

## Transcript

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You're listening to My Simplified Life Podcast and this is episode number 243. Welcome to the My Simplified Life Podcast, a place where you will learn that your past and even your present don't define your future. Regardless of what stage of life you're in, I want you to feel inspired and encouraged to pursue your dreams, simplify your life, and start taking action. I'm your host, Michelle Glogovac, author of How to Get on Podcasts, the podcast matchmaker.

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and CEO and founder of the MLG Collective. I'm excited to share my stories and life lessons with you while taking you on my own journey. This is my simplified life. Hey friends, welcome back to another episode. I'm your host, Michelle Glogovac. I am so thrilled to get to introduce you to my friend, James Rhee. I met James two months ago when we were both in New York.

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We were both selected as Summer Reads by Zibby Owens and invited to an Authors Only event in New York City. And I walked up to him and introduced myself and we hit it off instantly. Come to find out he's written this book called Red Helicopter and it is amazing. I devoured it on my flight back home to California because it's all about kindness and math. And those two things might seem like

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They don't go together much. And how do you write a book about kindness and math? And yet James did it. And he did it beautifully by using his own life as the example. I loved getting to read James's journey and it feels as he'll tell you, it feels like it's written for a movie. The events of this journey seem unlikely. And yet since it's real life, it brings a happiness to you

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that this is happening in our world today, that people are kind, that they look out for one another, that out there, there is someone who was CEO of a company and practiced this kindness and then saw the kindness be reciprocated. And it was reciprocated tenfold. It is such a great story. And I absolutely adore James, his words, and how he makes everything make sense.

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because we already know what we know, and yet so often we forget that we know certain things already. He's going to put this so much more eloquently than I just did, but I'm so thrilled to get to share my conversation with you, with James, and that we got to reconnect two months later, and bring more awareness to the fact that we just need to be kind. It's okay to be kind. It's cool to be kind. We need to be kinder to one another.

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to ourselves, and then you'll see what kind of benefits come from simple acts of kindness, as James will share.

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Hi, James. Michelle, hello. Hello to Michelle's friends too. I'm so happy we get to talk again in person. It's not the first time we've gotten to talk in person, which is actually rare for me. A lot of my guests, I don't get to meet in person, but we were lucky enough two months ago to randomly meet, random, not random, right? Yeah, we met in New York at Zibby Owens.

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lunch reception celebrating the fact that both of our books were selected by her for her summer reads, right? Yes. And funny enough, both of our books would not be normal beach summer reads. No, but they kind of are in their own little way. And that was sort of the randomness of all of it. We didn't even know, right? We were just sort of standing there eating finger foods. Can you introduce yourself to everyone before we dive in even deeper, please? Sure. I'm James Rhee.

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I live in Boston. I'm married. I have three kids. And I've had a bit of a on the surface topsy turvy life, but most of it has just been dedicated to learning and investing in people. And so I've been a high school teacher. I've been a private equity investor. I've run a company. And I'm now the author of a book called Red Helicopter, which is more than just a book. It's sort of a building a like a branded philosophy about.

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maybe the way that we should live and work. I love it. I started reading it the moment I got on the plane and I was over halfway done by the time I landed back in California. It is, it's so beautifully written. It's something that teaches and yet it's also something that brings emotion and feeling and you bring kindness and math together. That's your thing. And I love it because you are...

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You're a genius in my mind. We've met, we've talked. You're a very brilliant individual and you have so much compassion and really love for other people. And that's what's brought you to where you are today and how you were able to bring this book to life to help teach all of us. And Lord knows we need it right now more than ever with kindness. Can you share with everyone, like what is the red helicopter? It's the best story ever, but.

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How does that come into play? Yeah, the red helicopter is a metaphor for a lot of things. And on purpose, the cover doesn't have an actual red helicopter because I'm asking everyone else to have their own red helicopter. But for me, it was a literal red helicopter. It symbolizes a lot. I was five in the 70s in public school, Long Island. Parents were struggling as immigrants.

