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

Hey, MBS here, Michael. Holidays and a book coming, not necessarily in that order in terms of how important they feel to me right now. Thanks ahead of time if you've had a chance to pre-order the How To Begin book. I appreciate that. Howtobegin.com, if you're first to hearing of it. Over the holidays, we're just going to be releasing some of my favorite episodes from the vault. Katy Milkman is one of those behavioral scientists that's really making a splash and I really enjoyed her new book, How To Change. She is very much in the lineage of the great behavioral economists, and it's really appropriate that the book she chose to read two pages from is Richard Taylor's classic book, Nudge. It's a great conversation about just what it takes to change both at an individual level, but also at a kind of collective level as well. Enjoy.



MBS ([00:57](#)):

Ah, the illusion of free will. That delightful and diluted belief that we know what's going on. That we're in charge of what's around us. That our decisions are our own, but they're not. We're nudged into ways of behaving all the time. Sometimes for good, sometimes for ill. Welcome to 2 Pages with MBS, the podcast where brilliant people read the best two pages from a favorite book, a book that has moved them, a book that has shaped them. Professor Katy Milkman teaches behavioral science at The Wharton School of the University of Penn. And she's the host of the Charles Schwab's behavioral economics podcast, Choiceology. She's also the author of a new book, How to Change: The Science of Getting from Where You Are to Where You Want to Be. And I have been waiting for this book to come out a long time. I'm excited to get my hands on it. Now, Katie's on the side of change for good. And there was one book in particular that set her onto this particular journey.

Katy ([02:04](#)):

Late in my graduate school days, there was a new subfield, I should say, inside of behavioral economics, that was blooming. And it was the nudging field. The premise of nudging is that if we recognize people are predictably imperfect, then if we understand the ways in which they make systematic mistakes, we can actually use that insight to help people make better decisions and do a lot of good instead of just studying it and observing it dispassionately, we can get in there and make lives better. And that appealed to me immensely.

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

I love that phrase, predictably imperfect. That's me. That's me. It's you as well. Now Katie's able to write a book with new insights on change because she specializes in doing research at scale, working with big organizations who serve vast swathes of the population. I mean, you're probably in one of these groups.



Katy ([03:00](#)):

Consider gym members who might wish they were exercising more regularly. Bank customers who might wish they were saving a bit more for retirement or for an emergency, or customers of a pharmacy or even patients of a doctor's office who might wish they were achieving some more of their health goals.

MBS ([03:20](#)):

And from there, Katie and her team test different nudges in the huge mega studies.

Katy ([03:26](#)):

So, Instead of a single scientist partnering with a single, I'll say, bank to test one idea for increasing savings, they have a single hypothesis. We say there's a huge fixed cost to organizing that partnership. And if the bank is large enough, why don't we do many, many, many studies all at once. So, we have a team of about 150 scientists who we coordinate with, and we'll basically put out a call to them and say, "Hey, do you have ideas? We're partnering with organization X, say bank X, they want to help their customers save more for emergencies. How would you communicate with them? And what kinds of small incentives, for instance, might you offer to, to encourage that?" And then we run a tournament and we actually test lots of different ideas simultaneously, to see what works best in an apples to apples comparison. So, we can do sort of cost benefit analysis more easily than a traditional scientist would.

MBS ([04:17](#)):

I've been grappling for years to help support organizations and people in behavior change. I mean, it's the essence of the work we do at Box of Crayons, where we help organizations move from advice-driven to curiosity-led. So, I asked Katie what myths in behavior change drive her absolutely nuts.



Katy ([04:35](#)):

Oh god, where do I start? Let me actually, I'll start with a big myth. And this is like the goal of my book really, is to bust the biggest of all myths, I think when it comes to behavior change, which is that if you just read the right book with a single recipe for change, whether it's about how to build a lasting habit in that particular book, or how to set big audacious goals and then break them down. Like if you just use that one technique, that perfect solution, you will achieve change. And what drives me nuts about that isn't that some of those techniques actually can be really helpful for people, there's science supporting many different strategies that are out there. But what my research has pointed to over the last roughly 20 years is that it depends on what the problem is, what the solution is.

