

EPISODE 224

[INTRODUCTION]

[0:00:02.3] PF: Welcome to Episode 224 of Live Happy Now. I'm your host, Paula Felps, thanking you for joining us. We all have something we want to improve about ourselves, and as it turns out, this is the month to do it. September is self improvement month, so Live Happy editor, Chris Libby and I put together a list of our seven favorite podcasts for self improvement. And here's what happened.

[EPISODE]

[0:00:26.6] PF: Chris, welcome back into the studio, first week of September, and here you are.

[0:00:29.2] CL: Thank you for having me. It's a pleasure. As always.

[0:00:33.8] PF: It's a fun thing to do and you know this. But the listeners don't know that you and I started talking once we found out it was self improvement month and said, "Hey, you know, we've had some great podcast with some great advice on how to improve our lives, so why don't we do something with that?"

[0:00:47.9] CL: Yeah, it's great because we have the opportunity to talk to so many great people, so many experts and people with inspirational stories, and it's fun to go back and just kind of collect some of them that are favorites and just put that on one podcast so people can get the most out of it.

[0:01:02.4] PF: Yeah, because it was fun going through these and realizing just how much we've learned just in the last few years from all these different experts. And so what a great time to share it. And we're going to give what? Seven tips on how people can improve themselves for self improvement month.

[0:01:19.0] CL: Sounds good. I'm ready.

[0:01:21.6] PF: All right, well I'll start it out, and my first one was to try something that you're not good at and this is based on that podcast that we did not too long ago with Karen Rinaldi and was called. It's Great to Suck it Something. She was a lot of fun because Karen embraced surfing, even though she was not good at it at all. And her book talks about how rewarding it is to do something just for the act of doing it. Not because you're good at it, not because you're going to get a medal, You know, you just for doing it.

[0:01:53.4] CL: Yeah, exactly. Then one was a fun podcast, and I remember the one thing that I just got out of it the most is just be present with this moment. You know and experience it, and that's when you know if you get joy out of it. And that's why it's worth doing.

[0:02:06.2] PF: Yeah, it's kind of like you look at little kids that are dancing and singing, and they're not necessarily good at what they're doing, But they're having a great time. And and so that's really what it's about is like learning to embrace something that you might not even be good at. But you enjoy.

[0:02:19.7] CL: Yeah, I mean, I know I have a lot of those in my life. So guitar, parenting, cooking. I enjoy all those things. But I'm not very good at the,

[0:02:33.8] PF: Oh, man, that's great. But what you are good at is giving us our next one. What was your what was your top pick for the podcast?

[0:02:40.0] CL: Mine was finding self compassion with Kristin Neff. Kristin Neff is a pioneer in the field of self compassion as well as an author and psychologist. And this is a great topic because I think a lot of people struggle with this. And it's basically treating, comes down to if the way you would treat other people like kindness, fairness, forgiveness. But you treat yourself with those things and not feel guilty about it.

One of the things that she said in there was, we have this fear that will be complacent and we'll like lose our edge or wolf. We think that we're weak if we're self compassion, self compassionate. But self compassion really is a source of strength and makes us feel better on the inside. It's going to make us better in our relationships, and it's going to make us more motivated,

[0:03:27.6] PF: Right. We do tend to think of those softer emotions as being a form of weakness. And it's so interesting because we know from talking with psychologists and the studies that we've read that exactly the opposite is true and it really fortifies you and makes you stronger when you can embrace those things.

And I am glad that you brought up the self compassion because, as you noted, we're great to other people, and then we might turn around and just berate ourselves for something so minor that nobody else even noticed.

[0:03:56.6] CL: Yeah, no, you're absolutely right. One thing, she points out, we're not perfect. We're not perfect people, so just being aware of that, it will make you more able to manage your emotions and deal with them in a more constructive way. In the podcast she talks about and we have a link on there as well to her a self compassion workbook, where she gives readers a step by step, process all these different activities.

But I don't want to talk about one in particular right here, that people can use at home, and we also have a link on the podcast that will take people right to it. But you would basically take out a sheet of paper, and then you would think about how you normally respond to a friend or family member who was going through a troubled time or suffering and then you write down what you would say and the tone in which he would say it.

