

EPISODE 202

[INTRODUCTION]

[0:00:02.7] PF: Welcome to Episode 202 of Live Happy Now, brought to you this week by the Happy Child Summit. I'm Paula Felps, thanking you for joining us today to talk about happy children. As I just mentioned, this episode is brought to you by the Happy Child Summit.

Today, we're talking with Renee Jain, author and childhood happiness expert and founder of the Happy Child Summit. She's going to tell us what the summit is all about, how she came up with the idea and how you can be a part of it.

[INTERVIEW]

[0:00:31.9] PF: Renee, welcome to Live Happy Now. I am really glad that you could join in us here today.

[0:00:36.9] RJ: Thank you for having me, Paula. I'm excited to be here.

[0:00:40.0] PF: Well, we have so much that we can talk about, but I think to get started, I'd like you to first tell us a little bit about GoZen and how that all came to be.

[0:00:50.2] RJ: How that came to be? I was lying in therapy in my –

[0:00:55.8] PF: Okay, that's the first time I've ever got that answer, I'm intrigued.

[0:01:01.7] RJ: I was about 24-years-old. I was in a bad relationship and ended in a breakup. I started to have these panic attacks. Every time I had one, I would literally fall to the ground and clutch my chest and think I was having some heart attack. I had been used to pretending everything was okay. That was my way to deal with problems in my life, just to pretend that it was fine and I was fine. The funny thing is that when you do that for long enough, you stockpile all of the emotions inside, your body just starts to shut you down. It just will not allow it.

I thankfully ended up in therapy. I clearly remember this therapist who was wonderful and he looked like Freud. He would stroke his beard, as I imagine Freud would have. He's teaching me all these things; cognitive behavioral therapy. How to really reframe what you're going through, or how to feel your feelings? He pulled from lots of different fields; mindfulness, positive psychology, neuroscience. As I was lying there, I just thought to myself, "Wait a second. Why couldn't I have learned these things when I was a kid? Why did I have to wait for so long to learn life skills?"

I wish, I wish, I wish I had a time machine, I could go back in time and teach little Renee, but I didn't. At the time, I had graduated from college with a degree in finance. I was running this little tech and finance company. I decided that I needed to change career paths, because I wanted to take what he was teaching me and I wanted to figure out a way to teach it to kids. It took me about a decade. I had to sell that business. I went back to school. I got a coaching certification. I got a master's in applied positive psychology and I decided that the best way to teach kids is not to – I'm a parent, so I'm not minimizing the role of a parent or a teacher, but not to teach it through the parents, but to teach it to kids directly, because they're incredibly sophisticated.

I don't think we take into account how much they can learn on their own. I created cartoons to engage them and to teach them the skills that frankly, I wish I had when I was a kid. that was the genesis of GoZen.

[0:03:33.3] PF: What's so interesting is I think that a lot of us who have had that awakening as an adult and have said, "Why couldn't I have this as a child?" We've all been in that, or many of us have been in that place, but we don't take that next step to say, "I've got to do this for other children." What was it that made you need to take that step? Because it sounds like it became a mission for you.

[0:03:56.2] RJ: I think when you're on a mission, the question changes from why to why not. What is stopping me from doing this? What could possibly stop me? I know that it is my purpose. I know that it is my mission, because no matter how I feel at the end of the day, how tired I am, or if I have had a terrible day, how discouraged I am, I wake up in the morning with a burning inside of me, like there is nothing else that I could do, even if I wanted to. I think that it just was – that's something that lit up inside of me and the fire has just never gone out.

[0:04:40.1] PF: That's amazing. It's not just your children, it's you've taken all the world's children and made them – I know, this is part of what you are set on this planet to do. You go out and equip children with these skills. How does it change the future? Not just for those individual children, but how does it change the future for all of us when we begin equipping children with resilience and grit and gratitude and these other life skills?

[0:05:09.6] RJ: It's so interesting. It's such a good question. I really think that a lot of the time we spend as kids and as adults just trying to get to ground zero in our life and our emotional life, meaning that if we got rid of – if you think of everything that is going wrong, or has gone wrong in your life and with the snap of a finger if you could eliminate it, I don't actually think that you would be at a plus 10 in your life. I think that we would get to zero, right? I think we would get to the point where we can begin to live.

