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MBS (00:00):

Christmas time in Australia is in midsummer. And I know that's already freaking out a lot people who are listening in. So the northern hemisphere traditions, ugly sweaters, roasted meats, roaring fires, well, they just really don't work. We've even got a Christmas carol about Santa sleigh being pulled along by kangaroos rather than Rangers. It's called six white boomers, if you ever want to check it out. Many years ago, on a hot Christmas day, my family packed a picnic, lots of great summery food, and headed for Tidbinbilla the nature reserve about an hour's drive away. When we arrived at our destination, we laid out the food in [inaudible 00:00:39], some wind chimes. And we set up a table and chair in the middle of a river. Sitting there eating my mum's plum pudding with the water flowing by waist deep with my family, I knew I was happy.



MBS ([00:55](#)):

Welcome to 2 Pages with MBS. This is the podcast where brilliant people read the best two pages from a favorite book, a book that has moved them, book that has shaped them. Happy is elusive, of course. I mean, there are plenty of stories and expectations we've internalized about what we need to have, to own to be happy. And most of those are illusions. Now, Stephanie Harrison, my guest today is a champion for a wiser path to happiness. She calls it the new happy. And she came to that from the experience of just how and wonderful pursuing the old happy was.

Stephanie ([01:37](#)):

I was living in New York City had this job I had dreamed about and that I thought was kind of the be all end all of life satisfaction and purpose. And I remember having this realization that actually I was merely pretending to be happy, I wasn't at all fulfilled. It wasn't working for me in the way that I hoped it would. And that led to somewhat of a, I suppose an existential crisis of wondering where I had gone wrong and what actually might work for me, and was everyone else feeling the same way that I was? Or Was I the weird one who couldn't figure it out?

MBS ([02:17](#)):

That question, what's wrong with me? The system must be fine. I clearly haven't understood something essential. So what do I need to fix about me to get back on track? Now, I've certainly had that conversation in my head. And too often, I suspect, my answer has been tufted out, grind through it, figure out the rules. Not Stephanie, she tried out multiple pathways of well being and happiness, and when those fell short, she went at it from a scientific angle, she got a master's degree in positive psychology. And here's the conclusion she came to.



Stephanie ([02:56](#)):

I think in Western society, the predominant definition of happiness is that once you achieve something, then you will be happy. And it's always this thing, right? That we're setting our sights on and the ball keeps moving forward, we're never able to catch it. And if we do, then it lasts for what like a day or two, and then it disappears.

MBS ([03:15](#)):

Stephanie is pointing to how we tend to believe that happiness is conditional. That's a vicious circle.

Stephanie ([03:22](#)):

Everyone is constantly feeling less than in some way. Because they haven't gotten to the point that they think will make them happy. And when they get to whatever they've landed on is their definition of happiness, the thing that will satisfy them, when that dissipates and when that goes away, they tend to blame themselves and think, "Wow, this is something wrong with me," just like I was doing. There's, "I must have chosen wrong or everyone else must be happy and it's just me, that's the problem, I need to work harder, I need to push myself more and more." And so this feeling of like a lack of worthiness, I think pervades so much, it's such an underlying element of our world and that is not acceptable in our world, right? Like that feeling is not something that we have created space for.

Stephanie ([04:15](#)):

And so what happens is people feel pressured to paste the smile on and to pretend that everything is okay and to make all their appearances seem like all is going well. And so, for me that manifested as not really getting in touch with my emotions, not allowing myself to feel my emotions, not acknowledging how I truly felt and what I really thought and also of following this path that



seemed to be the right one but actually wasn't the right one for me and not knowing if it was okay to veer off of the standard perspective or pathway.

MBS ([05:02](#)):

I certainly understand that sense of I'm chasing something and then I cross that particular finish line and I'm like, [inaudible 00:05:07]. Turns out, that's not that be all and end all, after all. But I worry whether or not doing that means giving up on a sense of progress or a sense of ambition. How do you balance a sense of meaning that can come from pursuing something? And a sense of lack of meaning from pursuing empty goals?

