

Transcript

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You're listening to the My Simplified Life Podcast and this is episode number 255.

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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 Globeck, author of How to Get on Podcasts, the podcast matchmaker and CEO and founder of the MLG Collective.

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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 Gluckaback. Today my guest is Anastasia Zdajk. And I probably just butchered that, but she's going to introduce herself as well. Anastasia and I have been in the room many times together, and yet this is the first time we've had.

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a really deep personal conversation. And I love the fact that it is going to go all over for you. We are talking about Anastasia's journey. We're talking about books, we're talking about writing, we're talking about funerals. There is no topic that is off limits and we had a blast doing this. So I am very excited to share our conversation with you. Hi, Anastasia. Hi, Laura.

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I am so excited to get to talk to you. We've just discovered that we've been in the same room too many times to not have had this conversation. So now we're just going to get to know each other on a next level and let everyone eavesdrop in. Yes. Awesome. Thank you so much for having me. I'm really delighted. Oh, it's my pleasure. I have had so much fun stalking you and getting to know you before even talking to you. Can you introduce yourself to everyone, please? Sure. So I'm Anastasia Zodd-Eich.

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that's actually my maiden name. So it's kind of like a pen name because most people know me by my married name, which is Hipkins, and my nickname growing up was Stacy. And so my family and a lot of people that have known me for a long time call me Stacy. So I'm Stacy Hipkins in my non-literary world. Everyone in my reading world and writing world knows me as Anastasia Zoddick. So I'm almost like a split personality. But it's also a pair of- That's kind of what it just sounded like.

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I know, but it also serves as a great pseudonym because it's not really, like it's really my name. It's not my pen name. So I am, I started writing about 10 years ago, started writing something. Like before that I was one of those writers who's always, from the time I got my first little puffy pink diary with the key, I've been writing my whole life. But I never really was writing something.

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And so when my kids went off and they were launched, I decided that I needed to do something to keep my brain active. My mom died of early onset Alzheimer's, so I'd been dreading turning 60. And when it finally hit, I was like actually relieved because I still can put a thought together. But I did start writing to kind of keep my mind active. And I became involved in a group called So Say We All, which is actually where I sort of.

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got started with writing something because it's a organization that their tagline is helping people tell their stories and tell them better. And it's a you submit stories at the beginning of the month. If they choose your story, they assign you a writing coach and a performance coach because two weeks later you read your story with some images behind you that you've selected to go with it. And you read it in a bar filled with at the first time, first few times I did it, 200

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Now, of course, I've met many of the people that show up regularly. So it's become a group of a mixture of friends and strangers. But I started doing that. It kind of gave me the confidence that I could write. And after that, I wrote two novels and they're both out. One was called Blurred

Fates. It came out in 2022. And my latest one is *The Other Side of Nothing*, which came out in May, the end of May this year, 2024.

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So you were unlike normal, I'm going to put in quotes, normal writers who, you know, so many authors you hear there, oh, I'm an introvert and I don't want to go stand up on a stage. And you're like, yeah. So in addition to my two novels, I go stand up and read my stuff to 200 people in a bar that I don't know for fun. So I have to, I have to, I should have prefaced that with, so I, I consider myself an introvert, but no one believes me. But I did the, my very first time standing on.

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up in front of a group was reading, I wrote and delivered my father's eulogy. And it was the, like, I never thought that I could do that. I never, I mean, I did it for work. When I was my first career was in neuropsych research, and I often had to do stand up in front of a large group and give a presentation on something, but it was like cut and dried stuff more or less. And, but I

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Never thought that I could stand up and tell a personal story until I was telling the story of my dad. And it kind of, I realized that I was basically telling his life story. And so it gave me confidence that I could do that in a setting like that. And my dad was a minister, so I grew up and my grandfather was a huge storyteller. So it kind of runs in the family. And I realized that that's what my dad did every week. He told stories.

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as a minister, he was telling a story and then trying to relate it to people's life. And all of the people who listen to one of my stories or watch one of my videos, they always say that it's like a little bit like a sermon or a devotion, which I grew up reading devotions at the table with my siblings. There's always a little lesson in my stories, which is kind of funny. And as soon as it's pointed out to me, I see it. Like all of them have some kind of little like...