We are getting kids to the – we are arming them with the skills that they need, so that they can not only live, but then they can begin to thrive, right? We want to not just be surviving, we want to thrive. I think that the way that it can change the world and of course, it's not just me. There's so many people putting so much beautiful work into the world and we are all raising these children in this generation; all of us, whether you're a parent or not. If you were a human on this earth, we are all raising this generation of children by our actions and what we do and what we're putting out there in the world.

I think what happens is is that imagine every child has the opportunity to get these life skills before they face any challenges. Well, those are the kids that we are going to have that are going to be the risk takers, the innovators, the disruptors. They are going to find the light inside of themselves much earlier than maybe we all have and they are going to change this world, because we have a lot of problems, right? We have a lot of things that we need to deal with. We have a lot of stuff going on. Imagine that we don't have to deal with how to process our emotions frankly, because we learn that explicitly, as explicitly as we learn arithmetic, right? Or reading and writing. Yeah, so I think it changes the world in that the launching pad is something very, very different, right? You're not starting from a negative point. You're starting from a point of thriving.

[0:07:09.2] PF: That's particularly important right now, I think. I know on the podcast, we talk a lot about just us as adults and how the current environment is unsettling, the incivility and the

divisiveness is difficult for us as adults. We know that children are absorbing that. I think this timing is incredible in being able to give children these tools at a time when I don't think we've ever needed them more.

[0:07:37.1] RJ: Yeah. It's so interesting that you say that, because I think about a lot of parents who – and I think this comes out of love and compassion. It doesn't come from anywhere else, right, when you're a parent. I think a lot of parents will say, “Listen, we have to be tough on our kids, because it's a tough world and we need to teach them to be tough.”

I actually couldn't disagree more. It is our job to cultivate a very, very strong inner voice for our kids to be able to stand in the world that we have created, right? The generations in the past have created and that they are inheriting. The way to do that is really by giving them that unconditional love that they need, right? Giving them compassion and hearing them and seeing them. That's what's going to help cultivate it. I don't mean permissiveness and helicoptering and rescuing them and letting them do whatever they want, right? These are not the skills that are going to lend, or these are not the parenting styles that are going to lend to resilient kids.

What I mean is is that it's not our job now to say, “Listen, this is the way that is it in the world. I'm going to have to teach you at the age of three and four how to live in a very tough lifestyle, in a in a very strict way, because that's what's going to teach you to go out in the world and be resilient.” I couldn't disagree more.

[0:08:59.1] PF: Yeah, I'm with you on that one. We have a lot of protests now. When I see pictures of parents out there with a child in their arms, a child is not old enough to walk and they have – maybe they've given the child a sign. Whether I agree or disagree with what their cause is, I just – my heart just breaks for that child, because the volatility of the event and the level of anxiety that they must be feeling being in that environment, to me is – I feel we're exposing our children to the wrong things way too soon.

[0:09:31.9] RJ: So soon, right? So soon. I mean, if you have the news on the background. We don't do a lot of TV in our house, but when we will flip on a cartoon for my five and six-year-olds, sometimes the news is on right before I get to change the channel. Even in that blip of a moment, it's they play the things that bleed, right? If it bleeds, it bleeds as they say. I noticed that, especially my daughter she's six, her attention will go to it immediately. I turned the TV on the other day and of course, it was on the story about this baby, the six-month-old that was

abandoned in a parking lot or something and my daughter was immediately like, “What is that? What is that?” I said, “Oh, that's, you know.” I changed the channel and then I changed the subject frankly.

[0:10:22.1] PF: Sometimes that's the best thing to do.

[0:10:23.9] RJ: Sometimes it's just the best thing to do.

[0:10:25.9] PF: Well, and you're giving us a great alternative to the news. What you're doing with the Happy Child Summit is just remarkable. I want you to explain first of all, what the Happy Child Summit is.

[0:10:38.3] RJ: The Happy Child Summit is an opportunity to hear from 20 happiness experts, researchers, parenting experts, people from the field of education. It is an opportunity to hear both their views about how to raise happy, resilient children, but also not just their theories, but their practical tools. Okay, so how do we – very practical.

As an interviewer in the summit and Paula, I know you are as well, it's our opportunity to say to them, to the authors and the experts, “Okay, so we get your theory. Now how do we do that?” How do we help our kids when they're facing a challenge? How do we help our kids that maybe have a lot of negative thoughts and they're pessimistic? How do we help our kids when they feel overwhelmed from school, or from social pressure? What exactly do we do? What are the steps to do that?

