there's a nurse at school, get on the bus'). Rosmarin would instead calmly ask what exactly is upsetting: the taste, the embarrassment, being sick without Mom there. He suspects an old memory, like a parent cleaning up a mess, may be part of it.

• A hand on a stranger's arm during turbulence

A colleague on a very bumpy flight noticed the woman next to him hyperventilating. He held her hand and said, 'I'm nervous too, but we're going to be okay. Look at the attendants, they're chatting away.' Rosmarin uses it to show how sharing a fear can instantly connect two people.

• Exposure on an eight-seat Cape Air plane and a toilet bowl

For a fear of small planes, Rosmarin would put a patient on a tiny Cape Air Cessna out of Boston Logan, 'a minivan with wings.' A patient with a germ phobia had chafed their hands raw from washing. Treatment moved step by step from touching the office desk to things in the bathroom, and eventually the inside of a toilet bowl. Anxiety often drops noticeably after one or two exposures. Long-avoided fears take more repetitions, which he likens to paying off a mortgage.

• Rosmarin's own pandemic data and his wife

Rosmarin says his data showed that patients who finished treatment before March 2020 did not have a substantial rise in anxiety during the pandemic. That made him rethink treating all anxiety as clinical. When he finally told his wife about his fear of failure, she said, 'I know,' and supported him through it, which he says brought them closer.

OTHER RELEVANT

• When a child is anxious, ask questions instead of rescuing

Skip the reassurance ('everything's fine') and skip the accommodation ('you don't have to go'). Both tell the child that their anxiety is dangerous. Say something like 'Oh, you're feeling anxious, tell me more,' and ask without judgment what they fear, whether it's embarrassment, losing friends or the physical feelings. For sleepovers, validate first and get the child bought in rather than forcing them.

• Brain-dump, then look for the 'saplings'

Spend 10 to 15 minutes writing down everything in your head, then pick out the one or two worries with deep roots. Rosmarin even suggests asking ChatGPT to find the main themes in your list. Then dig into what you're really afraid would happen.

• Focus on what you can control for big worries

For fears like climate change, wildfires or money, Rosmarin says people are not 'the architects of all world events.' He draws on his religious tradition here. Turning your attention to what is in your power uses the anxiety constructively, like giving up control on a roller coaster rather than having it taken from you.

• Mel's takeaway: rename low-level anxiety

Mel plans to call the 1-to-3 feelings 'nerves,' 'excitement' or 'feeling unsettled' rather than anxiety, and to welcome them instead of bracing for battle.

How to Get What You Want Every Time: 3 Steps to Negotiate Anything With Anyone

Guest: Kwame Christian
Date: 2025-05-22 · Duration: 1:22:24
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MV8xSekK-KE

KEYPOINTS

• A playground rejection created a people pleaser

Kwame Christian, founder of the American Negotiation Institute, grew up first-generation Caribbean American in Tiffin, Ohio, the only Black kid in his school, with an accent. One recess, three groups refused to let him play, and he burst into tears. He vowed people would always like him and became the popular basketball captain who knew everyone by name, while agreeing when he disagreed and never standing up for himself.

• Being liked is not the same as being respected

A mentor told him that personal and professional success requires engaging with conflict. Christian calls himself a recovering people pleaser and says confidence is a learnable skill he built. The first difficult conversation is the internal one: working through the fear, self-doubt and overthinking that make it feel easier to put everyone else's comfort above your own.

• Negotiation and conflict are broader than you think

In his book Finding Confidence in Conflict, negotiation is any conversation where someone wants something, and conflict is one where there's also emotion, nervousness or attitude. Mel's team listed everyday examples: asking siblings to help with aging parents, raising marriage or kids with a partner, an adult child spending rent money on new outfits, a mother-in-law's passive-aggressive comments.

• Their reaction is a relationship test

We avoid speaking up for fear of anger, guilt-tripping or tantrums. Christian argues that if someone reacts with name-calling or immaturity, that reaction may be exactly why the relationship needs to change or end. Raising the issue tells you where that person belongs in your life, and the hurt you're swallowing matters as much as their feelings.

• Fear regret more than a momentary awkward talk

Strong emotions push us into short-term thinking, so we 'just eat it' day after day while resentment builds. He swaps fear of failure for fear of regret by asking what his life looks like in 10 years if the behavior continues. His four questions: what happens if you don't have the conversation, if it goes poorly (could you recover?), if it goes okay, and if it goes really well?

• Name it to tame it

Christian describes the amygdala as the fast, primal source of emotion and the frontal lobe as the seat of reasoning, and says that the more emotional we are, the less clearly we think. Labeling feelings helps because the part of the brain that accepts or rejects the label sits in the frontal lobe. Anger is usually secondary, so keep asking what else is there, such as disrespected or disappointed.

• Compassionate curiosity: three steps, used on yourself first

Step one: acknowledge and validate emotions. Step two: get curious with compassion through open-ended questions. Step three: joint problem solving, 'you and me versus the problem.' Internally, step three means reconciling what would feel good, like a furious text, with what would actually solve the problem. He calls it ethical because he uses the same method on himself.

• Open with situation, impact, invitation

Don't text 'we need to talk.' After some small talk, state the facts stripped of judgment, then the impact on you personally, which nobody can deny. Then invite them to solve it together: 'This morning at 5:30 your alarm went off and woke me up. I had a hard time getting back to sleep. I love living with you, and I'd love to talk about how we can make this work for both of us.' It takes 10 to 15 seconds.

• Politics and religion need longer on step one

These topics are heated because they touch identity and morality. Using the parable of the blind men and the elephant, he avoids right versus wrong. He summarizes their view ('so in your perspective...') without endorsing it, then asks hypothetical questions that show another side of the elephant, so they gain the full picture instead of being told they're wrong.

EXAMPLES

• The seatbelt standoff

His parents gave him a car with one rule: everyone wears a seatbelt. Friends refused, and he wouldn't drive for 15 painful minutes while they called him a baby. Afterward he asked his best friend, 'Why is it that you are my best friend, but it seems like you're the one who respects me the least?' The friend went quiet, explained and apologized, and they remain best friends who treat each other as equals.

• Mel's decade-long misunderstanding with her mom

When Mel got engaged to Chris, her mom said he wasn't who she'd have picked and refused to pretend otherwise. Mel quietly resented it for years without asking why. When she finally did, her mom was simply sad Mel had fallen for someone who lived far away, fearing she'd never move home, which she didn't. Her mom and Chris now joke about being each other's favorite in-laws.

• The roommate role-play got real

Playing the early riser, Mel pushed back: 'Why didn't you just go back to sleep?' Christian reflected the emotion he sensed, offered to postpone, explained his insomnia, and said honestly he'd have to move out if nothing changed. Then he asked whether a quieter alarm could meet the same goal. Mel said the fake scenario still triggered real emotions.

• Taking notes to buy calm

In business conflicts, Christian says, 'You've brought up a lot of good points. Mind if I take a few notes?' Often he writes nothing for the first few seconds, then quickly names his feelings and the reasons for them. When unsure what to say next, he asks a question, such as what someone means by words like 'fair' or 'respect.'

- **Dishes as dragon-slaying**

  Married 14 years to Whitney, his college sweetheart, he recently realized how much invisible work she did while he traveled. Framed as right versus wrong, chores felt like his mother scolding him. So he reframed them: if there were a dragon he'd slay it, so he'll protect his wife from the stress of the dishes.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Ask a landlord to describe the perfect tenant**

  Landlords want easy money: on-time rent and no damage. Ask what their ideal tenant looks like, promise to be that, then ask what it would take to lower the rent. They may trade a lower rent for an 18-month or two-year lease, and references from past landlords back up your claim.

- **Employers expect you to negotiate a job offer**

  Research market data, then aim above your target: if offered $100,000 and you want $110,000, make the case for $120,000. In roles like law, consulting or sales, not negotiating can cost respect. They've chosen you, so you have more leverage than you think.

- **Start a promotion ask three to six months early**

  Ask your manager for feedback, document it, report back on your improvement, then ask what it would take to be promoted. Mel's hard truth: doing a good job is why you get paid, not why you get promoted.

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.

4 Signs of Emotionally Immature Parents & How to Heal

Guest: Dr. Lindsay C. Gibson
Date: 2025-05-15 · Duration: 1:11:12
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wLsp_67xi4U

KEYPOINTS

• Emotional maturity has three parts

Clinical psychologist Dr. Lindsay Gibson, author of Adult Children of Emotionally Immature Parents, defines emotional maturity as being able to handle your emotions, think objectively (including about your own behaviour), and stay emotionally connected to others. Emotional immaturity is the reverse: emotions take over, self-reflection is poor, and people disconnect. At the core is egocentrism, the sense that 'all roads lead to them'.

• This is about seeing your parents clearly, not blaming them

Gibson writes that the mission isn't to betray your parents but to see them objectively. Most signs of emotional immaturity are outside a person's conscious control, and most such parents have no idea how they affected their children. Mel says people tend either to blame their parents or excuse them, and Gibson's approach lets you understand your history and change how you show up.

• Emotionally immature parents often find emotional depth destabilising

Gibson says these parents often seem exhausting or superficial and stick to safe topics like the weather because their defences are fragile. Asking them to engage with your feelings is like asking them to keep a hand on a hot stove. It's destabilising, not just uncomfortable, so they change the subject, make excuses or turn it back on you. She says seeing this helps you take it less personally: they might if they could, but they can't.

• They're often highly sensitive, while calling you oversensitive

These parents may say 'why are you getting so upset?' but are, in Gibson's words, among 'the most emotionally sensitive people on this planet'. Children who are often blamed develop exaggerated guilt about expressing themselves, and their first thought becomes 'what did I do wrong?' They feel morally obligated to give the parent what they want, even at a cost to their own health.

• The four types: emotional, driven, passive and rejecting

Emotional parents run the house with their moods, and everyone tiptoes around them. Driven parents are compulsively goal-oriented and treat children as extensions of themselves, whether that's about the Ivy League, sports, church or looking 'normal'. Passive parents are often the kids' favourite: warm and playful, but they don't protect. Rejecting parents act as if children are a nuisance.

• Each type leaves its own mark

Children of emotional parents become hypervigilant mood-readers who assume partners need managing. Children of driven parents struggle with perfectionism, procrastination, and guilt about resting. Children of passive parents don't feel worth protecting and learn to put up with bad behaviour. Children of rejecting parents learn the best relationship comes from not bothering anyone. Many end up feeling selfish, 'too needy' and secretly insecure.

• Feeling you can't make yourself understood is often their problem, not yours

Gibson says if someone wants to understand you, it doesn't matter how you say it, and if they don't, it doesn't matter either. She cites coach Jenny Walter's term 'brain scramble': losing your words when the other person looks like they're listening but isn't engaging. Conversation relies on emotional resonance, so the mismatch feels unsafe and knocks you off track. Better communication skills won't fix it.

• 'Healing fantasies' can keep you stuck

Gibson says emotionally deprived children all form a fantasy about how they'll finally get what they need, built around 'if only': if only I were more selfless, more attractive, richer, more famous. Or the parent will change when they're older, less stressed, or have grandchildren. The hope is understandable because these parents can be loving and quick to help when you're sick. But expecting them to suddenly become mature distorts reality; the rescue has to come from you.

• Expect grief, and shame, on the way to healing

Recognising what you needed but didn't get brings grief, which Gibson says actually gives you something solid to stand on. Getting there often means passing through shame first, since people tend to feel a bad experience says something bad about them. Many have also been talked out of feeling compassion for themselves.

• Repair is the real sign of maturity

Mel says she was an emotionally immature, volatile parent, the 'emotional' one to her husband's 'passive' one, and that her kids never knew which mood she'd wake up in. She argues that maturity isn't never losing it but calming down, owning it and repairing. Gibson agrees: self-reflection plus empathy make you want to go back and repair. Mel says apologising to her kids has brought them closer.

EXAMPLES

• The 91% poll

Mel asked her Instagram audience of 8.5 million whether their parents were emotionally immature: intense outbursts, punishing feelings, relying on the child for support, or being emotionally unavailable and critical. 91% said yes. Gibson wasn't surprised, saying people crave validation for things they've been told aren't really happening.

• Everyday examples of emotional immaturity

A mother answers her daughter's breakup with 'your father does that to me all the time'. A parent withholds approval when a son chooses writing over a 'successful' path. Guilt trips when you can't come home or drive them somewhere. One mother, told that criticising an aunt was hurting her daughter's relationship with her, replied, 'Who else am I going to talk to?'

• The quiz on page 26

Items include: my parent overreacted to minor things; was uncomfortable with emotional closeness; used me as a confidant

but wasn't one for me; only gave sympathy when I was sick; got defensive at polite disagreement; made sharing my successes deflating; wasn't self-reflective; thought in black and white. Mel said she could tick many boxes as a parent herself.

• The closed door and the dad on the bed

One of Gibson's clients ran to greet her rejecting father every evening, and it felt like 'throwing myself against a closed door'. Another's passive father would sit on her bed to comfort her after her mother exploded, but never stepped in while it was happening.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Lower your expectations, and stay connected to yourself

Accept that time with them will probably be draining. Go in as an 'anthropologist' observing a tribe, and repeat the mantra 'detach, detach, detach' whenever you feel the urge to over-explain. Keep a running inner commentary, or squeeze your arm, so you don't zone out or feel erased.

• Find the right amount of contact

Gibson says walking into your parents' home is like stepping into a time machine back to childhood. Choose limits that let you stay yourself, such as a two-day rule, no overnight stays, or meeting on neutral ground.

• Journal one question each night

Gibson's prompt for anyone wanting to grow up emotionally: 'What do I wish I hadn't done today?' Then ask what the next slightly better step would be, not to erase it, just to improve on it. She calls this 'the royal road to profound change'.

• Set boundaries in your own style

You don't have to become blunt. 'Gee, Mom, I'm so sorry, I know you're disappointed, it just won't work this time' still counts. Gibson's parting advice: you matter as much as anyone else, others will affect you emotionally, and you came 'factory equipped' to tell who's good for you.

If You Feel Overwhelmed & Uncertain About Money, Watch This

Guest: Lewis Howes
Date: 2025-05-12 · Duration: 1:09:47
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vq904k_-blE

KEYPOINTS

• The story 'I'll never get out of this' keeps you stuck

Mel says that for months after her family's 2008 collapse she told herself she'd never fix it and would lose everything. Telling that story 'kept me spiraling in place' and hid the simple steps experts recommend. Lewis felt the same, that money was hard, stressful and beyond him. His counter is that money looks complicated only until you learn the tools, like riding a bike: scary at first, and then you wonder why you were afraid.

• Massive action beats waiting on the couch

Lewis's turnaround came from doing things, not from a plan: messaging executives on LinkedIn, going to Toastmasters despite a terror of public speaking, even learning salsa, anything to build skills. Mel stresses the time it took: about five years of reps, couches and buses before things changed, and about 15 years for her to fully climb out.

• Make money from the skill right in front of you, even if it isn't your dream

Networking on LinkedIn made Lewis the 'LinkedIn guy.' He ran free events, then sold a $200 sponsorship booth, then one-on-one profile consulting, then a book sold at events. Teaching LinkedIn wasn't his calling, but it paid off debt and got him off his sister's couch. When it stopped feeling right he moved on, but only after building savings.

• Generosity matters most when you have little, and time counts

Lewis says the wealthiest guests he has interviewed over 12 years of The School of Greatness all describe giving as a habit to build when you have little, not a lot. With no money, give time, energy, curiosity and service: help at church, call a struggling friend, go for a walk with them.

• Self-leadership is the most valuable money skill

Asked which skill could put someone on track for six or seven figures within two years, Lewis didn't say coding or AI. He said leading yourself: regulating your emotions, believing in yourself, reflecting and journaling, and keeping morning and evening routines. Hard skills still help, and public speaking was one of his most valuable, but he calls self-leadership the foundation. 'Stack the wins' daily for momentum.

• Step one: write out your money wounds

List childhood memories that left you anxious, avoidant or ashamed about money: parents fighting about bills, moving schools, being teased for clothes. Lewis says many people still act unconsciously from wounds they haven't healed, and the charge is stronger inside an intimate relationship. Healing means forgiving yourself and recognising that as an adult you can do things differently.

• Step two: reset your money mindset through education and gratitude

Learn, find mentors, and have money conversations until they feel safe rather than scary. Lewis thanks money when it arrives and when it leaves, including taxes he used to hate. Paying a student loan becomes 'I'm proud I can afford this.' Paying the phone bill becomes thanks for being able to call your mum. He suggests saying 'Money is good. Money is my friend. I feel safe with money,' while admitting it won't feel true at first and has to be backed by daily behaviour.

• Step three: define a meaningful money mission, even a three-month one

Making money just to make money still stresses you out. Ask how it will serve you, your family and others. His mission, to impact 100 million lives a week, lets him turn down alcohol, gambling and porn sponsors. Mel's mission in crisis was simply safety: falling asleep knowing the bills were paid. A short-term mission could be paying off one card, learning to cook or reading a money book.

• The 'priority pendulum' runs from passion to practicality

Chasing passion may take years to pay. A purely practical job can drain you. Sometimes you need that phase. Lewis once drove trucks six hours a day for $250 a week, and Mel calls the first job she got when she couldn't pay bills the best she ever had. The goal is to move toward the middle over time, where passion and income line up.

• Changing your habits can cost friendships, so let them react

Lewis lost friends when he disappeared for months to focus. People can resent you for 'killing off the person they once knew.' Mel compares it to the friend who skips the party scene and comes back marathon-fit, and notes we often spend money we don't have to shape what others think of us.

EXAMPLES

• Mel's all-in restaurant bet

Around 2008, at 41, she and her husband Chris scaled a successful pizza place by securing it with their house, a home equity line, every credit card they could get, the kids' college savings and their 401(k)s. The recession hit, the house couldn't be sold without owing money, she lost her job, and she describes ending up a million dollars in debt.

• The rehearsed grocery-store line

Knowing the account was overdrawn, she'd pick credit, since debit would definitely bounce, and pray for a glitch. When it declined: 'That's strange, it just worked at the gas station,' then she'd say she was running to the car for cash and never come back.

• Broccoli in his pockets at Toastmasters

At 23 or 24, after an Arena Football League stint in Huntsville paying $250 a week plus food stamps, Lewis had a wrist surgery using bone from his hip and spent six months in a cast. At a Toastmasters meeting, in a cut-off shirt, he stuffed snacks into his pockets. A man named Frank asked what he was doing, bought him lunch, became his mentor and later co-wrote Lewis's first book, about LinkedIn.

• The $5,000 speech goal

Lewis wrote down earning $5,000 from a single speech within nine months, signed and dated it, and framed it by his bed. He went to Toastmasters every week and gave free workshops. He was thrilled when someone paid $100, and he hit $5,000 by the deadline. He credits the deadline's urgency and insists it was weekly work, not wishing.

- **The $5 shoebox club**

  As a dyslexic kid with few friends, Lewis couldn't answer a basement club's entry questions (name someone who walked on the moon, the first three presidents). His mum dug $5 in quarters out of couch cushions. He handed over the shoebox, sat alone for an hour, and took away the lesson that he had little value.

- **Asking for stories, not advice**

  His early LinkedIn messages asking broke-guy questions like 'Can I pick your brain?' got no replies. When he researched people and asked them to tell him about a specific triumph, they replied, took him to lunch, and gave him advice through their stories.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Mel's starting checklist**

  Open the bills you've been avoiding. Call the credit card companies. Print your monthly statement and highlight wasteful spending, including unused subscriptions. Talk honestly with family. Question the house, the car, even Netflix. Then get a job, a second job and a side income. For her it took a decade.

- **Audit your feed**

  Notice whether your social media pushes you to spend money you don't have or teaches you to handle money better, and change your inputs accordingly.

- **Make money a weekly conversation**

  Share what you're learning with a friend or family member and ask for their biggest takeaway. Lewis says it took him years before talking about income, spending and debt felt safe.

How to Stop Negative Thoughts & Reset Your Mind for Positive Thinking

Guest: Dr. Ethan Kross
Date: 2025-05-08 · Duration: 1:21:07
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jqArVJXZXaE

KEYPOINTS

• Negative spirals are normal, not a sign something's wrong with you

Psychologist and neuroscientist Dr. Ethan Kross, who directs the Emotion and Self-Control Lab at the University of Michigan and wrote Chatter and Shift, opens with this: worry, rumination and an active inner critic are part of the human condition. We evolved negative emotions for a reason, and in the right proportions they're useful. He flags one line: if the volume is very high and it lasts more than about two weeks, that moves toward clinical territory.

• Your inner voice is a multi-purpose tool

Kross describes self-talk as silently using language to reflect on your life, and lists four functions: verbal working memory (repeating a phone number or grocery list), simulating and planning (rehearsing a talk, mentally packing for a trip), self-control and motivation, and making meaning — building the story of who you are after rejection or conflict. He cites one study estimating we talk to ourselves at the equivalent of 4,000 words a minute.

• "Chatter" is the inner voice turned against you

Kross defines chatter as negative thought looping, and names three common forms: rumination (replaying the past without progress), worry ("what if" loops about the future) and self-berating ("you idiot, you're worthless"). It hurts thinking and performance because it soaks up the limited attention resources of the prefrontal cortex, strains relationships and undermines health.

• We're wired to weigh the bad more heavily

Kross points to the "negativity bias" — a favorite paper title of his is "Bad Is Stronger Than Good" — and to Nobel Prize–winning work showing people are more sensitive to losses than gains. That makes evolutionary sense, but nobody teaches us how to right the ship once the oversensitivity takes over.

• There's no single fix; build a personal toolkit

In large studies tracking daily COVID anxiety against about 18 coping tools, no single tool moved the needle on its own; combinations did. Kross compares it to a gym: you learn the machines, then find the routine that fits you. If a tool backfires for you, drop it and use another.

• Distanced self-talk: coach yourself by name

Using your own name and "you" — "Come on, Ethan, you've got this" — shifts you into advice-giving mode. Kross ties it to "Solomon's Paradox," studied in his lab: like the wise biblical king who made poor personal choices, we're better at advising others than ourselves. "You" is the verbal equivalent of pointing at someone else, which puts guardrails on your self-talk and moves you from threat to challenge.

• Mental time travel shrinks the moment

Ask how you'll feel about this next week, next year or in ten years; most emotions follow a time course and fade, and remembering that gives hope. Kross's other version goes backward: he pictures his grandmother surviving the Nazis' murder of their family in World War II. When Mel asks what happens if that comparison feeds self-shaming, Kross says to keep the spotlight on what the other person endured and use it as motivation — or switch tools.

• Order around you compensates for chaos inside

Rituals and tidying create "compensatory control": when chatter makes you feel out of control, you exert control over your surroundings. Rituals are rigid sequences done the same way every time, like grieving rituals or athletes' pre-game habits. Kross, messy when happy, cleans dishes and his kids' rooms when stressed. His caveat: rituals become harmful if you over-rely on them.

• Your environment can lower the volume

In Kross's research, looking at a photo of a loved one after recalling a painful experience sped recovery, so he filled his offices with family photos. Walks in safe green space capture attention gently, letting it rest and restore. Nature can also trigger awe, which "shrinks the self" and your problems with it.

• Journaling worked alone, but people rarely do it

Journaling was the one tool in the COVID study that reduced anxiety by itself, yet it was the least used, probably because it takes effort and feels vulnerable. Kross's prompt: write your deepest thoughts and feelings about what's bothering you for 15–20 minutes, ignoring grammar. A story's beginning-middle-end structure helps organize the jumble.

EXAMPLES

• Kross's own rabbit hole

When his youngest daughter applied to the same school as her older sister, he spiraled on "what if she doesn't get in," amazed at how good we are at brainstorming endless worst-case scenarios. She got in.

• Mr. Rogers' journal entry

Returning after time off, Fred Rogers wrote that he'd never live up to expectations, then partway through switched to distanced self-talk — you've got this, you'll do a great job — and the whole tone of the entry shifted.

• Mel's junk drawer

Two and a half hours late, unpacked and berating herself, Mel started organizing the kitchen junk drawer until her husband said she didn't need to do that now. Kross explains it as compensatory control; she also used to rearrange furniture during a hard stretch in her marriage.

• Mel's 5:15 a.m. walk

After difficult news and a sleepless night, Mel walked in the dark in her pajamas instead of opening social media. After about 13 minutes, spotting an owl and the sunrise, the beat-down lifted. Kross notes 13 minutes is probably faster than Tylenol works

on a headache.

- **"Don't Stop Believin'" in the car**
  His daughter's bad mood flipped when the Journey song came on. Kross says senses — music, scent — are underused tools for shifting your own and others' emotions.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Use WOOP to follow through**
  Wish (goal), Outcome (what life looks like if you get it), Obstacle (your personal barrier), Plan as an if-then: "If I start berating myself, then I'll coach myself by name."
- **Audit your "chatter advisors"**
  List the people you vent to. Circle those who first listen and empathize, then help broaden perspective; cross out those who only co-ruminate or jump straight to fixes. It's often not your closest people.
- **Ask before advising**
  Kross listens to his wife until she seems done, then asks whether she wants to keep going or hear a thought.
- **Give invisible support**
  Unsolicited advice can signal "you can't handle this." Instead, quietly take over chores, run a team best-practices session, share a helpful resource in the group chat, or offer a hug or pat on the back.

What Every Mom Needs to Hear Today

Guest: Jesse (Mel's studio manager)
Date: 2025-05-05 · Duration: 1:00:10
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2U3wQ82ZIdE

KEYPOINTS

• There is no 'right' way to give birth, and trusting your child is the first lesson

Jesse, Mel's studio manager and video editor of four years, was 36 weeks pregnant with high blood pressure. She felt she had already failed because her doctor said she wouldn't go into labor naturally and would likely be induced. Mel's reframe is that the baby has her own spirit and will come 'when she's damn ready.' She says 40 weeks is a guesstimate; her daughter Sawyer came two weeks late and had to be delivered with vacuum and forceps. Mel's warning: if you fixate on getting it right, your child will sense your anxiety and feel responsible for it.

• Fear after pregnancy loss is a sign of mental health, not weakness

Jesse had lost two pregnancies before this one. Mel cites a reframe from Dr. Lisa Damour: being nervous after experiences like that shows you're mentally well. Mel says you can be nervous and trust your body, your doctors and your baby at the same time, and that holding space for both is what parenting is.

• Parenting is holding space for your experience and your child's

Mel defines the job as comforting a struggling child while believing you can guide them and that they can learn from life with you beside them. 'If you stay in that lane, there's nothing to get right.' She applies the Let Them Theory too: let the baby come when she's ready, and let yourself feel what you feel.

• You will mess up, so apologize

'There would be no therapists if parents did not screw up,' Mel says. She describes being a shouter with a short fuse who took work stress out on her kids, 'wildly fun and then wildly pissed off.' That left her daughters on edge, wondering which mom they'd get. She has since apologized for the volatility, for the fighting with Chris during financial struggles and for the drinking.

• The 'parental mismatch': what kids need versus what a parent can give

Crediting Dr. Nicole LePera and Dr. Russell Kennedy, Mel explains that sometimes what a child needs is beyond what a parent's skills or circumstances allow. She uses T.D. Jakes's image, from a conversation with Oprah: a 'quarter-cup' parent can give everything they have and it will never feel like enough to a 'gallon' child. Mel says it's worth acknowledging that your own parents may have been emotionally immature, carrying their own trauma, or under stresses you didn't see.

• Be a guide, not a dictator

Mel says 'we're a ski family' or 'everyone here is a doctor' is your vision, not guidance. Make it safe for kids to feel what they feel and try what they want, whether that's music instead of sports or a partner you don't like. She cites Dr. Stuart Ablon of Harvard Medical School and Mass General Brigham and his collaborative 'with them' approach: ask 'What do you want to do about it?' and 'How can I support you?' The goal is a kid who leaves home equipped and wants to come back.

• Protecting your child's trust beats sharing what they told you

Mel says the fastest way to make sure kids never tell you anything is to pass along what they share, especially to other parents, because it gets back to school. If a child says 'don't tell Dad,' she explains that she and Dad are a team. She asks permission to tell him, or offers to go with the child to tell him together, and promises they won't be in trouble. She says the kids have always agreed, and it stops them playing parents against each other.

• Separate destructive guilt from productive guilt

Destructive guilt is society saying you're mothering wrong: you should be breastfeeding, you shouldn't be working. Productive guilt points to a value. Working to pay bills and keep a roof over your kids' heads, as Mel and Chris both had to around 1999–2007 without family nearby, is something to be proud of. Years later, Mel's guilt about missing field-hockey games while giving speeches told her she had met her financial goal and needed to take on less work.

EXAMPLES

• 'Do you want my advice, or do you just want me to listen?'

Jesse remembered Mel asking this when daughter Kendall came tearing upstairs upset. Mel calls it the single most important question a parent can ask. It stops you from jumping to solutions, signals you trust them to know what they want, and in her experience about 99% of the time kids just want to air it out.

• The party Mel accidentally exposed

One of Mel's kids told her about high-school drinking at a party. Mel casually mentioned it to a close friend, assuming she knew. The friend's daughter got grounded and blamed Mel's daughter, and Mel says it took a couple of years to rebuild that trust.

• Oakley's fear of throwing up

During a period when their son was changing schools and his dyslexia was still undiagnosed, he developed intense anxiety about vomiting. Mel describes leaving a Broadway show with Ben Platt mid-performance during his panic attack, and an airplane episode that ended with him throwing up in the airport. She often met it with anger. Recently she cried and apologized to him, saying she thinks she made his anxiety worse.

• Kids waking their parents for the bus

During the worst financial stress, when the kids were about 10 and 8, Sawyer and Kendall would get themselves ready and tap Mel and Chris awake in chairs where they had been drinking all night.

• Jesse's update five weeks postpartum

Jesse was induced at 37 weeks because of her blood pressure, eight days after recording, and calls the delivery 'perfect.' The induction fell a year and a day after her first miscarriage, which she sees as a full-circle moment. She's running on two hours of sleep and says that without fear she can be a guide to her daughter.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Build a night routine to rescue your mornings

For listener Kelly, who cries on her way to work, Mel suggests getting kids in bed by about 8 p.m. Then pack the lunches, backpacks and work bag and set coats and boots by the door; she estimates that buys about 30 calm minutes. Be in bed by 9:30 and wake 30 minutes before your child to exercise or plan, because 'the second your child wakes up, the day is no longer yours.'

• Use boundaries, not balance

Mel compares it to a Lego kit rather than balancing it all. For example, go home at 3 or 5, put the phone and laptop away, then work for an hour after the baby goes down. Expect about six months of blending before you find a rhythm. She adds that showing your child a mom with ambition is a gift.

• A script for guilt and perfectionism

Hand on heart: 'I'm doing the best I can with the resources I have. I'm a good mom.' If all you have is 60% and you give 60%, you gave the 100% you had.

• Parents of adult kids: it's never too late

Mel says apologizing clears the slate and her kids have been very forgiving. Use 'let them' to stop judging grades, motivation or partners, and 'let me' to decide how you show up. She cites Dr. Robert Waldinger's long-running Harvard Study of Adult Development: a happy, healthy life is about relationships.

Advice From the #1 Longevity Doctor: Add 10 Years to Your Life With 3 Simple Habits

Guest: Dr. Eric Topol
Date: 2025-05-01 · Duration: 1:05:26
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SQ54wma-JQA

KEYPOINTS

• Aim for healthspan, not just lifespan

Dr. Eric Topol is a cardiologist who practiced for nearly four decades, founded the Scripps Research Translational Institute, and wrote Super Agers. He says the goal is more years of healthy living. Across study after study, following the full set of lifestyle factors is associated with an extra 7 to 10 years of healthy aging. He says no magic pill is needed.

• The big three diseases take more than 20 years to develop

Cancer, cardiovascular disease and neurodegenerative disease (mainly Alzheimer's and Parkinson's) develop over two decades or more. That leaves a long window to prevent or delay them. Mel cites the book's figure that 95% of Americans aged 60 and older have a chronic disease. Topol says that if those people had started at 50, many would have avoided disease or developed it at 75 or 80 instead of 60. He's clear he isn't talking about cancers and diseases that strike the young.

• It's never too late, or too early

Starting in your 20s gives you more healthy years, but Topol says people who begin at 70 or 80 still benefit. He describes a 98-year-old woman in the book, Mrs. L.R., who is mentally sharp, does jigsaw puzzles and oil paintings, and stays socially active, even though her parents died in their 50s. He says lifestyle can override, or work independently of, bad genes. Aging is inevitable, but becoming frail and weak isn't.

• 'Lifestyle plus' goes beyond diet, exercise and sleep

The three big gaps Topol sees are poor diet heavy in ultra-processed food, too little aerobic and resistance exercise, and too little sleep, especially deep sleep, which he ties to brain health. The 'plus' covers social isolation, environmental exposures like air pollution, microplastics and 'forever chemicals,' and time outdoors in nature.

• Screening should match your risk, not just your age

Topol calls age-based screening outdated. He says most cancers aren't found by screening, and about 88–89% of women will never get breast cancer. He favors polygenic risk scores for breast, colon, prostate and lung cancer, which cost about $50, are offered by around 10 companies, and can be done with saliva. Combined with family history and blood work, they can tell someone whether they need a mammogram every 10 years, never, or often.

• Skip full-body MRIs and blood cancer tests unless you're at high risk

Multi-cancer blood tests like Grail's (Mel's husband had ordered one for about $700) flag maybe 4–5 people per thousand, and about half of those already have advanced cancer. Full-body MRIs aren't validated and often produce false positives. Topol says he wouldn't take one even for free. They can make sense for people at significant risk, such as a strong family history of pancreatic cancer.

• No anti-aging product has been proven in humans

Topol quotes his own description of a 'longevity circus': 800-plus US longevity clinics, some charging up to $50,000 a week. Rapamycin suppresses the immune system. NAD+ supplements have no human data. Senolytic drugs aren't selective. Young-plasma infusions and IV vitamin drips have nothing behind them. Yamanaka-factor reprogramming made old mice look young down to the organ level, but caused tumors, because the hallmarks of aging overlap heavily with those of cancer.

• Exercise is the only thing known to lower biological age

Epigenetic clocks, based on methyl groups on DNA, estimate biological age. Topol says exercise is the only intervention shown to widen the gap between your real age and your biological age. He used to focus on cardio. Now he says the data on resistance training is just as solid, and that it also improves balance. He says nothing beats exercise for slowing whole-body aging.

• Chronic stress and loneliness speed up aging through inflammation

Many physicians don't accept it, Topol says, but the data linking stress to cancer, heart disease and neurodegeneration is strong. Chronic stress ages the immune system and fuels inflammation. Adaptive stress, the kind that pushes you to exercise, is fine. Social isolation is critical: time spent alone rises sharply with age. Nature and music help mental health, and he says AI will never replace the human bond.

EXAMPLES

• Chris van Tulleken's ultra-processed experiment

Topol describes the UK physician and author of Ultra-Processed People, who ate a mostly ultra-processed diet for 30 days, Super Size Me–style. He gained about 10 kilos, and his brain scans and inflammatory markers 'went off the track.' Topol links ultra-processed food to overeating, inflammation, type 2 diabetes, atherosclerosis, brain inflammation and cancer risk. He says it makes up 60–70% of the typical diet and should be cut back, not necessarily eliminated.

• The Finnish risk-score study

In a Finnish study Topol cites, people told they had a high polygenic risk for heart disease went on to change their lifestyles. People rarely change while healthy, but specific personal risk motivates them.

• Rapid-fire food verdicts

Cut refined sugar and sugary drinks, and avoid high-fructose corn syrup. Swap regular salt for a potassium chloride substitute, especially since most sodium comes from processed food. Sugar substitutes are uncertain, so avoid them if you can. Coffee is the rare good news: two to four cups a day is linked to less chronic disease and inflammation.

• Supplements 'enrich your urine'

His book says there's little to no hard evidence for vitamins or supplements, especially in people who already eat well. He describes patients nervous to show him their long supplement lists. If they feel better, he won't argue, but he tells them it's likely

a placebo effect and that some supplements carry risks.

- **A blood test for Alzheimer's risk**

  Topol says the p-tau217 blood test is as good as a PET scan at showing Alzheimer's risk. He predicts AI will combine many layers of a person's data to estimate not just whether, but roughly when, someone might develop mild cognitive impairment. Mass General Brigham already gives patients polygenic risk scores.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Topol's exercise prescription**

  Do at least 30 minutes of continuous movement that raises your heart rate five days a week, ideally every day. Add resistance work a few times a week (cheap bands are fine) and balance practice, like standing on one leg for a minute and switching. Decide when and where you'll do it, whether that's the gym, home equipment or a walk outside.

- **Eat more protein as you age**

  The standard recommendation is 0.8 g per kilogram of body weight, about 70 g for a 70 kg (roughly 150 lb) person. Older adults may need 1–1.2 g/kg to counter muscle loss. That's around 70–90 g a day, not 150–160.

- **Ask your doctor about personalized risk**

  If cancer, heart disease or Alzheimer's runs in your family, ask about polygenic risk scores alongside family history and routine labs, rather than paying for unvalidated whole-body scans.

- **Turn outward**

  Topol's advice is to get outside, make and see friends, and build social contact into your life, especially as time alone naturally increases with age.

Trust Your Gut: How to Make a Hard Decision

Date: 2025-04-28 · Duration: 0:49:31
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aGPYyo_Mplg

KEYPOINTS

- **Your life is largely the sum of your decisions, including small ones.**
  Mel cites estimates that we make up to 35,000 decisions a day: whether to get up an hour early for the gym, eat the cookie at work, or reach for the vape again. She argues that where you are now mostly reflects past decisions, and who you become, in money, relationships, friendships and health, depends on the ones you make today. On autopilot, past decisions just repeat. To become a healthy or financially responsible person, start making the decisions that kind of person makes.
- **Being decisive is a skill you can learn.**
  Mel calls herself one of the most decisive people you'll meet, but says she wasn't always and had to build her own framework to stop being 'so damn indecisive'. She was even weighing a business opportunity while recording, and planned to use the framework on it herself.
- **Intuition is your inner compass.**
  Mel describes intuition as an internal GPS built from your DNA, your life experience, and signals from your gut, brain and heart. Her metaphor is a compass reading the energy around you, which is why you sometimes walk into a room and immediately want to avoid someone. Her core claim is that you usually already know what's right. The problem is finding the courage to act on it.
- **Feeling stuck is a signal pointing you somewhere else.**
  Feeling stuck, frustrated, sad, disconnected or on autopilot is, in Mel's framing, a directional signal: your compass telling you your life is out of alignment. It doesn't mean you're condemned to stay there; it means it's time to turn toward something new.
- **Use your gut to decide what to do, and your brain to decide when and how.**
  This is the central idea of the episode. Your gut tells you what the right decision is. Your thinking brain plans the timing, the wording, who needs to hear it and how to do it responsibly. For example, you might know three to six months before you quit a job that you're leaving, and use that time to save money so you aren't left in a precarious position.
- **Settle your emotions before you read your gut.**
  Mel points to research showing that the brain factors in your emotional state when judging a decision. When you're stressed or afraid, you tend to take the path of least resistance and do what you've always done. Her approach is to treat emotions as the storm, not the map: notice them, then set them aside while you check what feels true.
- **The right decision often feels wrong.**
  This is the title of chapter 8 of her book The Let Them Theory. What makes decisions agonising usually isn't uncertainty about the truth but dread of the aftermath: other people's disappointment, expectations and emotions. When someone asks for advice on a big decision, Mel believes they usually want courage and reassurance, not an answer. She calls agonising over a hard choice a mentally healthy response.
- **Not deciding is still a decision.**
  Avoiding a choice means choosing to stay where you are, accept less and ignore your intuition. Mel applies this to staying in a marriage or job too long, putting off moving a parent into care, or continuing to pay for an adult child you resent supporting.
- **There are no bad decisions if you trust yourself to handle the fallout.**
  Mel's final point is that every decision leads somewhere and gives you information. Even choices you regret, like staying too long in a relationship, may have brought you to the clarity you have now. If you make the choice that feels right at the time and trust yourself to handle whatever follows, she argues, it can't really be a wrong decision.

EXAMPLES

- **'Make it two'**
  In 1994, Mel was at a New York City bar ordering a bourbon on the rocks to go in a plastic cup so she could slip out. A voice behind her said, 'That sounds great. Make it two.' She turned around, saw Chris Robbins and 'just knew'.
- **Oakley and Hirschsprung's disease**
  When their son Oakley came home from the hospital, he wouldn't eat. Mel went back to their pediatrician, Mark, whom she had known for 11 years, every day insisting something was wrong. About five days later Oakley was airlifted to Mass General, and doctors weren't sure he would survive. It turned out to be Hirschsprung's disease, a rare intestinal condition, and he had been close to a rupture that could have caused fatal septic shock. She gives this as an example of intuition knowing before the mind can explain.
- **The law firm she knew was wrong on day one**
  In 1998, newly moved from New York to Boston, Mel took the first job offer she got, at a corporate law firm in a downtown high-rise. She knew on the first day it wasn't for her, but she needed to pay her bills and couldn't yet see how to change careers. She stayed about another year before making the switch. She doesn't count it as a bad decision: it paid the bills and pointed her toward the change.
- **The groom who dreaded his wedding**
  A listener wrote that his wedding was weeks away, he and his fiancée were fighting more, invitations had gone out, both sets of parents had paid deposits, and he couldn't shake a feeling of dread. Mel says that from the outside the answer is obvious: if you're dreading it, call it off. His real struggle is the guilt of hurting people. Worrying about them shows he's a good person, but it's no reason to marry someone he doesn't want to marry.
- **The year she didn't move**
  When her son wanted to move to southern Vermont, Chris and Oakley moved there for a year while Mel stayed behind. She knew she would eventually follow, but working out when and how took almost a year, and she says that was okay.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Run the one-year test**

  Get quiet, drop out of your head into your body, and picture yourself a year from now having done nothing. If your chest tightens, you feel dread or your energy drains, that's a no. Then picture the other path: out of the relationship, in nursing school, channel launched. If you feel some expansion or energy, even with fear, Mel calls that your true north.

- **Plan the 'when, how and to whom' separately**

  Once your gut has decided, use your brain to plan the timing, the conversation, who needs to know and the money. That separation takes the pressure off without letting you off the hook.

- **Let them react**

  Mel says the Let Them Theory stopped her from avoiding conversations, over-explaining or delaying decisions for fear of upsetting people. Expect people to be upset or confused, and let them. Telling someone when you no longer want to be with them is, in her view, the most courageous and kind thing you can do.

- **Change how you talk about intuition**

  Swap 'I don't know how to trust my gut' for 'I know what my gut is telling me; I'm just afraid to act on it.' Then work on how quickly you act on that truth.

It’s Not You: The Real Reason Adult Friendship Is So Hard & 3 Ways to Make It Easier

Guest: Danielle Bayard Jackson
Date: 2025-04-24 · Duration: 1:28:54
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kIiGtwPLSvI

KEYPOINTS

• Women's friendships tend to be deeper and more intense than men's

Friendship coach Danielle Bayard Jackson, author of Fighting for Our Friendships, says research shows women experience more platonic intimacy in same-sex friendships. They tend to pair off one-on-one, which brings depth and accountability, while men gather in larger groups of casual friends where they can stay more anonymous. Women talk more about health and family; men more about sports and current events. Women integrate friends like siblings; men, like cousins.

• Three affinities hold women's friendships together: symmetry, support and secrecy

Across anthropology, sociology and psychology, Jackson kept seeing the same three priorities. Symmetry is feeling equal and alike ("me too," "same"). Support is having each other's back, which research names as the top thing women want from same-sex friends. Secrecy means a shared "vault" of mutual self-disclosure. When tension appears, she suggests tracing it back to which of the three has shifted.

• No friendship is so close you don't have to say what you need

Many women believe a real friend should just know, and that having to ask detracts from closeness. Jackson calls that unfair, since we don't expect mind-reading anywhere else. Unspoken needs lead to withdrawal: calling less, initiating less, "silently stacking offenses," until the other person is cut off without knowing why.

• Sharing is the glue, and sharing less is the first sign of strain

If a friend tells someone else first about a promotion, pregnancy or health scare, it makes you question how close you are. Jackson notes some people were raised not to share their business and respects that, but challenges them to consider how close they feel to people if they never disclose.

• Women's friendships are deeper but end faster

Research she cites finds girls have more former friendships than boys, and women's friendships dissolve at a faster rate. Jackson rejects the "girls are petty" explanation: when someone helps raise your kids and advises your career, there's more surface for friction. Someone you check in with quarterly rarely falls out with you.

• Friendship breakups can hurt longer than romantic ones

Romantic relationships come with an expectation they might end; friendships rarely do. Some theories suggest women's friendships become part of self-concept, so losing one makes you question whether you're still funny or lovable. Mel shares a college friend she split with over 30 years ago, matching tattoos and all, whom she still thinks about because the ending holds a version of herself she regrets being.

• Envy and jealousy are normal; what you do with them matters

Jackson distinguishes envy (two people: you have something I want) from jealousy (three: I fear losing you to someone else). Envy can reveal your own desires. Instead of avoiding the friend or making passive-aggressive remarks, coach yourself: her having isn't you lacking, and timing differs. For tender situations like infertility, it's fine to set a kind boundary such as skipping a baby shower but sending a gift.

• Women set higher expectations and register more "wrongs"

Mel reads from Jackson's book: a review of 36 studies found women wanted more from close relationships than men, especially reciprocity and self-disclosure, and so identify more relational violations. One study tracking college dorms found most roommate reassignment requests came from women.

• Controlling friends are often driven by anxiety

Jackson sees anxious attachment under possessiveness, like the friend who tracks your location and texts when you're out with someone else. To someone who recognizes it in herself: build multiple friendships so one person isn't your everything, and ask what you're afraid of if you loosen your grip.

• Half of friends turn over every seven years

Research she cites finds people replace about half their friends every seven years. Jackson hopes it eases shame both about friendships ending and about making new friends at 42, and means we should keep inviting new people in. She adds that research finds 40% of adults don't have a best friend.

EXAMPLES

• Mel's middle-school slow dances

Mel says she hated her best friends when boys picked them to dance and not her. She cites research that girls' confidence drops sharply between 12 and 14, with a 46% drop by 14, and that 60% of girls that age aren't confident they can make new friends. Jackson mentions Dr. Hannah Bradshaw's work: girls who spend time with boys often say they went there because girls mistreated them.

• A friend who named her limit

A friend whose child was in a serious mental-health crisis told Mel she was happy for her but was stepping back from their friend group because seeing other kids hit milestones was too painful. Mel felt closer to her for saying it instead of faking a smile.

• The bridal party problem

Jackson calls choosing bridesmaids the only time besides MySpace's "Top 8" that women publicly rank friends, and it can reveal that someone isn't as close as she thought. Brides should explain the logistics — a small party, a sister's expectations, cost — to reassure friends, or skip the bridal party.

• Teen friendships predict adult love

Jackson cites a study finding the top predictor of success in adult romantic relationships is how well you did with same-sex friends in adolescence, likely because that's where you first learn to communicate and negotiate.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Say the disappointment, then watch the response**
  "I was bummed you didn't come last night." Weigh how severe and frequent letdowns are, but focus on whether the friend regrets it and tries to repair. Mel reframes a friend's disappointment as a green flag: it means they wanted you there.
- **Know the warning signs**
  You don't like who you are around her, you leave depleted, your goals feel delayed by the friendship, or trust feels unrecoverable. Sometimes it's not a toxic person, just a dynamic that doesn't work.
- **Frame boundaries as invitations, not accusations**
  Instead of "you text too much," try "I love our weekend calls; Saturdays or Sundays?" Playfulness lowers the threat.
- **Name transitions and new closeness out loud**
  "I love how happy he makes you, and I miss us — can we FaceTime Fridays?" With new friends, say "I'm loving getting to know you."
- **If a teen is iced out, help her find her people**
  Keep showing up kindly, and approach the one group member she trusts most. People who take pleasure in pushing her out aren't her people.

A Process for Finding Purpose: Do THIS to Build the Life You Want | Jay Shetty

Guest: Jay Shetty
Date: 2025-04-21 · Duration: 1:51:17
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MOVQponoBmI

KEYPOINTS

• Five steps sit between learning something and changing

Shetty's sequence is learn, experiment, perform, struggle and thrive. Experimenting means a new idea may fail on Tuesday and work on Wednesday, so don't expect it to be perfect tomorrow. Performing is when it becomes automatic, and struggle shows up just before the next level. Reflection runs through the middle steps: ask how you could do it 1% or 2% differently.

• You're not stuck, you're grieving a past version of yourself

Quoting a Zen teaching, 'what's holding you back is what you're holding on to,' he says reality has moved on and you haven't. Empty nesters see memories in every corner of the house. After a breakup people keep rereading old vacation photos while the ex has moved on. Momentum doesn't come from knowing where you're going but from knowing you don't want to stay where you are.

• Fear of your own social circle blocks new identities

'I'm a teacher, I can't be a creator.' 'I'm a nurse, how can I podcast?' 'I'm a mom, I can't run a TikTok shop.' Shetty says the pressure people feel comes from friends who have approved their current role, not from strangers. You can be two things at once without permission, and even when you succeed some people still won't understand, so it was never about their understanding.

• Become a professional quitter, without a full map

Almost no one understood when he became a monk, left the monastery, took a consulting job or left it to make videos. Three podcast production companies told him nobody would listen to him for an hour. He says 14 of 17 publishing imprints rejected the title Think Like a Monk, which went on to sell millions of copies. He has never known where his life was going, and thinks needing everything figured out first is 'the biggest lie we've been told.'

• Treat a job you hate as a launch pad

You can hate where you are and still collect every skill you'll need. Consulting gave him negotiation, communication, presentation and client skills he still uses. Spending eight or nine hours a day thinking 'I hate it here' wastes the only big block of time you have, since evenings might offer one or two hours. Accept that you dislike it, then take everything it offers.

• Find purpose by collecting and connecting

Citing a book about finding purpose through sampling, he describes collecting stories, skills and experiences in every job, then one day connecting them like jigsaw pieces. He sees himself as just as much consultant as monk and media person. School trained us to pick one major and one title, which is why being three things feels complicated.

• Passion plus service equals purpose, at any scale

Passion is what brings you joy. For him it's a weekend 'in a cave of books.' Purpose is using that passion to serve others. A photographer capturing memories for people is already doing it. Purpose isn't defined by reach, doesn't need to be your job, and doesn't need social media. A team member's retired mother found hers by organizing trips for family, friends and couples.

• If you feel numb, follow the whisper and ask people who know you

Signs are quiet: organize a couple more birthdays, help a friend plan a wedding, write one quote a day. You're already good at something that comes so easily you don't count it. Ask three people who know you deeply, such as a colleague, a family member and a friend, what you do that makes them think of you and what you help them solve.

• Judge others by intentions and yourself by actions

His monk teachers taught him to reverse our default of excusing ourselves by intentions while condemning others by actions. When a friend was hurt that he hadn't posted about their podcast, it wasn't neglect: he rarely touches social media while traveling. With people you know, ask directly. A hard conversation with someone you love should bring you closer, and if you're scared to have it, you may not be that close.

• Stop keeping score, and let love arrive in other forms

If you showed up expecting something back, that's a transaction, not love. His teacher said love is a circle: it returns, but not always from the people you gave it to. Shetty pushes back on rigid love languages, arguing that demanding to be loved one way limits what others can offer. Telling people they disappointed you discourages them, while noticing the small things inspires more.

EXAMPLES

• Hospital cleaners who called themselves healers

Shetty cites Yale researcher Amy Wrzesniewski's work with hospital cleaners. Some described their work as low-skilled labor, while others with the same hours, shifts and pay called themselves healers and carers, believing a clean hospital gives patients dignity and draws families to the bedside. That group was happier and more productive. The researchers called it job crafting.

• Radhi's meals before the cookbook

On a spouse visa in America and unable to work, his wife Radhi cooked and delivered meals in LA and joined food distribution programs. She turned down catering because she cooks as an act of love. Her New York Times bestselling cookbook, Joy Full, came much later as a byproduct.

• The Asus instead of the iPad mini

Shetty loved gifts because his breadwinner mom often worked on his birthday but left a wrapped Power Ranger. Radhi's family gives quality time instead. He hinted for an iPad mini and unwrapped an Asus her family said had better specs, and he was upset. Over time he realized he had been ignoring the many other ways she showed love.

• Mel's jealousy became two years of study

Tired of flying to corporate speaking gigs, Mel felt jealous of Shetty's podcast. He told her she'd 'destroy' it if she launched one. His line: weak people envy those ahead of them, strong people study them. She studied him for two years and launched with two episodes a week because of what she learned. For Mel, jealousy points to something meant for you, unlike envy.

• Mr. Buckeridge kept asking why

His art teacher refused 'it looks good' as an answer, which annoyed him at first. Shetty credits him with making him intentional, down to the book by his bed and the quote at his desk. Mel recalled her math teacher Glenn Core, whose class chanted 'Perseverance wins.' Both urge listeners to contact a teacher who shaped them.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Imagine life without something to feel grateful

In hard times, grieve first. When you're ready, instead of listing what you have, ask what life would be like without it, the way a cut finger suddenly makes you grateful for your hand. Mel applied it to her 80-year-old father and shifted from fear about limited holidays to gratitude that he's here.

• Text people when you want nothing

Whenever someone comes to mind, Shetty sends 'Thinking of you, sending lots of love,' and people often reply that they were just thinking of him. If the shades feel drawn, be the one who texts, calls or helps first, and remember Emerson: plant trees whose shade you don't expect to sit in.

• Ask whether life is a school, a hospital, a movie or a mountain

If lessons keep repeating, ask what you need to learn. If you're in pain, ask what needs healing. If things are good, ask what to experience before it passes. If you're on your path, ask what skill you need to climb.

#1 Weight Loss Doctor: The Truth About Obesity, Ozempic, Dieting, & How to Feel Better Now

Guest: Dr. Rocio Salas-Whalen
Date: 2025-04-17 · Duration: 1:17:47
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=57OyIDnHZAk

KEYPOINTS

• Obesity is a chronic, multifactorial disease, not a personal failing

Dr. Rocio Salas-Whalen, triple board-certified in endocrinology, obesity medicine and internal medicine and the founder of New York Endocrinology, opens with an apology on behalf of doctors: 'We failed you.' She says obesity is not self-inflicted, and that weight loss should not be a full-time job that consumes your life. She has seen grown men cry in her office on hearing for the first time that it isn't their fault.

• Five causes, and you control roughly one

Her framework: lifestyle (diet, exercise, sitting); genetics, including research she cites suggesting parents' weight before conception affects their child; hormonal changes such as hypothyroidism, PCOS, perimenopause and menopause; aging, with muscle loss and more fat storage; and environment. Environment includes processed food, places where walking isn't practical, remote work, and endocrine-disrupting chemicals like BPA and pesticides that mimic hormones. Some antidepressants and blood-pressure drugs can also promote weight gain.

• She says obesity raises cancer risk more than many people realize

Salas-Whalen says obesity increases mortality and is the biggest risk factor for more than 15 cancers. She claims it's a bigger breast-cancer risk than alcohol, hormone therapy or genetics, and the top risk for pancreatic, colon, prostate and thyroid cancers. She argues it should be treated like type 2 diabetes or hypertension: lifestyle support plus medication, with lifestyle not replacing treatment.

• GLP-1s are 20 years old and began with a lizard

The first FDA-approved GLP-1, Byetta from Eli Lilly, arrived in 2005 as a twice-daily injection for type 2 diabetes. Salas-Whalen says Dr. John Eng, an endocrinologist researching at the Bronx VA, isolated the compound from Gila monster venom, which causes pancreatitis in its prey. Saxenda (daily) was approved for weight loss in 2012, Ozempic for diabetes in 2017, and the same drug was approved for weight loss in 2021 as Wegovy, partly for insurance reasons. She has prescribed GLP-1s for weight since 2010 and compares newer versions to iPhone upgrades.

• They target both reasons we eat: fuel and reward

GLP-1s suppress hunger hormones and raise satiety hormones, so people feel full on a third to a half of their usual portion; for many that means two small meals a day. They also act on receptors in the brain's reward area for food and alcohol, so an anticipated meal or drink no longer delivers the same pull. She says they only stimulate insulin when glucose is above normal, which is why they can be used without diabetes.

• Thin doesn't mean healthy, so get a body-composition scan

Salas-Whalen measures body composition at every visit, using bioimpedance (InBody) for accessibility, DEXA as an option, or MRI as the gold standard. She uses obesity thresholds of 32% body fat and up, against normal ranges of 18–28% for women and 10–20% for men. Some slim patients are 'skinny fat' (sarcopenic obesity), and people who think they need to lose 5–10 pounds may actually need to lose 20–25 because they're under-muscled.

• Who is a candidate, and who isn't

Her intake covers when a patient first became weight-conscious (often age nine or ten), medications, two generations of family weight history, and gynecological status. The only absolute contraindication she names is a personal or first-degree family history of medullary thyroid carcinoma; other thyroid cancers don't count. They're not recommended during pregnancy or breastfeeding.

• Many people will need them long term, but not everyone

Chronic diseases are controlled, not cured, she says, and stopping doesn't remove genetics, hormones, aging or environment. Lifelong obesity usually means long-term use. Someone who never struggled until gaining 30 pounds after pregnancy may not need it long term.

• Muscle is the make-or-break factor

Eating less can cost muscle indirectly, and she calls muscle your biggest metabolic organ, burning calories and pulling sugar from the blood when it contracts (Mel connects this to post-meal walks). She sees fat drop rapidly in patients who keep or gain muscle. Her targets: about 90–100 grams of protein a day and strength training twice a week, upper and lower body, with protein first. She attributes 'Ozempic face,' hair loss and loose skin to losing weight too fast without enough protein.

EXAMPLES

• How weight loss was discovered by accident

Early GLP-1s were hard sells: they were twice-daily injections with heavy nausea, and diabetes patients linked injections with insulin and 'failure.' Then patients came back to follow-ups with better glucose and lower weight. Salas-Whalen says that was unheard of, because most diabetes drugs, insulin included, promote weight gain.

• The doctor's own six months on a GLP-1

Salas-Whalen lifted weights from her early 20s and never struggled with weight. After having kids at 38 and 39 and entering perimenopause (her mother had early menopause), she couldn't lose 30 pounds. At 42 she used a GLP-1 for six months, returned to her weight and hasn't needed it since. She felt no shame and says it made her a more empathetic doctor. She tells new mothers to give themselves one to two years before worrying about weight.

• 'Three pounds, half of it muscle'

Patients pleased with a three-pound loss often see on the scan that half was muscle. She says that's when they start lifting and eating more protein. Midway through treatment she sees a 'switch' from an external focus on looks to liking how strong they

feel.

• Mel's ad feed

While researching the episode, Mel was flooded with ads for mail-order GLP-1s. She mentions friends who complained of indigestion and one warned about suicidal ideation. Salas-Whalen says she has never had to stop the drug for those symptoms and stresses that safety depends on the prescriber's expertise.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Avoid med spas and compounded versions

Medical offices don't sell FDA-approved GLP-1s in the office; they send prescriptions to a pharmacy. Compounded versions sold by med spas, telehealth or mail order are unregulated and may contain fillers. Salas-Whalen cites studies showing most hospital visits for severe side effects come from compounded drugs and overdosing, whereas FDA versions come in pre-dosed pens. 'Safety should not be jeopardized by cost.'

• Skip microdosing

She says sub-therapeutic doses lack evidence, rely on compounded products, and aren't needed if you're already metabolically healthy. She notes Eli Lilly's tirzepatide vial as one lower-dose option for maintenance.

• Insist on real supervision

Look for an obesity-medicine doctor, NP or PA, with follow-up every 8–10 weeks to adjust the dose and check muscle. Expect the conversation to take far longer than a 15-minute slot.

If You’re Feeling Behind in Life, Watch This

Date: 2025-04-14 · Duration: 1:14:46
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tyzOH2tr9_M

KEYPOINTS

• The feeling of being 'behind' comes from a 'social clock'

Mel builds the episode on psychologist Bernice Neugarten's 1960s finding that every society carries an invisible checklist of milestones: graduate by 22, marry by 30, have kids by 35, a midlife crisis at 50, retire at 65. Being 'on time' or 'off time' is measured against that list. Mel's point is that the list is social conditioning, not a law of life.

• The stress comes from feeling you've disappointed someone, not from being 'off time'

Drawing on Robert Waldinger's The Good Life (from the 86-year Harvard Study of Adult Development), Mel says social clocks also come from your family, culture, religion, friends and social media. Being off schedule isn't stressful in itself. What hurts is believing you're failing someone else's expectations. Her test question: behind whom, and by whose standard?

• Many milestones were set for a very different world

Retiring at 65 dates from the 1935 Social Security Act. Mel says life expectancy in the early 1800s was around 29 and that our grandparents' friends were dying in their 50s, which is why they rushed. Following their timeline today can push you into major decisions for approval rather than happiness.

• Your 20s are for exploring, not having it figured out

If you feel lost in your 20s, Mel says, 'you're doing your 20s correctly.' She points to hybrid and 24/7 work, unaffordable housing, a big generational wealth gap and nearly 10 million people behind on student loans (about $250 billion past due). She also cites Dell research that 85% of the jobs that will exist in 10 years haven't been created yet. Her advice is to treat being digitally native, and learning AI, as an asset.

• Your 30s are for getting clear on what you value, not settling down

Mel separates pressure from real deadlines. Citing the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, she notes female fertility starts to decline around 30 and drops more sharply around 35. So if you want biological children, be honest about it and look into options like egg freezing. Don't spend the decade with a partner who doesn't want the same thing, hoping they'll change.

• Dating teaches you what you want, so widen the net

From her Let Them Theory book (page 252), Mel argues that dating isn't only about finding 'the one'. It shows you what you will and won't accept. Clock-driven desperation makes people pickier, when meeting more people works better. She suggests loosening app filters on height, distance and background.

• Buying a home later than your parents isn't failure

Mel says the median 1950 home cost $7,300, about $88,000 in today's money, and calls today's prices roughly 11 times higher. The average US home buyer was 35 in 1991 and is 56 today, and she says Boston prices rose 73% in three years. She blames remote-work migration, pandemic money put into real estate, and private equity buyers.

• Your 40s are a launch pad, not a finish line

Mel says you aren't starting from scratch: past experience, a network and a new sense of urgency all add up. She cites MIT Sloan research putting the average age of a successful startup founder at 45. She warns that beating yourself up about being behind doesn't motivate you; it makes you depressed.

• Your 50s are for reinvention, not crisis

Citing Waldinger, Mel says this stage often brings more freedom, resilience and self-acceptance. She cites OECD figures that 73% of UK job growth over 30 years went to people over 50, and LinkedIn's description of a 'skills-based economy'. She also says research shows this is the decade to prioritise friendship over pure caregiving and career.

• Retire only if you want to, and stay engaged either way

Mel argues that the real question at 60 isn't whether to retire but what brings you energy. She says research links retirement to drops in verbal memory and increases in depression and isolation, because work gave people community, structure and purpose. She adds that people 65 and over are the fastest-growing part of the workforce.

EXAMPLES

• Mel's 14 jobs by 41

Mel says she had about 11 jobs in her 20s: law school she hated, public defender, a big firm she quit after a year, three startups in three years, life coach training, a paint-your-own-pottery business and radio. At 41, her husband's restaurant was failing, she'd been laid off, and they were in debt with liens on the house. At 50 she started a media company, and at 54 she started the podcast.

• Sawyer's crying video at 25

Mel's daughter Sawyer followed a carefully planned path into a cybersecurity job, then worked fully remotely for three years and felt isolated. She hesitated to quit for a four-month solo backpacking trip because of how it might look on her résumé. When she came home broke and living with her parents, she recorded a tearful video saying she had no idea what she was doing.

• Listener questions: Mimi, Shauna, Laura and Alyssa

Mimi, 25 and jobless, thought it was too late for medical or law school. Mel says there's no age limit to apply to medical school, and post-bacc premed programs exist. Shauna, 35, wants children after four years on dating apps. Laura, an empty nester with twins, gets a 'second 20s' of exploring. Alyssa feels pressure to retire.

• Late starts and long lives

Mel lists Vera Wang starting to design wedding dresses at 40, Samuel L. Jackson landing Pulp Fiction at 45 and Julia Child publishing her first cookbook at 49. Later in life: Betty White working until 99, George H.W. Bush skydiving at 90, and 'Grandma Droniak' with 14.8 million TikTok followers. Mel's mother-in-law found love again at 85 after being widowed for 19 years.

• Chris Robbins in his 50s

Mel's husband started a men's retreat called Soul Degree (three a year), trained as a death doula, writes for an hour a day toward a book, and is studying online for a master's in spiritual psychology.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Ask whose clock you're following**

  When you feel behind, name the expectation and where it came from: parents, culture, friends or the 1950s. Then decide whether it reflects what you actually want.

- **Separate real deadlines from made-up ones**

  Fertility has real biological limits, so look at the medical facts and keep your options open. Most other milestones, like a house, a career change or going back to school, have no deadline. Research them and set your own timeline.

- **What to say to someone struggling in their 20s**

  Acknowledge that hybrid work and today's economy make this decade genuinely hard, then remind them they will figure it out. Mel's version: take a breath, go for a walk, take the next right step.

- **Make connection a priority as you age**

  Mel cites orthopaedic surgeon Dr. Vonda Wright's view that muscles and the brain can keep getting stronger throughout life. Into your 60s and 70s, keep moving, stay social, and repair relationships: apologise, forgive, and say 'I love you' while you can.

The Truth About Anxiety & ADHD: Life-Changing Tools From Renowned Psychiatrist Dr. Tracey Marks

Guest: Dr. Tracey Marks
Date: 2025-04-10 · Duration: 1:33:13
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LOkEvGV-L4U

KEYPOINTS

• Anxiety is rising, and the goal is management, not a cure

Psychiatrist Dr. Tracey Marks, who has practiced for over 25 years, cites a World Health Organization report of a 25% global rise in anxiety that began with the pandemic and is still climbing. She blames 24-hour news, social-media comparison and information overload. Social anxiety and generalized anxiety are most common. Anxiety rises and falls like a wave, and some of it helps, such as prompting you to prepare for a presentation. The aim is to stop it from impairing your functioning.

• Anxiety happens in the head and the body

Mind symptoms include worry and preoccupation with what others think. The sympathetic fight-or-flight response fires for imagined threats too, causing a racing heart, gut trouble and unnoticed muscle tension. That tension is why you can feel exhausted after 'just sitting' all day. Marks admits she felt performance anxiety during the interview itself: a dry mouth and overthinking her words.

• You can't stop the gas pedal, but you can stop accelerating

The amygdala detects threats and steps on the gas; the parasympathetic system is the brake. Marks says the initial response can't be prevented, but its escalation into rumination, freezing and worst-case thinking can. Mel calls this a breakthrough after '56 years' of trying never to feel anxious at all. For anyone supporting a loved one, the goal shifts to helping them slow down, not making the anxiety disappear.

• Interoceptive exposure breaks the link between sensations and fear

Many anxious people fear the physical sensation itself, like a stomach churn signaling a panic attack. Marks's technique, from her book Why Am I So Anxious? (pages 248-250), is to trigger the sensation on purpose in a safe setting so you learn it's survivable. Do jumping jacks if a racing heart scares you, or spin in a swivel chair for a minute if dizziness or 'nausea' does.

• With phobias, avoidance becomes the bigger problem

Avoidance makes any phobia worse, and soon the avoiding causes more damage than the feared thing. Marks says the pandemic reinforced social anxiety ('I didn't want to go anyway'), and isolation feeds anxiety in turn. Gradual exposure works through small steps: arrive at the networking event, then walk into the room, then talk to one person, building proof that you can handle it.

• Introversion and social anxiety are different

Introverts like Marks recharge through quiet time but don't necessarily fear people. Social anxiety is a disorder of being preoccupied with judgment to the point of avoiding situations, including performance situations like speaking in team meetings. When people glance at the door as you walk into a bar, a non-anxious person assumes they were expecting someone else, while a socially anxious person assumes 'they hate that I'm here.'

• Sleep, diet and exercise change anxiety biologically

Marks says high sugar and ultra-processed foods drive inflammation and alter gut bacteria, sending negative signals to the brain. They can even change gene expression (epigenetics), for example in cortisol regulation. Sleep deprivation raises baseline anxiety because the brain needs sleep to process the day. Exercise boosts BDNF, which she calls 'fertilizer for the brain,' helping good habits rewire it. She ranks sleep first, with diet close behind.

• ADHD and anxiety feed each other

Disorganized thinking makes people feel out of control, which creates secondary anxiety. ADHD involves low dopamine in the prefrontal cortex, which handles executive functions like time management, working memory and emotion regulation. A weaker prefrontal cortex manages the amygdala less well, so worst-case thinking takes over. Mel recognizes the hours she lost ruminating over an email from an annoyed business partner.

• ADHD is about stimulation, not an inability to focus

People with ADHD can hyperfocus on what interests them, which is why a teen can game for hours but leave sneakers in the hallway. Partners often read that as not caring, which strains relationships. Marks thinks rising diagnoses reflect better awareness, not overdiagnosis: 25 years ago adult ADHD was barely recognized. Her own struggle is 'set shifting,' where one midday interruption, like taking her mom to the doctor, wrecks the whole day.

EXAMPLES

• Oakley's 'nausea' and hand-shaking

Mel's college-age son asked by video about a spinning, nauseous feeling that sets off his anxiety. Marks suggested it may be depersonalization or derealization, a dissociative sense of losing touch with your surroundings, and recommended interoceptive exposure. For his unconscious hand-shaking when anxious, she said self-soothing is fine unless it causes problems. Noticing it is the cue to breathe and ease off the gas.

• Bruised hands in fourth grade

Oakley came home with bruises from wringing his hands in class. He was first diagnosed with anxiety, then found to have undiagnosed dyslexia, dysgraphia and ADHD. Mel was treated for anxiety from high school until an ADHD diagnosis at 47, which she says is common for women whose kids are being evaluated.

• Alyssa's fear of vomiting

A 23-year-old production assistant described lifelong emetophobia: she did virtual school to avoid classmates being sick, dislikes flying and rarely drinks. Marks, who once considered staying in New York after residency because it had few roaches, says crafting your life around a fear makes it worse. Phobias can be driven by disgust, not only fear.

• Marks's 'paralyzed' morning

After a stressful week of hunching over her mouse with one shoulder raised, she woke unable to lift her head and briefly feared paralysis. Now she uses progressive muscle relaxation, contracting and releasing muscle groups from head to toe, and recommends five minutes at lunch.

• Mel's ADHD tells

Lists everywhere, cabinet doors and faucets left open, endless saved social-media folders she never revisits, and 'time expansion,' believing she can do 25 things in three minutes. She can tape for nine hours straight but loses the thread after a single meeting.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Vagal tools to hit the brakes

Splash cold water on your face or chest, hum, or use paced breathing: box breathing (4-4-4-4) or 4-7-8, where the long exhale stimulates the vagus nerve. Box breathing makes Marks feel short of breath, so simply breathing slowly and deeply is fine. For grounding, pick a color and name everything in the room that's that color.

• Habit reversal for picking and biting

Body-focused repetitive behaviors range from nail and cheek biting to compulsive hair pulling. People with anxiety may do them to soothe tension, and people with ADHD for stimulation. Notice triggers like boredom, then substitute something, such as wearing gloves while watching TV for a couple of months. For severe cases, see a therapist. Tics are different: involuntary, worsened by anxiety, and sometimes by stimulant medication, which is worth raising with your doctor.

• The five-minute rule and monthly small wins

For procrastination, which is often fed by past failures, commit to five minutes with permission to stop. For lifestyle changes, take an inventory and tackle one per month: a set bedtime, fewer chips, a weekly walk. Her parting words: you're not defective, just different.

Reinvent Yourself: Let Go of Past Mistakes & Create a New Version of You With Charlamagne tha God

Guest: Charlamagne tha God
Date: 2025-04-07 · Duration: 1:23:38
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0CMKkM84vOk

KEYPOINTS

• Turning your life around starts with deciding the current way isn't working

Charlamagne grew up in a single-wide trailer on a dirt road in Moncks Corner, South Carolina. His mom was an English teacher, and his dad struggled with addiction, mental health and the law. His father warned him he'd end up 'in jail, dead, or broke sitting under a tree.' Mel's takeaway is that you don't need to know what the new life looks like. You just need to decide 'I'm not doing it like this anymore,' because despair is often the biggest obstacle.

• You don't have to know what you want, just that you want to do something

After the streets, he took any job that kept him out of them: Taco Bell, a mall clothing store, and telemarketing '20 CDs for a penny.' His acronym for the mindset is PEACE: 'positive energy activates constant elevation.'

• There's no redo on life

Watching older guys he admired end up exactly where his dad predicted made something click: the day you're living is gone for good. He quotes Biggie, 'being broke at 30 give a brother the chills,' and admits he was still broke at 30, but by then he was on his way in radio.

• Love every version of yourself

He says 20-year-old him didn't know what 46-year-old him knows, so why punish yourself for what you didn't know? He imagines hugging his 8-, 16- and 20-year-old selves and thanking them for choices like reading or getting into radio. A therapist told him you can't have the success without the problems. His Back to the Future line: Marty McFly went back to help his parents, not to curse them out. Mel notes the same grace extends to other people.

• If you don't deal with your trauma, it will deal with you

He started therapy when the panic attacks and depression were getting worse even as his money and success peaked, and while he 'wasn't doing right' by his wife. Critics call him a fake mental health advocate. He says he did the work because 'hurt people hurt people.' He believes '99.9%' of adult struggles trace back to childhood, so he talks to his inner child daily: 'calm down, we know why that is causing you to act that way.'

• He was disciplined for things he was never taught

His first real breakthrough in therapy was seeing that his father raised him 'out of fear, not love,' terrified his son would repeat his mistakes. The proof was an incident at 16: his dad slapped him for running a stop sign that his dad had just run himself. He adds that kids will live their lives regardless, so 'you got to let them.'

• The microphone can cause hurt or healing

He was once called 'the hip-hop Howard Stern' and admits saying things while drunk or high. Fired from radio four times, he was in 'by any means necessary' survival mode when he joined The Breakfast Club in 2010, after serving as Wendy Williams's 'attack dog.' Young artists like Young Thug told him his jabs hurt because their families listened. He now tells podcasters and hosts to 'choose the healing.'

• When generosity gets turned against you, treat it as data

He described people he lifted up turning antagonistic. Mel applied her Let Them framework: they may not have done the inner work, so lifting them up 'drags up the devil inside.' Let them reveal who they are, then let me choose how much time and energy to give. 'Don't stop giving. Just not to them.' His version: God judges you by how you treat people, not by how they treat you.

• Skip small talk by knowing your IG

In Get Honest or Die Lying he says IG stands for intention and goals: know why you're in the conversation and get to it. 'I didn't order the appetizer, give me the entrée.'

EXAMPLES

• Throwing up in a holding cell

He did about 45 days in county jail after a friend fired a gun from the car he was riding in, and he was pulled out of the high school where his mom taught. Later, after the house his crew sold from was raided, he stood in a holding cell at the Berkeley County Detention Center with 11 or 12 others, threw up at the steel toilet, and resolved to figure out his life.

• From intern to Saturday nights

In 1998, while chasing rap at a Charleston studio, he asked DJ Willie Will how he got into radio. 'Ask for an internship.' He drove the station van to events and then became a paid promotions intern at about $5 an hour. Music director Ron White asked if he'd ever thought about being on air: 'No, but I am now.' He started on voice-tracked Sunday mornings, then moved to Saturday nights.

• His father's secret

After reading Shook One, the week of Thanksgiving 2018, and after a 25-year-old cousin's suicide, his father revealed he'd once attempted suicide, gone to therapy two or three times a week and taken 10 to 12 medications. Charlamagne says knowing that as a kid would have helped him recognize his own panic attacks and depression.

• Wendy Williams's dinner remark

At a recent dinner, Wendy, his former mentor who is now in a conservatorship, wondered aloud whether her situation was connected to how she used to talk about people. He says he doesn't believe that's the cause, but it confirmed his choice to change his words.

• 'It's okay, you've never done this before'

After snapping at his 16-year-old and realizing he was projecting his fears onto her, he apologized. She told him it was his

first time being a father to a 16-year-old. He doesn't hit his four daughters and teaches them to treat the custodian like the CEO.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Try grounding and gratitude outdoors

His sacred purpose coach, Yachty Alba, had him lie 'face down' in the grass barefoot, lean his forehead against a tree and breathe, with no phone. In the water, he looks at the sun and just says thank you. When everything has gone wrong, he suggests starting with 'it could be worse.'

• His 4:15 a.m. routine

One snooze, then prayer, a shower, at least five minutes of meditation, readings from Ryan Holiday's The Daily Stoic and Robert Greene's The Daily Laws, kisses for his sleeping wife and daughters, and an energizing podcast on the drive. His daily intention is to serve.

• Put kids in therapy before there's a crisis

During COVID he started his then 13- or 14-year-old in therapy 'for no reason other than why not,' as part of breaking the cycle he inherited.

The Most Important Career Advice You'll Ever Hear With Harvard Business School's #1 Professor

Guest: Alison Wood Brooks
Date: 2025-04-03 · Duration: 1:07:34
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KmRPqrM9SWM

KEYPOINTS

• The best negotiators are great communicators, not tough guys

Brooks, a behavioral scientist with a Wharton PhD, was hired at Harvard Business School to teach negotiation and later created TALK, a waitlisted course on conversation. She says studies of real negotiations show the best negotiators build relationships, work out what the other side needs and deliver it. Most deals involve more than one issue, and even making the interaction pleasant is value that makes a concession more likely.

• People who thrive at work are good at conversation

Brooks says high performers do well talking with co-workers, bosses, clients and investors, and are people everyone likes working with. Leaders from CEOs to the night-shift manager at a restaurant tell her their success came from connecting with people. Business students over-focus on hard skills like finance and accounting.

• Assume nobody at work knows what you're working on

Mel cites research that, especially for women and minorities, promotion depends on whether contributions are known. Brooks says that if you trace how someone became known as a high performer, it often leads back to them telling someone. If something great happens and no one notices, it's up to you to share it.

• Trying to persuade backfires; trying to learn works

Brooks calls the persuasion mindset 'very dangerous.' Before asking for a raise, find out what your boss values, what you're nailing, what to drop and how replaceable you are. If 200 résumés sit on their desk, your leverage is weak. A learning approach turns the talk into joint problem-solving and, she says, ironically makes you more persuasive.

• Ask for casual feedback all the time, not just at review season

Formal 360s and annual reviews are high-stakes and nerve-racking. Brooks prefers quick questions: 'What did you think of my slides? Should I have used slides at all?' Regular asking keeps you in the conversation as a visible contributor and makes the other person invested in you.

• Real strength in a raise conversation is open-minded, not righteous

After the groundwork, Brooks says it's fine to ask whether the organization can afford a raise and whether your boss has the power to give one. Mel pushes back that it sounds weak, and Brooks says strength in conversation looks different from what we imagine. Mel adds that assuming you're owed more because the company seems successful is arrogant when you haven't seen the P&L. If the answer is no, ask what it would take, such as bringing in more clients.

• Pay isn't the only thing to negotiate

Brooks stresses that money matters tremendously, but happiness at work also depends on meaning, relationships, a work bestie, parking and good coffee. If a $10,000 or $20,000 raise isn't possible, she suggests asking for a four-day week, an office espresso machine, or hiring a well-qualified friend for an open role. She also advises behaving like the job you want: once you're doing next-level work, point it out.

• Networking means curiosity, not dazzling people

Mel cites the claim that 80% of jobs aren't listed. Brooks recommends in-person or phone contact over LinkedIn, and not leading with 'I'm looking for a job.' Ask for five minutes to learn what someone works on, what their pain points are and what their organization is missing. That's also how she says job seekers should prepare: work out what the organization needs instead of how to look impressive.

• Reframe nerves as excitement instead of trying to calm down

Brooks's dissertation research, which Mel has cited for seven years, says anxiety comes from uncertainty plus lack of control. Because it's a high-arousal state (racing heart, sweaty palms), telling yourself to calm down rarely works. Saying 'I'm excited,' ideally out loud, shifts you toward imagining how things could go well. People performed better because they spent less prep time fighting their nerves.

EXAMPLES

• Mel's advice to a restaurant manager, revised

A waitress-turned-manager who listens to the show told Mel she was asking for a raise the next week. Mel told her not to cite Glassdoor ranges (which feels like an ultimatum) but to list every problem she solves. Mel admits she skipped the key step of thinking about what makes her irreplaceable to her boss. Brooks adds: bring the list and ask which items are most valuable, what to do more or less of, and how to grow.

• Number one on Apple Podcasts

Mel mentions that the show had just ranked number one worldwide on Apple Podcasts, ahead of Joe Rogan, and says she almost didn't say it for fear of seeming boastful. Brooks's point: even twice-weekly listeners wouldn't have known, and now that it's been said, she can repeat it to others.

• Getting better restaurant shifts

Both women waitressed. Brooks suggests first 'trading on differences' with fellow servers who have different preferences. Then ask the manager what they weigh when building the schedule and what you could do to be considered for the shift you want. Mel notes this puts the employee 'with' the boss rather than against them. Her husband Chris uses a similar line: 'Mel, I'm not against you.'

• Mel's Friday routine for making work visible

Mel shares what she told her daughter at a large cybersecurity firm: every Friday, jot what you worked on, then email your boss what you finished, what's next and whether there's a higher strategic priority. A tip she heard at a conference: when you

solve a problem, send a broad email about how. Brooks compares it to an academic CV that logs everything.

- **'Two professional, two personal'**

  Brooks thinks 'tell me about yourself' is a poor interview question, but if you get it, say you'll share two things about your work and two about your personal life. She would mention that she's an identical twin, which is part of why she's obsessed with connection. Mel loves that the framing sounds prepared and gives a nervous candidate structure.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Follow up after short conversations, with a callback**

  Brooks cites a study of entrepreneurs in Africa who were taught to follow up more thoroughly. Send a quick text thanking them and saying it was valuable, and mention something they told you, like their daughter's tech job, to show you listened.

- **End final interviews with gratitude**

  Interviewers gave you their time. Saying 'No matter what happens, I've loved getting to know you and learning from you' lands well, Brooks says.

- **Treat rejections as bulbs on a string of lights**

  In TALK, every relationship is a string of cafe lights and each conversation a bulb you try to make glow brighter. Mel's takeaway for job seekers: some bulbs never light, so keep moving to the next.

4 Books That Will Change Your Life

Date: 2025-03-31 · Duration: 0:53:31
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4jE5UpWJy9Q

KEYPOINTS

• Listening to a book counts as reading

Mel, who led the 'Great Books' discussion program as a kid, settles the debate: she says research on which parts of the brain are used when reading versus listening shows 'it all counts.' She values books for escape, perspective and calm. She notes that at a time when people average six hours a day on social media, it thrills her that people are excited to read again.

• Pick #1, The Book of Awakening by Mark Nepo, is the book she gives most

It's a collection of one- to two-page daily meditations organized by date, so you can start on any day without losing your place. Mel brings it to dinner parties instead of wine. She has read it since 2016 and says Chris reads it daily and gives it to the men at the retreat he leads. Its message matches hers: the power is inside you, in your attitude, focus and how you process emotions.

• Nepo wrote it after nearly dying of cancer in his 30s

Nepo had tumors in his brain and back, and calls that brush with death 'the opening through which I stared into eternity.' Mel tears up reading his introduction, about building a fire and staring into life. She ties it to 2016, when Chris was struggling with depression and she was trying to earn their way out of debt, and the book gave her hope. She reads a passage Chris highlighted: 'Resisting this process doubles our pain.'

• A book as a gift works as a stand-in for you

Mel says a book on someone's nightstand, especially one with an inscription, tells them they're not alone and that you cared enough to choose it. She sees the same thing when people share a podcast episode, or when listener Aaron and her mother read The Let Them Theory together on a four-day vacation, stopping each night to discuss chapters.

• Pick #2, The Alchemist by Paulo Coelho, is about trusting your inner compass

It follows Santiago, a shepherd in Spain, on a quest for treasure through setbacks and epiphanies. Mel's key quotes: 'When you want something, all the universe conspires in helping you to achieve it,' and 'One is loved because one is loved. No reason is needed for loving.' She also takes a caution from it: you tend to get what you ask for, just not the way you expected. She has read it repeatedly for over 20 years.

• The Alchemist first flopped

Mel reads the 25th-anniversary foreword she quoted on page 217 of The 5 Second Rule. In Brazil, one bookseller sold a single copy the first week and a second copy six months later to the same buyer. The publisher cancelled Coelho's contract. 'I was 41 and desperate,' he wrote, and Mel notes that was exactly her age when she found the 5 Second Rule. A new publisher and word of mouth followed, then an American translator, HarperCollins, and a sitting U.S. president seen with a copy. She cites 65 million copies sold and more than 300 weeks on bestseller lists.

• Pick #3, A Court of Thorns and Roses, is permission to read just for fun

Her daughters pushed the fantasy series (ACOTAR on TikTok) on her, insisting on the dramatized audio with actors and sound effects, which Mel calls 'a movie in your ear.' She listened for about six months while doing dishes, folding laundry and walking, and Chris listened to the whole series too. She says fantasy is good for creativity, emotional intelligence and problem solving, and it revived a fantasy book idea she and her daughters started riffing on ten years ago.

• Pick #4, The Firm by John Grisham, showed her she wasn't stuck

Mel read the 1991 thriller in one night as a miserable first-year at Boston College Law School. She had applied only because people around her did and hated it immediately. Realizing a lawyer had written a page-turner opened her eyes: your degree or profession doesn't lock you in. She didn't think she would write books then, only that she didn't have to practice law.

EXAMPLES

• Grisham's winding road

Mel recounts it: community college for baseball, benched, and failed English. Then he was a walk-on at Delta State and cut. He changed colleges three times, got an accounting degree from Mississippi State in 1977, and was inspired toward law by a Vietnam-veteran classmate. He spent nearly a decade in criminal law in Southaven, Mississippi, and served in the state House. He started A Time to Kill after hearing a 12-year-old's harrowing testimony in 1984, and it was rejected by 28 publishers. He has since sold 300 million books.

• Grisham's 2010 New York Times op-ed

Mel reads that writing wasn't his childhood dream and that A Time to Kill didn't sell, so he kept defending criminals and drafting wills. He called writing harder than his old jobs laying asphalt and 'more frustrating than selling underwear,' but worth it.

• A green cover that 'breaks the rules'

The green-and-yellow paperback of A Court of Mist and Fury inspired The Let Them Theory's cover. Publishing people warned that green books are bad luck, and Mel pointed to Sarah J. Maas's sales.

• The Let Them Theory by the numbers

Mel says the book she wrote with daughter Sawyer sold 3 million copies in two and a half months. It cites 94 books, went through 11½ manuscript versions, and its concepts were tested with experts across 19 podcast episodes. She calls herself 'the villain' in most of its stories.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Make your first input of the day hopeful

Keep a daily-meditation book like Nepo's on your nightstand and read that day's page when you wake up or go to bed. It's quick and centers you on your ability to meet whatever you face.

• Start or join a book club, and include fun books

Mel notes a resurgence of book clubs and says not everything has to be self-improvement. Escapist fiction, especially dramatized audio, can bond families and spark creativity.

- **Read rejection stories when you feel stalled**

Coelho's cancelled contract and Grisham's 28 rejections are Mel's evidence that 'no' isn't the end. She suggests asking 'What if it all works out?' and treating setbacks as nudges.

The Body Reset: How Women Should Eat & Exercise for Health, Fat Loss, & Energy | Dr. Stacy Sims

Guest: Dr. Stacy Sims
Date: 2025-03-27 · Duration: 1:35:21
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cEVAjm_ETtY

KEYPOINTS

• Women are not small men

Exercise physiologist and nutrition scientist Dr. Stacy Sims says most fitness and medical guidance comes from male data and is simply generalized to women, which the industry calls "shrink it and pink it." Her advice: whenever a new trend appears, ask where the data came from and whether it fits you as a woman at your stage of life. Mel admits she resented her husband Chris when the same challenge leaned him out while she ended up "puffier, fluffier," tired and annoyed.

• Training on an empty stomach backfires for women

Sims says the female hypothalamus is especially sensitive to blood sugar. Exercising without food registers as a stressor, and the body starts breaking down muscle for fuel. Men's muscles have more glucose-burning fibers and adapt to fasting by using more fat. Women have more fat-burning fibers, she explains, so when fuel is missing their bodies hold on to fat. Many women in this situation end up "tired but wired."

• Eat early, and eat enough

About 30 minutes after waking, cortisol spikes. Food signals the brain to bring it down; without food, you stay in fight-or-flight, eating into muscle and bone and signaling the body to keep fat. She cites newer circadian research suggesting that people who eat breakfast by about 8 a.m. and stop by 6 p.m. see the metabolic benefits attributed to intermittent fasting, while those who hold out until noon don't. Under-eating also blocks changes in body composition, which means many women need to eat more to get leaner.

• Morning fuel also helps sleep

A lower cortisol baseline lets your body shift into the parasympathetic state needed for deep sleep. Eating more of your food earlier in the day also prevents low blood sugar at night, which she says is behind many women's night wakings, not just needing to pee.

• Long fasting plus lots of cardio can hide trouble

Sims describes women over 40 who rely on cardio as often "skinny fat": fat marbled through their muscle and bones "like chalk." On DEXA body scans, some women who look healthy and proudly fast until noon show low bone density, more visceral belly fat and, in worse cases, higher bad cholesterol, inflammation and insulin resistance. She stresses this is the worst case, not a certainty.

• Exercise is stress training

Exercise is a positive stressor that builds resilience, from your nervous system down to your cells. Mel's example is walking up a hill until you're winded, which trains your body to stay steady in a stressful meeting. Sims adds that walking in green spaces brings an especially strong calming response, and that strength training supports neuroplasticity and brain metabolism. She ties this to women's higher rates of dementia.

• Women recover faster between sets

Because women's muscles are more fatigue-resistant, women don't need as much rest. In a 5x5 squat program, she says, women matched men's relative strength gains when sets started every two minutes instead of every three. That means effective workouts take less time.

• From the mid-30s, lift heavy with fewer reps

In your 20s and early 30s, standard protocols like 10 to 12 reps or going to failure work. As estrogen and progesterone change, Sims recommends power-based training: up to six to eight heavy reps, ideally six with two "in reserve" and good form. Instead of 20-pound dumbbells you could press 10 times, pick up 30s. She tells Mel to put down the two-pound weights.

• "Abs are made in the kitchen" works mainly for men

Men can cut alcohol and sugar and get ripped. Women who cut without replacing those calories drop into a low-energy state their hypothalamus resists. Sims recommends eating enough and building your core through compound lifts like squats and deadlifts rather than crunches. Women's center of gravity is in the hips, so better posture helps abs show.

EXAMPLES

• Sims's protein coffee

At night, she mixes protein powder into almond or other milk, adds a hot double espresso and refrigerates it. In the morning she has a latte-like drink with about 30 grams of protein and caffeine. Mel drank one in the studio, said it tasted like a milkshake, and called it life-changing.

• The split overnight-oats breakfast

For a busy, plant-leaning mom of three who's never hungry in the morning: make oats with chia and milk the night before. Eat half with berries and a spoonful of Greek yogurt before a walk or workout, and the rest with more yogurt and nuts an hour or so later, for about 30 grams of protein in total. Within a couple of weeks, she says, morning appetite tends to return.

• Her own week, and her sister

Sims lifts three days a week and adds sprint intervals, sometimes 30 all-out seconds on an assault bike after lifting, and keeps gym time to 45 to 60 minutes. Her less athletic sister began strength training over the past year and saw changes in body composition and grip strength, after years of fearing a higher number on the scale.

• Mel's ice barrel versus Chris

In Vermont, Mel's plunge barrel is near freezing. Chris sits calmly and shivers, while Mel can barely breathe and never shivers. Sims explains that ice triggers a severe constriction response in women that blocks shivering, the source of cold's metabolic benefits. Water around 55–60°F (15–16°C) gives women benefits similar to what men get from ice.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Minimum workouts and sprint intervals

A baseline: two total-body sessions a week. For example, after a five-minute warm-up, do every-minute-on-the-minute rounds of jumping lunges, push-ups, overhead presses and air squats with one minute of rest, two or three times through. For sprint intervals, go all out for 30 seconds or less on anything (bike, kettlebell swings, running), recover fully for 1.5 to 2 minutes, and stop at five rounds, or two if you're spent. She credits these with improving insulin sensitivity, blood pressure and visceral fat.

• Build up before you lift heavy

Learn to move first with bodyweight or a loaded backpack, then add load over six to eight months to avoid injury. Free weights train stabilizing muscles; machines are built for men around 5'8" to 6' and 160–190 lbs, so women may struggle to fit them. Gyms are often gendered, so train with a friend or use guided online programs.

• Heat, timing and creatine

Ten to fifteen minutes of sauna twice a week offers what she describes as cardiovascular and metabolic benefits, and women tolerate heat well. Have about 15 grams of protein before strength training (she cites research by Abbie Smith-Ryan). Women carry roughly 70–80% of men's creatine stores. She suggests 3–5 grams daily, says it's considered safe in pregnancy, and notes it takes about three weeks to saturate.

• Stock non-perishable snacks

Keep nuts, protein bars, almond milk boxes and protein sachets in your bag or car. Add fruit, vegetables and whole grains at each meal for gut health and shop the perimeter of the store. Her one ask is ten consistent minutes a day for yourself.

Why You Feel Lost in Life: Dr. Gabor Maté on Trauma & How to Heal

Guest: Dr. Gabor Maté
Date: 2025-03-24 · Duration: 1:17:54
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tool-R8VJ2Y

KEYPOINTS

• Trauma is the wound inside you, not the event itself

Maté defines trauma by its Greek root, 'wound': it is what happened inside you as a result of what happened to you. For him, the trauma wasn't being handed to a stranger but the belief he formed from it: that he was unwanted and not lovable enough. The blow to the head is the event; the concussion is the trauma.

• Nobody is damaged goods: most 'flaws' started as adaptations

Shame, self-criticism, perfectionism, hypervigilance and shutting down began as sensible responses to difficult circumstances. A child who can't escape, fight back or ask for help may dissociate, and that protection then gets wired into the personality. In his words, these are 'perfectly normal responses to abnormal circumstances'.

• Children can be wounded by needs that go unmet, not only by bad things done to them

Besides the 'big T' events (abuse, neglect, an addicted, jailed, mentally ill or dead parent, family violence, a bitter divorce, poverty, racism), Maté stresses needs that go unmet. These include unconditional acceptance, adults who understand a child's emotions, play, and 'rest': a relationship the child doesn't have to work to keep. A child told 'don't be so sensitive' learns that something is wrong with them.

• Stress during pregnancy reaches the baby, and this is not about blaming mothers

Cortisol crosses the placenta and affects developing brain circuits. Maté links stress and depression in pregnancy with higher rates of ADHD and other mental health problems in children. He insists this isn't about blaming mothers, and he reframed Mel's guilt: pain flowed through her to her kids, but she didn't hurt them.

• Childhood trauma shows up in the body as well as the mind

Maté says people with severe childhood trauma have measurably higher inflammation, raising their risk of autoimmune disease, cancer, depression and addiction. Trauma can switch genes on or off and dysregulate the stress system. Long-term stress hormones thin bones, raise blood pressure, suppress immunity and add belly fat. He also says asthma risk rises with experiences of racism.

• No two siblings have the same childhood

Birth order, gender, the state of the marriage, money pressures and each child's temperament all change how a parent shows up. A child experiences how the parent actually behaves, not how much they are loved, so even a perfectly consistent parent would be experienced differently by each child.

• Unresolved trauma weakens your ability to handle stress, so you look for escape

Trauma disrupts the brain circuits that develop the ability to regulate stress, leaving adults overwhelmed and looking for escape. Maté says his own relapses into addictive behaviour usually followed stress. In rat studies, pups handled poorly by their mothers developed normally when placed with attentive mothers. He calls this epigenetic, which means it can change.

• We play down our own childhoods because the truth was too painful

Mel's husband Chris had a workaholic, heavy-drinking father but said he wasn't traumatised because there was food on the table. Maté's test is to imagine your own child in that house: would you tell them to stop complaining? He says this kind of dismissiveness, and a lack of self-compassion, are themselves signs of trauma.

• It's not your fault, but healing is your job

Maté separates default from fault: you followed patterns programmed into you, so the shame isn't deserved. But he also rejects a victim mindset. Recognising what happened is simply where taking responsibility begins. He quotes trauma psychologist Peter Levine: the goal is to stop 'living under the tyranny of the past'.

• Some trauma looks like success

The drive to prove he mattered made Maté a respected physician while he was depressed and unpredictable at home. A relentless effort to be attractive or look young can come from never feeling accepted as you were. Fear of hugs and emotional shutdown can also be old protective shells.

EXAMPLES

• Maté's infancy in Nazi-occupied Budapest

He was born in January 1944 to Jewish parents. Half a million Hungarian Jews were murdered between March and June, including his grandparents. At 11 months, his mother handed him to a Christian stranger to save his life, and he didn't see her for five or six weeks. When they were reunited, he wouldn't look at her for days.

• Mel's traumatic birth with Sawyer

After 36 hours of labour, forceps, vacuum extraction and emergency surgery with 2.5 litres of blood lost, Mel developed severe postpartum depression and was 'a zombie' on medication for 10 weeks. In EMDR therapy, Sawyer recalled lying in her crib wanting her mother while others came instead.

• The 9/11 pregnancy study and research on infants' brainwaves

Maté cites research on women who developed PTSD in their third trimester after 9/11: their babies had abnormal stress hormone levels a year later. He also says EEGs of six-month-olds could identify which babies had depressed mothers. The cause, he says, was not less love but less smiling, attuned interaction.

• Mel's fourth-grade assault, reframed

Mel shared that as a fourth grader she woke up on holiday to an older child molesting her, and she told no one. Maté said the deeper wound was how alone she already was, possibly while protecting stressed parents. Mel recognised it as the first time she remembers dissociating.

• The airport text and the Winnie-the-Pooh ending

When his wife texted that she hadn't left yet to collect him, Maté sank into a sullen withdrawal, unconsciously reliving his abandonment as a baby. He says the ending of Winnie-the-Pooh made him cry as an adult because nobody played with him as a baby.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Step 1: admit that you're suffering**

  Stop taking your pain for granted or running from it through busyness and addictive behaviours. Maté notes this echoes the Buddha's first teaching that life involves suffering.

- **Step 2: get curious with compassion**

  'Why am I like this?' asked as an accusation keeps the shame going. Try 'Hmm, I wonder why I do this?' and trace the behaviour back to what it once protected you from.

- **Step 3: ask for help**

  Babies are born knowing how to ask for help. If you've always believed you have to handle everything alone, treat that belief as an adaptation to help not being available, and reach out.

- **Take play and affection back on purpose**

  Maté cites a palliative care nurse's book on the top five regrets of the dying, one of which is working too hard and not playing enough. He says play matters more to brain development than academic learning. Mel is consciously working on hugging her kids more.

Your Guide to Better Sex, Intimacy, & Love From a World-Leading Sex Therapist

Guest: Vanessa Marin
Date: 2025-03-20 · Duration: 1:17:48
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LoPJEzhtypc

KEYPOINTS

• Disconnection in bed usually reflects disconnection out of bed

Vanessa Marin, a licensed psychotherapist and sex therapist for over 20 years and married to her husband Xander for 17, says a big mistake is treating sex as something separate that happens behind closed doors at night. How connected you feel all day drives desire. Couples who feel like 'roommates' or 'ships passing in the night' should treat a sex slump as a prompt to look at the whole relationship. Mel, married 28 years, says logistics have made her life with Chris feel transactional.

• Sex gives energy back

Marin acknowledges real exhaustion but says sex with a partner you feel close to creates energy, time and teamwork, while disconnection makes every task drag. Her example: at 5 p.m. one hectic day, Xander said, 'You are more important to me than anything on this stupid list.' They had sex, then 'killed' the to-do list together.

• There are two desire types, and most women are 'responsive'

Spontaneous desire starts in the mind and the body follows, which is the version shown in movies. Marin cites research that about 85% of women have responsive desire, where physical arousal comes first and mental desire follows. Responsive people often think they have low or no desire because sex doesn't pop into their heads. A classic sign is thinking mid-sex, 'This is fun, why don't I want it more?' Two responsive partners can end up in a standoff, each waiting for the other to start.

• Bedtime is the worst time for sex, so plan it earlier

By the time teeth are brushed you're exhausted and calculating how many hours of sleep you'll get. Marin suggests sex before TV, or between dinner and clean-up, and Mel decides late morning suits them. She reframes scheduling: early dates were already planned sex ('dinner, then my place'). She prefers terms like 'intentional intimacy' to 'scheduling sex,' which puts people off.

• Use a transition ritual between work and intimacy

Going from the day's chaos straight to 'be sexy' is too abrupt. Empty nesters Mel and Chris both work from home and have drifted from cooking together into cereal and frozen pizza. Marin says cooking together, or any short ritual, signals 'it's our time now.' She suggests defining emotional intimacy concretely: what could your partner do on a Tuesday at 8:30 p.m. to make you feel 10% closer?

• Share the work of initiating, as you would parenting

Mel, the primary breadwinner who manages a large team, admits she wants one area of life where she isn't in charge. She suspects Chris, a men's-retreat founder and death doula, feels the same. Marin compares one partner owning initiation to one partner doing all the parenting. Your sex life is your responsibility, and many women were taught their job is to put the brakes on sex.

• The 'bristle response' comes from touch that always means sex

Marin's term describes recoiling when your partner touches you, usually because lingering hugs or a hand on the thigh have become indirect bids for sex. The fix is more non-sexual touch plus asking directly with words for a while, so touch can just be touch. She suggests sharing the episode to open the conversation.

• Ask 'are you open to…' instead of 'do you want to…'

Marin says to expect not to be in the mood when your partner initiates, since you're two people on different timelines. Xander now asks, 'Are you open to being intimate?' or 'Are you open to me trying to turn you on?' That shifts the question from instant desire to whether you're willing to make space. Mel adapts it to 'Are you open to connecting later today?'

• Pleasure has to matter as much as desire

You won't crave sex you don't enjoy. Marin says typical heterosexual sex centers male pleasure and his timeline, and intercourse averages about five minutes. She notes the clitoris has an estimated 8,000 to 12,000 nerve endings, compared with relatively few in the vagina, and offers a blunt analogy: expecting orgasm from intercourse alone is like expecting a man to climax from his testicles being touched. Female orgasm is no more mysterious than male orgasm.

EXAMPLES

• Chris's three video questions

He asked whether physical or emotional connection matters more to Mel, how to help her switch off her 'working mind' at night, and whether there's anything she's afraid to tell him. Mel braced to be called 'all talk, no follow-through': he's asleep at 8:30, she comes to bed at 9:30, he's up at 5:15. Marin pointed out both were privately worried about the same things.

• Marin's nightly make-out rule

Realizing they had stopped kissing the way they used to, she and Xander made out every night, from 10 seconds to a couple of minutes, with at least 'a little tongue contact.' For the first month, sex afterward was off-limits so kissing could exist for its own sake. If you worry it will turn into pressure, she suggests doing it outside the bedroom.

• Have sex before date night

After a big meal, drinks and a tight outfit, most people want pajamas, not sex. Doing it first means more energy and a 'sexy little secret' while you're out. Mel vows to rock Chris's world.

• 'Connected' and 'playful'

Marin suggests asking, 'Right after great sex, what do you want to feel?' Mel guessed Chris would say 'connected and seen.' He said 'connected' and 'playful,' which surprised her. Marin also loves playful and says her best times with Xander involve laughing at awkward moments. Mel's own words: connected, safe and 'blissed out.'

OTHER RELEVANT

• Three under-a-minute daily habits

Gratitude, which Marin says research shows is the top predictor of marital satisfaction. A six-second kiss or a 20- to 30-second hug, which she says is the time needed to release oxytocin. And real eye contact, because feeling unseen by a long-term partner is 'the greatest tragedy.'

• Name a dry spell instead of ignoring it

There's no fixed definition, but people tend to feel that three to six months counts, and some therapists use one year for a sexless relationship. Silence leaves your partner wondering whether you've stopped caring. Try: 'Life's been full, I miss you, let's find time for us.' Marin's three nevers: faking orgasm, mocking a partner for initiating, and taking erection difficulties personally.

• If past trauma is in the room

Marin cites research that one in three or four women experience sexual trauma, which can linger even when you feel safe with a partner. Tell your partner it isn't about them. Partners can let the survivor lead, ask 'Does this feel good?', pause when the person seems to tune out, and build a trigger list alongside a 'joy list.' She recommends personal therapy as well.

6 Sneaky Ways People Are Disrespecting You & What to Do About It

Date: 2025-03-17 · Duration: 1:08:00
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FrXsUHP-v9s

KEYPOINTS

• With obvious rudeness, decide whether it's worth your energy

Mel says overt disrespect, like yelling at a waiter or a boss taking stress out on everyone, is easy to spot. Your real choice is whether to police it. She links the recent rise in snappy, impatient behavior to people living with chronic stress in constant fight-or-flight, but stresses that this explains the behavior without excusing it.

• 'Let them' means recognizing the behavior, not permitting it

By the time you say 'let them,' the person has already been rude. You aren't allowing anything. You're naming it to yourself, declining to parent another adult, and reminding yourself you can leave the store, the table or the conversation. In the 'let me' half, you can be kind, stay calm and protect your peace.

• Subtle disrespect #1: talking over you

'If someone talks over you, they have no interest in listening to what you have to say.' Mel says it happens to women more than men, at work and at family dinners. Her response draws on coach Harrison Monarth's advice, quoted in Harvard Business Review: keep talking, slow down, then use their name ('Mike, I'm going to finish my point, and I'll be glad to get your feedback after'). When you finish, invite them in: 'Mike, what did you want to say?' Everyone else gets uncomfortable as the interrupter gets louder, while you stay calm and keep the floor.

• #2: dismissing your feelings

Lines like 'you're so sensitive,' 'you're overreacting,' 'why is everything an issue' and 'people have bigger problems' tell you the person doesn't care how you feel. What counts is the impact, not what they intended. Mel admits that as a parent she has been 'the Bigfoot stepping on people's feelings' by rushing her kids to feel better, and now tries to say things like 'I can see this is hard for you, how can I support you?'

• Repeated invalidation takes a real toll

Mel cites research on emotional invalidation, from a study she attributes to a researcher at Walden University: having your emotions repeatedly brushed aside is linked to more stress, anxiety and even depression, and it wears down confidence and resilience. Over time you start asking 'Am I the problem?' and shut down. Her answer is to validate yourself, using lines from trial lawyer Jefferson Fisher: 'I feel how I feel' and 'Let me decide how I feel.'

• #3: always running late

'Someone who's never on time doesn't value your time,' and if they won't, you have to. A former chronic late-comer herself, Mel says long explanations about traffic make it worse, because they suggest your circumstances matter more than other people's time. Her fix if you're the late one: walk in, say 'Thank you for your patience,' and sit down. Her standard now is to be five minutes early.

• #4: the silent treatment about what they need

Mel says psychologists describe the classic silent treatment as a form of emotional abuse. She focuses on a subtler version: staying quiet about what you want, then punishing the other person for not reading your mind. Friendship expert Danielle Bayard Jackson notes that we project our needs onto people we're close to. Mel's rule is that you have no right to be mad at someone for something you never asked for, whether it's at work, about hosting Thanksgiving, or about wanting flowers.

• #5: condescension

'Never look up to someone who talks down to you.' Watch for 'actually, that's a good idea,' 'I guess that's one way to do it,' 'are you wearing that?' and 'you can't take a joke.' Once is easy to let slide. A steady pattern chips away at your confidence, and people keep doing it because they get away with it.

• #6: backhanded compliments

A real compliment makes you feel good, so anything that leaves you feeling bad isn't one. Examples: 'You're a runner, really?', 'You're really well spoken,' 'You look so tired,' 'How is someone as amazing as you still single?' Mel cites a Harvard Business School study, 'Backhanded Compliments: How Negative Comparisons Undermine Flattery,' which found people use them to raise their own status while trying to stay likable, and that observers end up seeing them as insincere and calculating.

EXAMPLES

• The dog carrier on Mel's flight

Mel's seatmate struggled to fit a dog carrier under the seat, huffed at a flight attendant who was trying to help, and snapped 'absolutely not' when he offered to hang her coat. Stuck beside her for two hours, Mel chose not to engage, took the behavior as information about her, and was extra kind to the flight attendant.

• A teammate's father in a nursing home

A colleague's father, recovering from a stroke, was nasty to his caregivers. Instead of apologizing over and over, she pulled the nurse aside and said, 'He's a tough old bastard. You and I are in this together. I really appreciate you staying calm.'

• Chris confronts 'Mel time'

Years ago, Mel's husband told her that her chronic lateness was unacceptable and told him he wasn't a priority. He asked her to warn him as soon as she knew she'd be late, and not to book a 7:00 reservation if she couldn't arrive before 7:15. Being called out for disrespect, not disorganization, motivated her to work out how much time she really needs. It's a lot more than three minutes to shower, blow-dry and get dressed.

• Golf versus a Sunday on the couch

A friend of Mel's wanted to spend Sunday cuddled up watching movies, but told her boyfriend 'okay' when he asked to play golf. She stewed while he was gone ('it should have been nine holes, not 18') and was furious when he got home. Mel's fix is to say it out loud: 'I'd love for you to stay on the couch with me today.'

OTHER RELEVANT

• Lines that stop condescension

Pause, say 'let them' to yourself, then quietly ask, 'Are you trying to be condescending?' and let it sit. Or use Jefferson Fisher's 'Can you repeat that?' Mel says people rarely repeat the dig. Then keep your distance.

• Responses to a backhanded compliment

Let a few seconds of silence pass, then ask 'Compared to what?', 'What did you actually mean?' or 'Are you trying to make me feel bad?' Focus on how the comment affected you, not what they intended.

• If you're the one waiting

Let them be late and control your own part. Tell them directly how it affects you, and don't hold everything up for them: if they miss the ferry, the movie or the first act, go on without them.

• With someone who sulks

Let them go silent or sulk. Then decide whether to address it at all. Remember that managing another adult's emotions isn't your job, and limit the time and energy you give to someone who acts like an eight-year-old.

If You’re Feeling Uncertain & Anxious, You Need to Hear This | Dr. Julie on The Mel Robbins Podcast

Guest: Dr. Julie Smith
Date: 2025-03-13 · Duration: 1:21:54
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bjvPbfxE3CI

KEYPOINTS

• Struggling is normal, and you trade places with other people over time

Dr. Julie mixes a bowl of white rice (everyone) with wild rice (the roughly one in four people with a mental health problem in a given year). Any small pinch, meaning your circle, includes someone who's struggling. Seeing your pain as a normal human experience removes the judgment so you can get curious. Mel adds that we all swap between being the wild rice and the white rice.

• Emotions are information, not evidence that something is wrong with you

Sadness, anger and anxiety usually signal a need or something going on around you. Emotion regulation isn't about making painful feelings disappear. It's about dropping the judgment and turning toward them with curiosity.

• Your attention is a spotlight, and you can't pull actors off the stage

"Only positive vibes" makes you feel like a failure every time a critical thought appears. She teaches defusion instead: picture your thoughts as actors on a stage. You can't drag the ones you dislike off, but you choose which one gets the limelight, and that shapes how you feel.

• Be the predator, not the prey, when fear arrives

When she was diagnosed with breast cancer a week or two before her manuscript was due, she deleted her own gentle chapter on fear and rewrote it. The prey darts around avoiding threats; the predator has a goal and is on the front foot. "This cancer isn't coming after me, I'm coming after it." The fear stayed. She just used it rather than waiting for it to go away.

• Let emotional waves wash over you

Waist-deep in the ocean, if you try to hold back a wave you tumble; if you turn sideways and bend your knees, you land again. Her inner world is "like a sauna": helpful only if you don't stay too long. In acute distress, reach out to someone you trust. She admits to dark moments, mostly fear for her children.

• Resentment points to what you need to work on

Blaming the other person keeps you in prey mode. Resentment usually means you haven't held healthy boundaries, or sometimes that you're taking someone for granted, in which case gratitude helps. Left unchecked, it destroys relationships.

• Compare narrowly, and never with friends

Telling people to stop comparing is impossible. Comparing yourself to friends puts a scoreboard between you: their wins feel like your losses, and bids for support become "I had it worse." Useful comparison is concrete, like watching a club player a few steps ahead of you with a great backhand, never comparing personalities or worth.

• Confidence is a byproduct of evidence from action

Every time you get through something uncomfortable, even badly, your brain logs proof that you survived. You have to go where you have no confidence and be willing to be a beginner. The self-doubt may never fully go away; you learn what to do with it.

• Avoidance brings instant relief and slowly shrinks your life

With a wooden rainbow toy, she removes layers one at a time: crowds, a friend's 200-person wedding, buses, restaurants. Each avoided thing gives an addictive "phew," but the arch shrinks until life feels depressingly small and missing things you value. Mel recognized this in her postpartum depression and in a child with anxiety who stopped going to sleepovers.

• You don't need to be fully healed before a relationship

She calls that social media rule "utter rubbish." Under it she never would have married Matt, her partner of 20 years. Struggle doesn't mean it's the wrong person, and strong couples have often been through the most together. If a partner isn't a talker, ask why you need them to be. She and Matt mostly repair with humor.

EXAMPLES

• Her desk Post-it during cancer treatment

"Get busy with life's purpose... get active in your own rescue, if you care for yourself at all, and do it while you can." It became the book's opening quote. She nearly put off getting a breast lump checked until after her deadline and urges busy parents not to wait. Early testing was her best weapon.

• A year locked in with your high-school bully

For self-critical clients, she asks how they'd feel after a year 24/7 with their worst bully, compared with their best friend. Your inner voice is one of those roommates. If your head isn't a safe place, she asks, how will you ever take risks?

• From shy kid to live TV

She was the quiet child in the corner and hated being looked at during clinical training. She only did live TV after promising to have her own back even if she "flashed my underwear to the nation," coaching herself the way coaches treat elite athletes.

• Note-taking in a care meeting

A client with severe anxiety and paranoia took notes in a meeting with their professionals, which moved their spotlight from "who's looking at me" to the plan. In a networking circle, the same trick means noticing what people say, what they're wearing, or what you could compliment.

• Mel's lonely move in her early 50s

After 26 years in one place, she wallowed for about six months, then set steps: leave the house daily, then read in a coffee shop for half an hour, then talk to people. Dr. Julie still faces her own fear of heights on family trips so her children don't inherit it.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Climb a fear ladder from the bottom**

  Rank feared situations from greeting a shop clerk up to a wedding speech. Start with something manageable but challenging and repeat it until it becomes your comfort zone, then step further. Going too far too fast often ends in retreat. After heartbreak, that might mean going out with a close friend, then joining mixed groups, then introducing yourself to a stranger.

- **Do her values-box exercise every few months**

  Split a page into life areas like parenting, marriage, health and career, and write how you want to show up in each. Rate each area's importance from 0 to 10, then how well you've lived it lately. A 10 paired with a 2 tells you where to focus. It's not for self-criticism. Choosing by values rather than comfort sometimes feels terrible, like night feeds, but choosing by comfort shrinks your life.

- **Use a compassion line for regret**

  "I did the best I knew how with what I had at the time, and I have new insight and skills now." Cringing at your past self is a sign of progress. Dwelling on the past feeds depression and the future feeds anxiety, so come back to the present.

- **Check whether a feeling is warranted and proportionate**

  Poor sleep, dehydration or too much coffee can amplify a reaction. In uncertain times, focus on the next couple of steps and live as if you have a future. What you do, who you're around, what you eat and how you move all influence how you feel.

Get Back on Track: 5 Evening Habits to Wake Up Focused, Recharged, and in Control

Date: 2025-03-10 · Duration: 1:01:18
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=85vnQT6TI_4

KEYPOINTS

• Your wasted evenings are a symptom of decision fatigue, not laziness

Mel draws on an American Medical Association article quoting psychiatrist Dr. Lisa MacLean, chief wellness officer at Henry Ford Health in Michigan: the more decisions you make, the worse your ability to make more, and the effect is cumulative across the day. MacLean says people with it may feel tired, foggy or physically and mentally fatigued. Mel's picture is a gas tank that's full in the morning and drained by every text, meeting and turn of the steering wheel.

• The average person makes over 35,000 decisions a day

The figure comes from the same article. Mel uses it to give listeners credit: from what to wear to whether to answer a text, you've been deciding all day, so wanting to 'not think' at 8 p.m. is normal, not a character flaw.

• Decision fatigue shows up in four ways

Mel lists procrastination (leaving the laundry for tomorrow), impulsivity (eating ice cream straight from the carton at the open freezer), avoidance (zombie-scrolling because it requires nothing) and indecision (an hour of streaming trailers without choosing anything, which she calls the new doomscrolling).

• Revenge bedtime procrastination is a grab for personal time that backfires

After giving everything to work and family, we consciously choose less sleep to reclaim time for ourselves. But Mel argues scrolling isn't time for you; it's more attention given away. She'd watched herself do it for weeks.

• Make your evening decisions in the morning

Per MacLean, decisions are most accurate, thoughtful and cautious in the morning, plateau in the afternoon and become impulsive by evening. That explains why you resolve each morning to go to bed early and then don't. The five-step routine is designed to run on autopilot with an empty tank.

• Step 1: Pick your bedtime using the nine-hour rule

Drawing on sleep researcher Dr. Rebecca Robbins of Brigham and Women's Hospital, who notes even good sleepers take about 20 minutes to fall asleep, Mel says eight hours of sleep needs nine hours in bed. Count back from your wake time: up at 6 a.m. means in bed at 9 p.m.; 7 means 10. Bedtime is when you get into bed, not when you fall asleep. She cites Harvard Medical School guidance that a consistent bedtime helps you fall asleep faster and sleep more deeply.

• Step 2: Clean up today's mess so tomorrow starts fresh

Like flushing a toilet, don't leave it for later. It's a five-minute pass, not a deep clean: empty the sink, load the dishwasher, wipe counters, take out full trash, hang up stray coats, plug in the laptop, stack tomorrow's work items. Mel says multiple studies link messy surroundings to higher stress, and waking to yesterday's mess drains energy before the day begins.

• Step 3: Make tomorrow easier

Remove morning decisions while you're half asleep: lay workout clothes on the floor, put a water bottle with electrolytes in front of the coffee maker so water comes before coffee, check breakfast options, pack lunch, put keys and backpacks together, set out kids' forms, set the coffee timer. Mel also picks the next day's workout and texts herself the class link.

• Step 4: Take five minutes for yourself

Your attention belongs to you in the first minutes after waking and then goes to the world until evening. Reclaim at least five minutes: a bath, a book, a stretch, journaling, or Dr. Daniel Amen's prompt 'what went well today?' Dr. Rebecca Robbins calls this a wind-down, which Mel describes as signaling to your nervous system that you're safe to rest. Five minutes tends to grow to 20.

• Step 5: Tuck your phone in before you tuck yourself in

You wouldn't let a toddler sleep with an iPad, and at peak decision fatigue we're all toddlers with phones. Mel charges hers in the bathroom so she can't reach it and must get up to silence the alarm. She cites blue light suppressing melatonin, notifications keeping the brain on alert, and Harvard Health Publishing linking shortened sleep to higher risk of depression, diabetes and cardiovascular problems.

EXAMPLES

• Stranded on the couch until 11:35

Chris, whose top habit is sleep, gets up at 9 p.m. sharp and wakes at 5:30 a.m. like clockwork. The night before recording, he went to bed at 9 and Mel looked up at 11:35 p.m., still scrolling and flipping channels.

• Chris's four-year movie list

Chris keeps a Notes app list of movie recommendations, and they've read it '55,000 times,' she jokes, without picking anything, which Mel now recognizes as end-of-day indecision.

• The soaking chili pot

A team member admitted leaving dishes 'to soak' overnight. Mel describes plunging your hands into a cold, greasy, chunky pot first thing in the morning as a 'dish hangover' and the opposite of an easy start.

• The suitcase trick and Chris's frozen smoothies

Home from a trip, Mel didn't unpack; she simply zipped her open suitcase and put it in the closet so it wasn't the first thing she saw. Chris makes triple-batch protein smoothies, freezes them in Mason jars and microwaves one each morning before his workout.

• Mel's bath-first wind-down

She turns on the bath, then clears the kitchen, locks doors, sets the alarm and puts the dogs in the mudroom while it fills. Some nights she adds mint tea with a scoop of magnesium. The whole thing takes 5–10 minutes.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Set a phone alarm for bedtime**
  Decide your bedtime in the morning and set an alarm so a nudge from your clearer-thinking self interrupts the scroll.
- **Keep the cleanup minimal**
  Tiredness is an advantage: you won't turn putting scissors away into reorganizing the drawer. Save projects for when you have energy.
- **Handle the 'what if someone needs me' worry**
  Tell family and work to call, not text, in an emergency. Turn notifications off and leave the ringer on, then charge the phone away from your bed: kitchen, bathroom, across the room or, like Chris, in a closed closet.

Look, Feel, & Stay Young Forever: #1 Orthopedic Surgeon’s Proven Protocol | The Mel Robbins Podcast

Guest: Dr. Vonda Wright
Date: 2025-03-06 · Duration: 1:22:42
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gO_x3gnXBzg

KEYPOINTS

• 'We don't get old because we age; we get old because we stop moving'

Dr. Vonda Wright, a double board-certified orthopedic surgeon who was turning 58 at the time, argues that decline into frailty is a myth rooted in inactivity. Our strongest muscles sit below the belly button, and walking is the first independent skill we learn. Otherwise, she jokes, we'd be built like a mushroom or Jabba the Hutt. She estimates 50 to 70% of people do no intentional movement daily and spend about 20 hours a day sitting or lying down.

• Aging isn't a problem to solve; how you age is what matters

Dr. Wright objects that aging men get 'longevity' and 'distinguished' while women get 'anti-aging.' She points out that midlife is roughly 37 for men, given US male life expectancy of 76.4, and about 40 for women. Her core belief: there is never an age or skill level at which you can't change the trajectory of your health.

• Healthspan, not just lifespan

US life expectancy is about 81 for women and 76.4 for men, but healthy, active years often end far earlier. Many people spend their last 20 years in steady decline and frequent doctor visits. She cites 'sedentary death syndrome', a set of about 33 chronic conditions including heart disease, stroke, diabetes and dementia, and argues movement is the one 'pill' that helps them all. She acknowledges some cellular aging is beyond our control, but says lifestyle influences mitochondria, senescent ('zombie') cells and inflammation.

• Standard aging studies mostly show how sedentary people age

Population studies like Health ABC, which followed 70-year-olds, found people slowed down, gained fat and lost muscle. Most of them didn't exercise. Dr. Wright's research group, PRIMA, studied recreational 'masters' athletes from their 30s up to age 103. She reports they kept muscle mass, bone density and frontal-lobe cognitive function, and produced longevity proteins.

• 35 to 45 is 'the critical decade', but it's never too late

By your mid-30s you have some life figured out but still have 'youthful vigor' and youngish stem cells. Around 45, perimenopause makes it 'a different game' for women. Building movement, lifting and nutrition habits beforehand softens the shock. For anyone older, even 92, she says improvement is possible. Start by walking, even around the kitchen table.

• Bone and muscle are communication organs

Dr. Wright describes bone as the body's 'master communicator.' It releases osteocalcin, which she says signals the brain to produce BDNF for new neurons, helps muscle and the pancreas regulate glucose, and supports testosterone production in men. She notes that people with osteoporosis have more dementia. Contracting muscle releases irisin, which helps build bone, and klotho, which she calls a longevity protein. She notes that in animal studies, mice unable to make klotho die young.

• FACE your future: Flexibility, Aerobic, Carry a load, Equilibrium

F is flexibility and mobility, moving joints through full range of motion (Pilates and yoga count), because tendons tighten with time. A is aerobic training at the two extremes. C is carrying a load, meaning lifting heavy. E is equilibrium and foot speed, since brain-to-muscle pathways degrade from about age 20 and falls are what break bones.

• Train aerobically at the extremes, not the middle

Dr. Wright says mid-intensity HIIT classes are 'a good way to get injured and see me in my office on Mondays.' Her prescription is mostly low-heart-rate walking or easy cycling, plus all-out 30-second sprints twice a week. Sprinting is about heart rate, not speed: go as hard as you can on a rower, treadmill or bike, fully recover, and repeat four times.

• Lift heavy, especially women in midlife

When the ovaries 'retire' around 50, estrogen no longer stimulates muscle growth. She says one in three women ends up frail or with a broken hip. Her target: every woman should work up to 11 push-ups and then lift heavy, defined as a weight you can manage four to six times in upper-body push and pull exercises (bench press, pull-up) and lower-body ones (squat, deadlift). It may take six to nine months. She suggests a few lessons from an expert rather than years of training, and says to drop the 'pastel' light weights.

• Movement feeds joints, and arthritis needs a whole-person approach

Cartilage is pressure-sensitive, but joints are nourished by fluid pressure from movement. For a former pro tennis player with knee arthritis, Dr. Wright cut inflammatory foods, especially added sugar, which she recalls Americans eat at about 16 pounds a month. She also increased protein and fiber, got her lifting again so muscles absorb shock, and added pool mobility work. Cortisone, she says, lasts about three weeks and doesn't fix the root cause. She uses platelet-rich plasma, made from the patient's own blood, and says multiple studies show it reduces inflammation.

EXAMPLES

• The thigh MRI images

Her widely shared 2011-era MRI images compare thigh cross-sections. A 40-year-old recreational athlete's looks like lean flank steak. A sedentary 74-year-old's looks like heavily marbled Kobe beef or 'cottage cheese.' An active 70-year-old's looks nearly identical to the 40-year-old's.

• Active 70-somethings beat sedentary 35-year-olds on klotho

Her group measured circulating klotho: active people over 70 had more than sedentary people around 35, and active midlife people had the most.

• 'Aunt Mary' with a broken hip

Choking up, Dr. Wright describes on-call hip fractures. A woman in pain and lying in urine from untreated menopause-related urinary problems, often with heart issues that complicate clearance for a 45-minute surgery, and often with dementia, tells her

daughter, 'I've not always been like this… don't get old.' Dr. Wright says about 30% of women die after breaking a hip.

• From cancer nurse to surgeon

At 23, Dr. Wright gave overnight chemotherapy on a cancer floor at Rush University in Chicago, spending six years with women fighting for their lives, sometimes browsing the Home Shopping Network together to feel normal. She says it shaped her whole-person approach. In 2022 only 7.4% of orthopedic surgeons were women, up from about 3% when she trained.

• The START class

For nine years in Pittsburgh she ran a twice-weekly class for beginners who started around 51% body fat, couldn't hold a plank, and couldn't walk around the track. After three months they completed a 3.2-mile walk-run and held a two-minute plank.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Her weekly prescription

Walk briskly at least 3 hours a week, in about four 45-minute sessions (she walks at a 4–5 incline at about 4 mph). Lift heavy at least twice a week. Add four 30-second sprints with full recovery twice a week. Practice balance daily by brushing your teeth on one foot and alternating legs. Add impact like skipping or jumping, because bones need it.

• Get past 'temporal disconnect'

Like retirement saving, it's hard to invest for a future self you can't picture. So focus on feeling great today. Mel suggests listening to podcasts while walking instead of sitting.

• No more excuses

If walking hurts, try walking in a heated pool at the local Y. If dishes are waiting, 'there is no such thing as the dishes police.' Dr. Wright herself gained 30 pounds in menopause and worked to reverse it.

How to Stop Screwing Yourself Over | The Mel Robbins Podcast

Date: 2025-03-03 · Duration: 1:10:24
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SO9FHaF4EJw

KEYPOINTS

• Your phone is built to capture your attention, because attention is what's being sold

Mel's main point is that we live in an 'attention economy.' Phones, social media and the news make money simply from you staying on them, whether or not you buy anything. Her takeaway number one is that the phone is designed to take your attention because people profit from it. She stresses that these companies aren't villains, just for-profit businesses, and that's why the design won't change on its own.

• The scale has crept up on all of us

Mel cites research that the average American spends about 7 hours a day consuming media on their devices, roughly 59 hours a week. The first iPhone came out in 2007, but she says the biggest shift happened in the last five years. Her suggestion is to check your screen time, not to shame yourself, but to see how far it's gone.

• Use it as a tool or it uses you

Mel says she's genuinely torn. The same tools let her reach listeners worldwide from above her garage in southern Vermont, and they help with connection, learning, art and marketing a business. They help you only if you pick them up deliberately for a purpose. Her image for unlocking the phone is stepping into the Hunger Games arena: go in clear-eyed, get what you came for, and get out.

• It's designed to be hard to quit, so stop blaming yourself and your family

Deleting TikTok and downloading YouTube instead, tapping past app limits, or scrolling while watching TV aren't signs of weakness. They're signs the design is working. Mel compares blaming people to blaming a smoker for being hooked on cigarettes. The kids at dinner, the partner always online, and the aging parent on an iPad are all losing a game they don't know they're playing. Understanding that is more useful than being angry at them.

• Morning scrolling drains your motivation for the rest of the day

Mel plays a clip from Dr. K, known online as HealthyGamer,, a Harvard-trained psychiatrist who specializes in gaming addiction. He explains that we wake up with full dopamine reserves in the brain's reward circuitry, which drive both pleasure and motivation. Four hours of work followed by a reward feels great. Four hours of technology first, then work, and even the same output feels flat. His analogy is a lemon: a full one gives lots of juice from a small squeeze, and tech is a hard squeeze that leaves little for the rest of the day.

• That's why evenings collapse into more scrolling

Mel connects Dr. K's point to the end of the day. If you've drained your reserves early, everything feels dull. By evening, after work, the dogs and dinner, you're numb and exhausted, so you pick the phone back up, feel worse, stay up too late, and repeat the next morning.

• It has rewired your cravings, but brains can change

The evidence is the fidgety urge to check your phone in a checkout line, reaching for it when a show slows down, and feeling agitated at the idea of going to bed without it. Mel's hopeful point is neuroplasticity: just as your brain learned it needs the phone at bedtime, it can learn that it doesn't. She wants listeners to get 'the ick' about their phone, like an ex you've finally seen clearly.

• Boundaries matter more than knowing the advice

'Thanks, Sherlock,' Mel says. Everyone knows they should cut screen time. What changed her behavior was understanding the manipulation. Of all the tactics, she says physical separation is the one that worked. Timers got tapped past, and moving apps off the home screen just made her scroll more.

• Too much screen time crowds out what gives life meaning

Mel's biggest realization is that the time and energy the phone takes come out of exercise, friends, gardening, painting and picking up the guitar, the things that naturally lift you. Less of those leaves you more tired, which sends you back to the phone. She frames winning back control as getting three things back: time, energy and your mood.

EXAMPLES

• AI says Mel is divorced

Searching 'Is Mel Robbins divorced?' got an AI-generated answer saying yes, linked to an episode where she advised someone going through a divorce. She uses it to warn that AI tools pull together whatever is online, true or not, and present it as fact.

• Airport hallways, museum gift shops and giant stores

Mel compares phone design to airports that funnel you through shops, exhibits that end in a gift store you have to walk all the way through, and a big furniture store whose route makes you walk past every display. The longer they hold your attention, the more you spend. She adds that sensational headlines work the same way, because fear drives clicks.

• The grayscale study

Mel cites research from Cornell and IE University in Madrid finding that switching phones to grayscale cut daily screen time by about 50 minutes. Without color, she says, the phone feels about as exciting as an Excel spreadsheet, which reminds you it's a tool.

• The 80-year-old and his iPad

A close friend told Mel her father, since retiring, sits rocking with his iPad all day and takes it to bed, which is straining a 45-year marriage. Mel's point is that this isn't only a teenager problem.

• Exercise and internet addiction

Mel cites a study by researchers in China, published in the journal Addictive Behaviors, that found exercise strongly reduced symptoms of internet addiction. Her explanation is that movement releases dopamine naturally and holds your attention. Nobody scrolls while hiking, skiing or playing pickleball.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Mel's five-question self-check**

  Is your phone the first thing you reach for? Do you check apps for notifications that aren't there? Can you sit, walk, do chores or go to the bathroom without consuming content? Does leaving your phone behind make you anxious? Do you doomscroll to unwind and end up empty? A yes to any one means the design is winning.

- **Physical separation boundaries**

  Mel charges her phone in the bathroom so it can't come to bed. At work it stays on her desk, not on her body, so she isn't checking it in meetings. On morning walks it's zipped into her fanny pack with the dog treats. Her family's rule is no phones at the table, at home or in restaurants, not even face-down.

- **Audit who gets into your head**

  Look at everyone you follow. Mel notes that platforms keep showing you the same handful of accounts. Unfollow anyone who doesn't teach you, make you laugh or lift you up, including accounts you follow out of guilt or old college ties, and including her. Treat a spot in your feed as a privilege you grant.

- **Practice small offline moments**

  Stand in a checkout line without looking at your phone, try grayscale for a day, and swap evening doomscrolling for a walk or other movement.

How To Handle Difficult People & Take Back Your Peace and Power

Guest: Jefferson Fisher
Date: 2025-02-27 · Duration: 0:50:59
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XhBp6GZzH6k

KEYPOINTS

- **See difficult behaviour as a bid for connection**
  Trial lawyer Jefferson Fisher, author of 'The Next Conversation: Argue Less, Talk More', says people are usually difficult because of a fear, an insecurity or a need to feel heard. If you walk in convinced someone is difficult, you've made the conversation difficult before it starts. Set smaller goals: understand them, be understood, and listen to the end of their sentences.
- **You don't have to swing at every pitch**
  From cross-examination he learned that just because someone throws a zinger doesn't mean you have to respond. Nobody can make you say something you don't want to say. The less you say, the more powerful you sound.
- **Meet extremes with slow, specific questions**
  When someone says 'You never listen to me,' repeat the extreme back: 'I want to make sure I understand. I never listen to you?' Then peel another layer: 'Is it that you feel I never listen, or that I objectively never listen?' When someone gets louder, go slower and lower your voice. Their brain hears the contrast, and they tend to come down.
- **Ask 'Is this something we have to agree on?'**
  Most of the biggest fights start over small things, like which laundry detergent to buy in the grocery aisle. Usually the answer is no. If it is something you have to agree on, follow up with 'Do we have to agree on it right now?' That protects your timing too: when someone asks for 'five minutes' that really means 48, it's fine to say not now and suggest tomorrow or next week.
- **Phrases that lower defensiveness**
  Tell them what you learned ('I learned this matters to you'), that they've been helpful ('That's helpful to know'), or what you agree on ('I agree this is worth talking about'). Hearing the word 'agree' calms people even if you don't agree with their content. Others he uses: 'I could have done better' and 'Maybe you're right.'
- **Make belittlers repeat themselves**
  A put-down like 'So you're still single?' is fishing for a reaction. Say 'I need you to say that again,' or ask about intent: 'Did you say that to embarrass me?' The spotlight flips onto them, the fun is gone and they usually backtrack.
- **Answer disrespect with silence, then a standard**
  Wait about 10 seconds, long enough to be a little awkward, then say something like 'That's below my standard for a response.' It makes clear you won't engage at their level.
- **Gaslighting: 'I remember things differently. Period.'**
  Say it as often as needed, with no explanation or justification. Fisher compares gaslighters to a laser pointer leading a cat around. You beat it by standing still, especially when they replay a whole timeline tweaked in their favour.
- **With narcissistic patterns, refuse the game of 'praise or provoke'**
  If you're not praising them, they'll provoke you, and they enjoy your anger as much as your praise. Add distance: there's no clock on texts, so reply the next day or when you're calm. Stay boring and neutral with 'Noted', 'Got it' or 'Good to know.' A long paragraph just gives them one word to twist.
- **Regulate yourself first: breathe and drop your shoulders**
  When you feel threatened you hold your breath and tense up, and that's when you get loud. Take a 'conversational breath' and let it be your first word. 'Silence can never be misquoted,' and you don't have to attend every argument you're invited to.
- **Be the wet blanket, and never give them an enemy**
  With a relative who loves throwing out provocative opinions, don't take the bait. Try 'I think differently about that' or 'I don't know enough about that.' Opposing lawyers have told Fisher he was hard to fight because he never gave them an enemy. He calls it staying 'in the pocket', a drummer's term for keeping steady rhythm without calling attention to yourself.

EXAMPLES

- **The angry deposition witness**
  A hostile witness softened when Fisher asked, 'Setting the case aside, what are you struggling with today?' The man had just moved his mother into assisted living and was caring for her alone. Fisher's lesson: the person you see is often not the person you're talking to.
- **'I could have done better'**
  A woman emailed that she'd used the phrase in a fight, and her husband immediately replied, 'I could have done better too.' He had never said that in their 18 years of marriage.
- **'You just weren't supposed to be there'**
  A father told Fisher this reframe helped his autistic son stop feeling crushed about not being invited to things, and to put his time into friends who wanted him around.
- **Mel's 'Is that new?'**
  Mel realised that asking her daughter in Los Angeles 'Is that new?' about her outfits (it was thrifted) was really an accusation about money. 'Are you trying to insinuate something?' would be a fair response.
- **Papa at Walmart**
  When his grandfather was rude to store staff, Fisher made a point of being warm to them. Later he set a firm boundary: if you talk to people that way, I can't come with you. Papa changed. They also just stopped going to Walmart.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Taking things personally is optional weight**

Fisher tells himself 'Put it down, Jefferson.' He says how often you take things personally reflects how much grace you give others. A colleague passing without saying hello was probably just preoccupied.

• 'Did you mean for that to sound harsh?'

Use 'Did you mean...?' on a rude email or a curt one-word text. He uses it with his own dad. With people who write badly but talk pleasantly, just call them.

• Swap 'agree to disagree' for permission

Say 'It's okay to disagree with me, and I want to know if you do,' or 'I tend to have a different approach.' Debate the problem, not the person.

• Be a safe space for the grumpy people you love

If your kids learn you won't accept their bad moods, they'll stop coming to you when they're in trouble.

• His closing formula

Speak with control (breath, volume, body), with confidence (an assertive voice and no empty apologies like 'I hate to bother you'), and to connect: say what you mean, and deliver the bad news or the compliment.

The 7-Day Reset for More Time, Energy, & Happiness (Backed by Science)

Date: 2025-02-24 · Duration: 1:07:54
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mSaI8Rluel8

KEYPOINTS

• Your week is being taken unless you plan it
Mel argues that headlines, endless work, never-ending to-do lists and doomscrolling are all pulling at your time, energy, focus and joy. The result is crawling to Friday, collapsing on the weekend and hitting the Sunday scaries. Her answer is a seven-item checklist, done each weekend or any day a week has gone badly. She admits each item looks like a low bar, and says her worst weeks are the ones where she did only one or two.

• 1. Brain dump everything — and it is not a to-do list
Write down everything rattling around in your head: dry cleaning, lasagna, calling your mother, a work presentation, a birthday gift. Each item frees a little mental space and shows why you can't focus. Mel stresses she has no intention of doing most of it; the point is to get it out of your brain. She sometimes draws a line down the right side of a meeting notebook page and dumps there when she starts to swirl.

• Level up with three sticky notes: work, personal, home
Before a Los Angeles trip, Mel stuck three big Post-its labeled work, personal and home on her kitchen island and added items all weekend as she walked by, from a Microsoft speech to packing three microphones. Afterward she could stick them into the journal she carries.

• 2. Free yourself by crossing off what you won't do this week
Much of the list — especially home projects — isn't happening this week, yet you're carrying it. Cross it off with zero guilt. Mel struck through a FedEx box of old photos she'd sent to a TV show years ago and the family photo album from her dad's 80th-birthday trip to Peru. Otherwise she'd have spent the flight thinking about them.

• 3. Circle one thing that matters to you and book a "hot 15"
From what's left, pick the item that would make you feel better if you'd moved it forward by next weekend — playing guitar, a health-insurance claim, bringing lunch to a sick friend. It should matter to you, not your boss or family. You don't have to finish it; schedule a 15-minute block with an alarm, because it isn't real until it's on the calendar. Mel likes arriving at her desk half an hour early for this.

• Progress beats completion
Mel cites Harvard Business School research analyzing about 12,000 diary entries from employees at seven companies: the most common trigger for a "best day" was making progress on meaningful work, not finishing it. She says progress boosts mood, pride and motivation, which is why 15 minutes on a bookcase often stretches to 40. Getting started is the hard part.

• 4. Plan just one meal
This isn't about dieting or Instagram-style meal prep. Scan your week and plan something: a Saturday brunch reservation, three family dinners with a shopping list, or doubling a recipe for tomorrow's lunch. Mel says research links meal planning with better nutrition, healthier weight, saving money and lower stress, partly because it removes nightly decisions.

• 5. Schedule one good workout
If you can't find time to exercise, it isn't a habit yet, so start with one. Mel cites a University of Sydney-led study of about 72,000 people tracked for five years and published in the European Heart Journal: people doing just 15 minutes of vigorous activity a week had about 17% lower risk of death from any cause compared with people who did none; around 50 minutes was linked to a 36% reduction. Her hack: paste the streaming class link into a calendar event with an alarm.

• 6. Plan one moment of rest — phone-free
Doomscrolling feels restful but keeps your nervous system on edge. Try a bath, tea in a favorite chair, lying on the grass, a walk without earbuds, knitting or playing piano. Mel cites research from the University of Konstanz suggesting even 10 minutes of rest can activate the parasympathetic "rest and digest" system, plus work she attributes to Harvard Medical School, the NIH and the University of California linking relaxation to clarity and better health.

• 7. Put connection on the calendar
Plan coffee, a walk, dinner or a museum date. Mel points to the Harvard Study of Adult Development, running since 1938, and its director Dr. Robert Waldinger: close relationships matter more than wealth or fame for health and happiness, and lonelier participants declined earlier. Having a slot booked makes it easy to invite someone along.

EXAMPLES

• Four years without a family photo on the wall
"Picture wall" has shown up on every one of Mel's home lists since moving to Vermont. This week she circled it, searched for picture-wall services, found a Boston store and booked a four-hour Sunday appointment three weeks out. Her producer Tracy confessed a shelf still covered in baggies a year after moving in.

• The leaking soup
Before a Boston taping week, Mel made a chicken, spinach, jalapeño, ginger and rice soup her daughter Kendall found and drove it down in a Tupperware on the passenger floor. It leaked an inch of green soup onto the mat, but it fed her all week. Tracy said she was noticeably more dialed in and should make it weekly.

• Breakfast for dinner, again
As new empty nesters, Mel and Chris kept meeting in the kitchen at 6:45 p.m. with no plan in a town where restaurants close by 8, ending up with breakfast for dinner.

• Seven-minute calls
On drives to Boston, Mel calls a different old friend each time: "I was thinking about you, I only have seven minutes."

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Run the checklist weekly**
  Brain dump; cross off; circle one and book a hot 15; plan a meal; plan a workout; plan rest; plan connection.
- **Start mid-week if needed**
  Mel says a bad Tuesday is a fine time to pull the list out.
- **Pair items**
  Invite a friend to the workout you've booked to cover two items at once.

Change Your Body & Your Life in 1 Month: 4 Small Habits That Actually Work

Guest: Dr. Rangan Chatterjee
Date: 2025-02-20 · Duration: 1:43:45
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mMHNvy9pFj0

KEYPOINTS

• Most modern illness is tied to how we live

British physician Dr. Rangan Chatterjee, author of Make Change That Lasts, says medicine was built for acute problems like a cough and fever: a 15-minute visit, a pill, done in seven days. Today, he estimates, 80–90% of what doctors see is in some way linked to modern lifestyles and stress. He stresses this isn't blame; genetics matter too, but many people never chose how they live intentionally.

• Four pillars: food, movement, sleep, relaxation

Changes in these four areas, he says, can affect energy, weight, mood and more. Lifestyle isn't only prevention; it can be part of treatment alongside medical care, including for someone under an oncologist. His key question: which pillar needs the most work? Pushing a diet from 85% to 90% won't move the needle if you sleep five hours a night.

• Food: favor one-ingredient foods

There's no single right diet, but the core principle is minimally processed food — things like an avocado or an apple that have no ingredient list. He explains that a sugary cereal at 7 a.m. spikes blood sugar, which then falls; around 9:30 or 10 you feel desperate for a snack because a rapid drop triggers stress hormones like adrenaline and cortisol. Mel was shocked to find 32 grams of sugar in a bowl of cereal she'd thought of as healthy.

• Treat diets as experiments and become your own expert

When well-credentialed experts contradict each other on plant-based versus keto, he suggests trying one for three to four weeks while tracking energy, sleep, focus, digestion and bloating, then trying the other. That's long enough for taste buds to adapt and for withdrawal to pass. On fasting, the right question is "for whom, and in what context": potentially game-changing for someone with type 2 diabetes or excess weight, a poor fit for someone underweight or with an eating disorder. When a diet fails, people blame themselves rather than the diet.

• Use "feel, feed, find" for cravings

Before the 9 p.m. ice cream, pause. Feel: is this physical or emotional hunger? Feed: how does the food feed that feeling — less stress, less loneliness, a treat for yourself? Find: what else could meet that need, like 10 minutes of YouTube yoga, calling a friend or a bath? He says the first step is 80–90% of the work, and that it works for alcohol, social media and pornography too. He also keeps foods he doesn't want to eat out of the house, since willpower gets tested enough outside.

• Movement: a five-minute keystone habit

He wakes around 5 a.m., starts his French press, sets a five-minute timer and does a strength circuit in his kitchen in pajamas — press-ups, squats, calf raises, sometimes kettlebell swings or curls — before he gets to drink the coffee. He's done it for over five years, including in his Boston hotel room. Like brushing your teeth, it doesn't need variety. The real payoff is evidence that he can trust and rely on himself.

• Sleep starts in the morning

Bright morning light helps set your body clock; if it's dark, turn on bright lights or buy a light box, or get outside on a 10 a.m. coffee break. He cites a study finding people who slept 5.5 hours instead of 7.5 ate about 22% more calories the next day. Even an extra 20–30 minutes helps. His wind-down starts one hour before bed: laptop closed, no money or household talk, and phones charging in the kitchen.

• Relaxation: chronic stress changes how you see the world

The stress response — rising blood sugar and blood pressure, faster clotting, an alert amygdala — was built for predators but now fires at inboxes and headlines. Over time, he says, it can contribute to weight gain, fatigue and type 2 diabetes. He cites recent studies suggesting up to 80% of Americans are chronically stressed. A stressed nervous system reads the same email differently on Friday than after a restful weekend.

• Practice daily solitude

He calls daily solitude the most important practice for anyone in 2025: a walk with nothing in your ears, journaling, breathwork or coffee without scrolling. Your thoughts and actions are downstream of what you consume. Solitude also lets you notice body signals; for him, tightness in his right upper back warns that stress is building.

EXAMPLES

• Dinner for breakfast

A pescatarian patient in his early 40s with belly weight, low mood and constant hunger ate sugary cereal every morning. Chatterjee suggested eating leftover salmon and roasted vegetables for breakfast as a week-long experiment. He returned feeling like a different person: more focused and not hungry until 2 p.m.

• From zero gym visits to 70 minutes a week

A 48-year-old patient agreed to 45-minute gym sessions three times a week and came back four weeks later having gone zero times. Chatterjee took off his jacket, taught him modified body-weight moves on the office floor and asked for five minutes twice a week. Four weeks later the man was doing 10 minutes every evening while dinner cooked, then started lunchtime walks, cooking better and prioritizing bedtime; years later he meditates daily.

• Results on TV

On his BBC series Doctor in the House, he says he used the four pillars to put a woman's type 2 diabetes into remission in 30 days, cut another's panic attacks by 80% in six weeks and greatly reduce menopausal symptoms for a woman who didn't want hormones.

• Caregiving as identity

When his father, a hospital consultant who for 30 years slept only three nights a week, developed lupus and spent 15 years

on dialysis, Chatterjee believed every need was his to meet. At the 2013 cremation, years of right-sided back tightness vanished. Caring for his mother now, he accepts he can't always be there and that she may be disappointed — and says he cares for her better as a result.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Pick one five-minute action for seven days**
  Journaling, yoga, star jumps — anything; make it one minute if five feels too much. Do it at the same time daily and attach it to something you already do.
- **Try the 3-4-5 breath**
  Inhale for three, hold for four, exhale for five. One breath takes 12 seconds; five take a minute. A longer exhale helps switch on the relaxation side of the nervous system — useful before a tense meeting or argument.
- **Caregivers: oxygen mask first**
  Five minutes a day for yourself makes you a better carer. Notice where stress shows up in your body and ask what it's telling you.

How to Control Your Mind & Redirect Your Energy to Self Transformation

Date: 2025-02-17 · Duration: 1:04:56
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cp6Kd-JAMRo

KEYPOINTS

• An idle supercomputer turns on its owner

Mel's central idea: your brain is a problem-solving, pattern-spotting supercomputer. Aim it at a project and you get flow; leave it idle and it makes you the problem — trashing your appearance, telling you nothing is enough. She notes you rarely beat yourself up while lost in gardening, gaming, sport, an instrument or a hike.

• Your brain is a Labrador that needs a ball

Retrievers are hardwired to chase whatever you throw; without a job they chew slippers and gnaw cabinets. Mel says your brain behaves the same: give it a goal, a 'ball in play', and it locks on; give it nothing and it turns destructive.

• Skill 1: give yourself a project, ideally creative and hands-on

Mel plays a clip of Martha Beck on the Today Show: we've long known anxiety shuts down creativity, so Beck wondered whether creativity shuts down anxiety — and says it does. Simply planning tomorrow's dinner (steak on the grill, and what goes with it) shifts your thinking. Her advice to people who say they're not creative: make something anyway — cook, garden, draw, knit.

• Research Mel cites on why projects help

She points to University of Exeter research that small steps on a project turn down negative self-talk and rumination; a University of Michigan and Oxford study in the journal Neuron indicating dopamine is released as you work toward a goal rather than when you finish; and University of Pennsylvania work suggesting goals build resilience against stress. With listeners reporting record stress, she sees a project as a way to stop a tired brain making you a bigger problem.

• Skill 2: look for hearts to prove your brain's filter works

Tell your brain to find a naturally occurring heart shape today — a leaf, a sidewalk stain, coffee foam, a spot on a dog. Recording, Mel spotted two: magnets clustered on a whiteboard and a stain on the carpet. It sounds silly, she says, but it trains the reticular activating system, the 'bouncer' deciding what reaches your conscious mind. It won't fix your problems; it proves you can direct your attention.

• You only consciously notice a sliver of what hits you

Mel relays Stanford neurosurgeon Dr. Jim Doty's figures: 6–10 million bits of information hit you every second, but the conscious brain handles only about 50–100, most of it about running your body. Your filter decides what matters based on what you tell it matters — like a social feed that fills with bird-feeder ads after you mention them. If you're not looking for opportunities or deals, you'll walk past them like an unnoticed heart-shaped rock.

• Skill 3: manifesting as intentional encoding, per Dr. Doty

Doty defines manifestation as embedding an intention in your subconscious so it has the greatest likelihood to occur. His process: write it in pencil, read it silently, read it aloud, visualize it — repeatedly. He explains that the default mode network holds self-stories like 'I'm never good enough'; repetition makes a new intention salient, engaging the task-positive network's salience, attention and executive control parts — his 'bloodhound' that tracks down possibilities. He stresses there's no magic, and urges starting small, like quitting soda before aiming to lose 100 pounds.

• Mel reprogrammed her own anxious defaults

A former chronic worrier, Mel says she deliberately installed two default thoughts: 'What if this all works out?' and 'This moment is leading me somewhere I'm meant to go.' Examples she suggests writing: I'm capable of success, I'm worthy of love, this moment is temporary, I'm stronger than I think.

• Skill 5: let thoughts rise and fall

Instead of TV, doom-scrolling or a drink to switch off, Mel suggests observing thoughts without attaching — 'oh, interesting, I'm still thinking about work'. She cites a study in the journal Mindfulness from Lawrence University and Goucher College finding such practices help people avoid negative loops, noting that rumination can worsen depression. 'Let them' (the thoughts come) and 'let me' remind myself I'm not my thoughts.

EXAMPLES

• Sawyer's 36-hour research project

When Mel asked her daughter Sawyer — formerly in marketing tech at a cybersecurity firm in 44 countries — to analyze online comments about Let Them, she expected a few pages in two or three weeks. Sawyer delivered a huge, color-coded analysis with linked sources and a two-page synopsis in 36 hours. Mel's heartbreaking realization: without a project for that horsepower, Sawyer aims it at herself.

• The FaceTime that inspired the episode

On a morning call, one daughter said nothing she did felt like enough and nothing looked good on her; the other chimed in that she felt the same. Mel, by contrast, describes her own ADHD brain as 'a box of mice let loose in the kitchen'.

• Mel's weekend closet project

Newly an empty nester, Mel planned to clear out upstairs closets her adult kids use as storage — a concrete project to keep her mind occupied rather than ruminating.

• Dr. Daniel Amen's bookends to the day

Psychiatrist Dr. Amen, who Mel says has scanned some 225,000 brains, starts each day with 'Today is going to be a great day' and asks why. At night he asks 'What went well today?' and goes on a 'treasure hunt' from waking onward. He did it even the night his father died: 'The brain is lazy; it does what you nudge it to do.'

OTHER RELEVANT

• Skill 4: the morning and night questions

Ask 'Why is today going to be a great day?' at breakfast (good with kids) and 'What went well today?' at bedtime. Mel says both send the retriever after good things you'd otherwise miss, even on terrible days.

• Float negative thoughts down a river

Picture writing each thought on paper and tossing it into a rushing river. Mel's other image: like dog mess on the sidewalk — notice it, don't step in it, walk past.

• If you can't find a heart, start there

Mel says the exercise is the baby step: if you can't spot a heart on tomorrow's walk, you won't believe your filter can find bigger things. Many readers of her book now post the hearts they find.

The Best Relationship Advice No One Ever Told You

Guest: Chris Robbins
Date: 2025-02-13 · Duration: 0:44:11
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6Kycn43KNOE

KEYPOINTS

• Mel and Chris answer listener relationship questions after 30 years together
The couple, who have three adult children, take questions on growth gaps, family pressure, drifting apart, alone time, parenting disagreements, losing yourself and unmet expectations. They disagree on air more than once, and at one point Mel says she just had 'a huge epiphany after 30 years.'

• You can't make your partner happy or force them to grow
To Rachel, who is growing while her partner isn't, Mel says you can make someone coffee or a reservation, but not make them happy or change them. Drawing on The Let Them Theory, she says people only change when they feel like it, and pressure creates resistance rather than change. Your job is to invest in your own growth and bring that back to the relationship.

• Commitment and compatibility aren't the same, and the couple disagree on this
Mel separates staying committed from later asking whether you're compatible with someone who won't grow. Chris pushes back: if your example doesn't rub off and your partner isn't inspired to grow, that already points to incompatibility. Mel's reply: first, have you actually talked about how their lack of growth affects you emotionally?

• Your growth can feel threatening to your partner
When one person changes, it forces the other to look at their own behavior, which is confronting. Shame or pressure will push a partner away. But influence works: Mel says watching Chris get up 90 minutes before her or walk the dogs makes her think she should too.

• The deal-breaker test: can you stop complaining?
If your partner never changes (keeps drinking, never addresses depression, never speaks kindly), can you keep choosing them as they are? If you can't end the complaining, it's a deal breaker. Per The Let Them Theory, real deal breakers make you give up your dreams or values; most frustrations are just different priorities.

• 'A house divided cannot stand'
When family or social pressure gets to a couple, Mel says the problem is cracks within, not pressure from outside. Agree together on your values, traditions and parenting style, and expect parents to take differences as a rejection of how they did it. Let them be a little bothered; there's room for old traditions and your own.

• Schedule protected time, not just date nights
For Sarah, drifting after kids and a move, the advice is a weekly slot for something familiar or new. Mel and Chris spent a couple of years in weekly couples therapy and say the best part was a 40-minute daytime block every week with no phones, kids or pets. After 26 years outside Boston, they moved to a small Vermont town and made a point of exploring somewhere new weekly. They're also talking about returning to a dance class they loved 25 years ago.

• Claim your alone time out loud and collaborate on when
Chris takes two to three hours early each morning for workouts, being outside or the office, and told Mel what it gives him and not to interrupt. He also plans occasional solo overnight hikes by asking when it would work. The rule: never expect your partner to read your mind about needs.

• Losing yourself in marriage is 'a you problem'
Mel tells Lauren that if you feel you're losing your identity, make bettering yourself your purpose for six months: health, sleep, creativity, friends, a class. Otherwise you'll resent your marriage for a purpose it can't supply. Chris adds that you still need to communicate. Don't just vanish for 72 holes of golf; explain you've lost yourself and ask whether taking a Saturday works.

• Unmet expectations are usually uncommunicated expectations
Mel admits that every time she's been disappointed in Chris, she hadn't said clearly what she wanted and why. Contempt like 'what kind of person doesn't know that?' is 'death by a thousand cuts.' Chris's view: it's far easier if she just gives him a list than resents him for not guessing.

EXAMPLES

• 'No one cares what's in your glass but you'
A couple of years ago Chris quietly quit drinking without asking Mel to. About four days in, she offered him wine while cooking, joked 'it's kind of just juice,' and said she felt weird drinking alone. He told her to stop asking, and that if she was self-conscious about her glass she should look in the mirror and ask why. Mel says it changed her life and that she now sees herself as having undermined his change.

• Oakley and the car
Their son Oakley, a college freshman without a car, floated having one next semester; Mel said 'great.' Chris, overhearing, thought it was a bad idea. Mel realized she's decisive because uncertainty scares her ('ready, fire, aim') while Chris taps the brakes, and kids exploit that crack.

• Three years of kids in the bedroom
When two of their kids developed acute anxiety somewhere between fourth and sixth grade, they'd come to Mel's side and she'd lift the covers. After talking it through, the couple compromised: a bed on their floor, no getting in theirs. Mel stresses this isn't parenting advice and to consult an expert; the point is they agreed.

• The birthday party and the Uber
Mel once resented Chris for not throwing her a birthday party she never asked for. Later, Chris suggested an Uber to pick up a kid flying home from college. For Mel, a curbside pickup, or waiting inside, is a show of love. Chris grew up in London and outside New York City with a traveling dad, where taxis were normal.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Say 'maybe' when kids ask and you haven't talked

Mel's new tool: instead of yes or no, say maybe until you and your partner have had Chris's 'three-minute discussion' about why one of you is a yes and the other a no. Understanding the deeper reason also tells you whose view should carry more weight.

• If your partner is growing and you aren't

Chris's message: don't throw up your arms and assume you can't catch up. There's always a good time to start. Couples are encouraged to listen together, since people change more readily when the conclusion feels like their own.

• Co-create rather than convert

The goal isn't to turn each other into each other but to understand where each comes from and decide together. Mel quotes a line she heard: second marriages are amazing, especially with the same person. Every day is a chance to start over.

Why Making Friends as an Adult Feels Impossible & What to Do About It

Date: 2025-02-10 · Duration: 1:12:31
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f26GCEUCNXk

KEYPOINTS

• Childhood built friendship for you

Mel says school, buses, town sports, playdates, team dinners, then college dorms or the military kept you with people your own age on the same schedule and milestones. Friendship was a group sport: if your group was invited, so were you. That trained everyone to expect friendship to just happen, which is why nobody sees the change coming.

• The 'Great Scattering' hits in your 20s, and again later

After graduation everyone scatters to different cities and timelines, and the group chat goes quiet. Mel says it repeats in your 30s as friends couple up and move to the suburbs, in your 40s and 50s with divorce, job changes or loss, and even in old age. Her father said he and her mom weren't thinking about a retirement community because 'our friends are dying.' Adult friendship becomes an individual sport, and if you don't realize that, you cling, take it personally or 'break up' with people.

• Three pillars: proximity, timing and energy

Mel's framework holds that all three must be present for a friendship to form and stay close. When one fades, the friendship changes. She says the change is about the pillar, not about you.

• Proximity matters more than you think

Mel cites an MIT finding that physical proximity, meaning how often your paths cross, is the strongest predictor of friendship. She mentions a state police academy study where cadets befriended those next to them alphabetically because they lined up and sat that way, and similar findings for chemists at neighboring lab benches. Moving, changing jobs or changing routines all shift proximity.

• Friendship takes time: roughly 50, 90 and 200 hours

Mel cites University of Kansas research suggesting about 50 hours together to become casual friends, about 90 to become friends, and about 200 to become close friends. As a kid you logged that weekly. As an adult, she notes, American time-use data shows most of ages 21 to 60 is spent at work. She frames the figures as 'just research', but they're why she says to give a new place a year.

• Timing explains why coworkers rarely become best friends

Work gives you proximity, but colleagues are in different life chapters: single, married, raising kids, grandparents, healthy or not. Mel says friendship came easiest when her kids were small, because school drop-offs and Saturday soccer gave her proximity and shared timing with other parents. Those groups scattered when the kids reached high school.

• Energy is the pillar you control, so don't force it

Chemistry either clicks or it doesn't. It can be off simply because you're different types, one of you doesn't drink while the other parties, or one goes deep and the other stays on the surface. Mel admits that in her 20s to 40s she pushed harder when energy was off and became, in her words, 'a walking red flag': clingy, insecure and passive-aggressive. Shifting energy is often a sign that both of you are growing.

• Friendships stretch like rubber bands rather than ending

Senior producer Yuna's analogy: with all three pillars present, the band is at rest. A move, a wedding, a baby, grad school or one person getting sober stretches it, but it stays intact and can snap back at a reunion, wedding or chance meeting. What breaks it is yanking: guilt trips, resentment and making the other person wrong. Mel calls 'best friends for life' a modern idea that sets people up to fail.

• 'Let them' needs 'let me'

Mel reads from The Let Them Theory: if they cancel, get busy, fall in love, move or stop calling, let them. But listener Charlotte said using 'let them' left her with hardly any friends. Mel's answer is that saying only 'let them' will make you lonely. The second half, 'let me', means making the effort, making the plans, checking in without expectation, and deciding how much energy to put into people who don't reciprocate.

• Don't keep score on texts or invites

Mel argues that being able to reach someone directly is a privilege, not a debt. When a friend got passive-aggressive after she didn't text back during a hard stretch with work and family, she replied that texting all day wasn't a priority but she cared about him, and that resolved it. To listener Seema, who hosts but isn't invited back, she says to host because you love hosting, not to trap friends into returning the favor.

EXAMPLES

• A year of sulking at age 52

After 26 years outside Boston, Mel moved to a Vermont town of about 3,000 people and spent roughly a year crying, watching Boston friends online, and reading alone in her favorite coffee shop. She had forgotten her own advice to her daughter Sawyer, who called crying almost daily as a Boston College freshman: give it a year.

• 32 contacts in the coffee shop

Mel started introducing herself and saving each name in a phone contact for the coffee shop, with a note like 'tall, beard, glasses, Kevin', so she could greet people by name the next day. She now has 32 entries. A Wednesday walking group came out of it. One morning she nearly skipped coffee with them for lack of time, went anyway, and says those 23 minutes changed her day.

• Chris's ski-touring crew

Mel's husband joined a golf league and a local ski race team. Chatting on the lift, he found fellow Telemark skiers and now meets a group of 30 to 40 who skin up the mountain with their dogs several mornings a week. An activity recreates proximity, shared timing and matching energy, much like a childhood team.

• Maxine keeps inviting

Mel's friend Maxine constantly throws parties and keeps inviting Mel and Chris even though they're almost always away or picking up a kid from the airport. Mel credits her with exactly the flexible approach she's describing.

• Reconnecting after 30 years

Mel recently started a group chat with her college freshman roommate Bernadine and another college friend. After more than 30 years of little contact, she says it felt like no time had passed.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Go first, every day

Compliment people ('I love your socks'), learn names at the dog park or mail room, and go places alone and talk to the person beside you. Mel cites Harvard's Dr. Robert Waldinger, a past guest, on research showing these small 'weak tie' interactions ease loneliness. She thinks they're among the strongest ties of all.

• Join or start an activity

CrossFit, yoga, a painting class or a library book club draws people with similar energy. Mel mentions research suggesting art classes are especially good for connection for older adults.

• Keep distant friendships going cheaply

Each morning, following a habit from her friend Brendon Burchard, she sends one text or voice memo to someone she's thinking about. Don't write 'let's get together' unless you'll suggest a date. Share concert plans with 15 friends so whoever wants to can join. Use drives or six minutes in a grocery line to call someone.

• When life is falling apart

For listener Colleen, who is jobless, divorcing, broke and embarrassed to host, Mel suggests going through your camera roll and old photos and texting someone who has been through the same thing to ask for advice. Free library and school events help too. People can't help if you stay stoic and isolated.

How to Create the Life You Want: Lessons From the #1 Happiness Researcher

Guest: Dr. Judith Joseph
Date: 2025-02-06 · Duration: 1:04:14
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R8UpO9mMu5M

KEYPOINTS

• Collecting the house, the car and the partner doesn't produce happiness

Dr. Judith Joseph, a double board-certified psychiatrist trained at Columbia and on faculty at NYU, says the research shows that once people get the things they're chasing, they still want more. She lived it herself: fancy degrees, marriage, a child, a house and a business, and she still felt empty. Her definition of happiness is connection and purpose, rooted in going out into the community as a child with her father, a pastor.

• High-functioning depression can hide behind productivity

In 2020, halfway through a talk to a hospital system about pandemic fear, she realised, "I think I'm depressed." She began asking patients about it and heard "that is me" from people who were still working, parenting and caring for others while feeling numb, "meh" and unexcited. They didn't fit neatly into a diagnostic box because they were still functioning.

• Happiness is biopsychosocial

Medical students learn that conditions have biological (genes, family history, illness), psychological (trauma, attachment, coping) and social (relationships, work, food, movement, toxins) parts. "If depression were as simple as a pill, we'd put meds in the water." Her Happy Lab project aims to make that framework available to everyone, and each person may need to focus on a different part first.

• The five Vs remove blocks before you add tools

Validation, Venting, Values, Vitals and Vision. Each has a negative side that keeps you unhappy and a positive side that builds happiness. Mel's takeaway is that common advice like taking a walk or calling a friend often doesn't stick because emotional blocks haven't been cleared. Joseph compares it to the early stages of therapy that most people skip.

• V1, Validation: name how you feel

Acknowledging your feelings reduces uncertainty, which lowers stress. Many of us ignore even basic signals: when she asked a room of high-powered women who works through needing the bathroom or eating, hands went up. Avoiding feelings is often a trauma response, but if you don't acknowledge them, you can't break unhealthy patterns. One serial people-pleaser client discovered low self-worth from childhood neglect underneath; naming that painful truth allowed them to work toward more balanced relationships.

• V2, Venting: release the pressure, with care

Venting means getting an emotion out, positive or negative, through prayer, therapy, art, song or, in Joseph's case, social media posts. Her dos and don'ts: don't vent in the heat of the moment, don't trauma-dump, especially on employees who can't push back, start with self-venting, and ask regular confidants whether it's okay and reciprocal.

• V3, Values: what makes you feel "full and fed"

Not what your family or society told you to value. Money and possessions are shallow values: on your deathbed you won't wish for "that pink Porsche." Joseph realised that despite prestigious programmes, what fulfilled her was connecting with and helping people. If you're unsure, look for the last time you felt full and fed.

• V4, Vitals: you have one body

Joseph covers sleep, movement, food and screen time. She says processed foods raise inflammation, which she links to anxiety, depression and poor sleep, while omega-3-rich fish, leafy greens and berries support the brain. In her Happy Lab demonstrations, she tells people a single blueberry increases blood flow to the brain within an hour. The vital doctors most often miss, she says, is relationship quality, which longevity research ranks as the top factor.

• V5, Vision: plan joy and celebrate small wins

Busy people check boxes without anything to look forward to, which keeps them stuck in the past. She suggests celebrating small wins, like getting your kid to school on time, with a sip of coffee and a "wow, I did that."

• Women face more biopsychosocial pressure

Joseph says women have twice the rate of depression and anxiety as men. She attributes this to hormonal vulnerability (periods, postpartum, perimenopause), social load (lower pay, caring for kids and parents) and higher rates of trauma. She plans support around predictable vulnerable windows and stresses that this doesn't mean hormones make women "crazy."

EXAMPLES

• Finding a lost value through nature

A client who couldn't remember what she valued traced it back to camping trips before her parents' divorce. Joseph didn't send her on a hike. She started with reading about a hike, then looking at photos, then buying boots. Her depression wasn't cured, but her "points of joy" increased and she felt hopeful. Mel adds a friend who looked transformed after taking up ballet again as an adult.

• The Prince question

For clients with foggy, traumatic childhoods, Joseph asks who they'd most like to have coffee with. One answered Prince, which led to a value of music and live shows.

• Chris and Oakley were blocked, not lazy

About seven years earlier, after his business failed, Mel's husband Chris was meditating, exercising and volunteering in hospice but couldn't feel happy. He was holding in shame about losing money and "failing to provide" until he named it and started journaling and talking about it. Their son Oakley, lonely at school, kept returning to unhappiness despite Lego and skiing.

• The time capsule

Inspired by shrines she saw while travelling to study how cultures view happiness, Joseph has clients fill a capsule with things they're working toward: a family photo with a note about seeing someone more, a concert goal, a step target. They "dig it

up" together in as little as two months. She says using touch and sight keeps clients present, which helps those who are neurodivergent.

- **"How many bodies did God give you?"**
  Each night Joseph asks her daughter this. The answer: "One." "And what do we do with it?" "Take care of it." She also tells her daughter there will only ever be one of her.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Validate in whatever way fits you**
  Ask "How do I really feel?" in a mirror, in writing, with an emotions face chart if you struggle to identify feelings (alexithymia), or through a song.
- **Colour-code joy in your calendar**
  Busy moms' calendars are full of soccer, work and chores, with no joy. Block joyful activities in a distinct colour as a reminder, a boundary and a priority.
- **Pick one V, and count points of joy**
  The biggest mistake is trying all five at once. Research measures wellbeing as accumulated points such as sleep, connection and energy, so track small wins, like three points of joy today, instead of waiting to be "fixed." Medication can still be part of the picture for some people.
- **Make it yours**
  "Mental health is yours." Joseph, who is Caribbean American, prefers dancing to a StairMaster and says the side-to-side movement helps the two halves of her brain communicate. Bring your own roots and creativity into your routine.

Why 80% of Autoimmune Diseases Happen to Women & Solutions From a Renowned MD

Guest: Dr. Sara Szal
Date: 2025-02-03 · Duration: 1:23:21
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a7PqRTeaxOk

KEYPOINTS

• Autoimmune disease is a case of mistaken identity.

Dr. Sara Szal, a Harvard- and MIT-trained physician who directs precision medicine at the Marcus Institute of Integrative Health at Jefferson, compares the immune system to private security. It's meant to recognise your own tissue and attack invaders. When it gets confused, it makes autoantibodies against normal tissue, which she calls a 'civil war' in the body. She describes health and autoimmune disease as two ends of a spectrum. In the broad middle, antibodies and early symptoms can be present years before anyone diagnoses a disease.