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didn't know the customs. Life wasn't easy in the rehousehold in 1976. Yeah, I came home from school with a toy red helicopter and then there was a barrage of what went wrong. Like it wasn't what was right. It was what's wrong. You took it from school. No, I did not. We didn't know the US customs. Every kindergartner gives toys at public school. You'll never fit in. No, Mom, Dad, you didn't mess up this time. I'm the only one who got

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Why don't you know why the family gave it to you? You are not so smart five year old. I'm like that, I'm five. I don't know why. So it's a lot of wrong. And just like as you get older, you think things that are clearly right, you second guess yourself. I was being second guessed, but I was

so confident. I just said, what? Like he, I didn't know. And it turned out I got it because I'd been sharing half of my meticulously.

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prepared lunch for my mom every day, I would give half my sandwich away because there was a boy who didn't have food. And his dad came in to give me a red helicopter as a thank you. And I didn't really put the two together, that that was a reward for what I had done. I just was like, he didn't have food. I gave it to him. And I didn't know also that the reason why he didn't have food was that his family was going through a hard time. His mom had died.

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five-year-old friend's mom had died that summer, unbeknownst to me. But my parents sleuthed all of this out, and they sort of asked me, why are you, instead of saying, we're so proud of you for doing this thing, my dad, who was a little bit Socratic, said, why are you giving away half of your lunch? That your mommy prepares every day, and was again, something was cast and wrong. And I was very confident. I just said, what? I had food. He didn't.

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What's the problem? And it sounds so simple, but I think as we get older, and I think we can all agree that these simple things get very complicated. I think that after learning about economics and civics and philosophy and being in private equity as a, quote, educated adult, I could probably give you 50 reasons why that boy didn't deserve half that lunch and justify it. And so for me, it's been a symbol of a guiding light. I just.

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I don't want to live like that. Like I, I, I, and I want to be in the world of adulthood and humanity and like, be able to use financial capital, intellectual capital, whatever, and to improve things for people. And it's just been a guiding light to just keep things just like a search for truth in its simplicity. And I never wanted to not be the guy that would instinctively share his lunch. I, I, and then solve problems after.

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So that's it. And I'm asking people in the book metaphorically, like I think it's a book ultimately about finding your own truth, isn't it? I think that's sort of why I call it Red Helicopter. And before we start recording, you and I were just talking about the state of our world, especially our country right now. And living in California, we have free lunches and free breakfast for every child that goes to school. And in other states, they look down upon it, which is really interesting.

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You know, seeing as you basically were doing this 40 years ago of, I'm going to share my lunch because someone didn't have it. And our state is saying, everybody's going to get lunch no matter what. And we want to make sure that no one is looked down upon for not being able to have a lunch. And so we're just going to give it to everybody. And yet there are people out there who still don't understand that that's a nice thing to do. It's a kind thing to do.

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And it's still, it's baffling that here we are as adults and we don't get it still. Yeah, we're teaching wrong. That's one of the reasons why I'm teaching at some of the business schools and teaching in the boardrooms. We have a warped view of what leadership is. The reason why, and I know you and I have chatted about kindness, we'll get into it in more detail, but when you are generous and kind and compassionate, it actually comes from a place of confidence and calm.

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To be kind and compassionate, that means it's the opposite of being weak. It actually comes from confidence that you're living a life of abundance, that you're not hoarding, you're not in fear, you're not racing to the grocery store before a hurricane and taking all of the canned foods. When you are kind, you are confident in yourself, in the system in which you live.

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You're confident on your quote balance sheet of your social relationships that people will be kind to you and need to. It's a neurological state of mind too, which is the same state of mind that why you go to yoga or meditate, you're not triggered, you're not living in fear. And so great leaders are in that state where they're not fearful.

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like they're creating an environment where people can also live like that and operate like that. And then it shouldn't surprise anyone that when your brain's in that state, you're actually using the best parts of your brain. The one, the parts of the brain that makes us most distinct as a species, it allows you to be creative and make mistakes and ask questions and push the boundaries of what you're doing at work and thinking of new things.

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That's called really good leadership, but we don't teach it that way. How did you learn all this? Because you're saying these and I'm like, yes, this makes so much sense and it's so beautiful. And yes, I totally agree with it. So where does this come from? I'm so curious, where does James get these words that come out that I'm like, oh, yes, that makes sense. What did you study to get to this place?