Katy ([05:30](#)):

And like, as an engineer, this is blindingly obvious, right? You don't try to erect a tower and in an environment where you don't understand how hard is the soil, right? What am I up against? Will there be wind resistance that's going to try to blow this over? You get that you have to understand what is working against you. But so often behavior change is ... Or behavior change solutions that are offered up and self-help bestsellers are agnostic to the challenge and solutions only work if they actually match the problem. So, that's a big theme in my book. There's lots of different ideas and insights from science that I bring to bear, but I try to clarify if the reason you're not taking your medication is you keep forgetting, it's a different solution than the reason you're not taking it is the side-effects are unpleasant.

Katy ([06:24](#)):

And we need to solve those problems in different ways and look to different scientific techniques to figure that out. And so, it drives me nuts that there's these one size fits all approaches that are ... And then people are frustrated



when it doesn't work for them and organizations too, will sort of go to that same place of saying, "Oh, let's slap this solution on. We think this'll change behavior. And it worked in this other setting," but the other setting, the problem was totally different. It wasn't a self-confidence problem, or it wasn't a problem that productivity was slow because there were abstract goals. It was a different problem. So, we have to understand what we're up against to solve for it.

MBS ([07:05](#)):

You said, if you're an engineer, this stuff would be bleedingly obvious. And that immediately took me to this metaphor, which is if you're trying to move, and by the way, this is the subtitle of your new book. If you're trying to move from here to where you want to be, really you're building a bridge. And there's not just one type of bridge, there are tens or hundreds of different types of bridges because you're crossing different types of terrain, different gaps. I mean, some are single span bridges, some have a huge arc, some are long, some go for miles. Different bridges are required to get from A to B depending on what's in the middle.

Katy ([07:42](#)):

Oh, I love that. I wish you'd given me that before I finished the book. I love that.

MBS ([07:48](#)):

Fantastic. So, you hinted a little bit about the book you're going to read for us. Tell us what it is.

Katy ([07:55](#)):

Yeah, well I should have the full title. The book is called *Nudge: Improving Decisions About Health, Wealth, and Happiness*. And it's by Richard Thaler and Cass Sunstein. And it's a book that changed my life and my career. So, I'm really excited to get the chance to share it.



MBS ([08:10](#)):

And when did that show up in your life? Was it as a graduate student?

Katy ([08:14](#)):

Late in my graduate student career, and some of the ideas from the book, I should note were swirling around already. They'd been short academic articles by Richard and Cass, that pointed to this idea of nudging, libertarian, paternalism. If that second term doesn't make sense yet, hold on. But there wasn't a book and the book really just brought it all into focus and really changed the focus of my research as a result.

MBS ([08:45](#)):

Yeah, no, I remember it having the same effect on me when I first read it, I just went, "Oh, wow. This makes me think differently about everything." I mean, for one thing, it makes me think about context as a significant way that you create nudges. Okay, but I'm getting ahead of myself as well. Which pages did you choose to read for us?

Katy ([09:05](#)):

Well, I hope this isn't too boring, but I was thinking I'd read the introduction, because that's where they really introduce the key idea. A friend of yours, Carolyn is the director of food services for a large city school system. She is in charge of hundreds of schools and hundreds of thousands of kids eat in her cafeterias every day. Carolyn has formal training in nutrition, a master's degree from the State university. She's a creative type who likes to think about things in non-traditional ways. One evening over a good bottle of wine, she and her friend, Adam, a statistically oriented management consultant who has worked with supermarket chains, hatched an interesting idea. Without changing any menus, they would run some experiments in her schools to determine whether the way the food is displayed and arranged might influence the choices kids



make. Carolyn gave the directors of dozens of school cafeterias specific instructions on how to display the food choices.

Katy ([10:05](#)):

In some schools, the desserts were placed first, in others, last, in still others, in a separate line. The location of various food items was varied from one school to another. In some schools, the French fries, but in others, the carrot sticks were at eye level. From his experience in designing supermarket floor plans, Adam suspected that the results would be dramatic. He was right. Simply by rearranging the cafeteria, Carolyn was able to increase or decrease the consumption of many food items by as much as 25%. Carolyn learned a big lesson. School children, like adults, can be greatly influenced by small changes in the context. The influence can be exercised for better or for worse. For example, Carolyn knows that she can increase consumption of healthy foods and decrease consumption of unhealthy ones. With hundreds of schools to work with and a team of graduate student volunteers recruited to collect and analyze the data, Carolyn believes that she now has considerable power to influence what kids eat.