• There are more than 100 autoimmune diseases, and many people don't know theirs is one.

Classic examples include rheumatoid arthritis, type 1 diabetes, Hashimoto's thyroiditis, Graves' disease, celiac disease, multiple sclerosis and psoriasis. Szal adds conditions that share features with autoimmunity, such as endometriosis, some forms of IBS, chronic Lyme disease and long COVID. She says people often go 7 to 14 years before getting a diagnosis.

• Rising antibody rates point to environment, not genes.

Szal says about 30% of Americans have anti-nuclear antibodies, and that positive results have nearly tripled over 25 years. Because genetics haven't changed that fast, she attributes the rise to changes in food, stress and trauma levels.

• Three requirements: genes, a leaky gut and a trigger.

Citing a pediatric gastroenterologist at Massachusetts General Hospital, Szal lists three root causes: genetic predisposition, increased intestinal permeability ('leaky gut') and a trigger. You can't change your genes yet, but she says you can work on the other two.

• A leaky gut is a lost boundary.

The gut lining relies on 'tight junctions' between cells. When they fail, bacteria, viruses and foods such as gluten or dairy can slip through. Since 70 to 80% of the immune system sits along the gut, this sets off the immune system in ways it isn't meant to be. Alcohol is the worst offender for tight junctions; Szal notes it's the standard way to create leaky gut in lab animals. Too much stress also contributes, through corticotropin-releasing hormone, and so do very hard training and night shifts, which she links to more autoimmunity because they disrupt the body clock.

• Trauma is the most common trigger she sees, followed by hormones.

Szal says she wasn't taught about trauma in medical school but kept seeing autoimmunity in patients with traumatic births or high Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) scores. Hormonal shifts matter too. Pregnancy forces the immune system to accept an embryo that is half someone else's DNA, which usually works but can lead to miscarriage or postpartum autoimmune problems. The most common spike she sees is during perimenopause and menopause, roughly ages 40 to 55.

• Women are about four times more likely than men to have autoimmune disease.

Szal says X-versus-Y chromosome biology is necessary but not sufficient to explain the gap. She points to socially constructed gender differences: women experience more stress and trauma, experience trauma earlier, and develop PTSD at higher rates after the same trauma. They also carry more of the caregiving burden. She lists research gaps and a treatment gap, citing a figure that 73% of women seeking help for perimenopause or menopause don't get the treatment they need. Her conclusion: 'it's a health hazard to be female in our culture.'

• Childhood adversity affects the body through the PINE network.

PINE stands for psychology, immune, nervous and endocrine systems. Szal says adversity in childhood dysregulates this network. Depending on the person, that can mean immune confusion and autoimmunity, lifelong cortisol problems, or a nervous system stuck on high alert with low heart rate variability. She adds that understanding your trauma intellectually doesn't stop it living on in the body.

• Lifestyle medicine adds to standard treatment rather than replacing it.

Szal argues that sleep, food, movement, emotions and relationships account for about 80% of the prevention and reversal of chronic disease. Medicine often treats symptoms instead, for example a steroid cream for psoriasis without asking about the gut. She is clear that some conditions are too advanced for lifestyle changes alone, such as type 1 diabetes once the insulin-producing cells are gone. Someone with rheumatoid arthritis on methotrexate could add an elimination diet, which she says has randomized-trial support for RA, and possibly lower the dose, but only with a clinician involved.

EXAMPLES

• The Gabor Maté clip that went viral

Mel's clip of Dr. Gabor Maté explaining why 80% of autoimmune disease affects women was one of the most viral things she has posted. Maté described four traits he saw in patients before they got sick: putting others' emotional needs first, identifying with duty and role, being 'nice' by suppressing healthy anger, and feeling responsible for how others feel. Szal said it 'nailed me to the wall.'

• Szal's own story

In her 30s, exhausted, with PMS and unable to lose baby weight, Szal was offered an antidepressant and a birth control pill and told to eat less and exercise more. She later found she had positive anti-nuclear antibodies, an ACE score of six, an unhappy marriage, teenagers and work she didn't like. She says each ACE point of one or more raises autoimmune risk by about 20%.

• The ACE questionnaire

Developed in the 1990s by the CDC and Kaiser Permanente, it asks about abuse, neglect, violence against a mother, household substance use or mental illness, divorce and imprisonment before age 18. Szal says higher scores were linked to

greater midlife risk of 45 diseases, including autoimmune disease.

• Hashimoto's and missing eyebrows

Hashimoto's is nine times more common in women than men and causes about 95% of hypothyroidism, according to Szal. She says 13% of relatively healthy people have thyroid antibodies. Signs include fatigue, weight gain, joint aches, rising cholesterol, constipation, dry skin and hair, and thinning of the outer third of the eyebrows. Mel, who had been buying brow serum, planned to get tested over lunch.

• POTS after COVID

In postural orthostatic tachycardia syndrome, the autonomic nervous system struggles to adjust pulse and blood pressure when you stand, causing light-headedness or fainting. Szal thinks much of it is autoimmune, and cases rose with long COVID. It's tested by taking pulse and blood pressure lying down, sitting and standing. She recommends trying enough salt and electrolytes and addressing insulin resistance before medication.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Know the clustered symptoms

Look out for fatigue, joint pain, swelling, unexplained weight changes, low-grade fevers or night sweats, tingling, gut problems, rashes, anxiety or depression, vision changes and a racing heart. If you have three or more, Szal's book advises seeing your primary care doctor, and a specialist if you have more.

• Step 1: get tested

Szal's list: a complete blood count with differential; inflammation markers (hs-CRP, sedimentation rate, neutrophil-to-lymphocyte ratio); glucose and insulin; estrogen, progesterone and testosterone; and vitamin D.

• Step 2: a three-week elimination diet

This is free if testing isn't possible. Cut gluten, dairy, sugar and alcohol for three weeks and watch whether your skin, joints or energy improve. If you see a partial response, keep going, since a long-standing leaky gut may need more time.

• Step 3: track triggers and calm your body

Szal says talk therapy alone works only about 30% of the time for trauma, because you can't think your way out of it. Start by creating safety in your body: slow belly breathing (about 5.5 seconds in and 5.5 seconds out, even just three breaths), meditation, yoga and time in nature. Mel adds cold plunges and guided psychedelic therapy from her own experience.

When Nothing Seems to Be Going Your Way, Here’s Exactly What To Do

Date: 2025-01-30 · Duration: 0:35:41
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ADrkJSpG3V8

KEYPOINTS

• Start by saying it out loud: life isn't fair

Mel opens by validating a long list of unfair things, big and small: losing a house or a parent, melting ice caps, corporations dodging taxes while you can barely pay yours, being born diabetic, caring for aging parents or young kids alone, acne, a supermodel sister, a parent favoring your brother, a friend's pregnancy after your miscarriage, an unaffordable housing market. Ignoring it or feeling bad about it isn't working, so she has listeners shout it with her.

• It will always be unfair, but this is a scene, not the ending

Some painful things will happen to you and not to the person next to you, and much will stay out of your control. Mel says complaining, venting and even feeling sorry for yourself have value, but it's 'one stop on the journey,' not where you live. The more powerful fact: through your attitude and actions you can move the needle a little.

• Step 1: Give yourself a deadline for feeling bad

A deadline is permission and a boundary at once. It acknowledges you deserve time to be sad, disempowered or grieving, and it marks on a calendar that this chapter will end, so it doesn't take over your life. Until then, play the sad songs, live in pajamas, cry, scream into a pillow. The exact date matters less than the intentional act.

• Strong feelings in an unfair situation mean you're mentally healthy

Mel credits clinical psychologist Dr. Lisa Damour: feeling sad, overwhelmed or depressed after a loss or breakup shows your mind is working properly, as long as the emotions match the situation. You don't need to fear or run from them.

• Suppressing emotions after trauma prolongs symptoms

Mel cites a UC Irvine study of how Americans coped after 9/11. Six months later many still had heightened anxiety and post-traumatic stress symptoms, but people who actively managed emotions right away (seeking support, planning ways forward, processing what happened) healed faster. Those who shoved feelings down, distracted themselves or just got back to work still had PTSD and anxiety symptoms months and years later. 'It's not time that heals; it's what you do with the time.'

• Step 2: Accept reality, which is harder than admitting it's unfair

You can shout 'it's not fair' and still secretly wish it hadn't happened. That wish is resistance, and Mel says most internal suffering comes from wanting things to be different than they are, an idea running from Stoicism to Buddhism. The relationship is over, the diagnosis is here, the cancer is back; wishing only makes the present more painful.

• 'Let life live through you'

Mel quotes Rumi: 'Try not to resist the changes that come your way. Instead, let life live through you,' and calls it the 'let them' part of her theory. When life hands you a 'poop sandwich,' you don't have to choke it down; set it on the plate beside you and move on. She says her worst news has often revealed the best things about herself.

• Step 3: Ask what's in your control, then make a plan

Paralysis blinds you to the fact that there's almost always something you can do. Instead of searching 'life isn't fair,' search your specific situation ('my marriage just ended, what should I do?') and learn from people who've been there. Mel is convinced someone has faced the same thing or worse and figured it out. What stops people is despair, not capability, because without hope you skip the small actions that change things.

• Step 4: Find meaning and choose your attitude

Mel calls Viktor Frankl's Man's Search for Meaning, with more than 15 million copies in print per her edition, one of the most important books of her life. Frankl, a psychiatrist, survived four Nazi camps by holding on to thoughts of his wife and imagining someday lecturing on the psychology of Auschwitz; his wife and family did not survive. She reads his line: 'Everything can be taken from a man but one thing... to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances.'

EXAMPLES

• Rules of thumb for how long feelings last

From her research for The Let Them Theory, Mel shares that people typically start feeling better about 11 weeks after a breakup, that grief after losing a loved one or a long-time home can take six months to two years to settle into a new normal, and the common advice to make no big changes for a year after a death. Your timeline may be shorter or longer.

• The 5 p.m. deadline for old grievances

For things you've beaten yourself up about for years, like your height, body, face or complexion, Mel says you've already done the grieving and it's only eroded your confidence. Her suggested deadline: 5 p.m. today.

• Her list of acute unfairness

A narcissistic ex bullying you through divorce, a home lost to fire or flood while you wait for power, a denied health insurance claim, a rent hike, being a Dreamer facing possible deportation, or simply a flat tire on the way to work: Mel agrees each is unfair before moving to what to do.

• Frankl's follow-up line

'When we are no longer able to change a situation, we are challenged to change ourselves.' Mel ties it to her 'let them, let me' framework: you don't control what happens, but you control what you feel, think, say and do about it.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Mel's AI-coach prompt for a 30-day plan

Her suggestion: ask ChatGPT to 'act like the world's best life coach,' describe what happened and that you feel hopeless, and request a day-by-day plan for 30 days with five daily actions. She frames it as removing the work of planning so your energy goes into following it, alongside library books, YouTube and articles from people who've been there.

• Recap of the four steps

Say life isn't fair and set a deadline to feel it; accept reality and let life move through you; make a plan with what's in your control; and choose your attitude and look for meaning. Mel adds that hope anchors you to a future beyond the deadline, which is what makes taking action feel worthwhile.

- **Use the deadline as reassurance**

  Seeing an end date reminds you the hard scene will pass, so you can let emotions rise and fall without fearing you'll be stuck forever.

3 Questions That Determine Who You Really Are

Date: 2025-01-25 · Duration: 0:37:19
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GsAK7h73cdo

KEYPOINTS

• Three questions borrowed from Terry Crews, Jeff Bezos and Viola Davis

Mel built this solo episode from clips she found going down a YouTube rabbit hole: Terry Crews on Shannon Sharpe's Club Shay Shay, a 2001 Jeff Bezos interview for the Academy of Achievement, and Viola Davis on a red carpet. Each person's question targets a different area: how you work, how you decide, and how you treat yourself.

• Question one: if someone paid you a million dollars to do this, how would you do it?

Terry Crews asked himself this while sweeping floors as a janitor in Los Angeles after leaving the NFL, close to tears and fighting depression. He called it a little game to get through the depression; Mel argues it is a way to play life to win. Any difference between how you'd do the task for a million dollars and how you're doing it now reveals untapped capacity you can choose to use at any time.

• Honesty about where you coasted is the fuel

Crews admits he never really liked football, saw it as a way out of Flint, Michigan, and didn't fully apply himself. He describes eating the cake, staying up late, showing up late to the interview and then blaming others. Mel uses this to own her own pattern of not throwing herself into college, law school and job after job, then blaming something else.

• Repeating the question turns excellence into a habit

Crews didn't use it once. He applied it filing papers at the Veterans Administration and working security on movie sets, ironing his clothes and checking his flashlight batteries 'as if someone gave me a million dollars to watch this parking lot.' He says it reversed the bad attitude he had in the league and felt like an imaginary reward, so it didn't matter what others said.

• How you do anything is how you do everything

Mel's point is that how you sweep a floor is how you show up at an interview and how you get back up after rejection. Showing up with excellence at the thing you're aiming for often opens a door you didn't know was meant for you.

• Question two: at 80, will I regret not doing this?

Bezos called it the regret minimization framework: project yourself to age 80, look back, and minimize regrets. He knew he wouldn't regret trying to take part in the internet even if he failed, but not trying would haunt him every day, which made the decision 'incredibly easy.' He put it as a 100% chance of regret if he didn't try and basically 0% if he tried and failed.

• Long-range thinking cuts through short-term confusion

Bezos left his Wall Street firm mid-year, walking away from his annual bonus, which Mel notes is often most of a year's pay there. He said such short-term factors can confuse you; Mel says they can actually drive the decision. In a later interview with his brother, Bezos added that our biggest regrets are usually acts of omission, paths not taken, like loving someone, never telling them, and watching them marry someone else.

• Trying and failing isn't a regret

Mel calls this time traveling: things that are confusing in the middle make sense looking back. Once you commit, obstacles become things to figure out rather than reasons not to act. Her claim is that you're proud of yourself for the risks you take, even the ones that fail.

• Question three: who is going to be the love of my life today?

Asked by BuzzFeed for relationship advice for young people at a 2023 Hunger Games premiere, standing beside her husband Julius, Viola Davis said what she tells her daughter: you are the love of your life. She added that loving yourself, creating boundaries, advocating for yourself and being honest with yourself is the seed for good friendships and relationships.

• It's measured by behavior, not feeling

Mel turns Davis's line into a morning question and a nightly gut check: who was the love of my life today? You know the answer by how you behaved: speaking kindly to yourself, caring for your body and needs, not chasing people who don't choose you, holding boundaries. She hopes nine times out of ten it's you, because how you treat yourself sets the bar for every other relationship.

EXAMPLES

• Never going back to Flint

In 1997, broke with a young family in LA, Crews's wife asked whether they'd return to Flint if it didn't work. He said they would never leave LA, even if it happened when they were 99, because he'd learned from the mistakes he made in football and wouldn't get another chance.

• Sitting on the gym machine reading a magazine

Depressed and having not worked out in a year, Crews paid $25 a month for a gym for the first time. At first he just sat on the machine and read a magazine, but he kept coming back, day 20, day 21, and it became 30 years of consistent training. He calls these changes 'incremental': one little thing at a time.

• The animation dream that closed

Crews had moved to LA to become an illustrator and shopped his portfolio to Disney, DreamWorks and Hanna-Barbera, but hand-drawn animation faded once Toy Story came out and studios returned his portfolio. Then he got a chance to act. Mel had no idea animation was his original goal.

• Mel's own regret tests

Mel quit law in 1999 for the dot-com boom and spent 14 years going job to job without direction, yet says she'd have regretted staying for the rest of her life. She used the same question to move to Vermont to support her son, and to start the podcast even though it meant shutting down successful parts of the business.

• Viola Davis's credentials

Mel notes Davis has the Triple Crown of acting (Oscar, Emmy and Tony), which she says only 24 people, 15 women and nine

men, have achieved, and also an EGOT.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Run the million-dollar test on one task today**
  Pick something mundane, such as a class, the dishwasher or your resume, and do it as if you were being paid a million dollars. Mel says she'd get an A+ in quantum physics for that money; the gap shows what you're capable of.
- **Use the 80-year-old lens for crossroads decisions**
  For stay-or-go choices about a job, a move or a relationship, especially when others depend on you, picture yourself at 80 and ask which choice you'd regret not making. Then treat the obstacles as logistics.
- **Bookend the day with the love-of-my-life question**
  Ask it in the morning to set your behavior and at night as an honest review. When the answer isn't you, adjust how you speak to yourself, which boundaries you hold and whom you're chasing.
- **Show up longer than you think you should**
  Mel tells her daughter, who is pursuing music in LA, that the game isn't how good you are on stage but how long you're willing to keep showing up at your best without quitting.

How to Find Your Purpose & Design the Life You Want

Guest: Dr. Martha Beck
Date: 2025-01-23 · Duration: 1:32:34
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yZt4ZOy6Z8c

KEYPOINTS

• Feeling stuck can come right before a breakthrough

Life coach Martha Beck now treats an impasse as a signal that a leap is coming. She says to get right down in the mud and admit you're miserable, then go for a walk, take a drive or watch birds out the window, and let another part of your mind come up with an idea you couldn't have imagined. She compares it to a caterpillar that can't imagine becoming a butterfly: stuckness means you're about to be transformed.

• Your body and your suffering are allies

When you feel lost, Beck says to tune into your body and notice your suffering. Find where the 'not peace' sits, name it as mad, sad, glad or scared, then let it grow as big as it wants without resisting. Invite it to sit with you and tell you everything. When Mel tried it, the tightness in her chest grew into a 'nuclear cloud' that, oddly, felt smaller.

• There's clean suffering and dirty suffering

Clean suffering is the pain of the event itself, like being hit. Dirty suffering is the storm of thoughts about it: she hates me, I deserved it, this shouldn't have happened. Beck argues that most of our pain comes from those thoughts rather than events, and that letting the pain tell its story helps you separate from it.

• Flip your most painful thought

Beck's core tool: hear your suffering out until you're tired of it, then state the opposite of your most painful thought and look for ways it could be true. She says that opposite is your next step toward awakening. 'I'll never find love again' becomes 'I'll always find love', in a tree, a cat, a parent, everywhere.

• Follow the feeling of freedom in your body

On her seminars in Africa, Beck takes people rhino tracking, then asks them to track their purpose the same way. The sign to follow is a sense of joy, lightness or relaxation in the body. It never shows you twenty years ahead, only the next step. Something that feels trapping, however slightly, is 'the track of not there'. Over time, the steps add up to a purpose.

• Purpose is personal

Beck defines purpose as what brings you the greatest satisfaction and joy while letting you contribute the most joy to the world, quoting theologian Frederick Buechner's 'where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet'. She says it's as individual as a fingerprint, and that the things that bring tears to your eyes matter more than career or money.

• Creativity can calm anxiety

Beck says there's plenty of evidence that anxiety shuts down creativity, and suggests the reverse is also true, though it's less studied. In her account, anxiety runs in a fear-and-control loop in the verbal, time-tracking left hemisphere, while senses, imagination and making things engage the right. Her line: 'anxiety always lies, but only always.' Her main takeaway is to swap 'what do I do now?' for 'what can I make now?'

• Try a day without lying

After her darkest period, Beck went a year without telling a single lie. She lost friends, and her motto became 'burn every bridge but love.' With clients she's gentler: try one day with no lies, including the small social ones, and notice where you bend the truth to fit in. She says the truth can be told with compassion, but don't lie to yourself.

• Find your community

Beck says we're social primates who look for a safe person in a crisis. She tried to rebuild alone after losing everyone and says it was horrible and took years. She now recommends joining something, like a book club, a church or an online community, to make a safe 'cocoon' while you grieve the old life. She adds that people mid-change often cut their hair or rearrange the furniture first.

• KIST: kind internal self-talk

For deep fear, Beck uses the acronym CAT: kindness, art, then transformation. Kindness comes first, through what she calls KIST, kind internal self-talk: 'I'm here, it's okay, I've got you, tell me everything, would you like some tea?' You don't have to believe it at first. She says this was the only thing that brought her back from her worst fear.

EXAMPLES

• 'What would Martha Beck do?'

In 2005, Mel, then a struggling young mom whose husband had just been laid off, heard Beck speak at an Oprah event in Boston and felt everything go quiet. Later, she saw a two-month-old request from a magazine looking to interview a life coach. She had none of the credentials, asked herself what Martha Beck would do, and hit reply. She says that's when everything began to change.

• From 'something stupid' to 'something brilliant'

Mel shared a fear about money that took her back to nearly going bankrupt 15 years earlier: 'you're about to do something stupid.' Beck flipped it to 'you're about to do something really brilliant,' and Mel felt her chest release. Beck suggests rating options from '' 10 to +10 by how your body responds, even when the difference is subtle.

• Mel's ideal day in 2034

Beck guided Mel using only her senses: waves and children laughing, the smell of salt and coffee, white sheets, worn wide-plank floors, a closet of flip-flops and Birkenstocks, and photos of two weddings and grandchildren. Mel teared up. Beck said those tears point to real purpose, and that Mel's anxiety was at zero throughout.

• Freedom while bedridden

Beck says she spent 12 years bedridden with autoimmune conditions. She flipped 'I'll never get out of this bed' into finding the ways she was already free: books, shows and friends' stories. She credits that shift with her recovery and says that at 61 she

recently walked 75 miles in six days. This is her personal account.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Where your eyes go, you go**
  Beck heard the same lesson from a hockey player, a whitewater rafter and a riding teacher: look at the gaps, not the goalie or the rocks. Your attention steers your life.
- **Selective attention and mirror neurons**
  Beck cites the 'invisible gorilla' experiment to show we miss what we're not looking for. She also suggests that mirror neurons mean your mood spreads to the people around you.
- **Beck's own story**
  Beck shares that she recovered memories of childhood sexual abuse, left the Mormon church, and lost her family, friends, job and marriage. She describes spiritual experiences that shaped her work, and urges anyone with a similar history to reach out for support.

If You Struggle With Stress & Anxiety, This Will Change Your Life

Guest: Dr. Aditi Nerurkar
Date: 2025-01-20 · Duration: 1:05:40
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6TiJuzF0iD0

KEYPOINTS

• Stress is a brain state you can reset

Dr. Aditi Nerurkar, a Harvard Medical School lecturer who was medical director of Beth Israel Deaconess's integrative medicine program and ran a large stress management clinic, describes stress as the thinking prefrontal cortex going offline while the almond-shaped amygdala takes over. She cites a recent study finding about 70% of Americans struggle with stress and a UK study finding over 90% experiencing burnout. In a room of 30 people, about 21 feel this way.

• 'Horizonlessness': drawing a blank when you picture your future

Nerurkar says the term was coined by a journalist, and she encountered it during the pandemic when interviewed for an Elle feature. It's not confusion about direction but a 'meh' absence of anticipation: nothing feels worth working toward. Anger or excitement about the future at least carry a charge; horizonlessness is a lack of emotion. She notes there isn't much research defining it yet.

• Anticipating a hopeful future is good for your brain

Nerurkar cites an MRI study showing that anticipating the future activates the medial prefrontal cortex and correlates with well-being. When you're stuck in 'amygdala mode,' focused on survival, you biologically can't access that planning, forward-looking part of the brain, which is why people describe feeling stuck.

• The delayed stress response: the dam breaks once you feel safe

During acute stress you hold it together at all costs. Once you feel psychologically safe, pent-up emotions flood out. Nerurkar ties widespread horizonlessness to the post-pandemic period: people held on through promised short lockdowns, and now feel worse than in 2020 while the world says to move on. She laughed at 'Roaring 20s' headlines because 'that is so not how the human brain works.'

• Step one: normalize, validate and practice self-compassion

Your brain and body are doing what they should and aren't broken. She quotes her meditation teacher Jon Kabat-Zinn: there is more right with you than wrong with you. Self-compassion isn't soft; she says it dials down the amygdala by changing neural circuitry, which helps you get out of your own way.

• Step two: start small, because this isn't the moment for big goals

Telling someone in amygdala mode to plan six months ahead is asking the impossible; it's not mind over matter. Mel compares it to not playing pickleball on a broken leg. Nerurkar suggests something as small as looking forward to an afternoon coffee or a walk around the block tomorrow.

• Small actions work through agency, not fitness

A walk around the block isn't about exercise but proving you have power to make a difference in your life. Mel admits she nearly rolled her eyes at 'coffee, walk, journal,' then realized the emotion itself makes you do nothing, which makes you feel worse; the action proves the emotion doesn't rule you. Nerurkar likens it to turning potential energy into kinetic energy.

• Habits take about eight weeks, but you feel better after one walk

Nerurkar says it takes about eight weeks to build a habit like daily walking, and falling off and restarting is part of habit formation. You'll feel better by the end of the first walk. Doing something daily beats occasional workouts because it avoids decision fatigue; vowing to do hour-long gym sessions three times a week when you feel horrible tends to fail.

• Loneliness is a global epidemic with physical risks

Nerurkar cites data that 330 million people globally go two weeks without speaking to a friend or family member. Per figures she attributes to the Surgeon General, Vivek Murthy (her college friend): about 50% of US adults are lonely, and 78% of 18-to-25-year-olds. In one study, loneliness carried a mortality risk comparable to smoking 15 cigarettes a day, with about 30% higher risk of heart disease and stroke.

• Being alone isn't the same as being lonely

Alone is a physical state; loneliness is an emotional experience, and you can feel it in a crowd. Mel describes loneliness while traveling constantly with thousand-person audiences, and during stretches of her marriage when life with young kids and Chris's struggling business became pure logistics.

• Parents are overwhelmed, and it affects kids

In a Surgeon General snapshot Nerurkar cites, nearly 50% of parents say they're overwhelmed by stress most days, 65% are lonely, 77% of single parents are lonely, and prior data suggest 75% experience parenting burnout. She suspects underreporting because of guilt. One study found children of caregivers with poor mental health were four times more likely to have poor general health.

EXAMPLES

• Cancer patients who cried after the all-clear

Nerurkar's patients often stayed stoic through diagnosis and treatment. Then, the day after a clean bill of health, they'd come in crying: 'I should be having a party, why do I feel like this?' She uses it to illustrate the dam breaking.

• The strong-ties and weak-ties clicker study

Over six days, participants clicked one counter for interactions with close contacts and another for casual ones with baristas, grocery baggers, dry cleaners or playground parents. More casual interactions meant less loneliness and greater happiness. A Harvard Business Review study across eight countries found similar results for a mix of both.

• Mel's six months of awkward hellos in Vermont

After 26 years outside Boston, Mel moved to southern Vermont and sat home for months, sometimes not talking to anyone for two weeks, crying to Chris that she had no friends. She finally started talking to people next to her at a favorite coffee shop.

About six months of hellos built 'scaffolding of familiar faces' and led to some of her favorite people.

• A friend in job crisis told to drop everything but three things

When a friend facing a possible job exit was trying to add every wellness practice, Nerurkar told her to focus only on sleep, laughter and community for now. The friend was relieved that she didn't have to do it all at once.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Treat sleep as therapy

Nerurkar suggests going to bed at 9 p.m. for a week and seeing how you feel, aiming as close to 10 p.m. as possible, since she calls 10 to 11 p.m. the golden hour of sleep. Add five minutes of daily movement, a gratitude list of five things and why, or reaching out to a friend, but only what feels doable.

• Lean into casual conversation when you're low on bandwidth

If deep friendships feel like too much, chat in the grocery aisle or at the dry cleaner. Mel tells her college-age son to get out of his dorm and say hello, even to whoever empties the trash bins. She cites Bob Waldinger's long-running Harvard study: relationship quality is the strongest predictor of happiness.

• Parent yourself the way you parent your kids

Parents set bedtimes and screen limits for children but not themselves. Nerurkar quotes the Surgeon General: 'caregivers need care too.' Silence the inner critic, which often speaks through 'a megaphone in each hand' for parents; remember repair matters more than perfection, and model self-care for your kids.

Try It For 1 Day: Do This Every Morning to Boost Motivation & Focus

Date: 2025-01-13 · Duration: 0:54:49
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5juT-Oh4zWI

KEYPOINTS

• You already have a morning routine, even if it's a bad one

Mel's opening provocation: hitting snooze five times, scrolling your phone for 45 minutes, or pulling the pillow over your head all count as a routine. The question isn't whether you have one but whether it works with or against your biology. She describes her old version: anxiety on waking, repeated snoozing, racing out the door late, no breakfast, no exercise, wallet left at home.

• Not being a morning person has real explanations, not character flaws

Mel lists seven reasons mornings can feel heavy: shift work, a disrupted schedule after retirement or an empty nest (citing a University of Wisconsin study showing retirees sleep later and longer), a too-comfortable bed, genetics, trauma, anxiety and depression. Her point is to drop the shame: you work with the wiring you have, and the routine is designed to push through all seven.

• Morning grogginess can be inherited

She cites a Nature Communications study identifying 351 genetic markers linked to being a morning person, and a Genome Biology and Evolution paper tying morning-type traits to Neanderthal ancestry. Harvard Medical School research describes the internal biological clock as personal, but still adjustable. Her husband springs out of bed; she describes herself as 'a hunk of meat marinating' in the morning.

• Trauma and PTSD can leave you waking up in a freeze response

Mel references University of Arkansas research linking traumatic experiences and PTSD to disrupted sleep, so people wake exhausted and want to go back to bed. Connecting her own morning heaviness to past trauma was liberating for her: it reframed the feeling as something to heal and push through, not a personal deficiency.

• Morning anxiety has three physical drivers

Cortisol, the stress and energy hormone, is naturally highest on waking; if it stays elevated you feel anxious all day. Alcohol the night before drops blood sugar overnight, and a hangover commonly brings anxiety. Low morning blood sugar can also trigger adrenaline and fight-or-flight. Mel, who has woken up anxious since age 15, says she had no idea drinking was part of it and believed she was 'damaged goods.'

• Lying in bed feeds depression and rumination

She cites research that 75% of people with depression struggle to get out of bed, and Emory University work describing 'bed rotting' as a common symptom of mood disorders. Her husband went through a serious depression, and she notes depression 'lies to you' about your ability to do what helps. An occasional slow, alarm-free morning when you're truly tired is fine; chronic lying in bed ruminating is the problem.

• You fall to the level of your systems

Mel builds the episode on James Clear's line from Atomic Habits: you don't rise to the level of your goals, you fall to the level of your system. Snoozing, skipping breakfast and hydrating on coffee is a system, and big goals can't outrun it. A morning routine is simply a system you can redesign.

• Mornings are the only part of the day you fully control

Once you check your phone, the news or walk into work, you're reacting. Mel treats the first 20–30 minutes as protected time before you hand your energy to everyone else, and stresses that each morning is a clean slate you can return to after days or months off track.

• Get up on the alarm and leave the phone alone

Step one is no snoozing and no lying in bed, since that increases rumination while cortisol is high. Her 5 Second Rule, invented about 15 years ago, is to count 5-4-3-2-1 and move before hesitation kills motivation. She compares the countdown to a first domino that can topple something larger. Her phone lives in the bathroom so she must get up to turn the alarm off.

• Water first, caffeine 60–90 minutes later

Water makes up 45–75% of body weight and about 80% of the brain, and dehydration brings brain fog, headaches and mood swings. Mel relays what Dr. Amy Shah told her on the show: caffeine in the first hour or two after waking traps adenosine, the sleepy chemical the brain is trying to clear, which drives the mid-morning crash and second cup.

EXAMPLES

• Mel's coffee habit collapsed after one change

She used to drink at least six cups of coffee a day, later three double or triple-shot lattes. After drinking a full glass of water and white-knuckling a 90-minute timer, she found she no longer craved a second cup. She now enjoys one coffee 90 minutes to two hours after waking. An internal focus group her team ran reported similar results, with some participants switching to occasional decaf.

• UC Berkeley's NBA high-five study

Read from her book The High 5 Habit: researchers counted high fives and fist bumps early in the NBA season and could predict which teams would finish with the best records. Mel's takeaway is that high fives signal trust and 'I've got your back', and doing it in the mirror makes you your own teammate.

• Neurobics and the mirror high five

Drawing on Duke neurobiologist Dr. Lawrence Katz, she explains neurobics: pairing a routine action like brushing your teeth with something unexpected snaps the brain to attention and works like 'brain fertilizer' for encoding a new habit. Here the habit being wired is self-belief. The high five is silent.

• Dr. Rebecca Robbins on cloudy mornings

The Harvard sleep scientist told Mel that morning light resets the internal clock, shuts off melatonin and starts the countdown to bedtime. She called it a myth that cloud or rain blocks the benefit. Mel adds a 5-10-20 rule, popularized by Andrew Huberman:

5 minutes outside if sunny, 10 if cloudy, 20 under bright artificial light if you can't get out.

- **Bond University on clutter**

A study from Bond University in Australia found your physical environment significantly influences cognition, emotions and behavior, including relationships. Mel uses it to explain why making the bed matters: less visual clutter, less chance of climbing back in, and a small daily act of discipline.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **The six-step, roughly 14-minute routine**

1) Get up on the alarm with 5-4-3-2-1. 2) Make your bed. 3) Silent high five in the mirror after brushing your teeth. 4) Drink a full glass of water and delay caffeine at least an hour. 5) Get outside for light using 5-10-20. 6) Take a 10-minute walk. She keeps it short on purpose so it works on busy days, on vacation or in a hotel.

- **Walk for 10 minutes, ideally without headphones**

Mel explains 'forward ambulation': walking creates optic and auditory flow that quiets overthinking. It works with low vision too; a legally blind producer on her team relies on the auditory version. Combine steps five and six by walking while you get light. A quiet, phone-free walk is best for building a calmer mindset.

- **Add a 'Hot 15' before opening your phone**

After her walk, Mel sits at the kitchen table for 15 minutes on a project that matters to her, before email or social media, because that's when she feels most focused and motivated. Meditation, journaling or strength training can also go here; the six steps are just the foundation you build on.

How to Stop Caring What People Think of You

Guest: Chrissy Teigen
Date: 2025-01-09 · Duration: 0:47:10
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BR-1OeY8BOA

KEYPOINTS

• Fear of what others think is, in Mel's view, the biggest obstacle to the life you want

Mel says it's the most common question across the 35 press interviews she'd done for The Let Them Theory, from Oprah to The Wall Street Journal. She points out how automatic it is: you pause before posting, speaking up at work or making a move to consider how someone else will react. Caring itself isn't the problem — it's a sign you're a good person — the problem is silencing yourself and using others' opinions as proof you're not good enough.

• You can never control or guarantee what another person thinks

Mel's core argument is that no behavior can manipulate someone into a particular opinion of you, so energy spent trying is wasted and becomes a source of stress and anxiety in itself. When Chrissy suggested she could at least influence it 'by being really good', Mel pushed back: she couldn't even control what Mel would tell her daughters about their conversation afterward.

• Let Them, then Let Me

Mel recaps the two parts. 'Let them' is for moments you feel frustrated, worried or annoyed by what others say, do or feel: let them think what they're going to think. 'Let me' reminds you that you control three things — your thoughts, your actions and how you process your feelings. Your power lives in your response, especially in acting in ways that make you proud of yourself.

• Seeking approval is conditioned in childhood

Chrissy describes a parent who wasn't affectionate and who she felt liked to show her off; reciting words in Thai and being good earned praise, so she learned to be good for everybody. Mel notes most of us got positive attention for performing, grades or winning. That attunement is necessary when you're a dependent child, but as an adult, locating your goodness in other people's moods means you'll never feel safe.

• Self-punishment and people-pleasing feed each other

Chrissy calls herself 'a punisher' — through diets, food, drinking and emotionally — after feeling she let people down. She rarely leaves the house because even a grocery-store interaction leaves her working overtime to make sure the other person had a good experience, then dwelling on it at home. Mel's read: her worth, happiness and pride have been handed entirely to other people's reactions, which she calls a prison.

• Children blame themselves — what Dr. Paul Conti calls attribution

Mel brings in psychiatrist Dr. Paul Conti from an earlier episode. Without abstract thought or life experience, he explains, a child whose parent snaps at a request for a drink concludes 'it must be me' rather than 'Mom's in a bad place'. Those self-attributions carry into adulthood. He cites the English physician Winnicott's goal of raising a child who feels solidly 'good enough' to face hard things, and says that can be rebuilt later in life.

• Let Them is attribution in practice

Mel connects Conti's idea to her tool: saying 'let them' assigns someone's bad mood or negative opinion to them rather than to your self-worth, which she calls 'the world's best boundary'. 'Let me' then attributes your power to your own thoughts, feelings and actions. Knowing your intentions, she says, is how you stop twisting yourself into knots to be 'the good daughter' or 'the good mom'.

• Two things can be true at once

Someone can be disappointed in you and still love you; someone can misunderstand you while you remain a good person; someone can have a negative thought about you while you keep positive self-worth. Accepting that everyone, including those closest to you, will think negative things is what Mel calls liberating.

• Adults are not responsible for other adults' emotions

Parents must help children process emotions because kids can't regulate alone, Mel says, but you're never responsible for managing another adult's feelings, no matter what you do. Exhausting yourself to make everyone happy means losing yourself.

EXAMPLES

• Chrissy's 'biggest battle'

Despite her businesses, four kids and her marriage to John Legend, Chrissy said the one thing she'd change is being so misunderstood: 'I wish people knew how good I was.' She called it desperate-sounding; Mel argues it's a universal fear.

• Mel's negative thoughts about the people she loves

To prove that love and negative thoughts coexist, Mel listed hers: her husband farting in the morning, finding him eating cereal instead of making dinner after she worked late, telling her intense daughter Sawyer to 'chill'. Chrissy admitted John's even temper sometimes makes her wish for more passion. With roughly 70,000 thoughts a day, Mel says, people can barely control their own thinking, let alone yours.

• Fear of passing it on

Chrissy said she'd accept her own pain but not her kids'. She worries she pushes them to be extra polite so they won't seem like spoiled celebrity kids, and links her childhood people-pleasing to later believing her body belonged to everyone. She wants them to know their body, mind and actions are their own. Mel's response: they're watching how much strangers affect her, so changing that teaches them too.

• The 'give no f*s girl'**

Chrissy laughed that she's seen as not caring, when she cares enormously. Mel's take: anyone who has to announce they don't care what others think is still processing it — and the key word is 'give', because caring means giving away power.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Your draft posts are 'the graveyard of your dreams'

Notice the moment you agonize over a filter, delete a line of text or add an emoji to soften it — you're thinking about someone else's reaction, not how you feel about it. Mel says social media is for your self-expression, business or art, not your college sorority or your mom's group. If you like the bathing-suit photo or the unfiltered video, post it; let them unfollow or roll their eyes.

• Care more about what you think than about what they think

Mel doesn't tell you to stop caring altogether — that would make you 'a selfish jerk'. Instead, saying 'let them think something negative' protects your time and energy, places your value in your own view of yourself and faces the fear underneath, which is that the opinion will be negative.

• Catch the workday spiral

When an email or your boss's mood suddenly has you obsessing about what you should have done, recognize you're giving your power away. Their bad mood doesn't make you a bad person; return to what you intended and how you want to show up.

How to Achieve Any Goal You Have in 6 Simple Steps

Date: 2025-01-06 · Duration: 1:05:32
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fxJjAuG3qkQ

KEYPOINTS

• Step 1: decide what you want, and know a dream from a goal

Mel says a dream exists in your head and heart: you can picture it and feel it. A goal is something you do in the world. Compare 'I dream of writing a book' with 'I have a goal of writing a book this year.' She says most people skip this obvious step and never actually define what they want.

• If you can't measure it, it's a wish

Ask how you'll know you've achieved it. 'Out of debt' means the credit cards are paid off. 'Financial freedom' needs a number in the bank. Mel's own measures: fitting into a size 28 pair of pants after hormone-related weight gain, drinking two quart-size mason jars of water a day, and holding a printed copy of her book.

• Step 2: write it down, because your brain filters for what you mark as important

Mel describes written goals as 'external storage': seeing the paper daily reminds you, and through what researchers call encoding, the hippocampus treats it as worth keeping in long-term memory. Your brain then starts surfacing related opportunities, like noticing Ford Broncos everywhere once you want one. She adds that written goals are linked in research to higher achievement, and the note helps on days you lack motivation.

• Step 3: find the formula, because someone has already done it

There are formulas for real estate businesses, motivational speaking, publishing, podcasts and weight loss. Mel spent two years researching podcast formulas (episode frequency, length, gear, advertisers) before launching hers. She says many people refuse to copy what works for fear of looking unoriginal, like skipping keto because a sister-in-law is doing it. Research online, ask people who've done it, or ask an AI tool for the steps. You'll put your own spin on it regardless.

• Other people don't block your way; they lead the way

Listener Elise had been stuck for years on a business teaching teens singing for Broadway. Mel's suggested measure of success: five paying clients and at least one client landing a Broadway or off-Broadway audition. Write that down, then study the websites, Instagram accounts and marketing of people already doing it.

• Fear of judgment is often what stops you following the formula

Mel says people often know exactly what to do and don't do it because they worry what friends will think. Her fix is the Let Them Theory: let them judge, think you copied, or unfollow. Then 'let me' do what the goal requires and act in ways that make you proud, which she says quiets the worry better than being told to 'stop caring.'

• Step 4: do the reps, and expect them to be boring

Borrowing from business coach Jeff Walker, Mel says the secret is doing the tedious daily actions, like gym reps. There are no big leaps, only small gains, and 'overnight' successes usually spent a decade doing reps nobody saw. If it were fun, everyone would be debt-free with six-pack abs.

• Write an implementation intention: 'I will [rep] at [time] in [place]'

Mel's examples: 'I will write for 30 minutes at 9 a.m. in my office.' 'I will do a Pilates mat class at 7 a.m. in my bedroom.' She cites an exercise study comparing three groups: people who only tracked, people who also read a motivational piece, and people who wrote a time-and-place plan. In the plan group, 91% exercised, which she says was roughly double the others.

• Lower resistance by naming it

Besides the 5 Second Rule (count 5-4-3-2-1 and move), Mel shares an idea from psychiatrist Dr. K, a past guest: we're wired to move away from what feels painful, so admit it. Say 'I know I don't want to do this, but I'm doing it anyway.' Mel says acknowledging that it will be hard lowers your resistance. She reframes tedium as a sign it's working.

• Step 5: make it fun and easy

After about a week of consistent reps, look for ways to remove friction: phone alarms, Post-its, workout clothes laid out, workouts picked on Sunday, a playlist, a partner, a class or an online community. Mel quotes James Clear's Atomic Habits: you rise or fall to the level of your systems.

• Step 6: don't quit, because coming back is what defines success

Missed days, weeks or even seven months don't end it. What counts is the day you return. Mel points to Michael Jordan being cut from his high school team as an example of the perseverance behind most success stories.

EXAMPLES

• Two years of drafts that never got posted

About 10 years ago, deep in debt and needing money for bills, gas and town soccer fees, Mel asked established speakers how to get paid. Their formula: a simple website with stage photos and keynote takeaways, testimonials from event planners, and above all posting about speaking on social media. She did the first two but sat on hundreds of draft posts for two years. She'd delete any that didn't get likes within five minutes, fearing friends would think 'who does she think she is?' Her measure of success was a single paid speech. She tells this story in The Let Them Theory.

• Hanging from a pull-up bar

Mel admits she's been practicing just hanging for two weeks because she can't yet lift her shoulders a quarter inch, a reminder that reps rarely show progress early.

• The mason jar by the coffee maker

She fills her water jar the night before and leaves it in front of the coffee maker so she drinks water before making coffee.

• Eleven drafts of The Let Them Theory

Writing in the room above her garage in Vermont, Mel wanted to quit at nearly every version up to number 11, and again when the publisher pushed back. Holding the printed book was her definition of success.

- **'Putting in the reps' in the family chat**
  Mel's kids now use the phrase in the family group chat as shorthand for doing the hard, boring work on something.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **When you're ready to give up, go back to step one**
  For a listener whose online bakery has slow orders and is exhausting her, Mel's answer is to decide again: keep going, or close it, learn and move on. Either choice is a new goal. If you keep going, define success, write it down and find the formula successful bakeries have used.
- **Put the goal and plan where you'll see them**
  Write the goal, how you'll measure it, and your time-and-place rep on one sheet. Post it by your computer or make it your phone's lock screen.
- **Expect it to be hard**
  Mel's view: doing hard things now makes life easier later, and always choosing what's easy makes life harder over time.

Eat THIS to Lose Fat, Prevent Disease, & Feel Better Now With Dr. William Li

Guest: Dr. William Li
Date: 2025-01-02 · Duration: 1:32:43
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WSBVq3Wj7Lg

KEYPOINTS

• The fat that matters for health is the visceral fat you can't see

Dr. Li, a physician-scientist who founded the Angiogenesis Foundation and wrote Eat to Beat Disease and Eat to Beat Your Diet, says the scale and the mirror are crude measures. The harmful fat is visceral fat, which wraps around your organs 'like a baseball glove' inside the tube of your body and pushes your waistline out. A growing belt size is the more telling sign.

• Body fat is an organ, and healthy fat helps insulin work

Fat produces hormones, including adiponectin, which he says partners with insulin to pull glucose into muscles. By his account it circulates at about 1,000 times the level of any other hormone. When fat cells get overstuffed and inflamed, that hormone system breaks down and metabolic problems follow, which is why overeating low-quality food is so damaging.

• Humans have no 'click' that stops the fuel tank overfilling

His analogy: a gas pump clicks off when the tank is full, but people keep eating. Fat cells can swell to about 300% of their size, and when they run out, stem cells make new ones. Eventually fat leaks out and gets trapped in the liver. He calls non-alcoholic fatty liver disease a silent epidemic now driving liver failure, while stressing that all of it is reversible with better choices, even after decades.

• A 12-hour overnight fast is enough, and it's built around sleep

He 'debunks' strict 16:8 fasting as hard for busy people. Finish dinner at 8, with nothing but calorie-free drinks after the dishes are put away, sleep 11 to 7, and wait an hour after waking (he walks or reads email first). That gives 12 hours in fat-burning mode, which he says clinical studies show is plenty to lose weight over time.

• Eating fast and distracted makes you miss fullness signals

In a gap year before medical school, living with an Italian host family, he noticed Mediterranean meals were never eaten alone or rushed. People talked about the food with gratitude and weren't over-served. Americans, he says, shovel food down while scrolling, eating alone or complaining.

• Stop when you're satisfied, not full

He invokes the Japanese principle hara hachi bu, stopping at about 80% full. If you need to unbutton your pants, you've gone too far, like hearing the scrape when you hit the parking block. Eat slowly until you'd say 'that was pretty good, I'm good,' not 'I'm full.'

• Brown fat burns white fat, and cold or certain foods switch it on

Brown fat sits deep around the neck, breastbone and shoulder blades. When activated it works like lighting a gas burner, burning white fat for heat. Cold triggers it, so try a cool shower for about 10 minutes, stopping when it gets uncomfortable. He insists you talk to a doctor before cold plunges if you have high blood pressure or heart rhythm problems.

• He names four things to avoid: soda, 'nuclear' packaged health foods, processed meat and plastic bottles

A regular soda has 7 to 9 teaspoons of sugar. He says diet soda drinkers also gain weight, citing recent research that artificial sweeteners harm gut bacteria. Read labels on airport bars and 'barbecue' nuts for emulsifiers, dyes and artificial flavours. He notes the WHO classifies processed meats as a Group 1 carcinogen, especially for colon cancer, while calling himself a 'reasonableist' about the occasional bologna sandwich.

• Microplastics are the newest concern, and he flags what is unknown

He says we swallow about a credit card's worth of plastic each week. An Italian study found plastic in plaque removed from neck arteries, and people with it had about four times the risk of fatal heart attack or stroke. Plastic has also been found in brains, blood and testicles. He says he doesn't yet have enough data to confirm hormone disruption.

EXAMPLES

• One tomato before lunch

He cites a Portuguese study in which healthy, normal-weight female graduate students ate one ripe tomato an hour before lunch for a month, with no other changes, and lost about a pound. He credits lycopene, and says simmering tomatoes at about 190°F for 20 minutes boosts it by 250%. He also cites Tufts research showing lycopene collects in body fat.

• A can of beans five times a week

University of Toronto research on people with metabolic syndrome, in his telling, found that roughly a can of beans five days a week shrank waistlines by about an inch in a month, thanks to fibre feeding the gut. His favourite is white navy beans stewed with rosemary, olive oil and shallots.

• Pomegranate, Akkermansia and GLP-1

He describes pomegranate's ellagitannins as encouraging gut mucus that feeds Akkermansia muciniphila, a bacterium with a newly discovered fragment, P9, that he says prompts the body to make its own GLP-1, the target of drugs like Ozempic. Drink about a cup of pure juice and check that it isn't apple juice with colouring, or better, eat the seeds.

• The USDA inspector's dissolving boots

A retired meat inspector told Dr. Li he had to replace his rubber boots every four months because fluid on processed-meat plant floors dissolved them. He also cites the podcast Science Vs on meat glue binding scraps into deli cylinders.

• No coffee or tea on planes

He skips onboard hot drinks because he says the water tanks are cleaned only once or twice a year, and brings his own metal or glass thermos filled after security.

• His pantry pasta

When he misses dinner: boil pasta, warm olive oil in a stainless pan, add chopped tinned mackerel, sardines, mussels or squid, and a squirt of double-concentrated tomato paste. For lunch he has sourdough with a tin of conservas and pickles.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **His four-week approach: diary, swap in, fast, two-thirds plate**

  Keep a food diary for two weeks with no guilt, then swap in healthy foods you already love (his book lists 200). Add the 12-hour fast, then serve two-thirds of what your eyes want and skip seconds.

- **Foods he says activate brown fat**

  Apples and coffee (chlorogenic acid), greens like bok choy (sulforaphane), extra-virgin olive oil, tomatoes, kiwi (vitamin C and fibre that he says shifts gut bacteria within 24 hours, with the skin blended into smoothies), matcha (whole-leaf, with Japanese research showing waist loss), dark chocolate of 80% cacao or more with coffee as a 'mocha', and edamame.

- **His top three starting rules**

  Drink only water, coffee or tea, without dairy, which he says binds the beneficial compounds; nut milk is fine. Cut back on ultra-processed food with 20-plus unpronounceable ingredients. Eat slowly and stop at 'I'm good.' Add walking or any movement.

- **Shop the produce entrance and the middle aisles**

  Local, seasonal produce is fresher. Don't skip the middle aisles: olive oil, lentils, canned beans, dried fruit and tinned seafood are there. Replace plastic bottles, leftover containers and cups with glass, ceramic or metal, and never microwave food under plastic.

How to Make Next Year the Best Year: Ask Yourself These 7 Questions

Date: 2024-12-26 · Duration: 0:48:39
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cm6oJwpuOYc

KEYPOINTS

- **You can't get directions until you know where you are**
  Mel compares goal-setting to calling a friend when you're lost near their house: the first thing they ask is where you are. Most New Year planning skips that step and jumps to manifesting and fresh starts, missing the wisdom of the past 12 months. Her 'yearly audit', which she and her husband Chris have done for 20 years and now do with their kids, is about locating yourself first.
- **You've forgotten about 95% of your year — use your camera roll and calendar**
  Mel says that after 20 years of audits she's certain people forget most of what happened. Scrolling photos and calendar entries jogs memory. Doing it live, she found 6,927 photos from 2024 and had already rediscovered forgotten moments by mid-January. Few photos, or the same old scenes, is data too: maybe you weren't present, or life has become too samey.
- **Write your answers down so they become real**
  If you're walking or driving, just listen and think; then come back with paper or a laptop and your phone. Mel says answers trapped in your head aren't real. You can also do it with a spouse, family or roommates — reminding each other of good moments and learning what matters to each person.
- **Question 1: What were the highlights?**
  Highlights aren't only accomplishments; they're whatever warmed your heart, and you want more of that next year. Mel's included finishing The Let Them Theory, climbing Mount Katahdin with her family, her daughter Kendall playing Carnegie Hall, and the tulips from her first-ever cutting garden. If flowers bore you, she says, they don't belong in your directions — but it would be silly to leave them out of hers.
- **Question 2: What were the hardest parts?**
  It's okay if this makes you sad. Something can appear on both lists: writing the book ate weekends and late nights. Mel's hard parts included her father's back surgery and slow recovery, becoming an empty nester (she prefers 'bird launcher'), Sawyer's devastating breakup, Oakley's rejections from his top three colleges and Kendall doubting her music career.
- **Question 3: What did you learn about yourself?**
  Both highs and lows teach you something. A year earlier, Mel had learned that her old approach to health didn't work in menopause and that she had to stop managing everyone's emotional breakdowns. This year: she'd outgrown running the operations of her business. Admitting a limitation, she says, lets you pivot instead of slogging on and beating yourself up.
- **Friction means you're in the wrong seat on the bus**
  Wherever you felt friction or frustration — work, marriage, parenting, roommates — Mel believes the fit no longer works. For her, the clash between the podcast role she loves and managing P&Ls, teams and leases made her want to throw up. Seeing that it's a role problem, not a personal failing, is liberating: what's the right seat and who do I need around me?
- **Questions 4–6: stop, start, continue**
  Mel borrows the classic business planning tool used by executive teams and coaches, adding that people tend to forget the 'continue' part. Last year she vowed to stop travelling for work; she went from 30–40 keynotes a year to seven. She also vowed to stop complaining about menopause and learned it came down to strength training, protein and hormone therapy if it's safe for you.
- **Question 7: What one step can you take today?**
  With your directions written down, pick something small you can do now: watch a video on planning spring flowers, or put a date on the calendar with parents or friends. Mel's conclusion is that the best year comes from small things you stop, start and continue, not from 'I'm going to make a million dollars'.

EXAMPLES

- **The flamingo yoga class**
  Mel had forgotten a 50-minute yoga class where a flamingo walked up and rested its beak over her shoulder. Seeing the photo still brings her joy — a reminder that new experiences and time with family are what light her up.
- **Strength training that didn't happen**
  Last year's top 'start' goal was strength training three days a week. Rather than trashing herself, Mel got curious: it worked when she was in Boston taping in a steady routine, and fell apart when life got crazy or she was in Vermont. Her lesson: rhythm and doing less make things happen, overambition doesn't.
- **'I grocery shop when I'm hungry'**
  Mel's metaphor for her pattern: when she's agitated or in the wrong role, she overcommits, overcomplicates and overreacts, like buying everything at the store on an empty stomach. Her audit told her that next year she must do less, not more — 'stop adding things' and start subtracting.
- **Letting her kids struggle**
  Watching Sawyer's heartbreak, Oakley's rejections and Kendall's doubts while writing The Let Them Theory taught Mel she can't rescue people from life's lessons. Stepping back and simply supporting them created space for her adult kids to step forward and grow.
- **'Can we bring ease to this?'**
  Mel's new 'stop' is tolerating friction and intensity. When Chris got anxious that a shared project might fail, she asked if they could just bring ease to it; with family members who get an edge, she asks to dial down the tone and breathe. She adds it doesn't mean being steamrolled.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Treat unmet goals with curiosity, not shame**

Ask why it didn't happen and treat the answer as information about how your life works — Mel's showed she says yes to too much and lets others hijack her time.

• Doing less can be a radical goal

Mel's plan: focus on three or four things that make her happy and three or four at work that move the needle, be 'maniacal' about ignoring the rest, and protect her peace so she doesn't take stress out on others. She also plans to keep limiting alcohol, which she says shows up whenever she's stressed.

• Keep last year's list in front of you

Her savings goal worked because the written list reminded her. Rereading old answers also reveals wins to add to highlights, like cutting keynotes to seven.

The One Tool to Transform Your Relationships: The Let Them Theory

Guest: Sawyer Robbins
Date: 2024-12-23 · Duration: 1:36:01
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U4h9-LIkvzA

KEYPOINTS

• Many close relationships have an 'invisible distance'

Mel describes a gap that builds between people who love each other, through passive-aggressive comments, small hurts you try to let go, and old resentments, like 'death by a thousand cuts.' From the outside, she and her oldest daughter Sawyer, 25, looked close. They texted, saw each other and took trips together. But underneath, Sawyer felt she wasn't a priority, and Mel felt Sawyer would never let her in.

• Sawyer's side: her mom was gone, and when home, talking about work

In Sawyer's middle and high school years, Mel was on the road up to about 200 days a year. Sawyer grew closer to her dad, Kendall and Oakley. She felt Mel's attention went to work or to Kendall's singing career, and she felt jealous for lacking a 'natural talent' that connected her to her mom and sister. Strangers kept introducing her as 'Kendall's sister' or 'Mel Robbins's daughter,' sometimes asking her for Mel's email. She started blaming Mel for the fans who were taking her mom away.

• Mel owns it without excuses

Mel explains she was consumed by fear over the family's debt and spent nearly a decade chasing income. She calls it her responsibility as the parent to make a child feel seen and prioritized, and to be calm rather than taking her stress out on the family. She also notes a common pattern: the oldest child often becomes responsible and stoic, so parents worry about them less, and she says that's still the parent's job to notice.

• Once you've decided someone doesn't care, everything confirms it

Shopping trips and showing up to games didn't get through, because Sawyer had already decided her mom didn't care, and her 'force field' reinterpreted everything. Sawyer admits she liked being mad at Mel, because anger, tears or a crisis were the only times she got her mom's full attention, phone down. Mel says resentment can become a substitute for the love you actually want.

• The Let Them Theory has two steps, and Sawyer created the second

'Let them' means you stop trying to control other people and let them be who they are. 'Let me' means turning to what you control: what you think, say and do, and how you handle your emotions. Mel defines responsibility as 'the ability to respond.' She credits the second step entirely to Sawyer's research.

• Drop the rope in the tug-of-war

Mel's image is two people pulling up to every conversation with a U-Haul full of baggage, each grabbing a rope and pulling. The fastest way to end it is to drop the rope. Expect the other person to push back, for example with 'Is this therapy-speak?', because they don't know the new dynamic yet. Sawyer says that when she started tugging and Mel let go, she'd 'fall down' and realize her mom just wasn't playing anymore. 'It takes two.'

• You don't need the other person's participation to shift the dynamic

Mel says your own calmer, more mature behavior changes the dynamic, and people only change when they decide to. She's careful to add that 'Let them' doesn't change things on its own. It creates the space for change, and over time the other person shows how far they can meet you.

• Step into their shoes

Using a tool she calls 'frame of reference,' learned from her friend Lisa Bilyeu, Mel suggests asking 'I wonder what it was like for them?' instead of 'I don't understand why they're like this.' She tells a parent upset that their kids were angry about their vote to ask why the kids might feel that way. She quotes Dr. Ablon: 'people do well when they can.'

• Two things can be true at once

If family members are disappointed you're skipping a holiday, Mel says that means they love you. It doesn't mean you have to change your plans. Someone can be disappointed in you and still love you, and two people can be wired completely differently and still have room for each other.

EXAMPLES

• The 27-hour research project

After backpacking solo through seven countries in Asia for four months, Sawyer came home broke to Vermont and cried daily, while insisting she'd never work for her mom. Mel offered her about $40 an hour to analyze the comments on her viral Let Them post and podcast episode, which Mel says became the sixth most-shared episode on Apple Podcasts that year. Mel expected a few pages in two weeks. Within 27 hours, Sawyer delivered a 36-page color-coded analysis with a two-page summary.

• The 10% Sawyer warned about

Sawyer told Mel she couldn't write the book yet. About 90% of comments were glowing, but around 10% said things like 'I'm saying let them and I'm lonely,' or 'I'm the only one in my family who makes the effort.' A book that made people lonely needed a second part, and that became 'let me.' Mel says that holding the report, she finally understood how Sawyer's 'supercomputer' brain works and why she's so hard on herself.

• Eleven manuscripts in eight months

Sawyer insisted on being a part-time contractor, which Mel praises as a healthy boundary. They scrapped and rewrote the book from scratch 11 times and finished in eight months instead of the usual two years. A typical day ran from morning work to midday hanger to an afternoon blowup, tears, a hug, and a glass of wine either way. They said 'let them' to each other constantly.

• Box jumpers and box steppers

Mel calls Sawyer and Chris 'box steppers' who move logically from A to B to C, and herself a 'box jumper' who can see the destination but can't map the route. Much of their friction came from each wishing the other thought the same way. As project manager, Sawyer learned to say 'let her blow it up, it's her name on the cover.'

- **Mel's mother at 19**

  Mel says her relationship with her own mom changed once she pictured her at 19 in Kansas City with a newborn, working nights at the IRS while Mel's dad started medical school, far from family.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Ask what you actually want**

  If your story is 'my sister doesn't care' or 'I'm invisible in my family,' Mel's question is whether this is how you want it to stay. If not, you're the only person who can start changing it.

- **Use 'Let me' to choose between stepping in and giving space**

  When Sawyer seems intense or closed off, Mel says 'let them,' then decides whether to move toward her or give space. She tries to respect her as an adult going through her own challenges instead of mothering or smothering her.

- **Look for the side of someone you've never seen**

  Mel would never have discovered Sawyer's gifts for research, digital marketing and project management without working together. She encourages listeners to remember that the people they think they know best may have whole sides they've never seen.

Harvard Psychologist Shares 6 Words That Will Change Your Family

Guest: Dr. Stuart Ablon
Date: 2024-12-16 · Duration: 1:26:57
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j6sSGT30WEg

KEYPOINTS

• Six words: "Kids do well if they can"

Dr. Stuart Ablon, Harvard Medical School professor and founder of Think:Kids at Mass General, says his whole approach flows from this sentence, and it applies to adults too: spouses, coworkers, in-laws. The common belief is that kids do well if they want to, which leads us to pressure people into wanting it. In 30 years he says he has never met a kid who prefers doing poorly to doing well.

• Challenging behavior is a skill problem, not a will problem

Ablon cites about 50 years of neuroscience research showing that people who struggle to manage their behavior lack skills, not motivation: problem solving, flexibility and frustration tolerance. Trying to motivate someone when motivation isn't the issue doesn't work and can make things worse. He stresses that none of these skills correlate with intelligence.

• The strongest predictor of change is the helping relationship

Across therapy, schools and other settings, Ablon says the only reliable predictor of helping someone change is the quality of the relationship between helper and helped: collaboration rooted in empathy, understanding and non-judgmental acceptance. The approach was tested first in residential treatment and correctional facilities before homes.

• There are five skill areas behind most hard behavior

These thinking skills live largely in the prefrontal cortex: (1) language and communication — knowing and saying what's bothering you; (2) attention and working memory — holding several "open files" at once, which all problem solving requires; (3) emotion and self-regulation, including impulse control; (4) cognitive flexibility versus black-and-white thinking; and (5) social thinking, from joining a group to reading how you come across and taking another's perspective. They overlap; a concrete thinker may struggle to empathize, and black-and-white thinking can make emotions spiral.

• Consequences work least on the people they're used on most

Consequences only work if you can stop and think ahead, which is impulse control. People with poor impulse control act first and get hit with consequences later, so piling on more doesn't change behavior. Ablon notes that well-behaved people aren't trying hard; the ones working hardest are those for whom it doesn't come naturally.

• Rewards and punishments can do real harm

He describes thousands of studies, with kids and adults, finding a strong negative relationship between external motivators and internal drive: people become motivated to get the reward, not to reach the goal, and may behave unethically to get it. Every reward or consequence also implies "you're not trying hard enough," which damages self-esteem.

• Discipline originally means to teach

Ablon notes the origins of the word revolve around teaching, not punishment, and punishment is a poor way to teach. If behavior is about skills, discipline becomes skill-building. He calls this "relational discipline": using relationship rather than power and control.

• Trauma and chronic stress delay these skills

Brain imaging shows that childhood trauma or toxic stress delays development in the five skill areas — Mel lists racism, poverty, absent parents and abuse as examples. Punitive responses add more stress, which escalates behavior, which brings harsher discipline, creating a cycle. Being trauma-sensitive means treating behavior as skill, not will.

• Adults can still build these skills

Ablon calls the idea that adult brains can't change "nonsense." It takes repetition and practice, but he says he has never seen anyone, even in the most severe cases, who couldn't improve a skill incrementally. Mel shares she has worked on her own all-or-nothing thinking.

• Pandemic-era skill gaps are making "adulting" harder

Ablon now sees more young adults than ever. In his school work, fifth graders look more like third graders and 22-year-olds more like 19- or 20-year-olds, despite heroic efforts by teachers and parents. Ultimatums to non-launching kids often produce "dissociative compliance": agreeing to anything just to end the talk.

EXAMPLES

• The sticker-chart letter

A Boston Public Schools girl who both "exploded" (screaming, flipping desks) and "imploded" (crying, leaving class) was put on a sticker chart. Asked in writing how it was going, she wrote that her brain was idiotic and she messed everything up. Ablon, visibly emotional, said she was already more motivated than anyone; the chart told her she wasn't trying.

• The prison guard's turnaround

When Ablon first presented at a prison, a respected senior guard said the ideas might fit 5–10% of the young people there. A couple of years in, the guard told him maybe a couple were sociopaths, but 95% or more were struggling with exactly these skills.

• The toddler photo

A mother of a hostile 15-year-old brought in a photo of him asleep in the car at age two. It reminded Ablon the kid who wants to do well was still in there. His advice to discouraged parents: watch your kids sleep to restore faith.

• "If you give a dog a name..."

His grandfather, who lived to 106, told him that if you give a dog a name, eventually it'll answer to it. Treat a kid as lazy and unmotivated and over time they start acting that way.

• Dez Bryant's note to himself

Mel reads the former Cowboys receiver's phone note about breaking generational curses: don't yell at your kids before bed or school; you become the voice in their head. Ablon suggests full healing may require forgiving his parents by remembering

parents do well if they can, while explaining is not excusing.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Pick a plan for each specific problem: A, B or C**
  List the specific situations where problems happen, not behaviors like "disrespect." Plan A imposes your will and builds no skills. Plan C strategically drops the expectation for now, so you stay in charge. Mel likens it to "Let Them." Plan B is collaborative problem solving toward a mutually satisfactory solution.
- **Run Plan B with three ingredients in order**
  First, empathy: get their concern on the table. Second, share your concern, not your solution, using "and," not "but." Third, brainstorm together. Only one adult concern means Plan A; only theirs means Plan C. This follows Dr. Bruce Perry's "regulate, relate, reason"; if they get upset, return to empathy.
- **Empathize with four tools only**
  Ask questions, offer tentative educated guesses, reflect back in your own words, and reassure: "I just want to understand" or "I know there must be an important reason..." Ablon spent about five years studying recordings to find these.
- **Listen to your kids about screens before talking**
  Kids often share your worries about addictive algorithms, so start by hearing their concerns and work together against the apps.
- **Name your real worry about money**
  With adult kids, translate "I'll pay for you forever" into the real worry, like "I'm worried you won't feel successful" or "we'll run out of money," and make them co-authors.

The Science of Well-Being: Powerful Happiness Hacks That 5 Million People Are Using

Guest: Dr. Laurie Santos
Date: 2024-12-12 · Duration: 1:24:57
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=14-DJFPm1_4

KEYPOINTS

• A realistic target: 5–15% happier

Dr. Laurie Santos, the Yale cognitive scientist behind 'The Psychology of a Good Life' (Yale's most popular course in 300 years, with 1,200 sign-ups in three days), says doing the work can raise positive emotion and life satisfaction by about 5–15%. That might move you from a 5 to nearly a 7 out of 10. Mel admits her first thought was that it wasn't enough. Santos says that instinct to go from zero to 100 is part of the problem.

• Happiness is a leaky tire

Like learning violin, French or Guitar Hero on hard, happiness takes ongoing practice. Good habits pump the tire up, then it slowly leaks. Santos says she isn't naturally happy but has become maybe 20–30% happier by doing her own homework. She stresses that happiness can be changed, not fixed at birth.

• Two kinds: happy in your life and happy with your life

Scholars measure both everyday positive emotion and overall satisfaction and meaning. New parents can be deeply satisfied with life while miserable in it, with no sleep and dirty diapers. Someone flying first class and eating at the best restaurants can have plenty of pleasure but feel empty. Many strategies raise both.

• We're wired to survive, not thrive

Evolution favored fear and anger over contentment. The meditating Buddha under a tree would have starved or been eaten. The resulting negativity bias makes us notice the threat in the bush, the bad news on Instagram, and that everyone else in the cafeteria has a friend. Santos says knowing this is a reason for self-compassion: your brain is doing what it was built to do.

• Circumstances matter less than we think, above a floor

Grades, promotions, a new relationship or a new house don't boost happiness as much as we predict. Her caveat: if you can't feed your family or are living in a refugee camp, changing circumstances matters a lot. Mel recalled her bank card bouncing at the gas station and how relentless that stress was.

• Money stops buying daily happiness at a point

Santos cites the late Daniel Kahneman's study, which she dates to around 2009. Higher income raised positive emotion and lowered stress until about $75,000 a year, then leveled off. She puts that at roughly $110,000 today. Reasons include getting busier as you earn more, and hedonic adaptation: first class and trainers become normal.

• Time famine hits as hard as unemployment

Harvard Business School's Ashley Whillans studies 'time affluence.' Santos says feeling chronically time-starved shows up in surveys as a hit to well-being similar to being unemployed. Whillans also finds people at any income level who spend money to buy back time, like the neighbor's kid mowing the lawn or wash-and-fold laundry, end up happier.

• Social connection is the first lever, for introverts too

Happy people spend more time with people they care about. Nick Epley at the University of Chicago paid commuters on the L train, with a $5 Starbucks card, to talk to strangers. They felt more energized and less lonely than people told to enjoy their solitude. Introverts got the same boost. They just predicted it would be far worse. Epley's line: 'Nobody waves, but everybody waves back.'

• Helping others voluntarily makes you feel richer in time

Doing something nice, like offering to take something off a colleague's plate, makes you feel you must have time to spare. It only works when it's chosen, not obligatory caregiving. Her fix for loneliness, which she says is around 60% across groups, is to text whoever you think is loneliest. She cites Kostadin Kushlev at Georgetown finding the happiest people are the ones taking action, and a 'feel good, do good' effect: upbeat gym music made people more likely to volunteer or donate blood.

• Presence and self-compassion

She cites Dan Gilbert's finding that people's minds wander about 48.9% of the time, and that mind wandering, even toward a vacation, goes with lower happiness. Kristin Neff's self-compassion has three steps: notice inwardly that you're struggling, recognize it's common to all humans, then treat yourself like a friend and ask what you can take off your plate. Don't compare your insides to other people's outsides.

EXAMPLES

• Why she built the course

As a head of college living among about 500 students, she saw the crisis up close. Nationally, she says, over 40% of college students report being too depressed to function, over 60% feel very lonely and overwhelmingly anxious, and more than 1 in 10 seriously considered suicide in the past six months. She expected about 30 students. The registration graph's axis had to go to 1,000.

• The Good Samaritan seminarians

In a 1970s study, Princeton seminary students rushed to give a talk on the Good Samaritan and passed a staged person in need. Those in a hurry almost never stopped. Santos uses it to show how time pressure squeezes out kindness.

• The yacht with nowhere to park

Clay Cockrell, a therapist for clients earning over $50 million, described a client whose new yacht caused marital strife because they couldn't find somewhere to park it. Santos compares it to moving her 1987 Corolla for the street sweeper. Possessions come with costs we don't expect.

• The wheelbarrow at dinner

Liz Dunn at the University of British Columbia found about 30% less smiling in waiting rooms when phones were present, even put away. Dunn compares a phone on the table to a wheelbarrow full of every photo since 2015, every email and endless cat videos. You couldn't focus on your husband with that beside you.

• The 45-minute egg sandwich

Santos reframed buying an egg soufflé sandwich as saving at least 45 minutes of shopping and cooking, time she then used for the interview and a walk.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Spend your 'time confetti' well

Journalist Brigid Schulte's term for scattered five-minute gaps. Whillans and colleagues estimate we have more free time than 10–20 years ago, but it comes in fragments we waste scrolling. Use those gaps to connect, savor or practice gratitude.

• Gratitude via negative visualization

Borrowing from the Stoics, imagine the last time you saw your spouse, child or parent was the last time. You'll hug them longer tonight. Or list what you're grateful for while brushing your teeth.

• Savor, especially outdoors

Really taste the coffee, and take in the clouds and the sound of crunching leaves, as in Japan's 'forest bathing.'

• This week's homework: three compliments

Give at least three meaningful compliments to anyone, strangers included. It combines being other-oriented, social connection and savoring, because you had to notice something.

The Only Dating Advice You'll Ever Need

Guest: Logan Ury
Date: 2024-12-09 · Duration: 1:20:15
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=166lDfHQtZA

KEYPOINTS

• You're born knowing how to love, not how to date

Logan Ury is a Harvard-trained behavioral scientist, author of How to Not Die Alone and Director of Relationship Science at Hinge. She came to this view while filming a show about daters over 55. Dating is a skill you can improve. 'You don't wake up on your 50th birthday and know how to make a delicious French meal.' Mel says up front the episode isn't sponsored by Hinge.

• Don't blame the apps for what has always been hard

Stanford sociologist Michael J. Rosenfeld's research shows online has been the number one way couples meet since 2017. Ury argues the pains that have always come with dating get pinned on technology: liking someone who doesn't like you back, not hearing back (ghosting before it had a name), and fear of rejection. Sex and the City showed New Yorkers struggling with dating long before the apps.

• Your filters are the bouncer at your club

Setting a 'six feet or taller' filter without much thought removes about 86% of men, and then people wonder why the club is empty. Men do the same with harsh age cutoffs. Someone you'd click with across a bar might never show up at all. Removing every filter would be chaotic. Instead, she suggests stretching your age range a little in both directions, widening geography and letting go of the other screens.

• Too picky and too passive both cause burnout

Most of her clients are too picky, but some are overwhelmed by incoming likes and never comment or reach out. She compares that to wanting a dream job but only answering LinkedIn messages. Getting in the driver's seat, by pursuing people and talking to them in real life, cuts burnout. A Hinge finding she cites: 56% of people aren't pursuing someone they're interested in because of fear of rejection.

• Date like a scientist

Treat 'my type' as a hypothesis to test. A client insisted on a '5'6" skinny redhead,' and she told him he was wrong and to experiment. When clients say 'he's not really my type,' she hears 'ding ding ding,' because the type hasn't been working. Her own husband is her opposite in personality and interests, but they share a sense of humor and she admires him. For people tempted to go back to an ex, she asks: are you doing the safe thing?

• Forget the spark; look for the slow burn

Her book chapter is bluntly titled 'F*** the Spark.' She names three myths. First, that a spark can't grow: she says only 11% of couples felt love at first sight. Second, that a spark is a good sign: some people, like her friend Archie, are just 'sparky' with everyone. Third, that a spark means the relationship is viable: she interviewed divorced couples who clung to a romantic origin story. Mel adds that sparks often signal a familiar, dysfunctional pattern.

• Three toxic dating tendencies

Romanticizers have unrealistic expectations of relationships and want a rom-com meet-cute. Maximizers have unrealistic expectations of a partner and want a 'Frankenstein' of someone's looks, someone else's ambition and another person's family. Hesitaters have unrealistic expectations of themselves and wait until they've lost 10 pounds or landed a better job.

• Each tendency has a fix

Romanticizers: if you're married 50 years, the day you met is 0.55% of the relationship. She also cites psychologist Renae Franiuk's research on shifting from a 'soulmate' mindset to a 'work it out' mindset. Maximizers, often tech CEOs used to having recruiters fill job descriptions, should become satisficers with high but fixed standards. Hesitaters should start before they're ready, because no one is ever 100% ready.

• Separate pet peeves from dealbreakers

A woman who said she was 'open to anyone' then ruled out mouth-breathers. Ury never tells people to settle, but to 'double down on the things that matter' and compromise on the small annoyances.

EXAMPLES

• 10% of men get 90% of the attention

Ury describes app attention concentrating on a small slice of profiles, with women's interest focused on a few men. Mel, mother of two daughters in their 20s and a 19-year-old son, says she hears the frustration from both sides.

• Gen Z believes in soulmates more

Hinge found Gen Z was 39% more likely than Millennials to believe in a soulmate, which Ury calls an idealistic generation looking for its own rom-com.

• 'Why do you think I'm single?'

Before a first session, clients must ask friends and family this question. The common answers are 'too picky,' 'not putting yourself out there' and 'unrealistic expectations.' The hardest feedback is 'you keep choosing people who aren't good for you,' a sign of ignoring red flags.

• The 'undateable' email

Her email asking 'what makes you undateable?' drew her biggest response ever: an STI, a partner's suicide, never having been in a relationship, too many relationships. A disabled veteran on her show was turning down athletic women because he couldn't jog with them. Her advice is to prepare a short narrative ('this happened, it was hard, here's what I did') so fear of the topic doesn't keep you from dating.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Build a profile like successful daters

Based on people who met someone and deleted the app: start with a clear headshot (no filters, no sunglasses, no one else in it), then a photo doing something you love, then a full-body shot. Use prompt answers to tell stories that show vulnerability and silliness.

- **Use the events decision matrix**

  Draw a 2x2 grid that rates events on how likely you are to meet someone and how much you'll enjoy it. Browse Facebook, Meetup and museum listings, then prioritize events that score high on both. At a Red Sox game, chat in the beer line. Getting in any line and talking about the line is a reliable icebreaker.

- **Start in medias res**

  Skip 'press play' small talk about siblings and majors. Open with something you're thinking about, like a podcast idea you heard on the way, so the date becomes an experience instead of an information exchange.

- **Hesitaters need a deadline**

  She won't book another session until a client has gone on three dates. Set a deadline, buy a cute outfit, choose fun first-date ideas and get a friend to hold you accountable.

To Anyone Going Through a Breakup: How to Heal a Broken Heart & Move On

Guest: Sawyer Robbins
Date: 2024-12-05 · Duration: 1:21:48
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GcJVygChaxA

KEYPOINTS

• Don't tell a heartbroken person to love themselves

Mel and her daughter Sawyer start by setting aside the usual advice. 'Love yourself' fails because right after a breakup you feel rejected, unwanted and even disgusting. 'Distract yourself,' 'get back out there' and 'push through it, girlfriend' fail too, because you think about the person all day anyway. Sawyer's request to the people around her was simple: let me be sad.

• Processing and moving forward are two different jobs

Sawyer's key distinction is that sobbing on the floor is processing, not a tool for moving through the breakup. Mel says ordinary advice runs the two together. This episode treats them separately: first understand what your body is going through, then use specific actions to build a life without the person.

• Your nervous system misses them too

Mel shares what her therapist, Anne Davin, told her: it hurts so much because the person is intertwined with your nervous system. You can still hear their voice, you want to share good news with them, and you picture them in the car beside you. Davin compares it to a death, except the person is still alive. Mel says this shows you're not 'some weak weirdo.' You're unlearning a life you built together.

• No contact for 30 days

Davin's rule: no texts, no calls, and no photos, videos or voice memos. She says their voice is especially charged and reactivates old patterns, setting you back. Mel quietly hid every photo of the couple from the family's digital picture frame. Sawyer had about 25 impulses a day to reach out and almost forwarded every funny video before remembering she couldn't.

• Urges to reach out are withdrawal, not a sign

Wanting to text them, send a meme or message their parents is habit and nervous-system signaling, Mel says, not 'a sign from God that this is your person.' She suggests pairing 'let them' with 'let me': let me keep my promise, send the meme to my sister instead, and drive down a different road than theirs.

• Give it about three months

Mel cites research that grieving a breakup takes about three months before you start to feel better. She says that by the 11-week mark, 71% of people report feeling better. She offers it as a mile marker, not a deadline, and calls the sadness a mentally healthy response. Sawyer's recovery was a 'rolling hill,' with good days followed by sobbing on the gym floor.

• Closure has to come from you

Sawyer doesn't believe in closure. Her call on day 30 didn't give her any, though hearing an 'official no' helped her move on. Mel says people look for closure because they don't realize they're grieving, and they hope one conversation will reset their nervous system. That work happens inside you.

• Let go of the future you imagined

Sawyer accepted the breakup, but not that he wouldn't be at the end of the aisle or the father of her children. She pictured running into him in New York years later with her hair blown out. She says that fantasy and the sadness kept her anchored and felt 'like crack.' Mel compares it to divorced friends whose anger keeps them emotionally married.

• Replaying only the good memories

Sawyer says that after a breakup you keep replaying the best moments until the relationship looks 'like a Barbie movie,' and you block out the disagreements and the reasons it ended. Mel says refusing to accept reality is what keeps you trapped.

EXAMPLES

• Sawyer's breakup, seven months later

Mel and Sawyer were writing the breakup section of The Let Them Theory, including lines like 'let them get fit and hot,' the very morning Sawyer was dumped by her boyfriend of two years. She spent days in pajamas and had panic attacks while Mel held her. That summer her plans were canceled, and she poured herself into work until she crashed.

• Five years of on-again, off-again

After her first major breakup, Sawyer reached out right away and they got back together, which set a pattern of coming in and out of each other's lives for five years. She says the 30-day rule and the nervous-system explanation would have helped them both move on much sooner.

• Gabrielle, 25: 'what if' comparisons

Mel says dating while asking 'what if' turns it into a 'throuple,' like bringing your critical mother on the date. Ask 'what if this works out' instead, date to find yourself, and use an 80/20 rule. The 80% that matters: is this person kind, do they make you laugh, do they prioritize you, do you share the same goals? The fears are the 20% that doesn't.

• Yuna, 29, and Tim, 27

Yuna forced herself to date after a past breakup and cried mid-date. Mel says she may still be holding a reunion fantasy, and notes she met her husband in line at a bar a month after swearing off dating. Tim posts and dresses for his ex. Mel tells him he's in a jail cell he holds the key to, and to restart with 30 days of no contact and unfollowing.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Clear out reminders and refresh your bedroom

Box up their photos, clothes and trinkets, pause the shared playlists, and ask a roommate or parent to do it if you can't. Paint a wall, move the bed or buy new sheets. The bedroom is often 'ground zero' for the sadness, so this marks a new chapter.

• Ask for help and fill your calendar

Tell roommates, siblings and coworkers what happened and ask them to check in on you and invite you out for three months.

Search for local events and plan things you look forward to. If you're the supporter, show up in person, drop off a meal or drive them to class, Mel suggests reaching out around seven weeks in, not just right after the breakup.

• Pick a challenge and ask Sawyer's question

Pick a challenge you never had time for, like a triathlon, guitar or a trip. Then ask: if the love of your life were 75 days away, how would you spend your nights and weekends? Mel adds that, by the figure she cites, only 11% of relationships start with a spark. To her, love is consideration and admiration, which grow over time.

5 Signs Of An Incompatible Relationship & 3 Signs You've Found "The One"

Date: 2024-12-02 · Duration: 1:14:27
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qtQg09GLXVc

KEYPOINTS

- **Doubting your partner is normal; something feeling off is different**
  Mel says everyone eventually asks 'am I with the right person?', whether married 50 years or newly dating, and dating apps make 'is there someone better?' constant. That passing doubt differs from a persistent sense that this is a good person but not good for you. Since your partner shapes your health, happiness, goals and stress, she treats the question seriously.
- **If you're frustrated more than half the time, it's not working**
  Mel's test: a relationship that works brings out the best in you. Warning signs include feeling insecure, compromising your values, constantly explaining yourself, griping to friends or a therapist but never to your partner, and dreading their name on your phone. Ask whether you feel safe, supported, respected and like a priority.
- **Compatibility means attraction, desire to make it work and wanting the same things**
  Plenty of couples are attracted and committed, even living together, but don't fit. A great person can be wrong for you. When something feels off, the key is whether you lean toward each other to work on it. Mel, married 28 years to Chris, says things have felt off countless times.
- **Mistake one: chasing potential**
  Mel's core principle is that people only change when they feel like it. If you're in love with who they could become, you're in a relationship with a fantasy. Accept who they are, then decide what you'll do.
- **Mistake two: misaligned values you hope will convert**
  Expecting someone to eventually want kids, share your religion or join your two-year travel dream rarely works. If you give up a dream such as medical school to stay, resentment follows, and Mel says the responsibility for that trade is yours, not theirs.
- **Mistake three: dumping the 80% for the missing 20%**
  People leave partners who are kind, loyal, respectful, growth-minded and fun because the nice-to-haves are missing: height, flowers, skiing, being outgoing at parties. Then they date people who have only the 20%. Looks, fitness and jobs change anyway. Mel suggests a 'boring' plateau may simply mean safe and stable.
- **Pressure creates resistance**
  Citing psychiatrist Dr. K of HealthyGamer, Mel explains that people are wired to feel in control of their own choices. 'Nice day for a walk' prompts 'thanks, Captain Obvious.' Gifting sneakers and sending workouts usually turns into a standoff. You can't change someone, but you can influence them.
- **The ABC Loop: apologize and ask, back off, celebrate and model**
  First, ask yourself 'why does this bother me?' five times. You may find fear for their health, or worry about how it looks for you. Then apologize sincerely for nagging and ask open-ended questions ('How do you feel about your health? How can I show up differently?'), which can surface the person's own inner tension. Back off and watch behavior for three months. Model the change in a way that looks fun and easy, and praise any progress without 'I told you so.'
- **69% of couples' conflicts never resolve**
  Mel cites Drs. John and Julie Gottman's research that most recurring relationship problems are unresolvable. Hers: ADHD-related messiness and lateness that drive Chris crazy, and his slow, question-heavy processing. What matters is whether you can discuss them, accept each other and lean in, through chapters when either of you earned more, less or nothing.
- **D and E: decide if it's a deal breaker, then end the complaining or the relationship**
  After three months without change, ask whether you can stop complaining. If you can't, it matters too much to you. Then either accept and love them as they are, or leave. Staying while resenting them is your choice. Mel says most issues turn out to be acceptable.

EXAMPLES

- **The coworker's lunch walk**
  A colleague walks outside every lunch, never inviting you, and returns smiling while you eat at your keyboard. Within weeks you go too, and credit yourself. Mel cites neuroscience research that behavior spreads when people feel the idea is theirs.
- **Asking about kids without pressure**
  Apologize for the snark and the baby-shower texts, then ask how it feels when you raise the topic, and whether they picture kids or grandkids around them late in life. A friend of Mel's spent a decade in her 30s with someone who stayed 'open to it,' then ended things when she pushed.
- **Talk in the car**
  Mel holds hard conversations with her adult kids while driving. No one can leave, there's no drinking, you both face forward, and you're less likely to be triggered by their expressions.
- **The partner who stopped exercising**
  Mel describes the familiar curve. First come invitations to walks, a training session and new sneakers. Then jealousy of couples jogging along the Charles River. Finally, resentment at the sight of a partner on the couch with chips. Each step adds pressure and deepens the standoff.
- **Chris's depression**
  Mel recalls wanting Chris to use his tools during his depression, her example of wanting the best for someone while your pressure backfires.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Fight for the truth, not the relationship**

The truth can't kill anything real. If you're afraid to say what feels off, Mel calls that a red flag that you can't be yourself in this relationship.

- **The right decision often feels wrong**

Grief, guilt and a pit in your stomach are healthy responses to ending something, not proof you're wrong. Ask whether you want seven more years or seven decades feeling like this, and whether you'd want someone to stay with you out of pity.

- **Ask how you'd show up if the right love were around the corner**

It may not take a different person. One of you may need to show up differently and stand for something bigger than the friction.

Unlock Your Brain’s Hidden Power: 6 Tools to Boost Focus, Confidence, and Creativity

Guest: Dr. Jeff Karp
Date: 2024-11-28 · Duration: 1:10:49
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jH1L2pXtPaw

KEYPOINTS

• Adult life runs on an "algorithmic lifestyle" that flattens creativity

Dr. Jeff Karp, who runs a medical-innovation lab at Brigham and Women's Hospital and teaches at Harvard Medical School and MIT, argues that creativity is something everyone is born with but society and schooling flatten. As kids everything is new; as adults we wake at the same time, eat the same breakfast, scroll the same sites and see the same people. His book Lit offers "life ignition tools" to break that single track and tap what he calls your evolutionary inheritance: the capacity to sense, learn, feel awe and create.

• Do new: small novelty opens new possibilities

Karp's first tool is to deliberately inject something new, even into your thinking. He handed Mel prism glasses that turned studio lights into rainbows, a simple frame shift that sparks curiosity. Stopping to watch clouds move is another; it pulls you out of rumination and into the moment, which he says is the actual process behind "be present."

• Press pause: real breaks let the brain connect ideas

After days of back-to-back meetings that felt like "two marathons" but left something missing, Karp began taking 5–10 minute breaks between meetings with no email, texting or social media, just doing nothing or walking. He found himself linking something someone said months earlier to the meeting he'd just had, sparking new collaborations. His view is that subconscious information needs time to swirl and settle.

• Learning consolidates in the pauses

Karp cites neuroscientist and musician Molly Gebrian, who told him "it's in the pauses that mind turns into matter": the rewiring happens during breaks and sleep, not only during practice. Rather than an hour straight, she recommends 15–20 minutes of practice, a 5–10 minute break, then returning. Coming back reveals what you forgot, which focuses attention and helps the skill stick.

• Fall in love with practice by varying it

Practice gets monotonous, so change how you do it. Karp interviewed five-time US memory champion Nelson Dellis, who started training his memory after a family member developed Alzheimer's; when card memorization gets boring, Dellis adds extra cards to the deck to create a new challenge. Karp ties enjoyment to persistence: if practice has joy in it, you keep going and notice the small "click" of incremental progress.

• Focus beyond failure: treat it as a prerequisite, not the opposite of success

Karp says nothing came easily to him. He was rejected by all three medical schools he applied to, booed off stage singing in high school, and lost student council races until his final year. He now sees failure as a chance to learn and explore options he hadn't considered, and drops the expectation of succeeding the first time.

• Flip the switch: a four-step way out of autopilot

Step 1: notice your inner desire for another possibility. Step 2: take stock of what's working and what's holding you back, acknowledging what works is empowering. Step 3: look for other possibilities and ways of thinking, often by talking to people who think differently. Step 4: take one deliberate step forward. Mel notes she does this by reaching out to a trusted friend for advice.

• Pinch your brain: use intention to direct attention

Pick any object, like a pen, mug or tree bark, and study its colors, textures, light and writing. This squeezes out other thoughts and can interrupt overwhelm, doom-scrolling or rumination. Karp calls each round "a bicep curl for your attention," especially useful with ADHD, when a huge advertising and marketing industry is competing to hijack it.

• Diversity of thinking is a creative engine

Karp deliberately limits overlapping expertise in his lab. He has had chemists, materials scientists, immunologists, a GI surgeon, a cardiac surgeon and a dentist, from about 30 countries. Different training means different wiring, which he says is how the sparks start. The lab's work includes a nasal spray tested against COVID-19 and flu, and a needle that delivers gene therapy to the back of the eye, now headed to a clinical trial.

EXAMPLES

• Lab presentation competitions

Everyone from high schoolers to faculty gives a three-minute talk on a passion, not their research. Feedback must be constructive, and the lab votes on best talk, most risk-taking and best feedback. Talks have included a rap about Boston burger places, a wetsuit surfing talk, a backyard permaculture project and a family bakery closed by COVID, which got people connecting.

• Fifteen seconds of silence at TEDMED

Karp rehearsed a 15-minute memorized talk endlessly, even renting MIT's Kresge Auditorium. Live-streamed at the Kennedy Center, he realized mid-talk he'd skipped a line and froze for 15 seconds. He clicked forward to a blank slide, then recovered. Learning he could stop and find his place again freed him from years of presentation anxiety.

• Mel's speaking advice: say "I'm excited"

Mel tells Karp the audience doesn't know what you were supposed to say, people root for visible vulnerability, and if you freeze, joke about it. She cites Harvard research that reframing nerves as "I'm so excited" helps keep your nervous system from hijacking your prefrontal cortex. Karp adds neuroscientist Rudy Tanzi's pre-talk line: "I am here to serve."

• From efficiency addict to present father

Diagnosed with ADHD and learning differences in seventh grade, Karp drilled efficiency until he was hooked on work's dopamine: networking at kids' birthday parties, pacing soccer fields for 10,000 steps, watching Game of Thrones on dog walks.

COVID's "unintentional pause" showed him his son was suddenly a high school quarterback. Through his wife's spiritual teachers he began Transcendental Meditation; in two to three months he learned to let urges pass, and now notices when he's about to hijack his kids' conversations.

- **"Set your sights lower"**
  As a C-and-D student, Karp was told to aim lower than becoming a doctor. His mother wrote school speeches with him and helped him memorize one word, then a sentence, then more, until he was winning competitions. His message to struggling kids: things are changeable, and every person needs one area where they feel that progress.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Schedule true five-minute pauses**
  Between meetings, step away from all screens. Walk, look at the sky, or do nothing, and notice which ideas connect.
- **Practice in 15–20 minute blocks**
  Whether it's guitar or a new work skill, break after 15–20 minutes for 5–10, then return and notice what slipped.
- **Label early attempts "Gen 1.0"**
  Before his first Stanford talk on Lit, Karp told himself it was version one and focused on gathering cues to make 2.0 better. Mel took a similar approach with drafts of The Let Them Theory.
- **Pinch your brain when you start to spiral**
  Grab the nearest object and describe its details to yourself until the worry loosens its grip.

The Simple Tool That Will Transform Your Family Dynamic

Date: 2024-11-25 · Duration: 0:56:14
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pw1ohFfCPsg

KEYPOINTS

• Your family isn't changing, but one person can shift the dynamic

Mel's starting point is that parents, siblings and in-laws are who they are, and people only change when they want to. Because families are interconnected, changing your own approach, energy and mindset can send positive ripples through the whole group over time. "It only takes one person in a family to change absolutely everything."

• Think of your family as a spider web

Parents and grandparents sit at the centre, and everyone is linked by strands of history and expectation. When someone taps one corner, such as an annoying message in the family group chat, the whole web shakes. Mel says the system isn't necessarily fair, but it's reality: you're connected whether you speak or not.

• Family criticism hurts more because everyone has a stake

Families tend to be harsher to your face than friends because your sadness or struggles ripple through everyone. Pushing you about your partner, job or health is often how they show care, but it lands as judgement. Mel says remembering that it comes from a shared stake helps you respond with less heat.

• "Let them" steps you back from the web; "let me" puts you in charge of yourself

"Let them" means you see the web without getting tangled in it: let your mom be disappointed, let your stepbrother bait people about politics. "Let me" means focusing on what you control: what you say, what you do, what energy you bring, and which conversations you join. Adults aren't responsible for managing other adults' emotions. Mel's one exception is that parents and stepparents are responsible for helping a child feel seen, heard, safe and supported.

• Decide what kind of relationship you want, and own it

Step one is choosing what you want to feel with your family, whether more fun, connection or peace, and taking responsibility for it instead of looking to your mother, sister-in-law or parents to change. Mel says expecting others to stop guilting you or playing favourites hands them your power. A guilt trip is like any road trip: you decide whether to get in the car.

• Use "frame of reference" before reacting

Credited to her friend Lisa Bilyeu, founder of Quest Nutrition and host of Women of Impact, the tool asks you to step into a relative's shoes. Picture parents whose friends all have family nearby while their kid lives far away and visits three or four times a year. Of course they pressure you. It's also their first time being human, and their first time being a parent or grandparent.

• In debates, listening comes before persuading

Most family arguments over politics, religion or diet are really power struggles about who's right. Mel cites research that people don't change their minds when you try to convince them; they dig in. They become open only when they feel heard. She separates petty debates from views that deny your fundamental rights, and says how you respond to bigotry from a relative is a deeply personal choice.

• Blended families sit on unprocessed grief

Mel says a divorce hits the web like a hurricane. Stepchildren and your own kids are grieving a life they didn't choose, and family events keep bringing it up. A new partner competes with kids who may now see their parent only half the time. Divorced parents need to "triple down" on prioritising their kids, accept that the kids may not like the new person, and sometimes see them without that person.

• Before cutting someone off, consider repair

Mel is frustrated by what she calls a trend of cutting family off without a conversation, an apology or the benefit of the doubt. She acknowledges that narcissistic personalities and real harm exist. Still, she asks whether holding a grudge is truly what you're committed to, and reminds listeners that you can always apologise, admit what you'd do differently and ask for a do-over.

EXAMPLES

• The old dynamic in Chris's family

Chris is one of three brothers who competed at sports and skiing, in a family where success was measured financially. Gatherings with a lot of drinking often ended in tears, fighting or someone storming off. Some of that eased after Chris's father died about 14 years ago, but an underlying disconnection remained. Jokes often targeted Chris, whose success is in his work with men and as a death doula, while Mel is the breadwinner.

• Mel used to be the difficult sister-in-law

Loud, opinionated, competitive and insecure, she joined in the debating and needling. As she worked on calming her own nervous system, she began walking away from the jabs without responding. Not rolling over, just deciding they weren't worth her energy. With no target, the needling faded. About two years ago, a brother-in-law told her, "Mel, you've really changed."

• Cindy's two sons

Mel's friend Cindy, a grandmother of four, has an older son who is a staunch conservative and likes to egg on his younger, liberal, creative brother. That happens in the group text and at the rare dinners they share. Her wish as the matriarch: "the politics would stay in another room."

• Ten Christmases

Mel's father is 80, and her grandfather died at 84. She says she's lucky if she has ten more summers and Christmases with him, and that realisation motivated her to lean in now. She also admits to being the aunt who forgets birthday cards and is last to reply in birthday texts.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Opt out of the old dynamic

Stop engaging in political needling, leave the table when an adult acts like a child, and let disappointment pass without trying

to fix it. Mel finds that when adults are given space to feel their emotions, the tension often eases.

- **Bring what you want more of**

Mel brings things the family can bond over, such as family Olympics, a big puzzle or a dance mix. Make the plans, ask the questions and start your own traditions, even if nobody thanks you. Do it because of who you want to be, not out of guilt.

- **Drop the rope**

Family conflict often feels like tug-of-war, with everyone fighting to be seen. When you let go, others often soften too. "People can only meet you as deeply as they've met themselves," so adjust your expectations accordingly. Accepting your family as they are isn't surrender; it's how you take back the power to shape what comes next.

Dr. Gabor Maté: The Shocking Link Between ADHD, Addiction, Autoimmune Diseases, & Trauma

Guest: Dr. Gabor Maté
Date: 2024-11-21 · Duration: 1:03:21
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PLvCXIvgrGQ

KEYPOINTS

• Childhood conditions are both physical and emotional

Maté, a physician and author of Scattered Minds, In the Realm of Hungry Ghosts and When the Body Says No, defines childhood conditions broadly. They include nutrition, housing and protection, but also whether a child feels seen and understood, and the parents' own stress, unresolved trauma, conflict, money worries and isolation. All of this, he argues, shapes a child's personality and brain development.

• Maté sees ADHD as an adaptation, not a purely genetic disease

He argues that genes create predisposition, not predetermination. What he thinks is inherited is sensitivity. A sensitive child in a stressed home can't escape or fight back, so they tune out, and that gets wired in while the brain is developing. He points out that rising diagnosis rates can't be explained by genes, which don't change in a population within decades. He acknowledges this view goes against what most physicians are taught.

• The brain is a social organ

He describes it as established brain science that a child's brain circuitry develops in interaction with emotional relationships from the womb onwards. Stress on the mother during pregnancy can affect dopamine receptor numbers, and in mice, isolation lowers them while companionship restores them. Stimulant medications raise dopamine. He links ADHD to poverty, racism, maternal postpartum depression and prenatal stress, while insisting "there's no parent blaming here."

• A diagnosis describes; it doesn't explain

"Why are they hyperactive? Because they have ADHD. How do we know? Because they're hyperactive." Maté calls this circular reasoning. Descriptions are useful, but to understand why someone tunes out or struggles with impulse control, you have to look at how their life acted on their genes.

• "Acting out" means expressing a need without words

As in charades, children act out what they can't say. Instead of controlling or punishing the behaviour, parents should ask what is being expressed, because changing the relationship changes the behaviour. He's not against medication and has both prescribed and taken it, but says it shouldn't be the first or only step, it does nothing for long-term brain development, and no child should feel acceptable only when sedated.

• Addiction is any behaviour you crave and can't give up despite harm

His definition: temporary relief or pleasure, craving, negative consequences, and an inability to stop. When he asks a room of 1,000 people if they've had such a pattern, nearly all raise their hands. Both ADHD and addiction involve weak impulse regulation and the dopamine system, and he cites figures that 30% or more of stimulant addicts may be diagnosable with ADHD. "The problem isn't lack of free will but lack of a free won't."

• Don't ask why the addiction; ask why the pain

Asked what alcohol gave her, Mel says belonging, relief and a way to turn her brain off. Maté reframes addiction as an attempt to solve emotional pain and isolation. The body's own opioids, endorphins, relieve physical and emotional pain, create pleasure and support bonding. People whose early lives undermined that system go looking for substitutes.

• He links four traits to autoimmune disease

Around 80% of autoimmune diseases, such as MS, rheumatoid arthritis, lupus, Crohn's and psoriasis, occur in women. From his family-medicine and palliative-care practice, he noticed four common patterns: putting others' emotional needs first, identifying with duty and role, being "very nice" by repressing healthy anger, and feeling responsible for others' feelings. Citing psychoneuroimmunology, he argues that suppressing anger, a boundary defence, also disrupts the immune system, another boundary defence. He frames this as cultural, not about gender.

• Attachment versus authenticity

Children need attachment, meaning belonging and acceptance, and authenticity, meaning connection to their own gut feelings. When being authentic threatens attachment, children give up authenticity. As adults, we can choose differently. Mel connects this to her Let Them approach of separating other people's emotions from her own responsibility.

EXAMPLES

• Mel's late ADHD diagnosis and her son Oakley

Mel was diagnosed with ADHD and dyslexia at 46 while her son Oakley was being evaluated. His school called it "behavioural," but testing at Mass General, which the family couldn't have afforded three years earlier, changed his path. Remembering her years as a public defender, she notes how many incarcerated people had undiagnosed ADHD. Maté: "We're hurting people for having been hurt." Mel also says moving from a hectic Boston life to Vermont changed her family.

• Vancouver's Downtown Eastside

Maté worked there for 12 years in what he calls North America's most concentrated area of drug use, where many patients had undiagnosed ADHD. One sex worker told him that the first time she used heroin, it "felt like a warm soft hug."

• Vietnam veterans and rat studies

Soldiers who used opioids in Vietnam but came home to supportive environments often didn't stay addicted. In lab studies, stressed and isolated rats easily became addicted to opioids, while rats in good conditions largely resisted, no matter how much they were given. Indigenous women in Canada, he says, have six times the rate of rheumatoid arthritis.

• His shopping addiction and his wife's rebuke

Maté would spend $3,000 in a classical music store, then return two hours later for more. The addiction was to the shopping, not the music. Five years ago, while touring for When the Body Says No, he was irritable and overworked. His wife, Rae, said

he'd better write one called "When the Wife Says No."

- **Women who said no**

  At a recent workshop, two women told him that reading When the Body Says No and starting to say no had "cured" their MS. He offers this as one of many anecdotes, not a trial result. He also points out that doctors treat many autoimmune flares with cortisol, a stress hormone, yet rarely ask whether chronic stress is involved.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Validate the need behind the habit**

  Mel's scrolling turned out to be about lacking joy and rest and being uncomfortable alone with herself. Ask what need the behaviour serves, accept that the need is valid, then look for less harmful ways to meet it. "Don't drink" alone doesn't address the underlying need.

- **The weekly six-question exercise**

  Where do I struggle to say no? What does that cost me? What belief stops me? Where did I learn it, often at two to five years old? Who would I be without it? And sixth: where am I not saying yes, to play, rest, creativity and joy?

- **Treat healing as a social process**

  He values 12-step groups for compassionate, shame-free sharing but wants more awareness of trauma there, noting that founder Bill W. was an abandoned child. Low-cost tools include free talks, library books, meditation, time in nature, exercise and better food.

The Real Reason You’re Exhausted: How To Gain Control of Your Time & Your Life

Guest: Dr. Scott Lyons
Date: 2024-11-18 · Duration: 1:02:01
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gStPBZVRVLc

KEYPOINTS

• Busyness can work like an addiction

Mel starts from a basic definition of addiction: a pattern of behavior you keep repeating even though it harms your life. By that measure, she says, constant busyness and stress qualify. She brings in Dr. Scott Lyons, a psychologist who developed a somatic stress-release method he says is now taught in 20 countries, and who has written about an 'addiction to stress.' She plays clips from her conversation with him and adds her own commentary.

• Signs of stress addiction

Dr. Lyons lists them as constant motion, anxiety others can see even when you can't, making mountains out of molehills, venting, gossip and overscheduling. It's 'always about the doing.' He calls it an avoidance strategy, whether you're avoiding emotions, intimacy or problems, and also a form of control.

• Busy people often aren't getting much done

Mel cites Stanford psychologist Albert Bandura's 1977 work suggesting that completing tasks satisfies a need to feel competent, which is why checking boxes feels rewarding. Dr. Lyons counters that chronically busy people often hyperfocus on one area, like filling a calendar or one part of work, while the rest of their life and home falls apart.

• 'A child who is not embraced by the village will burn it down to feel its warmth'

Dr. Lyons uses this proverb to describe the wound under drama and busyness: wanting connection and healing while also finding them dangerous. Mel connects it to self-righteous anger when your effort goes unappreciated, and to never asking for help ('it's just easier if I do it').

• Stress gives relief, so you keep needing more

Dr. Lyons quotes physician Gabor Maté: 'Don't ask why the addiction, ask why the pain.' He says the brain registers emotional and physical pain the same way. Stressful activity, from small anxieties to skydiving, releases endorphins that dull the pain. As with other addictions, you need more over time, at the cost of your physical health and well-being.

• Dopamine rewards the doing that keeps you from feeling

Each social event, work task or checked box gives a dopamine hit, and the activity keeps you away from feelings you've avoided for years. Mel's question for listeners: if your life paused for a week, what would come up, and what conversations would you need to have?

• Chaos is a 'familiar hell'

Dr. Lyons, who grew up in a household with physical abuse, alcohol and drugs, says early environments set your baseline. He cites Freud's 'repetition compulsion': we keep moving toward the familiar, hoping for a different outcome. Calm can feel like a threat to a nervous system raised on chaos. Mel admits she has told her team for three years that things will slow down in two months, and instead it keeps getting more chaotic.

• Many of us learned that doing equals worth

Dr. Lyons asks how you felt loved as a child: freely, or by earning it? Children with busy or unavailable parents often conclude they're 'too much' and must prove their value through perfectionism, more degrees, and constant achievement, which means abandoning themselves. Mel calls slowing down 'an act of defiance' against that training, and says you have to believe you're worthy even when unemployed or rejected.

• Healing starts in the pause

Dr. Lyons's first step is noticing what happens when there's no stimulation. Do you rush to fill it? He once sat in a bathtub resisting the urge to grab his phone, asked 'What am I running away from?', and realized it was too much to face alone. He recommends finding someone who can stay with you in the discomfort. Safety has to be felt, not just understood ('that was then, this is now'), and rebuilding it takes time.

• Before you fix someone else, look at yourself

Asked how to help a busy spouse, child or colleague, Dr. Lyons says: 'There's no better way to avoid yourself than to help someone else,' and that it can be a form of control. Change requires you to be grounded first. Mel borrows her friend David's line, 'leaders bring the weather,' and adapts it: your stress soaks everyone around you.

EXAMPLES

• Chris closes Mel's laptop

Home after a week away on business, Mel sat down with Chris, then opened her phone and later her laptop while he watched TV. He reached over, shut it, and said, 'I thought we were just going to hang out.'

• No Target in Southern Vermont

After moving to a town whose main store is an 1800s general store, Mel noticed how often she used to dart to the grocery store, mall or coffee shop with no real need. She concluded she was addicted to being busy doing nothing.

• Mel's third year of law school

Mel describes waking up hating her life, smoking first thing, rushing out the door late but still stopping at Dunkin' Donuts, sitting at the back of class smelling of cigarettes, barely able to study, and ending each day with a bottle of wine, all while juggling two relationships. She says the busyness meant she never had to face what was wrong. She had untreated anxiety and unrecognized trauma at the time.

• This Is Water

Mel uses David Foster Wallace's 2005 Kenyon College commencement story about young fish who ask 'What's water?' to

argue that busyness is what we're all swimming in and can't see. Each generation spots it in the next: kids on phones, Mom always working, Grandma always off at tennis or mahjong.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Try the line test**
  Next time you're in a 5-to-10-minute checkout line, don't touch your phone. Notice the agitation, fidgeting and looking around, which Mel says is the alarm Dr. Lyons describes. She admits she can manage about five minutes before it takes real restraint.
- **Red flags worth noticing**
  You can't book a friend for three months. You collapse at night and beat yourself up over what you didn't do. You need a drink to turn your brain off. You can't stop watching the news. You feel something terrible will happen if you don't get everything right.
- **Practice de-escalating, one moment at a time**
  Walk into the house without your phone, breathe, and remember you're bringing the weather. Don't send that text. Close the laptop and just sit with your partner. Mel believes she'll be more productive, not less, by staying connected to herself.

The #1 Money Rule to Live By: Understand The Psychology of Money

Guest: Farnoosh Torabi
Date: 2024-11-14 · Duration: 0:38:16
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eMuS6u7k3Lk

KEYPOINTS

• Financial fear is universal and normal, not a personal defect

Farnoosh Torabi, a financial journalist and advisor for about 20 years, says fear is the emotional undercurrent of almost every money question she gets: should I buy the house, take the job, get divorced, file for bankruptcy. She argues money naturally creates a sense of scarcity because it is limited, decisions often can't be rewound, and money feels personal: we ask what a choice says about us.

• Aim for a relationship with fear, not fearlessness

As a daughter of Iranian immigrants growing up in 1980s Worcester, Massachusetts, Farnoosh says she was terrified as a child. In her 20s she tried to be fearless and kept hitting dead ends. Things changed when she accepted the fear wasn't leaving and began asking what it was trying to tell her. Her line: when you're good with fear, you can be good with money.

• Money is a tool, and having your own money is power

Farnoosh calls money a tool that gives access and builds a bridge when you most need one, for good or for harm. Mel goes further and calls it power: being able to earn and spend your own money without hiding packages or fearing trouble. Farnoosh draws a line between power over a partner and power to heal and support. She says a partnership should be a dance with money, not partners sizing each other up by income.

• Financial independence is a right, especially for women

Farnoosh says many women are taught money isn't their domain. She asks whether you have your own bank account, your own credit card and potentially your own income, because someone else's money is not yours. In her view, real wealth is autonomy: the runway and confidence to stay in or leave a job or marriage, or start a business.

• Five fears show up again and again

Farnoosh's list: (1) not having enough, which can be a legitimate fear given prices; (2) losing it all even when you have enough, one layoff or bad investment away; (3) wanting too much, especially for women who worry that saying 'I want to be rich' clashes with expectations around caregiving; (4) passing scarcity or entitlement on to your kids, tied to low financial literacy; and (5) for boomers, dying without a legacy or a proper estate plan. She mentions a recent study finding millennials are the generation most afraid of running out of money.

• Many money fights between partners are really about hidden fears

Mel notes that a fight over sneakers for the kids can be a budget conversation for one partner and a fear about raising spoiled kids for the other. Farnoosh's rule is to talk about how each of you grew up with money before getting into the numbers. Then a partner's tightness or overspending prompts understanding ('I get where this comes from') rather than 'what's wrong with you?'

• Trace a fear to its root and ask whether it's even yours

Farnoosh's main exercise is asking where a fear came from. Hers came from scarcity at age nine, when she had no control over money. Her parents' fears became hers and made her a super-saver, which helped for a while. But if you have savings and a job and still feel you'll lose it all, the fear has stopped helping. She suggests thanking it and deciding as an adult that it ends with you.

• Take stock of the assets no one can take away

When markets drop or a job disappears, Farnoosh points to what you keep: experience, network, accomplishments, health, and even failures, which she counts as assets because of what they taught you. Fear of uncertainty makes you want certainty, so she suggests holding on to what is actually certain about you rather than reaching for ice cream or retail therapy.

• Add a fourth F, 'figure it out', to freeze, flight and fight

Rather than learning to stop fearing money, Farnoosh wants people to talk to their fear. In high-stakes money decisions, fear usually shows up for a reason, like real risk of loss. Asking yourself questions turns that reaction into a roadmap for what to do next, instead of the knee-jerk freeze, flight or fight.

• Go to the dark place on purpose

Farnoosh says fear of losing money activates the same brain areas as physical pain, and with pain we want a fix. So instead of looping on 'what if', she has people make it urgent: what if you lost your job tomorrow? Who would you call, what would you cut, where would money go? Turning 'what if' into 'what now' while you are still secure shows you that you could figure it out.

EXAMPLES

• Mel and Chris's $800,000 debt

At 41, Mel and her husband Chris put their life savings, a home-equity line and maxed-out credit cards into his restaurant business after the first location did well. It started failing. Mel describes staring at weeks of unpaid bills at the kitchen table, worrying about groceries and town soccer fees, and years of shame and grueling payoff. She says the first goal wasn't wealth but keeping the lights on.

• Farnoosh's parents fighting over money

Her father, the breadwinner, tied his manhood to financial dominance. Her mother couldn't work right away because she didn't speak the language. Money was discussed openly, which is less taboo in Middle Eastern culture, but often with fists on the table, crying and silent treatment. That taught Farnoosh that if a woman doesn't control her own money, someone else makes decisions for her.

• The menu with no prices

On a Caribbean trip with her husband, Farnoosh was handed a menu without prices because 'madam should not have to worry about such things.' She earns more in her marriage and laughed at the irony, but used it to show how deeply the idea that money is men's business still runs.

- **The single mom in her 50s**
  A listener who grew up in poverty had started a business, bought a house and put her boys through college alone, yet felt one bad decision from losing it all. Farnoosh told her the fear was her mother's, then had her list her record: no pattern of bad decisions, and real assets and accomplishments.
- **Laid off twice**
  Farnoosh admits that after her first layoff she binged Bridget Jones's Diary and Chinese dumplings, and says a pity party is allowed. Then comes the inventory of what you didn't lose.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Run a 'what now' drill for your biggest fear**
  Write down what you would actually do if it happened today. For a job loss, Farnoosh says the steps fall into place: look up your state's unemployment insurance and check your budget to see how many months you could cover.
- **Question inherited money scripts**
  For beliefs like 'renting is money down the drain' or 'I'm not a financial adult until I buy a house', ask who told you and why you believe it. Farnoosh notes that underneath fears like not paying for a child's college often sits a deeper value or belief about being a good parent.
- **Picture the future cost of doing nothing**
  For retirement fear, Farnoosh asks you to picture being 75, tired, still working and missing time with grandkids and friends. Weigh today's fear against where inaction could leave you in five or ten years, and let that push you to save and invest.

3 Truths You Need to Hear: The Best Expert Advice to Unlock Your Potential

Date: 2024-11-11 · Duration: 1:00:47
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vic1wX8_h34

KEYPOINTS

• What you think becomes what you say, then what you do, then who you become

Mel builds the episode on a line attributed to the Buddha: 'What you think you become, what you feel you attract, what you imagine you create.' Her version is a chain: thoughts shape your self-talk, self-talk drives what you do and don't do, and those actions add up to who you are. If you want to know your life in five years, she says, look at what you're telling yourself today.

• Negative self-statements stick and can harden into a 'truth'

In a clip, Stanford neurosurgeon and neuroscientist Dr. James Doty explains that humans have a negativity bias: negative statements tend to stick and lead to rumination. Once you tell yourself 'it's not possible, I cannot,' that becomes your truth and builds a limiting belief system. Mel uses this to argue that lying to yourself does real damage.

• Lie #1, 'I'm failing at life': you're on your way

Mel says the feeling of failing usually comes from comparing yourself to people who have something now. You're playing with other people, not against them, because success isn't limited. Someone else's love story or income just shows you what you want and that it's possible. From The Let Them Theory chapter 'Life Isn't Fair', she argues that through hard work, effort and patience you can create 95% of what others have, just not on their timeline.

• There are no failures if you learn from them

Mel says that telling yourself you made the wrong call is like walking into a room and hearing the door shut behind you. If you look back, you can explain how everything led you here, so you can also trust that where you are now is leading somewhere. You can always leave a job, a degree, a relationship or an apartment.

• Treat change as a series of small experiments

Steven Bartlett says the world is changing so fast that the right answer keeps moving. The only way to find it is to take a first step, run an experiment and build evidence about yourself. By 16, he realised grades wouldn't get him where he needed to go and looked for another path. Mel's version: experiments aren't permanent decisions, just tests of what works.

• Many social rules are doors nobody has tried

Bartlett describes life as full of social myths: you must go to university by a certain age, pursue one career, and believe quitting is for losers. When he pushed on those doors as a young man, he found 'nothing behind them'. Questioning them became a habit, and he says that's where life's biggest rewards came from.

• Lie #2, 'I'm unmotivated or lazy': you're working against your brain

Harvard-trained psychiatrist Dr. Alok Kanojia ('Dr. K') says we spend our lives swimming upstream instead of understanding our motivational circuitry. In his explanation, you wake up with a limited daily capacity for pleasure and behavioural reinforcement, driven by dopamine in the nucleus accumbens. Mel adds that real laziness is really a decision not to do something.

• Morning phone use may drain your motivation for the day

Dr. K's model: if you work for four hours first thing, the payoff feels strongly rewarding. If you spend those hours on technology first, the same work feels much less satisfying because your dopamine reserves are depleted. His analogy is a full lemon, where a small squeeze early gives lots of juice and tech is a 'hard squeeze'. This is his framework and Mel's paraphrase, not a measured protocol.

• Lie #3, 'I can't change': you're built to change

Mel calls this the most dangerous lie, whether it's 'I'll always be bad with money', 'the emotional eater' or 'it always works out for my sister'. She says that biologically and neurologically you keep growing and changing until you die. The only sure way not to change is to keep telling yourself you can't.

• Transformation happens through small dares, not a giant leap

Pastor and author Sarah Jakes Roberts admits that 'just take the leap' advice makes her cringe when you've spent more time doubting yourself than believing in yourself. Instead, open the cupboard: look at what you're working with and ask who you can believe you'll become from here. Introduce that person to your life gradually.

EXAMPLES

• Steven Bartlett's 'millionaire or jail' moment

Bartlett grew up the youngest of four boys, one of the only Black kids in an all-white area outside London, with poor grades and no money. He sold cigarettes his mother brought back from Nigeria on the school playground. A friend told him he'd be either a millionaire or in jail, and he linked money with belonging. He started businesses at 12.

• Mel the 'stuck lawyer'

Mel says she hated law school almost immediately but stayed because it felt too late to change course. At 29 she was six years in, pregnant, paying a mortgage, and felt sick saying 'I'm a lawyer'. She says the 'I failed, I'm stuck' story kept her there far too long, and she wishes her 23-year-old self had known she could leave.

• Mel's $800,000 hole

Mel says she once owed about $800,000, had liens on her house and struggled to buy groceries, while friends took their families to Disney World and renovated kitchens. Her shift was from 'I'm failing' to 'I want that, I can work for it, maybe not now but later'.

• The 'out of shape' experiment

Mel's example: replace 'I'll never lose this weight' with 'I deserve to feel good in my body,' first as a thought, then in a journal. Eventually you go for a walk, then the gym, a yoga class, a 5K charity walk, and become someone who moves every day.

• Sarah Jakes Roberts on introducing your new self

With a partner, she suggests saying something like: 'The way I've been showing up doesn't feel honest anymore. I think I

want to go back to school, or start a business, or I might be an artist, and I'd love to bring you along.' Transformation, she says, is a process, and one day you look up and realise you've changed.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Keep your phone away for the first hour**

  Following Dr. K, don't use your phone, social media, email or TV for the first hour after waking. Mel has made 'no phone in the bedroom' a firm rule. Aim that fresh morning energy at something that matters.

- **Say the true version out loud**

  Swap the lies for 'I am on my way, I'm on my own timeline, I'm capable of achieving what I want.' Roberts says putting words outside yourself creates space for who you're becoming.

- **Take one baby dare today**

  Mel's examples: skip the glass of wine tonight, tell someone you miss going to the art studio, or roll out your yoga mat tomorrow morning. Then journal Roberts' question: who do I believe I can become from here?

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.

How to Let Go of What You Can’t Control & Redirect Your Energy

Date: 2024-11-04 · Duration: 1:07:36
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zF27t4hYM0Y

KEYPOINTS

• Dread is bracing for the worst before anything has happened

Mel recorded this as the clocks went back, when it's dark by 4 p.m. in Vermont, and during a tense US election, which she refuses to discuss. She describes dread as something that happens far more often than people notice: before a breakup talk, a test, feedback at work, a diagnosis, or even waiting for a text reply. The dread isn't the problem, she says. Letting it take you over is. She admits she once put off a breakup for over a year because she couldn't move through it.

• When you're bracing, your body overrides what you know

Mel calls herself pragmatic and logical, yet in severe turbulence she couldn't hold on to rational thoughts about hurricane winds. Her point is that when dread kicks in, your physiology and psychology override your knowledge and you can't reach your tools, even though the tools still work. That's why she pairs head tools (focus on what you can control) with body tools that work 'from the neck down'.

• Box breathing signals safety to your body

Breathe in for four counts, hold for four, breathe out for four, hold for four. Mel says slowing your breath tells your body you're okay. She notes that people often barely breathe when they're bracing, like on the walk up to a breakup conversation. Chris counted her through it on the plane, and she describes the effect as an elevator in her nervous system slowly coming down.

• Sort what you can and can't control

Producer Phil, whose father was diagnosed with a cancer the doctor called very treatable, described waiting three weeks for a PET scan to see whether it had spread. His approach: listen to the doctor, tune out medical websites and well-meaning friends, and focus on what you can do, like eating well, walking and meditating. He compares going back to that list every time dread returns to training a muscle.

• Most worries never happen, according to the study Mel cites

Mel cites a Cornell study finding that 85% of what people worry about never happens. Of the 15% that does, she says 78% of people found it easier to handle than expected and learned something valuable. She pairs this with the Dalai Lama's line: if a problem can be fixed there's no need to worry, and if it can't, worrying doesn't help.

• Swap 'dread' for 'uncertain'

Calling something dreadful means you've already decided it will go badly, which lines up your thoughts, feelings and actions with failure. In truth the outcome is uncertain: the funeral, diagnosis, breakup talk or presentation hasn't happened yet. Staying in that uncertainty leaves room for 'what if it all works out', and she calls handling uncertainty a skill you can build.

• Dread isn't exactly 'manifesting', but it does make things worse

Asked by Phil whether dread manifests bad outcomes, Mel explains the hardwired fight-flight-freeze response. If a fire alarm went off, no one could do a math problem. The negativity bias makes you spot the rattlesnake instead of the turning leaf. Staying in that state shuts down problem-solving and stops you from taking the steps that would improve things, so in that sense you do 'create more bad'.

• Dread can show you what matters

Dreading a presentation shows you care about your work. Dreading a breakup shows you value honesty and yourself. Dread about your country or community shows you care, and Mel says it can push you to act locally. On the plane she wasn't thinking about work at all, only her parents, husband, children and friends. She urges using that information to decide how you show up next.

EXAMPLES

• Turbulence over Iceland

Returning from Bali, their first trip alone longer than a long weekend in 28 years, Mel was on a double-decker plane three hours from JFK when it began swinging side to side. The crew rushed to their seats and the pilots said nothing. She imagined never seeing her daughter's wedding and sent an 'I love you' to the family chat. Chris, who has meditated for 15 years, sat 'like a Buddhist statue'. His first reassurance ('you'll be unconscious, it'll last 10 seconds') didn't help. Box breathing and picturing a good outcome did. She asks airlines to train pilots to warn passengers calmly.

• Phil's elevator moment

The PET scan showed the cancer hadn't spread. Phil got his mom's text in the studio elevator, and his shoulders dropped as it went down. He walked out into a sunny day that felt 'like a new reality'. Mel uses it to show that the body keeps bracing even when you think you're handling things rationally.

• Hand on her heart before a funeral

About 14 years ago, getting ready for the funeral of a close friend who died by suicide and had been like a second father to her daughter, Mel sat on the edge of the bed, put her hand on her heart and told herself she would get through it and be present. She remembers every detail of the service and is proud she was there for her daughter.

• A plane drop that made her want to leave law

Decades ago, Mel was on a plane that suddenly dropped and the oxygen masks came down. In the 30 minutes before landing she took stock of her life: her relationships, how she felt about herself, and how she spent her time. She realized she didn't want to be a lawyer anymore and started making changes.

• Her parents waited two weeks to tell her

Mel's father passed out on a golf course. A check for vertigo turned up an aneurysm that needed brain surgery at the University of Michigan. Her parents waited two weeks to tell her and her brother 'because we didn't want you to worry', which she says only added to the bracing.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Listener questions answered**

  Nicole, 24, single for two years and dreading dating: you may not be ready, so drop the 'should', and call it uncertain instead of dread. A wife dreading her negative husband: stop pushing self-help on him, since trying to change people backfires. Let him have his moods, and ask an open-ended question like 'how are you feeling about things?'

- **Plan for winter instead of dreading it**

  Mel says seasonal depression is real and she feels it too. Instead of 'winter is coming', map out a new routine: adjust bedtime and wake time, plan a trip to see a friend somewhere warmer, or sign up for an evening class like painting to get out of the house.

- **If you dread getting up every day, treat it as a wake-up call**

  Use 5-4-3-2-1 to get out of bed; Mel still does after 15 years. For sleep, spend nine hours in bed to get eight. Then list what you dread about your day. It may point to your health, job, morning routine, an avoided conversation, or needing your family to step up. 'You're not stuck.'

Don’t Learn This Too Late: Make An Authentic Life Now, By Getting Real About The End

Guest: Alua Arthur
Date: 2024-10-31 · Duration: 1:08:30
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BDjgt8xRs48

KEYPOINTS

• Thinking about your death shows you clearly who you want to be

Alua Arthur, a death doula and founder of Going with Grace, calls her death her 'best advisor' and 'greatest motivator'. Picturing herself on her deathbed shows her how she is spending her time and whether she is pleased with it; if not, the fact that she is still alive means she can change it. Her line: 'I'm going to be the one who has to meet myself on my deathbed.'

• Silence about death doesn't stop it, it only leaves you unprepared

She says we avoid death because it brings up fear, inadequacy and the certainty of future pain, and some people fear that talking about it will bring it on. Her answer: 'Talking about sex won't make you pregnant, and talking about death won't make you dead.' Not talking just means everything goes unexamined when the time comes.

• A death doula supports anyone who recognizes their mortality

Alua describes the role as non-medical emotional, logistical, practical and spiritual support for the dying person and their circle: helping healthy people write end-of-life plans, supporting people with a serious diagnosis, working alongside hospice near the end, and helping families wrap up affairs afterwards. Many planning clients come after a parent's or friend's death turned into 'a mess'.

• When someone is ill or dying, lead with 'I don't know what to say'

Rather than filling the space with platitudes, she suggests admitting you don't know what to say, acknowledging that it sounds really hard, and asking how they're doing with the news. Avoid 'it'll be okay' (it may not be) and 'I know what you're going through' (you don't). Keep the focus on their experience, keep asking questions and let them steer — even if they'd rather talk about the Kardashians.

• Practical talk about belongings is a doorway, not a deflection

Mel worried her mother's focus on clearing out the house in Michigan was avoidance. Alua says it's an entry point: objects carry memories ('I got this in 1967') that lead to deeper conversation. You might ask whether an object is how she'd like to be remembered. How people talk about cremation — 'I can't think of myself burning' — also reveals how they see the self and body.

• Use deaths around you, and celebrity deaths, to start the talk

For a stoic parent, ask about friends who have died: what happened, how they felt about it. Celebrity deaths work too — around Aretha Franklin's funeral, a group of Black elders Alua was with laid out their own plans on the spot (no glass coffin, no shoes). Funerals, like weddings, show people what they would and wouldn't want.

• The most common deathbed regrets

In her experience, regrets center on authenticity (living for parents, society, a partner or kids rather than yourself), how time was spent (too much at the office, not enough doing what they loved) and, far more often, not showing up for the people they loved — not saying 'I love you', 'thank you' or 'please forgive me'.

• Don't make the dead into saints

Dying doesn't undo someone's impact, she says, and you don't have to forgive just because a person is dying. Glowing obituaries where everyone 'lit up the room' disenfranchise the grief of people who experienced the person differently. Honest grieving includes what you got from the relationship and what it took from you; sometimes healing is reconciling your own choice rather than speaking forgiveness.

• Grief changes form and can become fuel

Alua says grief never leaves, it changes form. Hers came out as anger — an emotion she says women, and especially Black women facing the 'angry' trope, are taught to swap for sadness. She was angry at the medical system and how society handles dying, and that anger led her to train as a doula and build a company. She's careful to say she isn't 'bright-siding' the loss.

EXAMPLES

• The bus ride in Cuba

At 34, after about eight years as a Legal Aid attorney, Alua was severely depressed and on medical leave. In Cuba, after nearly being hit by a car, she met a 36-year-old woman with uterine cancer visiting six places she wanted to see before she died. The woman's family kept urging her to focus on hope and healing; on the bus they talked openly about death. Picturing her own deathbed, Alua 'didn't like what I saw' — and felt alive again.

• Ken's ashes in film canisters

Mel's mother-in-law spooned her late husband Ken's ashes into hundreds of film canisters and invited guests at his celebration to take one, on the condition that they place him somewhere and send her a letter and photo. He's been on bike trips, overseas, and onto a hole of the US Open course. Mel's husband tucks his canister under his bike seat on rides. Mel says she wants the same.

• The grandmother who wanted her children to come

A client in her late 80s had three children and nine grandchildren; only the grandchild paying for her care was there. She'd been a harsh parent and her children had made their peace, but she refused to die until they came. Alua helped her, nearly nonverbal, write letters — part apology, part 'you should be grateful'. She died soon after; Alua never learned how they landed.

• Peter's death

Alua's brother-in-law Peter, gregarious, stubborn and her sparring partner on politics, was diagnosed with Burkitt lymphoma in June; by October doctors said they could no longer treat him. He died at 43, four days before his 44th birthday, while she held his feet. Nearly 11 years later she still gets emotional and says she 'learned how to do love through Peter'.

- **The 400-person funeral**
  A woman asked for help planning a funeral for an unhoused man she'd chatted with every morning at her coffee spot. They expected a small service; about 400 people came, because of how she'd talked about him. Alua's point: legacy isn't optional, and it's about who you are, not money or accomplishments.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Do a yearly birthday review**
  Each birthday, revisit the practical (who makes decisions if you can't, feelings on life support, what happens to your body, services, possessions, dependents, key information) and the deeper questions: who do I need to say I love you to, who do I need to forgive? Mel admits her own plans hadn't been looked at in three or four years.
- **Draw your lifespan as a line**
  Mark birth at one end and death at the other, place yourself on it at your current age, and ask what you want to experience in the time left. When Mel said she'd like to reach 100 'vibrant, active, engaged and connected to my family', Alua noted those are values that can guide later decisions.
- **Ask the three questions now**
  Who did I love? How did I love? Was I loved? Alua frames them in the past tense as if on a deathbed, but urges asking them today — especially about what's still 'sticky' between you and someone — rather than waiting for a reconciliation that may never come.
- **Support an estranged friend without rewriting history**
  When a friend's estranged father died, Mel offered to fly with her to the funeral or simply be there if she didn't go, and sent flowers with a card: you cut ties not because you didn't love him, but because you loved yourself enough to know you deserved better. Alua praised it for reinforcing the friend's choice.

How To Create Better Relationships: 6 Surprising Lessons From 30 Years Of Marriage

Guest: Chris Robbins
Date: 2024-10-28 · Duration: 1:18:56
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HfNw_w62uBo

KEYPOINTS

• Lesson one (Mel): get in the boat

Mel and her husband Chris each prepared three lessons separately, without telling the other. Mel's first came from her father, Bob, on his 56th anniversary with her mother, Marsha: marriage is like sailing; when it's stormy 'you put on a life jacket and a safety harness and you go,' because 'we started out the journey together, we want to finish it together.' Mel admits she has too often been 'in a raft with a bunch of friends' complaining about Chris instead of being in the boat with him.

• Couples quietly quit before they break up

Mel's warning is that when things get rocky or boring, people drift into coexisting like roommates without noticing they've stopped trying. No advice works if you're not committed to making it work. Chris adds a check: picture yourself at 85 on a porch rocking next to this person, and if you've drifted, ask why you got in the boat in the first place.

• Lesson one (Chris): have your partner in mind

Chris's lesson was about flowers. During a hard stretch, he thought a clean house, a cooked dinner and ready kids were enough. Mel said 'you can't even buy me flowers,' which made him realize that despite knowing how much she loves them, it had never occurred to him to buy or cut some for her. It's not about the flowers but whether, in a busy week, your partner thought about you.

• Separate boats lead to the 'me' stage

Mel cites a model from her therapist: a 'me' stage, a 'we' stage and a deeply connected stage where you hold the other person in mind. With Mel on the road 150 days a year giving keynotes and Chris as stay-at-home dad, both felt unseen, rowing hard in separate boats. They spent years fighting about dishes and dogs and 'who's on first' while ignoring whether each had the other in mind.

• Lesson two (Mel): love the person, not the potential

Mel says the biggest relief in their marriage is that Chris doesn't pressure her to change: he gets up an hour and a half earlier and closes the curtains so she can sleep, doesn't shame her for not skiing or golfing, and tolerates her being messy, loud and late. That acceptance makes her want to be better. She once resented his introversion and wished he were the life of the party; he jokes he is, 'just on a little quieter note.'

• Acceptance isn't tolerating bad behavior

Mel distinguishes asking a partner to learn skills, such as cooking, picking up or putting the toilet seat down, from pressuring them to change their fundamental nature. She says unconditional love doesn't mean unconditional tolerance: if someone is abusive or disrespectful, explaining it away means you're chasing potential and not seeing who they actually are.

• Lesson two (Chris): talk about the roles you think you're playing

At their wedding, friends called Mel the tornado and Chris the rock. Mel heard 'rock' as the foundation; Chris heard boring and later equated being a good rock with earning money, so when he didn't, he felt like a failure. About ten years ago they deliberately split roles, with Mel on career and money and Chris on family, which he calls the best decision they made.

• Money creates a silent power dynamic

They've always had one joint account; Mel says separate pots breed resentment and force no conversations. But whoever earned more seemed to have more power, and when Mel became the breadwinner she caught herself adopting a 'chauvinistic' mindset that she got to make the call. She argues primary caregiving has massive economic value that should be credited. Chris reframes it: for him it was never about power but about contribution.

• Lesson three (Mel): assume good intent

Remind yourself of the goodness that made you choose this person; if a dish is left in the sink, assume he was busy and meant to come back to it. Mel calls it a skill that leaves no room for resentment. When behavior genuinely needs to change, though, explain its impact rather than labeling the person.

• Lesson three (Chris): ten seconds of eye contact

Even when they were aligned on logistics, Chris felt they were ships passing. Starting that year, he stops Mel in the kitchen, puts his hands on her shoulders and looks into her eyes for 10-15 seconds. Mel likens it to what psychologists call refueling, a child running back to a caregiver on the playground before heading back to the swings.

EXAMPLES

• The financial collapse of 2007-2008

Chris's restaurant, started with best friends partly so he could be home more than his own traveling father, struggled when the financial crisis hit. They had jointly taken a home equity line, maxed out credit cards and liquidated a 401(k) and the kids' college savings. Checks bounced and they couldn't pay for town soccer. The restaurant hadn't paid Chris in six months when he left.

• Passed out from bourbon

Mel says both were drinking heavily then; their oldest, Sawyer, now 25, remembers coming downstairs to find them asleep in living room chairs after drinking. Chris was in 'freeze' while Mel channeled anger into earning, from a weekend radio show to a 5-day-a-week show in Orlando and odd jobs.

• The cardboard boxes 'middle finger'

Mel stacks unpacked boxes by the door instead of flattening them. After repeated fights, Chris sat her down and said every stacked box felt like her giving him the middle finger, a sign he was the maid and his requests didn't matter. Because he explained the impact without calling her a slob, the boxes took on a new meaning and she changed.

- **Mel's fly-fishing lie**
  On their first conversation, realizing Chris was a serious outdoorsman, Mel claimed she fly-fished, though she'd never held a fly rod; she grew up fishing and cleaning salmon, but not that. She used it to show her old habit of reshaping herself to match whomever she dated.
- **Where the role swap led Chris**
  Mel notes Chris would never have chosen it, but becoming the primary parent led him to a master's in spiritual psychology, starting a men's retreat and becoming a death doula. Both daughters, she says, want someone just like Dad.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Name your 'flowers'**
  Tell your partner one small, specific thing that shows they had you in mind; Mel's request is grabbing a cheap bunch of tulips at the grocery store. Ask what theirs is. Chris now picks up dog poop daily so the dogs aren't only Mel's job.
- **Put money conversations in the same category**
  If the power dynamic around money bothers you, raise it as a direct request. Mel says unspoken resentment about it built for years because 'when you don't talk about something, your emotions start doing the talking for you.'
- **Describe the impact, not the flaw**
  When a petty habit keeps causing fights, explain how it makes you feel, like disrespected or like the maid. Mel says nearly every small argument is really about not feeling considered or respected.
- **Try the shoulders-and-eyes greeting tonight**
  Hold your partner at arm's length by the shoulders, look them in the eye and smile, then end with a kiss, a hug or 'I love you.' It's different from a passing hug that one person ends early.

#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.

Start Strong: Do This Every Morning to Get Out of Bed, Beat Anxiety, and Feel Incredible All Day

Date: 2024-10-21 · Duration: 0:45:56
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=71RHa9ml4bM

KEYPOINTS

• Mel recorded this from bed to teach 'slithering'

In her eye mask and retainer, with her cat Mr. Noodle beside her, Mel shares a technique her therapist Anne Davin taught her. She describes waking for most of her life to dread: heaviness like an elephant on her chest, the bed a magnet and her a paper clip. Then her mind spins to yesterday's mistakes, unprepared meetings, the kids, skipped workouts. It happened on vacation, at home or traveling.

• It started during one of the hardest periods of her life

Three or four years earlier, the family had moved from Boston after 26 years to a tiny southern Vermont town and were living with her mother-in-law. Mel slept in a bunk room in the dead of winter, had no friends, had lost her dream job as a daytime talk show host, and felt she'd made a huge mistake. She'd fantasize, as she did in law school, about falling back asleep and waking up to a different life.

• Morning dread can trace back to childhood

Anne asked when the feeling started: law school, college, high school, earlier? They traced it to fourth grade, on a ski trip with other families, when Mel woke in a bunk room to an older child sexually abusing her. Confused, she curled up, stayed quiet to protect her little brother in the next bunk, and the next morning hid under the covers until everyone left, feeling she had done something wrong. Waking became fused with that sensation.

• Kids blame themselves for what others do

Mel cites Stanford psychiatrist Dr. Paul Conti on a 'flaw' in human design called attribution: young children can't attribute adults' or others' bad behavior to them, so they conclude something is wrong with themselves. She also notes her view that a child who does this to another child is likely being abused too.

• Your body stores experiences as sensations

Mel's takeaway from therapy and the show's experts: it needn't be something as severe as abuse. A parent whose mood you could never predict, uncertainty about food, bullying or an undiagnosed learning disability can leave you bracing, freezing or in fight-or-flight. She later linked a second memory: waking in high school to her mother crying in her arms because a family friend's son had been killed by a drunk driver.

• Talking and pushing through hadn't removed the feeling

Her 5 Second Rule got her out of bed, but the dread returned the next morning. Anne's line: 'Sometimes it's better to feel our way through rather than try to figure our way out.' Anne explains slithering isn't a formal taught method but an example of somatic inquiry, letting the body 'speak its mind' through movement.

• Anne's explanation: the dread was 'somatic residue'

In a voice memo, Anne, a psychologist of over 30 years with a PhD in depth psychology, says the child Mel had to wake and face what happened the night before without inner or outer resources. The adult dread was residue of that unresolved trauma, causing her to freeze. Joining with the symptom, turning toward and even amplifying it, shifted it from frozen to thawing to fluid, and her nervous system from distress to neutral to calm.

• Move with the heaviness instead of against it

Anne told Mel not to push herself out of bed but to imagine how the dread would move if it could, and let it lead. Slither one foot out, then the other, drip down the side of the bed and roll onto the floor. Lie there and slowly twist, bend your knees and roll until you feel the heaviness break apart. Then get on all fours and crawl toward the bathroom; don't stand until you feel ready.

• It felt absurd, but it worked from day one

Mel worried her kids or mother-in-law would see her crawling down the hall to the bathroom. By the time she got there, the heaviness was gone and replaced by freedom and a desire to stand up and face the day. While she was moving, her mind was busy with 'what are you doing?' instead of the day's worries.

EXAMPLES

• Six weeks of progress

Mel slithered every morning for six weeks. At first she lay on the floor a couple of minutes. Within a week or two she was ready to stand after three or four crawl steps, eight fewer than the week before. Eventually she only needed to roll to the floor, then just put a leg out before feeling free.

• Dogs Homie and Yolo joined in

When her dogs came over to lick her and crawl alongside her to the bathroom, Mel found she felt less alone and laughed, which broke up the sensation faster.

• The couch version

If heaviness pins you to the couch, Mel says to slide off onto the floor, slither, and crawl to the doorway of the room.

• Questions Mel gets about the technique

What if it's scary to drop into your body after decades of running from the feeling? Start small: slide one leg out and let gravity take over, and you'll find the sensation shifts and you have more power than you think. When should you use it? Any morning that feels like too much to bear.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Adapting slithering safely

If your bed is high, get one leg out, then the other, go from half-sitting to lying with your arm's support; there's no right way,

just get your whole body on the floor. If you have a disability, Mel suggests asking a physical therapist, nurse or doctor how to adapt the idea of moving with the feeling. Once up, don't get back in bed; she makes it right away.

• Doing it with kids

For an anxious child who dreads mornings, climb in and say 'let's slither out of bed today.' It validates the heaviness instead of correcting or pushing, and you crawl together until they're ready to stand.

• Anne's self-guided version

Ask: where am I feeling friction in my life, and is it recurring? Close your eyes, notice where you feel it in your body. Ask how it would move if it could, and let it move you for a few minutes, with or without music. Then check what shifted. Mel stresses she isn't a therapist and Anne isn't yours; this is a resource to try.

Focus on Yourself: 3 Signs You’re Giving Too Much & What to Do About It Right Now

Guest: Dr. Pooja Lakshmin
Date: 2024-10-17 · Duration: 1:12:02
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qXQCn4_u4ZA

KEYPOINTS

• Real self-care is about agency, not bubble baths

Psychiatrist Dr. Pooja Lakshmin, author of Real Self-Care, says the wellness industry has given us 'methods and tools but not principles or perspective.' Many of her patients have the meditation app and yoga membership but feel burned out and blame themselves. She points to structural pressures: no federally mandated paid parental leave, half of American workers unable to take a paid sick day, widespread childcare deserts, and parents of two paying about 10% of income for childcare. A juice cleanse won't fix that. She defines agency as the ability to solve problems and take meaningful action even within constraints.

• Self-care began as a word about choice

Lakshmin traces two roots to the 1950s and '60s: Audre Lorde's social-justice framing of self-care as self-preservation, and psychiatry's use of the term for the small choices patients on locked units could still make, such as what to wear, eat or do for exercise. Both point back to agency.

• It's not about the thing; it's the inner work before it

Picture two people in the same yoga class. One is consumed by guilt about homework and cupcakes, compares herself with the woman in a headstand, and doesn't know why she's there. The other negotiated weekend time with her partner (yoga Saturday, his run Sunday) and knows what yoga gives her. Lakshmin's line: 'Your yoga class is only as powerful as the boundaries you've set beforehand.' Real self-care is a verb, not a noun.

• A boundary is a pause, with three options: yes, no or negotiate

On her first day running a women's mental health clinic at George Washington University in 2016, Lakshmin's mentor advised her not to answer her office phone. Let it go to voicemail, decide, then respond. Insurance paperwork can wait until day's end; a patient who might crash her car without her ADHD medication gets an immediate refill. Saying no always has a cost and isn't available to everyone, but anyone can pause.

• Five questions to gauge your boundaries

Do I feel motivated, or overwhelmed or apathetic? Are particular people or situations constantly draining me? Do I set aside regular time to rest, or always grit my teeth and push through? Do I ask for help, and can I receive it? Am I making time for what matters to me, not my kids, my partner or society? Lakshmin says nearly everyone answers poorly at times, and naming it is powerful.

• Expect 'little-b' burnout and catch it early

Treating burnout as a catastrophe breeds denial until you land in the hospital, lose a job or crash a car. Lakshmin suggests accepting that we all burn out and noticing small burnout sooner. Type A, perfectionist people cycle through it more often; she recalibrates about every six months, and says it gets easier each time. Burnout and weak boundaries feed each other, partly through a cynical sense that nothing you do matters.

• Three warning signs you lack boundaries

First, you're constantly angry and irritable while believing you're selfless, like the mom who stays up wrapping gifts on Christmas Eve and is a terror the next morning. Second, you expect gratitude for things nobody asked for and resent not getting it. Third, you feel like you're managing your life instead of living it, and fantasize about escaping to a retreat, a beach or, in her case, a vegetable farm.

• Start with tiny, low-stakes boundaries; family is advanced

Family boundaries are hardest because of decades of history. Begin with remedial steps, such as sitting down to eat lunch away from your computer. One healthcare-worker patient went eight-hour shifts without food or water, so the first boundary was drinking water at the nurses' station every hour. Small wins build confidence and let you gauge how your boss and coworkers react before risking more.

• Guilt is a passing sushi plate, not a moral compass

Lakshmin believes guilt is largely internalized from a culture that values productivity, status and, for women, caretaking. Her acceptance and commitment therapy tool: your mind is a sushi chef and thoughts are plates on a conveyor belt. You don't have to grab the ones you dislike (hers is shrimp with the head on); let them pass. The goal is tolerating guilt, which softens to a whisper with practice. Selfishness is usually black-and-white thinking; aim to include your preference in perhaps one in ten decisions.

EXAMPLES

• Mel's 9 p.m. bedtime was 'faux self-care'

Under Lakshmin's questioning, Mel explained that missing her bedtime leads to scrolling or another episode and a chaotic morning without her walk. Lakshmin called the clock time the superficial part. Mel realized the real issue was taking time back from work: with a book manuscript due, she was still working when her husband was ready for bed and hadn't relaxed at all.

• Letting go of the laundry

Mel stopped doing her son Oakley's laundry. He washes it but leaves it in piles, and she had to resist folding it. Lakshmin says changing a pattern brings up your own feelings as well as theirs. You must give up control and accept that things take longer done their way.

• 'My name is Pooja'

On a toxic surgical rotation, Lakshmin's team only called her 'med student.' Unable to leave, she corrected them every time, a small act of agency. Mel recalled her hated big-firm job in Boston, where she left her jacket on her chair during lunch and turned her desk so no one could see her screen.

- **The sibling who won't help with Dad**
  For a reader caring for her father alone, Lakshmin advises grieving the unfairness, assessing whether siblings actually have capacity, and finding help elsewhere if they don't, such as neighbors or a former babysitter. Mel adds that siblings who don't share the burden shouldn't get a seat at the decision table.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Block 20 minutes today to scan next week**
  Notice where you feel dread, boredom or energy. For each dread, ask why: a rude coworker, or a standing 4:30 meeting during daycare pickup. Then act, for example by emailing the team to ask whether the meeting can move.
- **Know your rubber balls from your glass balls**
  Borrowing Nora Roberts's image, accept that some balls will drop. For example, Lakshmin questions whether three kids really need three schools 30 minutes apart.
- **Think trampoline net, not brick wall**
  Lakshmin pushes back on Mel's 'force field' image. Healthy boundaries flex, can firm up when needed, and aim for give and take, not cutting people off.

How To Reset Your Mind for Calm & Control

Date: 2024-10-14 · Duration: 0:46:34
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KXjX0b9B-j4

KEYPOINTS

• Comfort objects are tools, not childish leftovers

The episode starts at college drop-off. Just before Mel and Chris left, their 19-year-old son Oakley pulled out his childhood teddy and his tattered blankie and set them front and center on his freshman dorm bed, the first thing anyone sees on walking in. Mel's argument is that simple comforts are 'essential tools for your brain,' and that adults underrate them.

• Comfort means a moment of freedom from stress

Mel defines comfort as a state of physical ease and freedom from stress and whatever is weighing you down. It can be a ritual, an object, a sound, smell, taste or meal. Her daughter in Los Angeles texts her for a particular chili recipe when she comes home. Nothing that comforts you is stressful in itself, and that refueling, she argues, is what gives you strength to take risks and face hard things.

• Familiar comforts tell your brain you're safe

Mel calls Oakley's choice deliberate: he brought something predictable and familiar into a space that is new, stressful and unpredictable. Comfort rituals ground you and bring predictability to chaos. She feels the same thing unpacking in yet another hotel room alone. Oakley's childhood habit of rubbing blankie's ends when nervous is what she calls tactile grounding.

• Comfort triggers the brain's reward chemistry

Mel explains that familiar comforts, like seeing blankie or sipping your favorite drink, light up dopamine pathways. Dopamine, the neurotransmitter involved in pleasure, motivation and reward, signals 'this feels good, keep doing it.' Her claim is that this calm, familiar state leaves you better able to take on bigger challenges, so comfort is about stability and focus, not just relaxation.

• Growth works like a rubber band: stretch, then reset

Mel has long pushed listeners out of their comfort zones, and what surprised her in researching this topic is how important it is to come back to comfort on purpose. Change stretches you as you build new behaviors and neural pathways. A rubber band that never resets snaps, and constant stretching is what she calls burnout. Like a muscle, you have to rest between efforts.

• Learning locks in while you rest

Mel notes that new habits, memories and learning get consolidated while you sleep, not while you're practicing or studying. She uses this to argue that rest and comfort are part of growth, not a break from it.

• Dr. Waldinger: people refuel at a 'home base'

In a clip, Harvard psychiatrist Dr. Robert Waldinger explains that babies who bond well with caregivers grow up believing they're lovable and brave enough to explore, because they have a home base to return to. He describes a toddler on a playground running back to grab a parent's leg, which researchers call 'refueling,' and says we need that throughout life. As an adult, it might mean running a risky idea like starting a podcast past your spouse and hearing 'I've got your back.'

• Comfort isn't always warm and cozy, and it's personal

Controlled discomfort like a cold plunge or cold shower can, Mel says, activate the parasympathetic nervous system and leave you calm afterward. The comfort comes from the ritual. What soothes one person may do nothing for another, as her producer's husband shows (see examples).

• Nobody cares what comforts you, so own it

Asked whether new dormmates might judge him, Oakley said no one walks in thinking 'you're such a child,' because people understand comfort, especially at college, away from your room, friends and family. His line, which Mel highlights: if there's something comforting you feel you can't be without, 'then be with it.' He plans to keep blankie until it's a single thread, then frame it.

EXAMPLES

• Why Teddy matters so much

At five days old, Oakley was rushed by ambulance to Mass General's NICU with Hirschsprung's disease, where parts of his colon and intestines weren't working. Doctors caught it before his intestines ruptured. He spent 30 days there having surgeries, with Teddy in his crib the whole time. Blankie was a monogrammed gift from Mel's girlfriends in a town outside Boston, waiting for him when he came home from the hospital.

• Mel's travel comforts

A moth-eaten beige shawl from students in one of her online courses, about six years old and so fragile she now packs it instead of wearing it. A belt buckle from Chris with an old photo of the kids when Oakley was a baby, Sawyer about seven and Kendall six. She wears it on every keynote stage and jokes it's 'the best way to travel with your kids.'

• The gifts in her suitcase

Mel travels with things strangers have given her as thanks: sobriety medallions, memorial wristbands, and a brooch from a woman who had struggled with hoarding. The woman gave away her mother's brooch as a sign that she could finally let go of things. Seeing them in hotel rooms makes Mel feel less lonely on the road.

• Amy's three-minute river plunge

Producer Amy walks a quarter mile from her Vermont home, crosses a bridge, goes to the same rock and wades into the river in her water shoes. She shouts to her husband Tim to start a three-minute timer. Sometimes she cries or shivers, sometimes she crouches to watch the river 'from a frog's-eye view.' Tim never joins her, because it doesn't comfort him.

• The team's dinner-table answers

Mel's daughter Sawyer: sour grapes, which Mel can't stand. Business partner David: freshly mown grass. Business partner Christine: the chaise end of her couch after dinner, with their two Australian Shepherds piling on. Executive producer Tracy: old-book smell and the sense of discovery in a library. Mel: moments when the universe seems to say you're in the right place, plus her nightly bath.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Name your version of Teddy and blankie**
  List what you reach for when life feels new, overwhelming or exhausting: a candle, a lap blanket, a tea, petting your dog, a window, a stop on the drive home, a family photo or favorite mug at work. It's about getting into that calm state, not about the object itself.
- **Plan your reset after every stretch**
  When you take a risk, like a new job, a solo dinner, improv or asking for a mentor, also decide how you'll come back to comfort afterward. That might be a call to a parent, a bath, or a ritual like Amy's.
- **Bring comfort into new places on purpose**
  When you move, travel or start something new, pack and display the things that feel like home, as Oakley did, instead of hiding them.

The Best Way to Deal With Narcissists Without Arguing | The Mel Robbins Podcast

Guest: Dr. Ramani Durvasula
Date: 2024-10-10 · Duration: 0:46:27
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C57vhohpnPA

KEYPOINTS

• An inflated ego is one ingredient, not the whole soup

Dr. Ramani's analogy: a carrot is an ingredient in soup, not soup. Narcissism is a whole constellation — variable empathy, entitlement, arrogance, grandiosity, need for admiration, envy, need for control. Some big-ego people are 'teddy bearish' and genuinely warm. The dividing line Mel recalls from their earlier talk: annoying versus harmful. She also warns that online 'diagnosing' is rampant, and that clicking one video on narcissism means the algorithm serves you more.

• Boundaries with a narcissist are 'hugging a porcupine'

Announcing a boundary ('don't talk about this') simply tells a narcissistic person where to poke, and you can't win the power struggle that follows. Her alternative is an internal boundary: you know certain topics, events or behaviors are coming, so you plan around them and remove yourself instead of negotiating. Confronting them directly is walking into 'the tiger's cage'.

• Teen narcissism is a story best told backwards

Adolescents separate from parents and are often mean at home but lovely with peers — what therapists call 'soiling the nest', which makes leaving easier for everyone. Dr. Ramani: show her a narcissistic 35-year-old and she'll show you a horrible teenager, but a horrible teenager won't necessarily become a narcissistic adult, since the frontal lobes aren't set until about 25–27. Her advice: set the limits you need, 'white knuckle' it, and revisit in about eight years.

• How to tell normal teen selfishness from something more

Check how the teen treats peers, teachers and other adults. If friendships are reciprocal and other parents say your kid is great, it's adolescent nonsense aimed at you. If they're mistreating people across the board and struggling in school, narcissism is more likely — and so are other risks such as substance use, so watch their safety and mental health.

• Narcissistic love is romantic, transactional and performative

Asked whether a narcissist can find true love, she says probably not by any healthy definition. They're drawn to passionate, 'flash in the pan' romance and status, not long-term companionate love with mutuality and standing by someone through illness or a partner's success. She half-jokingly wishes for an 'informed consent' form on love definitions by the third date, and says therapists know: the more a couple gushes on social media, the more likely it's a train wreck.

• Your ex hasn't changed for the new partner

Dr. Ramani reads the 'true love' question as the fear of the person left behind: will they be better for someone new? She recalls watching an acquaintance's on-off narcissistic partner meet a 'soulmate' within months and get engaged in about two, while the left-behind partner struggled. Her reassurance: it's performative, with no depth.

• Psychopathy is colder and more dangerous than narcissism

Even a malignant narcissist isn't a psychopath, she says. Psychopathic people are cold, callous, calculating, superficially charming, lack remorse and can run elaborate grifts and double lives; narcissists have more insecurity and a more chaotic interior. Drawing a new partner under control within a month fits psychopathy, she notes, citing the 'Dirty John' case as a reminder that such people can be dangerous.

• Know your 'true north' — the one fight you'll take

Her default is disengage, disengage. Your true north is the exception you'll fight or work around for — a grandchild's birthday, protecting a child, or confronting racism. With a narcissistic adult son using grandchildren as leverage, she says parents must radically accept that he's 'the portal' to the kids, decide which events matter most, and grieve the access they lose.

EXAMPLES

• The mom who lowered her guard in custody court

Dr. Ramani once coached a mother who wanted to play the 'mother lioness'. Instead, at a hearing, she calmly said alternate weekends would suit her fine — she wanted to reconnect with friends and get back into hiking and climbing. Her ex suddenly balked at giving her that time, and she ended up with roughly 80/20 custody rather than 50/50.

• Leaving a raging husband with a scared seven-year-old

Dr. Ramani won't give a clear-cut answer: family court often awards 50% to a parent who asks, leaving the child alone with the person they fear, while staying lets some parents run interference. Before deciding, get the child into therapy while only one signature is needed, and see a divorce attorney with your tax returns to learn your state's custody and money rules. She knows people who filed the day after a child's 18th birthday, and calls ongoing court battles 'post-separation abuse'.

• Mel's three-night limit

Mel has an unspoken rule with one person in her life: visits max out at three nights, because by day four they get prickly. She'd never announce it. Likewise, when politics comes up with someone who dominates, she gets up from the table rather than declaring a no-politics rule.

• The reservation that seats an incomplete party

If someone always arrives 25 minutes late, book a restaurant that seats you before everyone arrives. When they complain you started without them, the facts speak: you said 7. Dr. Ramani says that isn't enabling — it's the boundary you can actually control.

• The daughter whose father charmed a new woman in a month

A listener described her father as narcissistic with psychopathic traits and said a wealthier, never-married woman fell for him within a month. Dr. Ramani says the new partner is probably being love-bombed and may already have been told the daughter is jealous. If it's safe, the daughter can share documentation once; if she isn't believed, it's no longer her problem.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **If your adult child's new partner seems narcissistic, don't say so**

  Saying 'I'm worried they're a narcissist' to a child in love is the biggest mistake. Borrow cult expert Dr. Janja Lalich's 'breaking the shelf': gently remind them of their pre-relationship self — the surfing, the old friends, the writing. After a bad interaction, ask 'Hey, are you okay?' rather than 'That wasn't okay.'

- **Protect your finances from a narcissistic adult child**

  Dr. Ramani says it's not unusual for such children to prey on older parents — getting onto a house note or power of attorney. Work with a good attorney on anything you plan to hand down.

- **Caring for a narcissistic aging parent**

  Approach it like a nurse with an abusive patient: expect yelling and no gratitude, have therapy, support and meaningful pursuits elsewhere, and do it to stay true to your own compassion — 'do it for yourself'.

- **Before reopening contact after estrangement, reread your 'ick list'**

  Write down every harm — a ruined wedding, a refused loan, insults about your children's weight — because 'euphoric recall' fades the pain over time. Ask what you're hoping for and whether you can withstand being hurt again; she sometimes role-plays it with clients first.

How to Learn From Your Mistakes: Let Go of Regret & Move Forward (My Breast Implant Nightmare)

Date: 2024-10-07 · Duration: 0:53:46
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GiD4CJVFqUo

KEYPOINTS

• Regret hurts more when you carry it alone

Mel's main lesson from a six-year ordeal is that staying silent made her regret worse and her shame bigger. For three years after getting implants she wore bigger shirts, smiled and pretended she was happy, because she'd done it to herself. She says the moment she started talking about it and moved into 'fix-it mode,' the shame went away.

• Obsession pushes out research

At 47, after three kids and breastfeeding, Mel hated her breasts so much that she skipped her homework. She used a friend's surgeon without interviewing anyone else and accepted his claim that a lift wouldn't work. She chose textured teardrop 'gummy bear' implants because they 'looked natural.' Her takeaway: when you're fixated on fixing something, give the decision the time and consideration it needs.

• You think you're the exception

Mel says she got a pamphlet with warnings in tiny print, but when you're excited you skip the warnings because you assume you'll be the exception. She compares it to going on a date with someone everyone warned you about.

• Your body and intuition send signals

Mel says she knew it was a mistake the moment she woke up from surgery. Over three years she developed numbness in her right arm, tingling in her pinky and armpit, worsening Raynaud's (her hands turned white when she reached into a freezer), brain fog, dry eyes, rashes, thinning hair, depression and anxiety. She blamed premenopause or work stress. Looking back, she calls it her intuition knocking on the door.

• Most decisions can be reversed

Mel's estimate is that '99% of decisions in life can be reversed.' She says the issue is rarely your ability to make things better. It's how long regret keeps you stuck. You can apologize, to yourself or someone else, and learn from it. Once is a mistake, and repeating it is a pattern. Learning from it is what she calls wisdom.

• Only you can make the call about your body

Before the removal surgery, Mel spiraled about the cost (about twice the original, not covered by insurance) and whether her chest would look worse. A friend who'd had a double mastectomy had the same fear about removing her reconstruction implants. Mel's advice is to take in all the information and recommendations, then tune out the fear and decide for yourself.

• Regret is self-punishment

Mel calls regret a 'psychological implant' you choose to carry. No one has ever fixed the past by regretting it, she says. Feeling bad for a day or two is a healthy response, but after that you need to learn and move on. She asks: what if this mistake is the beginning of a new chapter rather than the end of the story?

• There's a group for every mistake

Mel says that whatever you regret, there's a group online of people sharing the same story, and you can join under a fake name if you need to. Being there reminds you that you're human, not uniquely foolish, and it often brings practical next steps.

EXAMPLES

• She asked for a 36B and woke up a 38D

Mel says she told the surgeon repeatedly that she wanted small 'baseball' breasts and would never come back wishing she'd gone bigger. Her husband Chris told her the surgeon had tried 21 combinations of implants because her breasts were different sizes. After the swelling went down she was a 38D. She couldn't jog, twisting in yoga was awkward, and she felt her chest 'came into the room before I did.'

• A chance meeting at the Las Vegas airport

Three years in, a fellow keynote speaker stopped Mel in the terminal and said she was flying to Cleveland for explant surgery. She said her implants were behind her hair loss, numbness and brain fog, and after losing her mother to cancer she wasn't taking chances. She sent Mel an invitation-only Facebook group, which Mel read for five hours straight in her hotel.

• Jody's verdict in the hotel mirror

In San Diego, Mel's best friend since elementary school, Jody, looked at her in the bathroom mirror and said the right implant looked like 'half a chicken breast' and sat an inch higher than the left. Mel says that was capsular contracture: scar tissue had hardened enough to pull the implant up and press on her nerves.

• A recall no one told her about

Mel says the explant surgeon's clinic told her that her Allergan Biocell textured implants had been recalled more than a year earlier because of a link to a rare lymphoma. Her original surgeon never notified her. She says 84% of people with that cancer have the same implants, and that Allergan offered replacement implants rather than covering removal.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Research to read before getting implants

Mel cites a 2021 survey of 182 people, found through the National Library of Medicine. 97% said their implants had hurt their health, and 96% had them for cosmetic reasons. Brain fog, fatigue, joint pain and hair loss were the top symptoms. 60% learned about breast implant illness from friends, family or social media, not their doctors. Of the 40% who had removal, 97% reported relief. It's a self-reported survey, so talk with your own doctors.

• What the removal involved

Dr. Lu-Jean Feng's Cleveland clinic, which Mel says specializes in explant surgery and is pushing for insurance coverage,

had a year-long waitlist that was expedited after the recall. The six-hour surgery removed every piece of scar capsule, repaired a pectoral muscle Mel says had been cut in half (147 stitches) and included a lift. Her tingling was gone within a week.

• Follow-up screening after a recalled implant

Because of the lymphoma link, Mel had a mammogram and ultrasound every six months for three years. At her latest visit at Mass General, she was cleared to go back to annual breast cancer screening.

Change Your Brain: #1 Neuroscientist’s Exercise Protocol for Peak Energy and Focus

Guest: Dr. Wendy Suzuki
Date: 2024-10-03 · Duration: 1:04:03
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=izWRm4-52l4

KEYPOINTS

• Your brain can change in both directions throughout adult life

Neuroscientist Dr. Wendy Suzuki, dean of NYU's College of Arts and Science, defines brain plasticity as the brain's ability to change and grow in response to its environment. Positive plasticity means more connections between existing neurons and, in the hippocampus, brand-new cells. Negative plasticity means shrinkage and lost function, and she names chronic stress and chronic anxiety as the most common drivers. Her goal for every student is a "big fat fluffy brain" with constant positive plasticity.

• The hippocampus can grow new cells in adulthood

The hippocampus, critical for forming and keeping long-term memories, is one of only two areas of the human brain where new cells are born in adulthood. Everyone grows some, but physical activity increases how many are born. Suzuki describes these new cells as "teenage" cells: hyperactive and eager to join memory circuits, which makes the whole hippocampus work better.

• Every bout of movement releases a neurochemical "bubble bath"

Each time you move, Suzuki says, your brain gets a flood of dopamine, serotonin, noradrenaline, endorphins and growth factors. The first three lift mood; the growth factors travel to the hippocampus and drive new cell growth. The key takeaway she repeats: the flood starts with a 10-minute walk. Getting your heart rate up does more, but you do not need a marathon to start.

• Movement uses the same chemistry as common mood medications

Suzuki notes that the most commonly prescribed drugs for depression and anxiety work through noradrenaline, dopamine and serotonin, the same chemicals movement releases. That is why a short walk can ease anxiety. Mel adds that medications save lives and are an important tool, and the point is not to shame anyone but to remember the one your body makes for free.

• Focus is the most reliably reported brain benefit of exercise

Improved focus is the easiest effect to find in studies, linked to the prefrontal cortex. The exact mechanism is less clear than for the hippocampus; researchers think growth factors build new synapses rather than new cells there. You get an immediate focus bump from a 10-minute walk, and with regular long-term exercise your baseline focus and attention rise.

• Exercise feeds its own motivation

One of Suzuki's favorite findings: people assigned to exercise conditions became more motivated to exercise. She attributes the energy boost Mel feels after workouts most likely to the same dopamine and serotonin surge, since reward and good mood feel energizing.

• Aerobic activity is the key for memory

Growth factors for hippocampal growth come from muscle movement and from ketones released by the liver, so you need enough movement to raise your heart rate: dancing and power walking count. The benefit is to forming new long-term memories for facts and events, and to spatial memory, such as finding your way to the subway or learning a new route.

• Exercise stocks up the brain areas most vulnerable to aging

The prefrontal cortex and hippocampus are the regions most susceptible to aging and neurodegenerative disease. Regular aerobic exercise makes them as robust as possible. Suzuki is careful: it does not cure aging or dementia, it helps stave them off. Her own research is mostly in younger people because the longer you move, the better off your brain is later.

• It is never too late to start

Suzuki points to people with mild cognitive impairment who show improvement once put on an exercise program. For anyone who has not moved in decades, start with what you already do: walk more, park farther away, take the stairs, walk with a friend or pet, or walk around a museum you love.

• Social connection matters most for longevity

On living longer, Suzuki defers to Harvard's Robert Waldinger, whose research points to social connection as the number one factor, with heart-rate-raising activity also lowering cardiovascular risk. Her advice is to stack the effects: walk with a friend.

EXAMPLES

• Marian Diamond and the "Disney World of rat cages"

On her first day at UC Berkeley, Suzuki watched professor Marian Diamond, the first woman to earn a neuroanatomy PhD there, pull a preserved human brain from a hat box. In the 1960s Diamond showed that rats' cortex grew in an enriched cage versus a "shoebox" one, overturning the dogma that adult brains could not change. Later work found the running wheel produced most of those gains.

• The tenure years and the Peru rafting trip

Chasing tenure at NYU, Suzuki worked nonstop, had few friends, ate takeout and felt lethargic. On a solo rafting trip in Peru she was the weakest person aboard, so she started going to the gym. About a year and a half later, while writing a grant, she noticed her focus and memory were better, and wondered whether exercise was why.

• Teaching "Can Exercise Change Your Brain?"

When her administrator refused to fund an exercise instructor, Suzuki got certified herself in intensati, Patricia Moreno's mix of kickboxing, dance, yoga and martial arts, training for six months. Her class sweated for an hour, then discussed research, with tests at the start and end. A colleague's elective served as the control group.

• Her lab's dose studies

Low-fit adults (under 20 minutes of exercise a week) did 45-minute spin classes three times a week for three months, compared with a non-aerobic "power Scrabble" group. Spin improved mood, focus and some hippocampal functions. In a study

of already-active people, those who increased up to seven sessions a week got more brain changes — "every turn of the bike wheel counts."

• Betty the brain

Suzuki brought a real preserved human brain, "Betty," in her department for over 26 years. Mel held it, about three pounds, and learned that the visual cortex sits at the back of the head (why a knock there makes you see stars) and that unfolded, the cortex would cover a dining table.

• Her father's dementia and the first "I love you"

Her father got lost driving eight blocks home from 7-Eleven, a spatial-memory sign she knew pointed to the hippocampus; he was diagnosed with Alzheimer's dementia. In her Japanese American family nobody said "I love you," so she asked her parents on a Sunday call whether they could start. A week later her father, who remembered little, said it first. She explains that emotional resonance helps hippocampal memories stick.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Take a 10-minute walk as your baseline dose

Use it before a big task or when anxious to start the neurochemical flood, then build toward heart-rate-raising activity you actually enjoy.

• Aim for 45 minutes of aerobic exercise three times a week

That is the regimen that showed mood, focus and memory effects in three months in Suzuki's lab, and more sessions brought more change.

• End your shower cold for an adrenaline boost

Suzuki finishes hot showers on full cold and says the boost lasts much of the morning. Start with a shoulder and get out once you've felt the shock. Mel's habit: rinse your conditioner out in cold water, about 20 seconds.

• Exercise on the mornings you need to perform

Mel got up at 5:35 to work out before this recording because she knows a morning session starts you in a better mood with sharper focus.

Simple Life Hacks That Will Change Your Future: Steal These Habits From Billionaires

Date: 2024-09-30 · Duration: 0:44:17
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yxOKIB1s9-g

KEYPOINTS

• Daily reading builds the mental 'filters' behind fast decisions

In a 2015 Arizona State interview with Professor Jeff Cunningham, Warren Buffett said he reads five to six hours a day: five daily newspapers, magazines, 10-Ks, annual reports and biographies. He says this gave him 'filters' in his mind, so when someone pitches him an investment he usually knows within two or three minutes whether he's interested. Mel's point is that his quick decisions rest on decades of slowly built knowledge, and that the habit costs nothing if you use a library or free reading online.

• Make yourself do the scary skill, and sign up for a class that forces you

Buffett was so terrified of public speaking that he avoided any high-school or college class that required it. After school he paid $100 for a Dale Carnegie course, got 'this little diploma', and proposed to his wife during the course. Mel calls public speaking the most common fear, ahead of dying, and argues it's a learnable skill that lets you speak up for yourself at work, at home or in a wedding toast.

