



Episode 263: The Beautiful No & Other Life Lessons With Sheri Salata

Child: Welcome to my Mommy's podcast.

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This podcast is sponsored by SteadyMD, the innovative new way that I found and connect with my primary care doctor using concierge medicine. The idea of concierge medicine used to be something reserved for celebrities and the ultra-rich, and it didn't seem accessible to the rest of us. The concept is great — having a doctor who you know and trust and who knows your medical history always available when you need him/her. I've loved the idea of it for years, and was so excited when I finally found an affordable and personalized option that made this available to everyone. Think about this... we can do almost everything else virtually these days. The digital aspect makes it affordable. It's only \$169/month for a family plan of two parents and all kids. This also allows the doctors to take fewer patients so they have more time and attention for each patient. Essentially, it feels like the modern equivalent of a country medicine doctor who comes to your house when you have a medical need. Except it makes the best use of technology so we get instant access instead via text, email or even video chat. Find out more about how it works and take their free quiz to get matched with a doctor that fits your needs at [steadymd.com/wellnessmama](https://steadymd.com/wellnessmama)

Katie: Hello, and welcome to the "Wellness Mama Podcast." I'm Katie from wellnessmama.com. And I'm here today with a really special woman I can't wait to share with you. Sheri Salata is a producer, podcast co-host, and the author of an amazing new memoir, "The Beautiful No: And Other Tales of Trial, Transcendence, and Transformation," which will be published in June about the time you're listening to this. Her current ventures are the evolution of her 20-year career with Oprah Winfrey, her days as executive producer of "The Oprah Winfrey Show" were chronicled in the acclaimed docuseries "Season 25: Oprah Behind The Scenes." She also served as co-host of Harpo Studios and OWN, the Oprah Winfrey Network, and has been named one of Fast Company's 100 Most Creative People in Business as well as many other awards and accolades. But I can say from meeting her personally, that she's also this wonderful, kind-hearted, incredible human being. And I can't wait to share her with you today. So, welcome, Sheri. Thanks for being here.

Sheri: Oh my gosh, Katie, I'm so happy to be with you and your listeners. This is such an honor that you're having me on.

Katie: Oh, like I said, I can't wait...I've heard your story a little bit in person, and I can't wait to hear more today. And to start, I'd love to hear just on the background side, I know you've told me personally, but how did you end up being the co-president of Harpo and all of these things that you became and did so well for so many years?

Sheri: Oh, Katie. It was such a twisty, turny road. I graduated from the University of Iowa, go Hawks, yay, and I did everything wrong, every mistake. I didn't have a job lined up. I didn't do the proper, you know, career search, all the support tools available for a new graduate. I took advantage of none of them. And for the next, oh gosh, a good six, seven years, I struggled. I managed toy stores. I even managed a 7-Eleven. I delivered a baby in a parking lot. I was really lost. And finally, you know, in complete and total failure, at 27, I moved back to Lake Villa, Illinois and lived in my parent's house. And I was in such depression. And then I got a big break. My best friend from high school's fiancé was an executive producer at an ad agency, and he hired me as his secretary, which is what we called it back in those times, in the '80s. I was a terrible typist, but he overlooked that and basically trained me to become a producer.

So, that was my first big break. And by the time I was 35, I got the opportunity, and yet another start-over, entry-level position to become a promo producer at "The Oprah Winfrey Show." And that was the beginning of a career joyride.

Katie: Wow, that's amazing, and I'm sure had so many thrills and twist and turns along the way. And I think you're such a fascinating person to talk to when it comes to the topic of success because by a lot of people's metrics, you were highly successful by all the world's standards. You got this dream career and all that went with it. And I'm curious from you on a personal level, first of all, what is your definition of success, and has that changed over all of those years?

Sheri: Oh, you're so insightful, my friend. Yes. It's changed very much. In my earlier years, the definition of success was: have a great, sexy job, a great business card, and, you know, all the trappings that come with it. And of course, what I've realized now is that maybe, you know, what I created for myself was a dream-come-true career, but I did not create a dream-come-true life. And that was kind of my discovery in my 50s that, whoa, whoa, whoa, you have a whole second half to live here and you need to decide right now, do you want that dream-come-true life that you say you want?

And for me now, Katie, what that means is success is that feeling of joy and well-being when I know that happiness is my compass, that the pillars of my life are well-tended to, that my heart is ever expanding, my life is ever elevating, that I'm committing to doing practices each day like meditation or a little bit of yoga, or plant-based eating that I know elevate my own ability and capacity to experience joy.