Katy ([11:11](#)):

Carolyn is pondering what to do with her new found power. Here are some suggestions she's received from her usually sincere, but occasionally mischievous friends and coworkers. One, arrange the food to make the students best off, all things considered. Two, choose the food order at random. Three, try to arrange the food to get the kids, to pick the same foods they would choose on their own. Four, maximum the sales of the items from the suppliers that are willing to offer the largest bribes. Five, maximize profits period. Option one has obvious appeal, yet it does seem a bit intrusive, even paternalistic, but the alternatives are worse. Option two, arranging the food at random could be considered fair-minded and principled, and it is in one sense neutral, but if the orders are randomized across schools, then the children at some schools will



have less healthy diets than those at other schools. Is this desirable? Should Carolyn choose that kind of neutrality? If she can easily make most students better off in part by improving their health?

Katy ([12:17](#)):

Option three might seem to be an honorable attempt to avoid intrusion. Try to mimic what the children would choose for themselves. Maybe that is really the neutral choice. Maybe Carolyn should neutrally follow people's wishes, at least where she's dealing with older students. But a little thought reveals that this is a difficult option to implement. Adam's experiment proves that what kids choose depends on the order in which the items are displayed. What then are the true preferences of the children? What does it mean to say that Carolyn should try to figure out what the students would choose on their own? In a cafeteria, it is impossible to avoid some way of organizing food. Option four might appeal to a corrupt person in Carolyn's job, and manipulating the order of the food items would put yet another weapon in the arsenal of available methods to exploit power. But Carolyn is honorable and honest. So, she does not give this option any thought.

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

Like options, two and three, option five has some appeal, especially if Carolyn thinks that the best cafeteria is the one that makes the most money, but should Carolyn really try to maximize profits if the result is to make children less healthy, especially since she works for the school district? Carolyn is what we will be calling a choice architect. A choice architect has the responsibility for organizing the context in which people make decisions. Although Carolyn is a figment of our imagination, many real people turn out to be choice architects, most without realizing it. If you design the ballot voters use to choose candidates, you were a choice architect. If you're a doctor and must describe the alternative treatments available to a patient, you are choice architect. If you design the form that new employees fill out to enroll in the company health



care plan, you are a choice architect. If you're a parent describing possible educational options to your son or daughter, you are a choice architect. If you were a salesperson, you were a choice architect, but you already knew that.

MBS ([14:16](#)):

There's a lot to chew on in those opening pages. It's a good metaphor because of all the food. And I think maybe the food stuff is relevant for me because I'm living in my parents' house and they have a different way of choice architecting the food, which basically involves leaving around vast amounts of chocolate. I am hopeless in the face of actual chocolate. In my real life back in Canada, I architect my lifestyle so I don't have access to so much chocolate.

Katy ([14:41](#)):

You're a wise choice architect then.

MBS ([14:44](#)):

I have moments, but not all the time, but I do have brief moments. What's at the heart of this passage for you, Katy? I mean, what really gets to the essence of it?

Katy ([14:53](#)):

What I love about it is the way it, it clarifies that even in a simple situation, like in a cafeteria, where you might not be paying any attention to your surroundings, you're being influenced. And so, someone has an opportunity to make you better off. And that insight to me is so important and it really wasn't one I'd had before I read their work. That because of the influence that small things have on our decisions, there's an opportunity to improve us.



MBS ([15:29](#)):

Is it possible to have true preferences? I mean, that's one of the phrases that's in the passage that you read out. And I'm just wondering if such a thing even exists because it sounds like a true preference is a contextual preference?

Katy ([15:41](#)):

I think that's what decades of research suggests, is that in many cases, it's context dependent, what we prefer. Of course there are some things that there's no context in which I would tell you that I think chocolate ice cream tastes worse than carrots. That's just not going to happen. I don't care where you put me, but there may be some absolute preferences, that's what I need to say, but there's absolutely a context sensitivity to many things.

