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

How are you labeled? I mean, how have you been labeled by others, and how have you labeled yourself? I mean, you listen to this podcast, which means I'm guessing that you're the type of person who thinks about who they are in this world, who they've been and who they're becoming. One of the ways we claim a sense of self is by the labels we give ourselves. But what at first can be a helpful handhold can soon, to really horribly mix my metaphors here, become a straight jacket? What William Blake would call a mind forged manacle. I'm wondering how your current labels serve you, and I'm wondering how they don't.

([00:51](#)):

Welcome to 2 Pages with MBS, the podcast for brilliant people. Read the best two pages from a favorite book, a book that has moved them, a book that has shaped them. Caroline Webb is one of the world's experts in how to translate



insights from behavioral science to actually improving the life you live. She wrote one of my favorite books with one of my favorite titles, *How To Have a Good Day*. They say books, particularly business books and self-help books, if they name the problem and solve the problem in the title, there's genius to that. And *How To Have a Good Day*, is just such a title. Caroline started her journey as an economist working on public policies. Almost 200 years ago, economics was called the dismal science. What a vivid description. But it seems Caroline didn't get that message. But she soon figured out what it was that really interested her.

Caroline ([01:53](#)):

My interest in economics had always been the idea of it being a human science. And the tension that was growing between my interest in the nitty gritty human stuff, what made it good in team setting, or what made it bad, what made a leader good or bad in a particular setting, that was becoming more and more interesting to me. And that tension between letting go of this idea of myself as an economist, and the whole career that came with that, and saying, actually, there's something different than I need to explore. As it turned out, it ended up just being a big loop round, and I ended up coming back quite hard into behavioral economics. And so I was able to knit everything back together again.

MBS ([02:36](#)):

It was Marcel Proust who said, "The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new lands, but in seeing with new eyes." I think it's true for me, and perhaps for many of us, that we leave things behind and then return to them with new wisdom, new ambitions, the new eyes that Proust is talking about. But it takes some courage to take these voyages of discovery. How do you find that courage to step out into the unknown?



Caroline ([03:10](#)):

I think, whether or not the new identity is right or clear, or definitely what you're going to end up doing, I think painting a picture in your mind of what that might look like, because otherwise you're just stepping into the darkness and the unknown. But if you can say to yourself, what would a day look like if you were to play more to your strengths, put more of the things that make you joyful and energized at the center of your life. And if you allow yourself to paint a mental image of that, I think that's then something to move towards, even if you end up pivoting a gazillion times as I have in many ways.

MBS ([03:47](#)):

So what did it really mean to step away from being a successful consultant and partner at McKinsey? McKinsey is one of the big consulting firms, the most famous, the most storied. It's really the preeminent brand in management consulting. What did it take to step out of that and towards who she is today?

Caroline ([04:04](#)):

I was definitely ready to embrace a new adventure, a bit more of a sort of portfolio life with a few different pieces in it. And I remember being a little nervous of stepping outside the brand of a big firm like McKinsey.

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

A big brand. Yeah.

Caroline ([04:18](#)):

I remember thinking, who am I without... And so I actually, for a year before leaving, experimented with introducing myself, not as being a partner at McKinsey, but just, I'm Caroline Webb, I'm a leadership coach, or I'm an executive coach. And the world didn't end. So people still talk to me. So actually that was a very direct experiment that served me very well, I think.



MBS ([04:42](#)):

How did you come up with experiments? I mean, I'm a fan of this idea that you the path isn't obvious. You've got to kind of grope your way forward, and kind of experiments that tell you something, but I'm going to destroy your life in the enacting of it, are a great way to do that. I'm just curious to know maybe how you think about experiments, or even how you came up with them to go what am I testing here?

Caroline ([05:06](#)):

I think the trick is to look for the bit that feels sticky, that feels like there's a point of resistance. So in my case here, there was definitely a bit of financial fear of quitting a good job with a salary, and then stepping out and hanging out my own shingle and not having that security. But the other thing that was hard was that feeling of the loss of identity, which you've already said, is a big deal. And so I think the question that I try and ask myself is, well, what if I were not fearful about that? What would I do? And could I do that in a small way? So that was the let me introduce myself without saying I'm from McKinsey.