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Well, I think the first part was that I'm the son of two people who survived a war, immigrated here, had that sort of humility to know that there are very few things that are constant and always and perpetuals, that they started from scratch. And my mom was a nurse, my dad was a pediatrician. They cared for people. That's number one. Number two, what I studied, I've always just been curious about.

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people. And, you know, like it's so in college, I studied philosophy and economics and history and literature and poetry. Like it's that's how people expressed economics and numbers. Back then, there were no Excel spreadsheets. There was no economics. Economics is humanities. It's not finance. People forget that. And then, you know, I taught high school. So I generally try to learn something and then apply it. So then I ran a dorm coached

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sports. I'm like, can I lead 60 15 year olds as a 22 year old? Then I went to law school. So that's a whole system to write about how people behave. And then you know, I spent and I still am a lot of years managing a lot of money owning a lot of companies in private equity, which is very distinct from the hedge fund. It was real people, real jobs, real companies. And then I'm studying Oh, this is how accounting

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You have to know accounting and finance and org theory and this people spend time at work. Like this is, and then, um, yeah. So that's, and I study a lot of cog, psi, psych neuroscience, which is fundamentally, you know, physiologically what drives our behavior. It's all of these different disciplines. I've been in a lot of different, different disciplines. And at the same time, I've always sort of.

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applied them. It hasn't been purely theoretical. I learned something and I'm like, let me test it. And then I think it's also just the way I've been raised. I have a lot of different friends. I've lived in a lot of different countries. My dinner party is like the United Colors of Benetton. I just have a lot of different friends. I'm in all these different worlds. Think about it. I teach at MIT. I chair entrepreneurship at Howard. I'm a...

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You can't see me, I don't think, your audience, but I'm this Korean American guy. My wife's white. My kids are biracial. So I just, I find a commonality in humanity and, um, I don't know. That's, it's all of these things. It's been life experience, but also like what I read and study. And I think it's all bonded by a love of humanity, realistic about humanity. We have goods and bad impulses. And then.

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I think you know this like really deep down, like I am a creative, like I'm a musician. I mean, like literally a musician, but like I am a creative and I lost sight of that for a while at times in my private equity career. But like, I like creating things in worlds that make people better or happier. That's what I tend to do. And that's what I'm doing now. And that's what Red Helicopter, everything I'm doing about Red Helicopter is that.

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Let's talk about the company that you go in and run in the book, because I fell in love with it. I had never heard of the company. Of course, I'm a white woman, so I'm really not their demographic. But reading about it, I went and I had to Google, I need to find out more about this

company and the people. And I fell in love with Cherry. I hope that Cherry listens to shows that you are on so we can...

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give her a shout out. But walk everybody through that and your pleaded khakis. Yeah, I think it's like a, it's a literal story. So I wrote in the prelude that believe it or not, this all actually happened because it sounds fantastical, right? And the book in many ways is, for those who don't understand that part, it reads like a fiction almost, right? It's like, what? Like what happened? But no, it actually really happened. I was in my early forties and

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It's metaphorically like sort of the life I think many of us lead and things were fine, but there's a little bit of cognitive dissonance, a little bit of disillusionment, a little bit of like worry for my children. That's my parents were older. My dad was dying. And then all of this was happening. I'm like, it's like Jean Valjean and Les Mis. It's like, who am I? Like, what am I, what am I doing? Cause I'm staring mortality down. I'm, I'm, and I'm just.

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things are dying. The book is a lot about death, too, and loss. And then there's this company that was called, is called Ashley Stewart, which most people don't know of, if you're not a woman plus size in black, but it is one of the largest businesses employing and serving that segment of black women in this country. It's a historically very significant company. But that

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story of these women is not like that gets told a lot on media, right? You don't see it. And it bothered me. I knew why as a financier, why that company was struggling. You can imagine metaphorically, these women are not, life's not made easy for these women. And to think that a company that services and employs these women, it was not made easy. And I knew too much at that

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And I didn't like, I just didn't like it. Like, I didn't like it. And now in retrospect, I also knew why, what was drawing me to it was that these women reminded me of my mom. I mean, over the course of the book, what happens, there's an awakening in me and saying, I got to really relive my childhood as a CEO of this company, because these women were like my mom. Like, they were leaders, quietly leading.