Stephanie ([05:33](#)):

Such a good question, I think that my perspective is it comes from the intention and the motivation behind it. If you're doing something, to prove that you're worthy, or to earn other people's approval, it's likely not going to pay off the way that you want it to. If you're doing it from an authentic sense of who you are, as a person, of something to fulfill you, that excites you, that motivates you, that you're so passionate about, that it's the first thing you want to do in the morning. Or the people that you want to help because you want to help to make their world better than yours was, or whatever it is, if it's coming from that place, then really any accolades or kind of like chasing the carrot over and over again, become less important because it's more about the work itself.

Stephanie ([06:31](#)):

And so I think I totally agree with you. I mean, there's so much research, validating the importance of progress and achieving goals for well being and having a sense of agency. But I think again, it just comes back to where is this coming from? Is it because my parents want me to be like this? Is it because I think that my neighbors will judge me if I don't do this? Or is it because it's something I'm authentically curious about?



MBS ([06:54](#)):

But if I come back to you two weeks before that kind of miserable this is the revelation that this is not the life I'm looking for. And I said to you, Stephanie, is this the thing that you want?

Stephanie ([07:10](#)):

I would say yes.

MBS ([07:12](#)):

You would say yes, exactly.

Stephanie ([07:14](#)):

I think so. Yeah, totally.

MBS ([07:16](#)):

So this idea of pursuing what you authentically want, I'm sure there are some people who go "Look, I know, this is not what I'm authentically wanting, so I'm still pursuing it." But there's a lot of people who are miserable on their life, but this is what I want. So when you talk about how do you authentically pursue what you want, how do you know what's authentic? And what's just good marketing?

Stephanie ([07:41](#)):

I love that, it's so true. I mean, I think about it as the mental model that I've used to sort of, construct a way of thinking about this and problem solving it. Because it's quite hard if not nearly impossible to untangle all the influences that we've digested, and that's why there're [crosstalk 00:08:04]. Yeah, exactly. But, I think, the way I like to think about it is like, if you imagine yourself as a, kind of like, pure light filled being, like, even if you just imagine like a little ball, it's like your authentic self. What happens is that, it's like, veils, or Steam, or layers of



fabric are like covering that up. And that is all the conditioning that we've, the marketing, that we've ingested in our lives. And it makes it feel impossible to see at a certain point, because you're like, "Well, where is my true myself? Or what is my true self? Right? And like, going deep into those philosophical musings?

Stephanie ([08:52](#)):

So I think about it as what is getting in the way of me seeing who I truly am, rather than having to find yourself which can be kind of a dicey proposition. And so, what are the different layers and kind of blocking me from seeing that. And, obviously, for some of us, we can immediately point to certain things like, oh, this thing happened when I was a child, or this thing, my boss at work has really undermined my confidence over the last six months, and I'm feeling really overwhelmed and really unhappy and like, I'm not contributing here. And we can kind of start to peel that stuff away. And the more that we do that and investigate through the process of inquiry and through curiosity and self compassion, I think the more we uncover that true self and then there's other things.

Stephanie ([09:47](#)):

Like, I think thinking about what you are excited about as a kid and thinking about the moments in your day where you feel most alive or most joy like these are kind of little tools that can help you to start to pinpoint and it's almost like triangulating, you're pulling together different pieces of data and putting them up on the whiteboard like a police investigation and like starting to draw connections between them and then taking action against them to see how they go.

MBS ([10:13](#)):

Stephanie tells us about the book you've chosen to read for us.



Stephanie ([10:16](#)):

Great. So I have chosen Shantideva's, The Way of the Bodhisattva. It's a book that was very formative for me as I was going through this journey of happiness for myself. And it's an ancient Buddhist text that helps to inform my life and many other people around the world. It's a revered text of wisdom.

MBS ([10:43](#)):

How did it come into your life? I mean, did you seek it out? Or somebody thrust it into your hands? I mean, how did it show up?

Stephanie ([10:50](#)):

It wasn't a magical moment like that. I always dream about like, you go to a bookstore, and it's just waiting there for you kind of thing.

MBS ([10:57](#)):

Some mysterious person comes around the corner and goes, "This is the book you've been looking for."

Stephanie ([11:01](#)):

Wouldn't that be amazing?

MBS ([11:04](#)):

And disappear in a puff of smoke. Wait did that even happen?