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you know, think of wisdom at the end that you're supposed to take away. The one of experience, your mom taught you that experience never hurts after being a lingerie hostess at a restaurant. You all have to go watch that video because now it sounds like Anastasia, Stacey has done something very weird at the age of 17, but she had to go to college, so she had to fund her way. Experience is the best teacher. Absolutely. And she also told me that there are.

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If a mistake's not a mistake, if you learned from it, if you learned from it, it's a lesson, then it's not a mistake. So I always try to, and my dad added onto that, that the worst mistakes are the ones that you try to hide because you usually make another mistake. And so you just compound mistakes. And I told my kids that growing up, like if you're gonna make mistakes, we're human, we're gonna make mistakes.

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The best thing to do is just fess up and tell somebody about it so that you can work through it and make it a lesson. The worst thing you can do is compound it by making additional mistakes to hide the first one. And it's still something I live because I think so many of us get trouble with the second make. It's the second mistake and the third mistake that really get you messed up. So.

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So we've alluded to one of your videos of your storytelling and the other one that you find the fun in funerals, which I adore because before we started recording, we were talking about how we love funerals and obituaries and the really good ones, not the dry ones, not the, you know, he died and that was it. And he was born and had kids and got married, boom, done.

08:05

but the really, really good ones. And I love your story about your dad and Bob Chins. And I went, at first I went, Bob Chins, why do I know Bob Chins? I lived in Chicago for two years. You did? And I did. And I covered the Midwest territory at 12 states and would go visit all of my clients and stuff. And I remember that there was a pilot who was like, we gotta go to Bob Chins. We have to go to Bob Chins. So I drove to Bob Chins, somebody else got us a restaurant. You've been there. I've been to Bob Chins, yes.

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So I loved your story even more that you're at Bob Chin's and y'all are getting some Mai Tais and some drinks and you're planning a funeral that sounds like a bachelorette party. I loved it. I was like, yeah, I wanna play with your family. I think you guys sound like a lot of fun. That is definitely my favorite story because it's kind of a mixture of, it's bittersweet.

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It's there's some sadness in it, but there's also a lot of joy. And I think that's what's interesting about obituaries, honestly, is that it's sad because the person has passed away. But it's also it's truly like so a really well written obituary and a well put on funeral is a celebration of a life. And that's what I find. And, you know.

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I was listening, I'd stalked you as well and listened to some of the podcasts and I listened to the one that you did just a little bit ago. It was just you talking about what you've learned, the lessons you've learned through this podcast experience that you've had listening, you're talking to all these people and the gratitude that you feel towards the listeners and the people who've been on your podcast. And I think that that's what I get when I like read a really well-written.

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obituary is you get the sense that somebody who had lived a life, left a legacy, built community, was grateful. You can tell all of that in an obituary. It reminds you that you have one life. When I read an obituary, I'm reminded. I think about what I want in mine and what do I want people to know about me and what's important to me. That helps me to live my life.

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So it's sort of like these little, they're little reminders of what life can be. I love that. We recently did our last will and testament and the state plan and all that. And I was like, wow, this really sucks. We're thinking about this and the thought of death does not, I know, thank you. Like that doesn't sound good at all. I'm like, I was born to raise Catholic. I'm like, I know that there's heaven, but what is that like?

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Then you go to these funerals and like, oh, I love hearing all these stories of people and what do I want them to say about me? What do, and I'm like, do not play. I leaned over to my husband last week. I go, don't play on Eagles wings. Do not play that. And he goes, but you won't be here. I said, I don't care. It will not be playing at my funeral. It played at my father's. It plays at every funeral. I don't want the song played. He goes, but what are you gonna do if it isn't? I'm like, no, you don't play it. And I'm going to write this down.

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in my will, do not play it. And in fact, maybe nobody wears black. Maybe I want you all coming in color. And that's just gonna be my, what I want. And you all have to do what I say. I know. And we won't be there. We won't be there. But there's like a, but there is a like, I do want whatever ends up happening to me. I want it to be a celebration of life. And my grandmother did that. When she died, we all, she wanted us all to wear colorful things.

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And she gave my mom and dad, we grew up, let's just put it this way, I was the third girl, I didn't have my own coat that had only belonged to me until I was 13 and that was a Christmas present. So it wasn't, we always had what we needed, but we didn't always have what we wanted. And my grandmother wanted us all to wear new dresses, so she gave my parents money to take us shopping and she wanted us to bring them in and put them on in her hospital room so she could see us before she died.