MBS ([05:42](#)):

Which is great. It strikes me that there's a kind of two levels at which you're experimenting. One is a surface level, which is almost like a what if I have a different technical designation or something. And then there are these deeper rhythms, and I think you might've hinted at it when you go, I've got some deep, deep grounding in growing up in a family that's not particularly affluent. So moving from the stability of a well paid, high profile, high status job is not just a technical thing. It's got some deeper roots in terms of how you see the world. How do you even become conscious of those deeper rhythms at play?

Caroline ([06:29](#)):

I think you become conscious by slowing down on noticing your discomfort and noticing where you get stuck. And I think also acknowledging that each of us



puts on different hats in our lives and wears different clothes, so to speak, in a metaphorical way. And again, it comes back to the self-awareness of noticing, oh, which piece of me am I showing up with now? And what does that tell me about how my identity might be shifting? Because I think all the research on personality shows that personality's much more malleable than we used to think about in psychological research. And so I think that there's some optimism to had from that. Just yes, you can evolve, you can grow. Likewise, neuroplasticity, the understanding that our brains can reorganize much more fluidly than we perhaps thought 20, 30 years ago. I think that's also a sense of possibility that emerges from that. So I think just noticing what feels good, what identity, what clothes feel good. Just thinking what would it take for me to wear those more?

MBS ([07:44](#)):

I love that. I'm, perhaps in a similar way, trying to identify as a writer. And I'm distinguishing between the fact that I am already an author because I've written books.

Caroline ([07:59](#)):

Incontrovertibly so. Yes.

MBS ([08:02](#)):

But I'm not quite sure yet that I'm a writer because the measure of an author is their output, but the measure of a writer is the rhythms of their life. Do you design your life around what it takes to be a writer? Spending time reading, spending time just writing words most days. And at the moment, I still cram in books around answering emails and running podcasts, and doing a whole bunch of other things. So I'm just wrestling with that identity thing at the moment, which is like, how do I experiment with being a writer and test out that identity?



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

Maybe there's a half a day a week when you try on that identity and notice what you like about it. And maybe you don't want to be a writer.

MBS ([08:43](#)):

Maybe, exactly.

Caroline ([08:43](#)):

Maybe think an author is just fine.

MBS ([08:47](#)):

That is one of the outcomes of this, which is I'm like, ah, it sounded really good. When I started my career, I wanted to be a coach, and then I really found out that I didn't want to be a coach. Coaching wasn't playing to my strengths. Yeah. Interesting. Hey, Caroline, tell me about the book you've chosen to read from.

Caroline ([09:02](#)):

The book I've chosen to read is *How Emotions Are Made* by Lisa Feldman Barrett.

MBS ([09:07](#)):

Lovely.

Caroline ([09:07](#)):

Who is a great hero of mine, and I'm excited to be sharing some of her work today.

MBS ([09:13](#)):

No, I've heard her on podcasts before on the Farnam Street Podcast, and she was just dynamite. I remember listening to that, and having a plane to catch and not being willing to get out of the car I was listening to the podcast in because it



was so, so good. So I'm so excited that you're the first person to bring her to the podcast.

Caroline ([09:32](#)):

Fantastic.

MBS ([09:33](#)):

How did you decide what pages to read?

Caroline ([09:36](#)):

Well, the book is her master work, it's really distilling years and years and years of research into what the brain is for, and how it makes sense for the world for us. So it's not a small topic. And I was determined to pick two pages from it because not only is it has been intellectually and professionally very influential for me, but it's also been very personally transformative for me. I reread it last year, 2021, and I really found it was transformative in how it helped me navigate an extremely tough period in my life.

([10:10](#)):

So I was determined to find two pages. And I've done my best to stitch together, and I've paraphrased in some places because it is neuroscience, but she's such a brilliant writer anyway, that I've just paraphrased in a few places where she's referring back to things that she said earlier in the book. And it's really sort of setting up the big idea of the book, or at least one of them. There are several big ideas. And the big idea of the book here that I'm talking about is the fact that emotions are created by our brain to make sense of the world around us.