Katie: Yeah, I love that. I think that's...and I'm not nearly as far long in a career or life as you. You have so much more wisdom to share, but I feel like that's something that changes over time and you realize early in life you tend to maybe sometimes fall into the world's definition of success, or what's good, or what's wanted. And, like, throughout the years, you kind of have to find your own personalized version of that. And what works for you, and I think that's a scary leap for a lot of people and a tough one, because I think it's hard to, especially when you have something so amazing and in so many aspects wonderful like you had. It had to probably be a little bit scary to take a jump and to, like, explore new territories that you weren't already successful at. Was that tough?

Sheri: Well, it was kind of my default position, and I think a lot of us do that whether we are raising children as our primary occupation, or running businesses, or any one of a number of noble pursuits that sometimes what we do is we default to the thing that comes easiest. So, for me, I knew I could throw 95% of myself into my job and be super successful. Where I was less successful was managing my health and wellness, manifesting romantic relationships, all those other things that are part of a full and great life. And what I came to realize is the scarier thing, and this is the question for anybody listening to ask yourself with great tenderness that, you know, what I realize was being someone else's something, someone else's partner, wife, someone else's mother, someone's employee, someone's right-hand does not a full life make. It's just a part of the joyride. It's not the whole thing.

So, I think for all of us, you know, it's that exercise that I did which I called the reckoning. And I write about that very extensively, which is going back and looking at your life and saying, "What is the whole story here for me?" I don't wanna just be someone else's something, even somebody as remarkable as an Oprah Winfrey, you know, being her executive producer or the president of her company. You know, what an achievement and what a glorious opportunity, like winning the Powerball lottery of careers. But it can't be the whole story because it's not.

Katie: Yeah, that's such a good point. And I think maybe especially for women, that's such a tough point because maybe it's that we're just naturally a little bit more inclined to be nurturers or we're oftentimes very good at seeing the needs of others and stepping in when there's a need. But I think that's a really tough thing, at least speaking from my own life, to be able to step in and ask yourself that question even.

So, how did you...talk a little bit more about the reckoning because I've read the book and I'll make sure it's linked and, everyone, I would encourage you to pick it up. I feel like it's like reading and talking to your best friend. You write so well. But talk us a little bit more about the reckoning.

Sheri: Well, the reckoning is really, you know, was an experience that I created for myself, you know, as a highly intensive, what I knew would be very painful experience of looking at my life across the board and seeing what I'd manifested, and what I hadn't created for myself. And, you know, one of the keys to that was to find that tender voice, the voice inside myself that I use when I talk to my puppies, Bella and Kissy, or that I talk to babies in a grocery store. It's the voice that I hadn't often talked to myself with.

Usually, it was the harsh, critical, you need to do more, you're not doing enough here, you're not enough this or you're not enough that. I had to consciously retire that critical voice and offer my tender self a seat at the table to take a look at my life and really see where I had holes, where I had gaps, where I hadn't signed up for the joyride. And once I had done that, I began to put together kind of a, I call it, a pillar life plan.

I launched a company with one of my best friends, Nancy Hala. And we launched a podcast together. And we just started having conversations as great friends in our 50s who both had gaps in our lives, what are we gonna do to make the rest of our dreams come true?

Katie: I love that. I'll make sure that that podcast is linked here on the podcast that you have as well because it's such a great podcast. But I'm also curious on the motivation side because you had a front-row seat too, many of the gurus, and the life changers, and inspiring people as Oprah interviewed them. But yet, I found my own life as well just knowing the information is never enough to make the change. So, I'm curious in you, like, was there a catalyst for that shift of between the knowing and actually the motivation, and the doing, and the implementation?

Sheri: Well, that is totally the irony that, first of all, I'm an excellent student, second of all, since I was a teenager, I was interested in personal development. So, I did, I had a front-row seat with some of the most prolific wisdom keepers of our time. And I paid attention, and I took notes, and I was inspired. But somehow, all their wisdom got put on my someday list, you know, got just, you know, I don't have time for that now because I've got to do this now. We have shows to do, but someday I'll do that, which is, you know, nothing more than an excuse and it was a good one. That's why I got away with it. It was a good excuse. And we all have great excuses.