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And it was so sweet. I mean, we all went and picked out a new dress and they were colorful and we came in and we showed our grandma. And she was so touched because she knew that she wasn't gonna be there to see it. But I do want people to wear bright colors. And I do want, the one song I do want played is It's a Wonderful World. A Wonderful World. Oh yeah. Because it is, it's a wonderful world. And when we're gone, it's still gonna be wonderful. It's just gonna be. Yeah.

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Wonderful without us. I love, there was a story about a woman who hired like a flash mob for her funeral. Oh my God. Did you read that? This was a while ago, a few years back, she hired a flash mob to come and perform in the middle of the funeral. Like, why not? Why wouldn't she? I love that. I don't want to shock her. And I mean, people, you know, I want people to be able to laugh at my funeral.

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If I have we say we won't be there, but we'll be there. We will hear what is said. I think we will. I don't know. I'm not sure what's going to come next, but I definitely. I yeah, I was pondering that last week and I told my husband. I go I wonder like do you get to this place and there's only the people that you really liked so you don't have to deal with any drama with people you didn't like you get to eat the food that you want, but you're never really hungry and you don't have to

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cook either. Like are these the things that happen in heaven? I hope. And you don't worry about, and you don't worry about what you look like because you don't have to. Yeah. So you can eat whatever you want because there's no worry about that. And I don't know. Like it's, it, it feels like it should be all of the above, all of the things you just said. But on the other hand, if I'm an insomniac,

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horrible insomnia kept in my whole life. So if it is just a really long sleep, I'm good with that too. I can. Okay. Yeah. You know, I feel like I might get bored. But I'm not sure. Do you think we'll be conscious? I don't know. This is these are big. No, I know. It's, it's, and I think this is why I'm like, well, what just happens? Like you just, you just disappear. Like it's weird. Like what happens in that moment? It's

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Yeah, and then life just goes on here. It does. And it's, you know, what's interesting is a lot of times I think about this kind of thing when I'm traveling and I'm in a different place. And I know that the people in my world are still going about their lives, doing all the things they do here on my street. And I'm somewhere else. It's sort of like, that's what I think it will be like, kind of like, they'll like that. Everything will still be going on, but.

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I'll be someplace else. Yeah. And then you get those messages of being needed. Like I was traveling the other day and although everything was running smoothly at home, it was, where's the rice? Where's this? What do we do about this? And I went, oh my gosh, my time is not coming anytime soon. The other day I was talking to my husband and I said, I was cleaning out the filter of the washing machine.

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you know, it says on it, you're supposed to do it every month, which I don't do. But yeah, they do do it every once in a while. Because it's gross. Yeah. Yeah. And you realize like after you do it that the laundry smells pressure and all that. But so I came downstairs and I said I was just doing this and I realized that you don't know how to do this. So if I die, I need to show you a washing machine. And he was laughing. He was like, that's probably not gonna be the highest priority. But okay.

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And see, you know what mine does? He goes, hey, you haven't cleaned out that thing on the washing machine in a while, have you? That thing that you did that it was gross and there's like water that comes out, but maybe we need to do that soon. And I'm like, yeah, we, you don't even know what this is on the washing machine. You didn't even know that that existed and you've been living longer than I have, but you didn't even know it existed and you still don't know how to do it. The thing. We will get to that.

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Yes, but you're right. There's so much that you're like, what are you all going to do? What are you going to do? They'll muddle through. I'm not going to worry about it. I'll be up there eating my sushi and drinking wine and not worried about a thing. I think that's the biggest thing for me is also as somebody that I've realized now that I suffered from anxiety and depression my whole life. And I just only recently

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been addressing it on and off throughout my life with various, you know, I exercise like crazy and I have seen counselors, but I didn't start taking medication for it until just recently and wow, it changed my life totally. And I'm not saying that medication is for everybody because I'm not saying that, but for me, it was huge. I feel like that's also like a representative of what, if there's a heaven that that will be what it's like, like

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All of the things that we've struggled with in life will suddenly be changed and will be in this place where that doesn't Those things don't happen and that would be so cool That would be that would be nice. Yeah, all the things we worry about and all of the anxieties that we have about the world Could go away. That seems pretty terrific

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What point was it since you've brought this up, if you wanna talk more about it, at what point did you realize that you have anxiety, that there is depression, that these are the labels that go with it? So for me, I mean, I had, there were signs all along the way that I had anxiety and that I, I mean, I knew I struggled with some mild depression and then it became more serious at times.

