

CONFERENCES FOR WOMEN

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"Being Happy and How to Get There"

Moderator: Whitney Gray Wilkerson

Guests: Kathy Kinney and Cindy Ratzlaff

WHITNEY GRAY WILKERSON: Hello, everyone, and happy Tuesday. This is Whitney with the Conference for Women. Thanks for joining us for "Being Happy and How to Get There" with Cindy Ratzlaff and Kathy Kinney. I want to encourage you, if you are on Twitter, to follow along and tweet highlights @masswomen or @texaswomen.

Cindy and Kathy, thanks so much for joining us.

KATHY KINNEY: Uh-huh. You're welcome.

CINDY RATZLAFF: It's our pleasure.

KK: Glad to be here.

WGW: So a little bit about Cindy. She was named to the "Forbes" 20 Best Branded Women on Twitter list, and "Forbes Women" called her one of the most influential women on entrepreneurship. She's a contributor to "Business Insider" where she writes on social media marketing strategy, and her essays have appeared on Oprah.com, CNN.com.

As vice-president of brand marketing at Rodale she pioneered a marketing methodology called the Marketing 360 which is now widely emulated throughout the industry. Her firm, Brand New, Brand You, specializes in digital messaging and content marketing through social media. And along with Kathy she's co-authored two best-selling books on happiness and boundaries, Queen of Your Own Life, and the newly released Queenisms.

And Cindy, if people want to follow along with you on social media, how do they best do that?

CR: The best way is at Twitter @brandyou, or on Facebook at Cindy Ratzlaff, Brand New, Brand You.

Either one is great. I'm on Twitter nonstop.

WGW: And Kathy, what about you? I'll read a little bit of your bio in just a second, but if people are interested in following you, what's the best way to do that?

KK: You know, we post every day on Facebook, Queen of Your Own Life, so that's probably the best. I think we have little Queenisms every day we put up.

WGW: Kathy is best known for her iconic role as Mimi on the ABC hit TV series "The Drew Carey Show." She has appeared in many movies and dozens of TV shows such as "Seinfeld," "Whose Line Is It Anyway," "My Name Is Earl," and "The Secret Life of the American Teenager."

As I mentioned, along with Cindy she's a co-author of two best-selling books, Queen of Your Own Life and Queenisms. She's also the star and co-producer of the multi-award-winning website MrsP.com which promotes literacy and the joy of reading for children.

So Kathy and Cindy, welcome.

KK: Thank you.

CR: Thank you. It's so much fun to listen to someone talk about Kathy, because I've known her for decades and I'm still astonished by what she's accomplished every day, so that was a lot of fun for me.

KK: That's funny because I felt the same way. I was thinking, that's actually the point of what we're going to talk about. I mean, I listened, Whitney, to what what you were saying about Cindy and I was, like, she's so cool. She's so smart. She's done so much, you know. But when you know the real person, it's not that we're not both smart, right, and competent and brilliant and courageous and everything, it's just that when you are looking from the outside in, or outside -- the inside of you to the outside of someone else, it's -- you know, it's a great myth, but I'm going to let Cindy talk about that.

CR: That's a great lead-in. We want to talk about happiness not being a destination but really being a series of small choices that we make every day.

For example, we tell ourselves these tall tales, or

these myths, these untrue stories about ourselves every day. We tell ourselves I'll be happy if. You know, I'll be happy if I have a better job, if I'm thinner, if I have a better relationship, if I make more money, if I had big boobs, frankly, if I were prettier, younger, blonder. Whatever it is that you think is going to make you happy. We're here to say that's not the case.

We are so ashamed, on the whole, of being ourselves that we begin to think that we're not enough. So those I'll be happy ifs run hand in hand with the would have, should have, could have of regret. So there's a shame, and then there's regret. And the regret of would have, should have, could have is about perceived losses that you might have had in the past. And it's also about comparing ourselves to other people. Because if we're comparing ourselves to other people, we are never going to be happy. You know, what we see from the outside on other people's lives is almost always a work of fiction. Everybody is carrying a burden, whether we can see it or not. So when we think their lives are perfect, we are mistaken and we are telling ourselves untrue stories.

KK: I'm thinking about years and years ago, I went to an audition. It was when I first started out acting and I was just terrified all the time. But I went to this huge audition and I was -- I knew that the character had to be naked in the jungle with just a couple of well-placed leaves. And the thought of being naked in the jungle with a few placed leaves just freaked me out. I totally blew that audition, and that's one of my should have, could have, would have. I was like, if I just had not been so frightened, I could have had that role and I could have had a different career.