• Get ideas out of your head and into one place every day

Taylor Swift told songwriter Ryan Adams in 2015 that she is always 'pre-writing'. Any observation or lyric she likes goes into 'this endless notepad on my phone', even when she isn't making an album. Mel's takeaway: whatever you want to get better at, make it a daily practice. Ideas you plan to remember are usually gone a minute later.

• A stored library of ideas pays off later

When Swift wrote the chorus of 'Blank Space', she searched a year's worth of saved lyrics that matched the over-dramatic, luxurious picture she wanted and pulled lines like 'darling I'm a nightmare dressed like a daydream'. Mel adds that writing an idea down honors your own wisdom, because it treats the idea as worth keeping.

• Sleep is a free performance tool

LeBron James told a student podcast at his I Promise School that his self-care is sleep: 'eight hours plus', to re-energize body, mind and spirit and come up with ideas. Mel says that on the road he aims for 10 to 12 hours. She ties this to what earlier sleep experts on the show explained: sleep clears out the brain 'like a Zamboni', supports immune repair and stress recovery, and is when the day's learning and muscle memory take hold.

• You don't get what you don't ask for

Sara Blakely, who started Spanx with $5,000 in savings, landed Neiman Marcus as her first account. When people in the industry asked how, she said 'I called them'. They had spent six or seven years at trade-show booths waiting for a chance. Mel turns it into the habit 'make the call': send the DM, the letter or the FedEx, find the buyer, ask the person out.

• Not knowing the usual way can be an advantage

Blakely says she didn't even know trade shows existed: 'what you don't know can be your greatest asset if you let it.' The real obstacle is self-talk like 'I have no idea what I'm doing.' Mel says doing things differently is what sets you apart, and that you're the one telling yourself you're not ready.

• Break routine on purpose to spark creativity

Shigeru Miyamoto, creator of Super Mario, Zelda and Donkey Kong (Mel admits he isn't technically a billionaire), regularly wanders city streets and parks watching people, which has inspired his game worlds. Neuroscientist Dr. Tali Sharot, speaking on an earlier episode, explains that the brain gets used to whatever it sees repeatedly (habituation). New inputs break that and create new connections.

• Your gut either leads you to the next right step or the next lesson

Jamie Kern Lima, who co-founded IT Cosmetics, sold it to L'Oréal for $1.2 billion and became the brand's first female CEO, says life comes down to whether you listen to the 'no's' from the outside world or your inner 'knowing'. Self-doubt 'will lie to us all day long'. She doesn't believe your gut is ever wrong, because even a rejection gives you the lesson you need next.

EXAMPLES

• Mel's 14 years of reading

People often tell Mel she can boil down dense research from neuroscientists. She traces that to 14 years of reading psychology and happiness research every day. It started when she was trying to climb out of a dark period, and it became the kind of knowledge filter Buffett describes.

• Record-breaking songwriting output

Mel notes that The Tortured Poets Department came with 16 songs plus bonus tracks, followed by a surprise anthology of songs 17 to 31. All 31 debuted on the Billboard Hot 100 and took the top 14 spots, which she says was a first in Billboard history.

• LeBron's split night of sleep

After a heavy week of flights and games in December 2021, at 37, LeBron credited his stamina to 'sleep and inspiration' from his son's team. He slept from midnight to 8, ate breakfast, then slept again from 8:30 to 12:30. Mel jokes she'll quote this to Chris when he's up at 5:30.

• The Neiman Marcus bathroom pitch

Blakely flew from Atlanta to Dallas with her lucky red college backpack, a prototype in a kitchen Ziploc bag and packaging printed on a friend's computer. Sensing the buyer, Diane, losing interest, she asked her to come to the bathroom, put the product on under her white pants, and showed her the before and after. The buyer said 'I get it, it's brilliant' and tried it in seven stores.

• Changing your writing spot

Maya Angelou rented a small hotel room to write, bringing a dictionary, a Bible, a deck of cards and a bottle of sherry. Mel's

husband Chris, working on a master's and his first book, writes at a local coffee shop three days a week because the new sounds and people make him more creative.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Pick an idea-capture system and use it**
  Options from the episode: a phone notes app like Swift's, or a pocket notebook like Chris's, who has filled about 50 in 30 years and keeps one in his back pocket even in the truck. Mel admits that with ADHD and dyslexia she has bounced between Moleskines, 3x5 cards and Instagram save folders. The habit matters more than the tool.
- **Small ways to break routine**
  Sharot's suggestions: take a different route to work, take a free online course, try a new podcast, or befriend someone whose personality isn't the type you usually spend time with.
- **Turn 'make the call' into one action today**
  Name one ask you've been avoiding, at work, in dating or a pitch, and do it before your self-talk talks you out of it. If you get a no, Kern Lima's framing is that it's a lesson pointing to the next step, not proof that your gut was wrong.

Communicate with Confidence: The Blueprint for Mastering Every Conversation

Guest: Jefferson Fisher
Date: 2024-09-26 · Duration: 0:58:59
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZUCB3M_1Qp4

KEYPOINTS

• What you say is who you are.
Trial lawyer Jefferson Fisher argues that most people experience you almost entirely through your words. Calling someone 'nice' really means they said nice things to you. That's why he says you can't be a kind person without saying kind things. He also stresses that more words don't mean better communication, so introverts and shy people aren't at a disadvantage.

• Arguments are knots to untangle, not contests to win.
Fisher says the most common mistake is treating an argument as something to win. When each person pulls their own way, the knot gets tighter. He'd rather say 'help me with the knot'. He adds that anyone promising to teach you how to win every argument is just selling you something.

• Miscommunication happens because what's sent isn't what's received.
His image is two people with their radios tuned to different stations, one playing '90s country and the other 2000s R&B, each enjoying their own song. You know what you meant, but the other person only has what they heard. So when someone challenges what you said, the better reply is 'What did you hear?' rather than defending what you meant.

• Swap 'why' for 'what'.
'Why did you say that?' sounds like an attack on someone's credibility and invites a defensive 'because I said so'. Fisher suggests 'What was going through your head?' or 'What made you say that?' instead. Mel sums up the difference as judgment versus curiosity.

• Deliver hard news directly; don't use the compliment sandwich.
Rambling small talk before bad news, like asking about pickleball and family, only makes the other person panic. Fisher prefers a short warning, such as 'This isn't going to be a fun conversation', followed by the news. In his view, tiptoeing around the truth tells people you don't think they're strong enough to handle it.

• Name the quality you want someone to show, and they tend to rise to it.
Lines like 'I'm telling you this because I know you can handle it' or 'because I know you have an open mind' prompt people to live up to the description. Fisher compares it to giving someone a backpack for the journey ahead. You can also set the tone for a room: 'I want to make sure this is a place where I can be entirely honest. Are we good with that?'

• Frame the conversation: the topic, how it should end, and agreement.
Before a hard conversation, say what you want to discuss and where you want to end up, then get the other person to agree. If you try to cover everything, you end up covering nothing, which is why so many meetings feel pointless.

• Take the fun out of insults and disrespect.
When someone belittles you, Fisher suggests asking them to repeat it ('I need you to say that again'), or asking about their intent ('Did you say that to embarrass me?'). Either way they don't get the reaction they wanted. For outright disrespect, he recommends roughly 10 seconds of slightly awkward silence followed by 'That's below my standard for a response.' With someone you dislike, stay neutral, stick to facts and keep it brief. Remember that onlookers are judging you too.

• Separate the person from the problem.
Say 'the presentation could use a few changes' rather than 'your presentation'. At home, try 'I see the room still isn't clean. What should we do about it?' rather than 'your room is a mess'. Fisher pictures putting the problem on the table and pulling your chair alongside the other person, so you become teammates rather than opponents. Framing it around needs helps too: 'I have a need for help with the dishes. What's your need?'

• Let your breath be your first word.
Nervous speakers water down their message with filler and apologies. Fisher's example compares a rambling 'I mean it's not really a thing, but' with a pause followed by 'This is not something I'm comfortable with.' Slowing down also helps you stand your ground, because nobody can make you say something you don't want to say.

• Have conversational goals and conversational values.
A goal is where you want the conversation to end up, and it keeps you listening to understand rather than to reply. Fisher compares this to weak trial lawyers who plan their next question regardless of the witness's answer. Values guide how you behave on the way there. His are: if I can't be a bridge, be a lighthouse; if there's room for kindness, use it, which he learned from his mother; and tell them who I am without telling them my name.

EXAMPLES

• Mel's Uber ride after her mother-in-law's 87th birthday dinner
Mel said something at Judy's birthday dinner that she instantly wanted to take back. In the Uber afterwards Chris asked why she had said it, and she felt attacked. Fisher's script for that moment is 'What did you hear?' In hindsight Mel realised she hadn't actually meant anything bad.

• 'Is that new?'
Mel realises she belittles her daughter in Los Angeles by asking 'Is that new?' about clothes she doesn't recognise, when what she really means is a question about how her daughter manages money. Her daughter's answer is that she thrifted them. Fisher says that responding with 'Are you trying to insinuate something?' would throw the question back at Mel.

• Fisher's grandfather at Walmart
When his grandfather was rude to every employee, Fisher deliberately thanked each one warmly, then set a firm boundary: if this is how you talk to people, I can't come with you. He says the people we love need us to be honest mirrors, and that his grandfather did change.

• Kindness with an opposing lawyer

When a lawyer on the other side was boasting about his case, Fisher chose kindness and told him, 'Howard, you're great at your job and you really care about your clients.' The lawyer warmed up and agreed to the Rule 11 request on the spot.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Better answers to 'How are you?'

Talk about what you're looking forward to rather than how your day has gone, because people tend to be more negative about the past. If things are rough, use a weather metaphor such as 'a bit overcast today' or 'thunderstorms'. At events, have one real conversation instead of many shallow ones, and ask 'What are you most excited about today?'

• Be a well, not a waterfall

Oversharing often comes from wanting to be believed. Fisher's warning is that the more words it takes to tell the truth, the more it sounds like a lie. Give people a bucketful they can draw from instead of flooding them.

• Ask: who do my words say that I am?

Ask yourself, and someone who loves you, whether you rush, speak too fast or come across as anxious. Before you walk into a room, decide how you want people to describe you when you leave. Mel learned this as a public defender by asking what she wanted the jury to say.

• At work, have something to learn, not something to prove

Gossip attaches to your reputation. Authority words like 'direction' ('I'd like to set the direction of this conversation') make you sound like the captain.

• With family, say 'I'm learning too'

In hard conversations, say 'I'm telling you this because I love you'. To calm things down with a spouse or child, try 'This is my first time being a parent; I'm learning too', and apologise from a position of strength.

9 Small Things That Will Help You Feel Amazing Again

Date: 2024-09-23 · Duration: 0:40:39
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rOopSj40Zro

KEYPOINTS

• "Whether you think you can or you can't, you're right" works because belief controls whether you act at all

Mel borrows the line from her grandmother and walks it through a job search: if you believe you can't get a better job, you won't update your résumé or LinkedIn, reach out to college friends or ask your parents' friends for introductions. The belief doesn't predict the outcome so much as cause it, by stopping the effort. Flip it to "I think I can" and you open the door to optimism, hope and resilience, which makes you willing to try, and the results come from the trying.

• To get eight hours of sleep, plan for nine hours in bed

Mel admits she spent her life climbing into bed at 10 p.m. and setting a 6 a.m. alarm, then wondering why she never got eight hours. Sleep researcher Dr. Rebecca Robbins of Brigham and Women's Hospital told her that falling asleep is a process, not a switch, and even a healthy sleeper with no problems takes about 15 to 20 minutes to drift off. Budgeting nine hours covers that lag, and if you fall asleep fast you simply have spare time in the morning.

• The 5-10-20 rule makes morning-light advice easy to follow in any weather

Getting outdoor light into your eyes soon after waking resets your circadian rhythm and helps you sleep that night, but most people stall on how long and what if it's raining. Mel's shorthand: bank five minutes outside if it's sunny, 10 if it's cloudy, and 20 if it's rainy or if you can only sit by a window. She remembers it as the fives, tens and twenties in the cash envelope she dropped in the bank's night deposit box after closing shifts as a waitress and barback.

• A short walk helps with almost any problem because it changes you, not the problem

Mel jokes that a little walk solves 93% of your problems, a playful number rather than a statistic. Her point is that walking quickly shifts your mood, clears your head and puts space between you and a wave of emotion, so you come back able to choose a response instead of reacting.

• Stop talking, because you learn while listening and not every conversation needs your input

Mel says she has spent much of her life feeling she had to weigh in on everything and get the last word, especially at work and with family. She frames silence as growth (input is how you learn) and as protection: not everything deserves a response and not everyone deserves an explanation. In a tense argument, stop talking and lower your voice, which signals you're in control. She is clear this is not the silent treatment.

• Put things where they belong, not back where you found them

Pitched especially to people who struggle with ADHD or clutter, the rule is to move anything out of place to its proper home the moment you notice it, which usually takes under a minute. Doing this one item at a time, in every room, stops small piles from turning into what Mel calls a gigantic volcano of stuff.

• Wait a week before any impulse purchase over about $100

A cooling-off period lets you rise above the thrill and instant gratification of buying without shaming yourself or saying "I can't afford that." Mel blames social platforms that have become 24/7 shopping networks. She adds a second rule of thumb: if you can't afford to buy it twice, you can't afford to buy it once. Mel's own Amazon cart is full of items parked under this rule for months; once the urge fades she realises she doesn't need them.

• Noticing the colour of someone's eyes is a simple way to practise eye contact

Mel struggled with eye contact, which she calls a common ADHD symptom, and worried that her darting eyes looked disrespectful or dishonest. Looking for someone's eye colour gives you a reason to hold their gaze and something real to compliment, without staring creepily. She says research shows eye contact with small nods signals that you're listening and care.

• Deliberately smiling can lift your mood a little, but it's not a fix for real distress

Mel compares it to fixing her posture, and says she now catches her resting face looking serious or mad. You don't have to force a smile during a breakdown, grief or depression, but on ordinary days pulling the corners of your mouth toward your ears is a small nudge that helps.

EXAMPLES

• A producer's sleep tracker stuck at 7 hours 35 minutes

Amy, one of the show's producers, noticed she consistently logged about 7 hours 35 minutes of sleep. The reason was the same mistake Mel made: going to bed at the exact time she wanted to fall asleep and setting the alarm eight hours later.

• Five problems, one walk

Mel runs through a looming work deadline (a 10-minute walk beats sitting there spinning), a breakup text, a call saying your dad's tests suggest cancer (walk instead of spiralling on WebMD so you can support your parents), a nightly sundae craving, and a roommate who blows up when you raise that their partner is always over. The walk helps you see that managing the roommate's disappointment isn't your job. For the craving, she cites studies finding a 15-minute walk curbs chocolate cravings, plus research tying after-dinner walks to lower stress and better insulin processing.

• A speaker friend who decided to stop talking

When Mel's career was mostly motivational speaking, she told a friend she felt burnt out and stale. He had felt the same and committed to sitting in an audience at least 10 times a year. Mel realised her life was all output, so she signed up for two events as an attendee and set aside weekly time for books, online courses and watching masterful speakers.

• The bowl of studio objects, swim trunks, an owl statue and a T-shirt eye mask

After taping an episode about owls in her studio above the garage, Mel put the leftover props in a bowl and took it to the kitchen. Later she carried the swim trunks and owl statue on to the bedroom, where she found a T-shirt she'd used as a makeshift eye mask and put it in a drawer instead of under the pillows.

• A 3,800-person, 19-country smile study

Stanford researcher Nicholas Coles, who was on the fence about whether smiling makes you happier, organised a large

study that brought both camps together. Across 3,800 participants in 19 countries, people who mimicked smiles in photos or simply pulled their mouths toward their ears showed a noticeable increase in happiness, consistent with a facial-feedback effect. The researchers stressed it won't pull anyone out of depression or solve their problems.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Set bedtime by counting back nine hours from your alarm**
  If you need to be up at 6 a.m., be in bed by 9 p.m. A healthy sleeper still needs 15 to 20 minutes to fall asleep, and anything extra counts as a bonus.
- **Do one put-it-where-it-belongs pass right now**
  Mel's challenge is to look around wherever you are, find one item in the wrong room, and put it away as soon as the episode ends.
- **Know the limits of these hacks**
  Mel presents walking and smiling as ways to change your state, not to erase serious problems. Forced smiles are not a treatment for depression, and grief or heartbreak should be felt rather than smiled over.

How to Become a Better Human: Lessons on Kindness, Love, and Happiness (From a 10-Year-Old)

Guest: Elton
Date: 2024-09-19 · Duration: 0:42:31
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dL79htOIvZU

KEYPOINTS

• Kindness comes back to you

Elton, a 10-year-old about to start fifth grade whom Mel has known his whole life, describes it as karma: pick on a kid and they won't want to be your friend; be kind and they might. "We only get one chance and you got to make it good." If you're a jerk your whole life, he asks, what have you really accomplished? You'll have fewer friends, he adds, and friends help your mental state.

• Bottling feelings is like eating too many grapes

Six grapes are fine; twenty and your stomach hurts. Elton says he has bottled small things without harm, but bottling too much hurt him. Talking to someone is how you let feelings go.

• Therapy is like dropping off a dirty shirt

Elton started therapy because he wasn't happy, didn't have many friends and was being picked on, and he still goes. He compares it to handing over a filthy shirt and getting it back clean after a couple of weeks, which "in therapy is like a year." Mel says it's often easier to open up to someone who isn't family or a friend, and that therapists know you can get better because they've seen it.

• Have "safe keeps" for sad days

When Elton feels sad or lonely, he tells his mom and dad, his "safe keeps," rather than just anyone, and he spends time with adults as a safe place. His advice for sad adults runs the other way: hang out with young kids, since even shaking a cup makes them laugh, and laughter is contagious.

• "I can't learn" is different from "I don't want to learn"

In fourth grade, before his dysgraphia diagnosis, Elton skipped class because he couldn't learn the way he was being taught, and teachers misjudged him as a bad kid. Now he types and uses voice typing. Mel connects this to her son Oakley, diagnosed in fourth grade, and to her own dyslexia, which wasn't identified until she was 46. She still dictates her books and edits on paper.

• If you've been up before, you can get there again

Asked what he'd tell Mel's daughter Kendall about uneven reactions to her songs, Elton said that after a high you know you're capable of highs. If he's thrown a ball 60 yards, practice may take him farther, but he won't go lower.

• Life isn't fair, and differences are what make friends interesting

If life were fair, everyone would share a birthday and like the same things, and you need differences to have something new to bring to a friendship. He can practice basketball, but he can't practice away dysgraphia. He tries his hardest, and sometimes that isn't enough. That's fine.

• Aim for good enough, and always try

Elton isn't trying to be Steph Curry. Aim too high and it gets so hard you're more likely to quit, and Mel agrees most of us quit when we aim too high. His "lifestyle" is to always try, even things he doesn't want to do, because you may discover you're good at them and come to like them. There's a job for almost everything, so build momentum from what you're good at.

• Parents need fun, and kids want to choose their own success

Kids' biggest complaint, he says, is "my mom and dad are always trying to control me." Let kids choose their path, even dentistry over basketball or math, then help them. He also says parenting isn't a reason to stop having fun; an unhappy parent makes kids unhappy too. Mel adds that she believes happiness is the best form of success.

EXAMPLES

• Guess Who in his therapist's office

Elton found therapy boring at first. His therapist plays Guess Who with him ("Does this person have orange hair?") and slips in "How's school been?" between turns, so talking about feelings happens naturally.

• The pizza strategy for gossip

When a group chat starts trashing someone, say Ashley, Elton doesn't lecture, which he worries would get him ditched as a goody-two-shoes. He redirects, like distracting a baby: "Where are we going for pizza tomorrow?" Or he just doesn't respond to the comment. Mel calls it standing up for someone without the confrontation most of us avoid.

• Making friends at camp

In kindergarten he just asked kids, "Want to be friends?" At camp he'll join a clinic, team or play, since everyone who signed up shares that interest. Then he floats around rather than sticking to one person (if your one apple goes bad, you've got nowhere to turn), invests more in people he clicks with, and brings those friends along when meeting new ones.

• The sand bridge in Maine

Elton built a little sand bridge to help an older woman across a puddle. Doing it made him feel kind, and otherwise "that grandma now just has wet socks." He hopes to help create a kinder world.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Check on a struggling kid privately

Don't ask "Are you sad?" in front of the class. Try to make them smile first. If that doesn't work, take them aside and ask "Is everything all right? You don't seem like yourself." Suggest talking to someone with "Do you think it would help to talk to somebody?" rather than "You need therapy," which can feel like an accusation.

• Work on one change at a time

Elton used to tell himself he wasn't good enough. Trying to fix everything at once is like his brother watching six animes at the same time and finishing none. Elton's current focus is lying less. He used to think lying made him cooler, and it didn't.

• Feeling stuck? Go meet people

His dad didn't find his passion until about 40. Everyone has a role, the way bees pollinate. New people could introduce you to your future job or partner. Spend less time scrolling, and when you hate a task, deal with it early rather than letting it build.

• Encourage kids with a "double whammy"

Tell children they can do anything, and also warn them that some people may treat them differently, like picking on them for a learning difference, so it doesn't knock them down. Elton wishes his parents had sometimes pushed him more.

Living With Purpose: Timeless Wisdom for a More Meaningful Life

Date: 2024-09-16 · Duration: 1:03:28
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D1AtCrdD5MY

KEYPOINTS

• An anniversary drive turned into a moment Mel will never forget

Driving home in pitch-black, pouring rain after dinner on their 27th wedding anniversary in Southern Vermont, Mel saw a flash of white swoop onto the road and get hit by an oncoming car. She yelled for Chris to stop and ran out in heels and a dress, lit by headlights through the rain, to find an adult barred owl with a wingspan she estimates at three and a half to four feet and one wing flipped backwards.

• Time stopped when the owl looked at her

As Mel crouched over it, the owl slowly turned its head and locked eyes with her. She describes it as the craziest experience of her life — a few seconds that felt like years — and compares it to meeting Gandalf. She believes darkness and drama made it feel otherworldly in a way daylight might not have.

• Mel's family read it as a message

The Robbins family are devoted Harry Potter fans — Chris read the series to the kids nightly, and they've watched the films about nine times — and Mel had always wanted a Hedwig. In those stories owls carry messages between worlds, so holding one in her lap on her anniversary, Mel was convinced it meant something. Online, she read that owls are seen as messengers who usher in change.

• Lesson 1: look up

On an owl walk Mel learned you can't spot owls looking down; you scan the canopy for a shadowy, foot-tall shape. She applies it to life: we spend so much time staring at phones and the ground that we miss things. She now hikes with her phone zipped away instead of filming videos, texting or listening to audiobooks.

• Lesson 2: open yourself up to magic

Mel now steps into the woods expecting to see an owl. She admits she's seen only one in the wild in a year, but hears barred owls calling 'who cooks for you' at night and believes expecting something draws it to you.

• Lesson 3: be interested, and your life gets interesting

Owls symbolize wisdom, but Mel concluded the real gift was the family's curiosity. Learning that barred owls nest in hollow, rotting trees changed how she sees the woods: she used to want dead wood cleared, now she wants it left for owls and the chipmunks they eat. She contrasts a friend's husband who studied soccer and enjoys it more with her own nine years at her daughters' lacrosse games without learning the positions.

• Lesson 4: don't let meaning turn into clutter

Mel went from loving owls to 'the owl lady': a 20-pound cement owl on the porch, owl statues, two owl jigsaw puzzles, Chris's owl swim trunks, owl socks, and finally an owl item bought at a friend's store in Middlebury. One or two objects keep something symbolic; dozens dilute its meaning. She declared a family moratorium and asked listeners not to send her owl gifts.

• Lesson 5: experiences beat objects

'You'll never see a hearse pulling a U-Haul.' Mel can't recall her 2nd, 11th or 23rd anniversaries but will never forget the owl. She says she has wasted a lot of money and effort chasing stuff, and that time and money spent on experiences enrich life far more.

EXAMPLES

• The rescue, step by step

A driver behind them offered a big Caribbean-blue beach towel — just as Mel was about to scoop up a bird with a beak and talons that could hurt her. She wrapped it, tucked in the broken wing, and held it on her lap while Chris stretched the seatbelt around both of them. Their vet, Dr. Bob, called back within minutes and pointed them to the Vermont Institute of Natural Science (VINS). Following online rescue videos, they put the owl in a laundry basket in Chris's tractor barn with plywood on top.

• Why the owl was hit, and how it ended

Mel later learned owls' eyes are fixed, so they turn their heads — up to 270 degrees — to track prey while flying silently. She thinks it locked onto a small creature hopping across the road and never saw the car. It survived the night; VINS volunteers took it after about four hours, saying it looked like a broken clavicle. Three days later Mel learned it hadn't made it. She was crushed, and says the loss sparked the family's obsession.

• The 'owl house'

Christopher Robbins shares a name with Winnie the Pooh's friend, who goes to Owl's house for advice, so the family started calling their home the owl house. Chris and Sawyer spent a weekend building a three-foot plywood nest box, then hauled the roughly 40-pound box about 25 feet up a tree with an extension ladder.

• Chris the 'owl whisperer'

On a hike near home, Chris found a barred owl about 10 feet away, which called to a second owl; they swapped branches and the second stared at him. A psychic Mel consulted, Kim Russo, said owls represent higher wisdom and a new chapter. Mel notes Chris has since been finishing a master's in spiritual psychology, leading men's retreats, certifying as a death doula and in holotropic breathwork — during which, he said, he spent two hours feeling like an owl in flight.

• The 28th anniversary

Searching 'owl experience Vermont', Mel booked a 90-minute private session at New England Falconry in Woodstock. At their hotel, the welcome box held a small hand-painted pottery dish — with an owl, one of 12 animal designs. The next day a tiny burrowing owl flew between their gloves, and trainer Anastasia's barn owl circled and returned when they raised a hand.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Pick a subject to learn deeply

Mel's father, who hustled pool in college and medical school, moved to Muskegon, Michigan, home of Brunswick, and became a billiards collector; his garage room now looks like a museum, and he told her one cue is worth $11,000. Interest, she says, makes you more interesting too.

• Keep one or two symbols, not a collection

If an experience moves you, mark it with a single meaningful object and put the rest of your money toward doing things.

• Start the day expecting something good

Try Mel's line for Oakley: 'I'm going to meet somebody cool today' or 'discover something cool today'. She believes it points your attention toward the good, making it far more likely you'll notice when it happens.

How to Make a Decision You Won’t Regret Later

Date: 2024-09-12 · Duration: 0:39:48
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=isLA-Ge9aS0

KEYPOINTS

- **There is a clock ticking that you cannot see**
  Mel builds the whole episode around a quote she saw and reposted: "There is a clock ticking that you cannot see, so love whoever loves you and enjoy your life." Her dad just turned 80, and she did the math: if she is lucky she gets maybe ten more of his birthdays. That arithmetic is what made her decide she would not miss a single one, even when the logistics were absurd.
- **Being a good daughter in your own eyes beats being one in theirs**
  Her first insight is that there is a big difference between someone else thinking you are a good daughter or son and you knowing you are one. When you act to win someone else's approval, guilt runs the show. When you act in a way that makes you proud of yourself, you are acting on your own values and the guilt has nowhere to land.
- **Doing things out of guilt turns the other person into the villain**
  Mel points out that "I should," "I have to" and "they'll be mad" are signs guilt is driving. Doing something because you feel guilty is the same as saying you had no choice, which quietly casts your mother or father as the bad guy. Her fix: choose what you do and do not do on purpose, and own the decision. She admits it took her almost 55 years to figure this out.
- **Under the scheduling tension is usually sadness, not anger**
  The back-and-forth of "don't come," "come later," "three nights isn't worth it" can make you crazy. Mel's read is that underneath sits grief, hurt and loneliness: families who live apart are sad they do not see each other and do not know how to say it. Parents who never did that inner work tend to express it as petty friction, and knowing that gives you patience to tolerate the dance without quitting on the visit.
- **Stop waiting for a holiday or big event to see people**
  Her second insight: you do not need an anniversary, holiday or long weekend to see family. If you live far away, waiting for the perfect window means years slip by. With hybrid work, she notes, many people could simply go for two days midweek.
- **When you want to visit, announce it rather than asking permission**
  Do not call and ask, "When would work?" Say, "I'm coming, here's the weekend." You will either hear "amazing" or hesitation. If the date clashes with their friends visiting, that is fine: you can still come and get a hotel. The point is not to sit around waiting for an invitation.
- **When you want them to come to you, you must actually invite them**
  The caveat to the previous point: people often assume an "open invitation" is understood, then resent loved ones for not showing up. Mel learned her parents were not planning to join the family's annual beach week because nobody had explicitly invited them. Busy-looking families get read as too busy, so a real invitation means specific dates, who is coming, where they will stay and "please bring the dog."
- **Step into your parents' world to understand their choices**
  Ten days at home showed Mel her parents' daily life: neither child lives in town, while most of their friends have at least one kid nearby, so they have built a support system among friends. That reframed her mother's "don't come that weekend" — the long-planned visit from friends mattered because those friends are their local family.
- **People are who they are, and most become more so with age**
  Her final insight is that you have to love people for who they are, not who you wish they would be. Most people grow more rigid as they age. Mel realized a lot of the friction came from her trying to manage her parents, when what they needed was acceptance, including of their marriage, which is not her job to fix.
- **Hoping someone will change blocks the relationship from improving**
  Mel credits therapist Dr. Ramani with the idea that one of the biggest obstacles to healing, and to any relationship changing, is the hope that someone else will change. Once you accept who a person is and is not, you decide how you want to show up regardless of how your effort is met. In Mel's experience, the moment she changes how she shows up, the relationship improves.

EXAMPLES

- **The 80th-birthday planning dance**
  Getting five people from southern Vermont to western Michigan meant a 16–18 hour drive or two flights, inside a three-day window around her daughter's LA job and her son leaving for college. Her parents said don't bother, come in September, three nights isn't worth it, and they had the twins' 16th and friends visiting. Mel went alone anyway, for herself rather than out of obligation.
- **A $7 balloon arch, a crown and four inflatable costumes**
  Her dad insisted on no party, so Mel had Amazon ship to her parents' house a 120-balloon arch, "Happy 80th" plates and cups, a birthday crown he wore all day, and four inflatable pickleball costumes: a flamingo, a cow, a rooster and an elephant. Her mom invited his golf buddies for a surprise. Mel's lesson: do not wait for permission to create a celebration.
- **The pickleball injury and back surgery**
  Her dad, a former orthopedic doctor, had been hiding a badly hurt back from pickleball. With no radiologist on site to read his MRI, he drove himself to his old hospital to find one. Surgery was scheduled within the week, so Mel cancelled work and stayed ten days in her childhood bedroom. He is now banned from golf and pickleball for six months.
- **The beach-house invitation that never happened**
  For five years Mel and her husband have rented a Rhode Island beach house the first week of July for her parents, brother, his wife and their twins. This year her brother tipped her off that their parents were not coming because they hadn't been invited. Her first reaction was disbelief; her second was seeing that, from their side, no call meant it probably wasn't happening.
- **Her childhood best friend moved home**
  While there, Mel saw her best friend from elementary school, Jody, who had just left Santa Barbara and moved back to White

Lake, Michigan, to live with her aging parents. Both have talked for years about the grief of living far from family, and it pushed Mel to plan a return trip before year-end to discuss options with her parents now instead of hoping for the best.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Run the pride test before a family obligation**
  Before saying yes or no, ask, "Will this make me proud of myself?" rather than "Will they think I'm a good daughter?" If you go, go because it reflects who you want to be, and if you decline, own it. Either way you stop blaming the other person.
- **Read petty tension as unspoken missing**
  When a parent snaps "don't bother" or "do what works for you," consider that it may mean "I miss you and wish I saw you more." You do not have to make them say it the evolved way; just do not let the surface friction stop you from making the effort.
- **Use two scripts: "I'm coming" and a real invite**
  For visiting: name the date and offer a hotel if needed. For hosting: give dates, guests and logistics, especially for older relatives who must book flights.

The Ultimate Advice for Your Next Chapter (After Your Kids Have Left Home)

Date: 2024-09-09 · Duration: 1:11:10
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tLfs31mURpA

KEYPOINTS

• Focus on your wings, not the empty nest

Recording alone at home just after her youngest, Oakley, left for college, Mel says she hates the term 'empty nester' because every 'empty' (stomach, tank, wallet) means lack. She prefers 'bird launchers' and reminds herself the kids will fly back in and out. Her core line: it's not time that changes things, it's what you do with that time.

• Sadness and loneliness now are a healthy response

Mel compares it to Olympians after the Games. You've trained for at least 18 years, through college application stress, the 'season of lasts' and the 'season of firsts,' so feeling sad, lost or unsure what to do with the time is mentally healthy. She says you deserve a gold medal whether or not you bought the dorm headboard.

• Change means plowing a new path through snow

A major transition isn't only emotional; your brain, body and nervous system are unlearning old patterns and learning new ones. Mel's image is waking up to two feet of fresh snow and having to clear a path, which feels like being knee-deep with only a spoon. Feeling bad doesn't mean it is bad.

• Choose words that validate rather than alarm

Silence is the sense in overdrive for Mel; she now longs for the barking dogs. 'Unnerving' literally describes your nervous system losing an old pattern. Saying 'this quiet is so unnerving' amplifies distress, while 'I'm learning how to be with the quiet' frames it as normal adjustment.

• You and your child are on parallel tracks

College, the military or a first job means sensory overload for kids: new smells, food, textures and a roommate who may not sleep through the night. The advice you'd give them (it takes time, go put yourself out there) is exactly the advice you need. Parents may have it harder, living in the old chapter's environment while kids have a whole community built to support them.

• Your adult child isn't the solution to your discomfort

Reaching out whenever you're bored or sad is an 18-year pattern. For the first 30 days, Mel's experiment is to wait 30 minutes before texting. If they're not texting, that's good: they're busy plowing their own path. If they called crying every day, you'd eventually tell them to get out of the dorm, so model that yourself.

• Give it a month or two, and get out of the house every day

Mel notes parents' weekends are usually about a month in, and a sleepaway camp director told her camps run at least three and a half weeks because kids need about three weeks to get past homesickness, which simply means you miss something you love. Fill your calendar with an exercise class, friends, cooking, a class or house projects.

• Challenge one: you're more than a parent

Mother and father are roles, not your reason for being. If you know what you postponed (a career, a book, school, art), start now and never say you're too old; Mel started her podcast at 54. If you don't know, ask your kids what they'd have you dedicate the next five years to, make improving yourself your purpose, or volunteer.

• Challenge two: avoided relationship issues surface

Without kids in between, couples may feel like roommates or face swept-under-the-rug fights. Mel jokes that the empty nest reveals rotten eggs. You can't change a spouse; a relationship needs two people who want it and will do the work. If they won't, assume they won't change and make yourself happier, which raises your standards. Single parents must actively build friendships and a love life rather than isolate.

• Challenge three: a struggling child

Stop being their 'human Google,' since colleges have staff whose job is to help. For anxiety, Mel cites Harvard's Dr. Luana Marques: the more someone avoids what they fear, the bigger the anxiety gets, and rumination entrenches it. Validate feelings, then ask what one thing they could do right now, such as talk to their RA, go to the health centre or explore campus.

EXAMPLES

• Move-in day and the $500 Walmart run

Mel drew the line at a dorm headboard, but still spent about $500 on everything from socks to twin XL sheets. Oakley rode in silence on his headphones. Daughter Sawyer, 25, lofted the bed and stacked drawers in a cement room in 90 minutes, and the 'medal ceremony' hug ended with 'Mom, you're embarrassing me.'

• The quiet house after an anniversary trip

After a busy work week and a night away for their 28th anniversary, Mel and Chris opened the door to scary silence. She announced she'd move wherever the kids ended up, New York or Los Angeles, and Chris kindly said they could move anywhere she wanted. She admits that even as a senior, Oakley mostly grunted goodbye and ate on his own.

• Mel's mother and the pay phone

In her first semester, Mel had a full-blown homesickness panic attack and called home collect from the dorm pay phone daily for two weeks, until her mother told her to stop calling and make friends or she'd be at community college after Thanksgiving. By that afternoon Mel was 'a completely different person.'

• "I'm on my second marriage, just with the same person"

Mel and Chris saw a couples therapist even though things were good, because parenting had eroded their connection. She loves the line as a goal.

• Kathy's nest poem

Mel's friend Kathy Adzich, whose daughter roomed with Mel's at USC, texted a reflection comparing parenting to building a nest. It ends with her feeling guilty about enjoying the stillness yet lonely, unsure whether to rebuild the nest or soar, and certain she is 'good enough just the way I am.'

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Plan things to look forward to**

  Mel invited friends for each of the next four weekends and booked trips to Nashville in November and in March. She's no longer tied to a sports calendar.

- **Use your new freedom**

  Try being vegetarian, eat dinner earlier, join a CrossFit gym, a book club or a language club. Leave the kid's bedroom alone for now, since they're back in a couple of months.

- **Volunteer for perspective**

  Chris volunteers with hospice as a death doula. Mel says sitting with the dying reminds you that you haven't died, so stop acting like you have.

How to Get Ahead of 99% of People (In 4 Months)

Date: 2024-09-05 · Duration: 0:43:25
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n2js5sm7sis

KEYPOINTS

• January is when the calendar changes; September is when life changes

Mel's first argument is that September brings real-world change, not just a new date. Summer turns to fall, leaves change color, the weather shifts, and breaks give way to school and work routines. Because your whole life is visibly changing around you, you feel more ready to change yourself. She suggests treating fall as a bigger moment for change than New Year's.

• Use January to dream and September to do

Mel isn't against January. New Year's is a temporal landmark, a clean-slate moment that opens you up to dreaming big, and she recommends using it every year to audit the last year and envision the next one, five or ten. But dreaming differs from executing. She lists four reasons January is poor for productivity: you're exhausted from the holidays, you've spent your money on gifts, cold weather keeps you indoors, and dark days bring seasonal depression. She cites the figure that only about 10% of New Year's resolutions succeed.

• Other seasons work against momentum

Spring brings a short burst of cleaning energy that leaves Mel depleted, and then everyone coasts toward summer. Summer is the worst for productivity because schedules are irregular, people take vacations, and festivals and barbecues pull you outside. Productivity isn't about sprints but small, consistent moves over time, and consistency depends on a steady rhythm that summer breaks. By fall you should be rested and full of sunshine and vitamin D.

• The 'back to school effect' is wired into you

Mel's second reason: however long you've been out of school, every fall of your life has carried fresh-start energy. Back-to-school signs, buses, changing traffic and other people getting organized act as environmental cues that prompt thoughts of change. She argues that your environment makes change easier or harder, and September arrives already set up to support you. New Year's goals are optional, but back-to-school conditioning has been with you since childhood.

• You'll be more productive in fall anyway, so aim it at yourself

Her third reason is that research ranks fall as the most productive season, and the boost lasts from September through October and November rather than fading like a January spike. She says this is when people most often join weight-loss programs, go to the gym, start cooking at home, change their haircut and get serious about money. Winter is the least productive season, by her figure 25% less than fall. Her strong caveat: don't pour this extra energy into work, because you already give work enough.

• Only four months left is an advantage (Parkinson's law)

Her fourth reason relies on Parkinson's law, from the 1950s: a project expands to fill the time you give it. Two weeks for a presentation means it takes two weeks; twenty minutes means twenty minutes. January goals expand to fill twelve months, while a September goal has a built-in deadline at year's end. Tight deadlines sharpen focus and narrow attention. 'Stick to a budget through December' feels far more urgent than 'this year.'

• Four months matches how long goals actually hold our attention

Mel cites a Forbes Health survey finding that the average January goal stays top of mind for 3.74 months before people either achieve it or fizzle out. That is almost exactly the time left between September and the new year, so a fall goal fits your natural stamina rather than fighting it.

• Frame changes as starting, not stopping

Mel cites research showing changes stick better when framed as something you'll begin, like a new school year. Instead of 'stop eating sugar,' say 'start eating fruit instead of cookies.' Instead of 'stop drinking,' say 'start drinking non-alcoholic beverages.' Instead of 'stop eating gluten,' say 'start eating gluten-free.'

• When unsure what to work on, work on yourself

If no single goal comes to mind, Mel's default assignment is to spend the next four months improving yourself in some small daily way that makes you healthier or happier. Examples include signing up for an art class, reading ten minutes before bed, or going to bed half an hour earlier. Think of the evening as homework done for yourself rather than for a teacher or boss, because how you experience life depends on where you put your time and energy.

EXAMPLES

• UK survey: 69% think September changes are easier

Mel shares a survey of UK adults in which 69% said small improvements in September are much easier to achieve than New Year's resolutions. She uses it to show that most people already sense the back-to-school advantage.

• The $2 notebook ritual

Mel suggests buying a cheap new notebook, recalling the crisp crack of the spine, and writing 'September' plus the year (or 'Fall' and the year) on the cover in Sharpie, like a college notebook with the school seal. It symbolizes deciding to take the next four months into your own hands, and you can use it to track the change you're making.

• Mel's 15-minute Pilates lesson in consistency

After climbing Mount Katahdin in Maine with her family, Mel hurt her hip and skipped the gym for a few weeks. When she returned with a 15-minute streamed Pilates mat class, she immediately felt she should do more. Her own start-not-stop change: stop worrying about how long she exercises and start focusing on consistency, even five minutes a day.

• Why everyone needs the reminder again each year

Mel lists how much changed in her family in twelve months. A year earlier she and Chris still had a high school senior, she was 11 months into hosting the podcast, Sawyer was leaving for a four-month solo backpacking trip around Asia, Kendall was moving into her first apartment after college in LA, and Chris was starting a master's in spiritual psychology. Because you're a different person each fall, familiar advice can land differently.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Pick one theme with an end-of-year deadline**

  Choose a single area and size it for four months, such as writing the book, finishing a resume, taking a coding or AI certification class, sticking to a budget, or moving out of your parents' basement. Use the deadline to create urgency instead of letting the goal expand to fill a year.

- **Protect the fall lift from your job**

  You'll likely be more productive in fall whether you plan it or not. Decide deliberately where the extra energy goes, and put it toward something that makes you happier rather than more output for your boss.

- **Aim for good days rather than perfect ones**

  Mel's definition of a good life is a life with many good days. Each day, do what's in your power to make it a good one. Expect bad days too, and come back to your notebook the next day.

How to Get Motivated (Even When You Don’t Feel Like It) With Dr. K, HealthyGamerGG

Guest: Dr. Alok Kanojia (Dr. K)
Date: 2024-09-02 · Duration: 1:13:11
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H_WJ5hgWLFo

KEYPOINTS

• Motivation isn't one thing, and trying to increase it is the core mistake

Dr. Alok Kanojia, the Harvard-trained psychiatrist behind HealthyGamerGG, says there is no motivation center in the brain; it emerges from emotion, 'shoulds,' ego, identity and comparison. Chasing more motivation means trying to make action easy, which collapses when circumstances or feelings change. His alternative is learning to act independent of motivation.

• Are you in control of your wants, or are they in control of you?

If you only act when you feel like it, your wants are running your life. He links this to addiction: whether opiates, social media or video games, addictions activate the nucleus accumbens to give pleasure and craving, and suppress negative emotional circuitry. Scrolling when you're tired doesn't give you energy to cook dinner; it only delays the tiredness.

• Emotions fade and rewards dull, so motivation built on them wavers

He describes homeostasis (joy naturally recedes: a perfect wedding day doesn't guarantee a happy marriage) and tolerance (the second cookie is less delicious than the first). Chasing past highs to stay motivated is a losing game.

• Focus on action, not outcome

He draws on the Sanskrit idea of karma (action) and its fruit: the more you devote yourself to actions rather than results, the easier life gets and the more you control your behavior. He ties a society fixated on outcomes like GPA and stock price to one that is increasingly burnt out and unmotivated.

• Moving toward a goal costs pain before it pays off

Your brain runs an action-success calculation. Before the gym, both its pain and the comfort of staying home are hypothetical; once you start, the pain becomes real while the beach body doesn't appear. Your brain concludes 'this is dumb' and tells you not to go tomorrow. That's why people quit diets and workouts when results lag; you aren't lazy, you're fighting your wiring.

• Running from negativity creates a pendulum

Going to the gym because you hate how you look means moving from pain into pain, so you go one week and not the next. Mel describes a friend promised a promotion for two years who alternates between wanting to quit and working harder. Dr. K says they are following through 100%, just on moving away from whatever feels worst that day.

• Outcome goals like 'sober for a year' can't be done

As an addiction psychiatrist, he tells patients they can't be sober for a year because that's an outcome, not an action. Mel admits her brain jumped straight to the checkbox. 'Every day' goals turn success into failure: meditate 39 days, miss day 40, and you call it a failure; someone 48 days sober relapses and thinks 'what's the point.' Abandon 'every day' and focus on today.

• You aren't stuck; you're strongly motivated not to move

Feeling stuck, he says, is a misdiagnosis: a powerful resistance says don't pick the fight, don't upset your boss, stay seated. Going out to fix loneliness can trigger social anxiety that sends you home: 'a lot of irrelevant movement.' Since awareness precedes control, simply seeing the conflict clearly is the main intervention.

• Willpower is staying in conflict, not calm resolve

He cites research on the anterior cingulate cortex suggesting that what we experience as willpower is the brain monitoring conflict. You don't make a calm decision and then act; you stay conflicted until the action happens. Staying in that discomfort, whether skipping the happy-hour drink or studying chemistry for two hours, is how willpower grows.

• Separate the problem from what you do to yourself about it

His parting point: you can't control whether a medical school admits you or someone marries you, but you can control whether you beat yourself up. Most shortcomings, he says, are manufactured by that self-punishment, which is the part actually in your control.

EXAMPLES

• From a sub-2.0 GPA to 120 med school rejections

The child of Indian immigrant doctors, Dr. K played video games 16-20 hours a day and had below a 2.0 GPA after his first year. His father sent him to an ashram in India; at 21 he wanted to become a monk, but his teachers said he had nothing worth giving up yet and should earn a doctorate first. He graduated with a 2.5 after five and a half years, was rejected by about 120 medical schools over three years, then got into Tufts and trained in psychiatry at Mass General and McLean.

• Why application 100 is the same as application 1

The action of filling out forms and hitting submit is identical; the only difference is the story that you've failed 99 times. People who quit after 20 rejections envy those who try 60 times, but he says each action is individual.

• Mel's ice barrel

Mel doesn't hype herself up for cold plunges; she tells herself it will be 90 seconds of misery and gets in. Dr. K notes she never 'decided' calmly; she monitored the conflict for an hour until she was in the water.

• The motivational interviewing role-play

Playing a partner with a sedentary lifestyle, Mel answered 'how do you feel about your health?' with 'I'm okay.' Dr. K reflected back each answer until she admitted feeling nagged and misunderstood. He validated how hard that must be rather than justifying the nagging, then asked whether she wants to change at all, rather than 'how can I help?'

• Streaming therapy concepts on Twitch

Noticing he was teaching gamer patients the same dopamine and motivation concepts over and over, he started streaming conversations on Twitch, which briefly became the fastest-growing stream on the platform. HealthyGamer now has over 175

employees.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Anticipate the negative**
  Before tomorrow's workout, tell yourself you won't feel like it and it will be hard. He says studies show predicting difficulty helps; give yourself an accurate preview, like warning someone an injection will hurt for a moment, rather than a pep talk.
- **Dwell for a few minutes after acting**
  After a 30-minute walk, sit for two or three minutes and ask how it felt and what was hard. He says research shows letting the brain mull consequences reinforces good behaviors and reduces bad ones. Also sit with wins, like an A, instead of moving the goalposts.
- **Run a personal post-mortem, not a shame spiral**
  If you scrolled for two hours instead of updating your resume, skip both self-blame and jumping to a fix. Ask whether the goal was reasonable, where the desire came from and what got in the way. Often you'll see you can be uncomfortable for one day or every day until it's done.
- **Create space instead of pushing others**
  Pushing produces resistance. Reflect, validate the difficulty, then ask whether they want to change, so the motivation comes from them. With kids: 'which do you want first, jacket or shoes?'
- **Study your own controls**
  His one action: spend time understanding your conflicting parts and where your drive to change comes from, since much of it is social conditioning, instead of copying other people's answers to fit your unique situation.

8 Truths About College That Nobody Tells You

Date: 2024-08-29 · Duration: 0:44:50
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7FOgolNYuX0

KEYPOINTS

- **'Don't let studying get in the way of your education'**
  Mel's dad said this to her in the parking lot when her parents dropped her at college in 1986, after an 18-hour drive from Michigan. She first thought it was permission to party. He meant college teaches life skills no textbook can: being with yourself, advocating for yourself, meeting people, doing embarrassing things and moving forward. All eight truths, gathered with her daughters (24 and 25) and shared with her son Oakley at drop-off, are lessons from that 'education of life.'
- **Truth 1: If you're bored, you're doing college right**
  Even once classes start, you'll have days with five free hours and whole Saturdays with no plan, especially in the first couple of months. That's normal during a big change. The mistake is defaulting to your dorm room and phone. When you're bored, walk out: try a new café or dining hall, read the event posters, go to free swim hours, watch a team practice, or sit in the back of a lecture. Mel says graduates most often regret not exploring.
- **Truth 2: College changes how it feels to be in your body**
  Mel compares the first month to jumping into an ice-cold pool: new smells, lighting, bed, roommate, communal bathroom, food, weather and sleep schedule overload every sense. Everyone deals with it differently, but everyone tries to look like they have it together. That weird feeling often turns into 'I'm at the wrong school.' Her answer: you're not in the wrong place; you're just not used to it yet, and within about a month it settles.
- **The hack: a morning routine that moves your body**
  Without a routine, your day starts by chance: wake up feeling off, scroll, rot in bed, wait for your roommate to decide what to do. Instead, pick one thing you do every morning that gets you out the door and moving: a walk, the gym, a workout class, or a meditation in your headphones on the way to breakfast. Mel calls it the fastest way for your body to adjust to the new environment.
- **Truth 3: The change is fast, so go slow**
  Many students with newfound freedom drink far too much that first month because they can't handle the change. The night Oakley moved in, he texted his sisters that ambulances came to his dorm all night for students who had drunk too much; neither sister was surprised. Mel's message: you have four years of freedom, so slow down.
- **Slow down on hookups too**
  Her daughters stressed this repeatedly, for all genders. Emotions and hormones run high in the first weeks, and upperclassmen offering attention are usually after someone new. People aren't acting like themselves while they process change, so you're not hooking up with who they really are, and you may end up sitting next to them in Spanish class or seeing them date someone across the hall.
- **Truth 4: Take a flexible approach to friendship**
  It can seem as if everyone clicked into a group instantly, often through roommates, orientation, or shared backgrounds like camps and prep schools. People cling to others because it feels safe. Mel says those fast friend groups usually don't last; your friends may look different sophomore, junior and senior year, and finding your people can take two or three years. Let people come and go, and don't grip.
- **Inclusion creates more friendships**
  Invite the quiet roommate to lunch instead of worrying they'll hurt your chances of meeting others. In Mel's words, exclusion creates toxicity and expectation limits invitations. Her daughters saw friends lock into rigid freshman groups and four-year rooming plans that turned toxic, leaving them dreading sophomore year.
- **Truth 5: Your best college experience is at your college**
  Stop watching high school friends' party highlights, tailgates and big-school games, then deciding your school is worse. Stop clinging to your high school friends and partner. Mel says every hour spent feeling bad over someone else's posts destroys about ten hours of fun you could be having on your own campus.
- **Truth 6: Do things alone**
  Go to the club meeting, the info session, lunch in the cafeteria or intramural tryouts without a friend, and introduce yourself without a roommate standing there 'like a little blankie.' Mel says it's better to show up alone: you learn to trust you can handle it, and the confidence carries into your career.
- **Truth 7: You're not stuck**
  Nobody will create your experience for you. If your roommate is toxic, messy, never gets up, or keeps their partner over, you can change roommates. You can change classes and majors too. Talk to your RA, adviser, dean or a professor; they're paid to help. Mel calls transferring because of a roommate a cop-out, and suggests giving it a year and steering before you jump ship.
- **Truth 8: Every year of college is different**
  Each fall brings new housing, a new class of freshmen, new routines, and friends leaving for study abroad or internships. You may feel the same overwhelm, weirdness and boredom as a sophomore or senior. Mel says that's the real lesson: life keeps changing, people come and go, and you can ride it.

EXAMPLES

- **The basement jewelry studio**
  Two weeks into freshman year, Mel got a letter from home, felt homesick in a crowded campus center, and ducked into a stairwell so no one would see her cry. On a lower level she'd never noticed, she found a photo lab, a woodshop, a print workshop and a jewelry studio, where a bearded man was working on a silver ring. She sat down, went back daily, and worked there sophomore year.
- **Feeling like 'a gnome on the island of Giants'**

Mel arrived at Dartmouth from a small Midwestern public high school that had never sent anyone there. Classmates talked about Cape Cod, Nantucket, sleepaway camp, prep school and crew. She clung to her randomly assigned New York roommate 'like a life jacket.' Her daughter had a similar shock arriving in Los Angeles from a small Massachusetts town.

- **Mel's own first morning**

  She woke up on her first day of college in a full-blown anxiety and dissociative meltdown and held back tears so her roommate wouldn't know. That memory is why she texted Oakley at 6:47 a.m.

- **The text she sent Oakley**

  She told him to be patient, that a weird boredom in the first weeks is something everyone feels, and to keep telling himself he's in the right place. Soon he'd know his schedule, the best cafeteria food, a few friends and the ultimate team. 'Home is just a text away,' she wrote, and she could be there in two hours.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Send your student a first-morning text**

  Mel's model for parents: say you're proud, normalize the strangeness and boredom, remind them it takes a few weeks to find a rhythm, and that home is a text away.

- **Your first-week checklist**

  Get out the door every morning and move. Explore one new spot whenever you're bored. Keep the drinking and hooking up slow. Invite someone along. Do one thing alone. If something isn't working, take it to your RA or adviser.

- **If you're listening from your dorm bed**

  Mel's closing instruction: get out of bed, get out the door, and put this advice to work.

7 Lessons To Learn Once That Will Improve Your Life Forever

Date: 2024-08-26 · Duration: 0:45:30
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U2RwmuW5IJw

KEYPOINTS

• Switch to problem-solving mode instead of giving up

Driving away from the Baxter State Park ranger station, Mel realized her hiking boots were on her back porch in Vermont and all she had were Birkenstocks. She says the old Mel would have sulked, played the victim and stayed in the tent. This time she decided she wasn't going to miss the climb and was going to figure it out. She calls that declaration one of the most important mindset shifts she's made.

• Picture the good outcome before you know how it will go

Friends texted warnings about blisters from brand-new boots. Mel deliberately refused to feed the fear and told them instead that she'd text after the hike to say these were the best boots ever. She leaned on her habit of asking 'what if it all works out?' and pictured David Goggins running ultramarathons on ruined feet, telling herself she would 'Goggins this thing.' Her reasoning was that expecting disaster mostly makes things feel worse.

• Don't go to bed angry; talk it out

After an eight-hour drive turned into a 45-minute detour in silence, everyone was furious and on edge. At the campfire, Chris asked everyone to share the high and low of their day. Mel said the real low was feeling like a little kid in trouble during the silent drive, and wished they'd paused to make a plan before everyone blew up. Chris said he blamed himself for not running through a checklist. Talking 'put a pin in the balloon,' and they ended with a group hug.

• Ask for a reset when you need it

Fifteen minutes into the dark trail, the stiff new boots had Mel doubting she could last 12 hours. Instead of suffering in silence as she normally would, she asked Chris to call a family huddle: everyone shoulder to shoulder, one deep breath together. She says she was proud of herself for asking.

• 'You carry your baggage with you'

Near the summit, Mel asked a thru-hiker finishing day 172 of the 2,190-mile Appalachian Trail what he'd learned. He said he had assumed he had nothing to learn and was wrong. His first lesson was that you carry your baggage with you. Mel takes that to mean you can't outrun, out-hike or out-drink unresolved issues. You have to consciously decide to put them down, through therapy, self-awareness and learning about yourself.

• Never underestimate patience, and stay teachable

Walking past, the same thru-hiker added 'patience.' Chris and Mel talked about how people tend to think they know it all, and Mel calls life 'the single greatest school you'll ever attend' if you keep that mindset.

• Keep moving and good things come

On the way down, Mel met two more thru-hikers, trail names Riverrun and Wood, finishing a dream they'd chipped away at in sections over 45 years. Their first lesson was that if you keep moving, eventually good things come: good people, good weather, good views, good luck. They also said nature is the original healer, and that at their core people are good, citing strangers who gave them the shirt off their back or the last bite of a meal.

• Ask for specific help with a fear

Mel has a fear of heights and vertigo, and the descent through the boulder field meant looking down at sheer drops. She asked Oakley to go in front so he could catch her and Chris to go behind. Then she realized what she actually needed was Chris showing her one step at a time while she looked only at the next step, not the whole drop. She says five years ago she couldn't have done it.

EXAMPLES

• The boots from the farm-supply store

The ranger pointed them to a store about 40 minutes away, with no cell service to call ahead. It turned out to be a hardware and farm-supply store full of Muck Boots and work boots, with exactly one hiking-style pair in Mel's size, a little snug. She wore them all evening to break them in. After a 12-hour climb she had sore feet, wobbly legs and zero blisters.

• Planning six months out

Katahdin is about 5,200 feet, the northern end of the Appalachian Trail, and takes about 10 to 12 hours round trip. Campsites at the trailhead have to be booked six months ahead online at a set time. Chris spent three days on logistics for five people over two nights with no drinkable water or cell service. The store then sold him the wrong tents, so Sawyer and Kendall had to squeeze into a one-person tent.

• Buzz and Mel's 80-year-old dad

Mel's dad once mentioned he'd always wanted to hike the Appalachian Trail. His friend Buzz, who died suddenly this year, retired at 65 and hiked from Georgia to Pennsylvania. He flew to a family wedding, then went to Katahdin and hiked south back to Pennsylvania to avoid finishing on an icy mountain in late November. Her dad doesn't want to be away from her mom for six months, so Mel suggested he hike a section with Chris and Oakley. His face lit up: 'it's never too late.'

• The golden lake

After the hike, Mel and her daughters drove 35 minutes for the beer Chris had forgotten. Sawyer suggested jumping into a glistening mountain lake at sunset, and Mel calls it one of the core memories of her life.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Use a checklist

Mel's most practical lesson: for a long family road trip ending in a major hike, make a checklist and go through it before leaving. It would have saved both the boots and the beer.

• Do the high-low ritual

When a day goes wrong, have everyone share a high and a low before bed. It lets each person say how they felt and clears the air without assigning blame.

- **Take on the thing you've always wanted to do, in pieces if needed**

The 45-year section hikers and Mel's father show that a big dream can be done in sections. Start now with a manageable piece rather than waiting for the perfect time.

The Science of Women’s Health: Ob/Gyn Reveals 10 Truths You Need to Know

Guest: Dr. Jen Gunter
Date: 2024-08-22 · Duration: 1:07:12
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7KX2x0d42EE

KEYPOINTS

• The vagina is a 'self-cleaning oven'; the vulva is just skin

Dr. Gunter says nothing is needed inside the vagina, not even water, because adding products disrupts its ecosystem. She explains the anatomy with a doorway analogy: the vulva is the building's face (where clothes touch skin), the vestibule is the doorway, and the vagina is inside. Just as abrasive cleaners would damage a self-cleaning oven, washes and douches damage the vagina.

• You cannot 'balance' your vaginal pH with any product

A healthy vagina sits at roughly pH 3.5–4.5, an acidity that lets good bacteria thrive and keeps bad bacteria in check. An elevated pH is a result of a problem, not its cause, so it is 'an inside job.' Gunter says anyone selling pH balancing has outed themselves as uninformed, and she tells people to block them. pH also naturally rises in menopause if you are not using estrogen.

• Feminine hygiene products are a 'pink tax' linked to more problems

She advises avoiding the whole feminine hygiene category: studies associate these washes with higher rates of infection, and many contain fragrance. If you want to wash sebum off the vulva, use a gentle unscented facial cleanser (she names CeraVe or Eucerin types) rather than soap, because soap raises skin pH and is drying.

• Food cannot change vaginal odor, and odor messaging is often shaming

Asked whether pineapple makes a vagina smell better, she calls it 'a load of garbage': 'it's a vagina, not a piña colada.' Any message implying your body stinks exists to sell a product, a diet or clicks. If an odor seems medically different, get tested; otherwise she spends time in her office undoing harmful comments from men, a conversation she has about once a week.

• Discharge is normal and works like saliva

Up to 3–4 milliliters a day is within normal range; the vagina constantly sheds cells and mucus that carry bacteria out. Amounts vary from almost nothing to a 'healthy stripe,' and ovulation can bring heavy, thick mucus. Soaking a mini pad is the upper limit worth checking. See a provider for dark yellow, green or bloody discharge, odor, itching, irritation, pain with sex, or possible STI exposure.

• Penetration is the least reliable route to orgasm

Gunter calls the belief that a penis reliably delivers orgasm one of the biggest myths; many women don't orgasm from penetrative sex and nothing is wrong with them. Simultaneous orgasm is a Hollywood fiction from films that invest 'zero seconds in foreplay,' and pleasure, not orgasm, can be the goal. Distraction and stress (thinking about the laundry) take people out of the moment, so mindfulness matters.

• Pain with sex is a medical condition, not something to accept

Too many patients are told by doctors that pain is normal. Causes she lists include yeast infections, menopausal changes, vaginismus (tight pelvic muscles), nerve pain, skin conditions, endometriosis scarring at the back of the vagina, and painful bladder syndrome, so getting a real diagnosis is the route to the right treatment.

• Forget the word 'hymen'; it doesn't break and virginity isn't physical

Infants have a larger membrane, but with estrogen at puberty it becomes 'a nothing burger,' like baby teeth. Most people don't bleed the first time, studies show exams can't tell whether someone is sexually active, and 'rebuilding' a hymen is predatory. She blames a 'virgin industrial complex' and dismisses the idea that sex 'stretches out' a vagina: tissues are designed to stretch and recover.

• Yeast infections and bacterial vaginosis are easy to confuse

BV is an overgrowth of anaerobic bacteria that raises vaginal pH and can cause odor and discharge; yeast infection is yeast overgrowth with pH unchanged. Vulvar dermatitis and low estrogen produce similar itching. Over-the-counter yeast treatment should work about 95% of the time, so if one round fails, get seen: you may have a resistant strain, but more likely it was never yeast.

• Cleanses, resets and 'immune boosting' are medically meaningless

Gunter says to hear 'cleanse' and think 'scam'; the word traces back to purity culture and the ancient idea of balancing humors. Menstrual blood is not toxins, just blood, endometrium, inflammatory fluid and mucus. Boosting immunity is nonsensical since some diseases come from an overactive immune system, and seed oils like canola are fine to cook with.

EXAMPLES

• Bachelorette-party grooming

Mel shares that at 26 or 27, in the early '90s, her friends trimmed her pubic hair for the first time at her bachelorette party. Gunter explains pubic hair probably protects skin and traps moisture; removal is a personal choice, but razors cause irritation, infections and injuries, and the only medical reason she cites is laser removal for hidradenitis suppurativa.

• Period diarrhea affects about 12% of people who menstruate

Gunter had it badly, sometimes going to the bathroom 10 times in a day, and suspects she overproduces prostaglandins, the hormones behind cramps. When she polls audiences, hands go up above 12%, and some women have never heard of it at all.

• The lubricant osmolality warning

Vaginal osmolality is around 180–200; some warming, cooling or menthol lubes are far higher and can pull water from cells, irritate tissue and may make HIV transmission easier on exposure. Silicone lubes are best tolerated; oil-based products weaken latex condoms.

• Boric acid overuse

Boric acid doesn't change pH; it works like a detergent that kills everything, including good bacteria. It has a role in resistant

yeast and multi-step BV regimens under specialist guidance, but she and colleagues see patients using it for months on influencer advice.

• Her triplets and why she fights misinformation

Gunter had triplets; one son died at birth, the others weighed 1 lb 11 oz and 1 lb 13 oz. Oliver had heart surgery at three pounds, and Victor has cerebral palsy. She was pulled into disinformation herself, made choices she regrets, and Oliver was due for open heart surgery the month after recording.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Eat 25 grams of fiber a day and exercise

Her two take-home habits for every body part. Average American intake is about 10–12 grams; she says fiber lowers risk of breast and colon cancer and type 2 diabetes. She eats Kellogg's Bran Buds (about 13 grams per serving, roughly 70–80 calories) with oats, walnuts and blueberries. Normal bowel frequency ranges from three times a day to every three days.

• Search with the professional society's name

Google is a popularity contest, not a medical library. Add the governing body to your query, such as 'hot flashes treatment menopause society' or the American Cancer Society, ask your doctor who writes the guidelines, or use the WHO, the CDC or a hospital medical librarian. Beware of lookalike groups; one pediatrics organization with a near-identical name is, she says, essentially a hate group.

• Treat urgency as a sales tactic

Outside a true emergency, you have time to pause, gather information and get another opinion. Mel shares that her husband's father was rushed into esophageal cancer surgery six days after diagnosis with no second opinion; it went badly and she believes the rush killed him.

• Underwear, thongs, lace and shapewear are fit questions, not health ones

Your vagina doesn't need to 'breathe' at night, and color or lace doesn't cause yeast infections, a myth she ties to 1950s ideas about who wore black lace. The only caveat is long periods in occlusive material like latex. If something irritates, change it.

Pull Yourself Together: The Best Expert Advice to Make You Feel Incredible

Guest: Patrick McKeown, Dr. Shane O'Mara, Dr. Gina Poe, Dr. Neha Sangwan
Date: 2024-08-19 · Duration: 1:02:36
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JlmccJomcek

KEYPOINTS

• Mel boils roughly 200 episodes down to three pillars: breathing, walking and sleeping

She sets relationships aside and asks what you would focus on if you looked in the mirror with limited time. Her answer is not gluten-free diets, infrared masks or supplements, but three things you already do daily and, she argues, mostly do wrong. Nail them and you've covered '80% of your life.'

• Mouth breathing pushes your body toward fight or flight

Breathing coach Patrick McKeown has Mel notice that a mouth breath is faster and sits high in the chest, which he says activates more fight-or-flight. He recommends nose breathing at rest and during exercise. He says it raises blood oxygen uptake by nearly 10%, and that slightly higher carbon dioxide helps red blood cells release oxygen to muscles, organs and the brain.

• Everyday breathing feeds stress, not just the other way around

McKeown says dysfunctional breathing (faster, upper-chest, irregular) shows up in at least 10% of people but up to 75% of people with anxiety and panic disorder. He argues habitual poor breathing keeps stress high, not just the reverse, and that changing the breath works even when your mind is too busy for mindfulness. A stuffy nose, he adds, makes snoring and sleep apnea two to three times more likely.

• Walking challenges the brain, not just the legs

Neuroscientist Dr. Shane O'Mara of Trinity College Dublin breaks down a trip to the shop: standing up, balancing, orienting, building a mental map, pacing yourself on a hill, carrying bags home. Each is a small challenge that wakes up brain rhythms that stay quiet while you sit. His analogy: a new bike left in the garage for a year.

• Being sedentary is linked to personality change and memory decline

O'Mara says people who become more sedentary, even in midlife, grow less social and open and report more negative emotion. He cites a Chicago-area study of people in their late 60s and early 70s: walking a couple of miles three times a week grew memory-related brain regions and improved memory, while the inactive group declined more.

• Small bursts of walking spread across the day beat one big session

You don't need a 30- or 40-minute block. O'Mara favors lots of low-level activity with rests, like two minutes of walking every half hour, and warns that one workout won't 'zero out' a day of sitting. For heart benefits, walk fast enough that talking gets hard.

• 10,000 steps is made up, but adding 5,000 steps a day is a useful target

O'Mara calls 10,000 invented, his favorite origin story being a mistranslation from a 1960s Japanese company. The average US adult walks about 4,000 steps, so adding about 5,000 gets most people close. He says all-cause mortality falls by something like 30 to 40% somewhere between about 4,500 and 7,500 steps a day.

• Morning light sets the clock that runs your sleep

UCLA sleep researcher Dr. Gina Poe, 30 years in the field, explains that every cell's clock is synced to a master clock, the suprachiasmatic nucleus, which light through the eyes resets daily. Morning light, even on a cloudy day, marks 'time zero.' Bright or blue light at night tells the system it's morning and pushes you later.

• Deep sleep is when the brain cleans itself

Poe describes a roughly 90-minute cycle through N1, N2 and N3, the deep slow-wave stage. In N3 the brain clears the day's 'junk', such as unfolded proteins. Skip it and you wake with a 'junky brain.' Mel adds that you're wired to sleep well, so stop calling yourself bad at it.

• Stress ties all three pillars together

Mel closes with physician Dr. Neha Sangwan, who says stress causes or worsens more than 80% of illness. When she asked colleagues why they didn't ask patients about the roots of their stress, they told her not to ask a question you can't handle the answer to. Mel's point: poor breathing, too few steps and bad sleep all add stress.

EXAMPLES

• The five-second nose-pinch breath hold

Take a normal breath in and out through the nose, pinch it, hold for five, then breathe normally through the nose for three or four breaths, and repeat. McKeown says the hold stimulates the vagus nerve to slow the heart, and carries pooled nasal nitric oxide into the lungs. Mel felt built-up pressure drop right away.

• Nodding breath hold to clear a stuffy nose

After a normal exhale, pinch your nose and nod while holding, working up to about 30 seconds, five or six times. McKeown says skip it if you're prone to panic or anxiety, pregnant or have heart problems. His 26-person Limerick pilot showed a 70% drop in rhinitis symptoms at three months, but was only published as an abstract and never followed up.

• Mel's 2,800 steps versus Shane's 9,785

Mid-interview Mel finds 2,800 steps on her phone; O'Mara shows 9,785. He points to the Hadza in Africa, who walk 10,000 to 20,000 steps a day and on average lack diabetes and excess fat. His first instruction: check what you actually walk.

• Judy Robbins and the Wednesday walking group

Mel's mother-in-law Judy walks at least five miles a day at 86, and her parents Bob and Marsha, 75 and 80, walk every morning. Mel's 6:30 a.m. Wednesday walking group in Southern Vermont gets her out even at 20 degrees in the dark. She suggests singles try a walking group instead of apps, and changing routes like her husband Chris.

• Dr. Sangwan's five-question 'awareness prescription'

Sangwan asked patients: Why this part of your body? Why now? What clues make sense in hindsight? What else needs healing? If you spoke from the heart, what would you say? She says patients later reported needing half their migraine medication or a third of their anxiety medication.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Pillar one: close your mouth**

  Breathe low and slow through your nose all day, including during exercise, and go back to the five-second pinch-and-hold whenever you notice racing thoughts. Do the decongesting version only if none of McKeown's warnings apply to you, and stop at whatever level feels comfortable.

- **Pillar two: add 5,000 steps to your own baseline**

  Check your phone's step count first, then add about 5,000, which O'Mara puts at roughly 4 to 5 kilometers. Spread it out: two-minute walks between sitting stretches, walking errands, a group walk. On some walks, go fast enough that talking is hard.

- **Pillar three: Dr. Poe's four sleep habits**

  Get outside light first thing, even two minutes helps and 20 minutes is plenty, ideally while walking. Exercise during the day hard enough to get your heart pounding. Take a warm bath at night, which warms your hands and feet and helps your core cool by about half a degree. Keep caffeine low and screens dim or blue-light-filtered in the evening.

8 Realistic Healthy Habits That Make a Huge Difference

Guest: Dr. Aditi Nerurkar
Date: 2024-08-17 · Duration: 0:45:57
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Kd7I6GrdGM

KEYPOINTS

• Shop the perimeter of the grocery store
Dr. Aditi Nerurkar, a Harvard physician and stress expert, tells patients to stay on the outer ring of the store. That's where the produce, dairy, whole grains and lean proteins are, while the center aisles in the US are mostly processed and ultra-processed foods. Fruits and vegetables, plus fermented foods like yogurt, kombucha and kefir, support what she calls the gut–brain connection.

• The Mediterranean diet is a way of life, not a diet
She calls it the gold standard: mostly plants, fresh produce, minimally processed foods, whole grains, beans, nuts and olive oil, with less dairy and red meat. She is clear this isn't about living like a monk. Food is pleasure, and a slice of chocolate cake under stress is 'good for your soul.' The problem is when it becomes a nightly habit, like her patient's 11 p.m. cake that started to affect his cholesterol.

• Small swaps add up for the microbiome
Rather than a lifestyle overhaul, she suggests a few forkfuls of sauerkraut on your lunch sandwich or an extra helping of vegetables at dinner. Adding prebiotics and probiotics bit by bit, even if not every meal, strengthens the microbiome over time.

• Lifestyle comes before supplements
Patients bring her bags of supplements. She records them in the chart as she would medications, and she stresses that she believes in conventional medicine. But when someone sleeping four hours and drinking four to eight cups of coffee a day asks for the best burnout supplement, she answers that sleep is a therapeutic intervention: cut the caffeine and move a little. Mel adds that the bigger the problem, often the smaller the solution.

• You are never too old to change
She invokes neuroplasticity, calling the brain a muscle that responds to outside input, and says she has had 80-year-old patients whose behavior changes made all the difference in their stress and burnout. She suggests 'parenting yourself' back to health with the basics you'd give a child: a bedtime, less screen time, good food and daily movement.

• Sitting is harmful in its own right
Beyond the benefits of exercise, she says prolonged sitting itself raises anxiety, stress and burnout. The mechanisms aren't entirely clear; one idea is that you 'stew in your own emotions.' There's no set dose for how often to stand. After a two-hour meeting, get up instead of turning straight to Slack and email.

• Fake your commute so your brain can switch modes
About 85% of employees favor hybrid work, but the old commute did a psychological job: it moved you out of home mode into work mode, and the brain 'loves compartments.' Her fix takes 2–5 minutes. Set up your workstation, get out of pajamas, walk outside, grab a coffee, review the day's meetings and to-dos, then come back and start. If you can, bookend the day the same way instead of rushing straight to daycare or dinner.

• Multitasking is task switching, so monotask with time blocks
She says only about 2% of brains can truly multitask. For everyone else, constant switching weakens memory, productivity and the prefrontal cortex's ability to solve complex problems. Her workaround for four tasks in an hour: spend 5–15 minutes on each with short breaks between, so you make headway on all of them without the switching cost.

• Habits take about eight weeks, but you'll feel it sooner
She gives people a solid three months because they may slip, but says many feel a difference within a week. She encourages a concrete goal framed around your future self, such as 'I want to sleep through the night.' Being fed up is valid motivation too. And because even positive change is a stressor, big overhauls backfire when you're already stressed.

• Chase eudaimonic happiness, not just hedonic
Hedonic happiness, like Netflix binges, fancy cars and designer bags, is a real and needed 'Band-Aid.' But the hedonic treadmill pulls you back to a set point, as with lottery winners. Eudaimonic happiness, built on meaning, purpose and contentment, is the kind she says science links to cellular and genetic changes that hedonic pleasure doesn't produce.

EXAMPLES

• The 800-person sitting study
She cites a study in which the people who sat most had a 112% higher risk of diabetes, 147% higher risk of heart disease, 90% higher risk of death from heart disease and 50% higher risk of death overall. She uses it to back the pop-culture line 'sitting is the new smoking.'

• Ultra-short bursts of activity and cancer risk
She cites research on 1–2 minute bursts: taking the stairs, parking far from the store entrance, running for the bus. She says these were associated with a 40% lower risk of dying from cancer. That's why a hallway or staircase walk still counts.

• Her own burnout and the techno gym
As a resident working 80 hours a week, trained under the motto 'pressure makes diamonds', her 'diamond cracked.' A doctor told her to get a massage and relax, which didn't help. She had a state-of-the-art gym in her basement, but the mirrors, machines and blasting techno made her turn around and never go back. Instead she walked the scenic route home after 30-hour shifts in Philadelphia, starting at 2 minutes and building up.

• Zoom dysmorphia and the camera-off ask
During the pandemic, constantly seeing your own face fed what's been called Zoom dysmorphia, and she says Zoom fatigue is real. Her rule: showing up is enough. When she asks 'do you mind if I turn my camera off?', people often say yes with relief, or suggest a phone call.

- **The guitar-playing colleague**
  Early in her career, a doctor told her on a Thursday that he could only play guitar on weekends, and he hadn't played at all the week before. That conversation inspired her prescription to 'live a lifetime in a day.'
- **A study on 10-minute breaks**
  She describes brain-scan research comparing workers who took no breaks with those who took incremental 10-minute breaks. The break group ended the day with lower stress and better memory, attention and engagement. The researchers called the breaks a reset from cumulative stress.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Walk 10 minutes a day instead of scrolling**
  She walks daily rather than planning three hour-long gym classes, because a daily habit avoids decision fatigue and the self-efficacy crash of missing sessions. She frames it as mental fitness, not cosmetic abs, which she says has never motivated a stressed patient. Five minutes is fine, and 20 is great.
- **Try walking meditation**
  She hated sitting meditation at first. Walking while focusing on your feet, which have about 30 bones and 100 muscles, gets you out of your head and into your body. Mel, married to a daily sit-down meditator, said it was a relief to hear that walking counts.
- **Live a lifetime in a day**
  Even 2 minutes each: childhood (play and wonder for no reward), work (anything meaningful, paid or not), vacation (let your mind wander), community (a text or quick call, since she says loneliness equals smoking 15 cigarettes a day), solitude (for creativity), and retirement (reflect on what you got done before bed).
- **Add strength and balance as you age**
  She now aims for 30 minutes most days, including resistance training. After nearly falling off a balance board two months ago, she now stands on a wooden one during calls.

How to Figure Out What You Really Want: Use This Life-Changing Hack

Date: 2024-08-15 · Duration: 0:45:17
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1S1LEoZ_KOg

KEYPOINTS

• If you don't know what you want, other people's priorities win

Mel runs this episode as a free workshop and argues that much of feeling stuck or lost comes from not knowing what you want. Without a direction, you can't know what you value or prioritize, so people who do know what they want 'are always going to come before you.' People can advise you on how to get something, but no one can tell you what to want.

• Clarity is a skill, and your answer will change

Changing your mind is 'not only normal, it's unavoidable.' A college student may outgrow a major, and a couple may find their priorities have shifted since they fell in love. Mel says what she wanted with three kids in middle and high school is very different from what she wants as she and Chris become empty nesters. Without that clarity, you're 'a sailboat without a rudder,' moving fast but going nowhere.

• Clarity gave her the podcast

The High Five Habit, published in 2021, has a chapter about Mel dreaming of a podcast. Using this framework, she got clear that she truly wanted to launch one. She spent about two years studying others and building a game plan, then started the show about 18 months before this episode. By then it was nearing 150 million downloads, and what she wanted from it had grown 'on a totally different level.'

• Use the 5 Whys

Ask yourself 'What do I really want?' and then ask why four more times. Each 'why' forces you deeper, toward the root emotion. It also tests whether you want the thing itself or something underneath it. Mel says Sakichi Toyota, founder of Toyota Industries, developed the technique in the 1930s, that Toyota still uses it and that business schools teach it for root-cause problem solving.

• Include 'why now?'

In Mel's version, one of the whys is about timing. When she asked Sawyer why it mattered to move this year, Sawyer said she had always pictured herself living in New York in her 20s and was at the stage where it felt right. Asking about timing helps separate a someday wish from the most important thing right now. Sawyer could have said 'start a business' but chose New York.

• The surface goal can cost you the real one

If Christine had chased the lake house, she'd have spent years saving for it and then renovating and painting it, missing the time with her sons that she actually wanted. Often, Mel says, what you really want is 'right in front of your face.'

• The deeper answer is something you can act on now

You can still buy the lake house, move or write the novel. But knowing the root reason (time slipping away, a promise to your younger self, needing time for you) lets you bring that into your life immediately instead of waiting for the big goal.

• Your turn: what do you really want, and why?

Mel closes by asking you to answer the question honestly, ask why repeatedly and 'let yourself go there.' Then decide how to bring the deeper need into your days. The free companion workbook at melrobbins.com/what walks through the exercise in more depth.

EXAMPLES

• Christine's surprise breakthrough in a manifesting class

After the 143 Studios team made 104 episodes in a year, they went on a no-work, no-phones retreat. Christine, Mel's sister-in-law, business partner, CFO and COO, is 'a numbers gal' who isn't into 'touchy-feely' things. She walked into a manifesting class expecting to sit in the back. It turned out to be just her, the instructor and one man trying to sell a rental property.

• The lake house wasn't the point

Christine offhandedly said she wanted a lake house. Asked why, she said for family time, because her high-school sons were busy with sports and friends. Asked again, she found she missed how life used to revolve around family. The instructor pointed out the boys would be gone before she could save up. In tears, Christine realized she wanted time with her sons now. She told them so and set weekly time together, including car rides and practices. Does she still want the house? 'It'd be nice, but it's not the point anymore.'

• Sawyer, 25, and New York

Mel walks her daughter through the 5 Whys live. Moving to New York has felt like an 'energetic pull' since childhood. After 25 years in Boston, she wants something 'bigger and more uncomfortable.' The root: keeping a promise she made to herself as a little girl. Her other childhood promises include backpacking Asia (just done, for four months) and someday starting a business.

• The eulogy assignment

In Boston College's 'Courage to Know' class with Luke Jorgensen, freshmen wrote their own eulogies and read them aloud on parents' weekend. Classmates listed cures for cancer and trips to space. Sawyer's described moving to New York to live with her sister, three kids, two Australian shepherds, a 60-year marriage and dying surrounded by family. She thought she'd done it wrong. Mel calls it what we all want.

• Mel's fantasy novel

Mel's answer was a fantasy series she dreamed up with Sawyer and Kendall on a beach 12 years ago, and she still has the handwritten notes. Asking why led to wanting joy without deadlines, then to escape from constant demands. Her real want was more time to herself, so writing another project would have been ironic. Her fixes: a 30-minute walk instead of 10 minutes, unhurried garden time, a book instead of TV, maybe a solo meditation weekend.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Who to share this with

Mel suggests sending it to a college student choosing a major, someone facing a big decision or someone you see a bigger future for than they see for themselves. She has used the same process for current decisions in her business.

• Part of a workshop series

She mentions earlier free workshops on the science of setting goals and on moving from thought to action, each completed by close to a million people.

• Saying it out loud keeps you on course

Christine's way of sticking to it was telling her sons honestly that she missed their time together and then making it a priority. She suspects they missed it too, even if it sometimes feels like 'Sunday not-so-fun day.'

The “Bronze Medal Mindset” (and 4 More Surprising Habits From Olympians)

Date: 2024-08-12 · Duration: 0:58:45
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vPn4gdmx-R8

KEYPOINTS

• Real visualization means feeling it, not seeing it

Mel's first Olympic lesson is that mental rehearsal isn't about picturing yourself winning. It's about feeling, step by step, what doing it is like in your body. She learned this from US pommel horse specialist Stephen Nedoroscik. Photos of him with his eyes closed went viral as 'napping', but he said he was running his routine in his head about 100 times, then stood up and moved his hands and shoulders through every element.

• Rehearsing a move fires the same brain region as doing it

Mel cites UCLA research in which brain scans show that imagining and feeling an action activates the same region that controls actually performing it. Repetition builds procedural memory, the automatic, long-term memory behind writing with a pen, pouring water, walking or moving a wheelchair. Mental rehearsal starts building that pattern before you physically repeat it.

• Rehearse the hard middle, not the finish line

If Nedoroscik had only imagined the podium, Mel says, he'd have blown his routine. For a marathon, picture the 5 a.m. alarm, opening the door to rain, and your earbuds dying at mile 8, then feel yourself keep running. The aim is to rehearse doing the work even when you don't feel like it.

• Specialising in what you're great at can beat being a generalist

In high school, Nedoroscik realised he wouldn't be recruited as an all-around gymnast, so he focused on the pommel horse. That led to Penn State and the 2021 world title. Mel's takeaway is that life offers more than the same five career paths everyone chases, and that going deep on something you love and are good at can be the way forward.

• A perceived weakness can become a strength

Nedoroscik has no depth perception, is very sensitive to light, has eyes that act as if they're permanently dilated, and can't get a driver's licence. Mel suggests that not being able to focus on everything outside may help him turn his attention inward. In her view, he's the perfect spokesperson for visualization being about feeling rather than seeing.

• Bronze medalists are often happier than silver medalists

Mel cites research published through the American Psychological Association showing that bronze medalists tend to look and feel happier than silver medalists. Silver medalists 'compare up' to gold and dwell on 'if only I'd been a second faster'. Bronze medalists 'compare down', thrilled just to be on the podium, which brings gratitude and humility.

• Comparing yourself upward makes you miserable

With 8 billion people, someone will always be smarter, richer or more successful. Mel says if you scan for evidence that others are better, you'll find it, and you can't feel grateful while beating yourself up. She adds that even gold medalists often hit a low after the Games because they no longer have something meaningful to pursue.

• Enthusiasm is contagious and, Mel believes, brings luck

Norwegian swimmer Henrik Christiansen, 27, went viral with roughly nine short videos about the Olympic Village chocolate muffins: dry-looking buffet muffins that became the most sought-after food in Paris. Mel defines enthusiasm as expecting the best and working to make good things happen. She says, as her own belief, that it raises your IQ and makes you luckier because you're present and engaged.

• Winners quit when quitting takes courage

Mel separates running away out of fear from bravely making the right call. Her examples include ending a relationship that isn't right, leaving school or a job, calling off an engagement, or telling a demanding boss you can't work the weekend.

• Treat your mindset like a muscle

Mel says Simone Biles talked to her therapist at 7 a.m. on the morning of a gold-medal final in 2024, warming up her mind the way she'd warm up her body. Mel argues that mental strength, like a torn muscle, needs training, repair and rest, and that past trauma affects performance.

• Every Olympian knows what they want

Mel says most people who feel stuck either stop themselves from going after what they want or, more often, have never been honest about what that is. The goal doesn't have to be big. 'I'd like to be a bit better or happier than I am' is enough to give you direction.

EXAMPLES

• The team final that ended a 16-year drought

Pommel horse was the last event of the US men's team final, and Nedoroscik's routine would decide whether the team won its first medal in 16 years. Viral side-by-side footage showed his hand movements in the holding area matching the routine itself. He stuck the landing, and the team won bronze.

• Simone Biles and the twisties

After winning all-around gold in 2016, Biles got the 'twisties' in Tokyo: a disconnect between mind and body that left her able to do only 1.5 of 2.5 twists in warm-ups. She withdrew from the team final and every event except beam, where she won bronze. She calls it her favourite medal because it stood for putting her health first. Mel notes that Larry Nassar had been sentenced in 2018, with 265 known victims including Biles, and that Biles links the Games to PTSD.

• Mel's number two bestseller

Her self-published The 5 Second Rule couldn't make the New York Times list, so when The High 5 Habit debuted at number two, she'd finally reached a five-year goal. Instead she burst into tears and was angry about not being number one, a textbook 'silver medal' reaction.

• The supervisor who learned what a colleague earned

In an Inc. magazine story by editor Jeff Haden, a man worked his way up from the shop floor to supervisor and loved his job.

Then he learned that a lazier, less cooperative supervisor earned 50% more. Nothing had changed except who he was comparing himself to, but he became deeply unhappy and stopped working as hard.

• Femita Ayanbeku's running blade

The Boston Paralympian lost her right leg below the knee in a car accident at 11. At a Challenged Athletes Foundation clinic she won a free running blade, and three-time Paralympian Jerome Singleton asked what she wanted to do with it. She said learn to run and do something meaningful. She went on to become a three-time Paralympian, eight-time national champion and American record holder, and was competing six months after having a baby.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Rehearse your next hard task

Before a tough deadline, Mel pictured herself alone above the garage on another summer Saturday writing The Let Them Theory, taking a break with her family, then climbing the stairs and sitting back down. Rehearse the unglamorous steps, not the result.

• Catch yourself comparing up

When a kitchen renovation, a pay rise or a ranking suddenly feels disappointing, ask who you're comparing yourself to. Compare down, or to your old self, so you can appreciate what you have. You can still push for what's fair, such as a raise, from a calmer and more motivated place.

• Focus on doing, not 'making it'

Mel's advice to someone hoping to 'make it': focus on doing the work, and one day you'll realise you're on the podium.

• Start with one honest goal

Ask yourself Jerome Singleton's question in your own terms: what do you want to do with what you have? A small, honest answer is enough to start working toward.

Leaky Bladder, Pelvic Floor, UTIs, & Constipation: Dr. Rena Malik Gives Solutions To Get Control

Guest: Dr. Rena Malik
Date: 2024-08-10 · Duration: 0:55:54
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=akvlUuXKmjY

KEYPOINTS

• Bladder leaks and urgency are common, but not normal.

Urologist and pelvic surgeon Dr. Rena Malik, who trained in female pelvic medicine, defines a normal bladder as one that holds urine until an appropriate time, empties completely, and doesn't leak or cause problematic urgency. She says up to a third of women have urinary leakage and up to 40% have some degree of prolapse, though few need treatment for the prolapse. Being common, she stresses, doesn't mean you have to live with it.

• The pelvic floor is part of your core.

Malik describes it as a bowl, or hammock, of layered muscles attached to the tailbone, hips and pelvic bones. It holds up the bladder, uterus and rectum, controls the sphincters for urine and stool, stabilises you with every step, contracts during orgasm, and helps pump lymphatic fluid back toward the heart.

• Know the symptoms.

Malik's list: urinary urgency, frequency, leaking when you cough, sneeze, lift or exercise (stress incontinence), leaking because you can't make it in time (urge incontinence), trouble emptying, and pain when urinating with no infection. She also lists pain in the vagina, pain with sex or orgasm, related hip or back pain, and constipation from muscles that won't relax.

• The muscles can be too weak or too tight.

Weakness most often comes from pregnancy and childbirth, whether vaginal or C-section, especially with forceps, vacuum or episiotomy. It can also come from standing all day (hairdressers, nurses), a chronic cough, neurological or genetic conditions. Malik compares the organs to a boat floating on water (the muscles) and tied with ropes (ligaments): if the water drops or the ropes stretch, things sag. Young athletes such as gymnasts can leak for the opposite reason. Their pelvic floor is so tense it can't squeeze any further when they need it.

• Kegels help some people and make others worse.

If you have pelvic pain, Malik says to get evaluated before exercising, because Kegels make an overly tight pelvic floor worse. Tight muscles respond better to stretches such as happy baby, child's pose and a deep squat. Too much tension can also cause burning that feels like a UTI even when tests come back negative. Yoga and Pilates can help too.

• Constipation and bladder problems are linked.

A bowel full of stool presses on the bladder, causing more frequent and urgent urination and night-time trips. It may also raise UTI risk because more stool bacteria are nearby. Malik suggests more fiber with more fluid, walking, dates or kiwis, and less cheese and meat.

• Night-time urination matters more than you might think.

Under about 55, Malik says you normally shouldn't need to get up at all; after about 55, once is typical because the body starts producing about a third of its urine at night. Her worry is falls in the dark: for older adults who break a hip, the risk of dying within the following year is about 20%. Going more than eight times a day counts as frequent, but first check whether you're simply drinking a gallon of water.

• Caffeine, alcohol and smoking irritate the bladder.

Caffeine and alcohol make the bladder more sensitive and are mild diuretics, and your tolerance can change over your lifetime. Malik won't tell anyone to give up coffee. Instead she suggests experimenting with one caffeinated and one decaf cup, or half-caf, so you know whether it's the cause. Other free steps for overactive bladder: quit smoking, manage constipation, and if you're overweight, lose around 8% of your body weight, which she says significantly improves urinary symptoms.

• Recurrent UTIs have evidence-based prevention options.

Recurrent UTI means two within six months or three within a year. Malik cites evidence that drinking two to three litres of fluid a day lowers UTI risk by about 46%. Cranberry is in the American Urological Association's guidelines, but not sugary juice cocktail. She recommends a supplement made from the fruit itself, in soluble form, with 36mg of proanthocyanidins (PACs). If UTIs keep coming back, rule out kidney stones or a stray stitch after surgery. Men shouldn't get UTIs at all, so even one warrants seeing a urologist.

• There are treatments between pads and major surgery.

For stress leaks, the options include over-the-counter inserts or a tampon to support the urethra, and a fitted silicone pessary. In-office 'bulking' injections of gel into the urethral wall act as a cushion and don't rule out surgery later. A sling, made of mesh or your own tissue, acts as a backboard under the urethra. For overactive bladder, besides medication, there's tibial nerve stimulation (an acupuncture-style needle at the ankle, 30 minutes weekly for 12 weeks) and bladder Botox, which carries some risk of not being able to urinate afterwards.

EXAMPLES

• Mel's 15 years of leaking

Sawyer's birth more than 25 years ago involved forceps, a vacuum, a torn placenta requiring manual extraction, and heavy blood loss. Afterwards Mel leaked with every step, sneeze or jump, soaked her shorts within a mile and gave up running. She wore maxi pads constantly, avoided hikes and stopped dancing at weddings, and eventually had to half-stand and squat to empty her bladder. She avoided the sling for five or six years out of fear. It turned out to be an in-and-out procedure with two days of rest, and she says it changed her life.

• Most women do Kegels wrong

Malik says nine times out of ten, patients find they weren't doing a Kegel correctly. Mel tried one on the spot and clenched her buttocks. The target is the squeeze used to stop urine flow or hold in gas, without tightening the belly or buttocks. You can check

by feeling the squeeze with a finger in the vagina, but don't make stopping your urine flow a habit.

• Sex, travel and 'honeymoon' UTIs

Malik says there's no good evidence that urinating after sex prevents UTIs, and post-sex UTIs don't mean anyone is dirty. Thrusting simply moves bacteria toward the urethra. Dehydration on trips and weekends away plays a part. Options include extra fluids, a cranberry supplement on the day of sex and the day after (her suggestion, without data behind it), or a low-dose antibiotic after sex.

• Men, prostates and the coffee straw

About 80% of 80-year-old men have an enlarged prostate, which squeezes the urethra from a bubble-tea straw to a coffee stirrer. A study of about 7,000 men found older German men often sit to urinate. Malik says sitting can help relax the pelvic floor, but men can choose whatever is comfortable.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Start Kegels lying down

Squeeze for five seconds and relax for five, 10 to 15 times, once a day, then twice. Progress to sitting and then standing, like building up at the gym. A certified pelvic floor physical therapist is, in Malik's words, 'gold'.

• Exhale when you exert

Your pelvic floor stabilises as you breathe out. Holding your breath while lifting strains it.

• Keep a bladder diary

Search 'OAB diary' (the Urology Care Foundation has one) and record what you drink, when you urinate and how much. It can reveal triggers like that afternoon coffee and gives your doctor useful data. If it's hard to empty, sit with legs wide, lean forward, then stand, walk around and try again.

• Check your urine colour

Aim for lemonade yellow: darker means drink more, clear means you can drink a bit less. Watch for blood or very foamy urine. If it's cloudy or smelly with no symptoms, drink more water. And if your first doctor can't help, ask for a specialist.

“The Secret of a Happy Relationship…” the Best Advice That I Have Received

Guest: Matthew Hussey
Date: 2024-08-08 · Duration: 1:00:49
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WLKZz6vA0QQ

KEYPOINTS

• Over time we start treating a partner's wonderful qualities as normal

Hussey says one of the biggest relationship mistakes is that what is special about a partner, the things that make life easier, more joyful and supported, starts to feel like what anyone would do. People often find out otherwise only when they date someone else. He compares it to frequent upgrades: someone who always flies in a fancy seat stops noticing it, while a first-timer stays up trying the hand cream.

• We assume we know everything about our partner, and stop asking

What a partner tells us reflects the questions we ask, and many couples stopped asking ten years ago. You may know who they were then, not now. Quoting Proust, that real discovery is 'seeing with new eyes' rather than seeking new landscapes, he notes that an affair is a search for a new landscape. The alternative is to see your partner as an enigma again.

• Stay fresh for yourself so you can be fresh for your partner

When we stop growing, by reading, taking up new activities or meeting ideas that challenge us, we bring a stale version of ourselves to dinner. Hussey says that after 17 years of coaching he could coast, but he would go stale, so he keeps reading and talking to people. Mel, at 55, took this as the key point: whether single or partnered, start with what you bring to the table.

• Insecurity sends us looking for partners who make us look good

When we feel we aren't enough, we look for superficial markers of impressiveness, like looks, height, money, status or Instagram appeal, the way unpopular kids at school avoided being seen with other unpopular kids. When you feel enough, you focus on how someone makes you feel: seen, at home, having a great time.

• A partner is a hotel room, not your home

His analogy: you can enjoy a lovely hotel without thinking it's your value. Your home is the self you come back to each night: resilience, wisdom, generosity, connection. People who lose a dazzling partner often feel they've lost their worth because they confused the two. Mel adds that after 28 years with Chris, the right person 'very quickly just starts to feel like home.'

• The right person has to be both right and ready

Answering Carmen, back home after two happy years working in Europe for a partner who wouldn't move, he says different visions for the present or future are a compatibility issue, however good the relationship. 'Right person, wrong time' is science fiction. He asks for compassion for the partner who never chose this dream, and for honesty about whether you'll resent the compromise. If you choose Plan B, make it the new Plan A, or resentment follows.

• Ask whether a habit costs you a real need or just isn't how you'd do it

For video games, weekend golf or a night owl paired with a morning person, the test is whether it denies you something crucial, like quality time, or whether you're annoyed they aren't like you. If it's a need, say so: you respect their hobby, here is what you aren't getting, and then ask what they need.

• Meet deal-breakers with compassion first, then honesty about your needs

With a partner who has let themselves go, or struggles with drinking or anger, he starts from the fact that changing it is as hard for them as your hardest thing is for you. Then ask whether, taken to its extreme, it's compatible with loving yourself. Name the impact, including a 'delayed heartbreak' if their health suffers, and offer support or therapy rather than silently judging or venting to friends.

• When you outgrow a partner, the issue isn't the books or seminars

For Heather, who resents dragging a partner along on her growth, he says not reading the same books or doing self-development work is irrelevant on its own. Someone raised on a farm may have learned just as much. What matters is whether they can apologise and become aware of destructive behaviour through conversation. If your concerns are met with disinterest, judgment or contempt, you don't have a teammate.

• Your story about being single can become your biggest enemy

Loneliness, he says, is like chronic emotional pain. What makes it unbearable is the story you attach: that you're undesirable, always the person before the person they marry, that the good ones are taken. Get happy enough on your own that you can say no to the wrong people quickly, because you'll find the right one faster that way.

EXAMPLES

• The woman who couldn't get over a man for 30 years

A caller in her 70s on morning TV said she couldn't get over a man she'd dated on and off. He had stopped calling 30 years earlier. Hussey uses it, along with Titanic's century-old Rose pining for a five-day romance, to show how retelling a story gives it importance it never deserved.

• Mel's cardboard box pyramid

Mel, who says she has bad ADHD, stacked delivery boxes by the door instead of flattening them, and fights with Chris went nowhere. When he explained that the stack made him feel like her maid, she understood his unmet need for acts of service and changed. She now calls herself the best box flattener on the planet.

• The ski trip Mel skipped

Chris went skiing for a week with their son while Mel stayed home alone happily. It didn't cost the marriage anything because their needs for connection were being met in other ways, which is Hussey's distinction in practice.

• Dating is Chutes and Ladders, not Monopoly

Effort reliably pays off with weight, sales or savings, but you could date every day for a year and not find love. You climb to date five, get ghosted, and slide back down with less time and more self-doubt. He quotes Mitch Albom: if you don't like the culture, be brave enough to create your own.

• The IKEA voice note

Instead of replying to a 'you up?' text in kind, send a voice note: you're at IKEA with your sister buying furniture you're dreading assembling. Your voice reaches a different sense and creates intimacy even if they're talking to three other people.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Build a 'portfolio' for meeting people

Apps are one investment, not the only one. Find opportunity-generating friends. Join a running club with 50 people rather than running alone. Switch gym classes, or try a different church one weekend. New communities bring 10, 20 or 30 new options, plus invitations to parties where someone's sibling is single.

• Model first, then mirror

Lead with the energy you want, like a good-morning message, but keep a standard: if you're always the one initiating, back off. Hussey's long-standing rule, which he admits is flawed, is to invest based on how much they invest, not how much you like them.

• Name inconsistency calmly

If someone vanishes for two weeks and then asks for a Saturday movie, don't play it cool. Say you value consistency and assumed you weren't on the same page. Be warm in how you raise it and ruthless with your energy if nothing changes: 'this train is leaving.'

• Go slow to go fast

Don't rush into something precarious just to have news at Thanksgiving. Watch how dating apps and Instagram pull you into dopamine loops instead of real connection.

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.

4 Habits for Energy, Productivity, & Happiness That Changed My Life (Science-Backed)

Date: 2024-07-29 · Duration: 0:58:09
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xo8mD5NIfM4

KEYPOINTS

• Old favourite songs can reset your mood
Mel's first music hack is 'neural nostalgia': we tend to have more memories tied to older songs than newer ones, and hearing a song from high school, college or an early chapter of life brings back how you felt then. Researchers call this music-evoked autobiographical memory. You don't have to try to remember anything. The song takes you there.

• Why it works: strong emotion records strong memories
Music activates the limbic system, which handles memory and emotion. Mel points out that the same recording system that stores trauma also stores your best moments. High emotion, plus hearing a song over and over that summer, locks the memory in. That's why you remember your graduation day but not the Thursday before it.

• You don't have to want it to work
Put on a sad friend's favourite song and they may be annoyed at first, but by the end of the song they usually feel better. Mel's point is that you don't need to be in the mood. You just press play.

• Build mood playlists before you need them
Make a few playlists in advance, even empty ones, and add songs as they come up: a hype playlist, a pick-me-up playlist, a high school favourites playlist. Mel notes that streaming services already sell playlists by mood because they know this works.

• Hack two: 'walk-on music' before a performance
Like athletes running out to their entrance songs, listen to 'familiar energetic music', meaning upbeat songs you already like, before a test, an interview, writing or paying bills. Mel cites a roughly six-year NYU Tandon study using wearables. As she describes it, energetic music raised brain arousal more than coffee or stimulating scents, by increasing activity in the beta band linked to peak thinking.

• Nostalgia songs and hype songs do different jobs
Mel separates the two. Nostalgic music, like the yacht-rock 'Piña Colada' song her parents played, moves you from one emotional state to another. Energetic music, like her current Lizzo and Dua Lipa picks, primes your energy. You can use the hype kind on your commute so you don't drag yourself into the office. Any genre works, from EDM to country, as long as it gets you going.

• Hack three: binaural beats for focus, relaxation or sleep
Each ear gets a slightly different tone, and your brain mixes them into a third humming sound that isn't actually playing, an 'auditory illusion.' Mel explains that brain waves tend to sync to that frequency (called entrainment), so different tracks are designed for focus, stress relief or sleep.

• How to use binaural beats
Headphones are essential, because each ear needs its own tone. Start somewhere quiet and undisturbed, keep the volume comfortable, and listen for 15 to 30 minutes, longer for relaxation or sleep. Try them both before and during focused work, use them daily so your brain adapts faster, and choose quality recordings from reputable sources.

• Hack four: solfeggio frequencies, or 'angel music'
Mel describes certain high, pure tones as making people feel calm, get goosebumps or tear up. Listen for 10 minutes, an hour or all day in the background. She presents claims about healing as early and exciting. Treat them as a calming practice, not a medical treatment.

EXAMPLES

• The motor home road trip
In eighth grade, Mel's family drove across the country to national parks with only three 8-track tapes: Neil Diamond, America and Hooked on Classics. Hearing Hooked on Classics puts her back on I-90 toward the Corn Palace, playing gin rummy in the back with her mom and brother.

• Taylor Swift with her daughters
Mel saw Taylor Swift in concert with her adult daughters, whose childhood soundtrack her music had been. Kendall had picked up a guitar around age seven to learn the songs. Even listening to the set list on errands beforehand flooded Mel with a decade and a half of carpool memories.

• U2 at Gillette Stadium, 2017
Joshua Tree came out in March 1987, the spring of Mel's freshman year, and she played it 'until the needle broke.' At the 2017 tour show, under a 200-foot-wide 8K screen, the sky cleared just before the band came on, and the crowd felt like the world's biggest college reunion.

• The snow-crunch trigger
Mel was once in a car that rolled in the snow. Decades later, the crunch of snow underfoot puts her back in the car. It's the negative version of the same memory system behind neural nostalgia.

• The YMCA dish party
After big dinners, Mel starts a disco playlist that opens with YMCA. Guests start wiggling toward the kitchen with their plates, and the cleanup turns into a party.

• Malachi on Britain's Got Talent
Mel's first experience of 'angel music' was a viral clip of 13-year-old Malachi singing very high, pure notes. Simon Cowell called it the best voice he'd ever heard and gave him the golden buzzer.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Before a big exam, put headphones on early**
  Mel suggests putting on a hype song as you walk into the test centre or the office, to block out other people's anxious energy and walk in 'like a boxer in a ring.'
- **Binaural beats in surgery**
  Mel cites a Danish study in which cataract surgery patients listening to a relaxation binaural-beats playlist through headphones relaxed during the procedure.
- **Keep the sound-healing research in proportion**
  The RMIT study in Melbourne that Mel mentions used high-frequency sound waves in the lab to nudge stem cells toward becoming bone cells. That's interesting cell science, not proof that listening to music heals the body.
- **Background music at home**
  One of Mel's producers, Amy, plays 'healing frequency' tracks in the background when her family is home and says they get along better. It's a personal experiment, not a study, but it costs nothing to try.

How to Create a New Version of Yourself: Let Go of Past Mistakes & Regret with Sarah Jakes Roberts

Guest: Sarah Jakes Roberts
Date: 2024-07-25 · Duration: 1:26:19
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M98E87vhM_c

KEYPOINTS

• A pregnancy at 13 seemed to confirm she didn't fit

Sarah Jakes Roberts, daughter of a prominent megachurch pastor, became pregnant at 13 and had her son at 14. She expected to be grounded, but her parents' grief showed her it was life-altering. She had never felt like one of the 'good church girls,' and the pregnancy confirmed that insecurity. For about 10 years she carried shame and decided to figure life out on her own.

• Ten years of trying on other identities like Cinderella's shoes

She compared herself to other kinds of girls, chased achievement, success and relationships, waitressed at a strip club, stayed in toxic relationships, went to school and worked for the government. Eventually the 'country girl from West Virginia' decided to go barefoot and stand flat-footed in who she was. Then she tried faith, to see whether a God said to love you no matter what might work 'for someone like me.'

• You can't heal while you're still punishing yourself

For those ten years she sat with herself, but punishingly: 'How could you be so stupid? No one's ever going to want you.' She says replaying other people's cruel words never heals. Real healing means sitting with yourself in pursuit of compassion until you no longer cringe, which feels uncomfortable because it stretches you. People punish themselves thinking it will prevent repeats, but you'll never be more than that moment if you keep replaying it.

• 'But also': you're more than your worst moment

She stopped trying to escape the 'teen mom' label and added to it: a teen mom, and also an author, a dreamer, someone who loves herself. She is divorced and on the Mel Robbins podcast, and all of it is true. She doesn't want to be defined by her achievements either. She wants to be 'a girl on her journey and a woman owning her power.'

• Most people underestimate how necessary they are

Her core message: our lives aren't random, and when people underestimate their importance they don't take their healing or their thoughts seriously. They 'put themselves on discount' and give themselves away 'to the lowest bidder.' Growing up during the height of purity culture, she felt that once virginity, the 'highest prize,' was gone, her price kept dropping, so she accepted things she otherwise wouldn't have.

• Your value is an inside job, and hard experiences add to it

Working with women who have experienced divorce, molestation and other painful events, she finds everyone has something that challenged their sense of worth. Rather than lowering your value, she argues, surviving those things adds wisdom and resilience that make you more confident and courageous.

• Cook with your leftovers instead of reinventing yourself

She failed repeatedly trying to bury the pregnancy under a brand-new identity, like becoming an accountant or a CFO, using 'ingredients that don't exist.' Open the cupboard and use what's there: a child, a writing gift, insecurities, a divorce. Mel adds that what you hide gives others power over you. Hiding it leads to people-pleasing, being whoever others need you to be.

• Watch your whole movie, not one scene

Regret comes from replaying one scene. Now she feels compassion for her 13-year-old self, who was lost, lonely and angry. Her parents' church had exploded overnight, bringing death threats and security, and they assumed the kids were okay. Anyone with what was in her cupboard might have made the same choice. Mel adds that your parents were doing life for the first time too, which doesn't excuse everything.

• Change old precedents when you're running on fumes

She knows she's overextended when her family and team asking for things she set them up to expect starts to annoy her, like her eight-year-old asking what's for dinner. Rest first, then work out what's still true for you and who needs to know, and change the expectation kindly instead of resenting people. Mel asks her team to send her the clip to replay.

EXAMPLES

• 'I always knew to expect something like this from you'

When she got pregnant, someone close to her said this, and she 'ate it for breakfast' for 10 years. Years later, praying before a tour that unexpectedly sold out, she felt God say the same sentence back with the opposite meaning. She now uses it when doubt creeps in.

• The blog that wouldn't stop inspiring people

In her early 20s, in a toxic relationship, she blogged to process her thoughts. When readers called her inspiring, she tried to put them off by revealing the teen pregnancy, the divorce and dropping out of college. They responded 'me too,' and the things she thought disqualified her were exactly what people connected with.

• The wig came off mid-sermon

Back in Dallas, unsure whether the confidence she'd built in LA would carry over, she noticed women in the congregation signaling that her ponytail wig was slipping. It had been sewn only to the wig cap. With about 50,000 people streaming, she pulled it off, tossed it to her sister and kept preaching in the wig cap. Women said it felt liberating, and one threw her own wig on the altar. 'The message is always bigger than the mess.'

• Turning down the global invitation

Because she's an introvert who loves being home, someone declined an international invitation on her behalf. She went back and said that traveling the world would be a dream and she was open to it, so as not to let an outdated belief about her block opportunities.

• 'That wasn't kind' at Starbucks

Her 14-year-old daughter flung a car door into the next car, and the owner called her an insult. Instead of matching his anger, Roberts said, 'Now, that wasn't kind,' which seemed to make him reflect. She admits that on a low day she'd be less gracious.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Let it live outside you

Speak who you're becoming to yourself and to other people, whether it's going back to school, starting a business or being an artist. Saying it out loud empties you out to make room for more and creates space around you. In her experience people are usually more flexible than you expect, like a packed concert crowd that still makes room.

• Take baby dares, and introduce the new you gradually

After years of self-doubt, believing in yourself is a dare, not a leap. Picture who's within reach, then introduce that version to the people close to you a little at a time. Rest is part of it: her ritual is letting her grown self take 13-year-old Sarah's hand and show her how far they've come.

• Power is authenticity, resilience and humility flowing together

Her definition is 100% of each: resilience to get up, humility to own mistakes, authenticity to know when you need nurturing. Power flows from one season or city into the next, so ask what power looks like for you now. She paraphrases Esther Perel on confidence: knowing your gifts and flaws without being swayed by either.

How To Make Your Life Exciting Again | Mel Robbins

Guest: Dr. Tali Sharot
Date: 2024-07-18 · Duration: 0:38:47
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=awLRiNhrNis

KEYPOINTS

• Habituation is why good things stop feeling good.

Dr. Tali Sharot, a behavioral neuroscientist who directs the Affective Brain Lab at University College London and also works at MIT, calls habituation a fundamental rule of how every neuron works. We respond less and less to things that are constant, frequent or change only gradually. Her examples: studies show you stop smelling a bakery within about 20 minutes; you stop smelling your own perfume a month after buying it; a cold pool stops feeling cold after a few minutes. The same happens with a new romance, a new home, a new job or a promotion.

• Your brain works like the front page of a newspaper.

Sharot says the brain cares most about what just happened, because something new might need a reaction or be a threat. Once something has been around a while and turned out fine, neurons save their resources for the next new thing. That's why we notice the new most and the familiar least.

• Habituation cuts both ways.

It also dulls bad things, which helps: we adapt even to a loss or a breakup, so we don't stay stuck in that first wave of pain and can move forward. The downside is that long-standing problems fade into the background, such as cracks in a relationship, inefficiencies at work, or societal problems like sexism and racism. Once we stop noticing them, we're less motivated to change them.

• Breaks 'dishabituate' you.

Stepping away and coming back resets the response, like walking out of the bakery for ten minutes and smelling it again on your return. After a work trip of a few days or a week, Sharot says, your home, your kitchen and even your partner seem to have 'resparkled'. Mel jokes that Chris comes back looking 'not so bad after all.'

• Novelty is the other way to dishabituate.

Sharot cites relationship expert Esther Perel's research, in which long-term couples said they felt most attracted to their partner in two situations. One was after time apart. The other was seeing them in a new context, such as talking with strangers or on stage. For your sex life, Sharot says, Perel's advice is breaks or novelty, and doing new things together outside the bedroom matters too.

• A varied life is a psychologically rich life.

According to Sharot, people who have lived in different places, worked on different kinds of projects and spent time with different kinds of people tend to have more psychologically rich lives. You can add variety in small, cheap ways: take a different route to work, take a free online course, pick up a new skill or podcast, or befriend someone whose personality isn't your usual type. New inputs dishabituate you, and they also put you in learning mode, which people enjoy.

• Midlife is the low point of the happiness 'U-curve'.

On average, across data from thousands of people, happiness is high in childhood and the teens, falls to its lowest in midlife, then rises again and stays fairly high until the last couple of years of life. Sharot stresses this is a trend, not a rule for every person. One reason she gives is that midlife has the least change. Childhood and your 20s are full of growth and trying new partners, jobs and studies. Midlife is about maintaining. Retirement and an empty nest force you to learn again.

• Changing your surroundings sparks creativity, briefly.

Sharot cites a psychologist's research showing that even small changes, like moving from your office to a coffee shop or holding a walking meeting, boost creativity, but only for about six minutes. Those minutes can be when the breakthrough comes. Companies can rotate people through different divisions or projects: they learn something new, and when they return, they see the old team with fresh eyes, noticing both the good and what needs fixing.

• Anticipation is a big part of happiness.

Sharot calls things you've scheduled but haven't done yet 'anticipatory events'. She says that's also why people prefer Friday to Sunday by far. Friday holds the weekend ahead. On Sunday you may be out on that hike, but you're also anxious about the work week.

EXAMPLES

• The backyard tent

Mel opens by describing a night sleeping in a tent in her Vermont backyard under a full moon with Chris, after nearly 28 years of marriage. Chris noticed the forecast and suggested it. They used to do adventures like that constantly when they were dating. Over coffee the next morning, she wondered when life got boring, then realised: 'maybe life isn't boring, maybe you've gotten boring.'

• The 43-hour vacation peak

When Sharot surveyed guests at resorts for a tourism company, the word they used most to describe the best part was 'first': the first view of the ocean, the first cocktail, the first sandcastle. Happiness peaked 43 hours in, once people had unpacked, then slowly declined. A separate study tracking people before, during and after a holiday found they were happiest the day before leaving, while still at their desks.

• The fading-colour illusion

In Sharot's book with co-author Cass Sunstein, there's an image of colour clouds with a black plus sign in the middle. Stare at it for about 30 seconds without moving your eyes and the colours fade to grey, even white, because each neuron gets an unchanging signal. Move your eyes and the colour rushes back. Mel compares it to staring at your spouse or your job for too long until everything turns grey.

• The kitchen you used to love

Mel describes a kitchen that's perfectly fine until you scroll through renovation posts or see a friend's coffee bar, and suddenly you hate yours. Sharot points out that the friend probably envies your kitchen too, because each of you has habituated to your own. The urge for something new isn't all bad, since it keeps us moving forward, but it takes balance.

• Julia Roberts' 'resparkle'

Sharot and her co-author borrowed the word from Julia Roberts. Roberts has said her ordinary days of school runs, bike rides and after-school activities would be boring if they never changed, but going away to film makes everything look like it has 'pixie dust' on it when she returns.

• Ideas on the walk to the gym

Stuck on a problem in her office, Sharot walked to a nearby gym, less than six minutes away, and the solution came to her on the way. It led to a lot of her later work. She says nearly every big idea she's had, including book topics and research directions, came in a new place.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Take shorter, more frequent vacations

Several long weekends give you more 'firsts', more anticipation and more afterglow than one two-week trip, though Sharot accepts that isn't practical for far-away destinations.

• Imagine your life without it

If you can't get away, Yale professor Laurie Santos suggests closing your eyes and picturing life without your partner, home or job. Mel notes most of us do the opposite and compare outward.

• Book something to look forward to

A trip, a night out, a class or a simple hike all count. Mel is excited about a guided owl walk with Chris.

• Run 'experiments in living'

Sharot's book ends with this idea: like a scientist, you won't know what works until you test it. Try something new, or try removing something, such as social media for a few weeks, and see how it affects you.

3 Steps to Eliminate Self Doubt & Get Everything You Want In Life

Date: 2024-07-15 · Duration: 0:41:35
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pHkJa2tL-mw

KEYPOINTS

• Triggers are teachers, and the anger is aimed at yourself

Mel's central idea is that when someone's success sets you off, you aren't really mad at them. You're mad at yourself for not doing the small, boring things that would get you what you want. That's why she says she's happy, not sorry, when you're triggered: the trigger points to something you clearly want and supplies fuel to go after it.

• Trigger #1: an irritating person gets what you want

Mel argues it has to be the irritating, less-qualified person who wakes you up. Famous experts far ahead of you make the gap feel impossible and supply excuses: they have a team, time, money. Someone close to your level with fewer credentials removes those excuses and shows you're capable too. You don't have to fake being happy for them or like their posts. Take the lesson and use the anger.

• About 90% of the time, they're just putting in the reps

Mel acknowledges that roughly 10% of envy-inducing success comes from trust funds, privilege, bias or genetic luck. In the other 90%, people got there by doing tedious work 'in the dark' every day while you weren't watching. Viral success usually has no unicorn strategy, just posting content every day until it builds.

• Inspiration is cheap; anger moves you

Watching people far ahead mostly makes you present to the gap, which is demoralizing. Mel says that's partly why she delayed starting her podcast. Anger is a very different emotion, a 'very painful gift' wrapped in sticky, gross paper, and used well it gets you moving where inspiration doesn't.

• Trigger #2: being called out on your BS

Being exposed, whether for faking competence, drinking again or spending money you said you wouldn't, is among the most triggering experiences. Mel distinguishes this from impostor syndrome; here you really don't know what you're doing and are hiding it. The lesson is that saying 'I don't know,' 'I've never done that' or 'can I take a class or hire help?' is a superpower.

• Admitting you don't know builds trust

Mel says research shows that when someone admits they don't know, others trust them more, because they can rely on that person to be honest. Mel now routinely asks guests to explain big words and has zero fear of asking for help. She credits that with helping her take bigger risks and solve problems faster.

• Trigger #3: someone you respect says you're playing small

This is the impostor-syndrome trigger. Others see more in you, but you underestimate yourself and stay in a box: not posting your music, undercharging, keeping the client who nickel-and-dimes you, not applying for the dream job or school. Listen to people who see something bigger, because deep down you see it too; you're just scared.

• Ignored triggers get louder

Mel finds that the more stubborn she is about avoiding what she knows she should do, the bigger the sledgehammer life brings next. Recognizing the trigger is the hardest step and the first one.

EXAMPLES

• Molly the interior designer

Mel's friend 'Molly' (not her real name) is a trained, accredited designer with employees and years in business. She had talked for five years about doing social media and kept asking Mel for advice. Then a woman from her moms' group with no design training started posting photos of her own house, going live on TikTok and Instagram, and racking up thousands of likes. Molly spiraled on her couch and cried for days. Mel told her to thank the woman. Molly already followed Leanne Ford, Jake Arnold, Studio McGee, Joanna and Chip Gaines and Amber Lewis, but none of them had gotten her moving.

• Mel's six months faking a job

After leaving law in 1999 for an early Boston startup, Mel needed a new job when the company was moved to San Francisco. She had a baby at home and was secretly pregnant. In 2001 she talked her way into a senior vice president of content role at a marketplace for creative freelancers. With no idea how to do it, she spent six months typing emails and looking busy. The two founders finally called her into a glass conference room: 'You're awesome, but you don't have a clue what you're doing, do you?' 'No, I don't.' Her things were packed while she sat there.

• 'You were 10 times better, and we paid the others five times more'

Around 2013–14, deep in debt and afraid that higher fees would cost her bookings, Mel undercharged for 5 Second Rule talks despite friends' warnings. At an executive retreat in Philadelphia for a Fortune 50 bank, she sat shrinking in the back of the room behind speakers like Dan Pink, then closed the event and brought the house down. The chief HR officer told her she was 10 times better than any other speaker and that they'd each been paid five times her fee. Her price was so low they'd doubted she was any good.

• Aaron down the hall

Mel's composite example is the coworker who suddenly quits to run the custom boat business he's been building on weekends while you ran spreadsheets. Because you know him, you can't invent a story about superpowers or trust funds.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Step 1: recognize the trigger

When you feel envy, embarrassment or anger, label it: 'I'm triggered, and that means there's something I need to do.' Simply noticing stops the swirl.

• Step 2: play the 100-day rule

Want a following? Post for 100 days. Want to write a great song? Write 100 crappy songs on 100 days. Writing a book means

writing every day for 100 days. Better at three-pointers means 15 minutes on the court a day for 100 days.

- **Be someone's chief HR officer**

  If you see a person you love playing small, tell them plainly what they're missing out on. It won't be an easy conversation, but Mel calls it one of the most loving things you can do.

- **Make one practical trade-off**

  Mel's suggestions for Molly translate widely: take one fewer client and spend that time on the avoided task, or hire someone to help with it.

How to Get Unstuck: Do This to Create the Future You Want

Guest: Dr. Adam Alter
Date: 2024-07-11 · Duration: 0:51:59
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4ss_15MixTc

KEYPOINTS

• Everyone is stuck somewhere, and knowing that is freeing

NYU researcher Dr. Adam Alter, author of Anatomy of a Breakthrough, has surveyed thousands of people worldwide. He says everyone reports being stuck in at least one respect and can name it quickly. Some answers are narrow, like a piano piece someone has failed to learn for six years; others are 'my whole life is one big sticking point.' He argues that stuckness feels personal and messy, but there is a step-by-step path through it.

• There are two kinds of stuck

The first is goal-based: you know you want to get from A to Z, such as a nursing degree or no longer being single, but can't get past B. Alter says this is usually easier to solve. The second is diffuse 'blah,' where life feels dull and gray and no day builds on the one before. He believes modern life holds a lot of that emptiness, which is why loss of direction is so common.

• Life quakes stall even people who were doing well

Alter cites author Bruce Feiler's research on 'lifequakes,' major events that blindside nearly everyone: divorce, a death, illness. Good ones count too, like a promotion, a move or a new child, because they force change. If you expect ups and downs, you skip the 'why me' rumination and start acting sooner.

• Run a friction audit: find, intervene, confirm

Paradoxically, Alter says that when you crave freedom, tight structure helps. Step one is to find the biggest friction points, such as the part of the day you dread most or the step in your career you can never get past. Step two is to intervene by removing the friction or smoothing it down, spending time, energy or money if needed. Step three is to confirm that it worked. He developed the method with companies before applying it to individuals.

• Raise your lows instead of adding more highs

Alter argues that bad things drag you down more than good things lift you up, so 'we are often as good as the worst stuff that's going on.' He says the best return comes from smoothing out friction points, not from booking the next flashy vacation. The natural instinct is to turn away from those problems, which is how they become traps that can last for decades.

• Ages ending in nine trigger a spike in soul-searching

With UCLA's Hal Hershfield, Alter found that people question life's meaning more at 29, 39, 49 and 59, which he calls an end-of-decade crisis. At those ages more people sign up for marathons and buy books on aging. The research also found rises in extramarital affairs and a small rise in suicide. Alter's advice is to audit your life every year so you don't depend on an overwhelming decade marker.

• Set a goal to prove to yourself that you can move

Alter ran his only marathon at 29, when he was single, lonely in New York, missing Australia and unsure of his new career. The goal itself doesn't matter, he says; it's a 'palate cleanser' that signals you can make things happen and counters helplessness. Options include athletic goals, intellectual ones like coding or the Saturday New York Times crossword, and creative ones like painting or music. Connecting with people also restores meaning.

• Take a minimally viable action

The habit stage starts with the smallest step in the right direction. Stuck in a job? List alternative industries, then specific target companies and their pros and cons. Alter credits experimentation with getting him unstuck from a degree he didn't want: lay out your options and spend a week tasting each one. Turning it into an experiment removes the pressure of 'getting it right.'

• Good failure tells you what to do next

Alter says very few failures are irreversible. Bad failure leaves you dejected without knowing why. Good failure shows what worked, where you fell short, or that you should quit and move on, which is also valuable. His test: 'Have I learned what the next thing should be?' If so, he says it wasn't really a failure.

EXAMPLES

• Mel's 'I hate' list

In 2019, with a marriage, money, health and work she liked, Mel felt empty and guilty about it. Her close friend and mentor Peter, a business strategist, told her to write down everything that created friction, and it poured out of her: 'I hate packing on a Sunday… I hate how much I miss my kids.' He told her every item was now a project: remove it, hire it out, or do it without complaining. She now makes the list every year.

• Seven years of not starting a podcast

'I haven't started the podcast yet' showed up on Mel's friction list. She committed to 15 minutes a day for about a year: deciding to launch within a year or two, listing shows to study, listening, researching equipment. She says she stopped feeling stuck years before the podcast launched.

• Jeff Tweedy's worst-sentence warm-up

The Wilco frontman, who writes music and books, spends 10 minutes producing the worst, most boring sentences or music he can when he doesn't feel creative. It gets the ball rolling, and some of those 'bad' pieces turn out to be better than he expected.

• Booking a campsite six months out

Chris set a calendar reminder months ahead and logged on to the National Park Service site at 6 a.m. to reserve a campsite for the family's goal of climbing Mount Katahdin in Maine. His first two choices were already gone, so he took the third. Mel cites it, and Chris doing 75 Hard four times, as small steps toward something meaningful.

• Couples therapy as a friction audit

About four and a half years earlier, during a terrible stretch, Mel and Chris went to counseling. She compares it to digging up

dead bodies, but says the relationship on the other side was better than she knew was possible.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Build a three-part brain trust**
  Consult people similar to you, people who are deliberately different (companies recruiting at NYU take the best finance, marketing, French-literature and chemistry students), and a 'black sheep' who pushes back. Alter cites Pixar bringing in a narrative-first skeptic to a team of animators. Talking only to people like you entrenches you.
- **Helping a stuck loved one: ask, don't bully**
  Alter says you can't make someone care about getting unstuck. Without judgment, ask questions like 'Do you want this to change?' or invite them to list what annoys them, then offer to work on it together.
- **Alternate between exploring and exploiting**
  Alter's single takeaway: you can't explore options and drill deep at the same time. Try different things, commit to the best one until you hit a wall, then go back to exploring.

World Leading Psychologist: How to Master Your Emotions & Deal With Negative People

Guest: Dr. Susan David
Date: 2024-07-08 · Duration: 1:05:00
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KsNqnurfP5A

KEYPOINTS

• Many people feel 'untethered,' and Dr. David says the rise is real

Mel opens with herself glaring at a woman unloading potatoes one at a time at the grocery store. Psychologist Dr. Susan David says the pandemic, war and rapid change have left many people untethered from themselves. She says research shows a huge increase in depression, anxiety, burnout and lashing out. Because no one teaches the science of handling emotions at school or work, a world that feels out of control makes people feel out of control too.

• Stop 'hustling' with yourself over what you're allowed to feel

David says we hustle internally: Should I feel this? Am I allowed? If I accept myself, can I still want more? That fight cuts us off from our values. Her image is a gymnast who adjusts to the crowd and the music because of a strong inner core. Emotional agility is about building that core.

• Emotions are data, not directives

Emotions evolved to help us adapt. David rejects the pop-psychology split into positive and negative, and the old idea that emotions are weak or feminine. Thoughts like 'I'm a fraud' and stories written on our 'mental chalkboards' at age five are normal. Feeling something doesn't mean you have to act on it. Meeting it with compassion and curiosity gives you the distance to choose who you want to be.

• Invalidating a child's feelings teaches 'display rules'

Display rules are a family's unspoken rules about which emotions are allowed. If a child is told, even subtly, not to be upset, they learn 'sadness has no place here' and turn away from themselves. Kids learn to regulate by feeling sadness and then noticing it pass, so allowing every emotion is 'the core work of parenting.' David links people-pleasing to the same rules: learning as a child which feelings risked a caregiver's love.

• Get more precise than 'stressed'

'Stressed' gives your body nothing to work with. Disappointed, unsupported, unseen and bored each point to a different cause. Precise labeling builds what psychologists call readiness potential, pushing you toward a fix: if you're bored, what would make you not bored? David says children as young as two or three with more emotional granularity do better 10, 20 and 30 years later.

• Avoid both bottling and brooding

Bottling means suppressing feelings: Netflix as a default, forced positivity, rushing to fix. When leaders tell struggling staff 'everything will be fine,' David calls it 'denial wrapped up in rainbows and sparkles.' Brooding means getting stuck in the feeling. Co-brooding, a big shared moan, makes friends feel closer but, she says, worsens the long-term relationship with the person complained about, and brooding predicts longer-term depression and anxiety.

• 'I'm noticing that I feel sad' instead of 'I am sad'

'I am sad' or 'I'm a bad parent' makes you the cloud, all of you defined by one state. Saying 'I'm noticing a story that I needed to be a perfect parent' treats thoughts, emotions and stories as parts of you, alongside your wisdom and values. In her words, you are 'the whole damn sky.' Gentle acceptance, which she distinguishes from passive resignation, comes first.

• Separating from a loved one's pain means boundaries, not detachment

Parents tend to be 'only as happy as your most unhappy child.' Mel admits that when her kids' anxiety or her husband's depression comes up, she rushes in to fix things, then pours a drink. David's three-step boundary: name the need ('I can see you need me right now'), empathize, then say what you can and can't do ('I'm cooking; can we talk in an hour?'). You stay compassionate but don't let their anxiety knock you both off balance.

• Behind passive-aggression is usually an unmet need

Emotions are signposts: loneliness points to a need for connection, boredom to growth, anger to fairness or a crossed value. Reacting to a passive-aggressive text by calling someone toxic, which David links to the fundamental attribution error, escalates things. Asking what the emotion is for keeps the relationship 'clean.'

• Discomfort is the price of admission to a meaningful life

David says solving, fixing and controlling are part of the problem: we swap phones, cut off friends and try to replace hard thoughts with positive ones. Never having your heart broken is 'a dead person's goal.' Careers, relationships and families all come with stress. The skills are compassion, curiosity and courage.

EXAMPLES

• The stolen book title

Years ago, a far more famous professor asked David at a conference what she was working on. Six months later, while she sat in a Starbucks, he left a voicemail asking if she minded him using her concept as his book title, which was already on pre-sale on Amazon. She called her husband, a physician, who said he had a patient on the table for an emergency procedure and hung up. She resolved not to take his call back, which she offers as a model of how not to do it.

• 'It's not okay, your child is in pain'

When her newborn screamed during shots, David kept saying 'It's okay.' A nurse gently told her it wasn't okay, her child was in pain, though it would be okay. Despite her PhD, she had invalidated him.

• Hands on heart: 'It's hard to human right now'

David's quick grounding practice, which she uses with doctors about to give bad news, is to put your hands on your chest, feel your feet on the floor and say, 'It's hard to human right now.' She contrasts it with telling yourself you should just be grateful.

- **'Thanks a lot for inviting me'**

  A friend of Mel's held a small birthday dinner and got a passive-aggressive text from someone left out. Mel gets similar ones ('I see you're in Boston, thanks for calling'). David reads the text as asking 'Do I matter? Am I still part of us?' Mel's reframed reply: 'I can see you're upset; let's talk tomorrow, I don't want you to feel that way.'

- **'Suzy, we all die. It's normal to be scared'**

  At five, David crawled into her parents' bed night after night begging them to promise they'd never die. Her father didn't brush it off. He told her everyone dies and it's normal to be scared. He died of cancer when she was 15. Her lesson from him: courage isn't the absence of fear, it's 'fear walking.'

OTHER RELEVANT

- **When someone erupts, be present instead of fixing**

  David says simple presence, not jostling, distracting or reasoning with someone mid-meltdown, de-escalates difficult emotions. Respond with your feet on the ground rather than reacting.

- **Get specific about the feeling behind resentment**

  For a listener angry that her brother-in-law is dating her best friend, David says skip forced happiness and name the real feeling: loss, or a sense of an interloper. Mel adds that territorial feelings often come from insecurity, and David's 'keep your eyes on your own work' applies.

- **Vent less, label more**

  Before sending a string of angry texts, notice that venting often comes from not tolerating your own feelings. Name the emotion, ask what need it points to, then decide on a response that fits your values.

Secret Service Agent Explains Psychological Tricks To Read Anyone & Spot A Liar

Guest: Evy Poumpouras
Date: 2024-07-04 · Duration: 1:18:43
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ekPDLDgz7pQ

KEYPOINTS

• Start by getting someone's baseline

Evy Poumpouras, a former Secret Service agent and polygraph examiner, says a few minutes of watching shows how a person normally moves, stands and makes eye contact when nothing is at stake. In an interrogation she gets it with easy questions like name, birthplace and address. Then she watches how the person changes when recalling a memory and when emotional. Departures from the baseline are what matter, not any single gesture.

• Look for harmony between words, body and energy

Within seconds of arriving, Evy noted that Mel came straight over with open arms instead of letting staff greet her, and that her warm words matched her body language. That match signals sincerity. When words, posture and the 'energy' a person gives off don't line up, she says to note it rather than dismiss it.

• When someone seems off, don't make it about you

Evy's rule is to observe first and not spiral into 'they don't like me.' Most of the time someone's coldness has nothing to do with you. Mel, who mentioned being exhausted from hosting her parents and a late-night call with her daughter, says the trap is letting someone else's mood knock you off yours. Asking simple questions like 'how was your morning?' often lets people explain themselves.

• Never call people out on their body language

Evy says the cues are for you to gather information, not to show off. Pointing out "you just looked away" makes people feel analyzed and talked down to, so she keeps what she sees to herself unless asked.

• 'Liars look away' is a myth

Evy calls the eye-contact rule 'BS' and marketing. How a person makes eye contact reflects their whole history, such as shyness, being called stupid, being hit, ADHD or autism. She breaks eye contact herself to search her 'mental Rolodex.' She separates two things: when reading others, let them look wherever they want, but when you want to build trust, hold eye contact, because people are wired to read it as trust and respect.

• Body orientation tells you a lot

Squaring up with someone shoulder to shoulder signals interest. Leaning or angling toward the door is what investigators call the 'fleeing position', which many suspects took because they wanted out. Mel notes kids in trouble at the kitchen island do it too. Evy adds that you are the other half of the equation, so check what your own posture says.

• Verbal red flags

Evy shares cues her unit noticed while admitting there's no research behind them: 'divine props' like a Bible or rosary beads, and oaths like 'I swear to God' or 'on my grandmother's grave.' Her point is that the truth is usually simple and doesn't need selling. She also flags stalling ('Who, me? Homework?'), shifts in possessive language ('my car' versus 'the car'), and above all whether the person actually answered your question. A dodge, a subject change or an attack is information too.

• Watch out for the over-eager charmer

Evy recalls Canadian detective Jim Smith, who got a confession from serial offender Russell Williams, saying the person to watch is the very charming one working hard to win you over. She notes that this trait appears in some, though not all, people with narcissistic or antisocial personality disorders.

• People show you the truth even when they won't tell you

Evy doesn't need a confession. Behavior is the answer. Mel adds that a refusal to give a direct answer is itself an answer. In interrogations Evy collected small 'admissions' that formed a picture like a puzzle. With one fraud suspect she asked, 'You don't have to tell me if you did it. What are you worried about?'

• Deal with problems while they're small, or create space

With people you can't avoid, like teammates or family, address issues early before resentment builds, and remember that kindness is clarity, since others don't automatically know your expectations. If someone's name on your phone turns your stomach, minimize exposure: let calls go to voicemail and text instead of calling back. Cutting people off is something she saves for when it's really needed.

• How you say it matters more than what you say

Paralinguistics means your tone, pitch and pace. Evy learned it doing news segments after leaving the Secret Service. Her advice is to cut down to a few 'greatest hits' talking points, speak lower and slower, use pauses, and never rush, because hurrying signals your words aren't important. Fewer points also lighten your mental load so you can pay attention to how you sound.

• Bravery comes from action and mission focus

Evy says you don't need to feel brave, confident or motivated first. Waiting for those becomes the obstacle. Before a high-profile child-murder interrogation she told herself 'Evy, you don't matter' and focused entirely on the goal of getting information. She says losing and messing up made her braver than winning ever did.

EXAMPLES

• From AIG cubicle to Secret Service

A few weeks into an underwriting job at AIG, Evy saw a cop through the subway doors and thought 'I can do that.' She called NYPD recruiting that night, later applied to the FBI, DEA, CIA and Secret Service, and the Secret Service hired her first. Mel's takeaway: knowing what you don't want is often enough to start.

• Watching presidents absorb criticism

Starting under Clinton, Evy watched presidents stand next to TV screens of commentators calling them idiots without falling apart. From them she learned resilience, 'mental armor', losing with class, less is more, and delegating, because a president isn't expected to know everything.

• The polygraph unit she didn't want

The Secret Service had only about 30 examiners, who handled the hardest cases. Evy put in her name 15 minutes before the Friday deadline, was surprised to beat more senior and military candidates, and was sent to the Department of Defense polygraph institute at Fort Jackson. There she took graduate-level biology and psychology on tight timelines, plus lessons from pharmacists on how drugs affect people. She later earned a master's in forensic psychology.

• The manager who didn't care

Meeting a potential manager in LA with her husband, also a former interrogator, Evy could tell within seconds he was only there as a favor to her entertainment attorney. She ended the meeting quickly and didn't follow up, reasoning that if he wasn't excited now, he'd never work hard for her.

• 'This guy's dead because of you'

In simulated attacks at the training compound nicknamed 'Tiny Town', instructors would point out a mistake and move on immediately. Evy contrasts that with how we beat ourselves up over forgetting the milk. Her husband's rule: nobody says 'I should have', because you made the best decision you could with the information you had.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Hard conversations with someone struggling with addiction

Mel and Evy suggest going in to assess, not to force a confession. Put your feelings aside, watch tone, dodges and past behavior, and remember lying can be a coping mechanism. You may hope to get them into help, but you're only half the equation and they may not be ready. Plan your next step either way.

• Use baselines anywhere

First dates, job interviews, meeting the in-laws, pitching a client, hiring a babysitter: slow down, observe, and let people be themselves so their behavior shows.

• Make mistakes into lessons applied

Getting fooled sometimes is inevitable. What matters is correcting course without beating yourself up, which Evy says only makes you more insecure.

5 Fun Ideas to Shake Up Your Life & Get Out Of A Rut

Date: 2024-07-01 · Duration: 0:41:31
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CyN31HaG0P4

KEYPOINTS

• Play 'never been there, never done that' instead of waiting for Bali

Mel's game: make a list of places and experiences near home you've never tried, then pick one a week for the rest of the year. All it takes is about 30 minutes and walking out the door, and it needn't cost anything. Whether you live in a city, suburb or rural area, she argues, there are restaurants, coffee shops, trails, galleries, junk shops, library lectures and leagues you've driven past for years.

• Big trips stay on the horizon; local adventures can happen this week

Mel's executive producer Tracy described a family brainstorm — the Caribbean, Patagonia, a safari, Greece — that ended with no trip, because not a single date worked for everyone. Mel says to keep dreaming big, but notes such trips can take two years to fund and schedule, whereas a local adventure can happen in the next seven days.

• You get a mood boost from planning, and another from doing

Mel cites research that having something to look forward to lifts mood and energy when you plan it and again when you do it. Retelling her own adventures, she says, delivers a third boost as she relives them.

• Small goals give you direction and 'a game worth playing'

Each item on the list is a micro-goal that lifts you off autopilot. Without one, Saturday turns into the usual grocery run, chores and the same coffee stop. With one, you wake up and head to the new nursery or the fly-fishing museum, and the day feels more meaningful.

• Habituation is why routine loses its sparkle

Researchers call it habituation: you get so used to something you stop noticing it — the 20th order of your favorite bolognese doesn't taste as good as the first, and a partner, a backyard or a painting you've looked at for five years stops dazzling. Mel previews an upcoming episode with an MIT neuroscientist on the topic, and says change — of environment, route, people or routine — is what restores wonder.

• Your area is an anthill: it looks dull until you look inside

Someone described Mel's rural corner of Southern Vermont as 'very deceiving': from outside there's nothing to do, but inside is a whole vibrant world. When her son wanted to move there four years earlier, Mel had protested it was 'where people go to die' — she'd only ever visited her in-laws for weekends of hiking, golf and skiing. If you exhaust your town, go one town, neighborhood or block over.

• Mel barely explored Boston in 26 years

Living in the Boston area, she stuck to the same three restaurants and one coffee shop, rarely went to Fenway, visited the Museum of Fine Arts and the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum perhaps once or twice, and never made it to the Harbor Islands. She even owned a paint-your-own-pottery shop on Natick's two-and-a-half-block main street — which never made money — without visiting half the neighboring stores.

• A 'fail' still counts

The point is novelty, not perfection — Mel says a mediocre attempt is good enough because doing something different shakes things up. Some detours are amazing and some are 'meh'.

EXAMPLES

• The wooden salad bowl 'shack'

For almost two decades Mel drove Route 2 in western Massachusetts past a shack-like spot with wooden bowls on the lawn and a hand-painted sign. When she finally pulled in, she found a maker she says had been on Oprah's favorite-things list for years. Its bowls are now her go-to wedding gift.

• The Clark Art Institute

Planning a three-day visit for her parents around Oakley's high-school graduation, Mel discovered the Clark, about an hour away in Williamstown, Massachusetts, a town of about 7,000. She describes around 40 Renoirs in one room, works by Winslow Homer, Degas, Remington and her favorite portraitist, John Singer Sargent, 19 rooms and 145 landscaped acres — more impressive to her than the Musée d'Orsay she'd just seen in Paris.

• Dolene, the sourdough starter

Oakley wanted to learn sourdough, so they made a starter from scratch — a tedious seven-day process of feeding and dividing. Listeners named it Dolene. Mel left for Boston on day four; Oakley stopped feeding it, and it died — he hid the jar outside. They never baked bread, but she calls it a gloriously fun failure (despite her Austrian immigrant grandparents having owned a bakery).

• The 'beer and tinned fish' place

Mel drove past a spot for seven years, dismissing it as a beer garden. When she finally went in, she found hand-rolled croissants that sell out within 15 minutes on weekends, great coffee and matcha, and al fresco sourdough pizza and oysters out back. She now goes about three times a week. Her mother's line: 'Try it, you might like it.'

• Oakley and the 'chat and chop' grandmas

As a high-school freshman, Oakley wandered into the cafeteria to find older women from Grateful Hearts cooking donated farm food for food-insecure neighbors. He asked to help, put on an apron and stayed four years — which is how he got into cooking. Chris volunteers every Thursday delivering donated restaurant meals to hospice patients.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Five prompts to fill your list

Walk into a store you've never entered (or try the neighboring town's Thursday farmers market); turn down a street you've

never taken — Mel's colleague Amy and her daughter do this and find farms and fruit stands; visit a museum, gallery, library or green space; try a new restaurant, market or recipe; join a sports league, community group or volunteer.

- **Start with what's already on your radar**

  Mel's own additions: the National Fly Fishing History Museum she'd passed for 28 years, a garden center her colleague raves about, candlelit cross-country ski trails, a local CrossFit gym and a new Tuesday-night barre class.

- **Find volunteer and league options locally**

  If you're new in a city, Mel recommends a kickball league — no athletic skill needed. For volunteering, check your town's Facebook group, call the town clerk or ask at the library.

Brain Hacks: 6 Secrets to Learn Faster & Unlock The Full Power Of Your Mind

Guest: Jim Kwik, Dr. Daniel Amen, Dr. Sarah Wakeman, Dr. Joseph Ferrari, Dr. Paul Conti, Shawn Achor
Date: 2024-06-27 · Duration: 0:49:51
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t6JBor1xyQQ

KEYPOINTS

• Most of your brain's performance is within your control

Brain coach Jim Kwik, once called 'the boy with the broken brain' after hitting his head on a classroom radiator, says about a third of brain performance, such as memory, is set by genetics and biology. The other two-thirds is in your hands. In 32 years of coaching, he says, age, education, IQ and history haven't stopped anyone from improving.

• Use SUAVE to remember names

Say the name immediately (you hear it twice, and any mistake gets corrected early, so you don't spend 20 minutes talking to Ted and say goodbye to 'Ed'). Use it three or four times. Ask about it: spelling, origin, who they were named after. Visualise it, since the visual cortex takes up more of the brain: Mary carrying two lambs, David with a slingshot, Mike singing on a table. End by saying goodbye with their name.

• Point your brain toward the positive at both ends of the day

Psychiatrist Dr. Daniel Amen, whose Amen Clinics have done nearly 200,000 brain scans across 111 countries (including Mel's and Chris's), starts each day with 'today is going to be a great day' and asks his family at breakfast why it will be. At night he prays, then goes on a 'treasure hunt' for what went well, starting from the moment he woke. He has done it for seven or eight years, including the night his father died. 'The brain is lazy; it does what you nudge it to do.'

• Amen's five brain foods

Wild salmon for omega-3s, organic berries (he calls blueberries 'brain berries' and says blueberry extract has been shown to improve memory), nuts and seeds (linked to lower rates of depression and dementia), leafy greens for fiber and magnesium, and raw cacao. His rule: only eat things you love that love you back. He says beer, for instance, shrinks your brain.

• Heavy drinking damages memory and can shrink the brain

Dr. Sarah Wakeman, senior medical director for substance use disorder at Mass General Brigham and an associate professor at Harvard Medical School, explains that alcohol affects regions involved in laying down memories. Long-term heavy use can cause dementia, and a rare alcohol-related amnesia leaves people unable to form new memories. Scans of long-term heavy drinkers in their 50s often show volume loss resembling a much older brain.

• Cutting back brings quick benefits

Wakeman lists better, more restorative sleep, possible weight loss from fewer liquid calories, more energy to exercise without hangovers, less irritability and more presence with loved ones, and over time better skin, hydration and hormone regulation, with less acne. Seeing these early, she says, can reinforce longer-term decisions.

• Procrastination is learned, so it can be unlearned

DePaul psychologist Professor Ferrari says about 20% of adults are chronic procrastinators, with no significant gender difference, which he says is more common than depression or panic attacks. Everyone procrastinates sometimes; procrastinators do it across life, from RSVPs to bills. He says culture reinforces it by punishing lateness without rewarding earliness, and fear drives it, because people would rather be judged as lacking effort than lacking ability.

• Procrastinators see the forest and miss the trees

Ferrari's fix is to cut down one tree. If that's too much, three branches; if that's too much, a handful of leaves. A body in motion stays in motion. Mel adds examples: do arm exercises today instead of fixating on losing 30 pounds; ask your boss what it would take to grow; research one city you'd like to live in.

• Get curious about your self-talk rather than arguing with it

Psychiatrist Dr. Paul Conti, trained at Stanford and Harvard and credited by Lady Gaga with changing her life, says inner talk either 'paints with a broad brush' ('you're a loser') or targets what you want most ('you'll never find anyone'). Imagine someone whispering that in your ear all day. Recognise it, ask what you say when you drop something or face something new, and get it out of your head by journaling or telling a trusted person or therapist.

• Expect months, not days

Conti tells patients that real change in self-talk usually takes about four to six months, with some improvement possibly within a couple of weeks. Expecting a quick fix from a pill or a few sessions sets people up to quit.

EXAMPLES

• Amen's daily brain-healthy hot chocolate

About 12 ounces of unsweetened organic almond milk, heated, with a heaping teaspoon of raw cacao and a couple of droppers of liquid chocolate stevia, blended. He calls it part of his ritual for happiness.

• "To hell with it" means "to hell with me"

Conti describes small self-punishments, like walking in the rain rather than opening an umbrella. Mel admits doing exactly that, collar popped and hunched. Conti's reframe: put the umbrella up as a small act of protection, and do small kindnesses like picking up something a stranger dropped in a coffee line.

• Oakley's teeth

Mel's son barely brushed in elementary school until his sisters teased him about yellow teeth. A couple of months of daily brushing transformed them, which Mel uses as a parallel for cleaning up self-talk.

• Shawn Achor's 21-day happiness habits

The author of The Happiness Advantage asks people to write three new gratitudes daily without repeats for 21 days and to take 15-minute brisk walks four to five times a week, which he says research equates to an antidepressant over six months with a 30% lower relapse rate. He also recommends two minutes of watching your breath (he says accuracy improves 10% after 21 days) and a two-minute thank-you or praise email to a different person each day, which he says improves social connection, the

top predictor of long-term happiness.

- **The pitcher next to the glass**
  Achor says we argue about whether the glass is half full or half empty while ignoring the pitcher of water beside it that we could use to refill it.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Pair a positive question with brushing your teeth**
  Mel suggests asking 'what went well today?' while you brush at night, so the habit rides on one you already have.
- **Pick one tree today**
  Choose a single concrete action toward whatever you've been putting off, then stop thinking about the whole forest.
- **Commit to 21 days**
  Achor's habits are designed around a three-week run, so track them for 21 days before judging the results.

You Learn This Too Late: This One Idea Might Change Your Entire Life

Guest: Dr. Shefali Tsabary
Date: 2024-06-20 · Duration: 1:37:13
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dZccHfhhtXY

KEYPOINTS

• Control comes from your own anxiety and sense of unworthiness

Clinical psychologist Dr. Shefali, a pioneer of conscious parenting, says the urge to puppeteer your children, partner and life comes from inner anxiety tied to feeling unworthy. Children who feel constantly controlled conclude they must be broken. Her central invitation is to release control, because neither children nor life can be controlled, and trying to control them produces more chaos.

• Parenting is about the parent waking up, not fixing the child

Most parenting advice offers scripts to manage a child's behavior. Dr. Shefali says no script works if you're disconnected from yourself, because the child absorbs the disconnection. The child isn't broken, so there's nothing to fix. The relationship is a mirror of your own unhealed self, especially the inner knowing you lost in childhood. That's why she says "screw the carrots" strategies: get aligned with yourself first.

• "I just want my child to be happy" is still control

Parents who drop the Ivy League dream often move on to happiness as the goal. Dr. Shefali breaks down the sentence: "I" is ego, "want" is desire, "my" is possession, so it means wanting another being in a state that works for you. When the child isn't smiling and grateful, the parent panics and starts fixing. Mel admits she did exactly that that morning after seeing a "cringy" post from one of her kids.

• The hidden script: "I sacrificed, so you owe me"

Dr. Shefali believes parents often have children partly to fill their own sense of unworthiness, to bring home a trophy that says "See, I'm worthy," while claiming pure selflessness. Children then grow up believing they owe loyalty, duty and obligation, which she says explains a lot of adult guilt. She calls this objectification the most toxic parenting pattern, and the first objectification many people experience.

• A parent's job is unconditional presence and acceptance

Everyone wants to be seen and told they're good enough as they are, even if their path doesn't match your script. When parents tend to their own self-esteem instead of drawing worth from their kids, children feel free. "How your child is faring in the world doesn't give you a grade. How you are faring does."

• Seeing your own childhood clearly is the first painful step

Realizing you were "a puppet to my parents' fantasies" hurts, but it's where change begins. Next comes compassion: your parents acted from the level of consciousness they had, and likely weren't parented well themselves. Then you start in the present, whatever your age. She validates children who are being emotionally abused, but tells adults past about 21 that it's time to release their parents and parent their own inner child.

• Boundaries are about your behavior, not theirs

Begging someone to respect your boundary makes them the keeper of your dignity. A true boundary is what you'll do: leave, remove the Wi-Fi, stop buying the junk food. With little kids, be creative; she used to tell her three-year-old the park was closed in the evening. "You have two legs for a reason." With red-flag behaviors like drugs or drinking, she says parents should step in rather than wait.

• Screens have become substitutes for presence

Dr. Shefali links rising anxiety and depression in young people to parents who use screens to soothe their own anxiety and then pass the habit on. She blames what she calls the "parenting industrial complex" more than individual parents. She treats devices like alcohol or a vape in the house and suggests cutting back on activities. She calls social media exposure to strangers' scorn and judgment something kids aren't equipped to handle.

• A midlife crisis is an invitation

By midlife, many people have checked off most of society's list and still aren't happy. Kids become teens who treat you as "a chauffeur and a wallet" and then leave. The "now what?" is a chance to tear up the borrowed prescription and design a life from your own inner knowing. It will happen whether you welcome it or not.

EXAMPLES

• Mel's mother and "I gave up everything"

Mel's mom got pregnant with her in college, dropped out, and has told Mel and her daughters, "I gave up everything for your mother." Dr. Shefali says most parents say this more subtly at dinner: "Aren't you happy? I took you to the beach, I enrolled you in dance." Mel admits "you owe me, I paid for that" is the pattern she most wants to break in herself.

• Mel invited her daughters' criticism

Mel told her adult daughters, both in therapy, to talk about everything she did wrong: where they felt unseen, where she was controlling or checked out. Dr. Shefali says owning your imperfection frees children: they always knew it wasn't them.

• The basket in the kitchen

Mel's family puts phones in a kitchen basket, so the basket enforces the boundary. Dr. Shefali suggests starting with screen-free time, even five or 30 minutes a day, building to an hour, and letting kids be bored, frustrated and annoyed while everyone goes through withdrawal.

• Parents whose adult children have cut them off

Dr. Shefali works with many parents whose adult children have stopped talking to them. They may never get the ideal relationship back, but they can still be a source of unconditional love: leave a note on the doorstep, send flowers every Sunday, leave a meal, expecting nothing back. When they reconnect, she suggests owning their unconsciousness in a letter without pushing for a response, because "your child owes you nothing."

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Swap lectures for curiosity**

  When she wants to control her adult daughter, Dr. Shefali tells herself that if she isn't curious, she should zip her mouth. Look at your child as if they're the most amazing person on earth. People go to phones for safety and soothing, so become the presence that's more appealing than the phone.

- **Meet an adult child's real developmental need**

  Connecting with a young adult means supporting their need to leave, take risks and fail, not keeping them close for your comfort. Holding on with guilt clips the wings you worked to grow, and robs you of your own next chapter.

- **When someone you love is in a toxic dynamic, do "both-and"**

  Say: I love you and I'm here, but I can't take part in this dynamic. Stay as long as you can, and if it hits red-flag territory, step back so they can sit with why you left. Staying and pretending props up the dynamic.

This One Hack Will Unlock Your Happier Life

Date: 2024-06-17 · Duration: 0:58:10
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fz7xalJJBDs

KEYPOINTS

• Fresh flowers at home measurably lifted mood in a Harvard study

Mel, who calls herself 'kind of a flower freak' and keeps a cutting garden instead of a vegetable garden, cites Dr. Nancy Etcoff of Harvard Medical School and Mass General. People lived with fresh cut flowers for less than a week and were measured before and after. They reported more compassion and kindness toward others, less anxiety and worry, and fewer negative feelings.

• Flowers gave people something to look forward to and more energy

Participants in that study said they looked forward to seeing the blooms first thing in the morning and reported a boost in energy. Mel's explanation is awe: a tulip bursting from a dried brown bulb, and the fragility of petals you could tear with one touch, soften you. She won't get out of bed for donuts or bacon, she jokes, but she will for dahlias she cut blooming in the kitchen.

• Giving flowers deepens the giver's sense of connection

Mel cites Rutgers research finding that giving flowers made givers feel more emotionally connected to the person receiving them. She thinks of a bouquet as a living stand-in for you, and says the card gives the flowers the full meaning of what you wrote: I love you, I miss you, get better, congratulations.

• Flowers get real smiles and lead people to reach out

According to the research Mel describes, people who receive flowers respond with a genuine smile, unlike the polite smile for wine you don't drink or a framed picture you'll never hang. Recipients reported good moods lasting for days, and people who send flowers tend to be seen as successful, caring and emotionally intelligent. The flowers also led to more contact with family and friends, which Mel says explains why you text a photo to the sender right away.

• Buying yourself flowers is evidence that you matter

Mel dares listeners to keep fresh flowers somewhere they'll see them. A stem you give yourself, she says, is proof you're kind to yourself and believe you deserve beautiful things. She treats it as a small, concrete way to build self-worth through action, and suggests never leaving the grocery store, if your budget allows, without $5 of flowers.

• Looking closely at a flower works like a moving meditation

You can't worry about a deadline or tear yourself down while studying the speckles inside a lily or the shading on a daffodil. Mel keeps a single cut flower in a jar by her sink so washing dishes becomes a moment of being present. The free version: stop for one minute at a neighbor's garden, a flowering tree or a restaurant's planters.

• Nature restores attention, and a little bit counts

In a clip from an earlier episode, NYU professor Adam Alter describes attention restoration research. Natural environments draw a softer kind of attention that replenishes the energy focused work uses up, and he calls nature 'one of the best forms of medicine we have.' He values its timelessness and suggests about five minutes a day taking in even a small houseplant or a tabletop fountain if you live in a city.

• A plant on your desk may sharpen focus

Mel cites UK research finding that plants near your workspace can boost concentration by up to 20%, partly by lowering CO2. She links it to a Harvard T.H. Chan School study across six countries (the UK, US, China, India, Mexico and Thailand) that found higher office CO2 slowed response times and hurt focus and productivity.

• Digging in soil and harvesting trigger feel-good chemistry

Mel shares research that contact with a soil bacterium, Mycobacterium vaccae, triggers serotonin release, and that harvesting anything you've grown releases a little dopamine. Researchers theorize the picking reward evolved over roughly 200,000 years of hunting and gathering, which may explain pick-your-own orchards. She says the same reward process is linked to compulsive shopping, a modern 'hunt' for deals.

EXAMPLES

• Dr. Judith Joseph's exercise-ball-sized bouquet

During a burnout-heavy week of fast company growth, writing her next book and her daughter Oakley's graduation, Mel got a three-foot jewel-toned arrangement of coral peonies and roses at her Boston studio while she was in Vermont. Sad to miss it, she gave it to Charlotte, a teammate who had been burning the midnight oil. Charlotte sent photos all weekend as it opened.

• Christine's surprise copy

That Friday, a matching arrangement was waiting on Mel's great-grandmother's marble-topped cabinet in Vermont. Her sister-in-law and COO, Christine, had apparently sent a photo of the Boston bouquet to a local florist. Mel burst into tears, needed Chris to help carry it, and says that for 10 days it felt like Christine was waiting in the kitchen to hug her.

• An orchid for Jodie in Michigan

When Mel's childhood best friend Jodie, 56 and single, left her job and six years in San Diego to move home and help her aging parents, Mel sent an orchid as a 'surrogate.' Six weeks later Jodie texted that it was still blooming and reminded her of Mel.

• The studio CO2 monitor

After about 90 minutes of interviews in their Boston studio, Mel felt her energy and focus drain away. A CO2 monitor showed levels spiking from all the talking. The team added an air filter, started opening windows between interviews, and now plans to bring in plants.

• Memorial Day at the garden center

Growing up in western Michigan, Mel's family loaded into the Jeep Wagoneer every Memorial Day weekend for plants. Now she helps a friend, Annette, and other local women plant 50,000 dahlia bulbs at her flower farm. Mel's mom, who grew up on the family's farm outside Buffalo, refuses to pay to pick produce: 'I grew up picking that crap.'

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Mel's grocery-store flower method**

  Skip the mixed bouquets, which cost more. Buy a single-variety bunch from the buckets, like tulips, lilies or whatever is in season. Trim the stems and split the 5 to 12 stems into small jars around the house. Then ask the floral counter or bodega to rewrap them as a gift. She says they'll do it for free and usually enjoy it.

- **This week's practice**

  Keep fresh flowers where you'll see them, send flowers to one person who is struggling or whom you miss, spend a minute really looking at a bloom, put a plant on your desk, and find a way to get your hands in the dirt, whether in your own yard, a park cleanup or a local farm.

- **Choose flowers when you want them to feel your presence**

  Mel says a book or massage voucher is a fine gift, but a living arrangement keeps the giver in the recipient's mind every time they look at it.

The Most Important Sex Advice No One Ever Told You: Revamp Your Sex Life in 10 Minutes

Guest: Dr. Rena Malik
Date: 2024-06-13 · Duration: 1:18:04
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RUPkME8y7zc

KEYPOINTS

• Sexual health is health, not a side topic

Dr. Rena Malik, a urologist and pelvic surgeon, defines sexual health as psychological, emotional and physical well-being tied to giving and receiving pleasure. Problems in the bedroom often create shame, and they can also be an early signal of other disease. Men with erectile dysfunction are more likely to have heart disease, and ED often shows up before the heart problems do. She notes there's no equivalent data for women yet, though she suspects the pattern is similar.

• Treat sex as adult play, not a performance

Movies show couples tearing off clothes and climaxing within seconds. Malik says real sex is awkward, noisy, sometimes funny and sometimes mediocre, and all of that is normal. Long-term couples tend to fall into a script that works and then gets boring. Thinking of sex as the one time adults get to play makes room to try new things.

• There is no frequency benchmark you have to hit

On average Americans have sex about 52 times a year. That's roughly 80 times a year for 20-year-olds and about 20 for 60-year-olds. Researchers often define a sexless marriage as fewer than 10 times a year. Malik's point is that the only measure that counts is whether both partners are satisfied.

• Penetrative sex is shorter than people think, and women need more time

In stopwatch studies of couples around the world, intercourse averaged about 5.3 to 5.7 minutes, with a range from 0.1 to 53 minutes. Men guess it lasts about 8 minutes, think it should last about 16, and women say they want about 25. Women's average time to orgasm with a partner is about 12 to 14 minutes, falling to about 8 with masturbation.

• Arousal is a physical process that takes time

The vagina is normally about 3–3.5 cm wide and 8–9 cm long, and it can roughly double in both during arousal. The labia minora and clitoris engorge, and the cervix lifts out of the way. For some women this can take up to 25 minutes, which is why Malik calls foreplay part of sex rather than a warm-up. Lubrication doesn't always match arousal: bodies can lubricate without desire, or be aroused but dry because of genetics or menopause.

• Most women need clitoral stimulation, and the G-spot is a zone, not a button

About 85% of women need some clitoral stimulation to orgasm. The clitoris develops from the same embryonic tissue as the penis, with matching erectile bodies. It's the only organ that exists purely for pleasure, and recent biopsy work puts its nerve endings above 10,000, up from the old estimate of 8,000. The G-spot is an area about 2–3 cm inside on the front wall, near the Skene's glands (the 'female prostate').

• Squirting and female ejaculation are different, and neither is a must

Female ejaculation is a small amount of thicker, whitish fluid from the Skene's glands that contains PSA. Squirting is a larger gush from the urethra. Tests show it's very dilute, close to urine but not urine, with some PSA mixed in. Malik says it seems linked to how aroused a woman is, but it doesn't matter whether you do it.

• Menopause changes sexual and urinary health, and it's treatable

When estrogen drops, lubrication falls, the labia and tissue around the urethra shrink, and the vagina loses protective lactobacilli, so its pH rises. That raises the risk of infections and recurrent UTIs. Malik, a certified menopause practitioner, says vaginal estrogen can prevent and even resolve recurrent UTIs.

• Pain during sex is never something you should just put up with

Being told to have a glass of wine and relax is bad advice. Pain often comes from rushing before the body is ready. It can also point to pelvic floor dysfunction, endometriosis or another medical issue. If slowing down and using lubricant doesn't fix it, see a doctor. If your doctor never asks about pleasure or orgasm, Malik says to find one who will.

• Desire often comes after you start

In long-term relationships, desire is often responsive rather than spontaneous. You may not be in the mood when touching starts, then warm up. Malik compares it to the gym: you don't always want to go, but you're glad once you're there. Both partners should initiate. If one person always initiates and keeps hearing no, ask whether it's the timing or the approach.

EXAMPLES

• The ejaculation and prostate cancer study

Malik describes a study that followed about 40,000 men for nearly 20 years. Men who ejaculated 21 or more times a month were about a third less likely to develop prostate cancer than men who ejaculated 4–7 times a month, even after adjusting for smoking, diet and health. Frequent ejaculation probably also reflects better health, relationships and comfort, which a study can't fully control for.

• Morning testosterone and 'sex before dinner'

Testosterone, the hormone of desire, peaks between about 7 and 10 a.m., more so in men. Mel and Chris text each other times like '2 o'clock' to make sex something to look forward to. Malik's date-night tip is to have sex first, before the heavy meal, the drinks and the drive-home argument.

• The 10,000 nerve endings and the research gap

Mel cited roughly half a million papers on the penis against about 2,000 on the clitoris. The updated nerve count only arrived in the last few years.

• ED medications and their real risks

PDE5 inhibitors help about 60–70% of men by keeping blood flow going longer. Sildenafil (Viagra) is taken about an hour

before sex and works for up to about four hours. Tadalafil (Cialis) lasts about 36 hours. Malik says erections lasting over four hours are extremely rare when the drugs are taken as prescribed. When men come in with ED, she screens for high cholesterol and pre-diabetes and often finds them.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Have the sex talk side by side, outside the bedroom**

  Talk on a walk or in the car so you aren't staring at each other. Expect several awkward conversations, not one. Keep it positive with lines like 'I'd really like it if you tried this, it turns me on' instead of 'I hate when you do that.'

- **Get a baseline with a mirror**

  Look up vulvar anatomy and then look at your own: the clitoris and hood, the urethra and the vaginal canal, which should look pink and healthy. Knowing your normal lets you spot skin conditions or changes later.

- **Watch for mental health, medication and porn effects**

  About 30–60% of people with depression or anxiety have some sexual dysfunction, and SSRIs in particular often cause sexual side effects. Porn seen at a young age sets fake expectations about time, volume and how people react, so Malik says kids need to be told it isn't real. For people who feel shut down, she points to sensate focus: touch each other's bodies without touching genitals, then build from there.

- **Boost testosterone the low-tech way**

  Signs of low testosterone include low libido, ED, brain fog, low mood, fatigue and trouble building muscle. Hormones alone explain only about 3% of ED. Malik's three natural levers are more than 7 hours of good sleep (with no late caffeine, alcohol or screens, and treated sleep apnea), lower-body resistance training like squats and deadlifts, and a Mediterranean-style diet with healthy fats. She says low-fat diets can hurt testosterone, since it's made from cholesterol.

How To Stop Waking Up Feeling Tired: 7 Tips From a Harvard Researcher

Guest: Dr. Rebecca Robbins
Date: 2024-06-10 · Duration: 1:18:47
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wsslt3ynA-E

KEYPOINTS

• Most people aren't getting restorative sleep

Dr. Robbins, a sleep scientist at Harvard, says two in three Americans don't consistently get the sleep they biologically need. Between 20% and 50% struggle to fall asleep or to get back to sleep after waking at 2 or 3 a.m. In her lab's research, fewer than three in ten say they wake feeling restored. She notes doctors get only about 20 to 25 minutes of sleep training in a typical medical curriculum.

• Behaviour change beats sleep medication over time

In clinical trials comparing sleeping pills with behavioural strategies for insomnia, she says the behavioural changes win out over time once people actually put them in place. There's a time and place for medication, but small, free changes add up.

• Sleep is when the brain files and prunes memories

During sleep the brain rehearses the day, decides where memories belong and lets go of what isn't needed. Researchers increasingly think dreaming is part of this, the brain 'throwing spaghetti against a wall' to see where new events fit. Mel's library analogy (books reshelved at night, unpopular ones sent to a sister library) landed with her. All-nighters backfire: rested people get the same work done in a fraction of the time.

• Consistency is king, even above total hours

Humans aren't built for 'yo-yo' schedules. Her 'dirty secret': someone who can manage only five or six hours but keeps them consistent will do better than someone getting eight or nine on erratic schedules. She still pushes toward seven or more, but for shift workers or single parents with two jobs, protecting a fixed window comes first.

• Set your wake time first, then count back nine hours

Pick the earliest time you have to be up in a typical week and use that alarm seven days a week, sleeping in no more than about an hour. Daylight saving time shows how much one hour throws us off. Count back nine hours to set when you start getting ready for bed. Sleep need is partly genetic: children of two long sleepers may need eight to nine hours, and others closer to seven.

• Light sets your clock: get it by day, avoid it at night

The suprachiasmatic nucleus, just behind the eyes, is your circadian pacemaker. It shuts off melatonin when daylight hits your eyes and releases it in darkness. Even cloudy daylight works, and afternoon light matters as much as morning light. Screens mimic the sun and engage the planning brain, so start with five screen-free minutes before bed and build to 15 or 30.

• Healthy sleepers take 15 to 20 minutes to fall asleep

Sleep is a process, not a switch. Falling asleep the moment your head hits the pillow, like Mel's husband Chris on planes, is usually a sign of sleep deprivation, the way gorging signals starvation. The same 15 to 20 minutes applies to getting back to sleep after waking in the night.

• Lying awake in bed trains your brain to link bed with stress

If the 'not again' voice starts, get up and keep the lights low. Do a breathing exercise cross-legged on the floor or in an armchair, read under a sleep-friendly bulb, or fold socks, anything boring. Don't pick up your phone. Motion-sensor night lights in the hallway, even on the toilet rim, save you from using your phone as a flashlight. Change the story from 'I'm a bad sleeper' to 'I've got this.'

• Alcohol and caffeine both quietly wreck sleep

Alcohol helps you fall asleep but disrupts sleep architecture, which is why people wake at night and feel unrested even after nine hours. Try dry weekdays, for example Monday to Wednesday. Caffeine has a half-life of about six to nine hours, and a second cup stacks on the first. She notes FDA guidance of about 200 mg, roughly a small coffee, and uses a firm 'no coffee after lunch' rule herself.

• See a doctor if a solid week of good habits doesn't help

If, after really committing to these strategies, you still take 20 to 40 minutes to fall asleep every night, wake wired every night, or suspect you're waking repeatedly, that may be a sleep disorder that behaviour change alone won't fix.

EXAMPLES

• Her own wind-down ritual

Once her boys are in bed at 8:30, she tidies a little, dims the lights, turns off her phone, washes her face and showers. Then she sits cross-legged and does 4-7-8 breathing (in for four, hold for seven, out through pursed lips for eight) for five to seven rounds. She writes down intrusive thoughts, reads a few pages, does progressive muscle relaxation from the toes up, and says a prayer.

• Mel's 2:14 a.m. bathroom scroll

Mel used to wake at 2:14, use her phone as a flashlight, and end up on social media or texts on the toilet, which is exactly the habit Dr. Robbins says keeps the waking going.