But I remember one time on the Oprah Show, and I was a very junior person in the company, and Cheryl Richardson who is an amazing, amazing thought leader. She said, "You have to put the mask on yourself first when you're on an airplane before you can help somebody else." And I remember that caused such a brouhaha amongst women in America and around the world because for its time, it was culturally understood that women take care of everybody else first. And so, some people took offense.

But I think there's been enough shift in our culture where it's really time whether you're an overwhelmed mom or you're working two jobs and taking care of a family that we need to start to understand that all of that is done better when we take care of ourselves first. And that nurturing quality that serves us so well in anything we do needs to be directed at ourselves first. And that was my big epiphany that I realized unless I was willing to commit to radical self-care, and I used the word "radical" because I'd been so lazy about it. It's like radical self-care where I am taking care of myself like my life depends upon it.

And in doing that, all of a sudden, I'm a better sister, I'm a better daughter, I'm more creative, I'm more innovative, because I have finally gotten everything right in its priority that taking care of myself is my commitment to my own personal happiness. And my own personal happiness is part of a significant contribution I can make to the world.

Katie: Yeah. I love that line like your life depends on it because in my own life, actually, I've watched someone really dear to me in the last year or so have to go through one of those things that was life-threatening, and where they had to take care of themselves because their life did depend on it. And that really struck me as well because like you, I would guess we have some personalities, similarities. I've always been a fighter, and my thought had to always been most of my life like, "Oh, I'll just fight through it. I'll work harder. I'll sleep when I die. I can power through anything."

And the last five years or so have really been an exercise of learning that you will, first of all, speed up all of those things like dying if you don't sleep on a very practical level. But even more so, you can't just push through emotions, for instance, and you can't just push through these things and force them that there is a moment and a time required of that taking care of yourself and facing the emotions, and actually doing that work, and putting in the work of wellness, and of rest, and of bandwidth, and all those things that don't come naturally when you have that kind of fighter personality.

So, I love that you describe it as take care of yourself as if your life depends on it, and truly for any moms listening, not just your life but your family's life does depend on it because they need a mom, or a wife, or a, you know, a leader in their household functioning at that level. So, I love that the way that you put that. Can you give some examples of what that actually started looking like in your day-to-day life? And did you have trouble in the implementation? Like, did you kind of struggle with that for a while to actually get used to taking care of yourself? Was there a guilt for a while?

Sheri: I wouldn't say it's guilt because I don't...since I don't have human children, I'm not kind of driven, and I understand that would be...that's a little bit of a...it's a little bit of a more challenging thing to transcend. But I had my own issues, and listen, even now today, I just got back from a trip where there was a total of like 10 delays and 4 flight cancellations, which is super, super stressful when you're sitting in the middle of an airport and you have to get somewhere.

And, you know, the first thing I wanted to do was go to the lounge and have myself a couple nice crispy chardonnays to de-stress. And as I could feel myself ramping up, my blood pressure rising, feeling stressed out, my mood dropping, my anxiety rising, I realized like, "Okay. I have a choice here. Now, I can continue to try to numb this anxiety I'm feeling where I can go over in that corner over there that looks pretty quiet and I can meditate." So, listen, even now I am still soothing myself and talking myself into the practices that I know create happiness, and I know make it easier for me to lean into joy. And what that looks like is, you know, I'm a TM meditator, Transcendental Meditation, which is a very simple technique you do twice a day for 20 minutes. I usually can get in one.

So, if I get in one, I'm throwing myself a big parade. So, at least one meditation. I usually do about 10 minutes of sun salutations in the morning, a workout 4 or 5 times a week. And what I find like from, you know...and also, I'm on a weight loss journey. You know, that was one thing that got super out of control for me in my former stressed out, not-tending-to-myself life. I'm finding that a plant predominant lifestyle is what makes me feel like, makes me feel healthy and vibrant. So, those kinds of things for starters. But, Katie, I think that thing that the practice that I've implemented that has the greatest impact on me, which I would encourage people to try is a little bit of dreaming, like even 10 minutes a day to just go sit on a chair and do a little

dreaming about what you want for different areas of your life. It's a powerful creative tool and has almost instant results.

Katie: Yeah. I think that's another thing that's hard to...this thing we also naturally do as children, and then that's something that we forget about when we're adults and all the obligations start kicking in. But I bet for anyone listening with kids, your kids could teach you how to do it really well pretty quickly.