And the truth is that I don't want a different career. I didn't want to be naked in the jungle with a couple of bamboo leaves across my hoo-ha. You know, I'm really happy with the career that I have and it's the career that I'm supposed to have.

You know, I had someone come to me one time and say you have done two movies with Robert DeNiro. What could possibly be wrong in your life? And I thought, are you insane? That's what I was saying before. If you are on the -- you are going from your insides looking to my outsides, of course everything is going to be

brilliant. Oh, she's done two movies with Robert DeNiro. But the truth is, I'm still just who I am.

I'm a woman what has come from a place of great low self-esteem, someone who experiences fear and anxiety about moving through my life, and these are things that I've had to work on. And the truth is that we're all more alike than we are different.

And what do I get and what do we all get from telling ourselves these tall tales or these myths? Well, we don't have to do anything. If you are telling yourself this story, the fear and the anxiety that you create just stops you cold. You know, if I say oh, I'll never be a brilliant baker like Martha Stewart, you know, why would I even want to try? I keep myself down by telling myself these stories.

And where do they come from? Possibly things that other people told me. Your family, your friends, or things -- ideas that you get from the media that if you are not blonde and, you know, curvy and 21 years old, that you are not good enough.

And so the thing that I think is these are just sort of lies that we tell ourselves and it's like keeping ourselves in a straightjacket. And really, for me, I just got so fed up with that fear and living like that that I had to make a change. In the Midwest we call it that it's time to -- and I've cleaned this up -- poop or get off the pot. You just have to make your decision that you don't want to live that way anymore, because it's just you in a bad habit trying to control yourself, when really it's all about living the adventure.

So the things that I used to tell myself, I wouldn't let a stranger say those things to me so I needed to learn to stop the negative talk. And it's easy to do it. It just takes a little practice.

CR: So we wanted to talk very specifically about how do you stop that negative self-talk, because this is one of the hardest things for people to do once they fall into this habit. We have a couple of easy tools that we want to share with you.

The first one is learn how to reboot your thinking. Now, whether it's first thing in the morning or last thing at night, many of us have these negative thoughts

that are rolling around in our heads like a movie loop. And we can think of millions of ways in which we could have done something different or something more, but we have a lot of trouble listing all the good things about ourselves.

So for me, it's morning when that loop starts, and here's what I do. When my eyes first pop open and that list of would have, should have, could have starts to drag me to the dark side, I do not allow myself to get out of bed until I reboot my thinking. I lay there, I take a deep breath, and I start a new list of truths about who I am.

You know, I start by saying I'm brave. I'm brave enough. I'm brave enough to get out of bed today. I'm brave enough to live my life. I'm a woman who is kind, loving, intelligent, worthy. I'm a lifelong learner, I'm curious. And pretty soon I'm able to really make that list long. I'm willing to live the adventure that is my life. Now I let myself get out of bed. Now I'm ready to go out and have that adventure, and the would have, should have, could have list that I woke up with has been rebooted.

So that's my first tip, and Kathy is going to talk to you about our second one.

KK: I am, because you know, it seems so natural to -- that voice, that loop that Cindy was talking about that's in my head to say oh, you are so stupid. You're fat. You're not funny. You're not -- all the nots. You are not this, you are not that, blah, blah, but that's a little loop that runs in my head, or I should say ran in my head, and it seemed very comfortable.

But for me to say I'm brave, I'm kind, I'm smart, I'm funny, I'm a good friend, I'm an intelligent woman, I'm intuitive, that makes me go ooh, because it seems so uncomfortable. And again, it's that Midwest thing about tooting your own horn. But it's okay, because these are the truth. These are the truth. So learning to break that habit of being comfortable with those negative voices and just hearing the bald-face truth about what kind of really wonderful woman you are, that takes just a little bit of practice.

So you reboot in the morning before you even get out of bed and you try and set that track, the new loop. So

what do you do during the day to keep that going?

We're big about affirmations here. We love our affirmations. For years I used my imagination to torment myself. It's that classic, I've got a headache, it must be a brain tumor. I stubbed my toe, it's painful, oh, it's cancer. Whatever. I could use my imagination to go right from zero to 60 and have it be a major drama.

Now I like to use my imagination to help heal myself, and how that works is affirmations. So sometimes I will mutter an affirmation to myself: Everything is going to be all right. Everything is going to be all right. Cindy loves to say this: It's not like we're doing brain surgery. What we do is what we do, and if we make a mistake, it's fine. It's fine. Everything is going to be all right.