• A 'sleep marriage', not a 'sleep divorce'

She calls sleep a social behaviour and supports couples sleeping apart if snoring or shift work disrupts it: cuddle, then go to separate rooms. Without a spare room, try a pillow wall, earplugs rated for 60 dB or more, and white noise to mask intermittent sounds.

• Mel's 22-year-old mattress and 5:30 dinner

Mel and Chris had just replaced a mattress they'd slept on for 22 years. She also moved family dinner to 5:30, after their son kept raiding the fridge after practice, and noticed her sleep improved.

• Blue daylight lamps for early risers and shift workers

For the more than 25 million Americans on shift schedules, or anyone up before sunrise, a blue daylight-spectrum lamp at work can mimic sunrise. Some are strong enough to treat seasonal affective disorder. Don't stare into it.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Design the bedroom**
  Keep it at 65 to 68°F, cooler (65 or below) and with more airflow during menopause. Make it pitch black by taping over charger and cable-box lights, since eyelids are very thin. Clear out anything stressful, like laundry piles or a hated alarm clock. Replace pillows and mattresses that cause neck pain.
- **Keep a stack of note cards by the bed**
  Write down the dry cleaning, 'call Mom', the vet appointment. The cards become tomorrow's to-do list, and your brain learns 'not now.'
- **Eat early and light**
  Follow 'breakfast like a king, lunch like a prince, dinner like a pauper', with at least two hours and ideally three between dinner and bed. A smoothie works as a busy-night dinner. Couples can connect over tea, cribbage or a puzzle instead of a late meal.
- **Nap if you're a healthy sleeper**
  The afternoon slump comes from a natural dip in core temperature plus lunch. Five to ten minutes of sleep helps, but skip naps if you're dealing with insomnia so sleep pressure builds. Use a warm-screen tool like f.lux if you must work late.

Master Class on How To Fix Your Digestive Issues & Gut Health (With a Renowned GI Doctor)

Guest: Dr. Robynne Chutkan
Date: 2024-06-06 · Duration: 1:24:25
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GEYcfcJ0p1o

KEYPOINTS

• Gut problems are common and often kept quiet

Gastroenterologist Dr. Robynne Chutkan, who has practiced at Georgetown for 27 years, cites an MDVIP study finding that two-thirds of Americans have gut issues, rising to 73% of 18-to-44-year-olds. She points to ultra-processed food, busy lives and stress, along with greater awareness. An American Gastroenterological Association survey found 40% said GI issues interfered with socializing, errands, exercise or sex, and one in three won't bring it up unless their doctor asks.

• Your microbiome responds quickly to what you eat

Chutkan contrasts the gut with your genes: you're stuck with your genetic hand, but your gut keeps changing. She cites a 2014 Nature study in which switching people from a high-animal-protein, high-fat diet to a plant-focused one changed their gut bacteria and which bacterial genes were active within about 30 hours.

• The key number is 30 different plants a week

According to the American Gut Project, which Chutkan describes as more than 10,000 people in 40 countries, labels like vegan, omnivore or carnivore didn't predict a healthy microbiome. What did was eating 30 or more different plant foods a week. Fruits, vegetables, nuts, seeds, herbs, spices, beans and whole grains all count. Variety and eating seasonally matter more than amount, and a handful of berries is plenty. She says some animal protein is fine if plants make up most of the plate.

• Probiotic supplements are a lot like multivitamins

Chutkan says there's no clear evidence that a probiotic helps the average healthy person. Products are lightly regulated, the bacteria may be dead, and the ones that survive may only stay for under an hour. Worse, high-dose blends could compete with your own native microbes. The exception is medical-food probiotics backed by 100-plus studies for conditions like Crohn's and ulcerative colitis. Her biggest worry is people using a pill instead of changing how they eat.

• Feed the bacteria you already have

Prebiotics are the fibrous foods your bacteria eat. Chutkan's examples include stringy fibers like asparagus, celery, oats and dandelion greens. Probiotics are the bacteria themselves. She calls fermented foods like kimchi and sauerkraut a 'powerhouse,' citing Stanford research suggesting even a tablespoon of sauerkraut a day delivers multiple species and useful metabolites. She adds that a locally, organically grown apple can carry millions of microbes.

• Her three foundations: water, movement and fiber

Movement triggers nitric oxide and the gut's wave-like contractions. When things stall, you get bloating, constipation and bacterial overgrowth. She notes that nursing-home residents have the worst GI problems because they don't move, not because they're old. Hydration is the plumbing: once she started measuring and drinking 100 ounces a day, her own bowel movements improved dramatically. She estimates about half the constipated, bloated patients she sees improve with proper hydration alone.

• Early germ exposure helps train the immune system

Chutkan explains the hygiene hypothesis developed by British epidemiologist David Strachan. In a large study following children from birth into adulthood, kids in big, germ-filled households had lower rates of autoimmune disease than kids raised very clean. She says maps today still show higher autoimmune rates in countries with more sanitation and chemicals and less contact with soil and animals.

• Go once a day, without straining

The textbook says three bowel movements a week is normal, but she calls that arbitrary. Elimination should happen daily. Mel's routine (once a day, in the morning, feet on a Squatty Potty, formed and soft, quick in and out) earns Chutkan's 'stool nirvana' label. You can still be constipated with daily or twice-daily movements if emptying is incomplete. She compares that to waking at night: you go, but there's still 'something on the launch pad,' often shown by a smeary wipe.

• Women's anatomy makes bloating and constipation more likely

Women's colons average 3 to 5 inches longer, she says, which lets them reabsorb more water to maintain amniotic fluid during pregnancy. The extra length means more twists and loops, sometimes called a redundant or tortuous colon. Women also have a deeper, wider pelvis shared with the uterus, ovaries and bladder, and lower testosterone, which means looser abdominal muscles. She calls these features 'not a design flaw,' and says they're why colonoscopies take longer in women.

• Stress pulls resources away from digestion

In fight-or-flight mode, blood flow shifts to the brain and big muscles, and digestive enzymes and acid decrease. Chutkan describes a study of college students during finals in which some harmful gut bacteria multiplied dramatically. For irritable bowel syndrome, she says stress is rarely the whole cause but can be a major contributor.

EXAMPLES

• A gastroenterologist's typical day of eating

Breakfast is a green smoothie of collards, kale, spinach, celery, parsley, mint, green apple and lemon on unsweetened coconut water, sometimes followed by smoked salmon, eggs or a sweet-potato-kale hash. Lunch is usually soup, like split pea, lentil, or leeks, onion, garlic and scallion blended with broth. Dinner is protein, starch, vegetables and salad. She also has dark chocolate daily and admits to the occasional bag of Doritos on a road trip.

• The medication table and the trash can

Chutkan has patients bring every prescription, over-the-counter drug and supplement and lays them out, with a wastebasket nearby. She never stops a prescription she didn't write and sends those questions to the prescriber. She warns that the top cause of emergency GI bleeding is too much ibuprofen and similar drugs, and recalls ICU weekends spent stopping serious bleeds.

- **Morning-and-night tape measure test**

To tell bloat from belly fat, measure around your belly button morning and night for about a week. Big swings suggest bloating. Fat usually varies by less than an inch. She notes many patients send photos showing them flat in the morning and swollen by evening.

- **Yogurt as a surprise bloater**

She says 60% to 70% of people worldwide are lactose intolerant, and many lose the ability to digest lactose over time or after an infection. Many of her patients eat yogurt or cottage cheese daily to boost protein, and cutting dairy often helps. Salt, alcohol (which irritates the gut and causes fluid shifts) and sitting too long, which slows lymph drainage, also add to bloating.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Two-day reset after an indulgent trip**

For a healthy person who comes back from vacation backed up, she suggests two days of clear liquids (broth, tea, green juice rather than smoothies) plus about a quarter bottle of liquid magnesium citrate at night. Check first for kidney disease and stay near a bathroom. She prefers this to stimulant laxatives like senna, which she says the colon can become dependent on.

- **See a gastroenterologist quickly for red flags**

Get seen promptly for blood in the stool, weight loss, vomiting, real abdominal pain or nausea that won't let up.

- **The 10-day Gut Bliss method: remove, replace, restore**

Remove ultra-processed food, alcohol, NSAIDs, unnecessary antibiotics and rushed bathroom habits, which she compares to putting the stopper in a bathtub before filling it. Replace by adding healthy bacteria mainly through high-fiber and fermented foods. Restore with time outside, mind-body practices, quiet, less stress and plenty of water.

Before You Waste Time, Watch This with Dr. K (@HealthyGamerGG)

Guest: Dr. Alok Kanojia (Dr. K)
Date: 2024-06-05 · Duration: 1:11:04
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9AG88lmHXP0

KEYPOINTS

• Technology is shaping your thoughts, wants and identity without your consent

Harvard-trained psychiatrist Dr. Alok Kanojia, known as Dr. K of HealthyGamerGG, says the goal is to become aware of how technology shapes you so you can counteract it. He describes an 'attention marketplace' and the field of neuroeconomics, which uses brain scans to shape purchasing behavior. Platforms compete for your attention, and whichever wins, you lose.

• Tech is a 'whole-brain' addiction, unlike substances

Alcohol and opiates mainly act on specific receptors (GABA, opioid). Early video games mostly hit dopamine circuitry, but features keep being added: Facebook went from contact list to social validation via the like button, and now identity, work, dating and relationships live online. Developers have learned that the more of the brain they engage, the more you use them. He likens tech to an invasive species with no natural checks.

• Scrolling numbs negative emotion more than it relaxes you

Dr. K says studies show tech suppresses the amygdala and limbic system, the brain's negative-emotion circuits; he thinks much of the addictive pull is pushing negativity away, not just dopamine. Mel realizes her 'relaxing' scroll is a lever to switch off busyness, unlike a phone-free walk. He isn't anti-tech: cat videos can genuinely make you laugh.

• No idle time means emotions never get processed

For most of history people did rote tasks like churning butter or walking two hours back to camp, giving the mind time to process feelings. Dr. K says part of this is supported by science and part is his own conjecture, but he links reduced emotional processing to symptoms seen in almost every mental illness. It's also why emotions flood in once the screen goes off at bedtime, sending people back to their phones until exhaustion wins.

• Don't ask whether you're addicted; ask whether you're using tech the way you want

Clinically, addiction means impaired function in work, school, relationships, or mental or physical health. Most people's phone habits fall just under that threshold, which makes them harder to quit. The better question: looking back on your week, are you glad you spent 2 hours and 10 minutes on TikTok at 11 p.m. on a Thursday?

• Short-form content does the focusing for you and deconditions attention

Reading a textbook forces your mind to focus, strengthening that capacity through neuroplasticity. Content engineered to hold you within 15 seconds means 'taking the elevator instead of the stairs.' Dr. K connects this to rising ADHD diagnoses and to many people identifying with ADHD traits without a diagnosis. In college his distractions cost two minutes; now with Face ID, one impulse can cost 45 minutes to an hour. Teens average four to six hours a day on phones.

• Morning phone use squeezes your dopamine 'lemon'

You wake with full dopamine stores in the nucleus accumbens, which create pleasure and reinforce behavior. Work first, and the payoff feels great; scroll first, and even the same work later feels flat. Mel suggests even 10–15 minutes counts, and he agrees, because tech is 'a vice of a squeeze.' That's why people moving in the right direction still feel unmotivated.

• Numbing emotions erodes your sense of self and puts you on autopilot

Identity is built from emotional experiences, such as a divorce or surviving cancer, not ordering chicken salad for the seventh day. He draws on trauma research on dissociation. With no inner drivers, goals get supplied by feeds (a thigh gap, a side hustle, this bag, that supplement), so you feel confused and full of 'shoulds.' 'We are not driving anymore; we are being driven.'

• Boredom is withdrawal, and the skill is tolerating it

Dr. K calls boredom the brain punishing you for not supplying dopamine, like hunger or opioid withdrawal; it's a healthy signal hijacked by tech, as hunger is by Twinkies. You don't need motivation, just endurance: by homeostasis, the signal subsides. Over time cravings reset, as Mel's daily McDonald's habit disappeared in college. Then 'shower thoughts' return.

EXAMPLES

• From failing out of college to psychiatrist

Skipped a grade and outmatched in sports, he competed through video games, which became a problem in high school; after freshman year he was on probation with under a 2.0 GPA. His doctor parents sent him to an ashram in India. At 21 he wanted to become a monk; a teacher said 'you have nothing worth giving up' and told him to finish a doctorate first. He spent seven summers there, met his wife, trained at Mass General, and started asking mentors about gaming addiction in 2015.

• Trading against 1 a.m. buyers

He cites allegations that one trading house took the opposite side of trades placed around 1 a.m. by people too fatigued to think clearly, illustrating how products exploit late-night depletion of willpower.

• The online friend at his wedding

A gaming friend he met at 15 and never saw in person was a real friend for 13 years and came to his wedding, showing how real relationships now live inside technology.

• Staring at a wall for one hour

In his community, about half of people find the exercise transformative: 15 minutes of boredom, then thoughts, sometimes tears from suppressed emotion. Even an uneventful hour builds boredom tolerance. The 'senior version' is a six-hour flight with no entertainment.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Increase friction between impulse and phone

Turn off Face ID and biometrics, leave the phone in another room at home, take addictive apps off your home screen, or delete native apps and use browser versions. Keep work off your phone, since email easily turns into TikTok; if you're truly

tethered, use a separate work phone with no social apps.

- **No tech for the first hour and last hour of the day**

  Keep the phone away and do the tasks you never get to, like taking out the trash; Dr. K meditates about 21 minutes and showers. Before bed, use a computer to check tomorrow's schedule rather than your phone. And no phone in the bathroom.

- **When bored, pace or walk**

  Mel's dare: leave your phone in the kitchen or car and walk for 10 minutes. Expect a flood of thoughts at first; it's your brain sorting the backlog, like overdue mail, and it settles into calm.

- **How to talk to a loved one about their tech use**

  Trust your instinct even without impairment; many people 'show up for life but don't live it.' Say you're concerned, apologize for past pushiness, then ask 'help me understand.' Reflect back what they say rather than interrogating. If they want to stop, respect it and ask if you can bring it up again. His book How to Raise a Healthy Gamer has sample dialogue.

Transform Your Life at Any Moment: The Surprising Science of Happiness

Date: 2024-06-03 · Duration: 0:55:45
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FXD7NZRJgI8

KEYPOINTS

• Some of your favorite people are strangers you haven't met yet

Mel opens with a reframe: everyone you love was once a stranger. If you knew for certain that many of your future favorite people are walking past you, sitting next to you at the cafe or pulling into the parking spot beside you, you would move through the day differently. The episode pairs research with five true stories to show how 'unexpected connections' can change a life.

• Warm relationships predict health and happiness at 80

Mel revisits Dr. Robert Waldinger, the Harvard physician who leads the Harvard Study of Adult Development, which she describes as an 86-year study of happiness. People who were most satisfied with their relationships around age 50 turned out to be the healthiest, mentally and physically, at 80. In a clip, Waldinger says people who saw more people in a given week and had warmer relationships lived years longer and developed the diseases of aging later, if at all.

• Warm relationships include people you barely know

Mel's point is that warmth is not limited to your inner circle. The people around you whom you don't know yet also count, and treating them as possible connections is how you build the relationships the Harvard research links to a longer, healthier life.

• Two reasons we stay quiet: it seems pointless and it feels awkward

Mel says we don't say hello because we don't believe it matters, and because the moment right before you go first always feels vulnerable. You tell yourself 'they look busy,' 'I don't want to bother them' or 'I'll look like a creep.' She says the awkward moment never goes away, even at orientations where everyone is new, so you have to go first anyway.

• 'I don't want to bother you' is the most common opener Mel hears

About 90% of listeners who stop her in public start with that sentence, which tells her they expect it to be awkward. She says she loves being approached, and that 90% of the time when you go first, people respond warmly.

• We underestimate how good talking to a stranger will feel

In a University of Chicago study on commuter trains, one group rode as usual, reading or scrolling. The other had to start a conversation with a stranger. The talking group expected not to enjoy it at all, but afterward they were much happier than the group that kept to themselves. Mel says the research also found the stranger felt happier, and that people consistently underpredict how much these conversations will lift them.

• Weak ties matter more than you think

Researchers divide relationships into strong ties, like family, close friends and coworkers who know your birthday, and weak ties: your building superintendent, the person five offices over, your child's teacher, your yoga instructor. Mel says we pour all our energy into strong ties and overlook weak ties, which have real potential to make us happier if we take a bit more interest.

• Small positive moments spread from person to person

Mel cites Dr. Barbara Fredrickson of UNC Chapel Hill, who says small daily interactions release neurotransmitters like dopamine and oxytocin that are tied to positive emotion and bonding. This 'social contagion' means a hello, a compliment or a held door creates a ripple. Mel adds that giving warmth away makes it stronger in you.

• Imagine watching hidden-camera footage of your day

Mel asks you to picture footage of yourself going through a normal day. She predicts you would look closed off: buried in your phone in line, on the commute and at the gym, sending signals that you're not open to talking. If you feel lonely, she says the fix is to start going first instead of waiting.

EXAMPLES

• Sawyer and Naomi in a Bali hostel

Mel's daughter Sawyer, 24, landed alone and jet-lagged in Bali at 7 p.m. at the start of a six-month solo backpacking trip she had dreamed about for a decade. She counted 5-4-3-2-1 and introduced herself to a woman in a towel on her way to the shower: Naomi from London. Later Sawyer worked up the nerve to ask, 'What are you doing tonight?' They traveled together for four months and now talk almost every day.

• Al, 92, and Cheryl on the claims line

Al, a widower living alone in rural Maine, was shaken after hitting a deer. Cheryl, the representative handling his auto claim, got to know him by phone, had an army of coworkers at her office sign a Christmas card, and called him on Christmas Day. His grandson Joe wrote to thank her and sent along 'The Gift,' a poem Al wrote in December 1950. That year he could only afford a small doll for his daughter and nothing for his wife.

• Judy Robbins and Juliet in Paris

Mel's mother-in-law Judy's email kept going to Juliet, an American living in Paris whose address was one letter off. Instead of being annoyed, Juliet answered the misdirected emails with humor ('I'd love to try the eye cream but I'm not going to pay your bill'). They became pen pals for 15 years. Juliet hosted Judy's granddaughter in Paris, and the two finally had lunch in Woodstock, Vermont.

• The pool brunch that became 'Same Day Same Year'

Astrid chatted with a dad named Rich at a community pool. He invited her family to brunch, and weeks later she had forgotten his name and didn't want to go, but went anyway. The two families had both lived in Chicago during graduate school and been in Mexico in the 1980s, and Astrid and Rich shared the exact same birthday and birth year. Her custom-headboard design work and his house flipping turned into a business they named Same Day Same Year.

• Wanda's wrong-number Thanksgiving text

Wanda texted 17-year-old Jamal Hinton by mistake, thinking he was her grandson. After they swapped selfies he asked, 'Can I still get a plate though?' and she said yes. He came to Thanksgiving, became close to Wanda and her husband Lonnie, and kept the tradition going even after Lonnie died in 2020. This past year was their eighth Thanksgiving together.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Mel's openers that don't come across as creepy**

  Compliment someone's nails or shoes, ask what they're reading or what they ordered, or ask their dog's name. Mel always says good morning in elevators, chats with baristas and people in line, and asks customer-support reps how they're doing, which she says often catches them off guard. You don't have to act like you're running for mayor, just do a little more than now.

- **Your assignment: say hello to one person today**

  Borrowing from the University of Chicago study, Mel's challenge is one hello a day. Talk to the person next to you at the coffee shop, the parent beside you at soccer, or a coworker you've never had lunch with, and notice how it feels.

- **Treat mix-ups as openings**

  A wrong-number text or misdirected email can be an inconvenience or the start of something. Juliet and Wanda chose warmth and humor. Judy's phrase for it is 'fall in rather than falling out.'

#1 Neuroscientist: How to Motivate Yourself (and Others) to Change Any Behavior

Guest: Dr. Tali Sharot
Date: 2024-05-30 · Duration: 0:57:39
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=slD8f_qtEYY

KEYPOINTS

• Pressure backfires because it threatens people's sense of control

Dr. Tali Sharot, a behavioural neuroscientist who directs the Affective Brain Lab at University College London, says the desire for control is hardwired because controlling your world brings rewards and avoids harm. Once someone feels you're restricting their agency, their motivation drops and anxiety rises. In a partnership, nagging also signals that you see their negatives and that they're not enough.

• Trying to change someone is often about managing your own stress

Mel's example is a partner happily watching golf on a Sunday while she feels judgment rising. Sharot says that changing the other person may be an unconscious attempt to lower your own stress, perhaps from worry about their heart or their spending, and your stress is itself contagious.

• You influence strangers more than you realise

Through emotional contagion, even unknown people on the subway shape your mood and choices. Studies show stressed people make those around them more stressed, and seeing someone eat an apple or ice cream nudges what you crave. Sharot says it evolved because someone else's fear may signal real danger. The takeaway is to model the behaviour you want, such as not being on your phone if you want your kids off theirs.

• Fear is especially poor at getting people to act

Sharot's approach-avoidance principle: expecting a reward triggers a 'go' signal deep in the brain that makes action more likely, while expecting something bad triggers a 'no-go' signal that travels to the motor cortex and promotes freezing. In her experiments, people pressed a button faster to gain money than to avoid losing it. Fear can still help when you want someone to stop doing something, like sharing confidential information.

• Reframe messages around gains

Scare tactics also fail because people assume 'it won't happen to me.' Sharot's friends who smoke are motivated more by wanting better skin than by fear of cancer. Instead of 'Route A will lose you time and money,' say 'Route B will gain you time and money.'

• Lever one: social proof

Highlight what others are doing well, and model it yourself. For a partner, Sharot suggests inviting them to join your run rather than citing a friend's fit husband.

• Lever two: immediate rewards

Present bias means we value now over later; most people take $100 today over $110 next week, partly because the future is uncertain. Cake, a drink or Netflix pay off instantly, while books and fitness pay off years later. So attach something good to the action now: a trashy show only on the treadmill, a podcast on a run, or a sincere 'thank you for asking.'

• Lever three: progress tracking

Sharot says progress itself brings joy, and even top performers find simply maintaining demotivating. A 3:28 marathon after a 3:30 feels better than repeating 3:30. Track the specific elements tied to your goal.

• Give choices, but only two or three

Ask 'carrots or cucumbers?' or 'should I pick your outfit, or will you?' Sharot notes that asking you to choose is still their choice. The same applies to employees and patients. She cites the famous jam study, where 60 options left some shoppers leaving empty-handed.

• Change, on average, makes people happier

In economist Steven Levitt's study, thousands of people facing a decision flipped a virtual coin: heads meant change, tails meant stay put. Heads made people about 25% more likely to change, and at two weeks and six months, changers were on average happier. Sharot's caveats: this doesn't say which change (therapy may count), and the benefit likely comes from fixing something already wrong and from the joy of learning.

EXAMPLES

• One sentence that raised £5.6 billion

Adding 'nine out of 10 people in Britain pay their taxes on time' to UK tax letters increased compliance by 15%, which Sharot says brought in £5.6 billion.

• Hospital handwashing went from 10% to 90%

In a New York State hospital, cameras showed only 10% of staff washed their hands before and after entering patient rooms, even though staff knew they were being filmed. An electronic board giving instant 'well done, good shift' feedback plus running rates pushed compliance to 90%. A second unit went from 30% to 90%. Sharot credits immediate positive feedback, social proof and visible progress.

• "You'll look better for your girlfriend"

A mother had nightly fights telling her teenage son he'd be tired if he didn't sleep by 10 p.m. After reading Sharot's book, she told him he'd look better and have more energy for his girlfriend, and she said it worked perfectly.

• "I can really feel your muscles"

A woman whose husband disliked the gym touched his arm after his first visit and admired his muscles. He went back the next day. Sharot similarly thanks her husband whenever he lets her sleep in and takes their kids to school, and praised her daughter Olivia for ordering a sandwich with vegetables.

- **The neuroscientist and her bike helmet**
  Sharot admits she doesn't always wear a helmet cycling in London and rewards herself with a small Hershey's chocolate when she does. For months she wore a badly fitting one that 'wasn't protecting me at all' before finally buying a new one.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Open with a question, not a prescription**
  Ask 'How are you feeling about your job?' and listen. Focus on what they want, not what you think they should want. Sharot asks her team 'tell me how you're doing' at least once a year.
- **Praise out loud, without 'finally'**
  We tend to notice what people aren't doing and only think 'that's nice' when they do. Say it, but skip the condescending 'finally!' that Mel admits using when her son ate something green.
- **Pick your battles and work on yourself**
  Sometimes the best move is letting the golf game happen and addressing your own stress, which Mel admits is not the answer she wanted.

The Brutal Truth About Relationships You Need to Hear

Guest: Matthew Hussey
Date: 2024-05-27 · Duration: 0:45:21
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cf4ANNIRjdk

KEYPOINTS

• Four levels of a relationship: admiration, mutual attraction, commitment, compatibility

Dating coach Matthew Hussey's framework starts with admiration: finding someone attractive or impressive, often from afar, with nothing mutual. Next comes mutual attraction, or shared chemistry. Then commitment, where both people say yes to each other. Finally compatibility, meaning whether it actually works day to day. Mel's takeaway is that if you don't know which level you're at, no wonder the relationship isn't working.

• Level two is the most dangerous

Mutual attraction feels like the holy grail because many people rarely experience it, so it seems worth doing anything for. Hussey points out that connection and sexual chemistry aren't actually rare. A common story he hears is "We can talk about anything... but they're not ready for a relationship." That's level two, not three, and there's a world of difference.

• Chemistry is a plot of land; a relationship needs two builders

Great chemistry is like an amazing plot of land where you can picture what might be built. Commitment means two builders creating a castle together, with secret rooms only the two of you know. If the other builder is AWOL and just wants an experience, you're building alone. Level two is an experience; level three is a relationship.

• Over-giving doesn't earn commitment

Many people hope that if they make themselves indispensable, the other person will see their value and give back. Instead, Hussey says, the other person learns there's no cost to receiving, so your giving is taken for granted. Months or years later you ask "What is this?" and hear "I don't know." He says every great relationship is formed through hard conversations, and those can be elegant rather than aggressive.

• Level two can last for years inside a long relationship

Level two isn't just month-three limbo. It covers any partner who can't give the level of commitment you need, such as a partner of three years who won't decide on marriage or children, or someone you live with who doesn't want to marry. Hussey says nobody cares about your time as much as you do, and expecting them to is a recipe for wasting your life.

• The hardest conversation is the one with yourself

We avoid talking to our partner because we haven't first admitted to ourselves what matters most and what we're prepared to lose. To change, Hussey says, make change necessary. That might mean a 35- or 37-year-old finally getting honest about how much having children matters to them. Without that clarity, any script you use is just a tactic, not a standard.

• The "one-day wager" rarely pays off

Staking your time and energy on someone eventually becoming what you need is a dangerous assumption. People can change, but through hard conversations and visible, continuing progress. Hussey quotes Goethe: consider how hard it is to change yourself, and you'll see how foolish it is to think you can change someone else. He uses his own lifelong struggle with food as proof of how hard change is even when you're motivated.

• Love isn't enough without compatibility

Level four asks whether your fundamental needs are met, as opposed to "luxury items." Mel says incompatibility shows up as constant friction: battles over restaurants and Saturday plans, irritation, walking on eggshells. With a compatible partner, fights pass quickly. She says she has big ADHD energy and is hard-driving, while her husband Chris is easygoing, and she knew he was the one because she could be exactly who she is.

• Self-love is a job, not a feeling

Of 8 billion people, you're the only one charged with taking care of this one human. Seen that way, comparison and self-judgment make no sense; you don't need to like yourself to love yourself. Ask why you'd let anyone who keeps you in limbo or confused about your worth near the person you're responsible for. He says he revisits this monthly, sometimes weekly.

EXAMPLES

• The script for moving from level two to three

In a role-play with Mel, Hussey says something like: "I'm investing a lot of time, energy and intimacy that I wouldn't be giving if I were still seeing other people, and I wanted to know if you're in the same place. If not, that's totally okay, but I'd need to re-evaluate how much I give." When Mel, playing his date, said she'd just left a long relationship, he wished her well and stepped back without resentment.

• Why the script works

Mel noticed he said he enjoyed the time together rather than "I really like you," so he wasn't fishing for reassurance. He talked about his energy rather than demanding monogamy or a commitment. The subtext is "I know what I have to offer is incredible." Own the time and intimacy you chose to give, and don't make the other person a villain or yourself a loser.

• Audrey's text

After meeting his now-wife Audrey in London, Hussey went back to Los Angeles and gradually faded from calls to sparse texts. Weeks later he texted that he missed her. She replied: "I hope you're well. To be honest, when I get a message like this from you I'm not really sure what to say. We haven't really felt that close for a while now. (Rightly or wrongly, this comes across like a bid for attention.)" She stayed warm, named the gap between his words and actions, refused to mirror him, and added humility with "rightly or wrongly."

• The woman who missed her window

At one of Hussey's retreats, a woman collapsed on the floor, inconsolable. For ten years her husband said he wasn't sure about children, and she kept putting off the conversation with him and with herself. She missed her biological window, and then he left anyway. Hussey describes years of grief in people he's seen go through this.

- **The friend who always dated dancers**

A married friend of Hussey's had always dated dancers, but his wife is "the least coordinated person I've ever met." His response: he dances maybe twice a year, while she's an amazing partner, mother and best friend every day. It shows the difference between preferences and fundamental needs.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Know when it's time for the talk**

If you're giving more than you're comfortable with, unsure where you stand, or checking whether they're active on Hinge, have the conversation you've been avoiding. Mel says it's not their fault they don't want commitment; it's on you if you keep showing up for something that isn't good for you.

- **Watch for love-bombing after you call it out**

Some people respond to a boundary with a charm offensive: calling, flying out, gushing. That's still level two until the commitment conversation actually happens. And there's no such thing as "deep level two."

- **Let standards create attraction**

Living by clear standards is itself attractive. Before you ask whether someone will change, ask whether you've actually told them, whether there's been progress, and whether it's continuing. If you're only venting to friends, you aren't there yet.

#1 Stress Doctor: 5 Tools to Protect Your Brain From Stress & Feel Calmer Now

Guest: Dr. Aditi Nerurkar
Date: 2024-05-23 · Duration: 1:18:29
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rl5Y9Eem3tc

KEYPOINTS

• Healthy stress moves you forward; unhealthy stress keeps you stuck

Dr. Aditi Nerurkar, a Harvard physician, stress researcher and author of The Five Resets, separates adaptive stress (a new job, falling in love, the nerves before a 5K) from the maladaptive kind we mean when we say 'I'm so stressed.' Fear and excitement live in the same part of the brain. She suggests telling yourself 'this is excitement, I can do this,' because pushing through builds self-efficacy.

• Chronic stress puts the amygdala in charge

Normally the prefrontal cortex, behind your forehead, runs planning and focus. Under stress the amygdala takes over in 'cave-person mode,' built for survival. Fight-or-flight was meant to last seconds, for a tiger in the forest. Headlines, traffic, deadlines and worried kids keep it humming in the background, and over time that leads to burnout. Nerurkar says the amygdala doesn't reset on its own, which is why a vacation or a sunny weekend feels great but doesn't last.

• Burnout can look like simply getting through the day

You can go to work and see friends and still be running on fumes rather than thriving. Nerurkar cites a study where 60% of people with burnout had one main feature: an inability to disconnect from work. Mel admits she's in the 'running on fumes' camp despite knowing all the science.

• Doomscrolling, stress eating and revenge bedtime are the amygdala at work

Nerurkar's explanation for doomscrolling: tribes once had a night watchman scanning for danger, and now we each play that role on our phones. Stress also drives comfort eating (hers is chocolate cake) and 'revenge bedtime procrastination,' staying up late to claim some 'me time.' She cites a study showing people who do this know they should go to bed earlier. It isn't a knowledge gap. Behavior changes only when you act differently.

• Stress can be measured, and five areas drive it

Every patient takes a stress quiz, then retakes it after a month to see if the score moved. She focuses on sleep, movement, diet, media use and connection with others. Every tool in her book is free and quick, because most people can't fit in monthly massages and acupuncture.

• Reset 1: get clear on what matters most

Instead of asking 'what's wrong with me?', set a MOST goal: Motivating, Objective, Small and Timely. Mel's burnout goals included sleeping through the night and not thinking about work at 3 a.m. Nerurkar says a habit takes about eight weeks, falling off and getting back on included, so give yourself three months.

• Reset 2: find quiet in a noisy world

'Popcorn brain' describes being so overstimulated by constant phone use that slow offline life feels eerie. 'Brain drain' research suggests that just having your phone nearby distracts you and adds stress. She says over 50% of people check their phone first thing on waking. Her fixes are digital boundaries, not quitting: keep the phone off your nightstand, buy a cheap alarm clock and switch to grayscale.

• Reset 3: sync your brain and body

Shallow chest breathing goes with fight-or-flight, and slow belly breathing switches on 'rest and digest.' The two systems can't run at once, so breathing works like a light switch. She also describes the gut as a 'second brain,' with far more serotonin receptors than the brain. For movement, a 5–10 minute daily walk beats an ambitious gym plan, because daily habits avoid decision fatigue. 'Opt out of a scroll and go for a walk.'

• Reset 4: come up for air

Productivity follows a bell curve, not a straight line, and most of us sit on the overstressed right side. Nerurkar calls the middle the 'Goldilocks' zone. You usually can't cut your workload, so honor your breaks instead. Checking your phone between meetings isn't a break. It wakes the amygdala back up.

• Reset 5: bring your best self forward

The inner critic gets a megaphone under stress because the amygdala wants to keep you safe and small. Her main tool is a written gratitude practice. Keep a notebook where your phone used to be and each day write the date and five things you're grateful for, and why. She cites Rick Hanson's 'Velcro vs. Teflon' idea, that stress makes negative experiences stick, and studies showing better mood, less stress and better sleep at 30, 60 and 90 days.

EXAMPLES

• The Holmes–Rahe study and the rule of two

In the 1960s, psychiatrists Holmes and Rahe studied about 5,000 people across 43 common life events, good and bad. The more events people piled up, the higher their risk of stress and later illness. That's why Nerurkar recommends changing just two things at a time. She jokes that her 2020 plans to build a farmhouse table, learn Italian and play guitar turned into wearing clean clothes and eating a few vegetables.

• A doctor whose 'diamond cracked'

As a resident working 80-hour weeks and seeing death daily, Nerurkar was taught that 'pressure makes diamonds.' Then she burned out. She recovered with gentle yoga a few days a week and daily short walks, and says Mel's openness inspired her to share her own story in the book.

• Stop, breathe, be at the doorknob

Seeing 30 to 40 patients a day, she said 'stop, breathe, be' each time she turned a patient's doorknob, grounding her feet and taking a breath. She used it before this interview too. It works, she says, because anxiety is about 'what if' and this pulls you back to 'what is.'

- **The sitting data**

  In a study of about 800 people she cites, those who sat most had 112% higher risk of diabetes, 147% higher risk of heart disease, 90% higher risk of dying from heart disease and 50% higher risk of death overall. She notes the stress mechanism isn't fully understood. Her advice is simply to stand and move after long meetings.

- **The patient who watched news day and night**

  During an election year, a patient told her he watched the news day and night. She assumed he was exaggerating until his routine confirmed it. She uses the story to say it wasn't his fault: the amygdala drives the behavior.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Tonight's sleep plan**

  Start with self-compassion: if you're not sleeping well, it's not your fault. Ask her sleep colleague's question, what are you doing in the two hours before bed? Limit screens then, keep the phone out of the bedroom, and don't scroll on waking. She says you may notice a difference within a week.

- **Rename stress as an amygdala alarm**

  Mel's takeaway is to think 'my amygdala is on fire, I need a quick reset' instead of 'I'm stressed.' That turns a vague feeling into something you can act on.

- **If you do only one thing, practice self-compassion**

  Nerurkar says self-compassion has been found to calm the amygdala and lower cortisol. 'You are the sky; everything else is just the weather.' Be kinder than necessary to others, and to yourself.

Live a Healthier, Happier, and Longer Life: The Secrets to Feeling Young Forever

Guest: Judy Robbins
Date: 2024-05-20 · Duration: 0:51:47
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6T13rQENVeQ

KEYPOINTS

• Mel's 4-foot-1 mother-in-law returns to answer listener questions at 86

Judy Robbins, turning 87 in September, went skydiving for the first time at 80 and got her first tattoo at 85. Her first appearance drew so many questions that Mel brought her back. Mel calls her an expert in longevity 'with lived experience,' a counterpoint to doctors and researchers.

• She's walked daily for decades: four miles minimum

Judy started running at 33 or 34 in the early 1970s to keep up with her husband Ken, who is 6'2". Today she walks four miles a day, tracked on her Apple Watch: 'it can be five but it can't be less,' or she feels guilty and walks somewhere else to make it up. She adds yoga or Pilates once or twice a week. Mel has watched her head out in Vermont winters in a snowsuit and spiked shoes.

• Exercise creates energy rather than draining it

Judy's pitch to older people who say 'why start now?': you're less tired. Many assume a walk will exhaust them, but she says endorphins build and you come home wanting to do something rather than nap. She also notes that most friends her age, especially men, don't walk, and that anything, a walk or a nightly glass of wine, becomes a habit you miss.

• She's no health purist, and enjoys herself

Judy drinks coffee as soon as she gets up, skips breakfast and admits she drinks 'not enough' water, counting kombucha, apple cider vinegar and a fresh orange. After exercise she has a smoothie: a full packet of vanilla MET-Rx, a bodybuilder protein mix, ice, kale, sprouts, blueberries, strawberries and coconut water, with at least four Nabisco ginger snaps. Mel jokes that this is not a health episode.

• Appetite naturally shrinks with age

Lunch is grazing, like eating chicken salad standing at the fridge, unlike her partner John, who eats three square meals with a napkin on his lap. Dinner is usually chicken or fish; she's moved away from meat out of thinking about animals. Judy says older people often simply aren't as hungry, and she and John often split a main course. When she wondered about quitting wine, her son Chris told her not to bother at 86.

• Social connection now comes first for longevity

Judy says what she reads about longevity used to put the Mediterranean diet and exercise first, but now ranks social connection first, because loneliness brings depression and self-doubt. You can't wait for people to call. If nothing is going on, she creates a dinner party. Six guests is her ideal number because everyone talks together.

• A retirement community gave her security and activity

A self-described FOMO, she decided to move the morning after a friend said she was going. On her second day a neighbor named Mary walked over with orchids. If Judy doesn't emerge for four or five hours, someone checks on her, unlike her old 25-acre property or her Florida community, where 'I could have been flat out for a couple days.' There's even pickleball on grass.

• After losing her husband, she built a life through adventure and volunteering

Ken died about 19 years ago, around 2006. She rented a New York apartment for three months, found it lonely and signed up for Art Students League classes. Then came a solo bike trip to New Zealand. After a Cambodia bike trip, in her late 70s she went back for winters, arranged to tutor English at an elementary school without being a teacher, and got involved with the NGO Cambodian Living Arts.

• A hard childhood gave her courage

With only two years of college and no money for more, at 19 she moved to Chicago, answered phones at American Airlines, became a receptionist at a top ad agency, went to secretarial school and then moved to San Francisco. In high school she started the first girl cheerleaders at New Trier after 100 years of boys only.

• Lessons at 86: listen more, care less what people think

Judy says she used to want to be the center of attention and barely let people finish; now she's patient and interested in listening. As a child she was 'an incredible liar,' telling tales so people would like her. Now 'the package is done and wrapped up.' She still won't go to the grocery store without SPF 50 CC cream from Ulta.

EXAMPLES

• The star tattoo

Visiting a dying close friend, Diana, in Florida, Judy asked if she believed in life after death. Diana said she'd become a star. Judy got a tiny tattoo of a planet with three stars: Ken, Diana at the top, and John, 'who will be the last star.' Granddaughter Sawyer, then Kendall and the rest of the family got star tattoos too.

• Bungee jumping and skydiving

On the New Zealand bike trip, her grandson Heath bungee jumped, so she did too, and loved it. She likes things that scare her, though not things that make her dizzy. Skydiving at 80 followed in a similar spirit.

• An MDMA-guided session at 85

In a therapeutic setting with Chris, Mel, Sawyer and Kendall, Judy says she learned how much her granddaughters loved her. It reinforced who she was and that she isn't alone.

• The 'Robbins Gang' group chat

Judy started a multigenerational family chat with 18 people. When she posts a picture, maybe two people heart it. She doesn't take it personally, since everyone's busy; it's her way of saying 'don't forget about me, I'm still around.' She also recently called high school friends from her class of 1955.

• Mel's friend Jody and the bass fishing contest

Jody moved from Santa Barbara back to Michigan to be near her parents, then signed herself and her dad up to judge a bass fishing competition, despite knowing nothing about it. Mel offers it as a model of doing things with aging parents rather than prodding them.

OTHER RELEVANT

• How to start moving later in life

If you're social, find a gym class and see what others are doing, like yoga or a barre-style class. If not, just walk on nice days. Judy's motivation trick from the cassette era: listen to an audiobook only while walking, so you want to get out the door for the next chapter. She always has two books going: one to listen to, one to read.

• Reach out, and keep something on the calendar

After Ken died, Mel told Judy to call someone so she had something on her calendar; Judy calls it great advice. Her single most important tip: stay connected. If you're lonely, call a friend, cry if you need to and ask to come over. Volunteering, with kids or in hospice, takes you out of yourself.

• For anyone who feels their best days are behind them

Judy's morning gratitude: 'I'm so grateful my eyes opened, that I can swallow, get out of bed and brush my teeth,' even if you need a cane or walker. You don't need a hobby, just a reason to get up. Her parting words: stay in love with yourself, your friends and your life.

Don’t Argue or Fight With a Narcissist… Do This Instead (#1 Narcissism Expert)

Guest: Dr. Ramani Durvasula
Date: 2024-05-18 · Duration: 1:29:38
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IewDusCWdCM

KEYPOINTS

• The story of narcissism is usually told by the hunter, not the lion

Clinical psychologist Dr. Ramani Durvasula, author of It's Not You and host of Navigating Narcissism, says most content obsesses over spotting narcissists and why they act as they do, which keeps survivors focused on them. Her proverb, 'the tale of the hunt is always told by the hunter, never the lion,' describes a gradual, quiet takeover in which a strong, autonomous person ends up living in someone else's psychological service and no longer knows who they are.

• Becoming 'better' only makes you better supply

Trying to be a better daughter, partner or employee won't change a narcissistic person; it makes you a more convenient source of supply who anticipates their needs and keeps your own quiet. Adult children of narcissistic parents are often still bringing the four-year-old's finger-painted picture, now in the form of jobs, houses and grandchildren, and it's never enough.

• A narcissistic parent builds an 'accommodation muscle'

Children can't divorce a parent, so they reshape themselves (quieter, tidier, better grades, even the parent's therapist) to get basic attachment needs met. Dr. Ramani rejects the idea that these adults are more attracted to narcissists, since narcissists charm everyone. Instead, they're more likely to get stuck, because devaluation feels like a familiar game of earning love.

• Signs of narcissistic emotional abuse

Her short list includes self-blame, self-doubt, confusion, anxiety, helplessness, powerlessness, sleep and concentration problems, neglecting self-care, feeling selfish for doing anything for yourself, hypervigilance, constantly changing yourself to please others, loneliness, isolation and feeling 'weird.' Survivors also report losing faith or trust in the world.

• Step one is radical acceptance: they won't change

Radical acceptance means recognizing the behavior and dynamic won't change, not approving of it, and accepting that it will still hurt. Hope is the biggest barrier to healing because it ties up the psychological resources you need for yourself. Her distinction: anyone can change; a narcissistic person won't. Mel says this reframe changed a decades-long relationship in her life.

• Step two is grief, and it's monumental

Giving up hope means losing a narrative, an imagined future and a sense of belonging, and you don't get a second childhood or another parent. That's why Dr. Ramani builds 'scaffolding' around clients before removing hope. Two things make it worse: no closure, since there is no deathbed apology, and no justice, as families rally around the narcissist and exes remarry quickly. She cites Judith Herman's work on how injustice impedes healing from trauma.

• Rumination without a solution becomes depression

Rumination normally serves to find a solution, an idea dating back to Darwin. With narcissistic abuse there is none, so people hit the same wall, which fuels powerlessness and looks like depression. She recommends telling the story repeatedly in therapy, since each retelling puts another piece down, rather than wearing out friends.

• Dismantle hope with evidence

Euphoric recall makes survivors cherry-pick the good, like the trip to Miami or laughing at a TV show. Her 'ick list' means writing down every hurtful incident, with help from people who watched the relationship, until the pattern can't be unseen. For clients who insist it'll be different, she uses 'going into the tiger's cage': let them try the confrontation or share the good news, then analyze what happened. She estimates it's a kitten maybe one time in a thousand.

• Take a 12-month cleanse after leaving

No dating, sex, apps or flirty texts for a year, or for the length of the relationship if it lasted under a year, even after 30 or 40 years. The goal is rebuilding a self, from pizza toppings and thermostat settings to how you handle sadness, and getting through a first round of anniversaries and holidays alone. She says clients who followed it emerged with discernment, the core skill for avoiding the next one.

• Narcissistic families assign roles

The golden child is the best source of supply; the scapegoat absorbs the venom and carries lasting wounds; the rescuer cleans up before the parent's car arrives; the peacekeeper translates ('Mom didn't mean that'); the invisible child is forgotten, sometimes not even picked up from school (Mel laughs that this is her husband); and the truth-seer spots patterns early and often lands in the parent's crosshairs. The roles persist even after the narcissist dies.

EXAMPLES

• 60 cups of tea

With one client who kept expecting things to be different, Dr. Ramani bet a cup of tea on predicting what the narcissistic person would do. She collected about 60 cups and lost only once. The client later said Dr. Ramani's certainty, with a coaster already out for the tea, convinced her it was a pattern rather than mind-reading.

• Mel's friend a decade after divorce

Ten years after her husband moved a much younger girlfriend into the family home and lifelong friends sided with him, Mel's friend still couldn't let go and ruminated about a hypothetical wedding for her daughter, who isn't even engaged. Dr. Ramani's view: she has fully accepted who he is; it's the injustice that keeps her stuck.

• Narcissist bingo

One client playing narcissist bingo at family events marks off each invalidation or gaslight and has to stop herself from yelling 'bingo' after five. Dr. Ramani admits she bets herself a Dairy Queen on the way home.

• The 400-pound backpack

Dr. Ramani, a survivor herself, says it's like everyone else ran a marathon on flat ground while you were sent uphill with a 400-pound backpack, and you still finished. She says she still struggles to value herself and calls her voice a gift that previous

generations of women in her family never got.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Prepare and release around family contact**
  Before each visit, remind yourself it will be no different and they'll make it about them. Afterward, leave no meeting booked right after; nap, shower or walk. Keep revisiting why you still have contact; any reason is fine except 'this time will be different.'
- **Don't gaslight or proselytize to your kids**
  When co-parenting, it isn't your job to convince children the other parent is a narcissist. If an adult child says it, resist 'finally!'; they're testing the waters and still feel loyal. Ask how they feel and how you can help instead of fixing. Expect them to be anxious, and know some kids get lured with money or love-bombing.
- **Let anger work for you**
  Dr. Ramani calls anger a mobilizing emotion and a stage of grief, distinct from narcissistic rage. Many survivors also carry complicated anger and guilt toward the non-narcissistic parent who didn't protect them.
- **Build grief rituals for yourself**
  Deaths come with rituals like sitting shiva or the Tibetan 49 days; this loss doesn't, so deliberately make time to mourn. Stop asking 'why was I so stupid'; nobody taught you this, and everyone around you said 'they didn't mean it' while the narcissist said you were too sensitive.

How to Build Real Confidence: 7 Truths to Unlock Your Authentic Self

Date: 2024-05-16 · Duration: 0:55:12
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YZn2Q4IU53k

KEYPOINTS

- **Truth 1: putting yourself first will disappoint people, so make sure it isn't you.**
  Mel's opening rule is that someone will always be disappointed by your choices, so the only question is who. If you live to keep others happy while you stay miserable, the disappointed person ends up being you. She suggests holding space for other people's disappointment without letting their questions make you question decisions that are right for you.
- **Letting people down builds resilience and a stronger sense of self.**
  For people-pleasers, she says some sentences are necessary as well as reasonable: it's not in my budget, I can't go on the girls' trip, I'm not interested in another date, you're not borrowing that. She reframes the discomfort of saying no as a sign of growth rather than failure, and argues that staying silent to avoid upsetting people slowly wears away who you are.
- **Truth 2: your energy shows you when you're being yourself.**
  Mel describes being authentic as feeling 'plugged into a light socket', while the wrong room or the wrong people pull the plug. Pretending to be someone else is exhausting, and noticing that you're drained is often how you realise you're off track.
- **Dr. Ramani Durvasula: being authentic is hard because it can make you unpopular.**
  Mel plays a clip from psychologist Dr. Ramani Durvasula, who says the hardest thing in the world is being authentic, because it means blazing your own trail while people judge you and give you the side-eye. Mel takes this as the reason authenticity requires bravery: you have to notice which places, spaces and people shrink your energy and which ones expand it.
- **Truth 3: being yourself creates confidence, so don't wait to feel confident first.**
  The more you pretend to like things you don't, the more self-doubt, fear and paralysis you feel. Mel's definition of confidence is the willingness to try. It's an action and a skill you practise, not a feeling or a fixed personality trait. Her line is that you are waiting for confidence while confidence is waiting for you to show up.
- **Truth 4: loving yourself first improves your relationships with other people.**
  Mel cites an eight-year study by relationship researcher Dr. Matthew Johnson of the University of Alberta. It found that people recreated the same dynamics in new partnerships as in past failed ones once the honeymoon phase faded. Johnson's summary is that you are still the same person, so you likely recreate many of the same patterns. Mel's conclusion is that who you are matters more than the match, and that low self-worth can sabotage even a great partner.
- **Truth 5: learn to love what is unique about you instead of trying to fit in.**
  She argues that social media puts constant pressure to conform on your phone all day: the same outfits, trends and brands, even the assumption that every engagement ring should be a diamond. 'Every gem sparkles.'
- **Truth 6: what you think of your life matters more than what others think.**
  Mel applies her Let Them Theory: let them judge, let them be disappointed, let them not invite you, then turn that energy back to 'let me live my life'. She clarifies that this isn't about not caring at all, but about caring more about your own happiness. Two things can be true at once: people can disagree with what you do and still love you, just as you love family members whose choices you don't like.
- **Truth 7: you can have it all, but not all at once.**
  Mel says life tends to support you once you align it with who you are, but trying to push every part of your life forward at once derails you. Her solution is to pick one theme or priority for six months. She has gone through stretches where career came first, others where her social life did, and others where nothing mattered more than the people she loved.

EXAMPLES

- **Her parents' disappointment over who she married**
  Mel grew up in the Midwest and married Chris, whose family is from the Northeast. Her parents liked him but had hoped she would marry someone who would bring her back home. Their disappointment, she says, didn't change the fact that it was her life to build.
- **Quitting the family ski days**
  For years Mel pretended to enjoy skiing because everyone in her family loves it. This winter she told them she loves that they're a ski family but isn't a skier herself and won't really ski anymore. They were disappointed, and she found it liberating.
- **Wearing pants to law firm interviews in the early 1990s**
  As a third-year student at Boston College Law School, Mel bought a navy pantsuit with a wide belt from Ann Taylor for on-campus firm interviews, at a time when women at large firms weren't allowed to wear pants. A friend asked whether she had lost her mind. She estimates that 95% of the places she interviewed with didn't offer her a job, but she ended up somewhere she could be herself, and she still calls it one of her smartest moves.
- **Changing partners instead of herself**
  Mel says she dated great people through high school, college and law school but hated herself, so she kept switching partners as a distraction. Once the newness wore off, the same broken relationship with herself was still there. Her relationships improved only after she started changing herself.
- **The High Five Habit, tested with more than 175,000 people**
  Her method for building self-love: after brushing your teeth, look in the mirror and silently high-five your reflection, five mornings in a row. She describes it as a 'neurobic' exercise that pairs a routine activity with something unexpected and a positive emotion, and says her team has tested it with more than 175,000 people. These are claims from her own book and research team, and she invites listeners to try it for five days rather than take her word for it.
- **Chris's ice cream samples and airport pace**
  Chris always asks to sample several flavours before ordering black raspberry with chocolate chips, and he strolls through airports chatting with TSA staff while Mel is already at the gate with coffee. It used to drive her crazy; now she loves it. She says

her job isn't to speed him up but to admire what makes him who he is.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Do an energy audit**
  Ask where you feel most energized, whose name on your phone lifts you up, and when you lose track of time. If nothing comes to mind, think back to a happier period, such as playing on a team, drawing, building, writing or making people laugh, and add a small version back now: a 5K, a hike, an improv class, meditation or church.
- **Find a 'confidence pusher'**
  Pick a positive roommate, sibling, cousin or work friend who will nudge you out of your comfort zone, whether that means introducing yourself and your new business to people or signing up for the race. If you don't have one, Mel suggests imagining her telling you to 'wear the pants'.
- **Practise saying no without managing the fallout**
  Say the no, acknowledge the other person's feelings, and let them sit with their reaction as an adult.
- **Choose one six-month theme**
  Name the single area of your life that would give you the most growth over the next six months. Make it the priority, and add something every day that makes you feel more like yourself.

6 Simple Science-Backed Hacks That Will Make Your Life Better

Guest: Dr. Adam Alter
Date: 2024-05-13 · Duration: 0:55:46
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZTacS2ZJfIw

KEYPOINTS

• Modern life drains attention, and nature restores it.
Alter says that being in nature is, apart from sleep, one of the few states that refills you. Screens and work demand intense, focused attention all day. Nature still catches your attention with birdsong, running water or trees, but in a soft, undemanding way. He points to a body of research known as attention restoration and calls natural environments one of the best forms of medicine available.

• Even a small or indoor dose of nature counts.
City dwellers can use real plants, or fake ones if necessary, and a small plug-in fountain, since even the sound of running water stands in for the real thing. He suggests about five minutes a day of doing nothing but taking in a natural setting, however small. On a recent forest run he made himself stop and sit on a rock by the water for five minutes, against his instinct to keep going, and calls it the most restorative part of his day.

• Colour mostly works through association.
Alter, who is colour-blind, became interested in colour because of it. He thinks most colour effects come from what we associate the colours with. Blues and greens calm us because they remind us of sky, water and leaves, while reds and yellows activate us, which can help or hurt depending on the situation.

• Red signals dominance and attractiveness, with a caveat.
In many species, animals with more red, such as redder-faced birds or apes, tend to be the dominant ones. People wearing red feel more dominant and are seen that way by others. Alter says it can help in a negotiation, interview or date. His caveat is that red is a conspicuous, deliberate choice, so in a setting where it would look unusual it may send a message you don't intend.

• Mirrors make us more honest with ourselves.
Seeing a face, and especially eyes, makes us feel watched. Looking at our own reflection pushes us to judge whether what we're doing is right. Stores with shoplifting problems that can't afford constant surveillance often put up more mirrors for this reason.

• Seeing money makes people more independent and less helpful.
In studies Alter describes, people who had just been shown money or dollar bills were a little less helpful and less generous on a later task. The theory is that money reminds you of your resources and that you need other people less, which makes you more self-reliant and less community-minded.

• Clutter pulls at your focus even when you ignore it.
Every object in view draws you slightly out of the present, a phone most of all, but also photos and mementos. Alter isn't against family photos on a desk, but he favours a clear space for thinking. He notes that many people struggle to manage even 10 to 20 minutes of focused work in a row, especially with a phone nearby or email pinging.

• Scrolling works less like a thrill and more like a soothing trance.
Alter compares evening doom-scrolling to sitting at a slot machine: people stay not because it's exciting but because it numbs them. After a hard day it's like 'taking a bath in the screen', because nothing is asked of you. He notes that alcohol is the other common source of easy calm. Phones are harder to resist than TV because they respond to your actions, while TV is more passive and leaves you a little more control, even if it encourages binge-watching.

• Tech has removed the natural 'stopping cues'.
Chapters, credits and the end of a newspaper used to signal that it was time to move on. Alter says tech companies have systematically removed those signals, the bottomless feed being the clearest case. Because humans tend to keep doing whatever they're already doing, without a cue we simply carry on.

• Over a lifetime, scrolling adds up to 15 to 20 years.
Alter estimates that the average person will spend something like 15 to 20 years scrolling. Heavy use also lowers our tolerance for slow, effortful work: a brain fed constant one-second hits finds reading lessons or a quiet elevator ride hard. He argues that very few people, offered 20 extra years at the end of life, would choose to have spent them scrolling.

EXAMPLES

• Hospital rooms with a view of greenery
In a study Alter calls the most striking he knows, patients recovering from identical surgeries were randomly assigned rooms looking onto a lawn and trees or onto another part of the building. Those with the natural view needed about half as much pain medication and left hospital three days sooner.

• Olympic combat athletes in red win about two-thirds of the time
Olympic judo, wrestling and taekwondo randomly assigned competitors red or blue for fairness. Researchers found that when opponents were evenly matched, the one in red won about two-thirds of the time. Online dating studies also found that the same photo got more attention when the person wore red, or even when it had a red border.

• 'Drunk tank pink'
Alter's book Drunk Tank Pink is named after a bubble-gum pink used in holding cells, where aggressive detainees reportedly calmed down within about 15 minutes. He says the evidence is 'a little bit shaky' even though it drew wide attention in the 1980s. The visiting locker room at the University of Iowa is painted that pink, and some boxers wear pink trunks hoping to soften their opponents.

• The coin-toss test in front of a mirror
People privately flipped a coin, with heads earning a jelly bean and tails meaning something unpleasant to eat. Without a mirror, well over 50% reported heads. In front of a mirror the reports went back to about 50/50. Alter suggests putting a small

mirror in your snack cupboard, and Mel considers one for her snack drawer or a liquor cabinet.

- **Teens who spend 10 to 12 hours a day on their phones**

When Alter taught a summer high school class at NYU, students who tracked their screen time averaged six to eight hours a day, and some reached 10 to 12. Teens told him they wished everyone would quit together, because quitting alone means social isolation.

- **Twelve hours of driving for three minutes of eclipse**

Alter drove six hours each way with a friend to northern Vermont to see the eclipse. For days afterwards, he says, he had a 'hangover' of patience, and spending a few hours on a single task felt easy. He calls this time dilation, the opposite of the time contraction of five-second content.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Lock your phone away for one hour a day**

This is Alter's single biggest recommendation. Pick an hour, keep it at about the same time daily so it becomes a habit, and put the phone in a drawer or cookie jar. A family version is putting all phones in a jar with a 30-minute timer at dinner.

- **Replace the habit instead of relying on willpower**

Nobody has enough willpower to just stop. Plan something enjoyable to fill the gap. It doesn't even have to be screen-free: the test is whether you come away feeling better and more fulfilled, or hollow.

- **Build 'timeless' time into each day**

Spend some of the day doing something that could have happened a thousand years ago: being in nature, closing your eyes and letting your mind wander, a face-to-face conversation, or physical activity such as lifting heavy things.

How to Balance Your Hormones: What Your Doctor Isn’t Telling You About Menopause

Guest: Dr. Jen Gunter
Date: 2024-05-09 · Duration: 1:06:01
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6_B0sZINhU4

KEYPOINTS

• Think of menopause as 'puberty in reverse'
Dr. Jen Gunter, a double board-certified OB-GYN and author of The Menopause Manifesto, says menopause is a normal part of ovulatory life, not a modern problem: the ancient Greeks put the average age around 50, as it is now. Normal doesn't mean pleasant, just as puberty and pregnancy can bring complications. For some, ending painful periods or PMS swings is liberating.

• The transition is hormonal chaos, not a smooth decline
Perimenopause typically lasts about four to 10 years. As ovarian follicles dwindle, the brain pushes harder to trigger ovulation, so cycles become discoordinated: some with higher estrogen than normal, some without progesterone, some shorter. Mel's best friend whose periods simply stopped after one hot flash is, in Gunter's words, a unicorn.

• Exercise beats hormones as the top intervention
Gunter ranks exercise above hormone therapy because it touches nearly every domain menopause affects: depression risk, bone mass, muscle loss, heart and brain health, and balance (falling is the top risk factor for breaking a bone). It doesn't treat hot flashes or vaginal dryness, but medications do. She also recommends about 25 grams of fiber a day, more protein (especially plant-based), more vegetables and not smoking.

• 'Bioidentical' is a meaningless marketing term
Whether a hormone matches what your body makes doesn't make it safe; too much estrogen can cause endometrial cancer. 'Plant-based' is also marketing: estradiol is made by chemically converting a compound extracted from soybeans because it's cheaper, and 'nobody's grinding up yams.' Every FDA-approved estrogen except Premarin is bioidentical. She suggests calling these products what they are: compounded.

• Compounded hormones and pellets lack dosing data and oversight
Gunter says compounding pharmacies buy the same raw estradiol as drug companies, but haven't studied how it's absorbed through skin or gut, and individually mixed batches aren't batch-tested. She notes no major menopause society recommends compounded hormones. A quick check: an FDA-approved prescription comes with a package insert listing risks. The exception is a true allergy, such as US-brand oral progesterone made with peanut oil.

• Pellets can spike hormone levels unpredictably
These compounded implants may contain estrogen, testosterone or other hormones and can produce very high levels that then drop off, sometimes testosterone levels high enough to cause changes like clitoral enlargement. Gunter says it's unclear how much progesterone is needed to protect the uterus, they're expensive, and she has concerns about side effects not being reported to the FDA.

• First-line therapy is transdermal estradiol
Gunter says you only need to know two estrogens, estradiol and Premarin (conjugated equine estrogens from horse urine), and three routes: skin, vagina or mouth. Skin is believed to carry a lower blood clot risk than oral. A standard start is a transdermal estrogen with oral progesterone if you have a uterus. Place a patch only where the insert says, since absorption differs on belly, thigh or buttocks.

• If you're 45 or older, you usually don't need a blood test
Treatment is based on symptoms, not hormone levels. The average age of menopause is 51. If you're 45+ with hot flashes and irregular periods, it's 'no mystery.' Under 45, skipping more than two periods warrants bloodwork to check for early menopause or another condition. Menopause before 45 generally means taking hormones until about 51 regardless of symptoms.

• Timing matters: generally start within 10 years of your last period and before 60
Gunter says starting later is associated with higher dementia and cardiovascular risk, though there can be some wiggle room, for example for someone whose last period was at 55.

• The Women's Health Initiative fear needs context
The trial's estrogen-plus-progestin arm (Premarin plus a progestin) was stopped early after reaching a threshold of concern about breast cancer. Gunter says it was publicized unusually, before peer-reviewed data, and later research got less attention. She believes progestins carry more risk than progesterone; the standard regimen's breast cancer risk is very low, and estrogen alone is lower still. People with prior clots, heart attacks or very high cardiovascular risk may need other options.

• Don't use menopause to excuse mediocre men
Gunter responded to a Guardian advice column in which a woman whose husband broke their agreement to share parenting and housework, behaving like 'her third child,' was told it might be her hormones. Her point: the answer to being mistreated is being treated correctly, not taking hormones. The same goes for workplaces offering temperature control while keeping glass ceilings.

EXAMPLES

• Mel's three years on compounded hormones
During perimenopause, Mel used 'bioidentical' hormones from a compounding pharmacy, thinking they were custom high-end medicine. She ignored the light-exposure warnings and wasn't precise about how much she applied to her wrist. With ADHD and menopausal brain fog, she says she was probably over- or under-dosing. Her verdict: 'Case closed.'

• The roadside gas analogy
Using FDA-approved hormones is like a gas station with marked gallons and a working gauge. Compounded formulas or pellets are like buying 'bespoke gas' from a guy on the roadside who switches off your gauge. Gunter adds that it's like pouring

Cheerios into a fancy jar: same product, different delivery.

• Gunter's own patch and her reason for it

On camera she peeled off the estradiol patch she changes every four days. She takes hormones mainly to prevent osteoporosis: her mother died from it, she has osteopenia and a high FRAX risk score. She says she doesn't feel different on it, which is why reliable dosing matters to her.

• Only 8% did all three basics

Gunter cites a study finding just 8% of women in menopause got recommended exercise, ate a fiber-rich healthy diet and didn't smoke.

OTHER RELEVANT

• How to know if hormone therapy is working

Hot flashes usually improve significantly within four weeks, and doctors may allow eight weeks before changing dose; depression may take a couple of months. 'Green light' uses: hot flashes, night sweats, osteoporosis prevention, early menopause. 'Yellow light': mood, sleep disruption, possibly type 2 diabetes risk. Joint pain may help only about 20%, and there's no evidence estrogen treats brain fog on its own. Be cautious about dose escalation beyond a 100-microgram estradiol patch, roughly what you made when ovulating.

• Prepare for your appointment

Ask for cardiovascular (ASCVD) and breast cancer risk assessments plus a mammogram. Look for a Menopause Society certified provider, though certification isn't a guarantee. Download the hormone therapy guidelines from the North American Menopause Society (now the Menopause Society), which she refers to as the 2020 guidelines, and use its plain-language summaries; search it for anything you're being offered. For good candidates, she calls a six-month trial very low risk. Be wary of anyone selling products, and get a second opinion if you're not heard.

• For partners and family

Learn about menopause, pick up more housework (she notes women often do the less fun chores even when hours are equal), offer to come to appointments as a scribe, and sometimes just listen rather than fix, like a Parks and Recreation scene she cites.

#1 Researcher: 7 Signs You May Have High Functioning Depression

Guest: Dr. Judith Joseph
Date: 2024-05-02 · Duration: 0:49:21
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yQu-Ct9-6dg

KEYPOINTS

• Many people with depression don't fit the standard checklist

Psychiatrist and researcher Dr. Judith Joseph says that under the DSM-5, someone with many symptoms of depression but no loss of functioning or obvious distress is often told to come back when things get worse. She calls that model 'broken'. It misses people before they reach crisis, turn to unhealthy coping, or break down physically. The term 'high-functioning depression' has been around for about five years; she didn't coin it, but she is researching it.

• High-functioning depression can look like being 'the rock'

These are people who care for their families, meet deadlines and collect praise, the ones others call the rock of the family. Yet they feel something is missing and don't feel much joy. Joseph says some never had words for sadness because of their culture, and others push through because trauma taught them not to feel.

• The 'joy thief' is anhedonia

Joseph calls anhedonia, a reduced ability to feel pleasure, a sneaky symptom that strongly correlates with depression, especially the high-functioning kind. It 'steals your joy in the middle of the night' until nothing excites you and everything feels 'meh'. Many people don't recognise it as depression because they picture someone crying in bed all day.

• Depression can look very different from person to person

Joseph's research looks at the different faces of depression. Men may show it as irritability, anger, checking out or 'knocking back a couple of beers'. Others stay constantly busy because that's the only way they know, such as children of immigrants raised with 'work, deliver and you'll be okay', or mothers who feel they have no choice.

• Depression and anxiety often go together

Mel would have labelled her bolt-out-of-bed, multitasking, wine-at-night days as anxiety. Joseph explains that restlessness is also a symptom of major depression, and many researchers see the two as different sides of the same coin. That's why treatments like SSRIs and cognitive behavioural therapy overlap. Anxiety tends to come with more physical symptoms and excessive worry.

• There are many possible contributors, and inflammation is getting more attention

Joseph stresses that these are correlations, not proven causes. Dopamine, serotonin and norepinephrine patterns may differ in depressed brains. Twin studies point to genetic predisposition. Recent data links inflammation to depression, and with some estimates that 70–75% of people have had COVID-19, she says we don't yet know how that has affected brains. Back-to-back collective trauma and constant social media add to the picture.

• At work, it can look like control and a lost identity

People with high-functioning depression may believe nobody else can do the job right, tie their identity to their role, and have dropped hobbies like photography or art. Sleep isn't refreshing, appetite swings, concentration and energy dip, and they may over-deliver while denying distress. Joseph suggests some clinicians miss it because the patient looks like them.

• Scarcity trauma can be passed down

Joseph describes scarcity trauma: a history of going without, sometimes generations back through refugees, war survivors or farmers, that drives behaviour that doesn't make sense today. Examples include clothes left in the closet with tags on, hoarded expired food, being unable to throw things out, or overspending when money finally arrives. Emotional scarcity, growing up in a cold family focused on survival, works the same way.

• Naming a feeling helps take its power away

Joseph calls it affect labeling: naming what you feel calms the body, like turning on a light and seeing the noise was just a book falling. It isn't about diagnosing yourself; it's about bringing the problem out of your subconscious so you can see it separately from you. She says we teach children feelings charts but forget that adults need this too.

• Depression isn't a competition

Joseph gets pushback for the phrase 'high-functioning', but argues you should use the language people identify with, because 'you're not depressed enough' is invalidating. Mel agrees: getting through the day doesn't mean you feel better than someone who can't get out of bed.

EXAMPLES

• Chris Robbins' hidden depression

Mel's husband was sober, meditated daily, exercised, was close to their kids and ran a men's retreat, yet 'the light was off behind his eyes' for years. He thought it was midlife or falling testosterone. Mel says a brain scan by a doctor previously on the show found treatment-resistant depression (dysthymia), and the doctor said he usually saw brains like that after people had died. Chris resisted the label, believing it meant he was weak.

• A 'day in the life' from Joseph's TikTok

Waking before the alarm, full of angst; gulping coffee instead of eating; working through lunch; coming home too burnt out for family; doom-scrolling instead of playing with the kids. 'You're killing it at work, you're not letting anyone down, but you're letting yourself down.'

• Mel's opening quiz

Do you drink coffee instead of breakfast and eat lunch at your desk? Feel dread when the alarm goes off? Scroll mindlessly at night when you don't want to? Feel you can't take a day off? Tell yourself it's easier to do it yourself than ask for help? Mel says Joseph considers each of these a possible sign of high-functioning depression.

• Grandma's dim fridge

Mel's farming grandmother's fridge was always dimly lit and full of old food, because on a farm nothing was wasted. Through

therapy, Mel saw she had absorbed the idea that being wasteful made her a bad person. Now she keeps her fridge nearly empty with bright bulbs, and she notes that doing things differently can feel like defying your whole family line.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Don't treat yourself as a burden**

  Joseph's top 'never': don't believe you're a burden. With patients, she scrolls through phone photos from 'high-functioning AF' times and asks whether those friends would really have minded hearing them out. Challenge the belief that you're only lovable when you're perfect.

- **Acknowledge the 'little traumas' too**

  Standard trauma questionnaires miss things like being teased as a child for seeming gay, or arriving in a new country hungry with nothing. Recognising these helps explain how you see yourself.

- **Gradually challenge scarcity habits**

  Cross-examine the thought 'I'm wasteful' like a lawyer: where's the evidence? Throw out one expired can or give one item to charity, and notice how it feels. This gradual approach is a form of exposure therapy within CBT.

- **Check your symptoms and talk to a doctor**

  Joseph says her website has self-assessment scales for anhedonia and high-functioning depression. She encourages talking to your doctor even if therapy doesn't appeal to you. She is also researching mental health links to menopause, including brain fog and sleep problems.

Body Language Expert: 6 Psychological Tricks to Turn Awkwardness into Confidence

Guest: Vanessa Van Edwards
Date: 2024-04-25 · Duration: 1:20:22
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=73SHFFpm4J4

KEYPOINTS

• Burnout isn't a badge of success

Vanessa Van Edwards, founder of the Science of People behavior lab, says high achievers stretch their comfort zones, not their schedules, and don't compete over who's busiest. What sets them apart: they say no to difficult people more easily, enjoy the process as well as the result, and know who they are and share it.

• Track social energy and work energy separately

Social energy is spent on conversations, pitching ideas and managing conflict; work energy goes into tasks. Smart people plan only their tasks and forget how much interactions cost them. Van Edwards gains energy from one-on-one talks and teaching, and calls herself 'allergic to small talk,' drained even by weather chat with an Uber driver. High performers assertively claim tasks that energize them and decline or box in the ones that drain them.

• Ambivalent relationships drain more than toxic ones

Like an app running in the background, the 'kind of' friend wears you out: you consider canceling, leave tired, can't remember what you talked about and wonder if they even like you. Her exercise: list everyone in your life. Star people you'd rearrange plans for, minus-sign people you dread (fine if obligatory, just own it), and question-mark people you wouldn't miss. Pause the question marks and see if you miss them. Mel adds that you may be someone else's question mark.

• Use the Pygmalion effect with labels

Named for the myth of a sculptor whose statue came to life, research shows that expectations tend to come true. High achievers label people positively ('You're a magician with presentations,' 'thank you for cooking, you're so good at it') and use motivating labels on themselves.

• The most liked kids liked the most people

Van Edwards describes a study across multiple high schools and grades comparing athleticism, GPA, attractiveness and humor. The one consistent pattern: the most popular students had the longest lists of people they liked, and acknowledged everyone in the hallway, often by name. Her mission is to be 'first liker': invite people to sit with her and tell people outright that she likes them.

• Real warmth is contagious; faked warmth just falls flat

In Dr. Barbara Wild's research, people who viewed genuine smiles had improved moods afterward, while fake smiles produced no change, though not a worse mood either. Van Edwards doesn't love 'fake it till you make it,' but says faking with genuine hope that a relationship improves is okay.

• Small mistakes make you more likable

In a Richard Wiseman study, an actress demoing blenders at a mall was rated more likable when she spilled the smoothie than when she made it perfectly. Since nobody is perfect, polish can look like a cover-up. Van Edwards, a 'recovering awkward person,' found real connection once she admitted feeling awkward. Small vulnerabilities work too: 'I'm starving,' 'my feet are killing me.'

• Read a room by people's toes

We angle our bodies, especially our feet, toward whoever matters most to us, so she guesses who the boss is from where toes point. Feet shifting toward the exit mean someone wants to leave. Sometimes it reveals crushes.

• Maximize the distance between your ears and shoulders

Citing University of British Columbia research on winning athletes across genders and races, she says pride posture is universal. Hunching protects the neck, an evolutionary threat signal, which she says raises cortisol, causes dry mouth and blushing, and drops your voice into vocal fry. Mel saw her go from renowned researcher to 'middle schooler' just by turtling. Phone posture is the culprit: hold it 'up and out' before a date or presentation.

• Keep space between your arms and torso, and hands visible

Pinned arms and crossed-arm self-hugs make you feel anxious and speak in shorter sentences; she says research links closed posture to saying no more often. Choose a chair with armrests over a slouchy couch and swivel to face whoever's speaking. In a study of leaders on video, the steeple (fingertips touching, palms apart) was rated most charismatic. Rubbing your hands signals excitement. People believe gestures over words; try saying 'three' while holding up five fingers.

• One word can change behavior

In a study where the same game was called 'the Community Game' or 'the Wall Street Game,' Wall Street players shared about one third of profits, Community players about two thirds. In another, sprinkling achievement words like 'master,' 'win' and 'success' into instructions improved performance, doubled time on task and increased enjoyment. Her calendar blocks say 'Vanessa winning morning,' not 'writing block.'

EXAMPLES

• Stand where people exit the bar

Tracking foot patterns at her speed networking events, Van Edwards found the worst spot is the 'start zone' by the door, check-in or coats, where arrivals are wide-eyed and want a drink or bathroom first. The longest conversations and most card exchanges happened where people exit the bar, drink in hand, turned to the room. Or stand in the host's eyeline. Mel's wedding spot: the caterers' door, where she befriends other hungry guests.

• Sit within 25 feet of a high performer

Research she cites covering 58,000 working hours across 11 companies found that sitting within 25 feet of a high performer improved performance by 15%, while sitting near a low performer cut it by 30%. A separate study found people who smelled 'fear

sweat' from first-time skydivers showed fear-center activation on fMRI, versus treadmill sweat.

• 'What's your story?' split her data

In an experiment with 500 speed networkers across three events, that opener got either fives or ones: extroverts loved it, introverts and ambiverts hated it. Top-rated safe questions: 'What personal passion project are you working on?' 'What was the highlight of your week?' 'Any fun plans coming up?'

• Mel's ABCD list

Mel's A work: ideation, motivation, closing deals (she claims a 100% close rate in meetings), recording on the fly and coaching; her top social A is dinner at home. Her C and D: organizing, punctuality and spreadsheets, which she hands to teammates who love them. Van Edwards warns busy leaders often give away their A work, and that a week of dinners out could quietly burn Mel out.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Do the alphabet work exercise

Make four columns. A: tasks you're better at than most, where you hit flow, plus your most energizing people and settings. B: things you're pretty good at (where smart people get stuck). C: average and slightly embarrassing. D: worse than most, plus people who drain you. Maximize A, give away C and D, and partner with people whose A is your C. Unavoidable D work? Make a team 'D work day' with a 10 a.m. start, favorite lunch and music.

• Break autopilot conversations

Retire 'How are you?', 'What do you do?' and especially 'Been busy?', which triggers complaints. Try 'What's good?' or 'Working on anything exciting?' Don't go too deep too fast. If you hear vocal fry, speak louder. Replace sterile invites like 'Follow-up' with 'collaborative session' or 'power-through day.'

• Set goals you enjoy pursuing

Avoid 'if I achieve X, then I'll be happy' thinking. Reframe as 'find workouts I love and partners who make me laugh so I can lose 20 pounds.' Have a quest, big or micro, for meaning, and pause at night to notice how much A work you did. Her closing message: if you're burnt out, you're probably trying very hard; try differently, not harder.

Understanding This One Idea Changes the Way You See Your Life

Date: 2024-04-22 · Duration: 0:42:34
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JLdcQsJaeyA

KEYPOINTS

• Your life follows the hero's journey

Mel borrows Joseph Campbell's story archetype. Campbell was a mythologist who studied religions and myths across cultures and found the same pattern everywhere: a hero leaves home, faces trials, transforms, and returns with wisdom or treasure. George Lucas considered Campbell a mentor, and Mel argues the pattern is why stories like Star Wars, Mulan, The Lord of the Rings and Harry Potter resonate.

• Her therapist uses it to locate her struggles

Mel's therapist and coach regularly tells her which stage of the journey she's in. Hearing that a hard patch is 'the struggle every hero goes through' makes Mel feel less lost and helps her see the challenge as having a purpose. She takes notes and now uses the framework both to make sense of her past and to plan ahead.

• Four of Campbell's 17 stages matter most here

Mel focuses on the Ordinary World, the Call to Adventure, Crossing the Threshold, and the Midpoint.

• In the Ordinary World, you don't yet know your potential

Luke is stuck on the desert planet Tatooine, Mulan's only duty is to marry and bring honor to her family, and Frodo has never left the Shire. Like them, you only know the small slice of the world you live in, which Mel says is fine, as long as you're willing to look around.

• The call probably won't come from a wizard or a droid

There's no Gandalf at the door and no hidden hologram. You have to look for the call yourself. Mel's question: 'What is your life trying to tell you?' Notice what you can't stop thinking about, signs that keep showing up, or something you've wanted to do for years.

• The call can be negative or positive, big or small

Rising rent, a job you quit or a family health crisis can push you; a hobby you're drawn to can pull you. Listeners have told Mel that small calls, like a painting class or returning to a daily journal, made part of them come alive.

• Feeling stuck is evidence of a call you're refusing

Like Luke telling Obi-Wan he can't leave and has work to do at home, we're reluctant heroes. Mel suggests relabeling tension as a call to adventure: a breakup, a surprise layoff, jealousy as friends move or start graduate school, or her own approaching empty nest when Oakley leaves for college.

• Crossing the threshold is where most people fail

There's no journey until you commit. A threshold doesn't have to be a move. It can be saying 'I want something different' out loud, submitting an application, walking into a gym, throwing out the alcohol, booking the doctor's appointment, or calmly stating a boundary. That's why Mel keeps urging the first step and 5-4-3-2-1.

• The midpoint is a long slog, so don't turn back

This is the second half of the movie, full of setbacks, small wins, and allies and mentors who show up once you've set out. Mel says it may be the second half of your life too. 'It's called the hero's journey, not the hero's finish line.'

• Heroes come home changed

Your childhood home feels small when you return because you've outgrown it. Looking back, Mel says you've already completed many journeys: leaving for college, finding strength after a breakup, surviving a health challenge, a layoff or grief, or rebuilding habits over a year. What every hero figures out is who they are and what they're capable of.

EXAMPLES

• A lifelong friend moves home to Michigan

Mel's friend since fourth grade had lived in Santa Barbara for years. Her rent rose, she left a job she disliked, and then both her parents were hospitalized at the same time. She packed the car, put her bulldog in the passenger seat, drove across the country, and is turning her parents' upstairs into an apartment. Nobody asked her to; she texted Mel, 'I just arrived for my next adventure.' Mel expects her midpoint to be full of 'what have I done?'

• Mel's pull toward skinning up the mountain

In winter, Chris and their daughter Sawyer hike up a nearby mountain on skis fitted with grippy skins, then ski down. Chris now organizes 30 to 40 people who meet in a parking lot twice a week. Mel feels the pull but is scared because she's not in great shape and not as good as the group. She calls that pull a call to adventure.

• Chris's seven-year MBA

Early in their marriage, Chris earned an MBA from Babson one class at a time after full workdays. It took seven years, all three of their children were born during it, he felt twice as old as his classmates, and he thought about quitting constantly.

• Mel stuck mid-manuscript

Writing a new book, Mel spent every weekend and evening on it and recently sat in a chair for three days without writing a word. She compared it to Frodo at the grim pond near Mount Doom: 'I don't feel like a hero, I feel like quitting.'

OTHER RELEVANT

• Ask the question daily

'What is your life trying to tell you right now?' Mel suggests labeling each moment of tension as a call instead of a sign that life is falling apart.

• Reject 'it's too late' and 'I'm too busy'

Mel insists you can still go to grad school, move across the country or start a business, and that you'll find the time once you

commit.

- **Look for allies once you've started**

  Frodo had Gandalf and Sam, Luke had Han and Leia, Mulan had Mushu. Mel notes that mentors and helpers tend to appear only after you've crossed the threshold, not before.

- **Mel's framework habit**

  Mel likes borrowing frameworks from other fields, such as engineering, neuroscience, business strategy and physics concepts like momentum, and applying them to everyday life. The hero's journey is one of her all-time favorites.

How to Build the Life You Want: Timeless Wisdom for More Happiness & Purpose

Guest: Dr. Tal Ben-Shahar
Date: 2024-04-18 · Duration: 1:14:59
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NGE8BgxEOd4

KEYPOINTS

• Achievement gives a spike of happiness, not lasting happiness

Ben-Shahar, who taught positive psychology and the psychology of leadership at Harvard, learned this firsthand. He told himself he'd be happy once he won Israel's national squash championship. When he won, he was ecstatic "for about four hours" and then returned to the same stress. Even after becoming a top student at Harvard he was still miserable, which led him to switch from computer science to philosophy and psychology to ask why.

• We are built for the pursuit, not the outcome

Once we reach a goal, our minds check it off and look for the next one. He says to accept this the way we accept gravity and build our lives around it. Believing that achievement will make you happy is, in his view, a major cause of unhappiness, because people end up "climbing up the wrong mountain."

• Valuing happiness directly can make you less happy

He cites research by Professor Iris Mauss showing that people who wake up telling themselves happiness is very important to them become less happy. The answer isn't to fool yourself. His analogy: staring at the sun hurts, but light broken through a prism into a rainbow can be enjoyed. Pursue happiness indirectly, through its parts.

• The SPIRE model: five elements of wholeness

Spiritual (meaning, purpose, presence, with or without religion), Physical (exercise, sleep, rest, touch, nutrition), Intellectual (curiosity and deep learning), Relational (quality time with people who care about us, the number one predictor of happiness) and Emotional (giving yourself permission to feel sadness, anger and frustration). He defines happiness as wholeness across these five areas.

• Goals matter for having them, not for reaching them

He reconciles the future-focused Western model with the present-focused Eastern one. A meaningful goal is like knowing which mountain you're driving toward on a road trip: without one, you meander and worry about cliffs. The goal isn't the end; it frees you to enjoy the present.

• Happiness is a continuum, so aim for happier

Asked whether he is finally happy after 30 years, he says he doesn't know what "happy" would mean as a yes-or-no state. He is a lot happier than he was 30 years ago and hopes to be happier five years from now. For people who are stuck, he recommends kaizen-style 1% improvements and treating life as "experiments with truth," taken from the subtitle of Gandhi's autobiography.

• Minimum viable interventions (MVIs) count

Borrowing from the business idea of a minimum viable product, an MVI is a small change, good enough to make a difference over time when applied consistently. Because helplessness and doing nothing are core features of depression, doing something small works against it.

• Loneliness often comes from divided attention

He calls loneliness the number one predictor of unhappiness, made worse by Covid. Often the problem isn't a lack of people but doing 20 other things while you're with them. Play your two favourite songs at once, his are Whitney Houston's "I Will Always Love You" and Beethoven's Fifth, and you don't get 19.5 out of 10. You get noise. Single-task with the people you love.

• Antifragility: resilience 2.0

Drawing on Nassim Taleb, he explains that a resilient ball bounces back to where it was, while an antifragile one bounces back higher. Muscles grow under stress, and minds can too. Most of his psychology students knew PTSD, but hardly any had heard of post-traumatic growth. Research by Tedeschi, Calhoun and others suggests that simply knowing growth is possible makes it more likely, because it gives hope. "Depression is sadness without hope."

• Painful experiences are part of a full life

When he asks students which experiences they are most grateful for, very few name fun ones; most name hard ones. He is not against psychiatric medication, which he says has saved lives, but believes our culture is too quick to reach for pills to make pain go away. Removing all pain would also remove growth.

EXAMPLES

• A one-minute MVI for each SPIRE element

Spiritual: one minute of deep breathing. Physical: 45-second bursts, like stair climbing or push-ups, three times a day, which he says research shows adds up to the equivalent of a workout. Intellectual: learn one new idea or ask a new question, since curious lifelong learners live longer. Relational: a hug, a thoughtful text, two minutes of real listening. Emotional: write three gratitudes or journal for two minutes.

• Write or talk instead of ruminating

Citing Sonja Lyubomirsky at UC Riverside, he says that thinking over painful experiences tends to make them worse, while writing or talking about them helps people make sense of them and come out stronger. Journaling research by James Pennebaker and others shows that writing often produces an "aha" moment that makes the problem manageable.

• Christine goes back to church alone

Mel's sister-in-law and business partner Christine had stopped going to church when life got busy. After years of thinking about it, she simply went to a service one Sunday without waiting for her husband and sons. That hour a week has restored a sense of wholeness in her spiritual life.

• A friend's death and Nathaniel Branden's words

At 27, living in Asia, Ben-Shahar lost his closest friend in a plane crash between Indonesia and Singapore on 19 December 1997. His mentor Nathaniel Branden, who had lost his own wife in a drowning accident, told him: you won't understand this now, but you will get over it; it will hurt like hell, but we all do. He still recalls those words in every crisis.

• His ordinary happy day

He meditates in bed, reads quality material instead of news, and drives his kids to school, where they ask him for a "message for the day" such as "be generous." He works in the morning, does yoga, has lunch with his wife, and has started playing squash again with his 14-year-old after 25 years away. He admits his kids sometimes tell him, "Daddy, chill."

OTHER RELEVANT

• Use the three Rs of lasting change

Reminders (Post-its, a bracelet, a note on your mirror reading SPIRE), Repetition (recurring calendar entries, such as the gym every Monday, Wednesday and Friday) and Rituals, where repetition makes the behaviour automatic, like brushing your teeth or Serena Williams's forehand.

• Act before you feel like it

Some mornings he wants to stay in bed. What matters is what you do, not what you feel, and over time your actions shape your feelings.

• Find leverage points in your system

In systems thinking, everything is connected, so where you start matters less than starting. Look for a keystone habit, as Charles Duhigg describes, such as daily exercise or a morning breathing practice, that spreads to other areas.

• Read biographies and Helen Keller

He tells students the best self-help books are biographies. He recommends Helen Keller's essay on optimism and "Three Days to See," which he keeps beside him as a reminder to appreciate what he has.

Why You Care So Much About These 5 Things (and How To Stop)

Date: 2024-04-15 · Duration: 0:36:48
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kLb5lRmAA4A

KEYPOINTS

- **Trying to control the uncontrollable drains the energy you need for what matters**
  Mel's premise is that we burn mental and emotional energy on things we know we can't control: the friend who's always late, the roommate who never takes out the trash, the partner who snores. She names five common culprits and pairs each with what you can control: the weather, waiting, the headlines, the past and the future.
- **You can't control the weather, but you can control whether it bothers you**
  A few days after Mel put the winter coats away, she woke to snow on her emerging daffodils and tulips in southern Vermont. Fretting would change nothing, and she later learned tulips like cold and bloom longer in it. She points to how much worry couples spend on wedding-day weather; once you have a plan A and plan B, you're done. She means normal seasonal weather, not dangerous storms.
- **Bad weather is a chance to practice discipline**
  Mel says doing things you don't want to do, like walking in the rain, is linked to growth in the anterior midcingulate cortex, which researchers associate with willpower and even the will to live. She describes it as the only brain region that grows from doing what you don't want to do. Her rule: a passing shower won't kill you, so don't let it kill your plans.
- **You can't control waiting, but you can control what you do with the time**
  Gripping the wheel in traffic or fuming in a slow post office line on your lunch break doesn't move anything; it only leaves you exhausted. Mel suggests treating waiting as found time rather than lost time.
- **You can't control the headlines, but you can control your headspace**
  Mel admits she used to be passive with media, absorbing whatever the news or her feeds served. She treats attention as your most precious commodity and says giving it away by default is how you waste time and create stress. She cites a recent study estimating Americans watch about 34 hours of TV a week — time that could go to a degree, a side business, healing past trauma, the gym or learning to cook.
- **Passive scrolling and active posting may affect you differently**
  Mel cites a UK study in the journal Behaviour & Information Technology finding that people who passively browse others' content were more likely to report anxiety, depression and stress, while those who created and shared their own content saw a positive effect, especially on stress. Rather than making social media the villain, she says, keep the power by choosing how you use it.
- **You can't change the past, but you can change your behavior now**
  No amount of regret changes what happened. Learn the lesson, then remember that the best apology to others and the most powerful form of self-forgiveness is changed behavior. Living in a way that makes you proud today proves you're no longer that person. Mel says there are entire decades she regrets, but she's proud of who she is now.
- **You can't control the future, but you create it today**
  Mel argues she could predict who you'll be in six months from your current habits, friend group and media diet, so today's actions matter more than any amount of worry. The next six months will arrive either way. Unless you do something different today, the outcome is already set.

EXAMPLES

- **The best wedding Mel ever attended**
  A sudden storm off the Great Lakes ripped open a tent and sent a waterfall onto the dance floor at Emily Glasser and Billy Sussman's wedding. Thirty years later, Mel still calls it the most memorable, most fun wedding she's been to, partly because of the storm.
- **The "guardian angel" truck**
  Mel shares a viral idea: when you're stuck behind a truck on a one-lane road, imagine it was sent to slow you down and keep you from something around the corner that wasn't meant for you, or at night, to light your way. Sip your coffee and practice patience and gratitude.
- **Texting her nephews from the line**
  One of Mel's goals is staying closer to family, so she treats a long line as a cue to reach out, such as congratulating her nephews on their water polo tournament wins. Calling a friend hands-free or queuing up an audiobook or podcast also works.
- **Following Gary Vaynerchuk**
  About nine years ago, getting into media, Mel found that Gary Vaynerchuk's content lit something up and nudged her to post her own instead of procrastinating on social media. It showed her you control your headspace by choosing who gets access to you.
- **Not the same person she was in college**
  Mel describes her college self as anxiety-ridden and toxic, before she knew about trauma, her ADHD or anxiety, or had been to therapy. She asks listeners to look in the mirror and give themselves the same credit for change.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Keep the plan anyway**
  When it's drizzling or humid, take the walk, hike, yard work or dog walk you planned. Mel's friend Josh reminds her there's always blue sky above the clouds.
- **Curate your feeds on purpose**
  Unfollow accounts that make you feel bad, follow ones that inspire action, and consider creating rather than only consuming.

- **Ask what change would make you proud**
  Get up earlier, quit vaping, bring a better mood home. Pick one and start today rather than replaying regrets.
- **Swap each worry for a matching action**
  Worried about your parents? Call them today. About your vacation body? Exercise today. Retirement? Make a budget. A promotion? Book a meeting with your supervisor about what it would take in six months.

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.

How to Change Your Life in 6 Months: This One Hack Will Make It Happen

Date: 2024-04-08 · Duration: 0:41:36
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YYwewgQMK-o

KEYPOINTS

- **One question frames the next six months: what do you want to make happen?**
  Mel builds the whole session around a single prompt she repeats again and again: what do you want to make happen in the next six months of your life? She recorded in April, roughly a third of the way through the year, and argues that the remaining months will pass whether or not you decide anything. The point of asking it over and over is to move you from a vague sense of wanting things to be different toward a specific target.
- **Planning is easy and fun; execution is where goals fall apart.**
  She notes that almost a million people did her year-start goal-setting exercise, yet four months later most people could not say how they were tracking. She is careful to say she is not calling anyone out. Her view is that the gap between a plan and a result is the actual problem worth working on, and that this check-in is about turning clarity into action rather than setting fresh goals.
- **Things don't happen by accident; they happen on purpose.**
  This is the line she keeps coming back to. Whether the goal is a career move, more time with family or a small project at home, Mel's argument is that good intentions get swallowed by a busy life unless you treat the goal as a deliberate project.
- **A four-month check-in should end in a strategic pivot, not guilt.**
  Mel suggests reviewing each goal and making one of three moves: keep going and raise the bar, change the approach, or remove the goal to make room for something you care about more. Someone already making progress can use the review to set sharper targets; someone who has stalled can use it as a reality check and try a different approach.
- **Time-travel visualization makes the target concrete.**
  She asks listeners to close their eyes if they can and picture life six months out: how the day-to-day feels, what has happened at work, whether relationships, money or health have changed, whether they moved, whether they are happier. The idea is to imagine a specific future date and notice what you would want to see when you get there, instead of brainstorming in the abstract.
- **Five life categories keep the review whole.**
  The exercise runs through the same five areas Mel used in her year-start planning: health and wellness; career, money or school; relationships, love and friendship; happiness, which covers hobbies, daily habits and how home feels; and purpose, spirituality and meaning. Going category by category stops one loud area, usually work, from crowding out everything else.
- **You have permission to drop a goal you no longer care about.**
  Mel calls it liberating to admit that something on your list just isn't a priority anymore, whether because life changed or because you now see how much work it would take. She suggests writing those items down, clearing away the guilt and taking them off the list entirely, since keeping a goal you have no desire to pursue just takes up room.
- **Without a game worth playing, life slides into autopilot.**
  She describes the loop of getting up, going to work, coming home, making dinner, cleaning the kitchen and going to bed until you look up and it's October. Her claim is that sometimes the only thing missing from your life is a project worth getting out of bed for. She compares it to a child's team chasing a winning season, planning a wedding or training for a marathon: having something to aim at creates meaning and excitement.
- **The project only has to matter to you.**
  Mel insists the goal can be small or even crafty. If it would give you a sense of purpose and momentum as you chip away at it, it counts, even if it sounds silly to someone else.

EXAMPLES

- **Her hormone and health goal is working, so she is reassessing**
  At the start of the year Mel committed to balancing her hormones and to stop complaining about her health. For four months she did more resistance training, went through a gut reset program, practised intermittent fasting and did a lot of zone 2 cardio. She says following simple, science-backed advice is producing results, and that this progress is exactly why she wants to decide deliberately where to take it next.
- **The savings goal she failed at, then dropped**
  Mel admits she did nothing toward her goal of saving money and has probably spent more than usual. Thinking it through out loud, she decides she doesn't care about making it a project right now: she has already saved for years because she once faced bankruptcy and couldn't pay for groceries, and she calls herself extremely risk averse. Admitting it isn't a current priority felt freeing, and it's her model for dropping a goal honestly.
- **A photo wall she has imagined for two years**
  Her home in southern Vermont, where she and Chris have lived full time for two years, has no framed family photos anywhere. She has always pictured a matching-frame photo wall above the bench in the breakfast area. She points out that even this takes real work, from choosing photos to measuring and picking sizes, and she wants to sit down with coffee in October and see it finished.
- **Time with Oakley before he leaves, and with her parents**
  Her son Oakley graduates high school and leaves for college in the fall, and she describes her time with him as a melting ice cube. She also wants more time with her parents: her father is turning 80, and recently three of his friends suffered catastrophic events, two dying suddenly and one breaking almost every bone in a fall down the stairs. Both are intentions she says will slip away unless she plans for them.
- **Her career targets for October**
  Six months out, Mel expects to be in the middle of launching her book on the Let Them Theory, due in mid-September, which

she says needs its own plan. She also wants to start a women's health product company after finding her own hormone supplement routine confusing. Her picture of success by October is specific: the market research done, a business plan sketched out, funding decided and a CEO identified.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Run your own six-month review**
  Pick a date about six months out and picture it. For each of the five categories, write what you would want to see when you get there. Then compare that with the goals you already set and mark each one to keep and raise, rework, or drop.
- **Turn wishes into projects**
  Mel's own examples show the difference between an intention and a plan: the company goal becomes research, a business plan, funding and a hire. For each item you keep, list the concrete pieces that would have to exist by the deadline.
- **Be honest about what no longer matters**
  Make a separate list of goals that were once priorities and aren't anymore, and take them off your plan without guilt. Clearing them out leaves real room for the one or two things you will actually push forward.
- **Do the exercise with other people**
  Mel says many people did her earlier planning exercise with family, roommates or work teams and found it improved how they got along. She suggests it for anyone at a transition point: graduating, laid off, job hunting, applying to graduate school or starting a business.

What Makes a Good Life? Lessons From the Longest Study on Happiness

Guest: Dr. Robert Waldinger
Date: 2024-04-04 · Duration: 1:39:26
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5jnEizYzQl0

KEYPOINTS

• The longest study of adult life, now in its 86th year

Dr. Robert Waldinger directs the Harvard Study of Adult Development. He is a psychiatrist, a Harvard Medical School professor, a Zen priest, and co-author of The Good Life. The study began in 1938 with 268 Harvard undergraduates and 456 boys, about 12 years old on average, from Boston's poorest families; spouses and children were added later. It has followed them with questionnaires, home interviews every 10 years and medical records, adding DNA, blood work and MRI brain scans as science advanced.

• The biggest finding: warm relationships mean longer, healthier lives

People with more relationships, and warmer ones, lived longest, stayed healthiest and were happiest. The surprise to the researchers was the physical effect: lower odds of coronary artery disease and type 2 diabetes. Their leading hypothesis is that relationships regulate stress. Without them, the body stays in low-level fight-or-flight, with more circulating stress hormones and white blood cells that gradually wear down body systems.

• Relationship satisfaction at 50 predicted health at 80 better than cholesterol

Looking back from age 80, the team checked what at age 50 best predicted who would be healthy and happy. It was how satisfied people were with their relationships, not cholesterol. They didn't believe it and reanalyzed the data. Waldinger says it only became a scientific truth once other studies of different groups found the same.

• Loneliness is a signal, like hunger, not a verdict on you

Waldinger defines loneliness as feeling less connected than you want to be, so you can be lonely in a marriage or a crowd. Mel recalls feeling deeply disconnected from her husband Chris about five years ago, even while surrounded by people. She had read it as something wrong with her. Waldinger says to stop blaming yourself or anyone else and ask what's making connection hard right now.

• Bring a suggestion, not a complaint

Rather than 'vomiting the problem' (Mel's phrase for what she does with Chris), offer something specific that's easy to say yes to: 'Could we go for a walk after dinner tonight?' or a dinner out for just the two of you this week. Waldinger notes that angry couples are often longing to be closer underneath.

• The quickest way to make friends is to repeat a shared activity

Research shows the fastest route is doing something you love, like gardening, pickleball, bird watching or climate activism, alongside the same people again and again. Treat talking to strangers like batting: one hit in three is great, and most people will respond kindly.

• Culture sells you badges, not happiness

Car ads, pasta ads and face creams promise happiness. People tell Waldinger they feel terrible for not being billionaires, then can't say what the billion is for. He compares it to a watch counting 10,000 steps when what matters is how your body feels. As a Zen roshi, he still wakes up some mornings confused or sad. 'There is nothing to attain.' He quotes Jon Kabat-Zinn: you can't stop the waves, but you can learn to surf.

• Money matters up to basic needs, then it's a tool

Food, shelter, medicine and schooling are vital; research estimates of around $75,000 a year in the U.S. are somewhat arbitrary. Making $75 million wouldn't make you much happier than covering the basics. Mel recalls debt and liens on her house. Research also finds that spending on experiences, like a national park or a basketball game, makes people happier for longer than buying things.

• Make connection automatic with a standing date

Waldinger and co-author Marc Schulz, who lives in Philadelphia, have talked every Friday at noon for over 30 years, about research but also kids and marriages. Because it happens by default, someone has to actively cancel. He calls these small daily actions 'social fitness.'

EXAMPLES

• Final regrets and proudest moments

Participants' top regret was too much time at work and too little with people they cared about. The second, voiced more by women, was worrying too much about what others thought. What they were proudest of was being a good mentor, partner, parent or boss, even among those who had won major prizes.

• The 'who would you call at 4 a.m.' question

Asked who they could call in the middle of the night if sick or scared, some participants named no one. Some of them were married and didn't list their spouse. Waldinger says everyone needs at least one secure attachment, like a toddler running back to a parent's leg to 'refuel' before exploring again.

• The Chicago commuter experiment and the hotel elevator

Commuters assigned to talk to a stranger expected to dislike it but ended up much happier than those on their phones. Mel describes cracking open a silent elevator of seven electrical contractors, chatting all the way down 17 floors and recommending the almond croissant.

• Mel's own mini Harvard study

Mel looks at a photo from age 27, hours after getting engaged to Chris, when life felt life-or-death and she was a cash-strapped public defender. Back then she was obsessed with 'the curtains,' how things looked; now she's focused on 'the view.' Waldinger says awareness that life is limited tends to make people happier, not sadder.

• Video games aren't always isolating

Mel and her husband argued about their son's gaming until she found him on a headset with seven friends. Waldinger agrees it can be like basketball with friends, while noting games can become addictive.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Ask: what's here that I've never noticed?

A meditation teacher's question works on friendships too. Point out how someone has changed, as Mel's brother-in-law did with her: 'You're really different than you used to be.'

• Kids need one stable adult crazy about them

Waldinger summarizes child-development research this way. In divorce, fight as little as possible and tell the kids you both still love them. His family's dinner 'interrupting game' made interrupters put an M&M in the middle.

• Introverts need only one or two close people

Lots of relationships can stress an introvert, he says; invest in the few who help you feel good. You don't need a romantic partner either, though living with someone helps with medications and getting off the couch.

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 Speak So That People Listen: #1 Rule for Getting the Support You Need

Guest: Lisa Bilyeu
Date: 2024-03-28 · Duration: 1:27:46
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oMwmcVmsqrg

KEYPOINTS

• Everyone acts from a 'frame of reference'

Lisa Bilyeu defines a frame of reference as the lens, built from upbringing and experience, through which a person interprets words, actions and behavior. Yelling sounds like danger to someone from a verbally abusive home, while to Lisa, from a loud Greek family, it sounds like everyone's happy and excited. When someone reacts in a way you didn't expect, she takes it as a sign your frames differ.

• Ask 'what would have to be true?' before you judge or defend

Borrowing from screenwriting, Lisa asks herself what would have to be true about someone's background for them to say what they just said. This lets you understand someone without condoning harmful behavior. It is not an excuse for abuse, but it keeps you from getting emotionally hooked. Lisa does this with family and close friends, not strangers, because it takes real time and energy.

• Sometimes the criticism is simply true, so mine it

When her dad asked what she knew about movies, the honest answer was nothing. She had no contacts, no visa and no training. Instead of taking it as an attack on her self-esteem, she now responds with 'why?' and treats the list of reasons as practical problems to solve.

• Examine your own frame too, then challenge it

The second use of the tool is turned inward. Lisa grew up thinking a good catch meant a car with rims and heavy cologne. Tom showed up in a dirty, half-broken car full of junk, opened the door for her, and asked sincere questions about God on their first date. That started her questioning rules she'd never chosen.

• Don't tell people what their frame of reference is

Most people aren't aware of their own frame; Lisa suggests assuming they aren't. Explaining it to them invites 'you think you know me better than I know myself?' Do the analysis privately so you know how to show up and communicate, not as a weapon in the conversation.

• At the 'collision,' decide for your own story and ask 'what if it does work out?'

Lisa notes that, in the natural course of things, her father would die before her. She didn't want to be 50 and living with a choice made for someone else. She committed in advance to being proud she tried even if the marriage failed, which kept a possible failure from becoming 'Dad was right.' Mel's insight: when someone says 'he's not right for you,' they mean he doesn't fit their story about your life. A failed choice doesn't make the other person right.

• Do the inner work before the hard conversation

Lisa knows she rambles when she lacks clarity, and that without it she's permeable to other people's expectations. So she works out what she wants and why before bringing anything up. For any big change, picture 'an average Wednesday' under each scenario to see the real logistics.

• 'When' keeps people stuck in a mundane purgatory

For eight years as a bored, insecure housewife, Lisa swallowed her dreams with 'when' statements: when we have money, when Tom has made enough. Her breakthrough was asking what happens if the 'when' never comes. She thinks far more people are stuck in a life that's 'fine' than ever hit rock bottom. Money is often an excuse: you can start a YouTube channel with a phone or a library computer.

• Clarity means a granular mission plus 'what, how much, by when' goals

'I want to help people' is too vague. Lisa's mission is to create content that helps women build confidence, and it is the North Star that gets her out of bed on bad days. Goals that serve the mission must be concrete enough that you either did them or didn't, such as four 30-minute YouTube videos published by the end of the month.

• Confidence is a byproduct of action

Lisa says no one is born confident. Confidence is a skill that weakens without practice, and you build competence, then confidence, by taking action little by little.

EXAMPLES

• Lisa's father's frame: a village in Cyprus

After two weeks of arguing about film school, her father said, 'Study film; you're going to be a stay-at-home wife anyway.' He grew up in a mountain village with no running water. Around age 12, a few boys were sent away for schooling and girls weren't, because without contraception they were expected to marry and have children. Seen that way, his remark was his belief system, not an insult.

• Her dad said no to Tom, and Tom proposed anyway

Tom flew to London on an emergency passport with his mom's pink suitcase. Her father barely questioned him, assuming it wouldn't last. When Tom later asked for his blessing, the thousand questions came, about religion first and then how he'd provide, and the answer was no. Tom told him respectfully he'd propose anyway and promised the man he saw that day wouldn't be the man married to his daughter. Her father still paid for the wedding and attended.

• 'How am I doing now?'

Five years into Quest Nutrition, by then named the second fastest-growing company in North America with a 300,000-square-foot facility, 3,000 employees and 1.2 million bars a day, her father toured the plant. Tom asked if he remembered asking how he'd take care of his daughter, and how he was doing now. Her dad burst into tears and hugged him.

• Mel's mom: 'I didn't pick him for you'

As Mel's wedding approached, her warm mother turned cold toward Chris and his family. Asked to act as if she'd picked him,

her mom said she hadn't and wasn't happy, though the request alone softened her. In hindsight, Mel's parents had moved away from their families and rarely saw them again, so her mom feared losing Mel to the East Coast.

• Quitting cooking and cleaning, gradually

Lisa told Tom she loved him but was unhappy cooking and cleaning and wanted a purpose. His reply: 'What kind of husband would I be if I would rather you be unhappy and have clean underwear?' She proposed tapering from six days to five, four and three. Months later he ran out of underwear and cheerfully went commando, because she'd treated him as a teammate.

• Choosing not to have children

Relatives assumed her marriage was unstable or she was infertile. Lisa examined each reason for having kids: legacy (achievable in other ways), not dying alone (unfair to a child; build friendships instead). Picturing an average Wednesday settled it. Mel decided on a third child by asking whether, 50 years from now, she'd want to see two adult children or three.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Repairing a parent's mistake (listener Patty)

Lisa suggests telling your daughter you love her, that you think you made a mistake, and that you want to hear how she feels, without seeking relief from your own guilt or making her console you. Hold a high view of her resilience, and remember you aren't solely responsible for anyone's confidence.

• Introverts don't have to get loud (listener question)

Start with what success means to you, not other people's comments. Mel adds that research shows recognition of contributions is what tends to drive women's promotions and raises, so if pay matters, advocate visibly at work.

• Bring people along respectfully

Everyone wants to be seen and heard. Prepare a 'cheat sheet,' affirm the person's support, explain your why, and offer a transition plan. Accept that there's no guaranteed response, and that no adult does anything they don't want to do.

3 Small Decisions That Make You Feel Incredible: Do This Every Morning After Waking Up

Date: 2024-03-25 · Duration: 0:52:48
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tbBvEO0FI8Q

KEYPOINTS

• Knowing isn't the same as doing
Mel opens with the gap between knowing what you should do (exercise, update your resume, return a hard phone call) and actually doing it. Lack of motivation is one reason people get stuck. The other, she argues, is false confidence about how a decision will affect you.

• False confidence makes you think the rules don't apply to you
Mel describes it as believing that time will stretch, your body will cope or people will change just for you, against common sense and evidence. She links it to what psychologists call the overconfidence effect, a well-established cognitive bias. Her rule of thumb: easy decisions make your life hard, and hard decisions make life easier.

• It's easier to spot in other people
Examples: the friend sure a partner who treats her badly will change, the boss adding a huge project due in a month with no new hires, the sister planning to lose 30 pounds without changing her diet or exercise. Mel's own version is believing she can clean out her closet in 30 minutes over lunch, then ending up with a giant pile on the floor.

• Decision one: get up when the alarm rings
Picture person A, who hits snooze for an hour, and person B, who throws off the sheets and starts the day. Mel asks which one you'd hire, date or bet $1,000 on. She used to set her alarm at 6:00 for a 7:00 wake-up so she could snooze four or five times, telling herself it was how a non-morning person had to wake up.

• Mel cites research on staying in bed
She describes a University of South Carolina study, which she says was published in a sleep medicine journal and used sleep trackers, monitors, blood pressure tracking and blood work. As she reports it, people made to stay in bed longer had fivefold higher depression and anxiety and twice the inflammation of those who got straight up.

• Snoozing adds up to about a month a year
Mel cites a University of Notre Dame study published in the journal Sleep, which she calls the biggest study of snoozing, with participants wearing trackers for over a year. In her reading, the average snoozer spent 26.93 minutes snoozing each morning, about 164 hours a year or more than four work weeks.

• Decision two: natural light before artificial light
Mel says 89% of people look at their phone within 10 minutes of waking. Instead, turn off the alarm, leave the phone behind, and get outside for even a minute or two: sit on the porch, walk around the block, or even stick your head out a window.

• Two reasons morning light works
First, attention: opening your phone lets influencers, headlines and work emergencies jump to the front of your mind before you've decided what matters. Second, circadian rhythm: experts on the show have explained that early natural light signals your internal clock to wake up, which also sets up better sleep that night.

• Decision three: water before coffee, and delay caffeine
Mel used to start with a huge, candy-sweet coffee on an empty stomach, then sweat, feel anxious and shaky, and feel sick in exercise class. She says caffeine on an empty stomach spikes cortisol, which can worsen stress and anxiety. Now she drinks water first and waits about 90 minutes before coffee.

• The adenosine explanation, via Dr. Amy Shah
As Shah explained on an earlier episode, adenosine is a sleepiness chemical that builds up all day and clears during sleep, with some left on waking. It takes an hour or two to drop. Caffeine blocks its receptors, so coffee right away keeps adenosine from clearing, and when the caffeine wears off you slump and reach for more.

EXAMPLES

• The Las Vegas nightcap
After a speech to 17,000 people at a Keller Williams event and dinner with her team, Mel was back at the hotel by 8:45 pm, planning a bath with the hotel's salts, packing and an early workout before a 6:30 am flight. A friend said 'You're not going to bed, are you?' She stayed until midnight, skipped the bath and workout, and was racing to pack at 5 am, angry at herself.

• Almost climbing back into bed on Sawyer's 25th birthday
Mel got up early to surprise her daughter with balloons and a playlist. Her location app showed Sawyer two miles away hiking with Chris, and false confidence said she had time to go back to bed. She caught herself and got up. Moments later Sawyer was halfway up the driveway, just in time for Mel to blast Katy Perry's birthday song.

• From four lattes to one half-finished coffee
Mel says coffee was part of her identity and she was sure she couldn't change. Within about three days of drinking water first, she went from three or four coffees a day plus a 2 pm slump to one cup around 10 am. She often doesn't finish it and says the afternoon slump is gone.

• Sawyer's morning walk
Mel and Chris walk most mornings. Asked how she felt after walking with her dad, Sawyer described what Mel says the research predicts: better mood, more present, calmer and more energised.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Expect false confidence to come back every morning
Mel calls it hardwired and sneaky, even for her. When it says you're the exception, override it with the decision you've already

made.

- **Keep your phone away from the bed**
  Mel's phone sits in the bathroom, so turning off the alarm means getting up. That also keeps the phone out of your hand first thing.
- **Try the water-first swap for three mornings**
  Mel's challenge is to drink water first and delay caffeine at least an hour for three days, then see how your energy and afternoon feel. She still drinks coffee, just later.

The #1 Menopause Doctor: How to Lose Belly Fat, Sleep Better, & Stop Suffering Now

Guest: Dr. Mary Claire Haver
Date: 2024-03-21 · Duration: 1:14:32
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ReFZ__ZeSEQ

KEYPOINTS

• Menopause is badly under-researched and under-taught

Dr. Mary Claire Haver is a board-certified OB-GYN, a certified menopause practitioner and the author of The New Menopause. She says a PubMed search for 'pregnancy' returns about 1.1 million articles, compared with about 94,000 for 'menopause.' She estimates menopause gets roughly 10% of the funding and attention, even though it covers the last third of a woman's life. Women live a bit longer than men, she notes, but spend about 20% of their lives in poor health.

• Ovarian aging starts at birth

Women are born with roughly a million eggs and lose them throughout life, faster with age. By 30 about 10% remain, and by 40 about 3%. Mel, 55 at the time, was stunned she'd never heard this. When the eggs run out, periods stop, and estrogen, progesterone and testosterone fall with them. Haver says a postmenopausal woman's estradiol is under 1% of what it was at 25. 'You will not die without it,' she says. 'You'll just die faster and less healthy.'

• Estrogen receptors are in every organ system, so symptoms show up everywhere

Each woman experiences menopause differently. One may get palpitations, frozen shoulder and vaginal dryness, while another gets hot flashes, night sweats and rage. Haver lists joint pain, frozen shoulder, constipation or diarrhea, new or worsening asthma, new autoimmune disease, tinnitus, and dry skin, eyes, mouth and vagina. Doctors trained to spot a single checklist 'duck' miss many of these.

• Perimenopause is a 'zone of chaos' that can start at 35

Perimenopause typically begins 7 to 10 years before the final period, so roughly 35 to 45. It's more than irregular periods. The brain pushes hard to squeeze out an occasional egg, causing estrogen surges Haver compares to being 'pregnant with triplets,' followed by crashes. She thinks that's why moods swing. Some women do well with progesterone alone, others need estrogen too, and Haver admits good studies on the best approach are limited.

• Falling estrogen affects the brain

Dropping estrogen can narrow blood vessels in parts of the brain and trigger menstrual migraines. Haver says it's associated with low mood, anxiety and brain fog. Women with known ADHD often get noticeably worse during the transition. She says it's unclear whether that's new ADHD or someone who 'was kind of making it' until losing estrogen took away her resilience.

• Estrogen is anti-inflammatory, and losing it fuels chronic inflammation

Haver separates helpful acute inflammation from chronic, low-grade inflammation, the 'something's not right in my body' feeling. Estrogen calms inflammation in bones and joints, which is why aches and stiffness flare without any injury. Mel recognized herself in having to 'pry' herself over in bed.

• Osteoporosis is largely preventable but usually caught too late

Bone is constantly broken down and rebuilt, and in menopause breakdown outpaces rebuilding. Osteoporosis is often diagnosed only after a fracture, and Haver says 50% of women will have an osteoporotic fracture before they die. After 65, a broken hip carries about a 29% risk of death within a year even with surgery, about 79% without. Survivors often live with chronic disability.

• The WHI scare came from a flawed study and alarmist reporting

The major hormone study enrolled women averaging 62, with some in their 70s, rather than women around 51 at menopause. It also tested only one older formulation, conjugated equine estrogens. By then many likely already had heart disease. Haver says most of the frightening findings have since been walked back, and one remains debated. She cites data that women starting HRT between 50 and 59, or within 10 years of menopause, have lower cardiovascular and all-cause death rates.

• Most women are candidates for hormone therapy

Haver's absolute no's are undiagnosed vaginal bleeding (get it checked first), active breast cancer, an active blood clot and an active stroke. A family history of breast cancer isn't a contraindication. Clotting risks such as MTHFR can be handled by avoiding oral estrogen. Some breast cancer survivors may qualify after a nuanced risk-benefit talk, since cardiovascular disease, not breast cancer, is what such women most often die of. She doesn't expect every woman to choose HRT but says 'every woman deserves the conversation.'

EXAMPLES

• The 'WW in room 12'

In residency in Texas, senior doctors in cowboy boots would say 'you got a WW in room 12, good luck,' meaning 'whiny woman.' These were women who couldn't sleep, were gaining weight, unhappy and getting headaches, but still had periods. They were told it was just aging. Haver now hears the same story from almost every patient: 'my pants don't fit, I'm grouchy, I feel like I have ADHD or dementia.'

• Duke's frozen-shoulder finding

After a woman who chaired an orthopedics department compared notes with a woman who chaired an OB-GYN department, a Duke analysis found that women on hormone therapy had lower rates of frozen shoulder (adhesive capsulitis). Haver uses it as an example of research only now linking estrogen to joints.

• Heart drugs tested on men

Haver says ACE inhibitors and baby aspirin are often recommended to women for primary prevention despite benefits shown only in men. Being menopausal is itself a risk factor for worse cholesterol, and women on HRT tend to have higher HDL and lower LDL.

• Probiotics and belly fat

Losing estrogen shifts the gut microbiome toward a male profile and encourages visceral fat around the organs, which is linked to heart disease, diabetes and stroke. In a study Haver cites of postmenopausal women with obesity and hypertension, those taking probiotics had lower blood pressure and less visceral fat, though their weight didn't change.

• 80% vitamin D deficient

Haver checks vitamin D in every patient who will allow it and says about 80% are deficient, not just low. She points to weaker gut absorption and sun protection as reasons.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Haver's menopause toolkit, in order

Nutrition, then movement, stress reduction and sleep, then medication such as hormone therapy (or alternatives if you aren't a candidate), then targeted supplements. She prefers getting nutrients from food and supplementing only where there's a gap.

• Her top three: fiber, magnesium, omega-3s

Track your fiber for a couple of weeks, using beans, legumes, berries, nuts, seeds and avocado. For magnesium she favors glycinate, citrate or threonate (Magtein) and food sources like pumpkin seeds and leafy greens. For omega-3s, eat fatty fish or flax, or supplement. Her go-to is yogurt topped with flax, hemp and chia seeds, plus something probiotic daily such as yogurt, miso or kimchi.

• Train to be strong, not skinny

Haver was an '80s step-aerobics instructor exercising to stay thin. She didn't lift weights until her 40s and says it's never too late. Mel now does resistance training three days a week.

• Sleep: progesterone, estrogen and hard truths about alcohol

Progesterone can deepen sleep, has an anti-anxiety effect, and Haver says it can be taken daily even before menopause. Estrogen addresses the hot flashes and night sweats that wake you up. Don't neglect phone and light habits. On alcohol, she says even one glass now wakes her at around 3 a.m.: 'If you're choosing to drink, you're choosing not to sleep.' Track your cycle too, so you notice mid-month fog, irritability and headaches.

4 Ways to Stay Calm When You’re Stressed: This Life Advice Will Change Your Future

Date: 2024-03-18 · Duration: 1:01:22
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=af7uTFizB44

KEYPOINTS

• When someone you love freezes on an opportunity, it's usually fear, not lack of desire.

Mel's 23-year-old daughter Kendall, a singer-songwriter, got an invitation to perform at Carnegie Hall seven days later and left it unanswered for 24 hours. Mel was baffled and getting angry. When they finally talked, Kendall said she felt unworthy and unready, and worried about what friends who had worked just as hard would think. Mel's takeaway: intellectually the hesitation makes no sense, but the person you love is living in their emotions, not their intellect.

• We get frustrated because we can see someone's potential.

Mel compares it to a partner who says he needs a new job and is still in his boxers eating a waffle at 9:45 on a Wednesday, while you angrily wash the dishes. You get mad because you believe in them. She points out that the people who love you probably see things you say you want but aren't working on either.

• Pressure backfires; confusion opens things up.

Telling someone what to do is the fastest way to get them to do the opposite. Mel suggests starting with 'I'm confused', which puts the focus on you and gently points out the gap between what they said they wanted and what they're doing. For example: 'I heard you say you wanted to lose 40 pounds, and I'm confused because I haven't seen you exercising. Do you need support?'

• Expect defensiveness first, then the truth.

After you say 'I'm confused', Mel warns that the fear will come out first: excuses, 'I'm busy', 'how dare you'. Kendall even accused Mel of wanting it more than she did. Keep saying 'anything else?' until the real answer comes out. Usually they know what they want but are scared, or they don't know how to start.

• Lesson 1: 'It's not that deep.'

When someone is in the emotional deep end, these four words, which Mel learned from Kendall, lower the stakes. The phrase also reminded Mel that it was Kendall's decision: if she didn't want to go, there would be other opportunities. Mel applies it to job hunting ('it's just a resume, it's just an interview') and to dating, so you stay clear-headed instead of freezing or blowing the opportunity.

• Lesson 2: don't underestimate a good scream.

Mel encourages letting pent-up tension out instead of holding it together: in the car, a bathroom stall, into a pillow or in the front yard. She cites Dr. Brian Bruno, medical director of Mid City TMS in New York. He writes that the relief after a big scream or cry may come from endorphins and peptides that reduce pain and stress, and that screaming releases muscle tension from bottled-up emotion. Mel notes that researchers are still speculating about why it works.

• Lesson 3: give someone your pants.

Mel's third lesson comes from a stranger's generosity backstage. Her point is that it wasn't really about the pants. She asks what life would look like if your possessions were things to lend and give to lift others up, rather than just to own.

• Lesson 4: if you want a core memory, don't try to film it.

You can't be present to your phone and to your life at the same time. Mel's advice is to stop trying to capture everything, or you'll miss actually experiencing it.

EXAMPLES

• How the invitation came about

A year earlier, Kendall had met musicians at the Newport Folk Festival and kept in touch. One invited her to the annual Piano Recital at Carnegie Hall, where artists including Mandy Moore, whom Kendall calls her 'musical mom', perform two original songs with only a piano. Her mentor Phil Cook had already arranged her single 'Pastime' for piano and offered to accompany her. Once Mel said 'it's not that deep', pointing out that it's an auditorium at 57th and Sixth, she'd been performing for 15 years and her mentor would be beside her, Kendall laughed and said yes.

• The sprint around Carnegie Hall

On the day, Kendall's surprise visitors (her 86-year-old grandmother, who had flown in from Florida, and the grandmother's 85-year-old boyfriend) were in tow. Her pre-show anxiety kicked in: she couldn't find her water, lipstick or the right pants. Insisting 'I have the information', she speed-walked the wrong way, and she and Mel circled the whole block, arriving back at the stage door next to their hotel at 4:13 for a 4:15 call.

• The scream in the elevator

Inside, Kendall pressed 2, but the elevator went down to the basement. She dropped her head into her hands, then put her fists at her sides and let out a bloodcurdling scream. Mel expected her to cry, but Kendall immediately regained her composure. A breathless staff member who had come running at the basement said it 'happens all the time in here'. When the doors opened on the second floor, Kendall walked out calm.

• Leanne Ford's 'traveling pants'

At the sound check, Mel complimented a woman's black high-waisted pants that flared out like a ball gown. She had owned them for 20 years, the tag long gone, and friends around the world had borrowed them. Kendall mentioned she wished she had something that fabulous to wear. Hours later the woman, interior designer Leanne Ford, changed at her hotel, came back and gave Kendall the pants with a note, saying to mail them back 'when you're ready'. In a message afterwards, Ford said what she would remember most was watching Mel's joy as a mother, and that she hoped to give her own daughter the same light.

• Filming the railing

Warned that Carnegie Hall ejects people who film, Mel practised hiding her phone in a trench coat with her elbows tucked in. When Kendall started singing, Mel leaned forward into the moment and only afterwards found she had recorded the railing in front of her. She says she's glad, because she was fully present for the performance.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Use the 'I'm confused' script**
  Say: 'I heard you say you want X. I'm confused, because I don't see you doing Y. Do you need help?' Then let them vent and keep asking 'anything else?' until the real fear or block comes out.
- **Say 'it's not that deep' to yourself**
  When a resume, interview, date or performance starts to feel enormous, name the plain facts of the situation. Lowering the stakes keeps you moving and thinking clearly.
- **Give yourself a release valve**
  Whether it's a scream, a cry, a sigh or a hug, let the pressure out instead of bottling it. Mel sees it as taking control, not losing it.
- **Lend what you have**
  Look for small ways your belongings, time or connections could lift someone up in a big moment. Mel's view is that generosity like this matters more than the object itself.

What Alcohol Does to Your Body: Harvard’s Dr. Sarah Wakeman With the Medical Facts You Need to Know

Guest: Dr. Sarah Wakeman
Date: 2024-03-14 · Duration: 0:53:53
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6tXoJN8-H6k

KEYPOINTS

• Your cocktail contains the same molecule as rubbing alcohol

Dr. Sarah Wakeman, senior medical director for substance use disorder at Mass General Brigham and associate professor at Harvard Medical School, explains that drinking alcohol is made by fermenting sugars or starches. It's the same molecule found in hand sanitizer, mouthwash and rubbing alcohol. Some of her patients with the most severe alcohol use disorder drink those products when they can't get alcohol, which shows the power of addiction.

• The 'red wine is healthy' research had a flaw

Early studies compared moderate drinkers with non-drinkers, but many non-drinkers abstain because of chronic illness or past alcohol use disorder, which raises their mortality. Newer studies use infrequent drinkers as the comparison. Wakeman describes a large recent study of hundreds of thousands of people surveyed from the 1990s to the mid-2010s that controlled for lifestyle and chronic conditions. It found a slight mortality decrease for low-risk drinking, but not for cancer.

• Any amount of alcohol raises cancer risk

Breast cancer is strongly associated with alcohol, possibly through hormone effects, which is still being researched; liver and gut cancers also make sense given alcohol's path through the body. Wakeman says this matters especially if you have a personal or family history of cancer. She won't frame drinking as health-promoting, though she notes zero-risk living would also mean never driving, skiing or eating bacon.

• Liver damage can reverse until it can't

Heavy drinking inflames the liver, leading to fatty liver, which can reverse if you stop; the liver can regenerate even after 80% is removed. Past a threshold, scarring becomes cirrhosis. Wakeman now sees people in their early 30s with cirrhosis, sometimes dying during that hospital stay, when transplant is the only option. She cites a significant rise in alcohol-related liver failure from 2010 to 2020, especially among women and younger people, and roughly a 25% rise in alcohol-related deaths after COVID began.

• Alcohol dehydrates you by blocking a hormone, and harms your gut

You pee more because alcohol makes your kidneys less sensitive to antidiuretic hormone, not because of the volume you drink. In the gut, it can make the intestinal wall more porous ('leaky gut') and alter the microbiome, as a high-fat, high-sugar Western diet can.

• Higher-risk drinking thresholds

Per Wakeman, for women or anyone over 65, higher-risk drinking means more than about 10 ounces of hard alcohol or 35 ounces of wine per week. Above that, risks rise for dementia, liver and digestive problems. Mel notes home cocktails are often three shots poured in one 'glug,' and admits she's lied to her doctor about how much she drinks. Wakeman says she lies to her dentist about flossing and sees earning patients' trust as her job.

• The warning-sign checklist

Wakeman asks: Are you drinking more than you intend? Have you tried to cut back and failed? Do you keep drinking despite worried loved ones, work problems, or worsening anxiety or health? Do you have cravings? Physical signs include tolerance (needing four drinks for the effect one or two used to give) and feeling sick when you stop. The core of alcohol use disorder: loss of control, compulsive use and use despite consequences.

• Alcohol quietly disrupts sleep, mood and menopause symptoms

It helps you fall asleep faster but disrupts sleep architecture, so you may wake at 2 a.m. or feel unrested. It relaxes the valve that keeps stomach acid down, worsening heartburn. Because it dilates blood vessels, Wakeman says any amount can worsen hot flashes. Heavy use can cause a substance-induced mood disorder that looks like depression.

• Hangovers aren't mild withdrawal

Wakeman says hangovers are now thought to come mainly from dehydration plus toxic byproducts, including other compounds in some drinks, which is why dark liquors tend to cause worse hangovers than clear ones. Over time the brain adapts to regular drinking by changing receptors, dopamine and stress hormones, which drives tolerance and leaves you shaky and anxious when you stop.

• Never mix alcohol with sedating anxiety medications

Combining alcohol with benzodiazepines such as Xanax, Klonopin or Ativan can slow breathing, cause impairment sooner and risk overdose. Wakeman also notes that people drinking to ease anxiety or depression may be working against their own treatment.

• Alcohol use disorder is common and treatable

Wakeman says about 15% of people will have alcohol use disorder at some point, and most will get well with care. It's a health condition like depression, diabetes or high blood pressure, not a moral or willpower failing. If someone isn't meeting their goals, she says the treatment isn't enough yet; the person isn't failing.

EXAMPLES

• Young patients nobody warned

Wakeman's most heartbreaking cases are people in their late 20s and early 30s in liver failure, whose friends drank the same way, and who had seen doctors along the way without anyone explaining the risks or what lower-risk drinking looks like.

• What heavy drinking looks like on a brain scan

Wakeman says chronic heavy drinkers show brain volume loss on CT or MRI, so a 50-year-old's brain can look much older. In rare extreme cases, the part of the brain that forms new memories is so damaged that people develop an amnesia syndrome:

they remember the past but can't make new memories.

- **The marathon 'why'**

  Her example of a specific goal: 'I'm training for a marathon and can't get up for long runs when I drink, so I'll only drink on this day and keep it to this amount.' She advises making goals specific, measurable and time-bound, like a three-week trial then reassess, rather than vowing never to drink again after a wedding.

- **Mel's end-of-day ritual**

  Mel describes eating well, exercising and taking supplements, then washing it all down with a High Noon, glass of wine or gin as her signal that work is over, and calls that 'kind of dumb' in context.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **If you want to cut back**

  Keep a drinking diary of when, why and how much, like a food journal. Then plan: schedule non-drinking social activities, hold a club soda the minute you walk in, enlist a friend who knows your goal. Tell people your goal and how they can help without criticizing their drinking. Quick wins can include better sleep, weight loss, more exercise capacity, better mood and skin.

- **Helping someone you're worried about**

  Wakeman calls tough love, 'enabling' and 'hitting bottom' fallacies; nobody makes hard changes when threatened. Say: I love you, I'm worried, I'm here, treatment works, here's how I can help. Explore their goals, for example connecting sick days with the promotion they want. Families may still need boundaries for their own safety, but that isn't a treatment.

- **Talking to teens and college kids**

  Skip scare tactics; she notes kids may use more after DARE-style messaging. Ask what they've seen and what worries them, and focus on relevant risks: unsafe situations, sexual vulnerability, missing class. Make it safe to come to you about small things so they'll come about big ones.

13 Things I Wish I Knew in My 20s

Date: 2024-03-11 · Duration: 1:03:19
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5ntYJV50biM

KEYPOINTS

• Your 20s may be the hardest decade, not the best

Mel calls the 'world is your oyster' pep talk nonsense; her own 20s were the most confusing, overwhelming years of her life. She cried more then than in any other decade, even after being diagnosed with anxiety and put on Zoloft. You have your act together more than you realize, so give yourself credit.

• 'The great scattering' explains why you feel lost

From birth to about 20, you and your friends follow the same playbook: same grades, milestones, routines, even spring break, with an older class showing you what's next. In your 20s that template disintegrates and everyone scatters to different cities, jobs and timelines. Losing your frame of reference for progress is why the decade feels out of control, regardless of how polished other people's Instagram stories look.

• Stop spending money on stupid stuff

Her only money advice. Your phone is 'the new mall' with three-second ad-to-purchase loops, and most impulse buys are attempts to soothe boredom, sadness or stress with a dopamine hit. She is blunt about influencers: the one selling a $300 red light mask likely got it free, earns a commission, and gets Botox. Spend instead on experiences, skills, your wellbeing or therapy, things you'll actually remember.

• You have more time than social media suggests

Mel says today's pressure is worse than in her day for two reasons: social media makes success look overnight, and people compare themselves to their parents' timelines. She married at 27 and had Sawyer by 30, but her daughters' path is different. She worries couples rush engagements into reality-show moments without asking whether the relationship fits them now. Her line: 'be where your feet are, not where your phone is.'

• Date the person, not their potential

If you're constantly griping in your head about what you wish your partner would change, you're dating a projection. You can make clear, compassionate requests, then let their behavior show you who they are. Ask: if this person never changes, is this the relationship I want? Mel regrets spending her entire 20s in relationships out of insecurity and missing time with female friends.

• Life isn't fair, so never play the victim

A friend's dad gets her a job, a college acquaintance summers in Europe, your sister gets the attention at the bar. Mel agrees it's unfair, but says resentment and 'why not me' only stop you living your own life. A single day or moment can change your entire course, so trust where things are heading.

• Measure career wins by your circle, not your paycheck

Money comes from people: job offers, loans, promotions and introductions all come from another human. Titles and raises don't matter much long term, but connections do. Mel challenges listeners to talk to one new person every day and go beyond hello. Your network is simply the conversations you're willing to have.

• You don't get to want it if you won't ask for it

Roommates, partners and friends can't read your mind, and passive-aggressive texts or drunk conversations don't count. Whether it's dirty dishes, a partner's nicotine habit or friends blasting music after the bars, ask directly like an adult. Mel says you'll feel more in control whether or not you get what you want, because silent brooding tears you apart.

• Be your own person, and try doing things alone

Stop pretending to like things you don't, including drinking. You can order club soda in a wine glass at a bar. After following the pack for 20 years you may not know who you are, and the fastest way to find out is solo: dinner with a Kindle, a movie, an improv or painting class, yoga teacher training. Your relationship with yourself is the foundation for every other one.

• You're not in competition with anyone

Mel didn't learn this until her late 40s. Success, love and friendship are in limitless supply; your only competition is the part of you that talks to you badly. When a friend gets engaged or promoted, 'grab your pom poms' and celebrate even if you're jealous. She believes cheering shows you know your win is coming too.

• Take the biggest risks of your life now, but shrink them if needed

Change is the only constant, so decide your big moves before friends' choices force your hand. Look at who you're jealous of for clues to what you want. If the full dream is too much, do a mini version: five nights alone on part of the Appalachian Trail instead of a girls' trip, PTO volunteering on a farm, a free Canva account to start designing journals.

EXAMPLES

• Mel's daughters and a listener named Eliza

Daughter Kendall, 23, in Los Angeles, FaceTimes daily, swinging from 'met the love of my life' to negative $25 in her account. Daughter Sawyer, 25, lives at home to save before moving to New York and was overheard calling herself 'a depressed gerbil.' Listener Eliza described a year-long 'downward spiral tornado' after college: a breakup, bad friendships, a job she quit, money trouble and family fights. Every 20-something on Mel's team nodded along.

• $25,000 of hidden credit card debt

Overwhelmed and underpaid, Mel soothed herself with spending across five credit cards. At 28, after marrying Chris, she had to disclose $25,000 in credit card debt she hadn't told him about. She says she can't remember a single thing she bought.

• The fly-fishing lie

At 26, on her first date with Chris, he mentioned fly fishing and she claimed she'd grown up fly fishing with her dad. Three months later they visited his best friend, Jeff Clausman, who turned out to be a fly-fishing instructor. Mel says she morphed into every boyfriend's interests, from rap to the Grateful Dead.

• Smoking and Dunkin' on the courthouse steps

As a young lawyer she'd walk into court on her third Marlboro Light, chugging a large Dunkin' coffee, stomach in knots, thinking she had anxiety. Her verdict now: 'You have a crappy morning routine.'

• Sawyer's five-day notes trick

Instead of clicking buy, Sawyer writes the item in her phone's notes app and waits five days. If she still remembers and wants it, she decides then. She finds that simply writing it down satisfies the urge in the moment.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Five-step morning routine you can do hungover

Get up on the alarm with 5-4-3-2-1 instead of replaying last night; get light in your eyes within minutes; walk 10 minutes without music or podcasts; drink water before coffee, since coffee on an empty stomach spikes cortisol; and journal, even just one thing you want to happen. Doing it on 80% of mornings is enough to feel back in control.

• Audit your five closest people, including coworkers

Ask whether they're healthy and driven, how they treat you, and whether you can be yourself with them. Friend breakups are normal in the scattering. Since you'll spend 40+ hours a week with coworkers, choose jobs where people respect your time off and challenge you to grow.

• Easy openers for meeting strangers

Compliment someone's nails or shoes, ask the person behind you in line what's good to order, or ask a train neighbor whether they'd recommend their book. Also be kind, and apologize for past behavior; in Mel's experience about 95% of people forgive.

• For parents of 20-somethings

Validate rather than fix or lecture. Acknowledge how overwhelming this stage is and remind them they're doing better than they think. When panic hits about falling behind, Mel's phrase is 'I trust the timing of my life.'

Why You’re Broke: 5 Rules to Finally Take Control of Your Money

Guest: Tiffany Aliche
Date: 2024-03-07 · Duration: 1:29:28
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x6S63406raY

KEYPOINTS

• Shame gets in the way of solutions, so say it out loud

Tiffany Aliche, known as 'The Budgetnista', says shame thrives when you keep things to yourself. While she hid her losses, she couldn't see the skills she still had: budgeting, saving and side hustling. The fix is to tell someone. Once you do, you find out you're not alone, and 'me too' turns into 'let's get to work'.

• Fear makes bills look scarier than they are

Citing an African saying, 'fear makes the wolf bigger than he is,' Aliche says unopened mail is rarely as bad as you imagine. But leaving it does let the wolf grow. Mel admits she still leaves her bills in a stack unopened despite being able to pay them, and that she shops when she's stressed.

• A budget is a plan for saying 'yes', not a punishment

Aliche compares a budget to a parent saying 'yes, after dinner' or 'yes, when your homework is done'. It finds a safe way to say yes to what matters. She calls it a 'money list'. Step one is to write down, without amounts, everything you spend on. Step two: estimate monthly spending from bank statements. Step three: total your monthly income from all sources. Step four, the 'tears and tissues' step, is subtracting one from the other.

• Sort expenses into B, U and C to see whether you earn too little or spend too much

Mark 'B' for bills, where someone comes after you if you don't pay: rent or mortgage, car loan, student loans, credit cards. Add 'U' to bills that vary with usage, like electricity, water and phone data. Everything else is 'C' for cash or choice: eating out, grooming, entertainment, and groceries after essentials. If most money goes to Bs and Us, you have an earning problem, so cutting further won't solve it. If most goes to Cs, you have a spending problem.

• Use automation instead of relying on discipline

Aliche says over-consumption is the norm, with shoppable social feeds and influencers who got the product free. So rather than fighting human nature, she 'budgets without a budget'. Ask payroll to split your direct deposit across four accounts: a spending checking account with your debit card, a bills checking account with no debit card, and two high-yield savings accounts at FDIC-insured online banks, one for emergencies and one for goals.

• Aim to live on about 70% of your income

Her target is for spending plus bills to come to no more than about 70% of income, with the rest going to saving and investing. She says she once lived on 200% of her income and now lives on 20–30%, so treat 70% as something to work toward, not a reason for shame.

• Choose the debt payoff method that fits you

First make a debt list: who you owe, how much, the due date, the interest rate and the status. Snowball: pay off the smallest balance first for early wins. Avalanche: pay the highest interest rate first. 'Tsunami', her own: pay off the debt that stresses you most first, such as money owed to Grandma. In every version, you pay the minimum on everything else and roll each freed-up payment into the next debt.

• It's possible to save too much

Aliche's hot take: emergency savings should cover about three months of expenses for a stable job like her mother's nursing job, six for her engineer sister, and up to a year for an entrepreneur like her, but no more. Beyond that, the money should be invested. 'Not every belt is a Gucci belt; some are seat belts.' Mel admits she probably keeps too much in savings because of her past losses.

• Credit scores respond quickly to the right moves

Aliche says payment history is about 35% of your score and amounts owed about 30%, so automating bills and paying down debt covers roughly 65%. Length of credit history also matters: having no credit is like a new driver with no accidents, untested rather than safe. She calls credit 'tips and tricks, not discipline'.

• Spend on what you need and love

Before you buy, ask whether you need it, love it, like it or want it. Needs are your Bs and Us. Loves still bring you joy a year later. Likes fade in about six months. Wants are instant gratification. She tries to spend in the need and love categories, like a planned trip to Johannesburg, Namibia and Botswana, rather than on another Target T-shirt.

EXAMPLES

• Thursday money meetings and the light bill

Aliche's Nigerian immigrant father, an accountant, held family meetings every Thursday about the family's finances. He left the electric bill on the dining table and said that if it went down, the savings would go to a Disney fund. Her point: kids of any age don't care about your bills, but they care when bills are linked to what matters to them.

• From $30,000 saved to $300,000 owed

As a preschool teacher who tutored and babysat, Aliche had about $30,000 saved by her mid-20s. Then came a $50,000 master's degree and a $220,000 condo bought in 2006. A 'rich' friend talked her into taking about $15,000 in credit card cash advances for an investment promising $2,000 a week, then disappeared. She ran up another $15,000 expecting the payoff, was laid off three days before the school year started, emptied her retirement account and lost the condo to foreclosure.

• Crying in her middle-school bed at 29

Living with her parents again (who gave her a curfew), she realised she'd had more money at 14 from babysitting. Depression lifted only when her best friend Linda laughed and said everyone was broke in the recession. Linda would sit with her and read the scary pink envelopes out loud.

• From 530 to 750 in one year

While teaching a class how to check credit scores, she saw her own had fallen from 802 to 530. Following a debt lawyer's advice, she put a small recurring charge (under $25, like Spotify) on a zero-balance card and paid it off in full every month. With two cards, she rose to 750 within a year, despite an active foreclosure.

• Mel's credit card leapfrog

Mel graduated college with $10,000 in debt from cards banks handed out at freshman orientation. She moved balances between 0% offers and entered her marriage with five or six maxed-out cards she never told Chris about. Later, $800,000 in restaurant debt led to her rule that 50 cents of every dollar goes to savings.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Make your case before asking for a raise

Keep a 'go me' file of wins, ideally quantified in money made or saved. Then you're asking for a salary correction, not a favour. Check pay on Glassdoor, adjusting for company size. Aliche calls this 'illustrating your Oprah'.

• Choose side hustles that build on what you already do

Start with what you're certified in or already do at work. Do the maths first: driving for Uber may raise insurance and gas costs. Only invest where there's a direct return, like a $200 cake-decorating class that lets you charge 30% more.

• Remember what the money is for

Aliche's husband died suddenly two and a half years earlier; he never earned over $60,000 but raked a neighbour's lawn and called her parents more than she did. Her advice: money serves meaning, and you may already have enough.

The #1 Journal Exercise to Become the Person You've Always Wanted to Be

Date: 2024-03-04 · Duration: 0:34:40
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RmsXYFjDqw0

KEYPOINTS

• Your past happier self holds the map

Mel's core idea is that 'you do know how to be happy; that's why you miss feeling it. You can only miss something you know.' The episode is built around a journaling exercise she had kept to herself for years. She uses it to look back at a time she felt happier and bring practical clues from it into her life now.

• The portal metaphor comes from fantasy novels

Mel was hooked on A Court of Thorns and Roses by Sarah J. Maas, and it turned out most of her team at 143 Studios was reading it too. She notes that in stories like Harry Potter, characters cross into another world and always bring something back. She stresses that the exercise isn't meditation, a mantra or 'woo-woo.' It uses your own life experience.

• You don't need to escape your life to be happier

The mistake, Mel says, is thinking happiness requires a permanent escape: a vacation, blowing up your relationships, moving, or quitting your job. Instead, you learn to visit that happier world in your mind while still living day to day in this one.

• Look for just one clue

Mel calls this the most important tip, and says it's grounded in research, though she doesn't name a study. Don't try to rebuild your whole old life. Find one thing from that happier world to bring back now. It doesn't have to be the full version either: for someone who loved daily dance practice, one class a month can be enough.

• The clues are in small, ordinary details

When you picture your happier self, look at the routine. When did you get up? What did your mornings look like? Who were you with? Where did you live? When did you go to bed? What was your favorite part of the day? Mel says it's never the big things. It's what you take for granted: when you wake up, what you look at first, moving your body, a warm coffee, hugging your pets, time outside. 'The little things are everything.'

• If you can't find a happy memory, there are still clues

One team member said she hated the exercise. Her childhood was full of trauma, her happiness depended on another person's moods, and when she looks back she sees survival, not joy. Mel's answer is that these clues show what not to do. If you were conditioned to people-please and track others' moods, you know that doesn't make you happy. Taking that pattern seriously and healing it may be the most powerful clue of all.

• Comparing the two columns makes the gap obvious

Putting 'then' next to 'now' on one page usually reveals the differences right away. Mel says that's why the exercise works so quickly: the happier version of you is right there to see, and the specific missing habits stand out.

• Hearing other people's happy worlds jogs your own memories

Mel shares her team's reflections before guiding listeners through the exercise because, she says, hearing someone else describe their happier world tends to bring up your own memories. She thinks she has missed clues in her own life too, and that hearing yours might show her more.

EXAMPLES

• Sawyer in the kitchen, summer 2020

Sawyer graduated from college during COVID. She had worked for four years to save for a service trip to Cambodia, and it was canceled. She was stuck living at home, drinking every night, gaining weight and sedentary. Swollen-eyed, she told her parents 'I'm so stuck, I'm lost.' Mel answered, 'I think you do know what to do. You're just scared,' and had her draw a line down a page and write 'Happy me' on the left.

• Sawyer's two columns

Her happiest time was senior year of high school. She was up at 6:30 and out by 7, with friends all day, playing varsity lacrosse, exercising six days a week, drinking only on weekends, in a good relationship, and home for dinner about four nights a week. Now she slept until noon, drank nightly, didn't see friends, didn't exercise, ate badly and spent most of the day in bed on social media, with her job six months away. She saw the connection immediately.

• Jenaia's freedom and dance

A video editor on Mel's team said she felt happiest as a kid. School ended at 2, then she went to dance practice every day, which was her creative expression, then home for family dinner. Her clue was dance, or creative expression in some form.

• Maddie realizes she already has it

During her documentary MFA, Maddie exercised at 6:30, went to class, journaled daily at The Thinking Cup on Newbury Street where everyone knew her, and helped classmates shoot films. Doing the exercise, she realized her current life already has the same clues: a 6 a.m. workout, audiobooks on her commute, 45 minutes journaling at a café where she's a regular, creative work, and someone she cares about at home.

• Mel at 24, walking Manhattan

Around 1994, Mel was a Legal Aid public defender earning $19,000 a year and living with girlfriends on West 68th Street. She walked to 100 Canal Street, about 78 blocks, and spent the day on her feet in court or at Rikers Island. Her favorite part was the walk home with her supervisor and best friend Matt Myers, then Chris, whom she was starting to date, from the 30s uptown. Her clues were outdoor walks, walking and talking with people she loves, living near friends, and dynamic work that helps people. She notes that it sounds a lot like her life now.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Do the exercise now, on paper or in your head

Draw a line down a page and write 'Happy me' on the left. Close your eyes, travel back, and describe a typical week in detail.

Write your current week on the right and compare. If you're driving, picture the page.

- **Bring back something small this week**

Mel's suggestions include pulling an old puzzle out of the cupboard, gardening, painting, spending more time outdoors, or even getting the dog you loved as a kid. She calls it an 'invisible string' between that world and this one. Her own example: helping her parents restore the gardens of their fixer-upper in western Michigan explains why flowers make her so happy 50 years later.

- **Use it when you feel lost**

Mel says she's used this exercise over and over when she's felt lost, and it worked for her daughter when nothing else did. Look for the one clue, then act on it today.

5 Things Only Fake Friends Do & How to Let Go of What No Longer Serves You with Trent Shelton

Guest: Trent Shelton
Date: 2024-02-29 · Duration: 1:21:36
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ajBK8Grwp0M

KEYPOINTS

- **Your circle is the biggest barrier to peace.**
  Former NFL player Trent Shelton says that whenever he had the wrong environment around him, in football or afterwards, it drained him, and the right people lifted him up. His first test: you never have to question anything that's real. If you keep wondering whether someone is truly for you, you probably have your answer.
- **When the benefit ends, the loyalty often stops.**
  Shelton asks who would still be around if friendship were all you had to offer. Once he started saying no (no dinner on him, no club, not paying), the energy shifted, and people began whispering that he had changed. His view is that if 'no' changes the relationship, it wasn't real in the first place. A friendship that only runs one way needs to come to a dead end. Sometimes that means loving someone from a distance rather than cutting them off.
- **Don't let history keep you in misery.**
  Knowing someone since elementary school, or for five or ten years, doesn't mean they belong in your future. Mel adds that as you grow, people's roles shift. When she stopped complaining about her life and partying less, friendships built around those habits changed.
- **Type 1 to avoid: someone who wants your life.**
  Shelton distinguishes healthy admiration ('I want a marriage like that') from envy, which he calls jealousy left unchecked. The problem starts when someone feels they deserve your blessings without knowing what you sacrificed for them. He calls this 'counting people's blessings', like counting someone else's pocket. Such people may plant doubts about your partner or set you up to lose your position. His father told him to hang around only people with as much to lose as he had.
- **Type 2: someone of bad character.**
  Opportunities may steer clear of you because of who you're seen with. Shelton's rule: don't be friends with anyone you wouldn't trade places with, in character, mindset or life. To judge character, watch how someone treats people who can't do anything for them. Mel adds that she thinks a group sinks to its lowest common denominator rather than averaging out.
- **Type 3: a gossip.**
  If someone talks to you about other friends, assume they talk about you too. Shelton trusts people to be who they are: he expects a gossip to gossip and a liar to lie, so he doesn't hand them anything private. The mistake, he says, is trusting people for who we want them to be.
- **Type 4: someone who is friends with your enemies.**
  Shelton respects open enemies because at least he knows where they stand. The harder cases are 'frenemies'. Pay attention to their energy when you share good news. Do they turn the conversation to themselves, add doubt and fear, or say 'I'm proud of you' but never show up to support you? Sometimes, he says, your best support comes from strangers rather than familiar faces.
- **People who can't be happy for you usually aren't happy themselves.**
  Shelton admits that after being cut from the NFL he was 'a hater' who blamed everyone, even his parents for not making him faster, and picked apart Peyton Manning on TV. 'Have you ever met a happy hater?' he asks. Mel admits she felt similar envy during her financial struggles with Chris, when she thought none of her friends were struggling. Hurt people try to ease their pain by passing it on.
- **Be loyal to your principles, not to people.**
  Shelton says if he were loyal to people he would say yes when he meant no. Instead, he lets his principles decide, presenting 'facts over feelings'. Peace is his number one principle: however big the opportunity, if his peace says no, he doesn't do it. He says every time he has ignored his principles he has regretted it. He would rather be seen as cold-hearted than live broken-hearted from being misused again and again.
- **Be loyal to your own pace.**
  Runners who try to keep up with someone else's pace burn out. Shelton says many people let scarcity, comparison or panic set their pace. He lets confidence set his, which lets him say no to a big opportunity and yes to a small one. That, he says, is how he has stayed consistent for 15 years.

EXAMPLES

- **The high school friends who turned on him**
  Shelton's friend group all dreamed of playing Division I football. When he was the one who made it and started getting recognition, some of them spread rumours, and one went after his girlfriend behind his back. He decided that if his success made someone bitter, they weren't for him, because a true friend is happier for you than you are for yourself. Mel compares it to the friend who gets married or has kids first.
- **His son Tristan as the turning point**
  What changed Shelton was realising he didn't want his son to follow the path he was on. He started with 'rehab time': going to the gym, because he could control that, and reading his first personal development book. He jokes that until then Lil Wayne had been his only development book.
- **Rescheduling the interview for an eighth-grade game**
  Shelton postponed this recording because it clashed with Tristan's game. 'I can create other moments, but I can't get this moment back,' he says, especially after losing so many people in his life. Mel praises it as living by your principles.
- **Mel's coffee break mid-marathon**

Mel jokes that she ran the New York City and Houston marathons with friends, finished in about six hours, and once left the course for an iced coffee and a clean bathroom at Starbucks. Shelton says that's being loyal to your pace.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Send 'the invitation'**

Unclear communication sets unfair expectations. Tell friends plainly where you're going, what you'll no longer do, what you need and what you'll give. Like a birthday invitation, you can't control who shows up, but you didn't leave anyone behind; they chose to stay.

- **Write three to five guiding principles**

Ask what you want to feel and give, what standards you want to live by, and what your best self looks like, such as peace, integrity or honesty. When a decision comes up, let your principles answer it.

- **Build trust and 'soul momentum'**

Shelton recommends trusting your internal sense of direction over things simply lining up externally, and quitting comparison. Mel says small acts of defiance, like getting out of bed, eating real food or going to the gym when you don't want to, are proof that you believe something bigger is meant for you.

- **Know, and demand, your worth**

Cut whatever is pulling your worth's strings, whether that's opinions, comparison or followers. Shelton suggests repeating, 'I'm worth it, I've been worth it, I will forever be worth it.' Start with self-forgiveness, and find people who reflect your worth, even if that means a run club or community group.

How to Achieve Your Most Ambitious Goals

Date: 2024-02-26 · Duration: 0:47:37
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0_GO-hVw-LI

KEYPOINTS

• Liken yourself to a plant that was planted

This solo episode starts with a phrase from Victoria Monét's Grammy speech for Best New Artist: 'I like to liken myself to a plant who was planted.' Monét spent 15 years writing for and with Ariana Grande, Kendrick Lamar, Selena Gomez, Doja Cat, Brandy and Fifth Harmony before being recognized as an artist herself. Mel's daughter Kendall, a 23-year-old singer-songwriter, urged her to listen to it. Mel builds the whole episode around the metaphor as a way to keep going while the payoff is invisible.

• Name your 'Grammy moment', or settle for a small seed

Mel asks you to fast-forward 1, 5 or 15 years and picture something big. It could be money, a beach house, a tour, a million YouTube subscribers, a design brand or selling a business. If nothing comes, go smaller: the nagging idea you keep ignoring, like picking up your paintbrushes or walking after breakfast. Stop debating whether to be 'a tulip, a daisy, an oak tree or an asparagus.' You don't need to know what you'll become.

• Everything the plant needs is already in the seed

An acorn holds all the intelligence to become an oak, and a tulip bulb holds everything it needs to bloom. Mel's point is that having the vision at all is evidence the seed is in you. When doubt shows up ('that is a dumb idea'), let the seed take root instead of arguing it out of existence.

• You're designed to grow, toward the light

Put cut tulips on a counter and within 24 hours they'll be leaning toward the window. That's phototropism, and Mel says the human version is action. Feeling stagnant or lost is often a sign you aren't acting on the idea. Ask yourself every day what one thing you can do to move toward it.

• You can't force a bloom

Gardeners know peas go in by St. Patrick's Day and pumpkins right after Mother's Day if you want them by Halloween. No one plants zucchini Monday for Friday's dinner. Mel says a planted acorn takes almost six weeks to show anything. That invisible stretch is when the roots form, and people quit during it.

• Social media sells the overnight myth

Feeds push million-dollar-in-a-week and two-week six-pack programs. Even the makeup tutorials and new clothing lines took two or three years of work before that one polished post. Thinking in those terms makes you feel things should be faster and that it should be your turn already.

• Soil can be dirty or nourishing

Monét said the music industry 'can be looked at as dirty or as a source of nutrients and water.' Mel asks whether you're even planted, or still 'a pack of seeds on the display rack at Home Depot' while you look at other people's gardens. The honest checks: have you drafted the book's table of contents, talked to your boss about moving from HR to marketing, or actually called therapists and checked insurance?

• The grass grows where you water it

If your lawn is dirt, stop staring at the neighbor's, whose dad maybe installed it for them. Seed it and water it every day. Planners and prep can feel like progress, Mel admits, but they aren't the work. 'No one is coming.'

• Those who already made it are allies, not competitors

For people who have started but stalled, Mel's fix is a bigger pot: richer soil and a new environment. She joined a mastermind of authors and podcasters. Those who have had their Grammy moment know what you're going through and 'should be your best friends.' They won't cast shadows on you.

• Stalls usually mean you dropped the fundamentals

If you've been at it a while, you may be on autopilot and resigned, skipping the tedious basics. A lawn that's lush in June burns up if you stop watering. Success, Mel says, is a game of stamina: have your cry, then get back after it tomorrow.

EXAMPLES

• Mel's own Grammy moment: women's health

Saying it publicly for the first time, Mel shares that she has wanted for three or four years to build something in the women's health and supplement space. She sees women confused about hormones and supplements, and says most companies targeting women are run 'by a bunch of dudes.' She can already picture the packaging on a conveyor belt.

• Lonely in her 40s and doing nothing

When her social life 'dropped out' in her 40s, Mel scrolled other people's girl trips, college friends and '55 bridesmaids' and complained, but did nothing for years. The turning point was admitting that scrolling and jealousy wouldn't get her friendships. She calls it being a tulip in a tub of concrete.

• Chris's 400,000 handwritten words

Mel's husband Chris has journaled every morning for five years, by his estimate over 400,000 words that no one has read. He often told her he had nothing new to say. About a year ago he'd clearly stopped growing, so he hired a writing coach he talks to monthly, who helps with the table of contents and gives assignments.

• 5,478 days

Mel puts Monét's 15 years at 5,478 days. She notes those years weren't wasted: the co-writing was root system, which is why Monét won three Grammys that night (best new artist, best R&B album, best engineered album) and why Mel expects she won't be 'one and done.' Monét ended by saying she felt she was 'sprouting above ground.'

OTHER RELEVANT

• Use the six-word question

On days you feel unseen or start calling the idea dumb, ask: 'What if this does work out?' Mel says it keeps her in the game.

- **Count the small wins already underway**

If you're halfway through 75 Hard, on a third manuscript draft, in week one of marathon training or month five of job interviews, the roots are spreading even with nothing above ground. You're gaining skills and confidence.

- **Bigger blooms need bigger roots**

Mel argues the time you spend building is directly proportional to how big your life becomes, so treat patience as part of the plan rather than a delay.

Do This To Become More Confident: 5 Truths You Need To Hear with Jamie Kern Lima

Guest: Jamie Kern Lima
Date: 2024-02-22 · Duration: 1:11:37
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nGjKNh80Lfw

KEYPOINTS

• Every choice comes down to listening to the 'no' or to your 'knowing'

Jamie Kern Lima says we hear 'no' constantly, from retailers, from not being invited, and most painfully from our own negative self-talk. Underneath that is a knowing: intuition, a still small voice, a gut feeling. Her view is that your gut is never wrong. It leads you either to the next right step or to the next right lesson, so even a gut call that 'blows up' was teaching you something.

• Lie #1 is 'something's wrong with me'; the truth is 'you're not crazy, you're just first'

Jamie was adopted, has five families through divorces and birth relatives, and grew up where nobody had gone to college. Her big ideas got her called 'crazy' as a term of endearment. In her late 20s, the first in her families to see a therapist, she asked whether she was crazy. The therapist told her that being first, whether to break a generational cycle or to show up authentically, often meets confusion and resistance. Jamie argues that the things you think are odd about you are often what's most right with you.

• You can't truly connect while showing up as your 'representative'

Jamie says genuine connection with a friend, partner or customer is impossible unless you're authentic. In her words, authenticity alone doesn't guarantee success, but inauthenticity guarantees failure over time.

• 'Things like that don't happen to people like me' is a story you can rewrite

Answering listener Lisa, Jamie suggests first noticing the lie, then honestly asking whether you want to keep believing it, because some people use lies as excuses. You are the main character of your life, even if you can't control the supporting cast. Each time the thought shows up, intercept it and replace it with 'things like that haven't happened yet.' She cites figures that 80% of women don't believe they're enough and 75% of female executives deal with impostor syndrome.

• Lie #2: past failures predict future success

Answering listener Jesse, who keeps failing, Jamie says long stretches of rejection don't indicate your potential. The people who succeed most also fail most, because they try most. To decide whether to quit, she gets still through prayer or meditation, asks the question, waits for an intuitive answer without projecting the one she wants, then takes one step in that direction. Knowing when to let go of a dream can matter as much as knowing when to chase one.

• Intuition is a muscle, often trained out of women

Jamie points to studies in which boys answer a question immediately while girls look to each other for a consensus answer. To rebuild intuition, recall times you followed a gut feeling and times you overrode it, and notice what happened. Before automatically saying yes, pause and ask how you really feel.

• Mel's test: does the choice expand you or shrink you?

Mel says self-doubt is loudest when she's busiest, so she gets still. Putting off a dreaded call or conversation brings a flash of relief, but she feels part of herself shrinking and constricting. The true knowing feels expansive, even when it terrifies her. She adds that nine times out of ten she is afraid of the thing she knows is right.

• Lie #3: your weight determines your worth

Jamie believed this most of her life, even while running a company that celebrated every kind of beauty. She cites a figure that 89% of girls and women opt out of meaningful activities when they don't like how they look.

• Lie #4: 'if I stand out, I'll get kicked out'

Women often bond over problems and downplay wins. Mel admits she chronically hides successes, having grown up around someone who constantly griped about people who had more. Jamie's reframe: sharing a win isn't arrogance. It shows another woman she can share hers, and people who call it arrogance are reflecting their own sense of unworthiness.

• Lie #5: labels are permanent

Jamie compares labels to Post-it notes with light adhesive that come off once you decide they should. Identify the label, ask whether it's really true, and replace it with a true, empowering one. Being adopted becomes 'chosen' rather than 'unwanted.' Rejections get relabeled as 'divinely orchestrated.' She was voted 'biggest procrastinator' in her high school yearbook. Had that label stuck, the struggling waitress would never have launched a business.

EXAMPLES

• Rosacea on live TV sparked IT Cosmetics

At 31, anchoring the news, Jamie heard her producer say through her earpiece that there was something on her face. Her hereditary rosacea was cracking through her makeup under the HD lights. She spent whole paychecks on products that didn't work, then had the idea that if nothing worked for her, it didn't work for many others either. She also wanted ads with real women of every age, size and skin type, and went ahead despite having no money or industry connections.

• The QVC make-or-break moment

After three years of hundreds of nos, the company was selling only two or three orders a day and nearing bankruptcy. QVC, broadcast to 100 million homes, offered one 10-minute slot with a goal of over 6,000 units, on consignment. Twenty-two banks refused a loan before the 23rd, California Bank and Trust, said yes. Consultants urged flawless young models; Jamie used women of all ages and skin conditions, removed her own makeup on air, sweated through two pairs of Spanx, and sold out. Her husband's reaction: 'We're not going bankrupt.'

• The pool on her daughter's first birthday

At a hotel, Jamie was about to sit out swimming again, covered up on a lounge chair. She flipped her thinking by attaching more pain to regret, to what hiding had already cost her, than to being judged. She took off the cover-up, 'shook my cellulite with joy,' and got in, realizing that hiding was teaching her daughter she wasn't worthy of her own body either.

- **'I don't think women will buy makeup from someone who looks like you'**

  With IT Cosmetics already a big hit on QVC, a major private-equity investor passed at the final meeting, telling Jamie her body and weight were the problem. She felt a lifetime of body doubt flood back but also a gut certainty that he was wrong: 'this dude gave me a no, but God gave me a knowing.' Six years later, the day L'Oréal's $1.2 billion cash acquisition hit the Wall Street Journal homepage, he emailed: 'Congratulations… I was wrong.' She kept it classy.

- **The 'You're Not Crazy, You're Just First' poem**

  Jamie reads an excerpt of the only poem in her book Worthy, which brings Mel to tears. It celebrates being the first to launch the business, beat addiction, end a generational cycle and start healing.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Self-worth is your ceiling**

  Jamie's closing thesis: we don't rise to our goals but fall to what we believe we're worthy of. Without a sense of worth, people stay stuck, sabotage, or achieve everything and still feel empty. With it, a failure may shake your confidence but can't touch your worth, which makes you bolder.

- **Text your wins to a real friend**

  Mel and Jamie text each other victories, big and small. Find someone who is genuinely excited for you, and be that person for others.

- **Audit your labels this week**

  Write down labels like 'not a morning person,' 'bad at math' or 'too old,' check each one against the truth, and write a replacement you can believe.

4 Easy Nighttime Habits to Feel Energized & Sleep Better

Date: 2024-02-19 · Duration: 0:40:55
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K-VuxetScRE

KEYPOINTS

• You already have an evening routine, it just may be working against you

Mel's point is that the 5-to-9 counts as a routine whether you plan it or not: a glass of wine that becomes the bottle, four hours of scrolling, eating at 9, dishes left in the sink. While 9-to-5 drags, the evening disappears. Her test: does what you do at night help you relax, sleep and feel like the person you want to be?

• What you do at night decides how tomorrow morning goes

She describes the cycle she lived in for years: a wasted evening leads to midnight guilt and lying awake, then an alarm that feels instant, anxiety on waking, cold greasy dishwater, lost keys and lateness. 'Tomorrow is the new me' only works if you did last night's dishes. Otherwise the new you spends the morning cleaning up the old you's mess.

• Obvious isn't the same as done

Mel expects listeners to say they already know they scroll too much, drink too much and should go to bed earlier. Her reply is that common sense isn't so common, and knowing something doesn't mean you're doing it. She also notes the steps take almost no brainpower, which matters because by evening you've already used up your energy on work, school and the day's to-do list.

• A short, consistent routine helps you fall asleep, according to sleep researchers

She cites the American Academy of Sleep Medicine: even a 10-minute evening routine helps you fall asleep faster and stay asleep, because a steady rhythm works with your circadian rhythm and signals your body that sleep is coming. She also cites Harvard Medical School sleep scientist Dr. Rebecca Robbins, whose research links a consistent bedtime and wake time to better sleep and falling asleep faster.

• The foundation is picking a bedtime by working backward from an honest wake time

Mel used to think she could wake at 7 and fit in her bed, exercise, journaling, breakfast, dog walks and kids in 15 minutes. Her daughters call that 'girl math' and her husband Chris calls it 'Mel time.' Most people, she bets, need to wake 30 to 60 minutes earlier than they do. Her real wake time is 5:45 to 6:15.

• Bedtime means when you get into bed, not when you fall asleep

Count back eight hours from your wake time to get the time you need to be asleep (6 a.m. means 10 p.m.). Then subtract how long it takes you to drift off. Chris is asleep as his head hits the pillow, while Mel needs 5 to 25 minutes with a book, so her bedtime is 9:15 to 9:30.

• Step one: flush the day so the morning starts clean

Her blunt image is a toilet: you flush it so nobody walks into your mess, and you should do the same with the day. In about five minutes, empty the sink, load the dishwasher, take out the trash, wipe the counters, put other people's stuff in piles by the stairs or their door, turn off the lights and charge your computer. Because you're tired, good is good enough.

• Step two: prep tomorrow to cut decision fatigue

Another five minutes goes to setting yourself up: workout clothes out, leash by the door, a filled water bottle in front of the coffee maker, vitamins laid out, lunch packed, keys on the counter. Mel ties this to decision fatigue, where each decision makes the next one harder, and to habit research showing that a visible cue makes the habit more likely. You can do it half-asleep, even while texting.

• Step three: take five minutes for yourself before the TV or your phone gets them

Out of 1,440 minutes a day, she argues you deserve five at night before screens take them. Use them for a side hustle, a grant application or student-loan forms, or for nothing at all: tea, a book, skincare, quiet. Hers usually falls between 7:45 and 9:15. Those five minutes break the couch-and-scroll habit and often grow to 45 minutes of reading or yoga.

• Step four: put your phone to bed somewhere other than your bedside

Mel cites research that bright light suppresses melatonin: one study of kids found melatonin suppressed by 98% after bright light an hour before bed, and about 50% in adults, plus fragmented sleep. She says she can't be trusted with her phone, so it goes in the bathroom before she gets into bed. Notifications, she adds, are a separate problem on top of the light.

EXAMPLES

• Mel's old 7 p.m.-to-midnight routine

Dishes stacked and drowned in soap as if 'Scrubbing Bubbles' would clean them, email on the laptop on the couch, drinks, endless scrolling, no lunches packed, no gym bag, an hour clicking through thousands of TV options with nothing to watch. Then at 12:15 a.m. she opened her gratitude journal and wrote a to-do list instead.

• The 15 minutes a day she lost to keys

Mel says she used to burn about 15 minutes every morning hunting for her keys. Putting them on the counter the night before won back time at the part of the day when, she argues, time is scarcest.

• Workout clothes on a Boston hotel chair

The night before recording, brushing her teeth in pajamas, she laid her exercise clothes over a chair so that at 5:45 a.m. she could pull them on and go straight to the gym.

• The disappointing four-inch lanterns

A couple of weeks earlier she broke her own rule, scrolled in bed and one-click bought outdoor lanterns that looked amazing online. They arrived about four inches tall and looked nothing like the photos, which is why her phone now sleeps in the bathroom.

• The running bath as her 'take five'

While she clears up and preps for tomorrow, her bath is filling. Her five minutes is often lingering in it, reading or listening to an audiobook. She notes many listeners play the podcast at night, which she counts as taking time for themselves.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Do the bedtime math tonight**
  Write down the wake time you actually need with real runway, subtract eight hours, then subtract your usual time to fall asleep. Adjust over a few nights until you find a bedtime that works most nights.
- **Run the four steps in order**
  After dinner: clean up the mess, set up tomorrow, take five for yourself, then put your phone in another room before you get into bed. Mel suggests trying it for four days this week.
- **Set 'traps' for the habits you want**
  Put the cue where you'll bump into it: water bottle at the coffee maker, gym bag by the door, vitamins by your mug. That way the morning habit needs no memory or decision.

Signs You’re Dealing With a Narcissist (New Research From World-Leading Expert Dr. Ramani)

Guest: Dr. Ramani Durvasula
Date: 2024-02-15 · Duration: 1:26:52
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-4ff9NOPocA

KEYPOINTS

• Treat narcissism as a personality style, not a diagnosis you can hand out

Dr. Ramani argues the 'disorder' label muddies the conversation: only a clinician who has assessed someone can diagnose narcissistic personality disorder, and the people in question rarely see one. Calling it a maladaptive personality style lets you name the pattern without needing a diagnosis. She compares an ordinary personality to firm Jell-O with a little give, and a narcissistic one to cement.