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wearing 20 hats, raising their kids, really investing in the future for their kids, getting no credit, not asking for credit. My mom was like that. But these women, like a lot of people are, and a lot of women, they're made to feel small, and I don't like it. That's the only time you'll see me sort of like, like the glint in my eye. I don't like watching people being made to feel small. You can make me feel small, it's fine, but like when I see like a

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all of like, like it's imbalanced negotiating leverage, and people take advantage of it. I don't like it. And I'm like, that's not that's like, feckless. Yeah. Like, and so all of these things, the company is about to go away. And then all those reasons, I sort of raised my hand and said, I don't think this is okay. I don't think it's right. And people you can imagine private equity, New York, Boston.

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people kind of laughing at me and saying, oh, really? It's not okay? I'm like, well, no. And you didn't teach high school after college. Like that's not, I'm not driven to be a billionaire. I don't want my ring kissed. Like I, and so I left that world. It's like, my parents were horrified, but like I, and my wife was supportive, but also like, hmm. So I ripped up that life that my parents wanted me to create and I was.

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this chairman CEO of a twice bankrupt failed business serving plus size black women in urban areas across the country. I basically just was off the radar. I left. In a lot of ways, part of me died. I left. That identity that some of the things that brought me safety and comfort and pride, they died. What I found was that I was a very, very, very, very, very, very, very, very, very,

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And they helped me find this. I refound that red helicopter boy, like the one that didn't need external validation that was really happy. In the things that are important, you know, and I learned all of these things, relearned all these things in time, um, for both of my parents to die. And I made a bunch of really new and incredible friends that really loved me. For me.

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And at the same time was able to apply all the things I learned that I didn't know as a kid like private equity law economics like all the things I teach at MIT and Howard I applied all those things in a Very different way that enabled this company to really thrive Because the women were thriving Right and we proved to the world, you know, we have the right to say to the whole world

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laughed at us and but she won. Like we, we, we beat them. And so these days when people are saying it's not possible, you can't. And that's why I wrote the book now and why I did the Ted talk a couple of years ago, cause I think it's time. Like I sort of, sort of tightened my belt up and said, I think that it's time for me to say a few things and say, no, I can't let you say it's not possible.

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We did it. You had an Asian guy with no CEO experience partnered with millions of black women across this country, twice bankrupt business. Look what we did without money, by the way. We made a lot of money, but it started with social capital and all the things that you teach your kids. We started with that. And it brought the country together. Like, you know.

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A lot of white women came to support us, like became 40% of our online business. And so we bonded people on humanity. And I think the reason why the book is, it's a good year for it is that the country's grappling with all of that now and saying, is there a way for this? And I'm saying, yeah, like I get it. It wasn't at the scale of a country, but do you see the metaphor? Like, look what we did. And

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We started with two simple things. It sounds like egregiously simple, like the red helicopter story. But I was like, I asked everyone, hi, my name is James. I know I'm wearing pleated khakis. I've never done this. I get it, I'm not a woman. I'm not black. I'm not anything. But I was like, can we just start with the basics? And can you be kind? And can you be mathematically honest? Because if we can't have those two things,

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then we have no shot. Those two things never lie. They, kindness transcends, you know what kindness is. You see it, you just know it. And math is math. Math is a discovered science. Math is not controlled by people. And so I was asking people, and can you sort of point to a higher order of humanity and math? In a very non...

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faith-based, very secular way. Those are very secular. Right, right.

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That's what I asked. And it transcended race and faith and people really rallied to it. It was really the women, as in, you know this Michelle, the book is like, it's me. There were a lot of times I wanted to turn away and go home and take the easier path. And this book, the protagonists, they're all women. It's my wife, it's Cherry, it's Gina, and it's my mother. And they were real leaders in my life.