The Happy Child Summit is where you get to tune in as a parent and educator, a therapist, a human basically, and listen to these experts talk about not just what, but how to raise happier kids.

[0:11:51.6] PF: What impresses me with the lineup is that you've pulled together a pretty broad range of people. I talked with Rebecca West, who's an interior designer and she talks about how to design a space to make your family happier and make it your child more comfortable and happier. You've pulled in some really great names and in a lot of different areas. Can you tell us some of the experts that we're going to hear from?

[0:12:15.1] RJ: Yeah. It's interesting, because when we pick the name Happy Child Summit, I was like, "Oh, no. That's a very nebulous term. What is happiness exactly, right?" What we decided to do was go with a framework that Martin Seligman, who is the father of positive psychology, or known as the father, the founding father of the field, came up with a framework, different pathways to happiness. He called it PERMA, which is an acronym, standing for Positive Emotions, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning and Achievement.

Then Emiliya Zivotovskaya who's also a host on the Happy Child Summit added the letter V to this framework, for Vitality. PERMAV is what we are talking about during the summit, so we invited in experts such as Christine Carter. She has written several books, one of them called *Raising Happiness*. She's a happiness researcher and we're having her talk about the P in PERMAV, Positive Emotions. We invited Tal Ben-Shahar. He is very well known as a professor at Harvard University, who taught the most popular classes at Harvard ever. That's a pretty good statistic.

[0:13:29.0] PF: That's a good one.

[0:13:29.9] RJ: Yes, it is. He taught those in the subject of happiness, right? Can you believe the most popular subject in class ever at Harvard ever run was on happiness? He's joining us to talk about how to raise happier kids. I have spoken to Jane Nelson. She is really the founder of the field of positive discipline. She's amazing and she's going to talk about relationships with our kids.

Every day, we are talking about a different theme. We're on theme for PERMAV. I've spoken to so many experts as have you Paula, that just really when I'm speaking to them I'm learning, right? A lot of times when I'm doing the interviews, I'm taking notes for myself.

[0:14:16.7] PF: Well and that's what's so exceptional about this, because when parents start – even you're doing this for your children and you start teaching your children these life skills, it changes you as a parent.

[0:14:29.4] RJ: Oh, absolutely. There's no way you could go through this process without absorbing something and then embodying it eventually.

[0:14:38.4] PF: Yeah, because these aren't things – you can't teach your child happiness skills, or gratitude without practicing it yourself. I would suppose you could not, let's say that.

[0:14:47.7] RJ: You could try, but I feel kids are really good detectors of inauthenticity. They are really good at sniffing out if you're being fake. If you're not really walking the talk, then they know that it's not that important to mom, dad, caretaker, uncle, aunt, whomever, right? I guess it's not that valuable. Yes, we've had the opportunity to have these conversations and we want to bring this into as many living rooms as possible. The event is actually free from April 8th through 11th. You can watch all the interviews and then there's an opportunity to get the recordings as well.

[0:15:25.7] PF: Can you tell what timeframe, when do they log on, how do they sign up, what are some of the things that they need to do to prepare themselves for it?

[0:15:34.6] RJ: Okay. We try to make it so easy. You go to happychildsummit.com and you will see a big register for free button. You register and then that's all you have to do. Then every day, you will receive an e-mail letting you know where you can watch the talks. Each day, we keep all five talks up for 24 hours. You can pick and choose when you go to a live conference and you read about the speakers and what they have to say and what the topics are and you can pick and choose which ones you want to listen to for that day.

Or if you have five hours on your hand each day, you can sit and listen to all of the interviews as well. Yeah, that's all you have to do. It's simple, happychildsummit.com and then you just register and you're all set.

[0:16:21.1] PF: It could not be any easier.

[0:16:23.8] RJ: It could not.

[0:16:26.3] PF: That's terrific. We talked about this in terms of parents, but it's really for a lot broader audience than parents. Can you explain who it's designed for?

[0:16:36.2] RJ: Okay. If you are a person that has emotions, this is for you. That covers everyone. If you're a person that has ever faced a challenge, or may face a challenge in the

future, this is for you. If you are a person that either has a kid in your life, whether that be your own child, or niece, or nephew, or cousin, or you have ever been a child in your life, then this is for you. It's really for humans of all ages. These are life skills, life experiences and as Paula and I have said, as we're interviewing, there's just no way as even as a grown up that you can't absorb some of these things that the experts are teaching us. It's pretty amazing.

