



Transcript: Wake Up Happy with Todd Kashdan

HOST

Kym Yancey

SPEAKER

Todd Kashdan

PRESENTATION

Sandra Well, good morning, everyone. I am so excited to *Wake Up Happy* with you. This is Sandra Yancey, and we've got people calling in from all over. I just want to acknowledge Jody from Palm Springs getting up bright and early out in California on the West Coast. We've also got Kelly from Williamsonville in Oregon. We've got Chris from Lincoln, California. We've got Marcia from the Midwest, St. Louis, Missouri, so, so excited that you're waking up happy with me.

And Todd Kashdan, we've got an amazing call; this amazing man who has got just a wealth of knowledge. It's so timely, I think, for the holidays. It's timely every day, but sometimes during the holidays we need that extra boost and he is just the guy to give it to us all.

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So, I'm pinch-hitting, if my voice sounds a little bit different. This is not Kym Yancey, my husband; he has no voice. He is down and out with the flu and so, I am drawing on my ABC interview days being on the air for eight years and pinch-hitting for him. I am excited to be with you and wishing Kym well. I know that he is listening and let's get going here.

I want you to know at any time during our call together, I want to encourage you to get social with us. Let's spread happiness around the world. That's part of the *Live Happy* movement. So, at any time when you hear anything that Todd says that speaks to you, resonating with you, connecting with you, and you want to shout it out to your community, there's enough for all of us. We can expand the whole movement of happiness.

So, all you have to do through any quotes that you hear Todd say that you want to do a shout out, make sure that you include the hashtag WakeUpHappy. The Twitter handle is MyLiveHappy, again, that is MyLiveHappy. You can also post on our Facebook page, My Live Happy. I just want you to know that at the end we're going to have some recap highlight quotes from not only what Todd is going to talk about today, but also our previous speakers on Pinterest. So, you can always find us on [pinterest.com/livehappy](https://www.pinterest.com/livehappy). Okay, wonderful, kind of recap.

Let me also say, before I dive in with Todd, that *Live Happy* is way more than a publication. I mean, while we're the fastest selling magazine in Whole Foods today, we're also a website that gives you all kinds of happy information relative to relationships, your career, health and wellness; I mean, we even have a store for everything you desire that's all about being happy. So, I want to make sure that you check us out there as well.

I've got to tell you about the Guinness Book of World Records contest that we're in the process of creating and I know that Kym is going to be excited to share with you about one of the banana companies that I know is going to be coming onboard to sponsor and make this the movement of movements. So, I want to make sure that you get on the front end of it, because everybody knows that when you get on the front end, you get advantages that those that come along later sometimes miss. And so, take your picture with your banana and post it, make sure you use the hashtag BananaSmile, and you can email it to wakeuphappy@livehappy.com. I just bet you might see yourself posted all through our social media channels and websites. Make sure you take the banana, and my little secret is bring it down just a little bit so that we can actually see the corners of your mouth smiling, so it replicates the smile of the banana.

Also, want to let you know that if you don't know this and you live in and around the Washington, DC, I'm an American University graduate so I know this area well. Would you believe it? Right during spring break and cherry blossom season, George Mason

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University is doing an amazing conference on March 26th and 27th. This is really a wonderful time to be in Washington, DC, with your family and they're doing a spotlight event called, "Leading to Well-Being in Workplaces, Organizations and Communities." It's a conference; you can learn more. The tickets are on sale now, and in fact, there's an early bird price for wellbeing.onmason.com. So, you can go and guess who is going to be speaking there, psychologist and author Todd Kashdan. You're going to get a little dose of him today and then an opportunity to really go deep with him at this amazing conference. Again, in Washington, DC, March 26th and 27th.

Let's talk about Todd, because you want to write these down. You're going to hear sound bytes like, I mean this guy is well researched and really gifted at this whole topic that you and I need to know more about. To follow him and to quote him, you'll want to use his Twitter handle which is @ToddKashdan. Kashdan, for those of you that might be calling in and not in front of a computer, is K-A-S-H-D-A-N, Todd Kashdan. His Facebook is Todd.Kashdan. All right, just want to make sure that you know. Let me give you a little bit of background. I mean, his bio is lengthy, but let me just give you the highlights so we can get into chatting with him.

He is a world recognized authority on the well-being, strengths, social relationships, stress and anxiety. Dr. Todd Kashdan has published more than a 150 scholarly articles and is the author of multiple books. His just released book, *The Upside of Your Dark Side: Why Being Your Whole Self – Not Just Your Good Self, Drives Success and*

Fulfillment. He is professor of psychology and senior scientist at the Center for the Advancement of Well-Being at George Mason University. His research has been featured in several media outlets, including *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*. He is a twin, and guess what, he has twin 7 year old daughters, which plans to rapidly populate the world with great conversationalists. I love that.