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And I'm sort of showcasing what real leadership is through them. And the overarching theme too, I believe that you asking them for kindness and mathematical honesty, it came because you were very kind. You took the time to listen. You went and you visited all of these stores. That's how you connected with Gina and Cherry. And you listened. You truly listened to what they were doing because they were also listening.

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to their clients, to their clients and their families. And I love that, you know, if somebody was at home and needed something, they were there with a casserole or, you know, they were calling

in, how come you haven't come in in a while? We miss you, what's going on. Everybody knew what was going on. And it's that kindness that, you know, it baffles me. I was telling you this earlier that it baffles me that we don't have more kindness because it's just so simple to do.

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Even on my own street, a couple of weeks ago, the cops were here because there was an estranged son who was harassing his mother who's 85. I got involved. I called the police. I spoke to the police. I did what I had to do. The other son said, that was so kind of you. I said, well, what else would I do? It's an 85-year-old woman. Why wouldn't I be kind to my neighbor? That's simply what we have to show up and do. And yet...

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so many are not showing up and simply doing. And whether that's because they're selfish or it's just not their priority, I don't know. I love that you said that it's a lack of confidence. It's a lack of so many other things that come into play and that's why they're not being kind. Yet if we're showing the kindness, then hopefully others can learn from that as well because all of these women in the book, in your life, are really kind.

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I, please tell your wife, I admired her throughout how you were gone, you know, throughout the week. She's at home working. She's managing the children, the household. She's supporting you and things are going on with your kids as any mother knows. And you know, there's accidents happening. There's hospital visits and she's cheering you on at the same time. She's being so kind. And yet that had to have been stressful for her too, to be doing all of this and knowing what's going on with you. And, you know,

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managing her own life. Yeah, I mean, she, she's definitely people. She's people email me about my people don't know my wife. And they're like, yeah, she's, she is great. I'm very lucky that she said yes, when I asked her to actually go on her first date. And she makes me a better person. So yeah, my, these are investments and she invested in me, she invested in our marriage invested in

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the community in a better way. She runs the portfolio, she's the CEO of Cure Alzheimer's, so she's been busily studying how to solve for Alzheimer's. We both invest in humanity. And kindness, we have gotten primed to live in a society where you think money can really fix everything. I mean, the last 20 years economically, the amount of money printing, right? So there's so much.

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quote, money circulating, that it's a money culture. And money cannot solve everything. We know that. And I'm worried, and that part of the reason why I'm writing this book now, it's like what happens when money is like what hyperinflation is, is when money has no value. And people, when you're used to just dealing with just money, and you forget that capital is not just financial capital, it's social capital.

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It's emotional capital, it's your friendships, your relationships, hobbies, health. When money has no value in the future, potentially, what capital will you have left?

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And I think that what you're seeing too, a lot of the readers early on have been women who are sharing this with the men in their life too, because the men and the loneliness amongst men, which is well documented, right? A lot of the women are saying to me, yeah, I'm worried about my husband, boyfriend, or my son, that the only thing that they want to talk about is work. Just work. And then they're like, no hobbies.

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I think the average male has one friend in their life. And so I hope that this book also gives the language to men to express some of the things that are on their mind, like that are in their hearts. But, yeah, so I mean, women create we know this economically, they create so much uncompensated, positive externalities in our society economically. I always say to women when they're asking for parity and wages.

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The dorky quant in these often says, I agree and don't agree. And they said, what? Of course you agree. I said, no, I think you should be asking for more. Because parody actually doesn't reflect all the other things that women do that are uncompensated. So I think economically, parody is actually asking for too little. But these are things where...

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you talk about kindness and math, like that's, I think mathematically just true. It is. What do you say to the people who are turned off, like, I'm not a math person, like, I don't want to talk about math. Like you said earlier that, you know, everything has to do with math, and it truly does. As an adult, we all know that math comes into play with literally everything in order for us to survive. So what do you tell people or explain to them of how that comes into

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life when we don't want to talk about math. We don't want to deal with money. It's like a put-off. Well, I think the way I structured the book, and this is how I'm teaching it to students all over the place, but also like adult students, if you think about the metaphor of the helicopter, like the body of the helicopter, the cab, the hub, that's life. And so the book is a book about life. That's why Act One is about life.