And then, now, think about yourself going through a bad situation in a stressful situation and how you would respond to yourself. Then, if you've noticed a difference right down what those differences would be and what fear would lead you to treat yourself that way. And then, now, at the very end, you write down how differently would feel if you responded to yourself the way you would respond to other people.

[0:05:01.5] PF: Yeah, that's a great way to do it. And you know, another way to look at it too, is how would I want someone else to respond to me in this situation? You know, because we're so quick to jump on ourselves. But think about if someone were watching me go through this, how would I want them to respond to me and then try to act in kind?

[0:05:01.4] PF: I mean, yeah, you're absolutely right. And that's a good way to look at it as well. I mean, it's all about perspective and awareness. Once you get that and you're able to step back and see, then you realize that, man, I really I'm being hard on myself.

[0:05:32.9] PF: Yeah, that's very true.

[0:05:34.0] CL: So, Paula, what's your next one?

[0:05:36.2] PF: My next one is one that I really need to do, and that's get organized. And we had Gretchen Rubin on, and she was fantastic because she talked about outer-order, inner-calm and we might not necessarily equate clean desk with a clear mind. But she made a great argument in that direction, and she really does show how having orderliness in your home creates that same kind of order in your mental state. And it builds happiness.

[0:06:06.2] CL: Yeah, and I think a lot of it has to do with control as well. You can't control everything that's going on outside of your purview or out in the outside world. And why would you? I mean, that's impossible, but you can probably control the things that you do have control over and doing that probably makes you feel a lot calmer.

[0:06:23.7] PF: It does. And then there's also the idea that you feel less stressed because when you know — there's a huge difference in my stress level, where my desk is clean and what is not. Because if I know where things are, if I can get to it easily, I can get my job done more efficiently. All is right with the world.

I just went through paying my taxes because I'm that far behind and, you know, that's a great way to spend a weekend looking for all the little pieces of everything. So you know, it really does make a big impact on how you feel if you can just maintain some order in your life. And Gretchen, this podcast was so incredible because she gave great advice on how to do it and how to just simply begin finding more order in your life.

[0:07:05.6] CL: I bet, like something like you talk about taxes, that is probably weighing on you for a while. And then now that you've got it done, it was probably a huge sense of relief.

[0:07:15.6] PF: Oh, yeah, I'm happy. I'm not [inaudible].

[0:07:21.2] CL: One thing, having little kids, I now know that stuff is everywhere all the time and before, because I'm usually pretty tidy on most things. But like when I go and try to get a Tupperware thing and the kids don't do this, I do this because you're constantly just throwing stuff because you're on the go. And when you open a drawer and 10,000 Tupperware lids fall out and you're just just drives you bonkers.

[0:07:48.6] PF: All right, so we're going to get orderly. And then what's your next thing you're going to do?

[0:07:50.1] CL: My next one is the podcast *Becoming Resilient* with Rick Hansen.

[0:07:55.9] PF: That was a good one.

[0:07:57.0] CL: Yeah, This gentleman is always a great guest because he's just a wealth of information. He is probably one of the foremost experts on neural networks and how the brain works as far as our strengths and mindfulness and resiliency and how all that plays out. This time, he was on to talk about his book *Resilient*, but he also has a bunch of books *Hard Wiring*, *Happiness*, *Buddha's Brain*.

And the great thing about Rick is that he gives us the tools to develop our inner strings so we can say strong no matter what's going on. And he also points out that it is a choice. It's a choice to pick to do this, you know, to create these habits, like finding moments of calm or connecting with another person. Your brain starts to collect these positive situations, and it creates a way for you to bring it back during stressful situations.

[0:08:46.5] PF: And another thing that he brought out on that podcast. And I remember that I remember interviewing him and boy, he is just such a wealth of information. You wanna hold him hostage and not let him go. But we did. Don't worry, we did let him go. But one thing that he talked about is how happiness helps you build resilience and again, kind of like with self compassion.

You think of those softer emotions and things like that, making you weak or signifying weakness. And again, it's just the opposite. But he really talks about pursuing happiness, and

finding things like meditation and gratitude in your life will help you become more resilient. So it's not just that you get knocked down and get back up a lot. It's that every time you get knocked down, you have these tools that you can implement.