Stephanie ([11:07](#)):

That's an app that we need for sure. I don't even remember to be honest, how it came into my life, I think it was probably via a recommendation from like the Dalai Lama's books, which were my entry point into this new way of thinking about happiness. And my parents always had done many kind of philosophical and spiritual texts floating around the house. And so I'd always been really



curious about that ever since I was a teenager. And as I was kind of exploring, where I had gone wrong in while being I started to pick those up more and more and think about it from that perspective. And so that's how I came across it.

MBS ([11:50](#)):

Perfect. And what pages have you chosen for us?

Stephanie ([11:53](#)):

I have chosen, it's about 12 verses. I'd say written in, its poetry, really. And so it's probably a little bit shorter than most of your other two pages.

MBS ([12:08](#)):

We've had such an interesting mix. One of our guests, Jordan [inaudible 00:12:12] read from a graphic novel. And that took about twelve seconds to read two pages from a graphic novel. I was like, wait, we're done. Okay. But it was fantastic. And people seem to have reading two pages from the longest book in the world. So I'm like, wow, this is a long two pages, and so I'm sure you'll be somewhere perfectly in the middle.

Stephanie ([12:33](#)):

Thank you. Thank you for the kindness.

MBS ([12:34](#)):

Over to you, Stephanie.

Stephanie ([12:35](#)):

"All the joy the world contains has come through wishing happiness for others. All the misery the world contains has come through wanting pleasure for oneself. Is there a need for lengthy explanation? Childish beings look out for themselves, Buddha's labor for the good of others. See the difference that divides them. If I do not interchange my happiness for others' pain,



enlightenment will never be attained, and even in samsara, joy will fly from me. Leaving future lives outside the reckoning, even this lives needs are not fulfilled. The servants do not do their work, and masters do not pay the wages earned. Casting far away abundant choice that may be gained in this or future lives because of bringing harm to other beings, I ignorantly bring myself intolerable pain."

Stephanie ([13:38](#)):

"All the harm with which this world is rife. All fear and suffering that there is clinging to the eye has caused it. What am I to do with this great demon? If this eye is not relinquished holy, sorrow, likewise cannot be avoided. If they do not keep away from fire, people can't escape from being burnt. To free myself from harm, and others from their sufferings, Let me give myself to others, loving them as I now love myself."

MBS ([14:17](#)):

Thank you. That's wonderful.

Stephanie ([14:20](#)):

Thank you.

MBS ([14:23](#)):

What's at the heart of this for you, Stephanie?

Stephanie ([14:26](#)):

I think that I love this passage, because, well, it's so inspirational and it's also such a high level aspiration, that I think I find that really inspiring. I really believe that we all have this common desire to make our mark on the world. And we want to know in some small way that we matter and that we've made a difference using our lives here on Earth. And I've always found it really compelling to think about contributing to a purpose that goes far beyond my



lifetime and beyond what one person can do in such a short period of time relative to how long life has existed. And this idea that we can use our lifetimes to help alleviate suffering for other beings, is the heart of that. And it's also a mission that continues to go on even after, I'm no longer here. And I just, I can't really think of anything more worthy than that. I can't think of anything more compelling and personally meaningful.

Stephanie ([15:47](#)):

And the beauty of realizing that actually, that approach does lead to your happiness and to your well being, it's the ultimate win win. For me, that was the big light bulb moment in my whole life and the opportunity to change the way that I was living and being. And so neatly won together, it's just really, really beautiful.

MBS ([16:15](#)):

One of the responses to hearing that, Stephanie, might be, look, I don't want to be subservient. I don't want to trade my ambitions to support others ambitions. And particularly I think if you're potentially coming from a position of less privilege, you're like, "I don't have." you're trying to figure out how to get autonomy, and self sufficiency and respect and dignity in my own life. Why are you encouraging me to trade that off and stop pursuing my own dignity for a sense of trying to help other people? How do you find the balance between that?