Sheri: That's for sure. And see, you know, here's the thing, I think we dismissed some of those things because like you say, "Oh, who's got time to dream? I've got this big to-do list." But if you would understand that dreaming is a quantum tool of creation, that you are literally dreaming up your life as you go, and if you could spend a little bit more time in that kind of mindset, in that kind of vibration as opposed to trying to get through your endless to-do list, you could actually change the quality of your life almost instantly.

Katie: Yeah. It's an interesting point. And I think, like I talk about this on a practical level in a day-to-day sense, but I think the mental level is also really applicable here that we get so swept into the day-to-day routine that we're very much just surviving a lot of times, especially, I mean, I speak from the mom perspective with six kids. Like, I'm always just managing things, keeping things running. And I think the mental aspect of that can be the toughest, and you have to actively make time for those things like you said whether it be meditation or if it's prayer, whatever it is for someone or we're thinking toward the future, and dreaming, and actually planning for that because if not, you'll just get swept away in that busyness of life. And I have so many friends, and I was guilty of it too for a long time who when you would ask how they are, they would ask how I was, the answer was always, "Oh, so busy."

Sheri: Yes. Oh my gosh. My favorite.

Katie: Yes. Have you fallen? I'm sure, well, you actually were legitimately busy, I'm sure, for a lot of years, but you've honed to that too even now in your new life?

Sheri: Well, listen, I mean, that was the story about Sheri Salata for 20 years. You know, anybody who knew me, "Oh, she's so busy. She's so busy. She's so busy." So, I'm very familiar with that characterization and what that kind of life looks like. You know, and when you're saying, you know, I hear you say, "I have six kids," and I'm like wow. And I have a tendency culturally to just go right into all of your busyness. And, you know, when I'm thinking, you know, and I know you're doing this in your life but gosh, a mom's most important job is inspiring her children to happiness, is to, showing them what it looks like to take care of themselves, is teaching them how to use, how to make their dreams come true.

And gosh, you know, I think of my own mom who, you know, culturally, she had to get through her to-do list, making sure I was bathed and fed, and I was where I was supposed to be at the right time. And I think we're in this moment where there can be a shift, where we understand what is really going on, and what we're really...and how we're really supposed to uplift each other, whether they're our children, or our friends, or our neighbors, or our co-workers.

Katie: Yeah. Yeah, absolutely. And that brings up another point that I love to talk about and I would love your take on which is the value of community because this is something else that I've seen change so much even from just what my grandparents would talk about from when they were little or when they were young parents, and how we have all this supposed connectivity, thanks to technology. But based on everything I'm seeing and all the statistics, we have so much less actual human connection and community with people who can be in that supportive friendship role. And part of it is the busyness that everyone is so busy, it's hard to actually make the time, and then we're not living in this close proximity as we used to friends and family. But that's something that for me in the last two years, speaking of, like, trying to create the life that you really want, it's been having that focus on community and all of the, like, hard times that can actually come with that but also all the beautiful times that can come with that.

And I realized that's something that I think is a tremendous void especially for a lot of women because so many women feel like whether it's they're career that's taking their focus, whether family, so they sometimes feel like they're on an island doing battle alone and trying to keep all these plates in the air at the same time. And I think even just strong community, and strong friendships, and a strong support network can make a drastic difference in how you feel and reminders to take care of yourself when you have other people in that support network doing it, too. But I also feel like it's not something that happens naturally anymore. We almost have to go out of our way to intentionally create communities that do that. Has that been part of your journey at all finding, like, really strong friendships? You mentioned your one friend in your podcast, but has that been part of the journey and part of your process as well?

Sheri: Well, absolutely. And I completely, you know, flipped everything on its head. And one of the things that Nancy and I talked about is, you know, so we've been friends for 30 years. And for years and years, our friendship was get together, share our complaints, who we're mad at, what isn't working out, what disaster happened, what this and that, and be in agreement about, "Yes, that was bad," and, "Oh, you shouldn't have been treated that way." And what we've done now is we have completely revolutionized our concept of intentional friendship is what we call it which is I really do not wanna get together with a group of sour pusses anymore.

I don't wanna talk about things that are not uplifting. I mean, I'm there for support and I'm there for encouragement, but also too, I wanna be coached to my most elevated self. And I find that when you intentionally get together and seek out people to spend time with that are looking to rise, not perfection but they're looking to rise. They're looking for more joy. They're looking for more ease. They're looking for more flow in their lives. That just being around like-minded people like that really can be elevating and energizing. You know what I mean, Katie?

Katie: Yeah, absolutely.