[0:09:28.7] CL: Exactly. He really equates it to building up. Internal resources, like self-worth, calm, compassion, like you said, gratitude, patience. And so when external situations and resources that you can't control, like civility, discourse, any outside stressors, when they start to fail us, we can use it as a buffer and can help us deal with stress so we can succeed.

[0:09:51.3] PF: You know, that's terrific. Yeah, I encouraged everyone to listen to that that podcast episode because that was really insightful.

[0:09:57.7] CL: Yeah, he does have one tip that I'd like to give to everybody and basically awareness. And so when the moment you become upset, he says 50% of the work is just being aware that you're upset, and then you move on to have a little bit of compassion for yourself and then make a plan what you're going to do and how this situation is going to play out. And he also gives a tip by saying, Imagine that you're being recorded in those situations and how you would act differently.

[0:10:25.4] PF: Oh, wow, yeah, that could you know what? In today's world, you probably are being recorded so —

[0:10:31.2] CL: Well, that's interesting you say that I was just watching. I think it was Good Morning America this morning and they talked about a referee for youth sports who started a Facebook page that said, "I'm going to start paying \$100 for people who send in videos of parents going crazy on referees."

And so he started doing this, and then parents started to see what they looked like, and then he started getting feedback, like, "Wow, I can't believe I looked like that," so there's some truth to that. Even if you just imagine you're being recorded, you will act differently.

[0:11:03.6] PF: That's terrific. Yeah, be aware. Be aware of that. And interestingly, my next one kind of ties into resilience because it's about making a comeback. And it was my podcast with

snowmobiler Colten Moore, and he was an incredible athlete, still is an incredible athlete, but both he and his brother had risen through the ranks and I were at the X-Games.

They were medal winners, both in snowmobiling and and the same day, just like an hour apart. His brother had a crash and he had a crash. His brother ended up, dying from his injuries. Colten had a fractured pelvis. He had numerous broken bones. Doctors weren't sure he was ever going to walk again. And he had an incredible story about working through not just his emotional pain and the loss, his brother had been his greatest champion.

They were super close. I'm an incredible bond, and he had to work through that loss as well as his physical injury, to start re doing what he loves. And that's he still snowmobiling, despite all the odds and and all the advice, maybe. But it was really an incredible lesson in how you can rally your family around you, how you can rally the support of friends and how you can really dig deep down inside and find a grit that he didn't even believe that he possessed.

[0:12:22.6] CL: Yeah, that's a really an emotional story. And the one thing that I got from that podcast was the power of a positive mindset. Because he said he was always sort of a positive person. But that kind of played out throughout that whole story and how that kind of kept him on track, you know?

[0:12:38.7] PF: Yeah. Even when they were saying, "Well, you're not going to be able to do this." He was kind of like, "You don't know that." Yeah, you know, just cause the X rays say this doesn't mean that's what's going to happen.

[0:12:48.2] CL: Yeah, and one of the things that go to go back to Rick Hansen. He says that a big part of resilience is choosing to be optimistic over your frustration.

[0:12:57.7] PF: Yeah, and we can't choose the situation that we're in, but we certainly can choose how we're going to approach it And what lens we're going to view it through. That's what changes everything.

[0:13:06.2] CL: Yeah, And I did notice in that podcast that Colten said that one of the things that helped him was the foundations that he works for and helping terminally ill kids with their X-game experience and stuff like that. So —

[0:13:17.7] PF: Yeah, he's done a lot of things to work with, children who are in pain, whether it's a physical pain or an emotional pain, and that has really helped him release some of his own heart and some of the own emotions that he has to deal with.

[0:13:32.8] CL: It was really a powerful podcast.

[0:13:35.9] PF: Yeah, he's a he's quite a guy, really a great thing. So that would be my next one would be developed some grit this month. So what you got for us?

[0:13:44.0] CL: This one and it will be a little bit more on the lighter side, this is Playful Intelligence with Dr Anthony DeBenedet, and I hope I said that, right? I think I did. He is the author of the book *Playful Intelligence — The Power of Living Lightly in a Serious World*. And as a medical doctor and a behavioral science enthusiasts. He explains how playfulness can kind of counter act some of the seriousness that we encounter in everyday life, and he links humor with resilience, how playfulness can help us be nicer to one another and just the power of wonder in our daily lives.