• The core traits sit on top of chronic shame

She lists variable empathy, entitlement, grandiosity, arrogance, selfishness, a need for validation and admiration, a need for control, being driven by power and dominance, envy, and living in fantasy. All of it is armor around deep insecurity and a 'cauldron of shame.' That is why narcissistic people react so hard to criticism, frustration or disappointment: each one threatens the perfect self-image they have built.

• Their empathy is variable and transactional, not missing

Narcissistic people are not psychopaths. They learn that empathy wins connection and 'supply', so they switch it on when their star is rising and use it as a tactic, sometimes as a weapon. Her example: a spouse who is all support on Wednesday after a great day at work, then on Friday snaps 'why are you telling me your problems?' That flip-flop is the narcissistic relationship.

• Entitlement is what separates vanity from narcissism

She puts narcissism on a spectrum. At the mild end are the 'Instagram narcissists': selfies, look-at-my-dinner, annoying and emotionally shallow, but not necessarily harmful. She cites 2017 research on the phenomenology of narcissism that found entitlement is the one pillar present in every form. A vain person who still waits their turn and treats a server kindly is not, in her view, a narcissist. An entitled person needs to be more special than you.

• You can explain the behavior and still call it unacceptable

Her 'multiple truths' idea: he really did miss the promotion, and the way he's treating you is still not okay. She warns that psychology often slides from 'we can explain it' to 'so it's fine'. She also pushes back on couples therapy's assumption that both people share the blame. When one person uses the other as a 'pacifier and punching bag', she would give the target maybe 5% for being in the room.

• Two developmental paths: adversity and overindulgence

One path is early neglect, invalidation or abuse, though most children with that history do not become narcissistic. The second, drawn from Eddie Brummelman's group in Amsterdam, is being taught you are more special than other kids, or being the 'performing pony' who is loved for soccer or grades rather than for who they are. For parents, she says the heavy lifting runs from birth to about age 13.

• Social media fuels the vulnerable narcissist most

Citing Keith Campbell (University of Georgia), co-author of 'The Narcissism Epidemic', she says grandiose narcissism has stayed fairly stable, while vulnerable narcissism (victimhood, failure to launch, angry trolling) has 'gone off like a wildfire'. Social media is the match. It only ignites people who are already 'gasoline'.

• Shame drives the rage, and they aim it selectively

She describes rising shame as 'psychological diarrhea': an overwhelming urgency where rage or grandiosity is the bathroom they run to, echoing Kohut's view of shame and rage at the core. Yet they rarely scream in shareholder meetings. They pick 'low-value targets' they see as disposable, which shows they can control it.

• The DIMMER pattern turns down your light

Her acronym covers dismissive, invalidating, manipulative (including gaslighting), minimizing, entitled and rageful behavior. To survive the relationship you end up giving in and living in their service. She compares herself to a cup of water: she's fond of it while it holds what she needs, then throws it away. They hate abandonment, though, because it means losing control, and they punish people who leave.

• Real change in close relationships is very unlikely

Asked whether narcissists change, she says they may learn manners, punctuality or a little anger control with less important people, but she has not seen them become present, empathic and self-aware. They are less likely to start therapy and, she says, about 60% more likely to drop out of it. Change requires touching your own vulnerability, and that is exactly what the pattern defends against.

EXAMPLES

• The $1,500 Versace toddler

Checking into a hotel for her mom's 75th birthday, Mel watched a father yell at staff while the mother tapped on her phone and their three-year-old sat in a stroller in a Versace sweatsuit and Golden Goose glitter sneakers, scrolling a phone. Dr. Ramani said that modeled entitlement plus social media plus unattuned parents is 'the person who is going to love bomb and destroy someone's life in about 25 years.'

• 1 in 5, and worse in some industries

Studies of the clinical disorder show rates of roughly 1–6%. Pressed for a 'spitball' figure for the personality style, she guesses 20%, enough narcissism to cause problems in relationships. She expects it to be higher in big cities and much higher in finance, law, politics, media, athletics and celebrity.

• The client whose partner improved when he out-earned her

A successful woman's partner, a 'textbook malignant narcissist', cut her down and cheated constantly. When his career took

off and he made more money, he felt more secure in the power balance and 'behaved a little better'. She uses the story to show that every narcissistic relationship is asymmetric and built around power. Her line: 'You're in love, they're in power.'

• The client who stayed for the prenup

A former client ended therapy, saying 'you see the truth of my relationship and I'm not leaving', citing a restrictive prenup and the fear of a one-bedroom apartment. Years later the client emailed that nothing had changed and the marriage had damaged their child's mental health. About 50% of people stay in these relationships, and she says she doesn't judge them for it.

• Love bombing at the cocktail party and on the first date

Narcissists 'case the joint' like a burglar and rush over 'like heat-seeking missiles' when a famous person arrives. In dating, love bombing sounds like 'good morning my queen', soulmate talk and the 48-hour date. With vulnerable narcissists it can be pity-seeking that hooks rescuers, and parents can do it too, with pizza and Disneyland.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Use the 'would you accept this for Mary?' test

Borrowing from Kristin Neff's self-compassion work, she asks survivors who blame themselves whether they would sign off on the same treatment if it happened to a friend. When they say no, they work backward from there to calling it unacceptable.

• Ride out love bombing like a Maui vacation, then apply the rule of three

She says no one can make themselves walk away from something that feels that good. So enjoy the trip, but remember it's a vacation and you go home. Watch how they handle disappointment: a lost reservation, lost bags, a wait for a table. Her supervisor's rule was that the first time is an event, the second is a coincidence and the third is a pattern. Catch yourself making excuses like 'we did just have an overnight flight.'

• If it feels like too much, it is too much

She warns that romance-heavy cultures and curated dating profiles favor narcissists. A healthy relationship is with a whole, ordinary person, not a fairy tale. Expect second rounds of love bombing after you catch shady texts or disappearances. They are meant to steady the ship.

3 Simple Ways to Get the Love You Want

Date: 2024-02-12 · Duration: 0:53:44
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IE2w7DegTSg

KEYPOINTS

• Mel's most controversial line is 'I love you'

She ends every episode, newsletter and YouTube video with 'in case no one else tells you, I love you and I believe in you and your ability to create a better life.' Listeners write that they stay to the end just to hear it, and one woman said Mel is the only person in her adult life who has said it to her. Others loathe it. This solo episode explains why she says it and why she means it.

• The line comes from a principal's daily sign-off

In 2013, at one of Mel's first unpaid speaking events, she heard Linda Cliatt-Wayman address about 12,000 women at the Pennsylvania Convention Center. A former special education teacher, Wayman volunteered to lead Strawberry Mansion, a Philadelphia school considered among the most dangerous and failing in the state, after four principals in four years. She ended each day over the PA system: 'If nobody told you they loved you today, you remember I do, and I always will,' adding that she expected them back, in uniform, ready to learn.

• Love, in this sense, is believing in someone's potential

Wayman said her real secret was loving her students and believing in their possibilities unconditionally: 'When I look at them, I can only see what they can become.' Mel says that struck her 'like lightning' and became her definition: seeing somebody's struggles and still seeing the greatness in them.

• Mel defines love as showing people they matter

The dictionary calls love a feeling of affection; Mel calls it demonstrating that someone matters to you, echoing the Dalai Lama's definition as a wish that others be happy. Under that definition, it has nothing to do with sex or chemistry and can extend well beyond family, partners and pets.

• You can love people you don't like

Mel says she sometimes thinks families exist to teach us how to love people we don't like at the moment. You can show someone matters, by calling or hugging them, even when they're frustrating you.

• One committed adult changes outcomes

Mel cites Harvard's National Scientific Council on the Developing Child: every child who does well has had at least one stable, committed relationship with a supportive adult. She extends it to work, saying research shows the single biggest predictor of someone failing at or leaving a job is believing no one in power there believes in them.

• Hostility to being loved often traces to conditional love

Mel reads a newsletter reply from Trish, who said Mel doesn't know her and to stop 'spouting this crap,' then unsubscribed. Mel's response: love isn't transactional, so she still loves her. Her theory is that people who grew up getting attention only when a caregiver was in a good mood or they earned good grades learn that mattering must be earned and comes in limited supply.

• You don't need to know someone to believe in them

To a listener named John who said Mel doesn't even know he exists, Mel replies that everyone wants the same three things: to be seen, to be heard and to matter. Believing there's more to a person than their job, relationship status, bank account or weight doesn't require meeting them.

• To feel more love, give more of it

Mel's formula for anything you want more of is to be generous with it. She invokes the law of reciprocity: when someone holds the first set of double doors for you, you trip over yourself to hold the second. Being the first domino with 'I love that you did that' sets it in motion.

• Don't assume people know how you feel

Mel calls holding back appreciation 'stingy.' Her friend in his late 50s told his father he loved him for decades and first heard it back two weeks earlier, from a hospital bed. Now his dad says it constantly. If your family never says it, she suggests you may be the one meant to break the cycle.

EXAMPLES

• Strawberry Mansion's turnaround numbers

Wayman has turned around three low-performing schools. At one, Mel says, only 3% of students were proficient in math and 9% in reading before she arrived; by the time she was done, 94% of seniors were accepted to college.

• UPS Mike and the birch tree

In snowy Vermont, Mel's UPS driver Mike texts when he can't make it up the driveway, wraps the package in a garbage bag, leaves it behind a birch tree and offers to come back for it. Mel texts back 'I love you, Mike.' She also loves Paul, the always-smiling maintenance man at her Boston studio building.

• The coffee refill conversation

Eating alone at a hotel, Mel asked the server questions and learned he grew up in southern Illinois, dislikes Los Angeles, misses the four seasons, wants to study intellectual property law and just paid $1,800 for an LSAT prep class. She says both walked away feeling they mattered.

• Small acts Mel counts as love

The FedEx driver leaves two dog bones on the packages even when the dogs aren't there; a bus driver wears funny hats; a grocery worker stacks zucchini like art. Mel's point: tell them you love it.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Way one: do something on purpose to make someone feel they matter

Think of someone you haven't talked to, like an old neighbor, ex-sister-in-law or your dog's puppy class teacher, find a photo on your phone and text it with 'I love this because it reminds me of your laugh.' Mel cites Dr. Robert Waldinger of the Harvard

Study of Adult Development: people struggle in relationships because they worry about doing it right, but there's no wrong way to reach out.

- **Talk to strangers**

  Mel cites University of Chicago research finding people underpredict how happy a chat with a stranger on a bus or in a grocery line will make them and overestimate how awkward it will be.

- **Way two: listen**

  Asked how to improve any relationship, Dr. John Gottman said be a good listener. Mel says the Harvard study points to attention as the most basic form of love: put the phone away, look at the person and listen. Not getting a parent's attention is why many people didn't feel loved.

- **Way three: say it**

  Tell people directly, or send them this episode as a stand-in. Mel's request is that you be the one to say it first, at the grocery store, on the bus or to your sister, instead of waiting to hear it.

The 51% Rule (and 3 More Strategies to Think Like a Millionaire) with Steven Bartlett

Guest: Steven Bartlett
Date: 2024-02-08 · Duration: 1:03:07
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2tvDzicthMA

KEYPOINTS

• Use the 51% rule instead of waiting for certainty

Steven Bartlett recalls Barack Obama telling him, on stage in São Paulo, that he went ahead with the Osama bin Laden raid at roughly 50% certainty. Obama's advice was to get to about 51% on big decisions, decide with peace of mind and let it go, because 100% certainty only exists in hindsight. Mel names this the 51% rule for overthinkers and perfectionists. She stresses that overthinking and not deciding are decisions too, and says waiting for certainty is why she didn't start her podcast for years.

• Most decisions are reversible 'type two' doors

Bartlett cites Jeff Bezos's shareholder-letter distinction. Type one decisions are doors you can't walk back through, so take your time. Type two decisions can be undone if you're wrong, so make them as fast as possible. Bartlett says most of what we ruminate over is type two. Mel adds her daughter's line: 'Mom, it's not that deep.'

• Flip the risk equation: not deciding is the bigger risk

In marketing, Bartlett pitched the same ideas to a father and son running businesses on the same street. The father took six to nine months, waiting for sign-offs and arguing details. The son interrupted halfway through, called in his team and said 'do this now,' even without a contract. Over five years the son's company overtook the father's and sold. Bartlett's read: the father saw being wrong as the risk; the son saw not deciding as the risk.

• Make your own happiness the North Star

When a banker stopped Mel in an airport saying she'd love to teach kids, Bartlett argued that staying is the bigger risk. Spending another decade in banking for 'Sally and Jenny's opinion in the WhatsApp group' puts other people's views above your happiness. He cites palliative nurse Bronnie Ware's finding that the dying regret not living their own lives. He keeps sand timers all over his house as a reminder that his time is running out.

• Failure is feedback, and feedback is power

Bartlett's chain: failure is feedback, feedback is knowledge, knowledge is power, so failure is the power you're looking for. People stay 'imprisoned in their current misery' because they won't run the experiment. He says his companies win by out-failing competitors and even have a 'head of experimentation and failure' who tracks experiments weekly.

• Reason from first principles, not convention

Convention says couples share a bed. Bartlett's first principles: his girlfriend goes to bed around 9 p.m. and rises at 6, while he goes to bed at 1 or 2 a.m. and wakes around 8 or 9. He cites sleep scientist Matthew Walker, who he says links roughly 10–20% of relationship problems to sleep issues. Since he believes much of his restorative sleep falls between 6 and 9 a.m., they use a spare room on early mornings without insecurity.

• Most limits are circles we've accepted as real

Bartlett describes videos of an ant that walks in circles inside a pen line drawn around it. A spider that accidentally crosses the line can never be trapped by the pen again. He believes people operate at about '1% of their potential' because of social myths: you must go to university, quitting is for losers. 'When you push on most doors, there's nothing behind there.'

• Shrink the first step until it's almost embarrassing

Drawing on Nir Eyal's view that procrastination is avoiding psychological discomfort, Bartlett breaks big goals into pebbles rather than Mount Everest. At 14 he wet himself on stage giving a talk and ran out. He went back a few days later, shaking too hard to read his notes, and ran out again. He credits small steps like that for eventually speaking in an arena alongside Obama.

• Boundaries, even with family, can be the kind thing

Bartlett pays for his parents' food, holidays, health and dental bills, but won't fund his mother's businesses after watching her start about 25 that hurt the family. He kicked his best friend out of his spare room and fired another close friend, crying as he did it. Both, he says, are now hugely successful. Mel's point is that propping people up often spares you the discomfort of saying no and robs them of who they could become.

EXAMPLES

• 'Either a millionaire or in jail'

Bartlett moved from Botswana to an all-white area of Plymouth as a baby. His Nigerian mother had left school at about five and later had a gambling addiction, with drawers full of lottery tickets; she took his maths book to hunt for numbers. By 10 he was often home alone. At six or seven he searched classroom drawers for money, and a friend told him he'd be 'either a millionaire or in jail.' He sold cigarettes his mother brought back from Nigeria on the playground.

• 'My little Harry Potter'

With attendance at 30%, Bartlett was expelled. His head teacher reversed it, joking 'you're my little Harry Potter, I keep you under the stairs' because his schemes had made the school money. He was expelled again in the final week.

• The 7 p.m. post that rewired him

From 21, every day at 7 p.m. he wrote a 140-character quote or video about what happened that day. Reviewing his notes, he connected the trapped-bird feeling he got when a woman wanted commitment with watching his mother shout at his father. Mel corrects him: 'You learned the model of misery,' not love. He's now four years into a relationship and plans to propose.

• Instagram first, no business plan

Bartlett says he has never written a business plan. When he has an idea, he immediately creates an Instagram account with the business name, and his phone holds pages for businesses not yet launched. 'The train has left the station.'

OTHER RELEVANT

• Try his introspection habit

Throughout the day, note moments that trigger a feeling, like an argument or being cut off in traffic. At 6 or 7 p.m., distill one into a 280-character post on an account nobody needs to follow. He compares it to the Feynman technique: if you can explain it simply, you understand it. He calls it the most reliable way he knows to build self-awareness.

• Question the 'truths' you've accepted

Mel's prompts: Is it really true I'm too old to go back to school? That I'm not a morning person? That I'll never find love again? Then take one step outside the circle, such as Googling a teaching certificate or using evenings and weekends.

• Saying 'this isn't working' can itself be a type two decision

Mel argues that telling a partner 'I'm miserable' feels permanent but changes the relationship either way, and is often the only thing that will.

This One Study Will Change How You Think About Your Entire Life

Date: 2024-02-05 · Duration: 0:47:56
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ih3nIPvCjVI

KEYPOINTS

• The people you remember are the ones who made you feel something

Mel opens with a quiz. Can you name the last five Grammy artists of the year, or the last five Olympic women's gymnastics champions? Most people can't. But you can name your five favorite coworkers, the five people you laugh hardest with, and the friends you miss. Her point: we remember people for how they made us feel, and that's where time matters.

• The data: who Americans spend time with across a lifetime

Mel walks through charts based on about ten years of American Time Use Survey data on how social time changes with age. Her caveat: it's U.S. data and shows averages. Her intention is to 'wake you up' to how time passes, so you choose more deliberately who and what gets it. Averages describe people who drift, she says, and you don't have to be average.

• 1. Time with parents and siblings drops sharply after 18

From birth to 18 is when you spend the most time with family. After 18 it falls steeply until about 26, then flattens for life, typically at under an hour a day unless you live multigenerationally or work in a family business. Family often gets defaulted to holidays: Mel and Chris lived a mile from his brother outside Boston and rarely saw him, and her 86-year-old mother-in-law lives three miles away, yet she sees her about every two weeks.

• Do the math on the time you have left

Mel's father, Bob, turns 80 this year, and she sees him and her mom in Michigan three or four times a year. If he lives ten more years, that's about 30 weekends. Her takeaways: decide what kind of daughter, son, brother or sister you want to be. Always have the next visit booked. Check in regularly. She calls her parents three times a week and finds they soften and feel less forgotten.

• 2. From 20 to 60 you spend the most time with coworkers

For about 40 years, coworkers are the people you see most, so choose work by the people, not just the pay. Mel cites the 'bad apple' effect, where one festering person can bring down a team, and Gallup data that a top reason people quit is their boss. Her advice: don't stay in a job you hate with people you hate. If you can't leave yet, build relationships in other departments while you look, and be the 'ripe apple' yourself.

• 3. Friendship time declines from 21 and drops off at 29

You see friends daily through school. Then moves, jobs, graduate school and new relationships pull people apart, and after about 29 time with friends falls to a low plateau. Friends become the group you see least. Mel says her daughters, 25 and 23, describe friends 'evaporating.' She links this pattern to the loneliness epidemic: people assume they're the problem when it's the drift of time.

• The 'two Ps' of adult friendship

Patterns: overlapping routines like work, a kids' sports team, a pickleball class or the same coffee shop create friendships naturally. Prioritize: nothing happens unless you make the plan, whether a dinner, a museum painting class, or one trip a year with long-distance friends. When she feels lonely, Mel either changes her patterns to bump into people or prioritizes reaching out.

• 4. Your partner is the person you'll spend the most time with

From around 29, time with a partner rises every year until death. After 60 it's who you'll spend most of your days with. Don't settle because friends are marrying or you feel late. Look past the nice car, fake tan, popular friends and dating profile, and ask whether you'd want to be alone with this person every day at 60. Focus on how they make you feel. Her best relationship advice: choose life with yourself first, so you're proud of who you are and drawn to character.

• 5. Time alone rises from 40, and after 70 it's most of the day

Mel normalizes this. Being alone isn't the same as being lonely: when you're present making tea, reading or walking, you're with yourself. She enjoys solitary drives, lunches and dog walks. The takeaway is to learn to enjoy your own company: take yourself to yoga, out to lunch or for a manicure, and be kind to yourself.

• 6. Time with your kids peaks in your 30s and 40s and flattens around 52

Time with kids drops sharply as they reach high school, and after they turn 18 it settles at a level similar to the time adults spend with their own parents. Mel, 55, admits she beat herself up for years of work travel and missed milestones. But she refuses to become the statistic. The glue, she says, echoing many of her expert guests, is that kids feel seen, safe and supported. Grown kids need you differently: as someone they trust to call, laugh with and think out loud with.

EXAMPLES

• Two milestone trips

Over the holidays Mel's family went on two grandparent trips. For her mother-in-law Judy's 85th, three sons, nine cousins and partners shared two sailboats, and it was the first time all 18 had gathered in ten years. Right after, they celebrated her mom's 75th with her whole family. Getting everyone together after 18 is so hard that those moments feel especially happy.

• Her brother on a different calendar

Her brother Derek lives in Chicago with twin high-school freshmen in competitive sports, and their school breaks never line up with her family's. Without a plan, they simply don't see each other.

• Mel's half-joking plan

She plans to bring her kids into her business so they become coworkers, the group you see most between 20 and 60, to show the data can work for you.

• Leaving early for a ski race

Mel ends the episode to make her son Oakley's ski race. He's 18 and leaving for college in the fall. 'Nobody stands up at a funeral and says, boy, I wish they would have worked more hours.'

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Book the next visit**
  Estimate how many visits you have left with a parent or sibling, then put the next date on the calendar before this one ends.
- **Apologize, even for old things**
  Mel says it's never too late to apologize to kids, parents or siblings, and that doing so strengthens rather than weakens the relationship.
- **Send it as an invitation**
  Mel suggests forwarding the episode to a sibling, parent, old coworker or lost-touch friend as a way to say 'I miss you, let's get together.'

Want to Be Happier Right Now? Don’t Make This Mistake (New Surprising Science)

Guest: Dr. Judith Joseph
Date: 2024-02-01 · Duration: 1:08:53
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mdb3anMJRX8

KEYPOINTS

• Stop chasing 'happy' as a state; aim to be happier through points of joy

Psychiatrist Dr. Judith Joseph says the picture-perfect idea of happiness is unattainable, which is why so many people feel they can never reach it. In her framing, happiness is not a destination but the accumulation of small moments of joy across a day. Shifting from 'I need to be happy today' to 'there are points of joy available today' makes the goal reachable, and the moments add up to feeling happier overall.

• Anhedonia is the clinical name for feeling 'meh', 'blah' or numb

Joseph uses the old medical term anhedonia (an = lack of, hedon = pleasure) for the flat, autopilot state many high-functioning people describe as 'I'm okay' when they actually feel nothing. She says most people experience it at some point, but not usually in long stretches. French psychologist Théodule Ribot first described it in the 1800s, linking it with depression, substance use and schizophrenia; Joseph argues it is now showing up far more broadly.

• Naming a feeling lowers stress (affect labeling)

Preschools hang face charts labeling happy, sad, angry and hurt because children need to name feelings to act on them. Joseph says adults stop being trained to do this. If you cannot identify how you feel, you cannot trace it back to the thought or experience that caused it. Knowing what something is makes it less frightening.

• A biopsychosocial lens explains the rise in numbness

Bio: possible effects of the virus on the brain (she cites a figure that about 70% of people were infected), genetics, and diet-driven inflammation from nutritional psychiatry research. Psycho: unprocessed trauma, worsened by 'just world' thinking that blames victims. Social: mixed messages about whether people were safe, isolation, and connection moving online, with CDC reports showing children's mental health declining.

• We 'do, do, do' instead of 'feel, feel, feel', and excess soothing replaces processing

Joseph describes society soothing itself with excess: rising binge drinking in previously protected groups, unhealthy online sexual habits, record online shopping and constant social media. They distract but never satisfy, because the trauma never gets processed. Her image is her daughter hit by wave after wave at the beach without catching her breath: the pandemic, police brutality, political unrest, wars.

• Doctors often miss it because high-functioning people aren't 'impaired'

Clinicians typically code a problem only when it causes impairment. If you are working, caring for your family and nobody is complaining, a vague 'nothing gives me pleasure' tends to get a 'see you next year.' Joseph's focus is on exactly these people who are getting it done and look successful from the outside but carry a low ache inside.

• Memory gaps and constant work can be trauma responses

Many patients, and even Joseph's own lab team, describe 2020 as a blur. She says forgetting large stretches is a recognized trauma response, so you shouldn't blame yourself for it. Numbing is also part of fight, flight or freeze. Many entrepreneurs remain in fight-or-flight, and work that came home 'temporarily' never left.

• Anhedonia, and joy, are contagious

Anxious leadership passes fear down an organization, rewarding people for working more and feeling less. The reverse is also true: when she became more joyful, her lab and her daughter did too.

• Shift the behavior first and the feelings follow

She draws on cognitive behavioral therapy's thought-feeling-behavior triangle. Therapy classically works on thoughts first, but changing a behavior even when you don't feel like it pushes the whole system the other way. She says the effect starts with the first point of joy you savor, and the benefit comes from adding those points up consistently. Not feeling at all is a form of self-gaslighting; validating how you actually feel is where repair begins, even if sadness or tears come first.

• Self-care is basic needs, not elaborate treats (HALTS)

Joseph extends the familiar HALT check (hungry, angry, lonely, tired) with an S for stuck, her everyday word for anhedonia. A rushed manicure, she notes, can be stressful rather than restorative. For the body, she suggests mood-supportive foods such as green vegetables, omega-3-rich fish, antioxidant berries and dark chocolate, while acknowledging you can't control genetics or some disease states.

EXAMPLES

• Mel takes the anhedonia quiz live and scores 'very high'

Joseph runs Mel through her agree/disagree scale, which she modernized from the British SHAPS (Snaith-Hamilton) scale because 'did you enjoy your cup of tea this morning' doesn't fit everyone. Mel agrees she makes 'when I get X I'll be happy' statements, feels restless resting, eats standing up, scrolls while watching TV, struggles with praise and vacations, and can't enjoy her own work because it never feels good enough.

• Mel's candid admissions about burnout

She says her sex life with Chris has taken a hit since the pandemic, socializing now drains her, and a recent family vacation left her more tired. She traces it partly to her talk show being canceled when COVID hit CBS Broadcast Center, with a payroll still to make.

• The one-minute glass-of-water exercise

Joseph demonstrates how she starts her mornings. She notices the clear water and her pink nail polish, feels the cool, hard glass, listens to her nails tap it, notes the fresh rather than mineral taste, and follows it down her throat. Doing one minute for each step of the 5-4-3-2-1 grounding method (five things you see, four you feel, three you hear, two you smell, one you taste)

adds up to 15 minutes. Start smaller if that's too much.

- **'Simmering' as a low-pressure point of joy in intimacy**

  A term from couples counseling: instead of full-on sex, a small gesture such as gently rubbing the small of a partner's back creates a little spark of excitement. She suggests the same idea with pets: touch them more.

- **Joseph's own path and burnout**

  She switched from anesthesiology to psychiatry, which she had resisted as the child of Caribbean-American parents expected to be 'a real doctor.' She later built a lab and became a single mother, and had anhedonia herself. Her lessons: never say never, no is not negative, new can be good, normal is not real.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Pick one quiz item and enjoy it on purpose today**

  Tomorrow is not promised, so ask what you want now rather than down the road. Choose a single simple pleasure, such as reading, a bath, music or savoring coffee, and fully experience it. Joseph suggests treating it as an experiment: compare one savored minute of lunch, noticing the mushrooms, corn and chipotle sauce, with five minutes of shoveling food in before a meeting.

- **Five device-free minutes with your child**

  For a single parent with no spare time, Joseph says the data show that even five consistent minutes a day of one-on-one play where the child leads and you simply listen can sometimes be enough to repair a relationship.

- **Validate what happened to you**

  Say plainly, 'I went through this; something happened to me; it wasn't my fault.' Joseph says this kind of validation is the psychological step everyone can take. People with anxiety, ADHD or other conditions should also get support for those.

- **Push back on martyr culture in small ways**

  Joseph sees anhedonia bred in pre-med tracks, performance careers such as acting, and teaching, where self-sacrifice gets rewarded. Her suggestion to a teacher: take a real lunch break instead of grading through it, just once a week. The world will not fall apart.

2 Ways to Believe in Yourself & Achieve Cool Things

Date: 2024-01-29 · Duration: 0:54:35
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JBtK4Hw9Tvk

KEYPOINTS

• Niecy Nash-Betts won on her fifth try

The episode is built around the actor's viral Emmy acceptance speech. She was 53, had been nominated for a Primetime Emmy five times and had lost four, and finally won Outstanding Supporting Actress for Dahmer. Mel asks listeners to compare it with their own losing streaks, such as four breakups, four rejected house offers, four medications that didn't work, or four promotions that went to someone else.

• Expect worthwhile work to gut you

Mel's first takeaway comes from Nash-Betts thanking her partner 'who picked me up when I was gutted from this work.' Getting in shape, managing your health, writing a book or going back to school will include days that flatten you. If you expect that going in, a hard day doesn't derail you, because you saw it coming.

• Self-esteem means thanking yourself out loud

Mel defines self-esteem as how you value and perceive yourself. Nash-Betts said, 'I want to thank me for believing in me and doing what they said I could not do,' and then, 'Go on, girl, with your bad self.' Mel notes how rarely anyone credits themselves, and that we're quick to give all the credit away.

• 'Nobody has to believe it but you'

Asked backstage why she thanked herself, Nash-Betts said she's the only one who knows what it cost: crying over roles she couldn't get, going through a divorce on camera, still showing up for her children. She added, 'It's not called them esteem or us esteem, it's called self-esteem.' Mel's point is that only you know the internal battle behind your outward smile.

• Speaking your truth unlocks power

Nash-Betts dedicated the award to Black and brown women who've gone unheard yet over-policed, naming Glenda Cleveland, Sandra Bland and Breonna Taylor, and said an artist's job is to speak truth to power. Mel argues everyone has to speak their own truth, and that thanking yourself for the battles you fight is one way to do it.

• Action comes before belief

You can't think your way into self-belief. You act as if you believe: start the walk before you feel motivated, quit drinking before you want to, apply for the job or school before you're sure you'll get in. Every day there will be at least one moment of self-doubt or friction to push through.

• Goggins: self-doubt is cured one day at a time

Listening on the treadmill to David Goggins in an interview with Andrew Huberman, Mel heard him compare self-doubt to alcoholism: there's a cure, but it only works one day at a time, and the cure is your actions. His line: 'There's no hacks, bro. It's you against you.'

• 'You against you' means fighting a past version of yourself

Mel first took it to mean today's mood against today's goals, but she now reads it as battling an old self who still lives inside you. Goggins, in his own words, is fighting the 300-pound 'lazy' man he used to be; his profanity online is aimed at himself. Identify which past version of you is chirping self-doubt, and you know who you're fighting.

• Outwork the old you, every day

Mel's secret is to name that version and outwork it: get up with 5-4-3-2-1, go to the gym when you don't feel like it, keep pushing past insecurity. It's never one and done; the old self will show up again at the next launch or the next risk. Blaming other people's judgment hides the real obstacle.

EXAMPLES

• Oakley's DNF was 'a win for me'

Mel's son Oakley was elected captain of his Vermont high school ski team despite being, by the family's joke, its worst skier, so he races last on a course already carved into ice. After a regional race he texted the family chat that he got a DNF (did not finish), but he had skied hard and looked pretty good on video, so 'that's a win for me.' Mel says he understands he's competing only against himself.

• Mel's own acceptance speech

Mel thanks herself for living with 40 years of toxic habits (lying, cheating, people-pleasing, jealousy, insecurity and self-hatred nobody saw), for getting sick of it, for dragging herself out of bed through unemployment, bills and hating her husband, for getting into therapy that nobody told her to get or paid for, and for moving to Vermont for her family, which 'sucked' for about two years.

• Kendall vs. her sophomore self

Mel's daughter Kendall, a singer-songwriter, spent months on her single 'Pastime' but hesitated to promote it. Asked which version of her was holding her back, she immediately named her college-sophomore self: insecure, chasing the wrong friend group, paralyzed by what others thought. Once she named it, she started posting, and Mel says it's working.

• Mel's fourth-grade self

Mel shares that on a ski trip in fourth grade she woke up with an older kid on top of her. At nine, she believed she had done something wrong and would get in trouble if she told. Mel says she still wakes up most mornings feeling anxious and guilty, worried about upsetting people, and that this is the version of herself she battles with 5-4-3-2-1 and 'let them.'

• Goggins before the SEALs

Mel recounts that Goggins was a 300-pound exterminator in Indiana who had survived childhood abuse, struggled with learning disabilities and was afraid of water. He lost the weight on a tight deadline, passed the written test, and failed BUD/S training twice before passing on his third attempt.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Try your own Lifetime Achievement speech**
  Mel asks you to imagine receiving a Lifetime Achievement Award and thanking yourself for what you got through that nobody knows about, the progress you're making unseen, your healing work, time for hobbies and friends, and choosing to listen instead of zoning out.
- **Ask 'which version of me is holding me back?'**
  Use it before walking back into a gym, applying for a job, or promoting your business online. Mel says listeners who are real estate agents, trainers and coaches often fear what friends will think, and that the fear is the old self talking.
- **Women carry an invisible load**
  Mel notes that many women juggle kids, dogs, aging parents, groceries and work while keeping a smile on, which is one more reason to credit yourself.

The Truth About ADHD in Adults: Harvard’s Dr. Chris Palmer Explains the Research

Guest: Dr. Chris Palmer
Date: 2024-01-25 · Duration: 1:06:51
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XM5qZXqTQ3s

KEYPOINTS

• How ADHD is diagnosed
Dr. Palmer, a psychiatrist who has spent almost 30 years at Harvard's McLean Hospital, explains that symptoms must begin before age 12, even if nobody noticed them then, and must last at least six months. They fall into two groups: inattention, and hyperactivity or impulsivity.

• Girls are more often missed
Hyperactive, impulsive kids, more often boys, are obvious: blurting out answers, fidgeting, treated as discipline problems, so they get diagnosed. The primarily inattentive type, which tends to be more common in girls, shows up as trouble focusing on tests or remembering what was just read. These kids have to work harder and are often wrongly seen as 'not so bright.'

• It's a disorder on paper, but can also be an adaptive trait
ADHD is listed in the DSM-5, but Palmer says it can also be seen as neurodiversity. Explorers, innovators and energetic, motivated people are essential to a tribe's survival. The problem comes when you put them in a classroom and ask them to sit still and read for five hours.

• Underactive 'conductor' regions in the brain
Regions for focus and concentration, especially the frontal lobes and the striatum, tend to be underactive. There's no brain scan that can diagnose ADHD, and presentations vary widely. Palmer says the over- and underactivity seen on scans is really about brain metabolism: blood flow that brings food and oxygen so cells can make energy.

• Comorbidity is the norm
About 50% of Americans with one DSM diagnosis have more than one, and people who seek treatment average three to four. ADHD often comes with dyslexia, anxiety, depression or bipolar disorder. Among autistic people, about 50% have ADHD and many have seizures, depression or anxiety.

• Stimulants are a metabolic intervention
Medications like Adderall and Concerta raise dopamine, which boosts metabolism in the underactive conductor regions. Palmer isn't against them: if a stimulant works for you, keep taking it. But understanding them this way opens other options, which matters because some people crash in the evening, sleep poorly or lose their appetite, and all of that further disrupts brain metabolism.

• Try lifestyle changes before or alongside medication
Therapy, behavioural interventions, cognitive behavioural therapy and medication all stay on the table. Before reaching for pills, Palmer would do a common-sense check: is the person eating mostly processed food, getting enough vitamins, minerals and protein, sleeping, and how much screen time are they getting? Mel notes she's never had a clinician ask first what she eats or how much she exercises.

• A two-week elimination diet to test for food sensitivities
Palmer points to growing research on the two-way gut-brain connection. For example, gluten in a sensitive person can inflame the gut and affect the brain, which may show up as ADHD symptoms, anxiety or low mood. Cut common culprits like gluten, dairy, soy, sugar and artificial dyes and sweeteners (a Whole30-style plan covers many) for about two weeks. If you improve dramatically, add foods back one at a time to find the least restrictive diet that works.

• Or simply eat more protein, fewer carbs and more whole food for a month
Mel's summary: 'chicken cutlets, not chicken nuggets.' Give it at least a month, and if it makes no difference, stop. Palmer says he isn't asking for sacrifices with no clear return.

• Build muscle, do zone 2 cardio, cut substances
More muscle means better metabolic health, and a little tone goes a long way. Zone 2 is 30 to 60 minutes at a pace where you can still talk: hiking, cycling, swimming. Reduce alcohol, marijuana, smoking and vaping. Palmer also flags psychiatric drugs that cause weight gain as potentially working against you long term.

EXAMPLES

• Mel's diagnosis at 47
Mel learned she had ADHD, dyslexia and dysgraphia at 47, after her son Oakley was assessed in fourth grade, labelled a problem kid who, it turned out, couldn't read. She had been treated for anxiety for 25 years and now wonders whether the inability to focus was the core issue.

• Oakley and medication
Oakley was an extremely picky eater who lived on chicken nuggets and played lots of video games. On Vyvanse he 'turned into the Hulk.' On Adderall he dropped off a cliff at the end of the day, and Mel saw 'the light going out' in her 12-year-old. He refused to keep taking medication. He hasn't taken any since 13, and after changing his diet and becoming more active, Mel says it's as if his whole brain changed.

• Exercise works like Adderall for Mel
After an intense workout, Mel can hyperfocus for about 90 minutes. She also skipped her medication on the morning of the interview because studio adrenaline keeps her focused. Palmer notes both stimulants and exercise act on brain metabolism.

• 'Don't medicate away your success'
When Palmer asked whether she really wanted to change, Mel admitted she sometimes uses ADHD as an excuse. Palmer said the traits teachers scolded may be what fuelled her success, and he'd hate to see someone 'medicate away' those

strengths. Medication and lifestyle work are for when symptoms clearly interfere with life.

- **One lifestyle plan, many conditions**

  For a patient with obesity, type 2 diabetes, polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS), fatty liver, depression and ADHD, Palmer says a single plan covering diet, exercise, sleep, stress and quitting smoking can address them all. He insists her brain improving is biological, not 'just psychological.'

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Tell kids the problem isn't them**

  Palmer says children told they're troublemakers internalise being 'the problem.' A better message: 'Your brain metabolism isn't working right, it's not your fault, and we can address this.'

- **Limits of the approach**

  Palmer says diet won't cure all ADHD, and core differences in social skills on the autism spectrum likely won't change, though other symptoms might, especially with early intervention. People with complex conditions such as chronic infection may need more sophisticated treatment.

- **Talk to your doctor first**

  Both Mel and Palmer stress that you should consult a doctor before changing diet, medication or exercise, especially for a child.

- **Use a dry month as an experiment**

  If cutting alcohol for a month leaves you sleeping better and more focused, Palmer sees that as metabolism at work, and as evidence worth acting on.

Reset Your Mental Health: The Diet & Nutrition Protocol From a Renowned Harvard MD

Guest: Dr. Chris Palmer
Date: 2024-01-22 · Duration: 1:29:51
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-xg5-HF4ehU

KEYPOINTS

• Mental health treatments work, but fail far too many people

Dr. Chris Palmer, a Harvard Medical School psychiatrist who has spent almost 30 years at McLean Hospital, is careful to say that current treatments save millions of lives. His concern is the people who take their medication year after year without getting better. He argues that research from the last 20 years undercuts the message that serious mental illness is a lifelong sentence that can only be managed.

• Brain energy theory: mental disorders are metabolic disorders of the brain

Neurotransmitters, hormones, genetics, stress, trauma, loneliness and addiction all play a role in mental illness, but he says no one had tied them together. His claim is that people with brain disorders have a metabolic problem affecting the brain, which is why their brains either do something they shouldn't or fail to do something they should. Mel and Palmer both acknowledge that many in the field consider the theory controversial.

• Metabolism is more than burning calories

He defines metabolism as turning food, oxygen and nutrients into energy and building blocks for cells. It shapes how every cell develops and functions, and whether it lives or dies. His analogy is city traffic: many factors matter, but the drivers determine whether it flows. In metabolism, the 'drivers' are the mitochondria.

• Mitochondria respond to lifestyle and to stress

Mitochondria help regulate neurotransmitters like serotonin and dopamine and switch inflammation on and off. They are affected by diet, exercise, sleep, hormones and substances such as cigarettes, alcohol and marijuana, and also by psychological and social stressors. That's why he believes lifestyle can reach the root of the problem.

• Mental illness carries a heavy physical cost

Across all psychiatric diagnoses combined, he says men lose about 10 years of life and women about seven, roughly 15% of their lifespan. Heart attacks are the leading cause of death, and dementia risk is higher too. He argues the mental health field has wrongly treated these conditions as 'not our problem.'

• Rising metabolic disease and rising mental illness aren't a coincidence

He cites about 50% of US adults having prediabetes or diabetes, alongside 1 in 5 Americans having a mental illness in a given year and 1 in 2 over a lifetime. He calls the brain an organ like the heart. Whatever you blame, whether diet, inactivity, social media or environmental toxins, those factors hit the brain at the same time they affect weight and blood sugar.

• The ketogenic diet is a medical therapy, not just a fad

He notes it was developed over 100 years ago by a physician to stop seizures. He says randomized trials and meta-analyses now support it for treatment-resistant epilepsy, sometimes working where drugs and even brain surgery failed. He says it changes neurotransmitters and gene expression, lowers inflammation and improves mitochondrial function. Epilepsy patients often need it for only two to five years.

• Keto isn't required for everyone

Some people do 'spectacularly well' just by cutting junk food, processed foods or added sugar, or by eating Paleo, Whole30, or a vegetarian or vegan whole-food diet. For mental health, keto is usually not lifelong. People often stay on it for one to five years and may then add back complex carbohydrates like whole grains or potatoes.

• Expect keto flu, then look for an antidepressant effect

A well-formulated version may need extra sodium, potassium and magnesium. The first week or two can be rough, with weakness, hunger, irritability and dizziness, while the body shifts toward burning fat. After that, many people notice they feel lighter and have more energy, clearer thinking and easier mornings. Weightlifters may see a strength dip for about two months before it returns.

• Never make these changes, especially to medication, on your own

Both Mel and Palmer repeat that any diet or lifestyle change should be made with your own doctor. Tapering medication is a 'rocky road' where things can get worse before they improve. He also allows that some people have rare genetic conditions, hormone imbalances or chronic infections that lifestyle alone won't fix.

EXAMPLES

• A childhood of OCD and his mother's psychosis

He had undiagnosed OCD as a child and was bullied, at one point covering his mouth because he believed the air was contaminated. When he was 12, his mother developed psychotic depression and lost custody of all eight children, her money and the family pharmacy. He moved in with her and started high school while living in a homeless shelter. Her medications left her looking drugged and still ill, and he says he assumed he would be dead before 20.

• Professors told him psychiatry would waste his talent

He was a top medical student. At least two professors told him psychiatry just 'throws pills at people that don't really work.' That infuriated him and helped push him into the field.

• His own metabolic syndrome, reversed in three months

In his 20s at McLean, he had high blood pressure, prediabetes and bad lipids despite eating under 5–10 grams of fat a day and exercising. Facing three daily pills, he skeptically tried Atkins. Within three months his metabolic syndrome was gone, and his mood, energy, sleep and concentration were the best of his life.

• The schizoaffective patient who lost 160 pounds

An eight-year patient with daily hallucinations and paranoid delusions had tried 17 medications, gained over 100 pounds and weighed 340. He tried keto to lose weight. Within two weeks he was smiling and talking more. At about two months the voices began fading, and he concluded the conspiracy wasn't real. His father and psychologist confirmed the change. Nearly seven years later he has kept off 160 pounds, moved out, earned a certificate, performed improv and teaches karate. Palmer stresses he is not cured and still takes reduced medication.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **His starting plan for mild-to-moderate cases**

  He offers it only for people who aren't in danger, suicidal or psychotic. First, try a ketogenic diet for three months. A typical day might be eggs with extra butter and bacon, then protein like steak, chicken or salmon with low-carb vegetables dressed in olive oil, plus nuts and avocado.

- **Move a bit more, by any route**

  If you're doing nothing, one weekly resistance session hitting the major muscle groups to failure is 'more than enough.' So is a 10-minute walk after dinner, away from screens.

- **Sleep until getting up isn't torture**

  Aim for at least seven to eight hours. If you're hitting snooze and dragging yourself out of bed, go to bed earlier.

- **Ninety days off alcohol, weed and nicotine**

  He compares it to an athlete in training: no alcohol, marijuana, CBD, smoking or vaping for three months. For people who can't do it all at once, he starts with diet, because early mood gains give them the energy to add the rest. Some patients later joke that he 'tricked' them, because they feel too good to go back.

Don’t Quit: The Reminder You Need to Hear When You Feel Unmotivated

Date: 2024-01-18 · Duration: 0:39:13
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oUKpLEN3E1Q

KEYPOINTS

• 'Quitter's Day' falls on day 19 of a new routine

Mel cites Strava, the fitness-tracking app, which analyzed more than 800 million logged activities and found that people most often abandon a new resolution on day 19. She calls it Quitter's Day. If you know where the pothole is, you can steer around it. The pattern applies to any fresh start, whether a Monday, a new quarter or a school year, not only January 1.

• Week three is hard because the novelty has worn off and the work is real

Weeks one and two of dry January, Whole30, the gym or the Peloton feel exciting. By week three it's a grind. Mel explains that building new neuroplasticity and overriding old habits takes a lot of activation energy. Once the shine fades, she even starts rebelling against herself and gets snippy with Chris about the after-dinner walk she agreed to.

• Results lag behind effort

Another reason people quit around now is that they don't see results yet. Mel jokes that she thought cutting gluten would make her 'menopause middle' disappear by now. Expecting quick visible change sets you up to decide it isn't working.

• Vacation resolutions collide with real life

Changes that felt easy on holiday, like a daily hotel smoothie or a walk in warm weather, get hard when you're back at work or school. The new you is trying to live inside your old life. Your home, job and schedule didn't change; only your intentions did. That mismatch is what makes it feel like so much work.

• Missing a day doesn't erase your progress

Mel argues that breaking a streak doesn't wipe out what you've built. Neurologically and physically, your body doesn't forget a few weeks of weight training or not drinking in a day or two. 'You did not fall off the wagon; you hit a bump.' Her personal rule for month-long challenges: if she misses a day, she adds a day at the end instead of quitting.

• Reconnect with your 'why' when you're dragging

In the tired moment, ask why you wanted this change: why a month without alcohol, why resistance training, why get serious about money, why heal. Mel cites University of Oregon research that she says supports knowing what you want and why. Knowing your reason makes Quitter's Day irrelevant.

• Your life is a melting ice cube, so stop waiting for someday

Many people move the same dream, such as a book, a business, a move or healing, from one year's list to the next. Mel insists you'll never feel ready or worthy before you start acting; the feeling comes from the action. Time passes whether you begin or not, and 'today is that someday.'

• Where you put your time and energy defines your life

Mel reduces habit advice to one idea: point your daily time and energy at what you want, not just at maintaining what you have. That includes reassessing relationships that drain you without giving anything back. Even 5, 10 or 15 minutes a day counts. Simply working on something that matters to you, she says, brings meaning and joy because it validates something deep inside.

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

To a listener who wants to become a surgeon but finds the path complicated, Mel says it looks overwhelming only if you stare at the end result. Ask each day how you can put a little time and energy toward it. With dreams you've never pursued, you aren't afraid, unworthy or a fraud. You're simply new.

• Confidence is forged in failure, not in winning

Mel argues that winning tends to build bravado, while real confidence comes from surviving setbacks. Her drive to keep reinventing herself at 54 comes from not wanting regrets on her deathbed. That means being willing to take risks, look stupid and mess up, because each failure has equipped her with skills for something better.

EXAMPLES

• The back of the marathon pack

Mel urges everyone to watch a marathon finish. Elite runners blur past early, but her favorite part comes five to five and a half hours in, when ordinary people walk, limp, crawl or wheel across the line. Some wear shirts dedicated to loved ones; blind runners are guided by partners. It isn't about time but about the spirit of putting one foot in front of the other.

• The friend who's 'technically' doing dry January

When a friend declares a wedding weekend an exception, Mel's verdict is that it isn't dry January, just normal drinking. She uses the example to show how others' wavering can tempt you to quit too, and why you may need encouragement from someone who truly backs your why.

• Mel's failures that led somewhere

A decade earlier she was $800,000 in debt, unemployed and drinking her way through problems, a period that produced the 5 Second Rule. Her CBS daytime talk show, a long-held dream, was canceled, which eventually led to the podcast she calls her favorite work ever.

• Driving away from the family home

After selling the house outside Boston where they lived for 26 years and raised their kids, Mel watched it disappear in the rearview mirror for the last time. She uses the moment as a reminder that you will look back on today, too, and wish you had started.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Put day 19 on your calendar

Count forward from whenever you started and mark day 19. Plan a little extra support or a reminder of your why for that week,

and remember the rule: miss a day, add a day.

- **Be your own cheerleader for the long haul**

  Mel offers herself as the person cheering on the sidelines, but she stresses that life is a marathon, not a sprint, so you have to learn to believe in yourself too. Keep your eyes on the windshield, not the rearview mirror.

- **Start with the minutes you actually have**

  Single parents, caregivers and people underwater with bills may have only 5 to 15 minutes a day. Mel's ask is to aim those minutes at the dream you keep postponing and let the progress compound.

The Secret to Success & Happiness Nobody Talks About

Date: 2024-01-15 · Duration: 0:51:21
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RYcQIUw5f2E

KEYPOINTS

• The biggest barrier to Mel's happiness was Mel

After three years of therapy, research and honest self-observation, Mel concluded that she had been actively blocking her own happiness. People saw her as positive, but her baseline was feeling agitated, frustrated or disappointed. She frames this episode as a deeper look at what changed for her, not a list of quick happiness hacks, though she says hacks do help.

• Happiness here means being content, present and okay with yourself

Mel isn't talking about a burst of positivity. She means a steady, supportive, optimistic baseline you can reach no matter what's happening around you. Her mistake was looking outside herself, thinking she'd be happy once the bills were paid, once she was in love, once she got into the school. She was miserable at Dartmouth, in law school, and even in a public defender job she liked.

• Money helps only up to a point

Mel has lived through not being able to pay her bills, and she says that pressure is crushing, so reaching the point where you can make ends meet does raise happiness. Past that, more money doesn't fix the real problem, which is not knowing how to be happy. Fixing outside problems like debt, marriage issues or the kids' struggles just exposes what's still unresolved inside.

• Be the eye of the hurricane, not the hurricane

The image comes from Hoda Kotb on the Today Show, who described how still and quiet it is inside the eye of a storm. Mel realized that she had been the hurricane: smiling outside, spinning inside, with moods set by whatever happened around her. Happiness, as she defines it, is being able to reach that stillness whatever is swirling around you.

• 'Happiness is an inside job' means you have to let it in

The phrase used to irritate Mel because she didn't understand it. Now she reads it as: there are plenty of reasons to be happy, and the work is letting them reach you. She calls the habit of fighting this a 'campaign of misery.' She also notes that some people block happiness because they're afraid, for example after a death or tragedy, of feeling good and losing it again.

• Bank-vault door versus swinging kitchen doors

Mel says she used to live behind a thick steel vault door no one could open. She wants to be like the swinging doors between the dining room and kitchen at the Red Rooster Tavern, where she once worked, letting good things flow both ways. Giving happiness out was easy for her. Letting it in was nearly impossible, which she connects to how warm or closed-off the adults were when you were growing up.

• Block one: living in your head instead of your life

You can't take in happiness if you're not mentally present. Mel shows she still struggles with this, using an example from just days before recording.

• Block two: carrying a sword

This means moving through life braced for a fight: hypervigilant, convinced someone is mad at you, annoyed by the slow airport line or the bill in the mailbox. Mel describes herself as having 'a smile on my face and a fight in my belly.' Her advice is to drop the sword. If a real fight comes you'll be ready, and what you actually need to learn is how to be at peace.

• Block three: fixating on what's wrong

The negativity bias magnifies problems. A campaign of misery takes it further: obsessing over the one person who didn't text back or the people who didn't invite you, while ignoring everyone who shows up and speaks well of you.

EXAMPLES

• Pete Shen's slap-in-the-face observation

About three years ago, while Mel was complaining, her friend Pete Shen told her: 'The more successful you've become, the more miserable you are.' He could see the storm under her smile. Mel says he was right, and that moment started her happiness project.

• Mom's 75th birthday trip

On the last full day of a four-day family trip, the last time all five Robbinses would be together until Oakley's graduation in June, Mel spiraled. She worried that Kendall lives in Los Angeles, might marry there and raise kids there. She woke up every hour until her 5:45 a.m. alarm, and says she wasted the last 24 hours together.

• 'Why are you always so mad at Sony?'

While Mel was hosting a daytime talk show at CBS Broadcast Center, her executive producer asked why she always needed an enemy, in this case the production company. Mel recognized a lifelong belief that someone was out to get her.

• The mom who hit her goal 50% of the time

A Today Show viewer with a toddler asked how to do better than 50% on her goal of 15 minutes a day for herself. Mel's answer: finding that time half the time with a toddler is amazing, and counting only the misses is how you shut out the good.

• Oakley's friend and 'I love you'

One of Oakley's friends wrote a college essay about how Oakley always tells his friends he loves them. Now the whole group does it, and the friend has started saying it at home, where his family is saying it back.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Picture the swinging doors every day

Notice whether you're letting good things in. When something good happens, acknowledge it. When someone compliments you, look them in the eye and say thank you.

• Accept help and say 'I love you'

Mel is practicing letting the hotel staff take her bag instead of insisting she dragged it from Boston herself. She's often saddened by how many people say their parents never told them they loved them, and points out it's just three words.

• Pete's friction list

Write down everything in a typical week that gives you friction: bills, commute, health, loneliness, walking the dogs you never wanted. Three years ago, almost everything on Mel's list came back to constant work travel. Today it would be her menopause complaints. Getting the list on paper gets it out of your head and makes it something you can work on.

• Stop complaining and choose to change one thing

Mel's hard truth for herself was: 'You are more committed to your excuses than to fixing it.' Complaining is easier than changing. Anything on your list, whether a job, a business model, drinking, petty friends or your weight, can be a decision to change over the next year.

How to Motivate Yourself: Leverage Dopamine & Overcome Your Excuses

Date: 2024-01-11 · Duration: 0:47:49
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=91G7M_Wgj0M

KEYPOINTS

• Motivation simply means you feel like doing something

Mel notes the research definitions (a general desire or willingness to act; the force behind starting, continuing or quitting something) and boils them down: motivation is feeling like doing it, and a lack of motivation is not feeling like it. When you feel like it, action is easy; the trouble is the other '99%' of life.

• Dopamine drives cravings, not chores

Often called the molecule of motivation, dopamine is tied to the brain's reward system and pulls you toward what you crave. You're eager to cook when you get home hungry, but not to do the dishes afterward. Mel says foods you love spike dopamine by about 50%, and lists meth, cocaine, nicotine, sex, social media, video games and sugar as top spikers. College applications, résumés, dating profiles and stepping on the scale aren't on the list.

• 'Motivation is garbage' because it vanishes when you need it

If motivation were on tap, Mel jokes, everyone would have a million dollars, six-pack abs and a dream side hustle. Waiting to feel motivated for things you don't crave is effectively deciding they'll never happen, and knowing what you need to do isn't enough.

• Let yourself feel the setback before you push

Sadness and frustration after working hard and falling short are appropriate; Mel says they show you're mentally healthy. She knew it wasn't the moment for a pep talk. What matters is what you do after the wallowing.

• You can't motivate someone else, and pressure makes it worse

Mel badly wanted her son to push through, but says she couldn't feel it for him or 'spray him with motivation'; more pressure would leave him more demoralized. What you can do is help someone reconnect with their own drive through the same two steps you'd use on yourself.

• Step 1: Remind yourself why this matters to you

If you don't really want something, or don't know why, you won't do the work. Mel cites University of Oregon research that knowing your why aids self-regulation and helps you prioritize the work over easier distractions: coming home from ski practice instead of taking extra runs, or getting up early to work on your résumé.

• Dreams set a direction; you don't have to achieve them

Pursuing reach goals forces you to do things you normally wouldn't, and that shapes the person you become. Mel says Oakley wasn't applying just to get in somewhere but to be the kind of person who gives it his all.

• Step 2: 'Just do it,' and the key word is 'just'

When Mel asks keynote audiences of 10,000 which word in Nike's tagline matters most, they guess 'do,' then 'it.' Her answer is 'just,' which captures the universal moment of hesitation on the sidelines, when fear or feeling unworthy keeps you thinking instead of acting. Push through with the 5 Second Rule's 5-4-3-2-1 and act.

• Full speed means 100% of what you have today

Mel's caveat: slow down first to know your direction, since speed without clarity is running in circles. Then give your best effort, whatever that is today. Borrowing from brain coach Jim Kwik, if you only have 20% and you give 20%, that's full effort; Mel says she has been at about that level for two months from overwork.

EXAMPLES

• Oakley's early-decision rejection

His top-choice school posted decisions at 8 a.m. on a Saturday. Oakley, who is dyslexic, had no audition, recruitment or interview to lean on, but strong grades, two varsity captaincies and a senior mentor role. With Chris's hand on his back he opened the portal, went silent, and said, 'It's a no... they didn't even defer me.' Mel said 'that sucks, buddy,' offered his favorite Bolognese, and he went to his room.

• Eleven days and zero motivation

Expecting to get in, Oakley had put off other applications and then had 11 days to finish them while feeling not smart enough. After letting him decompress, Mel and Chris laid out every option, from a gap year or job to more top schools. Oakley chose to apply to more reaches, saying that otherwise he wouldn't have given it his all, and that more rejections would help him feel better about wherever he landed.

• Mel's 'why' for doing the dishes

She doesn't want to start her morning coffee and incense by scrubbing cold, crusted pots and resenting that she left them for herself. Knowing that, and how good a clean kitchen feels, matters more than not feeling like it at night.

• 'Fail at full speed'

At dinner, Sawyer's boyfriend Gavin shared what his Division I lacrosse coach taught him: run at the thing as hard as you can. Mel loves that it requires no motivation, only a decision about who you're being, and says she'd rather fail having tried everything than succeed by cutting corners.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Expect the same demoralization in other setbacks

Mel lists parallels: a relative laid off without warning after 10 years, being single while friends get engaged, fertility struggles while everyone seems pregnant, failing a finance licensing exam, or a year in real estate without a single listing. Not feeling like it is normal; it doesn't have to stop you.

• Supporting someone after rejection

Acknowledge it, say you're proud they went for it, ask what support they want today, give them a day or two, then lay out the

full range of options so the choice is theirs, not yours.

- **Use it on small tasks too**

  Mel applies 'why does this matter?' then 'just do it' to taxes, Sunday snack prep, closet clean-outs, a three-month-avoided conversation with your mother, or choosing a mocktail over a beer.

4 Important Life Lessons I Learned the Hard Way (So That You Don’t Have To)

Date: 2023-12-28 · Duration: 0:42:27
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7u7qdU3sv4w

KEYPOINTS

• A bonus lesson: meaningful change only comes when you slow down

Mel admits she is not someone who sits with a cup of tea, yet she found that the changes you choose for yourself, the ones that take insight and some courage, surface in still moments: a long walk, a hike, a solo road trip, a hot shower. Letting your mind wander is when ideas bubble up from the subconscious. Her way is coffee, a deep breath and a journal.

• An annual audit of the past year comes before any plan

For more than a decade Mel has reviewed her last 12 months before planning work, marriage or life. A year earlier she did it privately with Chris and the kids and saw that 2022 nearly broke her, so she committed to making 2023 about healing and happiness. The four lessons here are what that year taught her.

• Lesson 1: 'Drop the sword' and stop fighting your own happiness

Deciding to be happy didn't make life cooperate; it handed her situations to practice on. Working with her therapist, she realized she brought a sword to every situation, braced for what might go wrong. Picturing gripping a sword makes your body tense; picturing dropping it softens your energy. You can always pick it back up if you truly need to fight.

• Bracing blocks happiness in small, everyday moments

Mel's examples: tensing when your mother or boss calls, bracing as you walk into work, fuming in a coffee line because the person ahead is ordering six drinks, or getting tense because someone hasn't texted back. Stop hunting for what's wrong, assuming things won't work out, and complaining, and you make room for good things.

• Lesson 2: Forget balance and focus on boundaries

Balance assumes every part of life carries equal weight, which puts work, kids and self-care in competition and breeds resentment: you resent a demanding job you love, or your kids when you come home exhausted. Boundaries are active choices based on your top priority and needs in the moment. Balance is something you wish for; boundaries are something you create.

• Your boundaries are for you, and they only work if you say them out loud

Boundaries mark where you say yes and no and reveal what matters to you. People aren't mind readers, so a boundary only works if you communicate it. Paradoxically, Mel says, good boundaries make life feel more balanced, because everything fits where it should.

• Lesson 3: Frustration is a sign you're growing

Frustration doesn't mean things are terrible or that you're broken; it means you've outgrown a situation, system or habit. Mel was frustrated that her 40s habits stopped working in her 50s and in menopause, and concluded she needed to upgrade them. Stop aiming frustration at yourself and treat it as a signal that something has to change.

• Lesson 4: Real change takes a full year

Mel borrows this from her kids, who told a caller whose daughter was anxious and lonely after a sophomore-year move, 'you've got to give it a year.' She applies it to the podcast, the new studios, moving to Vermont and sorting out her gut and hormone health: a year of stopping, starting and experimenting with systems can change your whole life.

EXAMPLES

• The phone boundary at home

To be more present with family, Mel's rule was that her phone isn't on her body when she's with them: in her bag when out, plugged in in the bathroom or kitchen at home. She didn't spend more time with her family than the year before, but was present for it. She cites research on 'phubbing' (phone snubbing) covered by the New York Times: it makes people feel ostracized and less trusting, and spreads, since when Chris scrolls she's tempted to scroll too.

• The coffee boundary

Inspired by Dr. Amy Shah's three appearances on the show, including research on caffeine and adenosine and the gut's role in estrogen and hormone health, Mel went from four to five cups a day to one. She drinks 16 ounces of water on waking, waits at least 90 minutes for coffee, has it with breakfast rather than on an empty stomach, and reports feeling less bloated and more focused.

• The 90-hour weeks

The podcast became the fifth most-followed show of the year on Apple Podcasts, unexpected for a '55-year-old mother of three' who'd never launched one. In a year meant for healing she worked about 90 hours a week, always behind and reinventing the wheel. Slowing down showed her the small team had outgrown its launch systems, which led to new studios in Boston.

• The same fight with Kendall

Her 23-year-old daughter flew home from Los Angeles, and within an hour they were bickering in their familiar dynamic. Mel reads it as a process problem she can address from her side, by dropping the sword or using the Let Them Theory, rather than as proof something is wrong.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Try it for 24 hours: notice where you're holding a sword

In each situation, ask whether you're bracing for what happens next. When you catch it, consciously drop it and soften into the moment.

• Use the three Ps when you're frustrated: project, process, people

Turn the frustration into a project instead of something personal. Identify the broken process, which could be how you communicate, organize your work or run a meeting. Then look at the people, starting with yourself, and ask whether you've outgrown the people or just the dynamic.

• Treat stalled habits as outdated systems, not personal failure

Habits are repeated processes. If your health efforts aren't sticking, change how you shop for groceries, what's in the fridge or your morning routine, or put a new habit on a Post-it on your mirror. Build systems for where you're going, not where you are.

- **Check whether to change your people or your dynamic**

Frustration at work or at home can mean you need different support, or simply a different way of being around the same people. Slowing down lets you respond strategically rather than emotionally.

How to Make 2024 the Best Year: 6 Questions to Ask Yourself

Date: 2023-12-21 · Duration: 0:45:33
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gn48zmBb1Ek

KEYPOINTS

• You need your starting point before you can get directions

Mel compares goal-setting to Google Maps, which can't route you without knowing both where you are and where you're going. Most people skip straight to resolutions without stopping, and end up with goals they think they should have rather than ones they actually want. She has done this year-end ritual of six questions with Chris for 20 years, and now with their three kids too.

• Questions 1–3 look back; questions 4–6 look ahead

The first three questions (highlights, hardest parts, lessons) show where you are now. The last three come from a business consulting practice Mel says top companies and executive teams use: stop, start, continue.

• Q1: What were the highlights of the past year?

Don't rely on memory, Mel says, because you'll forget a surprising amount. Scroll your camera roll and calendar week by week. The point is to remind yourself that your life is bigger than how you feel right now, especially since year-end reflection often happens in a temporary low mood.

• Q2: What were the hardest parts?

Get specific by sorting struggles into five areas: health and wellness; career, money and school; relationships, love and friendship; fun and happiness; and purpose, spirituality and meaning. Highlights and struggles can overlap. Mel's highlight of sunrise photos in Vermont sat alongside the loneliness of her first months there.

• Goals that grow out of your struggles are the ones you'll stick with

Mel cites research showing that goals need to be relevant to your current life. Goals built on what's been hard tap into intrinsic motivation because they're personal. If not being lonely again matters to you, or not getting winded on the stairs, you'll act. After a loss, a goal might be giving yourself permission to be happy again.

• Q3: What did you learn about yourself?

Answer across the same five areas, and ideally with family or friends, because they'll point out things you don't give yourself credit for. Mel's lessons: diet and exercise that worked when she was younger stopped working after menopause, and there's a difference between supporting someone and being responsible for their emotions.

• Q4: What will you stop doing?

Mel says that sometimes stopping something changes more than adding something new. Examples include stopping complaining about your job or money and showing up differently. She walks through each of the five areas.

• Q5: What will you continue doing?

Typical goal-setting never asks what's already working. This question avoids 'whack-a-mole', where focusing hard on fitness means neglecting your relationship, or paying off debt means skipping fun. Mel will continue using the Let Them Theory: letting people have their reactions and show who they are, and not managing everyone's meltdowns.

• Q6: What will you start doing?

Starting can include restarting something you used to love, like making playlists, playing guitar or piano, taking cheap day trips, or doing 'Unfollow Friday' to curate your social feeds so they don't make you feel bad.

EXAMPLES

• Lost leaving a retreat

After taking her team on a four-day phone-free retreat, Mel drove off the property and couldn't get Google Maps to connect. She pulled over instead of guessing at the intersection. An older man in a golf cart asked if she was lost, and she said she just needed a minute to figure out where she was so she could figure out where she was going.

• Mel's highlight reel

Scrolling her photos turned up the podcast's one-year anniversary, Kendall graduating from college and singing the national anthem in front of 60,000 people, rescuing an owl hit by a car on the night of her 27th wedding anniversary, and signing a five-year lease on a new production studio. She saw the lease as 'placing a bet on myself' and evidence that her success wasn't luck.

• Hypergrowth and menopause

Mel's struggles included a podcast that grew so fast it 'ran our asses over', with no one on the team having done their job at that scale before. Too much work squeezed out fun and relationships, and menopause changed her body. The year before, the ritual surfaced betrayal in her business and loneliness, which shaped goals that she says left her feeling like a different person 12 months later.

• Stopping work travel

Mel once spent 150 days a year on the road, sometimes booking 120 speeches a year ahead, and says she missed much of her daughter's high school years. She did about 25 the previous year and had agreed to just one for the coming year. She also planned to stop saying yes to outside content requests and to stop complaining about menopause.

• What Mel planned to start

Strength training three days a week, inspired by a muscle-centric medicine episode with Dr. Gabrielle Lyon. Writing her Let Them Theory book. Testing a work rhythm of one week producing together in the Boston studio and one week of deep work. Getting aggressive about saving and startup investing again after going over budget on renovations.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Do it with others

Mel recommends doing the six questions with your partner, family, team or mastermind group. Sharing answers deepens connection, and others remember wins you've forgotten.

- **Use the same questions for any big decision**
  Mel also uses this exact sequence for business planning or a major life pivot, not just at year's end.
- **Write your answers in all five areas**
  Going through health, career and money, relationships, fun, and purpose for each question gives you much richer answers than general themes, and turns vague resolutions into specific stop, start and continue lists.

Why Do I Love the Way That I Love: The 4 Attachment Styles Explained

Guest: Thais Gibson
Date: 2023-12-18 · Duration: 1:15:14
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GIkspM20BeY

KEYPOINTS

• An attachment style is your subconscious rulebook for love

Thais Gibson, author of Learning Love and founder of the Personal Development School, defines attachment style as the subconscious set of rules you have for love and connection: your beliefs, needs, expectations, communication and boundaries. You're not born with one. It's conditioned, mostly between ages zero and two, through 'repetition plus emotion,' and she says it can be reconditioned.

• Children take everything personally, and those meanings spread

A child with a critical parent can't think 'my parent communicates poorly.' They conclude 'I'm not good enough' or 'I'm bad.' Gibson says those beliefs then shape how you see yourself at work, in friendships and with money, which is why Mel ties this episode to New Year's goals.

• Willpower can't overpower the subconscious

Gibson says the subconscious drives roughly 95% to 97% of beliefs, thoughts, emotions and actions, and the conscious mind can't simply override it. That explains why you can intend to skip the wine or not snap at your partner and fall back into the old pattern anyway, like 'putting the gas and the brakes on at the same time.' She compares the conscious mind to the tip of an iceberg, with the subconscious just below the surface and still reachable.

• Secure: needs met consistently in childhood

When a crying child's parents reliably came to figure out what was wrong, the child learned it's safe to express needs and rely on people, and that they're loved for who they are. Gibson says secure adults trust, communicate, resolve things quickly and have by far the best relationship success. Research puts secure attachment around 51%, but Gibson doubts it because the figure is self-reported, and many clients who call themselves secure clearly aren't.

• Anxious preoccupied: warm but inconsistent care

A common example is loving parents working 12-hour days while the child stays at daycare or with cooler grandparents. The core wounds are fearing abandonment, being alone, being excluded, being rejected and not being good enough. These adults may panic when a partner pulls away and 'hold on so tight the sand slips through their fingers.' They need reassurance, validation, consistency and closeness. Gibson calls them the sweetest people, but notes that by abandoning themselves to please others, they keep the old wound alive.

• Dismissive avoidant: emotional neglect leads to hyper-independence

The neglect can be obvious, like no food or structure, or subtle, like 'toughen up' and nobody asking how school went. The core wounds are 'I am defective,' shame, feeling trapped or weak when relying on others, and not belonging. These adults can be charming early on but pull away like a turtle into its shell when things get real. They often soothe with binge-watching, food or video games, and are quietly very sensitive to criticism.

• Fearful avoidant: chaos at home leads to push-pull

Growing up with unpredictable love, like an alcoholic parent who is affectionate one day and angry the next, a bitter divorce or a narcissistic parent, creates a struggle with trust and constant hypervigilance. Gibson says this style carries the most core wounds, mixing anxious fears with avoidant ones. These adults are often high achievers who show up brilliantly in a crisis. Unlike anxious types, they can't hold needs in forever and eventually erupt.

• Insecure styles reenact their wounds against themselves

Gibson says what keeps childhood wounds alive 30 years later is that you replay them in your relationship with yourself every day. Anxious people abandon their own needs, take on coworkers' work and fall behind, and let career, money and personal growth slide in favor of relationships.

• Why affirmations fall short, in her view

Gibson says the subconscious doesn't process language: tell someone not to picture a pink elephant and they will. It responds to emotion and imagery. Her three ingredients for reprogramming are repetition, emotion and imagery, and the more of each, the faster it works.

EXAMPLES

• Mel realizes she may be fearful avoidant

Mel came in assuming she was anxious preoccupied. When Gibson described chaotic homes, including narcissistic behavior, Mel said 'ding ding ding' and wondered whether she's actually fearful avoidant. On hearing that anxious and dismissive people often pair up, she joked that Gibson had just summed up three years of marriage therapy with Chris.

• Kendall, the 'human blankie'

Mel believes her daughter Kendall is anxiously attached. When anything feels uncertain, one call becomes a second and a third. Mel also wonders whether daycare for her two daughters contributed. Gibson says repeated calls and texts, or checking someone's location when they don't answer, are classic signs of anxious attachment.

• Gibson's lesson as a fearful avoidant wife

Early in her marriage, Gibson noticed she still expected her husband to just know her needs. She held them in, then became critical or cutting. Her healing involved communicating needs proactively and considering herself as much as everyone else.

• Shay's turnaround

A listener named Shay said therapy and antidepressants hadn't helped her feel less emotionally stunted. Learning about core wounds from Gibson finally explained why old pain kept showing up in her daily life, and she says it changed her life.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **In the moment, find the need behind the urge**

  Before sending a 15th text, ask what you actually want from the person: encouragement, certainty, reassurance. Then give it to yourself. Write three wins, journal about why you'll be okay, or create a schedule for certainty. Gibson says it feels mechanical at first, starts feeling comfortable around day 7, and by day 21 many anxious clients say they enjoy time alone.

- **The 21-day core-wound exercise**

  Locate your style. Name the wound that bothers you most (abandonment for anxious, betrayal for fearful avoidant, 'I am defective' for dismissive avoidant). If unsure, ask what worst case you fear when triggered. State the opposite, like 'I am good enough.' In a relaxed state, recall 10 memories that prove it, such as walking across the stage at graduation, and feel and see each one. Repeat daily for 21 days.

- **Notice how a partner shifts you**

  Gibson says fearful avoidants have both anxious and avoidant sides, so dating someone more avoidant pushes them toward the anxious side, and vice versa. Anxious and dismissive types often end up together. Seeing that pattern helps you tell your wounds apart from your partner's behavior.

Super Brain: 10 Things to Eat, Think, & Do to Improve Your Memory and Learn Faster

Guest: Jim Kwik
Date: 2023-12-14 · Duration: 1:02:10
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=25P_j48IYaA

KEYPOINTS

• About two-thirds of your brain's performance is within your influence

Brain coach Jim Kwik says roughly one-third of memory and brain performance is set by genetics and biology, leaving two-thirds in your direct control. After 32 years of daily coaching, he says people of any age, IQ, education or background can improve. His point is that 'genius is built, not born.'

• Learning how to learn is the 'lead domino'

Kwik says school teaches what to learn but never how. There are classes on math, history and Spanish, but none on focus, memory or reading speed. Telling a child to 'focus' or 'memorize this' is like telling someone who never had a lesson to play the ukulele. Most of us also stopped upgrading our reading skills at age six or seven, even though reading demands have exploded, and he says that gap creates information anxiety.

• A visual pacer can speed up your reading by 25–50%

Run a finger, pen or highlighter just above the line as you read. Kwik gives three reasons it works: it stops 'back-skipping' (rereading words and lines), your eyes are wired to follow motion, and sight and touch are closely linked, much as smell and taste are. He says some people even double their speed. With the average person processing information about four hours a day, saving one hour daily adds up to 365 hours a year, or more than nine 40-hour work weeks.

• Remembering names starts with MOM: motivation, observation, methods

Motivation: before meeting someone, ask why you want to remember them. Kwik's test is that if a suitcase of a million dollars rode on remembering the next stranger's name, everyone would. Observation: most people don't forget names, they never hear them, because they're looking around or planning their reply. He notes the letters of 'listen' spell 'silent.'

• The SUAVE method for names

Say the name right back, so you hear it twice and get corrected early (better than calling Ted 'Ed' after 20 minutes). Use it a few times in conversation. Ask about it: how it's spelled, where it's from, who they were named after. Visualize it, because we remember faces better than names; for example, picture Mary with two lambs, David with a slingshot or Mike singing on a table into a microphone. End by saying goodbye using the name.

• Find lost keys by encoding the moment with a vivid image

Memory works by encoding, storing and retrieving. Most 'forgetting' is a failure to encode. You don't need to repeat 'my keys are here' 15 times. Take a split second to make it extraordinary, such as imagining the desk exploding as you drop the keys. The same see-it, feel-it, hear-it approach is how he says eight-year-olds memorize the periodic table.

• The 3M framework: mindset, motivation, methods

Kwik defines mindset as your assumptions about something, and says 'if you fight for your limitations, you get to keep them.' Your self-talk is a program your brain runs, so he suggests adding 'yet,' as in 'I don't have a great memory yet.' For motivation, he asks himself about 10 times a day: 'What is the tiniest action I could take right now that will give me progress toward this goal, where I can't fail?'

• Ten keys for a limitless brain

Kwik's list: a good brain diet, killing ANTs (automatic negative thoughts), exercise, brain nutrients, a positive peer group, a clean environment, sleep, brain protection, new learning and stress management. On peers he cites mirror neurons and says whether someone smokes has more to do with their social network than their biology. On stress, he says chronic stress has been shown to shrink the brain and keeps you in survival mode.

• His favorite brain foods and supplements

Kwik lists avocados, blueberries ('brain berries'), broccoli, olive oil and a Mediterranean diet, and eggs, whose choline is a precursor to acetylcholine. He adds leafy greens, fatty fish for omega-3 DHA, turmeric for curcumin, walnuts and almonds for vitamin E, and dark chocolate. For nutrients he mentions DHA if you don't eat fish, plus ginkgo, lion's mane and creatine. These are his recommendations, not a medical protocol.

EXAMPLES

• 200 names in reverse

Mel first saw Kwik speak to several thousand people at a big consulting firm. He had a couple hundred people wearing red stand and say their names, then repeated them all in reverse. Mel, skeptical and watching from backstage, confirmed he had nothing in his ears and wrote nothing down.

• 'The boy with the broken brain'

At five, in 1978, Kwik fell head-first into a radiator while standing on a chair to see sirens outside. He struggled with focus and memory afterward. At nine a teacher defended him by saying 'leave that kid alone, that's the boy with the broken brain,' and it became his inner voice. His takeaway: adults' external words become a child's internal words.

• The mentor and the dream list

Ready to quit college, Kwik visited a friend's family. The father asked him why he was in school, had him write two pages of dreams, then held his fingers apart and said 'you are this close.' He handed Kwik books and asked him to read one a week. About 60 days into studying how the brain learns, Kwik says 'a light switch flipped.'

• Bill Clinton's memory at a fundraiser

At a 2,000-person event, Clinton greeted Kwik by name and picked up a conversation from three years earlier. He told Kwik that his grandfather in Arkansas used to quiz the kids on stories to see if they were listening. Kwik concluded that 'incredible memory and powerful presence come from being powerfully present.'

• Counting to five in Japanese

Kwik teaches Mel 1–6 using images: scratch your knee and say 'itchy knee' (ichi, ni), point up at the sun (san), point to a woman (shi), say 'go go go' (go), and row a canoe (roku).

OTHER RELEVANT

• Test the pacer on yourself in two minutes

Read for 60 seconds normally and count the lines. Then read for another 60 seconds while underlining with a pen tip and compare the counts.

• Memorize any list with the memory palace

Kwik walks Mel through a 2,500-year-old technique. He places each of the ten keys along a route to his office: a brain-food buffet in the parking lot, stomping ANTs on the bridge, exercising in the elevator, a helmet to headbutt the classroom door, and relaxing on the bonsai trees. Mel recalls all ten in order. He uses this method with Hollywood actors and TED speakers for speeches and toasts.

• Catch and edit your brain stories

Mel names her own: ADHD, menopause brain fog, 'I'm bad with names,' and dyslexia. After six years of high-school French she placed into French 101. Kwik's point is that arguing for these beliefs keeps you from using the methods.

Boost Your Success in 2024: My Best Advice on Business, Time Management, and Reinvention

Date: 2023-12-07 · Duration: 0:50:13
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hRMFeMuzUKo

KEYPOINTS

• Pick one thing to master each year, and study it before you act

In a live Q&A in Oklahoma City, Mel says 'if everything is important, nothing is.' She describes her career as 'leapfrogging' between private skill-building and public moves. She was for years one of the most booked female speakers on the corporate circuit, which is where she built her expertise. About six or seven years ago she focused on social media strategy, studying Gary Vaynerchuk, Upworthy and Ellen's YouTube. Then came two years studying podcasts like Jay Shetty's, Alex Cooper's Call Her Daddy, and Howard Stern. Her current focus at the time was YouTube.

• Cut the news and curate your feeds to protect your energy

Mel cites Harvard happiness researcher Shawn Achor's finding that a minute of negative news in the morning can affect your mood for six to eight hours. For a business owner, time, attention and energy are the scarcest resources, and what you take in shapes what you put out. She skips the news, assuming she'll hear anything important. She unfollows accounts that don't lift her up, or mutes them if unfollowing would cause friction, like with a relative.

• Treat a slump as a research project using process, product and people

Asked whether to close, pivot or push through slow sales, Mel suggests stepping back from emotion and examining three things. Process: systems and, for e-commerce, marketing such as photos, keywords, campaigns and integrations. Product: has it gone stale or run its trend? People: wrong or too many hires, a sister still running social media, or you, if you've lost your 'why.'

• 'Business procrastination' is stress relief

Doing dishes, email, yoga or Pinterest instead of the hard work of growing your business is avoidance. Mel notes research linking procrastination to stress: putting off hard things gives short-term relief. Noticing it is the first step. Then make the work easier by changing where you do it. Ambient coffee-shop noise helps her focus, and her single best workspace is an airplane seat, where she's strapped in with bad Wi-Fi.

• Your day has five zones of time

Zone 1 is from waking until you check your phone, email or TV, and it's the only time that's truly yours. Zone 2 starts once you hand your attention to someone else. Zone 3 is the workday, time you've traded for money, so don't resent it. Zone 4 starts around 3 p.m., a foggy stretch through dinner. Zone 5 begins when the TV goes off at night, and is best spent on sleep so you can use Zone 1 well. Focusing on Zones 1 and 5 made Mel more productive, less stressed and less resentful.

• Confidence is the willingness to try

Mel says research shows the feeling of confidence comes from competence, which comes only from practice. So the confident act is trying before you feel ready. Impostor syndrome just means you're crossing a bridge, sometimes a long fog-covered one like the Golden Gate. And 'I don't know, but I can find out' is the most confident thing you can say in a meeting.

• Skip PR; join communities; be careful with partners

Mel calls hiring PR a waste of money, since your customers and your own social media are your best PR. Mentors can fade, leaving you chasing them. Peer entrepreneur communities propelled her most, because family and friends don't understand what running a business is like. She advises treating competitors as allies to learn from. For existing businesses, she warns against handing equity to a partner out of overwhelm. Hire expertise, and partner material will reveal itself. She had a partner who was 'fantastic and then… really horrible.'

• Make a calculated decision, not a leap of faith

Before going full-time, look at cash flow, know your budget, cut spending to extend your runway, and decide how much risk you can tolerate. Leaping too soon puts financial pressure on the business and on you. Mel cites a University of Wisconsin–Madison study finding entrepreneurs who kept their day jobs at first were 33% less likely to fail. She also quotes Adam Grant: quitting your job to start a company is 'like proposing marriage on the first date.'

• Self-care is a business strategy

Mel cites UCLA researcher Dr. Judy Willis on how a chronically stressed nervous system impairs the prefrontal cortex, affecting processing speed, working memory, clarity and strategic decisions. Mel says she ran 100-hour weeks from 2014 and called it success until reading this during the pandemic. She argues hustle culture doesn't work for most people with families, and that best ideas come away from work, like on a walk without earbuds or in the bath.

• Self-doubt is the biggest obstacle, and the 'just' in 'Just Do It' captures it

Fear always shows up when you try something new, whether a product line, pricing model or hire. Mel says the key word in Nike's slogan is 'just', which acknowledges the moment of hesitation every athlete and decision-maker feels. Expect it, then count 5-4-3-2-1 and act.

EXAMPLES

• Mel's morning routine

Phone out of reach. Make the bed. Drink 16 ounces of water from a mason jar. High-five herself in the mirror. Walk outside for at least 10 minutes 'like you're late', with no phone or podcast, for mood and morning light. Dump thoughts in a notebook and pick one priority. Text or video-message a friend or relative. Then do a 'Hot 15': 15 minutes of progress on something that matters before opening email. She goes to bed earlier as she gets older and more successful.

• Tasha's three years with a day job

A listener kept her job for three years until business income matched it. Mel calls that 'crazy smart' and supported by research, and says it's now a calculated decision rather than a leap.

• Laura and the iceberg model

A listener feared being an entrepreneur, wife and mom was impossible. Mel uses the iceberg model from systems thinking:

your story ('it's impossible') feeds beliefs, which drive actions, which produce results, so change the story first. She also says to get clear on why you want this, and to replace celebrity follows with female entrepreneurs as a 'board of directors' in your feed. Mel argues being an entrepreneur models purposeful work for your kids.

- **An all-female team new to their jobs**
  Mel says no one on her all-female podcast team had worked on a show like it, and some had never done their roles before, yet the show grew to become one of the most followed podcasts. She offers it as proof you can figure things out.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Protect Zone 1 tomorrow**
  Keep your phone away from the bed, take a 10-minute walk without input, choose one priority, and do 15 focused minutes before email.
- **Audit your input**
  Remove news from your morning and unfollow or mute any account that doesn't make you smarter, calmer or more focused.
- **Run the numbers before you quit**
  Know your monthly costs, cut spending, build a runway, and keep your job until income is proven.

5 Ways To Improve Your Subconscious Mind & Be Happier: Amazing Insight From Dr Paul Conti

Guest: Dr. Paul Conti
Date: 2023-12-04 · Duration: 1:19:48
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IIGaYbPSChA

KEYPOINTS

• The little voice is a background dialogue you can control only once you notice it

Dr. Paul Conti, a Stanford- and Harvard-trained psychiatrist whose book has a foreword by Lady Gaga, describes a running set of opinions about ourselves behind our experience of the present. Many of us have never put words to it. The first step is curiosity: what do I tell myself when I'm sitting quietly, when I drop something, or when I walk into a new social situation?

• Inner dialogue is more deterministic than external factors

In 25 years of practice, Conti says, what people tell themselves has proven far more decisive than schedules, gym access or other practical fixes. If 'you'll get in shape, then lose it and feel worse' is running in the background, logistics won't save the plan. He likens it to dragging the weights of the past and projecting them into the future.

• Repetition is information, not fate

Patients often say they'll never have a good relationship because the last seven were bad. Conti replies that unless they were bad in seven different ways, it's one pattern repeated, which means you haven't failed seven times; you've done one thing seven times and can learn to do it differently.

• Negativity bias is a hijacked survival mechanism, not self-hatred

Conti stresses that no part of us wants to harm us. Our brains weight negative events more, as in remembering the berry that made you sick, which helped hunter-gatherers survive. That salience bias gets turned toward false conclusions about ourselves. Like weeds outgrowing flowers, negative voices grow louder unless the positive ones get an ally.

• Childhood lessons stick because children blame themselves

Without abstract thought or life experience, a child yelled at by a stressed parent concludes 'it must be me,' not 'they're in a bad place.' A child rewarded or punished unpredictably learns 'I can't control this' and 'I am bad.' Those lessons aren't retested in adulthood: unlike a computer, the brain doesn't reboot to check for new information. Conti compares it to going back to check whether you wrote down x = 3 when it was 5.

• Trauma generates shame that belongs to someone else

Shame is a reflex to trauma, so victims often feel at fault for what was done to them. Conti suggests asking what you'd say to someone else who was assaulted while asleep: would you tell them how awful they are? Don't make yourself the exception to the compassion you'd give anyone else.

• Avoiding the past lets it grow

Conti compares it to ignoring an overflowing toilet: pretending it isn't happening turns a mild problem into a disaster. People fear they'll start crying and never stop, or curl up and never get up; he says that never happens. The scary 'goblins' outside the room are decoration around answers that can change your life.

• Get thoughts out of your head

Thinking alone tends to loop, so write, talk to a trusted friend or see a therapist. Conti himself never misses his own therapy, since he can't give himself an impartial perspective. He says professional help is essential if thoughts turn to not wanting to be alive.

• Expect months, not weeks

Negative pathways atrophy over time but don't vanish at once; say a word 5,000 times and it'll be on your mind for days. He typically tells patients four to six months, with improvement possibly starting in a couple of weeks. A 20% drop in how often a negative thought appears over a few months can be a real achievement, and he criticizes systems that offer ten sessions and expect a cure.

• Good enough is the parenting goal, and it starts with self-care

Citing English physician D.W. Winnicott, Conti says the aim is a child who feels solidly good enough to face hard things and get back up. Parents should start by checking whether they're too tired, hungry or stretched to be present, and apologize when they snap rather than looking away in shame.

EXAMPLES

• The man who believed he was dead

Conti treated a patient with Cotard's syndrome, a rare belief that one has already died. Affable and funny, he joked about Conti listening to a dead man's heart. Years of isolation had turned his self-talk from 'I'll find someone' to 'you don't get to have people.' Conti's point: if self-talk can convince someone they're dead, it can certainly convince you you'll never get a better job.

• The 50-minute commute with no music

A young man who loved music took a poorly paid job 50 minutes away when better ones were closer, and drove in silence, which Conti realized was self-punishment for being ashamed of the job. Its roots were childhood abuse he felt responsible for. After working through the shame, he got more education and a far better job.

• Mel's 'someone is mad at me' reflex

On vacation, Mel woke at 8:30, found Chris, the kids and the dogs gone, and instantly felt she was in trouble. Through EMDR with her therapist she traced it to fourth grade, waking at a family gathering with an older kid on top of her, then hiding under the covers feeling she'd done something wrong. Despite degrees and years of therapy, she hadn't connected that moment to decades of the same voice. Chris, she notes, was happily walking the dogs.

• Conti's own sense of being cursed

After a series of traumas, Conti began to feel that if something went well, something bad would follow. Putting it into words let

him challenge it: he didn't believe anyone else was cursed, so why him?

- **What listeners' inner voices say**

  In Mel's audience poll, 95% recognized the voice. Kind nudges included 'take care of yourself' and 'start another business even though the first failed'; far more were harsh: 'you're not going to make it,' 'my anxiety is right,' 'am I ever going to be enough?'

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Put up the umbrella**

  Conti notes how often we walk through rain rather than open an umbrella; 'to hell with it' really means 'to hell with me.' Small acts of kindness to yourself and others, like opening the umbrella, picking up what a stranger dropped or smiling, build the momentum to face harder things.

- **Watch for self-fulfilling body language**

  Someone convinced no one will approach them goes out head down and avoidant, isn't approached, and finds 'proof.' Friends often see it, like a change since a breakup, so ask trusted people what they notice.

- **Pair inner work with behavior change**

  If you call yourself a loser for not being healthy, getting up 20 minutes earlier to walk around the block both changes the behavior and starts disproving the voice.

- **Notice it without judging it**

  Mel found that just catching 'there it is again,' like assuming the person ahead of her in the coffee line is mad at her, was rewarding. Conti adds that it takes courage not to feel bad about feeling bad.

Reset Your Gut in 5 Days: A Medical Doctor’s Step-by-Step Protocol to Transform Your Health

Guest: Dr. Amy Shah
Date: 2023-11-30 · Duration: 0:41:53
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2qHhU7Qpmbo

KEYPOINTS

• Chronic stress shuts down digestion

Dr. Amy Shah says stress puts you in survival mode, as if a tiger is chasing you. Blood flow shifts away from the gut toward the brain and big muscles, so digestion, hormone balance and repair get deprioritized. She says news, email and social media are designed to trigger that response, so it falls to you to deliberately get back into 'rest and digest.' Constipation and sudden acid reflux are among the results she lists.

• Gut health is tied to far more than bloating

Shah describes a brain–gut axis that modulates hormones and the immune system. She says research is linking the gut microbiome to breast cancer and other cancers, heart disease and depression. She frames the goal as 'successful aging' rather than anti-aging, which depends on keeping gut bacteria 'happy' and signaling to the brain that things are going well.

• Bloating is common and most people underfeed their gut bacteria

Shah cites a study finding that one in seven people feel bloated at least once a week. She also says 98% of Americans don't eat enough fiber, the food gut bacteria need, and that lack of exercise compounds the problem. From part one, Mel recaps that bloating comes from unhappy gut bacteria and can be triggered by stress, hormones, cruciferous vegetables, sparkling drinks, gum, ibuprofen and holiday overeating.

• Choose gentle, non-bloating fiber when you're recovering

Shah means whole-food fiber, not a supplement brand. Her de-bloating list: spinach and leafy greens, berries, asparagus, cucumbers, celery, parsley and cilantro, and spices like turmeric and ginger that act like prebiotics. For fruit she recommends bananas and avocado, plus pineapple and papaya, which contain natural digestive enzymes. If you tolerate bread, she says sourdough has fewer gas-causing sugars, so avocado sourdough toast with fruit makes a good breakfast.

• The daily base is her '3F' morning routine

Every morning, reset or not, Shah does fasting (12 hours before the first meal), fitness, and fiber plus fermented foods. Her own favorite is probiotic yogurt and cottage cheese, even though she can't tolerate much other dairy. Mel jokes that it's really five Fs.

• The five-day reset adds one 'E' each day

Day 1: exercise. Any movement counts, but walking twice a day, yoga twists to release gas and fluid, and weight training are favored; Shah notes women lose about 1–3% of muscle mass per decade, accelerating in menopause. Day 2: eliminate dairy, gluten and white sugar, or other suspected triggers like nuts, shellfish or corn. Day 3: eat foods your gut bacteria love. Day 4: enjoy. Day 5: do all of it together.

• Whole protein is gentler than processed protein

For protein during the reset, Shah suggests eggs, fish, soaked black beans, tofu, probiotic yogurt, cottage cheese and some nuts. She says shakes, bars and 'fake meats' tend to bloat people, herself included. On meat she is openly uncertain: the bulk of research still suggests red and especially processed red meat may be inflammatory, but newer data suggest the type of meat (fast food versus locally raised) may matter. 'The meat story remains to be pieced out.'

• Enjoyment and connection are part of the protocol

Shah says people return from vacations and punish themselves with crash diets and cleanses, which keeps them stressed and makes things worse. Day four is about spending time with people who are good for your mental health, dancing, or doing what lights you up. 'Bonding is a love language for your gut bacteria.'

• Probiotic foods beat probiotic pills, for now

Shah compares the gut to the Amazon jungle, with hundreds to thousands of species. A pill with a few hundred strains is like throwing seeds from a plane onto land you know nothing about. Bacteria in yogurt, cottage cheese, kimchi or sauerkraut arrive in a food matrix that the body seems more likely to incorporate. Her ranking is pills a C, fermented foods a B, and bacteria from another human an A.

EXAMPLES

• Mel's red pants

After a week-long work road trip, Mel's favorite red pants went from fitting to unbuttonable, and she says she looked 'in my second trimester.' She wondered if it was menopause, stress or travel, and Shah says it's probably all of them. Mel admits that after Thanksgiving she eats four or five helpings plus her family's cranberry Jello, then tries extreme fixes that don't work.

• The three-day study

Shah describes a study that rapidly switched people from a processed, fast-food diet to a gut-friendly one. Researchers expected the microbiome to transform in two weeks and saw it in three days. She says you may feel better mood, less bloating and fewer cravings by day three, and be markedly better by two weeks.

• Fecal transplants and the schizophrenia mouse study

Shah explains that stool from a healthy donor can be placed in the colon via colonoscopy. She calls it curative for some diseases and possibly promising for depression, ADHD and cancer, though those uses are speculative. She references research in which gut bacteria from people with schizophrenia were transferred into germ-free mice, which then showed mental-health changes.

• You share a microbiome with your partner

Shah says identical twins separated at birth end up with microbiomes closer to the people they live with or their partners than to each other. That's why she tells Mel she is likely more like her husband Chris, microbially, than she would be like an identical

twin.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **A model 'day five'**
  Wait 12 hours before eating, then exercise. Have a veggie scramble with yogurt, berries and ginger tea, followed by yoga or stretching later. Eat whole foods all day with no artificially sweetened snacks or fast food, and finish with a walk or coffee with a friend, time with your dog, or creative writing.
- **Run elimination long enough to learn something**
  Shah says the microbiome may not respond for a few days. Keep eliminating for at least a week, and for up to three weeks to identify true sensitivities.
- **Don't sabotage the reset**
  Mel's own read: no heavy drinking ('a bottle of Jim Beam') and no Advil first thing in the morning during the fast. She says to decide what fits your health and lifestyle.

The Science of Your Gut: 3 Easy Steps to Reduce Bloating, Improve Digestion, and Feel Better Today

Guest: Dr. Amy Shah
Date: 2023-11-27 · Duration: 0:48:49
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w7xUT5ln7Qk

KEYPOINTS

• Bloating has many causes, not just gas

Dr. Amy Shah, a double board-certified physician in allergy, immunology and internal medicine, defines bloating as the belly being pushed out from the inside, or 'distension'. That can be caused by gas, stool when you're constipated, water retention, hormones (before your period and especially in menopause), medications, or a swollen intestinal wall. It all feels similar, which is why it's hard to tell what's going on.

• After a big week, you may be dealing with three things at once

After a holiday or trip, Shah says you're often retaining water from travel, alcohol and salt, your gut microbiome is upset and producing gas, and you've eaten extra calories. You won't know how much of each until you reset. Water weight goes quickly, constipation should clear, and then any real weight change shows on the scale. Mel points out that nobody gains 7 to 10 pounds of fat in five days.

• Bloating can show up in surprising ways

Signs include frequent burping, gas, constipation (gas can make it harder to pass stool), and fluid retention elsewhere: rings that won't fit, tight bracelets or shoes. Shah says what's happening in your intestines can be happening throughout your body. Mel realised that her swollen hands overnight and feet half a size bigger by evening might be related.

• Healthy raw cruciferous vegetables can make bloating worse

Broccoli, cauliflower, Brussels sprouts and cabbage have sulphur compounds Shah calls powerhouses for reducing inflammation and cancer risk. But raw, they're full of hard-to-digest insoluble fiber. Suddenly eating lots gives gut bacteria too much work at once and creates gas, so when you're already bloated, skip the raw vegetable platter. Softer, well-cooked options like baby spinach are easier. She compares building fiber tolerance to marathon training: work up to it.

• Gum, sparkling drinks and eating fast add air and irritation

Shah says chewing gum and fizzy drinks make you swallow air, and the sugar substitutes in most modern gum and diet sodas irritate gut bacteria. The digestive tract is 'one tube' from mouth to anus, so rushing meals and not chewing enough can start bloating before food reaches your stomach.

• Ibuprofen and other NSAIDs can cause bloating

Ibuprofen, Motrin, naproxen and aspirin all belong to the NSAID family and share bloating as a side effect. Shah describes the 'perfect storm': a raw vegetable platter, several painkillers the morning after a party, and the week before your period, then waking up looking six months pregnant. Mel admits painkillers were her usual morning-after routine.

• Common triggers vary from person to person

Shah's list includes artificial sweeteners, carbonation, dairy, gluten and a lot of sugar. She says about 68% of people worldwide are lactose intolerant. With gluten, preparation may matter: some people handle sourdough but not pizza. Her own triggers were gluten, dairy and sugar; others react to only one or two.

• An elimination diet is the gold standard, not food sensitivity tests

Shah says that, as of 2023, there's no validated food sensitivity test. Allergy tests, such as for peanut anaphylaxis, are valid, but nothing beats removing suspect foods for one to four weeks and reintroducing them. A big reaction when a food comes back is your answer. Mel, who drinks whole milk and eats cottage cheese and skyr daily, realised she has no idea whether dairy affects her.

• Your gut needs rest overnight

Shah says most Americans eat over about 16 hours a day. Citing the Nobel Prize-winning research on circadian rhythms and her figure that about 80% of body functions follow them, she recommends stopping food two to three hours before bed and fasting about 12 hours, such as 6 p.m. to 6 a.m. Late meals and late drinks disrupt sleep, overnight repair and the gut, so if you drink, do it earlier.

• Exercise and sunlight may be the 'best probiotic'

Shah says gut bacteria respond to movement and morning light by producing short-chain fatty acids, which calm inflammation and support mood. She says it's what people try to get from pills. She also links the gut-brain connection to low mood, fatigue and odd cravings, noting that few doctors check gut health when patients report depression or anxiety.

EXAMPLES

• Mel's red polyester pants

Mel travels with one stage outfit: stretchy red pants and a black shirt, steamed clean in hotel showers. Over a week of speeches including Nashville, Chicago and Orlando, the pants fit Monday to Thursday. By Friday she couldn't button them and the button was hanging by one thread. She looked 'six to seven months pregnant' despite sleeping well and not drinking heavily.

• Kendall's burping

In high school, Mel's daughter Kendall burped loudly and kept saying 'I feel so fat' despite being thin. Mel worried about body dysmorphia and took her to a therapist, who recommended a gut test instead. Mel says the test showed Kendall was missing beneficial gut bacteria, so food sat in her gut and caused painful pressure. A microbiome reset cleared the symptoms.

• Shah's 3F morning routine

Fasting: has it been 12 hours since your last meal? If you ate pizza at 11 p.m., wait until about 11 a.m. Fitness: about 30 minutes of movement in daylight, so a morning walk covers both. Food: a breakfast with fermented food and fiber.

• A gut-friendly breakfast

Shah suggests about 30 grams of protein, fiber from vegetables, and something fermented. Ideas: yogurt with nuts and berries; a tofu or egg scramble with vegetables; probiotic cottage cheese; a spoonful of sauerkraut; or water with raw apple cider vinegar. Ginger or peppermint tea also helps. She calls the first meal of the day your best chance to support gut and hormone health.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Wear stretchy pants when you travel**

  Shah's first tip: changing air pressure and not being able to go to the bathroom for a couple of days make travel days prime for bloating, so leave fitted waistbands at home.

- **When you're already bloated, ease off rather than 'cleaning up'**

  Avoid raw cruciferous vegetables, gum, fizzy and diet drinks, and painkillers if you can. Eat slowly, chew well, stop eating two to three hours before bed, and walk outside.

- **Find your triggers properly**

  Remove gluten, dairy and refined sugar for at least a week, ideally up to four, then reintroduce them one at a time. Skip food sensitivity test kits.

4 Surprising Secrets of Successful Relationships (What I Learned From a Fight with My Daughter)

Date: 2023-11-23 · Duration: 0:44:22
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l_jqrs9p5lI

KEYPOINTS

• A distant, angry teen may not actually hate you

Listener Chelsea feared her 17-year-old son hated her after a rough few years of breakups and a lost friend group she felt she'd handled badly. Kendall, 23, suspected he's carrying a lot of negative emotion from losing friends, and his parents are simply the safest place to put it. Oakley, 18, echoed Mel's line at home: we treat family worst because deep down we know they aren't going anywhere.

• Start repair with a real apology

Oakley said that if his parents had meddled in his friendships or dating life, he'd want a plain apology for getting into his business. It shows a parent is human, makes mistakes and doesn't think they're above it all, and it acknowledges the hurt. Mel calls that the non-negotiable first step.

• Space often brings appreciation

Kendall has watched college friends who fought constantly with their parents come to appreciate them once they left home. She admits she was furious in high school over parties she couldn't attend, people she couldn't see and opinions she didn't want — slamming doors, raising middle fingers. Years out of the house and a college graduate, she now sees those rules as attempts to keep her safe and set her up for success, and says she'd do the same as a parent.

• Many family fights are about mismatched energy or a disrupted routine

Mel's first lesson from her fight with Kendall: you're rarely angry at the person. One of you is quiet and the other is bouncing around like the Energizer Bunny, or someone has wrecked the morning routine that makes you feel like yourself, and the pent-up frustration lands on whoever is in the way.

• "Let them" means not trying to change someone's mood

Apart from one immature moment of throwing her boots on the bed, Mel let Kendall be annoyed, make her bed in a huff and stew in the car, without trying to fix it. She says staying neutral and unhooked defuses things faster. Kendall's caveat: the person being "let" usually gets angrier before calming down, like a kid in a tantrum, and a calm parent in the corner can feel infuriating in the moment.

• Never hold gifts over someone's head

Mid-fight, Mel nearly blurted out everything she'd bought Kendall the day before, including the running shoes she was wearing. She stopped herself and calls it a breakthrough: as a child she felt love came with strings and had to be earned through compliance. If you do something nice, do it because you want to, not so the person owes you obedience.

• Don't let guilt make you do what you don't want to do

Kendall offered to take an Uber so Mel could get organized; Mel insisted on driving, then drove angry with her elbows up. Kendall's point: once you accept a favor someone feels guilty refusing, you get their resentment. Chris noted Mel's "I don't care, I'll get a car" energy didn't make it easy to accept. Mel's takeaway: let them get the car.

• Pause when nothing is actually urgent

Kendall says they acted rushed when they weren't. Unless it's an emergency, breathe and ask for what you need — "Stop doing your makeup and just pick up your stuff for five minutes" — or go cool off in the kitchen.

EXAMPLES

• The morning that went sideways

After a late mother-daughter dinner with Kendall's roommate and her mom, they skipped their 7 a.m. Pilates class. In Kendall's tiny, hot room — Mel radiates heat and had a hot flash — Kendall woke groggy to Mel's belongings everywhere, Mel's suitcase on her bed and Mel chipper and ready. Whispered bickering about bed-making, packing and an Uber followed. Both apologized on air.

• What Oakley can't stand

Asked what his parents do that irritates him, Oakley named one thing: talking to him first thing in the morning. He described filling his water bottle in the kitchen while a parent launches into a conversation and wanting to be left alone. Kendall laughed that it was exactly what had happened to her with Mel that morning, which set up the story of their fight.

• Meeting Reese Witherspoon in birkenstocks

In a New York hotel vestibule around 7:45 a.m., sweaty from a workout, Mel was stopped by Reese Witherspoon, who said she loved her work and had seen her on the Today Show. Mel, rarely starstruck, felt tongue-tied. By the time she checked Instagram, Witherspoon had already sent her a message.

• Red light, green light

Mel proposed a tool from friends Josh and David, learned from their therapist: say "this is a red light moment" when you need quiet, or ask "is this a green light moment?" before diving in. Her family mostly vetoed it. Kendall wants the person needing space to raise it, and wants Mel to read the room first. She also admits "Do you want me to listen or advise?" feels better than unsolicited advice but still triggers her.

OTHER RELEVANT

• For a lonely new kid, expect a year

A listener's freshman daughter moved, had no homecoming date and was comparing herself to old friends online. Mel says belonging at a new school takes a full year; expecting that brings grace. Scrolling old friends' lives is avoidance; every small move counts — a club, creative classes, going to the dance without a date, other new kids, new lunch tables, inviting people over.

- **Old friends aren't moving faster**
  Oakley notes friends back home have had about 10 extra years together. As a senior mentor to freshmen, he's learned everyone is going through something.
- **Bring grace to holiday gatherings**
  Mel's Thanksgiving reminder: relatives may be struggling, had a rough morning or need space.

Outsmart a Narcissist: A Proven 4-Step Plan to Take Your Power Back | Mel Robbins Podcast

Guest: Rebecca Zung
Date: 2023-11-20 · Duration: 1:39:34
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wz_1hI7SOT4

KEYPOINTS

• A narcissist isn't someone who thinks too highly of themselves, but someone who feels no inner value

Zung, a top-ranked family law attorney who spent about 20 years litigating high-net-worth divorces and wrote SLAY the Bully, approaches narcissism as a litigator, not a clinician. In her definition, narcissists pull all their sense of worth from outside: image, prestigious friends, houses, cars, and putting other people down. Because it is fear- and scarcity-based, it is never enough.

• She describes three common types: grandiose, covert and malignant

Grandiose narcissists are the in-your-face, bragging 'garden variety' and the easiest to spot. Covert ones are the stealthiest: often seen as kind humanitarians, clergy, doctors or lawyers who play the victim, agree to things and don't follow through, take credit, and deliver small jabs that sound harmless when you repeat them. Malignant ones will ruin your life with false accusations, stalking or threats. People can be a mix.

• Her explanation of the origin: repeated childhood trauma stalls emotional development

In Zung's account, chronic stress in childhood floods the brain with cortisol and adrenaline and arrests development in the limbic, emotional system, while the prefrontal, thinking brain keeps maturing. The result is someone sharp in thought but emotionally immature, who can 'spin on a dime.' Mel, drawing on Dr. Ramani Durvasula, stresses that narcissists are made, not born, and that seeing the hurt child underneath shrinks them and gives you back your power.

• 'Narcissistic blindness' explains the 'I never said that'

A trigger, which can be an eye roll or a tone ('they hear tones like dogs hear whistles'), sends them into survival mode and black-and-white 'splitting.' In that state, she says, they may retaliate even at their own expense, have little memory of what they did, and be blind to the damage. Mel came to see family blow-ups that were later denied as possibly not even remembered, though Zung notes some people do act intentionally.

• They run on 'narcissistic supply', which comes in diamond and coal tiers

Diamond-level supply is image: celebrities, money, a new partner, the judge, their employer, the label on their clothes. They'll protect it at any cost, 'even at the cost of their children.' Coal-level supply is degrading, controlling and manipulating people: backhanded comments like 'that dress is very becoming for your figure.' Mel singles out triangulation, bonding by trashing others, as the sign she now sees everywhere.

• The cycle runs from love bombing to devaluing to discarding

Love bombing means mirroring you, '50 emails a day', soulmate talk, and pushing for marriage, bank access or a business partnership fast, often swooping in as a saviour after a death or crisis. Devaluing brings lies, unpaid loans, stories that don't hold up, and 'why are you so needy', alternating with promises. Discard means a smear campaign and the mask coming off. Mel likened it to the abuse cycle she learned about on a domestic violence hotline.

• Intermittent rewards create a trauma bond

Zung cites Stanford's Robert Sapolsky: monkeys rewarded unpredictably showed dopamine surges she likens to cocaine. Mel compares it to a slot machine. Unpredictable affection is why smart, accomplished people get hooked and keep chasing the next round of love bombing.

• The biggest myth is that narcissists just want to win

They also want to keep jerking you around for coal-level supply, so they keep moving the goalposts. Unless you threaten a more important source of supply, she says, it never ends. That is why their divorces drag on for years. One client told her, 'I'd rather pay you than her.'

• Her four-part SLAY framework

Strategy: set a specific, positive vision, not just 'peace'. Leverage: threaten diamond supply, or 'fluff for favour, vomit later' by feeding their ego to get what you want, and keep documentation of their contradictory texts and emails. Anticipate: know which type you're facing and expect baiting and 'flying monkeys'. You: stand in your power and mindset. 'Do you want to be right that you can't win, or actually win?'

EXAMPLES

• The $2 million apology

After 12 hours of mediation, a 'big flaming narcissist' husband was set to pay about $2 million in alimony over several years. The wife offered to waive all of it if he sincerely apologised in private. He refused at first because he wanted to keep her on a string. Zung pushed him into it, and the alimony was waived.

• Seeding the smear six months ahead

A covert narcissist might tell neighbours 'I'm so concerned about Johnny's drinking' for months before filing, then ask them to testify in a custody fight, even if Johnny has no drinking problem. At work it looks like 'accidentally' leaving you off an email chain for a key client meeting.

• The anniversary gaslight

'I'm going away with my friends on our anniversary weekend.' 'We never discussed that.' 'We had a whole conversation, you agreed, don't you remember?' She traces the term to the play and film Gaslight, in which a husband dims the lamps and denies it.

• Glinda's line

Zung casts the narcissist as the Wizard of Oz, a big projected head hiding a feeble, frightened man. Your goal is to be Glinda, who tells the Wicked Witch, 'Go away, you have no power here.'

• Mel's own two shifts

With a narcissistic person she won't cut out of her life, Mel pictures them as an eight-year-old mid-tantrum, then pauses to ask what she wants: a yes, a no, silence, or consciously giving some supply to get her goal.

OTHER RELEVANT

• First boundary: don't run, and stop accepting disrespect

Zung's first steps are don't run, make a U-turn, break free. Never explain, justify or over-share. Let the words go past you like dodgeballs hitting the wall. Remember they attached to you because you have value. If you feel physically unsafe, leave the space.

• Phrases that defuse

'I agree that that's your opinion.' 'Your triggers are not my responsibility.' 'I understand that's how you feel; your approach isn't working for me.' 'Let's discuss this when you're less emotional.' 'I can see that you're upset.'

• Make the vision concrete

Instead of 'I don't want a panic attack when I see my ex', try 'I want to sit next to them at the school show, celebrate our daughter, and go out for pizza afterwards.' With a parent, define how often you'll see them and what you'll talk about.

• Keep receipts, even outside court

Record what they say and do, even in recurring family fights like who hosts the holidays. It builds leverage and keeps you sane when they deny things. Negotiate contracts, issues and terms, never your self-worth.

The Surprising Link Between People Pleasing & Your Health: MD’s Recommendation on How to Say “No”

Guest: Dr. Neha Sangwan
Date: 2023-11-16 · Duration: 0:54:06
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FbmwWvZEdZw

KEYPOINTS

• A 'yes person' has lost their inner anchor

Internal medicine physician Dr. Neha Sangwan describes people-pleasing as becoming driftwood in the ocean: you go wherever the wind pushes you and lose track of how you make decisions. The goal is not an anchor that stops you from moving. It's a sailboat with a rudder, which feels the wind but charts its own course. When it's time to decide, she says, let your own heart be slightly louder than other people's voices.

• Her definition: giving up what matters to you so you can belong

People-pleasing, in Sangwan's words, is the moment you give up what matters to you to appease someone, avoid conflict or keep a relationship intact. She frames it as a spectrum, not a label. She wants to keep caring what her partner and the people around her want, but she had to learn to sit in someone else's discomfort in order to stay true to herself.

• People-pleasing is a coping strategy for feeling safe

Sangwan calls it a behavior we use to feel safe and belong, often formed in childhood by scanning the room and adjusting to get love or keep the peace. She mentions Gabor Maté's idea that we sometimes choose attachment over authenticity. A coach once challenged her for blaming her parents for her engineering and medical careers: she was the one who applied and did the 36-hour shifts. That made her see she was chasing being seen, valued and never sent away again.

• The real root is not being able to tolerate discomfort

Most of us were never taught how to handle disappointment or unease in the body. When that feeling rises, we do anything to make it stop, including saying yes when we mean no. Mel's takeaway is that before boundaries can work, you have to build the ability to ride out that wave. Being aware of the discomfort is what gives you a choice.

• Avoiding conflict feels easier now and costs more later

Shoes in the house, dirty dishes in the sink, hosting the holidays again, 'I'll take the pager': skipping the conversation gives you what Sangwan calls 'the short-term high' and leaves you with 'the long-term yuck.' An ignored conflict doesn't go away. It grows and moves somewhere else, until you're asking whether everyone thinks you're a magic fairy who does everything.

• Resentment means your boundaries have been crossed

Sangwan treats resentment as a sign that boundaries were trampled, often ones you never actually stated. She cites the saying that resentment is like drinking poison and hoping the other person dies. Notice where it shows up in your body, like a sinking stomach or weak knees. Mel finds it helpful to treat resentment as a sign of a broken system or outdated communication pattern instead of a personal attack. Sangwan's follow-up question: have you said this out loud to anyone, or only vented at home?

• Me-we-world: look at all three parts of a conflict

Trained as an engineer, Sangwan looks for root causes. In any conflict, ask what your part is, what the other person's part is, and what role the environment plays. With aging parents, if you always rush over right now while a sibling says 'in an hour,' look at your own urgency and the role you've long played in the family, and not just at their lack of help.

• Stress causes or worsens most illness, in her view

From her patients, Sangwan concluded that stress causes or exacerbates more than 80% of all illness. She believes not communicating with yourself and others makes people physically sick. When she urged colleagues to ask patients about the roots of their stress, they told her not to ask a question she didn't know what to do with. She says medications for anxiety, depression or sleep help when someone is near the edge, but used alone they send people 'back in the ring for round two' without new insight.

• Survey results from Mel's audience

When Mel's team surveyed listeners, 70% said they often say yes when they mean no, mostly at work and with friends. 82% said they feel constantly stressed, irritated, tired and impatient, and linked it to conflict they were avoiding. The most common reason given was 'I hate confrontation.'

EXAMPLES

• Sent to Africa at three months old

Sangwan's parents emigrated from India in 1965 and settled in Grand Blanc, Michigan. When her grandfather was posted by the UN to Africa, her grandmother took baby Neha with her. Two years later, back with her parents, she cried for over a month, called her dad 'hey you' before promoting him to 'Uncle,' and then learned to read everyone's wishes. Overhearing that her dad had wanted a son who'd be an engineer and her mom had wanted to be a doctor, she became both.

• The smashed plate in the yellow kitchen

At about seven, standing behind a plant, she watched her father slam a plate onto the table during an argument. Decades later she recognized the rule she had made in that moment: don't make Dad mad, and get out whenever voices rise.

• June 17, 2004: the alpha pager

At 31, exhausted on her last day of a five-on, five-off hospital rotation with 18 patients, she said yes to also covering the 'alpha pager' for all incoming transfers. Five hours later she had seen two patients. A nurse asked if she was okay, because she had requested IV potassium for room 636 four times in five minutes. She asked a psychiatrist colleague for a consult 'now.' An hour later he told her she was a severe people-pleaser, taking on an understaffed, bullying environment by herself.

• Mel's husband Chris and the attic crib

Mel had never thought of Chris as a people-pleaser. She realized he felt like the forgotten child: his mother recently recalled, in tears, putting him in a crib in an unfinished attic so they wouldn't hear him. For Mel, it explained a lifetime of putting himself

last.

• Patients' notes after five questions

After Sangwan's discharge questions, patients wrote back that they needed half their lifelong migraine medication, a third of their anxiety medication, or had slept through the night without back pain for the first time in five years. Separately, Mel cites a large review (97 reviews, over 1,000 trials, more than 125,000 participants) concluding that exercise was about 1.5 times more effective than medication or therapy for most people's depression and anxiety.

OTHER RELEVANT

• The 'awareness prescription': five questions

1) Why this? Why did this part of your body break down? 2) Why now, and what message weren't you getting? 3) In hindsight, which clues and patterns now make sense? 4) What else in your life needs healing? 5) If you spoke from the heart, what would you say? Sangwan says whatever answer comes to you is the right one.

• Saying no at work without fear

If your boss asks you to work the weekend, name it and ask for clarity: 'I'll need to see about child care. Is this ongoing? Help me understand what's changing about the role.' Sangwan frames it not as fear of being fired but as figuring out whether the role still fits.

• Notice your body when resentment hits

Before reacting, ask how the feeling shows up physically. Then ask whether you ever actually stated the boundary or just assumed people should know it.

6 Ways to Use My “Let Them” Theory to Improve Any Relationship | The Mel Robbins Podcast

Date: 2023-11-13 · Duration: 0:58:27
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fJIEzxxpHpw

KEYPOINTS

• 'Let them' redirects your energy away from what you can't control

When someone does something you don't like, such as skipping brunch plans, avoiding commitment, or watching ahead in your shared series, Mel says to quietly say 'let them.' Her core claim: the more you try to control something, the more out of control you feel. She stresses it isn't about letting people walk all over you. It's about taking back the time and energy you spend on other people's choices.

• Unhooking lets you respond effectively instead of emotionally

When the garbage collectors skipped her house, Mel didn't take it personally. She let them forget, then let herself call and ask them to come back. Once you're not offended, you can get what you want without the drama.

• Recovering peacemakers will feel discomfort, so let it pass

Caller Daniel stepped out of refereeing his family's conflicts but still felt uneasy. Mel says peacemaking was how he soothed his own discomfort. The growth is noticing the urge, breathing for about 90 seconds, and reminding yourself these adults can work it out or see a therapist. She had a similar habit of trying to keep her mom happy, and found her mom wasn't nearly as unhappy as she'd assumed.

• Be available for problem-solving, not gossip

Mel calls gossip a form of bonding through complaining that keeps families stuck. Her suggested script: you're happy to hear what happened and help find a solution, but you've committed to not gossiping about each other. When one person stops taking part, the person stirring drama has no partner, which leaves room for others to show up differently.

• Critics are often reacting to their own fears or lost dreams

Caller Jennifer left a 21-year teaching career to write a novel, with her wife's support. Her mother-in-law called it 'crazy' to Jennifer's 11-year-old son, who defended her, and has kept her distance for months. Mel offers two kind readings: worry about money coming out sideways, or a dream she never dared to chase being stirred up. Neither excuses the comment, but both make it less personal.

• The bigger issue may be silencing yourself to keep the peace

Jennifer admitted she isn't herself around her mother-in-law after 20 years. Mel says she had been fighting herself to avoid friction. The fix is to let the mother-in-law have her reactions while Jennifer shows up as herself, says when she doesn't feel supported, and asks her spouse for support.

• The four things you're responsible for

Mel's summary: expressing your needs, expressing your feelings, showing up as yourself, and doing what you need to build a better life. Other people are responsible for their own emotional reactions, feelings and boundaries.

• Expect pushback when you stop over-functioning

When you stop being someone's emotional caretaker, they will often throw a tantrum or lay on guilt, because it worked for years. Let them. Mel repeats her exceptions: you don't let a drunk friend drive, you take someone with suicidal thoughts to the ER, and you don't ignore discrimination or real danger.

• Rescuing can rob people of facing what they need to face

Caller Liz's parents fell into financial crisis because of her father's gambling. After weeks of chest tightness, she wrote each parent a letter urging them to get help and felt immediate relief. Mel told her she isn't responsible for his addiction or for rescuing her mother. She sees addiction as masking a deeper issue, and says bailing someone out can stop them from facing it. Liz can still support and guide, just not fix.

• You can't make someone adopt the theory

Caller Eva's husband stews about not being invited to lunch by coworkers or family. Mel says you can only appeal to someone's best self: tell them you're worried about the pattern, share the episode, then stop engaging and simply say 'let them' when it comes up again. The stories we tell ourselves are usually more painful than what actually happened.

EXAMPLES

• Tacos in the rain at Oakley's junior prom

At the pre-prom photo party, Mel was fuming about the corsage, underdressed parents, kids driving instead of taking a bus, and dinner at a taco stand in the pouring rain. Her daughter Kendall touched her arm and said, 'Mom, it's Oakley's prom, not yours… let them.' Mel says she felt the frustration leave and her focus shift back to herself.

• Aaron, the lifelong fixer

Caller Aaron grew up in an abusive home where the job was keeping Mom happy. After surviving cancer, Aaron wondered who they'd be if they stopped taking 1 a.m. calls and solving everyone's problems, and has started telling friends they're 'not up for the boyfriend conversation anymore.' Mel says telling a friend stuck in a pattern the truth is real friendship, and a lost holiday invite is a small price.

• Mimi, living with an abusive ex

Mimi, newly separated but sharing a house with her ex and her special-needs child, said he escalated as 'let them' stopped working on him, especially after she launched her business. Mel pushed back hard. Staying is a choice Mimi has to own, and the behavior will likely escalate. Asking family to let her move in for six months, or finding a roommate, isn't being a burden. Here, 'let me' means solving the problem and getting out.

• Eva's script for her husband

Mel's suggested wording: 'I'm concerned about you… I'm seeing this pattern where you're focused on all the places you're

not invited… you deserve more.' Then share the episode, and stop feeding the conversation.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Pair every 'let them' with 'let me'**
  Let them have their opinion, mood or tantrum. Then decide what you'll do: say how you feel, make a request, set a boundary, or simply get on with your own plans.
- **Sit with the 90-second wave**
  When the urge to fix, referee or people-please hits, name it, breathe and let it rise and fall instead of jumping in.
- **Know when the theory doesn't apply**
  In cases of danger, abuse, self-harm or discrimination, step in or get yourself out. 'Let them' is for unhooking from things you can't control, not for tolerating harm.

Stay-At-Home Mom “With No Experience” Built A $255M Empire: Blowouts, Divorces, & The Messy Truth

Guest: Alli Webb
Date: 2023-11-09 · Duration: 0:52:33
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7Fet5XVpDbk

KEYPOINTS

• 'I had no business being in business'
That's how Alli Webb describes herself when she started Drybar: a 32-year-old stay-at-home mom of two in Los Angeles with an itch to get out of the house, no college degree and no plan to disrupt an industry. Drybar grew into a $100 million-plus blowout brand. Mel calls BS on the story so many people tell themselves about not being qualified, and says many admired founders never had an MBA.

• Your best idea is usually right in front of you
Webb spent hours as a teenager figuring out hair in the bathroom, but drifted through a brief stint in college and a move to New York before deciding on beauty school. Her brother said 'I think you should'; her parents were less sure. Mel points to research suggesting that leaning into what you already love helps you succeed, because you'll naturally put in more time. Notice what makes you light up, even if your family dismisses it.

• Passion is energy, and it's personal
Mel defines passion as anything that energizes you, and points out how Webb speeds up when she talks about blowouts. Mel admits she couldn't have built Drybar because she doesn't care about blowouts and can't manufacture passion. Her test: what would you do all the time if your bills were covered? Not a beach with margaritas; that's fun for about a week.

• It started as a mobile blowout business that lost money
After a party-planning venture with her best friend Paige didn't feel right, Webb posted on a local LA moms' email list offering to come to people's homes while their babies slept and do a blowout for $35 to $40. She was flooded with requests. With gas and childcare limits, she made basically no money, but she got freedom, adult conversation and work she loved.

• No mirrors came from doing hair in kitchens
At clients' homes, she usually worked in the living room or at the kitchen bar, not in front of a mirror. Clients couldn't micromanage, didn't spend 45 minutes nitpicking their faces, and had a big reveal moment at the end. That became Drybar's signature: stations without mirrors facing the client.

• Saying no too often meant it was time to grow
In under a year, with only about four hours away from her kids, she could do three or four blowouts in a day and was turning down more than she accepted. Sending other stylists out risked losing clients and control. So she pitched her brother Michael on one small shop where clients came to her; he asked why women couldn't blow out their own hair. Her salon know-how, plus his book smarts, made the partnership.

• Everything you've done is preparation
Webb says PR work and years as a salon owner's assistant uniquely prepared her 'to sit at the helm of a blowout empire.' Mel's point: experiences in any field teach you what you would and wouldn't do.

• She built a different kind of salon culture
Webb disliked the cutthroat 'eat what you kill' salon world and the stories stylists told her about how they were treated. Drybar paid stylists hourly plus tips instead of chair rental, so clients could sit in anyone's chair and get a great blowout. Today more than 5,000 stylists work for Drybar.

• Small, debatable decisions shaped the brand
Drybar provided every dryer and brush, which annoyed stylists who liked their own tools. Styles were named after drinks, like the Cosmo for curls and the Mai Tai for messy beach waves; Michael thought that was cheesy, and customers loved it. In 2010, mid-recession, the founders personally guaranteed the lease of a business landlords didn't understand ('Is it a bar?').

• Impostor syndrome means you're growing
Webb's response to feeling like an impostor is 'great.' It means you're doing something new. She felt that way going on live QVC for the first time, and decided she was up for the challenge.

• The messy cost: her marriages
Webb built Drybar with her first husband, Cameron, who once tried to call off the wedding a month before. She now sees their close friendship with little passion as a copy of her parents' marriage; they also built a business and divorced in their 50s. After she began inching toward an emotional affair, she ended it. Then, sharing it publicly for the first time, she said her second marriage, fast-tracked during COVID, is ending. She'd mistaken intense passion for proof it was right and overlooked what didn't fit.

EXAMPLES

• The 'psychology of a blowout'
A friend writing for Marie Claire sat in Drybar for eight hours watching women arrive serious, head down, hat on, and leave lighter. Webb sometimes didn't recognize clients on the way out. That's when she realized Drybar was selling happiness and confidence, not blowouts. Mel notes research linking feeling good about how you look to confidence.

• Letting the phones ring
The first week, phones rang nonstop over loud music, blow dryers and Devil Wears Prada on the TVs. Webb hated putting a finger up to a client while answering a call, so she let calls go to voicemail and returned them at night. Eventually phones moved out of the shops to remote staff, then a full call center as Drybar grew to about 150 locations. About half of clients still prefer calling.

• The ceiling caves in

In the first month, black goop from the restaurant above seeped through the tiles, then broke through right in front of the first chair. Nobody was hit; clients moved their chairs and asked the stylist to keep going.

• Mel's tough-love girlfriend moment

When Webb said she'd started talking to people after about five months single, Mel pushed hard: she's not even divorced yet, can't trust herself, and in Mel's opinion needs a year. Webb pushed back. She'll go at her own pace, slowly, and is 'cautiously optimistic.'

OTHER RELEVANT

• Don't be so afraid of being alone that you rush

Webb's advice, aimed at herself too, for anyone heading into a new relationship, especially when blending families: slow down, know your non-negotiables, and don't lose yourself in your partner the way she says she does, like the 'how do you like your eggs' scene in Runaway Bride.

• The worst they can say is no

Webb cold-texted Mel, whom she'd never met, when her husband of one year asked for a divorce. Mel responded and they became friends. Webb uses the same approach in business.

• Go deeper in her book

Webb's book, The Messy Truth, tells the full story of building Drybar, the costs and her practical takeaways.

This Teen Cracked the Code on Anxiety and Teaches You How He Did It | Mel Robbins Podcast

Guest: Oakley Robbins
Date: 2023-11-06 · Duration: 0:52:15
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7nP7GUVydPE

KEYPOINTS

• Stress is part of life, so stop resisting it

Answering a 17-year-old who wants a stress-free college search, Oakley, now 18 and just done with his applications, says that isn't possible and the process is arguably supposed to be stressful. Accepting stress, then stepping back to breathe, beats rewriting the same essay over and over because 'this isn't good enough.' Mel extends it to job hunts, fertility, dating and searching for purpose.

• No single outcome decides your life

Not getting into a dream school won't stop you from getting the job or living where you want; the school you end up at is usually great, and you can transfer. The bigger cost is spending senior year worrying and missing what Oakley calls arguably the most enjoyable year of high school, so appreciate where you are now.

• Name your boundary instead of hoping people guess it

Oakley told Mel he hears about college essays all day at school and didn't want to discuss them at home. Mel praises him for taking responsibility for the limit and suggests adults do the same: 'my weight is not up for discussion,' or 'please don't ask if I'm dating anyone.' Parents should know junior and senior year are '90% college' in a teen's head.

• Don't keep raising what someone is already anxious about

If your son and daughter-in-law are trying for a baby, they're already thinking about it every day. Mel describes a close friend who never had children and is hurt each time her mother says it breaks her heart. If someone wants to talk about a job search or a house hunt, they'll bring it up; show love in other ways.

• Parent through your values, not through control

On alcohol, Mel assumes every teen will experiment, so she and Chris focused on what they value most: trust, open communication and safety. Kids may try drinking with them first; there's no grounding for honesty, but lying is punished, and getting in a car with a drinking driver costs driving privileges for a year. Banning alcohol, she believes, produced sneaking, lying and binge drinking among other kids.

• During divorce, be honest without details and keep your spouse out of it

Oakley's advice: tell kids you're unhappy, repeat that it's not their fault, take their wishes about which house to be at seriously, recognize they're grieving too, and never vent about the other parent to them.

• You usually already know when to break up

Oakley says what holds most people back is fear of hurting the other person. An awkward hour or tears in a school hallway beat staying with someone you aren't happy with. Staying friends with an ex is possible, but only after space: no post-breakup hookups and no drunk calls, and the friendship won't look like the relationship.

• Confidence is an action, not a feeling

Mel's definition: confidence is the willingness to try. Oakley says middle school is where confidence drops, as bodies change and kids start talking about each other; what helped him was time, realizing nobody is looking at you as closely as you are, theater, and surrounding himself with people who hype him up rather than chasing a cool crowd.

EXAMPLES

• The solo jelly costume

On Halloween, Oakley's peanut butter and jelly duo partner bailed. He nearly skipped his bulky costume, then saw everyone else's and put it on. He spent the day explaining 'it's just the jelly,' loved it, and realized the only one judging him was himself. Mel adds that Chris built confidence the same way by starting men's retreats and a master's in transpersonal psychology.

• The summer camp bullying

At a month-long camp around sixth grade, Oakley's letters went from 'I love it' in week one to 'get me out' in week two, but he didn't say why. When he finally told Mel he was being targeted, she 'became the Hulk' and pulled him out; the camp's investigation ended in a three-page letter from the director admitting it had profoundly failed.

• Gaming as a phone call

Mel and Chris used to fight over Oakley's gaming. Mel's view: on headsets with friends, it's a play date, the boys' equivalent of a three-hour phone call. Oakley suggests an hour or two on weekend days is fine, and only full-day, 9-to-5 gaming is a concern.

• His sophomore-year low

Two years earlier, Oakley was in a dark place and believed he'd feel that way forever. The mindset slowly moved to the back of his mind and faded, which is why he promises a struggling listener it will get better.

• His daily journal

Mel learns on air that Oakley arrives at school 20 minutes early to journal in the car about the previous day, and has for about a year. He'd never show her, and she respects it, along with his room and his twice-daily showers.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Oakley's 'mentors at the table' exercise for anxiety

Sit up straight, plant your feet, rest your hands on your thighs. Take three slow breaths in and out through your nose with eyes open, then close your eyes (not while driving). Picture a long table of mentors, real or fictional. Ask each, 'Do you love me?', then 'Do you have any wisdom for me?', taking the first thought that comes, then ask about love once more and open your eyes.

• Openers for a teen who's always in their room

Oakley: 'I feel like you're in your room a lot recently, I'm curious what's happening.' Mel's: 'You don't seem like yourself.' A 15-year-old is likely on her phone, and that's normal; worry if they come home and never leave the room. A regular family dinner with a high-and-low round opens conversation.

• If a college kid reports bullying, assume it's worse

Mel reads a college athlete telling a parent about team bullying or hazing as a sign they don't know what to do. Ask leading questions: Are you telling me everything? Are you nervous going to practice? Have you told anyone? What do you think you should do?

• Raising favoritism or staying close to siblings

Bring specific examples and say how it made you feel ('I'm starting to feel like I'm not important') rather than accusing parents of favorites. Siblings who rarely talk can stay connected through a family group chat with photos, memes and occasional 'roll call.'

Dr. Gina Poe: How To Get Better Sleep And Boost Your Learning, Memory & Energy | Mel Robbins Podcast

Guest: Dr. Gina Poe
Date: 2023-11-02 · Duration: 0:41:39
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_0FHxJLe9Ns

KEYPOINTS

• Sleep is active work time for the brain, not laziness.
Dr. Gina Poe, a UCLA neuroscientist who has studied sleep for about 30 years, says researchers have been trying to answer why we sleep for 50 to 70 years or more. The difficulty is that so much happens only during sleep: it supports the immune system, thinking, emotional health, and growth and repair. She suggests thinking of sleep as a different, pleasant kind of work time. That makes it easier to justify, and to schedule, in a workaholic culture.

• Falling asleep changes the brain's chemistry.
When we fall asleep, the mix of neurotransmitters changes. Acetylcholine, which keeps us attentive to our surroundings, switches off in non-REM sleep. Poe notes that some animals sleep one brain hemisphere at a time, and the sleeping half is the one that turns acetylcholine off.

• A 10-year-old's sleep is the benchmark.
Children around 10 have well-tuned homeostatic sleep pressure and circadian timing, which is why Poe says not to wake one if you can help it. Teens still need about 8 to 10 hours but naturally fall asleep and wake later. Sleep tends to stay good until about 40 or 50, then becomes less efficient, varying from person to person.

• Adults need about 7.5 to 8 hours, give or take an hour.
Some people need nine hours, while others feel fine on six for a while. Poe says your body tells you, especially through how sleepy you feel during the day. Ideally you wake with daylight, so work backwards from your wake-up time to set your bedtime.

• The stages run from dozing to deep sleep to REM.
N1 is two to five minutes of dozing, which is why you forget the last bit of a book or podcast. Between N1 and N2 come hypnagogic hallucinations, which can be as mild as the jolt of falling off a step or as frightening as a monster on your chest. N2 brings short, vivid dream fragments. N3, or slow-wave sleep, lasts roughly 20 to 30 minutes per cycle. It's deep and hard to wake from, and people woken from it report no dreams.

• Deep sleep cleans the brain.
In N3, synchronised waves sweep through the brain from front to back, about one per second. They push waste such as misfolded proteins into the cerebrospinal fluid and restore the energy used during the day. Without this stage, Poe says, you wake up with a 'junky' brain and handle the day less well.

• REM sleep is where learning gets organised.
REM is called paradoxical sleep because brain activity looks like waking, but the chemistry differs. Norepinephrine (noradrenaline) and serotonin, which tune you to new information from outside, are switched off. The brain turns inward and sorts the day's learning into schemas, which Poe compares to boxes of Lego pieces. You gather the pieces while awake and assemble them while asleep. Mel's summary is that habits are made in the bedroom. About 90% of people woken from REM report a dream, even those who say they never dream.

• Order matters, and you need about five 90-minute cycles.
A cycle runs N1, N2, N3, N2, then REM, averaging 90 minutes, and around five a night is ideal. Removing any one stage makes the whole process work less well. Cut REM and memories don't consolidate; cut N3 and the brain doesn't get cleaned.

• Your body knows the clock time, so staying up late costs you deep sleep.
Mel assumed that sleep starts at 'hour zero' whenever you nod off. Poe corrects her: your body knows 9pm from 2am. Most N3 cleaning happens in the first half of the night relative to your body clock. If you go to bed three hours later than usual, you still get REM but lose much of the deep sleep. People who are chronically late sleepers shift their clock, which aligns most strongly with daily light exposure.

• Second-half REM helps take the sting out of painful memories.
Poe's lab, working with others, is investigating how REM separates the factual memory of a painful event from the physical and emotional pain attached to it. In people with insomnia, noradrenaline stays too active during sleep because they are anxious, and that separation doesn't happen. This is ongoing research, but she says good sleep isn't just helpful for healing; it's necessary.

• A consistent bedtime boosts growth hormone tenfold.
When you fall asleep in step with your body clock, the combination of melatonin and sleep releases about ten times more growth hormone than you get while awake. Growth hormone repairs muscle, builds proteins and helps consolidate memories. If you push sleep past your melatonin surge, the growth hormone surge is much smaller.

EXAMPLES

• Melatonin supplements: unknown benefit, unreliable doses
Asked whether melatonin supplements boost this effect, Poe says nobody knows, and she doubts it, because much more than melatonin is happening at sleep onset. She adds that supplements aren't really regulated by the FDA, so a pill might contain no melatonin or ten times what you need.

• Why a warm bath helps
Mel takes a bath every night. Poe explains that warming your hands and feet widens the blood vessels there, which helps your core cool by about half a degree as you fall asleep. People sleep best with warm hands and feet exposed to the air.

• The sleep scientist's own routine
Poe's best bedtime is around 10:30 to 11pm, and she tries to stop working an hour before. She showers, then prays, relaxes

and breathes deeply, or plays an easy number game called Threes on a dimmed phone with blue light turned off and Do Not Disturb on. She is usually asleep within 10 minutes. She admits it's better to keep the phone out of the bedroom, and suggests a book as an alternative.

- **Mel's kids' bedtime routine as a model**
  Mel describes the routine she used with her three young children: same bedtime, toys away, bath, story, pyjamas, song and a kiss goodnight. Poe agrees that adults need the same predictable wind-down.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Get bright light in the morning**
  Get outside around sunrise; even a cloudy or rainy day is brighter than indoor light. Twenty minutes is plenty, ideally while walking, and even two minutes helps. Poe also suggests getting daylight around lunch and dinner.
- **Avoid bright and blue light at night**
  Screens in the evening tell your clock it's morning and shift you later. Use blue-light settings or blockers, and dim lights as bedtime approaches.
- **Poe's five free basics**
  Bright morning light, a consistent bedtime, a warm bath or shower before bed, vigorous exercise during the day (she isn't sure why it helps; adenosine build-up and repair signals are possible reasons), and not too much caffeine too late.
- **Pick three and stick with them**
  Mel's three: morning light whatever the weather, going to bed earlier (she notices she's happier and more successful when she does), and a nightly bath or shower as a wind-down cue.

Simple Steps To Losing Weight & Feeling Better: The Science of Lifting Weights | Mel Robbins Podcast

Guest: Dr. Gabrielle Lyon
Date: 2023-10-30 · Duration: 1:15:29
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F4jxN4v50iI

KEYPOINTS

• Skeletal muscle is an organ, not a look

Dr. Gabrielle Lyon, a physician fellowship-trained in nutritional science and geriatrics, says skeletal muscle makes up about 40% of body weight and should be treated as the 'organ of longevity.' Mel admits she had only ever judged muscle by whether it showed.

• Contracting muscle releases signaling molecules and clears blood sugar

When you contract muscle, even in a bicep curl or climbing stairs, Lyon says it secretes myokines that travel through the body and support bone health, brain health and nutrient use. Working muscle also pulls glucose out of the bloodstream into the cells, which is why she ties muscle so tightly to insulin resistance and the obesity epidemic.

• Lyon's reframe: people are under-muscled, not just overfat

Running a weight-management clinic while also caring for geriatric and Alzheimer's patients, Lyon concluded that the common thread was unhealthy muscle rather than excess fat. She argues that conditions like cardiovascular disease, hypertension and Alzheimer's are in large part 'diseases of skeletal muscle' that begin decades earlier, while acknowledging obesity itself is very complex. If 50 years of fighting fat hasn't worked, she says, we may be fixing the wrong problem. She cites research showing 'healthy' sedentary 18-year-olds already had signs of unhealthy muscle.

• Aim to gain muscle instead of losing pounds

Chasing weight loss through repeated diets strips away muscle, and it gets harder to rebuild as you age. Lyon finds the 'what I have to lose' framing demotivating and suggests targets like putting on five pounds of muscle. She calls muscle the one currency of health you cannot buy or sell, only earn, and says earning it builds confidence and a can-do attitude. Her line: you can't exercise your liver, but you can exercise muscle.

• Protein helps with fullness and is hard to overeat

Protein is made of 20 amino acids, which Lyon compares to the grains of sand in a sandcastle. Her hunger test: sit down with a chicken breast instead of a bag of chips. Because protein is essential, she says it's hard to gain fat eating a lot of it.

• Target about 1 gram of protein per pound of ideal body weight

Lyon says the average woman eats roughly 60 to 68 grams a day. For Mel, at an ideal body weight of 138 pounds, she prescribes at least 100 grams and up to 120 to 130 grams. Mel's honest reaction is fear of becoming a 'Weeble Wobble.' Lyon answers that 100 grams is only about 400 calories, that up to around 20% of that energy can go into digesting it, and that overfeeding studies show body composition improving. She adds that calories still have to be controlled.

• Older muscle gets worse at sensing protein, but more protein compensates

Muscle is a nutrient-sensing organ, and that sensitivity drops with age. That shows up as sarcopenia, or frailty. Lyon says raising protein intake can make older muscle respond more like muscle in your 20s. She also calls healthy muscle your 'metabolic sink' for blood sugar and triglycerides, and your reserve during illness. She notes that cancer patients often die of cachexia, a state that wastes muscle.

• Resistance training is the one non-negotiable form of exercise

Lyon says all movement helps, but for muscle health resistance training is non-negotiable: any movement against a load, whether body weight, push-ups, bands, machines or free weights. Yoga and Pilates are a fine starting point but not ideal over time. The general guideline is 150 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous activity a week. Her minimum is two days of full-body lifting built on multi-joint moves, such as a machine squat or leg press for beginners.

• Train to real fatigue; heavy weights are optional

Lyon used to believe women had to lift heavy, and she still prefers it, but says the evidence suggests what matters is genuinely taxing the muscle: not being on your phone, and working until you can't do another rep. Some evidence or speculation suggests women may need more volume, but she warns against getting lost in the weeds. Beginners improve fastest. Expect visible change in about 6 to 8 weeks, though energy, blood sugar and triglyceride markers respond right away.

EXAMPLES

• 'Betty,' the patient who sparked muscle-centric medicine

Lyon describes a woman in her mid-50s, a mother of three, who had been told for years to lose the same 10 to 20 pounds she gained after her first baby. Each round of cutting calories and adding cardio destroyed more of her muscle. Seeing this pattern across many patients led Lyon to conclude the problem was being under-muscled.

• The postmenopausal breakfast study

Lyon describes research where both groups of postmenopausal women ate 1,600 calories a day. One group's first meal had about 40 grams of protein. The other had a typical breakfast she recalls as roughly 50 grams of carbs and 13 grams of protein. The protein group had better body composition, even though calories were identical.

• Beef patty vs. six cups of quinoa

To get about 2.5 grams of leucine, the amino acid that switches on muscle building, you need 3 to 4 ounces of lean beef or roughly six cups of quinoa. Lyon jokes that the quinoa route is 'carbicide.' Vegans and vegetarians can use blended plant protein powders, which are balanced for amino acids. Someone eating only whole plant foods may need about 35% more total protein.

• Mel's collagen surprise

Mel had been counting collagen in her smoothie as another 10 to 20 grams of protein. Lyon says collagen scores essentially zero for muscle health. It may be good for hair and nails, but it shouldn't count toward your protein target.

• Vicki's workaholic 24-year-old daughter

A mother writes in about her perfectionist, anxious daughter, who has gained about 25 pounds, sleeps little and pushes back on health advice. Lyon's suggestion is to frame training around the daughter's own goal of success, so the discipline she already shows at work turns into discipline about her health. Mel adds that helping caregivers take care of themselves also helps their kids.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Lyon's three-meal protein template

First meal: 30 to 50 grams of protein (a whey or pea shake is fine) with no more than about 30 grams of carbs. Middle meal: a smaller one, around 20 grams of protein and 20 grams of carbs, such as three eggs. Last meal: another 30 to 50 grams before the overnight fast. She calls these broad generalizations, not exact rules.

• A 20-minute weekly interval session

Lyon adds one high-intensity session a week for women. That means all-out efforts of 45 seconds to a minute on an Assault bike or rower, or doing as many air squats as you can, followed by rest. Repeat for about 20 minutes. With true 80 to 90% effort, she says even a few minutes can count.

• 'Muscle magic' snacks during the day

Do 10 to 20 air squats every hour, stand at your desk, take brisk walks to the bathroom or water fountain about 10 times a day, and keep a resistance band at your desk for quick sets of 10. Lyon says 1-pound wrist weights help, though they aren't optimal.

• Menopause belly is not inevitable

Lyon pushes back on the idea that every woman gains about 30 pounds at menopause. Shifting hormones affect body composition, partly because women tend to move less. Resistance training against an external load plus enough protein is how she says midlife women can manage it.

6 Signs You Are Addicted to Stress, According to a Psychologist | The Mel Robbins Podcast

Guest: Dr. Scott Lyons
Date: 2023-10-26 · Duration: 1:10:32
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=punx8WL5_-s

KEYPOINTS

• Drama addiction means unnecessary turmoil, and it can be internal

Dr. Scott Lyons, author of Addicted to Drama, defines it as unnecessary turmoil: exaggeration, intensification and dysregulated energy and emotion used as a dysfunctional way to adapt. Mel's realization is that it isn't only the loud person who sucks the air out of a room. Someone sitting quietly in the corner, braced and ruminating, can be just as hooked. Lyons reclaimed the word 'drama' from 'drama queen' to make the topic more approachable.

• Outward signs to check yourself against

Lyons's list includes extreme language ('literally,' 'always,' 'never'), feeling anxious or bored when things are calm, gossiping and stirring things up, and craving extreme situations and sensations. Others: pulling people into your crisis, generalizing one bad event ('what's up with men'), the catchphrase 'it's always something,' feeling most alive under deadline pressure, constantly fixing things, and replaying scenarios. If you retell a story more than twice, he asks what you haven't processed. His warning on gossip: people who gossip with you also gossip about you.

• Inside, it feels like urgency and being out of sync

From the outside, someone hooked on drama can seem controlling and bulldozing. Inside, they feel out of control, in pain and on edge, as if everything is an emergency, with timing and emotion that feel mismatched with everyone else's. Peace and stillness can feel unsafe, even terrifying.

• The 'revving reflex' interrupts calm

Lyons describes the moment in a meditation class, a bath or a garden when you start to relax and an inner alarm goes off. Suddenly you're thinking about work, checking your phone or looking up an ex. He also cites sad music when you're sad and rushing with nowhere to go. The revving keeps you from contacting vulnerable, unprocessed feelings. His line: 'We chase the drama to avoid our traumas.'

• Drama gives three payoffs: distraction, energy and pain relief

Overscheduling, gossiping and fighting all trigger the same stress response. The first stage releases energy; the second releases a cascade of pain-relieving hormones. For people numbed by early trauma, 'drama is not about making sense, it's about making sensation.' The intensity rises above the threshold of numbness so you feel alive, even if what you feel is bad.

• It meets the criteria for an addiction

Lyons points to tolerance (needing more stress to feel the same; he once took on multiple grad programs at once), withdrawal (anxiety and boredom that create an 'itch' for friction, doomscrolling or news), disregard for social consequences, and the way it consumes energy and attention. On violent crime and horror shows at night, he says they offer the same three payoffs, not just familiarity.

• Trauma trains your senses to scan for danger

Staying in an Airbnb, Lyons couldn't find a carbon monoxide detector beeping every 55 seconds and noticed his whole body bracing for the next beep. Trauma isn't only stored, he explains; it tunes all your senses like a TV channel toward the next possible threat, which is why 'it's always something.'

• How to be around someone who's revving

Stress responses are contagious, so first notice what's happening in your own body and settle yourself. Don't try to stop someone mid-roll down the 'hill of drama'; questions just add logs to the fire. Let the cycle run, then reconnect and ask what story, feeling or unmet need sits beneath their story. If you get an eruption followed by the silent treatment, validate your reality with a friend or therapist rather than waiting for theirs to match.

• Passive people are in the drama too

Lyons, who refereed his parents' fights and later did couples work, recognized he got his own physiological rev from being the martyr. If you enable someone's drama by avoiding confrontation, you're participating. Reclaiming the choice to say no or walk away is what makes the relationship workable. He stresses this isn't victim-blaming.

EXAMPLES

• Lyons faked his own suicide at 16

Bullied by students and by teachers who called him stupid because of severe learning disabilities, he staged a note and pills. He didn't want to die; he wanted people to feel his pain and save him, which he now calls 'weaponized empathy.' He went inpatient, loved the safety, then was sent back to the same school. Later, depressed after a divorce in his late 20s and living with his parents, he noticed he felt alive only when fighting with his ex or sister, watching Bravo, or calling friends about the news.

• The motorcycle boots fight

While shopping in LA, Mel told her daughter that the boots she tried on looked like a pair Mel bought her five years ago. Her daughter stomped back into the dressing room, and the tension lasted the day. The next morning Mel asked what she needed. Side by side in the car, her daughter burst into tears: she felt lost and lonely and afraid she wouldn't make it as a singer-songwriter. Mel apologized for assuming she had it all figured out.

• 'Try to get a ride home'

While Mel traveled, Chris, shaped by a childhood where no one picked him up, told their middle-school daughters to find their own rides. Lyons calls the family's panic around getting out the door now a disproportionate response, 'blowing out a candle with a fire hose.'

• Mel's lonely story and her friend's passive-aggressive texts

Five or six years ago, Mel convinced herself her old friends were partying without her, which kept her isolated. In reality,

everyone was busy and lonely. A friend who texts 'thanks for not telling me you were in town' likely feels unseen. Lyons suggests responding: 'I hear the story you're creating is that I'm not here for you. I'd love to connect.'

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Create a family safe word like 'rev up'**

  Mel asked her family to call out her demeaning tone and venting. Losing that outlet forced her to face being overwhelmed at work without a strong team. Start by noticing the urge for even one second, then build to five and ten.

- **Take a media fast**

  Lyons says media captures attention with awe, angst and anger. He cites findings that people who repeatedly watched Boston Marathon bombing coverage showed more significant PTSD signs than people who were actually there, which he attributes to the repetition and dramatic framing.

- **Choose your words, set boundaries, forgive yourself**

  Swap 'you're an abuser' for 'when you said that, I felt pained.' For a parent whose 30-year-old calls them an abuser when refused, Lyons suggests the boundary 'that word isn't allowed in our family.' Forgive yourself for a survival mechanism while taking responsibility for change.

“I Can’t Stop Stalking My Ex Online. How Do I Stop?” How To Move On For Good | Mel Robbins Podcast

Date: 2023-10-23 · Duration: 0:36:36
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sQTCphkl3oA

KEYPOINTS

• Treat checking an ex's social media like an addiction: block them everywhere

Listener Patty admitted she still checks her ex's feeds seven years after the split. Mel's blunt answer: you're chasing a dopamine hit from curiosity, then stalking, then feeling bad, the same build-up-and-crash loop as drinking or gambling. Because you can't trust yourself, take away access. A quick search on air confirmed that once you block someone you can't see their profile, so block them on every platform.

• Recruit friends to protect the boundary

Mel says to tell friends you've blocked your ex and ask them not to show you posts or bring the person up. Her core line: when your past is in your present, you can't create a different future, and seven years of watching is why Patty doesn't have the future she wants.

• The biggest mental health gains often come from the neck down

Asked what she'd adopted from 100 episodes, Mel says experts repeatedly point to physical habits and nervous-system care. Hers: get straight out of bed, make it, get outside into bright light to reset her circadian rhythm, and walk without listening to anything.

• Mel sees signs and synchronicities as evidence of a greater force

Asked whether she believes in God, Mel says she believes in a higher power she can't define, in a good force connecting everyone, and in signs (a song, a squirrel crossing the road, unexpected connections) that suggest you're on the right path. Her team calls this 'the portal is open.' It takes courage to believe you're meant for something and the clarity to notice these signs.

• Mel's view of death: being born into another world

She stresses she doesn't know, but compares it to a baby in the womb, warm and safe with food on tap, with no concept of the world it's about to be born into. She thinks death may be the same. Raised Methodist, she views Jesus as a historical figure and believes the ability to connect with something deeper lies inside each person.

• Pushy parents of your kids' friends are usually acting from insecurity

In late elementary and middle school, friend packs splinter, and one parent often lobbies to get their child invited to the three-person sleepover. Mel argues this pushes a child where they're not wanted, and that you'd be better off helping your kid meet people who are better friends. With the parent, be direct: you won't arrange your kids' friendships, and no one is obligated to invite everyone.

• After a baby, lead with affection and conversation, not sex

To Skip, who feels neglected after his wife gave birth, Mel says intimacy doesn't require penetration. Birth is a major physical event, and new mothers may fear pain, torn stitches or another pregnancy, and may feel unsexy or have the baby blues. Once she's healed, try a bath together or foot rubs, say you miss her, and ask how you can be close in ways that don't hurt or worry her.

• Promoting your business is an act of service

To Amarie, embarrassed to market her business, Mel says hiding it out of fear of what friends think is selfish, because people who need you can't find you. If describing your work honestly sounds like bragging, that means you're that good.

• Consuming personal-development content isn't doing the work

For someone doing 'all the work' and still feeling unworthy, Mel suggests it may have become entertainment, as it once was for her. Real work means changing habits, examining childhood patterns behind unworthiness, and caring for your nervous system with things like cold exposure and vagus nerve toning. Worth, like love, is created internally and won't come from a job or a partner.

EXAMPLES

• Lessons Mel adopted from guests

From Dr. Russell Kennedy: anxiety as an 'alarm' that rings when the younger you feels alone, soothed by telling yourself it will be okay. From Dr. Mindy Pelz: fasting 12 to 16 hours a day for 21 days, then taking seven days off, which she ties to being a woman. From Dana K. White: instead of piles and baskets, carry each stray item straight to where it belongs, and own less.

• Kendall, a tuna sandwich and the Newport Folk Festival

Mel's daughter Kendall, an aspiring touring singer-songwriter, froze backstage at the Newport Folk Festival for six hours feeling like an impostor, then decided to lead with humour. She befriended a man named Phil over a 'sloppy tuna salad sandwich' without realising he was a highly respected keyboardist and producer. Watching his warm-up, she silently wished he'd play Bonnie Raitt's "I Can't Make You Love Me," and he switched to it. He said he hadn't played it in a warm-up in a decade. They performed it together the next night, leading other bands to ask her for sessions.

• How Mel learned she was dyslexic

The way many adults do: one of her kids was diagnosed, it looked familiar, and her own neuropsych evaluation confirmed it.

• The 'hip replacement' comparison

Mel asks whether you'd want to test a partner's new titanium hip the moment the anaesthetic wore off, to show why rushing sex after childbirth lands badly. She notes it differs whether it's been six weeks or six months with a breastfeeding baby in the bed.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Write a day in the life of the worthy you

On paper, describe when that version of you wakes up, whether they exercise, journal or check their phone, and what projects, spiritual practice, friends and hobbies they have. Then do those things even while you feel unworthy. Mel calls this behavioural activation, and says the actions become proof that feeds itself.

- **Do a social media audit for anyone you're stuck on**

  If seeing someone's posts keeps you in an emotional loop, remove access first and process feelings second. Willpower alone won't beat that cycle.

- **Let older kids own their friendships**

  Once kids have phones and make their own plans, step back. The bigger deal you make of an exclusion, the worse they'll feel.

How to Have the Best Sex of Your Life: Even if You Are Tired, Single… or Not in the Mood

Guest: Dr. Emily Morse
Date: 2023-10-19 · Duration: 1:30:04
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GqPgnUvgJB0

KEYPOINTS

• Great sex doesn't happen automatically; believing it should is the core myth

Dr. Emily Morse, who has hosted Sex With Emily for almost 18 years and holds a PhD in human sexuality, says couples expect the new-relationship energy of the early days to last on its own, then quietly suffer through disappointing sex because they don't know how to ask for something different. Her mission is making sex as normal to talk about as finances or who walks the dog.

• Stress, trauma and shame are the three 'pleasure thieves'

When listeners sent questions, the recurring blockers were shame, overthinking and not being able to ask. Dr. Emily groups them as stress, trauma and shame. On stress she is blunt: you can't live with spiked cortisol and also feel arousal; anxiety and desire cancel each other out, so sex can't be siloed from overall physical and mental health.

• Desire can be spontaneous or responsive, and neither is broken

Her shorthand is that penis owners tend to be 'frying pans' and vulva owners 'slow cookers.' Many women aren't instantly aroused when a partner is, feel broken, acquiesce anyway, and end up in roughly seven minutes of sex built around the partner's orgasm. She says it typically takes vulva owners 20 to 40 minutes to orgasm with a partner, so foreplay is a requirement, not a nice extra.

• Most women don't orgasm from penetration alone

Dr. Emily says only about 20% of vulva owners orgasm through penetration; the most sensitive tissue is external. She also notes the clitoral network is now described as having around 12,000 nerve endings, up from the 8,000 she quoted for 20 years, which she contrasts with about 4,000 in a circumcised penis. She blames the gap on women's bodies being understudied and on sex education, noting only about 17 US states require it to be medically accurate.

• Solo sex is the foundation, not a substitute

She calls masturbation solo sex and the 'most primary relationship': it builds the owner's manual you later share with a partner. Waiting for a partner hands away your power, because you are responsible for your own pleasure. It also counters shame and the negative body talk that keeps people from being present in bed. She herself didn't orgasm until getting a vibrator in her mid-20s.

• Use the three T's for awkward conversations: timing, turf, tone

Timing: talk when both of you are relaxed, not mid-conflict. Turf: outside the bedroom, which stays for sleep and sex; a walk or car ride works because there's intimacy without eye contact. Tone: curious, compassionate and framed as 'this is about us.' She warns it may not go well at first; after decades of silence a partner often hears criticism, so keep returning to wanting more pleasure together.

• Sexual intelligence rests on five pillars

Embodiment (am I present or thinking about an unsent email?), health (exercise, food, and medications such as SSRIs, blood pressure drugs and the birth control pill that can affect arousal and orgasm, plus unprocessed big-T or little-t trauma), collaboration with a partner, self-acceptance of your body as it is now, and self-knowledge of what turns you on and off. She says it's a lifelong practice, not something you check off.

• Breath and the senses pull you out of your head

Her in-the-moment tool is a five-count inhale with a Kegel squeeze, then a slow release, repeated until grounded; she notes many people hold their breath or breathe shallowly during sex. A discreet alternative is cycling through the five senses, since you can't be in the past or future while noticing what you see, feel and smell.

• Low libido can be worked with like exercise

Dr. Emily says it's okay not to feel desire, and she hears this from women in their 20s as well as in perimenopause and menopause. Mel's summary of her approach: set yourself up for intimacy without waiting to feel like it. Scheduling sex at a realistic time removes the nightly guilt of the higher- and lower-desire partner dance.

• Orgasm doesn't have to be the goal

She defines hot sex as consensual, mutually pleasurable, communicative and safe. Centering connection, touch and intimacy instead of 'is it going to happen?' often makes orgasm more likely. She also suggests mining your 'sexual DNA,' the circumstances of your most memorable experiences, and noticing core desires, such as feeling cherished or adored, which can trace back to childhood needs.

EXAMPLES

• Mel's eye-mask problem

Mel describes planning a great night in the morning, then finding Chris asleep within five minutes, eye mask and retainer on, while she is too tired. She also admits waiting until she hears his truck leave the driveway before using a vibrator, and a hard 'no' about being watched, which Dr. Emily calls extremely common.

• 3,500 questions in 24 hours

Mel asked her audience what they wanted from a new chapter of their sex life and received 3,500 questions within a day, ranging from wanting to feel good about a post-baby body to feeling 'touched out, talked out and outdone.'

• The compliment sandwich script

Open with something you loved ('I really liked how we slowly made out last time'), add the request ('foreplay and touch are a big part of my arousal'), close positively ('I think we'd both have more pleasure'), ask how they feel, then listen without getting defensive.

- **Rapid-fire listener cases**

  A woman raised Catholic: practice mindful solo sex, returning to bodily sensations. A divorcee after 30 years of marriage: say yes to every social invitation to practice connecting. Someone a year sober: go slow, tell partners it's a new chapter, and make stopping okay. Someone who can't handle intense pleasure: practice letting the feeling move through you alone first.

- **Pain and trauma signals**

  Dr. Emily lists dissociation, numbness, avoidance, flashbacks and pain, including vaginismus and vulvodynia, as possible signs of unresolved trauma, though not always caused by it. She says 85% of women will have pain during sex at some point, recommends a pelvic floor physical therapist, and is a fan of EMDR therapy for trauma.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Name a dry spell out loud**

  Dr. Emily says there are 'no sex police' and months without sex are common, but couples rarely acknowledge it. Mel and Chris went several months without sex during financial stress. Saying 'we're not having sex, it makes me sad, I want to reconnect' is the start of a new chapter.

- **Try the yes/no/maybe list**

  Dr. Emily offers a free list of about 80 activities, from kissing and cuddling to dirty talk and toys, that partners mark yes, no or maybe. Shared yeses become a starting menu; Mel plans to bring it to date night.

- **Flip the script on shame**

  If casual sex or pleasure brings up shame, write down the exact messages ('I'll go to hell'), question whether they're true, imagine the opposite, and surround yourself with sex-positive voices.

- **Her five bottom-line tips**

  Communicate ('communication is lubrication'), practice solo sex, try one new thing, prioritize sex with phone-free date nights that skip kids and work talk, and work on limiting beliefs. She adds a sixth: take the focus off orgasm.

Five Ways I’m Finding Hope and Strength Right Now | The Mel Robbins Podcast

Date: 2023-10-16 · Duration: 0:34:55
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z_8OVjNJF0U

KEYPOINTS

• Feeling lost in dark times is common, but you aren't actually lost or alone.

Mel recorded this in October 2023, while travelling for work and feeling overwhelmed, sad and horrified by the news of war and violence. Her own first reaction to that kind of darkness, she says, is paralysis: she gets stuck, angry and drained. Her message is that even when you feel deeply afraid, you're not alone, because you're with yourself and many people care about you. She adds that you're not truly paralyzed either: there are small things you can do to get through the storm.

• The support you need sometimes comes from a stranger.

Mel's starting point is a driver named Ernest who lifted her spirits when she arrived exhausted and heartbroken. She suggests staying open to strangers who may give you exactly the connection you need without either of you planning it, and remembering that you can be that stranger for someone else. As she points out, everyone you love was once a stranger.

• A lighthouse shines for everyone within reach.

The image at the centre of the episode is the lighthouse. Its single job is to keep shining so ships can find their way home, and it doesn't choose which ships get the light. Mel describes each person's 'light' as their humanity: compassion, the ability to laugh, love, hug, listen and care. She says that's why your heart breaks when you see innocent people suffer, and reminds herself that civilians caught in war are victims and not their governments.

• Helping someone else is often the fastest way to lift yourself.

When she feels low, Mel's first move is to help someone. Even if you can barely get out of bed, she argues that is exactly when to try. She says research repeatedly finds that helping others feels good and does you good. It breaks the echo chamber of fear in your head, shifts your perspective on your own situation and reminds you that you have more power than you think. Small acts count, like running an errand, staffing a hotline or checking on family.

• Be gentle with yourself, because collective stress gets into your body.

Mel quotes Dr. Thema Bryant, a recent guest: whatever is happening out there is happening in here too. You absorb the stress of people around you even when you turn the news off. Signs it's affecting you include trouble concentrating or sleeping, more procrastination, feeling on edge, or sliding into a sense that nothing matters. Her view is that you need to look after yourself first in order to lift anyone else up.

• Watching more news doesn't mean you care more.

Drawing on Dr. Bryant's advice, Mel separates staying informed from flooding yourself. She doesn't watch or listen to the news; she reads it, so she can stay informed while protecting her mental health. She urges people to avoid staring at traumatic images and to show they care through what they do rather than what they consume.

• Meet darkness with its opposite.

Mel's final practice is a mindset: when she sees despair she responds with hope, sorrow with love and agitation with kindness. Thinking of herself as a lighthouse shining in every direction helps her rise above her own heaviness and take action. If you don't know what else to do, she says, just smile at people, say hello and reach out to friends.

• Turn toward people instead of away from them.

Mel argues that when people around the world are suffering, we aren't really strangers. Pulling back from one another feeds the darkness. Leading with humanity, even in a passing moment at a stoplight or in a grocery store, is something anyone can do right away.

EXAMPLES

• Ernest, the driver who called himself a minister

On a work trip from Nashville to Chicago, the man who picked Mel up had a huge smile and a voice 'like liquid butterscotch', and spoke almost in poetry. When she asked whether he was a minister, he laughed and said yes. He explained that a pastor is responsible for a church, while a minister is anyone who spreads light and lifts people up. Mel invited him to her speech the next morning, where he sat up front among thousands of attendees.

• 'Mel, you're a lighthouse'

After the speech, Ernest told Mel that everyone is a minister because everyone can spread light. He said the audience had been quiet as church mice, and that she had made 'a way out of no way' by reminding people of their power. Then he called her a lighthouse, a word that carried her straight back to childhood.

• The Muskegon South Pierhead Lighthouse

Mel grew up on a small lake in western Michigan that fed into Lake Michigan. Her dad would take the boat out early on weekends to fish for steelhead, cigar in his mouth. As a worried child she pictured storms, a dead engine and being lost at sea. When the engine sputtered, her father would point to the Muskegon South Pierhead Lighthouse and tell her it was always there so they wouldn't get lost, however foggy or dark it got.

• A walk through a friend's dahlia field

One morning, driving past the fields of her friend who runs a flower farm, Mel pulled over, left the car running and walked silently through the rows. She stopped to look at individual blooms and a bumblebee 'drunk on pollen' in the centre of one. She says connecting with something bigger than the moment keeps her grounded and calm.

• Her kids deleting TikTok

Mel and her husband asked all three of their children to delete TikTok during this period, because they felt the imagery on the platform was too much for anyone's nervous system and heart to process.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Keep a spiritual practice going, daily or more

Mel has been praying for people who have died or lost loved ones, for those in harm's way, for anyone struggling with anxiety and grief, and for peace. Your version might be meditation, journaling, gathering with people of your faith, or a walk in the woods without your phone. If you can't get outside, picture your favourite place or the people you love.

• Use the 10-5 rule

At about ten feet from someone, look them in the eye and smile, holding it for three seconds or more. At five feet, smile again and say hello. Mel says that mirror neurons make most people smile back. She notes that some listeners say this isn't safe where they live, so only do it if you're comfortable.

• Check in, and say they don't need to reply

Reach out to friends who are hurting. Mel has been checking on her Jewish and Muslim friends in particular, as well as anyone facing a loss or a frightening diagnosis. End the message with: 'You do not need to respond. I just wanted you to know I'm here.' That gives two gifts: the unexpected warmth of the message, and relief from the guilt of not having the energy to reply.

• Read the news rather than watching it

Choose a format that keeps you informed without flooding your senses. Put the energy you would have spent scrolling into a concrete action for someone else.

Remember THIS When The World Feels Overwhelming | The Mel Robbins Podcast

Guest: Dr. Thema Bryant
Date: 2023-10-10 · Duration: 0:29:19
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2CluLkJMmsE

KEYPOINTS

• Your body tells you how the news is landing before you name it

Dr. Thema Bryant says to start with bodily awareness. How is your heart? How are you sleeping? Have you lost your appetite or started emotional eating? Are you snapping at people, or have you shut down with no words? Noticing how you're showing up lets you connect what you're feeling with what's causing it, instead of saying 'I'm blessed, how are you?' when you aren't.

• 'Homecoming' begins with telling yourself the truth

Homecoming is the title of her New York Times bestseller and the core of her advice. She defines it as telling yourself the truth and then living based on that truth. Being honest about how you're really doing is where liberation and healing begin. Journaling, art and therapy help connect the larger story in the world with your individual one, because what is happening out there is also, to some degree, happening within you.

• Everyone is feeling it, just in different ways

Bryant's first message is to release self-judgment. People assume they're the only one who is overwhelmed, the only one who can't stop crying, or the only one who can't access their tears. She says everyone is affected, and that dropping the rules about how you 'should' feel is how you become a soft place to land for yourself.

• Be informed, not overexposed

Knowing nothing about the world means you've checked out of the human family, Bryant says. But a 24-hour visual news cycle means absorbing nonstop images and sounds of violence and death. Her line: 'The number of hours or minutes I consume it is not the measure of my care.' Give yourself permission to stop watching all day. She also praises the humility of people online who admit they're confused about a long, complex history.

• Post-trauma healing is different from homecoming during continuous traumatic stress

Bryant notes that the term PTSD was developed with veterans and assumes the danger is over, like an adult who survived child abuse or escaped an abusive relationship. People living with perpetual conflict or community violence don't get the luxury of 'post.' Waiting until it's over to reconnect with yourself could take a lifetime or generations, so the task becomes staying near to yourself while the world spins.

• Two ways to nourish yourself while it's still happening

First, spiritual practices such as meditation, prayer, gathering with people of your faith or reading a sacred text. Connecting with nature counts too, even by visualizing the beach or your favorite tree if you can't get there. Second, narrative therapy, which means telling your story to people who won't judge or reject you, because 'we heal in relationship with each other.'

• Judging your own numbness doubles the problem

Drawing on mindfulness, Bryant says that if you feel numb and then criticize yourself for it, you now have two problems. Instead, notice it with compassion: after so much loss in recent years, it makes sense that you're not really feeling. Whatever you feel, given your life's journey, it makes sense.

• Hopelessness is a failure of imagination you can push back on

Bryant says hopelessness is being unable to imagine anything better than now. Her counter is to deliberately reawaken imagination and picture what it would look like for people to be safe, free and treated with dignity, even if you've never seen that in your community or nation. She adds: 'This moment does not have the final say,' and trauma affects us but doesn't define us.

EXAMPLES

• A same-day call for help

Overwhelmed by the news and aware the show reaches 194 countries, some in active conflict, Mel DMed Dr. Bryant 'in a panic' asking for 10 minutes. Bryant replied, 'I'll be there.' Mel introduces her as a psychologist, minister and tenured Pepperdine professor who in 2023 became the first Black woman to serve as president of the American Psychological Association.