MBS ([10:41](#)):

That's so great. Well, let me introduce you formally, Caroline Webb, author of *How to Have a Good Day*, reading from *How Emotions Are Made*. Over to You, Caroline.



Caroline ([10:53](#)):

"In every waking moment, you're faced with ambiguous, noisy information from eyes, ears, nose, and other sensory organs. Your brain uses your past experience to construct a hypothesis about what's going on, and compares it to the cacophony arriving from your senses. This lets your brain impose meaning on the noise, selecting what seems relevant and ignoring the rest." And she goes on to say that it's not just data from the outside world where your brain is trying to guess the meaning. It's also inside your body. "From your brain's perspective, your body is just another source of sensory input. Sensations from your heart and lungs, your metabolism, the changing temperature and so on, have no objective psychological meaning.

([11:40](#)):

If you feel an ache in your stomach while sitting at the dinner table, you might experience it as hunger. If flu season is just around the corner, you might experience that same ache as nausea. If you're a judge in a courtroom, you might experience the ache as a gut feeling that the defendant cannot be trusted. In a given moment, in a given context, your brain uses concepts from your past experience of similar situations to give meaning to internal sensations, as well as to external sensations from the world all simultaneously. So from an aching stomach, your brain can construct an instance of hunger, nausea, or mistrust. Depending on the context and your experience, your brain picks what it thinks is the best guess."

([12:26](#)):

And she gives a really fun example from her own life, which I love. "Back when I was in graduate school, a guy in my psychology program asked me out on a date. I didn't know him very well and was reluctant to go because, honestly, I wasn't particularly attracted to him. But I'd been cooped up too long in the lab that day, so I agreed. As we sat together in a coffee shop, to my surprise, I felt my face blush several times as we spoke. My stomach fluttered, and I started having trouble concentrating. Okay, I realized I was wrong. I am clearly attracted



to him. We parted now later after I agreed to go out with him again. And I headed home intrigued. I walked into my apartment, dropped my keys on the floor, threw up, and spent the next seven days in bed with the flu."

(13:18):

So her neural processes constructed a feeling of attraction from a flushing stomach and a flushing face. And that's going on all the time. And the conclusion here is this, "An emotion is your brain's creation of what your bodily sensations mean in relation to what's going on around you in the world. Philosophers have long proposed that your mind makes sense of your body in the world. From Rene Descartes in the 17th century to William James in the 19th, neuroscience now shows us how this process occurs in the brain to make an emotion on the spot. In summary, you're not a passive receiver of sensory input, but an active constructor of your emotions."

MBS (14:02):

I love that story. Although I do want to find out, did she keep dating him, or was it like, actually, I'm not attracted to you at all?

Caroline (14:09):

Yeah. No, I don't think she kept dating him.

MBS (14:12):

Beyond the dating story, Caroline, what's the note of truth in this for you?

Caroline (14:18):

Yeah. Well, once you know that your emotions are just your brain's best guess at trying to make sense of what's going on, both in what you're experiencing and perceiving from the outside world, but also what you're noticing in your body, and you know that there are multiple ways to interpret those signals, and your brain's just picking what it thinks is the most likely story, I think that's very powerful because it gives you a sense of agency and choice.



(14:44):

It allows you to say, huh, I feel, back to our conversation earlier on, I feel some discomfort. What does that mean? Does that mean I don't like what I'm doing? Or does it mean something else? What could be all the different stories that my brain might be trying out here? And it allows you the possibility of trying on a different story. And this has been well established as a technique in both therapy and in coaching, the idea of reappraisal. You look at a set of assumptions, and you say, well, what if they're not true? Let's just try on some different assumptions. Let's just lay out the facts more cleanly without any assumptions, and then let's see what comes out of that.

(15:26):

I mean, we know that that's tremendously powerful. And I've used that a lot in my work, and I've used that a lot with clients. But what this does is it starts to unpick that we know the neuroscience behind this now, and that starts to become very interesting. So she doesn't say that this is necessarily new knowledge, but it gives us so much more confidence in something that we might have always suspected, which is that... Well, I like the line from Hamlet, Act Two, Scene Two, "There is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so."

MBS (16:04):

[inaudible 00:16:04].

