

EPISODE 237

[INTRODUCTION]

[00:00:02] PF: Welcome to episode 237 of Live Happy Now. I'm your host, Paula Felps, thanking you for joining us again this week. 25 years ago, author Sarah ban Breathnach inadvertently launched a global movement with her book, *Simple Abundance*. Her organic approach to gratitude and a simpler, happier life sparked a movement that sold millions of books and changed not just her life, but the lives of countless readers.

This year she has refreshed that book for modern times and she sat down with me to talk about her revised and updated edition of *Simple Abundance: 365 To a Balanced and Joyful Life*.

[INTERVIEW]

[00:00:38] PF: Sarah, welcome to Live Happy Now.

[00:00:40] SBB: Thank you, Paula. It's a wonderful place to be.

[00:00:44] PF: It is such a treat to have you on the air. I read your book for the first time. Like many people, when I was going through a difficult time, when it first came out, and it was so life-changing for me that I went ahead and bought it for my best friend. Then she bought one for her mom, and that's what happened with a lot of people. You're like going viral before going viral was a thing.

[00:01:04] SBB: Well, I think what it was was Simple Abundance was like the first women's blog, because every day we were talking about something different than all women seem to share.

[00:01:16] PF: As horrifying as it seems, we didn't have actual blogs back then.

[00:01:20] SBB: No, we didn't.

[00:01:21] PF: We couldn't read them.

[00:01:22] SBB: That's right.

[00:01:24] PF: Now, when you wrote *Simple Abundance* 25 years ago, you absolutely had no idea that it would have such a huge influence on a global scale. One thing I found really interesting in this refreshed edition is you talk about how you wrote that book that you wanted to read. Can you tell us a little bit about that first time of writing it and what made you write this book and how it came about?

[00:01:46] SBB: Sure. Well, I had already published two books, and they were on Victorian Family Life. I was about to do my third book, but it was supposed to be on Victorian Decorative Details, and a writer really is with a material for a book at least two years. The thought of mulling over the meaning of ruffles and flourishes just killed me.

[00:02:13] PF: It wasn't doing it for you.

[00:02:15] SBB: It wasn't doing it for me, especially because I had no idea why I was so unhappy when I'd achieved a level of success as we think of it. I had the two books and I'd had a nationally syndicated column with the Washington Post Writers Group, and I had a beautiful child and I had a wonderful husband. I just didn't know what was wrong, because it seems like I was connecting all the dots that other women were doing, but I couldn't find the picture. So that was where it started to begin.

But I think a lot of women don't whine. They might whine to their best friend. But I don't think that I certainly wasn't a complainer. I wanted to be a pleaser, but I never stopped whining to myself and to God and to heaven. One morning it was just that morning, I just got so sick of hearing this echo, and I heard a comforting voice say, "I want you to sit down here at the dining room table and I don't want you to get up until you give me over 100 reasons why you're happy and you're grateful right now exactly as your life is."

Of course, a great deal of my unhappiness was that this was in the early 90s and we were in a deep recession, but it was all –

[00:03:49] PF: Which led to depression.

[00:03:50] SBB: Which led to depression, exactly, and down-shifting was the only game in town and the only thing that people were writing about, and it had affected me. So I was at the point where if I couldn't have a check for my accomplishments, I didn't say they counted. So I really had – I was a prime candidate for gratitude's boot camp.

[00:04:21] PF: I made me some of that gratitude.

[00:04:24] SBB: Yeah. At the end of that day, the six hours and as many pots of tea, I had over 150, and I was really very shocked and very humbled and very ashamed, because I had so many blessings. The money thing was a temporary cash flow problem.

But I really felt the power of gratitude. Since it was a new behavior for me, what I mean by that is we're all immediately grateful at the big moments if you've survived an accident or the health of someone. We automatically say thank you. But for the little moments, I did not – I wasn't practiced in that way. So that's when I started simply writing them down so I wouldn't forget, and that's how gratitude started.

[00:05:21] PF: What's interesting is how far ahead of your time you were, because today the idea of a gratitude journal is everyone puts one out. It's like the Purina cat chow gratitude journal, and everyone has a gratitude journal, but it didn't exist when you were doing this. This was really something new.

[00:05:40] SBB: Yes, and actually the gratitude journal came from Simple Abundance. Victor Hugo said, nothing can combat an idea whose time has come. Not the greatest armies in the world can battle an idea whose time has come. I think that that was the time. We were ready for it.

[00:06:03] PF: Well, we obviously were, because it sold millions of copies and spawned a whole franchise. I remember the additional books, there were calendars. We learned how to live with Simple Abundance through that. Now that you've come back, how has the world since changed since you wrote that first book?

[00:06:23] SBB: They're different planets. I mean, in 1995, technology was not really a part of our daily round, and the internet was rudimentary. Smartphones hadn't been thought of, and so technology was not a big threat to us. In the beginning of technology, when we could get in contact with friends and family, it was all wondrous. But then it just grew.

[00:06:57] PF: And how did you go about creating a version that was updated for our time? I know you have some meditation. You've added some other new elements. Can you talk about how you approach that and how the change in the world made you approach it maybe differently?

[00:07:13] SBB: Yes, that was a very interesting creative process for me. Grand Central Publishing gave me the green light to do a 25th anniversary edition of Simple Abundance, which is eternally grateful, has never been out of print in 25 years.