• How it shows up for Bryant: sleep

Her own sign of distress is trouble sleeping. As a parent she stays 'on' during the day, and only after the kids are in bed does she process what she has seen. She also seeks community, and mentions Dr. Shelly Harrell's concept of 'soulfulness': being present so that instead of 'nothing matters,' you think 'I want to make this moment count.'

• The garage-door repairman

The day of the recording, the man who came to fix Bryant's garage door was from the affected region of the Middle East and had been glued to his TV. She apologized for 'dumping' on him, but says moments where people truly see each other remind us of 'the sacredness of now.'

• Mel's 'soul exhale'

Mel says she felt her shoulders drop after the conversation. Her takeaways are being a non-judgmental soft landing for herself and watching her input of news, then turning toward an output of compassion, service and connection.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Replace extra consumption with one act of service

Bryant draws on liberation psychology: ask how you can be part of a solution within your capacity. That might be time, money, prayers, a post of support or, for psychologists, support groups for people worried about relatives. Many people are simply asking 'Does anyone care?', so visible care helps.

• Share honestly to soften the room

Being vulnerable in conversations at home or work 'puts breath in the room.' It reminds people that colleagues and neighbors are humans, not just labor, and creates space for real care.

- **Set a deliberate limit on news, especially video**

  Decide how you'll stay informed without a constant stream of violent imagery, and remind yourself that limiting it doesn't mean you care less.

Your Toolkit for Preventing Burnout and Improving Resilience In Tough Times | Mel Robbins Podcast

Guest: Jennifer Breheny Wallace
Date: 2023-10-09 · Duration: 0:55:35
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9vsA0XqYc0A

KEYPOINTS

• Grind culture says your worth depends on your performance

Journalist Jennifer Breheny Wallace, author of Never Enough, defines grind culture as messages that you're only as good as your productivity, grades, income or college. Toxic achievement is chasing the next goal because you don't feel worthy until you hit it. Healthy achievement means knowing your strengths, accepting you need other people to reach high goals, and not treating a miss as an indictment of your worth.

• Parents have become 'social conduits' of competitive pressure

Researchers use that term for parents who pass on fears about an uncertain, competitive future by becoming more controlling and perfectionistic. Wallace avoids blaming parents, who she says are all feeling this; Mel blames herself and extends it to bosses who push their own stress onto employees.

• The real root is an unmet need to matter

Mattering, a concept dating to the 1980s and sociologist Morris Rosenberg (who also gave us self-esteem), means feeling valued for who you are at your core and being relied on to add value back to family, friends, colleagues and community. Wallace says it works like a buoy or protective shield against anxiety and depression, so a setback doesn't become a verdict on your worth.

• Kids suffer most when mattering is conditional, or when no one relies on them

Among the 'healthy strivers' she studied, Wallace found about 15 common threads. The kids struggling most felt valued only for performance, or felt valued at home but never depended on, leaving them without 'social proof' that they matter. Researchers describe an 'instinct to matter' driving behavior: when it's met, people give back; when it isn't, they turn inward to depression or substance use, or act out.

• A child's resilience rests on the caregiver's resilience

Wallace says research shows the top intervention for a child in distress is protecting the primary caregiver's well-being, and that caregiver's resilience depends on the depth of their own relationships. Chasing perfection made her burnt out; Mel highlights her line that 'the difference between a 91 and a 99 is having a good life.'

• Aim for 'good enough,' not perfect

When her oldest was born, Wallace considered getting a psychology PhD to parent perfectly. The 'good enough' parent responds to needs, validates them and does their best without meeting every one, which also helps kids learn to handle disappointment.

• Minimize criticism, prioritize affection

That's resilience researcher Suniya Luthar's advice for buffering achievement pressure at home. Wallace says criticism lands up to five times harder than a compliment, so she aims for five positive interactions per criticism, and separates 'the deed from the doer.' Mel's example: tell your daughter that paying about $100 to ship shoes is a poor choice, not that she's dumb.

• Being known beats being praised

Wallace stopped saying 'you're so good at math,' which can feel like pressure, and earned 'a PhD in my kids' by studying what makes each tick. Her family took the free VIA Character Strengths survey to focus on core strengths instead of weaknesses. As Brown sociologist Gregory Elliott puts it, 'what gets in early gets in deep.'

• Balance extrinsic values with intrinsic ones at home

Values act like a zero-sum game: competitive schools and social media flood kids with extrinsic ones (GPA, looks, likes, the A team), which research links to more anxiety, depression and substance abuse. Home should emphasize intrinsic ones, like 'you're such a good brother.' Wallace now ignores grades on report cards and highlights teachers' narrative comments.

EXAMPLES

• Mel's 48-hour freakout

Mel had stayed calm about Oakley's applications in southern Vermont until an acquaintance's son, 'in range' for the same early-decision school, was rejected. Mel raced home, demanded his first-draft essay, told him it didn't sound like him, and got 'Mom, could you back off.' A friend, Paige, recommended Never Enough, which led to this interview.

• Wallace's survey of 6,500 parents

With a Harvard researcher, she hoped for 1,000 responses and got 6,500 in days. 83% agreed others see their children's academic success as a reflection of their parenting, and 87% wished childhood were less stressful for their kids. An Alaska mother said her kids never knew a real Thanksgiving because they were always at soccer tournaments.

• 'Lead with lunch'

Instead of asking about the Spanish quiz, Wallace asks what her kids had for lunch, borrowed from her late grandmother, signaling she cares about them and not their performance. Her kids already hear that achievement matters everywhere else, so home should be a haven. For partners or roommates, try 'what was the best part of your day?'

• The Washington Post 'bloodbath'

When her seventh-grader Caroline was crushed by red marks on a paper, Wallace showed her a heavily marked-up early draft from an editor at the Post, where she has now written for 10 years, and explained she came to see the edits as someone investing in her.

• Luthar's one-hour support groups

Busy professional mothers met one hour a week for three months in groups of four or five. None dropped out, cortisol fell, and

well-being and relationships with their kids and parents improved.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Make others feel they matter, starting small

When a 30-year-old asked for a mattering mantra, Wallace told him to thank the cafeteria worker who brightens his day. Thank the drugstore clerk, text a friend, make eye contact. She cites a Gallup finding that about 80% of workers hadn't heard appreciation from their boss in a year, and gratitude research showing people underestimate how well thanks will be received. Being on your phone mid-conversation signals the opposite.

• Family motto: 'Never worry alone'

Teach interdependence alongside self-reliance: how to rely on others and be relied on. Wallace models limits out loud ('that's enough for the day') and shares failure stories.

• Frame chores and decisions around being needed

Swap 'I'm sick of setting the table' for 'Dad's cooking, I'm on a deadline, who can pitch in?' and 'Could you throw a couple of my things in with your laundry?' Ask kids' opinions, such as finding the best hotel rate or rental car price. Wallace's family also has a weekly volunteering requirement for everyone.

• Reframe a bad grade and ask teachers who your child is

From psychologist Lisa Damour: a bad test grade only shows what you knew that day, not your future or how your teacher sees you. Mel and Chris ask teachers to describe what kind of person their child is with peers, not the grades.

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.

You Can Make a Difference: Remarkable Story To Inspire You to Do Something Big | Mel Robbins Podcast

Guest: Lorenzo Lewis
Date: 2023-10-02 · Duration: 1:17:31
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=797GbDqRrYQ

KEYPOINTS

• Lorenzo Lewis turned barbers and stylists into mental health advocates
His nonprofit, the Confess Project, has trained over 3,000 barbers and stylists across 52 cities in 35 states, reaching more than 3 million people a year; Mel cites roughly a million people reached for every thousand trained. Lewis isn't a therapist or doctor, and nobody asked him to do this. Mel's point: he saw a problem and answered the call.

• The gap he's addressing: access and trust
Mel cites that only about 4% of therapists and licensed mental health professionals are Black, that 47% of people still see seeking therapy as weakness, and that 60% don't fully trust the person they get help from. Lewis says it's hard to open up to someone who doesn't share or understand your lived experience, and historical distrust of medical providers and authority adds another barrier.

• He was born to an incarcerated mother and lost his father at 10
Lewis was born while his mother was in jail; his father died in prison when he was 10. To keep him out of foster care, his aunt and uncle drove from Little Rock, Arkansas, to Newark, New Jersey, to take him in. He had a good upbringing in many ways, but felt lost, angry and unseen, wondering whether his parents loved him or whether their absence was his fault.

• Unrecognized grief can look like 'bad behavior'
After his father died, Lewis was kicked out of school in about third grade and spent around two months in a behavioral health facility at 10, coming home on weekends. Returning to school, he felt ashamed and tried to make it sound cool. Mel says it makes her angry when struggling kids are disciplined instead of having mental health or learning differences addressed, and notes men often shove sadness down until it erupts as anger.

• 'A child who is not embraced by the village will burn it down'
Lewis quotes the African proverb to explain how, at 17, he joined a gang and was arrested on a firearm charge. He frames it as lashing out at himself because he didn't feel loved or seen, not simply bad choices.

• A juvenile detention cell became his turning point
The weekend before court, a month shy of 18, he kept thinking this was the same place he was born and where his father had been. Thanks largely to his aunt pleading with the court and his clean record, the judge gave him a second chance. He promised her she'd never see him in the system again and that he would go to college. He kept his word, earning a human services degree from Arkansas Baptist College.

• Barbershops and salons are community hubs
Lewis grew up doing homework and eating dinner in his aunt's beauty shop, later built behind their house, and found his first mentor, Sylvester, the only male barber among five operators. He says Black barbershops were tied to civil rights organizing, are among the few routes to generational wealth, and, outside church, are rare places where homeless neighbors, principals and entrepreneurs gather together.

• The idea came from hospital work and empty men's events
Working on an inpatient mental health unit in Arkansas, Lewis saw patients from all walks of life cycling back, saying treatment felt pointless and not feeling honored or included. His first event, a back-to-school mental health event at a Black church in Little Rock, drew about 700 people. But men wouldn't come to library sessions; only the women who wanted their men to get help showed up.

• Manhood norms make vulnerability hard
Lewis says ideas of manhood, growing up without fathers at home, and media and hip-hop images make it hard for men, especially Black men, to be vulnerable. He credits figures like Charlamagne tha God for championing mental health. His view: model vulnerability by being transparent that you're still learning, too.

• The four-part training formula
Barbers learn active listening, validation, positive communication and stigma reduction, drawn from therapeutic practice but used as advocacy while cutting hair. Instead of 'don't worry about it' or 'just pray,' they might say: 'I noticed your day's been hard. What's going on? How can I support you?' Each shop also gets a resource directory for housing, health care sign-up, jobs and bill pay.

EXAMPLES

• The 'last haircut' in Johnson City
Two weeks after a training in Johnson City, Tennessee, where local therapists attended, a client told his barber he didn't want to be here anymore. The barber knew how to respond and connect him to help. By contrast, in South Philadelphia, before training, a man said he'd walk into traffic, then went missing during a psychotic episode; barbers didn't know what to do. He was found. Mel notes police often aren't trusted in many communities, and aren't the right responders.

• The Harvard study
Thirty-two barbers across eight states took part in a Harvard Medical School study lasting eight to nine months. Lewis says findings, published in an international journal, show barbers can act as mental health and suicide prevention gatekeepers, may help reduce community violence, and that female stylists are key connectors to children's mental health. He adds that 90% of participating barbers preferred support in a barbershop over a clinic.

• Mel's audience poll
When Mel's team polled her audience on Instagram, roughly one in five said there was not one person they felt they could go to. The quality people most wanted in a confidant was 'non-judgmental,' which Mel says is why people confide in hairdressers;

hers knows more than her therapist.

- **Quitting with minimal savings**

  Lewis left his hospital job with very little saved and a young daughter at home. Early barbers were skeptical ('we don't know who you are'), so he built credibility with a few committed shops and testimonials, then sponsors like Gillette and Andis. Seven years in, he believes going full time got them further than 10 slow years would have.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **'You are best equipped to help the person you used to be'**

  Mel shares this line from her friend Ed Mylett as the episode's challenge. You don't need a degree, permission or an invitation; look at the struggle you've lived through and who's still in it.

- **Use the four skills with people in your life**

  Listen actively, validate what they're feeling, respond positively without minimizing, and treat getting help as normal. Lewis compares it to CPR: it keeps someone going until professional help arrives. Know local resources so you can point people to them.

- **What's next for the Confess Project**

  Lewis has expanded the training to first responders, law enforcement, educators and counselors, and launched a virtual 'super user' program so trained people can teach others. His goal is to take the model worldwide.

6 Magic Words That Stop Anxiety & Overwhelm | The Mel Robbins Podcast

Date: 2023-09-28 · Duration: 0:38:30
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=63P5Cv9MSFE

KEYPOINTS

• Mel recorded this from a Salt Lake City hotel room after catching herself in a worry spiral

With about an hour before a convention center speech, Mel described what had just happened. Her daughter Sawyer, 24, is on a planned four-month solo backpacking trip and was in Australia doing solo hikes. Two days after posting a sunrise photo from a summit (a roughly five-mile hike started at 4 a.m.), she hadn't messaged on WhatsApp or Instagram, and her location showed only a spinning wheel.

• The mind jumps to horror-movie scenarios in a nanosecond

Instead of assuming Sawyer met friends, her phone died or she was simply busy living, Mel's mind went straight to: she fell off the mountain, she was kidnapped, she was assaulted on the trail. Standing in her underwear brushing her teeth at 6:15 a.m., she noticed she had inflicted self-torture before even having water or coffee. She says listeners' messages show the same pattern with money, jobs and kids.

• The six words: 'What if it all works out?'

First, the phrase hits the brakes on the 'locomotive of worry.' Second, because it's a question, you pause and consider it, and realize you don't actually know what will happen. It is logically true that things could work out, so you aren't lying to yourself. Mel stresses this isn't 'lipstick on a pig' but using logic to interrupt a habit.

• Most worries never happen

Mel cites a Penn State study on chronic worriers: the average person has three to four major worries a day, and 91% of them turned out to be false. Of the 9% that did happen, the outcome was much better than expected about a third of the time. Her math leaves roughly a 6% chance of the bad outcome, and her stance is 'if something bad happens, I will deal with it then.' She also says research suggests about one in three people struggle with constant worry.

• The Buddhist teaching of the two arrows

When misfortune strikes, two arrows fly. Life fires the first one into your heart: the missing text, a breakup, the number on the scale, a $1,000 car repair, a scary cough. The second arrow is the one you fire into your own forehead with your reaction and catastrophizing. You can't stop the first, but you can grab the second out of the air.

• Psychology calls this primary versus secondary emotion

Your primary emotional response is the immediate hit, like shock and despair when someone dies. The secondary response is what lingers, such as long-term grief. Mel says research shows you have little control over the first but many ways to shorten the second, and worry is a secondary response you can work on.

• Worrying makes you experience the pain twice

If the bad thing doesn't happen, you suffered for nothing; if it does, you suffered in anticipation too. Mel has been fired twice and says she could feel one coming and tortured herself for a month, which changed nothing. Once she got over the humiliation, getting fired felt liberating, since you usually get fired from a job you can't stand or aren't performing in.

• Catastrophizing damages your ability to solve real problems

Drawing on Dr. Judy Willis, whom she interviewed for The High 5 Habit, Mel explains that worry triggers the sympathetic fight-flight-freeze system, which impairs executive function in the prefrontal cortex: focus, decision-making and problem-solving. Even if the worst happens, say Sawyer were hurt and needed help, an arrow in your forehead makes you worse at handling it. Mel's own plan: if she didn't hear from Sawyer in 72 hours, she would switch to problem-solving.

• Painful thoughts light up the same pathways as physical pain

Mel cites work associated with Dr. Arthur Barsky of Harvard Medical School on stress causing physical pain: headaches, nausea, a stomach 'in knots.' She describes studies showing painful thoughts activate the same neural pathways as physical pain, and math anxiety research from a University of Chicago psychology professor who likened anticipating a math problem to burning your hand on a hot stove.

• Hypervigilance from a chaotic childhood can be kept without the pain

Mel says people who grew up waiting for the other shoe to drop often scan for danger constantly; she did too. Seeing around corners can be an intuitive superpower. The goal isn't to lose that radar but to stop escalating before anything has happened.

EXAMPLES

• Listener arrows from Instagram

Sylvia fears flying and adds 'what if I can't say goodbye?' Maggie's annual review becomes 'what if I'm laid off and can't pay for groceries?' Gabby's divorce becomes 'what if I never have the life I want?' Natalie sees happy couples and thinks 'what if I never find my person?' Mel reframes each, for example: what if the divorce is the hardest and also the best thing that ever happened to me?

• Mel's own airplane spiral

On takeoff she sometimes spirals into missing her daughters' weddings and never meeting grandkids. Her counter: what if the plane lands, she sees everyone, and she outlives them all?

• The missing charger before the flight

The day before, racing around with 15 minutes to go, she couldn't find her computer charger, passport or travel bag. She caught herself: what if it all works out? Worst case, she's an adult who can buy a charger at the airport. Stopping the spiral let her focus and search.

• Reframing Sawyer's silence

Mel's positive version: Sawyer posted the sunrise and was photographing other hikers, so she's probably busy with new friends. What could be better than a 24-year-old on a solo trip too caught up in the moment to check in with her mom?

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Catch the second arrow in real time**

  Notice when stress rises after a trigger, name the first arrow (what actually happened), then ask 'What if it all works out?' before stacking worst-case thoughts. It doesn't guarantee a good outcome; it keeps you calm, focused and present until you know otherwise.

- **Practice positive ideation as a default**

  Mel's sample lines: 'This could be the best thing that ever happens to me.' 'This isn't easy, but I trust I'll grow through it.' 'I don't know what I'm doing, but I can figure it out.' She says research shows visualizing positive outcomes is effective at beating down worry.

- **Keep a real-world trigger for action**

  Worry isn't preparation. Decide in advance what would make you act, like Mel's 72-hour rule, and save your clear thinking for that moment rather than spending it on imagined disasters.

Answering Your Questions on Friendship, Therapy, Boundaries, And More | The Mel Robbins Podcast

Date: 2023-09-25 · Duration: 0:37:24
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rRB93MwkfVk

KEYPOINTS

• A friendship has run its course when you've given more than you've received for a sustained stretch

Mel's answer to listener Jeannie separates a season from a pattern. If a friend is dealing with postpartum depression, a divorce, a breakup or an illness, being the strong one is part of friendship. It's a problem when you're always the one making plans, checking in and reaching out, nothing big is going on for them, and none of it comes back.

• Many friendships depend on a shared container

College, a job, a neighbourhood, your kids' friendships or a relationship status can hold a friendship together. Mel told her daughter that when the container disappears, the ties often go with it. She calls that normal, a sign your energy belongs elsewhere, and rejects the idea that every friend has to be lifelong.

• Pulling back reveals what the relationship really was

Pulling back doesn't have to mean ghosting. It can mean reaching out every two weeks instead of weekly, not answering texts instantly, and not feeling obliged to invite them to your party. If the connection disappears once you stop chasing, Mel says you were in a relationship with potential. The same applies to romance, and she'd rather you discover it yourself than have the rug pulled out.

• Update what you think friendship requires

People are busy and move far more than earlier generations did. Mel says some of her favourite people live far away, rarely text, and didn't raise kids alongside her, yet she'd get on a plane if they called. You probably have more friends than you think, so stop pouring energy into people who don't return it.

• To stop overthinking, ask what someone you respect would do

Mel's tool for Natasha is to pick a mentor, a decisive friend, Mel herself or 'the Rock' and ask what they'd do, borrowing their confidence. If the answer makes you bristle, that's fear, so count 5-4-3-2-1 and act.

• Negotiate pay with proof of your impact, not market comparisons

Asked by Neely how a woman should negotiate with a male boss, Mel says most people do the wrong homework: comparing their title's salary in their area. Bosses care more about what you've contributed to the bottom line and the problems you've solved. If you track those all year, you may prove you're worth more than the salary survey says.

• Everyone needs therapy in their life, so describe it as a resource

Telling someone they 'need therapy' sounds like 'you're messed up.' Mel describes it as an intentional conversation about your life with a trained, objective person whose feelings you don't have to manage, a luxury like a school counsellor. Pitch it around goals: feeling more confident, handling work, defusing family situations.

• You can't force someone into help, but you can state a boundary

Do the work (find the therapist, even make the appointment), say you're worried and can't handle this alone, then let them choose. If they refuse, say what you'll do: for example, that you won't stay if they won't address depression or addiction. Mel calls that clear communication, not manipulation. Badgering instead builds resentment that leaks out as fighting, snapping and lost intimacy, and she says most relationships die from resentment.

• A boundary can include a timeline

People don't change direction overnight, so you needn't walk out after 17 years of marriage. Mel suggests saying you're worried and giving them, say, three months to deal with it.

• Midlife is an opportunity, not a crisis

Mel, then 54, says she prefers her 50s to her 40s. After the comparison-heavy 20s and status-chasing 30s, you have wisdom, a bigger network, failures to learn from and technology to use. If you're unhappy halfway through the road trip, let that push you to act.

EXAMPLES

• Chris's seven years of depression and the medication boundary

Mel's husband Chris struggled with major depression for about seven years. He kept healthy habits (daily meditation, walks in the woods, journaling, therapy) but resisted a diagnosis and saw medication as weakness. Mel worried that heavy meditation was isolating him, citing research then suggesting too much can worsen depression. After two years of watching him decline, she told him to take the medication their psychopharmacologist and marriage counsellor recommended for a year or the marriage wouldn't work. He did, came off it after a year, and their therapist said it got him out of the spiral so therapy could work.

• Mel didn't feel she 'won'

She says the boundary freed her from resentment and from wanting to control Chris, and made her feel safe.

• Betsy's husband and his hearing aids

Mel's playful ideas: plan a fun outing, like her parents' casino trips in central Michigan (her dad now wears hearing aids), and stop at a hearing appointment on the way home; or spend a day mouthing words silently. Her real point is compassion. At almost 55, failing eyesight makes her feel frail, and for men of that generation, hearing loss can feel like the final leg of life, made worse by pride, fear or being first among their friends.

• Mel's childhood dream

She wanted to be a doctor like her father and cure cancer, until a freshman biology or chemistry class ended that. Looking back, it was admiration for him; she was drawn to performing. She studied American history and film, earned a women's studies certificate, and volunteered on a domestic violence hotline.

• Word vomit as vulnerability

To Sean, who spills everything when trying to open up, Mel says, as a fellow word-vomiter, that trying to control vulnerability misses the point. The word vomit is his vulnerability.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Audit a one-sided friendship**
  Ask whether this is a hard season for them or a lasting pattern, check in honestly, then cut your effort by half and see who shows up.
- **Keep a running wins file before salary talks**
  Record problems solved and results tied to revenue or savings as they happen, so the ask rests on your value to this employer.
- **Reframe the therapy ask**
  Lead with what it could help them gain, do the legwork, then state your limit and accept their choice, unless it's your own child, where you have more say.
- **Look for the fear beneath stubbornness**
  When a partner resists something obvious, ask whether it makes them feel weak or old. The surface fight often hides something you could connect over.

THIS Is Why Intermittent Fasting Never Worked For You | The Mel Robbins Podcast

Guest: Dr. Mindy Pelz
Date: 2023-09-21 · Duration: 0:50:30
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bt1vPBptL94

KEYPOINTS

• Fasting is about when you eat, not what you eat

Mel frames intermittent fasting as a health protocol rather than a diet. The idea is to cycle between your sugar-burning energy system, which runs when you eat, and what Dr. Mindy Pelz calls the fat-burning system, which she says switches on after about eight hours without food. This episode focuses on the most common version: 12 to 16 hours without eating. Stop at 9 p.m., and your first food comes somewhere between 9 a.m. and noon.

• Anything that won't spike blood sugar is fine in the fasting window

Water, unsweetened mineral water, coffee, and black or green tea are fine. Sweeteners, including NutraSweet, are not. Bone broth is a good way to break a fast, but she says its protein changes the healing response and it can raise blood sugar, so it doesn't count as part of the kind of fast she's describing. She herself has full-fat cream in her coffee.

• The first few fasts can feel rough, and that's expected

Dr. Mindy compares it to a fever or sprained ankle: unpleasant while the body adapts. People may feel moody or foggy, get constipation or diarrhea, and in extreme cases rashes, which she describes as the body clearing things out. She says it usually lasts one to three days, and roughly half of people don't notice anything. Her advice to women is to get curious about unfamiliar body rhythms rather than reject them as too confusing.

• Women's hormones run on a monthly rhythm, men's on a daily one

She says a man's testosterone pulses roughly every 15 minutes on a 24-hour cycle, and that fasting suits it, so men can fast regularly. Women cycle over 28 to 30 days: estrogen builds in the first ten days, testosterone peaks around ovulation, and progesterone rises in the week before a period. In her account, estrogen "loves" fasting, while progesterone drops if blood sugar falls too low or cortisol rises too high.

• Why early fasting fads backfired for many women

Dr. Mindy says women who fasted all month long reported lost periods, hair loss, rising anxiety and sometimes weight gain, and the media concluded fasting wasn't safe for women. Her explanation is that constant fasting depleted progesterone. That affects shedding of the uterine lining, which shows up as spotting, and progesterone is calming, so anxiety rose. Long-term calorie restriction also disrupted the thyroid, which she links to the hair loss. Mel points out that the original advice came mostly from men talking about men.

• Pre-period carb cravings have a purpose

Dr. Mindy reframes the urge for ice cream, pizza and nachos before a period as progesterone asking for higher glucose to make more of itself, not a lack of discipline. The fix is to eat more "nature's carbs" that week: fruit, potatoes, sweet potatoes, lots of vegetables, bananas and tropical fruits. She also singles out chocolate as good for progesterone.

• Her hormonal hierarchy puts connection at the top

In her model, sex hormones sit at the bottom and are thrown off by insulin. Insulin is pushed around by cortisol, since stress makes you more insulin resistant. Above cortisol sits oxytocin, which comes from connection with other people. More oxytocin lowers cortisol, which improves insulin sensitivity, which helps balance sex hormones. That's her reason for recommending fasting with other people rather than alone.

• Fasting breaks down some muscle, so protein matters when you eat

During a fast, the body breaks some muscle down as it uses up stored sugar, which she says isn't harmful in itself. Problems start when you open your eating window and skimp on protein, so muscles don't get the amino acids they need to rebuild. She doesn't see fasting and high-protein advice as contradictory.

• Mel's enthusiasm, with her own caveat

Mel calls the benefits for brain fog, belly fat, energy and gut health strongly supported, and calls the research "irrefutable." That's her characterization. Dr. Mindy's specific hormone mechanisms are presented as her own clinical framework from her book Fast Like a Girl. Mel also says she initially thought "this is complicated" when hormones came up, which is why the episode boils the advice down to a simple rule.

EXAMPLES

• Dr. Mindy's own routine

Coffee with full-fat cream in the morning, first meal around noon or 1 p.m., and family dinner finished by about 8 p.m. After a trip to Hawaii where she ate off-plan, she stretched to an 18- to 19-hour fast. Once or twice a year she does a three-day water fast, which she says clears out old cells, slows aging and increases stem cells.

• Bridget, the "rushing woman" CEO

Bridget had been trying to manage her weight by exercising more and eating less. Fasting felt miraculous at first: her brain came back online and the weight came off. But 30 to 60 days of fasting every day led to weight gain and a lost period. Working out Bridget's rhythm is how Dr. Mindy arrived at the idea of stepping out of fasting the week before a period.

• Mel's MCT oil disaster

On a hike with a group of guys, Mel drank coffee with what was probably a loose shot of MCT oil and was doubled over with cramps and diarrhea within about 45 minutes. Dr. Mindy's dose is half a teaspoon to a teaspoon.

• Listener questions on yo-yo weight and comfort food

Jody kept losing and regaining the same 10 pounds. The suggested fix is intermittent fasting, no fasting the week before her period with more nature's carbs, then restarting on day one of bleeding. Becky wanted a weekly comfort-food lunch. The answer is to slide your eating window: for a 10 a.m. Sunday brunch, eat 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **The simplest rule for cycling women: don't fast the week before your period**

Fast 12 to 15 hours during the rest of your cycle. In the roughly seven days before your period, eat normally, including breakfast if you'd skipped it, and lean on whole-food carbs. Restart fasting when you start bleeding.

- **No regular cycle? Use the moon**

For women on a hormonal IUD or other birth control that hides their cycle, in perimenopause, or past menopause, she suggests treating the new moon as day one. Fast from about day 1 to day 21, take a week off, then restart at the next new moon. She uses the Moonly app, and her book has a 30-day reset. She calls this the best gauge available, not a precise measure.

- **Three quick-start hacks**

First, set a stop time at night and a start time in the morning. Second, add half to one teaspoon of MCT oil to coffee, which she says speeds ketone production and switches off hunger. Third, if you feel off while fasting, add a pinch of high-quality sea salt such as Himalayan for magnesium, potassium and sodium.

- **Limit three kinds of food and build a fasting lifestyle**

Cut inflammatory oils like canola, cottonseed, corn, partially hydrogenated, safflower and sunflower, and favor olive, avocado, sesame or walnut oil. Keep man-made carbs like bread, pasta and cookies minimal even if they're organic or gluten-free. Avoid toxins such as artificial sweeteners, colorings and nitrites. Her four steps are: know your goal (gut repair might call for 24-hour fasts, stubborn weight for 36-hour ones), cycle your fasts, cycle your food, and do it in community, even just a book club or a 30-day challenge with friends.

How to Lose Weight, Boost Energy, & Live Longer with Intermittent Fasting | Mel Robbins Podcast

Guest: Dr. Mindy Pelz
Date: 2023-09-18 · Duration: 1:09:22
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dRlywtji5ZU

KEYPOINTS

• Fasting as a healing state switched on by low blood sugar

Dr. Mindy Pelz, author of Fast Like a Girl, describes fasting as a state the body reaches only by going without food long enough for blood sugar to drop. In her account, that triggers repair responses: burning fat, sharpening the brain, quieting hunger, improving sleep, easing pain and slowing aging. Mel frames this first episode of a two-part series as the science; part two covers how-to and protocols for women.

• Two energy systems, like a hybrid car

Pelz describes a "sugar burner" system that runs on food and a "fat burner" system that kicks in when blood sugar falls, usually 8 to 12 hours after eating. Moving between the two is called metabolic switching. She says people with poor metabolic health stay stuck burning sugar and never reach the repair processes, and cites a figure that only about 12% of Americans are metabolically fit. Her evolutionary explanation is feast-famine cycling: early humans had no fridge or DoorDash.

• It's about when you eat, not what

Pelz says fasting isn't a diet because you can keep any eating style and simply compress it into a window. She cites research suggesting that eating within 8 to 10 hours a day can reverse metabolic damage, even from fast food. On "keto" products, her advice is to skip the label debate and eat "nature's carbs," meaning vegetables, fruit and foods that grow from the earth, over anything made in a factory.

• Why cravings fade, according to her

Pelz gives three reasons. Fast-food blood-sugar spikes crash low and trigger hunger every few hours, and longer gaps break that cycle. Ketones made while burning fat travel to the brain and switch off hunger. Fasting also shifts the gut microbiome, and she says organisms like candida drive sugar cravings. She adds that ketones raise GABA, a calming neurotransmitter, and describes landing after an 18- to 19-hour flight fast feeling calm and not hungry.

• How the research is characterized

Mel says a 2019 New England Journal of Medicine review of more than 85 studies recommended intermittent fasting as a "first line" intervention for obesity, diabetes, heart disease, neurodegeneration and cancer, with anti-aging effects. That's how she and Pelz summarize the paper. Pelz also says much fasting research comes from people observing Ramadan, notes Hippocrates wrote about fasting, and argues that the media amplifies negative stories because no industry profits from fasting.

• Who shouldn't fast, and when to involve a doctor

Pelz says fasting is not for pregnant women. Nursing mothers should keep fasts under 15 hours because detox byproducts may pass into breast milk. It's also not for anyone with an eating disorder or whose food challenges it could trigger. People with diabetes or heart disease should fast only with their doctor involved, and Mel adds that anyone on psychiatric or ADHD medication should check with their doctor.

• The clock starts with your last bite or sip

Wine counts, and sleep counts toward the fast. Black coffee is fine as long as nothing in it spikes blood sugar, so creamer and sugar are out, and a Frappuccino definitely doesn't count. Full-fat cream usually works, she says, because fat stabilizes blood sugar.

• The six fasting lengths, as she describes them

12–16 hours: glucose and inflammation fall and growth hormone, which she says declines after 30, rises. 17 hours: autophagy, cells clearing out damaged parts, with Pelz saying it can eliminate rogue cells. 24 hours: a "gut reset," citing MIT work on intestinal stem cells. 36 hours: a "fat burner" reset aimed at stored belly fat. 48 hours: a "dopamine reset" with more receptor sites and lower anxiety. 72 hours: an "immune reset" based on Valter Longo's research at USC.

• Start small and give it 90 days

Fasting gets easier with practice. Pelz compares it to marathon training, so don't open with a 36-hour fast. For belly fat, she says to do 12 to 15 hours consistently and give it about 90 days. Many in her community use 17-hour fasts after a vacation of overindulging. Longer claims, like happiness rising for weeks after a 48-hour fast, come from stories her community shares rather than controlled trials.

EXAMPLES

• Todd and the 12 sodas

At a retreat, a man of about 300 pounds who called himself food-addicted told Pelz he wanted to stay alive for his wife and kids. He was drinking about 12 sodas a day. She didn't change his food at all, only compressed it into a 12-hour window. He lost around 25 to 30 pounds the first month while still having wings and soda. After a year he'd lost close to 120 pounds, quit soda and eaten better, and his goal is to feel proud in the family Christmas card photo.

• Her own start at 43

After reading about Yoshinori Ohsumi's 2016 Nobel Prize-winning work on autophagy, Pelz tried a 13-hour fast and found the first day miserable. Within three or four days, her 3 p.m. crash, brain fog and creeping perimenopausal belly fat had eased. She points out that ketones can supply roughly half the brain's fuel.

• The teachers who couldn't afford "healthy"

During the pandemic, a teacher told Pelz the peanut butter with better oils cost $8 more, money he didn't have. Another said she worked shifts that started at 4:30 a.m. or 3 p.m. and relied on the McDonald's drive-through. That's what convinced Pelz that people need a free tool that works for everyone.

• Studies Pelz cites

She describes a study of breast cancer survivors in which a 13-hour nightly fast was linked to 64% less recurrence. Another protocol of 36 hours fasting and 12 hours eating, repeated over 30 days, notably reduced belly fat. She also claims viruses can't replicate in cells undergoing autophagy, and suggests a 17-hour fast when you feel a cold coming on. These are her characterizations of the research, not consensus medical advice.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **A simple first protocol**

  Stop eating at 9 p.m. Around 5 a.m., after eight hours, you start switching into fat burning. Have your first food between 9 a.m. and noon for a 12- to 15-hour fast. Shift the window to suit you: stop at 7 p.m. and eat earlier the next day.

- **Keep coffee "clean"**

  Drink coffee black or with full-fat cream. Skip creamers, syrups and sweetened drinks if you want to stay in the fasted state.

- **Treat bold claims with care**

  The longer fasts come with dramatic claims about cancer cells, stem cells and immune reboots. Build up gradually, avoid fasting if you're in an excluded group, and involve your doctor if you have a chronic condition or take medication. Part two covers how women should adjust fasting around their hormonal cycle.

The Ultimate Guide to Friendship, Self-Esteem, & Anxiety W/ My 18 Year Old Son | Mel Robbins Podcast

Guest: Oakley Robbins
Date: 2023-09-14 · Duration: 1:03:17
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7dKEAoHQ9K4

KEYPOINTS

• When a teen boy goes quiet, it's usually not about you

Mel's 18-year-old son Oakley explains that boys in high school learn that sharing sadness, or even liking someone, reads as weak or 'not masculine,' while anger is acceptable. A son who withdraws is often protecting his place in a social hierarchy, or still processing and not yet sure what he feels, which makes prying especially frustrating.

• After school, let them decompress before you ask questions

After eight or nine hours of classes, tests and social interaction, Oakley wants to greet the dogs, say hi, then spend 10–20 minutes alone in his room. Mornings are worse: he's tired and easily set off. A 20-minute debrief the moment he walks in is the last thing he wants; an enthusiastic hello is welcome.

• Watch for the signal that they're ready to talk

If he walks away mid-argument, don't stop him. When he's ready, he comes back to a shared space, maybe grabs food, and hangs around waiting for a parent to engage. The best opener names what you saw and asks: 'I noticed you're very upset, would you like to talk about it?' Skip 'hey bud,' which can feel condescending, and if he says no, give more space.

• Ask: 'Do you want advice, or do you want me to just listen?'

Oakley singles out this line of Mel's as one every parent should use. Parents instinctively jump in to solve problems, but often a teen just wants to tell you what happened and can work it out himself.

• Cliques are closed and judgy; friend groups aren't

Oakley's distinction: a clique only engages with itself and doesn't let others in. If you're in one, change it or leave; if you're outside one, you can still befriend individual members, who usually have other friends. Popular groups make you feel seen, but in his experience members often trash each other behind their backs.

• Parents are coaches who never step onto the field

Oakley, a senior mentor to ninth graders who presented parent tips at his school, repeats his headmaster's line: coaches can advise, watch and cheer, but cannot play the game. What teens most need to hear is that you're proud of them, you love them, you're there for them, and you like their friends.

• Act like you like their friends, even if you're unsure

Mel explains that if a teen senses judgment, they stop bringing friends home, and then you lose any window into who they spend time with. Invite friends to dinner and get to know them. Oakley mentions a study claiming 97% of a young adult's success depends on their five closest friends; neither he nor Mel names the research, so treat that figure loosely.

• Stay out of minor social conflicts, but not serious ones

Oakley pleads with parents not to contact the bully's parents or the school over teasing; the backlash the next day is worse. The exceptions are clear: racist or discriminatory remarks, anything dangerous, or a child who is becoming depressed or can't cope. Otherwise, keep asking what your child needs, and help them rehearse comebacks.

• Dyslexia isn't a reason to 'try harder'

Mel explains that dyslexic brains are wired differently and reading pathways take longer to form; Orton-Gillingham tutoring is the gold-standard way to train new connections. Helpful accommodations include audiobooks, typing instead of handwriting and getting teachers' notes. Oakley is strong in math but struggled when asked to show his work, because his brain takes shortcuts.

EXAMPLES

• The shorts incident

In middle school Oakley wore jeans daily while hanging with the popular boys. The one day he wore shorts, a friend said his legs looked weird and spread it around. A few guys said 'that's not cool,' and he realized those were his real people.

• Agree with the insult to defuse it

His tactic for teasing: lean in ('yeah, they do kind of look stupid, funny right?'). The bully expects a reaction; when there isn't one, the teasing goes nowhere. He believes people who say hurtful things are usually hurting themselves, but acknowledges it still stings.

• Oakley's anxiety and Mel's breakdown

Oakley's childhood fear of vomiting became anxiety that makes him feel nauseous, and at its worst he skipped dinners with friends. He says therapy and medication helped, with no shame in either. He recalls Mel sobbing on Mother's Day after selling their Massachusetts house, begging Chris to get it back; seeing parents break down, he says, was scary but helpful, because it showed him nobody is happy all the time.

• The barn with two rules

Outside Boston, their narrow farmhouse with a low dirt basement was never the hangout house for daughters Sawyer and Kendall. In Vermont, Mel built an outbuilding with nothing breakable, sat Oakley's friends down and set two rules: leave it as you found it, and make the bunk beds. She posted a step-by-step photo guide, down to the European shams.

• Cell phones: wait on the smartphone

For a 14-year-old without a phone, Oakley says it's helping, not hurting; nobody gets bullied for it. He suggests around 16, the age you can drive, for a smartphone. A flip phone for texting parents is fine earlier.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Curfew is about safety, not control

Mel's rule in rural Vermont, with no Ubers: home by midnight, which means no drinking or smoking, or sleep over. At their house she takes car keys and everyone stays the night. Her strictness comes from losing a family friend to a drunk-driving crash in high school.

• Make chore requests immediate and shared

Teens forget anything asked for 'in an hour.' Ask face to face and right now: feed the dogs, clear the table. Avoid the 'I pay the bills' card; offering to do the dishes alongside them, or saying you need help because you have to go do something, gets less attitude.

• Help kids find their people through shared activities

Clubs and sports put you in a room of 20 people who like the same thing. As a new ninth grader from Massachusetts, Oakley simply walked up to people. At lunch, 'I'm new, you guys look cool, can I sit with you?' works, and a no tells you which group to avoid. The first friend won't always be your best friend.

• Confidence in class and getting teens to listen

Oakley recommends a drama class for projecting and public speaking, and reminds nervous students that classmates aren't waiting for you to mess up. To get your teen to hear this conversation, play it in the car, pick a 10-minute segment, or mention a kid their age is talking.

10 Genius Hacks To Keep Your Home Organized (When Getting Out Of Bed Is Hard) | Mel Robbins Podcast

Guest: KC Davis
Date: 2023-09-11 · Duration: 0:51:20
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hLGT9ZmkRb4

KEYPOINTS

• Motivation and getting started are different problems
KC Davis, a therapist known for her approach to care tasks, defines motivation as believing a task is worth doing. Looking at laundry and thinking 'I don't deserve clean clothes' or 'I don't care' is a motivation issue. Thinking 'I wish it were done, but I'm frozen' is a task-initiation problem. For that, she says, build momentum: often action comes first and motivation follows.

• Use 5% momentum to do 5% of the task
Don't wait for 100% energy to do everything. Fold one item, wash two dishes, or set a timer for five minutes. The choice isn't between staying in bed all day and doing all the laundry. You could stay in bed 10 hours and then wash one outfit.

• Being frozen during a crisis is a sign you're processing it
For listeners stuck after a layoff or a breakup, KC says they are doing something: using limited mental and emotional resources to process pain. Mel adds that the laundry pile and the breakdown can be a sign of mental health, because that's how you're supposed to feel. It becomes a problem when it's chronic and stops you functioning.

• Shame freezes you; self-compassion gets you moving
KC cites studies linking self-compassion to better psychological functioning, while shame paralyzes. Start by checking how you're talking to yourself, and use the mantra 'I'm allowed to be human.' Even real mistakes, like being rude or blowing a deadline, call for 'I don't want to do that again, how can I grow?' rather than self-punishment.

• Care tasks are morally neutral, which opens up creative fixes
If the problem is moral failure, the only answer is to try harder on the same broken wheels. If it's a neutral problem you deserve to solve, options appear: stop folding clothes, use paper plates, buy a grabber or a wheeled stool, put a 32-gallon trash can on wheels in the kitchen, or set up a 'toy library' where kids check toys out of a closet.

• Crisis is part of life, not a detour from it
KC rejects the idea that life is a highway and hard times are side roads you push a broken car down. A child's autism diagnosis, for example, is life. In seasons like that, aim for survival-level functioning: paper plates and napkins, outsourcing whatever your budget allows, and one small corner you can make beautiful in under five minutes to retreat to.

• Clothes are made to fit your body, not the other way around
KC realized much of her dislike for her body came from clothes that didn't fit. Get rid of 'matronly' pieces bought because you felt you didn't deserve better, and things three sizes too small kept for 'one day.' Mel admits about half her closet doesn't fit since menopause, including favorite cargo jeans that felt like 'a tourniquet' around her waist.

• You don't have to care about yourself to start caring for yourself
KC says self-esteem is overrated and self-compassion is what predicts better outcomes, and it doesn't require liking yourself. Care builds worth, not the reverse. Her analogy: you can adopt the scruffiest dog at the pound and care for it simply because you decided it was worthy.

• Rest is a right, not a reward
Childhood teaches 'chores first, then play,' which works when the list is finite. An adult's list never ends, so people never rest, then collapse and call themselves lazy. 'People who work in shame rest in shame': if tasks feel like moral obligations, you can't relax even when you sit down. Instead of breaks that require babysitters and coordination, make things easier, such as a Friday pizza or snack-plate and movie night with no dishes and no bedtime routine.

• Aim for fair rest, not equal labor
Arguing over whose work is harder breeds competition. KC suggests asking how to divide the tasks so both partners get the most free time. A default parent doing care tasks that never stop is always on call. Options include alternating who's the default parent on weekend days, or the other partner stepping in without being asked. Agree on a minimum standard of functioning, and respond with grace rather than accusation when the trash isn't out.

EXAMPLES

• Hygiene kits around the house
For a listener overwhelmed by her son's autism diagnosis, KC suggests kits with baby wipes, dry shampoo, something that smells nice, and single-use pre-pasted toothbrushes placed around the home. She also recommends a laundry basket and trash can in every room so cleanup is one step, not five.

• Cover the mirrors
For a listener who hates how she looks, KC suggests covering the shower mirror and using a small pocket mirror for makeup or hair, so she can experience life 'first-person' instead of constantly watching herself.

• Do one small kind thing for tomorrow-you
Choose one inconsequential irritation, like cold feet or a chilly early dog walk, and fix it the night before: slippers by the bed, a robe by the back door, coffee set to auto-brew. It shouldn't be a chore that earns praise, just something that immediately feels good.

• 'You can't save the rainforest if you're depressed'
KC tells people to throw out the moldy Tupperware that blocks them from tackling the kitchen. She notes no environmentalist shames diabetics for single-use syringes, yet new mothers and grieving people get shamed for paper plates.

• Mel and Chris's role reversal
When Mel became the solo breadwinner and Chris the 'first-call' stay-at-home parent, Mel found herself valuing her paid work

more, adopting the very stereotype she rejected. She realized his role was priceless. Chris's trigger: unflattened cardboard boxes stacked by the garage, which make him feel like 'the maid.'

- **The gift of a cleaner**

During severe postpartum depression after Sawyer's birth, Mel spent 12 weeks in bed heavily medicated and wasn't left alone with the baby. Cousins Lisa and Steve paid for their cleaner to come weekly, which Mel calls one of the greatest gifts she's received. Parents, in-laws and her friend Joanie took turns staying with her.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Bring paper goods to someone struggling**

KC's favorite gift is a big stack of paper plates and paper goods left on the porch. No dietary questions, no need to come inside, no guilt about the environment because you supplied it, and everyone gets a break from dishes.

- **Ask what your best friend would do**

When you're in a hard season, give yourself the practical, judgment-free help you'd offer a friend: rest, shortcuts and reasonable expectations.

- **Think about long-term accessibility**

If chronic pain or illness means things will always pile up, change your home rather than waiting to feel better. Use tools, put things at reachable heights, and simplify routines.

What To Do When Your House Is A Mess (And You Can't Function) | The Mel Robbins Podcast

Guest: KC Davis
Date: 2023-09-07 · Duration: 1:02:29
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EWm1Usbv0pA

KEYPOINTS

• Four things make simple chores hard

Therapist KC Davis, author of How to Keep House While Drowning, names emotional difficulty (we moralize care tasks, so a sink of dishes becomes proof we're failing), physical factors such as disability, mental load under stress or grief, and societal messages about whose job domestic labor is and what it's worth — which she says carry a surprising amount of racism and sexism. Mel adds that she absorbed it from her mother, a stay-at-home mom who did everything while her father worked.

• Care tasks are morally neutral

Davis's core message: mess is morally neutral, and 'dishes do not make meaning, only people do.' We tie being a valid adult, a good mother or a competent spouse to the state of the house. Even as a self-described progressive feminist, she notes the insidious version: 'boss ladies' should have a career without letting the house fall apart.

• Ask what else the mess could mean

When Mel called her laundry pile proof she couldn't keep it together, Davis asked what else it could mean. Ten days of visitors, swimming, cribbage and dinners meant she'd prioritized hospitality and relationships. Other times it simply means you're having a hard week — which, Davis says, deserves compassion rather than an indictment. That's not toxic positivity; you still deserve clean clothes.

• Shame lowers functioning, and self-compassion raises it

Davis says research shows drowning in shame arrests psychological functioning while self-compassion improves it, so stepping out of shame is practical, not just nice. Many people cling to self-hatred as a kind of atonement: if I'm not worthy, at least I'm right to hate bad things.

• A shower is about 35 steps for your brain

Executive functions — initiating, time management, shifting focus, staying motivated — falter under stress, sleep deprivation, pain or emotional load, and with conditions like ADHD, autism, PTSD, depression, anxiety and OCD. Davis compares the brain to air-traffic control. She walks through feelings about showering, timing it around the day, ignoring distractions, body image, water temperature, the order of washing, getting out of the warm water and deciding where the towel goes. Showers are also boring, she adds.

• Toothbrushing is the task people are most ashamed of

Davis says it comes up more than anything when people describe their most shameful struggles, because dirtiness feels disgusting and unlovable. She admits she brushes at best every other day, a struggle since her second child, when working from home removed her lifelong motivation of other people smelling her breath.

• Your space exists to serve you, not the other way round

Overwhelm tends to make people either freeze or pinball frantically without rest. Davis distinguishes enjoying a functional, beautiful space from needing it perfect to feel worthy: what you tell yourself when the house is clean will mirror what you say when it's messy.

• Chores are cycles, not done-or-not-done

Laundry is always somewhere in a loop — closet, body, floor, hamper, washer, dryer — and every stage is morally neutral. You aren't obligated to line every cycle up at 'done' at once. Her line: 'I signed up to make sure my family always has clean clothes, not to make sure they never have dirty ones.' Set a pace that's functional: too fast and you're exhausted and perfectionistic; too slow and you can't function.

• Momentum beats motivation

Lower the barrier to entry: give yourself permission just to stand up, or stand in the kitchen without doing dishes. Davis has stood there scrolling TikTok for 30 minutes before washing one dish, then two. Sometimes she stops at two — still two clean dishes for tomorrow.

EXAMPLES

• Mel's sour milk and blue towels

The morning of the interview Mel found the milk had turned and berated herself for not even keeping the fridge stocked. She also confessed to once-white Target towels turned blue by jeans, doing laundry only when she runs out of underwear, and a closet stool holding 'a Tetris game' of dirty clothes.

• Mel's toothbrush confession

Mel admitted she rarely brushes the full two minutes because she gets bored and has a strong gag reflex, and went about five days with mouthwash and gum after her dog chewed her toothbrush — feeling dirty all day. Davis's suggestion for people who hate the burn of mint, strawberry toothpaste, hit Mel's instinct that it's 'for kids'.

• The clean laundry pile and the fleece onesie

For eight months after her last baby, Davis's clean laundry sat in a pile everyone stepped over. Folding one day, she realized she was folding fleece pajamas, onesies and underwear that didn't need it. She moved everyone's clothes into one closet by the laundry room, hung the dozen items that need it, and sorts the rest into baskets 'like throwing cards'. Now laundry gets done every week.

• Why unloading feels worse than loading

Loading the dishwasher or washer follows a satisfying pattern, Davis explains, while putting things away means bending and deciding where each item goes, with no pattern for the brain to enjoy. Mel realized that's why she groups dishes on the counter before putting them away.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Get clean without the full shower**

  If the goal is being clean, wash at the sink or use a wipe. Skip washing your hair if that's the barrier, run a small heater beforehand if temperature swings bother you, or pick a 'shower podcast' for the boredom.

- **The five-things tidying method**

  Tidy every room in the same order: trash out; dishes to the sink; laundry into a basket; put away things that have a place; pile up things that don't. Davis does it when she's already on her feet with shoes on, such as right after the kids leave for the bus, sometimes with a timer.

- **Cut steps that add no value**

  Look for the step where a cycle always jams, like folding was for Davis, and question whether you need it at all. Doing one outfit's laundry, or paying for a laundry service if you can afford it, is a practical choice, not a moral one.

The Most Important Wake-Up Call You'll Ever Hear

Date: 2023-09-04 · Duration: 0:37:25
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ytdBRV37YjQ

KEYPOINTS

• Your life is a melting ice cube

Mel's central image: most of us assume there will be a right time, when we feel ready, when things are perfect, when we're a 'legitimate' writer. Meanwhile, the ice cube keeps melting until it's a puddle that evaporates. Her message is that 'today is that someday.' If you keep waiting, you'll spend your life watching time tick by.

• Your excuses are endless, but time isn't

Mel admits she carried 'start a podcast' from one yearly goal list to the next for years. Her excuses were familiar ones: she didn't know how, dinner had to get made, there were college tours that weekend, it might be embarrassing, and big names had already said everything. She uses her own stalling to show how much time and energy goes into talking ourselves out of what we want.

• It comes down to time and energy

Mel boils change down to two resources. You don't have to write the book overnight, just pick up the pen. You don't have to become a doctor overnight, just research schools and apply. Every day, find five, ten or fifteen minutes to move from thinking to doing: write a sentence, send an email, do the research, take a class, all while you're still living your current life.

• Notice where your energy goes, too

Alongside wasted time, Mel points to wasted energy: relationships that drain you and give nothing back, and routines you go through on autopilot. She asks listeners to notice each day where their time and energy actually go. Getting serious about it, she warns, shows you what an active participant you are in your own stuckness.

• Life is a solo road trip

Borrowing from her Audible project 'Reinvent Your Life', Mel describes life as a road trip where each year is a mile marker. You'll drive alongside others, cross paths with them and travel in groups, but you're driving your own car. She says that isn't meant to feel lonely. It's freeing, because everyone else is busy steering their own lives and isn't watching you as closely as you think.

• First acknowledge the dream, then take responsibility

Mel's two steps: name the thing that's on your list and in your heart, then take responsibility for moving toward it in whatever way, big or small, you can manage. She stresses looking ahead through the windshield rather than back at wasted years, and inching forward day by day, week by week, month by month, year by year.

• You're not an imposter, you're a beginner

Mel replays her daughter Kendall's insight from an earlier episode on imposter syndrome: 'I'm not an imposter if I'm a beginner, because that's what I am.' Of course you lack experience in something you've never done. Mel calls that good news, because it means you're just starting and have a lot to learn.

• Fear can disguise itself as comfort

Mel calls it the 'dream thief': fear that looks like comfort and routine. It's why it's hard to get off the couch, start working out, or leave a job you've had for ten years even though you want more. Getting used to what you have can lull you to sleep, and decades go by. She says that's exactly what happened to her with radio and podcasting.

• Working on your dreams is an act of self-love

Mel argues we often wait for someone else to give us permission or love. In her view, love is something you give yourself by taking your dreams seriously enough to work on them. She notes that research shows spending time each day on something that matters to you brings more meaning and joy, and calls that the fuel for the rest of your life.

• Starting brings it to life, even if you never finish

Mel shares a dream of writing a fiction trilogy. She says just signing up for an online fiction-writing class would move it from an idea into the real world. You don't have to finish the book; simply working on it brings something alive in you. Her summary: where you put your time and energy every day defines the life you create.

EXAMPLES

• A book deal on the desk since 2006

Mel's friend Kathy, about to turn 60, sent a teary voice memo halfway through the imposter syndrome episode. She had written a book proposal and received an offer back in 2006, but self-doubt ('I'm not a respected writer', 'it isn't that interesting') meant it stayed at the top of her goal list for almost 20 years.

• 700 messages in a day

Within hours of the imposter episode going live, more than 700 listeners wrote in. Their dreams included becoming a motivational speaker, a fashion editor at 34, a clothing designer at 31, a surgeon, an actor, a film director in LA while working in marketing in Europe, and leaving a corporate job to start something of their own.

• Mel's replies to listeners

To the 34-year-old career changer: scarier than changing careers is reaching 68 and wishing you had. To the would-be director: take screenwriting and producing classes in Europe and make a plan. To the person who feared failure in a job they disliked: you're already failing yourself. To the aspiring surgeon: it only looks complicated from the end result.

• The house in the rearview mirror

After 26 years, Mel sold the home outside Boston where she raised her kids, a place she assumed she'd live in forever. She describes watching it disappear in the rearview mirror for the last time, as a reminder that time passes even when you're too busy to notice.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Your biggest regret**
  Mel argues that the regret that will sting most is not pushing through fear, self-doubt and imposter feelings to start on the life you want to create.
- **Busy lives still have five minutes**
  Single parents, people caring for ageing parents, and people buried in bills may only have five to fifteen minutes a day. Mel says that's enough to start pointing your time toward what you want.
- **Her challenge to listeners**
  Mel asks each listener to take one real action today, not a wish or a fear, and tell her what they did so she can cheer them on.

The Surprising Psychology Behind the Secrets Everyone Keeps | The Mel Robbins Podcast

Guest: Dr. Michael Slepian
Date: 2023-08-31 · Duration: 1:12:53
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RDJg3IpYC1Q

KEYPOINTS

• The average person keeps 13 secrets

Slepian, a psychologist at Columbia Business School and author of The Secret Life of Secrets, first asked a couple of thousand people what secret they were keeping. From their answers he built 38 categories, then gave the list to about 50,000 people. On average, people had 13 categories of secrets at any one time, 97% had at least one, and 92% of open-ended secrets fit the list. Mel's summary is that about five are secrets people have never told anyone.

• The most common secrets

Top of the list are a significant lie, romantic desire, finances and sexual behaviour. Next come "extra-relational thoughts" (romantic thoughts about someone other than your partner), family secrets, secret ambitions, dissatisfaction with your social life or body, mental health, and broken trust. Mel says the hundreds of secrets her Instagram followers sent all fit his categories.

• A secret starts with intending to withhold

Slepian defines secrecy as the intent to keep information from one or more people, not the act of hiding it. Most secrets rarely come up in conversation, but they exist before and after those moments. A traveller who cheats once has a secret the moment they decide "I can't tell my partner." A small example: stepping away from the Target announcements so your boss doesn't realise you're not at your desk.

• Living with a secret is harder than hiding it

Because people can't read your mind, concealing a secret in conversation is relatively easy. The harm comes from thinking about it alone, doubting your choice, and replaying feelings of shame, isolation and inauthenticity. On your own, you never get the perspective from others that could soften an overly negative view.

• Secrets can make the world feel heavier

His early research followed up on the idea of being "weighed down" by a secret. People thinking about a significant secret judged hills as steeper and distances as longer, in the same way that tired or burdened people do, as if they had fewer resources to deal with what lay ahead.

• Secret versus private

Things that simply never come up, such as your sex life with family, are private. A specific experience you would actively hold back if it became relevant is a secret. Mel notes that "secret" tends to carry shame, while "private" feels like being in control.

• Shame says "I'm bad"; guilt says "I did something bad"

Shame is hard to change because it feels like who you are. Guilt focuses on behaviour, which motivates you to do better. Your past doesn't dictate your future. Mel's version: "You're a good person who did a bad thing." She applies it to cheating on boyfriends in college and law school: a good person with crushing anxiety, coping self-destructively.

• Keep the door open for kids to confess

Children keep secrets as soon as they realise their thoughts are private. The cookie-crumb fibs of three-year-olds are normal. The danger is later, when shame or bullying stays hidden. If confessing leads to an angry outburst, kids learn to keep things to themselves. Mel wants her kids' first thought in trouble to be "I have to call my mom, she'll help," and she saves disappointment for later conversations.

• Family secrets teach children that hiding solves problems

Slepian warns that this can grow into a habit of not asking for help. Mel goes further, calling it emotional abuse when parents make kids keep secrets or pull them into marriage conflicts, because it teaches them that love means loyalty and obedience.

• Before revealing, ask why

There's no undo button. Ask whether you're telling someone because you can't bear carrying it alone, or because they need or would want to know. If you're unsure, talk to a third party first. He also finds that the secrets we think about most are the ones that harm us most.

EXAMPLES

• The midnight call that started it all

About ten years earlier, after a long day interviewing for a job at Columbia by presenting his new research on secrecy, Slepian's dad called around midnight to say he wasn't his biological father. Slepian and his brother were donor-conceived, from different donors, and his parents had made a pact never to tell them. The truth was fine for him; the secrecy was what hurt. Years later, interviewing his parents for his book, he learned his mother let it slip partly because she had been reading his research on how secrets harm people.

• What listeners confessed

Examples included compulsive shopping and binge eating, desperate unhappiness in a marriage, a high-interest loan hidden from a partner, an affair with an employee that led to moving away, falling in love with someone other than a husband with nothing having happened, not graduating from high school, and appearing to thrive after divorce while doing worse than ever.

• "I didn't do well in college"

A friend of Slepian's suddenly told him this at a party, deciding it didn't need to be a secret anymore. It changed nothing between them. New information, even surprising information, is a drop in the bucket of a shared history.

• A grandmother's fear

His deepest regret is not asking questions when he first found out. Years later he learned his paternal grandmother had

pushed hardest for secrecy, fearing the boys would feel less part of the family. Knowing actually made those relationships more meaningful, and he wishes he could have told her.

• Role-playing the party confession

Playing a high school junior calling from a party the police broke up, Mel asked what a parent should say. Slepian: "Let me help you. This is something we can get through together. I'm upset you weren't honest, but I'm glad you brought this to me." Mel said she felt her shoulders drop.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Raise suspicions without accusing

With a partner, start with something like: "I want us to be able to bring anything to each other," then speak about yourself: "I'm feeling insecure about how close you are with so-and-so." With friends who leave you out, say you're open to talking about it.

• Use your "coping compass"

Point yourself to the most helpful available support. Choose emotional support if you need to be heard, or an assertive friend if you need a push to act. Don't shift the burden onto someone it would compromise, such as your partner's best friend. Sometimes the best person is whoever told you the secret.

• Ask two closeness questions

From Mandy Len Catron's New York Times essay: "What is your biggest regret?" and "What is your hardest memory?" Mel and Slepian both answered. His was rereading old emails and seeing he had been a terrible partner at the end of a five-year relationship. Hers was a breakup after her boyfriend's father died by suicide.

7 Longevity Secrets From My Rockstar 85 Year Old Mother-in-Law | The Mel Robbins Podcast

Guest: Judie Robbins
Date: 2023-08-28 · Duration: 0:43:40
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UXazmvQl-58

KEYPOINTS

• Longevity here means a vibrant, connected life, not just more years

Mel interviews her mother-in-law, Judie Robbins, nearly 86 and widowed at 68 after 45 years of marriage. Judie ran her first marathon at 70 (with Mel), went skydiving for the first time at 81, held a 2.5-minute plank at 82, and lifts heavier weights than Mel in barre class. People routinely guess she's in her early 70s. Mel's question is how Judie built a life where, at 85, her best days still feel ahead of her.

• A morning routine she enjoys

Judie wakes early and turns on her home sauna. She has an Emergen-C drink and a latte back in bed, checks email on her phone and plays a practice hand of bridge (Mel admits that's the opposite of her own advice). She meditates in the sauna for 15–20 minutes, then drinks kombucha with apple cider vinegar and fresh orange juice, and walks five miles. She notes that walking 18 holes of golf counts for the day.

• Movement is a non-negotiable habit, and missing it makes her grouchy

Judie never had an exercise routine until she and her husband started running in their 30s. She switched from running to walking around 75. Her motivation is what Mel calls 'good guilt': if her phone shows less than 10,000 steps, she feels it. She chose a three-floor condo on purpose, with laundry on the bottom floor and the bedroom on top, and always takes the stairs. Her rule is no weeks off, because a week off becomes 10 days.

• Social connection may matter even more than exercise

Judie thinks being social is 'almost more important than exercise' because it makes you feel loved. She says sedentary friends her age seem depressed but won't admit it, and use excuses like rain to stay in. She keeps younger friends as well as old ones, hosts a weekly bridge game for 16 women from a list of about 40, and has a longtime group she calls the Vermont Chicks.

• If you feel unloved, create love by caring for someone

Asked what she'd tell someone with no one who loves them, Judie answered right away: take hospice training and care for someone. She has volunteered in hospice for more than 40 years and calls it the most rewarding thing she does. She also visits a friend with Parkinson's, and says even 15 minutes matters. 'You can't say you're too busy.'

• Don't wait for others to call

Judie admits she has wondered why her kids don't call more. She has decided that because she's healthy and busy, they wait for her to call, and she'd rather that than calls driven by worry. Mel points out how Judie gives people freedom to live their lives without keeping score, which saves her a lot of resentment.

• Talk to people, not about them

When a friend with early Alzheimer's began insisting she didn't have it, another friend asked Judie whether to tell a mutual friend. Judie said to call the woman's husband directly. Her rule: if you're worried about someone, call them. She plans to ask another friend directly whether she's worried about herself, because 'everybody's talking about her but nobody's talking to her.'

• Gratitude and the present moment keep her young at heart

Judie doesn't take any day for granted, because nobody is guaranteed tomorrow. She's grateful for her family, her health and her original knees and hips. She thinks stress comes from expecting what you don't have, and quotes her mother: 'You're going to wish your life away.' She adds that the process and anticipation are often the best part.

• Keep love and adventure in your life

Judie has 'always had a man in my life' since being widowed. About a year and a half after her husband's death came Bill. Then came Hans, with whom she had a 10-year relationship before he moved to a retirement community, and they're still close friends. Now she's with John, whom she asked out herself at a local event. At 85 the two went on a cattle drive at a Montana dude ranch, her first time on a horse in about 40 years.

EXAMPLES

• Teaching English in Cambodia at 69

After a bike trip through Vietnam and Cambodia, Judie contacted the NGO Cambodia Living Arts and got placed teaching English at an after-school program, with no teaching experience. Her students included monks and mothers. She went for years, spending nearly three months at a time teaching seven days a week. A granddaughter who joined her in eighth grade fell in love with the country too.

• Mel's advice that stuck

After her husband died, Judie rented an apartment alone in New York and found big-city solitude lonely. Before she headed to Florida, Mel told her to call friends and fill her calendar before she landed. Judie says having things to look forward to kept her from a 'blank slate' of self-pity.

• The Sa Ta Na Ma sauna mantra

Judie chants 'Sa Ta Na Ma' aloud, then in a whisper, then silently, touching each fingertip to her thumb. A local yoga teacher says she's taught it worldwide to people with Alzheimer's and dementia. Mel connects it to 'neurobics,' pairing focused thought with movement. Judie is candid about the results: 'I think I'm convincing myself that I'm remembering more.'

• Audiobooks on every walk

Judie always has an audiobook going on her walks. She tried training for the marathon without one and couldn't stand 16 miles in her own head. She also reads for an hour or two most afternoons. Mel notes that for lonely people, an audiobook is active company and input, unlike bingeing a show alone on the couch.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Make plans before you need them**
  In a transition such as widowhood, a move or retirement, put things on your calendar ahead of time so you're not facing empty days.
- **Build in movement you can't skip**
  Choose stairs, walk instead of using a golf cart, check your step count, and don't give yourself 'just a week' off.
- **Reach out first and stop keeping score**
  Call the friend you're thinking about, text your family, and accept that others' lives don't revolve around you. If connection is missing, Judie and Mel's advice is to volunteer: giving to someone else brings love back to you.

Improve Your Breathing for Better Health From #1 Breath Expert In The World | Mel Robbins Podcast

Guest: Patrick McKeown
Date: 2023-08-24 · Duration: 0:57:13
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vcj61HKHKuc

KEYPOINTS

• Healthy breathing is quiet, light, slow, through the nose and barely noticeable

McKeown, founder of Oxygen Advantage and author of ten books on breathing including The Breathing Cure, puts the ideal as 'the perfect person breathes as if they do not breathe', so softly the hairs in your nostrils don't move. Mouth breathing tends to be faster and higher in the chest, which he says feeds the fight-or-flight response. Mel, who calls herself a mouth breather, noticed her breath stuck 'just under my boobs.'

• Stress, talking, desk jobs and congestion slowly wear down how we breathe

Breathing is delicate and easily changed by diet, lifestyle, trauma, stress, a lot of talking and sitting all day. Poor patterns become habits. A stuffy nose pushes you to breathe through your mouth, and mouth breathing makes the nose stuffier, a vicious circle. The more you breathe through your nose, the better it works.

• Nose breathing improves how oxygen reaches your tissues

He cites a 1988 finding that continuous nasal breathing raises blood oxygen uptake by nearly 10%. During exercise it keeps carbon dioxide higher, which, through an effect described in 1904, helps red blood cells release oxygen to tissues. The nose also carries nitric oxide into the lungs, which he describes as antiviral, antibacterial and a bronchodilator, relevant to asthma, bronchitis and COPD.

• Faulty everyday breathing feeds anxiety, not just the reverse

Fast, upper-chest, irregular breathing shows up in at least 10% of the general population but up to 75% of people with anxiety and panic disorders, by his account. Poor oxygen delivery can make brain cells more excitable. He links poorer breathing to fatigue and cold hands and feet. Mel admitted she wears socks to bed because her husband complains about her cold feet.

• The exhale controls relaxation, and mouth exhales are too fast

Relaxation is 'all in the exhalation.' A fast breath out signals stress, and the mouth is a bigger exit than the nostrils, so it speeds the exhale. At rest the exhale should last about one and a half to two times the inhale. Mouth breathing also loses about 42% more water, which affects hydration, gums, breath and lips. Mel tied this to a Stanford finding of neurons that monitor breathing and tell the brain when something's wrong.

• Bigger breaths don't bring more oxygen

At rest, 12 to 14 breaths a minute is typical, but volume matters as much as rate. Over-breathing blows off carbon dioxide, which narrows blood vessels and makes red cells hold on to oxygen, so less of it reaches the body. 'Deep' should mean low, driven by the diaphragm, not big. The diaphragm is also connected to calm and to the upper-airway muscles.

• About six breaths a minute brings body and mind into balance

For deliberate relaxation he gives 4.5 to 6.5 breaths per minute, for example in for five, out for five. Italian researcher Luciano Bernardi found, in a study he dates to around 2000, that both reciting the rosary and repeating mantras brought breathing down to about six breaths a minute. Someone breathing 20 times a minute shouldn't drop straight to six; slow down gradually, for example in for three, out for five.

• Mouth breathing is tied to snoring, poorer sleep and sleep apnoea

A stuffy nose makes you two to three times more likely to have a sleep problem, snore or have obstructive sleep apnoea, he says. Nasal breathers sleep more deeply in the studies he cites. Fast breathing at night can wake you and fuel 3 a.m. rumination. He puts insomnia at about 30% of people, 10% chronically. You can't mouth-snore with your lips closed, and soft nasal breathing reduces nasal snoring.

• Mouth tape helps, but with real caveats for sleep apnoea

He uses an elastic tape stretched 30 to 40% that draws the lips together, as a daytime reminder for kids and adults and at night once nose breathing is comfortable. In mild obstructive sleep apnoea, keeping the mouth closed cut the AHI severity score by 33%. People with moderate to severe apnoea, and some with obesity, need to 'mouth puff', so tape that seals the lips fully, like the micropore tape he used before, can make apnoea worse.

EXAMPLES

• 11,000 British children

He cites research by Karen Bonuck following UK children from six months to 57 months: those who snored, had apnoea or breathed through their mouths and went untreated had about a 40% higher risk of special educational needs. He says 25 to 50% of studied children mouth-breathe.

• The Limerick decongestion pilot

In a 26-person hospital pilot in Limerick, Ireland, rhinitis symptoms dropped by 70% at three months with his breath-hold nose-unblocking exercise. He notes it was only published as an abstract and the larger follow-up study never happened.

• Mel's 'Tootsie Roll' nostrils and packing tape

With allergies kicking in, Mel felt her nose clear after the second breath hold. She tried mouth taping the night before with packing tape ('I think I gave my upper lip a wax') and found she mostly sleeps with her mouth closed. Her husband snores, and she says one billion people worldwide have obstructive sleep apnoea.

• Breath-hold sprints for athletes

With well-warmed-up athletes he uses deliberate stress: 40-metre sprints holding the breath with 30 seconds rest, or 400-metre runners holding the breath for the final 40 metres. He doesn't teach hyperventilation and wants everyday breathing fixed first.

- **His own pre-meeting reset**
  Before an intense meeting he takes a soft breath in through the nose and a slow, gentle breath out, untimed and invisible to anyone, to tell his brain everything is fine and move attention out of his head.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Small breath holds for a racing mind**
  Breathe normally in and out through the nose, pinch it and hold for five seconds, then breathe normally for three or four breaths. Repeat about five times. He says this stimulates the vagus nerve and slows the heart. People with panic disorder should be careful, because focusing on the breath can trigger them.
- **Nose-unblocking exercise, with warnings**
  Exhale normally, pinch your nose, nod your head while holding, ideally working up to about 30 seconds, then breathe in through the nose. Repeat five or six times. Skip it if you have anxiety or panic disorder, are pregnant, or have heart problems.
- **Breathe 'sideways', low and slow**
  Cup your lower ribs and guide them outward on the inhale and inward on the exhale, rather than pushing your belly in and out. Mel realised her yoga belly breathing had been vertical, not horizontal.
- **Exercise only as fast as you can nose-breathe**
  Expect some breathlessness at first. Slow down, or try a nasal dilator on hills, and your body adapts to doing more with less air.
- **Breathe about 30% less before bed**
  For 10 to 15 minutes before sleep, take softer, smaller breaths with slow exhales until you feel slight air hunger. More saliva in your mouth is a sign you've shifted into rest-and-digest. Combine it with a cool, dark room and blue-light glasses.

College Drop Off: 6 Steps to Navigating Any Major Change Like a Pro | The Mel Robbins Podcast

Date: 2023-08-21 · Duration: 0:40:28
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=junoxkPFNnk

KEYPOINTS

• Change is hard for everyone, and so is watching people you love go through it

Recorded on the spot after a kitchen conversation with two colleagues, Amy and Lynn, during drop-off season, this episode is about any transition: college, a new grade, a first job, a move or dating again. Mel's framing is that we struggle with change ourselves and also get triggered when the people we love are struggling with it.

• Getting swept into their distress destabilizes them

Lynn describes herself as an empath who absorbs others' emotions. At her son's first college drop-off he thought he'd chosen the wrong school, and she cried with him and wanted to take him home. Looking back, she says she robbed him of the chance to rise to the challenge. Mel admits the same tendency: she hates seeing people in distress, and her own tears in goodbye moments made things harder for her kids.

• Flip into strength mode at the goodbye

With her daughter this year, Lynn let her be emotional without matching it. She switched off "empath mode" and focused on encouragement — "you've got this" — while understanding the transition was her daughter's. It can feel cold, but it keeps you steady enough to be useful.

• If they spent a year choosing it, give it a year

When Lynn's daughter said after her first drop-off that she'd made a mistake and wanted to come home, Lynn said no, and not after the first semester either: she'd spent a year choosing the school and couldn't judge it without a full year. Mel thinks the same rule works for a new job or a new grade.

• Expecting excitement sets you up to panic

People build changes up in their heads — the next school year or post-college life in New York will be amazing — and then it doesn't feel the way they imagined, so they think something's wrong. Mel says what you imagine and what your body experiences in the moment are different, because everything is new.

• Being upset about big change is a sign you're mentally well

The script all three hosts take away: "Of course you're upset. This is your process for change. You always do this before something that turns out great. It shows me you're mentally well." Feeling turned upside down by a new place, people, commute and rhythm is the appropriate response, and it's temporary.

• Let them borrow your belief in them

Amy's insight from leaving her daughter in Málaga, Spain, for a gap year: in that moment a parent has to believe in the child more than the child believes in herself, so she can borrow that confidence. Not in a shaming way, but "yes, you can." Amy says she needed this as a child and did much better when she got it.

• Build a bridge to the next time you'll see them

Amy points to a technique psychologists recommend for preschool drop-off: link the goodbye to a specific future moment — "I'll pick you up tonight and we'll do this," or "I'll see you at Thanksgiving." Mel says it gives emotional stability at any age.

• Don't make the moment about your own feelings

Mel realizes her goodbye pain is tangled with her own history: she left Michigan at 18 for Dartmouth, never moved back and misses her parents. She admits nudging her daughter toward the East Coast and vows to stop. Amy adds that you should ask probing questions so kids decide for themselves, not to please you.

EXAMPLES

• "No, you can't come back"

At 18 or 19, boarding a plane alone for a semester in Hawaii, Mel told her mom she could always come back if it didn't work out. Her mom said no — make it work. Mel ended up with anxiety and in a psychiatrist's office, but says that answer made her look forward instead of back, and it was the best thing her mom could have done.

• The Container Store detour

Mel's daughter Sawyer had planned her Boston College dorm down to color-coded mason jars, then froze on move-in day, feet dangling from her lofted bed, saying she'd made a mistake. Mel took her to The Container Store, Target and an early dinner to kill time, which she now calls a major mistake. At USC, her daughter Kendall, who had fought hard to get into its pop music program, sobbed and clung to them at goodbye.

• Lynn's own new job

Lynn left a job of 10 years to join Mel's team and was at her first off-site. She hears the voice asking whether she's the right person but doesn't give it permission to steer; she reminds herself she has handled transitions before, and shared that with her daughter so they were going through change together.

• A panic attack on the side of the road

A young woman Mel considers like a daughter called mid-panic: newly graduated, job start delayed, family just moved, grandfather sick. Mel grounded her with one thing she could see and hear, breathing together and a hand on her heart, then told her that being thrown by that much change showed she was well, and that it was temporary.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Use a goodbye script, then walk away

Acknowledge it'll be hard and different, say you believe in them and when you'll see them, hug, then turn and walk away like you mean it. Don't run back for another hug. Mel plans to cry in the car afterward.

- **Narrow their focus on the tearful call**

  Mel cites F-14 pilot Carey Lohrenz's book Span of Control: in an emergency only three dials matter. Ask, "What can you do in the next hour?" Then push them out of the room or cubicle to talk to people.

- **Breadcrumb the calendar**

  Overwhelm can lead to freezing and procrastinating. Help them schedule a lunch, a cafeteria buddy or an event so their week shows forward motion. Mel's plan for her daughter: change sucks for about two weeks, so get into a rhythm.

These 4 Words Will Silence Your Self-Doubt: A Life-Changing Conversation | The Mel Robbins Podcast

Guest: Kendall Robbins
Date: 2023-08-17 · Duration: 0:44:54
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GjKu3JMY9pM

KEYPOINTS

• Imposter syndrome is a near-universal fear of being found out

Mel frames it as intellectual self-doubt: you walk into a room, start doubting whether you deserve to be there, and worry people will discover you have no idea what you're talking about. She notes the term was coined in the 1970s by two female researchers and cites Harvard Business Review reporting that executives worldwide name being found incompetent as their number one fear. The point is to normalize the feeling before trying to fix it.

• Being surrounded by people you admire can make the feeling spike

Kendall, 23 and a recent graduate pursuing a career as a touring singer-songwriter, got an artist pass to a music festival through a family friend. Thirty minutes in, alone, in a long skirt in 85-degree heat, she realized the backstage tent was where established artists she had streamed for years were standing in the free-food line. Her instinct was to rip the wristband off and go stand in the audience.

• Isolating yourself is how imposter syndrome does its damage

Kendall spent roughly the first five hours of day one alone, to the point that someone asked if she was okay because she looked so out of place. Mel's diagnosis: when you get up in your head and intellectualize 'I don't belong,' you cut yourself off from both what you could gain from the room and what you could give to it.

• The first turn is choosing gratitude over self-torture

Kendall's shift was not instant. She told herself she could either keep torturing herself in front of her favorite artists or enjoy being within arm's reach of them, with free food and backstage views. Naming what she lacked (no Grammy, no music on Spotify, not performing) and then deciding to be grateful anyway is what loosened the grip.

• Enter every room with a learner's posture and something to give

Kendall recalled advice from her mentor Sean Holt, vice dean at USC's Thornton School of Music: walk into rooms without ego, lean into gratitude for what you'll learn, but know there is a reason you're there and you will give people something they didn't know they needed, just as they'll give you something. Kendall calls it a balance: only focusing on giving makes you self-obsessed; only on learning makes you dumb yourself down.

• You're not an imposter if you're a beginner

The line that stopped Mel mid-conversation was Kendall's reframe: she isn't an imposter, she is a beginner, because that is simply what she is. Accepting where you are, rather than measuring yourself against what admired people have already accomplished, is what she says makes the imposter feeling largely disappear.

• Beat everyone to your inconvenient truths

A second Sean Holt idea: you become one of the most powerful people in the room when you say the awkward fact first. For Kendall that meant answering 'do you have music out?' with no, she just graduated and is figuring out her sound, rather than dodging. Saying it was horrible the first time, her jaw locked, but vulnerability is what created connection.

• What you contribute may have nothing to do with your skill set

Mel points out the first thing Kendall gave wasn't music at all but her sense of humor; inappropriate jokes broke the ice with someone highly regarded who may be part of her career going forward. Kendall's takeaway is that in rooms where you feel like an imposter, your contribution is likely to be your humanity, a relatable experience or your humor.

• Imposter syndrome is a compass pointing at what you want

Mel argues you only feel it in situations you care about; Kendall notes she would never feel it at a financial convention because she has no desire to be in that room. The discomfort is your dreams saying there is work to do. Mel stresses the feeling recurs at new levels rather than vanishing.

• If you can't believe you deserve to be there, trust there's a reason

Mel's alternative to forced confidence: you don't have to declare that you deserve the room. Anchor in faith that there is something for you to learn or discover about yourself there, and don't leave the room.

EXAMPLES

• The festival turnaround

Once Kendall started introducing herself as a beginner, the friends her family connection introduced her to took her under their wing. Working musicians told her that being around someone so fresh reminded them why they started, since doing music to pay the bills gets long and hard. She ended up performing at a late-night show and was asked by several people to collaborate and write together.

• Mel's crying-in-the-hotel-room moment

About nine years earlier, before she'd been paid to speak, Mel was invited onto a panel in California. At the opening reception she saw Christy Turlington and Gretchen Rubin, had one TEDx talk nobody had heard of yet, and fumbled 'what do you do?' She skipped dinner, cried and stayed up all night, but that discomfort clarified that she wanted to create work people recognized. She kept showing up feeling like an imposter for another two or three years before publishing.

• Levels of being a beginner

Mel notes Kendall isn't a total novice: she graduated from USC Thornton's pop music program studying with Grammy-winning artists. Mel herself hosted an award-winning radio show and recorded audiobooks with Audible, yet felt like a beginner launching a podcast, and again when she met Alex Cooper of Call Her Daddy before her own show existed.

• 'You're not a nobody' texts

Kendall texted her USC friends that she was a nobody drinking alone while famous artists walked past. They replied that she was supposed to be there. Her reflection: awards, fans and followings are not who people are; 'so-and-so is not her Grammy.'

• Imposter syndrome about the episode itself

Kendall admitted feeling like an imposter for talking about imposter syndrome to Mel's large audience with no album, tour or following. Mel called it a classic example and argued that being in the middle of it makes her more relatable than someone who already figured it out.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Catch it, then flip to gratitude

When you notice 'I shouldn't be here' in a new job, school, neighborhood or workout class, recognize the thought and switch to being grateful you're there and excited to learn from others. Mel's claim is not that the feeling stops, but that you can stop destroying yourself over it.

• Script your inconvenient truth in advance

Decide how you'll say the thing you're embarrassed about (no product yet, new to the role) plainly and early, ideally with what you're excited about next. Kendall's version: just graduated, working on music, not rushing the process.

• Don't wait to be validated for results you don't have yet

The compliments that mattered to Kendall were about her spirit, ambition and passion, not her original music. Early in a path, those are the things worth being seen for.

• Introduce yourself, even if you're alone

The festival only changed once Kendall started meeting people through the friends she was introduced to. Staying in the corner protects you from awkwardness but guarantees you neither give nor receive anything from the room.

Something Scary Happened The Other Day and I Wanted To Talk To You About It | Mel Robbins Podcast

Guest: Dr. Mary Catherine McDonald
Date: 2023-08-14 · Duration: 0:51:30
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wUjQauuNoHk

KEYPOINTS

• Witnessing a tragedy can be traumatic, even if you didn't know anyone involved

Trauma researcher Dr. Mary Catherine McDonald says we rarely acknowledge that witnessing trauma is traumatic. Vicarious trauma is real, and it can come from seeing an event or from hearing graphic details again and again. She says several of her clients have watched a rescue at sea that didn't end in a rescue, and were deeply shaken.

• Normal memories are filed within roughly 4 to 24 hours

McDonald describes the hippocampus as a file room with workers who put each experience away within about 4 to 24 hours. A well-filed memory has three parts: the story, some of the emotion, and a meaning tag that says where it fits. That's why you can retell a funny grocery-store moment, laugh again, and get on with your day.

• In an overwhelming event, the brain switches to survival mode and memories get fragmented

When the amygdala sounds the alarm, McDonald says the brain reprioritises 47 functions to deal with the threat, and the 'file room workers' leave to help. The result is a fragmented file, scattered sensory pieces without a full story, feelings or meaning. The brain keeps it near the front of your mind so it can try to file it properly later.

• Triggers are your brain's attempt to file the memory, which is why they set off the alarm

When you encounter something that matches a fragment, such as a particular shade of red, the brain pushes the file forward to give you a chance to organise it. But the amygdala has tagged that cue as mortal danger, so the alarm goes off again, even if you're sitting at your desk. Mel says that for her, helicopters, the words 'rip current' and the sight of a tan Suburban now do this.

• The trauma response is adaptive, so drop the shame

McDonald stresses that the trauma response comes from the drive to survive. It starts out helpful and only becomes unhelpful over time. People often jump to 'something is wrong with me, I'm broken', and she sees shame as the biggest barrier to healing. Her line: you're not broken; you're 'the unbroken'.

• There's no hierarchy of whose pain counts

Mel felt guilty for being so shaken when it wasn't her son or anyone she knew. McDonald says we've defined trauma wrongly for about 150 years by ranking whose response is legitimate. Your nervous system is telling you that you need care. You wouldn't refuse treatment for appendicitis because someone else in the ER has a broken collarbone, so don't do it with psychological injury.

• The same event can affect people very differently

A memory can fragment in countless ways, so two people at the same event may react very differently. One may cry and feel anxious; another may shut down and tell the story without feeling anything. McDonald says the second still needs to integrate the memory, because the emotional part of the file is missing. Historically, she says, the calm soldier was used to shame the distressed one.

• What happens right afterwards matters a lot

Not everyone who witnesses something terrible develops trauma. If you can talk it through, give it meaning and feel it with someone soon afterwards, the memory may be filed normally. McDonald recalls a study, she thinks in Israel, in which terror-attack survivors who did a narrative exercise in the emergency room were something like 80% less likely to develop PTSD than those who got standard care.

• Trauma is an unbearable emotional experience with no 'relational home'

Borrowing the term 'relational home' from clinician Robert Stolorow, McDonald defines the risk of chronic trauma as unbearable emotion plus nobody to help you hold it. A relational home is someone who helps you feel through and organise what was too much in the moment. How much you need varies: a divorce might need one every day for six months.

• Healing means integrating, not feeling nothing

Integration means a coherent story with a beginning, middle and end, plus its emotions and meaning. Approaches include EMDR, where occupying your vision while recalling the memory helps restore balance in the brain, narrative therapy, and, she notes, psychedelics such as psilocybin or MDMA, which are thought to quiet the fear centre. McDonald favours using several approaches because the whole body is involved. Memories are supposed to carry feeling, so 'I feel nothing' is the wrong goal.

EXAMPLES

• The missing swimmer

At a rented beach house on a day with huge waves and a rip-current warning, Mel heard car horns at 6:30 p.m. People on the shore were trying to flag down police boats heading the wrong way. Her first two 911 calls didn't connect. On the third, she stood on the porch railing waving a red-and-white towel while the dispatcher redirected the boats. She sent her daughter Kendall running down with the phone.

• Three and a half hours, then recovery

Helicopters, spotlights, dive teams and sheriff's boats searched until 9:30 p.m., when it became a recovery mission. The next morning Mel climbed into bed with her son and held him. She kept replaying what she could have done, donated to the family's GoFundMe, and contacted her therapist and a trauma specialist.

• Mel's rock bottom, now integrated

Fifteen years earlier, Mel faced bankruptcy, heavy drinking, constant fighting and depression, and for a long time couldn't talk about it without choking up. After telling the story many times and letting herself feel it, she says she can describe it honestly without being triggered, which shows how integration works.

- **Giving the event meaning**
  McDonald pointed out that turning the experience into an episode that normalises trauma responses is itself a way of giving meaning to something that felt random and out of control.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Put the shame in a box**
  Close your eyes, picture placing your shame in a box on the highest shelf in your house, and leave it there for a few days. You can take it back later; it's just in the way of healing right now.
- **Write the full story, then feel it with someone**
  Write what happened as if for someone who wasn't there, even if others were with you. Do it daily if you can bear it. Then notice which fragments stand out and what feelings they carry, ideally with someone attuned enough to say 'you must have felt so helpless'. Finally, ask what this means in your life and how you'll carry it forward.
- **Treat your body as a barometer**
  McDonald says not all triggers are conscious, so unease around certain people is worth noticing. She sees triggers as chances to finish filing a memory, not things to avoid forever, and says you have more influence over your nervous system than you think.

Neuroscientist Reveals The Shocking Science & Benefits of Taking a Simple Walk | Mel Robbins Podcast

Guest: Dr. Shane O'Mara
Date: 2023-07-31 · Duration: 1:05:09
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MltZxgejfKI

KEYPOINTS

• Walking is a deeply social act, not just a way to get from A to B

O'Mara, professor of experimental brain research at Trinity College Dublin and author of In Praise of Walking, says the most surprising thing he found was how social walking is. Humans left Africa on foot 80,000–130,000 years ago in groups that had to watch out for one another. He uses the term "effervescent assembly" for the sense of self and other dissolving when people walk together for a shared cause. He says no other species marches together like this.

• Inactivity is linked to personality and brain changes over time

He describes a US panel study tracking personality against activity. People who became more sedentary, even in midlife, tended to become less sociable, less open to experience and more prone to negative emotion. He stresses this was about inactivity, not simply age.

• Walking challenges the brain more than you notice

Standing up, keeping your balance, orienting yourself, building a mental map, adjusting your pace on a hill and carrying shopping home are all small demands on the brain. Brain rhythms that are quiet while you sit become active. He compares the body to a new bike left in a garage for a year: chain silted, tyres flat, brakes unresponsive. Bodies and brains need repeated challenge.

• We have designed movement out of our environment

Our bodies evolved to conserve energy, yet we now live with a calorie surplus. O'Mara argues that environments should make walking the easy default. He doesn't want to blame individuals, because poor footpaths, bad lighting, fear of crime and buildings built around elevators decide a lot of how much people move.

• Walking reliably boosts mood, even for people who dislike it

He calls the mood boost one of the most certain findings in this field. In lab studies, people who walked 10–15 minutes to rate campus buildings felt better than those who rated photos, including people who say they hate walking. Walking in nature adds a further boost on top of the walk itself.

• Be careful with neurochemical claims

O'Mara warns that most studies that mention dopamine never measured it, because you can't measure it in a living person's brain without invasive procedures. Cortisol can be measured in blood or saliva. What the evidence mostly shows is correlation, not cause. He describes the benefit as several things working together: falling stress hormones, the sense of motion as scenery moves past ("optic flow"), a break from rumination, and time in nature.

• Creativity needs time away from the problem, and walking provides it

Staring at a hard problem is the worst way to solve it. Creative thinking moves between preparation and incubation, and between big picture and detail, like seeing the forest and the trees at once. In studies, people who walked before problem-solving produced substantially more creative ideas than people who sat; Mel mentions roughly double. O'Mara says the science of walking and creativity is still at an early stage, with no definitive recipe.

• Mild physical engagement may bring buried ideas to the surface

He calls the state "mindlessness": unlike mindfulness, you aren't watching your thoughts; you're out of your own head. His idea is that a slightly more active brain "tickles" ideas just below awareness so they rise to the surface. Slumped in a chair, nothing comes. He presents this as his own working idea, not a settled finding.

• Small, frequent bouts of walking beat one big session

Non-industrialised groups move at a low level all day with rest in between, rather than in one burst. Getting up for two minutes every half hour is good advice, and one workout won't cancel out a day of sitting.

• Match your pace to your purpose

For heart health, walk fast enough that talking is hard, which he says beats slow jogging. For thinking, walk more slowly. He demonstrates by asking Mel to subtract 17s from 1,000. The mental load shows how fast walking would leave no capacity for thinking.

EXAMPLES

• Older adults' brains grew with walking

In a Chicago-area study of people in their late 60s and early 70s, participants walked a couple of miles three times a week with a partner and a physiotherapist. Memory-related brain regions increased in volume and memory improved. Sedentary peers declined more than they needed to.

• An Australian study on depression

Tracking people who weren't depressed at the start over seven to eight years, the study found those who moved least were most likely to develop major depression. Risk fell as movement rose, then levelled off.

• Step counts and mortality

The average US adult walks about 4,000 steps a day, while a child learning to walk takes about 1,200 an hour. Japan walks the most, thanks to car-hostile cities. All-cause mortality falls substantially, something like 30–40%, at about 4,500–7,500 steps. O'Mara calls 10,000 "made up" and says one story is that it came from a Japanese marketing campaign in the 1960s, though he isn't sure that's true. Mel was at 2,800 steps; he was at 9,785.

• The Hadza walk 10,000–20,000 steps

These traditional African hunter-gatherers average 10,000–20,000 steps a day depending on sex, and on average don't get

diabetes, carry much body fat or have heart problems.

• His dictaphone method and his stairless building

O'Mara wrote much of his first draft by walking with bullet-point notes and a dictaphone, never a phone, so he isn't tempted by alerts. In contrast, his office building puts the elevator right at the entrance but makes you go through four fire doors to reach the stairs. In his medieval Dublin suburb, pandemic outdoor dining widened three-foot footpaths and made walking the default.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Check your step count, then add about 5,000

Most people don't know their baseline. Adding about 5,000 steps, roughly 4.5–5 km, brings most people close to 10,000. Spread it through the day.

• Use different walks for different jobs

Walk briskly for your heart. Walk slowly, without your phone, to think. Either let your mind go completely blank or think loosely about a problem to find unexpected connections.

• Choose green routes over busy roads

Walking beside fast, noisy traffic is stressful, and people stuck in harsh urban environments are more prone to psychiatric disorders. Parks and tree-lined streets offer more benefit.

• Expect quick adaptation and lasting gains

If you've been sedentary, the first days may feel hard, but within days you'll feel better and miss walking when you skip it. He also suggests a walk for a stiff back from sitting before reaching for pills, because movement produces natural anti-inflammatories.

How to Hack Your Hormones and Use Science to Lose Weight and Sleep Better | The Mel Robbins Podcast

Guest: Dr. Amy Shah
Date: 2023-07-27 · Duration: 1:15:46
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_jt-924PLJI

KEYPOINTS

• Women's hormones were left out of medical research for decades.

Dr. Amy Shah, a double board-certified doctor with nutrition training from Cornell, explains that women were long excluded from medical studies because of fluctuating hormones and possible pregnancy. Inclusion had to be mandated, which she recalls happening around the 1980s. Until then, women were often simply given smaller doses. Even now, she says, studies rarely track how a drug affects estrogen, progesterone or testosterone. When she struggled with her own hormones as a young mother, OB-GYN colleagues admitted they had learned about puberty and pregnancy, and little more than 'it shuts off' about menopause.

• Think of estrogen and progesterone as two sisters.

Shah describes estrogen as the smart, social, risk-taking sister who can go a bit off the rails, and progesterone as the calm one who says let's stay home and chill. In the years around menopause both decline. Less estrogen can mean less sharpness, less energy, less socialising and quietly moving less. Less progesterone can mean more anxiety, poorer sleep and a feeling that life is out of control, which explains much of Mel's waking in the night.

• Your cycle has phases you can plan around.

From day 1 of your period to about day 14, estrogen and progesterone rise, so energy and stress resilience are higher. Shah calls this the time to 'train like an athlete, eat like an athlete' and to try intermittent fasting or not eating two to three hours before bed. Testosterone spikes around ovulation, making it a good window for building muscle, or for something that needs confidence, like asking for a raise. Days 21 to 28, the late luteal phase, are when you're least stress-resilient and more insulin-resistant. That's the time to ease off intense workouts and sugar, eat more fiber and protein, and get more sunlight, walks or massages.

• PMS is a monthly mini-menopause.

In the week before a period, estrogen and progesterone fall to their lowest point, which is why Shah calls PMS a small version of menopause. The habits that help in perimenopause also help with PMS.

• Perimenopause is like squeezing an almost-empty toothpaste tube.

Some months you get a good dose of hormones and feel normal; others you get a splatter or nothing and feel terrible. The hormone drop can start up to 10 years before menopause, often in the mid-40s and sometimes as early as 35. Hot flashes happen because hormones help the hypothalamus regulate temperature. Menopause itself means 12 months without a period. Symptoms often ease five to ten years later as the body adjusts to lower levels, but disease risk, especially heart disease, rises after menopause.

• Belly fat in midlife has a hormonal reason.

As ovarian estrogen falls, the body looks for other hormonally active tissue, and fat around the middle produces estrogen. Estrogen also helps preserve muscle. Shah says adults lose up to about 3% of muscle mass per decade, and the loss speeds up in menopause without weight training and enough protein, which explains Mel's 'wings'. Women also tend to become less active without noticing.

• Hormone therapy helps some symptoms, but not weight gain.

According to Shah, HRT is good for hot flashes and temperature swings, vaginal dryness and pain during sex, and progesterone replacement can help anxiety. It isn't a treatment for weight gain. Her analogy is that hormones are like gas in a car: if the highway is jammed, more gas won't get you anywhere. Sleep, exercise, weight training and food choices are what clear the traffic. She adds that the old fears about HRT causing cancer have been revised, and that starting close to the onset of perimenopause or menopause seems to give the most protection.

• Insulin resistance makes old habits stop working.

Shah explains insulin as the hormone that opens a cell's door to sugar. When cells are already full, they stop answering, blood sugar stays high and the body gets the signal to store fat, while the risk of type 2 diabetes goes up. During menopause, caffeine, alcohol and sugar also raise cortisol at a lower threshold. That's why the same coffee, sugar and glass of wine you always had can now cause trouble.

• There's no such thing as adrenal fatigue.

Shah says the adrenal glands don't 'burn out'. Feeling exhausted is a traffic jam across the whole hormone system, involving the thyroid and brain, driven by lifestyle and age-related changes. She also warns that more isn't better with hormones: too much thyroid hormone can cause heart palpitations and arrhythmias.

• You don't need a blood test to diagnose perimenopause.

Shah calls it a myth that you must have your hormone levels checked. Menopause is diagnosed by symptoms, not by a hormone level. She criticises the 'medical gaslighting' of women who leave with an anti-anxiety prescription and no explanation, and encourages finding a doctor who will look at symptoms in the context of a woman's hormones.

EXAMPLES

• The symptoms nobody warns you about

Beyond hot flashes, Shah lists brain fog, mood swings, fatigue, sudden temperature changes, and itching of the ears and body. Mel had been scratching her back like she'd been bitten by a mosquito minutes earlier. Mel, 54 at the time, compares her mood to a swinging kitchen door and her midsection to an inner tube.

• Why Shah is wary of testosterone pellets

Shah says women have about four times more testosterone than estrogen or progesterone. Doctors agree, she says, that implanted pellets are a bad idea: they can't be adjusted, usually give the same high dose to every woman, and often push levels too high, which can bring anger, aggression and risk-taking. Her view is that pellets persist partly because they're profitable. Use

whatever form suits you, but have your levels checked.

• Light in the bedroom and weight loss

Shah cites one of the few studies on menopausal women, which found that even ambient light, such as from a window, appeared to stall weight loss in women on a weight-loss plan. She attributes this to disruption of the body clock.

• Exercise timing

Shah says studies find people stick with exercise best when they work out in the morning, especially women, whose mental load can take over the rest of the day. Late afternoon is a second good window and may be better for building muscle.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Increase NEAT before adding more HIIT

Shah recommends raising non-exercise activity: park farther away, take the stairs, walk the dog, track steps. In perimenopause, lots of running or high-intensity classes can raise cortisol, so build a walking base and add weight training.

• Three sleep basics

Keep the room cold, since your core needs to drop about a degree to fall asleep. Make it pitch black, using an eye mask if needed. Keep the same bedtime and wind-down routine every night. Shah says some data suggest a consistent bedtime may matter even more than total hours.

• Eat more, not less, of the right things

Shah says many women respond to midlife weight gain by cutting calories hard. She recommends more protein, more fiber, real food and less ultra-processed food, plus a high-protein breakfast. She also says to stay hydrated, because thirst can feel like hunger. A craving check: would you eat a bowl of vegetables right now? If not, you probably aren't hungry.

• A hormone-friendly day

Wake without an alarm if possible, get morning sunlight, exercise early, and do your most demanding work early in the day. Between about 1 and 4pm, when cortisol naturally dips, take a 20-minute nap or meditate.

Understanding Yourself: The #1 Thing You Need To Do To Live an Authentic Life | Mel Robbins Podcast

Guest: Ritu Bhasin
Date: 2023-07-24 · Duration: 1:02:27
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1klDVUw31ro

KEYPOINTS

• Fitting in and belonging feel different in the body, and that feeling is your best signal

Ritu Bhasin defines belonging as the profound feeling of being honored and accepted for who you are. When you belong you feel ease and flow, even if you are nervous about sharing something vulnerable. Fitting in is 'activating': you change how you speak, dress or what you talk about, and your body registers stress before your mind catches up. She urges listeners to use the body as the guidepost for which state they are in.

• People wear a 'performing self' mask out of hurt, not deceit

Bhasin deliberately avoids the word 'inauthentic' because it implies you are trying to mislead people. In her research and her own life, people mask because they fear others will take away love or opportunities, and that fear is usually rooted in it having happened before. Hiding anxiety, depression or a hard upbringing is self-protection.

• Changing who you are may open doors, but it never produces real belonging

As the child of Indian immigrants in Canada, Bhasin faced relentless racist bullying and cultural confusion, so she learned to curate a performing self. As a young lawyer and woman of color she kept code-switching, hiding topics and adopting popular corporate hobbies she hated. Her conclusion: masking can earn acceptance, but acceptance is not the same as belonging.

• 'Core wisdom' means tuning into your mind and body in the moment

The number one thing Bhasin says brought her more authenticity and joy is cultivating core wisdom. In any moment she asks what her mind is saying, such as 'see, you're a loser, don't speak,' and what her body is feeling, such as chest stress, sweat or heat in the face. She then interrupts the inner saboteur with prepared mantras and deep breathing. She calls herself a work in progress who stays 'anchored' while everything swirls.

• Activation is a nervous-system response to perceived disrespect

Bhasin explains that the body is constantly scanning for threats. Today the 'bears' are eye rolls, raised eyebrows at your outfit, constant interruptions, a mispronounced name or a different tone of voice. The body treats these as attacks and generates energy such as trembling, tears or the urge to flee. People then override it to avoid being judged, so the energy gets pushed down.

• Release suppressed emotion later instead of leaving it trapped

If it isn't safe to cry or shake in the moment, Bhasin says to come back to it. She describes grieving her mother, who is dying of Alzheimer's: she tells herself to keep going at work, then in the evening plays calming music, returns to the memory and lets the tears come. She calls this emotional release or discharge, done because she doesn't want that energy trapped in her body.

• Prepare for hard moments with four steps: script, self-coach, settle and visualize

First, script what you will say ahead of time. Writing it down helps retention, but rehearsing in the shower or on a walk is better than nothing. Second, choose your affirmations in advance; hers are 'stand in your power' and 'you've got this.' Third, decide how you will calm your body. Her top tool is deep belly breathing with an emphasis on the exhale, which she says engages the parasympathetic system and is invisible to others. Fourth, picture yourself doing all three.

• Rehearsing a bad outcome is not manifesting it

When Mel asks whether visualizing rejection attracts it, Bhasin calls the process 'decision treeing,' like a choose-your-own-adventure: if they say this, I'll say that. The energy still goes toward the outcome you want. Mel's aha: rehearsing the worst case lets you express what is true, like 'I love you,' freely and without attachment to the response.

• We each move between three selves: authentic, adapted and performing

The authentic self is unedited and uncensored. The performing self feels like you have no choice but to mask in order to avoid bias, and it is exhausting and disempowering. Mel says most of us became performers in middle school and kept going. In between is the adapted self, where you willingly choose to adjust your behavior to meet your needs and other people's. The difference between adapting and performing is how it feels, and too much adapting slides you into the 'performing self vortex.'

• Exploring the adapted self reveals more agency than you expect

Bhasin lists three gains. You realize you have more choice and control over your behavior than you thought. You notice you are already behaving more authentically than you assumed, which is liberating. And adapting gives you a safe place when full authenticity isn't safe or you are simply exhausted.

EXAMPLES

• Mel's Nashville steakhouse moment

At Kane Prime in Nashville, a manager in his 40s told Mel he loves the podcast because she is 'so real.' Mel says the honest answer to how she got comfortable being herself is decades of self-hate and people-pleasing. That pain finally pushed her to accept who she is and who she isn't.

• A YouTube video teaching her own name

After decades of people anglicizing her name, Bhasin decided at 30 that everyone in her life would say it properly. As a speaker she later saw that mispronouncing it made people anxious, so she posted a pronunciation video. She says people don't need to nail it; they just need to signal that they care.

• The coffee-shop test

Mel points to people who don't speak up when a barista gets their order wrong because they don't want to make waves or hold up the line. Bhasin says every micro-behavior, with a barista, airline agent, internet support rep or your boss, is part of a chain reaction toward claiming belonging.

• 'I'm in HR': adapting at a party

Exhausted on a Friday night, Bhasin told strangers she works 'in HR' instead of explaining that she is a belonging and DEI expert, which would have opened a long conversation. Her sister questioned it. Bhasin says it was true and was a willing choice, so it was adapting, not performing.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Locate which self is showing up, then choose

Bhasin's main takeaway: in any situation notice which self is present, push out of performing, adapt where you want or need to, and bring the good side of your authentic self. She also says to adapt on the 'bad and ugly' parts, such as yelling or prejudice, rather than calling them authenticity.

• Script ahead for the high-stakes conversations you're dreading

Use her steps for telling a partner you love them, asking for a raise or facing a critical relative. Write out branches ('if they say X, I'll say Y'), choose your mantra, plan your breathing and visualize it. She acknowledges the 'burden of the oppressed,' the unfairness of having to prepare for mistreatment, but still prefers going in ready.

• Use the same prep to be an upstander

Bhasin applies the four steps to allyship. Plan what you'll say the next time someone makes a disrespectful remark, whether to a stranger or a family member at Sunday dinner. Then you're not a silent bystander, and others at the table who are shut down feel less alone.

• Expect pushback from people who knew the old you

Mel previews that showing up authentically will draw rejection from people used to the people-pleasing or insecure version of you. Bhasin admits she has been rejected many times after saying 'I love you,' but says it didn't matter in the end because she spoke her truth.

A Masterclass on Dealing with Change: A 3-Step Process | The Mel Robbins Podcast

Guest: Dr. Luana Marques
Date: 2023-07-20 · Duration: 0:59:49
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lUvC-E3YSxE

KEYPOINTS

• Transitions hurt because you're clinging to the shore while the boat leaves

Harvard clinical psychologist Dr. Luana Marques, author of Bold Move, pictures a transition as a journey toward a new life: you hold on to the familiar shore with one hand and the departing boat with the other, and get stretched thin. That stretch is the panic and uncertainty people feel. Holding on is a form of avoidance; her advice is to let go and start swimming, because there's no ticket to a perfect life.

• In a transition, your values get questioned

Marques defines values as intrinsic motivators — family, faith, wealth, integrity — that should act as your compass, though most of us notice them about as often as house paint. Values drive goals. When an old value no longer fits, pushing harder on it brings misery, and you end up living an emotion-driven life focused on avoiding discomfort rather than a values-driven one.

• Lean toward the pain to find your values

Pain exists, Marques says, because a value that matters is being violated. A stranger's insult stings little; a loved one's hurts because you care. After her health scare she spent early mornings crying and asking why it hurt so much, and found the answer was impact: she wanted to help far more people than research papers reach, citing CDC data she described as roughly 40% of Americans reporting clinical-level anxiety and depression.

• Or notice when you feel your best

The second route to values is studying moments of contentment and flow and asking why they matter. Marques could see Mel light up describing her family under one roof during the pandemic. Her own values include connection and family; her family eats dinner together daily and joined her on a work trip so she wouldn't be away from her son for five days.

• Many people are still forcing pre-pandemic values onto a changed life

Marques sees a global value shift since COVID, with people wanting flexibility because family time was being compromised. Most haven't had the chance to pause and reflect, so they keep doing what used to work, get worse results, and blame their anxiety. In her practice, anxiety is now so high that patients' brains feel "locked" in fight-flight-freeze and can't take in new ideas as easily.

• There's no transition without discomfort

Marques tells Mel her daughter will feel discomfort after graduating, and Mel will too; if they didn't, something would be wrong. Discomfort doesn't mean something bad is happening. The first thing a parent can do is let it exist instead of rushing to fix it, and calmly name it if it gets aimed at you: "It looks like you're upset and throwing it at me, and this isn't my transition."

• Rescuing people from hard feelings robs them

Mel realizes that rushing in with scripts and phone calls to fix her kids' problems took away what they gain from facing discomfort, which is why some lessons kept repeating. Marques adds that avoiding pain only prolongs it. Parenting is imperfect, she notes, joking about a friend's "therapy jar."

• Feeling your feelings shortens them

When her five-year-old has a tantrum, telling him to stop escalates it. Sitting beside him and naming the frustration lets his thinking brain come back online, and it lasts three minutes instead of 20. Marques points out Mel did it live: when asked about her own feelings, she switched to talking about her daughter, a classic avoidance tactic.

• Kids can't regulate themselves yet; adults must

Marques says the brain isn't fully developed until about 30, so kids lack brakes and adults have to model pausing. She hears from teachers so anxious they run out of classrooms and sees parents stepping into normal playground bickering. Her view: everyone who touches a child, from janitors to bus drivers, can teach a little regulation.

EXAMPLES

• Marques's "stroke" at her desk

Ambition got Marques out of poverty in Brazil and up to associate professor at Harvard, but when a colleague asked if full professor was next, she felt hollow, couldn't sleep and gained 40 pounds. While writing a grant, half her face then body went numb. Fearing a stroke, she went to her doctor in tears; it turned out to be a severe migraine, her first ever, and the moment she stopped avoiding change.

• Mel's sadness was about her own graduation

Asked to stay with her feelings, Mel said she felt sad for her daughter — then recalled spending her own college graduation sick under a tree, possibly with meningitis. Marques pointed out her daughter would be singing the national anthem for 18,000 people. Mel was grieving her own lost graduation.

• "It's okay not to be okay"

A best friend Marques calls Mary was fired after 10 years in finance and kept saying she was fine, though she was the main earner. Marques told her it's okay not to be okay; if she weren't uncomfortable, something would be wrong.

• Mel's Post-it note from her worst week

Kicking and screaming about moving to a Vermont town of 3,000 with no Target and an airport 90 minutes away, Mel wrote her "why" on a giant sticky note while sobbing: peace and connection, more time with her son and husband, a simple business that runs like a clock, global impact through higher-leverage use of her time, seeing friends daily. Two years later she says she lives it, and her fear-busting rule on the back read: approach, don't run.

• A boss who held space

When Marques sobbed to her psychiatry chair that she wanted to quit, he asked whether there were parts she still liked, then suggested reducing her time to a day or two a week. He didn't solve it; he let her sit with it.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Use the three steps: shift, approach, align**

  Shift: talk to yourself like a best friend and notice fear's distortions. Approach: move toward the discomfort instead of running. Align: let what the pain reveals become values, then turn them into concrete actions.

- **Do a Sunday values check**

  Marques reviews the coming week each Sunday; if a day doesn't serve impact, family or health, she rearranges it. She says values-driven living is linked to lower stress, depression and anxiety and higher well-being.

- **Write your own North Star note**

  Mel suggests capturing your values and promises on a sticky note while the transition is fresh, even mid-tears.

Mindset Flip: Getting Real About Your Relationship With Alcohol | The Mel Robbins Podcast

Guest: Rachel Hart
Date: 2023-07-17 · Duration: 1:28:08
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rmBj6ngdlLw

KEYPOINTS

• Feeling conflicted about drinking is normal, not proof that something is wrong with you

Mel opens with a confession: she isn't ready to quit, but she argues with herself every time she has a gin and tonic, partly because her husband Chris rarely drinks. Coach Rachel Hart says most of her clients start in that in-between place. A huge industry sells alcohol as fun and adult while the science calls it a poison, and two parts of your brain care about different things.

• Your brain learned what alcohol stands for

Hart says we don't just acquire a taste. We learn that drinking is how we relax, connect, open up, watch the game, celebrate or holiday. For her, drinking in her 20s meant relief from perfectionism and anxiety and a way to feel sexy, confident and a little wild. Change starts with asking what alcohol has become a symbol for.

• A drink can act as a boundary between work and rest

Mel describes the drink after a busy day as a lever that shifts her out of work mode. Hart reframes it as a boundary, the signal that you're off the clock. Remove the drink without replacing that boundary and your brain thinks you're still working. Hart's own old line was "I deserve it," and the useful question is what the "it" really is: permission to stop thinking, reward, pleasure, celebration.

• Urges carry information

Rather than treating urges as enemies to defeat, Hart treats them as inner intelligence about a deeper desire, such as more belonging, pleasure, permission or a boundary. 'Just say no' messaging puts you at war with the urge, which gives it power. Control, in her definition, means influencing what happens next, not making urges disappear, which is impossible without getting rid of the lower brain.

• Name the urge as it happens

Hart's first tool is narrating it: "Of course I'm having an urge, it's 5 o'clock, my brain learned we get a reward now." Naming it engages the higher brain and takes you off autopilot. She recalls fixing a cocktail and lighting a cigarette while watching Mad Men without noticing why. Sunsets were enjoyable before you drank; only the association makes something feel missing.

• Fear-based facts about alcohol often backfire

Hart cautions against obsessing over how toxic alcohol is. Some people find it effective, she says, but for many it just adds shame: now you drank the fourth glass and you 'should know better.' Getting curious about what you want and how it feels to be the odd one out is, in her experience, more powerful.

• The worst outcome of not drinking is usually a feeling

Asked to imagine never drinking again, Mel said she'd never have fun, never enjoy March Madness, weddings, dancing or even sex. Hart says those scenarios really come down to an uncomfortable feeling: being sober on the dance floor, or beerless at baseball. Her other mindset prompts include what you make it mean that saying no is hard, and stories like 'I'm all-or-nothing' or 'my brain lacks an off switch.'

• Disappointment is coming either way, so choose which one

You can feel disappointed now because you skipped the drink, or later because you broke your commitment. Mel recalls that on dry-month challenges, urges peaked around 5 to 7 p.m. and passed once she rode the wave, because the desire was for a boundary or a 'liquid hug,' not the drink.

• Manage the lower brain like a toddler

The lower brain wants pleasure, avoids pain and saves energy right now; the prefrontal higher brain can plan and weigh trade-offs. Lecturing a tantrum doesn't work and giving in teaches it that tantrums pay. Instead, say: I know this is hard, you're not in trouble, and I'll stay with you until it passes.

• Change requires a different relationship with commitment

Hart thinks people are all-or-nothing about commitment more than about drinking: you either earn a gold star or break the promise and binge or set even harsher rules, the same pattern as dieting. She also suggests saying "I'm choosing not to" instead of "I can't," since you obviously can, and 'can't' triggers rebellion.

EXAMPLES

• A rum and Coke at Lake Michigan, age 14

Mel traces her belonging trigger to arriving at a state-park beach as the only freshman among her boyfriend's senior friends. When a girl handed her a rum and Coke in a red Solo cup, she exhaled. Decades later, a friend poured two glasses of Sancerre for a garden walk, and Mel joined in despite planning not to drink, then berated herself on the drive home.

• Hart's grumpy four-year-old photo

Hart keeps a picture of herself at four on her phone, on mirrors and over her office. Asking what that child needs is easier than asking her 42-year-old self, who 'shouldn't need anything.' Mel's answer was a hug, and she realised the Solo cup had been one.

• Undiagnosed ADHD and dopamine

Mel connects her love of the first sip to living 47 years with undiagnosed ADHD, which she links to seeking dopamine hits. She also says she had a drinking problem in her 20s, 30s and early 40s, tied to anxiety, financial trouble and sadness.

• The night a friend died

During a past break, Mel heard a friend had died and poured a cocktail. Reviewing it Hart's way showed grief, anger and a belief that the emotion was too big to feel. That's useful data about missing skills, not a moral failure.

• Hart's 30-day break is about testing tools

Unlike Dry January, the goal isn't a perfect streak but trying every technique for urges and excuses. A drink on day two is data to examine. One client's compelling reason was wanting to be 'captain of my own soul,' and Hart has people list reasons across health, relationships, career, faith, money and time.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Look for substitutions

Mel suspects that on nights she skips a drink she buys something or eats a big dessert. Hart says her 'eight problems' were really one: identifying needs and tolerating an unmet desire.

• Replace 'fine' with a real feeling

Hart, self-described as not touchy-feely, had to learn that 'fine' isn't a feeling. Name it, such as disappointed, and treat it as human.

• This isn't only about alcohol

Both say the same skills apply to food, spending, scrolling, procrastinating and video games. For many people sobriety is the right choice, and Mel acknowledges that.

Repairing a Broken Relationship: It’s Not Too Late | The Mel Robbins Podcast

Guest: Dr. Joshua Coleman
Date: 2023-07-13 · Duration: 1:13:38
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HQ_f99U6O9w

KEYPOINTS

• Estrangement is a deliberate, usually one-sided cutoff, and it's common

Dr. Joshua Coleman, a San Francisco psychologist and author of Rules of Estrangement, defines it as a complete or near-complete cutoff that one person wants and the other doesn't, most often initiated by an adult child. He cites an Ohio State study finding 26% of fathers and 6% of mothers estranged from a child (other studies put mothers closer to 10-11%), and estimates about 27% of US families have an estranged member. He notes definitions vary, which muddies the research.

• Culture shifted from role to self

Drawing on sociologist Anthony Giddens's idea of the 'pure relationship,' Coleman says ties are now judged by whether they serve an individual's happiness and goals, rather than by roles like 'good adult child.' Estrangement has always existed, but never before has cutting off a parent been framed as good for mental health or an act of courage.

• The main pathways: abuse claims, divorce, in-laws, therapy and mental illness

Adult children most often cite emotional or physical abuse, neglect and differing values. In his study of 1,600 estranged parents, about 70% had divorced, which can lead kids to blame one parent or compete with step-families. Others include mental illness in parent or child, a son- or daughter-in-law who says 'choose me or them,' and therapists who diagnose a parent from afar.

• He believes some therapists push clients toward cutoffs

Coleman says parents show him letters stating 'my therapist says you're a narcissist and can't change,' from therapists who never met them. Childhood trauma is real, he stresses, but he thinks the culture now over-assumes it behind every adult problem. Mel notes they may differ on how much childhood trauma drives adult behavior.

• Over-closeness and pursuit can trigger the break

He cites a University of Virginia survey finding most parents expect to be best friends with their grown children, which many adult children don't want. Texting and social media let anxious parents intrude anywhere, and the most common line in estranged children's letters is 'respect my boundaries.' When a parent responds to normal distance by acting hurt or critical, it can become John Gottman's pursuer-distancer dynamic.

• Five common mistakes estranged parents make

Expecting it to be fair (which breeds victimhood and resentment); using guilt, which he says no longer works in North American culture, though cultures with filial duty tolerate it more; returning fire with fire; assuming every unanswered text is personal; and treating repair as a sprint. He adds a sixth: half-hearted amends like 'I'm sorry you feel that way.'

• Reconciliation happens largely on the estranged person's terms

Unlike couples therapy, where both partners have equal claims, he tells families that sessions are about helping the parent become more empathic and respect boundaries, and that if he sides with anyone it will be the adult child. Once the parent shows empathy and accepts those terms, the relationship can move to discussing what the parent needs.

• Parents have a moral duty to take the high road, and adult children owe something too

Because children didn't choose to be born, Coleman says parents must lead, take more responsibility than feels fair, and not get pulled into the weeds. He also argues adult children owe parents a period of due diligence: hearing them out and seeing them three-dimensionally, with compassion rather than contempt, though not tolerating ongoing abuse.

• Concept creep makes generations talk past each other

He cites Australian psychologist Nick Haslam's 2015 'concept creep' paper: definitions of abuse, trauma and neglect have expanded. A parent hearing 'you emotionally abused me' often can't relate. His suggested reply: 'It's clear I have blind spots; I'd like to learn what that felt like and whether there's something you'd like me to read or work on.'

• The odds favor reconciliation, slowly

Coleman says most estrangements eventually reconcile, even without his methods, as people mature, become parents themselves or want their kids to know their grandparents. It's a marathon of months or years, and catching the dynamic early leaves a smaller hole to climb out of.

EXAMPLES

• Coleman's own daughter

Divorced in his 20s, he later remarried; his daughter cut contact for several years in her early 20s, feeling displaced by his new family's more stable life. His therapist advised reminding her what he'd done for her and showing up to demand to see her. Things turned only when he stopped explaining, defending and blaming. Reconciling took many conversations, and he says it still comes up occasionally.

• Mel's prom-suit moment

After an hour and a half and hundreds of dollars on a black suit for her son's prom, Mel asked for a ride home and he said it would make him late for practice. She caught herself before saying 'are you kidding me,' recognizing a transactional 'I did this, so you owe me' reflex, and saw that he had also accommodated her schedule.

• Mel and her mom

Newly married and living near her husband's family on the East Coast, Mel sensed her Midwest-based mom felt she was losing her to another family. Every conversation had landmines. Mel credits therapy with avoiding a rupture and feels closer to her mother now than ever.

• Listeners Mel met in real life

One woman hadn't spoken to her sister in five years; a man and his wife hadn't spoken to their daughter, who has mental health issues, in seven years and didn't know where she lived. Mel's uncle died without meeting two grandchildren, who then

came to his memorial.

- **The lighthouse model**

For parents alienated after a divorce, Coleman's image is standing steady on the beach broadcasting light while the child is tossed by waves. They may orient toward you, get pulled back out, and eventually find their way, so the job is to stay loving, available and accountable.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **How to write an amends letter**

Keep it to about two paragraphs. Open with 'I know you wouldn't do this unless you felt it was the healthiest thing for you.' Name their complaints fearlessly, like a searching moral inventory, and how they may have hurt their trust or safety. Make no excuses, such as being a single mother or the other parent's failings, but don't make it self-hating either.

- **If you don't know why you were cut off**

Say you clearly have blind spots and ask whether they'd be willing to write and tell you more, promising to read purely to learn, not to defend yourself.

- **Know when to stop**

Returned letters, police threats or contact through an attorney signal it's time to stop completely, often for a year. He calls it 'lose your parent, find yourself': some adult children need to feel the absence to reconnect differently. He'd say the opposite for minor children: don't give up.

- **Treat a child's partner as the gatekeeper**

Never criticize a son- or daughter-in-law to your child, because it will likely be passed on; if you already have, work hard to make amends to them directly. Feeling replaced is developmentally normal, and complaining makes it worse.

- **Siblings and friends in the middle shouldn't be advocates**

Don't ask a non-estranged child to plead your case; they may be cut off too. Tell them they don't have to prop up your self-esteem and can voice their own complaints. Friends caught between two people should avoid taking sides, which can make the other person feel ganged up on.

Where Did All My Friends Go? A Simple Guide to Finding Your People | The Mel Robbins Podcast

Date: 2023-07-10 · Duration: 0:56:04
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=drgexn10QPE

KEYPOINTS

• Adult life can feel like summer camp, if you build it

About a year after moving to a tiny town, Mel says she woke up feeling like she lived in "adult summer camp": friends texting at 5:30 a.m., spontaneous plans, people she loves walking into the same coffee shop. A year earlier she was crying in her new house and lonely. Her point is that this kind of community is within your power to create, and it takes about a year of steady effort.

• The lie: "I have no friends"

Mel's friend Gretchen called mid-recording and said Mel had friends and was loved a year ago; she just didn't feel it. Producer Amy admits she recently said "I need to find my friend group" to a room of her friends. Mel's view is that we confuse how often we see someone with whether they're a friend. Your old friends are still there, and they probably think you're the one who left.

• Every friendship has a bond and a friendship

Amy's framework: the bond is the outside force that brings you together, like work, school, a team, a yoga studio, family or living nearby. The friendship is the caring, interest and outreach you add on top. When the bond disappears because of a move, divorce, new job, graduation, breakup or remote work, keeping the friendship alive is on you. Mel believes the past few years wiped out many people's in-person bonds.

• "On purpose" friends

An on-purpose friend is someone you deliberately chose and made a friendship with, rather than someone you're close to only because of the softball team or the office. Amy says these friends bring vitality because they're there for you, not for the organization. Mel, Amy and Jesse became on-purpose friends by taking a work bond much further.

• In adulthood you have to create the bump-ins

When you're young, friendships are arranged for you through classes, teams, dorm hallways and seeing the same people over and over. As an adult, especially with remote work keeping people at home, you have to create those chances deliberately. Mel puts it like planting: if you want flowers, you have to put seeds in the ground.

• Your town has four kinds of coffee shops

(1) The chain: efficient and transactional, with mobile orders and drive-throughs, and people come in and leave fast. Mel says it's a bad place to form bonds. (2) The first-responder, old-timers' spot with the best donuts and drip coffee: intimidating when you're new, but its regulars prove that a daily ritual can create a bond. (3) The bustling local spot where moms stop after school drop-off and staff know your usual. (4) The high-end spot from the travel guide with a huge espresso machine and pricey pastries.

• The coffee shop works like a Sorting Hat

None of the four is better. Each attracts people with certain interests. To find yours, ask which one you'd choose if you had two hours to kill. Then go there several mornings a week, plus one weekend hour, until you start seeing the same faces, getting to know the staff and saying hello.

• Make it your standing meeting place

Whenever you meet someone, suggest coffee at your spot, for example 9 a.m. on Saturday, because that's where you always meet friends. That routine becomes your bond and your institution. People start bringing their friends, and the group grows. Amy sums it up as "friendship is a verb."

• Make group chats fun

Mel copied friends she finds hilarious and fills every group chat with memes and ugly selfies, like "I'm coming in my pajamas," along with a photo. That playful energy is what recreates the spontaneous, bumping-into-each-other feeling of camp or college.

EXAMPLES

• "I'll probably just leave it all dirt"

Amy's favorite story: when Mel moved into her new house, Amy tried to cheer her up by asking what flowers she'd plant. Sad and lonely, Mel said she'd probably just leave it all dirt. A year later, workers were outside planting peonies, hydrangeas and hostas, which became Mel's symbol for planting friendship seeds.

• Mel didn't know her favorite spot existed

Mel lived in town for a year before Jesse told her about the type-four coffee shop. When she walked in, she thought she was in Brooklyn. It became her regular place. On the morning of the episode, after Pilates, she walked in to find David, then Amy, then another friend arriving for a meeting.

• The selfie fix

For her first six months using this approach, Mel would swap numbers with someone and then get a text weeks later asking to meet at the bakery, with no idea who it was. She has ADHD and sometimes deleted the thread. Now she jokes that she'll forget what they look like as soon as she leaves, and asks to take a selfie together so her text makes sense.

• The 5:06 a.m. text thread

On a Friday, Mel's friend David started a group thread at 5:06 a.m. with a video of mist in the valley. He and Amy traded weekend plans and asked what time Amy would pull that day's card. Then came "Mel get in here." Mel woke up to it, joined in, and felt the summer-camp feeling she had once thought she'd never have again.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Openers that work

In line, ask what the best pastry or muffin is. Compliment something specific like nails, earrings or braids; people light up. Say

you're new and ask what people do around here, or admit you've become a bit of a hermit lately and ask what's on this weekend. Mel even says outright that she needs friends, and most people laugh and say they feel the same way.

• The answers you get depend on the shop

At a chain, people will likely shrug and hurry off. At the old-timers' spot you might hear about a tractor pull or a fire-department fundraiser. At the local shop it might be an art fair or a library event. At the high-end spot it might be mushroom foraging or an author talk. That's why the place you choose shapes which invitations you get.

• Do the things you already do, together

Amy's mother-in-law used to fold laundry with her girlfriends. You can cook dinner with another family, exercise together, or trade chores. Amy loves weeding, and Amy and Mel once painted Mel's house side by side. Mel says these plain moments build friendship better than fancy outings.

• It works in cities too, and long-time residents can still be lonely

Your neighborhood, gym, office and kids' school each have all four kinds of shop nearby. It's normal to feel lonely in a town you've lived in for 20 or 30 years. Suggest a walking group or a Saturday meet-up, get the person's number right then, and text them on the spot.

The REAL Formula For Success and Happiness | The Mel Robbins Podcast

Guest: Shawn Achor
Date: 2023-06-29 · Duration: 1:15:53
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8N9_OYj1qv0

KEYPOINTS

• Happiness is 'the joy you feel moving towards your potential'

Shawn Achor, Harvard-trained researcher and author of The Happiness Advantage, Big Potential and Before Happiness, rejects the pleasure model of happiness because pleasure is fleeting and only shows up when life is good. Joy, as he defines it, is directional: it's the sense of growth that can coexist with fear and pain, which is why it can shorten the troughs of hard seasons. He deliberately wants happiness and joy to be conflated.

• The brain moves the goalposts every time you succeed

Achor says external circumstances are a poor predictor of happiness: get the degree, then you need a job, then a promotion. He saw it in his own career; finishing a book felt like the summit until worries about readers and the next book set in. Echoing Maslow's hierarchy, he argues it's not where you are on the ladder that makes you happy but whether you feel you're moving up.

• Step one is recognizing that 'I'll be happy when' doesn't work

Asked by a listener how to stop relying on money, a job or a partner, Achor says first acknowledge the brain is built to foil the idea that success guarantees happiness. His example is the pandemic: people expected to be happy when it waned, forgetting they weren't 100% happy before it. He adds a caveat: internal change doesn't negate the need to fight inequality, discrimination and racism; it gives you the power to fight them.

• Multiple realities are true at once, so choose which to focus on

The week before recording, Achor went to the ER with chest pains and missed his first talk in two decades. He was fine. In that room, 'I'm in a hospital and not with my family' was true, and so was 'I'm going home today to two kids and a wife I love.' Because the brain's resources are finite, he chooses the reality that helps him take the next step.

• Happiness is a team sport, not a self-help project

His turning point out of depression wasn't the habits but telling eight close friends and family, some of them Harvard peers and competitors. They called, emailed and visited; one brought cupcakes. That connection made the habits feel worth doing. He's skeptical of endless self-analysis without action, describing a fellow plane passenger reciting years of therapy insights to a stranger.

• Loneliness is about meaning, not headcount

Achor cites a Stanford study finding loneliness had nothing to do with how many people are in your life; it's the absence of meaning in those relationships, including whether you're doing anything meaningful for others. His grandmother put it simply: if you want a friend, be a friend.

• Diversify your 'meaning portfolio'

To a 65-year-old mother, four years past breast cancer treatment, whose happiness rests on her unhappy 26-year-old son, Achor says love necessarily involves pain, but she's telling her story as a side character in his. When all meaning is in one 'stock,' a child or work, happiness becomes fragile. Mel recalls promising herself to put the laptop away on planes when work became her only source of meaning.

• You shouldn't feel happy all the time

Achor says constant happiness would signal being divorced from reality. Healthy people swing between days of connection and days of struggle, a point echoed by his mentor Tal Ben-Shahar's line that you're never as great or as bad as you think. Mel adds that the people we love sometimes need to struggle, as she learned watching her husband's depression: you can hold space but can't do the work for them.

• Happiness is an option, not a choice

Achor used to sign books 'happiness is a choice' but stopped, because in a crisis without practice it can feel like a burden. When Mel suggests 'option,' he adopts it. The choice is harder with chronic illness, racism or a depressed child, but still available, and meaning often comes from other people even when your body feels like a prison.

EXAMPLES

• The Harvard depression figures and Achor's journal

Achor applied to Harvard on a dare while a volunteer firefighter, assuming everyone there would be happy. He says 80% of students went through debilitating depression and 10% had contemplated suicide in the last public data he saw. Later, while counseling first-years, he became depressed himself; his first journal entry read 'I don't remember being happy and I don't think I'll ever be happy again.'

• Hills look 20–30% steeper alone

He cites researchers in Virginia who found that people viewing a hill alone perceive it as 20–30% steeper than people standing next to someone they're told will climb with them, evidence to him that challenges expand or shrink depending on whether we feel alone.

• Synchronized fireflies

Fireflies flashing randomly have about a 3% nightly mating success rate. Two species, in Indonesia and Tennessee's Smoky Mountains, flash in unison; per the MIT research he cites, success jumps to 82% per bug because the combined light attracts more mates. Breadth, depth and meaning of social connection is one of the biggest predictors of long-term happiness.

• The teachers in Flint, Michigan

With funding only for teachers, Achor's team found that in classrooms where teacher happiness rose, students' and parents' well-being scores and student test scores improved too. On a random-kindness day during a blizzard, teachers handed out doughnuts to road crews at 4 a.m., visited hospices and handed out happiness kits at the DMV until a manager kicked them out.

• The two-minute email and day eight

Isolated, introverted participants told to email a new person daily tend to stall on day eight, after their favorites list and 'my mom twice.' That's when they recall forgotten mentors, teachers or a child's first-grade teacher. Achor says 21 days of these notes lifts social connection scores into the top 15% worldwide.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Achor's four habits for 21 days

(1) Write three new things you're grateful for from the past 24 hours, no repeats for 21 days; the scanning matters more than the items. (2) A 15-minute brisk walk four to five times a week, which he says matched an antidepressant over six months with a 30% lower relapse rate over two years. (3) Two minutes watching your breath, which he says raises accuracy 10%, lowers stress and even shifts cortisol in people around you. (4) A two-minute email praising or thanking a different person daily.

• Mel's version and a practical tweak

Mel maps these onto her own advice: look for wins, walk like you're late (she says 10 minutes, outside, nothing in your ears), and reach out to one person daily. She plans to borrow the breathing habit by setting a phone timer to take her hands off the keyboard.

• Don't tiptoe around struggling people

Achor says grief needs a long period of recognition; he'd soften his message for a friend who had just lost a child. Mel pushes back: once someone reaches for a lifeline, simple habits like a thank-you note to someone who helped at the funeral give them guideposts back, alongside empathy and check-ins.

• Leave harmful relationships

Achor stresses that 'meaning comes from other people' doesn't mean staying with someone who harms you; find safe spaces outside that relationship.

Don’t Take Life Too Seriously: How to Have More Fun | The Mel Robbins Podcast

Date: 2023-06-26 · Duration: 0:42:38
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V6pOQBBHYXc

KEYPOINTS

• Laughing at yourself is a separate skill from not caring what people think

Mel splits it in two. Not caring is what let her whisper to a friend that she had a wedgie and tell the whole table what happened in the bathroom. Laughing at yourself goes further: you loosen your grip on the moment and find it funny instead of something to replay. She says both matter, and the second is the one that has felt most freeing to her.

• The same embarrassing moment can go one of two ways

Shuffling toward the museum, she could have beaten herself up for buying the wrong size, always getting things wrong, screwing up and running late. Or she could laugh at how ridiculous it was that her first fancy event in about three years came with a wardrobe disaster. She credits herself with choosing the second, and notes that the 'old Mel' would have turned it into self-criticism.

• Letting people in on the joke changes the dynamic

Her producer Jesse points out that Mel doesn't keep these moments private. She announces them. When you do, the people around you stop thinking about their own insecurities and laugh with you, which she calls a gift, especially with people you've only just met. Mel applies the same idea to posting unflattering, real-life photos of herself online.

• Self-deprecating humour works because it's relatable and touches what people don't say

Amy, who performs amateur stand-up and improv, says the story is funny because everyone has been there and because it's the kind of thing nobody talks about. She stresses laughing at yourself in a warm 'that's funny that I always do this' way, not a condescending one. She admits she has always been hard on herself and is still working on it.

• A sense of humour can be developed; it isn't fixed at birth

Mel argues you can get funnier and learn to see the world in a funny way. If you don't think you're funny, you can still laugh at the situation, laugh at someone else's joke, help someone through their day with a smile, or teach your kids to laugh at their own spills.

• Research links an appropriate sense of humour to perceived status and competence

Mel summarises research her team pulled together, and promises links to the studies: people respect funny leaders more, and someone with an appropriate sense of humour is seen as more confident, powerful, intelligent and likeable, with higher status. She qualifies it: this is about appropriate humour, and she wouldn't tell your boss about a thong wedgie.

• Taking yourself too seriously is like wearing a bodysuit that's too small

Her metaphor for the whole episode: refusing to laugh or share your mishaps constricts you and cuts off your 'life force'. 'Unsnapping' judgment, seriousness and the need to be perfect lets more love and connection in, takes pressure off you and, in her view, takes a confident person to pull off.

• Humour turns a painful memory into a lasting good one

Mel says she will remember the day for most of her life, and that what she recalls is the laughing, her friends and the event, not the discomfort. Turning something embarrassing and slightly painful into something hilarious and relatable 'shifted everything about it.'

EXAMPLES

• The untested Skims bodysuit

Mel's daughter Kendall, helping her clear out clothes that no longer fit during menopause, decided the real problem was no shapewear and saggy bras, and ordered pieces from Kim Kardashian's Skims. The thong bodysuit looked like Barbie clothing. Mel tried it on, loved how it looked in the mirror, and took it off without sitting or walking in it.

• The 'human caution tape' outfit at the ICA

For a fundraiser luncheon celebrating women artists at Boston's Institute of Contemporary Art, she wore eight-year-old tailored black pants, heeled boots and a tight ribbed sweater striped white, yellow, brown and black. Getting out of the car started the wedgie. Walking two city blocks in five minutes made it worse, front and back, until she was shuffling.

• The friend who said 'I'll save you a seat'

She hugged her friend and whispered that she had a giant wedgie and needed the bathroom. In there she learned it's a two-hand job: she pulled the sides down for slack, only to find the suit slipping off her chest. It crept up again through a lunch of poached salmon and asparagus.

• The 'Caution: Dead End' photo

In the parking garage she finally unsnapped the suit behind her car door. Her friend Lisa backed her car up to get a picture, hit a plastic pylon, and then snapped Mel posing in exasperated freedom under a black-and-yellow 'Caution Dead End' sign that matched her bumblebee sweater perfectly.

• 98% and 84% of executives

Mel cites one study in which 98% of executives said they would prefer an employee with a sense of humour, and 84% believed people with a sense of humour do better work.

• The office fart

When Mel once farted at work, Jesse laughed so hard they had to stop for three minutes. Mel deliberately let out a second one, knowing it would make Jesse lose it completely.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Test-drive new clothes, especially shapewear

Before an event, sit, stand, walk and get in and out of a car in a new outfit. Mel's mistake was judging the bodysuit from the mirror alone.

• Notice whether you laugh at yourself or at others

Mel's invitation for the week: when something embarrassing happens, whether it's a spill, a mid-sentence belch with your kid's teacher or a mistake at work, notice your reaction and try making the joke yourself instead of ruminating. She doesn't change her shirt when she spills; she jokes about it.

• Keep the humour appropriate to the room

The professional upside of humour depends on reading the setting. A relatable joke builds trust; oversharing to your boss doesn't.

Harvard Doctor Reveals Why You Have Cravings and How to Stop Them | The Mel Robbins Podcast

Guest: Dr. Amy Shah
Date: 2023-06-22 · Duration: 1:25:47
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rPextTZy5C4

KEYPOINTS

• Hunger and cravings run on separate systems

Dr. Amy Shah, a double-board-certified physician trained at Cornell, Harvard and Columbia, describes hunger as the body's need for nutrients, signalled by hormones such as ghrelin, which rises on a daily timer. Cravings travel the dopamine pathway, the same one alcohol, drugs and sugar use. Ordering dessert when you're already full is a craving, not hunger.

• Ask whether you'd eat a bowl of vegetables

Shah's quick test: if you wouldn't eat plain vegetables right now, you're not hungry. Next, drink a glass of water (sparkling with lemon or lime is fine) and check again in 15 minutes, because the brain easily confuses thirst with hunger. She calls the 64- or 80-ounce targets estimates rather than science.

• Ultra-processed food hijacks dopamine the way a first trip to Miami does

Shah calls it the 'Miami phenomenon': South Beach feels thrilling on day one, and by day three you need the club to feel anything. Foods that don't exist in nature pack sugar without the fiber, water and nutrients of an apple, producing a dopamine spike she compares to cocaine, then a drop that leaves you irritable and wanting more. Her definition of ultra-processed: something you couldn't make in any kitchen, even with every ingredient in the world.

• Many poor food choices aren't simply a willpower failure

Shah argues food companies design products to trigger the craving pathway. She cites findings that people eating the most ultra-processed food have 80% more poor mental-health days than those eating the least, and says over 70% of kids' diets are now ultra-processed. Her goal isn't zero, but cutting adults from roughly 60% to 30–40% so your own signals become audible again.

• Food and exercise may rival medication for depression

Shah cites a South Australian analysis finding diet and exercise about 1.5 times more effective for depression than leading treatments, with medication and therapy grouped together, and says the authors recommended lifestyle change as first-line therapy. Mel frames it as hopeful rather than a reason to drop treatment, and the show's disclaimer says it doesn't replace a physician.

• Some foods support dopamine and serotonin

Tyrosine-rich protein (dairy, soy, nuts, cherries) feeds dopamine production, so Shah favours a 'high-dopamine breakfast' such as cottage cheese with fruit and nuts. Tryptophan sources such as eggs, turkey, dairy, lean meat and fish, paired with a complex carb like sweet potato, squash or quinoa, support calming serotonin in the evening, which she says can help people who wake at night.

• Sleep, omega-3s and protein strengthen fullness signals

Leptin, the fullness hormone, is about 33% lower after a bad night, Shah says, which is why you wake up starving. Omega-3s from salmon, algae oil or walnuts also help. GLP-1 drugs like Ozempic and Wegovy amplify a natural fullness hormone, and she says nuts, sleep and exercise raise it naturally. Protein also tells hunger hormones to stop.

• The gut and brain talk in both directions

Gut bacteria produce dopamine and serotonin and signal the brain in at least four ways, including nerves, hormones and short-chain fatty acids. Shah describes a mouse study where researchers could tell which animals had received gut microbes from a person with schizophrenia just from their behaviour. She links the gut to anxiety, depression, ADHD, autism and Parkinson's, an area still being researched.

• Fermented foods beat probiotic pills, and exercise beats both

Results for supplements like lactobacillus and Prevotella are inconsistent, Shah says, partly because the body attacks free bacteria. Bacteria inside the food matrix of yogurt, kimchi, kombucha, sauerkraut or raw apple cider vinegar survive better, and one study found four to six servings a day raised 'happy' bacteria most. Her 'number one probiotic' is exercise, which boosts anti-inflammatory short-chain fatty acids.

• Delay coffee and food for 45 minutes and eat in daylight

Morning grogginess is largely adenosine, which clears in 30 to 40 minutes. Coffee only blocks its receptors, so drinking it immediately sets up a crash and a second or third cup. Shah argues intermittent fasting is often done backwards: eat during daylight and stop late-night eating, since the body processes sugar poorly once melatonin rises two to three hours before bed. Habitually skipping meals, she says, is linked to worse outcomes.

EXAMPLES

• Mel's 2 p.m. truffle-chip habit

Mel opens holding a bag of the black truffle potato chips her kids introduced her to, which she craves every day around 2 p.m. and can finish in one sitting. She adds that a colleague's dark chocolate stash now has her hunting for candy at the same hour.

• The 3-2-1 intermittent reward method

To replace a Snickers with dark chocolate: on three random days a week (picked from a fishbowl, by a colleague, or by a random phone alarm), spend two minutes telling yourself why it's a better choice, then one minute savouring it. Do this for two weeks. Shah says random rewards hook dopamine hardest, the same mechanism behind gambling and on-off toxic relationships.

• Gut bacteria shifted in three days

In a study Shah attributes to the journal Nature, participants in a clinical centre switched from processed meat, sugar and soda to a mostly plant-based whole-food diet. Stool samples showed marked changes in gut bacteria within three days and drastic change by two weeks, without special probiotics.

• Store-bought orange juice belongs with soda

Shah says heat pasteurisation destroys vitamins and filtering removes fiber, leaving mostly water and sugar that rivals soda. She ranks high-fructose corn syrup and soda as the worst items, followed by processed meats such as hot dogs and nitrate-laden bacon.

• Shah's own peppermint-mocha cycle

As a physician, she rewarded good days with Starbucks peppermint mochas until it became daily, then twice a day, before she recognised the pattern in herself.

OTHER RELEVANT

• A sample hormone-friendly day

Start with 'sky before screens' (two to 10 minutes outside in bright light), coffee after 45 minutes, and breakfast an hour or two after waking. Lunch is a salad with protein plus a fermented food, with carbs like sweet potato or quinoa at dinner and protein snacks such as yogurt or cheese.

• Pair a slip with a positive action

After eating something you're cutting back on, go straight for a sunny walk. Shah says this replacement behaviour gradually retrains the pathway.

• Test gluten rather than banning it

Go gluten-free for three to four weeks, then reintroduce small unprocessed amounts like bulgur or good sourdough instead of cookies and pizza. Shah says true gluten allergy is rare, and processed gluten-free products are often less healthy.

• Find your sleep need without an alarm

Note how long you sleep unprompted and which recent days felt best. Shah says under six hours is linked to higher mortality, lower mood and more hunger; she sleeps nine or 10.

The TRUTH About ADHD in Adults | The Mel Robbins Podcast

Date: 2023-06-19 · Duration: 0:58:15
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0R0xhDNPfwU

KEYPOINTS

• ADHD is a neurobiological disorder, not a character flaw

Mel shares the definition that changed how she saw herself: ADHD is a chronic neurobiological disorder that affects the brain structurally and chemically, as well as how different parts of the brain communicate. It is also highly heritable. She repeats throughout that she isn't a doctor and that this solo episode is meant to point people toward professional help, not to diagnose.

• Women are a 'lost generation' because the research started with boys

When ADHD became a diagnosis in the late 1970s, she says, researchers studied only boys. So girls whose symptoms looked different were often treated instead for anxiety, depression or eating disorders in their teens and 20s. Mel believes that's her story. She was treated for anxiety for decades and says she 100% believes the underlying issue was undiagnosed dyslexia and ADHD.

• Four differences between boys and girls

One: boys' symptoms show on the surface (fidgeting, impulsivity, being physical), while girls' are internal (daydreaming, forgetfulness, disorganization, being hard on themselves). Two: boys typically present around age 7, girls around 12. Three: boys wear it on their sleeve, while girls hide it and overcompensate to fit in. Four: boys tend to get better, girls tend to get worse.

• Undiagnosed girls face serious mental health risks

She reads from clinical psychologist Dr. Ellen Littman, co-author of Understanding Girls with ADHD, who calls the outcomes 'horrendously negative.' Anxiety and depression turn into low self-esteem and self-loathing, and Littman reports that the risk of self-harm and suicide attempts is four to five times higher for girls with ADHD. Mel stresses this goes far beyond homework.

• ADHD is trouble directing attention, not an inability to focus

Mel draws on Dr. Ned Hallowell and Dr. Daniel Amen. She describes attention as the prefrontal cortex switching between two networks. First it quiets the noise outside and inside you, like a grumbling stomach or stray thoughts. Then it amplifies what you mean to focus on. That's why her son Oakley could focus so hard on video games that he wouldn't hear pots banging behind him, which she points out isn't an appropriate use of attention either.

• The missing orchestra conductor

Her metaphor: a healthy prefrontal cortex is a conductor who shushes the horns, then cues the strings. In ADHD, the orchestra is always warming up. Trying to suppress noise and focus at the same time burns mental fuel. She says the brain uses about 25% of your calories just at rest, which is why people with ADHD end up both behind and exhausted.

• A critic you can't switch off feeds self-loathing

If the conductor can't quiet the default mode network, the inner voice saying 'why are you always behind?' never stops. Mel says Dr. Amen, who reports more than 60,000 scans, sees what look like 'holes' in the prefrontal cortex in ADHD brains, a sign of low blood flow he calls a 'sleepy brain.' She links that to chasing dopamine through shopping, alcohol and other addictive behaviors.

• Six lesser-known adult signs

Hyperfocus in some settings, followed by a collapse. Trouble controlling emotions, because there's no fuel left for frustration, which is why she snapped at her kids. Impulsive shopping and overspending. Time blindness. Looking high-functioning or workaholic while actually being scattered. And intense self-criticism. Mel says she has all six.

• Treat it the way you'd treat diabetes

Hating your diagnosis doesn't help. Understanding it lets you build supports and laugh at yourself. She also emphasizes ADHD's strengths: links to entrepreneurship, creativity, problem-solving and risk-taking.

EXAMPLES

• Diagnosed through her son at 47

When Oakley was in fourth grade, a neuropsych exam with Dr. Moldover in Wellesley found profound dyslexia, dysgraphia and ADHD. Reading the report, Mel asked pediatrician Dr. Mark Blumenthal whether she might have ADHD too. He told her she was probably the most ADHD parent in his practice, one of the roughly 20 parents who call in a panic every fall needing a sports physical. When she asked why he hadn't told her, he said, 'I'm not your doctor.' A specialist confirmed ADHD and dyslexia.

• Eight hours in Dartmouth's Baker Library

She'd haul books to the stacks for a full day of study, then get pulled away by hunger, the bathroom, and 'is that Emily?' She nearly failed a 400-student engineering class and calls herself the queen of all-nighters and procrastination.

• Jobs that fit her brain

Office jobs felt unbearable because she could hear every door and elevator ding. Even TikTok videos two rooms away sound like they're in her ears. She thrived waitressing, bartending and as a Legal Aid defense attorney in 1994, moving between her office, the court at 100 Canal Street and Rikers. Her current work suits her because no day is the same.

• Adderall, but not on keynote days

After her diagnosis, she tapered off anxiety medication and started long-acting Adderall, which she calls life-changing. She skips it on weekends and on speech days, when the adrenaline backstage gives her blinders. Stimulants worked for one of her kids but not all of them.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Build systems instead of blaming yourself

She spent a day pulling birthdays from Facebook into repeating Google Calendar events. When same-day alerts still didn't leave time to send gifts, she added a reminder a week ahead. She also learned that clutter has to be decluttered before it can be organized. More baskets weren't the answer.

- **Take a child's symptoms seriously**

  She cites research from the past five years suggesting that children with ADHD who receive treatment (behavioral therapy, plus medication where appropriate) have better outcomes, and that untreated kids face a higher risk of addiction. She calls treatment a personal choice and says to start with your pediatrician.

- **Adults: start with your primary care doctor**

  If you're a woman roughly 20 to 75 who was called a tomboy, scattered or a daydreamer, and you've struggled with anxiety, depression or disordered eating, she suggests a self-assessment for learning only, then a GP, a therapist or an online therapy platform for a real evaluation.

Harvard Professor Says THIS Is the Secret to Success (It’s Not What You Think) | Mel Robbins Podcast

Guest: Dr. Luana Marques
Date: 2023-06-15 · Duration: 1:15:15
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5_iGYo44_C8

KEYPOINTS

• The problem isn't anxiety, it's avoiding

Dr. Luana Marques, a Harvard associate professor of psychiatry who has worked at Mass General for over a decade and wrote Bold Moves, compares anxiety to a fever and avoidance to the infection that keeps it going. Patients ask her to get rid of their anxiety, but she says what keeps them stuck is what they do when they feel it. 'We can't get rid of anxiety. What we can get rid of is avoidance.'

• Avoidance means lowering discomfort fast at the cost of staying stuck

She defines it as anything you do or don't do in response to a perceived threat that brings your discomfort down quickly but keeps you stuck long term. The brain is wired to predict and protect, and it can't tell real threats from imagined ones, so an email or a work meeting can register like a lion. She says she has never met anyone whose struggle didn't involve avoidance, including her own hardest moments.

• The three Rs: retreat, react, remain

Retreat is moving away: not opening the email (her husband moves unwanted emails to another screen), skipping hard conversations, ruminating. React is lunging at the discomfort to make it stop: firing off an angry email, yelling at a barking dog (Dan Harris's example), grabbing a drink or a vape. Remain is freezing in place, staying in a job or relationship you know doesn't work. She says they mirror fight, flight or freeze, triggered by perceived rather than real threats.

• Staying home to avoid a panic attack trains the brain to fear work

Mel describes a family member who took a week off after anxiety spiked. Marques explains that panic attacks come out of the blue, but avoiding work links work to panic in the brain. Your baseline anxiety rises, which makes an attack at work more likely when you return. Rather than 'just do it,' she suggests a partial approach, like driving toward work.

• Pause and write out the thoughts–emotions–behaviors cycle

Marques's own example from that morning: the thought 'What if Mel Robbins doesn't like me?' brought anxiety and a pounding heart, then the urge to stay in bed. Those three ping-pong and snowball fast. Her research-based tip is to write down your thoughts, feelings and urges. She says writing engages the prefrontal cortex, which competes for energy with the amygdala, and that she has seen hundreds of patients stop the spiral this way.

• Cross-examine the thought; you don't have to believe the new one yet

She walks Mel through a feared sales meeting. Messed up 2 times out of 100? That's a 2% chance. Worst case, you'll be embarrassed, which you've survived before; firing on the spot has never happened. The new line, 'I've been nervous before and done a good job,' won't feel true at first. She says positive thinking alone doesn't work: you reframe, repeat it, and then show up.

• Aim for 'comfortably uncomfortable' in small, repeated doses

Total comfort holds nothing meaningful, and total discomfort triggers fight-or-flight, so she aims for the middle. For a listener who always wants to leave the room, she suggests staying one extra minute (or 30 seconds), and if you walk out, coming back within a minute, then building to 3 and 5 minutes on a timer. She has never had a patient who couldn't tolerate a minute.

• Not all avoidance is bad: safety and strategy are different

In situations like domestic violence, stepping back to get safe is necessary. A patient staying six more months in a job she disliked to collect a bonus that would pay bills was using strategy, not avoiding. Marques says avoidance is a reflex with a 'price tag' that keeps you stuck, while strategy is something you can explain calmly and rationally.

EXAMPLES

• Grandma's Chinese-food exposure therapy

At 15, after moving in with her grandmother in a bigger Brazilian city, Marques became terrified of people and hid behind studying. Her grandmother, actually her stepfather's mother, with no college training, took her to the mall for Chinese food, a treat after times without enough to eat. She then insisted they go talk to an elderly stranger, and kept doing it until people stopped being scary. Marques later realized it was exposure therapy. At 16 her grandmother gave her The Alchemist.

• Mel's cancelled summer in Albuquerque

As a second-year law student, Mel's anxiety built until she called the firm two days before her flight, claimed a family emergency and gave up a summer job she had worked hard for. Marques calls it a textbook retreat.

• From fear of heights to loving skydiving

Marques froze on the cable section of a Yosemite hike. She built a ladder of exposures: chairs, stairs, her roof, then three skydives in one day. She now loves it, and invites herself to Oakley's 18th-birthday skydive, which Mel is dreading.

• Mary, the CEO and Joanna

Mary gained 100 pounds in a job she hated but stayed for the income. A powerful Fortune 500 CEO avoided dating and was 45 with no meaningful relationships. Joanna, a single mother of three, hadn't asked for a raise in 10 years while being passed over for promotions.

• Interoceptive exposure: sitting with the sensation

For physical-symptom fears, Marques has panic patients hyperventilate or spin in a chair and then do nothing while their bodies settle. One vomit-phobic patient walked Boston's Faneuil Hall on a Monday morning seeing pub vomit. Mel admits she did the opposite with Oakley ('you're not going to get sick'), and he threw up 15 steps into Logan Airport. Marques later recognized her own childhood 'asthma' as panic attacks after violent fights at home.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Find your avoidance in five minutes**
  List what you want for your life, then ask why you're not doing it. Or ask: 'If I went toward this, would I feel more uncomfortable?' If yes, you've been avoiding.
- **Limit reassurance to one check**
  For health anxiety, checking with your doctor once is fine; second and third opinions after a clear result feed the loop.
- **Let your kids feel some discomfort**
  Marques says rushing in to remove a child's anxiety makes it worse. Her five-year-old Diego wants a podcast telling people to stay with their emotions instead of running.

The Science of Gratitude & 6 Surprising Ways You’re Getting It Wrong | Mel Robbins

Date: 2023-06-12 · Duration: 0:58:40
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CWuRB0XuIgA

KEYPOINTS

• Genuine gratitude is deep appreciation for something that comes from outside you

Mel draws on UC Davis psychologist Robert Emmons, whom she calls the field's leading gratitude researcher. In his definition, gratitude is a deep appreciation for what you've received, tangible or intangible, recognizing that it comes from others, nature or a higher power. A key takeaway she cites from his decades of research: gratitude strengthens every relationship, because it trains you to notice how others support you.

• It retrains your brain to scan for the positive

Racing late to class, Mel was scanning for the negative: sweating, bracing for the worst, likely spiking cortisol. Genuine gratitude, she explains, stimulates dopamine, oxytocin and norepinephrine (a word she cheerfully blames her dyslexia for mangling) while reducing cortisol — leaving you calmer, more focused and better at decisions. She felt that shift as soon as she began appreciating the man at the front desk.

• Thankful is transactional; grateful is felt and lingers

Thanks are expected, automatic and forgotten the moment the elevator door closes. Gratitude is unexpected, deeply moving, and its emotion lingers like 'a positive energy buzz' for both people. Mel admits she once bought a 'thankful' pillow off a HomeGoods clearance rack and argues gratitude has 'jumped the shark' now that it's printed on discounted cushions.

• Use gratitude in three directions: past, present, future

Looking back, you acknowledge a heartbreak and see how it shaped you — the mountain now behind you. In the present, you name a blessing as it happens. Facing the future, gratitude doesn't erase fear of a loss, new job or breakup, but balances it with trust that you can climb the next mountain.

• Toxic gratitude #1: posting 'blessed' while ignoring the mess

Think of the friend whose feed is all beach kisses and 'love of my life' posts, who then spends three hours complaining about the relationship in person. Genuine gratitude makes room for the painful and broken alongside the beautiful. Mel suggests posting the truth — such as loving someone because you work through the ups and downs — or nothing.

• #2: gratitude as a sledgehammer

'You should be grateful there's anything on your plate', or telling kids who lost a soccer semifinal to be grateful they got that far. Mel confesses she recently told Oakley, after hosting a party, that he should be 'grateful enough' to help unload the dishwasher. She calls it a generational, transactional parenting habit and says what she was actually expressing was resentment.

• #3: gratitude as a reason to stay stuck

'I hate my job, but I'm grateful to have a paycheck', or 'at least I'm not single'. Ending the sentence there kills any motivation to change and quietly lowers your standards. Mel's fix: add the truth and use 'thankful' — I'm thankful for the paycheck and I deserve to work somewhere I feel appreciated, so I'm going to start looking.

• #4: grabbing gratitude to escape painful feelings

'I'm just grateful he's no longer suffering' can sit on top of 'I'm devastated my father is gone'. When a friend called hours after her husband asked for a divorce, she kept reaching for 'but I'm grateful' — Mel told her she wasn't ready. Mel says research shows that facing and talking about uncomfortable emotions helps them pass faster; being laid off is embarrassing even if you hated the job.

• #5 and #6: forced positivity, and gratitude that erases your effort

'You'll beat it!' to someone with cancer can make them feel unheard. And thanking people for including you at a meeting you earned a seat at diminishes your responsibility. Mel says she isn't 'grateful' for her success — she slept on couches, clawed out of bankruptcy and worked nights and weekends for over a decade — though she is deeply grateful for her listeners.

EXAMPLES

• The 3:48 a.m. fire alarm

In New York for Good Morning America naming her show its podcast of the month, Mel was woken by a hotel fire alarm. Ignoring instructions to stay in her room, she pulled on tights, a T-shirt and sneakers and took eight flights of stairs — and was the only guest in the lobby until a family of six in flattened shoes and two Australian tourists arrived. False alarm. In the elevator mirror she saw her tights were inside out and backwards.

• Judah at the barre studio

Oversleeping after the alarm, Mel sprinted two blocks to a 7 a.m. barre class expecting a strict scolding. Instead Judah, whom she likens to Queer Eye's JVN, greeted her warmly, found her a hair tie and walked her in, arm around her shoulder, to where her colleague Amy had set up rainbow grip socks. He'd been writing his gratitude list when she arrived. Mel later learned his band is called Sunshine and the Fox — after she'd called him 'a human ray of sunshine'.

• Shoveling an elderly neighbor's steps

Shovel a neighbor's walk and you expect a thank-you. Gratitude is when she comes out, holds your shoulders and tells you the last person to shovel her walk was her late son. That unexpected, lingering emotion is the difference Mel wants you to feel.

• Snoop Dogg's Walk of Fame speech

Mel's favorite acceptance speech: Snoop Dogg in 2018 thanking himself for believing in himself, doing the hard work, having no days off and never quitting. She calls it full ownership with no toxic gratitude.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Make your gratitude list specific and emotional

Swap 'health, kids, job' for a named moment and why it moves you. Mel's example: her daughter calling out her outfits, then picking the bell-bottoms and red T-shirt that drew compliments on GMA.

- **When you don't know what to say, say that**

Try 'I don't know what to say — what do you need?' or 'That sucks, you don't deserve this, and you won't go through it alone', which Mel credits to Adam Grant and Sheryl Sandberg's Option B.

- **Judah's grounding practices**

He grounds physically, barefoot on a beach or hike; follows 'do your best', one of The Four Agreements; and keeps a strong why — sharing music with his band as a 'super force of love'. As he put it, with a strong enough why you can withstand any how.

How to Get From Here to There: A Framework for Creating the Life You Want | The Mel Robbins Podcast

Guest: Kendall Robbins and Amy
Date: 2023-06-01 · Duration: 0:53:09
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LKNBwfxZfyM

KEYPOINTS

• 'I can do it': every word matters, and many people lack the 'it'
Mel's Tampa keynote for her publisher Hay House, crammed together on the plane, breaks the phrase down. 'I' means you're responsible and no one is coming to save you. 'Can' means belief. 'Do' means action. 'It' is your North Star. She finds that stuck people are missing at least one of the four, and this episode is about the 'it.'

• A North Star can be anyone, and only one aspect of them
Mel's examples are The Rock and Michelle, a fan in her late 50s whom Mel met in a hotel lobby after Michelle had just finished an Ironman-type race, training with the podcast in her ears. Mel loved her ripped arms and energy. North Stars don't have to be famous or people you know, and you can admire one slice, like a shop clerk who always smiles.

• Three steps from Kendall's USC program: emulate, assimilate, innovate
Mel's daughter Kendall just graduated in popular music performance (vocals) from USC's Thornton School, a program she says is built on this method, credited to its founder Chris Sampson. Emulate: pick a North Star and break down what they have that you don't. Assimilate: put in the long practice to absorb it. Innovate: make something of your own. Kendall says anyone can use it, from a banker to a mom.

• Emulation means breaking your North Star into categories
Kendall's North Stars are Sara Bareilles and Brandy. She sorted their traits into skills (songwriting, singing, instruments, arranging, producing), character (strong, fierce, advocates, collaborators) and career. That turns admiration into a concrete list. Amy notes many people stop because they don't know they're allowed to pick a North Star, or because 'I'll never be like The Rock' feels final.

• Say 'want,' not 'need'
When Mel says 'need,' Kendall corrects her: 'need' implies you're lacking something, while 'want' frames it as something to gain, which she finds more motivating. In the same spirit she rejects calling it 'the gap.' The space between you and your North Star is the road you get to travel, and Mel likens each step to lighting up a lily pad you keep.

• Assimilation is the 10,000-hour montage, and the best part
Kendall calls assimilation 'the music montage moment,' like an ice skater at the rink at 6 a.m. day after day. For her it meant four years of classes, lessons and singing 'a hundred million songs.' It's the longest phase, and she says you discover parts of yourself you never knew existed along the way.

• No clear North Star? Declare what you're graduating from
For goals like dating, health or money, Kendall suggests imagining your future self (how she wakes up, talks, eats, moves) and breaking that down, or picking someone from a magazine. Mel wanted to graduate from the money fear she'd carried since she and Chris nearly went bankrupt over 15 years earlier. Once she decided, North Stars appeared: Ramit Sethi came on the show, and a weekend with more successful business-owner friends showed her what she hadn't learned yet.

• It's a circle, not a finish line
Kendall pushes back on the idea of 'becoming' your North Star: you'll never be Sara or Brandy, and the process restarts every time you innovate. The cycle also happens inside each step. North Stars are 'a directional signal, not a destination,' which she says is why Motown artists and top scientists keep working. Mel ties feeling lost to having stopped creating and growing.

EXAMPLES

• The USC drumming-to-the-millisecond drills
For the first two years, students were put in bands and assigned songs from the 1950s onward. They were graded on how exactly they could copy the original: drummers down to the 16th note, Kendall on intonation, phrasing, riffs and runs. The goal wasn't to sound like herself but to learn the building blocks of pop music.

• Amy's 'hey, love'
Producer Amy admits she used to watch the Real Housewives. One controversial but kind cast member called everyone 'love.' Amy found the courage to start doing it, and it made her more open and kind. It's now part of how she talks, a one-sliver North Star. Her body goal is Jennifer Aniston: emulate her yoga and greens, then adapt it into her own version.

• The Rock's boardroom post
Mel admires The Rock's character (generous, humble, for the everyday person) and how he keeps pivoting: tequila, an energy drink, shoes with Under Armour, the XFL. Her moment came from an Instagram photo of him at a big table with his team at Seven Bucks, named for the $7 he had on arriving in LA. She realized he doesn't do it alone. But she admits she has only admired him and hasn't done the research step.

• The framework that arrived a week before Kendall's senior project
Kendall had listed all the skills and qualities she'd gained, but a week before presenting, Chris Sampson told her there was no project yet without explaining how she got there, and gave her this framework. She expected to leave USC with an EP and 25 songs. She still doesn't have them, but says what she learned about herself was worth more.

• Where Mel's sign-off came from
Twelve years earlier, Mel heard principal Linda Cliatt-Wayman describe telling students over a school's loudspeaker that she loved them, believed in them and expected them back the next morning, because hope comes from knowing someone believes in you. Mel emulated it, tried versions of it and innovated it into her 'I love you and I believe in you.'

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Make the three-column breakdown**
  For your North Star, list the skills, character traits and career experiences you want to gain, then pick the first ones to practice daily.
- **Expect detours and stay with the process**
  Kendall's advice: even if your North Star pulls you somewhere unexpected, stay present, grateful and aware, and trust that it's taking you where you need to go.
- **You are the artwork**
  Kendall's closing image is that working on your career and life is chiseling away at the sculpture that is you. North Stars help you shape it, but the art is you.

The ONE Trick You Need to Master to Live a Peaceful and Fulfilled Life | The Let Them Theory

Date: 2023-05-29 · Duration: 0:53:59
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d4z5C8G32AY

KEYPOINTS

• The core idea: stop forcing people to match your expectations

Mel recorded a quick selfie video about the "Let Them Theory" that drew over 14 million views and about 9,800 comments in a week. If friends don't invite you to brunch, if the person you're attracted to doesn't want commitment, or your kids don't want to come along, let them. People are showing you who they are, and then you get to choose what you do next.

• Drop the oars

Mel borrows a metaphor from Dr. Amy Johnson: trying to control people is like paddling a boat upstream. It builds resistance and frustration and makes you feel less in control. Take your hands off the oars and the boat turns and floats with the current, which brings peace and ease.

• Control is often anxiety in disguise

Mel says overbearing parents, including many immigrant parents she hears from, usually push out of fear and uncertainty, and because they think micromanaging is love. In fact, it suffocates. Focusing on others also tricks you into feeling in control. You can guilt, shame, compliment or love people, but you can't control them. The only person you can control is yourself.

• Controlling can hide a deeper feeling

Afterward, Mel realized her prom meltdown wasn't about tacos. She told Chris she was sad: she missed knowing all the kids and parents from four proms with her daughters back home. Controlling and obsessing are often triggered by how things "should" be and by discomfort with uncertainty.

• Three times not to "let them"

Don't let someone do something dangerous, like driving after drinking, or discriminate against you. Don't let others decide things you need to ask for or advocate for, like your salary; she cites a 2023 Pew survey in which 60% of respondents said they didn't negotiate pay at their last job. And don't let people keep crossing boundaries you've clearly stated.

• Use 1: Detachment

Use it to detach from mental and emotional struggle over what others do: friends seated together at a wedding while you're at table 11 with distant relatives, an airline boarding back to front, or a friend who took a trip without you. Mel calls it a form of radical acceptance, and says it takes practice. It's not for fixable moments, like a friend leaving flip-flops on the beach.

• Use 2: Let people fail and take responsibility

Every rescue robs someone of a chance to grow and makes them weaker and more dependent. If they forget their lunch or a job-application deadline, let them. With addiction, Mel says people don't get sober until they're ready, so forcing rehab tends to fail. For people-pleasers: let your kids do their own laundry, let your brother host the holidays, let coworkers handle their own work and birthday cupcakes.

• Use 3: Let people be who they are, and who they're not

Many of us are in a relationship with someone's potential rather than the real person. Constant griping about their drinking, ambition, hair, family or sex life keeps you busy and stops you from facing reality. When you let someone be themselves, you see who they really are and can choose what you need. Mel used to be irritated that Chris processes slowly; now she sees she needs someone with his feet on the ground.

• Jealousy is an attempt to control, and it backfires

Being jealous of a partner's time with their kids from a previous marriage, golf with friends, or same-sex friendships is a bid for more love that ends up giving you less. Letting them enjoy what makes them happy is an act of love, and Mel says it tends to bring more love back.

EXAMPLES

• Prom night at the taco shop

At pre-prom photos in Vermont, a torrential downpour started. About 20 kids in tuxes and gowns, with no dinner reservation, decided to go to a tiny taco spot with maybe six tables. Mel jumped in, worrying about dresses and rain, until her daughter said, "Mom, it's his prom, not your prom. Let them." Mel realized it might be the most memorable part of the night.

• Why her parents hadn't visited Vermont

Years after the family moved in March 2020, Mel's parents still hadn't visited. Instead of staying hurt, she asked her mom, who said she didn't like the state. As a small child, her mom was left with her grandmother while her parents took an older sister to Vermont for an eye surgery. The grandmother died next to her, and her parents asked why she hadn't saved her. Given space, her parents were due to visit within a month.

• Chris's brother said no

When Chris's business was failing, with bounced checks and a lien on the house, he asked his brother for a loan. His brother refused, saying that if the business failed, so be it, but he couldn't bail him out. Mel calls it one of the most important things anyone did for Chris, because it made him responsible for his own rescue.

• The school that said don't bring the lunch

Oakley's fifth-grade school for language-based learning differences like dyslexia told parents not to bring forgotten lunches. Kids wouldn't go hungry, and the sting of forgetting is what teaches them to build their own systems.

• Letting Kendall be annoyed

Her daughter Kendall warned that if they only got 15 minutes to sort Mel's closet, she'd have an attitude. Mel simply let her be frustrated instead of starting the usual emotional tug-of-war of calming, explaining and fixing, and found it liberating.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Ask: what am I afraid of, and is it true?**

  Often the fear is absurd, like ruined prom shoes or overhead bin space. Sometimes it's valid, like fearing a loved one with addiction will die. Even then, you don't know whether it's true, so it can't justify constant control.