Caroline (16:03):

We've seen this in art and philosophy and literature over the years. Now we can see at a more granular molecular level what's going on in the brain. That's so interesting. So it's for real. Reality is a fiction, reality is [inaudible 00:16:16].



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

That Shakespeare blathering on about stuff, he actually got something right for once. It's one thing to understand that this power of you get to create the story, or get to try on different stories and see which ones actually serve you best. It's quite hard to do that in the moment. Because your emotion feels like it's true. Your judgments feel like they're true. And who cares about the facts? It's like you've got feelings and you've got opinions, and they feel like they define the truth of it. When often just-

Caroline ([16:51](#)):

And they do. I mean, they do. It's just that it happens to be one hypothesis. And I think you're right, I mean, for me, I think it's been the deepest life journey from a personal perspectives is this, from being in my 20s, and taking everything terribly seriously and personally, to loosening my attachment to this is definitely about this, and this is obviously me, I've done this.

([17:16](#)):

And the reason I say it's a life's journey is because last year I had to relearn this, and we often have to relearn things we already know when the context around us changes. My situation was that I'd made a big decision to reorganize my life, with my husband's support, to partner with my brother to really be present for my mom's last journey. So she was given a terminal diagnosis. We knew she was dying. We didn't know how long she was going to have. And about two and a half years into basically non-stop crisis and really so much stress and worry, I was feeling really exhausted. And I had this narrative in my mind, because I'm a very responsible person and I always do the maximum, and I was thinking, well, if I feel like I don't have the energy to do anything, then I'm lazy. I'm demotivated and lazy. So there was a sense of-

MBS ([18:22](#)):

And a bad child.



Caroline ([18:23](#)):

Right. Exactly. And what was interesting was that I was actually rereading this book, *How Emotions Are Made*. I was listening to it on audio, whereas previously I'd had it just in my office and had sort of read it in bits and pieces. And I listened to every single word. And somehow suddenly realized, oh-

MBS ([18:23](#)):

Oh wait.

Caroline ([18:44](#)):

... so I'm exhausted. My brain is telling me a story about the fact that I'm lazy. I'm actually just tired, really tired. And I know that sounds obvious because deep truths often sound obvious once you lay them out. But oh my goodness, it was like a weight lifted. And I could reconnect with what my body and what my mind needed. So it was really interesting to have a book that was important professionally and intellectually suddenly become so personal.

MBS ([19:15](#)):

Caroline, I'm wondering what you've learned about how you find those brief moments where you get a chance to re-author what's going on. Because for me, I think so much of the challenge is it just doesn't even occur to me that there's another story to be told and another way of framing what's going on. I just kind of plow on. And I feel like I'm probably missing clues and doorways and thresholds or exit ramps, whatever. Have you knowledge or insight around how you stay more attuned to understanding when you might want to choose to reframe the input?

Caroline ([19:59](#)):

I do, actually. I mean, one thing to say is that we don't want to reinvent or question everything all the time because this is actually the way that our brain navigates, see trillions of pieces of data at any given moment. We need to have



an interpretation or hypothesis, whether it's an emotional one or a non-emotional one. We need that. And if we questioned ourselves from moment to moment, it would be a disaster. We paralyze ourselves.

[\(20:28\)](#):

But I think it goes back to this, the fact that there is this interceptive set of data. So the internal sensations, and knowing what your tell is. So I mean, everybody's different. I will say actually this changes over time as well. My gut has become much more of a source of, oh, hello Caroline. This might be a moment. Historically it was usually sort of my face getting a bit frozen or sort of a tightness here.

[\(20:58\)](#):

So it takes a little bit of pausing and thinking, okay, well when I think about moments, well to this point about sticky moments, what do I notice in my body that might give me an early warning sign? And also, are there patterns in what tends to cause these situations where I opt for one story that, with in retrospect, might not have served me. Because we do have patterns in what tends to lead us down that. It might be, for me, whenever it's trying my very best to do something good, and someone thinks that I've been ill intended that is almost... I'm immediately put my hands on my stomach. Okay. Okay right. So what are different ways of thinking about this? What would be a different assumption? What could be a different story? So I think it-

MBS [\(21:48\)](#):

I meant to say this interview's been quite disappointing so far, Caroline. I mean, I was hoping for so much more than what you're actually giving me. But fine, we'll just carry on.