[0:17:20.9] PF: Yeah, because one thing I really noticed when talking with people particularly on this topic, I start thinking about, "Wow, if I had had that in my childhood, I would have done X, Y, Z differently." When you start looking at it in those terms, you can reframe where you're at now. Okay, so how would – let's pretend I did know those skills, how does that change me now and how does that change the way that I can look at what did happen as my childhood?

[0:17:48.2] RJ: I think about that a lot. Wow, the trajectory of my life would have been so different had I had these skills. Then I think about I wouldn't be doing this meaningful work, but perhaps I would be doing some other meaningful work, right? Yeah. All of these things, you do think about, "Wow, I wish I knew that as a kid." Then you know what? I can use it now. I can use it now.

[0:18:10.6] PF: Yeah. It's not like there's an expiration date on it. It's like, "Oh, I'm over the age of eight. It's done. Never mind."

[0:18:15.6] RJ: Doesn't apply. Yeah, doesn't apply. I am the way I am. Well luckily, we know from science that we're a lot more malleable than we believed before, even into adult.

[0:18:27.0] PF: You've done other summits like this before.

[0:18:29.9] RJ: I have. Yeah.

[0:18:32.4] PF: Can you talk about what impact and what response you've received from people?

[0:18:38.6] RJ: I'm going to be super frank with you. When I ran the first summit, which was called the Resilient Child Summit, I was thinking to myself this is a side project. Our bread and butter it goes then, are the animation programs, the animated programs that we create for

schools and for parents. Maybe some people want to hear from experts, so I'll just reach out to some people in the field that I know. I interviewed 21 experts for that.

I was so shocked that the feedback we got was none other we'd ever received. We've received a lot of positive feedback on our programs, but this was unbelievable. Oh, my goodness. I felt you were sitting with me at home and you were describing exactly what I'm going through with my kids. I have tears flowing down my eyes. I feel I'm not alone. I feel you're asking the questions that I would want to ask to these experts and these authors. Thank you so much for making this available. I'm trying these things. I'm trying them immediately.

Now this is the fourth summit that we've worked on and the feedback continues to be super positive. Now will every talk resonate with every person? Maybe not, but there's definitely golden nuggets in every single conversation in every single summit.

[0:19:58.3] PF: There is so much to be gained out of just spending the time to listen to some of these speakers.

[0:20:04.8] RJ: Oh, my goodness. Some of the topics are so exciting; creating contagious optimism, right? How to use mindful technology? Raising resilient kids. The science of healthy families. Strength-based parenting. There's just so much in there. It's really just a privilege to be a part of it.

[0:20:23.1] PF: Yeah, it is an incredible lineup and I think the topics are outstanding. Once the summit goes away, you have it up the 8th through 11th and people will still be able to come back and access it, correct? There's a way to do that?

[0:20:36.5] RJ: Yeah, absolutely. You can come back and purchase the recordings at any time, right? Because obviously, some people can't sit and watch. You might be a busy parent, or a busy professional, or both. Sometimes you want to watch them over and over again. With the purchase package, we give worksheets and we have bonuses, we have some extra interviews and there's a lot of extra stuff. The best part is that you can watch it at your own pace. That being said, we want to make clear that it is a free event from April 8th through 11th. You just go to HappyChildSummit and you register.

[0:21:10.5] PF: Well, we are going to come back. We're going to tell listeners a little bit more about where they can go to find more information. I know we've got some things on our website as well about the Happy Child Summit, so we've got a lot of entry points to make sure that they know how to get to find you.

[0:21:27.2] RJ: Awesome. Thank you.

[0:21:29.4] PF: All right. Well, Renee, thank you again for one, for putting the Happy Child Summit together and for all the work that you do with GoZen and then for taking the time to sit down and talk to us about it today.

[0:21:39.6] RJ: Thank you, Paula. Thank you so much for the opportunity. It was really my honor.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

[0:21:47.9] PF: That was author and childhood happiness expert, Renee Jain. We invite you to check out the Happy Child Summit, which is happening online April 8th through 11th. The Happy Child Summit brings together 20 different experts who will talk about everything from how to motivate your kids to ways to tackle technology to how to instill your child with grit and resilience. You can visit us at livehappynow.com to learn more about how to register for the Happy Child Summit and also to learn more about Renee and her company GoZen.

That is all we have time for this week. We'll meet you back here again next week for an all-new episode. Until then, this is Paula Felps reminding you to make every day a happy one.

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