Again, his handle is @ToddKashdan, and his Facebook is Todd.Kashdan.

Todd, welcome to the *Wake Up Happy* call.

Todd Thank you for such an enthusiastic introduction. I appreciate it.

Sandra Well, I'm really enthused about your subject, because I think you get to the realness that sometimes gets overly looked in the happiness movement because you argue that people are not whole. How do you define wholeness? What does that mean to you?

Todd Well, for me, wholeness is respecting the fact that we have this—almost think of it like a 16-sided die of a personality. And we tend to favor certain sides of our personality, you know, probably things that your guests have talked about – kindness, compassion, empathy, perspective taking, capability of loving, fairness, leadership. There are other sides of your personality; they're a little bit more uncomfortable to feel and they're really inappropriate in some ways to talk about in polite company. And that's—sometimes

we're narcissistic; sometimes we lack emotional connections to people; sometimes we don't like people; sometimes we're selfish; sometimes we are manipulative. These parts of our personality are there for a reason.

We've got millions of years of evolution that have created certain behavioral tendencies, or that certain situations they're exactly what we need, not just to get the best outcome in a situation, but to actually in the long run acquire greater happiness, meaning of life, greatness [ph], curiosity, flexibility, maturity, and wisdom. When we discard prematurely certain sides of our personality, we're not whole. We don't appreciate what makes us unique and what our unique experiences are that allow us to make a great creative contribution to the world.

Sandra It's so powerful—I love that we're talking about this because there is—I have to admit, and you're right. Just saying this on the air is uncomfortable for me to say that yes, there are elements of me that are pretty selfish, you know, particularly when it comes to my family, the things that I'm really protective about. You're right, just acknowledging it gives me a sense of discomfort. We have them. Why is that? Why is that a natural—do you have some research around that natural tendency to have those things, even when we know we don't want to feel that or we're uncomfortable feeling that?

Todd Well, sure. So one message comes from evolution and then one message comes from this science and psychology and behavioral economics. Probably, I'm going to say,

argue, that the most toxic idea in the self-improvement movement, in the happiness movement and in psychology is this notion that you should feel good and run from feeling bad. This idea that your mind is going to tell you that you don't want to feel bad, this moment is calling you away from happiness, why would you do this? And it's almost as if like your heart is going to—it's almost as if your heart is on a leash and your mind is on a leash.

And sometimes your mind will tell you these things, no one else hears them, because no one hears 95% of what your mind is telling you. Your mind will say, "Listen, hold back, don't reveal anything about yourself that might be used against you. You've been hurt before. I don't want you to be hurt again. You don't want to be hurt again." And your mind will tell you this and thus, you will buy into the idea—we all do that it's useful to avoid uncomfortable thoughts and feelings. Don't tell people you feel anxious; don't tell people you feel angry because why rock the boat when you could be happy, happier by just keeping things concealed and to yourself.

Sandra So, what are the consequences of not acknowledging some of these other emotions that we have?

Todd I'm glad you asked because it is huge. If you think about this, let me just go through some of the science. We know that the amount of anger you have with your romantic partner has no predictive power in terms of the health of your relationship or whether

you're going to break up or get divorced. We know that being anxious is not predictive of whether a police recruit or someone that's going through basic training in the military is going to make it through it and become an amazing officer and maybe move to being a one, two, three, or four-star general.

What makes people fail in life in terms of success, what makes people experience emotional problems is not anxieties, sadness, anger, boredom, embarrassment, or guilt. It's when you get embarrassed about being embarrassed; when you get anxious about being anxious, and then you start avoiding those thoughts and feelings inside your head. The only problem is, unlike trying to avoid a bad spot in a city that's nearby you because there's a lot of crime there, you can't avoid the thoughts and feelings in your head.

They're coming around with you for the journey, no matter whether you like them or not. So, you have to figure out can I have a relationship with the thoughts that are uncomfortable such that I can peddle my bike through a difficult part of the city with a huge incline, despite doubting myself and despite being uncomfortable that I can't do this. The answer is yes because you can change the gear on your bicycle.

Sandra So, talk to me about this whole notion of acknowledgement, acknowledging and emotion. Does that necessarily mean if I acknowledge to another person? Is it just the internal conversation that I have about acknowledging it to myself? What are the

different ways that people can acknowledge these emotions that are productive, that lead them to a more improved desired happier state?

Todd Well, you just hit the magic question. It actually—emotions—people make the mistake of making the end game of trying to feel more positive than negative by aiming for positivity.