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I could keep it at bay with exercise most of the time. I exercised to the point of like, I don't want to say pain, but for sure exhaustion. I pushed myself really hard and then when I would do that, I would feel better. I did it every day. I became an exercise, not an addict, but I definitely needed it for my mental health. Then there came a time when that just wasn't enough anymore.

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I had a moment that I talked about with Matt on his podcast. His podcast is called Life Shift if anybody wants to check that out. He's been on the show too. So yes. Yeah. It's a great podcast. He talks about these moments in people's lives. And for me, it happened in February of 2021, right after the pandemic. And I'd been holding in a lot of what I now know is...

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severe anxiety and depression. And I got to the point where I decided that I didn't want to be here anymore and that the people in my life would be better off without me. And I had a, thankfully, had a glimmer of, as I was executing my plan, I had a glimmer of my kids and what it would be like for them and realized that I would be...

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doing something that would be really, really devastating to them. And that was enough to keep me going and to stop what I was doing. And at that point, a friend found me and basically told me like, we need, I'm here and we're going to get you help. And that I made the call that was one of the hardest calls I've ever made in my life, which was to say I...

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I didn't want to be here and I was prepared to end my life and I need help. And I was so tempted to do what I always have done for many, many years, decades, which is when to say, no, I'm okay. Actually, I'm going to be fine. I'm going to be fine. And I did that for a long time and, and, and I would make myself fine. And when I finally said, I'm not okay. And I got, I was.

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went to see a doctor and was put on some prescription medication, which it didn't, it wasn't like a magic pill. It didn't, the first one didn't work. The second, so I'm not, I don't want to make people, uh, or make it seem like this was a, everything was fine. It took months for me to find this thing, the things that worked for me. Unfortunately, the one, the first medication that worked for me, I had a really rare side effect and I actually almost died from a medical, like a physical side effect of the medication didn't know.

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that was from the medication. And when they finally figured it out, I was able to switch medications. And so it's been a difficult process, but coming out on the other side of it has been so amazing that I feel like it was a gift that I actually got to that point of needing to say I need help. Because struggling along on this sort of self, like I thought I had to rely on myself to fix myself.

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and realizing that I didn't have to do that and that there were other people that could help me and that it was a good thing to reach out for help was such a life-changing moment for me. And now I feel like every day is a gift and I really, truly believe some of the things that I wrote in my second book. I think the writing of the book

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almost contributed in some ways because it was a really deep book and it was about mental illness and so it forced me to think about things that maybe I wasn't really prepared to think about in my own life. And to do it through a character enabled me to kind of get there and do it for myself. And one of the characters in the book talks about this philosophy of life based on Albert Camus' book, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, which is to live life.

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as a succession of presence. And for me, that is my new motto. And I use presence in both senses of the word, present like a gift, and also present like the moment that you're in, this present moment. And it is life is a succession of present moments. It's and if you can look around you and, and like how lucky I am to be sitting here right now, talking to you, this is a moment.

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And I can appreciate this moment and then the next moment and then one after that. And that has changed my whole world. When I'm taking a walk, I notice the flowers, I notice this clouds, I stop and notice the moments. And that's really what life is about, is moment after moment. So.

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I love that. No, I love that. And it reminds me of, I don't know if you can see, I have a client's book still, *The Art of Noticing*, in which she took a photograph every single day of something in nature, something different and just noticed like this is what's in my backyard. And after going through all these photos, I started to stop, pause as I'm doing the dishes, notice that the leaves are changing colors every so many days and to just...

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notice and to pause. And it's funny, I feel like it's such a shame that it takes us this long in our lifetimes to really figure these things out. And I think we all love hitting 40 because that's when we actually start paying attention and we grow comfortable with who we are. And it just gets better. It took weeks at 60. But at 60, I sort of, and I read about this in a lot of other ways.

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women in particular have said this, that for me 60 was like turning a page first of all because I could stop worrying about being diagnosed with early onset Alzheimer's at age 60, but also that I realized and maybe the anti-anxiety medication and the therapy and the CBT, everything that they suggested to me I tried. And they all worked together to kind of make me realize that I'm all I've got.