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

And the phrase that felt the juiciest part of this conversation really for me anyway, was when you go, "In the wrong hands, this is a weapon, it's an arsenal. It can be used to manipulate power." And I know that you associate with behavior change for good, but this feels that it gets to the heart of it, which is Katy, how do you ethically think about being a choice architect?

Katy ([16:35](#)):

Yeah, that's a great question. I think one way is by the exact problems that I choose to study. And as I just mentioned, I think if you don't understand the actual obstacle you're up against, it's not going to be that useful to use a given tool. So for instance, when I study what it might take to encourage someone to get a vaccine or to exercise more regularly, those are very specific types of problems that are really different than what it might take to get someone to buy your brand of toothpaste. The barriers are different. And so, the insights that I generate about what helps people achieve goals, I think some of them are portable, to be used for nefarious purposes, but a lot of them really aren't



because they just don't encounter a barrier that's relevant. I'll give you a really concrete example.

Katy ([17:29](#)):

One of my favorite topics I've studied is a technique I call temptation bundling, where in order to motivate yourself to do something that you know you should do, that's good for you but maybe not super fun as you're executing it, like exercising or spending time with a difficult relative or studying for a test, a way you can motivate yourself to do it is by linking it with something tempting, something that you really enjoy and maybe not letting yourself do that tempting thing unless you are simultaneously exercising, say watching your favorite TV show only while you're at the gym or burning your favorite scented candles or eating your favorite snack only while you're working on your homework or going to your favorite restaurant only when you are spending time with that difficult relative. So, that kind of linkage temptation bundling, linking something that you want to do for your longterm benefit, but dread in the moment with something fun, I don't see easy ways to turn that into a nefarious tool for marketers, because the problem that it's solving isn't a problem that keeps you from buying a certain brand of toothpaste, right?

Katy ([18:41](#)):

It's not the same thing. So, I think that helps, figuring out ways to work on where I really see a social benefit and try to produce solutions that are well-suited to that problem, but maybe not generalizable to nasty purposes, that's a big answer.

MBS ([18:59](#)):

Yeah, I mean, you're not the person I'm worried about. I mean, I know there's a vast range of people who come to this with a good heart. I mean, there's a spectrum, probably. There are people who come to it with a good heart and who produce behavior change for good. And there are also people who have a



dark heart, like, "I'm just going to manipulate things because I know stuff about behavioral economics and behavior change, and I'm going to have people behave the way I want them to behave, for my personal or my organization's gain or benefit." But there must be murky middle, people who have good intentions, but let's say they come from, to use the language of the moment, a place of privilege. And they don't really even fully understand that they're projecting all sorts of biases and their own way of seeing the world onto others, saying, "This is the right way you should be behaving."

MBS ([19:50](#)):

I mean, it's notorious in the world of philanthropy and particularly nonprofits, the White Western savior coming to a country and going, "I'm just going to fix this problem for you people because you haven't figured it out for yourself yet."

Katy ([20:03](#)):

Yep. Yep. No, that's the nasty paternalism part. Like you're misapplying paternalism. You have the best of intentions, but the worst of outcomes.

MBS ([20:13](#)):

So, talk to me about the nuances of paternalism.

Katy ([20:17](#)):

Yeah, that's a great question. There are many nuances. As I mentioned, I'd say I get to sidestep this in my own work because I just stay away from gray areas. There's at least things, to me that feel like ethical gray areas I want nothing to do with, and when it comes to improving student performance in high school and getting people to exercise more and get vaccinated to prevent deadly plagues-

MBS ([20:45](#)):

It's pretty unambiguous. These are good things.



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

Yeah, I feel good about those things. And I think Bob Cialdini who wrote the amazing book Influence, I think he's struggled and thought about this a lot. And he was a guest speaker in one of my classes this year at Wharton, and got a similar question. He gave a wonderful answer. So, I'm going to parrot it back to you, but attributing it to him, which is he thinks that one way that we can help ensure people around us will hopefully, mostly use the ideas we generate and the science we generate for good is by, when we write about it, when we talk about it, when we do it, being really careful to provide examples that are for the social good. So, he has done a lot of work on influence that actually could be transported to sell cars, but he focuses generally on improving the environment.