Sandra Right.

Todd And that's problematic because all emotions and thoughts are tools. And when it comes to tools—

Sandra Oh, that's a tweetable, because when you—ooh, that's really powerful. Oh, I love that, that's everybody, listen to what he just said. I think, you nailed it and this creates the shift. What Todd said was is that your emotions are just tools, right? So, by definition, a tool is what?

Todd Well, here's the thing about the tools. It's about which tool is appropriate for the situation I'm in. That's talking about situational awareness.

Sandra Yes.

Todd How should I use it effectively? Do you have the skills to use it effectively? How hard or how delicately do I use that tool and then do I need another person to leverage the best way of using that tool to get the best possible outcome?

So, let me get really concrete. I'll give you one of my favorite studies in the '80s that everyone forgets about in this world of thinking about positivity all the time. We have to get rid of the notion that being happy is good and being sad is bad, because it is just wrong.

Let me give you an example. So, imagine you are meeting someone for the first time, which happens like right now with you and I it happened, every single day. And you were given a task to get to know me.

Sandra Right.

Todd Find out who I am, find out what makes me tick. Let's say that one time you were asked, "Do you think you have enough information about Todd?" Now, if you're in a happy mood, you will quit prematurely and say, "Yes, I've got enough. I'm feeling good. I just needed the basics; I'm good to go."

If you're a little bit less than happy, I'm not saying depressed and I'm not saying suicidal and I'm not saying a pit of despair, just a little bit sad, a little bit somber. You will persist

and say, "You know what, no, I don't know if I have enough information yet let me persevere and devote more effort because Todd's a complex character and I'm unsure about whether I've got all the basics about him."

Now, let's switch the game a little bit. Let's say in the midst of trying to get to know me, you're asked the question, "How are you feeling right now during this task?" The happy person persists and says, "Oh, I'm feeling good. I want to keep on going. I want to keep feeling good." And the person who is a little bit downtrodden, a little bit somber, will quit prematurely.

Sandra Oh, I think you're right.

Todd It's not that sad is good or happy is good; it depends on the situation. If the task is to feel good, if you're instructing someone, "Listen, I want you to feel really good in my house. I planned all this stuff for this holiday dinner, whether it's Hanukkah or Christmas, or Kwanzaa, I want you to feel good." The happy person is going to be content and want to keep that going.

If you ask somebody, "Do you think we've done enough to make this the best dinner possible, considering who is here?" The sadder person, the more somber person will say, "I think there's a little more we can do." And so, they both serve their purpose.

Sandra Right.

Todd And if you just think with blind generalizations and blind blanket statements that “I want everyone to be happier.” You know, we have happiness consultants that go into organizations. Well, guess what, that’s a bad thing because happiness alone is not the way to increase success, effort, creativity, and morale.

Sandra Yes, what I feel like I’m hearing you say is that if you think about happiness really is like a coin. There’s the heads and the tails; there’s both sides to it. If we just focus on one side, then just like a coin, it’s going to be counterfeit; it’s not going to have its full value than if we look at both sides of it. Is that accurate?

Todd I’d change the coin.

Sandra Okay. Say more, say more.

Todd The coin is this—I’m not sure that—I actually move away from the idea of aiming to try to be happy and I realize this is *Wake Up Happy*. And instead say, if we can pursue what we care about, if we can pursue what matters to us with an attitude of openness, and with the willingness to be in the present moment, we will make effort towards what matters to us. We will catch meaning automatically—meaning in our lives. And sometimes we’ll be happy and sometimes we won’t.

On the flip side of being caring about something, of having something that matters to us, the other side of the coin is that you're going to experience pain when you don't do well and you don't commit effort towards the things that matter most to you. If I don't spend time with my kids every single day, I'm going to experience pain. If I don't let myself really fall in love, well then, I'm never going to understand who I am fully as a person and what I'm capable of because we're social creatures.

Sandra Right.

Todd The willingness to love, the willingness to care, the flip side of the coin is the inevitability of pain.

Sandra Right. So, for the people that are listening today, Todd. And it's the holidays, and sometimes it elevates, would you agree, sometimes it elevates just the notion of the holiday season can elevate those that are going through a difficult time. Maybe it's the first season with the loss of someone they love, a mother, a father, a spouse, even a child. Sometimes it's the ending of an important relationship or a relationship that has lasted for a while, even sometimes when you want the relationship to end, just the holidays seem to accentuate the difficulty of that. What are some tips that you could give our listeners that right now are in that place?