Stephanie ([17:00](#)):

Such an amazing question again. I think there's two things that I would say to that. The first is that I think it's a false dichotomy, that we experience, the pursuit of dignity, and agency and all these wonderful psychological well being elements on our own. Like we do nothing on our own, we are all completely connected to one another. And the path to experiencing fulfillment and well being is through the ways in which we relate to other people. And I think that



the second point about privileges totally makes sense. I mean, there's a reason why we say that you can't pour from an empty cup, right? Like, you need to take care of yourself. And that is something that like each of us need to figure out for ourselves, what that means and how we need to take care of ourselves first, and I definitely advocate for that.

Stephanie ([18:08](#)):

But I also think that people with privilege are the ones who are most confused, or most wrongly led by our current definition of happiness. I think that there are so many people who have so much, and who are so unhappy. And they could reap so many rewards, internal rewards, not material rewards, if they started to integrate being of service more into their lives. And I think that the... What I would most like to see is this shift among people who have privilege, and who are equipped with resources and tools and power and companies and all the rest of it, to ensure that they are doing their part, which is disproportionately should be more than people who aren't, who don't have that opportunity. So I think that... There was this article A while ago, and like five or six years ago in the New York Times, I think it was by Charles Duhigg, and it was called, why are people wealthy, successful and miserable?

Stephanie ([19:30](#)):

And it talked about this man who was some investment banker or something like that making millions of dollars every year and turns out, he's miserable. And I've read that article, just thinking if this man could go out and just start doing something, using what he has, whether that's his investment, banking knowledge, or his resources or whatever he's passionate about, if it's not investment banking, and use that to give back to others in some way, I'd be willing to bet That he would find fulfillment and meaning and happiness pretty quickly.



MBS ([20:06](#)):

How quick is pretty quickly? Because here's a thought, if some guy like that who's like, "I'm earning a million dollars every seven minutes because of my investments or whatever." And it's like, Okay, all right, go and help out those, Stephanie tells me that's going to make me happy. So he goes down and he volunteers a couple of nights at the local soup kitchen. And is like honestly, not that much happier. [inaudible 00:20:34] we'll go back to my office and make money because the whole soup kitchen things really not working for me. What is the process of learning to serve?

Stephanie ([20:47](#)):

That I think is the really interesting part of this, like once you kind of get into the practical application. And so when we think about serving, I mean, I think the image that probably comes to mind for most people is Mother Teresa, right? Like this elevated image of I have to give up my whole life and give up [crosstalk 00:21:10].

MBS ([21:10](#)):

And I'm like, I don't want to give up my whole life to work as [inaudible 00:21:15].

Stephanie ([21:15](#)):

No exactly.

MBS ([21:17](#)):

That's not my path.

Stephanie ([21:18](#)):

That's not for everyone, right? But it is for some people, and they're probably a minority. But that is the path for some people, it's not the path for everyone.



And I am not advocating that of a life of necessary austerity, where you surrender everything in your life that brings you joy and pleasure. I think like, that's why I say that this passage is aspirational, because this is something that Buddhist monks who have renunciated the world are kind of pursuing at the highest peak of what this is. But how do we take direction from this in a way that shifts us a little bit more towards what science tells us makes us happier? Which is being there for other people in some way.

Stephanie ([22:06](#)):

And so what I would say, what my work is really focused on right now is helping people to understand that you have a unique way to serve the world based upon who you are as a person. And for that finance guy, he doesn't have to serve in a soup kitchen to make a difference, he could do so much-

MBS ([22:27](#)):

Should just send me a check. Send me a check dude whoever you are.

Stephanie ([22:34](#)):

Right. Like some of the greatest ways if you are someone like that, who has an abundance of material resources, then you can look at someone like Mackenzie Bezos, right? Who has led these amazing donations to organizations that were incredibly underfunded, including HBCUs, and other nonprofits and all that great work that she did. That's a really amazing way to help because that's what she has. But for those of us who are not endowed with those resources, well, how do we use our passions and our gifts and the things we're interested in, the things that bring us light to help people. Because, there's no shortage of ways to make a difference in the world. And it's really about I think, figuring out how do I match what I have, what I can offer, and where can I make a difference in my little corner of the world and make it a little bit better?



MBS ([23:27](#)):

Is it enough just to give money? Because there's a way that if you're have certain means it is relatively easy to make a donation here and there. And does there need to be a sense of some degree of self sacrifice for happiness to get accessed?