My problem is perfectionism. You know, I was an only child, I still am, and my parents -- you know, my father died when I was 15. And my mother was nervous and frightened and she relied on me a lot, and I didn't know any better. And then everyone began to rely on me and I believed that I had to be perfect. And even now, I struggle with that.

And in that perfectionism, it's that Martha Stewart thing that I was talking about before. Well, I'll never be as good a baker, chef, cook, housekeeper as Martha Stewart. And I can whirl around and around and around in my head until all of a sudden, I can't even move. My fear keeps me from moving forward.

What I need to do is be vigilant. I have to be vigilant about the language that's in my head, the things that I say to myself and how to stop that. And one of the things we use is affirmations. Sometimes I print them on a card and put them on the mirrors that I look in most. Sometimes I just mutter them over and over in my head when I have some free time and I feel the negative loop starting to spin out.

For me, it's I forgive you. I forgive you for thinking you need to know everything. And that's just the classic. You don't have to know everything, and I forgive you for thinking you should. Because I think I'm supposed to know everything. Absolutely everything. And sometimes I just have to say to myself, I want you to know that you are enough just the

way you are.

Now, does that sound looney? A little. But you know what? It works. These are tried and true tools that we have used and that work for us on a daily basis. And the more you do it, the better it gets, the easier it gets.

CR: It's so true. You know, it's not that I don't hear negative thoughts anymore in my head, it's just that it's easier for me to recognize that negative language and pause and take a break and reframe it. So whenever I hear something negative going on in my head, something I'm saying to myself, I stop and I say no, that is not the truth. Here is the truth, and I say it out loud. I need to say it out loud to myself. And I know that there are people that think I'm a crazy woman because I'm talking to myself on the street, but it's better for me if they think I'm crazy and I'm reframing that negative language than that I don't.

So now let's talk about you have reframed your own negative thinking about how to take care of yourselves, but what about when others are involved? You know, you cannot control the thinking that comes through your front door, you know, whether it's metaphorical or really. Sometimes that negative thinking lives right in your own home. Sometimes it's in the cubicle next door.

I've come to realize that I'm the least happy when I'm personally not crystal clear about what it is I can and cannot do, what I want and don't want to do, and when I don't communicate that clearly to myself or to others. That's why our final point here is that it's so important to learn to set strong boundaries.

You know, boundaries is just really another word for telling the truth. If you say yes to everyone, you're almost always saying no to yourself. So we build in this pause. We like to recommend pausing all the time before committing to things, and here's why.

We developed this because I'm personally a serial yes-sayer. When someone asks me to do something, I'm just -- yes is already on my lips. And it's mostly because I want them to like me. I don't want them to think I can't be relied upon. I want to be the person who saves the day. But the truth is if I say yes to everyone, I'm going to disappoint someone, or I'm

certainly going to deplete and disappoint myself.

So now the tool for me is that I pause. Any time anyone asks me to do something, I say let me get back to you. I'm going to have to check my schedule. And then I'm able to pause and ask myself these questions: Am I able to do this? Do I want to do this? And am I willing to do this? And if the answer to those questions is yes, I'll get back to this person and say yes, I'd be glad to do that. But if the answer to any of these things is no, I have to respectfully decline. And that's how I set boundaries for myself as a recovering yes-sayer, as a serial people-pleaser. I just have to do that for myself.

Some day I hope that I will be able to say no and yes exactly when I need it. But for now, I have to say to myself I need a pause so I can think, and that's what I do. That's the tool that I use and I hope it's helpful for you.

KK: Because it's so true that, you know, I can admit that I want everybody to like me, too, and it's just not possible. And it really isn't any of my business what other people think of me. But I also am one of these -- my perfectionism comes from thinking that I'm the only one who can do it right, which is so -- not only is that not true, but that takes away from everyone else's experience of learning how to live their life if I'm always trying to pick up all the loose ends and make it work.

And because it is so uncomfortable to learn to take care of yourself in the beginning, if you've got a good friend like Cindy and I, even though we live on opposite sides of the United States, we do this thing called bookending. If Cindy has some big yes or no that she needs to make in business, she'll call me up and she'll say, I've got to do this and here's what I think I should say and we talk it through. And then she'll say okay, I'm going to call them or go to the meeting or send them the e-mail, and I say okay, talk to you when you are done.

Then she'll call me or Skype me and we go through it again. Here's what I said, and I'll say that sounds good. It sounds to me like you really set a strong boundary, you have done everything you can, or if I think she should have done a little more, maybe a little more, and that's called bookending. It just

helps you to make a little bit calmer these choices of saying yes and no. It helps to have a good agenda-free friend.