Caroline [\(21:57\)](#):

Oh my goodness. Yeah, exactly. Thank you. I'm breathing deeply. No, I mean, I don't think this is easy because it's below the level of our consciousness that this



process is happening. All you can do is know your patterns and be attentive to what your body is telling you, if that's the internal signals, and be attentive to what the external world tends to create in you. And just-

MBS ([21:57](#)):

Helpful.

Caroline ([22:22](#)):

... perhaps give a bit more space. It's made me so much humbler over the years. Just much more able to-

MBS ([22:30](#)):

What do you mean by humbler?

Caroline ([22:30](#)):

Mm?

MBS ([22:30](#)):

Because humbler is an interesting word with many meanings. What does it mean to you when you say I'm much more humble?

Caroline ([22:38](#)):

Well, I'm much more aware that my perception of reality is a simulation in my brain, and that it is mostly made up. That came out of neuroscience and psychology in the 1990s. In the visual cortex in the brain, 10% of the neurons are wired to take an input from the outside world. 90% are wired to make predictions to the rest of the brain. So mostly we're just creating a sense of our best guess about what we're seeing in front of us, rather than actually seeing what's in front of us. And that's true for all the senses.



[\(23:17\)](#):

So it does make you humble in the sense that you just say, okay, I thought I was sure that you said that I was stupid, but maybe I misheard. Or maybe you're having a bad day. Or maybe, or maybe, or maybe. And the more you practice it, then the easier it is to just loosen your grip on I'm right. I'm absolutely right. And what I've seen and experience is the objective truth. That's what I mean by humble.

MBS [\(23:48\)](#):

Thank you. Just reflecting on all you've said, and you've said so much in a condensed period of time, I'm just holding on here. But I think one of the things that occurs to me is you tell some of your stories, and about how, if you like triggered, if that's the right word around it, it feels like there's often a kind of deeper story that is true to your sense of identity, that different moments threaten. I'm just making this up, of course, Caroline, but if your deep story is I am responsible, one of the things that happens when you're not responsible and not reliable is that. I know for me, probably one of my deep stories is I am free. And it means anytime there's this challenge to my sense of autonomy, I mean, I'm somehow into a world of misery and making stuff up about what's really going on and what their intentions really are. So that's really powerful.

Caroline [\(24:45\)](#):

Yeah. And I think real maturity and humility comes from knowing those patterns in yourself. I mean, we all want to feel a sense of self-worth, and that includes autonomy, and that includes a feeling of agency and competence and so forth. So the things that I've mentioned, the things that you've mentioned, are quite universal, but there are certain expressions of them that we know in our own minds will be especially vivid and especially likely to cause those moments where we choose a story which takes us down a certain route that, in retrospect, we think maybe didn't serve as brilliantly as it might have.



MBS ([25:28](#)):

Your book has called How to Have a Good Day. But it's been out for, what, three years or four years now? Maybe even longer.

Caroline ([25:35](#)):

Maybe even longer. Yeah. In fairness, it took about 15 years to write.

MBS ([25:42](#)):

Well, look, I'm celebrating the fact that we're still talking about-

Caroline ([25:42](#)):

Thank you.

MBS ([25:45](#)):

... a book that came out five years ago.

Caroline ([25:45](#)):

I love it.

MBS ([25:46](#)):

Because most books vanish without trace, and your book is wonderful.

Caroline ([25:50](#)):

Thank you.

MBS ([25:51](#)):

And I also know that neuroscience is galloping along at a rapid pace. I'm curious to know what's been a kind of new learning or a shift in your thinking around what it takes to have a good day based on some of the new research that has emerged?



Caroline ([26:08](#)):

Well, actually, one of the reasons that I got to know Lisa Feldman Barrett is because she was tremendously kind to me. When I was writing *How to Have a Good Day*, I was desperately trying to stay abreast of neuroscience and psychology and behavioral economics. And it was quite a lot. I was reading a lot. And so I tried to make sure I had some advisors, people I could turn to and say, "Is this right? Does this?" Because also when you're trying to simplify science to make it accessible, it does really feel sometimes a little risky because you're taking out some complexity that is necessary. And so I really do feel that if you are going to step into the world of popular science, you need to have a good committee of advisors.