- **Ask: whose business am I in?**

  Micromanaging a teen, stewing over a seating chart or resenting a missed award puts you in someone else's business. Get back into your own: what can you do about it? When Mel felt left out, she admitted she hadn't thrown a party or planned a women's weekend in five years.

- **Let people have their feelings and opinions**

  If a drifting friend says you've changed or that they don't feel important anymore, listen, witness and validate. You don't have to control what they think. Equally, if someone is hurt that they weren't invited, Mel says it isn't your job to make sure everyone's feelings are okay.

6 Signs You’re Disconnected From Your Power and How to Get It Back | The Mel Robbins Podcast

Guest: Dr. Thema Bryant
Date: 2023-05-25 · Duration: 1:00:26
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sBJrZjZ_TJk

KEYPOINTS

• You can come home to yourself even if you never felt at home

Dr. Thema Bryant, a psychologist, minister and Pepperdine professor named the American Psychological Association's first Black female president in 2023, calls disconnection 'psychological homelessness': wandering, ungrounded and confused. People raised amid stress or trauma often learned survival mode, playing small or people-pleasing, and never got to 'unfold.' Her good news is that you can still find your way home.

• Homecoming starts with telling yourself the truth

The social script is 'I'm fine,' or in faith communities 'I'm blessed,' but you can be blessed and lost. Bryant wants people to be able to say "I miss myself." Recognising that you're disconnected is itself the first step, and she says it means your mind, body and spirit are ready.

• Six questions point to psychological homelessness

Does your inner or outer life fall short of what you imagined? Did you get what you wanted and still feel empty? Do you feel powerless or hopeless? Have you lost energy for things that used to matter? Is there an ache you can't put into words? Do you cry often, or find it impossible to cry? Saying you don't know your purpose is another sign of disconnection.

• A 'bad attitude' can be irritable depression

Bryant says people rarely meet attitude with compassion. But if family, culture or religion taught you that sadness is weakness, you may mask despair with anger and bitterness, like an iceberg. Fighting someone in warrior mode fails because they'll always out-combat you. Instead, soften, share a related experience of your own (transparency is contagious), or name what's happening in their life and ask what's helping or what they need.

• Excellence can hide unhealed wounds

Some survivors cope through busyness and a 'spirit of excellence,' and when you're excellent, people don't notice your wounds, sometimes not even you. Late at night or in certain settings they show up still bleeding. Bryant defines healing as accepting and loving yourself so you have nothing to prove, quoting a Los Angeles life coach named Shannon: "I don't want to be driven, I want to be called."

• Don't keep your healing hostage to people who harmed you

Waiting for an apology or for others to change ('if only my spouse, kids or supervisor would') lets you off the hook and can take a lifetime. Her line: the reason you feel unsettled is that you're not supposed to settle. Look at where you're settling and what you can shift.

• Act before you feel worthy

Cultural, gender and religious messages can frame self-care as selfish, but you're not just a tool for nourishing others. Drawing on behavioural psychology, Bryant says waiting for high self-esteem before caring for yourself won't work, so start the actions first. That includes food ('can I say I'm eating this because I love myself?'), water, moderation and sleep.

• Peace can feel boring if you grew up with chaos

If three episodes of Law & Order is how you relax before bed, Bryant asks why trauma feels soothing. People raised in high stress often find calm fake or dull, so homecoming means leaning into unfamiliar discomfort.

• Growth reveals who wants you whole

People liked the silent, compliant, doormat version of you, so not everyone will celebrate your voice. Some relationships will end and some will change, which may involve grief. In toxic jobs or relationships you have to disconnect to survive, so have compassion for why you stayed.

• Therapy and spirituality both have a role

Bryant defines therapy as a trained, licensed guide who journeys with you without judgment and without needing you to take care of them. She notes research that mental health professionals report lower spirituality than the general public, and defines spirituality as awareness of the sacred beyond what we can see. Believing you're worthy of what you haven't experienced takes faith in 'the more.'

EXAMPLES

• The eagle raised among chickens

Bryant, who attended high school in Liberia, tells a West African fable in Liberian English. An animal expert spots an eagle living with a farmer's chickens. The first time he urges it to fly, it hops back down to its 'chicken brothers and sisters.' The next dawn he carries it to the barn roof as the sun rises, tells it it's not a chicken, and it flies away for good. Her message: people treated like chickens date and pick jobs like chickens.

• "You don't look like any survivor I've ever known"

After Bryant, herself a sexual assault survivor, gave a keynote on sexual assault, a woman with an attitude challenged her in the signing line. Bryant didn't get defensive and simply softened. The woman then said the only survivors she'd known were 'fat and poor like me,' showing how differently surviving can look.

• "Whose peace is it keeping?"

Bryant was taught that silence about abuse kept the peace, until she realised it kept the offender's peace while she held the war in her own small body. She also disproves self-blame with logic: does every girl who develops early deserve to be molested? Then you're not the exception.

• A mother who said 'I love you' felt fake

A client reconnected with her mother, who had struggled with addiction and didn't raise her. The mother said saying 'I love you' felt like something from TV. Bryant told her it isn't fake if you mean it; it just feels unfamiliar because no one said it to her.

• The kid cussed out in the parking lot

Early in her career, Bryant would spend an hour building a child up, only for parents to curse at them before even reaching home. That's why she values family and couples work alongside individual therapy.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Begin with breath and a body scan

In through the nose, out through the mouth, notice where you hold tension, and set intentions for self-compassion and clarity. Mel says her mind went quiet and she 'dropped into her body.'

• Build a morning ritual for a toxic job

Wake before you have to, then add a theme song for the season, stretching, a walk, prayer or meditation, or inspirational reading, so you arrive with a full cup. You are more than your labour or your boss.

• If you feel you have no one, make friends a goal

Try a cooking class, book club, political group or yoga, or deepen surface relationships by going deeper first. Know which people offer emotional support and which offer practical help. Bryant, noting the Surgeon General's loneliness advisory, says loneliness isn't shameful and isn't the same as lacking self-love.

4 Simple Ways to Stop Caring What Others Think of You | The Mel Robbins Podcast

Date: 2023-05-22 · Duration: 1:20:09
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MkpQDBfPv7k

KEYPOINTS

• Not caring what others think really means redirecting energy toward what you value

Mel frames the whole episode around spending less energy on things that don't matter so you have more for the things that do. Her team lists the week's "no-shits-given" moments in Los Angeles, and she argues that each one was really a choice about where her attention went. Worrying about appearance, minor norms and imagined judgment drains focus and confidence without giving anything back.

• Twisting yourself to fit hurts when it betrays your values and feels joyful when it serves them

The child-size rocket tent becomes her central image. Squeezing into a space that doesn't fit is painful when you are hiding who you are or contorting to please others. Army-crawling into a tiny tent felt like joy because it served values she holds: bringing fun, surprise and enthusiasm to her students.

• If you look like that in public anyway, you can post it online

Mel points out the double standard of walking into a grocery store sweaty, with your bra showing, but refusing to be seen that way on social media. She posts selfies straight out of hot yoga, with a tomato-red face, grey roots and fogged-up glasses, because hiding that version of herself would mean she was still quietly caring about her appearance.

• Criticism of her looks taught her to detach

As one of five paid legal commentators on CNN, she analysed cases like Trayvon Martin, Ferguson, Freddie Gray and Tamir Rice. Critics almost never attacked her arguments. They went after her neck, her jowls and her appearance instead. Hearing that so often trained her to tune it out.

• Picture the life of the person attacking you

Her method for troll comments is to imagine what life looks like for someone who spends their time abusing strangers online. She guesses at negativity, few friends and a lot of screen time, and concludes their life must be hard. Responding with sympathy means the comment stops being about her.

• Small minds talk about people; big minds talk about ideas

Mel separates gossip from asking for advice about a real situation, which she says is legitimate. If your social circle mostly talks about people who aren't there, you need bigger goals and should look hard at who you spend time with, because people who gossip with you will gossip about you. She admits she was a big gossiper in her twenties, when she was "insecure, desperate, clingy, anxious, competitive."

• Honest feedback works when care drives it

Producer Cameron says what keeps Mel's blunt advice from sounding condescending is that kindness and real investment in the other person come through. Mel says she used to stay quiet when friends were in bad relationships or being walked over at work, and now sees that as being a bad friend. Her line is that you can manage your tone, but you shouldn't censor the truth.

• Most people react with the emotional maturity of an 8- to 12-year-old

This is her rule two. She believes most adults never developed adult emotional regulation. Their disappointment is a child's tantrum, and their anger lasts about as long as an 11-year-old's. Picturing a boss or a deal partner as a smart kid helps her relate to them as a person and worry less about how they react.

• There is a time and place for self-expression, and bias makes the balance unequal

Rule three uses a seesaw: standards and norms on one side, self-expression on the other. At work, she says, you are being paid, so standards matter more. She wouldn't wear the espadrilles to close a big deal at JP Morgan, or at least not without a manicure. She adds an important caveat: for many people, workplace norms carry real discrimination, so how to strike that balance is a deeply personal decision.

• Go first: drop the mask so others feel free to

Rule four says everyone is stuck following some rule they think they're supposed to obey, so someone has to go first. Mel finds that people approach her more when she looks a mess. CEO Christine, who has known her for 18 years, adds that she has never heard Mel criticise anyone's appearance. Christine thinks that once you stop judging yourself, you stop noticing those things in other people.

EXAMPLES

• The LA cafe and the Audible meeting

At a poolside cafe, Mel took off her t-shirt to sun herself in a nude bodysuit, tucking the shirt in like a bib over her chest. Later she wore open-toed Valentino wedge espadrilles with bell-bottoms to a first meeting with a senior dealmaker at Audible. Christine had packed closed-toe ballet flats especially for it. Mel then switched from seltzer to about three gin and tonics. The Audible contact later texted their literary agent that he was "both afraid and extraordinarily excited."

• The child-size spacesuit in front of 5,000 students

At the first live training of her six-month coaching course, Launch, the team brought out a child-size astronaut suit, a helmet and a rocket-shaped pop-up tent, meant only as desk decorations. Mel squeezed into all of them, took her glasses off to fit the helmet on, overheated, and started the session on the floor pulling elastic cuffs over her shoes. Viewers "went bananas."

• Telling Dr. Amy Shah to use her title

When Dr. Amy Shah, a double board-certified physician and nutrition expert with Ivy League degrees, said to call her just "Amy," Mel pushed back on air. She said there is so much noise from self-styled wellness experts that Shah's medical authority matters, and asked her to claim "Dr. Amy." Shah thanked her for it.

• Research on Black women's natural hair at work

Mel cites a Michigan State study finding that 80% of Black women feel they need to change their hairstyle to fit more conservative work standards. She also cites Duke research showing that Black women with natural hairstyles were less likely to get job interviews than white women or Black women with straightened hair. She uses both to show that her open-toed shoes are a privileged example.

• Kendall's national anthem at USC

Mel's daughter Kendall sang the anthem a cappella at USC's 140th commencement. Afterwards she said 99% of her friends had never heard her sing in four years, even though she was a popular music major. Her Instagram had just one singing post. Mel calls it a cage built from insecurity, and says the door is open.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Rule one: try caring about everything and see if it works

Deliberately worry about your shoes, your friends, your weight and next week, then ask whether any of it makes you happier, more secure or less busy. If worrying worked, you'd feel better. Seeing that it doesn't makes it easier to let go.

• Audit where your seesaw is out of balance

Look for places where you've stopped being yourself, such as falling back into childhood patterns at your parents' house or following norms that no longer fit your values. Rebalance where you can without breaking legitimate workplace standards.

• Check whether your circle is a cage

Mel adapts a Nipsey Hussle line: if you can't be yourself with the people around you, you are in a cage, not a circle. She warns that your own insecurities usually build that cage.

• Give feedback you'd risk someone's disappointment for

Cameron's mother compared hard conversations to a time-release grenade: people may get defensive at first, and the point lands later. Expect that not everyone will react as graciously as Dr. Shah did.

If Someone You Love Is Having a Hard Time, Listen to This

Guest: Dr. Lisa Damour
Date: 2023-05-18 · Duration: 1:25:23
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0QI2BQmnsH8

KEYPOINTS

• Mental health isn't feeling good; it's fitting feelings that are managed well

Clinical psychologist Dr. Lisa Damour, author of The Emotional Lives of Teenagers, says psychologists ask two questions. Do the feelings fit the circumstance, and are they managed well? Being dumped should bring sadness and maybe some bitterness. A teen who hasn't studied for tomorrow's big test should feel anxious, and its absence would be more worrying. In her words, that distress is 'proof that they work perfectly.'

• Uncomfortable has started to feel unmanageable

She worries that too many people now treat discomfort as a sign that everything must stop. Discomfort is part of life and deserves care, but it is different from distress that needs clinical support. She also notes that psychologists treat all emotions, positive and negative, as information. If lunch with someone always leaves you feeling diminished, that's data.

• Two red flags: mood that impairs functioning, and costly coping

Sadness is expected, but depression casts 'a pall over everything.' Anxiety is expected around danger, but not when it becomes paralyzing. The second flag is coping that comes at a price: substances, being hard on the people around you, or turning pain inward through self-criticism or self-harm.

• Costly coping persists because it works

Her training held that people are rational actors: weed, cutting or eight hours of video games bring real relief. Mel called this the first time she'd heard anyone say it plainly, and it explains the defensiveness when you try to take the behavior away. Telling someone 'you need to stop' sets up a showdown. The better move is to stir up an internal conflict and side with the part of them that wants to be healthier.

• Adolescence runs from about 11 to the mid-20s

Puberty is usually underway by 11, which is why psychologists start there rather than at 13. Brains are largely developed by 18–20, but under stress, good reasoning is knocked offline more easily until about 24 or 25. She pushes back on the idea that young adults have undeveloped brains: 'look at that English paper.'

• Girls tend to discuss, boys tend to distract, and both work in moderation

She stresses big caveats: these are averages with heavy overlap, and the research has mostly studied conventional genders. Venting to a friend or shooting hoops are both healthy. Trouble comes at the extremes. Endless analysis of a text thread becomes rumination ('picking at an emotional wound'), and girls are more prone to vicarious distress. Constant distraction denies boys support and practice putting feelings into words.

• Think delay, not loss, after the pandemic

Teenagers have two jobs, becoming more independent and spending time with friends, and lockdown blocked both. Some strong students 'cratered' without the cues of moving between classrooms. She saw more extreme derailments than ever, including eating disorders, heavy weed use and social conflict. Still, she says development is powerful and humans 'bend toward health.' Kids now back in routine mostly look like pre-2020 teens to her.

• Avoidance feeds anxiety

She calls this one of psychology's most important findings, and one of the worst communicated. Skipping a dreaded party brings instant relief, which teaches avoidance. And because you never go, the imagined disaster stays 'sealed in amber.' She makes the case for healthy anxiety and stress. Stress is simply adapting to change, and it is pathological only when chronic or traumatic.

• Weight loss in a teen is a flag

Teens normally gain weight and strength. Learning from eating-disorder colleagues, she says that by the time a teenager is losing weight, 'something's usually up.' Not every vegetarian develops an eating disorder, but nearly everyone who develops one drops a food category. Her test is whether the 'no sugar' kid still eats a really good cupcake. She suspects seeing thousands of ultra-thin images a day changes real behavior, though she admits it can't be proven.

EXAMPLES

• The knock on the door

Playing a teen smoking weed in his room, she models the opening line: 'You and I both know that smoking weed like this is going to get in the way of the kind of life you want to lead.' If the kid isn't in a state to talk, schedule it, with the core message 'what you're doing isn't working.' Mel said she wishes she'd used that framing when Chris's depression came to a head, instead of 'pounding on the door.'

• Externalization: emotional trash

Mel's daughters call Chris to chat but FaceTime her three times in a row to unload, then move on while she lies awake. Damour calls it the defense of externalization. As a freshman, she called her own mother from college in Connecticut saying she had no friends, then hung up to go out. Her mom stayed up all night, ready to 'pack the cooler' and drive across the plains.

• The eight-word rule

A 'brilliant and terrifying' supervisor allowed her eight words or fewer when responding to a client, because longer replies go to the head and bypass the heart. She credits that discipline for how she writes and speaks.

• Read the CDC numbers in context

She notes the devastating CDC report on adolescent mental health released that February was collected in fall 2021, during a third disrupted school year. That context got lost in the coverage, and she expects about another 18 months before a clearer picture.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Just ask about suicide

She says passing thoughts of suicide aren't rare in teens. Give a reason ('you've been in your room for a day and a half'), then ask directly whether they've had thoughts of harming themselves or ending their life. Research, she says, shows asking doesn't plant the idea, and teens who are thinking about it are glad you asked. With a client, side with 'the part of you that wants help.'

• Interrupt rumination with a scheduled pause

Say: 'Talking usually helps, but the more we talk the worse you feel.' Set a time for tomorrow and take a mental vacation until then. The next day, kids often wonder why they were so upset.

• Suggest therapy without confirming their secret fear

Get help when what you're trying at home isn't working. Since teens often secretly worry something is wrong with them, she says: 'For what you're up against, you deserve way more support than you have.' Ask your pediatrician who they like.

• Be a steady presence

Don't match their agitation. Otherwise a '15-year-old-size bad' day becomes '52-year-old-size bad.' Listen and say 'that stinks, I'm sorry,' which is often all they need. Don't jump on the phone or cancel plans.

Feeling Stuck Right Now? Stop Looking In The Wrong Place | The Mel Robbins Podcast

Guest: Ricki
Date: 2023-05-15 · Duration: 1:01:52
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zb9yteXYOzc

KEYPOINTS

• If you keep getting stuck, you may be working on the wrong problem

Mel opens with a weed in her old Boston garden: tall fescue clumps that kept appearing among her irises, peonies and daisies. After a week of rain she dug gently instead of yanking and found one root running about 10 feet under the lawn, feeding every clump. Her point is that recurring problems, like dating 'another loser' or the same fight with your mother, often share a deeper root. Cutting them off at the surface only lets them sprout again.

• Ricki's problems all seemed separate

Ricki, 44, told Mel she felt like she was in quicksand despite years of self-help books and programs. Her job paid the bills but wasn't fulfilling. She had gained 30 pounds and was in the worst shape of her life. She had expected to be married with kids by now, and her relationship with herself was poor. From the outside, she said, friends thought her life looked great.

• The 'bad news': your own story is the biggest obstacle

Mel told Ricki she'd have to push through the resignation and emotion that had built up. Ricki said the change felt like an insurmountable mountain. Mel said it only feels that way because she'd convinced herself it was too late. The actual work to get fit, find fulfilling work and like yourself is 'the same work everybody needs to do'.

• Your daily habits come to match what you believe

When Mel said her best years were ahead, Ricki heard a voice calling it 'BS' and saying her best years were her 20s. Mel's explanation: after years of telling herself it wasn't going to happen, Ricki's routines had lined up with someone who believes her best days are behind her. That's why she let her health slide, settled for a draining job and lowered her standards in dating. The fix is to live the daily life of someone who believes the opposite.

• Unresolved grief can quietly change your whole life

Mel guessed something had derailed Ricki in her late 20s or 30s. Ricki's father died when she was 28, followed by depression and a series of painful breakups. Mel suggested she had spent a decade grieving and was stuck in a kind of freeze response: hunkered down, no longer dreaming, focused on getting through each day. Ricki said she'd never connected being stuck to his death and thought she had moved on.

• The relationships may have been about grief, not her worth

Ricki was embarrassed that she kept believing relationships would go somewhere when they didn't, and saw herself as a failure. Mel offered another view: she was entering relationships with a hole that grief had left, wanting to feel safe again. So she fell fast and 'misread the room'. Mel told her there's nothing wrong with her.

• Letting love in is the deeper breakthrough

Mel describes trading her heart's 'impenetrable' castle door for swinging restaurant-kitchen doors that let love go out and come back in. Ricki pushed back: she's the friend and sister who's always there for others. Mel said that being 'the rock' often blocks love coming in, as do self-criticism and lines like 'I'm okay, I can handle this on my own'.

• Ricki had quietly put an expiration date on her dreams

Asked what changed when her dad died, Ricki said she had always wanted to make him proud and felt she'd lost the chance, even though he told her before he died that he was proud. She just wasn't proud of herself. Mel called it 'quietly quitting' on her own ambition and told her Joe is still watching, and that she has her whole life to make herself proud.

EXAMPLES

• The gym locker

Partway through, Ricki remembered she used to love working out and running. She learned of her father's death right after a workout, opening her locker to find several messages from her sister and insisting her sister tell her right then. She kept going to the gym afterward, but it never had the same momentum. Mel said it makes sense that a traumatic moment drained the joy from something she loved.

• Bringing back acting, singing and writing

Asked what she did in her 20s that she no longer does, Ricki said taking risks, acting, singing and writing. Mel suggested acting classes, auditions, community theater or summer stock, and pointed out that these involve love flowing back from castmates and audiences. She said a job change alone wouldn't go deep enough.

• Mel at 44

In 2013, at Ricki's age, Mel was $800,000 in debt with liens on the house. Chris was leaving a failing restaurant that hadn't paid him in six months and was too depressed to function. She was struggling with drinking and working two jobs. She had no book, podcast or social media, and her TEDx talk had only just gone online. That's why she says she means it when she tells Ricki her best years are ahead.

• Ricki's update from the cemetery

Ricki went to her father's grave on what turned out to be the 16th anniversary of his burial. She brought tulips, which he used to plant in their front yard. She read her letter, told him about giving up and not working out, and promised to keep making him proud. She says she believes her life will be 'unrecognizable this time next year'.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Write a letter to the person you lost

Mel's assignment: thank them, say you miss them, and promise what you'll bring back into your life. For Ricki, that was acting, singing, writing and running. If you can, read it aloud at their grave. Mel believes this deeper motivation will do more than any

formula.

- **The 'then vs. now' comparison**

  Draw a line down a page. On the left, describe an average week when you felt most alive: wake time, friends, exercise, hobbies, creative outlets. On the right, describe your weeks now. Compare them, because the gaps show what to add back.

- **Pair your 'why' with a simple 'how'**

  Mel says research shows lasting change needs both a reason and a method. Ricki already knows how to audition and sing. Her 'why' is permission to be happy and proud. Turn it into weekly steps, like one singing group and one audition a week. To get moving, walk 10 minutes a day outside 'like you're late'.

How to Read Body Language to Get What You Want | The Mel Robbins Podcast

Guest: Janine Driver
Date: 2023-05-11 · Duration: 1:28:02
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=06qk0mxg3GA

KEYPOINTS

• Three groups are naturally good at reading people

Body language expert Janine Driver, who spent 17 years at the ATF and trained with law enforcement, names three groups. First, kids who were abused and had to read when a parent's mood meant a bad night. Second, people like the Secret Service, who are trained daily to look for anomalies. Third, people whose right brain takes over after a left-brain stroke. Teachers, therapists and judges, she says, aren't good at detecting deception, because nobody trains them to.

• A 'yes' plus a head touch is a nonverbal maybe

She calls it a high-level pacifier: someone nods yes while touching the back of their head (more common in men) or lifting hair at the nape of the neck (more common in women). It signals something unspoken, like 'I just went vegan' when you suggest a steak dinner. She says the higher on the body the pacifier, the more stress it signals.

• Open the hidden file with 'Maybe I'm wrong here'

Her 'MIW' formula, short for Maybe I'm Wrong, sounds like 'Maybe I'm wrong here, but it seems to me there's something you're uncertain about.' It invites the person to say what's behind the gesture without accusing them. She also uses it when someone breaks eye contact or covers their eyes, which she calls eye blocking.

• Always compare against someone's baseline

A single cue means little until you know how the person normally behaves. When Gwyneth Paltrow was sued, she pressed her lips in throughout her testimony, which Driver says usually shows we dislike what we see or hear. But old interviews showed it was part of Paltrow's normal behavior, so Driver discarded it.

• Communication grows like a tree: roots, trunk, branches

Roots are what you believe, the trunk is body language, and the branches are thought. She claims body language shows up as much as five seconds before conscious thought, which gives an observer an early read. And because the roots come first, confident gestures layered over a belief that you're a 'loser' will read as fake.

• Shoulder shrugs broadcast uncertainty

She describes a common pattern: one employee says firmly, 'My mother's coming, I'm taking four days off,' while another asks with shoulders up by her ears. She attributes the boss's yes-to-Bob, no-to-Jane answer partly to that shrug, which mirror neurons pass on as doubt. She acknowledges a real gender double standard, but says this piece is within our control. Try saying 'Can I have the Fourth of July off?' with your shoulders raised and notice how your whole body questions the words.

• The word 'left' often signals strife

'I left my husband,' 'I left my job,' or even a minimizing 'I just left the house' often points to a problem, she says. Hearing it before a sales pitch or meeting is a cue to pause and ask, 'Is everything okay this morning?'

• Eye contact and eye touching carry status and stress

High-status people hold eye contact both when listening and when talking, while low-status people break it when they speak. Mel, who has ADHD, said she looks away when searching for words. Driver says touching the eye under stress is soothing and cited an fMRI finding about a nerve and dopamine. She points to Putin and to Mexico's president, who touched his inner eye while saying the US could help curb the cartels.

• Watch where belly buttons point

She calls it 'naval intelligence': people face their belly buttons toward those they like, admire and trust. Count the belly buttons in a meeting. If half face someone else, that person may be your rival, so meet with them first. Keep your three 'power zones' open: the neck dimple, the belly button and the groin.

• Priming and embedded commands get more truth from kids

Borrowing from hostage-negotiation mentor Jim Cavanaugh, she suggests saying 'Whether you tell me the truth or you don't, (pause) tell me the truth, I know more than you think.' Assigning a trait also helps: 'Everyone says you're a truthful person, is that true?' Getting a yes creates cognitive dissonance about lying. She claims this pushes truth-telling in 8- to 13-year-olds above 80%.

EXAMPLES

• Escaping a would-be kidnapper at 16

At 5:30 a.m. in 1986, a man in a car tried to get her to put her bike in his trunk. She says her alertness, shaped by being molested at six, kicked in. Instead of riding the 2.8 miles home, she rode to a nearby BayBank hoping for a camera, slipped through a cut fence and down an embankment, and called 911.

• Claiming expertise overnight

After a Dan Kennedy marketing video, she announced to an ATF colleague that she was the media's go-to deception expert. She soon appeared on Fox News, launched lyintamer.com and pitched every upcoming Rachael Ray segment. On the show, Rachael Ray sat on her lap, which prompted a literary agent's call, a bidding war and a Random House deal worth half a million dollars.

• Steepling past a bully boss

At 25, working at the World Trade Center, she dreaded a boss who pointed and summoned people. Her mother, a nurse, taught her to press her fingertips together the way doctors did with her. When called in, Janine walked in steepling, and the boss only asked how she liked New York. Driver says a low steeple in meetings quiets people who talk over you. She adds that Indra Nooyi's chin grab makes you look like 'you're about to win.'

• Jim Cavanaugh and David Koresh

She says Cavanaugh got Koresh to agree he was 'a man of his word,' then got women and children released 'two by two'

after Koresh's message was read on Christian radio. After the FBI took over negotiations, she says, no one else came out alive.

- **How detail people drink water**

  Detail-oriented people watch the glass all the way from the table to their mouth and back. Before a Paylocity keynote, she spotted two executives doing exactly that. Both confirmed they would fix a crooked coaster. For readers like that, give lots of detail. Big-picture people need three must-knows at the top of an email.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Iron Man posture, not 'shoulders back'**

  Superman and Clark Kent differ by about two inches of posture. Imagine a light in the center of your chest and aim it at the line where the wall meets the ceiling, with your shoulders relaxed.

- **Sit 30 degrees off center on dates and in interviews**

  Sitting directly opposite someone is a 'fighting pose.' Move the chair off center so you both have a visual way out, then put it back when you leave.

- **Toe push-ups instead of announcing your nerves**

  Never tell an audience you're nervous. Discreetly press your toes up and down inside your shoes to burn off the stress.

- **Treat criticism as a 'good to know'**

  She learned this reset from Andrea Quinn. When a woman told her 'I don't like your personality,' Janine answered 'Good to know, anything else?' and moved on. Her son later used it after a breakup. She also ends each day with her kids by asking for their 'up-down-ups': something good, something not so good, and something good.

Should You Trust Your Gut Instinct? | The Mel Robbins Podcast

Guest: Oakley Robbins
Date: 2023-05-08 · Duration: 1:08:56
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zTt-IGK-dm8

KEYPOINTS

• The issue isn't trusting your gut; it's having the courage to follow it

Mel argues your instincts are almost always right. What stops you is fear of acting on them, because nine times out of ten the right decision will disappoint someone, force a change, make you learn something new, or pull you away from the pack. So she wants listeners to stop saying 'trust your gut' and start saying 'I need the courage to make decisions that are right for me'.

• Asking 'what do you think?' is where you give away your power

Partway through a campus tour, Mel's son Oakley turned and asked his parents what they thought. Mel says this is everyone's reflex with big decisions, from jobs to breakups: instead of asking 'can I see myself here?', we check other people's reactions. Her reply to Oakley was 'it doesn't matter what I think, it matters what you think', because you're the one who lives with the decision.

• A 'no' and a 'yes' feel different in the body

Oakley, then a high-school junior, described a no as 'uninterested, unenthused, closed off… I feel out of place'. It starts in his mind and then 'my whole body starts to agree'. A yes is 'super open… lots of possibilities… you feel like you're in the right place', and you can easily picture yourself there. Mel sums them up as expansive versus constricted and draining.

• Reading your gut gets faster with practice

The first school was a no within about 30 minutes, and a later one within about five. By the end of the week Oakley was deciding almost instantly. Mel credits a week of paying attention to his body during each decision. It's a skill you build by tuning in, not a fixed trait.

• Imagine everyone else on a separate tour

One school split parents and students into separate tours. Oakley explained why that matters: on a tour, parents act as guides, and kids look to them for praise or disapproval and like or dislike a school accordingly. Mel turns it into a visualization for any decision: picture friends, family and partners on another tour, so you're alone with your own reactions.

• Research cited: decisions start in the body

Mel cites neuroscientist Antonio Damasio's widely cited work as showing that we decide with our bodies and the brain interprets those signals. Her everyday example is ordering from a menu: even if you wait to hear everyone else's order, you end up asking 'what do I feel like eating?' She adds that higher-self choices, like going to a party you're too tired for, sometimes mean pushing past present feelings for the sake of your future self.

• Let your future self be your tour guide

Fast-forward and ask whether you can picture yourself in this life a year from now. You'll often hear the no louder than the yes, and Mel says that's enough to act on. You don't need to know where you're headed. 'Anything but this' gives you a problem to solve, and she says people are great problem solvers once they have one.

• Leaving the pack connects you with new people

Mel and her colleague Amy note that when you break from a group that holds you back and go with your future self, you 'catch up to a tour' of people on the same path. Amy says those people became some of her best friends. What's meant for you won't pass you by, Mel says, but ignoring your gut can cost you years or decades.

EXAMPLES

• Mel turned into the over-involved alum

Mel was relaxed during her daughters' college searches, but when Oakley wanted to see Dartmouth, her alma mater, she says she 'became a sociopath'. She imagined reliving it through him, nudged him toward the tour guide who played ultimate frisbee, asked about the old swim-test requirement, and talked about his application until he asked how she even knew he'd apply. Chris eventually pulled her back by the shoulders.

• Mel's own college decision

In 1985, from a western Michigan high school with 73 graduates where no one went out of state, Mel fell for Dartmouth on sight. When she said she'd apply early decision, her math teacher told her 'you better not get your hopes up'. She got in anyway and says one discouraging voice could easily have changed her path.

• Following the crowd into law

After graduation Mel followed her boyfriend to DC and temped at a Georgetown law firm, Bates-stamping documents for months in a windowless room for the free $30 dinner. She applied to law school only because everyone around her did, had panic attacks, ghosted a Michigan Attorney General research project, and ended up back in a firm. Only after a breakdown on maternity leave with Sawyer could she say 'I can't do this anymore'. She networked into a $55,000 job in four weeks.

• Amy's month-for-a-year challenge

Amy, who ran a copywriting agency, told her mastermind group she'd earn last year's income in one month. The group fell silent and then questioned her. One member, Richelli Wright, told everyone to back off. Two weeks in, a client called while Amy was on Route 684 offering 10 e-books in a month at a price she could name. She later subcontracted work to Richelli.

• Jesse leaves pharmacy

Jesse, the team's video producer, chose pharmacy because she'd worked in one. After failing Organic Chemistry II and being asked by a professor whether she really wanted it, she switched to broadcast journalism. That meant an extra semester and a path no one she knew had taken. She felt it 'in my heart', found an internship with the football program on her own, and now has a 14-year broadcasting career.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Notice when you're the loud voice**

  Sometimes the voices are your own. Cameron on Mel's team knew Indiana University was too big and too far away, but stayed because she thought people would judge her for transferring, even after her dad said she could. If you're the parent or friend, check whether your enthusiasm is crowding out someone else's clarity, as Mel's did at Dartmouth.

- **A quick check before a big decision**

  Find quiet and drop into your body. Ask whether the option opens possibility and makes you feel like you're growing, even if it's scary, or whether it makes part of you shrink, as in 'I'm a doctor because everyone in my family is'. Listen to the no first, then find the courage to follow the opening.

- **Find or be a Richelli**

  A listener in Mel's Vermont walking group went back to nursing school after her divorce because a neighbor said 'just go back to school'. When someone says 'just do it', they're inviting you to imagine the life for a moment. If no one does that for you, Mel says, you have to say 'watch me' to yourself.

If You Got Your Heart Broken, You Need To Hear This! | The Mel Robbins Podcast

Date: 2023-05-04 · Duration: 0:45:33
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qq3k1_jzxwo

KEYPOINTS

• The right decision and fear of the right decision feel different

Mel calls this the episode's biggest truth. Listener Katrina, who was dumped by her boyfriend of five years days before her 25th birthday and during her last year of law school, asked whether to leave Indianapolis. Mel told her it would be a short session because "you know the decision." The decision that's true for you is often the one that scares you most.

• Life-changing decisions aren't made in your analytical brain

Katrina thinks like a lawyer, but Mel says big decisions are felt in your heart and gut. Use your heart to know what's true, then use your analytical mind to plan when and how.

• Run toward something, not just away

Asked why she wanted to move, setting her ex aside, Katrina said it was 60% feeling called somewhere else and 40% needing to get away from memories of him on every hiking trail. She had wanted to move even before the breakup. Mel says framing a change as moving toward something gives you control of the story, and adds that you can always come back.

• How someone makes you feel outweighs how you feel about them

Mel's second truth is to give the most weight to how a person or place makes you feel. Katrina's ex made her feel rejected and disrespected. Indianapolis now makes her feel small, stuck and like she has stopped growing. That's the information to decide on.

• If someone doesn't want you, they aren't your person

Katrina said her ex was everything she wanted "except the fact that he didn't want me." Mel calls that the single most important quality. She sees hoping he'll return as handing him your self-worth, as if winning him back would prove you're enough. The only person you need to be worthy of is yourself.

• There are always signs, and owning them strengthens your intuition

Pressed by Mel, Katrina listed them: he cheated two years in. Weeks before the breakup, after a fight when some Mormon friends visited, he looked at her differently. He was distant over the Fourth of July weekend, after the guys in their friend group had all broken up with their girlfriends two weeks earlier. Mel says admitting the signs you ignored isn't weakness; it trains you to trust your instincts next time.

• Separate what ended from how it ended

Mel argues Katrina couldn't let go because of the injustice of how it happened: no warning and no honest conversation. As a person of principle, she deserved better. Getting angry about the disrespect, instead of agonising over whether to move, gave her back her power.

• If you hold yourself back, own it

Katrina felt guilty leaving her parents. Mel: they're adults who can fly or FaceTime, and they want you happy. You don't get to bet on yourself and then blame your parents. Most of the time you haven't even asked whether they'd be disappointed. People can be sad you live far away and still support you, as Mel's own parents do.

• You'll regret what you didn't do

Mel lists her own regrets: cheating on past boyfriends, how she treated friends, wasted opportunities in college and law school before she understood her childhood trauma. Still, she says the bigger regrets are the moves, degrees, trips and fresh starts we were too afraid to try.

EXAMPLES

• A new story about the ex

Mel rewrote Katrina's narrative: he wasn't everything she wanted. He cheated, was forgiven, then froze her out under pressure from his religious community and ended things in a cowardly way. The lesson: "I want an actual man" who talks about feelings and has hard conversations, and "I was dating a child and making excuses for him." Katrina said she would keep that story in her back pocket.

• Rehearsing the run-in

Sensing that Katrina would bump into her ex soon, Mel role-played him. After a couple of tries, Katrina delivered: "I want to thank you for ending what we had. I recently made the decision to move, and I wouldn't have if we'd stayed together. The way it was done was not acceptable, and I hope you do better for the women in your future." She said it felt "empowering and honest."

• Katrina's growth since the breakup

After three to four numb months, she built friendships, started hobbies that required patience and confidence, and dropped her plan to avoid men until the July bar exam, using the 5 Second Rule to start conversations. She had meant to email Mel for six months and finally sent it after counting 5-4-3-2-1.

• Mel's college roommate

Mel had a falling out with her college roommate about 33 years ago, which she says was mostly her doing. She used to dread running into her. Using what researchers call A/B planning, she decided in advance she would greet her with a big hug. Owning her part and changing her behaviour gave her closure without needing the other person.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Use the expand-or-contract test

Close your eyes and picture each option. The aligned choice feels expansive, as if something opens up, even if it's scary. If you feel yourself shrink or your energy drop, that's a no.

- **Let go of the doorknob**
  Closure means releasing the small hope, the self-blame and the rumination, then walking toward something new. Another person's behaviour is all the information you need. If it's not love, it's a lesson.
- **Ask for support instead of assuming disappointment**
  Script: "I need to do this for my growth. The only thing holding me back is fear that you'll be upset. Can I have your support? I can always come back." They may or may not give it, but you'll know.

What Every Stressed Out Person Needs to Hear | The Mel Robbins Podcast

Guest: Chris Robbins
Date: 2023-05-01 · Duration: 0:53:00
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XWyXecMJNBs

KEYPOINTS

• Under stress, people tend to overfunction or underfunction

Mel draws on psychologist Harriet Lerner, who coined the terms. Overfunctioners jump into first-responder mode: helping, directing and taking over. Underfunctioners slow down, go quiet and gather information, or at worst freeze and wait to be told what to do. Mel overfunctions and her husband Chris underfunctions. Neither is good or bad, and the goal is to notice which one is your default.

• Overfunctioning is a superpower with a cost

Mel says it lets her think 20 to 25 steps ahead. But her internal 'five-alarm fire drill' makes her lose rational thinking, trample other people's ability to handle things, burn herself out and stress everyone around her.

• The same event can set off very different alarms

On a zero-to-ten scale, their son's breakdown was an eight for Mel and a three or four for Chris. That gap is the start of the friction: each feels the other's response doesn't fit the situation.

• Resentment builds on both sides

Lerner's research, as Mel describes it, finds that overfunctioners resent slower partners because they feel they're carrying the alarm alone and read slowness as not caring. Chris adds that being bulldozed leaves him feeling bullied and mistrusted, as if he isn't problem-solving when he is, just quietly. Over time he started assuming Mel would handle everything anyway.

• Underfunctioning isn't doing nothing

Chris says he's always thinking about solutions. He just gathers information before deciding, and under real stress his focus narrows and he goes a bit numb. Mel ends by apologising that his hard thinking and worry never get credit.

• Underfunctioners need to learn to step up

Mel says that if your default is to freeze, feel helpless and second-guess yourself, the work is learning to advocate for yourself and problem-solve while the alarm is going off. Sawyer, she says, learned from her ER day about underfunctioning, pushing people away, and the value of asking for help.

• Functioning under stress comes down to three abilities

Per the research Mel cites, how well you function under stress depends on your ability to make decisions, act on them and handle emotion. An overfunctioner's anxiety pushes them to act before deciding well. An underfunctioner may decide well but act or speak too slowly for the people around them.

• Lerner's advice: 'hang in'

Hanging in means stopping yourself from doing what you normally do. Overfunctioners should hold their tongue and say about 50% less, or as Mel puts it, 75% less. Underfunctioners shouldn't disappear into silence: say out loud that you're processing, because silence can feel like abandonment to an overfunctioning partner.

• Ask the overfunctioner, 'What are you scared of right now?'

Mel says that question would reach the emotion behind the barking orders and help her see when a fear doesn't fit the facts. In this case it was a kid whose car broke down four blocks from school, with adults already helping. Chris says it might also help him meet the fear and not just the logistics.

• Give the underfunctioner a short script

Mel asks Chris to say something like 'I need a sec, I'm processing, I'll handle it,' preferably without swearing at her. Chris suggests Mel can keep talking, just in a more organised, less tornado-like way, so they work as a team.

EXAMPLES

• A colonoscopy morning goes off the rails

Chris had been up all night with colonoscopy prep. Mel forgot to set her alarm, skipped her own evening-prep advice and had 25 minutes to get out of the house. Mid-drive, their son Oakley called: his Jeep had died in the road outside his high school. She recorded a voice memo in the pickup outside Dartmouth Hitchcock hospital to show the breakdown as it happened.

• Coaching a grown man through a call with AAA

While Chris called AAA (a US roadside-assistance service), Mel kept interrupting with 'tell them you're going to a colonoscopy.' Then a school administrator, Mary, offered to meet the tow truck, and Mel talked over Chris directing that too. Her daughter was meanwhile sleeping through a virtual appointment. Chris says the barked orders, in one ear while he listened with the other, derailed the conversation.

• 23 vials of blood

When their daughter Sawyer was sent to the Mass General ER in Boston after two weeks of odd symptoms, she insisted she was fine. They were three and a half hours away. Mel deferred all day, then drove down at 3 p.m. once she heard they'd drawn 23 vials of blood. Sawyer had been there alone for 11 hours. Mel's lesson: if you feel called to show up, don't ask, just go.

• Friends who were standing at the NICU door

The fear underneath was a memory. When Oakley was six days old he was rushed to Mass General for life-saving surgery, and two close friends who'd had kids in the NICU (a newborn intensive care unit) were waiting when the doors opened. They knew Mel and Chris wouldn't know how to ask for help.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Start with 'Are you safe?'

Looking back, Chris noted that neither of them asked Oakley if he was safe, which would have been the right first question before AAA, tow trucks or schedules.

- **Name the partner who's good in a crisis**

  Their couples therapist, Dr. Cooper, asked Mel to describe a time Chris was in charge and she felt completely safe. Her answer was camping, hiking and fly fishing. Calling him 'the trip leader' gives her a phrase to hand over control, and reminds him to lead them toward figuring out what's driving the angst.

- **Try venting out loud**

  Mel processes by talking. Saying it all into a voice memo, putting a hand on her heart and telling herself 'it's okay, Mel' helped her settle back into her body before she reflected.

- **Your stress default shows up with your kids too**

  Chris notes their kids call Mel first in an emergency because she's fast and decisive. That's valuable, he says, unless it shuts out everyone else's contribution.

The Truth About Money and Why We Have It All Wrong | The Mel Robbins Podcast

Guest: Ramit Sethi
Date: 2023-04-27 · Duration: 1:30:16
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yHuXPsw6h7Y

KEYPOINTS

• How you feel about money has little to do with how much you have

Ramit Sethi's key principle: having $5,000, $50,000 or $500,000 more won't make you feel safe on its own. A rich life means working on two things at once: learning a few basic numbers, like your savings rate and the rule of 72, and actively improving your money psychology, because so much in society pushes us to feel bad about money.

• Childhood money phrases follow you into adulthood

Sethi asks what you heard growing up: 'We can't afford it', 'We don't talk about money', 'We're not like those people'. People who heard 'we can't afford it' thousands of times can end up 40 years later with money in the bank and still feel guilty ordering a salad. He tells parents to stop saying it reflexively. Class differences between partners, like 'just grind harder' versus talking about investing at age five, often drive money fights.

• Start with a vision that excites you, not a spreadsheet

When asked to name the first words that come to mind about money, people say debt, restriction, overwhelm and mistakes, so it's no surprise they avoid it. Sethi starts with dreaming instead. Mel adds that when she and Chris were in debt with liens on their house, dreaming was a lifeline that made the crisis feel temporary.

• Find your 'money dial'

Ask what you truly love spending on, and why. Sethi says the most common money dials are eating out, then travel, then health and wellness, then convenience (his own). Then imagine turning that spending up four or ten times. It's rarely more of the same; it's a change in quality or meaning. Look for the common thread in your answers.

• People shrink their dreams within seconds

Asked about their rich life, most people say 'do what I want when I want', then can't say what that is. One person immediately downgraded a beach house to a 'dilapidated shack'. Sethi says nobody is inspired by a tiny vision. When one wealthy man said his rich life was 'coffee', Sethi told him it was boring and pushed for something like touring a Guatemalan coffee farm.

• A rich life is personal and should look strange to others

Sethi spends extravagantly on hotels, keeping a list of exact rooms he wants around the world, and on clothes. He says he's spent more on travel in one year than on cars in 20 years. Another reader retired in his 30s to travel in an RV, which Sethi says sounds like hell to him, and that's the point. You can have a rich life while still in debt.

• Use a conscious spending plan built on four numbers instead of a budget

Sethi doesn't keep a budget ('who wants to track the price of apples?'). His guidelines as a share of take-home pay: fixed costs, including minimum debt payments, 50–60%; savings 5–10%; investments 5–10% or more; and guilt-free spending 20–35%. He says knowing these four numbers makes people feel in control, and many find they have more money than they thought.

• Know what you owe and when it will be paid off

Sethi says about 90% of people in debt he talks to don't know how much they owe, and 95% don't know their payoff date. Plug your numbers into an online debt payoff calculator and sit with the result, even if it says 28 years. Later you'll see things like an extra $50 a month cutting years off. He pushes back on the puritanical idea that you can't enjoy anything until you're debt-free.

• Housing and cars are the biggest overspends

Sethi's guideline is housing at roughly 28% of gross income; at 42%, nothing is left over for saving, investing or going out, and couples end up fighting about Target. Cars are next: a $75,000 earner buying an $80,000 truck based on the monthly payment ignores the total cost of ownership, which he says can reach $120,000 with insurance, tax and gas. Never buy something expensive based on the monthly payment.

• The '$75,000 makes you happy' study is widely misread

Mel raised research suggesting about $75,000–78,000 relieves daily money stress. Sethi says people have wildly misinterpreted it, which leaves people earning that much wondering why they're still stressed. His point: nobody is broken with money; the fix is learning the basics and working on your psychology.

EXAMPLES

• Sethi's scholarship stock bet

The son of Indian immigrants who ate out every six to eight weeks, always with a coupon, Sethi applied for 65 scholarships in high school, winning about 10 to 15 and covering undergraduate and graduate school. He invested his first scholarship check in tech stocks around 1999–2000 and immediately lost half. His father encouraged him to learn from it rather than give up on investing.

• Early 'rich life' memories

For Sethi, it was ordering an appetizer without checking the price, or taking a New York taxi without watching the meter. For Mel, it was paying for her own warm-weather vacation. Sethi says these small, vivid early wishes reveal what a rich life means to you.

• Mel's dessert dial

Mel's 'Lamborghini' is ordering every dessert on the menu for the table. Turned up 4x, she'd send desserts to the whole restaurant; turned up 10x, free dessert at schools, like Ben & Jerry's Free Cone Day. Sethi saw generosity and delight in her answers, and Mel realised her deeper dream is angel investing in underrepresented founders.

• The young man and the Michelin list

At a talk in DC, a young man said that quadrupling his eating out would just mean eating four times a week. Pressed, he

revealed he had a list of every Michelin-starred restaurant in DC and would take his family, who could never afford places like that. A young woman in Pasadena turned 'more clothes' into someday having something custom-made in Italy with her mother.

- **Writing in Kyoto**

  On their 10-year bucket list, Sethi wrote 'write a book in a luxury hotel'. His wife, heading to Japan with friends, suggested he take his writing project to the Kyoto hotel he loves. He says sometimes you need someone to remind you about yourself.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Make a 10-year bucket list and fund one item**

  Write a list alone or with a partner, then compare. Pick one item, describe it in vivid detail, and choose a month and year. Estimate the cost on a napkin (if you each guess differently, use the bigger number), then automate monthly savings toward it, for example $100 a month into an account named 'Dream Trip 2030'.

- **Gather logins one day, work out numbers the next**

  Gathering account logins is usually the hardest part, so do that one day and work out your four numbers in about 15 minutes the next. Aim for 85% accuracy. Then spend about an hour a month reviewing your plan, as Sethi does with his wife.

- **Finish one sentence and change one phrase**

  Complete 'I spend extravagantly on ___ and cut costs mercilessly on ___.' Replace 'I'm bad with money' with 'I haven't always been great with money, but now I'm learning.' Mel's version: 'I used to be stressed about money; now I'm learning to enjoy it.'

How to Get Confident, Beat Your Insecurities, and Overcome Fear | The Mel Robbins Podcast

Guest: Michelle Poler
Date: 2023-04-24 · Duration: 0:59:21
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=512w8shwJTE

KEYPOINTS

• Fear of speaking up is about vulnerability, and it's not just about stages

Mel calls public speaking the number one fear. She broadens it to speaking in a work meeting, pushing back with a doctor, having a hard family conversation or being called on in class: any moment when all eyes are on you and you fear judgment. She quotes Seinfeld's joke that at a funeral, the person in the coffin is less scared than the person giving the eulogy.

• Mel started out terrified

As a kid Mel turned bright red when called on. In law school she had coughing fits or left the room, and as a young lawyer she wore scarves to hide neck rashes in court. She says she went from that to being the most-booked female speaker on the corporate circuit, at more than 111 speeches a year for companies like Microsoft, Starbucks, JPMorgan and AT&T.

• Preparation is one of the best tools for nerves

Mel says rehearsal doesn't remove the stakes, but it works through your resistance and builds muscle memory so other tools can work. She quotes a story about Charlie 'Bird' Parker (unsure if it's true): first you learn your instrument through decades of practice, then you forget all that and just play. Preparation is what lets you improvise and express yourself fully.

• Mistakes can make you more likable

Mel cites the pratfall effect: imperfections can make experts seem more likable and trustworthy, unlike a 'snooty know-it-all.' The point, she says, is not getting it perfect but being willing to try.

• 'Alive but not living' was the start of Michelle Poler's 100 fears

Speaker and author Michelle Poler (Hello Fears) moved to New York, her dream city, but was stuck in her comfort zone. Hearing OneRepublic's 'I Lived,' she cried, realizing she was 'alive but not living,' and asked herself whether she was happy or merely comfortable. With her husband Adam's support she faced 100 fears in 100 days while working in advertising and doing a branding master's, editing and posting a video every night on three or four hours of sleep.

• The 'don't do it' feeling can point to growth, not danger

Poler used to treat the tight feeling before something scary as intuition and backed away, missing opportunities. After 100 fears, she reads it as her ego guarding against rejection or embarrassment, and often a sign of growth, so she chooses growth when she feels it.

• Ask 'What's the best that can happen?' instead of 'What's the worst?'

Poler says the worst-case question builds a brick wall of fears and focuses you on hurt feelings. Asking about the best case shows you the rewards; if they don't excite you, the fear may not be worth facing. Before a new talk that day, a follower asked her that question, and she pictured a room laughing, clapping and crying.

• Own your story instead of reciting what anyone can Google

When Facebook asked Poler to speak on imposter syndrome, she caught herself repeating search results. She replaced them with her own experience of following a polished speaker at ESPN in 2016, feeling she had to sound more perfect, and then hearing at happy hour that her realness was a highlight for people.

• Nervousness and excitement feel the same in the body, so rename it

Mel says both put your body on alert: blood shifts to the heart and brain and away from digestion, producing butterflies, the urge to pee, sweating and dry mouth. Those signals mean you're about to do something that matters, not that you're about to fail. Citing Harvard research on people facing interviews, speeches, debates, singing and track meets, she says telling yourself 'I'm excited' improved performance. She adds that, per UCLA's Dr. Judith Willis, staying steady keeps stress from blocking access to what you prepared.

EXAMPLES

• 'Did you get your check yet?'

In 2013, with Chris bottomed out and getting sober and Mel working two jobs, her accidentally viral 2011 TEDx talk led to seven free talks. At the Pennsylvania Conference for Women, where she spoke to a 1,000-seat breakout room, another speaker asked whether she'd been paid, and Mel was stunned for two weeks.

• 'What's your budget?' and the $10,000 call

Mel promised herself that next time she'd pause, ask 'What's your budget?', and plan to double it. The first caller, Darren from Dallas, whose wife Lori had seen the TEDx video, offered $10,000 for J.Hilburn's sales conference. Mel says yes immediately. She spent half on a graphic designer for her slides, over-prepared and 'destroyed it.' Darren called her top three of all time and has managed her speaking business since.

• The see-through dress on the Jumbotron

At that first paid talk Mel wore a dress she wore on CNN. Afterward a woman told her that with the stage lights and Jumbotron, the audience could see her Spanx and a thong. The dress went into the hotel trash.

• Poler's scariest fears

Stand-up comedy at a New York club scared Poler more than skydiving. Posing nude for a drawing class taught her to stop hiding imperfections and start creating interesting shapes for the artists: 'No one's judging us the way we judge ourselves.' Her next fear is a second baby.

• Dancing to Daddy Yankee on stage

Poler calms down by dancing reggaeton, so she walks on dancing to 'Dura,' even when corporate crowds stay seated. Mel's explanation: it isn't calming; she's channeling nervous energy into excitement.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Before you speak, remind yourself why it matters**

  Whether it's a raise, a town meeting or a sales pitch, name your purpose, such as 'I want to be valued for my contributions.' Mel tells herself that out of 3,000 seats she's speaking to one person who needs to hear something that day.

- **Use the reframe in the final minutes**

  The waiting time after rehearsal is when nerves are worst. Mel's ritual is to keep saying 'I'm not nervous, I'm excited.' She doesn't meditate or try to calm down.

- **Look for a 'trust fall'**

  Mel points out that Poler DMed her, then came to the hotel with two hours to catch a flight. Mel herself plans to skydive with her son for his 18th birthday despite it being her biggest fear.

How to Stop Screwing Yourself Over | The Mel Robbins Podcast

Date: 2023-04-20 · Duration: 0:43:50
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pAcjVWJc2x8

KEYPOINTS

• You can't switch off a critical inner voice; you replace the playlist

In two unedited coaching sessions, Mel describes default thinking as a playlist that runs in the background. Silencing it is nearly impossible, but layering a new soundtrack on top is doable. Simply recognizing that your default thinking no longer serves you is, she says, an enormous first step.

• Find out whose voice it is, and break the chain

Poppy's inner voice says putting herself first is selfish and that anything she does for herself will fail. She learned it from her parents, who probably learned it from theirs and thought they were protecting her. Once you see the voice isn't yours, you can separate from it and be the person 'this playlist dies with.'

• Under 'it's selfish' is an uglier story: 'they'll pull their love away'

Mel recognizes the belief from her own life. People raised to keep everyone happy link self-care with consequences, so taking care of themselves feels like risking love. That fear, more than the word 'selfish,' is what keeps people burned out and holding back.

• Name the voice and talk back to it

Poppy names hers Vicky. When she feels herself holding back, the signal of default programming, she physically turns toward 'Vicky' and says 'Shut up, Vicky,' then states what she actually believes. Mel's comebacks: 'You're not paying my rent.' 'There's no plus-one on this invitation.' Distancing yourself from the voice drains its power, and your reticular activating system, the brain's filter, starts noticing more reasons to put yourself first.

• Start each day with 'I deserve to be happy'

Mel's main mantra for Poppy is 'I deserve to be happy,' paired with the question 'Does this make me happy?' Other beliefs to install: my parents are proud of me for being me; nobody's disappointed in me, and if they are, I'm an adult and can handle it.

• Consider dropping the word 'toxic,' unless there's abuse

Mel suggests replacing 'toxic' with compassion for immigrant parents who likely felt like outsiders with high stakes and aimed that fear and love at their child. She calls the word divisive if you want to improve a relationship. When Poppy says there was physical, emotional and mental abuse and they aren't speaking, Mel changes course. Boundaries are right, therapy is right, and reconnecting is optional and only if Poppy ever feels safe. Mel praises her for speaking up as an act of putting herself first.

• Chronic fear can block memories

Diane has blocked out much of her childhood. Mel cites Dr. Judith Willis, whose work Mel attributes to UCLA, on how nervous-system dysregulation impairs the brain's functioning. A child living in fight-or-flight because adults are erratic isn't present enough to form memories. Mel says she has few memories of high school, college or law school for the same reason.

• Treat narcissistic programming as deliberate, and reprogram deliberately

A person with narcissistic traits may not intend harm, but their lack of empathy and habit of blaming you install 'everything is my fault.' Mel compares reprogramming to a 65-year-old moving to Russia and learning to speak Russian for the rest of her life. It's hard but entirely learnable through consistent thought substitution.

• Pick a mantra you can believe, with some edge

Mel argues that 'I love myself' usually fails because your brain rejects what you've spent years disproving. Choose something true enough to accept: 'I'm a kind person doing the best I can, and that's good enough,' or 'I deserve to be happy, especially after the people who were in my life.' A little spice loosens the mood.

• Catch the filter that makes everything about you

If your boss is grouchy, your programming reads it as your fault. Mel lists other possibilities: his marriage, a divorce, irritable bowel syndrome, his own childhood trauma. None of it involves you. Most people are too busy beating themselves up to be thinking about you.

EXAMPLES

• Poppy: 'Shut up, Vicky' rehearsed live

Mel role-plays the voice ('If you don't make your boss happy, nobody will love you') and makes Poppy answer louder each time. Poppy says she'd be less intense if she believed in herself. As a child of immigrants raised harshly, she lives 'on the edge.' Her takeaway is more compassion for others and for herself.

• Diane, 65: 'Who do you think you are?'

Diane's inner critic says she's not good enough and asks who she thinks she is, a voice reinforced by a parent on the narcissism spectrum, an ex-husband with narcissistic traits, colleagues and bosses. Mel notes the hostile bite of that phrase often points to a chaotic, eruptive household.

• Diane's new mantra

Diane lands on 'I quit taking myself so seriously,' and Mel adds 'I might as well enjoy the rest of the ride.' Diane's version: the first 65 years kicked her butt, so let's have fun the next 65. Mel urges her to give herself credit for getting out of a marriage with a raging narcissist.

• Mel's own decades with the critic

Mel says she lived with negative self-talk for more than 40 years and a dysregulated nervous system for more than 45. She describes a child's brain as '3 pounds of macaroni' absorbing every speech pattern around it. Realizing the voice that held you back was never yours can stop your heart for a second. She calls it great news, because most people never learn their thinking can change.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Say the new belief every morning, even before you believe it**
  Repetition is how the old voice took hold, and repetition is how a new one takes hold. Expect it to take time, not happen overnight.
- **Use the transformation trifecta**
  Mel's broader framework is to reset your mindset, calm your nervous system, and build habits using triggers and rewards. She stresses that none of these requires spending money.
- **You're not to blame, but you are responsible**
  Your brain absorbed patterns as a child. As an adult, reprogramming them is your job. If you're cynical about change, ask who taught you to be.

5 Easy Steps to Make Your Home and Your Mind Clutter-Free

Guest: Dana K. White
Date: 2023-04-17 · Duration: 1:42:40
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HdPeIk8R26o

KEYPOINTS

• Decluttering and organizing are different jobs, and decluttering comes first

Dana White, who writes the blog A Slob Comes Clean and the book How to Manage Your Home Without Losing Your Mind, says she always thought her mess meant she needed to get organized. Organizing, to her, is planning how a space will work for the next ten years with bins and systems. Decluttering is simply getting stuff out, needs no planning, and is what finally changed her house. She thought she was giving up when she 'settled' for it.

• Everyone has a clutter threshold

It's the amount of stuff you personally can keep under control, not an aesthetic preference. It explains why a friend can buy the same things and her house looks like a magazine while yours looks like a thrift store. There's no quiz: if a space keeps getting out of control or your home feels overwhelming, you're over it, so remove more until a daily five-minute pickup restores order.

• Your house is not a project

As a former theater teacher, Dana excels at planned productions with an ending, so she tackled her home over whole weekends or summers, declared it done, and watched it revert. Mel recognized the same pattern of spending six hours staging a laundry room with matching baskets until her son moves one thing.

• Start with the visibility rule

Begin where visitors would see in from your front door, not the pantry or top closet shelf. Visible progress motivates you and your family. Spending all day color-coding a closet nobody sees, while still being embarrassed to open the front door, is the most defeating outcome.

• Steps one to three involve no hard decisions

First, trash, ideally into a black bag so you and your family can't see and retrieve things; if you have to think about it, skip it. Second, easy stuff that already has a home elsewhere, carried there immediately, as much as your hands hold. Third, obvious donations into a box that itself gets donated, not a decorated bin that invites second-guessing.

• Step four: 'Where would I look for it first?' Then take it there now

This is an instinct question, not analysis; the answer is the first drawer you'd open, even if you're not confident. In Dana's family, nail clippers live in a kitchen junk drawer, not the bathroom, because that's where everyone looks. Then take the item there immediately; sorting into piles to deliver later fails when you get distracted, and the piles merge into a bigger mess.

• The follow-up question: 'If I needed this, would it occur to me that I already had one?'

If you can't name where you'd look, ask this. If you wouldn't remember owning it, you'd have done without or bought another, so it goes in the donate box. If the destination is itself full, ask what you're willing to remove to make room.

• Step five: the container concept

Containers are limits, not storage, like the boundary firefighters use to contain a fire. Consolidate like items, put your favorites in first, and let the container make the decision. Shelves, rooms and the house itself are containers too, and its people deserve space first. Her line: 'You can keep anything, but you can't keep everything.'

• Progress, and only progress

Because every item gets a final decision acted on immediately, the space is only ever better, never worse, so you can stop any time. A seven-minute gap in your day is enough to throw away trash. That removes the 'I need a whole free day' excuse.

• Accepting how your brain works is the starting point, not a cop-out

Early readers of her anonymous blog turned out to be poets, artists and theater teachers, which led Dana to see a link between creativity and clutter. She stopped following advice from naturally organized people, whose 'before' photos looked like her dream 'after,' and built a process for someone like her.

EXAMPLES

• The 2009 anonymous blog

Dana wanted to be a writer but put off starting because her house was a disaster. In her first post, on August 24, 2009, she wrote that she'd feel like a fraud if someone saw her house 'on the wrong day,' and that she needed to change routines, not do a 30- or 365-day plan. The practice blog became her career.

• Mel's flannel shirt and jacket

Mel tore open her 18-year-old son Oakley's donation bag to rescue an expensive flannel shirt she'd given him, then spun stories about keeping an outgrown jacket in the basement for Vermont visitors who forget coats. Dana called it the brain spinning out, which is exactly what the two questions are for.

• The red crayon buckets

Copying a friend's tidy craft area, Dana bought a red bucket, then two more for 700 leftover crayons, then needed more shelves, then concluded she needed a bigger house. The container concept reversed that: fill one bucket with favorites and accept the rest don't fit.

• The watercolor pencils

Mel had a mason jar of watercolor pencils her mother-in-law gave one of the kids about ten Christmases earlier, moved from house to house and never used. By the end of the episode she decided to throw them away.

• The husband's memorabilia shelf

Dana cleared out a space she'd used for kids' out-of-season clothes and gave it to her husband for his 1980s collectibles, telling him to put his favorites in first. He later said it made it easy to see what he loved. She avoids asking 'why do you have that?' because 'why' shuts people down.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **When partners have different thresholds**

  In shared spaces, declutter to the lowest common clutter threshold; keep elaborate systems for your own spaces. Start with your own and neutral stuff, never the other person's. For the messier partner, the daily five-minute pickup with a real timer is the fix; Dana's husband eventually realized she genuinely doesn't notice open cabinets.

- **Four daily routines instead of to-do lists**

  Do the dishes, a five-minute pickup, check bathrooms for clutter (not cleaning) and sweep the kitchen floor to spot what's been dropped. She added one habit at a time, about seven days each. If overwhelmed, just do the dishes.

- **Let emotional items wait**

  The first three steps involve zero emotion, so you can make big visible progress before facing sentimental things. Skip an emotional item rather than letting it stall everything; later you'll have the space for it or be ready to decide.

- **Decluttering cures overbuying**

  The pain of donating something you paid $75 for and never used changes how a $5 bargain looks at a store or garage sale; you start seeing it as future clutter.

Surprising Signs of Anxiety and How to Heal It | The Mel Robbins Podcast

Guest: Dr. Russell Kennedy
Date: 2023-04-13 · Duration: 1:07:37
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yuy9VVY2Snc

KEYPOINTS

• Anxiety is framed as an 'alarm' set in childhood

Recapping part one of this two-part toolkit, Dr. Kennedy, a medical doctor and neuroscientist, argues that anxiety starts with a moment in childhood when you felt separate, unsafe, or both. The alarm was useful then, pushing a small child back toward an adult, but many people keep running it into adulthood. Any hint of separation (being judged, dumped, fired) sets it off, and the mind then piles worries on top.

• Sleep hygiene helps you cope; finding the root is what heals

For listener Jason, who gets anxious at bedtime and wakes up worrying, Kennedy backs Mel's 3-2-1 routine and no blue light, because a reticular activating system kept busy by 'zombie scrolling' stays on alert. He calls those coping tools, though. The deeper question is what bedtime felt like when you were a child. His own mother, a nurse, worked 3-to-11 shifts and left him with a father whose moods were unpredictable.

• Talk therapy alone often misses the body

Kennedy has nothing against cognitive therapy, but says most North American therapy ignores trauma stored in the body. Mel says it took her decades to heal because she got 'so good at talking about' her anxiety. Things changed only when she 'got below the neck', learned to sit with uncomfortable sensations, and realized she had been tackling the problem in the wrong order.

• The goal is getting used to the alarm, not getting rid of it

Kennedy cites Bessel van der Kolk (The Body Keeps the Score): the work is not removing the alarm but learning to tolerate it, so discomfort no longer sends you compulsively into your head looking for an answer that isn't there. He links this to cold plunges. The nerve pathway that carries temperature also carries pain, and emotional and physical pain use similar brain structures, so breathing through cold is practice for staying with a hurting younger self.

• 'Am I safe in this moment?' brings you into the present

Anxiety is always about the future, he says, so sensation brings you back to now: a hand on your chest, a breath, an essential oil, humming. His daughter Leandra, who went through a hard stretch at 21, told him it was the single most useful tip 'Dr. Dad' ever gave her. He says healing happens only in the present moment, not while you're stuck in old trauma or future worries.

• Your body's state shapes your thoughts

Kennedy's quick tool is the physiological sigh: two sniffs in, then a long, slow exhale. He says it moves you toward a parasympathetic (rest-and-digest) state and breaks the feeling-thought-feeling chain. 'You will think exactly the way your body feels', which is why repeating 'I'm happy' while you feel anxious is like pushing a rock uphill.

• The mind is a 'meaning-making machine' that turns body alarm into stories

Sensations travel through deep brain areas that have no words, and the left hemisphere then explains them, usually with painful stories that fit the alarm. Feel bad, and your brain hunts for a reason: the dentist appointment next week, then taxes, then the relationship. He calls this 'stacking'. Find where the alarm sits in your body and you get closer to the root.

• Anxiety isn't genetic, he says, but sensitivity may be

Kennedy says no 'anxiety gene' has been found, unlike the stronger genetic links in schizophrenia and bipolar disorder. What may be inherited is sensitivity. Every anxious patient he has seen is a sensitive person who needs more love, even from parents who were basically fine. Children of anxious parents can also be conditioned to pick up anxiety because they feel it in the adults.

• To break the family cycle, heal the parent first

Asked by Lena how to avoid passing her father's short temper on to her kids, Kennedy says that when parents ask him to see an anxious 15-year-old, he works on the parent instead. He compares it to Cesar Millan, who trains the owner, not the dog. Once a parent leaves alarm mode, kids notice ('Mom, you seem more connected'). He says it's about the adults '99% of the time'.

• Survival mode shuts down connection

In alarm, the social engagement system (eye contact, facial expression, tone of voice, body language) goes offline. That helps explain social anxiety and feeling cut off from a spouse or kids. People often feel guilty and wonder if they're in the wrong relationship, when they may just be dissociated.

EXAMPLES

• Panic attacks after a massage

Kennedy sometimes left his massage therapist so relaxed that he had a panic attack. As a child, relaxing was exactly when his father would slide into depression, mania or psychosis. He uses this to explain 'when it's not safe to feel safe' (chapter 62 of his book) and why patients distrust feeling better.

• Children of alcoholics stay on guard

With patients raised by alcoholics, he sees a cycle of blow-up, apology and quiet, then another blow-up. The child decides it's safer never to relax and stays hypervigilant, which later shows up as poor sleep and middle-of-the-night waking.

• Surprising signs a parent had anxiety

For a generation that never discussed feelings, his list is alcoholism, chronic irritability, being warm one moment and cold the next (which he calls almost worse than being consistently cold), hypervigilance, over-organizing, leaning on prescription drugs, being warmer with pets than with a spouse, and polished people-pleasing, like the mom who bakes cookies for everyone.

• Years of therapy that didn't reach the root

He describes patients who have spent '$40,000 on 10 years of therapy', at around $150 an hour, and feel no better. He blames therapy that never reaches the root in the body.

• A photo of your partner as a kid

Mel describes Chris as a latchkey kid locked out on game day, climbing a bee-covered trellis and punching through a glass door. When she's irritated, she pictures that fourth-grader in his blue-and-white uniform. Kennedy suggests couples keep a photo of each other at age 7 to 9, because 'that's who you're dealing with'.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Night-waking routine**

  Put your hand where the tension is, breathe into it, ask or say 'I am safe in this moment', and let yourself feel it. Add physiological sighs. Kennedy stresses linking the feeling to the thought, since he says that's how new pathways form.

- **Break a rumination spiral by moving**

  Notice the alarm first, since he says you can sit in anxiety for hours without realizing it. Then breathe, use 5-4-3-2-1, and get moving: put your shoes on and go somewhere. Rumination has inertia, like the shutdown after Mel's friend Warren died, when Chris got her out on the water.

- **Coping aids, kept in perspective**

  Kennedy lists grounding (feeling your feet on the floor), touch, hot or cold temperature, scents like lavender or chamomile (he says smell skips the thalamus and goes straight to the emotional brain), and side-to-side eye movements, which he says lower amygdala activity. He calls all of these coping, not healing. Mel warns that much viral TikTok advice is unreliable.

- **Kennedy's ABC process and play**

  A is awareness of where the alarm sits in your body. B is body and breath. C is compassionate connection with your younger self. Look at the sensation with curiosity ('heavy, sharp, purple'). Bring back the kind of play you loved as a teen, ideally with no winner or loser, and for kids try games around the dinner table guessing feelings from faces.

Anxiety Toolkit: Understanding Its Effects On Your Mind and Body | The Mel Robbins Podcast

Guest: Dr. Russell Kennedy
Date: 2023-04-10 · Duration: 0:55:04
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G0P2L1BbkP0

KEYPOINTS

• Anxiety is alarm in the body that the mind tries to explain

Physician and neuroscientist Dr. Russell Kennedy, author of Anxiety Rx, separates anxious thoughts from what he calls 'alarm': a painful sense of danger stored in the body. The mind, a 'compulsive meaning-making machine,' explains that alarm with worries, what-ifs and worst-case scenarios. Those thoughts make the alarm worse, which makes the thoughts worse, a loop he calls the alarm-anxiety cycle.

• Everyday worry is normal; relentless daily anxiety usually isn't

Kennedy says worrying about taxes or your kids is normal. Anxiety that shows up every day, like waking with dread, usually traces back to unresolved childhood wounding held in the nervous system. Because people treat it as a thinking problem and try to fix it through the mind, he says, some stay in therapy for 30 years without getting much better.

• Children blame themselves, and that split leaves alarm behind

Kennedy quotes the saying that when a child is abused, neglected or abandoned, the child doesn't stop loving the parent, they stop loving themselves. The child, powerless, escapes into overthinking, and the habit stays. Later events like divorce or a car accident bring the alarm back. His summary: 'Anxiety occurs because you've blocked love for yourself.'

• Trauma is whatever gets your nervous system stuck

Kennedy separates everyday 'drama,' which every childhood has, from trauma, which leaves the nervous system stuck 'on.' He compares it to an old railway switch moving you from growth mode to protection mode. A securely attached child with attuned caregivers can go through hard events without that switch flipping. The older you get, the more the switch 'rusts' in place, though he avoids calling it permanent.

• The amygdala has no sense of time

Traumatic memories stored by the amygdala feel like they're happening now, not in the past. Kennedy says this is also the way in: because the amygdala doesn't track time, you can go back to your younger self and give them, now, the comfort they needed then.

• Coping tools help, but healing works at the root

Kennedy has taught yoga and meditation, and he says breathwork, guided meditation and similar tools do help you cope. Healing, in his view, means finding the suffering child in you and showing them they're seen, heard, loved and protected. He's frustrated that recent neuroscience advances have rarely changed outcomes in the exam room. The exception he finds exciting is guided psychedelic therapy with ketamine, MDMA or psilocybin, which he thinks helps people reconnect with themselves.

• Seeking validation can be a hidden sign of anxiety

Constantly looking for love and attention outside yourself, and feeling crushed and lonely without it, is a sign people often miss. Kennedy sees addiction as closely tied to anxiety: both grow from childhood wounding, and substances temporarily remove the blocks so people feel connected to themselves. He adds that unresolved childhood wounding can show up as anxiety in one person and as depression, eating disorders or personality disorders in others.

• Go into the body instead of the head

When alarm hits, Kennedy says not to 'add thoughts to it.' Feel the support of the bed, breathe, and find where the alarm sits: his is in his solar plexus, others feel it in the throat or shoulders. Put a hand there and notice its shape, color and temperature. He points to the insula, which links the thinking brain and the feeling body, as a promising area for changing these patterns.

• Go slowly, and get help for major trauma

Your younger self may not trust you after decades of ignored alarm, and the adult resists going back because that's where the pain is. Start gently. If there was significant emotional, physical or sexual abuse, Kennedy says to work with a therapist, possibly a somatic therapist, because doing it alone can re-traumatize you.

EXAMPLES

• The hand-holding shock study

Kennedy describes a study, though he says he doesn't remember the exact details, in which women received a mild, voluntary electric shock. About 12 brain areas lit up when they were alone, eight when a stranger held their hand, and four when their partner did. He uses it to show how much less work the brain does when we feel connected.

• Carrie, 53, after 30 years of panic

A creative leader with a 'so-called great career,' crippling overthinking and travel panic attacks says guided meditations haven't helped and she's close to barricading herself at home. Mel relates, saying her own high-functioning anxiety fueled business risk-taking but was 'torturous.' Kennedy hears unresolved trauma in Carrie's voice and recommends working with her younger self rather than adding more coping tools.

• Crunching snow and Mel's mornings

Mel's amygdala linked the sound of crunching snow to a car rollover on a ski trip, so walking to the mailbox in winter can bring it back. She also shares that she was molested by an older child at a fourth-grade sleepover and woke feeling something was very wrong. At 50, mornings still trigger that feeling. Kennedy says a parent's comfort the next morning, 'it's not your fault,' might have prevented the switch from flipping.

• 'I love you, Rusty'

Kennedy's father had schizophrenia, his brother had orthopedic problems that took much of his mother's attention, and he was bullied at school. 'Rusty' is his 12-year-old self. Going under anesthesia for surgery three weeks earlier, he kept repeating 'I love you, Rusty.' His phone's home screen is a photo of himself at three.

• Switching between dusk tag and the hard memory

Kennedy guided Mel to her best memory: summer dusk in her Michigan front yard, playing tag and statue with her brother and neighborhood kids, which she felt from her cheeks to her heart. He then had her briefly touch the fourth-grade memory, which she felt in her gut and ankles, and return to the warm one. He says the pull toward the bad feeling is normal because we're wired to notice fear, and moving back and forth weakens it.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Start younger-self work gently

If a photo feels too triggering, picture yourself as a child at a happy time, notice what you're wearing, relax your jaw and shoulders, and notice where the good feeling sits in your body. Kennedy suggests calling up that memory during Mel's High 5 habit at the mirror.

• Use play to calm the nervous system

Kennedy says trauma activates the fight-or-flight and shutdown systems at the same time, like pressing the gas and brake together, and people swing between anxiety and exhaustion all day. Play also activates both systems, but in a safe way, so it helps the body learn that arousal doesn't have to lead back into the trauma.

• Kennedy's morning ritual

He does a self-made meditation, then listens to Peter Gabriel's 'In Your Eyes' while looking at his childhood photo. Mel plans to print her fourth-grade photo for her phone and office, seeing her alarm as younger Mel reaching up to be reassured.

Feeling Used? 5 Ways to Take Your Power Back | The Mel Robbins Podcast

Date: 2023-04-06 · Duration: 1:20:56
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cZ0wXDFtk3w

KEYPOINTS

• Being used isn't the same as people being used to things

Mel's first takeaway separates deliberate use, like coasting at a job for the paycheck, raiding a roommate's food, or someone saying "this is more" when they only want sex, from a setup everyone has simply grown comfortable with. In the second case, nobody else has a reason to change it. It works for them; it just stopped working for you.

• They aren't going to grow up on their own

Asked "when are they going to grow up?", Mel's answer is never, because they're comfortable. If you want the situation to change, you have to be the adult and lead it, especially when it's your house and your happiness at stake.

• Learned helplessness keeps people stuck

Mel explains learned helplessness, a term from 1960s psychology research: after enough setbacks or pain, people stop trying and just cope. The opposite is realistic optimism, the belief that your own actions and attitude can make a difference. Living with people who feel nothing they do matters breeds complacency and fear, and shared trauma deepens it.

• Spell out SMART goals, because the path isn't obvious to them

SMART stands for specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timely, an approach Mel says three researchers proposed in 1981. Don't assume your expectations are obvious. Define them precisely: who shops on Tuesdays, who cooks, who does the dishes, who shovels snow and takes out the trash, and that beds get made each morning.

• Then cheer every box they check

When they make the bed, spend an hour job-hunting or check in for ten minutes about work, say thank you and "I appreciate you," like a coach cheering players. You can also be honest about your feelings: you love them, you feel frustrated and a bit used, you believe there's more for them, and if they can't meet the request, maybe you can't keep living together.

• "Get a job" is too vague after two years

In a role-play, Brooke asked her boyfriend to find work. He said he'd been applying online, and the conversation drifted. Mel's point is that a request needs a structured box to check. Since Brooke believes therapy is what he needs, ask for that specifically: once a week for three months, which she offers to pay for.

• It's a choice, not an ultimatum

Option one is to accept the gift of weekly therapy and share what comes up. Option two is to start healing somewhere else, with someone else. He gets to choose, and a deadline is fine, like an answer by breakfast tomorrow. You must be willing to let him walk out the door. Then judge by what he does, not what he says.

• When being loved matters more than loving yourself, the dynamic is toxic

Brooke identifies as anxious and her boyfriend as avoidant. She keeps trying to be "so great" so he'll finally notice and love her. Mel links this to a mother Brooke describes as emotionally unavailable and says Brooke is chasing someone who can't give what he doesn't have. She says it isn't really a choice: old patterns and a belief that she isn't worthy are driving it, which calls for self-compassion, not shame.

• You're only used if you allow it

Mel closes by saying that if you stay in something you know doesn't work, you're participating. People aren't in our lives for us to grip on to, and we aren't meant to be everyone's caretaker. Resenting silently and fighting aren't healthy. Clear communication about what you need, and what choice the other person has, is.

EXAMPLES

• Crystal, the breadwinner sibling

Crystal has supported two adult siblings for years. One has been unemployed for over three years, and the other was just put on a performance improvement plan. Their mother lived with them until she died four years ago, and they stayed together after an abusive father for "safety in numbers." Mel suggests a family improvement plan and notes that many people put on a PIP feel ashamed and quietly give up.

• Brooke and Adam

Brooke has been with Adam about three years. He served eight years for an armed robbery committed when he was young, lost a job after showing up late, and hasn't worked in almost two years. He's smart and fluent in sign language because his mother is deaf, but he gets defensive and distant when work comes up. During a short breakup, he pursued a woman ten years younger, then came back.

• Mel's perspective from criminal defense

Mel was once a Legal Aid criminal defense attorney. She describes re-entry after prison as jarring, isolating and full of discrimination, with some state laws restricting work. She says losing the structure of prison life and then a job can make someone spiral, which is why this is harder than an ordinary job loss.

• Chris and the non-negotiables

When Mel's husband Chris left the restaurant business with a drinking problem, she told him he had to get sober and see a therapist. Later, when a doctor recommended antidepressants and he worried it made him weak, she said it wouldn't work unless he tried them for a year. He took a week to decide.

• Mama Bear Brooke

Brooke's son is eight and also named Oakley, and she lit up when Mel brought him into the role-play. Mel calls ages 8 to 14 pivotal for learning about relationships and self-respect. Either outcome is a win for him: he sees his mom support someone into healing, or refuse to tolerate a broken dynamic. Brooke's late best friend Molly, who died of an overdose, always told her she deserved better.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Visualize the future you two years out**

  Mel had Brooke picture herself two years from now having put herself first. Brooke saw herself waking earlier, being more present with her son and friends, doing better in her career, and not spending whole days in bed binge-watching. Mel's point is that she's already alone and isolated, so being alone shouldn't scare her.

- **Write three bullet-point reasons before the talk**

  Brooke's three reasons: I'm my son's mom and won't have this dynamic around him; I love you and won't watch you spiral, and your healing starts today, with my support or elsewhere; I deserve someone who grows with me. The only measurable proof is weekly therapy.

- **Expect the feelings anyway**

  Expect to feel uncomfortable or cry when the moment comes, so the emotions don't throw you. When fear says "I can't," Mel suggests asking what a confident person you admire would say, and letting a bigger reason, like your child, carry you through.

Steps You Need to Protect Your ENERGY and Create a Positive Life | The Mel Robbins Podcast

Date: 2023-04-03 · Duration: 0:42:33
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bdcjq9OoPts

KEYPOINTS

• Other people's bad moods splash onto you like a wet dog shaking

Mel's image: your dog rolls in mud or a rotting fish on the beach, runs over and shakes, and it all lands on you. An all-caps text, a panicky email or a stranger's tirade works the same way. Listener Veronica asked how to hear colleagues' panicked, angry emails without her fine day turning into panic and anger too — Mel's answer is that you have to actively protect your energy.

• The people you vent at usually aren't responsible for the problem

Whether it's a hotel clerk or a coworker absorbing someone's stress about Q4 numbers and a difficult client, Mel says the person on the receiving end almost never caused the thing that's broken. She sees no reason not to ask for help politely, and notes that bullying works often enough — people who are mean at the front desk sometimes get the better room — which is exactly why it drains everyone.

• First tool: breathe 4-7-8

Breathe in for four seconds, hold for seven, and exhale for eight. Mel says she doesn't remember who developed it, but has read that the long exhale is the key part because breathing out longer than you breathed in signals your nervous system that it's okay to relax. She uses it when she doesn't have the energy to confront someone.

• Second tool: put them in a snow globe

Picture the person having their tantrum inside a snow globe, with all the shaken-up glitter as their negative energy. It stays in there with them, gives you objectivity, and frankly lets you laugh rather than absorb it. Mel says she'd used it just the night before recording.

• A tantrum means someone can't tolerate their own emotions

Mel distinguishes two kinds of 'jerks': the entitled ones who are rude to waiters and clerks because that's how they've always treated people, and the emotionally immature ones who are under pressure and explode because they lack a mature way to handle stress. Either way, the eruption is about their inability to hold negative feelings, not about you.

• Moods are biologically contagious — bad ones more so

Mel explains that connection releases oxytocin while being around a hostile person triggers cortisol, the stress hormone, which is why we describe such people as 'toxic'. She cites a study by scientists at Oxford and Birmingham universities finding that bad moods spread more readily than good ones, and describes mirror neurons that read faces and tone in fractions of a second — the reason you tear up at a sad film, and why a sustained, toothy smile usually gets one back within five seconds.

• Managers shape mental health as much as partners do

Mel cites a Workforce Institute at UKG study of 3,400 people in 10 countries: 69% said their manager had the greatest impact on their mental health — on par with their spouse or partner, and more than their doctor or therapist. That's why listener Kay's toxic workplace matters, and why she can act.

• You can call out rude behavior directly

Walk down the hall or call: 'Is something going on with you? This isn't like you, and the tone of that email felt demeaning.' Or: 'I'm happy to help, but only if you speak to me respectfully.' Mel's kids used to tell her, 'Don't take work out on me — I don't work with you.' If it's consistent, document it and go to HR.

• Gossip harms the gossiper too

Mel says engaging in gossip — dishing, listening or retelling how you were wronged — spikes adrenaline and cortisol and puts you in fight-or-flight, which research links to feeling helpless, angry and anxious. She cites Georgia Tech research that about one in seven of the roughly 112 emails a corporate worker sends daily is gossip, and a UC Riverside study finding men engage in tear-down gossip as much as women.

EXAMPLES

• The high-ponytail guest in Los Angeles

Around 9:15 p.m., a woman marched up to the hotel desk, slapped her hands down mid-check-in and berated an exhausted young clerk (Mel guessed about 24, a hospitality intern in an ill-fitting blazer) because her balcony door didn't close. Mel, tired from a cross-country flight, chose not to confront her and instead breathed and pictured the snow globe.

• The airport barista

With 20 minutes until boarding, Mel sent Chris — who likes arriving early while she prefers boarding last — ahead to the gate. When she politely asked whether 'the drink for Mel' was almost done, the overwhelmed barista erupted. Mel pictured her in a snow globe, said 'No problem, totally understand', left and didn't let it bother her.

• Melting the ice at CNN

As one of five paid legal analysts, Mel found colleagues on their phones, one-upping each other about which shows they were booked on. She began complimenting them coming off set, forwarding research on breaking cases, and tweeting praise when they appeared on air. Within five days the ice melted; she names Paul Callan, Joey Jackson and Danny as close friends, and two years later a CNN staffer asked how the group had built such camaraderie. Her answer: 'We just started cheering for one another.'

• Ed Mylett's father

Mel's friend Ed Mylett told her a stranger helped his father get help for alcoholism, and that without that person Ed wouldn't be here — her proof that one act of kindness can change a life.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Shower curmudgeons with compliments

The law of reciprocity — like rushing to hold the second mall door after someone holds the first — works on grumpy colleagues in competitive places like law firms and banks. Compliment their work (or nails, without being creepy) and over time they start returning it.

• Only talk about people who are present

Mel's rule for quitting gossip, which she says she used to do a lot. Seeking advice or expressing concern about someone has a different intent. When others gossip, say 'I make it a rule not to talk about people who aren't present' or 'Aren't there other things to talk about?' — or simply walk away.

• People who gossip with you will gossip about you

Mel describes gossip as a way of bonding through triangulation, which she says narcissists use in particular. Seeing that changes how you view those relationships, and not gossiping draws people who won't trash you.

• Blow bubbles: spread energy on purpose

Tell someone daily that you appreciate them. Mel texts a friend whose father is in hospice every morning, saying she's sending a hug and needs no reply. She thanks grocery-store workers, leaves notes for hotel housekeepers and hugs her son Oakley extra tight when he walks in.

One Powerful Hack to Live a Meaningful Life | The Mel Robbins Podcast

Guest: Chris Robbins
Date: 2023-03-30 · Duration: 0:50:06
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z3GXIfIEJok

KEYPOINTS

• The episode is about lifelines, not tattoos

Listener Jonathan Googled Mel's wrist tattoo and found only '5 Second Rule' tattoos. Mel uses his question to open a bigger subject: a meaningful mantra, written somewhere you'll see it, can act as a lifeline in the moments when you need to remember you can face something. She says more than once that she doesn't want anyone to get a tattoo because of her. A Post-it note works the same way.

• Chris's 'one gate' comes from his late father's handwriting

As a teenage ski racer, Chris shook in the starting gate, fixated on his time and the result instead of the course. His dad, often at races, kept telling him to take it 'one gate at a time'. Later his father wrote him a letter about it. Chris had a tattoo artist lift the words 'one gate' from that letter in his dad's handwriting and put them on his left forearm, placed so he sees them.

• Mel's 'it shall be' came from a friend who noticed she says it

The night before the appointment, Mel still had nothing, and she admits she was jealous of Chris's idea. Deva, one of her first life-coaching clients and owner of a Boston store, told her she should get 'it shall be'. Mel had never noticed, but Deva said Mel always tells clients that if you do the work and hold the belief, 'at some point it shall be'. For Mel it means do the work, have faith, keep your head down, and give up your timeline.

• A mantra only works if you believe it

Mel says this is why so many people get positive self-talk wrong. If you've beaten yourself up for 40 years, saying 'I love myself' or 'I look beautiful' in the mirror won't land. Your mind argues back with evidence from yesterday and can make the negative belief stronger. Rule number one: the phrase has to be meaningful, something you can 'get behind' when you say it.

• Tone it down a notch so it holds up on bad days

Instead of 'I'm beautiful', try 'I deserve kindness', 'I'm trying my best', 'I deserve to feel better' or 'my body needs me to take care of it'. Avoid inflated lines like 'I am the best', because some days you won't feel it, especially if it's on your wrist. 'I'm trying my best' is something anyone can get behind.

• Let your future self write the phrase

Chris notes their kids haven't chosen tattoos yet, maybe because they haven't figured out what they need to hear in hard times. That gives Mel what she calls a breakthrough: imagine the person you're becoming, assume it all works out, and let that future self reassure the present you. She says 'I believe in you' doesn't land as her own voice today, because she hasn't always believed in herself. It does land as a message from the future Mel who 'knows what's coming'.

• Tattoos work as 'environmental triggers'

Mel explains that researchers call a visual cue in your space that prompts a thought or behavior an environmental trigger. People usually talk about triggers in a negative sense, but they can cue positive thinking too. She covers the idea in more depth in her earlier episode on five hacks to make new habits stick. Where the cue sits matters: Chris points out that Mel's is on her wrist where she sees it all day, not on her shoulder.

• A mantra can describe who you're becoming, not just the end goal

Chris suggests a phrase can support your path of becoming instead of standing for a finish line. That changed how Mel felt about a listener's 'love yourself first', which hadn't clicked for her at first. Chris also warns against judging a phrase by your first reaction. Let it sink in over time, posted on a wall or by your bed, before deciding whether it fits.

EXAMPLES

• The anniversary appointment mix-up

Mel booked a sought-after Boston tattoo parlor six months ahead, with a big deposit, for their 15th anniversary, August 24, 2012. Pulling out of the driveway with a babysitter booked, they called and learned the appointment was for the following week. The first five or six shops they tried were full. The sixth or seventh, near their old Cambridge apartment, was run by a big bearded man who recognized her name from her WTKK radio show and said 'come on in'.

• A font chosen in a hurry

Mel realized at the shop that she had never picked a font or size. While Chris was being tattooed, she scrolled the fonts in Microsoft Outlook, picked one starting with 'Z', and had the artist print it. She had second thoughts, but says she loves the result. Chris says it looks a bit like her handwriting.

• Eleven hard years with 'it shall be'

In 2012 they were about $800,000 in debt, Chris was in the restaurant business, and they were struggling with drinking. Two years later Chris left to get sober and was 'comatose' for two years while Mel was in survival mode. She leaned on the phrase through that, the move to rural Southern Vermont, and launching a podcast when people warned there were already five million. She calls the whole tattoo night an example of the philosophy: nothing went to plan, and it worked out.

• Chris's 'you' photo

For a dream-analysis class assignment, Chris pinned a black-and-white photo of himself, taken by their friend Jenny Maloney, to his bulletin board with 'YOU' and an arrow written in Sharpie. It reminds him daily that he's good enough as he is. He tears up talking about it.

• Listeners' phrases

Denise, a single mother in Phoenix, has 'love yourself first' tattooed as a reminder that self-love is necessary, not selfish. Monica in Italy chose 'the little things' to keep going when her goal feels far away and to enjoy small moments. Mel's colleague Tracy has kept 'every day I'm learning and growing' on her bedside table for a year.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **The Post-it assignment**

  Choose a phrase, or borrow one from the episode: 'what if it works out', 'courage', 'I believe in you', 'one day at a time', 'one gate'. Try it on like Goldilocks: it fits when you don't argue with it. Write it in Sharpie on a Post-it or painter's tape and put it where you'll run into it, like a mirror, laptop or nightstand.

- **Test a tattoo idea first**

  If you're thinking about ink, write the phrase on your arm in Sharpie and live with it for a while. Get a tattoo only because you want one.

- **Use 'one gate' when you're anxious about results**

  Chris uses his phrase now while building an online version of Soul Degree, the men's retreat he's run in person for six years. Marketing and being on camera are new to him and scare him. The phrase slows him down so he focuses on the next piece instead of 'how it's all going to play out'.

Difficult Conversations: Why You Need Them and When to Have Them | The Mel Robbins Podcast

Date: 2023-03-27 · Duration: 0:59:35
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BTs4nJu_QgU

KEYPOINTS

• Three reasons we avoid hard conversations

Mel's diagnosis: you don't know what to say (like a family member unhappy with a bonus after his boss said profits were down); you think it's not your responsibility (her own unease about who was left out of a women's weekend planned in a group chat); and the big one, the need to be liked and keep the peace. Knowing which one is stopping you helps you choose a strategy.

• Conflict avoidance is often trained in childhood

If you grew up with unpredictable, yelling or silent-treatment parents, conflict felt dangerous, so you learned to freeze and keep the peace. Mel describes a close friend whose mother gave her the silent treatment for weeks, acting as if she didn't exist; as an adult she avoids conflict at all costs. Recognizing that pattern, as Claudia does, lets you act as the person you want to be now.

• Avoidance doesn't make the discomfort disappear — it creates it

We tell ourselves that skipping the talk keeps things comfortable, yet the unspoken issue sits inside you every time you see the person. Mel says that in many of her own hard conversations, the other person didn't even know she was upset; speaking up relieved her and let the situation improve. If something bothers you, even in someone else's group chat, raise it — just think about tone and who to say it to.

• Know your why before you start

Your reason for having the conversation anchors everything else. It might be speaking up at work, improving a friendship, sticking up for yourself or protecting your peace. Mel shows how the why changes the tone: going in to 'protect my peace and remove the drama' lands very differently from 'repair this friendship'.

• Anchor on one specific, factual example

Pick something recent with a time and place and describe it without adjectives. Then shift to how it made you feel, because the other person can argue about what they did, but not about its impact on you. From Harvard Business Review, Mel adds: don't assume your point is obvious, and don't exaggerate with 'you always' — one example usually stings enough.

• Mel's six steps

1) State your why. 2) Give one specific example. 3) Say how it made you feel. 4) Listen with your mouth shut. 5) Validate what you hear, since it's their lived experience — that turns an argument back into a conversation. 6) Restate your why and any boundary or request. Do it in person or on Zoom so faces add humanity; never over text or email.

• Your goal isn't to fix the other person

Mel tells Carla that hard conversations are about improving dynamics that leave you feeling disempowered, worried or afraid, and about your own self-expression and boundaries. With a family member who hasn't taken care of themselves, speak about your feelings, fears, and what you will and won't do any more; then they choose. Sometimes everyone walking on eggshells keeps a person stuck.

• Distinguish anxious attachment from abuse

When Candace's relatives turn combative after she asks for a pause, Mel first checks that the behavior isn't abusive — if it is, get help. Clinginess and pressure for an immediate answer can reflect anxious attachment, which Mel says she has herself. She also notes that when you change a long-standing dynamic, people often get more triggered at first.

EXAMPLES

• Claudia and the friend who raged over a missed call

Conflict-avoidant from childhood trauma, Claudia had walked on eggshells for over a year with a friend tied to her larger friend group, who flew into a rage when Claudia didn't call back fast enough. Mel suggests she stop calling her a friend and script it: I want to protect my peace; last week, when you got upset I didn't return your call, I felt like the kid getting in trouble again. Then listen, validate ('you needed me, I can see why that upset you') and close: I don't return calls on demand — text if it's urgent.

• The party Mel wasn't invited to

During Chris's restaurant crisis, after she'd lost her job, Mel was secretly drinking and they were $800,000 in debt with liens on the house. A longtime friend felt used for babysitting and left Mel out of a big birthday party. Mel called, left a voicemail saying 'I know I've done something wrong', and heard hard truths. The friendship was off for years, but now she trusts that friend more than most.

• Erica and her husband's ex

Her husband's ex of over 12 years insists on joining every family visit. Mel suspects the real frustration is the husband not handling it. Tools: 'gray rock' (from narcissism expert Dr. Ramani) — be so boring and unreactive that pettiness drips off you — or picture the ex as a seven-year-old tantruming in a party dress inside a snow globe. A bigger why: his daughters are watching.

• The coworker Mel stopped listening to

In her 20s, Mel watched a work friend's disordered eating worsen after a breakup. She finally said she loved her, was worried, and wouldn't keep listening to the venting unless she got help — but would hang out and talk about work or books. The friend cut her off and changed jobs; 10–15 years later she messaged on Facebook that the conversation was a tipping point into treatment.

OTHER RELEVANT

• When someone pushes back on your pause, build a bridge

Say you need a pause and promise when you'll return — in an hour, in the morning — like telling an anxious child at daycare you'll be back at five. Name what must change: not that tone, and trust me when I say I need time. Mel uses this with her

husband, who shuts down when she erupts.

• If they explode, restate and exit

Calmly say you're not blaming them, just explaining how something made you feel; if they can't hear it, thank them for letting you say it, restate your why and leave. Either they rise to meet you — even apologize — or you've 'dropped a grenade' that may land later.

• Sometimes downgrade instead of ending

When you can't leave a shared circle, you can be cordial without being close. A friend of Mel's told a dramatic member of their kids' friend group, 'We're never going to be best friends, but for the sake of the group and our kids, let's rise above this.'

Reset Your Health: Stop Feeling Like Crap with Dr. Mark Hyman MD | The Mel Robbins Podcast

Guest: Dr. Mark Hyman
Date: 2023-03-23 · Duration: 1:23:08
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BA1evuRjdHo

KEYPOINTS

• Functional medicine's formula: take out the bad stuff, put in the good stuff

Dr. Hyman says he doesn't really 'treat disease'; he removes what impairs the body and supplies what it needs, then lets its self-healing systems work — the same way a cut on your hand heals without a prescription. He argues most people never connect how they feel to what they eat, their toxin exposure, stress, sleep or movement, and so don't realize how close they are to feeling better.

• Food is information, not just calories

Every bite, he says, carries 'informational molecules' that switch gene expression, hormones, brain chemistry, the immune system and the microbiome up or down in real time. He also cites a comparison of genetically identical pasture-raised and feedlot bison whose meat differed across some 1,500 metabolites — you are what you eat, and what your food ate.

• Your gut talks constantly to your brain

Mel notes the gut and brain form from the same embryonic tissue and stay connected. Dr. Hyman says there are more neurotransmitters in the gut than the brain, and that a scientist growing the gut bacterium Akkermansia for a probiotic found its byproducts contained GABA, the calming neurotransmitter Valium acts on. He also mentions Harvard research on treating depression through the microbiome.

• Hidden inflammation drives many 'Western' diseases

A sore throat or a swollen sprained knee is visible inflammation. Inside, he explains, it is silent: an inflamed brain doesn't go red but can show up as depression, attention problems, anxiety or insomnia. He calls inflammation a hallmark of ageing and says about 70% of the immune system sits in the gut, where a damaged lining ('leaky gut') lets food proteins and bacteria trigger immune reactions.

• Five things knock the body out of balance

His list: bad food (he says about 60% of the American diet is ultra-processed), stress, toxins such as heavy metals and pesticides, bad bugs or an unhealthy microbiome, and allergens or sensitivities. He defines stress as the perception of a real or imagined threat to your body or ego — the same gun produces different reactions in Woody Allen and James Bond.

• The ingredients for health are broader than diet

He lists whole-food nutrition, key nutrients (often omega-3s, vitamin D, B vitamins, iron, zinc, magnesium), balanced hormones, light at the right times, clean air and water, movement, active relaxation, seven to eight hours of sleep, and connection, love, meaning and purpose. In his book he writes that curing loneliness could extend life by seven years or more, versus five to seven for eliminating heart disease and cancer.

• Anxiety and ADHD are symptoms, so look for the cause

Saying 'I have anxiety' is like saying 'I have a headache', he argues — it could come from life stress, trauma, toxins, the microbiome or blood sugar. He says diagnostic manuals list some 155,000 diseases, most of which describe symptoms rather than causes. He is openly critical of antidepressants and anxiety drugs, though he says he still uses medication when needed.

• Blaming people for their weight is 'a big fat lie'

He rejects the calories-in, calories-out and 'moderation' narrative as shaming and letting the food industry off the hook, arguing processed food is biologically addictive. If you're mentally bargaining for artificial sweeteners or stevia, he says, that's a sign of sugar addiction. He cites a figure that only 6.8% of Americans are metabolically healthy.

• Women's hormones shift every decade

He describes the hypothalamus as the command center for sex, stress, thyroid and growth hormones. For women in their 30s and 40s, he names four that tend to fall out of balance: sex hormones, thyroid (often underdiagnosed), cortisol and insulin — the last tied to belly fat. Fixing lifestyle basics often resets them without treating each directly, though symptoms like severe hot flashes may need specific treatment.

EXAMPLES

• Producer Donna's recovery

About 12–14 years earlier, Donna had severe back pain, bad asthma and had been diagnosed with 43 allergies at age 8. As a single mom, she replayed Dr. Hyman's audiobook on CDs in the car, gave up sugar and soda, ate greens and started exercising. Today she has no back pain, no inhaler, no meds, has run 27 5Ks, climbed Mount Washington twice and biked 75 miles in a weekend four times.

• The 12-year-old with ADHD

A boy expelled from kindergarten while on Adderall was, at 12, on seven medications for ADHD, asthma, gut and mood problems. He lived on junk food and was deficient in magnesium, zinc and B vitamins. With a whole-food elimination diet, a multivitamin, fish oil, magnesium, vitamin D and probiotics, his mother reported two months later that his ADHD, migraines, asthma, skin and gut problems were gone and his handwriting had become legible.

• Mel's son Oakley

Diagnosed with severe dyslexia and dysgraphia in fourth grade and medicated for ADHD, Oakley refused the meds by eighth grade. His school cafeteria served only salad bar, soup and protein. By ninth grade he was focused, his handwriting had changed and he'd been off meds for three years. Mel says she suspects diet is a major part of it, having watched him go from mac and cheese and nuggets to vegetables.

• The panic attacks a can of Coke fixed

A patient with a big belly had palpitations, sweating and breathlessness that went away when he drank a Coke. Dr. Hyman

recognized crashing blood sugar (hypoglycemia) and notes that panic can have many causes, but big blood-sugar swings are a common one.

• Two pounds versus four ounces

Researcher Denis Burkitt found that genetically similar African city dwellers had heart disease, diabetes and autoimmune conditions that hunter-gatherers lacked — and passed about 4 ounces of stool a day versus 2 pounds, which Dr. Hyman attributes to plant fiber feeding good gut bacteria.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Try a 10-day reset as a dare

Cut gluten, dairy, sugar, alcohol and packaged food (canned sardines or salmon are fine); briefly drop grains and beans too, since some people react to them. Eat protein, vegetables, nuts, seeds, berries and good fats. Sample day: eggs with tomato and avocado; a big colorful salad with wild salmon and pumpkin seeds; fish or chicken with three-quarters of the plate vegetables, including cruciferous ones daily.

• 'Take Five' breathing

Five times a day — before meals and bed — breathe in through the nose for five seconds and out for five, five times. He says moving the diaphragm engages the vagus nerve and lowers adrenaline and cortisol.

• His baseline supplements, with caveats

A clean multivitamin; vitamin D3 taken with food (he suggests 1,000–5,000 IU, noting official guidance calls up to 4,000 safe); fish oil, since he says over 90% of people lack omega-3s; and magnesium if you have 'twitchy' signs like anxiety, palpitations, constipation, muscle or toe cramps, or eye twitches. Soda, caffeine, alcohol and stress all drain magnesium.

• Feed the gut before buying probiotics

A probiotic won't rescue a diet of sugary cereal, nuggets and takeout. Eat fiber, fermented foods (sauerkraut, kimchi, miso), prebiotics (asparagus, artichoke, jicama) and colorful polyphenol-rich foods — he says Akkermansia likes green tea, pomegranate and cranberry — and be mindful that antibiotics, acid blockers and NSAIDs like Advil can disrupt the microbiome.

• Sleep basics

Keep fixed sleep and wake times, get about 20 minutes of morning light even when cloudy, avoid screens two to three hours before bed or wear blue blockers, and keep the bedroom dark and at 68°F or cooler. He likes a 20-minute hot Epsom-salt bath with lavender before bed.

Feeling Overwhelmed? How to Tap Into Your Power and Feel Calmer | The Mel Robbins Podcast

Date: 2023-03-20 · Duration: 0:43:36
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7PFUbb56Xfg

KEYPOINTS

• There are two kinds of overwhelm, and naming yours tells you what to do

Mel splits overwhelm into 'legitimate overwhelm,' where your circumstances genuinely demand more than you have, and 'lifestyle overwhelm,' a chronic, self-made state of overcommitting, never saying no and putting yourself last. The first calls for compassion and stamina; the second calls for changing how you prioritize. She asks listeners to diagnose each caller's situation alongside her.

• Legitimate overwhelm is temporary, so protect your stamina rather than doing more

Kids too young for a full school day, caring for a dying parent, grief, a dissertation or a divorce are seasons, not permanent states. Mel's prescription is to accept the season, tell yourself it will pass, lower the pressure and prioritize rest, asking a partner, parents or other parents to swap time so you get an hour alone.

• Lie #1: 'If I just hurry, I can fit more in'

For a caller juggling a two-year-old, a full-time job, marathon training and anxiety, Mel says this season isn't about fitting more in but accepting where she is. She hears resistance in the long list of personal-growth goals and reframes it: taking care of a small child while working is already the most important thing she could be doing.

• Lie #2: 'Everything is important'

If everything is important, nothing is. Samantha's habit of giving equal weight to every task and then pushing them to tomorrow is classic lifestyle overwhelm. Mel's point is that you get to decide what matters, and genuine emergencies, such as a sick child or an empty gas tank, bubble up and get your attention anyway.

• Lie #3: 'I should be doing more'

Cindy, an overachiever, feels like a failure when she can't finish an impossible daily list. Mel tells her you only need to do what needs to get done, and the rest 'doesn't matter.' Overachievers who can't sit still are most at risk, because lifestyle overwhelm robs them of reading, gardening or meeting a friend for coffee.

• Lie #4: 'I can handle it all in my head'

Thinking about a task is not working on it; it becomes rumination. Mel ties this to her earlier procrastination episode, where procrastination is framed as the 'freeze' response to stress and the stress you carry is a 'stress backpack.' Things that truly matter have to land on a calendar.

• Procrastination feeds lifestyle overwhelm in a vicious cycle

You freeze, push things off, beat yourself up, then feel more overwhelmed by everything you've delayed. Mel says avoidance drains far more energy than doing the task, which is why finishing a dreaded task can suddenly free up 'energetic time.'

• Do hard things when your energy is highest

Mel cites psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi's work on motivation and flow and the idea of 'activation energy,' the resistance to starting. For her, exercise only happens in the morning; dragging herself to the Peloton treadmill at night takes '100 times more energy.' She admires David Goggins' discipline but doesn't want a life where she has to summon willpower for what brings her joy.

EXAMPLES

• Mel recorded this while in legitimate overwhelm herself

She showed up in ripped jeans, a jog bra and a T-shirt reading 'mentally elsewhere,' about to drive to Boston for a friend's funeral where she was giving the eulogy. She uses her own day to model the framework in real time.

• The blank hallway walls

Carrying laundry upstairs in her southern Vermont house the night before, she saw the freshly painted, empty hallway walls and spiraled about a family photo wall: black-and-white frames or canvas prints, and the Shutterfly account she let lapse. She found herself having a panic attack over a project six months old, then told herself it didn't matter; clean underwear for the eulogy did.

• Her friend Joni

Joni was her mother's primary caregiver for the last two to three years of her mother's dementia. Mel never saw her, because all Joni could do was care for her mother, take care of herself and sleep, which Mel holds up as the clearest case of legitimate overwhelm.

• The talk-show mentor's advice

Before Mel hosted a daytime talk show, 175 shows in six months, often three tapings a day four days a week at the CBS Broadcast Center, a famous former host told her it was a marathon: protect your stamina, be patient with yourself, skip dinners out, don't get sick, and tell loved ones you're going into a bunker.

• Michelle paid a six-month-late credit card bill

After the procrastination episode, Michelle recognized her 'freeze mode' around money anxiety, burst into tears, paid the bill that morning and was surprised by how much time and energy she suddenly had after six months of torturing herself.

OTHER RELEVANT

• The 20–30 minute 'million dollar morning routine' still fits a hectic life

Get up when the alarm rings, make the bed, high-five the mirror, put on exercise clothes, get some bright light (even sticking your head out a window), and move for 10–20 minutes, whether that's a walk with your toddler or a streamed workout.

• Brain dump, then highlight three

Pour everything in your head onto any blank paper, even the back of a bill; optionally split it into 'important' and 'can do later.' It can run to three pages. Then highlight only the three things you must do today; Mel's were picking up her ADHD prescription, packing for Boston and writing the eulogy.

- **Use the rule of three and tell yourself 'it doesn't matter'**

When you catch yourself adding tasks or feeling guilty for being done, remind yourself that anything outside today's three doesn't matter right now. It lowers the pressure and creates time to simply enjoy your life.

- **Ask 'How can I make this easy?'**

For Leela, an artist who can't get back to her easel, Mel suggests choosing the time of day that suits her, paying for a class to outsource motivation, or recruiting an accountability friend who texts 'did you paint yet?' Mel herself does ice baths only because her stoic husband Chris climbs in first and shames her into it.

How to Deal With Betrayal and Take Your Power Back | The Mel Robbins Podcast

Date: 2023-03-16 · Duration: 0:45:34
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y0xShs1P950

KEYPOINTS

• Before confronting someone who betrayed you, decide what you want

Mel's first step is to ask your goal. Do you want to protect your business and your peace? Repair the relationship? Make them wrong, get a 'gotcha', or pursue them legally? What do you need to say for closure? She chose not to confront the person who stole from her business, but says she'd decide differently in other situations, and in the past she has involved a lawyer.

• Your peace of mind can be worth more than getting the money back

Because the person was in another country, Mel weighed the time, energy and emotional cost of legal action and decided it was too high. She had already put so much into the situation that looking backward would only bring more stress. So she protected the business, took the lesson and moved on.

• You can forgive someone and still not let them back in

Sometimes you need to say out loud: 'I know what you did, I won't surround myself with people who do this, I forgive you, but you're not welcome back in my life.' Forgiveness doesn't require a second chance.

• If you want to keep the relationship, start with an apology and describe the impact

Mel's opener: 'I need to apologise for something: I should have come to you sooner.' Starting this way lowers defensiveness. Then take responsibility for how it's affecting you and describe how their behaviour makes you feel, instead of listing what they did.

• Their reaction tells you everything

If they say 'that's ridiculous, you're too sensitive', you have your answer. If they say 'I had no idea, I feel terrible, what can I do?', that's a relationship worth saving. When Sonia said people in her life simply weren't interested in how they'd affected her, Mel told her that's all she needs to know.

• Closure doesn't require a conversation

Mel argues that when we chase someone down 'for closure', we're often really looking for confirmation or reassurance, which we can give ourselves. If you're clear on your boundaries and their behaviour has already shown you who they are, you can move on without resolving anything with them.

• Look for the pattern that keeps repeating

Mel says patterns repeat until you learn the lesson. Looking back after the business betrayal, she saw a recurring type in her inner circle: people who turned out to be mean, gossiped behind others' backs, and left her scared to leave. Ask which personality types or dynamics keep drawing you in.

• The betrayal is about their pain, not your worth

Speaking as someone who has been both betrayed and, earlier in life, the betrayer, Mel says cheating, lying and stealing come from the other person's trauma, coping mechanisms and avoidance. People reach for the quick rush of cocaine, sex, secret flirting or stealing to escape pain they won't face. That doesn't make it hurt less, but it doesn't decide whether you're lovable.

• Give yourself about a year to grieve

Mel says you're grieving both the reality you thought you had and the future you expected, which is deeply destabilising. Give yourself around a year to move through the anger and the 'how could I not see it?' At some point you'll be saturated with the misery and start to feel sorry for the person, and that empathy is what finally releases it.

• A marriage can survive infidelity, but only if both people do the work

Mel believes any relationship can come out stronger if both people show up: one to forgive and the other to face what led to the betrayal. She says she knows no couple who regretted working through something in therapy, but does know divorced people who wish they'd tried. Even if you split, the work makes you better co-parents and friends.

EXAMPLES

• Mel's business betrayal

At the start of 2022, Mel discovered that someone she trusted had been stealing from her business for a long time, lying to her and her team. She felt stupid, then hurt, then furious. She spent a couple of weeks quietly securing the logins and accounts before cutting ties, and says the experience taught her better boundaries as a businesswoman.

• Sonia from New Zealand

Sonia's marriage ended when her husband got together with her best friend, who had come out as bisexual. Her ex kept reaching out to stay friends. Mel told her she owes no explanation and doesn't need to resolve anything. Sonia said it was freeing to hear, and that she now has wonderful new friends and a new boyfriend.

• Jen from Pennsylvania

After a betrayal ended 14 years of trust, Jen questioned everything about herself and kept thinking it happened because she wasn't pretty or thin enough. She and her husband are in therapy, and he's trying to own what he did. Mel offered a new story: he was lost and felt he wasn't good enough, chasing an old version of himself. 'It's not about you not measuring up.'

• The suspension bridge

Mel says every change is a bridge, and Jen's is as long as the Chesapeake Bay Bridge and sways in the wind. Asked what surprised her, Jen said how strong she is and how much compassion she could find. She gets through her days repeating 'grace, gratitude', going to therapy and doing the hard work.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Turn self-blame into lessons**
  When you notice what you let slide, don't blame yourself. Instead, write down rules for the future: 'When I have a hunch, I won't talk myself out of it.' 'When I'm disrespected, I'll address it.'
- **Write out the anger, then aim for understanding**
  Let yourself feel it and write it down when you're furious. Then steer toward understanding what happened and forgiving, so you don't carry resentment and distrust into what comes next, whether you stay or leave.
- **Tell yourself a kinder story**
  Swap 'it happened because I'm not enough' for 'this reflects their pain and avoidance'. Mel adds that compassion isn't condoning, excusing or taking responsibility for what they did.

This is Why You're Not Happy and How to Fix It | The Mel Robbins Podcast

Date: 2023-03-13 · Duration: 0:54:25
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nqs6I2kMW8M

KEYPOINTS

• Chasing happiness outside yourself makes you feel short on time and less happy

Mel opens with listener Andrea, who can't remember feeling true happiness and senses something is missing. She cites researchers at Rutgers and the University of Toronto who found that people who actively pursue happiness often feel they don't have enough time in the day. That feeling of time scarcity makes them feel less in control, and so less happy.

• "I'll be happy when..." thinking backfires twice

When you finally lose the weight, land the job or pay off the bills, it feels less good than you expected, and without the big goal your happiness drops. The deeper problem is that it ties your happiness to something that hasn't happened yet, turning it into something you have to earn. Mel argues happiness should be grown where you are now.

• About 40% of your happiness is in your control

Mel presents a formula she describes as research-backed: of your total capacity for happiness, roughly 50% is set by genetics, 10% by current circumstances and 40% by what you do. Whatever your family or situation, she says, that 40% is yours to work with, and the episode focuses on it.

• The ocean metaphor captures happiness's range

Waves are the fun you have to jump into. A still ocean you can float in is the deeper contentment. A stormy day you watch from the beach is about being present to the details. Mel uses the image to make sure she and the listener mean the same thing by "happiness," which can range from laughter to feeling fulfilled.

• Researchers split happiness into hedonic and eudaimonic

Hedonic happiness is moment-to-moment fun, like waves that come and go. Eudaimonic happiness is a sense that life has meaning and that you're thriving. Many people have one without the other, such as plenty of fun but little meaning, or deep work but no fun, and Mel argues you need both.

• Healing journeys can squeeze out all the fun

Listener Rachel journals, reads self-help, exercises and reframes her thoughts, yet still feels stuck. Mel recognises her past self: every book was self-help, and she couldn't remember her last novel, concert or party. Working on trauma and thought patterns matters, but you have to double down on fun while you do it. Research shows happy people prioritise doing things that make them happy.

• Relationships are the number one factor in a happy life

Mel draws on the Harvard Study of Adult Development, formerly the Harvard Men's Study, which has run for 84 years. It began with 724 men and now includes 1,300 descendants across three generations, and is led by its fourth director, Dr. Robert Waldinger. Because it tracks people forward in real time instead of relying on memory, and its results have been replicated in five other large studies, she calls it the most important study of happiness. Its main finding: good relationships keep you happier and healthier.

• Loneliness is an alarm, and it's about quality, not headcount

Warm interactions make the body feel safe, while cold ones trigger fight, flight or freeze. Because early humans survived in tribes, the brain reads loneliness as a threat. You can be lonely in a crowd, a bad marriage or a toxic friendship. Mel cites a figure that 75% of adults feel moderate to high loneliness and says to treat that pang like anxiety: a signal you're missing connection.

• A wandering mind is the opposite of inner peace

Answering listener Steve, Mel defines inner peace as feeling content and secure. She cites Harvard professor Daniel Gilbert's research finding that close to half of our waking moments are spent thinking about something other than what we're doing, and that mind-wandering is linked to unhappiness. Older people, often wrongly seen as grumpy, tend to be happiest because they're more present.

EXAMPLES

• Paddle tennis after a friend's death

After a close friend died suddenly of a heart attack at 47, Mel hadn't left the house in days. Chris booked a 4:30 paddle tennis game with another couple. She fumed the whole drive and almost told him off, but within about five seconds of hitting the ball she felt different. She needed fun and people she likes, not more heaviness.

• Mel's loneliest stretch was her most successful

During a booming period of nonstop speeches, Audible projects and good money, she was on the road constantly, barely saw Chris or her friends, and missed time with her daughters in high school. She was having fun "in the waves" with colleagues but was deeply lonely. Seeing her son Oakley's high school years as a "melting ice cube," she rebuilt her business to work from the studio above her garage.

• Jenna, a mom who misses the joy of the early years

Jenna, a mother of two boys, felt more joyful when her kids were little. Mel suspects that back then she was surrounded by mom groups, school drop-offs and playgroups, meaning more warm relationships. That suggests missing connection, not a personal failing.

• Her mom talks to everyone

Mel used to find it embarrassing, but now admires that her mother comments on strangers' sweatshirts and the weather and ends up swapping restaurant tips. She cites a University of Chicago study finding that people who talk to strangers on trains, planes or at coffee shops are happier afterwards, even when they expected not to be.

• Present-moment rituals at home

Mel eats Trader Joe's blistered peanuts or smoked almonds one at a time to notice how each tastes, gazes at a flower by the kitchen sink, and savoured teaching Oakley her "beef with lots and lots of onions" from the cookbook Six Seasons, baked at

300°F for about five hours. Her 70-something parents' simple days of walks, golf, mahjong and sunsets show the same presence.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Make having more fun a stated goal**
  Set the intention to invest in hedonic happiness this year, especially while grieving or doing heavy personal work. In any group at the beach, someone has to grab the boogie board first, so be that person.
- **Sort people into warm and cold columns**
  Warm people energise you and their texts make you smile, while cold people make you brace yourself. Pour energy into the warm column. Either spend less time with cold people or warm the relationship up through forgiveness, reframing or boundaries. Mel notes research linking time with cold relationships to more loneliness and worse health.
- **Be the one who reaches out**
  If nobody invites you anywhere, check whether you're inviting anyone. Text someone daily, reconnect with cousins, and compliment strangers' nails or ask what they're reading. Remote work removes many small interactions, so you have to replace them deliberately.
- **Listen fully and do single tasks with full attention**
  Listening, not just hearing, shows someone you're present, which Mel calls the most basic form of love. Treat ordinary tasks as "moving meditation" to come back to the present.

How To Reinvent Your Life Starting TODAY | The Mel Robbins Podcast

Date: 2023-03-09 · Duration: 0:47:44
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IoOCnMEYSEg

KEYPOINTS

• You're never starting over; you're starting from experience

Mel's first response to a listener named Sarah: being laid off or ending a relationship doesn't send you back to zero. Every experience, good and bad, is raw material for the next chapter. Mel says about 90% of the questions she's getting right now are about reinvention, even when people don't use the word.

• Picture life as a road trip with mile markers

Everyone starts at mile marker zero, and each year is another marker. Mel was at 54 when she recorded this. Naming your marker reminds you that a lot of road is behind you but plenty of open road is ahead, and that you choose the speed, the route and the next destination. That choice is what she means by reinvention.

• When you're lost or in a storm, pull over first

Driving around doesn't help when you're lost; you stop, check the mile marker, look for landmarks, then decide where to go. Mel calls this a mental strategy: pause, acknowledge where you are, and only then pick a destination.

• Look through the windshield, not the rearview mirror

The windshield is far bigger than the rearview mirror for a reason. Feeling sad after a setback is right, but endlessly replaying what you should have done, like wishing you'd chosen a different major at 24, keeps you from moving forward.

• Treat setbacks as detours, not verdicts on your worth

A breakup, a death, a layoff: Mel frames each as a detour on a path unique to you. She asks you to embrace two truths. Every detour is aligned with what's meant for you, and the best years of your life are on the road ahead. The alternative, she says, is feeling like a victim who is never good enough.

• Feeling 'blah' means you're on autopilot

Nothing's wrong, nothing's right. Mel notes researchers call it languishing. Step one is recognizing it ('that's me'). Step two is picking a specific destination ahead that genuinely excites you.

• Dream about two years out

Mel time-travels about 24 months ahead because that's enough time to make almost anything happen. A destination on the horizon creates energy, gives you something to look forward to, builds momentum, and widens your outlook like opening a camera's aperture so you start to notice possibilities and changes you could make.

• Anticipation gives you two bites of the apple

Mel cites research that planning a trip, say Disney with the kids, lifts your mood before you go, and the trip itself is a second boost. A week before boarding, your boss can pile on work and you won't care, because something good is ahead.

• Adding a meaningful activity makes time feel more abundant

In a 2021 study described in Laura Vanderkam's New York Times essay, overwhelmed participants spent nine weeks adding things rather than cutting back: exercise, small adventures, effortful activities like reading a novel instead of watching TV, and one night a week for themselves (not work or family). They reported feeling they had more time, more energy, and more progress at work and with family.

• Fifteen minutes spent helping felt like more time than fifteen free minutes

Mel describes a study in which some university students were let out of class 15 minutes early, while others stayed 15 minutes to edit essays for at-risk high school students. The helpers reported feeling they had more time. Mel's takeaway: rewarding, engaging activity makes time feel less scarce.

EXAMPLES

• Sarah at 40

A listener who turned 40 described being in a toxic 11-year marriage to a man with serious health problems, being laid off from a job she loved, gaining weight, and wondering if she'd ever been happy. Mel calls it driving through a sideways rain and hail storm, and reminds her the rain doesn't last.

• Jen's breakup

Jen thought she'd found her person and now struggles to get up and dressed. Mel tells her to use 5-4-3-2-1 to get out of bed, and to stop telling herself it happened because she isn't worthy. Her exercise: write down everything you want a partner to do for you and make you feel, then do those things for yourself.

• The family motorhome trip

Mel's father rented a motorhome one summer to hit as many national parks as possible, with stops at the Corn Palace, Wall Drug and Mount Rushmore on the way to the big prize: Old Faithful and the lodge at Yellowstone. As she recorded, her dad, brother, Chris and their son were headed to Yellowstone. The Corn Palace is the near-term excitement; Yellowstone is the dream.

• Busy people adding things

Mel was doing the 75 Hard challenge, and Chris was pursuing a master's in spiritual psychology while volunteering in hospice and launching Soul Degree for his men's retreat. Neither had spare time; both made it.

• Denise, voiceover artist

After 20 years of dreaming about voiceover work while feeling 'a part of me died' in a 9-to-5, Denise set a goal of a live ACX narration profile by June 13. It went live in August, and instead of beating herself up she celebrated progress. Six months in, she had two narration jobs, three auditions under review, and was pitching commercials, aiming to be full-time within a year.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Take responsibility for the response, not the detour

Mel distinguishes between what happens to you and how you navigate next. Grabbing the wheel on the second part is where your power lies.

- **The 'one night for you' rule**

Commit a few hours each week to something you enjoy, like a choir, a softball team, tutoring or pickup soccer. Signing up forces you to solve childcare and logistics you assumed were impossible.

- **Mel's caveat**

The episode is presented for education and entertainment and isn't a substitute for advice from a physician, therapist or other qualified professional.

A Toolkit for Confidence: How to Build UNSHAKABLE Self Confidence | The Mel Robbins Podcast

Date: 2023-03-06 · Duration: 0:55:13
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kMtNkJcJn3M

KEYPOINTS

• Confidence isn't a feeling; it's the willingness to try

Prompted by listener Heather, who got a bigger role but doesn't "feel confident" in it, Mel says the common mistake is waiting to feel confident. Her research-based definition: confidence is the willingness to try. Feeling confident is what shows up after you've done something many times; real confidence begins the moment you're willing to be a beginner.

• Trying builds competence, and competence lowers self-doubt

Mel describes a confidence-competence loop: every attempt either succeeds or fails, but you always learn something. That small gain in competency makes the next attempt easier, which lowers the resistance in your brain and body. Over enough repetitions it starts to feel effortless — not because you became "more confident," but because you built the skill.

• Everybody starts at zero

Whether it's guitar, a social following, a book or a business, Mel says no one skips the beginning. She started with zero speeches, zero TV experience, zero followers and no podcast know-how at 54, with five million podcasts already on Spotify. Her chopsticks example: confidence is saying "hand them to me, I'll try" instead of "can you get me a fork?"

• Imposter syndrome is a sign you're growing

Mel reframes feeling like an imposter as "a fancy way of saying you're trying something new." If you never feel that way, you're not doing anything uncomfortable, and she believes discomfort is the only route to becoming your best self. Her advice is to welcome it: "Great, I'm trying something new."

• Myth 1: confident people are the loudest in the room

Listener Alex, more introverted and surrounded by high achievers at university, worried she lacked confidence. Mel distinguishes confidence from bravado: truly confident people often don't need to prove anything and are frequently the quiet ones. Confidence isn't a personality trait; it's a skill anyone can build.

• Myth 2: confidence is built when you're winning

Mel compares confidence to steel forged in fire: the skill gets built in hard moments, when you start at zero and feel like an imposter. Winning, she suggests, tends to build arrogance and bravado and makes us forget what went into the win.

• Myth 3: you can lose your confidence

You can't lose a skill defined as the willingness to try, Mel argues; you're only blocked from the feeling because you stopped trying. If you're surrounded by high achievers, it's because you belong there and are meant to grow, so don't aim that pressure at yourself.

• Courage comes first; confidence builds over time

Her central distinction: you can tap courage before you feel assured, and each courageous action adds to confidence. You can't think your way out of fear or doubt; only action unlocks it.

• Social media can erode your willingness to try

Answering Gen Z listener Skye, who quit social media during a rough time, Mel says social media isn't good or bad; how you use it is. Feeds full of filtered bodies and Lamborghinis make you feel you're losing a race that doesn't exist, which drains the willingness to try. She also questions posting for appearances, like posting from the bathroom instead of enjoying the party.

EXAMPLES

• A 21-minute panic attack on the TEDx stage

Mel's TEDx talk "How to Stop Screwing Yourself Over," which she says has nearly 30 million views, was her first official speech, and she calls it a 21-minute panic attack. She went bright red when called on in school, and as a Legal Aid public defender in New York City got neck rashes so bad she hid them with scarves and turtlenecks, including during her years as a CNN legal commentator.

• Lying on the couch on live TV

On the morning she recorded this, Mel appeared on the Today show with Jenna and Hoda, and viewers messaged her about how at ease she looked. She calls it the result of ten years of trying, failing and learning, not a natural trait.

• Failures that led somewhere

A decade earlier Mel was $800,000 in debt, unemployed and drinking her way through problems, and that low point produced the 5 Second Rule. Her daytime talk show taped at CBS got canceled, and she says that path led to this podcast, her favorite work ever.

• Dr. Brian Little's TED talk

Mel cites the UK professor's talk "Who Are You, Really?": he's deeply introverted but has taught himself to act extroverted when teaching because it matters to him, even though it drains him. Mel's point: you're not stuck in a fixed place.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Use the 5 Second Rule to interrupt self-doubt

Count 5-4-3-2-1 and physically move. Mel says it shifts you from a doubting habit toward the prefrontal cortex, which helps with focus and action — for Alex, that means raising her hand before she can talk herself out of it.

• Borrow an alter ego

Ask "What would The Rock do?" or "What would Mel do?" Mel cites a Johns Hopkins study on alter egos easing self-doubt and behavioral activation research: acting like your future self now is one of the fastest ways to change mindset and habits.

• Prepare to settle your nerves

Every rehearsal is a try, which calms your nervous system because it knows what's coming. Think of the Williams sisters hitting endless balls before tournaments, or how differently you walk into a test you studied for.

- **Tell yourself this is preparing you for something**

Mel's reframe for failure: everything is preparing you for something that hasn't happened yet. Her driving fear is reaching her deathbed wishing she'd tried.

- **Re-curate who you follow**

Write down your goals and how you want to feel, unfollow everything, and refollow only accounts that align, including unfollowing Mel if she makes you feel bad.

How to Get Freedom From Self-Doubt with Lewis Howes | The Mel Robbins Podcast

Guest: Lewis Howes
Date: 2023-03-02 · Duration: 1:18:24
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OAyVovOO3-c

KEYPOINTS

• Insecurity at school shaped how Lewis showed up

Lewis Howes, host of The School of Greatness and author of The Greatness Mindset, was ranked in the bottom four of his class all through high school. He had a second-grade reading level in eighth grade, was in special-needs classes, cheated on tests to pass, and took seven years to finish college. He hid in the restroom to avoid reading aloud. As a young networker from 25 to 30, he simply asked people questions, and they called him the most interesting guy in the room.

• Losing your backup plan can push you forward

A year before his injury, his father suffered a traumatic brain injury in a car accident and spent three months in a coma. He survived another 17 years but was "physically alive but emotionally dead." He had to sell the insurance business Lewis could have taken over. Lewis calls losing that safety net, along with his own injury, the catalyst for building something himself.

• Ego can get results but leaves you feeling alone

Lewis played 14 Arena Football games with a broken wrist so he'd have game film for the NFL, which ground down a bone. He frames that "nothing can hurt me" toughness as ego, not greatness: it delivers some results but leaves you alone inside.

• Success without self-acceptance never feels like enough

Before 30 he was accomplishing and accumulating, but nothing felt enough because he didn't feel enough. He describes "I'll prove them wrong" as the second most powerful fuel, after anger and not-enoughness, and says it is exhausting. He reached big sports goals after 10–15 years and felt angry afterwards. He now separates success (about me) from greatness (about we).

• Healing means your nervous system stays calm amid chaos

He used to feel tightness in his chest, throat and stomach, lie awake ruminating for an hour and a half, and react from wounds he either didn't recognise or defended with "this is who I am." Healing doesn't mean never being triggered. It means noticing faster and responding from integrated lessons, not old wounds.

• Accepting the thing you hate makes you better at it

Lewis and Mel both have dyslexia. He used to hate himself for stumbling while reading. Now he tells himself "you've got this" when he stutters or has to redo a sentence, and he finds he reads more smoothly and saves time. Mel invites listeners to apply this to whatever they beat themselves up about.

• Saying shame out loud can bring people closer

Lewis believed that if anyone knew he had been sexually abused, no one would ever love him. Hiding it felt like a draining double life. When he finally told people, it made them trust and respect him more. Mel shares her own buried memory from fourth grade, which came back during a seminar, and cites figures of one in four women and one in six men experiencing sexual abuse. Speaking it, she says, is a form of acceptance.

• Stop abandoning yourself to buy peace

His biggest block in relationships was giving in whenever a partner was upset, coming home early or skipping trips, to escape uncomfortable emotions. Years of that led to losing himself and building resentment. Mel says many men struggle with this because they were never taught to handle hard emotions except by defending or shutting down, and compares him to her husband Chris. Lewis now states his values upfront and won't give up who he is to please one person.

• Healing is a journey of processing and integrating

Speaking up was only the start of ten years of different approaches. "The next step is integrating the healing, which is where all the work is." Without continued integration, he says, old pain resurfaces.

EXAMPLES

• On his sister's couch, 2007–08

At about 23, after bone was taken from his hip to rebuild his wrist (20 staples, six weeks bent over), he wore a cast from shoulder to fingers for six months instead of three. It took about a year and a half to straighten his arm. Without a degree during the 2008 crash, he felt "financially, physically, emotionally and spiritually broken." One inner voice kept saying "keep going."

• A pickup basketball fight

At 29, he "turned into the Incredible Hulk" after being headbutted in a friendly game in LA. A friend said he wouldn't play with him anymore. At home he looked in the mirror and asked, "Who are you?" He realised he had too much to lose to let his wounds control him.

• Standing up on day three of a workshop

At a five-day leadership workshop near LAX, he walked to the front, staring at the carpet, and described being abused at five by his babysitter's son. Afterwards, sobbing in the alley, a man in his late 50s told him, "You're my hero." He had been abused at 11, had kept it from his wife of 20-plus years, and now felt able to tell her. Other men followed with their own stories.

• The 405 traffic jam that started a podcast

Stuck in traffic around 2012, after selling his LinkedIn-training business, going through a breakup and the fight, he called Pat Flynn and Derek Halpern about podcasting. They warned him that "greatness" was too broad. He committed to one episode a week for a year as an experiment, with no pressure to make money and about two years of savings from living on a $495-a-month apartment and trains.

• Five months of intensive emotional coaching

Two years before this conversation, he did weekly sessions, sometimes five or six hours on Saturdays, with the stated intention of "peace, clarity and freedom." His coach's breakthrough line was "You're a free man." Having watched both trapped

and emotionally free men during four and a half years of prison visits to his brother, he saw he was "trapped emotionally but free physically." A recurring ball of pain in his chest dissolved, and a month or two later he met his partner, Martha.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Hold on to the voice that says "keep going"

Even if you hear it for only a second a day, Lewis credits that voice with getting him through decades of feeling unlovable, including childhood years of saying "I wish I was dead," which he says were not actual suicidal intent.

• Pick a mission that fits your season

On the couch, his mission was simply earning enough to get off it. Once you're safe, think bigger and include others. He learned in a workshop that you don't win unless everyone around you wins.

• Experiment before going all in

Mel highlights his approach: give yourself a year-long experiment, take the pressure of money off where you can, and improve with each attempt. His first episodes were about winning; his voice developed through practice.

• Consider an emotional coach

People hire business, career and health coaches but rarely invest in emotional skills, which Lewis calls the game most of us never master. Mel adds that "when you put all your energy into keeping peace with others, you create a war inside yourself."

Start Putting Yourself First: Tools to Say No Without Guilt or Drama | The Mel Robbins Podcast

Date: 2023-02-27 · Duration: 0:55:18
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UVPhdG_w3u0

KEYPOINTS

• Everyone people-pleases; it's only a problem when it's your default

Mel notes 'people pleaser' isn't a medical diagnosis. It's a casual name for a coping strategy everyone uses to keep the peace, fit in and feel loved. You'll always need to please some people: your boss, your family, the DMV clerk, the friend throwing the big party in Cabo. It becomes a problem when you're so focused on others that you've neglected your needs, silenced your voice and lost track of who you are.

• The guilt won't go away at first, and that's healthy

Janet was raised to believe a good woman always comes second: last to shower, last to eat. She wanted to take care of herself without feeling guilty. Mel's 'bad news' is that you can't remove the guilt when you start putting yourself first. She reframes it: guilt shows you care, and it's a sign you're breaking an old habit, not evidence you're doing something wrong.

• The people who love you will be annoyed, and still love you

Your putting them first has been convenient for the people around you, so expect irritation or disappointment when that changes. Mel's recurring principle is that two things can be true: you can put yourself first and disappoint someone, and they can still love you. You can also feel guilty and still put yourself first.

• People-pleasing is really about avoiding your own discomfort

Mel's biggest wake-up call is that people-pleasing isn't about other people. It's about not being able to tolerate the tension between what you want and how someone else might feel. She cites research from Dr. Juan Dominguez at Monash University in Melbourne showing that this kind of conflict activates the prefrontal cortex and anterior insula, which is linked to feeling emotions in the body. The resulting distress, which she calls cognitive dissonance, pushes you to make the situation go away by caving.

• When you change, the suppressed tension shows up between you and others

Courtney, who built boundaries in therapy, heard relatives call her 'rude, unkind, inflexible.' Mel's explanation is that people-pleasing works, which is why we do it. When you stop, the discomfort you used to absorb lands in the relationship, and others experience it as rejection. Expect that, and give them room to react.

• It goes both ways: make room for their disappointment

If you want others to accept your reasons, you have to accept their sadness, confusion and snarky comments. Mel says a dig is often hurt that hasn't been processed in a healthy way. Her parents set the example when they declined to come for Christmas. They acknowledged she was disappointed, kept their rule against holiday travel, and invited her to visit them instead. She calls that loving someone the way they need to be loved.

• Stop asking people who don't live your life to approve it

Anna's disciplined lifestyle set her apart from her friends. Mel says you don't need to drop those friends, but they can't understand a life they don't live. She turns to peers like Jay Shetty, Jenna Kutcher and Trent Shelton for career advice, not her family, and wouldn't ask a 28-year-old fitness fanatic about menopause. Find people doing what you're doing, through masterminds, classes or events, and stop seeking validation from people you wouldn't trade lives with.

• You can't be your authentic self until you know who that is

Nella, a singer-songwriter in Ireland, asked how to stop masking. Mel's provocative question was whether she even knows who her authentic self is. For many people, she says, conformity is 'the air you breathe' because of religion, culture or family. She also says people-pleasing at its core is believing that who you really are isn't good enough.

EXAMPLES

• The 'felted aircraft carrier'

Mel's father, a billiards fan who hustled pool in his student days and collects antiques from Brunswick in Muskegon, gave her and Chris an 1800s Brunswick pool table from an old Vikings Lodge. It sat in his basement for over a decade, then filled their new playroom with no space for anything else. Over the years it became a Lego table, a laundry table and finally a desk under plywood, where Mel laid out The 5 Second Rule. For years she couldn't bring herself to take it apart for fear of disappointing a dad who visited four or five days a year.

• The phone call

Mel's stomach churned and she talked about nothing until she counted 5-4-3-2-1. Her dad kept steering toward how much her brother loved his table and suggested the living room. She felt 'like the world's worst daughter' as his heart sank, and she says it didn't feel like a victory. Her parents teased her for years. When she later built her Vermont home, she put a barn on it partly to give the table a place.

• The Ireland divorce story

A woman Mel interviewed for The High 5 Habit delayed a divorce she wanted for seven years, held back by the Catholic Church, her mother, her priest and 'what the whole country might think.'

• Leaving Amy at the Vegas steakhouse

On day 15 of a 16-day trip, at 9:30 p.m. before a morning speech, Mel had finished her filet while her friend Amy had about 20 minutes of slow, happy eating to go. Mel felt the old pull to stay so she wouldn't seem rude. Instead she asked, 'Would it be okay if I head upstairs?' Amy says on the episode she felt relieved, because she didn't want to be watched eating. She stayed another 25 minutes and enjoyed it.

OTHER RELEVANT

• The 'switch' tool: turn your automatic yes into a pause

Instead of saying 'sure' on the spot, say 'let me check my calendar' or 'I'll get back to you.' That gives the discomfort time to

settle. You can then decline by email or text 20 minutes later if saying no in person feels too hard. Mel says the switch is based on research.

- **The screenwriter exercise**

  Write a character description and a day in the life of the real you, minus the country, religion, family pressure and stories you've absorbed. Include when you'd wake up, where you'd live, your work, your friends, your habits, and who you'd laugh with.

- **Ask kindly and expect the wave of discomfort**

  Mel says how you say it matters as much as what you say. Notice the wave of discomfort, ride it, and act on what serves you. She points out that every yes to someone else is a no to something you need.

Hate Your Job? Laid Off? Reimagine Your Future & Take the Next Right Step | The Mel Robbins Podcast

Guest: Amy Porterfield
Date: 2023-02-23 · Duration: 1:18:04
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZZ1GWfsz8Ic

KEYPOINTS

• You don't need answers to change direction, just a wake-up call you take seriously.
Mel and Amy Porterfield both describe a moment of 'I want that' before they had any plan. Mel's point is that this jolt is the only thing you need to start pivoting, provided you pause and pay attention to it rather than dismissing it with 'that won't happen for me'. She calls it a 'pad thai moment' for your career: a whole world you had never considered because you simply didn't know it existed.

• Jealousy tells you what you want.
When Amy felt envy watching business owners describe their lives, she asked herself exactly what they had that she wanted. Her answer was being her own boss, setting her own hours and never having to ask for a raise or for vacation. She says getting clear on that was the first real step.

• Start with the life you want, then build the work around it.
Before choosing a business, Amy asks students what lifestyle they want: home for dinner, more income to invest, control over their time. Mel adds that the pandemic forced many people to rethink their values and where they live, and showed them that mindlessly chasing more wasn't the lifestyle they wanted.

• 'Unboss' yourself by thinking like an owner, even if you stay employed.
Most of us grew up watching caregivers equate safety with being someone's employee. Amy's idea of 'unbossing' means believing you can lead yourself. Someone with this mindset doesn't seek everyone's approval or show up saying 'I'm stuck', but brings options and asks which is best. Mel says the best people on her own team think this way, taking responsibility and figuring things out instead of licking their wounds.

• Immerse yourself in the world you want to join.
Amy cleaned up her social media and followed people who had the kind of business she wanted. She then started seeing them everywhere, the same way you notice a car model after buying one. She also changed her identity by asking what bosses do: they listen to business podcasts, read books and buy courses.

• Ask for advice, and bring the work with you.
Find people doing what you want and ask how they did it. If you can't pay, their podcasts, videos and posts already contain much of their advice. Amy's tip for getting a reply is to describe your challenge and two or three options you're weighing, then ask which they would pick. That way you've done the thinking instead of asking someone to solve your problem.

• Action is the only thing separating people who do from people who don't.
Mel's view is that there is no secret formula. Everyone wants freedom and income. What separates people is being willing to go one step further than the person who quit. She also urges putting half as much energy into 'why not?' as you currently put into shooting down your own ideas.

• Lead with courage, not confidence.
Amy argues that confidence comes from a track record, so you won't have it when you're starting something new. Instead she says to draw on courage, based on your record of getting through obstacles in the past. Confidence follows once you've taken action and seen small results.

• Someone already doing it proves there's a market.
If you think the field is already taken, Amy's response is that it proves there's money and demand. There are more than eight billion people, and you only need a sliver of them: ten buyers of a $100 program make $1,000 you didn't have. Mel adds that you're best placed to help the person you used to be. She would rather learn from an instructor who looks like her than from a 28-year-old doing donkey kicks.

EXAMPLES

• Amy, taking notes at Tony Robbins's side table
Fourteen years ago Amy was director of content for Tony Robbins. She was called in to take notes, at a side table rather than the main oak table, while a group of online business owners described working when, where and how they wanted. She realised she had never been free. She later paid a woman whose business she admired for an hour of advice, and took the call whispering under her desk at lunch because the walls were thin.

• Mel skipping work to see Martha Beck
While working in business development at an ad agency, Mel told her employer she was somewhere else and went to an Oprah 'live your best life' event to find clients for her life coaching side business. When Martha Beck walked on stage, Mel felt 'that's what I want' without knowing what it meant.

• Laid-off women and pay
Amy cites research suggesting women tend to take layoffs personally and see their salaries fall by about 24% in their next job, while men average about 1.3% more. Mel reminds a listener from Spain who felt 'disposable' that a layoff is a business decision about fit. One of Amy's students, laid off in her 50s after 20 years, realised she hadn't even liked the job.

• From side hustles to six figures
Rachel, a pharmacist who hated her job during COVID, bought a property to run as an Airbnb, made $300,000 last year and quit. Tara, a single-mom accountant in a small town who was refused a raise, sold wreaths on Etsy for about $1,000 a month, then taught other crafters how to sell on Etsy and earned $100,000. Anne, laid off from Gap and Old Navy and unable to get interviews, now runs $100,000 launches teaching surface pattern design in her 60s.

• Starter ideas from young people

Aiden dropped out of college at 19, posted videos of his well-trained dogs, got neighbours paying him for training, and now sells courses and memberships. Mel's neighbour's son made almost $30,000 in his senior year of high school by picking up unwanted furniture and reselling it on Facebook Marketplace. Her children's guitar teacher, Dave Wade, put lessons online before COVID and now teaches students all over the world.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Run the Sweet Spot formula

Amy's four quadrants: what you're good at or have gotten results in, such as the person who went from couch to marathon in three months; who your customer could be, often you a few years ago; where people already spend money on the topic in books, courses or coaching; and what lights you up, which is not the same as finding your passion. You only need to be about 10% ahead of the people you want to help.

• Don't quit your job yet

Amy suggests starting a side hustle in the mornings, evenings and weekends to build a runway, and aiming first for $100 or $1,000 rather than a million. If you're job hunting, Mel says don't forget that she believes around 85% of jobs are never advertised and are filled through networking.

• Your social media isn't for your friends

Once you decide to pivot, your feed is your board of advisors and your posts are a beacon for people who need what you offer. If you wouldn't trade lives with the critics, says Mel, don't take their advice. Amy filmed marketing videos for weeks and posted none of them because she feared what former co-workers would think.

• Use free education

Look for free or employer-provided learning: MasterClass logins offered as a work perk, Khan Academy, YouTube, and the free resume templates from the Harvard Extension School that Mel mentions.

The Reason You Procrastinate Is Not What You're Thinking | The Mel Robbins Podcast

Date: 2023-02-20 · Duration: 0:44:54
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G8r_F-xR3Ig

KEYPOINTS

• You aren't 'a procrastinator,' you have a habit of procrastinating

Mel, a self-described former chronic procrastinator who pulled all-nighters in college, says calling yourself a procrastinator turns a behavior into an identity. Procrastination is not a personality trait. It's a broken pattern of behavior you can understand and replace. If yours is chronic, she says that mostly tells you the stress in your life is chronic too.

• Productive procrastination is different from destructive procrastination

A deliberate break, like stepping outside during a hard project to clear your head, is a conscious, helpful kind of delay. The episode focuses on the destructive kind: dozens of small 'micro-procrastinations,' like social media checks that add up to hours each week, and avoiding something big, like a dissertation, an application, sales calls or posting videos.

• Procrastination is about avoiding stress, not the task

Mel draws on Dr. Timothy Pychyl of Carleton University, who has studied procrastination for two decades and describes it as a subconscious desire to feel good right now. You put off the thing that takes brainpower because you're trying to escape stress. The stress may have nothing to do with the task: aging parents, money, a friend's divorce, childhood trauma, or simply how hard you are on yourself.

• The 'stress backpack' makes focused work feel impossible

Concentrated work requires your prefrontal cortex, but if you're carrying a backpack of worry, your brain pushes back: 'You want me to make 15 cold calls when I've been worried about paying my bills all day? Can we watch cat videos?' Two hours later nothing is done and you're more stressed. Mel describes procrastination as the 'freeze' part of fight, flight or freeze.

• 'Comfortable' means familiar, not pleasant

Listener Vidhi says 'feeling shitty has become a comfortable feeling.' Mel says that makes perfect sense: comfortable means you're used to it, not that you like it. Being stuck and knowing what to do but not doing it can become normal. Recognizing that you're in the loop is the first step to breaking it.

• Revenge procrastination at night feeds the cycle

Scrolling for three hours on the couch after a draining day is a way of getting back at your job. An occasional night of it is fine. The problem is when you go to bed stressed about the wasted evening, skip setting up tomorrow, wake up behind, and do it all again.

• Step 1: forgive yourself

It may sound cheesy, but it's backed by research. Mel cites a paper Pychyl co-authored finding that students who forgave themselves for procrastinating on one exam were less likely to procrastinate on the next. Since being hard on yourself is a major source of the stress, she suggests telling yourself something like 'Wow, two hours went by, I must be really stressed. I forgive myself.'

• Step 2: name what's actually stressing you

When you notice the pattern, like unopened bills or a parking ticket that doubled because you missed the deadline, ask what's really bothering you: senior year ending, a sales quota, a spouse who's angry with you, waiting on your dad's test results. Mel says naming it loosens its grip because it pulls the stress out of the backpack where you can see it.

• Step 3: ask what future you wants you to do right now

Picture the version of you who has already finished, like Vidhi's completed portfolio or the Mel who has seen the doctor, and ask what they'd want you to do now. Two glasses of wine into a lost evening, the you who wakes up tomorrow wants you to pack lunch, turn off the screens, read 10 pages and go to bed.

• Then count 5-4-3-2-1 and start for one minute

Mel uses the 5 Second Rule as a starting ritual. Starting is the hard part: once you make the first cold call, write the first sentence or type your name on the application, you usually keep going. The problem isn't your ability, she says. It's that you're caught in a stress-driven cycle that sets off your nervous system.

EXAMPLES

• Vidhi, the illustrator who freezes at her desk

Vidhi can't wait to draw each morning, but once she sits down she's flooded with doubt and excuses, and by the end she's too exhausted for anything. A 'siren' in her head says she's a fake and that 'there are hundreds of much more talented artists.' She says she doesn't even want her drawings to be perfect, and that the doubt is now seeping into her relationships.

• Mel's 'bread basket' and the doctor's appointment

At 54, in the middle of the 75 Hard challenge (no alcohol, two workouts a day), Mel still hadn't booked a hormone appointment about the new belly she calls her 'bread basket.' She has to suck in to zip her pants. She realized the real stress was aging and feeling out of control of her body. She notes that research shows medical appointments and tests are among the things people put off most.

• Her daughters' 'taking a break from life'

Mel watches her daughters swipe so fast she asks what they're doing. 'Nothing. Taking a break from life.' She uses it as an example of micro-procrastination: checking out because your brain and body are already overloaded.

• The bills you haven't opened in two months

Mel's example of the steps in action: 'I haven't opened my bills in two months, I must be really nervous about this. I forgive myself.' Then name the stress and face it, rather than letting late fees and penalties pile up.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Replace 'Why can't I just do this?' with better questions**
  Ask instead, 'How am I feeling right now?' and 'What is truly stressing me out?' Mel says these questions point you to the cause instead of reinforcing the belief that something is wrong with you.
- **Act like you believe in yourself before you do**
  Mel's answer to Vidhi's 'How do I learn to believe I'm good enough?' is that belief follows action. Drawing for one minute despite the doubt is acting as if you believe in yourself, and seeing yourself do it consistently is what builds real belief. She links perfectionism to protecting yourself from rejection, often learned in childhood.
- **Share it with someone stuck**
  For a person with huge potential who won't write the music, start the channel or apply to nursing school, Mel suggests sharing the episode 'as a message from their future.' Their problem is the cycle, not laziness.

If You Struggle With Anxiety, You Need To Hear This | The Mel Robbins Podcast

Guest: Oakley Robbins
Date: 2023-02-16 · Duration: 0:58:13
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=br1gy1sShHE

KEYPOINTS

• Therapy is for when you're fine, too

Mel's 17-year-old son Oakley walked into the kitchen after a Zoom session and announced "I love my therapist," Keith. He hated therapy as a younger kid after a therapist pushed him to ride an elevator he was afraid of, but a new therapist changed his life. He compares therapy to a journal you don't have to write in that answers back, and says it's worth having even when you're perfectly happy. Friends your age with the same mindset, he warns, can't solve the same problems you have.

• Hiding anxiety lets it come back harder

For about three weeks in March of ninth grade, Oakley had overwhelming anxiety and told no one. He didn't want it to become "a process" with therapists and medication, both of which he'd had bad experiences with before, and he'd lived with weekly small panics his whole life, so he figured he could handle it. Looking back, he doubts the sophomore-year collapse would have happened if he'd spoken up in ninth grade.

• Big, scary, intrusive thoughts are common and not who you are

Mel stresses that, according to therapists, almost everyone experiences a sudden frightening thought like the one Oakley describes. They can come out of nowhere and feel uncontrollable. Oakley says suicidal thoughts are talked about as if only people at "the worst of the worst" have them, which made his scarier. Knowing they were normal and temporary, he says, would have helped.

• Wanting to end the pain is different from wanting to end your life

Mel repeats a distinction she's made often: you can lessen anguish, anxiety or sadness without ending your life, and talking about it is how you start. Oakley compares bottled-up thoughts to a shaken Coke can. Mel believes most people, if offered their life without the pain, would say "hell yeah" to staying. The episode is clear that persistent dark thoughts call for reaching out to a therapist or someone you trust.

• Saying it out loud shreds the paper bag

Mel's friend Amy heard a therapist describe scary thoughts as being trapped in a paper bag: you can't think of anything else. The moment you find the courage to say them out loud, the bag tears open and you see you're not alone and that help exists. Oakley's advice to anyone from middle school to their mid-20s: if what's in your head is overwhelming or stopping you from doing normal things, tell someone early instead of waiting to collapse.

• An existential spiral can grip someone whose life looks great

In sophomore year, Oakley had great friends, a girlfriend, classes he loved and a close family, yet couldn't see why any of it mattered. Mel notes that research suggests empathetic or introverted people may be more prone to deep meaning-of-life questioning, which can be triggered by things like climate change, injustice, poverty or loss. You can't assume you know what someone's inner life is like.

• Purpose can be something you discover over time, not a pressure

Oakley's early sessions with Keith focused on purpose. He concluded that life may not inherently matter, but individuals can make it matter, and that one day he'll find a person, place or calling that gives him a reason to be here. At 17 he doesn't know his purpose and isn't daunted. It could take 10 or 25 years, and it has to come from him, not from his mom.

• Acknowledge recurring thoughts instead of fighting them

Oakley says the "nothing matters" thoughts still show up daily, but in the back of his head, where he can think "that may be true, but who cares." Mel describes her plane ritual: when "what if this is it" pops up, she thinks of her family and gratitude, notes "oh, there's that thought," and doesn't resist it.

EXAMPLES

• The Blue Ceiling: a foggy March morning in ninth grade

Watching TV in bed, Oakley was suddenly lightheaded, confused and terrified. He walked past his dad by the fire without saying anything, despite wanting a hug. Later, looking at the knife block, he had a vivid unwanted image of hurting himself, then hyperventilated outside telling himself he'd be okay. That night he cried under his blue star-projector ceiling. He wrote it up as a memoir called "The Blue Ceiling" in sophomore year.

• How the sophomore-year breakdown built

Writing the memoir pulled him back into those feelings. A week later, a climate film in English class set off a chain of thought from his town to the universe until "we become a grain of sand" and nothing mattered. Panic attacks followed. At dinner he went to the bathroom and told the mirror "you're okay," then broke down crying with Mel, saying he wasn't in danger but "I can't live like this."

• What the family did

Mel went into first-responder mode. Oakley wasn't allowed to sleep alone, he took a week off school, they went back to Massachusetts to see doctors, she made sure he ate, his dad meditated with him, and they got him into therapy fast. He also started an antidepressant, which he's still on and calls great. Mel's metaphor is that sometimes you need a ladder, and sometimes a surfboard.

• Mel's own derealization episodes

As a young person with acute anxiety, Mel would feel a switch flip and everything would seem fake, like The Truman Show, as if the walls might fall like a TV set and leave her alone in a desert. She shares it to show Oakley's terror wasn't unique.

• John Mayer's "Stop This Train" and the About Time quotes

The song about wanting time to stop moved Oakley to tears, including in a call from the school parking lot about how much he loved his life, about three weeks before the collapse. The family's favorite film, About Time, gives him two lines, including

living each day "as if it was the full final day of my extraordinary, ordinary life."

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Ask: do I want this in my universe?**
  Keith's "life-changing" idea was that a personal universe begins at conception, and whatever you do stays in it. Before acting, say going behind a friend's back, ask whether you want to live in a universe where you did that. Even if existence doesn't ultimately matter, you're still living and feeling this life, so make it one you enjoy.
- **For parents: don't assume silence means fine**
  Oakley hid both episodes because he didn't want a fuss. Mel hears daily from parents whose sons don't talk to them, and families forward these conversations to open dialogue. Stay curious even when someone's outer life looks good, and respond to disclosure with presence rather than panic.
- **If you're struggling now, tell anyone**
  Fleeting dark thoughts don't mean you're broken, but persistent ones are a reason to reach out to a therapist, family, friends, a spiritual leader or anyone you trust. The episode is educational and not a substitute for professional care.

The Million Dollar Morning Routine: 6 Steps to a Solid Morning Routine | The Mel Robbins Podcast

Date: 2023-02-13 · Duration: 0:47:18
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sHjI-ktwiyc

KEYPOINTS

• Act like your future self now
Mel frames the episode around behavioural activation: you become the person you want to be by acting like them in everyday life. Each morning is a clean slate, and she says you should build the routine your future self needs, not the one you currently like.

• Your first decision is the lead domino
'How you set your day up is how it ends up.' If the first domino is procrastination and stress, more of the same follows. A good start (meeting a friend at the gym, arriving prepared) gives you energy and pride. Mel goes as far as calling the morning routine the solution to almost all of life's problems.

• Hitting snooze is procrastinating on your life
For decades Mel's first decision every day was to hit snooze four or five times while staring at the ceiling thinking about her problems. She sees that habit repeated all day: snoozing on the phone call, the networking, the hard conversation, the gym. Given that some people didn't wake up today, she calls snoozing opting out of the day.

• A routine is a set of simple promises, not a Navy SEAL regimen
Mel stresses that routines are boring and repetitive, and that's the point. Keeping small promises to yourself builds discipline, confidence and resilience. For someone with childhood trauma and anxiety, she says, just getting out of bed can be a profound win, and the routine acts as guardrails during grief, depression or anxiety spikes.

• Rule 1: when the alarm rings, count 5-4-3-2-1 and get up
You set the alarm the night before, so it's a promise. After 14 years Mel still counts down every morning because she'd always choose the warm bed with bamboo sheets. If you can't rely on yourself to get up, she asks, how will you handle the hard conversation, the résumé or the second act? Lying in bed usually means scrolling, rumination and riding a wave of cortisol.

• Get up for yourself, not for others
Most of us have always woken up for someone else: a parent yelling, the school bus, work, kids or ageing parents. Mel points out you'd set an alarm an hour early to drive a loved one to the airport, so do it for yourself.

• Rule 2: make your bed
It completes something, so you start the day with a checked box rather than a 'tsunami' you keep seeing all day. Mel does it in hotels and at her parents' homes in Florida and Michigan, because the routine keeps her herself wherever she is. It's also a gift to tonight's you.

• Rule 3: the high five habit
Stacked onto brushing your teeth, look yourself in the eye, decide who you'll be today (peaceful, brave, building momentum) and high-five your reflection like a team breaking a huddle. Mel says she covered the science in an earlier episode with her husband Chris.

• No phone until the routine is done
Checking texts or email hands your attention and intention to others. Mel asks whether you'd let your few hundred Facebook friends into your bathroom while you brush your teeth with no underwear on, because that's effectively what you're doing. Evenings are unpredictable; the morning is the one time you can reliably put yourself first.

• Rule 4: move your body and your mind
Do 10 minutes of brisk walking (walk like you're late) plus at least a minute of mindset practice such as journaling, meditation, prayer or an app. Getting outside early also exposes you to bright light, which resets your circadian rhythm and helps you sleep.

EXAMPLES

• Sleep inertia after snoozing
Mel says that drifting back to sleep starts a new 75–90-minute sleep cycle, so a nine-minute snooze wakes you mid-cycle. She says research suggests the grogginess can last about four hours and eats into the first two hours after waking, when processing speed and alertness peak.

• From $800,000 in debt
Mel says she was about $800,000 in debt 14 years earlier, addicted to excuses, nightly alcohol and complaining, and a chronic all-nighter in college who was always late on deadlines. She credits the routine as the foundation for building her business.

• 10 minutes of power walking
Mel cites a study she attributes to the Journal of the American Medical Association suggesting 10 minutes of power walking a day can add years to your life, while also boosting mood and sleep.

• Tucking in Chris
If her husband is sleeping in, Mel makes just her side of the bed and sometimes tucks the sheet around him as a small act of love.

• The progress principle
Rule 5 draws on Harvard Business School research: people who make progress on something meaningful feel more fulfilled. Mel's examples are spending five minutes on a parents' anniversary photo album, financial-aid paperwork, clearing a bedroom to write a book, or learning how to launch a podcast.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Pair this with an evening routine**
  Mel says the morning starts the night before, so set the alarm and wind down in a way that makes rule one easier.
- **Keep it portable**
  These five promises work anywhere, whether at home in Vermont, at a hotel or on her daughter's couch in Southie, so travel doesn't break the chain.
- **Do five minutes on what matters before email**
  Pick one meaningful project and move it forward for five to 15 minutes before letting the world in. Over time those small steps add up.
- **Ignore the 'I'm not a morning person' story**
  Mel's view is that the routine isn't about whether you feel like it. Some mornings will be hard and the negative chatter gets louder the longer you listen, so count down and shut it off.

How to Find Your Purpose and Achieve Your Dreams With Jamie Kern Lima | The Mel Robbins Podcast

Guest: Jamie Kern Lima
Date: 2023-02-09 · Duration: 1:18:38
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L4egtvSr_SI

KEYPOINTS

• 'Our steps are ordered': every job adds to your toolbox

Kern Lima waited tables at Denny's, where the kitchen took an hour to get pancakes out, so she learned to keep customers talking. Some left a dime and a penny. Years later, it taught her to get operations right or nothing else matters. She also pushed grocery carts and sliced deli meat to pay for school. Mel, a former waitress herself, adds that service jobs teach you no work is beneath you.

• Setbacks are often setups

Living her dream as a TV news anchor in Seattle at 28, Kern Lima's rosacea started breaking through her makeup on live air, and producers told her through her earpiece to wipe something off her face. She spent her small paycheck on department-store, professional and drugstore makeup and nothing worked. That frustration became the idea for IT Cosmetics.

• Purpose usually isn't a job title or a big goal

People who reach a long-held goal often find 'this isn't it.' Kern Lima says purpose is often serving the person you once were: becoming the generational cycle-breaker in your family, or saying hi to someone lonely in a coffee line. Her purpose wasn't being an entrepreneur but helping women feel worthy as they are. She notes only about 5% of IT Cosmetics customers had skin issues like hers. The other 95% simply felt seen.

• Your strongest clue to purpose is what hurt you and how you got through it

Her 'aha' came on the news set: she'd never seen a model with red, bumpy skin selling makeup, and the airbrushed ads she loved had always made her feel not enough. She decided to use real models of every age, size, skin tone and skin challenge and to 'call them beautiful and mean it.' Mel credits her with starting the real-beauty movement around 2007-2008, when everything was airbrushed and there were no curvy models.

• 'Someone's already done it' is false, because no one has done it your way

There's only one of you, so anything authentic you make has by definition never been done. The flip side, she warns, is to expect lots of rejection, because experts can't picture something new.

• The pain of regret outweighed the pain of failure

She quit her anchor job to go all in, sensing that otherwise she'd wake up every day for the rest of her life with a 'longing' in her gut. She and her husband wrote a business plan and put all their savings into it, working from their living room. She worked 100-hour weeks, which she does not recommend, and didn't pay herself for three years. Retailers including Sephora, Ulta, department stores and QVC all said no.

• Build intuition like a muscle by looking for patterns

Look back at times you ignored your gut because everyone disagreed, and times you trusted it, and notice how each felt and what happened. For her it's a tiny feeling, a 'still small voice,' and she prays about it. She says girls often learn early to distrust themselves, decide by consensus and people-please. Mel suggests trying to make only decisions that match what you truly want for the rest of the day, from parties to dinner.

• A 'no' versus a 'knowing'

After meeting after meeting, the head of a big investment firm told her, about three feet away, 'I just don't think women will buy makeup from someone who looks like you, with your body and your weight.' She felt no anger, just a strong gut sense that he was wrong. 'This dude gave me a no, but God gave me a knowing.' Her line: your destiny comes down to which one you listen to.

• Inauthenticity guarantees failure

Kern Lima's version: authenticity doesn't guarantee success, but inauthenticity guarantees failure every time. Mel adds that it's your job to keep advocating for your vision, because only you have seen it. Family and investors say no because they only know who you've been.

EXAMPLES

• Cold-calling every brand in Sephora

Manufacturers are closely guarded secrets in makeup, so she wrote down every brand in a Sephora and cold-called them asking who made their products. Most hung up. One small brand's employee gave her the name of a New York manufacturer, which took a chance on making samples. It took about a year and hundreds of formula versions to get a product.

• The QVC Expo ambush

At a cosmetics executive women's event with 6,000 attendees, she kept sneaking away from her three-foot table to QVC's mobbed booth. QVC's beauty head had already turned her down many times. Sweating through her clothes, she pitched a buyer, got a card, flew out and won one 10-minute live segment.

• 23 banks and 6,000 concealers

The deal was consignment: she had to sell over 6,000 units, about $130,000 to $140,000, in 10 minutes or take everything back and likely go under. The website was doing one or two orders a day, so Mel puts it at roughly ten years of sales. Twenty-two banks said no; California Bank and Trust said yes. Consultants urged flawless early-20s models. She cried in a rental car for a week, then went with real women and a bare-faced before shot.

• 'Thank you, sugar' and the sold-out sign

In double Spanx, her hand shook so badly that she couldn't do the wrist demo she'd practiced showing the concealer doesn't crease. The host grabbed her wrist and took over. At the 10-minute mark a sold-out sign appeared. Her husband ran in and said, 'We're not going bankrupt.' That September 2010 airing led to five more that year, 101 the next, then about 250 live shows a year.

- **'Rejection is God's protection'**

  Had the investor said yes, she believes she'd have given up most of the company for almost nothing. Six years later L'Oréal bought IT Cosmetics for $1.2 billion in cash, and she became the first female CEO of a brand in its 107-year history, backed by executive Carol Hamilton. The investor got in touch once, the day the deal was announced: 'I was wrong.' She resisted replying with Pretty Woman's 'Big mistake. Huge.'

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Your purpose can live outside your job**

  If you need a job for health coverage or family reasons, that's fine. Kern Lima says purpose can be found in what you do outside work, guided by what feels aligned.

- **Don't wait for perfect clarity**

  Waiting for clarity is, she says, the biggest excuse for never starting. Take a step and notice how it feels. Their friend Dean's image: it's okay to adjust your aim on a 'fuzzy target' a few times before letting the arrow go.

- **Find friends who pull you toward who you're becoming**

  Loved ones often pull you back toward your past or their comfort zone. Add people who want what's best for you, not what's best for them in you.

The #1 Hack for Being More Productive Tomorrow | The Mel Robbins Podcast

Date: 2023-02-06 · Duration: 0:53:45
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eCsXE4Dlulg

KEYPOINTS

• Your morning routine begins the night before

Mel says she isn't naturally a morning person. The biggest reason her "million dollar morning" works is that she puts herself to bed with an evening routine that winds down the day and sets up tomorrow. Think of the choices you regret each morning, like the extra drinks, the 1 a.m. drive-through burrito, or oversleeping a class. Tonight's decisions determine who wakes up tomorrow.

• Watch out for revenge procrastination

Revenge procrastination is when you resent that work took your whole day, so you get back at it by scrolling for hours, finishing a bottle of wine, or refusing to do anything useful because you deserve to relax. Mel agrees you deserve to relax. Her point is that a few small steps give you time to rest and also hand tomorrow-you a clean slate.

• A chaotic morning is the first domino

Mel argues that starting the day in a rush sets off more stress, more feeling behind and more reacting all day. That's partly why, in her old life, she came home exhausted and wanted wine the minute the kids got on the bus. A calm start does the opposite and builds momentum.

• Rule 1: The 3-2-1 rule

Three hours before bed, stop eating and drinking alcohol. Two hours before bed, stop working so your thoughts and stress can settle and you're less likely to wake at night. One hour before bed, turn off screens, because Mel says the blue light interferes with your brain's ability to shut down. Since she goes to bed early, her family moved dinner earlier. She suggests a countdown alarm or a sticky note on the fridge as a reminder.

• Rule 2: Make tomorrow easier

Mel says her habits used to fail because she relied on willpower and memory. Now she lowers what she calls the "activation energy" the night before, so the morning takes less thinking. Fewer obstacles make you more likely to do things you'd otherwise skip, like exercise.

• Rule 3: Give yourself a clean slate ("flush the toilet")

You wouldn't leave last night's mess in the toilet, so don't leave it in the kitchen, which is where most people go first in the morning. Empty the sink, load the dishwasher, and clear and wipe the counters. It takes about five minutes. Walking into a clean kitchen makes the new day feel like a mental fresh start too.

• Rule 4: Set your alarm on purpose

Most people have kept the same alarm time for years. Mel says to set it for the person you're becoming, and to drop the "fake math" of brushing teeth, packing three lunches and finishing homework in ten minutes. She needs about 90 minutes before helping anyone else, and 30 in a pinch. If you're not sure what you need, set it an hour earlier. Treat setting the alarm as a promise, and waking up as keeping that promise.

• Rule 5: Tuck your phone in before you tuck yourself in

No phone in the bedroom, ever. Charge it in the kitchen, closet or bathroom. If family or work need to reach you, leave the ringer on and tell people to call in an emergency. Mel finds that people only call when it's real, while texts and Snapchats would keep you awake. If the phone is your alarm, having it outside the room forces you out of bed.

• Your attention belongs to you at night

All day, through news, email, Zoom and scrolling, you let the world have access to you. Mel says nothing on your phone will help you sleep; it just stirs you up. She says a third of people check email in the middle of the night. If the phone isn't within reach, you can't reach for it out of habit.

EXAMPLES

• The old Mel's evenings

Mel used to come home, open a bottle of wine, throw dinner together, and slump on the couch with TV and her phone while the counters filled with dishes, backpacks and homework. She kept telling herself she'd tidy up at the next commercial. By 11 she'd finished the wine, left the pans to soak, put off packing lunches, and gone to bed scrolling until almost 1 a.m., annoyed that Chris was already asleep.

• The five-alarm morning

She set alarms for 5:45, 6:00, 6:15, 6:30 and 6:45, and usually got up at the "emergency" 7:15. Then she rushed three kids, yelled, hunted for permission slips, and found the gas tank empty on the way to work just as traffic doubled. She says all those alarms told her subconscious that getting up is hard, life is an obligation, and there's nothing to look forward to.