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And there's, you know, those sayings like be yourself, cause there's no one else that can fill that job. Like I'm, I really feel like that's true now and that I'm, I'm learning to stop and notice not just the world around me, but stop and notice how I feel in it and what, and what I can contribute to it in that moment. And, and, and it's a, it's just a much healthier view. One of my favorite things is I have this, for a long time I was doing it on Instagram.

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I called it stop, look closer. So like I would make myself stop on a walk and look down and then look closer at it and closer until I noticed something that I hadn't noticed before. And there's so many, like I never realized that there's in, in bougainvillea there's these little tiny white flowers in the pink flowers and inside the little white flowers are little tiny. Like the closer you look, the more you see the.

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beauty that's in nature, in our world. And the same is true for people. The more you stop and notice people, the more you talk to them, the more you see the beauty in each person. So it's just, it works for almost everything. So- I love that because I feel like we need it so much right now. Don't we? Don't we? Oh my gosh. Yeah. Yeah. And yet there's a lot of truth to that too, because I feel like especially we're recording this before the election and we see so much-

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ugliness. And at the same time, I also feel like I've seen so much camaraderie also come out of it. For those of us who I know I reached out to you last week thanking you for your substack and I read it and was like, yes, so there's these not just beliefs, but life stories and lessons behind each of us that we don't know. And this has brought that out in us as well, which I'm grateful for, for the ones that I'm like, oh, yes, like I can, you know.

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commiserate or agree with you or connect with you on that level. And I think that's part of it. It's true. I think for all of the complaints, and I have complaints about social media, don't get me wrong, but there has been this ability to tell people's stories. Like, Substack, I think, is a way for people to tell their stories, small little bits of their life and share it with other people. And same with podcasts. The ability to...

27:23

to really stop and listen and talk to somebody new and find out that you have so much in common. It's crazy. And then when you listen to them, you can tell when people are really connecting. It's a really good, so there's been some good things about social media and the ability to connect with people across, I don't even, where are you right now? I'm in San Jose, so I'm not far from you. Okay. Yeah. I'm not too far, but.

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Yeah. Yeah. There's been people all over the world even. I mean, the other day I talked to Emma Gray and she's in Australia. She's so, I love her. I adore Emma. And you know, it's funny, Matt edited that episode and he goes, you can tell you guys like each other. Yes. She is, she blurbed my book. She's such a lovely person. I mean, and her book, her first book, I haven't read her second book yet, but her first book. The second one, so good. Oh, really? So good. Yes.

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It's on my TBR, which keeps getting taller and taller. Same. Same, friend. So many good books out there right now. I know. Which is a good thing for readers, but I got to tell you for authors, it's

daunting. Because there's so many books coming out all the time, and so many good ones. And I don't think I realized how many come out so frequently.

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until you really start paying attention and you're getting emails from publishers, you're like, oh my gosh. I know. And it's, I did the math and, you know, depending on which source you use as the number of books that come out every year, like I think traditionally published, they say it's like a million a year traditionally published. But when you include all of the other types like small publishers, self-published books, hybrid published books, it's...

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closer to the estimates are between two and four million a year. Like, so I mean, and that's a huge disparity between two and four, but even if you use two or one, it's like thousands of book on average every week coming out. And that it's just mind boggling. Which is why I need to give myself grace when I go, Oh, I haven't heard of that one. Well, yeah, I wonder why. No, I mean, and obviously, you know, like depends on your genre and what you like to read, but still.

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That's a lot of books. Yeah. What do you like to read? I read pretty much everything. If you looked, so my current pile was love. I do, I read a lot of fiction, but I also love memoirs. I do like nonfiction. I like books of essays. I like short stories. I'm reading two really great books right now. One is called, I gotta grab it. Hold on a second.