[\(26:51\)](#):

Now, she was not on my committee, but I'd seen her work. And so I emailed her and I said, "I'd love to talk through something with you." Which was, in particular, it was about stress and about the amygdala. And we always used to say, "Oh, the amygdala is the fear center of the brain." It is not at all. It is, if anything, it just sort of directs attention. It responds to anything that's novel, and that includes things that make us fearful, but actually it includes anything that generates a sense of relevance and salience for us.

[\(27:26\)](#):

And I thought, my goodness, I've got to get this absolutely right. She responded. She was willing to jump on a call, chat, which was incredibly generous and kind. And then, later on, we met in person and we compared notes about taking scientific ideas into the world. Obviously she has rather more than I do. And that kindness was just tremendous. And so I try to stay in touch with what's new. And I think she's a very good beacon. I just read everything that she says and does.



[\(28:04\)](#):

And I do think that, more and more, we just know that there's no particular area of the brain that does one specific thing. Every part of the brain is engaged in everything, and that is much more complex. It's less cool than being able to say, "Oh, the dorsal lateral prefrontal cortex does thus," but it doesn't because it's recruited and engaged with all sorts of different things. And so I think that that's the kind of learning that I'm trying to keep pushing forward in myself so that I can be a good translator of where science is going.

MBS [\(28:37\)](#):

The challenge with writing a book called *How to Have a Good Day* is that a lot of people go, "How's your day going, Caroline?"

Caroline [\(28:45\)](#):

Oh, yeah, yeah.

MBS [\(28:47\)](#):

I'm wondering what you find trickiest to navigate in the quest to have a good day.

Caroline [\(28:55\)](#):

Well, one of the reasons I picked this book is because, for me, staying steady, when I definitely do tune in to other people quite intensely, I think it helps me in my work as a coach. And it helps me when I'm on stage speaking to an audience. But I need to work myself at staying centered and steady. And actually, when I was still a management consultant, there was a big body of work that we were putting together on what it took to be a good leader and professional called centered leadership. And it all started then because I used to have colleagues come to me and say, "Are you centered today, Caroline? Are you centered?"



MBS ([29:39](#)):

Stop asking me that.

Caroline ([29:43](#)):

So yeah, I mean, I think that that is definitely the thing that I work on most. I think the other thing for me is I'm not a very routinized person. And so I have to be honest with myself about that. And I have to also acknowledge that I need to be careful with the rituals I do put into my life because they're going to take some effort and they've got to be worth it. So I have a few rituals that are really important to me. I have to choose them wisely.

MBS ([30:12](#)):

That's so helpful for me to hear, because I never set up a routine that I couldn't then hack. I spend my whole life hacking my own good intentions. And I'm like, it's so annoying. But it comes down to that kind of deeper narrative I have around I am free and I will be free. And my freedom won't be compromised, even if it's being compromised by me. I'm like, oh, no, it won't.

([30:37](#)):

Caroline, how do you sit with the paradox that you've just presented us with? Because here's one way of framing what you've told us. One is we're just making stuff up all the time. It's all fluid. You shouldn't totally trust what your brain is telling yourself, because when the brain says, "I'm the most important organ," you got to remember it's the brain telling you that. So it's like it's-

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

Very much so.

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

... slippery. And at the same time, this idea of being centered and present and calm is about a kind of deeper trust to yourself. It's a kind of this sort of sense of



calmness about who you are and how you are in the world. And to use a word you used right at the start of this conversation, there's a tension between those two things, or there could be. I'm wondering how you hold that tension.

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

I think about it a lot. I think it's wonderful that you've pulled it out. The way I resolve it in my mind is just to feel that what we can do, what I can do, is just be the best version of myself that I can be at any given moment. And to be kind to myself. Now, to be clear, I would say I have to work on that quite continuously. But to be kind to myself about the fact that, in a complex world, you're not always going to get things right, but just that guiding idea of just you do the best you can, you tread as lightly as you can, you hold your ideas as lightly as you can, and you show as much compassion and understanding for others as you can. Maybe what we're experiencing in our heads is a simulation, but that doesn't mean it isn't a wonderful life.