Stephanie ([23:55](#)):

I don't think so. I think that you're likely to reap more happiness, if you're physically out there doing something versus like, there's been some great studies done that show that when you meet the beneficiary of your work, and it increases your sense of meaning. So like being out there and actually like seeing the people who you're helping and being kind of in the field with them, I think that probably lends itself to a greater in the moment happiness, because there's the human connection and the feedback and the increasing motivation and stuff like that. But again, I think it's really depends on who you are as a person and what you have, and there probably are some people out there who find just great fulfillment in sending a check and that's fantastic. For other people, maybe that won't be enough.

MBS ([24:48](#)):

In the reading. There's a line about the I being the great demon. How do we transcend the I? I mean, I know that's not the biggest spiritual question ever asked ever. If you could give us a quick answer on that, that'd be fantastic.

Stephanie ([25:07](#)):

Oh, yeah. Great. Let me just pull that out of my back pocket. I can share my perspective, which is I think it's the same answer. It's not over emphasizing yourself. There's this really nice line of research that-



MBS ([25:25](#)):

It's a great prize.

Stephanie ([25:27](#)):

Thank you. There's this really nice line of research that I've enjoyed following over the years and it's about having a quiet ego. So consciously tempering down your ego. And I think that there's some really cool findings from that. People who have quiet egos are they experience a host of benefits to their psychological well being. And they don't do the thing that immediately comes to mind when you hear something like tempering down your ego, which is they don't diminish themselves. They still see them as worthy as having value, having the chance to make a difference in the world, all of these things, it's like, self esteem, but without the unhealthy parts of self esteem of like the self-aggrandizing, and like the dependence of your worth upon your achievements.

Stephanie ([26:21](#)):

And so I think having a quiet ego and consciously pursuing that, I think that when you are recognizing your interconnection to other beings and to the world around you, it does put everything in perspective, right? Because most of the time, it's just like me in my head, and I'm the most important person in this movie and just like it's everything that I want that matters and I'm directing the world to my pleasures kind of thing, right? Like, that's kind of our default orientation. But, if we can even just take a minute and say, wow, look at that person who is out there, who is exactly like me, who is just trying to navigate this messy world, and I'm connected to that person in these ways. And that, I think, helps us to reduce the eye so that it's not harmful. Like I think it's like healthy balance, right? Like, we don't want to over emphasize ourselves, but we don't want to under emphasize ourselves, either.



MBS ([27:28](#)):

Stephanie, you talked about sending your work and on your website, the science of the new happy. And this conversation feels more like the spiritual path of the new happy. Is happiness always a spiritual practice?

Stephanie ([27:46](#)):

I really was very excited when I discovered that science and spirituality were starting to come together. And that's really kind of what led me to positive psychology. I think there have been some debates about like, is positive psychology, just a new religion, right? Like a new approach? And a lot of the underpinnings of the work, including the work on character strengths actually comes in a lot of ways from spiritual texts. But I think that, to me, the spirituality is where I guess... Spirituality is, in my perspective, and I know it will mean different things to everyone. It's just about being human. It's just about how we navigate this world, and how we do it with grace, and leaving an impact and navigating pain and all of those different challenges that we all go through. And I think that positive psychology is another way of approaching that because psychology is about being human.

Stephanie ([28:56](#)):

And where we can blend them together in interesting new ways is where a lot of this innovation is coming from. And a lot of the research is validating these ancient spiritual practices like in Buddhism, and then alternatively, we're learning from the research other ways to take care of ourselves. Other practices that work and things that aren't going to help us to live better lives, which is really, I think, what really, it's all we care about at the end of the day. And so for me, it was a really exciting moment, when I discovered that there was this inner connection between the deepest truths that I was discovering in both of those fields and they were approaching it from different perspectives.



MBS ([29:49](#)):

To that phrase, spirituality is just about being human. That's intriguing to me, because I'm never quite sure whether I'm a spiritual person, not a spiritual person, because I'm an atheist, and I'm like, okay. Well, how is being human, spiritual or vice versa? How is spiritual being human? Can you say more about that?