Sheri: That's the kind of tribe. You know, just finding people to commiserate with, it's interesting. It's like you go away. You're not really feeling that much better. You have a sense of dis-ease. And then later on, it's like then you can't even trace back, "Why am I not feeling so happy right now? Why am I feeling kind of glum and dour?" And, you know, those seeds are planted in the conversations of complaining, and, you know, this isn't

working out, and that isn't working out. I realized that, and it took me until the middle of my life. I realize that where I spend my time and who I spend my time with is absolutely crucial to how I experience joy in my life.

Katie: Absolutely, yeah. So, pivotal. And I think that's such a great point. I had that similar realization, but with people who whenever we got together, they were complaining about their husbands or complaining about their husband's actions. And, like, it kind of was a wakeup call for me at some point and just realized like, "Wow. Like, I don't feel good when we leave that environment."

Sheri: Right, exactly.

Katie: Yeah. I think that's such a great point. And I love that term intentional friendship. I've had to kind of do that in my own life to create that community I talked about. Basically, where I used to live, I found a few people who had kids sort of the same age and seem like we might have some commonalities, and I literally just sort of picked them and I was like, "Hey, you wanna be my person? You wanna go to dinner and hang out?" And we eventually had this women's group that lasted for years and years, and now where we live, we've created that even in our own neighborhood. And so, we have these like relatively daily touchpoints of people who are uplifting, and also who challenge you. And it seems like you have that aspect as well at least from your podcast that I've listened to, the gift of having another, a friend who will not just uplift you but also challenge you sometimes, it feels like. Like, you guys are great at that kind of push and pull of challenging each other as well.

Sheri: Yes, I think so. I think so. And in the end, you know, you wanna make sure that when you're creating your tribe, they're with people who are rooting for you, that they see you as you are, the things you do well, the things that, you know, you struggle with, but that are rooting for you. I really don't wanna be around somebody that feels better when I stumble because they feel better about themselves, and I don't wanna be that kind of person either. I wanna be a person who is always rooting for the people in my life and rooting for myself.

Katie: Yeah. Absolutely, for sure. So, I'm curious if there were...so, you mentioned that, you know, you were the great student and you had, like, bookmarked, book ended all these pieces of advice from all these gurus over the years to do someday. Are those coming into play now? And if so, were there any that come to mind just really like pivotal things that you heard or saw in all of those years working with Oprah that like just really stuck with you?

Sheri: Oh my gosh. It was a buffet of a spiritual life. I always say that working for Oprah and "The Oprah Winfrey Show" that the biggest company benefit, and there were many, was it gave me the foundation and the opportunity to build a spiritual life. And, you know, everybody, I mean, and some of these people are my great friends today. Deepak Chopra is one of them. His spiritual laws of success really began to transform my thinking. Marianne Williamson, her book of Return to Love kind of began a new way of looking at, you know, love as both the end game and a powerful force.

And through my exposure to all these teachers, I stumbled upon another spiritual teacher, Esther Hicks with abraham-hicks.com, and that probably was the singular most transformative thing in my life was "Ask and It Is Given," a book by Abraham Hicks, which, you know, you can Google up and get in a minute. But it was just clear and precise language where I could begin to understand that I'm in charge. I am co-creating my life with the divine force.

And once I understood that, that means that I'm responsible for my thoughts, and my thoughts are powerful, and my thoughts create outcomes. You know, there's a way of looking at the world. In its most simplistic thing, glass half-full glass half empty. And that sounds trite, a trite little saying that we've all grown up with. But what I realize is that really is the quantum, the quantum explanation of how you go through the world in joy or in misery. And the glass half-full is you're always seeing opportunity, always seeing opportunity, always seeing opportunity. And it really changes your experience literally from a quantum level, it rearranges things in your path.

Katie: Yeah. I have a friend who, and I mentioned her a couple of times, has a saying that everything will work out perfectly for me. And it's amazing because in her life, it does work out perfectly for her, not necessarily maybe always how she thought it would, but she's just such an optimist and it's contagious. When you're around someone like that, it makes you feel so positive and uplifted. Two, and I've always been relatively optimistic, but I think that there is probably a little bit of an innate temperament aspect to that, like it's never been tough for me to be optimistic, and maybe that was nature or nurture, I don't know. But do you have any tips for people who struggle with finding that optimism or, you know, things that can help on that path?