• Workout clothes on a hotel floor

On day 15 of a six-city business trip, Mel still lays out her exercise clothes on the hotel floor every night, so she isn't hunting in the dark at 6 a.m. for clean tights. Her other set-ups: her water bottle and journal next to the coffee pot, healthy food at the front of the fridge, a dish for her keys, and the kids' lunches, backpacks, cleats and sticks ready by the door.

• The "easier" soaking pan

Leaving pans to soak felt like a shortcut. By morning the suds were gone, the water was cold and greasy, and half the food was still stuck, so it took longer. Mel says seeing that mess first thing would trigger her and send her day downhill.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Routines become automatic

You already lock the door, turn off lights and put the dog away without thinking. Mel says the goal is for these steps to become so automatic that skipping one feels as strange as waking to find the lights left on downstairs. That predictability also signals your brain that it's time to sleep.

- **Borrow from childhood bedtime**

  Mel's parents had a strict routine: bath, footed pajamas, one show or a bit of play, a story, then being tucked in. She says that rhythm made bedtime feel safe and predictable, and adults benefit from the same structure.

- **Small nights add up**

  Mel says she gets worked up because she regrets years of unnecessary stress for herself, her kids and Chris. A better evening makes a better morning, which makes a better day, week, month and year. She says the change comes faster when you support your future self.

The Truth About Love: How to Find It, Keep It, and Let It Go With Jay Shetty | Mel Robbins Podcast

Guest: Jay Shetty
Date: 2023-02-02 · Duration: 1:11:54
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qN06K97RR9o

KEYPOINTS

• Love has three parts: like, respect and commit

Jay Shetty's working definition of love is liking someone's personality, respecting their values, and being committed to helping them achieve their goals. Physical attraction is a given he takes for granted, not something he dismisses. He encourages couples and individuals to write their own definitions and rules. He also notes research that young people experience love mainly as a feeling, and that a more mature prefrontal cortex lets reasoning and self-control shape it.

• 'Liking' means wanting to spend 200 hours with someone

Shetty cites research that a casual friend takes about 40 hours together, a good friend about 100, and a great or best friend about 200 quality hours. So the test of liking someone's personality is whether you're curious and excited enough to want 200 hours with them.

• Respect their values; don't demand they share them

Most relationships, Shetty argues, fall apart because one person tries to mold the other into valuing what they value as much as they do. That's unrealistic. His wife Radhi's top value is family, and his is purpose and service. During the recording she was in London with her grandmother, who had been in the hospital for two weeks. Neither made the other feel guilty, and he'd fly back the moment she needed him.

• Support their goals, not the potential you see in them

Saying 'they could be so much more' is about you, not love. When everyone told Radhi, a vegan chef and food scientist, to open a restaurant, she felt pressure until they sat down and asked whether she actually wanted that. Her answer: maybe someday, not now. His key question: are you helping them to the next step in their journey, or in yours?

• Rule one: learn to be alone, and treat solitude as strength

Citing the theologian Paul Tillich, Shetty notes that we talk constantly about loneliness, the weakness of being alone, but rarely about solitude, its strength. Use time alone to learn what you like. If you wait for someone else to prove you're lovable, you become unlovable the moment they change their mind. People who pour energy into lists of partner qualities often lose themselves in a partner's likes and dislikes within a few years.

• Entering a relationship out of fear of being alone backfires

Shetty says research shows three outcomes: you settle for less than you deserve, you become dependent and mold yourself to someone you see as out of your league, and you're afraid to leave because anything seems better than being alone.

• Parents' 'gifts and gaps' become your map for love

If parents showed up for every recital, you may look for someone endlessly present. If they criticized you or compared you to a sibling, you may hope a partner fills that gap. That's why people keep dating the same type. Shetty's monk lesson: whatever you want from someone else, give it to yourself first, whether compliments, understanding or validation.

• Four phases of love, and the 'contract' behind 'I love you'

The phases are attraction, dreams, disappointments and adapting, and trust. 'I love you' can mean 'forever' to one person and 'tonight' to another, yet we rarely check whether our contracts match. Early sparks, he notes, are excitement mixed with stress ('do they think I'm hot?'). As stress fades into comfort, people mistakenly think the spark has died.

• Watch for the halo effect and the context effect

With the halo effect, we assign people qualities they haven't shown: attractive means trustworthy, smart means organized at home, one kind moment means kind always. With the context effect, studies suggest holding a warm drink on a date raises warm feelings, and weddings or romantic movies make people think 'this could be the one.' He also asks whether they respond at your pace or you're forcing it.

• Partnership vs. ownership: the four C's

Unresolved hurt shows up as comparison, criticism, complaining and control. 'No one in the history of comparison has ever changed because they were compared.' Control often looks like care, such as telling you what to wear or which friends are good influences. Ask whether it's for your growth or their convenience. Shetty admits he judged some of Radhi's longtime friends early on and realized it wasn't his place.

EXAMPLES

• 'She's out of your league'

At 11, bullied for being overweight and Indian, Shetty came to class late to find everyone had told the girl every boy liked that he alone had a crush on her. For a week, girls lined up behind the goal where he played goalkeeper and shouted 'she's out of your league.' As a teen he showed exaggerated passion just to hear he was the best. With an aloof father, the monks became his first male role models, and since monks don't validate you, he learned to validate himself.

• Meeting Radhi at the temple

Six months before leaving to become a monk, Shetty showed a visitor around his temple. She asked him to meet her daughter; he introduced the daughter to his sister instead. The two women became close friends, and after the monastery his sister acted as wingwoman. He later learned Radhi's mother had prayed that day for someone like him. Six months into dating, he snapped back into old habits.

• 'Love me for this'

Fresh out of the monastery with 25,000 in debt and rejections from 40 companies, he tutored economics to pay for dates. As his career took off he kept holding up milestones for Radhi's approval, but she never loved him more for views or downloads. She praised how he handled challenges and criticism. That showed him she loved his essence, and it's why he calls a partner your

'guru': someone who reflects the truth back without judging.

- **Mel's realization about Chris**

  Listening to Shetty, Mel realized she'd been subconsciously steering Chris away from growing the men's retreat he'd run for six years, afraid it would make him too busy for family. She had never asked him what his goal was.

- **The escape room test**

  Early on, Shetty took Radhi to an escape room. He discovered he becomes intense and obnoxious about time ('we've got 55 minutes left!'), while she, a lateral thinker, pushed random things and opened the trap door. 'If your relationship starts like an interview, it will end like a rejection.'

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Reflect after every experience**

  After a project, an outing or time with a group, ask: Did I like it? What did or didn't I like? Was it discomfort or truly bad? You'd never return to a bad restaurant, but people keep going back to the same person.

- **Try the younger-self meditation, in a safe space**

  Picture yourself at 13, embrace that child, say what you needed to hear ('you are enough'), and ask what wisdom they have for you. Shetty warns it can be emotional, so follow it with journaling or a talk. Mel's 13-year-old self asked her to say it every day.

- **Slow down and see them in new settings**

  You can't control the hormones, but you can control the pace. See them weekly rather than daily, meet their friends, and take a class neither of you knows.

How To Know If Your Relationship Is Over & 6 Pieces Of Advice To Make It Work | Mel Robbins Podcast

Date: 2023-01-30 · Duration: 1:00:48
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X9OIlAHm-3Q

KEYPOINTS

• Don't stay 'for the kids'; stay for yourself, or not at all

Answering a listener named Jennifer, who felt the cultural pendulum had swung from 'stay for the kids' to 'leave to be happy', Mel calls staying for the kids the world's worst advice. Kids know when you're miserable and learn a dysfunctional model. A valid reason to stay is your own values: keeping the family intact, and the friendships, community and history you've built together.

• The exit door is usually the easy out, and the answers are usually in the mirror

She worries that people now cut others off quickly and call them toxic. Her clear exceptions: leave if the relationship is abusive, if your partner is narcissistic, or if you're miserable after genuinely trying everything. But bailing to avoid the work carries the habit into your next relationship. She says she doesn't know anyone who truly worked to repair a marriage or friendship and regretted it, but knows many who regret not trying.

• Whatever you'd do after a divorce, do it now

After a split, people get in the best shape of their lives and become more vibrant to attract someone better. Mel asks why not do that now, for yourself. She adds that anyone new comes with 28 years you haven't seen, plus hidden trauma and history, whereas you know at least part of your current partner's story.

• Relationships only work if both people work on them

You can't fix a marriage from one side by fixing yourself. If your partner refuses, therapy alone will change you, but she calls that an 'enduring' marriage, and the person doing the work often grows right out of it. Eventually you may need to say that certain things are non-negotiable if you're going to stay.

• 'Transactional but emotionally sequestered' is how couples become roommates

Their therapist, Dr. Cooper, told Mel and Chris they were excellent at the logistics, like cooking, calendars, parenting and projects, but had lost emotional connection over five to eight years. Mel admits that her resentment over Chris's failing business made her turn on him when he needed her most, a 'quiet quitting' of the marriage.

• Step one: decide to make it better, and treat the marriage like a garden

Wishing it were better is what you're already doing. Committing means scheduling the work. A marriage is a container where you both grow or wither, and small irritations are weeds that are five feet tall after a few days of rain. Talk about them, ask for what you need, and don't harbour resentment. Mel calls their every-other-week virtual therapy better than any date night.

• Step two: get genuinely interested again, and celebrate their wins

Assume there's a lot you don't know about your partner. Mel cites UCLA research finding that how you react to a partner's good news matters more to the bond than how you respond to bad news. Enthusiasm gives a lift, while downplaying it 'leaves a lasting chill.' She now cheers Chris on through his men's retreat, his master's in spiritual psychology and his death doula training.

• Step three: plan fun, because it rarely happens spontaneously

Mel told Chris in therapy that life had become too serious. Fun has to be planned, as it was when you were dating: movies, hikes, dance lessons, concerts, roller coasters, skinny dipping, dinner parties.

• Steps four to six: swap roles, ask for what you need, assume good intent

Mel's anxious habit of planning everything left Chris no room to lead and left her feeling everything was up to her. Ask out loud instead of quietly punishing, and ask what your partner needs. Assume they didn't mean the tone. If you can't even admit your partner is a good person at their core, she says that's your answer.

EXAMPLES

• 'Is Chris okay?'

After a barbecue, a close friend called Mel to say 'the light behind his eyes is gone' and that their usual magnetic connection was missing. Mel later learned Chris was struggling with depression. It came just before they started therapy in 2020.

• 'The Monument'

In therapy Mel learned how isolated Chris had been as a latchkey kid with much older brothers: nobody showed up to his games and he was teased when he asked for things. His family nicknamed him 'the Monument' because he barely spoke for two years. It turned her annoyance at his quietness into a wish to support him.

• Morning sex revealed on national TV

On her daytime talk show, Chris said he prefers being intimate in the morning, which Mel hadn't known after 22 years of marriage.

• The 'trip leader' and the Vegas ring

Their 25th anniversary passed uncelebrated because things were so bad. For their 26th, Mel let Chris plan. He booked a getaway less than an hour away in southern Vermont and gave her new vows and a ring she'd tried on as a lark in Las Vegas, which he'd had a jeweller recreate. It was the first jewellery he'd chosen since her engagement ring.

• Dead flowers on the counter

Returning from week-long speaking trips, Mel would find the flowers she'd bought herself dead in the vase, which felt like nobody had thought of her. Once she asked Chris for $3 grocery-store tulips, he started bringing flowers every time he shopped.

• Muir Woods with 30 minutes to spare

With 90 minutes before a California business meeting, they detoured to Muir Woods at 4:15 p.m. under a looming rain cloud and had the redwoods to themselves. It felt like a Hobbit movie and reminded them to do more of that.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Talk to your partner, not about them**
  Spend at least twice as much time talking with your spouse as you spend complaining to friends or family, and never vent about your partner to your kids. They aren't your therapist.
- **No money for therapy? Use free tools**
  Try free online courses or a book or workbook you go through together. Individual therapy is valuable, but it's work on yourself, not on the marriage.
- **Support separate pursuits**
  A partner who doesn't want to join your dude ranch trip or your Kilimanjaro climb isn't the problem. Mel broke her leg and tailbone being bucked off a horse on a dude ranch trip for her dad's 70th. Have your own friends and hobbies. The real problem is a partner who refuses to address issues in the relationship.

3 Surprising Reasons Why You Have No Childhood Memories ft. Dr. Nicole LePera | Mel Robbins Podcast

Guest: Dr. Nicole LePera
Date: 2023-01-26 · Duration: 1:56:42
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E8MxNR9bmHM

KEYPOINTS

• 'At 32 I realized I was a child in an adult body'

Dr. Nicole LePera's viral post described her life at 32: a PhD, a successful psychology practice, a committed partner, the city she wanted — and a numb, shame-filled lack of fulfillment. Her clients, too, reported getting more stuck and frustrated week after week despite insight. She concluded that stress- and trauma-based conditioning from childhood creates habits that keep people disconnected from themselves, their lives and their relationships.

• Change starts with becoming conscious, then making new choices

Her two-step model: first notice how patterned and automatic you are, which creates a little space; then make new choices outside old habits. Even realizing you feel stuck, numb or 'not alive' is the start of consciousness, she says. She adds that people rarely believe change is possible until they experience it.

• Emotional immaturity is being unable to be with your emotions

She defines it as the inability to feel, process, navigate and regulate emotions. It can look like shutting down — suppressing or repressing feelings — or like exploding, yelling and saying hurtful things, or turning the energy inward in self-harming ways. Mel's image: her emotional development stalled around eight or nine while her body kept growing; Dr. LePera pictures a child in a father's oversized suit.

• It's usually inherited, which is a reason for compassion, not shame

Without an emotionally attuned caregiver who could soothe them, children's nervous systems settle into survival mode, and those patterns persist for decades. Dr. LePera notes the emerging science of epigenetics suggests stress can affect later generations at a cellular level, and that the brain stays neuroplastic, so whenever you notice the pattern is when you can start changing it. She describes the causes of mental-health symptoms as holistic, including the gut's role in neurotransmitters.

• Signs of an emotionally immature parent

Unpredictability and explosiveness, where you're always waiting for the other shoe to drop; physical or emotional absence; parentification, where a child parents siblings or the parent; anxious, boundary-crossing helicopter parenting; or so many walls that there's no connection. Consistent patterns — not a single bad moment — push a child's nervous system into fight, flight, fawn or shutdown.

• Little childhood memory can be a sign you weren't present

Dr. LePera once feared a rare neurological condition and volunteered for a memory study; it turned out her whole family remembers little. Her explanation: if you dissociate to stay safe, you aren't present enough to encode recallable memories, and she says chronically high cortisol in childhood affects the hippocampus, a key memory region. Mel, who couldn't recall visiting her best friend Jodi at Central Michigan University, says hearing this ended her fear that something was wrong with her brain.

• You don't need to remember trauma to heal it

Her view is that you're 'a living memory' of your past: it shows up in reactivity, shutdown and how you relate to people. She defines trauma less by the size of the event than by how supported and safe you were when overwhelming things happened. Her line: childhood trauma doesn't come back as a feeling, it comes back as a reaction.

• A dysregulated body can't relax, however much the mind wants peace

Dr. LePera calls herself 'a hippie at heart' who craved rest yet couldn't sit still on a free Sunday. Tense muscles signal threat to the brain, the mind starts scanning for problems, and she'd end up nitpicking her partner. That's why her workbook starts with reconnecting to the body before exploring the stories you tell or your authentic self.

• Healing often feels worse before it feels better

New choices challenge a subconscious that perceives the unfamiliar as threat, and long-suppressed feelings surface. Feeling more, including discomfort, is often a sign you're healing, she says.

EXAMPLES

• Mel's postpartum depression and her daughter

Mel shared that after a traumatic birth she had severe postpartum depression and was so heavily medicated she couldn't care for her daughter for the first eight weeks; at 29 or 30 she was also volatile and unpredictable. Her now-adult daughter, who says she doesn't feel alive, recalled that distress in therapy. Mel believes she passed on a family pattern of hypervigilance; her kids now tell her 'watch your tone' several times a week.

• Dr. LePera's mother and the planner

Her mother, who largely showed up for her academic wins and softball games, found her high-school planner with notes about drinking and run-ins with police, threw it at her head and collapsed on the bed saying she was having a heart attack. For a child already afraid her older parents would die, it confirmed that causing stress could cause harm. Her mother's usual response was the silent treatment, including about a month and a half after discovering she was gay.

• The tech glitch both women felt in their bodies

When an echo delayed the recording, Mel felt herself sensing her team's nerves and fearing her guest's displeasure — the same reaction she had at eight. Dr. LePera, tired and anxious to be perfect, noticed a childlike wish that the problems would cancel the interview so she could disappear. Both caught it, which they say is the point of practice.

• Daggers out, demanding a hug

Dr. LePera describes walling herself off in her bedroom, then blaming partners for not coming in — like holding out a hand with daggers and demanding an embrace. She left relationships for lack of closeness without seeing that she never shared her real feelings. Her partner Lolly, who remembers everything, often recounts outings she can't recall.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Start with one daily 'consciousness check-in'**

  Anchor it to a phone alarm (say 2 p.m.), brushing your teeth or your morning coffee. When it comes, notice without judgment where your attention was, then 'hook' it to your breath, your five senses or the feeling of your body supported by a chair or the ground. Keep that one small promise for a couple of weeks before adding more.

- **Write a 'future self' intention each morning**

  Dr. LePera journals her intention for the day to counter the autopilot that starts the moment you wake; a sticky note in the bathroom works too.

- **Rethink the silent treatment and the 'good boy' script**

  Repeated silence teaches children that part of them is shameful, often leaving adults panicking whenever someone seems distant. Boys, she notes, often learn that crying or anger is weak; anger is a natural signal of violated limits, and suppressing it can lead to explosions later.

3 Proven Methods to Heal Trauma and Rewire Your Nervous System

Date: 2023-01-23 · Duration: 1:18:36
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=etmtcooHY_g

KEYPOINTS

- **Trauma is the lasting emotional response to a distressing event, and everyone has some**
  Mel's working definition: trauma is 'the lasting emotional response that comes from living through a stressful, distressing, scary or life-threatening event.' On that definition, no one reaches adulthood without it. She stresses that she is not a doctor, therapist or certified trauma specialist. This episode is her personal account, and an expert conversation follows in the next one.
- **Common signs that past trauma is setting off your nervous system**
  Mel lists reactions researchers associate with it: feeling on edge, snapping or getting frustrated over small things, taking things personally, or the opposite pattern of shutting down, feeling unseen and struggling to ask for what you need. Others include trouble focusing because you feel 'the other shoe is about to drop', addiction, disconnection, and retreating into your head. Rewriting a text 15 times and adding an emoji so no one is mad at you is another example she gives.
- **Trauma is personal and stored in the body**
  What counts is how your body experienced an event, not how big it looks from outside. Two people can come out of the same event with different triggers, as Mel and her mother did after a car crash. The body attaches sensations to the alarm and replays them years later, often when you least expect it.
- **'Little-t' trauma counts**
  Beyond 'capital-T' events like disasters, abuse, witnessing death, neglect or combat, Mel describes smaller experiences your nervous system still remembers. Examples include being the only person of your race or religion in class, being called worthless, having to be quiet because Dad's coming home, or constant comments about your body. She dislikes the big-T and little-t labels because 'little' can make people feel their reaction is a defect.
- **You don't need to remember the original event to heal**
  Asked by producer Jesse, who grew up in a happy home and can't name any trauma but tears up or shuts down easily, Mel says the starting point doesn't matter. Many of these imprints may form before age five, before we can put them into words. Your map to healing is noticing the moments in daily life when you feel overwhelmed or triggered.
- **It isn't about blaming your parents**
  Mel says a frightening tone of voice, or no one comforting you when you were tiny, can be enough. That doesn't make the adults bad. The focus is your body's response and your chance to retrain it now.
- **Talking alone may not change a body-level reaction**
  Mel values talk therapy, including couples counseling with Chris, but found she could talk a situation through and still react the same way when triggered. In her case that reaction is lashing out. Her conclusion is that these reactions start in the body as a feeling, not in your thoughts, so repair has to include the body.
- **Your nervous system is like a home's wiring, and trauma is a nick in it**
  The nervous system includes the brain, spinal cord, gut and nerves. When the wiring works, lights dim smoothly and smoke alarms stay quiet unless there's a real fire. Trauma is a mouse chewing a wire, a wall knocked down, or a breaker that keeps tripping. The result is flickering lights, or an alarm beeping at 3 a.m. when nothing is wrong.
- **Repair means learning to switch from fight-or-flight to rest**
  Mel describes two systems: the sympathetic (fight, flight, fawn or freeze) alarm and the parasympathetic state where you relax, focus, feel confident and let in love. The alarm can get stuck on. She argues three years of pandemic uncertainty left many people there. She says she has given more than 150 talks to companies like Microsoft, Starbucks and JP Morgan in the past year, and focus and productivity problems came up everywhere.
- **The vagus nerve is the switch**
  Mel describes the vagus nerve as running through every major organ and the vocal cords, and says 'toning' it signals safety. Humming, singing and chanting work through the vocal cords. She says there are so many studies that she didn't pick one to cite, so treat this as her overview, not a clinical recommendation.

EXAMPLES

- **The fourth-grade ski trip**
  Mel shares, with a content warning, that on a multi-family ski trip she woke on a bottom bunk with an older kid on top of her. She 'left her body.' The next morning, as her mom flipped pancakes and asked how she slept, she saw the kid and froze, then said 'fine.' She traces her alarm response, control issues, busyness and snapping at people back to that moment.
- **Crunchy snow and black ice**
  Driving from western Michigan to a ski weekend up north in a wood-paneled wagon, Mel, her mom and their dog Freckles rolled several times after a passing car swerved in front of them. The radio had just warned about black ice. Mel describes feeling like she was sitting still inside a tumbling dryer. Decades later, the squeak of wet snow on the way to her mailbox brings it all back. Her mom, in the same car, isn't bothered by snow but tenses up at the words 'black ice.'
- **Chris, the latchkey kid**
  Mel's husband Chris didn't think he had trauma. He was the youngest of three, came home to an empty house every day, walked two miles to school and often had no one at his baseball games. Mel connects that to how he shuts down and doesn't voice his needs at 53, and contrasts it with her own lashing out and addiction to busyness. Both, she says, have improved markedly with nervous system work.
- **The tripping ice maker**
  In their Vermont house, a new ice maker trips its breaker three or four times a week. Mel goes to the basement, finds the switch labeled faintly in pencil, and flips it back. She uses it as a picture of an emotional surge causing a shutdown, and of deliberately resetting yourself.

• What Mel has tried

Over four years: individual and couples therapy, EMDR (an eye-movement trauma therapy), cold exposure, several guided psychedelic therapy sessions with psychiatrists, and a therapist-guided session as a family. She says she's a better leader, parent and wife when she isn't on edge.

OTHER RELEVANT

• High-five your heart

Place one hand over the other on the center of your chest, press in, breathe, and say 'I'm okay, I'm safe, I'm loved.' Mel says her team gathered about 164,000 data points from 91 countries on this as a calming tool. She suggests it for kids who get picked on, after a presentation that falls flat, or when someone cuts you off in traffic.

• Use warm baths and short cold exposure as practice

Ending a shower with 30 seconds of cold water, or sitting in very cold water (she cites 34°F) and breathing through it, trains you to calm yourself while alarmed. Mel admits she hates it and says the point is building capacity, not the bath itself.

• Audit your day and journal

Keep a notebook of when a wave of emotion hits and what set it off, stay curious, and later ask when else you've felt this way. Journal prompts she suggests: 'How can I make today peaceful?' and 'How could I make myself feel safe today?' These tools are free and work with or without therapy.

Mindset Reset: Take Control of Your Mental Habits | The Mel Robbins Podcast

Date: 2023-01-19 · Duration: 1:20:52
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ufQEqi4LUZ4

KEYPOINTS

• A mindset works like a pair of sunglasses

Mel defines mindset as your beliefs and opinions about how the world works, and compares it to the tint of a lens. A pessimist on a perfect Bahamas beach only notices that lunch is late. A colleague with a can-do attitude assumes a rude customer is having a hard day. Her key point is that most people don't realise they're wearing glasses at all; they think they're just seeing reality.

• Mindset matters because it decides what you do

Mel's main argument is about action, not feeling good. A dark lens says nobody will hire you after a 20-year gap, or that you can't move from accounting into interior design, so you never update your résumé. A brighter lens says 'what if it works?', and that makes you apply, put the dating app back up, or do the back stretches your doctor gave you.

• This isn't toxic positivity

Mel says nice thoughts won't pay your bills, and a positive mindset won't change discrimination, poverty, mental illness, or life in a country under siege like Ukraine or Iran. What it does is help you face, deal with and survive what's happening. The aim is moving from 'I'm screwed' to 'I can figure this out', for example finally opening student-loan letters you've ignored for 10 months.

• Your brain has a filter, the reticular activating system

Mel describes the RAS as a live network of neurons, a 'hairnet' over the brain, that decides in fractions of a second what reaches your conscious mind. Since you can't consciously process everything coming in through your senses, it works like a nightclub bouncer with a guest list. Whatever it thinks matters to you gets in, and everything else waits outside.

• The filter follows your attention, so negativity reinforces itself

The RAS judges what's important by where you spend your time, energy and thoughts. If you doubt yourself all day, it highlights the one bad email and hides the 32 good ones, and a boss's 'can you stop by my office?' instantly reads as a threat. Mel says your brain isn't against you; it's following your focus. Pointed at small wins, it shows you more of them, which is how she explains why gratitude practices work.

• Two people can see the same situation completely differently

Mel's example is a single friend you see as smart, funny, loyal and attractive, while they're convinced they're unlovable. Their filter shows them every couple in the bar and none of the single people. Each of you believes your view is the truth, and their negative story becomes self-fulfilling as they stop putting themselves out there or settle for someone wrong for them out of desperation.

• Social media feeds work the same way

Explore and discover pages respond to whatever you engage with, whether that's puppies, long nails or a video you clicked by accident, and then show you more of it. Mel's daughter realised her feed had filled up with filtered fitness models in waist trainers, which made her feel bad about a strong, healthy body. Mel's tip is to be deliberate about which accounts you follow.

• Swap 'what if it goes wrong?' for 'what if it works out?'

Mel calls this a 'substitution diet', her name for what researchers call cognitive bias modification: catch a default thought and replace it with a better one. 'What if it works out?' isn't a promise; it's just as uncertain as the negative version, but it pushes you toward action. Her examples include going to 90 AA meetings in 90 days, making 10 cold calls, and knocking on the door of a house before it goes on the market.

• The negative voice often isn't yours

Mel calls her default negativity her 'campaign of misery' and says she learned it as a child. Much of the critical voice comes from parents, other caregivers or a relative who has since died. You can't get rid of those thoughts entirely, but you can notice them without getting hooked. She calls it 'hand-to-hand combat' with your mind and says setbacks will bring the default back at times; she says it happened to her six months earlier.

• 'I'm not good enough' often starts in middle school

Mel says surveys of 250,000 students in her mindset course rank 'I'm not good enough' as the most common negative thought. Her own view, which she labels as opinion, is that even kids from secure homes start sizing themselves up in adolescence (theatre kids, sports kids, rich kids) to avoid rejection. That trains the filter to look for where you don't belong, and adulthood is the chance to retrain it to spot where you fit.

EXAMPLES

• Mel's Bronco moment

Mel's 2014 car kept showing an engine light and costing $500 per repair. Once she started thinking about a new Ford Bronco, she saw them all over her small southern Vermont town, including a colleague's husband's. She'd never noticed one there before. The cars had always been there; her filter just started letting them through.

• The 'everywhere' effect

Other examples: curtain bangs, covered-toe Birkenstocks and chunky Converse once you want them; University of Michigan stickers when you're looking at colleges; pregnant women when you're trying to conceive; couples in love when you're single. Mel says this is evidence that your filter changes in real time.

• The rose-coloured glasses study

Mel cites University of Toronto research suggesting that a good mood literally widens what you take in visually, so people with a 'rosier' outlook may notice more of the world around them.

• Listener questions from Brandy, Peter and a listener in Germany

Brandy asked how to stop spiralling into negative thoughts and reset. Peter asked how to get past self-doubt. A listener in Germany saw two hearts within an hour of trying the exercise, then became afraid to find more. Mel says fear of things getting

better is common after a lot of heartache, and that the old programming is simply outdated.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Do the heart hunt every day**

  Each morning, tell your brain its job is to find a naturally occurring heart shape: in coffee foam, a cloud, a leaf, a rock, bricks or a stain. When you spot one, stop and savour it, and take a photo or keep it. Mel's adult daughters text her pictures of theirs. The point isn't the hearts but proof that you can program what your mind notices.

- **Check your lens honestly**

  Ask what colour your best friend would say your glasses are. Then ask whether your current view of a job, relationship or health problem is actually helping you, or quietly keeping you stuck.

- **Reframes for when you don't feel good enough**

  Try 'I'm a work in progress', 'I can figure it out' and 'the people who love me are the people I need'. Look for the day's wins rather than what went wrong, and spend more time with people who make you feel good.

The Ultimate Guide to Making New Habits STICK | The Mel Robbins Podcast

Date: 2023-01-16 · Duration: 1:01:09
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LN5-RKWPeeI

KEYPOINTS

• Mel is testing these tools on herself in 75 Hard, after quitting it once

For 75 days: no alcohol, a healthy diet (for her, no gluten or dairy), two workouts a day with one outdoors, a gallon of water, a daily progress photo and 10 pages of nonfiction. Miss anything and you restart at day one. Last year she bailed within a week. This time she's six days in, doing it alongside her husband Chris, her daughter and her daughter's boyfriend, and her brother.

• Missing a day doesn't erase your progress, whatever 75 Hard's rules say

Mel stresses that the challenge's restart rule contradicts habit research. Citing Dr. Phillippa Lally at University College London, she says a missed day is just a missed day and the new neural pathways remain. The real danger is the 'what-the-hell effect' Dan Ariely writes about, whose own example is: 'I just had one slice of cake when my goal was no sugar, so what the hell, I'll have a couple more.'

• If you break a promise within hours, check your why

To listener Zoe, who ate birthday cake by noon on New Year's Day after vowing no sweets, Mel says a chronic pattern of quitting fast usually means the goal lacks 'the will.' It isn't personally meaningful, which is about intrinsic motivation, not willpower. Mel's own why: to 'play a bigger game' and break through on personal discipline, test whether dairy or gluten is behind her sinus congestion, and join family members doing it. She hasn't gone 75 days without alcohol since she was 16.

• Stuck? Sign up for something hard

After a breakup, firing, divorce or weight gain, Mel suggests a challenge that pushes you out of your comfort zone: a marathon, an adult beginner swim class at the Y, tango lessons. You can't finish it without changing your habits and systems, and doing so reminds you that you're more powerful than you think.

• Be an 'outie' organizer, not an 'innie'

Her friend Amy's terms: 'innie' organizers keep everything in their heads, while 'outie' organizers put cues out in the world. Since a habit runs on a cue, a behavior and a reward, the trick is to place the cue outside your head. Mel tells listener Ann, who can't stay consistent, that she isn't the problem. Relying on memory and willpower is.

• System 1: make it visible, deciding for your future self

Mel cites Harvard Business School research that we make better decisions when deciding for our future selves. Setting things up the night before also reduces decision fatigue and lowers activation energy, the effort needed to start. Labeled phone alarms count too. She cites research in which twice as many people who received quit-smoking messages quit over six months.

• System 2: get temptations out of sight

Put alcohol in the basement, don't stock the cheese, keep the phone out of the bedroom. Mel argues you wouldn't leave cocaine on the nightstand of someone recovering from addiction, and claims phone dependence is comparable. If kids or roommates need the milk or alcohol, push it to the back or into a cupboard. Making something just slightly less convenient is enough.

• System 3: you can only know you're on track if you track

Mel cites Dr. Benjamin Harkin of the University of Sheffield, whose meta-analysis of 138 studies with nearly 200,000 people, published in Psychological Bulletin, found that monitoring progress increases goal success. Recording it physically or reporting it publicly helps even more. Streaks, like Snapchat or BeReal, tap the same urge not to break a chain.

• System 4: plan, including 'if-then' backups

Mel cites UT Austin research that specific implementation plans make behavior change more likely, and work by Columbia's Heidi Grant Halvorson showing if-then planning raised exercise success from 39% to 91%. Look at your schedule, weather and fridge. 'If it rains, then…', 'If I'm invited to dinner, then I'll offer to bring something gluten-free.'

• System 5: do it in the morning

Mel calls morning action 'the keys to the kingdom': willpower, processing speed and focus are highest in roughly the first four hours, and it's the time you control before kids and work take over. Parents of toddlers may need to wake, and so sleep, half an hour earlier. Getting the phone out of the bedroom, a puppy or an early-rising partner can help.

EXAMPLES

• Mel's visible cues

The challenge list is taped to her bathroom mirror. Her water bottle and nonfiction book sit by the coffee maker overnight. The beverage fridge holds kombucha, non-alcoholic beer and spirits, and seltzers instead of beer and wine. Her workout clothes are on the floor by the bed, 'a giant middle finger to myself' on 37-degree rainy Vermont mornings.

• Google's lidded M&M bowls

When Google offices moved M&Ms from open bowls to bowls with lids, Mel says employees ate three million fewer over a year. She uses it as proof that a tiny bit of friction works, and of decision fatigue.

• The 75 sticky notes

Mel borrowed her daughter's system: a grid of 75 sticky notes numbered on the wall, with one pulled off each evening for a satisfying hit of completion. Mel, 54, prefers paper on the mirror or fridge because she forgets apps.

• Chris's 45-minute walk in horizontal rain

On December 21, driving from New York to Boston for a party with old friends, Chris still owed his outdoor workout. Despite fog and 40-degree horizontal rain, they went to his brother's house, and he walked 45 minutes at 7:30 p.m. in borrowed cotton sweatpants before they went to the party late. Mel calls it integrity and the most attracted to him she's been in 26 years.

• The whole-milk moment and the Jack Ryan stretch

Mel admits she rummaged through the fridge for whole milk and was grateful there was none, so she drank the plant-based creamer. On day four, with no plan for her second workout, she offered to 'stretch' while watching Jack Ryan. Chris put his hands

on his hips and sent her to the treadmill.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Supersize it with community**
  Do it with others: daily check-in texts, Peloton high-fives, a Facebook group. Chris leads a worldwide WhatsApp group for 75 Hard. A woman in Iran posting from her morning walk helped Mel stop complaining about Vermont rain.
- **After a slip, savor it, then reset**
  Mel's advice to Zoe: enjoy the cake, shake it off with a walk around the house, recognize the what-the-hell effect and go straight back to your promise. With tracking, you'll see the gap and can get back on it the next day.
- **Do tomorrow's setup tonight**
  Before bed: lay out clothes, put the water and book where you'll see them, move the phone to another room, and set labeled alarms for vitamins, runs or project time.

The Ultimate Toolkit for CREATING New Habits: The Science Made Easy | The Mel Robbins Podcast

Date: 2023-01-12 · Duration: 1:05:15
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DPMvfxjbvw4

KEYPOINTS

• Fast change comes from identity; the goal takes longer

Listener Sarah asked whether sudden, rapid change is possible or a dangerous myth. Mel's answer: yes, but the quick change is in how you see yourself. Train daily for a first marathon and within days you see yourself as a runner, long before race day. Habits start as things you do, and over time become evidence of who you are.

• A habit is something so automatic there's no drama

Brushing your teeth, checking your shoulder when reversing, turning when you hear your name. Mel's husband Chris is 'Mr. Habit': he rolls out of bed, dresses, meditates, hits the gym, walks the dog and journals without a fight. Her goal is to make any new behavior as effortless as her morning coffee, which she never debates on a rainy day.

• Every habit has three parts: cue, behavior, reward

Mel credits the framework to Dr. Ann Graybiel at MIT and Dr. Wendy Wood at USC, whom she calls the 'grandmothers' of habit research. She says Wood finds almost nobody actually applies it, for two reasons: we get emotional and opinionated about what we 'should' do, and we overcomplicate it. Willpower and brute force, she argues, never make a behavior automatic.

• You learn habits the way a puppy learns to sit

Mel recorded right after a training session with her Australian Shepherd YOLO and puppy Homie. To teach 'sit', you need a cue (the word or a raised fist), the behavior (guiding the dog's rear to the floor) and a reward (a Milk Bone). Trainer Caroline Edgar of Grateful Dogs, pulled upstairs onto the show, agreed it's the same science — and joked that clients ask if it works on husbands.

• Six kinds of cues are already running your life

Sound (the Netflix intro that settles you on the couch); time of day (morning coffee, 6 p.m. wine); location (why your routine falls apart at your mother's house or on vacation); emotional state (boredom triggering snacking, frustration triggering Mel snapping at her kids); the people around you (try staying organized with slob roommates); and things in your environment, like a sticky note.

• You can't remove old triggers, so replace the behavior

If you pour wine at 6 p.m., 6 p.m. isn't going anywhere; your alarm will always ring and someone cooking will always make you hungry. Mel's point is to anticipate the trigger and change your response to it, while proactively adding new cues that make good behaviors obvious.

• The reward is what locks the habit in — and it must come fast

A dog needs a treat within seconds; Mel says research suggests humans should reward themselves within about two minutes. The dog sits not because of the word but because the word makes it think of the Milk Bone; the reward provides dopamine and forms the habit loop. Some habits have built-in rewards (clean teeth, static-free laundry, the thrill of a purchase); for others, like exercise, you have to add one.

• Self-punishment works against you

Caroline explained that punished dogs develop 'learned helplessness' — they stop offering behaviors — or become fearful and aggressive, like a kid who stops raising their hand after being mocked. Mel calls that a description of humans: berating yourself after every attempt kills the desire to try. Reward small attempts instead.

• The 21-day rule is a myth

Mel cites Phillippa Lally's study at University College London, published in the European Journal of Social Psychology, which found habits took between 18 and 254 days to become automatic. Missing a day didn't materially affect the process. Context explains the spread: supportive people, strong rewards, motivation and fun put you near the 18-day end.

EXAMPLES

• The 5:30 a.m. workout and the breakfast burrito

In 2019, as a new TV talk-show host due at the CBS Broadcast Center by 7 a.m. and working until 7 p.m., Mel needed to exercise at 5:30 a.m. Her cues: book the class the night before (the reminder text) and lay out her workout clothes on the floor 'like a giant middle finger from future Mel'. Her reward: coffee from a minimalist café and a homemade chorizo-and-cheese breakfast burrito. Within four or five mornings the alarm made her think 'burrito time', not 'workout'.

• Mr. Noodle and the sticky note

Mel's cat pees in an upstairs bathroom corner when he's upset, so she stuck a note on the door — 'keep the door closed' — as an environmental cue to build a new habit in everyone else.

• YOLO's barking

Mel is training YOLO to stay quiet when visitors arrive, but when he's overwhelmed he barks anyway. Caroline explained that emotional states can block access to skills a pet has learned — just as emotions derail people.

• Mel's 2 p.m. chocolate and other everyday loops

Mel has a small piece of chocolate around 2 p.m. every day. Texting a friend a photo and getting a reply, or laughing at a funny video, delivers the same quick dopamine hit — which is why you keep scrolling.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Pick your 'Milk Bone' before you start

Instead of agonizing over why you can't just journal or quit bread, design the cue and choose a reward you genuinely look forward to, to enjoy within two minutes of finishing.

- **Make it social**
  Mel suggests exercising with a friend: you'll wake up thinking about seeing them, not the walk. Similarly, surrounding yourself with savers makes a money habit easier than hanging out with big spenders.
- **After a lapse, don't restart from zero**
  If you planned 10 minutes of morning light and missed three days, the 15 you already did still count. Mel says the all-or-nothing, 'Navy SEAL' standard is what turns people into chronic quitters.

Feel like quitting? Me too. Before you give up, listen to this. | The Mel Robbins Podcast

Date: 2023-01-09 · Duration: 0:39:48
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oYfkwF9gvPg

KEYPOINTS

• Unhappiness is the gap between expectation and reality

Mel recorded this episode in real time after freezing behind the mic. She had planned to teach the science of habits, a topic she knows by heart, but her mind went blank and she cried. A rough end to 2022, with big plans for the first week of January going sideways, meant the new year felt nothing like a clean slate. Her formula: you feel unhappy when your expectations for how things should be don't match how things are.

• The 'fresh start effect' doesn't always show up

Mel acknowledges research on the fresh start effect, the clean-slate motivation people feel at New Year's or a birthday. This year she felt the opposite: piles of unfinished business from last year still needing to be shoveled. She suspects many listeners feel the same and wants them to know that's normal.

• An 'F-it moment' is a trigger plus a wave of uncomfortable emotion

When you push to change anything, such as health, organization or a bigger goal, some small, silly thing will eventually set off a flood of emotion. You'll want to say 'forget it' and quit. Mel defines the F-it moment as an inability, in that moment, to tolerate uncomfortable feelings, so you numb out, check out or throw in the towel. One small F-it can quickly snowball into a big one.

• F-it moments are a sign you're growing

Mel's reframe is that these moments happen precisely because you're expanding your capacity for new behavior. Shedding old patterns stored in your nervous system sends shock waves through you. Handled well, the moments help you grow, and they pass. 'Life doesn't always give you what you want, but it gives you what you need.'

• Most unhealthy habits are a way to escape uncomfortable feelings

Coaching listener Liza, Mel explains that most addictions and unhealthy habits are triggered by negative emotional states and our inability to tolerate them. Alcohol, for example, becomes a way to numb something scary, such as sadness or a loss of control. Finding the core feeling underneath matters more than the specific slip.

• One slip doesn't erase your progress

Mel says research shows that whether you had three days or 300 days of progress before the slip, it remains in your neural pathways and nervous system. You aren't starting at zero. Beating yourself up is what actually saps motivation, so her first rule is not to make yourself wrong.

• Wring the towel out instead of throwing it in

Mel's image: when emotion rises, picture a towel soaking it up. Breathe, wring the towel out, shake it off and continue. Recognizing 'this is an F-it moment' is the skill, whether you're seven days into quitting dairy and furious at your family or about to end a relationship to avoid a hard conversation.

• Tell people what's going on, with a heads-up

Mel noticed that in her own spiral she kept talking it through with her team, husband and daughter. Her tip is to ask first: 'I'm going through something; do you have capacity for me to vent for a minute?' That way people know it isn't about them and won't get dragged into their own F-it moment.

• You deserve more help than you're willing to ask for

Help might be meetings, a friend who texts you daily to check on your commitment, or a medical screening you've been avoiding. Mel argues that seeking help is a sign of strength and seriousness, not weakness.

EXAMPLES

• 200 unmailed holiday cards set off Mel's spiral

On day four of the 75 Hard challenge (no alcohol for 75 days, a gallon of water daily, two workouts a day, and she added no gluten), Mel woke to a stack of 200 holiday cards still in plastic since early December. It was the first time in three years the family had agreed on a photo. She berated herself: how could she teach habits if she couldn't mail cards? Then she found her ADHD prescription had run out, and her house looked like the Macy's parade had marched through after two weeks with all three kids home.

• What Chris said when she tried to quit

Mel told her team she couldn't record and told Chris and her daughter she was dropping 75 Hard. They said yes, she could. Chris told her she needed a breakthrough by doing something hard for longer than the 30 to 45 days she'd managed before, and that feeling 'F-it' four days in was good because it was pushing her buttons. She went straight to bed, and the next morning had done her workout, half her water and her 10 pages of fiction.

• Liza's slip after about 300 sober days

Liza, who wants to become a health coach, had gone roughly 300 days without drinking. After a parade, a party where everyone was drinking, guilt over snacking, and an unsettling morning at church when a woman fainted (which stirred fears of being alone after her husband dies), she got through the party sober. Back home, she drank champagne bought for her husband's birthday while watching a Lifetime movie.

• Mel's blunt prescription: 90 meetings in 90 days

Mel suggested Liza attend 90 meetings in 90 days and go as a student of discomfort. When Liza hedged ('that's what my friend did'), Mel pushed back that she heard wiggle room, not commitment. Liza admitted drinking had been a coping mechanism since about age 16. Mel's three rules for her: don't make yourself wrong, go to the meetings with an open mind, and stop making yourself wrong.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Ask 'do I want this, or do I just feel uncomfortable?'**
  When a trigger hits, name the feeling and ask whether you actually want the drink, the snack or the exit, or just want the discomfort to stop. The question alone makes the driver conscious.
- **Keep an exciting alternative on hand**
  For anyone cutting alcohol, Mel recommends always having a non-alcoholic wine, beer, spirit or kombucha you like, so you can raise a glass and feel included without breaking your promise to yourself.
- **When you slip, show up tomorrow**
  If you say 'not today,' come back the next day knowing your progress is intact. Mel's closing line: say 'F-it, let's keep going.'

Goal Setting Toolkit: How to Set the Right Goals For You AND Achieve Them | The Mel Robbins Podcast

Date: 2023-01-05 · Duration: 0:57:30
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sDmzLZnghcg

KEYPOINTS

• A goal is an outcome that won't happen unless you do something different

Mel builds the episode on the definition from Dr. Elliot Berkman, co-director of the University of Oregon's Center for Translational Neuroscience. Getting six-pack abs or getting out of debt qualifies; watching the series you're hooked on (Gangs of London, in her house) doesn't, because it takes no effort. Goals naturally involve friction, so expect some resistance.

• Having goals measurably improves daily life

Mel cites research that goals make you happier, dampen negative emotions (University of Wisconsin work suggests even fear and depression), give a sense of purpose, and make life feel easier. She opens by calling herself one of the 81% of people who abandon resolutions.

• Every goal needs a will and a way

In Berkman's research, the 'will' is the motivational why: why does this matter, why change, why now? The 'way' is the informational how: how will it unfold, what skills does it need, what's the plan? Mel notes they rely on different brain systems: the how on executive function in the prefrontal cortex, the why on dopamine reward circuits. New behaviours are rarely as rewarding as old ones like Netflix, so you need both.

• If you don't know what you want, dream bigger, then scale down

Mel's research-backed prompts: let yourself dream big and shrink it into small goals; think about your death, since nobody wishes for more days at work; get quiet, as mindful people set better goals; and look for 'want-to' or self-concordant goals (from Carleton University research) rather than obligations like doing a Whole30 because everyone else is.

• State your goals in the third person

Citing Cornell research, Mel has listeners say their goals aloud using their own name, as in 'Mel would really love to spend more time gardening this year.' She says it sounds more authoritative, as if it's already happening.

• Mistake one: a how with no why

Pressure triggers an inner rebel. Mel joined Dry January from FOMO in past years, lasted two or three days, and then started sneaking drinks and lying about it.

• Mistakes two and three: too many goals, or goals outside the sweet spot

Mel says (her opinion, not a study) the most common mistake is stacking Dry January, Whole30, Spanish, a job change and volunteering into one month, so stick to one to three goals. Then aim for the Goldilocks zone. Dreams are big and open-ended; goals must be small, specific and timed. She cites Florida State, BJ Fogg's Stanford habit work, UC Riverside on keeping some ambition, and a German study showing that missing a too-high goal hurts self-esteem.

• Mistake four: too vague; ask how you'll know you've succeeded

Columbia's Dr. Heidi Grant Halvorson suggests one question: when will you know you've succeeded? It made Mel realise her gardening goal was really to grow dahlias for the first time and cut a bouquet for a vase by her sink.

• Mistake five: skipping a high-low range

Mel cites a Florida State finding that a goal of losing two to four pounds is easier to hit than three pounds. Ranges feel more achievable while still stretching you.

• Pursuit matters more than arrival

Working toward goals creates the happiness; achieving them gives a brief high and then you climb back down the mountain. Mel calls the belief that you'll finally be happy once you get the job or lose the weight the 'arrival fallacy,' and points to Olympians and movie stars who struggle after their biggest wins.

EXAMPLES

• Mel's three goals, refined live

She starts with 'garden more,' 'stop drinking for a while' and 'journal every morning.' By the end they are: grow one to 10 dahlias from seed; no drinks on 75 of 90 days, ambitious given Valentine's Day and a big late-January gathering, but not the year that would feel like a punishment; and journal five to seven days a week.

• Her real why for going alcohol-free

Even one beer to signal that work is over was making her tired and hurting her sleep. She wants to see what removing alcohol does for her focus, downtime, brain fog and menopause symptoms.

• The coffee-card study

In research Mel credits to the University of Chicago, customers with a 12-stamp card that already had two stamps filled finished faster than those with a blank 10-stamp card, despite needing the same 10 purchases. Mel calls the effect 'incremental illusion': early progress motivates.

• Daughter Sawyer's rut

Working remotely for over a year and a half, never at the office or holiday parties, Sawyer felt every day was the same. Mel's prescription: goals break up the monotony and give you something to look forward to.

• Telling the right person helps

Mel says new Ohio State studies found that sharing a goal with someone you admire raises commitment and performance, contradicting a widely reported 2009 study suggesting that telling people backfires.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Watch for perfectionism disguised as ambition

Mel says it shows up as setting a goal and quitting before you start, analysing endlessly, or avoiding situations where you might fail. Vowing to exercise two hours a day, every day, is her example of failing before you begin.

- **Make the first milestone trivially easy**

  Count steps already taken (Chris gave Mel a dahlia book for the holidays), then do something small like a search or five minutes of journaling.

- **Start the moment you finish listening**

  Mel cites a University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine study finding that starting right away produced the most change, so don't wait for Monday.

- **Re-run this process every quarter**

  Mel suggests revisiting it whenever you feel stuck, such as before graduation, after a divorce, or when you need to reinvent yourself.

The One Science-Backed Habit You Need This Year | The Mel Robbins Podcast

Guest: Chris Robbins
Date: 2023-01-02 · Duration: 0:59:20
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sIFnYopQdtc

KEYPOINTS

• Self-love is an action, not a feeling

Answering Maria from Spain, who asked how to love herself, Mel argues we get stuck because dictionaries define love as a feeling. You feel loved by others because of what they do, like Chris bringing her coffee or saying 'I love you, Mel.' So the way to love yourself is to show it through your own actions toward yourself.

• The high five habit in brief

After brushing your teeth, put the toothbrush down, look the person in the mirror in the eye, and when you're ready, high-five your reflection. Pairing it with brushing your teeth is habit stacking, which Mel says helps your brain encode it faster. It takes less than five seconds and requires no particular thoughts.

• Looking yourself in the eye is the hard part

Mel says her own research found that about half of men and women can't or won't look at themselves in the mirror, often because of regret or disappointment in who they've become. Others look through themselves or straight at what they dislike (weight, eye bags, in Mel's case one breast hanging lower). Holding a loving gaze is what we do with people we love, so avoiding it each morning amounts to rejection.

• Neurobics: pairing movement with a new thought

Mel cites research she associates with MIT and elsewhere showing that combining a physical action with a new positive thought is the fastest way to build new neural pathways. She says a high five also comes with a lifetime of positive associations (cheering, encouragement, 'shake it off'), so the gesture does the work and gives a dopamine boost even if you don't believe anything nice about yourself yet.

• Self-criticism blocks self-forgiveness

To Teresa, who asked how to stop beating herself up over past mistakes, Mel says we waste years because we don't know how to accept failures and regrets. Looking at yourself with compassion every morning is where forgiveness begins. As Chris puts it, forgiving yourself while walking down the sidewalk is futile, because the mirror is where it happens.

• If you can't love yourself, you can't accept love from others

Mel argues that if your own actions toward yourself say you're unworthy, you'll deflect the love around you. It's part of why she ends every episode with 'I love you,' knowing many listeners rarely hear it.

• Repetition matters more than perfection

Chris says transformation requires repetition. During his challenge he high-fived himself at every mirror, not just at the sink, and expects life to knock the habit off course sometimes, just like exercise or sleep. The point is to come back to the moment of 'partnership with myself.'

• Men often feel unseen

Chris, who has led the Soul Degree men's retreats for six years, says men rarely feel truly seen and heard, and tend to put the wife, kids and employer first, squeezing in a workout. Slowing down enough to look yourself in the eye can feel close to impossible for many men, so he wants partners and parents to know that.

EXAMPLES

• Mel stumbled on it after losing her talk show

Mel started instinctively high-fiving the mirror after effectively being fired from hosting her talk show. She felt an immediate lift, which became the first domino toward intensive therapy and taking her happiness seriously.

• 175,000 people, 91 countries, five days

Mel says her own challenge, in which about 175,000 people in 91 countries tried the habit for five days, showed breakthroughs in under five days. People typically laugh the first time, she says, partly because it feels dorky and partly because the brain recognises a high five.

• The NBA and math-test studies

Mel cites a study, echoed by The Wall Street Journal, finding that the top four NBA teams had more high fives, fist bumps and pats on the back in the preseason than losing teams. In another study, children facing hard math problems were most motivated by a silent high five, more than praise or growth-mindset language, and researchers retitled the paper to highlight 'the surprising motivational power of a high five.'

• Chris: 'The high five was easy; looking at myself was not'

Chris initially called the idea ludicrous. When he tried it, he saw failure: about 15 years of feeling he hadn't succeeded as a provider, a restaurant business unravelling, and the image of his father in a suit catching the train to a Manhattan high-rise. He later recognised he'd been battling depression. Mel, who stood at the next sink for years seeing a great dad and partner, had no idea. Today he says he sees a man he loves and is proud of.

• A listener named Chris and her anxiety voice, Patrice

A 35-year-old woman wrote that in 2020–21 her life fell apart. She gained 35 pounds, lost hours to TikTok, numbed herself with wine, had panic attacks and named her anxious inner voice Patrice. While cleaning a glass slider door at a client's house, she heard Mel say to high-five the mirror, did it at a big round mirror, and cried. She entered therapy in December 2021 and says she's herself again.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Start tomorrow after brushing your teeth

Look, hold your gaze until it stops feeling weird, then high-five. Do it for five days in a row before judging it.

- **Use every mirror**
  Like Chris, treat any mirror you pass as a chance to see someone worth cheering for, not to inspect flaws.
- **For men, start with forgiveness**
  Chris's message to men carrying failure, addiction or depression is to begin with yourself and forgive the choices you made with the tools you had. You're not alone in the struggle.
- **It's not a cure**
  Chris notes that when you're depressed, a high five can feel like the last thing you'd want to do. Mel presents it as a first domino alongside therapy, not a replacement.

8 Simple, Research-Backed Changes That Will Change Your Life | The Mel Robbins Podcast

Guest: Tracey
Date: 2022-12-29 · Duration: 0:44:11
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iVBqNSzRLys

KEYPOINTS

• A research-hour episode with Mel's head of research
Mel introduces Tracey, who has led research for Mel's Audible productions, books and corporate courses for clients like Starbucks and LinkedIn. Tracey often pushes back when a popular study 'technically does not say that.' Together they walk through eight recent studies, each tied to one small behavior change you can start immediately.

• 1. Small acts of kindness matter more than we assume
Tracey describes research from the University of Texas at Austin and the University of Chicago titled 'A Little Good Goes an Unexpectedly Long Way.' It found that people underestimate how much a small kindness means to the person receiving it, and that this underestimation is why random acts of kindness are less common than we think. The giver ends up happier too. Examples include smiling, waving someone into traffic, or looking a barista in the eye to say thank you and tip.

• 2. Lowering slowly builds strength
A study from Edith Cowan University in Australia, with teams in Japan and Brazil, focused on eccentric contractions, the lowering half of a movement. As Tracey summarizes it, a three-second eccentric contraction once a day can increase muscle strength. Mel demonstrates by lowering slowly into a chair and holding an inch above the seat. She notes that when lifting weights she has focused only on the lift, which the research suggests matters less than the controlled lowering.

• 3. Birdsong lifts mood, even through an app
A King's College London study published in Scientific Reports, nicknamed 'Feeling Chirpy', gathered about 20,000 assessments over four years. As described in the episode, hearing or seeing birds was linked to improved mental wellbeing lasting up to eight hours, in healthy people and people with depression. The researchers separated the effect from trees, plants or water, and recordings counted too. Mel wonders whether it reflects evolution, since our ancestors tracked migratory birds.

• 4. Mindfulness matched medication for anxiety in one trial
A Georgetown University Medical Center study in JAMA Psychiatry compared the antidepressant Lexapro with mindfulness-based stress reduction, such as body scans and gratitude journaling, in people with anxiety. Tracey reports that the drop in anxiety was comparable. She adds that the researchers still stress medication has a role, and that the approaches can work together. Mel's theory: anxiety pulls you into a feared future, and writing what you're grateful for pulls you back to the present.

• 5. Don't rely on willpower; set up your environment
A University of Pennsylvania and University of Michigan study of about 20,000 high schoolers preparing for the SAT accounted for socioeconomic status and prior achievement. Students who used strategies did better than those who relied on willpower. The strategies were disabling their phones, studying in a distraction-free place, and scheduling study blocks. Willpower fades, so Mel suggests applying this to any high-stakes preparation.

• 6. Taste and smell can bring back happy memories
Lancaster University researchers asked older adults to recall a treasured memory, then 3D-printed matching tastes and smells onto edible strips, like wedding food, a curry or childhood strawberries. Participants were vividly transported back. The researchers see this as a way to deliberately revisit positive memories.

• 7. Tiny 'mundane secrets' can strengthen a relationship
Research from Indiana University, the University of Connecticut and Duke found about 90% of people recently hid a minor consumer behavior from someone close. Examples: a small online purchase, a slice of cake, watching ahead on a shared show. The small guilt that follows often motivates people to invest more in the relationship, and partners often keep the same secret, like two 'vegetarians' each eating meat on their own. The researchers' definition excludes anything that hurts the partner, like betrayal or a shopping addiction.

• 8. The highest-impact habit is being kind to yourself
Tracey and Mel say the research is conclusive that daily self-kindness has the biggest effect on happiness, meaning and sense of purpose, and yet it's the habit we practice least. Mel previews a full follow-up episode on how to make it a habit.

EXAMPLES

• The music teacher who asked 'Are you okay?'
A reader comment on a New York Times article about the kindness study: a child living in poverty with an abusive parent was stopped in the hallway by a music teacher, who asked if he was okay, shared his lunch, and said, 'You're in a bad spot, but it doesn't have to be your life.' Thirty years later, the commenter says the cycles of abuse and poverty were broken for them, their partner and their children.

• Skip the pay-it-forward line
Mel shares a former barista's post saying pay-it-forward chains confuse busy coffee shops. Instead, thank the person making your coffee and tip them what you would have spent on the stranger's drink.

• Mel's go-to kindnesses
She compliments people's nail art, because they clearly put effort into it, and thanks people cleaning public bathrooms 'for taking care of us.' Most people are floored, she says.

• Tracey closes the laptop
While finalizing the newsletter, Mel was online shopping in another tab. Tracey silently shut her laptop and pushed it away, and they finished quickly.

• The cologne and the math class

Mel recalls a story from a book on trauma, by a psychiatrist she doesn't name: a high schooler's grades and behavior collapsed in one math class because the teacher's new cologne matched the one his abuser had worn. When the teacher stopped wearing it, the problem ended.

• A signature scent at the altar

Tracey, who is engaged, was advised by a recently married friend to choose a scent for the altar. The friend used a large arrangement of her favorite flowers plus a sprayed fragrance, so she can revisit the moment for life. Tracey suggests the same for any big occasion.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Eight small changes to try

Do one small kindness. Lower slowly into a chair once a day. Play birdsong. Write down what you're grateful for. Silence your phone and schedule focused blocks. Choose a scent for big moments. Go easy on yourself about harmless secrets. Practice self-kindness.

• Mel's 2:13 pause

She sets a daily 2:13 p.m. phone alarm labeled 'stop' as a cue to breathe and do nothing for a moment, a simple mindfulness practice.

• Keep medical decisions with your clinician

The anxiety trial compared mindfulness with medication, and the researchers still see a role for medication. Don't change a prescription without talking to your prescriber.

3 Lessons From One of the Hardest Years of My Life | The Mel Robbins Podcast

Date: 2022-12-26 · Duration: 0:54:15
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tTVW9ckd89g

KEYPOINTS

• Mel rates the past year a 97 out of 10 for difficulty

Even as the podcast took off, Mel says she was burnt out after years of running on adrenaline, and felt more unhappy the more successful she became. For two years she lived alone in Boston while Chris and their son stayed with her mother-in-law three hours away in southern Vermont, where Oakley chose to attend school during the pandemic. A close person in her inner circle had been stealing from her and lying. She wasn't exercising, reached for alcohol to cope, and says photos show her looking 'grey like a dolphin.'

• Lesson one: life is always trying to teach you something

Mel rejects the 'life is happening for you' cliché she used to hate, but reframes it as school. Easy times teach you what works; hard times show you what's broken. She calls herself a stubborn student: ignore the lesson and life brings out the sledgehammer.

• Friction marks where the lesson is

Anywhere you feel friction (body, relationships, work, bank account) points to one of a few things: a broken process, broken relationships, the wrong people around you, or something no longer aligned with who you are. Mel says friction only grows until you address it. Looking back, she sees years of excusing people who lied to or betrayed her, until the betrayals got big enough to force the lesson.

• Friction even shows up in children

When Oakley was in fourth grade he had full-on tantrums at homework time, cried before school and banged his head on the kitchen island. His body knew something was off. It turned out to be profound dyslexia, dysgraphia, and executive-function and attention issues.

• Lesson two: your excuses are just fear

Too late, too old, too young, missed the window, would be a copycat: Mel says every excuse is fear of rejection, failure or disappointing others. Her examples include not going back to the gym because it's been three months, or skipping white kitchen cabinets because a friend already has them.

• Action is the answer to excuses

Mel says you can reverse-engineer what others did and take one step a day. She finally launched the podcast when she got sick of the friction and denying herself the dream, deciding she didn't care if nobody invited her on their show or if it failed. You're doing it for yourself, not for money or to impress anyone.

• Lesson three: change isn't easy, but it's worth it and you're capable

Go in expecting difficulty. Selling the Boston house where they raised their kids for 26 years, to end the split living, triggered a wave of grief and what Mel calls a big mental breakdown. With therapy and her first antidepressant in 20 years, she got through it. She openly credits Celexa as a ladder and says there's nothing wrong with needing medication.

• Mel ran her career like an emergency for a decade

Her success began in crisis: liens on the house, bills unpaid, and Chris having left his business, getting sober and depressed. She says she never left that 'say yes to everything to stay afloat' mode and always assumed her luck would run out, which is why she eventually hit a wall.

• Even marriage fights can be broken processes

Mel says most breakdowns with Chris come from a communication process failing: he retreats, she keeps going 55 miles an hour, and he feels rejected or taken advantage of. That doesn't mean they're bad people or the marriage is bad. It means a process needs fixing.

EXAMPLES

• The 'things I hate / things I love' page

On December 21, after Mel's friend Pete told her she sounded more miserable than he'd ever heard, he had her draw a line down a page: things she hates on the left, things she loves on the right. Her left column included packing up on Sundays to drive home alone, flying and working alone, generating every idea herself, ADHD-driven disorganisation with no admin support, never seeing friends, and not knowing how her work connected to something bigger. The right side included therapy, time with Chris and Oakley, building a house and the future podcast.

• Begging podcast hosts who never replied

Promoting The High Five Habit a year earlier, Mel recorded custom videos asking the biggest podcast hosts she admired to have her on. Mostly crickets, which she took as proof she'd never make it in podcasting. A year later her show was, she says, the number one education podcast on every platform.

• Jealousy as blocked desire

In The High Five Habit (page 111), Mel admitted being jealous of friends like Lewis Howes, seven years into The School of Greatness. She got her start on a Saturday-morning Boston call-in radio show paid $25 an hour to help cover groceries, and had wanted to return to audio since 2007.

• Oakley streaming to nobody

Oakley loved streaming video games and giving advice but quit for two years after a school move, fearing what new classmates would think. After positive feedback on a podcast appearance, he started again from a closet upstairs with no viewers, telling Mel it takes time and you have to show up consistently.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Make your own two-column list, ideally with a truth-telling friend

Getting friction out of your head and onto paper makes it something you can work on. Also honour what's working and do

more of it.

- **Expect whack-a-mole**
  Mel's left column filled up again with new things. New friction will always show up, so treat lessons as ongoing rather than a one-time fix.
- **Ask for help without shame**
  Whether it's people, medication or new habits, Mel says asking for help is something to be proud of. Don't wait for a breakdown to make the list.

A Toolkit for Families: Practical Wisdom That Makes You Closer | Mel Robbins Podcast

Guest: Chris, Sawyer, Kendall & Oakley Robbins
Date: 2022-12-22 · Duration: 1:00:17
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RXjHfBcI-XE

KEYPOINTS

• 'You will never get in trouble for telling the truth', and the parents actually kept that promise

Sawyer says this rule is the main reason all three kids talk so openly with Mel and Chris. Her friends' parents said the same thing and then grounded them anyway. The Robbins parents did what they said. Mel argues that most parents mean the line until the call comes about a blackout or a police-raided party, and then emotion takes over. Following through is the whole point.

• Mel's number one parenting goal was to be the people the kids came to

She wanted her 13- to 16-year-olds to talk through what they were worried about or wanted to try with adults who would listen, not with other teenagers who 'don't know what the hell they're doing.' Mel didn't grow up with this. The message she got as a child was that trust takes a long time to build and two seconds to shatter.

• Hearing is not the same as listening

One of the daughters draws the line clearly. Lots of parents hear 'I want to go to this party' or 'I slept with someone before I was ready,' but they've already decided the answer. Her parents took in how the kids felt, empathized, and loosened the reins enough to let them fail. Another sibling adds that when a parent's mind is made up before the talk starts, kids learn to be sneaky, and resentment follows.

• Connection first, correction dead last

Mel and Chris say they never aimed to be their kids' friends. Mel describes the job as helping kids figure out who they are: thinking through decisions, finding their own values, feeling the weight of consequences, and eventually leaving to build their own lives. Chris notes that this meant listening respectfully even to ideas that were immature, dangerous or irritating.

• Set guardrails around character, not activities

The kids say their parents' firm lines were about morals: be kind, hold the door, say thank you, learn the waiter's name. Nothing dangerous, self-destructive or discriminatory was ever allowed, and drinking and driving was off the table. Other families, they say, set rules about activities, like no drinking on weekends, and those rules mostly taught kids to hide.

• Showing your feelings makes it safe for kids to show theirs

The kids have seen both parents cry at the dinner table over a bad day at work or a hard talk with a friend. Sawyer, 23, says many of her friends have never seen their parents cry, and that a constant brave face tells kids they aren't allowed a bad day. Mel adds a limit: be open about your life, but keep things like the details of your marriage private.

• Kids are truth-tellers and lie detectors

Mel says honest communication works because what parents say has to match what kids actually experience. When she or Chris was upset, they said so up front with 'this is not about you,' so the kids didn't blame themselves for their parents' moods.

• Go to your kids instead of dragging them to you

Mel's main takeaway is to do what your kids love, even if you don't, and to welcome their friends. Kendall wishes they'd done more girls' outings, like painting pottery, the pumpkin patch or shopping. Sawyer says the teenage stretch when friends matter more than family is a phase, and that family comes back, especially once kids leave for college.

• Repair is always possible: tell your kids directly

A listener named Buffet asked how to make peace with past parenting mistakes. Kendall's answer: tell your adult kids you feel you messed up and want to connect. Mel models what that could sound like, for example 'I regret that I wasn't around more,' or 'I regret we were struggling so badly financially that I couldn't afford those things.' She says it's more useful than processing it all with your friends or spouse.

EXAMPLES

• Sawyer and the handle of vodka

The first time Sawyer drank, she finished a whole handle of vodka and woke up covered in vomit on the window bench, sure she was 'dead meat.' On the screened-in porch, her parents told her they would never punish her for something they had also done as kids. Her only 'punishment' was going to a lacrosse tryout anyway. She says that talk opened the door for good.

• Chris takes Oakley to PAX East

Chris doesn't play video games. He still offered, unprompted, to take Oakley to the PAX East gaming convention, where they walked the booths and played together. Oakley says it made him feel there was nothing wrong with what he enjoyed. The family also recalls Oakley trying gymnastics, diving, soccer and lacrosse for half a season each, while his parents simply asked what he wanted to try next.

• A miserable freshman year at Boston College

One of the kids describes going to BC with a boyfriend at Michigan, making only one friend all year and crying daily to be picked up 20 minutes away. Her parents made her stay the year. Sophomore year turned into the best year of her life. Mel's script for this situation: 'I hear you, that is hard. We're paying tuition, so you finish the year. If you're that miserable, put the energy into transfer applications.' Mel's practical push was to knock on someone's door or DM someone to get lunch, and it worked.

• The boyfriend no one liked

When Sawyer's parents first said she should break up with someone, she pulled away. When they switched to inviting him for dinner and framing their worry as 'you're not yourself around him,' the question 'who am I in this?' stayed in her mind until the end. Oakley describes hiding a girlfriend in his room to keep her comfortable, and says his parents' gentle comments stayed with him the same way.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Keep asking, and accept silence**

  For a listener with a four-year-old, the kids recommend a warm, genuinely curious invitation to share, over and over. If kids don't answer, that isn't a crisis. The asking itself tells them you're there.

- **Ask 'Do you want me to listen or give advice?'**

  Mel says nine times out of ten her kids just wanted her to listen, and then worked their way to a solution on their own. Don't rescue kids or let them bail on discomfort. Mel warns that letting them escape every hard situation raises their anxiety.

- **When a child is excluded, promise to listen, not to act**

  For a 12-year-old crying over her friend group, the kids suggest sharing a similar story from your own school days first. Then make clear you won't call teachers or scold anyone, because kids fear a parent stepping in will make the bullying worse.

- **Stop grounding, and keep their secrets**

  One of the kids says her grounded friends went straight back to parties, doing twice as much. Talk through why it upset you instead. The kids also insist that what a child tells one parent shouldn't reach the other parent, a friend on your walk, or anyone else.

This Is The ONE Thing You Should Do This Week | The Mel Robbins Podcast

Date: 2022-12-19 · Duration: 0:43:40
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pyug7UHnmkU

KEYPOINTS

• The one assignment for the week: do nothing

Recorded during the week between Christmas and New Year's, this episode asks you to do nothing on purpose, whether for a minute, a day or a week. Mel admits she is "addicted to being busy" and finds it hard herself. She says constant doing keeps your mind spinning, drains your energy and stops you being present, and that moments of nothing are how you refuel.

• Doing nothing isn't just for the privileged

Mel's first reaction to "just do nothing" is irritation: she has a company to run, bills to pay and kids at home. She speaks directly to people caring for young kids or ageing parents, working several jobs or night shifts. For them, doing nothing might mean finding five minutes or pushing the to-do list to next week.

• Most "achievement" online is staged

Answering Jenny, a single parent of two who feels hopeless surrounded by achievers, Mel uses The Home Edit as an example: stylists and production assistants create those colour-coded pantries, and nobody's pantry looks like that 24 hours later. Rule one is to stop measuring yourself against impossible standards online.

• Only advice you adapt to your life will work

Mel points out that many self-help voices are single, child-free, or men with a full-time partner at home. Advice from a 30-something with hours a day to exercise won't fit her life with three kids, two dogs, ageing parents and ADHD. She doesn't have three hours for a morning routine and is lucky to get 30 minutes. So she adapts: 15 minutes instead of two hours, three walks a week instead of marathon training.

• Stop calling rest "guilt"; it's an unfamiliar pattern

Mel says what we feel when we sit down isn't guilt. It's weirdness: not knowing what to do with your hands or thoughts, because you have a long-standing pattern of staying busy. A world of phones, endless TV and emails also makes feeling needed a way to feel important and connected.

• Quieting your mind is harder than sitting still

Mel separates physical doing nothing from mental doing nothing. Zoning out on the couch with a show counts if your phone and to-do list are out of reach. But sit still for five minutes and your thoughts race: the wall needs paint, the sheets need washing. She compares it to the mice in the walls of her old Sherborn farmhouse, who started a parade the moment the lights went out.

• Beginners need help to quiet their thoughts

Mel doesn't tell novices to sit and meditate alone. She notes that her husband Chris is the meditation instructor, while she prefers moving mindfulness. Use free guided meditations through apps like Calm or Headspace, YouTube, Spotify or ASMR, or build a playlist that quiets your mind.

• Laziness, procrastination and excuses aren't doing nothing

Truly lazy people don't beat themselves up, and Mel says that's fine if it works for them. Procrastination is a stress-triggered habit of avoiding tasks that need brainpower. She says research shows that starting is the cure, using her 5 Second Rule (5-4-3-2-1), because about 80% of the time you'll keep going once you begin. Excuses are actively talking yourself out of something. All three are busy states, while intentional nothing is a deliberate reset.

EXAMPLES

• The grocery store detour

Picked up by Chris at Albany airport after nearly a week away, including a visit with their daughter in LA, Mel immediately suggested stopping at the grocery store, even though he had already gone twice that week. She caught herself: why not just sit in the truck, go home, and enjoy their son and the dogs?

• 35 minutes of scrolling after cribbage

After a quiet evening by the fire playing cribbage, which Chris won, he went to bed. Mel sat scrolling Instagram for 35 minutes, comparing herself to other people's businesses and purchases, when she could have been asleep.

• Emails in the bath, phone at the nail salon

Mel admits she answers emails in the bath and scrolls with wet nails while the manicurist tries to keep her hands still. For her, doing nothing means a hot bath without even a book.

• A family line of nonstop workers

Her grandmother grew up in an Ohio coal-mining town and was sent to New Jersey to work as a maid. She met Mel's Austrian-born grandfather, a Navy veteran, and they ran a bakery around the clock. The other side of her family were cattle farmers with a produce stand. Mel jokes that sitting down isn't "in my DNA."

• "He doesn't have children"

Envying a friend's three-month book tour, Mel complained to her sister-in-law and COO, Christine. Christine pointed out that he doesn't have kids, and that Mel will never match what a single man or a 23-year-old can do while she has ageing parents, three kids and a business.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Set a daily 2:13 pm alarm

Label it "take a breath, do nothing for one minute." Mel compares it to restarting a glitchy phone that has been on for three weeks: an intentional unplug that restores energy and interrupts the chaos.

• Pair the minute with music

Mel plays a trippy, yoga-style track she likes, which she calls "Genesis," and focuses on the sound so her racing thoughts fade. Choose whatever music quiets your mind.

• **Picture your own version of nothing**

Ask yourself what an hour of nothing would look like, such as a bath, a fire or lying on your bed, and then try a small piece of it this week without your phone. One minute is a good enough place to start.

5 Tools For a Better Brain & 3 Daylight Savings Hacks from Dr. Amen | The Mel Robbins Podcast

Guest: Dr. Daniel Amen
Date: 2022-12-15 · Duration: 1:08:49
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bzN77yhhLzw

KEYPOINTS

• Your brain's physical health creates your mind

Psychiatrist Dr. Daniel Amen dislikes the term "mental illness" and prefers "brain health issues," since the brain's physical functioning produces your thoughts and moods. Alzheimer's scans make this obvious, and he says COVID's brain inflammation is linked to a raised chance of new psychiatric symptoms in the months afterward. The effects are quick: sleep well tonight and your mind is better tomorrow; get drunk and it's worse.

• Three steps: brain envy, avoid what hurts it, do what helps it

"Brain envy" means actually caring about the three pounds between your ears. He contrasts it with his home town of Newport Beach, where people lavish attention on their faces and bodies instead. The second step is to know what harms the brain; he says most second graders would score 90% on a list of 100 brain-damaging things. The third is to do brain-helping things regularly.

• The "mother tiny habit": is this good or bad for my brain?

Developed after six months working with Stanford behavior scientist BJ Fogg, the habit is to pause for three seconds at each decision and ask whether it's good or bad for your brain. He says to answer it "with information and love": love of yourself, your family and your mission. It's his one recommendation if you only adopt a single change.

• Serotonin and dopamine counterbalance each other

He says low serotonin makes people worried, rigid, argumentative and quick to feel disrespected, which can look selfish but is really inflexibility. About 90% of the body's serotonin is made in the gut, but the brain makes its own from tryptophan, which needs a carbohydrate to reach the brain, so turkey with sweet potato works. When serotonin rises, dopamine tends to fall, which is why some patients on SSRIs feel happier but stop caring. One stopped doing his taxes, and Dr. Amen had to rebalance his medication.

• Drip dopamine, don't dump it

Dopamine is "the molecule of more." Cocaine, alcohol, nicotine and vaping, scary movies and new love all dump it, and he argues phones, social media and video games wear out pleasure centers over time. Instead, seek micro-moments like holding hands and eye contact. With new love, enjoy it but hold off on big decisions. He says signs of low dopamine include tiredness, low motivation, poor concentration and impulsivity, and the brain can recover within months.

• Chronic stress hormones shrink memory and add belly fat

Cortisol is essential, but he says chronically high levels from stress and negativity put fat on the belly and shrink the hippocampus, the brain's memory center. During his own grief about 17 years ago, he couldn't remember names. He argues news outlets profit from negativity because the brain notices threats first, so limit your consumption. Meditation, prayer, hypnosis and regular relaxation help, as does asking whether something is worth losing brain cells over.

• Don't believe every thought you have

He was 28, a psychiatry resident at Walter Reed, before a professor taught him this. Growing up as one of seven children, his mind used to "torture" him. He calls negative self-talk "ANTs," automatic negative thoughts, and treats thoughts like weather: suffering comes from attaching to them. The question he'd tattoo on himself is "Is it true?"

• Chronic tiredness has many possible causes

First get your thyroid checked, along with anemia and iron or ferritin. He looks at four areas: biological (infections, gut, hormones, sleep apnea, which he says both men and women should be checked for if they snore or stop breathing at night), psychological (ANTs driving up cortisol), social (conflict and unforgiven hurts) and spiritual (purpose, which he links to more dopamine).

• Muscle and brain reserve decide how you weather a crisis

At 68, Dr. Amen says strength lowers Alzheimer's risk and that frailty kills many older people. Muscle is your protein reserve, and the reserve you bring into an illness or accident often determines how you come out. He suggests walking "like you're late" about 45 minutes four or five times a week, plus strength training.

EXAMPLES

• Chloe's game and the orange juice test

With his young daughter Chloe, he'd call out foods: blueberries got "two thumbs up, God's candy," avocados "God's butter," Frosted Flakes "way too much sugar," and heading a soccer ball an eye-roll ("brain is soft, skull is hard"). Second graders he tested got only orange juice wrong, which he says is the sugar of four oranges.

• Supplements and the bonefish study

He takes a high-quality multivitamin and cites new placebo-controlled research in which a multivitamin, not cocoa extract, improved memory in people with memory problems. He says his clinics found 98% of people not taking supplements had suboptimal omega-3 levels, and omega-3s make up about 25% of nerve cell membranes. He cites a Florida International University study that found bonefish carried an average of seven pharmaceuticals, mostly antidepressants, as a reason for purified fish oil. Note that he sells his own supplements and light-therapy lamp.

• The pit bull attack and hand-rubbing

Walking his dog on the beach at Corona del Mar, two pit bulls charged; his dog ended up in the ocean and he was bitten. He did a session of EMDR, a trauma treatment using back-and-forth eye movements. On that beach now, he rubs his hands back and forth for bilateral stimulation to ease the anxiety, rather than turning to alcohol, marijuana or mushrooms, which he considers potentially toxic.

• His brain-healthy hot chocolate

Raw cacao, unsweetened almond milk and chocolate stevia, heated and blended. His rule is to eat only things he loves that love him back. Rocky road and beer don't qualify.

• Mel's sick-week spiral

On day four of being ill, Mel told herself her husband Chris was annoyed at caring for her and that people were angry about her cancellations. None of it was true, and she let the thoughts make her feel worse instead of questioning them.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Use the 15-second breath

Breathe in for 4 seconds, hold for 1.5, breathe out for 8, hold for 1.5, using your belly. He says breathing out twice as long as you breathe in triggers a relaxation response and can stop a panic attack in two minutes or less, and that it works best when practiced regularly.

• Bookend your day

Each morning, say "Today is going to be a great day," or ask your kids at breakfast why it will be. At night, go on a "treasure hunt" for what went well, starting from the moment you woke up. He kept this up even the night his father died.

• Daylight-saving and winter mood fixes

Use a 10,000-lux light at arm's length for 20 to 30 minutes in the morning, without looking at it directly. Exercise, don't overdo caffeine, and block or turn off blue light after dark to protect melatonin. To boost dopamine, he suggests a cold finish to your shower and tyrosine-rich foods like eggs, almonds, beans, fish and chicken. Do focused work when your energy peaks, whether you're a morning lark or a night owl.

• Eat his five brain foods and cut toxins

His five are wild salmon, organic berries, nuts and seeds, leafy greens and raw cacao. Protect blood flow by limiting caffeine and nicotine and staying active, and keep learning, since he says the brain starts dying when you stop. Scan personal-care products with the Think Dirty app. His non-negotiables: don't say everything you think, don't deliberately wreck your sleep, and don't treat by symptom clusters alone.

3 Things You Need to Accept About Other People | The Mel Robbins Podcast

Date: 2022-12-12 · Duration: 0:59:09
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=24aTvL9p5wM

KEYPOINTS

- **Truth one: if they wanted to, they would, and that applies to you too**
  Mel's first rule is to judge where someone stands by their actions, not their words, because 'talk is cheap' and we all do what we feel like doing. She says it applies to whether people show up, reach out, make an effort or build healthy habits. She stresses that it also applies to you: there are people waiting on you to change. Remembering that, she says, builds humility and compassion.
- **Add a caveat: if they could, they would**
  Some people can't change yet. They may not recognize a trauma pattern, may be fighting depression, or may lack the support, resources or knowledge you had. Mel admits she didn't understand 'little t' trauma until her mid-40s. She used to think trauma meant combat or violent crime, not emotional abuse, distant parents, poverty or discrimination at home.
- **'Should' is a signal that you've slipped into judgment**
  Responding to listener Lisa, who wanted to scream 'just be better' at people who wallow, Mel calls 'I did it, so you should too' toxic positivity. 'If I did it, you can too' is inspiration; 'should' carries judgment. Her test is to ask whether you want them to change because you care and see potential, or because you feel superior. Understanding and tolerance are acts of love.
- **Truth two: you can't make someone change**
  'You can make them dinner, you can make them laugh,' but not change. Mel says she has wasted years trying manipulation, bribery (down to a box of Legos), motivation and inspiration. Your choices are to stop trying, or to change how you show up so you either support them or make up for the gap. The energy you spend being frustrated is energy you could put into your own life.
- **Truth three: stop being mad that people aren't who you want them to be**
  Mel says she will never be a detail-oriented 'Susie Q with the calendar'; her genius is creativity and connection. She and Chris have made 26 years work by being '99%' compassionate and supportive, with occasional '1%' blowups. Accepting who someone is doesn't excuse them, she adds. She still owes it to others to get the support she needs.
- **Your changes don't inspire people, they confront them**
  Relationships run on energy and overlapping patterns, such as shared interests, work, kids or neighborhoods. When you change, patterns shift. Start a side business and Saturday poker nights fade. Mel says becoming a loud cheerleader ('let's all go keto!') can come across as superiority, and people who feel confronted often find it easier to attack you than to look in the mirror.
- **My-side bias makes lectures backfire**
  Mel describes my-side bias as a cognitive blind spot no amount of intelligence or education fixes: once we pick a side, whether an ice cream flavor, a candidate or 'nothing wrong with a glass of wine,' we argue for it. She points to University of Toronto psychologist Dr. Keith Stanovich as a leading researcher on it. She cites research that only 3% of people change when change feels forced on them, versus 37% when they believe the idea is theirs.
- **Loving someone means loving where they are and where they aren't**
  Mel says that when you're trying to change someone, you're judging them, not loving them. Anyone you worry about, over weight, drinking, money or marriage, is almost certainly already worried, so your worry adds shame and pushes them away. Accepting people as they are 'opens the door,' and people walk toward acceptance.

EXAMPLES

- **The missed puppy vaccinations**
  Mel took their puppy Homie for shots at 12 weeks, then missed two follow-ups while launching the podcast. He was eight weeks behind just before puppy class. Chris, who 'never gets upset,' slammed the folder down and said, 'Don't give me this ADHD [stuff].' Mel told him she wants to do better but can't right now: she has no assistant, is terrible with calendars and is 'dropping balls left and right.'
- **The 15-year-old system: 'go to Chris'**
  Since Chris couldn't make her change, about 15 years ago they made him the point person for the calendar, checks and the kids' annual wellness checks, which Mel admits she remembers the day they're due. After the vet fight she screenshotted a holiday-party invite straight to him.
- **The friend who couldn't stop talking about her ex**
  Six months after an ugly divorce was finalized, Mel told a friend she had suggested therapists and books, none of which the friend used. She said she was no longer available to hear about the ex but would support any move toward change. Mel says the friend will likely be mortified and go quiet for a while. She didn't ask the friend to change; she changed what she is available for.
- **'Nobody cares what's in your glass but you'**
  When Chris quit drinking after leaving the struggling restaurant business, Mel kept offering him wine by day three: 'It's basically juice.' He told her that if his seltzer made her think about her own glass, she had some thinking to do. Because he never lectured, any change became her idea. Now his 5:45 a.m. routine, with a gallon jug of water and a workout with the dogs, has her wondering about getting up earlier, without him saying a word.
- **Dan and the 'Mr. Know-It-All' label**
  Listener Dan's wife told him to stop acting like a selfish Mr. Know-It-All after his personal growth. Mel says to apologize if his enthusiasm made her feel less than, invite her in without lecturing, and ask questions like 'Why does this bother you?' Mel notes her own change was slow, from nearly bankrupt and on the verge of divorce in 2008 to who she is 14 years later.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Use the six-month rule for wallowers**
  People get six months to wallow about a divorce, weight gain, a lost job or anything else. After that, set a boundary: you're not

available to be a sounding board for staying stuck. Mel frames it as 'I love you too much to be part of you staying stuck.'

- **Say 'not around me' instead of 'don't do that'**

  A friend was upset that her boyfriend did cocaine with his friends. Mel told her not to try to change him but to set the boundary 'don't do it around me.' It states your values without a demand, and Mel thinks it makes the other person question their own choices.

- **Drop the rope**

  If a relationship feels like constant tug-of-war, Mel suggests letting go. The struggle often disappears when you stop pulling, and constant effort may be a sign the relationship no longer works for you.

- **Make your change their idea, not your lecture**

  Given the 3% versus 37% figures Mel cites, invite people in and let them see what your change does for you, as Chris did. Then focus on protecting your own energy and peace.

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.

The Secret to Why You’re Unhappy & The ONE Thing You Can Do About It | The Mel Robbins Podcast

Date: 2022-12-05 · Duration: 0:59:05
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PMMdW3tGWRY

KEYPOINTS

• Joy can be wiped out by anticipating loss

Mel woke up flooded with joy because all three of her kids were home for Thanksgiving. Almost immediately, a second wave of grief washed it away, because they would leave in three or four days. "They just got here." Thinking about their departure meant she wasn't actually experiencing them being there, and the realisation turned into the episode.

• The "campaign of misery" is a hidden habit of fighting your own happiness

Mel's name for the constant search for what's wrong or about to go wrong. On the surface she is grateful and positive. Underneath, she realised, "I pick up the sword, I start wielding it, and I'm fighting for misery." Her husband Chris had long told her she was focused on what was wrong and that it was never enough, and she had always rejected that.

• Put down the sword, pick up the mirror

Her producer Amy pulls an oracle card for her each morning, and that day it was the "Garden of Venus." Amy explained that the sword represents always defending yourself, your judgements and how hard things are. Putting it down and picking up the mirror means seeing your natural state of beauty, peace and love. Mel uses the card as a framework, not as evidence.

• We all learn two languages, the spoken one and the emotional one

Mel says she learned English and also learned from her mother to look for what's wrong. One of her mother's sayings was "holidays are women killers." She stresses compassion: her mother grew up in a hard-working farming family that wasn't loving. Amy and Jesse recognise the same pattern: as children, they agreed with a parent's complaints to keep the peace and feel safe.

• The emotional language is absorbed before you have words

Citing what she learned from Dr. Becky, Mel says that from birth to about age five, children absorb their surroundings in a highly receptive learning state. That's why they pick up languages easily, and also how they take in the emotional tone underneath what's said. Amy adds that this pattern is a default you needed, "not who you are at a soul level."

• Changing it is like becoming fluent in a new language

At 54, Mel says the campaign of misery is "as fluent inside of me as English." Learning a new emotional language takes daily practice, and you'll slip back into your native one. She commits to journaling, talking about it and catching the moment she starts picking up the sword, beginning with being kind to herself and to family members who do the same thing without realising.

• It shows up even in success

As the podcast's downloads kept growing, Mel caught herself thinking "it's temporary, it's luck, you're going to plummet," instead of enjoying the fact that it was resonating. Even during the recording, workers hammering on a shed set off her urge to find something wrong.

• Give your mind a new question

Mel's point is that prayer, meditation, oracle cards and daily devotionals like The Book of Awakening all give your mind a different thought to hold onto. Most minds have the job of finding what's horrible. A new prompt trains your subconscious to look for different answers. The aim isn't to answer it perfectly; it's to retrain where your mind looks.

EXAMPLES

• Amy's burn-and-wash ritual

For a long time, Amy wrote three pages of morning pages every day about her family's "tribal" emotional language, what she hated and loved about it. She tore up the pages, burned them in a Pyrex bowl outside while watching from behind the sliding door, then washed her hands up to the elbows. Mel connects the hand-washing to her father, an orthopaedic surgeon, scrubbing in: surgery to remove the old language.

• The prompt: "How can this be easy?"

Amy writes it at the top of every page and has done so for about five years. Mel's and Jesse's first reaction was resistance: they didn't like the question and worried they couldn't fill three pages, which Amy pointed out was the campaign of misery talking. Her advice: write whatever comes up, even "Amy's a jackass," to get through the crust to the "golden Buddha" underneath.

• Jesse's three pages

Jesse started out crying and unsure. Her mirror habit is telling herself "you look like crap," and her family's emotional language centres on victimhood. She ended with "breathe, be still, be present, hug your husband, hug Myrtle my cat," and decided it's fine to spend her first Thanksgiving in her new home with FaceTime: "Your new tribe starts now."

• Mel's pages: from the cat to "stop gripping"

Mel began by venting about a cat peeing on the floor and scratching the new stair runner, then moved on to grief that her parents wouldn't come for Thanksgiving or Christmas. She ended with: let them be who they are, you're in a five-year experiment in healing, "let go, stop gripping, and just love." She realised the cat was in distress and needed love, not resentment.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Name your sword

First, recognise that you have a campaign of misery and that you can put it down. Amy says to give yourself credit just for noticing, even if you don't act on it for months.

• Try the morning ritual

Write "How can this be easy?" at the top of the page, fill three pages of stream of consciousness, then rip and burn them safely and wash your hands. Expect resistance, expect the floodgates to open once you start, and expect to write similar things for a while.

• Look for the small easy joys

Both Jesse and Amy landed on simple things: breathing, being still, hugging their partners. All three admitted they hadn't hugged their spouses that morning, which is an easy fix.

PSYCHOLOGICAL TRICKS To Boost Your Influence, Income, and Impact TODAY! | The Mel Robbins Podcast

Guest: Vanessa Van Edwards
Date: 2022-12-01 · Duration: 1:40:19
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FVmTeH0uK5k

KEYPOINTS

• Charisma means signaling warmth and competence together

Behavioral investigator Vanessa Van Edwards says research finds charisma has nothing to do with being extroverted, attractive, athletic or even intelligent. Highly charismatic people consistently signal two things: warmth (trust, likability, friendliness) and competence (capability, power, effectiveness). When both come through, the other person can quickly conclude 'I can trust you' and 'I can rely on you.'

• Under-signaling hides how good you really are

Van Edwards draws on Dr. Susan Fiske's Princeton research: without enough warmth, people don't believe your competence. Her students are often brilliant overachievers who assume their smarts will speak for them, but if they don't send the cues, 'the world literally cannot believe them.' Mel highlights the claim that warmth and competence make up about 82% of how people evaluate you. Van Edwards says that judgment happens again on every Zoom call, email and LinkedIn profile, not just at first meeting.

• There are four types, and charisma works like a dial

The rare sweet spot is high warmth with high competence. Her example is Oprah, who gets guests to share their darkest secrets but asks the hard questions, as in her Lance Armstrong interview. Steve Jobs is her example of high competence with almost no warmth: brilliant, but seen as cold and not a team player. People who are mostly warm are empathetic cheerleaders who give too much to be liked. The fourth group under-signals both.

• The need to be liked and the need to be right both backfire

If you lean too warm, especially at work, your need to be liked gets in the way of your need to be respected. If you lean too competent, your need to be right gets in the way of being liked. Signs you lean competent: people call you intimidating, you fact-check people on Google mid-conversation, and you try to fix a partner's bad day when they just want you to listen.

• Awkwardness looks different in introverts and extroverts

Van Edwards calls herself a 'recovering awkward person' and an overthinker who replays every conversation in bed at night. Introverts tend to shut down out of fear of being judged. Extroverts tend to over-talk, show off or turn into a drama queen. She says telling yourself to 'just be confident' doesn't work, so she aims to be purposeful about the cues she sends instead.

• Cues come in four forms

Verbal cues (your words) are what people prepare most. There are also nonverbal cues (gestures, face, body), vocal cues (volume, pace, cadence, tone), which she calls the most overlooked, and 'ornaments' (jewelry, background, nails, hair, glasses). Her research also tracks 'danger zone' cues, the negative signals that undercut you.

• Up-talk makes listeners doubt you

Ending a statement on a rising, question-like inflection shifts the listener, she says, from listening to scrutinizing. Her example is a salary ask: 'I'm really looking for a range of over $100,000?' That invites negotiation. She calls it permission-seeking behavior, more common among very warm people and among women, who are often taught early to be liked. The fix is to speak on the out-breath with a downward inflection, and to re-listen to your own voicemails.

• Gestures and words have to match

When words and gestures conflict, she says the brain believes the gesture. Saying 'big idea' while pinching your fingers together reads as a small idea, and Mel's attempt to say 'five' while holding up three fingers felt wrong to her right away. Purposeful gestures, like holding up two fingers for 'two things,' make you seem competent and easier to remember. She stresses this isn't interpretive dance.

• Fake smiles leave people cold, so use other warmth cues

Van Edwards cites Dr. Barbara Wild's research. Real smiles reach the upper cheeks and create crow's feet, muscles she says only about 1 in 10 people can move on purpose. People who looked at real smiles felt happier, while fake smiles had no effect. Her advice is to 'smile purposefully, not more' and to use a neutral expression or a full real smile in LinkedIn and dating photos. Another warmth cue is a slow triple nod, which she says makes the other person speak 67% longer.

EXAMPLES

• The muffled doctor voices and malpractice lawsuits

In a study she describes, doctors recorded 10-second introductions, which were then muffled so only tone, pace and volume came through. Doctors rated lowest on warmth and competence from these clips had the highest rates of malpractice lawsuits. The most common pattern among the low-rated voices was up-talk.

• Coding thousands of hours of TED Talks

Her lab counted cues in TED Talks against view counts. The most viral talks averaged 465 hand gestures in 18 minutes, compared with 272 for the least popular, almost half.

• Lieberman's fear-face experiment

Van Edwards cites UCLA's Matthew Lieberman: seeing a fearful facial expression activated people's amygdala in an fMRI scanner, meaning they 'caught' the fear. Labeling the emotion as 'fear' calmed the amygdala again. She uses this to argue that both good and bad cues are contagious, and that noticing them gives you some control.

• Achievement words doubled people's persistence

Two groups got test instructions of the same length, but one version included words like 'win,' 'succeed' and 'achievement.' Three or four of those words improved performance and, by her account, doubled people's desire to keep working. She applies the idea to email: words like 'collaborate' encourage collaboration, and 'let's power through' encourages getting things done.

• Neil deGrasse Tyson's eyebrow test

She says Tyson tries space facts on airplane seatmates and only puts in his books the ones that make people raise their eyebrows and say 'really?' An eyebrow raise is her silent cue for 'I'm listening, tell me more.'

OTHER RELEVANT

• Run a 360 on your charisma

Take her free quiz at scienceofpeople.com/charisma as your real self, not your ideal self. Then have a partner, friend and colleague take it as you and compare the results. Many people come across differently at home and at work. Also record an important Zoom call and code every cue: gestures, fidgeting, vocal power and word choice.

• The first 10 seconds of a call

Show your hands right away, with a wave or a 'hey everybody.' She says hidden hands put the brain on alert, a holdover from checking strangers for weapons. Sit at least 18 inches from the camera, since closer than that is the 'intimate zone.' Say your name without up-talk.

• Read nervous tells in clusters

Common tells include mashing the lips together, touching the face or stomach (she cites Cornell research on this), purposeless gestures like wringing hands or playing with a necklace, and pauses in the middle of sentences. One cue alone means little. When she spots three on a team call, she checks in gently: 'Rob, any hesitations?'

• When someone is dismissive

Resist going on offense or defense. First send warmth and competence and hope it rubs off. If that doesn't work, name a likely emotion ('you seem frustrated'). People often correct you ('no, disappointed'), and that gives you something real to talk about.

• Silent cues for introverts

Subtly mirror the other person's energy, the way Oprah matches high- and low-energy guests. Use eyebrow raises, nods and head tilts. Reflect a friend's sadness on your face so they can see you're sharing the weight with them.

How Do I Learn to Love Myself, Really? | The Mel Robbins Podcast

Guest: Oakley Robbins
Date: 2022-11-28 · Duration: 0:41:36
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wb9oN1720ws

KEYPOINTS

• Being kinder to yourself may be the single biggest lever for wellbeing
Mel cites a large UK study that compared behaviour changes such as diet, gratitude, meditation, exercise and seeing friends more. Being kinder to yourself had the biggest impact on day-to-day quality of life, and it was also the habit people practised least.

• Self-hatred often grows out of tiny moments where we turn on ourselves
Kids can't turn to critics and say 'you idiots, my legs are fine,' so they turn the criticism inward and focus on fitting in or getting attention off themselves. Mel calls each of those moments a small act of self-hatred that cuts your connection to yourself, and says they stay with you for years.

• Comparison hurts, but relentless self-criticism is the real source of self-hatred
Mel separates the two. Social comparison is something to work on, especially online. She notes research that many teens came out of the pandemic worse off after 'mainlining' social media at home, and says Oakley rarely uses it. But she says self-hatred ends when you stop criticising yourself.

• Oakley's breakthrough came when the outside judgment stopped
During the 2020 lockdown, at 14, with no one making fun of him, he played games, jumped on the trampoline, hung out with his dogs and lived with four people who loved him. He stopped checking the mirror for what others might dislike. His lesson: worrying about what other people think 'drags me down', and not caring left him nothing to prove.

• 'You only go through life with yourself'
Oakley's realisation: you're the only person you wake up and go to sleep with every day. You can't please everyone, and if you're not happy, other people's happiness won't make you feel better. Mel calls this a crazy simple statement of why self-acceptance matters.

• Five words to practise: 'There's nothing wrong with me'
Being removed from school made Oakley see that all his energy had gone into managing a belief that something was wrong with him. Mel spent 40-plus years waking up with that belief. Acceptance means accepting yourself exactly as you are and as you aren't. There may be things to improve, but nothing is wrong with you.

• Then ask the radical question: why don't I just like myself?
Most of us make liking ourselves conditional, for example once we lose 30 pounds, pay the bills or stop making mistakes. Mel says research shows you won't feel motivated to change while bashing yourself. Decide to like yourself now, or at least treat yourself as if you do, and motivation and self-care snowball from there. The only thing in the way is your own judgment, which you can remove.

• Self-love is a skill you build like a muscle
Both admit it's hard and takes time. Oakley compares it to lifting: start with a small weight. Negativity is often unconscious, and with practice, being kind to yourself becomes the unconscious default instead. Mel, at 54, says she still works on it daily.

EXAMPLES

• The shorts day
In seventh grade, with bleached hair and eyebrows so blond they looked absent, Oakley wore skinny jeans every day from October to April. On the first warm day he wore shorts, and several kids said, before even saying good morning, that his legs looked weird. He wore jeans in 70- and 80-degree weather for the rest of the year.

• Hiding in sweatshirts
From about 13 he saw chubby cheeks, a double chin and 'man boobs' in the mirror, wrapped his towel around his upper body after showers, and almost never took off a sweatshirt. He later put the split at roughly 70% disliking himself and 30% liking himself.

• Mel's Flashdance perm
In ninth grade Mel got layers and a perm to copy Jennifer Beals and came out looking like a Labradoodle. Everyone in the school hallway laughed. That night she washed her hair about 25 times trying to get the perm out, which only made it frizzier.

• Oakley's three small likes
Asked on the spot, he named his hair and his smile, how he treats and shows up for his friends, and his school results, which he's proud of because he's trying. Mel told him what she admires most is how he lives by his values.

• Listener Corinne Schillinger's challenge
A listener asked what loving yourself actually looks like day to day, because the advice is so general. The episode's answer is small, specific, repeatable habits rather than a broad mindset.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Compliment yourself on one small thing daily
It can be the colour of your eyes, your laugh, being a good friend, your cooking or trying hard at work. If you're stuck, look at your iris, a pattern unique among 8 billion people.

• Name one win before bed
Your brain is scanning for what went wrong. Retrain it with a small win: you got out of bed, got dressed, smiled at a stranger, treated yourself to a coffee, got outside.

• Try the high-five habit

After brushing your teeth, look in the mirror and silently high-five your reflection. Mel says about 50% of people in her research can't or won't look themselves in the eye. Laughing or crying is normal. She claims a breakthrough within five days. These are her own research and claims, from her book The High 5 Habit.

• Compliment others on character, not just looks

Oakley's addition: point out what's great about friends, like a good point in class or how they treat people. He says compliments on how he acts mean more to him because you can control how you show up but not what you look like.

Why Having FUN is the Secret to a Healthier Life | The Mel Robbins Podcast

Guest: Sawyer Robbins
Date: 2022-11-23 · Duration: 0:57:32
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KuR0gcRGOuE

KEYPOINTS

• Rule one: you don't have to spend the holidays with people who harm you

Mel notes that searching for advice on family holidays mostly turns up tips on toxic relatives and boundaries. Her starting point is that you have permission to decline invitations involving narcissists, people who abused you or anyone who triggers your trauma. Everything else in this Thanksgiving episode is about the families you do want to see.

• Family gatherings follow a predictable slide

Mel describes the pattern: excited emails, packing the car, big hugs, then within hours you've caught up on college, work, dating and weather and everyone's on their phone. By day two you want your friends and your routine back and you're 'ready to kill your sister.' Old roles return too: the golden child, the middle child, feeling eight again at your parents' house. She admits relatives probably find 'Aunt Mel' a loud control freak.

• Fun is a serious ingredient in strong relationships

Mel cites relationship researchers Drs. John and Julie Gottman, whose research found that happy couples know how to have fun together, and argues the same goes for families. She lists what fun does: lowers stress, helps sleep, raises happiness and strengthens relationships. When she asks what your best family memories are, she bets they're the fun ones.

• Most of us are in a 'fun drought'

Mel cites research figures without naming the source: 97% of people wish they had more fun, 60% of adults feel their lives are too grown-up, and 73% miss parts of childhood like birthday parties and family celebrations. Researchers, she says, call this a 'fun drought.'

• Guilt is the first reason we skip fun

After hard years of divorce, job loss, illness or death, it can feel wrong to prioritize fun. Mel argues that having fun when someone can't be there, or has died, honors them, and that guilt shouldn't stop you.

• Fear of judgment is the second, so expect to be teased

You will get eye-rolls when you show up with foam hats, poster board, face paint or a Wiffle ball. That's what families do. Mel's point is that they'll complain anyway, so you choose whether they grumble about politics and sore backs or about the ridiculous hat everyone is now laughing at.

• The biggest reason is that adults don't plan fun

Childhood fun felt spontaneous, but adults planned the parties, play dates, Legos and popcorn. Now you have to plan it for the grown-ups too. Mel cites research that happy people deliberately do things that make them happy, and says fun works the same way. Weave laughter into the logistics, the way Oakley replied to a dry Thanksgiving email chain in all caps: 'PEOPLE WE ARE GONNA DESTROY THIS FEAST!'

• Recruit a 'first follower'

One person in a turkey blazer looks odd, but two make it a party, like the second dancer on an empty dance floor. Mel calls this first follower theory and recruits her 23-year-old daughter Sawyer, the family's 'Chief Fun Officer.' Sawyer's rule: if you plan something, go 100% all in and be the most enthusiastic person there, or no one else will commit.

• Make it turnkey, with no opting out

Sawyer says asking 'what does everyone feel like doing?' kills fun, and the day dissolves into eight Harry Potter movies, a bottle of wine and phones. Plan one activity a day that's already booked or prepped: a hike, a paddle court reserved, wreath greens already cut. Give two or three weeks' notice for costumes so no one turns up in red leggings as Santa. Avoid repeating stale ideas, which get done half-heartedly, and don't force things like pool parties that only work if people want them.

EXAMPLES

• Mel's fun memories

Euchre, backgammon and cribbage with her mom as her smack-talking partner. Wiffle ball with her twin nephews (now 14), which she had to quit because she'd pee herself before her bladder surgery. Her dad's 30-plus-year-old rented pontoon boat on Muskegon Lake, which died mid-lake last summer. Chris's nine cousins building sled jumps about 15 years ago, and an epic lip-sync battle 13 years ago in which every family was a band.

• Sawyer's track record

A bar crawl in Breckenridge in colonial prairie costumes that ended up on the town's Facebook page. An impromptu living-room 'wedding' for a widowed mom who had just gotten engaged, with a paper-towel veil and foil flowers. A Halloween granny costume built from about 15 makeup tutorials, with New Balance sneakers and a mask chain.

• The quarantine 'anything but clothes' dinner

Sawyer planned a month of theme nights, including a family Olympics and a chef-costume bake-off. On 'anything but clothes' night, Sawyer duct-taped king pillows around herself and Mel wore a champagne box and garbage-bag pants. Chris came downstairs in a rubber pot lid tied over his front, plus clogs and socks. He now threatens to wear it to a kid's rehearsal dinner.

• Planning their own Thanksgiving for 14

It's their first time hosting extended family at the southern Vermont house. They land on Capture the Flag, a cocktail contest per family with alcoholic and non-alcoholic versions, drawing names to make someone a crown (Sawyer takes on the supplies), a question bowl ('If money were no object, where would our family travel?') and the family's disco playlist for cleanup. They rule out karaoke, since Kendall would take over.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Break up the usual seating

Sawyer suggests ringing a bell every 15 minutes so everyone picks up their plate and moves seats. That way people talk to Uncle Bill instead of spending two hours with their favorite cousin.

• The phone basket

As host, bring out a basket and say you want everyone present, ask for phones for about three hours, and frame it as a request, not a punishment. Sawyer predicts adults, including Mel with her 'work calls,' will resist most.

• Do all the prep so guests just show up

Cut out the crown shapes and set out paint, markers and gems so guests don't have to lift a finger. Have playlists ready. Give people a fun question, like Mel's friend Maxine's dinner-party prompt about your first apartment, adapted so younger kids can answer too.

This Simple Mind Hack Will Help You Overcome Any Fear

Date: 2022-11-21 · Duration: 1:01:39
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QI_1qWJnvsk

KEYPOINTS

• Nerves don't just stop you; they hurt how you perform

Mel frames the episode around performance: nerves can stop you signing up for an improv class, taking a bigger role at work, or passing the MCAT or bar exam. She shares stories from people who say they used this tool: Makoto with OCD, Lynn, a nurse, with public speaking, Emma with panic attacks about school, Dan with heights, and Maren, who earned two promotions.

• Fear of dying when you have no control isn't irrational

Coaching her producer Cameron, Mel says it's normal to think about mortality when you're strapped into a metal tube 30,000 feet up with strangers. She notes that about 95% of first-class passengers accept a free drink at 8 or 9 a.m., which she thinks is nerves, not drinking problems. The first rule is not to make yourself wrong for being afraid.

• Telling yourself to calm down makes fear louder

Cameron's coping strategy was dismissing her fear ("It's not even real, Cam, calm down"), which usually ended in tears or a panic attack. Mel says rejecting a real fear means you aren't comforting yourself, so it gets bigger. You can be terrified and still find the courage to face it.

• Anticipation steals the weeks before the event

Cameron's flight to Portugal was about five weeks away, and her dread was already setting in. Mel points out that unmanaged fear doesn't just affect the flight. It ruins the run-up and can taint the trip itself with worry about flying home.

• Loss of control often lies underneath

Cameron's father had recently died suddenly, and she says her fear of flying worsened afterwards, because having control "ripped away" made every uncontrollable situation feel threatening. Mel calls learning to move through those moments the bigger breakthrough: you can't control the plane, but you can control what's going on in your head and body.

• Superstitious bargaining eventually fails

Mel's old flying rituals failed on a short, sunny flight with her family. The plane hit an air pocket and the oxygen masks dropped while the drinks cart was out. Every "safe" sign had been present. That's when she decided she needed a real tool instead of bargaining.

• Fear and excitement feel the same in the body

Mel explains that your nervous system's automatic stress response, with adrenaline, a racing heart, blood rushing and butterflies from changes in your gut, is the same whether you're boarding a plane or about to meet your favourite band. The only difference is what your brain says about it. A six-year-old loves turbulence because their brain labels it fun.

• Reframe high alertness instead of trying to calm down

Mel cites a Harvard Business School study titled "reframing performance anxiety." As she describes it, people facing stressful tasks like singing karaoke or debating who told themselves "I'm excited" felt less nervous and outperformed those who didn't. Her explanation: you can't drop from high alert to calm instantly, but you can switch the label from fear to excitement. If you let fear take over, she says, cortisol floods your brain and you lose what you prepared, which is why people go blank on stage.

• Build the anchor before the nerves hit

Mel stresses that you must create your exciting image ahead of time. Once your thoughts are racing about failing the test or the plane, you've lost control. Linking the anchor to the event, such as arriving or nailing the interview, makes it believable, because reaching that moment means it went fine.

EXAMPLES

• Nervous-flyer Mel in the 1990s and 2000s

Flying home to western Michigan, Mel shipped Christmas presents ahead in case she died, and put off booking until the cheap seats were gone. She was overly nice to airport staff for good karma. At the gate she looked for someone in uniform, someone in a wheelchair, a baby or clergy, and she checked whether a pilot had a military-style crew cut. She sent goodbye texts, grabbed strangers' hands during the level-off after takeoff, and only relaxed once the seatbelt sign went off or the drinks cart came out.

• Cameron's anchor: Sienna in a black sweater

Asked what excited her about Portugal, Cameron chose seeing her sister Sienna, who was coming from London. With her eyes closed, she described arriving in Lisbon, Sienna in her usual black sweater, probably annoyed they were late, hugging their mom first, and Cameron feeling "comfort and wholeness." Mel tells her to say it out loud: "I'm so excited to see Sienna."

• The Lumineers test

Mel had Cameron imagine front-row seats and a meet-and-greet with The Lumineers at Fenway. Cameron described jitters, clammy hands, a racing heart and feeling flustered: almost exactly how she describes flying, except she labelled it positive.

• The yoga studio and an oat milk latte

Cameron has wanted to join a yoga studio on her street for months but is too anxious to sign up. Her anchor: walking out after class in her light-blue tights into Thinking Cup for an iced oat milk latte, feeling proud of herself.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Build a confidence anchor in three steps

1) Name the situation that makes you nervous. 2) Find something about it you're genuinely excited about. 3) Close your eyes and bring that moment to life in detail: clothes, setting, who hugs whom, how you feel.

• Use it the moment nerves rise

Count 5-4-3-2-1 (Mel's 5 Second Rule) as a signal to interrupt the worry, then bring up the anchor image and say "I'm excited." Repeat it on the way to the airport, while boarding, and at every bump of turbulence.

- **Apply it to your whole list**
  Write down everything that makes you nervous, such as interviews, tests, dates or a side project, and create an anchor for each. Mel believes repeated practice can retrain a default state of feeling on edge.

4 Attachment Styles You Need To Know To Create Healthy Relationships | The Mel Robbins Podcast

Guest: Dr. Marisa Franco
Date: 2022-11-17 · Duration: 1:12:50
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WNmYDYdgYQo

KEYPOINTS

• Attachment style is the set of assumptions you bring into every relationship

Dr. Franco, a psychologist at the University of Maryland and author of Platonic, explains that your style shapes how you give and receive love in friendships, families and at work, not just in romance. Your interpretation of events, filtered through that lens, often matters more than what actually happened. It's a spectrum: nobody is fully secure, anxious or avoidant.

• Secure people assume they're lovable and balance their needs with yours

They give and receive love comfortably, raise conflict level-headedly and are vulnerable in a reciprocal way: they share, wait for you to share, then go deeper, and pull back if you don't respond. They accept your boundaries without pushing or withdrawing. They talk about exes with nuance ('it didn't work for this reason, but I liked them for that') rather than calling them evil.

• Anxious attachment centres on fear of abandonment

Anxiously attached people see rejection where there is none, like a tired friend or a slow reply. She cites research that their amygdala is more reactive. They over-accommodate and self-sacrifice until they blow up, struggle with boundaries, over-apologise, give in order to be liked, and invalidate their own feelings, so they need others to soothe them. They tend to misremember events as more negative than they were and have the highest rates of mental health issues.

• Avoidant attachment is a defence against a need for connection that feels unsafe

Avoidant people believe closeness leads to harm, so they initiate less, ghost more, minimise problems, stonewall and struggle to apologise. Underneath, she says, is deep shame and a core belief of 'I'm a failure, I'm deficient', so criticism hits hard. They often have a 'phantom ex', a relationship they miss only after leaving it once the urge for space fades.

• Disorganised attachment flips between craving and fearing closeness

It usually follows extreme early experiences such as abuse. People with this style swing between anxious and avoidant behaviour, may escalate in anger or read negative intent into neutral actions, and can feel frozen about whether to move closer or pull away.

• Your style can differ from one relationship to the next

A very anxious partner can make you feel avoidant, and a distant one can make you anxious. Franco also draws on internal family systems: younger selves, like a bullied sixth-grader, can take over in the moment, but everyone has a highest, adult self that is securely attached. Women skew slightly anxious and men slightly avoidant.

• Anxious people often mistake being triggered for being in love

Hurt and excitement are both high-arousal states, so an inconsistent, hot-and-cold partner can feel thrilling. A secure person just leaves. The anxious person tries to earn the love and is put off when someone gives it freely. Franco says that when she was more anxious, she'd lose interest as soon as someone wanted her back.

• Falling in love can mask attachment styles for about a year

The chemical cocktail of early love can make an avoidant partner comfortable with intimacy, until perhaps a year in, often after moving in together, when they suddenly feel suffocated and say their partner expects too much.

• Secure and insecure people express anger differently

She draws on John Bowlby's 'anger of hope' versus 'anger of despair'. A girl left alone in hospital asked her mother 'where was you?', which is vulnerable anger aimed at repair. A boy named Reggie said of a returning caregiver, 'my very own Marianne, but I hate her', which is anger aimed at destroying. Anxious adults bottle up, then blow up, character-assassinate or collapse into self-blame. Avoidant adults go quiet, withdraw, and later call you too sensitive.

• Insecure attachment carries physical as well as emotional costs

Both anxious and avoidant people are more likely than secure people to have mental health problems, with avoidant people falling between secure and anxious. She links avoidant emotional suppression to unexplained migraines, gut problems, ulcers and chronic pain, and says your ability to connect even predicts how long you live.

EXAMPLES

• Mel and Chris: anxious meets avoidant

Mel realised they had been discussing attachment in weekly couples therapy for two years: she's anxious and her husband is avoidant. She hadn't understood the shame behind his quietness, and says he now recognises he was numbing his emotions with a daily weed and alcohol habit.

• The kitchen-door metaphor for receiving love

At 54, Mel said that only in the previous two months had she noticed she pours out love but stonewalls receiving it. She now pictures swinging kitchen doors to catch herself putting up a wall against small gestures: a stranger's smile, a heart-shaped leaf, her pet greeting her.

• A secure way to raise a one-sided friendship

Franco's script: 'I love you, I want to be close to you, I've noticed I've been the one reaching out and that's been hurting me, and I want our friendship to continue, so I figured I'd bring this up.' It's direct without being confrontational.

• How avoidant people sound versus secure people

Insecure people apply one template to everyone, for example 'all my relationships are fragile' (anxious) or 'nobody can be trusted' (avoidant). Secure people give the benefit of the doubt while keeping boundaries, saying things like 'I had to love that person from afar.'

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Become your own secure figure**

  When a strong emotion hits, tell yourself 'it's okay that you feel this way, I'm right here with you,' and ask what you need. Pause instead of reflexively clinging or pulling away, notice where the feeling sits in your body, and build tolerance for it. Franco has even sung love songs to herself.

- **For avoidant people: name body sensations, then feelings**

  Notice tingling, pressure in your chest or a lump in your throat, then use a feelings wheel to put a word to it, the way you'd learn a language. Try any form of self-expression, like journaling, art, singing or even origami. Therapy focused on attachment helps.

- **Communicate space instead of ghosting**

  If you're avoidant, say 'I'm overwhelmed and need about a week, then we'll talk.' If you love someone avoidant, get some needs met in other relationships, move at their pace, lead with what they do well, ask calmly for one addition, and acknowledge their improvements.

- **Spend time with secure people and savour acceptance daily**

  Look for people who share appropriately, respond to your needs, show empathy and calm your nervous system; over time they rewrite your template. Each day, write down one moment you felt accepted, like a friend's voice note, a comment, or someone bringing cinnamon rolls, and stay with it until you feel it.

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.

The Hidden Signs Someone's In a Narcissistic Relationship | The Mel Robbins Podcast

Guest: Dr. Ramani Durvasula
Date: 2022-11-03 · Duration: 1:08:48
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NRGxKdNlSDs

KEYPOINTS

• A narcissistic childhood can make chaos feel like love

Growing up with a narcissistic caregiver normalises the behaviour and teaches you not to voice your needs, which suits a partner who won't meet them anyway. The good-day, bad-day uncertainty of childhood ("Who's coming home today?") gets confused with love. Ramani has seen many survivors meet a kind, generous partner and decide they were "bored." Her advice: if someone doesn't trigger you, they might be a keeper.

• Everyone is vulnerable, some more than others

Narcissistic people come across as charming, charismatic, curious and confident, so nobody is immune. Higher-risk groups include children of narcissistic parents, people with trauma histories, people going through transitions such as a rebound, a new city, a new job or a loss, and people rushing because of a biological clock. Surprisingly, people from very happy families are also vulnerable, because they can't believe this behaviour exists and think love will fix red flags. "There ain't no loving anyone through a red flag."

• Red flags often show up late, are faint, or get explained away

The charm can last six weeks, three months or longer. Watch for snappiness at mild feedback, entitlement and how they treat waiters, contempt for others, and attempts to cut you off from the friend who sees through them. One woman on Ramani's own podcast saw no red flags for six years of marriage. More often the flags were there but people didn't recognise them, justified them or blamed themselves, so she tells people to stop calling themselves idiots.

• The trauma bond runs on justification

As children, people excuse a parent's behaviour ("Dad had a bad day at work, I have to be good") and take on the blame. As adults, they excuse partners: tough childhood, stressful job, they only want what's best. Those justifications keep the toxic dynamic going. Because a trauma bond is felt in the body, people often feel physically sick at the thought of leaving. "There's no talking your way out of a trauma bond."

• Love bombing isn't always Paris and roses

Beyond grand gestures, it can look like whatever counts as lavish on the person's budget, constant good-morning and goodnight texts, requests for photos of where you are, deep oversharing early on, a "first date that lasted two weeks," or moving in after a month. What defines it is intensity and speed, which she calls an "intense indoctrination" that keeps you too dazzled to notice red flags.

• Gaslighting means denying reality, then making you feel impaired

A lie alone isn't gaslighting. Her example: they moved the checkbook, deny it, then say your memory has been slipping, you've been stressed, and maybe you should talk to someone. The silent treatment, denial and "can't you take a joke?" have a similar effect. Narcissistic rage, the table-flip moment, comes from thin-skinned sensitivity and is usually followed by downplaying or a pseudo-apology.

• Narcissists can make small changes, but they won't transform

From clinical work, she says motivated clients can gain a little accountability: catching their rage, rolling their eyes less, huffing at the airport line instead of screaming at the gate agent. "They can sprint through some stuff, but they're never going to be marathoners." Narcissism develops in childhood, isn't fully conscious, and still isn't excused: multiple things can be true at once.

• It's not your fault, and guilt is a learned response

Her central message: you are not responsible for someone else's reactions, and they could choose to say, "I need a minute." Survivors were taught that disappointing someone is wrong, which is where reflexive apologising and self-gaslighting ("Don't listen to me") come from. About 50% of people in narcissistic marriages stay, and she doesn't pressure them to leave. Some wait until their youngest turns 18.

• Narcissistic bosses rarely change, and most people eventually leave

Document everything, avoid one-on-one meetings, and save emails, voicemails and texts, because workplace bullying generally isn't illegal. Mel recalls partners screaming in hallways at her Boston law firm and being tolerated because they brought in money, which Ramani calls the "golden goose phenomenon." She links this kind of workplace stress to physical health problems and sleepless rumination, and warns about the moral injury of staying part of the machine.

• Healing is grief, not a straight line

Survivors mourn lost childhoods, dreams and years. She won't promise you'll never think about it again. Instead, she compares it to an old injury that still twinges when you step wrong, and warns that overly sunny timelines can make people ashamed that they aren't healing "right." Even so, many survivors go on to do remarkable things.

EXAMPLES

• Ramani walks away from charisma

After years of charming, grandiose people in media and academia breaking promises, sometimes to her real financial harm, she reacts to charisma like Pavlov's dog: she excuses herself "to the restroom" at parties. She admits it can make her seem closed off, and credits her team for calling out nonsense. Mel describes her own recent betrayals in business and life and her pattern of fawning over charismatic, rebellious people, which Ramani identifies as a trauma response.

• A client who chose to stop hurting people

After empathy and mentalisation work, one client realised he would never want to listen to others' feelings for hours. He divorced his wife, ended things with his mistress, and now lives alone. Ramani saw his decision as a kind of empathy, because it

freed his wife, who now has her own work to do.

• 75 texts in one night

A young woman in Mel's family had an ex flood her phone and Snapchat with about 75 messages in an evening. Ramani called it abuse: don't respond, save everything. Mel's husband Chris replied that they would involve law enforcement, and it stopped, though Ramani notes that police thresholds are frustratingly high.

• Survivors' acts of reclamation

One woman graduated from college at 75 after 50 years of being called a fool. Another baked her ex's favourite cake and gave it to homeless people in her neighbourhood. Others threw a party on the ex's birthday or retrained as therapists and coaches.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Helping a friend: find the back door

Don't criticise the partner, because that makes your friend defend them. Ask open-ended questions such as "How are you feeling about it?" and reflect what they value: "You love having your own place. How do you feel about moving in?"

• Grey rock, yellow rock, and don't go DEEP

Grey rock means flat, minimal answers to avoid the bait; expect them to escalate at first. Yellow rock, developed by Tina Swithin for high-conflict co-parenting, adds warmth and neutral small talk such as weather or road closures, which is less unsettling for kids. When they bait you, don't Defend, Explain, Engage or Personalise. Example: "I RSVP'd a month ago. I'm leaving at 7." No apology.

• Say the multiple truths out loud

To break the cognitive dissonance, name it: "I'm married to a deeply insecure person who rages. We have kids. I don't want to divorce. I'll work on me." Expect to feel sad. That sadness is clarity.

• Practise tiny acts of rebellion and keep your dreams private

Use the 18 minutes before they get home to exercise, take one step a day toward a goal, or finish an online degree. Never share your aspirations with a narcissistic person, because they'll mock or sabotage them. Small wins rebuild your sense of what you can do.

LIES About Adult FRIENDSHIP And The TRUTH You Need To Hear | The Mel Robbins Podcast

Date: 2022-10-31 · Duration: 1:02:25
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kxw8vzgswGA

KEYPOINTS

• Adult friendship is hard partly because of five lies we tell ourselves

Mel recorded this while trying to build a new circle after moving from Boston, where she lived 26 years, to a small town in southern Vermont. Her most viral post ever, with 140,000 likes and 10,000+ comments, read: "Making new friends as an adult is hard because the people I'd get along with best also don't want to leave their house." She argues five lies keep us lonely and stop us from doing the simple things that build friendships.

• Lie 1: everyone else's life is a huge party

Scrolling other people's curated vacations and bachelorette trips sends you into what Mel calls "the toilet of comparison," invalidating your own life and killing any motivation to reach out. The truth: if you want your life to be a party, create it. Normal people aren't drinking margaritas in Ibiza; influencers are.

• You don't need a big group, just a "4 a.m. friend"

Mel points to the research idea of a "4 a.m. friend": someone who'd pick up if you called at 4 a.m. simply because you were lonely, not in an emergency. If one person comes to mind, you're doing okay. She shares that she's extroverted at work but introverted in her personal life, and it's fine to prefer a small circle.

• Lie 2: people don't like me

Mel admits her default assumption is that people are mad at her, and she adds emojis to texts to soften them. She attributes it to childhood wiring and an insecure attachment style. Believing it leaves your motivation to put yourself out there at "negative 27." She cites "liking gap" research from psychologists at Cornell, Harvard and Yale: people consistently underestimate how much others like them.

• Not asking for support can make friends feel left out

Because of the liking gap, Mel hesitated to ask friends with podcasts for help launching her show, fearing she'd be a burden. Her lesson: when you don't ask, friends may assume your life is a party they weren't invited to. Her alternative is to walk into work or a party assuming people like you.

• Lie 3: best friends are forever

The pressure to keep every best friend for life makes you hold on out of obligation, breeding resentment and leaving no room for new people. Mel's reframe: BFF means "best friends are flexible." Friendships rise and fall in intensity based on shared energy, goals and life patterns, not just history. Marriage, kids, sobriety or a new passion can shift who you're closest to without ending anything.

• Lie 4: you have to be everybody's friend

Trying to be liked by everyone turns you into a people-pleaser. Mel quotes the line that you can be the ripest, juiciest peach, but some people don't like peaches. Stop disguising yourself as a plum; the more you show up as yourself, the more likely you are to find people who like peaches.

• Lie 5: I'm too busy or too tired

Mel describes being addicted to busyness to cover loneliness, and worries that after COVID, staying home became the default. She says getting out the door after a day of Zoom calls takes "activation energy" — a term she tentatively credits to Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi. She cites the Harvard study that followed men for decades, which she says concluded the people around you bring life's greatest meaning.

EXAMPLES

• "When's the last time we invited anybody?"

When Mel's kids hit high school, the built-in sports-parent social circle fractured while her career took her on the road. She saw friends posting from a country club and other gatherings, and complained to her husband Chris that they never got invited. He asked when they'd last invited anyone over.

• Brendon Burchard's text

After her podcast launched with half a million downloads in a week, Mel's friend Brendon Burchard texted to ask whether he'd done something wrong, since mutual friends had promoted the launch and she hadn't asked him. She hadn't because he was launching his own podcast network and she didn't want to burden him.

• The Dynamite Dahlia Dames

On a 4.5-mile loop near her house, Mel kept stopping at a mysterious acre of tulips, ranunculus and dahlias. A contractor's truck led her to the grower, Annette, whom she messaged on Instagram. Annette, working full time, was worried about digging out her dahlia bulbs, so Mel rallied women and 13 showed up one Saturday. Annette later texted that building her vision had been a hard, lonely path, and a group chat was born.

• A video message from Glo Atanmo

Mel plays an unprompted video from author and podcaster Glo Atanmo, who read her a devotional passage about making mistakes as proof you're trying and fully alive, then said no need to reply. Mel shares it as the kind of random message that instantly makes you feel connected.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Sort friends by reason, season or lifetime

Reason friends — coworkers, neighbors, team parents — are there for a stretch. Season friends span a chapter, like college or young-mom years. Lifetime friends are your 4 a.m. people. Don't force someone into the wrong category, and sometimes the kindest move is to graciously let them go.

- **Budget the hours friendship takes**

  Mel cites a University of Kansas study: students become acquaintances in about 43 hours and go from casual to good friends in about 57, while adults need about 94 hours to become casual friends and 164 to become good ones. After school stops grouping you with peers, you have to create that time.

- **Text one friend every day**

  Make it a morning habit to send an unexpected message or a quick selfie video from your walk. Mel says we underestimate how much hearing from us means, and cites research covered in The New York Times that an unexpected text from a friend creates an immediate sense of connection and strengthens the friendship.

- **Follow your curiosity to people**

  Mel's dahlia story started with an interest, not a networking plan. Lean toward what you love and see who's there.

3 Steps To Understanding Your Childhood TRIGGERS And How To Repair Them | The Mel Robbins Podcast

Guest: Dr. Becky Kennedy
Date: 2022-10-27 · Duration: 0:53:24
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qZ5BoJoUPGg

KEYPOINTS

• You wired early, and it's never too late to rewire

Clinical psychologist Dr. Becky Kennedy, author of Good Inside, says her adult clients arrived with different labels (anxiety, reactivity, imposter syndrome, depression) but shared one core story. As kids they adapted to thrive in their earliest environment, and those once-clever adaptations now hold them back. She calls the 'double truth' empowering, not a reason to panic about the past.

• Your body is the same one you were born with

Kennedy points out that we never get a new body. It has lived through everything since infancy. We define memory narrowly as events we can retell, but we can only retell what adults helped us make sense of. The hardest moments were often the ones we were left alone with, so the body holds them without a story.

• Babies wire how caregivers respond to their distress

Using a moment Mel witnessed in an airport lounge, where a mother screamed at her baby in a bathroom, Kennedy explains the sequence. She stresses that it is one moment within a repeated pattern. The baby feels overwhelmed, then encodes the caregiver's added fear and anger. The lesson becomes 'when I get upset, my relationships are threatened.' Years later that adult may tell a caring partner 'all good,' then pull away or drink rather than seek comfort.

• Triggers are stories from your past acting out in the present

A father who knew all the right tantrum strategies still yelled awful things when his child melted down, and he said he had no memory of how his own parents handled his emotions. Kennedy told him his body was acting out that memory every time. Strategies sit behind a door you can't open while triggered, so you have to work on yourself too. As she puts it, we respond to the circuit activated in our own body rather than to our kids.

• A protector part shuts down what wasn't allowed

Drawing on Richard Schwartz's Internal Family Systems model, Kennedy explains that when a child's overwhelm brought yelling instead of compassion, the child developed a harsh inner voice ('you ungrateful kid, you're too much'). It shamed them first to avoid punishment or abandonment. As adults, that part takes over the 'boardroom' and does to others what it learned to do to us.

• Ask what someone else's behavior invites you to grow

Rather than trying to make a whining child or coworker more like you, ask what part you were forced to shut down and might need to develop. Start with the most generous interpretation of their behavior, and move from sitting across the table from someone to sitting beside them, facing the problem together.

• Tantrums are explosions of desire

Kennedy believes many women learned to 'be a good girl,' which meant tracking others' wants over their own. That can surface as people-pleasing, perfectionism, overthinking and fear of speaking up, asking for a raise or wanting things for themselves. In the toy-store meltdown, shaming the child ('can you ever focus on someone else?') teaches that wanting is bad. Caving teaches that their wants topple a sturdy leader. The middle path names the want, maybe photographs the Lego, and holds the no.

• Thank your old patterns for their years of service

Kennedy dislikes calling adaptations 'symptoms.' With a hand on your heart, she suggests telling a pattern that it kept you safe for perhaps 18 years, then running small experiments while it protests. Tears are normal. Shame was adaptive in childhood but it is a freeze state, and change requires movement. Self-blame doesn't hold you accountable; it makes change impossible.

• Say 'I am a good person who…'

We collapse behavior into identity: I did a bad thing, so I'm bad. Saying 'I'm a good parent who yelled at my kid' or 'a good person who hasn't worked out this week' separates who you are from an action that doesn't match your values, and frees energy for curiosity and repair. The same applies to kids: 'I have a good kid who is saying I hate you.'

EXAMPLES

• The chicken-again dinner blowup

After a stressful day, a child groans at dinner and the parent explodes. Kennedy's repair, ideally after you first repair with yourself: name what happened, say clearly 'it's never your fault when I yell,' validate that it felt scary, and promise to work on your feelings. Discuss how to voice food complaints separately, perhaps a day later. She calls repair the single most important skill to get good at.

• Mel's anxious-texting daughter

Mel described a daughter who sends 15 texts when nervous, then says 'you're not helping' and hangs up, leaving Mel feeling like a punching bag. Asking for the most generous interpretation made Mel realize the word 'enemy' resonated. As a child, upsetting her mom made her feel like the enemy.

• 'Hi, worry boy'

Kennedy's five-year-old greets his nighttime 'worry boy,' reminds himself it's a part of him and not all of him, and remembers his 'I'm safe boy' and 'happy memories boy.' Adults can do the same with a 'tired part' that stops a morning walk.

• Mel's quick snap at her kids

Mel, whose children are 23, 22 and 17, said she can't recall being yelled at yet snaps at her kids under stress, then quickly apologizes. Kennedy says not remembering is completely normal, because the body still carries the pattern.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Trace the road to reactivity**
  Instead of asking how not to yell at dinner, ask where the depleting path began, such as the PTA meeting you agreed to despite promising yourself you wouldn't, or the sleep-in you skipped.
- **Check whether a goal comes from shame or values**
  No one motivates from 'I'm lazy.' If the goal really aligns with your values, listen for the part that resists, greet it, and ask it to step back.
- **Repair is permission to keep practicing**
  You will mess up again. Repair rewires both your circuitry and your child's or partner's, and it stops another generation from wiring self-blame.

What To Do If You’re Having a BAD DAY And Don’t Feel Like YOURSELF | The Mel Robbins Podcast

Date: 2022-10-24 · Duration: 1:03:04
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5z0xjtb4_e4

KEYPOINTS

• This episode started as an unplanned conversation about a bad mood

Mel asked her friend and colleague Amy how she was, and Amy, who is almost always upbeat, said she felt 'below the line' and close to tears. Amy agreed to record on audio only. Her struggle was twofold: she disliked the feeling, and she didn't know how to sit in a bad mood and let it pass, especially when people kept noticing and asking what was wrong.

• Anxiety can hit in the middle of a perfect stretch

Mel had just finished 14 days on the road where everything went right: a great speech in Montreal, a surprise hangout with Jay Shetty six floors above her at the Four Seasons, a family wedding in Montana, a spectacular New England fall drive, a new puppy and news of half a million downloads in one week. Walking into her new Vermont house to see Chris and friends, she felt a massive wave of anxiety and felt herself 'leaving her body.'

• Your mind will invent a convenient explanation

Mel noticed herself doing what Dr. Russell Kennedy described on an earlier episode: jumping into her head to ask 'what's wrong with me?' and scanning for a cause. She settled on sadness that her daughters, in LA and Boston, couldn't be there for the puppy, but sensed that wasn't the real reason.

• Locate the feeling in your body and give it a shape

In a therapy session that morning, her therapist Anne Davin had her close her eyes and find where the feeling lived. Mel described a brass corset around her lower ribs, like something from House of the Dragon. Amy, trying it live, felt an oily, viscous slick in her upper chest and the back of her neck. Next, imagine it floating out in front of you, then let it take the form of a younger you.

• Seasonal transitions can trigger stored memories

Mel realized fall, despite being her favorite season, had been the most acute time for her anxiety: junior and senior year of high school, every fall at Dartmouth, a fall overseas, three falls in law school. Anne explained that seasons are processed through the limbic brain and circadian rhythm, so shorter days and fall smells can trigger memories of hard transitions marked by self-hatred, drinking and dissociation. Mel dreads the clocks going back, when it's dark at 3 p.m.

• You have two states: the divine self and the injured self

Anne described a part of you that taps into flow, awe, creativity and connection, and an injured part from childhood that learned to cope. Mel had strengthened the first in public: on stage, with fans, with friends. But that work wasn't complete in private moments, so when the excitement stopped, the injured part 'looked for a place to plug in.'

• The injured self reaches for whatever protected you as a child

Examples include pulling back if parents weren't affectionate, staying quiet to avoid fights, or keeping the peace for approval. For Mel, it's leaving her body and spiraling into worry; for Amy, shame and sadness. Many of these patterns were formed before age five, so your body remembers what your mind has no story for, a point Mel credits to Dr. Becky.

• 'The rattle': getting off the roller coaster leaves you shaky

Anne's analogy: after a thrilling ride, you step onto the platform and feel unsteady until you find your footing. That shakiness is the injured self saying 'remember me?' Mel visualizes herself standing on the platform rather than stuck at the bottom of the ride. Amy recognized her own fear that 'the other shoe has to drop' when life is very good.

• Not feeling like yourself can be a good sign

Mel's reframe: if you've done the healing work, feeling off is noticeable precisely because you now know another way of being. She contrasts this with Eckhart Tolle's 'pain body,' living in your own pain all day, which she says she did for decades.

• Fire up a different memory circuit on purpose

Anne told Mel that injured experiences are encoded in the amygdala, while memories of deep connection and flow use different circuitry. Recalling a specific peak moment, feeling where it sits in your body and toggling back to the heavy spot strengthens the positive pathway. When Amy did this, she rated the oily feeling in her neck as noticeably lower.

EXAMPLES

• The Dante's Inferno assignment

When Mel pictured her corset as a younger self, she recalled senior year English: students wrote cantos sending a classmate to hell and read them aloud. The first six or seven were about her. She left school and didn't return for days. She admits she was insecure and condescending then, and hadn't yet remembered being molested.

• Amy's childhood as the non-golden child

Amy's feeling took the shape of a left-out kid. Her brother, the golden child, had cancer for two years and died at 12 when she was 10. 'You can't compete with somebody who isn't even here,' she said, adding that the narcissism episode helped her see new layers.

• Kendall singing under a full moon

Mel's peak memory: on parents' weekend in LA, Kendall and her pop music program friends joined an impromptu open mic on a peeling porch. Because of COVID, Mel had seen her perform live only once in four years. Kendall covered Ariana Grande's 'Love Me Harder' as phones went up and a full moon rose; Mel felt it below her belly button and took the lyric as a message to love herself harder.

• Amy's errand game with her daughter Jane

Amy put her youngest in charge of a 10 a.m.-to-noon errand list: paint store, TJ Maxx, Price Chopper, a bookstore and more, with Jane calling time ('Mom, you have two minutes'). Both said it was a peak experience, and Amy felt it in her solar plexus.

- **Buckbeak on the boots**
  Mid-recording, Kendall called from a boot store. Mel joked about Buckbeak from Harry Potter, her therapy protection image, and the boots turned out to have a winged design that looked like him. Mel calls these coincidences signs and says noticing them builds circuitry for flow.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **What Mel does when the wave hits**
  Put a hand on your heart and reassure the younger you ('you're okay, I love you'). Say the feeling out loud instead of thinking about it. Ask for a hug; she hugged Chris and said she felt anxious without knowing why. Then let yourself rest; she chose a movie on the couch. She notes research suggesting an emotion typically passes in about 90 seconds if you don't resist or grip it.
- **Get curious instead of numbing**
  Both women admit the instinct is to have a drink, joke it away or get busy. Mel's practice is to notice 'there it is,' avoid making up a story and let the feeling move through.
- **Look for hearts and call out signs**
  From The High 5 Habit: look for naturally occurring hearts, like clouds, stones, a stain or the puppy's heart-shaped freckle. When you find one, tell yourself it was put there for you, pick it up or photograph it, and train your brain to notice things going right.

Are You Dealing with a Narcissist? Here’s How to Spot Them | The Mel Robbins Podcast

Guest: Dr. Ramani Durvasula
Date: 2022-10-20 · Duration: 1:17:04
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1gS7uV6Bj0s

KEYPOINTS

• You can't change the weather in Chicago

Dr. Ramani's opening takeaway is that people pour themselves into getting a narcissistic person to change, or into being 'better' so they'll act differently. That's like trying to make Chicago warm in February. Her advice is to bundle up. She describes her work as GPS for what you're dealing with, not 'you're bad, I'm good,' but 'this may not be good for me.'

• Narcissism is a personality style, not a diagnosis

Calling someone narcissistic is like calling them stubborn or agreeable: you're naming a maladaptive, antagonistic personality style. Narcissistic personality disorder is the diagnosis, which she says affects roughly 1–4% of people and is rarely documented, since these people seldom see a clinician and insurance won't pay to treat something that doesn't change. It's her own view that the diagnosis serves little purpose. Unlike most disorders, it harms others more than the person, who is often happy, successful and even doing well in dating while life goes their way.

• Healthy personalities flex; narcissistic ones don't

Dr. Ramani is introverted. Her best day that week was one where she spoke to no one, yet she can 'stretch' to lecture. Everyone returns to baseline under stress. The narcissistic person struggles to stretch or change because the style is built to keep them safe and satisfied with little regard for others. Agreeableness (warm, empathic, flexible, ethical) is its counterweight.

• The core traits, with deep insecurity underneath

Low or inconsistent empathy, entitlement, arrogance, constant need for validation and admiration, need for control, and poor emotional regulation with rage when frustrated. Also thin skin, pretentiousness, superficiality and grandiose fantasy ('my perfect love story'). Underneath is unprocessed shame that people will see 'they ain't all that,' so even a joke at their expense triggers lashing out. They're driven by power, dominance, control and safety.

• Narcissists are made, not born

If it were purely genetic it would show up in many siblings, yet one sister can be kind and another narcissistic. Her likely explanation is a possible temperamental vulnerability, such as a demanding, hard-to-soothe baby, met with constant invalidation ('can't you be more like your sister?'), no secure attachment, and trauma, chaos or neglect. Most kids from hard childhoods don't become narcissistic. They more often become anxious adults who undervalue themselves. 'A story we can tell backwards but never forwards.'

• The five warning signs

1) Reactivity to any feedback: suggest rewriting a paragraph and they throw the paper back. 2) Oppositionality: asked to wear a mask during the pandemic or not park in a reserved spot, they refuse. 3) Performative, transactional 'thank-you-card empathy' that tunes out once you go deeper. 4) Egocentricity: your first trip abroad becomes their travelogue about Rome hotels. 5) Contempt and putting others down ('that's just the baseline Tesla'). She adds 5A, gaslighting ('you're so sensitive, have you seen a shrink?'), and 5B, entitlement such as refusing to wait in line.

• Never call out a narcissist

A 'gotcha, I see you' moment invites rage, a smear campaign and being labeled the ungrateful one, or the narcissist. If you see it, change your behavior instead: stop being their supply and stop taking the bait. When a parent opens with 'haven't heard from you in a long time,' answer 'no, you haven't.' 'They're playing tennis; you need to play solitaire.'

• When you must attend, choose guilt or realistic expectations

Either sit with the guilt of saying no, or go with realistic expectations. Make it 'personal bingo' and reward yourself, say with a scoop of ice cream, for every five invalidations. Decide by your True North, what's healthy for you, whether that's a camping trip over Thanksgiving or a deadline the Monday after. Guilt is for doing something wrong. Not doing what someone wants isn't wrong, though children of narcissists were trained to believe it is.

EXAMPLES

• The child as an extension of the parent

Narcissistic parents expect a child to have no needs of their own: eat, play the sport and excel the way the parent wants, and shame them about weight or for choosing violin over sports. Drawing on psychoanalyst Daniel Shaw's 'loss of intersubjectivity,' she describes a parent who says 'this is my birthday, what is happening here?' to a sad child. The child learns shame for having needs.

• The tea maker

She doesn't think about her tea maker until she wants tea. A narcissistic person thinks about people the same way. Meanwhile you ruminate about them constantly, while they think about you only when they need something or you're in their way.

• Family roles

The golden child is anointed. The scapegoat is criticized, may be denied the tuition a sibling gets, and can come out with something like complex trauma. The helper acts like a personal assistant, and the fixer plays court jester to stop fights. The truth teller sees through it and often gets scapegoated. The brainwashed child insists 'she gave up everything for us.' Two narcissistic parents can attract each other and stage the white-shirt social media family.

• An overindulged path, too

She cites Eddie Brummelman's research at the University of Amsterdam. Children told they are more special than other children were already showing entitlement. The issue isn't 'you're special' but 'more special than others.' Kids need secure attachment (Bowlby and Ainsworth's work), practice with disappointment (she doesn't let her daughter win Chutes and Ladders) and modeled empathy, not cutting lines at airports and theme parks.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Am I a narcissist?**

Everyone has ungraceful moments. What matters is how quickly and authentically you make amends. The narcissistic apology is 'I'm sorry you feel that way.' When she hears it, she gives a Mona Lisa smile, says 'I gotta jump' and ends the conversation.

- **Authenticity costs something**

Being authentic means being unpopular and often having smaller social networks after 'clearing away the dead branches.' Empathy doesn't mean being someone's emotional punching bag. You can step away gracefully. Discomfort is pain, too: 'Why are you willing to tolerate pain' at the gym 'and not here?'

- **Where to go deeper**

Her YouTube channel, DoctorRamani; her podcast Navigating Narcissism (iHeart), with survivor stories including a woman from The Tinder Swindler; and a moderated subscription community for survivors.

How To Let Go Of What No Longer Serves You | The Mel Robbins Podcast

Date: 2022-10-17 · Duration: 0:48:14
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=59agbwvJS8Y

KEYPOINTS

• Letting go is how you make room for change

Starting on a fall hike in southern Vermont, before she gets too winded and finishes in the studio, Mel argues that self-improvement usually focuses on adding things. She says the best place to start is often dropping projects, thinking patterns, relationships and habits that no longer serve you. She's answering listener Cheryl's question: how do you know whether to let something go or fight for it harder?

• Trees push their leaves off to survive the winter

Mel explains that leaves turn sunlight into energy for the tree, and in return the tree sends them water. In winter the ground freezes, there's no water, and leaves left on the branches would drain the tree dry. So the tree pulls back water and ejects them. She calls it 'almost a violent act,' not a gentle, pretty one: once the exchange becomes one-way, holding on would kill the tree.

• The test is whether the energy exchange is still reciprocal

Healthy relationships, jobs, friendships and habits give back roughly what you put in. When something becomes a one-way 'energy suck,' Mel says it's time to let go. Holding on too long depletes your vitality and motivation, and leaves you no time, space or drive to create anything new.

• Honor the purpose something served, then drop the guilt

Things often serve a purpose for a season. Work friends you ate lunch with every day may fade after you move, because the patterns of your life changed, not because something is wrong with you. Mel admits she held on to the house where she raised her kids for 26 years about two years longer than she needed to. Thanking something for its purpose makes it easier to release.

• Your energy doesn't lie

Mel asks listeners to check an internal fuel gauge from empty (burnt out, pouring into everything else) to full (energized even when things are hard). She notes how a grumpy barista can drag down your mood, while a kind one who buys your coffee on a bad day lifts you up. She calls energy a compass tied to intuition: it's why you feel 'off' around some people and why a text from someone you dislike lands differently.

• Easy cases: things that only return negativity

Examples include high-school or pre-pregnancy pants that make you feel bad every time you try them on, a job that puts a pit in your stomach, a friend who only gossips and drags you down, or a roommate who was a fit two years ago. Donate, delete or leave. If you can't leave, like a job you need for the bills, redirect the energy you spend complaining into 30 minutes each morning job-hunting or working on a side project.

• Hard but worthwhile things pay you back

Mel hates exercising and getting out of bed, but once she pushes through, the return is pride and energy. Chris's sobriety took enormous effort at first and now pays back in better sleep, clarity and alignment with his values. Chasing someone who leaves you insecure and distracted, by contrast, is 'an obsession,' not a reciprocal relationship.

• In draining caregiving situations, your values create the return

Caring for an aging parent, or a child or partner with mental-health struggles, can be exhausting, and the person may not be able to give back. Mel's answer is to connect with your values: feel proud that you're a compassionate caregiver acting as the person you want to be, and remind yourself 'this too shall pass.' She keeps showing up for a friend who has struggled for a long time because she would want a friend to stay.

• Winners quit all the time

Responding to DMs asking whether letting go makes you a quitter, Mel says holding on to what no longer serves you is the losing move. Quitting one thing is saying yes to another, so she frames letting go as a beginning and a source of possibility.

EXAMPLES

• The law-firm year Mel wasted

At 30 and pregnant, after loving her work as a New York public defender (in court 8 to 5, visiting Rikers), Mel moved to Boston without a Massachusetts license. She took a big-firm job writing alone in a high-rise office. For a year she rode the 45-minute commuter rail feeling more dread the closer she got. She stayed miserable instead of searching for something else, until maternity leave gave her distance.

• Chris's 12-week ultimatum

With a mortgage and a baby, Chris told Mel she had 12 weeks of maternity leave to find a job paying $60,000. She landed one the night before her leave ended. It paid $55,000, which was enough, and she walked in the next day and quit the firm. Her lesson: give a human a problem to solve and we get creative.

• Stuck in traffic on the way to the studio

Running late, Mel felt the wave of stress and the 'should have gotten up earlier' complaints starting, and recognized it as her own energy draining away.

• 'How do you stop controlling your friends?'

At a Los Angeles event with her friend Kathy Heller, a woman asked Mel this, and Mel says she kept thinking about it. Her answer: when you catch yourself trying to control someone, let go of the urge to change them and put that energy into listening and supporting. Control blocks connection.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Rule one: a 24-hour no-complaining challenge

Mel calls complaining a complete energy drain, whether it's about traffic, your job, your partner or your weight. Try going a full day without complaining, and redirect that energy into fixing the problem or letting it go.

- **Rule two: stop trying to control other people**
  Let people show up as they are. Mel adds that sometimes a person's purpose in your life is simply to teach you how to let go.
- **Give yourself credit for the hard things you're already carrying**
  Mel suggests naming four or five difficult things you keep showing up for and letting yourself feel proud. That pride is the energy coming back to you.

The TRUTH About ANXIETY And How To HEAL IT! | The Mel Robbins Podcast

Guest: Dr. Russell Kennedy
Date: 2022-10-13 · Duration: 1:31:49
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RdM596wLz00

KEYPOINTS

• Neck-up tools help you cope; neck-down work helps you heal

Mel calls her own tools, like the 5 Second Rule, a 'neck up' approach because they work on thoughts, worry and self-criticism. Dr. Russell Kennedy is an MD with a neuroscience degree, author of Anxiety Rx, and someone who had anxiety for about 30 years. He argues that coping is mostly top-down thinking strategies, while healing means addressing what's going on in the body. He doesn't dismiss talk therapy. He says it's only part of the toolkit.

• Call it 'alarm', not 'anxiety'

Patients almost always describe anxiety as a story: my husband, the bus, the grocery store. Kennedy says that story is what the analytical left hemisphere makes up. He asks instead what they feel physically, and renames that sensation 'alarm' so people pay attention to the body. Alarm doesn't always look like worry. Mel's daughter shows it as frustration and anger, and some people go into freeze: withdrawing, losing eye contact, moving stiffly.

• The feeling comes before the thought

Kennedy's model is that the amygdala detects a threat outside you or a worry inside you and sends signals down to the brainstem. Heart rate, blood pressure and breathing go up. Then the left brain asks why you're alarmed and starts 'stacking' worries to explain it, which creates more alarm in what he calls the alarm-anxiety cycle. Thoughts can cause anxiety, he says, but treating them as the origin is the mistake. They're mostly a symptom.

• Background alarm is old emotion stored in the body

Kennedy describes unresolved childhood emotional pain as 'background alarm' lodged in the body, a framing he shares with Gabor Maté. He's clear it's a construct, since mind and body can't truly be separated, but says it helps people. We live in our heads partly to avoid feeling, he says, because the body is 'where the pain is.'

• 'All anxiety is separation anxiety'

In Kennedy's view, alarm starts with feeling separate from parents who are supposed to see, hear and love you. It doesn't have to be abuse. A 'parental mismatch,' feeling you just don't connect with a loving parent, can be enough. Children can't blame their parents, so they blame themselves with what he calls JABS (judgment, abandonment, blame and shame), and that's the start of the inner critic.

• Your alarm may be your younger self asking for attention

Kennedy asks: if a crying child in a grocery store reached up to you, would you push them away? We comfort others without thinking but tell our own alarm to go away. He believes turning toward the sensation, rather than fleeing into thought, drops the intensity, perhaps from a 9 to a 4 rather than to a 2. Over time the alarm fires less often and less intensely.

• Regulate the body to settle the mind, not the other way round

Kennedy says the body is far more likely to relax the mind than the mind is to relax the body, because 'your mind lies to you all the time; your body never can.' Engaging the brain's sensation and movement areas pulls you out of rumination, which is part of why yoga helps. He calls anxiety at its root a mind-body disconnect, and says many people become addicted to worry, so more thinking doesn't fix overthinking.

• Chronic anxiety and addiction are tightly linked

Kennedy says he rarely sees chronic anxiety without some addiction. Alcohol, drugs, porn, constant achievement or 'negative stress' can all drown out the alarm. Mel recognized herself: busyness and stress let her outrun her anxiety for decades, which is why a quiet Vermont town with 'no Target to run to' felt so frightening. Kennedy calls this sublimation, channeling the alarm into something useful so you never have to feel it.

• Anxiety as blocked love

Kennedy believes anxiety means separation from yourself, and that many anxious people struggle to let love in. That's why saying 'I love you' in the mirror can feel unbearable. Turning toward the alarm and soothing it, he says, is giving yourself love. He shares that when his father's schizophrenia worsened when Kennedy was a young teen, he blocked his love for him because it hurt too much. He says you can't block love from a parent without blocking it everywhere, and jokes that's why he's been married three times.

EXAMPLES

• Mel's lifelong anxiety

In sixth grade Mel was sent home from a five-day school camp after calling her parents every day, and she told her friends her grandmother had had a heart attack. As a varsity athlete she chugged Mylanta behind a bush before matches, and her parents bought it by the case. She was diagnosed with anxiety in law school in the early '90s and took Zoloft for 20 years, which she describes as a ladder out of the hole. When she tapered off it before Sawyer was born, she had severe postpartum depression for eight weeks.

• Mel's lava wave

After moving to a small town in Vermont, Mel woke with alarm starting in her ankles and rising like hot lava to her chest. Her instinct was to curse it and try to sleep. Kennedy reframed it as 'little Mel' needing attention. Mel says she still often feels separate, like an outsider looking in.

• Oakley's school-morning panic

Oakley was bullied and had undiagnosed dyslexia and ADHD. His body sounded the alarm before school, he read the stomach butterflies as 'I'm going to puke,' and he'd bang his head on the kitchen island and sometimes throw up. Therapists told him to 'change the channel' of his thoughts. Mel now thinks he needed a hug and physical reassurance. During quarantine, surrounded by family, he realized he didn't have to hate himself because others picked on him, and Mel says his chronic anxiety lifted.

- **The school pickup line**

  Kennedy's walkthrough for spotting someone you dislike: feel your seat, relax your shoulders and jaw, take a slow breath, and locate the sensation, for example an apple-sized pressure in your upper chest that radiates to your neck. Put your hand on it. Often the trigger isn't this person but someone from your past they remind you of.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Find a safe place in your body and move back and forth**

  Use a 5-4-3-2-1 countdown to drop out of your head and into your body. Locate the alarm, then find a neutral or safe spot. For many people that's the breath; for Kennedy it's around his nose and cheeks. Shift attention between the two.

- **The 'love sandwich' for a child (or anyone)**

  Kennedy's wife Cynthia, a somatic trauma therapist, works with preverbal trauma. With a distressed child, put one hand on their heart and the other on their back at the same level, and just stay until their nervous system settles.

- **Ask 'Am I safe in this moment?'**

  Kennedy prefers this question to the statement 'I am safe,' which anxious people tend to reject. You can have a Friday presentation, a tax bill and a sick mom and still be safe right now.

- **Kennedy's physiological sigh**

  Take three quick breaths in through the nose and hold for 3–5 seconds. Then exhale slowly through closed teeth with a hiss, picturing a deflating tire, with shoulders and jaw loose. The long exhale is what calms you. He says that under stress, 'the stress starts breathing you.'

The biggest MISTAKE you’re making with MOTIVATION | The Mel Robbins Podcast

Date: 2022-10-10 · Duration: 0:50:21
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SVA3MPaq6ns

KEYPOINTS

• 'Motivation is garbage' if you treat it as a feeling

Mel's counterintuitive opening is that motivation, understood as a feeling, comes and goes, and it won't be there when a task is hard, scary or solitary. Most people wait to feel motivated and then act. She says it works the other way: you act, and motivation follows. She still calls motivation essential. Her point is that waiting for the feeling is a trap.

• The skill that matters is acting when you don't feel like it

Mel says you already know what to do, whether it's the gym, speaking up at work or ordering the salad instead of the cheeseburger, and if you don't, you can Google it. Knowing just makes you smarter. Her 'hundred million dollar skill' is making yourself get out of bed, apply for the job or face what you're avoiding.

• No one is coming to rescue you

Mel's second takeaway comes from her lowest point. She wanted someone to show up and fix things, but no one was going to pay the bills, fix the restaurants or make her look for a job. Your dreams are your responsibility, and she argues you're capable of acting on them.

• There's a five-second window of hesitation

Mel noticed that the moment you start thinking about doing something instead of doing it, your mind fills with excuses, anxiety and overwhelm. She describes a 'bias toward thinking' (hesitating) versus a 'bias toward action' (moving regardless of how you feel). Counting 5-4-3-2-1 is her tool for moving from the first to the second.

• Why counting works, as Mel explains it

After years of what she calls research and conversations with neurologists, psychologists and habit experts, Mel describes the countdown as metacognition, a 'cheat code' for deliberately switching gears. In habit terms, she says, it's a 'starting ritual' that interrupts an old pattern so you can replace it, swapping the evening glass of wine for a mocktail or the snooze button for standing up. Counting also takes focus, and she says it engages the prefrontal cortex.

• Starting requires activation energy

Mel says your brain's job is to keep you alive, so it resists change. You'll always have to push yourself, and starting something new is the hardest part. Counting backwards is itself an action, a 'Trojan horse' that gets you moving. Her example: it's 3 p.m., raining, you skipped your morning run. Count down, and at 'one' walk to the closet and put on your running shoes.

• Change comes from small decisions repeated over time

'You're one decision away from a different life,' Mel says, but she's clear the rule works over time, not overnight. Quick fixes don't stick, so you have to keep repeating it. She expects you to fail and mess up, and says what matters is showing up again the next morning.

• It applies far beyond getting out of bed

Mel says people use the rule to make sales calls, reach out to executives, lose weight and stay sober. She shares a listener, Kyle, who said it helped him stay sober for three and a half years, even after learning his grandmother's cancer had returned. She jokes that if you teach it to your kids, they'll use it on you.

EXAMPLES

• $800,000 in debt by 2008

Chris and his best friend opened a 40-seat pizza place that was a hit, then expanded using the Robbinses' life savings, a home equity line and cash advances on credit cards. Location two was in the wrong place, location three was too expensive, and then the 2008 crash hit. Mel, 41 with three kids under 10, lost her job. They were $800,000 in debt, Chris hadn't been paid in six months, the mortgage was months behind, and they pulled their daughter from a $125 soccer program. Mel was drinking heavily and screaming at Chris.

• The rocket launch

A week before their first bankruptcy proceeding, Mel gave herself a pep talk in front of the TV, possibly after four bourbon Manhattans, she admits. She saw a rocket launch countdown in a commercial and decided to launch herself out of bed the next morning. When the alarm went off and she reached for the snooze button, she counted 5-4-3-2-1 and stood up. By day three it clicked. She went on to use it to stop yelling at Chris, go for a run in February, call friends to say she needed a job, and call her parents for help.

• Chris uses it on the business

Chris used the countdown to renegotiate leases with landlords, tell investors the truth, restructure the business and lay off people he cared about. Over the next couple of years, the couple used it to get their marriage back on track and their drinking under control. Mel took a $25-an-hour local radio job. Chris eventually left the restaurant business, got sober and became a yoga instructor.

• A '21-minute panic attack' on the TEDx stage

In 2010 a college friend got Mel a speaking slot in San Francisco. She accepted mainly for two free plane tickets and two nights at the St. Regis, since she and Chris hadn't had a vacation in four years. It turned out to be the first TEDx event. She had a stress rash by minute one, forgot her ending, mentioned the five-second rule almost as an afterthought, and gave out her email address. Two years later, emails from strangers using the rule started arriving.

• A self-published book that went global

Despite dyslexia and ADHD, Mel self-published The 5 Second Rule. She says it became the most successful self-published audiobook ever, led to six Audible projects, and the hardcover has been translated into 41 languages and sold over a million copies. Her point is that you're not too old or too unqualified.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Mel's five-day wake-up challenge**

  For five mornings, when the alarm goes off, count 5-4-3-2-1, throw off the sheets at 'one,' stand up and walk toward the bathroom. If you naturally spring out of bed, set the alarm 30 minutes earlier so you feel the resistance. Mel says pushing through morning resistance builds the same muscle you'll use everywhere else.

- **Use the countdown at the moment you hesitate**

  Whenever you catch yourself talking yourself out of something, whether a call, a workout, speaking up or a hard conversation, count down and move before your brain 'kills' the impulse. Mel's own rule is to move within five seconds of the instinct to act.

- **Use it to interrupt bad habits too**

  When you notice yourself spiraling into worry, self-criticism or reaching for a drink, count backwards to break the pattern, then do the healthier thing you've planned in advance.

2 Ways to Take Your Power Back When You Feel Insecure | The Mel Robbins Podcast

Date: 2022-10-07 · Duration: 1:01:15
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6HSXaSAiLNI

KEYPOINTS

• A real-time dilemma: your ex-crush now likes your new friend

Mel's daughter Kendall, 21, a college senior and aspiring singer-songwriter in Los Angeles, texted her mid-class. A fellow musician she'd hooked up with for six months (renamed 'Steve') now had a crush on a new friend, a woman who had just offered to help book Kendall's sessions and manage her music. Kendall had an 'ugly cry,' felt the friend was gorgeous, and wondered if he'd only been in it for sex because he never said such things about her.

• Parents: pause and offer connection instead of a fix

Mel says her anxiety normally makes her jump in with solutions. This time she used her 5 Second Rule to pause, then replied 'that sucks, I hate it when the universe does that.' When Kendall asked what to make of it, Mel turned the question back: 'What do you think?' She only gave her own view after asking 'Do you want me to tell you what I'm thinking?'

• Kendall framed it as a test of her commitment to music

She'd been manifesting devotion to her work 'above all else,' and saw two people who could help her career becoming entangled as a test of whether she'd let it pull her focus. She was trying hard to hold an abundant mindset: good for them.

• When the energy shifts, slow down and pay attention

Mel's core advice: a change in the vibe around a person or project signals something about alignment. Making music is intimate, and it's hard to collaborate with people you have weird vibes with. She compares it to having a crush on a coworker, then learning they're secretly dating someone else at work and no longer wanting to share projects with either.

• The fork in the road: Kendall Zero versus the aligned you

A text, a sighting or a song puts you at a crossroads. The old self goes left into negative self-talk and evidence-gathering ('I'm ugly,' 'no wonder he wants her'). The other road aligns with who you're becoming. Kendall admitted that on day one she was already having to train herself not to go there.

• Name exactly how you'd sabotage things

Mel asked Kendall how the old her would derail it. Answer: avoid the new friend, 'pump the brakes' on that relationship, give both people the cold shoulder, refuse to collaborate and spiral into self-talk that wouldn't lift for a while. Mel said that described her own teens, 20s, 30s and sometimes 40s.

• Flip the script into 'healthy selfishness'

Kendall decided she knew in her heart she didn't want a relationship with him; part of her only wanted him to want her. So she surrendered to reality and imagined how great it would be if two people who respect her and want to pour into her creatively loved each other. Her question became: how can I make this fun and benefit from it?

• Past pain makes faster processing possible

Two and a half years earlier, Kendall had a far more painful, drawn-out, entangled breakup that took about a year and a half. Mel believes breakthroughs come in proportion to how painful the experience was, and that having processed that pain lets Kendall recognize the old road within an inch of it. Mel says the same about her own contentment at 53 after two brutal years she went through.

• Believing you're meant for more makes setbacks smaller

Kendall said that during her old breakup she didn't truly believe she was put on earth to live an incredible life. Now she can 'taste' bigger things coming, so this feels like one piece of the puzzle, not the whole puzzle, and is easier to compartmentalize.

• If you keep choosing left, life eventually forces a wake-up call

Mel says stubbornly repeating old patterns can end in a painful, shocking breakdown that makes the pattern impossible to ignore. For Kendall it was a deep betrayal; for Mel, multiple betrayals. Her plea: don't wait for your life to fall apart before inching toward something new.

EXAMPLES

• The text exchange

Kendall: 'This is the universe giving me a test.' Mel: 'Every relationship is a test; this one is saying I'm just fine on my own.' Kendall's most honest line: 'I don't want to be with him anyway. I just don't want him to want her.' Mel kept telling her the texts read like song lyrics.

• The surprise call mid-conversation

Kendall was eating a chocolate bar, then got on her bike, and briefly worried she'd run into the pair. Mel had reached her grandfather's outgoing voicemail, which Kendall has kept since ninth grade. Chris also called during recording and joked Kendall was probably after money.

• A producer's breakup, three and a half years on

Producer Maddie teared up and shared that she was still recovering from a prolonged breakup where she felt not good enough. Kendall's advice: every day, do one small thing that scares you or try thinking the other thought, 'strengthening the muscle' of turning right. Maddie realized turning left meant choosing everyone else; her dad always told her to choose herself first.

• Kendall's earlier advice to Mel

During a hard stretch in Mel's life, Kendall told her the struggles were reminding her how the people she tries to inspire feel every day, since success had distanced her from that daily struggle. Mel took it as a challenge tied to her purpose.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Small 'right turns' you can make today**
  Mel's examples: don't hang around his frat house hoping he sees you; find your friends at the library. Don't stalk someone on social media; go for a walk or a class. Each day, turn toward something new instead of grasping at what was.
- **Use energy as your compass**
  Ask 'how could I make this a win?' and notice what feels expansive versus what makes you shrink and feel depleted. Kendall's first instinct was to cut both people off, but that felt like losing power; staying open felt energizing, which told her which road was right.
- **Privacy boundary when sharing others' stories**
  Mel says nothing involving her kids, husband, friends or their texts airs without them hearing it and giving the okay, so people can speak freely and feel safe.

3 SIMPLE steps to create POWERFUL changes in your life | The Mel Robbins Podcast

Date: 2022-10-06 · Duration: 1:02:52
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1JbfAr-BQjA

KEYPOINTS

• Birthdays trigger the 'fresh start effect'

Mel recorded the first episode of her podcast for release on her 54th birthday, sitting on a hotel-room floor in a pillow fort to muffle a construction site. She describes the moment the birthday cake arrives: you stop hearing the singing, close your eyes and go inward to make a wish. She points to Wharton School research that names this the fresh start effect, a burst of intrinsic, aspirational motivation that comes when you feel handed a blank slate.

• Temporal landmarks open a new 'mental accounting period'

Researchers call the triggers temporal landmarks: a date (January 1st, a birthday, a Monday), an experience (a new semester or sports season) or a physical thing (Mel's habit of buying new journals). Like an accountant closing the books on a fiscal year, a landmark separates you from your 'imperfect' past self and briefly quiets the inner judge. That's why diets and first gym visits cluster on January 1st.

• Big life events are landmarks too

Births, weddings, deaths and breakups mark time and also change identity. After a painful breakup, she says, you might need a month or two of crying. Then you wake up one morning relieved it's over, stop judging yourself, and start building something better.

• You don't have to wait for a date on the calendar

Her invitation is to give yourself a fresh start today. With about eight billion people on the planet, someone has already faced what you're facing, built the company you dream about or healed the relationship. That's evidence your next chapter is possible.

• Step one: make a wish

Ask one question: 'What do I want the next year of my life to look like?' At 52 Mel couldn't answer it. She only knew she didn't want to stay in her current chapter, and she says that's enough. Knowing what you don't want makes it easier to remove what isn't working, and new possibilities show up.

• Step two: act like the future you, whatever you feel

Don't wait to feel happy or motivated. She says even a small mood boost improves focus, energy and productivity for the rest of the day. She ties this to the research behind behavioral activation therapy, summed up as 'act like the person you want to become in the future no matter how you feel in the present moment.' Each daily action is one brick, and a year later you've paved a path.

• Step three: find the proof it's possible

Treat anyone who has the relationship, career, body or friend group you want as a 'light on the path,' not someone robbing you of your light. Mel admits she used to give a friend's renovated kitchen a tight fake smile ('I love the white cabinets') while seething with jealousy. Her mindset flip is that success and happiness are unlimited, and the only thing robbing you is your excuses, fears and waiting for motivation.

• You are a light for someone behind you

If you've grieved a loved one, changed careers, sold a family home, lost weight, learned to live with depression or been the first in your family to graduate from college, your experience proves to someone else that it's possible.

EXAMPLES

• Mel's 52nd birthday, two years earlier

She had just been fired from her dream job and lost her daytime talk show, and her book contract was rescinded. COVID shut down her speaking business while she was responsible for payroll and health care for 15 families. People in her inner circle lied to and stole from her. College was canceled, so three anxious kids were home, and her husband Chris had just been diagnosed with long-term depression. She woke up in the bunk room at her mother-in-law's house, cried, and filmed herself.

• The steps she laid out in that video

Name the feeling (lost, suspended between an old life and a new one) to tame it. Move your body to shift trapped emotion, which is why she put on an exercise tape. Do one thing that makes you happy, which for her was buying flowers. Dump your thoughts in a journal. Remind yourself 'this is temporary.' Then force yourself to dream again, because how you feel now reflects what you see in your future.

• How small actions became a reinvention

Exercise, flowers, stand-up comedy specials and journaling eventually made her answer clear. She wanted to travel less, not miss her son Oakley's high school years the way she had missed her daughters', and stop falling asleep with a to-do list. She started saying no, asked for help, went to therapy with Chris and sold the Boston-area home of 26 years for a small town in southern Vermont.

• Danielle's email

The day before taping, a woman named Danielle wrote that the 52nd-birthday video was the first Mel video she ever saw. She had been suicidal and had promised a friend, through a pact to call each other, that she'd give life 24 more hours. She spent those hours watching Mel's videos. Over the following year she kept 'chipping away,' and she learned that happiness is something you practice daily, not a reward for fixing everything first.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Oakley's introduction

Her 17-year-old son Oakley reluctantly introduced her. He listed four years on CNN, The 5 Second Rule, The High Five Habit and a million YouTube subscribers, then admitted he calls his mom, not his 'chillest guy ever' dad, when he needs anything.

- **Give up what weighs you down**
  Her advice to her 52-year-old self: have a good cry, get a big hug, then some tough love, with Toni Morrison's line about giving up what weighs you down. Mel rejects 'it is what it is'. She says it is what you make it.
- **Homework: a voice memo from your future self**
  Bookmark the episode for hard days. Record a voice memo as yourself a year from now, with your wish come true, describing your days in detail. Then share the episode with someone who needs it.