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And what I'm saying to people in Act 3, that's joy. So I said, can we agree that you want to live the life you want to lead, which includes family and friends, and if money was not an issue? And joy is the top propeller, so Act 3. And ideally, that's how you would fly your helicopter. But here's the cool thing about the helicopter. The prop of a helicopter, in order to offset the torque,

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that's created by the piston that drives that top propeller. Newton's third law says you have to have a rear prop that offsets that torque. And so that's why act two of the book is money. And so I think all of us, I'm not saying like to be a monk and to go live in, like this is a way to live in society. We work. We need to have money, a financial currency.

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Work is beautiful. Work is very fulfilling. And so money is the rear prop. I think that that's how I'm explaining it to people, that to really have agency, to live the life you wanna lead, to be joyful, which means that you are intrinsically motivated, that you're not asking for validation. You're living your life, your red helicopter. I'm also trying to explain how to do that in work. And in order to have agency at work,

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You need to understand a little bit of accounting, a little bit of finance, right? A little bit about economics, just, just enough to realize that you have to have more control over your stream of income and your employment. I think a lot of people that we grew up with and older, there was much more guaranteed employment, right? Pension funds that that's gone. Everyone is now being a forced entrepreneur.

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You can't be a passenger in someone else's airplane. I'm asking people to sort of mental model wise to realize you have to fly your own helicopter. You can't carry everyone. They're small. But helicopters have to be very agile, right? They can fly in six different directions and helicopters are more expensive to maintain than airplanes. Human beings are tricky. Like we're complicated. And in the end of the day, it's a...

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That's how I've structured the book. That's what I'm explaining to people. I'm like, you have to know some money, some, and which isn't taught. And then, you know, making it really accessible. I mean, you know this, I taught accounting in the book in chapter five using a lemonade stand and saying, my general way of saying, you know this already. Like that's how I'm, I'm like, you know it. And I think a lot of books or sort of pundits on TV, they make people feel small or dumb.

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I like you don't know this and like I sort of take the opposite tact in life. I'm just like, I think you know a lot of this. You should trust your intuition. Um, don't let people make you feel. Not smart or incapable. I think the, the premise of the book is saying, you know, more than you think you

do, and I'm reminding you of it. Right. And then once you have that confidence, then it's saying, this is

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these are a couple of things that could be helpful to you. Right, like, and I think that's a better way to learn. I'm saying that as an experienced teacher, also as a high school teacher too, right? And it's, I don't like people condescending to other people. I don't think it's long-term effective. I also just think it's inappropriate, so. I feel like you could be a life coach, a therapist. I could listen to you all day long.

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Well, it's about the book. I don't know. Like it's, it was hard to get the book published. I'm grateful the Harper one because, um, you know, as we chit chatted a little bit earlier, people wanted me to write the private equity CEO, how to make a lot of money, how to transform, how to, I'm like, there are a lot of books. Okay. Like I'd rather write a book about life and that using life principles at work and having people be joyful in both work and life. And so

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But my life is heading there a little bit. It's, you know, I get a lot of phone calls. I got one very serious one. I'm gonna pilot it. It's the executive producer of a very well-known talk show person. And so I've gotten up, people are like, oh, you could host a television show. And I just said, oh, yeah, maybe. And they say, have people asked you that? I'm like, well, yeah. And then they're like, but we can't put our finger on what the show.

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would be and I and I know in my heart what it is it's like do you mean like modern day Mr Rogers who has a little bit of Trevor Noah and him and it's a bit of an Anthony Bourdain type feel but you know how to make money is that the show and they're like yeah that's the show you mean the show you're gonna cry and laugh at the same time and make fun of yourself and but learn some principle that you thought was

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not true, but you unlearn something and realize that your childhood intuition is much more accurate and in line with neuroscience. Is it that? And they're like, yeah, that's the show. I'm like, great. So we're going to shoot a pilot in September. And that would be the show. It's like a modern day Mr. Rogers that's more in real life. That's more grounded in reality. Because I loved Mr. Rogers growing up. Oh, me too. He was almost too...