I had started getting messages, of course, because they came in from email and text from millennial and generation-X women, who said they had discovered the pink book. The original Simple Abundance was pink book. They had discovered the book and remembered that their mothers had loved it so much. So they opened it, and whatever their eyes lit upon, there was continuity of comfort and they wondered however the spell was broken when they would get to my joyful simplicities, and I'd suggest ordering a mail order catalog or watching a VHS tape.

[00:08:15] PF: So they're Googling to see what that is.

[00:08:18] SBB: Right. With online ordering and live streaming of movies, I was going to have to do that. Well, that's actually – See, the creativity sort of casts her spell and gives you delusions so that only when you're in it that you realize, "I think creativity and the great creator operate on the need-to-know basis." I didn't need to know how much hard work it was going to be. So I started just looking at the joyful simplicities, and then I realized our life is completely different.

[BREAK]

[00:09:02] PF: I hope you'll stay tuned for more of my conversation with Sarah Ban Breathnach, but right now I wanted to take 60 seconds to talk to you about one way that you can make your

life, or at least your dinner, simpler. Sizzlefish.com is a great way to find the top quality seafood you want for your family without even having to leave your house. They offer an amazing selection of seafood that they'll bring right to your door. So whether you're craving crabs or salivating for salmon, sizzlefish.com has a variety of your local fish market with the convenience of shopping in your slippers. Because all of their fish is all natural and responsibly sourced, you know that you're getting something that doesn't just taste good. It's truly good for you and for the planet.

If you're interested in great tasting, health efficiency food, check out sizzlefish.com. Whether you want to order great seafood for a special meal or become a regular customer and sign up for a monthly subscription box, you can get exactly what you're looking for.

As an exclusive deal for being a listener, you can use a discount code HAPPY for 10% off your first order. That's discount code HAPPY for 10% off your first order. Now, let's hear more from today's guest, Sarah Ban Breathnach with more ways that you can discover simple abundance in your own life.

[INTERVIEW CONTINUED]

[00:10:17] PF: 25 years ago, the harmony that I was talking about was overextending yourself, the way women make promises without thinking, the way we don't have any time and our calendar for ourselves that even blocking out two hours a week for self-time seems revolutionary and just impossible. That was 25 years ago.

Now when I was looking at harmony, it was the idea that we're losing our attention span. Time Magazine reported on a Microsoft survey that showed that a human attention span is less than a gold fish.

[00:11:02] SBB: Oh my gosh! That's not good news.

[00:11:04] PF: I mean, the gold fish stay 9 seconds, and we've fallen down from 12 to 8 since this survey was first taken. I really needed to address it and the social media mirage, and Simple Abundance is about honoring, finding, discovering your authenticity. There're just so many ways that their image and their self-respect, everything, can be torn down.

Again, it's just learning that we can control our access to it. You don't have to read bad reviews. Why would you do that? That made the book very different, and the voice of the narrator, or I always write for just one person, and that's you, the reader. The voice of the woman had to be from now, not from 25 years ago.

[00:12:07] SBB: Was it a challenge to bring us, the readers, back to simplicity when – I mean, our world is not simple, but you're creating – I feel like as going through your pages you're like that quiet, wise voice in the corner and they've got the TV blaring and everything's loud. So it's like everything has to calm down and slow down so we can hear you. I think it does that. How a big a challenge was it to achieve that?

[00:12:34] PF: I trusted the book. The book, or the painting, or the piece of art, the podcast, which is a wonderful new art form, it always knows what you don't. You need to trust the work, the creative work. The other thing, as I said, Simple Abundance was so organic that you don't start with simplicity. You start with two months of gratitude. When you're only focusing on that, that I say if you put down five things every day for which you're grateful for, in two months you will not recognize your life.

[00:13:15] SBB: I'm so excited that you're bringing this to a whole new generation of women, and I think it's going to have – I'm really interested to see how it takes on its next life, because I feel like it's going to be so different than – It's a different world and I think the path that it takes is going to be different than the previous incarnations of Simple Abundance.

[00:13:36] PF: Yes. I think, you know, life takes on, we have different stages. Simple Abundance is waiting there for you, and there's a new gratitude journal. It's coming out in December. What I wanted to do with that is in the first gratitude journal, I had just talked about wonder of gratitude. I really wanted to talk about the new one.

I really wanted to also add the chapter, the section about gratitude in the hard times, because that has been miraculous for me. I just wanted to share that. If we want to live happy and we do these proactive, these steps, to help us, sometimes life just really throws a curve ball and we're stunned. I learned to personal experience that gratitude sits quietly at the end of bed waiting for you while you're crying yourself to sleep, and I really felt I needed to share that with my readers.

[00:14:44] SBB: That's really beautiful. Both these volumes, like your previous books, they're so pretty. It just has a different feeling when you hold it. Like you want to take a breath before you open it. I think it's so well-designed. I think it's always done that.

Sarah, it's such a pleasure to talk to you. Again, I'm really excited that you've done this new version of Simple Abundance. I think it's so timely, so needed, and I think it's really going to touch a lot of people and a lot of new people on a whole different level.

[00:15:13] PF: Thank you, Paula. Thank you for letting people know that, and I love your podcast and I love your website. Thank you for inviting me.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

[00:15:24] PF: That was Sarah Ban Breathnach, author of Simple Abundance: 365 Days to a Balanced and Joyful Life. To learn more about Sarah, the edition of her book and how to follow her on social media, please visit us at livehappynow.com and we'll give you links and more information. We hope you're already a subscribe to Live Happy Now. But if you're not, you can find us on the Pandora Podcast Network, Spotify, SoundCloud, Stitcher, iTunes and Google Play. Just look for us in your favorite platform and hit 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]