Sheri: Well, I certainly understand that. And there have been many times in my life when I felt or I told myself the story that I couldn't reach for that more optimistic thought. But here's what I'm gonna say, I have come to see that we are supposed to live the lives of our dreams. It isn't just for a lucky few. We're all supposed to live the life of our dreams. And if you knew that the secret to that, the real secret, not the secret, secret, but the real secret to that was reaching for the best possible thought you can have at any moment, wouldn't you try?

And that's what I say to myself when Nancy and I launched our podcast, we said, "Okay. Here's our mission statement. It's never too late to make the rest of your dreams come true, and if not now, when?" And whenever I repeat that to myself, I say, look, you get so many days in this physical experience. Who knows how many I have left. But I really do not wanna waste any more worrying about things that are never gonna happen, worrying about other, you know, tending, minding other people's business instead of tending to my own garden.

I really don't wanna distract myself with that foolishness anymore. I really want to live the life of my dreams. And if that means that I have to focus my thinking to optimism and belief that things are working out for me and understanding. And here's where I'll tie into The Beautiful No, Katie, that right in the moment you get a disappointment, or a heartbreak, or a no, if you can do a major shift inside and say, "Okay. I'm disappointed. I feel heartbroken, but here's what I know, that I'm gonna soon find out that this no was my...what catapulted me to the next wonderful thing in my life." And that's what I've learned.

Katie: That's such a good point.

This podcast is sponsored by Isa Herrera's Pelvic Pain relief system, which has provided relief and freedom to almost 15,000 women suffering from pain, leaking and other pelvic floor issues. While the "leak when you sneeze" post pregnancy has become so normal that it is the subject of memes. The fact is that it shouldn't be normal and definitely isn't necessary. If you've ever leaked urine as you laugh, cough, sneeze or jump, it may be a sign that your pelvis could use some help. The good news is that these types of problems can be helped and that is exactly what Isa helps women with! In fact, I can say that after carrying six babies, I can jump on the trampoline with them or run around to play capture the flag (or sneeze when they bring home a cold) without worrying about leaking, but I know many women who struggle with these activities. If you ever have, you've got to check out Isa's free masterclass which teaches things like: How to stop the bathroom trips, improve your posture, and put the fire back into your sexy with a super easy stretch (that you can do in just 30 seconds, anywhere, anytime) and why kegels might be causing leaking or making your pelvic pressure and pain worse, how to know if this is the case, and what to do instead. Even your doctor won't be able to share this with you. Isa has helped almost 15,000 women to find relief and freedom. Claim your spot at her incredible free masterclass all about it at [pelvicpainrelief.com/healing](https://pelvicpainrelief.com/healing)

This podcast is sponsored by SteadyMD, the innovative new way that I found and connect with my primary care doctor using concierge medicine. The idea of concierge medicine used to be something reserved for celebrities and the ultra-rich, and it didn't seem accessible to the rest of us. The concept is great — having a doctor who you know and trust and who knows your medical history always available when you need him/her. I've loved the idea of it for years, and was so excited when I finally found an affordable and personalized option that made this available to everyone. Think about this... we can do almost everything else virtually these days. The digital aspect makes it affordable. It's only \$169/month for a family plan of two parents and all kids. This also allows the doctors to take fewer patients so they have more time and attention for each patient. Essentially, it feels like the modern equivalent of a country medicine doctor who comes to your house when you have a medical need. Except it makes the best use of technology so we get instant access instead via text, email or even video chat. Find out more about how it works and take their free quiz to get matched with a doctor that fits your needs at [steadymd.com/wellnessmama](https://steadymd.com/wellnessmama)

Katie: And I'm curious to get really personal for a minute, if you're willing. I think you're still right. Like, choosing our thoughts is one of the most powerful things we can do. And, like, you mentioned weight struggles and I'll, like, be vulnerable and feel like that's something I struggle with as well with, you know, so many pregnancies and also thyroid disease. That's been my biggest challenge. And I realized, I was so good at changing my thoughts when it came to being hopefully like a good mom to my kids or being positive when it came to that and that was easy. Or even in business, I could be very optimistic about that.

But you hear it said, you know, that your subconscious hears all of your thoughts, and, like, really internalizes that. And I realized I was talking to myself and judging my own body and my own being really in ways that I would never ever talk to a friend or certainly never to a child. And I've realized, that was probably going to be my big thing that I had to learn and to conquer, and I'm still in progress on that. But I'm curious if you have learned anything in your journey that helps with catching yourself and making that shift when it's so deep, and so ingrained, and so directed at yourself.