30:13

It's called Third Ear. It's called Third Ear. It's by Elizabeth Rosner and it's reflections on the art and science of listening. And it's part memoir, part like science, like about how we listen and how the brain and like it's fascinating. But I'm also reading Finding Margaret Fuller Right Now by

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So those are the three and I'm listening to the Jessica Knoll, Bright Young Women. I'm glad that I feel in the same boat. I'm listening right now to Gretchen Rubin's Five Senses. So I feel like that is connected to the third listening and- The art of listening. Yes. Because she, yes, yes. She

goes through the different senses and like the science behind it and then she goes and she focuses on a sense. And-

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does something to intentionally, like color, she picks a color and then she looks for everything with that color and she listens to something. So it's interesting. Yeah. And then I'm reading Leslie Rasmussen's, *The Stories We Cannot Tell*. Oh, yes. That's a good one. That one I got up at 5.30 this morning to continue reading. And then I just finished Laura Dave's, *The Last Night We Saw Him*. All of her books are like the last something. *The Last Time? The Last Time We Saw Him*. Yeah.

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The one they made into a Netflix series. Yes, not out yet. Yes. So I was excited. I'm like, oh, I got to read this. And I loved that one. Oh my goodness. I couldn't put it down. Yeah. There's a lot. And there's so many good books. There seriously are so many books coming out. But I think there's also, right now, part of being, I think part of book marketing is finding the audience for your book, right? Because not everybody likes everything.

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And, but I think that for some people they're looking for something that, and they don't even necessarily know what they're looking for. And the book hits them at the right time. And you know, something that someone wise once told me, my writing coach told me, while you're writing your book, it's your book. But as soon as you put it out into the world, it's your reader's books. And they're going to bring to it everything that makes them them. So they're going to bring their history, their relationships.

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They're going to bring where they are right now in their life. And they're going to bring all of that to it. And they're going to, each person is going to read this book differently. And they're going to, they're going to relate to different parts of it. And some of them are going to be, might be triggered by something in it, not necessarily in a bad way, sometimes you can be triggered in a good way. Like you see yourself in a character and you realize that you could learn something from what they're going through.

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the book, even though it's fictional, it can give you empathy for yourself. It can give you empathy for others. It's so I think it's just about finding the right audience and finding the right book.

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That's such a great point because it reminds me of reviews. I don't read reviews of a book before I read the book. I will go read them after just to see what other people have said, but I feel like that it's such a good point why authors shouldn't pay so much attention to what some of these written reviews are, because exactly of that, there was one, I just interviewed the author the other day and I loved the book and I told her, this is what I got out of it. And she was like, yes, this is what I wanted.

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And then I went back and I read the reviews and there was one where it was, I mean, it was a horrible review. Yeah. Why? And as you say that, like what was going on in that person's life that they pulled that out of this book. Absolutely. I was at a book club for my first book and we were talking about the book for probably 30 or 40 minutes. And then I realized that one of the women wasn't saying anything. And I kind of turned to her and I said, you know, so I said not to put you on the spot. Is there anything you want to say though? Because

34:14

You know, I don't want to want to make sure everybody gets a chance to talk. And she said, you guys are discussing a different book than the book I read. And she's like, I read this book and she held up the book and it's, it's this, it was my first book, this one, blurred fates. And she said, I grew up with a mom who was, and then she described her mom. And, and she said, and as soon as I started reading the book, I realized what was happening.

34:43

because I grew up with someone like this and I read it in a totally different way than the way you guys are describing it. And it was fascinating for me as a writer, as the writer, both in two ways. One, she said, that's actually, she said, that's a compliment because you portrayed this

character so believably that I related to what it would be like to be around that person. And it was just fascinating, but she saw the book.

35:13

like in a totally different way because of her life experience, basically. And it was one of my first book clubs and I really brought home that idea of it's not the same book for any two readers. And it's, you know what, I've never talked about that with someone before, really on the show or outside of how true that is. So I love that this is a new topic. Well, I mean, if you think about it, like...

35:41

So, I mean, there'll be books, I'll go to a book club, and I've been in book clubs for the last 35 years of my life, and you'll hear books that I thought were fabulous that people didn't like, and I'll be like, how can you not like this book? And then they'll explain it to me, and I'll be like, oh yeah, I guess, I didn't see that. Or somebody will bring up, this always, because as a reader, there have been times when I've seen like,

36:09

something that I think is like truly symbolic, like something that like a thread that's throughout the book. Like, have you noticed how there's always like, in this book, I deliberately put in a thread about light, but I always assume that authors are doing that. So I'll be like looking for those things. And then I was at a book club for my second book, and somebody brought up this theme that they kept seeing. And I had not intentionally put that in there. So it's funny, because I think that, you know, you're sort of