Stephanie ([30:08](#)):

Man, you're really taking me to some deep places today. I love it. I mean, I think that maybe is a better way to say it is. Spirituality is about helping us to be human. Like, we can, obviously we don't need that to navigate a life. Like we don't need other people's advice or ancient wisdom or art or thought provoking philosophy or these things that I would classify as, not always being spiritual, but having the capacity to be spiritual. And I think that the... But they make life better, at least for some of us, those of us who are called to it. And I don't think there's any value judgment in there, that just doesn't resonate with some people and that's awesome and they have their own things that make life meaningful. But for certain people, and I would count myself among them, and maybe you too, they're helpful tools for navigating life.

Stephanie ([31:18](#)):

And so I think if needed, they can be divested from their history, and use this tools. And that's not always going to be the case for everyone again, and some people might really object to that, because it's breaking apart the practice from the theology or from the philosophy, but I think that, I just, I'm for anything that helps people get through life. Right? And that does it with minimal harm and maximal benefit. And there's a lot of wisdom that we can glean from those tools, as well as from the myriad of other things that people find that give their lives meaning.



MBS ([32:05](#)):

What's been the most significant way you've reoriented to your life? Having kind of immersed yourself in the science and spirituality of the new happy.

Stephanie ([32:18](#)):

I think for me, I used to wake up in the morning and think like, What do I want? How do I go get what I want? What do I need to do to be better? How do I win? How do I be better than that person? Or-

MBS ([32:40](#)):

How do I crush them? How do I crush my competition? You don't come across as a bit of a crushing type of person, but I get what you're saying.

Stephanie ([32:47](#)):

Like the general vibe. And I think that now I try, and again, I'm not always good at sticking to this either. But I think I'm hopefully a little bit better than I used to be to wake up in the morning and think, what can I do for other people today? What can I do for those in my life who needs support and who need help? And what can I do for those who I don't know who I can help. And one of the things that has brought me great meaning over the last year or so has been I, through the new happy we leave these wellbeing challenges for people to help them to learn the science and apply it in their own lives. And they're completely free, they're just something that I offer to anyone who's interested. And we put them through these, essentially five to seven day curriculums, which is what I was doing before I started the new happy where we help people learn the science and learn the skills and practice them.

Stephanie ([33:51](#)):

And I think that that has brought me so much joy, because as I mentioned earlier, it's like, it's something I have that I can offer. It's something I love, and I'm



really passionate about. And hopefully it's meaningful for them because they're getting things that are paywalled behind that are not always accessible to everyone, and that maybe it hits them in the right moment, or they find it or whatever it is. And so that kind of approach is something that I'm just trying to find new ways to integrate into the work that I do and the way that I'm living.

MBS ([34:36](#)):

What are your practices for self care or self renewal? Because it's so easy. Or there's the risk, I would say, of when you come from a service mindset, it can be a depleting one. And I think that's more true. My guess is you probably know the research better than me, but it's probably more true for a woman than a man. It's probably more true for a person of color than a white person.

Stephanie ([35:06](#)):

Yeah.

MBS ([35:08](#)):

I'm straight white male dude. So I'm like, "Yeah, I don't mind being of service, but I've got a whole lot of replenishment that goes on just by where I am in society." So how do you give and not become depleted?

Stephanie ([35:26](#)):

This has been definitely something that I've had to learn. I'm also a caregiver to my partner who is incredibly ill and relies upon me to do every task for him. And so I'm very familiar with what it means to over deplete myself. And so it's been something I've definitely had to learn and I agree with you completely. I think the more privilege that you possess the or sorry, the less that you are supported by society, in life and in work and in the world, the more important it becomes to set those boundaries and really, and really take care of yourself. And the unfairness of this, of course, is that it's the hardest for those people. But I won't get into that rage that I feel for that right now. But I think, for me, what I have



learned is I think, first of all, it's about considering are you giving from a place of spreading your light with the world? Or are you giving from a place of self sacrifice, to please other people or to and giving up something?

Stephanie ([36:53](#)):

So a lot of people say to me, like Stephanie you should just give up as a new happy because you have a full time job with taking care of Alex. And I've certainly wondered if that would be something that would help me in the long run, like, if that's something that would be better for me. But I realized that I'm actually so incredibly lucky because doing it, even though it's challenging, and it can be hard to prioritize, and I don't move as fast as I want to. And like all these other things, I'm so inordinately lucky, because it actually gives me so much energy. It gives me so much back more than I give, I get so much more back. And that is to me, like, that is what everyone deserves. They deserve a way of living in the world that brings some energy and joy that also gives back to other people, hopefully. And so it's like, how do we help people to find that intersection between those things.