Todd Sure, and this tip actually goes beyond people that are experiencing an increase in stress or having some nostalgia about people that they love that aren't here this year, or even can't be here physically because they live on the other side of the world. The first thing that I always say in terms of trying to live a better life is learning how to better tolerate pain.

Sandra Okay.

Todd This is important and part of that is creating the climate where all emotions are valued because they motivate us to do things that are in our best interests.

Sandra Yes.

Todd One part of that is do not try to fake your emotions to fit the group; do not try to force yourself to be happy. Honor millions of years of evolution that gave you sadness, which is a sign that—it's the quickest signal you can give to another person, when someone sees that you're sad that you could use some caring, some loving, and some help. There's no quicker signal that you have available to you. It's often outside of conscious awareness.

We have sadness for a reason. When you force yourself to try to be enthusiastic and happy when you're not there, you lose that signal to other people that you could use some love and some support and some help.

Sandra Yes.

Todd So, notice your emotions and let them be present, and this comes from practice. Practice doing it and recognizing that—the reason that we are unwilling to feel anxiety or sadness or anger is because we have biases.

Sandra But Todd—

Todd We think that if I get angry, I'm going to get out of control, like Lou Ferrigno in *The Hulk*, in the '70s. I'm going to rip a fan out of the wall or throw it at my uncle who is always making puns and I hate that kind of humor.

Sandra Right.

Todd The fact is, you can be frustrated which is a lower grade form of anger and let me tell you, when people are on the receiving end of anger, what we know is 76% of the time—like studying people in everyday life; 76% of people who are on the receiving end of

anger say that because of that anger that someone expressed to me I learned more about my faults, and I appreciate it.

Sandra Wow.

Todd And 48% of people say my relationship with that person is strengthened because they let me know what bothers them.

Sandra Yes. So help me understand this before we come to a close. I could talk to you all day; this is completely fascinating and I've always said the opposite of happiness is not unhappiness, necessarily. It's going through the unhappiness that can guide you to being better, more fulfilled, stronger relationships. What is the fine line?

Todd Well said.

Sandra Help me understand for the people that are—I totally agree with you about learning to tolerate your pain, understand your pain, validate yourself, being your authentic self, and wallowing it, using it as a crutch becoming that energy vampire that just sucks the life out of everyone. Where does that cross over?

Todd Well, there's no clear line but I can say that our most valuable currency that we can spend is our time and energy. And we have to think of whether we're spending it wisely.

If we're wallowing in our despair, by definition, we are not spending the currency of energy wisely because—here's my tip. For every thought that you have, you should mix in three bits of action for every thought.

Sandra Ooh. Wait, wait, wait. Repeat that, this is okay, everybody, you got it. This is everybody.

Todd Here's your exit point. For every thought and idea you have, mix three points of action. Do something. And wallowing is all about just getting stuck, spinning with your thoughts and your ideas; you're not doing anything.

Sandra Yes.

Todd Three parts action for every part thought.

Sandra Ooh, three part actions for every part thought. I love that. And then just become really cognizant are your actions feeding this? Are you going down a destructive path? Or are these positive actions? Things that help you work through where you're going to say—

Todd Yes, those actions should be a commitment towards what matters most to you. Most people—even people that are depressed will not say my motive is to be stuck in my head so that even though my kids are laughing around me, and someone is hugging me

from the side, I'm sitting there thinking about do I deserve to be in this room and be the recipient of this love. No one will say that that's what matters most to them, they'll say, "I want to be loved." And I'd say I'm following my colleague Steven Hayes who says get out of your head and into your life. Three parts action for every thought.

Sandra Yes, let me get this other one that you said I think is just a gem—I just want to make sure the audience is capturing and that is three parts action for every one part thought. Right? The other gem you said is when you defined actions, actions should be a commitment to what matters most to you. That is like, "Whoa." Right? That really defines what kind of actions. That differentiates are you going down the wallowing route and you're getting into your own kind of falling in love with your own misery, or, are you doing something that really aligns with what matters most to you. Brilliant. Just beautiful. Get out of your head and into your life. Yes.

Todd Please know that proper due to Steve Hayes who came up with these ideas decades before me.

Sandra Spoken like a true scholar that you are. I love that; thank you for that. Okay, wrap up, final words of advice for our audience.

Todd I'm going to give a simple one, which is if we want to make a difference in our lives, and make a difference in the world, we need to see human beings as they are, not as we

hope that they are. And part of that is that we have a full repertoire of emotions and behaviors, some of them are uncomfortable, and some of them are uncomfortable. If we see human beings for how they were designed through millions of years of evolution, only then can we maximize our powers and potential in the world.