36:37

Like I said, we bring all of our history and our reading experiences to a book. And so we might be looking for something that the author didn't even intend or, but it's there. Yeah. And maybe it's unintentional. I don't know. It's unconscious. It's such a fascinating thing. Books are so fascinating to me. Yeah. I love them. I love that there are people who are writing them from their own experience, that there's

37:06

parts of us in the book, that there's parts of what's around us that are in these books. And then the way the reader reads them, that takes on a life of its own because of their life. So yeah, it's absolutely amazing and fascinating in how we can interpret it in so many different ways. Exactly. And then also how when you're in a book group and someone brings up something that they saw, that it can change your perspective.

37:32

So like even the perspective that you had the whole time you were reading it, I remember reading *Bel Canto* by Anne Patchett years ago. I was in a book club and somebody said to me, and I remember this to this day, it was not to me, to the group. It's like the book itself is an opera. And one of the main characters is an opera singer in *Bel Canto* and obviously *Bel Canto* is an opera singer. But I had not thought of that. And as soon as she said it, I started seeing that.

38:01

in the plot and in the characters. And it was like another level of appreciation. So I think that opportunities like this, podcasts talking about book, book clubs talking about books, even like Facebook groups talking about books, you can learn from other readers something that you didn't see. And it can expand the universe of that book in a different way. Does that make sense? I love that.

38:30

Yeah, I love that. We're going to quote that somehow. So one of the other books that I'm just now reading or just finished reading is called *Lost in Thought* by Deborah Sarah. And the whole book is about a woman whose her her boyfriend is a neuroscientist. And he's trying to talk to her about the research he's doing about the fact that so much of what we think is, is free will and our ability to put conscious thought into words.

38:58

is actually unconscious because so many times when we open our mouth to speak, and this, I'm, I think about this a lot now that I read the book on a podcast or, or in a conversation at a dinner party or even just out and about that you haven't really thought through what you're going to say. You open your mouth to speak and words start coming out and they make sense, but you didn't think the whole sentence through before you said it.

39:28

And it's interesting because on your, one of the things I read or listened to that you were talking about, you said that you used to, and I should let you tell it that you used to have that. I used to script everything. Can you talk about that? Yeah. In the beginning, I scripted all of my episodes. I would spend, and it took forever to type everything out and then I would read it, but it sounded conversational. Like this was, I just read it because I typed in my own words.

39:55

And it got to the point, and I think this is where a lot of podcasters just stop because it's so exhausting, the time. And I went, oh my gosh, I'm taking so much time to do this. And I can't sustain it, that I'm typing this out and then I'm saying it. And so I stopped and just, I now do some bullet points if it's a solo. If it's an interview, there's nothing. I do my research in advance where I stalked you.

40:21

for the last two days. I have looked at your website, I have watched your videos, I've listened to podcasts, I've perused your books, I've done all of these things to prep it, but I've just shown up. And I think it's much more, I don't wanna say realistic, but, and I hate the word authentic, but it's authentic in that way. It is, you know, whatever is my thought comes right out of my mouth. I don't think about it, I don't script it. Isn't that interesting? But like, when you really think about that, like, how do we do that? How does it...

40:50

What does that all happen? Like, it's just fascinating to me. Like, I open my mouth, I'm talking to you, I have a general idea of what we're talking about, but the words are just coming out. It's fascinating. Where does that happen? It probably is why we mess up so often. We put a foot in our mouth, right? You're like, oh, I shouldn't have said that. Oops. Yeah. I shouldn't have said that. And that's why I think people use filler words too, right? Because our brain hasn't caught up with our, our mouth hasn't thought.

41:20

caught up with our thoughts or whatever. But yeah, so the ums come in and the likes and the. Right, this is fascinating. And it brings in your past career, it feels like. The neuroscience, yeah, yeah. I think the brain is the last frontier. It's so fascinating to me on so many levels. But particularly now with where everything is going with the fact that we are talking more openly about how our.

41:47

mental health impacts our lives and how, and how their whole idea of neurodivergence and this idea that we, we want everyone to be thinking the same way, but we don't, none of us think the same way. Every one of us comes into the world with a different brain and, and that's what makes us unique. And so this idea that sometimes maybe we're trying to over correct people to make them our version of normal.