36:46

Like I drop F bombs. Like, you know what I mean? Like it's like real, to make it more accessible and to make the neighborhood more, neighborhood is metaphorically your life versus on a TV screen. Like how do you live that type of life? And I believe that when you live that life over then longitudinally, you will be more joyful and you may not be a kajillionaire, but I do believe that you will.

37:14

do better financially over the long term. And it certainly played that out that way at Ashley Stewart and it's not the only investment I've made in that way that when people work together and they feel creative and safe and they're loyal to a business that's loyal to them but that also holds them accountable, does it surprise anyone that that business should thrive?

37:39

Particularly now, right over the next 20 years, people are going to be very lonely. Like that was the macro bet that I was saying to people 10 years ago. I said, you have no idea what we're about to go through. It's. It's loneliness and isolation. And when you don't have human connectedness, which we need physiologically, it leads to bad things. It leads to anger, right. And hate and mistrust. And we don't want those things.

38:08

It's playing out for those. I know some of your listeners are like quote business people not just you know, you know, you know writers and poets and creatives it's um, I'm encouraging those people who identify more in business to think more in poetry and Then for those who are think they're more artists to really learn more about business because I think we are holistic people But look at like insurance like, you know how expensive is to get insurance now

38:37

Insurance is the economic result of the demise of mutualism. When you start living a life solo, like I'm going to build my own, you know, house without with big fences by myself, solar, self-sufficient off the grid. Life gets very expensive. Yeah. When you try to live by yourself, not to mention lonely. I think our country is really struggling with that right now. That's that's what's going on.

39:06

I think that we could all benefit from watching a show with you on it every week, please. Yeah, so it's funny, right? I never would have thought I've had to kind of get over a little bit. I've been, you know, you know, this in my forties, I went away, like it was. And then the irony is that I'm being pulled back into more public spotlight. That's the irony. And I think that's one of the reasons why it's working, because people know.

39:35

I'm an introvert. You know, I was like, it's, I get tired. Um, but that's, I'm making conscious baby decisions right now. I'm shifting my life a bit. So that like the Ted talk was my first public public thing to see how I felt about it and then the Brene Brown podcast put gasoline on it and they're the ones who made me write the book because I was complaining to her, I couldn't write the book and then her audience, Brene's audience was in my.

40:05

LinkedIn and inbox and Instagram saying, dude, get the book done. I love it. I'm so mostly women. They're like 70, 80% women. They were like in my in there, like, write the book, get over it. So I'm like, oh, geez. I have a lot of strong women in my life. I was like, okay, so, you know, I wrote the book. And so like, this book is that next step about, you know, how it's like writing a book, it's like you bite your fingernails and it goes out there and then

40:34

It's a lot of work and then you hope that it's helpful. You hope that people read it and you hope that people love it and you brace for misunderstanding or brace for whatever. And so it's only been four months since it came out and it's been nice. Like, it's like, I think it's a bomb. I think it's

helping some people this summer just think about things in a very difficult time for all of us. Yeah. I'm so grateful that

41:03

we met and I'm so grateful that you wrote this book. The world needs you and I'm so, so glad we have you and that you are coming into the public eye even more because we need your words, we need your wisdom. I can't sing your praises enough because I like you. I really like you, James. I like you too. I mean, we liked each other when we met, you know.

41:31

Zibi's apartment. It's like you have it's intuition, you know, it's just, it's just nice to just have relationships and friendships with people that are just that. And it's just, you remember as a kid, that's the big the biggest for people often say like, Wow, you did so much for cherry and Gina. And I always say to them, I was like, I actually think they did more for me. You know, they to be in a situation where you have

42:00

stripped of all of your identity.

42:04

all of your resume, and then you have gender and race. And for these women to just intuitively say to me, we think you're a decent guy. That's effectively what they said, right? Like when I'm going around, they're staring at this Korean face with the pleated khakis, private equity, whatever, and they saw right through it. And they're like, we can feel your heart. Like you're just someone we would have been friends with as kids. You know, when you had no...

42:33

Right. Resume. You're just, you're friends with people who make you laugh. They make you feel better about yourself, right? That bring out the best in you. That's what friends are. And I was very blessed. Like it's, you know, I think to this day, I wonder what would have happened for me psychologically if these women had said, we will not follow your vision or listen to you or be friends with you because you're not Black or because you're a man.