He breaks down playful intelligence to five qualities. That's imagination, sociability, humor, spontaneity and wonder. So those five things and as he got into this by basically finding more ways to connect with his daughter and he, he said, he was at a crossroads in his life, where he's doing everything he's supposed to do is an adult. But he wasn't really enjoying it that much, which is very relatable.

And he was said he was on the verge of burnout and didn't even realize it. So there is this huge thing that when we're kids we used humor and playfulness for fun, and we use it to solve problems through play. But when we use it as adults, it's a bonding experience that we're able to have with other people. We create these connections. It forces us to exist, really in the world, and it can open the door for resilience.

You know, we could give you what he calls psychological distance from the pain. If you were going through something really serious. So this was a really good podcast. As far as getting back to you know, the funnier, humorous things in life. Because that is one of the character's strengths that is most tied to happiness and life satisfaction. What he suggested, just create

more opportunities to laugh and have fun, especially with your kids, because they can bring you down to a level where anything is possible through creativity. And also pets are a great way to get out and be playful.

[0:15:41.6] PF: Yes, because they will make you run and play. Yeah, that's that's terrific. But I think we do as we get older and we hit adulthood. We get burdened with responsibilities, and we just forget to take time to play. And when we do, we're more fun to be around. We enjoy our lives more, and other people want to be around us, too. So get out there and play this month.

And then finally then, while you're at it and you're out there playing, my last one is to cultivate kindness. And this is a podcast we just recently did with Kelly Harding. Really loved talking with her. She had a lot of scientific information about what kindness does to us and for us, in terms of — she's a medical doctor and was talking about research that shows we actually live longer when we're being treated with kindness.

And you know, when you think about it that way, when we can enhance the lives and improve the lives of those people around us just by practicing kindness and at the same time we're benefiting ourselves, it really was a powerful podcast, in my opinion, to hear how much it can do for us.

[0:16:44.8] CL: Yes, and I always love it when we have medical doctors on, because it's not always — I mean, every expert we talked to is great. But when you start getting into the medical field and when doctors are starting to implement more of these things into our lives and we know that holistically we can treat ourselves with these different interventions that we do. And we don't always have to, you know, rely on medicines, that stuff that we have the capability of making ourselves feel better.

[0:17:09.6] PF: Yeah, and that the great thing about kindness is it's something that's really easy to start practicing. And as we become aware of our actions and just start by taking that simple act of kindness once a day making intention of I'm going to do one kind thing today, and you don't have to limit yourself to one kind thing.

And it's just like everything else that we talk about, the gratitude and any other kind of practice where you start looking for a way to do that. And now you're retraining your brain in that

direction. So you find yourself doing these acts of kindness throughout your day and not even thinking about it.

[0:17:46.5] CL: You're absolutely right. You make it a habit, you know. You keep doing it, then your brain won't train itself to look for the kindness.

[0:17:53.7] PF: Yeah, and then maybe we could get a whole planet of kinder people.

[0:17:57.7] CL: Hopefully.

[0:17:59.3] PF: We need that. We'll start by hoping for a kinder September. How about that?

[0:18:04.7] CL: Excellent. Yes. And I hope anybody listening to this got something out of it that they'll be able to start using today.

[0:18:10.2] PF: Yeah, and we're going to put up a web page that has all seven of these podcasts, so they can jump on and listen to of them very easily. And we'll break down exactly what we talked about and, yeah, make it a month of self improvement.

[0:18:23.6] CL: Excellent.

[0:18:24.6] CL: All right, Chris will talk with you soon.

[0:18:25.0] CL: All right, take care.

[END OF EPISODE]

[0:18:30.3] PF: That was Chris Libby editor of Live Happy, Joining me to talk about seven ways to practice self improvement this month and beyond. If you'd like to learn more about any of these podcast episodes, please visit us at livehappynow.com and we'll give you direct links to listen to them.

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for us on your favorite platform and hits subscribe so you'll never miss an episode. That is all we have time for this week.

We'll meet you back here again next week for an all new episode and until then, this is Paula Felps reminding you to make every day a happy one.

[END]