MBS ([32:24](#)):

That's right. And that you're not the hero of that simulation. Tell me what you've learned about being kind to yourself.

Caroline ([32:34](#)):

Well, I think quite a few people who know me would say, "Yeah, tell us, Caroline."

MBS ([32:41](#)):

We'll find that quite amusing. Yeah.

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

Yeah. No, I think of my personal mission in life as being of service to others and helping other people thrive. And I would say another lifelong thread has been trying to work on making sure that I put on my own oxygen mask. That



overused metaphor. It came to a head in 2003 actually, when I had a bit of a health crisis, which we would now all understand it was a post-viral syndrome. So I had a virus. It took a while to go away. Then it came back five years later. Great, fantastic. Thank you very much.

[\(33:26\)](#):

And that time it didn't go away, or at least I ended up with this long drift. Now this is what's happening for a lot of people with long COVID. And it's terribly debilitating, and it really changes your sense of how important your body is in your whole experience of life. And so that, for me, that 2003, 2004, totally reset my sense of how I needed to see myself as a whole integrated human where I needed to look after the sustainability of the organism, not just maximizing what I was doing there and then, but thinking about, well, long term, how do I make this all fit?

[\(34:05\)](#):

So I would say that there are times when I drift away from that, and then I come back to it. But it really was, it took a crisis to get there. And I really love it when I see people who are able to get to that understanding without having a crisis, because we all need to honor the need to look after ourselves physically and mentally in order that we can do good things for other people.

MBS [\(34:35\)](#):

I've been a virtual friend of Caroline now for quite a few years, but it's only recently that I made it to New York, and we met up in person. The coffee shop we went to closed early, so we had to go and get a cocktail, which of course was perfect. One of the things we discovered when we were chatting over a cocktail is that we both like dressing up. Now she's been to Burning Man many times, where people dress up in wonderful costumes. And I was the driving force behind a small group of friends that won the best dressed prize in the Canberra Times family fun run six years in a row. So it was fun to hear us talk about putting on different hats in our lives and wearing different clothes.



[\(35:24\)](#):

I mean, we were talking metaphorically in the interview, but now I'm thinking that's probably literal as well. I mean, we all have a uniform. We all get dressed in our uniform. I mean, for years, I had shirts that I would consider Box of Crayons shirts. They were long sleeved, roll up the sleeves. They'd have a pattern on them, often from Liberty in the UK. Now, I have shirts that I consider mbs.works shirts. They're more short-sleeved, vaguely Hawaiian, but not Hawaiian. And even as we speak, in fact, I'm dreaming up what my next uniform might be.

[\(36:02\)](#):

What if I started to wear a suit to work, even though work is working in my home office? What would it mean to be dressed up like that every day? What story would it mean that I was telling to myself? Think back to what your answers were from the intro. The intro where I asked you, what about your labels, both given by others and generated by yourself? How, I wonder, does your uniform both support and contradict those labels?

[\(36:36\)](#):

If you're interested in the podcast interview that we mentioned in the interview, you can find that at fs.blog. That's Shane's wonderful website and blog series. And you can listen to him interviewing Lisa Feldman Barrett. His podcast is worth listening to all the way through.

[\(36:54\)](#):

If you'd like other conversations that are similar to the one I had with Caroline, I've got two I might recommend for you. One, Amantha Imber. That interview is called *Make it Magical, Make It Meaningful*. And then Jenny Valentish, *How to Reinvent Yourself*. Both Amantha and Jenny, in fact, are Australia or based in Australia, so you're getting a good Antipodean recommendation.



[\(37:17\)](#):

If you'd like more of Caroline, and you should get more of Caroline, she's one of the loveliest smartest people I know, you can find information about books and coaching, courses and speaking, and a fun quiz as well at carolinewebb.co, carolinewebb.co. C-O. I think that just leaves me to say thank you for supporting the podcast, listening to the podcast, reviewing the podcast, giving it some stars, if you've done that. And particularly if you've liked an episode enough to recommend it to somebody else, the way this podcast spreads best is by word of mouth. And if you can help us with that, I am very grateful. You're awesome. You're doing great.