Katy ([21:38](#)):

And so, by giving the examples in that context, the power of suggestion, he feels at least helps increase the likelihood that people will think about using it for good as well, because that's where they've seen it, that's where they've heard about it, that's where they thought about it. So, it's by no means a perfect solution, but I think it's a nice point that one of the things we can do is make sure that when we describe these things, we're in just non-ambiguous territory and the examples and the research we do is not ambiguous. That's not a complete answer to your question, but hopefully it's an okay start.

MBS ([22:09](#)):

I'm not sure the question is answerable. I mean, it's messy and difficult and complex.

Katy ([22:14](#)):

It's a philosophical question.



MBS ([22:17](#)):

My memory of reading Cialdini's work, he also talks about how to increase charitable donations. So again, another example of chosen contexts for good rather than otherwise. So, Katy, if there's no such thing as true preference, and we're constantly moving from one context to another and let's assume every context either knowingly or unknowingly has choice architecture built into it, is there any way we can inoculate ourselves against manipulation that's not actually in our best interests, or is it just the very nature that this is a nudging that happens always at an unconscious level?

Katy ([22:52](#)):

It doesn't all happen at an unconscious level, I think. And I don't know if you can fully inoculate yourself, to stick with the vaccine metaphor. Some vaccines are 95% effective, some are 50% effective. I'll take anything that's more effective than just facing the world on my own unprotected. And I think that's kind of what we've got in this domain, is educating yourself so that you're aware of these tools and understand how context shapes our decisions. How powerful it is, for instance, when there's a default choice and how much that can change your decision. So, like the example that's most widely used is of organ donation. Many countries, by default, you're an organ donor, but it's easy to opt out and say, "Nope, I don't want, if I were to die early and my organs could be harvested to help someone else, I actually don't want that to happen."

Katy ([23:46](#)):

Other countries have the opposite default, where they say, "By default, I am not a donor, but you can opt in very easily." And that's what we have in the United States where I live is you're defaulted into not being a donor, but you can elect to become one. And it turns out there's a huge effect. So, something like an 80 percentage point change in the rate at which people agree to be donors, depending on whether it's the default choice, because it takes a little bit of work.



It's very small, but a little bit. And it also changes how you think about the status quo and what other people must be doing and what's recommended by the government, must be whatever the default is. And so, that changes your decision. But once you know that about defaults, that's actually one where you can be on the lookout, especially on important decisions for what am I being defaulted into here? Is this an auto renewal every year? Is not going to be a problem for me?

Katy ([24:41](#)):

Do I really like these defaults? Wait, am I saving for retirement when I start with this new employer automatically? Or do I need to set that up myself? So, there are things like that where once you know how powerful it is, once you understand the tool, you can be on the lookout for tricky defaults that might trip you up, and also helpful ones that might make your life better. And I think there's a number of tools of choice architecture like that, that once you see them, and once you understand them, you can be on the lookout for them and try to use them for good. And then there's others where it's probably hard. I think cafeteria layout, which was the passage I just read is probably a good example of one where I don't know that my sophistication about the fact that the cafeteria layout is going to shape my decisions really helps me not be enticed by the first thing I see.

Katy ([25:31](#)):

I'm not sure that's a huge ... Because once it's on my tray, am I really going to go put it back, even knowing, "Well, it's probably on my tray because it was the first yummy thing I saw." I don't know. I'm probably not going to. So, I think there's some situations, and I guess another thing I'd say is it's okay. I think when it's little stuff, it's probably not a huge deal. You visit one cafeteria once, it's not a huge deal. If you go every single day, and I was the same way, and you fall into a routine and now, you start gaining weight and then now you're pre-diabetic. Okay, these things can add up. But in general, if we are sophisticated and savvy



on the really big things, like making sure we're saving for retirement, making sure we're getting regular medical checkups ...

MBS ([26:13](#)):

Or the occasional carrot, even if you're eating chocolate ice cream all the time, come on Katy, step up.

