

## TRANSCRIPT FOR PODCAST EPISODE 43-START A LIFE LIST

I'm Jill Baughan, and you're listening to the podcast called Find Joy...No Matter What.

This is Episode 43.

If you're in a tough place right now, your joy may seem like it's hiding--or gone.

I understand. But it's still there, I promise, just waiting to be resurrected. And this podcast is designed to help you do just that...no matter what else is going on in your life.

For just a few minutes each week, I'll tell you a story--one that just might inspire a way to uncover a piece of joy you might be looking for. Then, we'll consider how it might speak to your life, because even though you'll hear quite a few of my stories during our time together, I believe you'll find your own in every one of mine.

Finally, I'll offer a benediction to send you into your day--or into your night.

So. If you're up for doing joy shots with a friend today...have a listen.

True story:

*Earlier this year, when Ruth Bryant was celebrating her 100th birthday party at the Cambridge Hills Assisted Living Center in Roxboro NC, police arrived with handcuffs. "Are you Miss Bryant?" said an officer.*

*"It all depends on what you want!" she said.*

*"Here's what I want," the deputy said. "I want you."*

*Then he handcuffed her to her walker and led her to the police car. When she kicked at him, he said, "Don't kick me; I've got a bad knee." Ruth replied, "I've got two bad knees!"*

*She was taken to the county jail in the police cruiser, lights flashing and sirens blaring, and once inside the slammer, was given an orange jumpsuit, ordered to have a mug shot taken, and given one phone call, which she made to her daughter.*

*"I'm in the jail-house now! I finally got here!" Bryant told her daughter.*

*And then everyone posed for pictures! Because apparently, one of the remaining items on Ruth's bucket list was being arrested for something.*

*Marian Oakley, Bryant's daughter, was shocked at her mother's birthday party shenanigans. 'I know that she's a hundred years old, but I didn't know that they'd be going this far,' she said.*

Well, congratulations on your incarceration, Miss Ruth. That must have been some radical bucket list you had there.

You are most likely very familiar with the concept of a bucket list--it's a list of things you want to do before you kick the bucket, right?

To summon more joy into your life, however, you might want to consider a change in terminology, since "bucket list" connotes kind of a manic pursuit of adrenaline rushes in order to beat the clock that's headed toward your death. I invite you, instead, to make a Life List--a list of things in your heart to do that will teach you how to live.

And who doesn't want more aliveness?

Some people find the idea of such a list appealing but overwhelming. Maybe right this second you can't think of a single thing you'd put on a Life List--but I can just about guarantee that there are lots of dreams inside your soul that are just waiting to be resurrected.

The truth is, your Life List can change your life. And it starts so simply: by just writing down one thing that's in your heart to do, one thing that you haven't done yet for whatever reason.

You might be tempted to think you can just remember it all, writing it down is very important. Henriette Klauser says in her book, *Write It Down, Make It Happen*, "by writing it down, you declare yourself in the game. Putting it on paper alerts the part of your brain known as the reticular activating system to join you in the play. At the base of the brain stem, about the size of a little finger, is a group of cells whose job it is to sort and evaluate incoming data. This control center is known as the reticular activating system (RAS). The RAS sends the urgent stuff to the active part of your brain, and...tunes you in to something specific and useful to you" like your baby's cry in the middle of the night, when nothing else like a dripping faucet wakes you up.

*"The RAS is like a filtering system for the brain. Writing it down sets up the filter. Things start to appear--it's a matter of your filtering system.*

Maybe, she says, you've experienced something like this, for instance:

*"If you have never owned a Honda before, and you buy a blue Honda, all of a sudden you see blue Hondas all over town. You might wonder, 'Where are all these blue*

*Hondas coming from?' But they were there all along; you were just not paying attention to them.*

Making a life list in writing *"is like buying a blue Honda; it sets up a filter that helps you be aware of certain things in your surroundings. Writing triggers the RAS, which in turn sends a signal to the cerebral cortex: 'Wake up! Pay attention! Don't miss this detail!'* Once you write down something on your life list, *"your brain will be working overtime to...alert you to the signs and signals that, like that blue Honda, were there all along."* (p. 34)

Think of it as a continuing list; you don't have to complete it in one sitting. It will evolve over time. And make it easily accessible so you can add to it when you find yourself saying, "I'd like to do that."