Sandra Well, you have to come back; it probably won't be me, unfortunately, although I might twist Kym's arm because I want to have a whole conversation about this whole thing about if we want to make a difference in our lives and in the lives of the world is to not see people as they are—to see them as they are, not as we hope they are because I believe that that's the destructions of most relationships, specifically marriages and families. That is a topic that I know many people can relate to; we've got to be able—I wish we had more time.

You are a gem. I have loved our time together. Thank you, thank you, thank you, Todd, so much.

If you aren't following this guy, you need to do that. So if you haven't already or you need to make a mental note if you're listening on your phone, you need to go to—you need to follow him, first, on Facebook he is Todd.Kashdan. Again that is spelled with K-A-S-H-D-A-N. Twitter, his handle is ToddKashdan. Thank you so much, Todd, for this. I've got a few little wrap up notes that I want to share with everyone.

Just want you to know that, of course, as I was talking yesterday, you know I'm really passionate about spreading happiness to the world. You never know how the tiniest little thing can make a difference. We look at all the destructive graffiti that exists around world. What if we started a movement around happy graffiti? I know just the way to do that.

Live Happy has produced these notes sold; tens of thousands of them in just the last month of these wonderful, little post-it notes where you can tear them off. If you follow me on @SandraYanceyeWN, I posted a picture of them right before the call. They're post-it notes with already pre-written little notes on them, little quotes on them. You can leave them at gas stations for the next person that pulls up, on gym lockers, receipts when you leave your tips, the little things that can make a difference; \$5.95. I just feel like every person on the planet should have this in their stocking or whatever holiday they celebrate, Menorah, wherever. They should be everywhere; everybody should have this.

Then we have the beautiful Live Happy book, *50 Amazing Happiness Facts and Quotes*. Again, great little hostess gifts for \$15.95, if you're looking for something a little bit different than a typical coffee gift card, this is the way to go, if you ask me.

And guess what, Live Happy, because you're on this call, they have a discount code – WakeUpHappy – and you get 15% off and free shipping when your purchase is \$25.00 or

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more. So, really easy to do. I know I've got them for all my girlfriends. I'm doing a little book with a little pad of the post-its and wrapping it up for all of my hostess gifts when I'm meeting girlfriends over the holidays for lunch, stocking stuffers, that kind of thing. So, join the happiness movement, let's spread a little bit of happiness.

I want to end with a quote of the day by our guest Todd Kashdan. And he said, "Only by seeing humans as they are, not as we want them to be, can we make the greatest impact on the world and the greatest gains in moving our own well-being. This means appreciating every emotion and every side of our personality, and understanding what works best in a situation." Just love that.

Again, do you want to know more about Todd? You can follow him; he's very active on social media and he's going to be one of the speakers at the upcoming George Mason University conference called, "Leading to Well-Being in Workplaces, Organizations, and Communities" conference. And again, that event is March 26th and 27th in the beautiful Washington, DC area, couldn't be a better time being the whole spring break season and cherry blossom season which is at the end of March and April. One of my most beautiful love moments with my eyes was seeing cherry blossom season in Washington, DC, so much to do there.

I want to have you mark your calendar and know that you can register right now, so while you're in the happy frame of mind, pre-program yourself to join us again January 5th

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through the 9th for our fifth series of *Wake Up Happy*. You can register at LiveHappy.com/wake-happy. Register now, we've got amazing speakers already booked. Kristin Neff, Darrin McMahon, Shani Robins, Barbara Fredrickson, and Senia Maymin. Beautiful people doing amazing work on the planet about happiness.

Thanks again to Todd Kashdan; amazing conversation today. I'm wishing you the blessed, blessed holiday season whatever it is that you might celebrate. But I also wish you self-love and acknowledging all of who you are with productive ways and actions, at least three for every thought is what I've learned from Todd about how to move you into a more happy space.

Bye for now, everyone.

Todd Can I—?

Sandra Yes, yes, Todd, please.

Todd I just wanted to mention that this message is in more detail in the book by Robert and I that's available just in the last month.

Sandra Okay, repeat the title of the book for me please.

- Todd *The Upside of Your Dark Side: Why Being Your Whole Self, Not Just Your Good Self Drives Success and Fulfillment.* It's available on Amazon.
- Sandra And where's the best—on Amazon. So, you can do a search on *The Upside of Your Dark Side* that should probably get you there. Make sure that you're looking for Todd's name, Todd Kashdan, and who's the co-author with you? Did you say?
- Todd The more creative and smart one of our group, Robert Bismas-Diener.
- Sandra Your generous with that; I can only imagine. I can't quite imagine, but I trust you. Okay, there we go, thanks, everyone. Have a blessed holiday season and you'll be back with Kym in January. Bye for now.