Katy ([26:18](#)):

I do eat a lot of ice cream, I will admit, but anyway.

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

It's interesting, in Australia here, it's one of the few countries where voting is compulsory. It's the default, and it makes a difference to how democracy plays out. And in terms of conversation around disenfranchising, which you know is a pretty hot topic in the US at the moment, those conversations don't really happen in Australia because there's just this default way of behaving. Just remove some of those manipulations off the table.

Katy ([26:46](#)):

Yeah, no, absolutely. Yeah, so government plays a large role in its structure and what's possible for a paternalistic nudger and what isn't.

MBS ([26:59](#)):

Katy, you've been thinking about behavior change now for 20 years. As you've been working on the new book and you've been conducting some of these mega studies, what surprised you recently about insights around behavior change and how it works?

Katy ([27:14](#)):

That's a great question. I would say a thing that has surprised me is how important it is to be prepared for failure. And I don't mean complete failure, but



maybe I should say, it surprised me how critically important it seems to be, to have ways of keeping people from becoming demotivated when they take an inevitable step backwards. When things go a little bit off kilter, a lot of the research that I've done and seen of late, that's excited me the most has highlighted this same theme that rigidity in routines, rigidity and expectations is just going to be our downfall consistently, and we need to find ways to sort of get back on the wagon whenever there's a slip up. And that a lot of the best solutions for behavior change either are about finding a way to help you climb back up after you've fallen down, or anticipating that there's going to be a challenge if you're too rigid.

Katy ([28:24](#)):

I'll give you a specific example to make that come to life a little bit more. I did a study at Google where we were trying to build lasting exercise habits for their employees. And we had this idea that if we could get people into a really consistent routine around when they worked out and reward them for that consistency for a month, we would see long-term benefits, that consistently exercising at the same time of day would build a very stable routine around continued exercise after we sort of let go and watched. And we pitted that against another, I'll say designed for kick-starting and exercise habit, where instead of really encouraging people to work out in the same time each day, we encourage them to mix it up a bit more. And what we found is that contrary to our expectations and lots of expectations, we've surveyed psychologists at lots of top departments and the vast majority shared our belief that this consistency of routine would be what worked best.

Katy ([29:32](#)):

We actually found that people who exercise at the same regularity, but in a less routine way, built more lasting habits. And the reason was everybody sort of had a favorite time to work out, in both groups, and they built something of a routine around that. It was a little stronger in the group that really practiced that



a lot, but the folks who we'd rewarded for that consistent routine, if they miss their regular time, they throw up their hands and gave up.

MBS ([30:00](#)):

Right, it's like, "Oh, four minutes past seven. I can't possibly start because I start at seven o'clock, or I don't start yet."

Katy ([30:07](#)):

Exactly. It was an only-if kind of rule that they'd built in their minds and life throws you curve balls. And so, that flexibility that other folks had learned was really critical. And that's just one example of ... There's a lot of insights like this. One of my other favorite topics I've studied as the fresh start effect, which is about how there are moments in our lives that feel like new beginnings from the start of a new year to the start of a new week, to the celebration of a birthday, the beginning of spring, and that highlighting those, or even just experiencing them their own can motivate us to tackle goals we wouldn't otherwise feel motivated to pursue because it gives us a sense of a clean slate. And so, we can feel dissociated from our past failures and like it's going to be different this time.

Katy ([30:50](#)):

And I think it's really about the same fundamental psychology that these failures, when we let them get out of control, when we let them take over, we don't have what it takes to succeed and we don't push forward. And so, much of life is about small failures, and we have to have ways that we can keep going anyway. So, in converging, there's more that I can say, there's lots more of I would ...

MBS ([31:15](#)):

Yeah, for sure.



Katy ([31:16](#)):

But it's so many things I keep seeing and running mega studies where the best performing treatments have some element or some flavor of this helping people stand back up after a small failure and keep going, and be more flexible. I think that's really important.