Sheri: Well, Katie, I would say like you, I'm still healing that. I'm still healing that. You know, I found there I was in the middle of my life, and the weight thing had just completely gotten away from me. I used food to suppress any bit of anxiety, or stress, or emotion I felt. You know, my unexpressed grief for, you know, things that had been very hurtful in my life. Keeping cool on the outside, but inside like, "Oh my god. I have so much to do." So, I'm still healing that because you're right, those neuropathways are super deep. And that harsh, critical voice that, you know, "You're so fat. You're never gonna be able to do this," is the absolutely death of health and wellness because you cannot succeed under that sort of hatefulness.

So, you know, here, all I continued to do is sooth myself into the practices that I know create health and wellness. You know, I say, "You're doing great. It's little by little. You're releasing these habits. You're finding new powerful ways to..." You know, anxiety doesn't disappear. You know, those are habits built up over a lifetime. You're just not gonna put anxiety and stress in a drawer. It's just that now I consciously choose to handle it differently. And when I don't, I say, "Wow. You had like four pieces of pizza there. You don't feel very good right now. But it's not the end of the world. Just get back on the path that you know makes you feel good."

Katie: Yeah, exactly. That's what I kind of am realizing too on the journey of it is that I thought, you know, for all those years, I thought, "Oh, if and when I can accomplish all of these like physical health goals, then I will be happy in my body." And I've realized, "No, the peace with your body has to come first. Like, you have to love and accept your body where it is and make peace with it and be its friend." And then you can work together to move forward. But that was a tough thing for me to realize is no amount of physical perfection was ever gonna make me actually come to peace in terms of myself because that was also those deeply ingrained tendencies of perfectionism that I was holding myself to, and it was, like you said, finding that peace and giving yourself that grace, and working from there that lets you then start to make those baby steps.

Sheri: You know, I think that is brilliant what you just said because, you know, what you're illustrating, and it's a tendency I share, it's really using your excess weight as an excuse to delay happiness. And I am quite sure that if we are honored with the ability to live to an old age, that I am quite sure, looking back, it would be a very painful regret to realize you did not fully live your life because you were too busy beating yourself up for the size of your body. I mean, it just would be, it would be tragic.

And, you know, what's so great for us right in this moment is we have the ability right this minute to make a new choice and to make a new decision and say, "Body, I love you exactly where you're at right now. You're my home. You are the sacred vessel, the vessel of my dreams. And I'm gonna start speaking to you with more love. I'm gonna treat you with more love. And slowly but surely, we're gonna walk down this path together."

Katie: Yeah. I love that. And because truly also then that keeps the focus on health. And I think I've seen so many people over the years especially, you know, on college and in career, they got like the physique and all of those things right, but they were doing it in such a way that was so hard on their body and so stressful, and not actually healthy, but they maintained that perfect physique. And I think with the approach you're talking about, not only are you eventually gonna get there to where you wanna be, but you're gonna do it in a way that actually brings you toward lifelong health and, you know, things like a good parasympathetic nervous system, and all those things that actually are really truly good for us, not just that make us the size we want.

And I think that that's the key. That's the tough part and the easy part at the same time is to stop fighting and, like, to work with your body. I think that's such a great point that you make. And I should've asked at the beginning, but can you tell the story of why the book is called "The Beautiful No"?

Sheri: Oh, yes. Okay. So, "The Beautiful No". The Beautiful No is the story about how I got the job at "The Oprah Winfrey Show." And, you know, as I said earlier, I had made so many mistakes. I had done everything wrong, but it turned out okay. But, you know, I really made the journey much harder, more difficult, more painful, and longer than I needed to make it. And I had applied, you know, I was living in Chicago as an advertising producer, and I, across the river from the merchandise mart where my agency was located, there was this show making national news called "The Oprah Winfrey Show." And I was drawn to it. I didn't watch it because it was on during the day when I worked, but I could just feel that there was something going on there that I wanted to be a part of.

And I began to feel like my work was missing the kind of meaning that I craved. And so, I applied, and they rejected me. And the message was, "I'm sorry. You're not what we're looking for." And they were real nice about it but it was a no. And so, I was embarrassed. I was like, "Oh, gosh, of course, I'm not what you're looking for. It's a very different discipline." So, I went on, journeyed on. I continued to freelance produce television commercials. But I was depressed. I felt like I wasn't in the right lane.