CR: You know, it's really helpful for me if I have to do something that's particularly difficult, if I have to tell someone, in particular in business, that I cannot or will not do something, it stresses me out a lot. And sometimes I'll call Kathy and I'll tell her what I said and she'll say you know, it sounds to me like you have a little cleaning up to do because you may not have been as clear as you wanted to be. If I were that person, I might be left with the impression that maybe you would still do it.

I'll say great feedback. I have to clean that up. So I'll call the person back and say I just wanted to make sure that we're both on the same page about what I said and that we all understand what's going to happen next. And sure enough, most often there will be that moment where there was a little grey area and my calling back to clean it up or clear it up was an excellent strategy and helped me have a better business relationship with this person because of my clarity.

Now, this bookending thing also works in personal relationships. And in fact, sometimes it's the family relationships that are the messiest.

KK: Uh-huh.

CR: So having a friend that you can call and go all right. This happened. I'm really stressed out. Because nobody can push your buttons like family members. Then practice what you are going to say. Hang up, say what you need to say with love. Remember, there's no need to leave bodies, especially in a familial situation. And then call your partner back up, like I call Kathy, and I tell her what I said and she'll tell me okay, now your job is to say nothing and let that person absorb it and deal with it because you have set a good, strong boundary.

So having that support as you learn to say yes or no is truly invaluable.

KK: Because it's true, and you want to do it with someone who is agenda-free. That's the important thing. And also what Cindy said about leaving no bodies, it's so true. It takes practice to learn how

to say yes and no. And of course, you feel guilty. They feel angry because this is something you've never done before.

But you know, every year we try to -- Cindy and I try to pick a word or a couple of words that are important to us through the year, and this year it was clarity and honesty. We want to be clear and honest about what's going on. And if you live a life like that, then that's a life free of resentment because resentment is -- resentment towards yourself for saying yes to do something when you really didn't have the time to do it, or resentment towards someone else when you feel like they made you do something. That's what starts those loops in my head, oh, you are so stupid. Why did you -- blah, blah, blah, that grumbly, awful, awful series of negative words.

So by being clear about what I want, honest about what I want with myself and other people that I'm talking to, it keeps my life clean. It keeps the air moving. It makes it seem more like the kind of adventure that I want my life to be rather than just living in this dark cave of negativity.

CR: So with those three simple tools, we're able to foster more happiness in our lives. So we reboot negative thinking first thing in the morning or last thing at night. We practice affirmations whenever that stuff pops up in our heads. And we set strong boundaries and we bookend when we need help doing it. Just those few tools have increased the way that we feel about -- you know, the happiness that we feel in our lives way more than threefold.

So we offer those to you. We think they have been helpful for us, and we hope they are helpful for you.

KK: We have called them tried and true.

WGW: Cindy and Kathy, thank you for your tried and true happiness tips.

And thanks so much for joining us again for everybody who is following us on Twitter @masswomen or @texaswomen.

Cindy can be found @brandyou, and Kathy on your Facebook page, and remind us how they can find that.

KK: It's Queen of Your Own Life.

CR: Facebook.com/Queen of Your Own Life.

KK: You know, I just want to say that if any of the things that we said rang true for you, that you need to know that you're not alone. Because we post these Queenisms, these jolts of inspiration every day on Facebook. And we actually have over 25,000 women follow us every day because we are all more alike than different.

These are the topics that come up and that we talk about. The Queenisms are just jolts of inspiration, because we know that everybody is as busy as we are, so you want something that you can read that will change your thinking just for a moment but follow you through the day. So come and visit us at Facebook.

CR: Let us know that you are there. We love to talk to people on Facebook. We talk to every person who leaves us a comment.

KK: Of course, we're also on Twitter and Pinterest, and then we do have our own website, queenofyourownlife.com. But we're posting every day on Facebook our little Queenisms.

So I'm sorry, Whitney, I probably interrupted you. Do you think anyone has any questions for us?

WGW: No. What I was just going to say is if someone listening to the call wanted to get off the teleclass and do something instantly to increase their happiness, it sounds like a great way to do that would be jump on Facebook, see what you guys have posted today and go there from there.

KK: Definitely, because we posted something special.

CR: So go on over to Facebook and see what we posted for the Conference for Women.

WGW: Fantastic. Thanks so much for joining us, everybody, and thank you so much, Cindy and Kathy.

KK: You're welcome. Thanks, Whitney.

CR: Thank you.