MBS ([31:32](#)):

In my small company, and of course, this is just a tactic in a certain context, but we have the, "How fascinating rule." And this actually comes from a guy called Ben Zander who years ago wrote a book called The Art of Possibility. And here's how that works. When things go off the rails and they always do, you throw your hands in the air and you go, "How fascinating," and it puts you into a different somatic state, shifts your body, it invites curiosity, it invites you to hold it lightly, it invites you to discover that this too shall pass. And before this interview, I was talking to Ainsley who I work with, and we just discovered that we screwed up something that is meant to happen tomorrow. And we just got onto our little Zoom call together and she went, "Michael, how fascinating?" And I went, "Ainsley how fascinating. All right, now, how do we tackle this? How do we fix this?"

Katy ([32:25](#)):

Reframing is the great and powerful tool that I love that reframing of when life gives you lemons, make lemonade.

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

Yeah, exactly right.

Katy ([32:33](#)):

How fascinating. Yeah, that's great.



MBS ([32:35](#)):

Katy, I've got a final question for you. This is my final question I ask at the end of all of these interviews and it's a tricky one.

Katy ([32:42](#)):

Uh-oh.

MBS ([32:43](#)):

What needs to be said that hasn't yet been said in this conversation between you and me?

Katy ([32:49](#)):

I would say one thing we haven't talked about is how my thinking has evolved around behavior change since 2009 when I read this amazing book, Nudge, and it changed my life and made me want to study behavior change forever. And so, let me say that I love the book Nudge, and by the way, I think a new and improved ... I think it's called the final edition. It's coming out later this year.

MBS ([33:20](#)):

The ultimate nudge, nudge, nudge.

Katy ([33:22](#)):

Is that ... Well, they apparently, in the introduction, they talk about how it's a commitment device to not write another revision. But for me, a big realization and part of what led me to write a book that is very different from Nudge, even though I think of Nudge as the book that shaped my life's work, is that nudging is really about how an organization can shape behavior. And that's a super important piece, and how policymakers can shape behavior for the better. And that's a really important set of questions. And the book I wrote tries to address that too, with a lot of the tools it provides, but I realized that we are choice



architects in our own lives as well. And that a really important opportunity is to teach people how to nudge themselves. And so, what I've tried to do in the book I wrote is take Nudge as a jumping off point and then build on it and build in, "Here's all the research that can help you architect change for yourself as well as for others." But it's focused on helping the individual.

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

One of my favorite authors is Peter Block. I mean, if you followed my work at all, you know he just keeps popping up in conversations. He wrote a book called *The Answer to How Is Yes* and among other things, I mean, he has a bit of a rant about best practices, but amongst other things, he talks about role models or rather avatars. And interestingly for us and for this conversation, his favorite avatar is the architect. For him, it's a role that blends discipline and science, that's part of what you need. Also, the need to understand context, which is so important. And then also a degree of personal flair. You got all those different sides playing out. Now, I really appreciated Katy's final call to arms, which is to be your own architect, be your own choice architect. If you know what you want, and I love that question, what do you want? What you really want? You can then think about shaping your environment to get it.

MBS ([35:33](#)):

That Winston Churchill quote, "We shape our buildings, thereafter, they shape us." Be who you want to be by building what you need to build. If you're interested in more on Katy, the best place to go is to her website, KatyMilkman.com. I subscribe to her newsletter, I'd recommend you do as well. It's a monthly newsletter and it's excellent. And her book is terrific. It's just been nominated for all sorts of prizes and on all sorts of lists, so definitely worth grabbing hold of it. And as ever, thank you for listening to 2 Page with MBS, this podcast of mine, which I really love to do, I hope you'll join our free community. It is a place where you get access to all sorts of good things, additional



interviews I haven't released, some downloads, the transcripts of the podcasts if you're interested in reading through what's been said.

MBS ([36:22](#)):

It's called The Duke Humphrey, it's named after a favorite library of mine at Oxford, where all the cool stuff was, and you'll find it mbs.works/podcast. The podcast grows best by word of mouth. So, if episode has moved you in particular and you know people who want better lives, who want to shape their lives so they can be the best they can be, who would like to go deeper into understanding around behavioral economics, then perhaps you'll suggest this episode to them. And maybe you'll be so moved as to go and give this podcast a review on your favorite podcast app. That would be amazing. Thank you, if you've done that. You're awesome, and you're doing great.