I love to produce but I wasn't doing the kind of work that I really made my heart sing. But they had said no. So, I went on, put it out of my mind, would never have applied again. And I finally, I'm almost out of money because I was a bad freelancer. You know, dialing for dollars, calling people up and begging for work was not my strong suit. So, I was out of money. I was in desperate straits. And finally, I get this interview at a big fancy agency, and the interview goes great. And the executive producer says, "You're exactly what we're looking for. I'm gonna pay you a ton of money. I'm gonna give you all these benefits. You're gonna work on huge brands."

And so, I'm celebrating with my friends, yeehaw. Okay. I'm gonna make this work. I'm gonna make this meaningful. This is the greatest thing. You know, I'm just waiting for his call now. Well, he never called. Not only did he never call, I got a letter in the mail that said, "I'm sorry, we're not hiring at this time." So, it was devastating. I was on the couch watching soap operas for weeks afterwards because I was like, "Now, I don't even know. I don't even know what I'm supposed to be doing with my life."

And one day, when I was at in my darkest hour, another message was left on my machine and it said, "We were cleaning out an old closet and found your resume and your tape of commercials, and we would like you to come in. This is so and so at 'The Oprah Winfrey Show.'" And I didn't realize it then, of course it was a dream come true, but I didn't realize at then, but years later, I thought, "Oh, if that fancy advertising agency had hired me, and paid me big money, and gave me my great office, and put me on big accounts, a few weeks later, no way would I have quit that job to go in and talk to The Oprah Show people. So, that no was the most beautiful no I had ever gotten. And what I started to realize is if I could collapse time and shrink the gap between the disappointment of a no and knowing that it's catapulting me on to something really wonderful in my life, I think I would've mastered one of the big secrets to being happy, and that my friend is the beautiful no.

Katie: I love it. And like I said, I really enjoyed the book because it truly feels like talking to you or like having a conversation with a friend. I think you wrote it so well, and I think people are gonna love it. And of course, I'll link in the show notes both to your book and to your podcast. But another question I love to ask for the end of interviews, and I feel like you're gonna have the biggest library to pull from of anyone I've ever asked is if there are any book or books that have really changed your life, and I know you already mentioned one, but are there any others that just really had an impact on you?

Sheri: Yeah. Well, listen, you're right. It's a big library, but I'm gonna pull something else out that may be less expected because it's by one of my favorite authors, Elizabeth Gilbert who's a contemporary writer. In fact, she and I both have book birthdays in June. She has a new book of fiction coming out which I can't wait to read. But, you know, that "Eat, Pray, Love" thing, that was something that really spoke to my soul. And, you know, the journey of a woman who's life has literally fallen apart, and who's laying on the bathroom floor and feels like she's failed in every way, and to go off in the search of spirit, and pleasure, and love, I thought was that stirred something up in me, and maybe that's part of the inner catalyst for all the reckoning and the soul-searching that I've done in my own life that, you know, I think that book gives us all permission to, you know, make some radical moves and even little moves leaning more in toward the lives of our dreams, and the things that make us really happy.

Katie: I love it. I'll make sure those are in the show notes as well. And lastly, if there's just one piece of advice that you could pass on as parting wisdom to everybody listening, what would it be?

Sheri: Well, I'm gonna repeat something I shared earlier which is it's never too late to make the rest of your dreams come true. And then in parens, the little follow up is, and if not now, when? Now is what we got, my friends. We have now. We have the day we wake up in, and that may be it. So, we can begin to make our dreams come true right this minute by kind of deciding we're gonna put on some magical glasses and look at our lives and our world anew. And that's a conscious choice every day. But it's a choice that can create a different outcome. And that is my message. That is my message to myself. You know, I'm only ever really talking to myself. Like, "Come on, Sheri, put on your magical glasses and see your life and the world anew."

Katie: I love it. And I really did love your book. I would encourage all of you guys to get it and to check it out. Sheri, thank you so much for your time and for sharing today. This was wonderful.

Sheri: Thank you for having me.

Katie: And thanks to all of you as always for listening, for sharing your most valuable asset of your time with us. We're so grateful that you did. And I hope that you will join me again on the next episode of the "Wellness Mama Podcast."

If you're enjoying these interviews, would you please take two minutes to leave a rating or review on iTunes for me? Doing this helps more people to find the podcast, which means even more moms and families could benefit from the information. I really appreciate your time, and thanks as always for listening.