To get you started, I'll put a list of questions to ask yourself in the show notes. And just for fun, here's a sample from my list:

- Play percussion in a band. Any band.  
Take percussion lessons. All the fun and none of the stress of being a drummer. I have rhythm.
- Take another improv class. Learn to be really good at improv.
- Go to France, England, Ireland, Scotland, Italy, Hawaii, back to Alaska (deeper in) for hiking adventures, but also to encourage people speaking.
- Speak in prison.
- Dog sled in the snow.
- Go virtual sky diving.
- Speak at special adventure retreats like Alaskan Adventure Caregiver Respite/Dementia-Friendly Cruise and Symposium, or Breast Cancer adventure retreats.
- Get paid to have adventures and write about them.
- Go to the Junk Gypsy prom in Roundtop TX.
- Teach a class at the Holy Apostles soup kitchen/NYC.
- Do a mixed media art therapy class.
- Write the devotional I always wanted to read. Humor, a little snark, a lot of hope, no Sunday School answers.

--Go to a "rage room" and break dishes (childhood fantasy—don't judge me).

--Ride in a one-horse open sleigh.

--Play one of those pianos sitting out on a city street.

--Take a goat yoga class.

The truth is, the more you position your brain to receive, the more you'll add to the list. It may surprise you, especially if you can't really think of that much to list right now. Just start.

Here's how it happened to me as a result of writing on my list "Ride in a parade on the back of a convertible":

Last year I was able to travel to my hometown of Bluffton, Indiana, to celebrate their annual Street Fair and my brother's "reign" as Mayor, which was coming to a close after 24 years.

This Fair has been a big deal my whole life--in particular the opening night parade. When I was a child, I dreamed of being one of the contenders for Queen of something or other, because all the contenders got to ride on the backs of cool convertibles in that parade in all their evening gowned, teased-to-the-hilt very tall hair with a little sash across their fronts that stated their title of Miss Something or Other.

In fact, all through my adulthood I kept that wish on my life list. One year I even found somebody with a convertible, and had visions of applying for entry in the parade, doing the pageant wave, and wearing a sash that said something like "Miss Understood" or "Miss Conception" or Miss Demeanor."

But I could never bring myself to do it, because my brother kept running for Mayor and winning, and I didn't want to damage his credibility and reputation. Everyone would know that I was his sister and would undoubtedly pronounce judgment on him and his family. So I waited. And waited. And waited. Twenty-four cotton pickin' years I waited.

And then, on the verge of making my move, I learned that you must have some kind of community sponsor to be in this parade; in other words, they didn't just let random out-of-state people drop in and indulge themselves by crossing off life-list items.

However.

Last year, my brother Ted's final year as Mayor, the Street Fair Board decided they wanted him to be the Grand Marshal, and ride in a horse drawn carriage in the parade. My sister-in-law was to join him, of course, and there was room in the carriage for two more people. A number of teenage grandchildren were given the opportunity to ride in that carriage, but all declined. Something to do with their reputations, I think. So they asked their five-year old grandson and me to ride in it, probably because we have no reputations, and we are shameless.

Visions of the pageant wave started dancing in my head. This was my chance. So of course, I said yes.

Let me tell you, it was *magical*. For a few minutes during that parade I personally forgot everything that was wrong in the world.

And here's the truth: riding in a fancy horse-drawn carriage with people you love in a parade in your hometown, past the vendors for breaded tenderloins and funnel cakes and cotton candy and funnel cakes and candy apples and funnel cakes...oh the funnel cakes...Waving wildly at people you know, and just as wildly at people you don't know--well, it's surreal in a most remarkable way.

I have never been so close to living a Hallmark movie.

Yes, there were jokes about the carriage turning back into a pumpkin when the parade was over. And I get it. The parade ends, you step out of the carriage, and POOF. No mo bibbidi bobbidi boo.

Maybe.

But maybe not.

Because that right there was better than a thousand rides on the back of a convertible with a Miss Behavior sash across my chest. I could not have dreamed up that opportunity. But because I had a similar desire on my life list, my heart knew--and was only too willing--to jump on the chance for something far, far better.

I've framed the photos from that carriage ride--not just to remind me of the joyful moments we had that day, but also as a reminder of joyful dreams that are in line to become reality.

And so, my friend,

May you pay attention...to your own heart, and whatever is in it, knowing that what's in it is a gift from the Almighty.

May you be unafraid to write down those dreams and wishes that are just waiting to teach you how to live.

And may God rain funnel cakes on your parade...today and every day.

Thanks so much for joining me.

If you know people who could use a nudge to make even a small dream a big thing, I invite you to share this podcast with them, and subscribe yourself on Apple Podcasts, or wherever you listen to podcasts. Or you can go to my website at [jillbaughan.com](http://jillbaughan.com), click on a podcast episode and sign up to receive episodes in your inbox. Just don't miss a single one, because I so look forward to being with you again soon.

Make a Life List, my friend. And always, always remember, if you go looking for joy, you'll most likely find it.

Till next time...