42:17

when maybe their version is different and we need to appreciate that and not look at it as something that's deficient in any way, but to embrace it and celebrate those differences. We are not there yet and I don't know exactly how we get there. But for sure there's like, and that's one of the issues actually that I dress in the other side of nothing is one of the characters.

42:43

is has been diagnosed with a mental illness and he doesn't want to take medication or do anything to change it because he believes that that is also what makes him who he is and makes him, it gives him his creativity, it gives him his view of life, his energy, his way of experiencing his senses. And when you take that, for him, when he takes the medication, it dulls all of those things. And it's actually a real issue for

43:11

for a lot of people with bipolar disorder, that taking the medications that will level their moods does remove some of those highs that they feel and some of that creative energy that they feel during that time. And many, many people have been, lately have been posthumously like diagnosed with bipolar disorder that were creatives and that experienced periods of

43:39

incredible creativity and energy and productivity, and then also experienced profound depression, and often were at the time placed into facilities to deal with that. And it's just, it's such an interesting topic to me, like where does creativity stop? Where does genius stop and insanity begin? Like that whole idea. And I mean, I know I'm using that term that is outdated, but

44:09

It's just the brain. The brain is fascinating. Yeah, humans. Is it because our neurotransmitters are just spinning way too fast that we have, but is that a gift for some people? And if you can control, I don't know. It's such an interesting and fascinating topic that- There's so much. I feel like we could probably keep going all day long. I know, I'm sorry. No. I just went off.

44:36

I love it. That's what these conversations are for. So we can go wherever the path may lead. And obviously we can go have lunch and cocktails and keep going. And next time we see each other in person, we're going to be like, let's do this. Oh yeah. We're going to.

44:54

Forget everything else. We'll be like, no, we have some catching up to do. Where can everybody find you and buy your books, Anastasia slash Stacey? You can find me at my website is Anastasia Zodiac.com. That's a doozy, I know, but- It'll be in the show notes. It's okay. I'm pretty much on Instagram, Facebook, Twitter. Well, I'm not on Twitter anymore. And threads.

45:22

And LinkedIn, I think almost everything is under Anastasia's exotic. So just my name. So if you look for that and my dog is, he's trapped in my office and he doesn't like it in there. But he has to be in there because he like, he's he's the perfect watchdog. He lets me know when there's someone on the other side of the street walking, just in case I was wanting to make sure. Yeah, and then you can find my books anywhere books are sold. My first book is Blurt Fates and my second book is the other side of nothing.

45:51

This one is the one that's closest to my heart. I did not get a chance to talk about why I wrote it, but it's in the book. So if you get through to the author's note, you'll find out why I wrote it. And it's definitely my, not that I have a favorite book because you're not supposed to, but this one definitely comes from the heart. I love it. And you know what, I love reading.

46:14

the acknowledgments and author's notes, because to me it's almost like an obituary. You get to really see the truth behind. I'm always like, oh, let's see, who do we think and what kind of research went into this? Absolutely. And it's funny, this is one of the questions whenever I interview another author, I always ask them about the acknowledgement because you find out so much about the people that were important to them or the person that inspired them to write. This one, my

46:44

for Olivia and Jack my answer. And you'll have to read the book to know what the question is. I love it. All right, everybody, go read the book, buy the book, and then send us your answers. Yeah, sent, oh my God, that's such a great idea. I should have people send me their answers. Yes. All right, make that your next Instagram post. You are genius. Every once in a while, I don't know what's gonna come out.

47:13

That was perfect. Thank you so much. I'm so glad we got this chance to get together and chat and let the world eavesdrop on it. Thank you, Michelle. Thank you so much. Have a wonderful rest of your day. Friends, this is what I absolutely love about this podcast and all of my conversations. It's that you don't know where it's going to go. And you really get to see a behind the scenes conversation between two people who just want to get to know each other.

47:43

And I love the fact that I got to know Anastasia so much and on such a deep personal level. I adore her. We are definitely now friends. There was even some phone number exchanges at the end. So you know that I feel that's next level. And I'm very excited about that. And to really see where our friendship and collaborations continue to go. Remember that you have a story. You have a story to share that people wanna hear because your life is important.

48:12

What you have done is important and we want to hear it. So I'm so grateful that Anastasia joined me and I'm grateful that you all got to listen to her incredible story and to have fun with us. And let's see what happens next.