Stephanie ([38:00](#)):

That being said, I still have to obviously, take breaks and rest and do all that kind of stuff. And for me, the tools that I use are I really prioritize my sleep like, I'm never going to be somebody who's going to pull an all nighter or do anything like that, I protect my sleep at all cost. I try to surround myself with people who are really supportive, and who are like a part of a mutually nourishing relationship. And then I find a lot of fulfillment and rejuvenation through exercise, reading, and meditation. And those practices really just start things that kind of fill my cup and help me to be able to do the other things.

MBS ([38:56](#)):

Stephanie it's been a wonderful conversation. Thank you.



Stephanie ([38:59](#)):

Thank you.

MBS ([39:00](#)):

I'm wondering what still needs to be said that hasn't yet been said in this conversation?

Stephanie ([39:08](#)):

That is an awesome question. Let me think. I guess I want your opinion about all of this. What do you think about it?

MBS ([39:21](#)):

Well I'm working on this new book, called How to Begin, it'll come out in January. And at the heart of it is a sense of how do you set a worthy goal. And the three attributes of a worthy goal are thrilling, important and daunting. So thrilling is about lighting you up and what matters to you. Important is, how does this serve the world, give more to the world than it takes? And daunting where do you learn? How is this new for you? How does that find the boundaries around that? So I'm mostly just violently agreeing with everything you're saying.

Stephanie ([39:57](#)):

I love that [crosstalk 00:39:57].

MBS ([39:58](#)):

Ask questions that make me sound skeptical. But I'm like, Yeah, exactly.

Stephanie ([40:02](#)):

I love that framework. That's so cool.



MBS ([40:07](#)):

I think it's going to be a good book. Writing books is one of those things that is miserable for quite a long time until it gets better. But I'm pretty happy with the way it's shaping up. And it's in the very final copy editing phase at the moment, and we've got the cover design so it's all coming together nicely.

Stephanie ([40:28](#)):

That's so exciting. I think that's a really cool example of how you're loving your new happy, right? Like how you've found a way to be of service to others using your gifts and your skills and doing so I know writing is painful, but doing so in a way that hopefully brings you joy as well.

MBS ([40:49](#)):

Right. Yeah, the thought of being a good teacher is part of the kind of deep nourishing thing for me for sure.

Stephanie ([40:56](#)):

I love that.

MBS ([41:05](#)):

When I think back to that Christmas day, I have no memory of what presents I was given, I have no memory of what I was trying to achieve or to win, have no memory of what was annoying me or what many dramas I was living through. Rather, I have a bone deep sense of contentment. The right people, a perfect gathering, a moment of stillness, sunlight on the river, and the river flowing past. If you've enjoyed this conversation with Stephanie and me, let me recommend two other episodes that might tickle your fancy. In an episode called How to resist conformity, Julie Lythcott-Haims who is the author of a book How to Raise an Adult, reads from Tara Westover's book Educated and talks about finding your own path.



MBS ([41:52](#)):

And Mason Currey, who is the author of a book *Daily Rituals* reads from *Big Book of philosophy*, Thomas Mann's *The Magic Mountain*. That episode is called *fragile and fleeting*. And it's also about finding the life that's right for us. If you'd like to know more about Stephanie, you'll find her at thenewhappy.com. And she's on Instagram and Twitter and Facebook at [new happy co](#) as the handle. And her Instagram in particular, I think is fantastic, so do check that out. Thank you for listening. I always appreciate you being here with me during the episodes and listening to the end. My usual messages apply, check out Duke Humphreys, you'll find that the free membership site at the [mbs.works](#) at the podcast link. It's where you'll find transcripts and downloads and unreleased episodes and the like. We'd love you to sign up for that. If you're so moved to mention this episode to somebody else, that's great. Word of mouth really is the slow and steady way the podcast grows. And a review is always welcome on your podcast platform. Thank you if you've already done that, you're awesome and you're doing great.