43:04

or because I would have been, it would have been sad. I mean, I don't, I would have been- We wouldn't be having this conversation. No. And I would have been in a very different place, emotionally, mentally in my life, right? It would have been just another disappointment and saying, oh, the world kind of can suck. And they gave me back that hope. Like it was sort of, you know, I'm like, oh, they saw through it. They finally saw through it. That-

43:33

I'm more of an artist. Like, I did private equity because I was learning things and I had a lot of school debt. And I was like, they were like, you're an artist. And so I often think about this, you know, I'm a music guy. Like the song I used to sing as a kid when I was dreaming about like being an adult, I often sang that lyric from your song when he sings, Elton John sings, if I was a sculptor and then again, no, or a man who makes.

44:03

potions and a traveling show, I know it's not much, but it's the best I can do. My gift is my song and this one's for you. That's sort of how I look at the world. And Ashley Stewart was my song, right? I sang and I designed it and said, I know it's not much, you know, we're not some kajillion dollar, you know, but big enough that.

44:31

And I asked the world, what do you think of our song? And these women sang it with me. And that's, yeah, it's hard not to have hope after that, right? Like it was just the world, we got the world to behave in a good way. And we saw the best behavior from people that you wouldn't think would, like dudes, super financial dudes, super white financial dudes. It didn't matter. People wanted to.

45:01

to be part of it. And it restored a lot of faith that I had deep down in what we can do when we want to do that. And so the question I'm asking people, do you want this? Particularly for your kids, do you want it? And if you don't want it, at least want it for your kids. And if you don't want it for kids, what are we doing?

45:30

What are we doing? It's truth, yeah. Right? And let's just, let's call it a day. Let's go to Mars. Then let's forget it. Which is the way a lot of people are behaving, right? It's like, forget it. We don't care. And if you don't care, then, then don't be part of the conversation.

45:52

I love it. I love you. Can you share with everyone where they can find you and buy the book please? Yeah, come to redhelicopter.com. That's a good place to see. There's original music. You'll see all the faces involved. Redhelicopter.com is a good place. I'm on LinkedIn. I have a very small Instagram thing that I'm terrible at that Harper is sort of saying you need to kind of be better at.

46:20

I have mixed feelings about social media, as you can imagine. Um, but you know, come find me like, and love to hear your red helicopter story. And like, I'm, I'm building this to sort of. Tell this, you know, it's like, you know, Lord of the rings. It's like being like Sam, like I'm trying to like help ring bearers. I think there are a lot of ring bearers that are very tired right now. And I'm really, I found what I'm really good at. Like I'm, I'm really good at helping ring bearers. That's.

46:50

My thing. Perfectly put. You know, my mom was one, right? The women at Ashley were one. I think it's just people who are just trying and then it's easy to get tired. Yeah. Thank you so much for coming on. Thank you for sharing your life and your story with the world. I appreciate you very much. I'm so, so happy that you've come into my life. Yeah, me too. I'm grateful we met and like, we got to figure out the next in-person. Yes.

47:20

I don't know how often you get to the East Coast and me to the West Coast, but we'll figure it out. We're going to make it happen. Yeah. Well, thank you.

47:30

I don't even know what to say after talking to James. I am just blown away constantly when I speak to him about really what he's done, what he's accomplished, what he knows, and how it's so simple. It's about being kind. It's about math that makes sense that's not complicated. It's not P&Ls and spreadsheets and whatnot. It's really taking inventory and taking stock and making it about people.

48:00

and not simply things and assets and making sure that you know those relationships in your life are assets and we need to count them. So I encourage you all, be kind, do something kind for someone else today. We need it so much in our world today. I know I do. I know you do. And go do yourself a favor. Pick up a copy of Red Helicopter.

48:26

You will love it. You will cry. You will laugh. I promise you, you will feel all of the emotions because I certainly did. I'm actually ready to go back and read it again already. It's a beautiful book written by an incredibly beautiful human being. So go reach out to James, find him, follow him and purchase Red Helicopter because you won't.