Jill Baughan

TRANSCRIPT FOR PODCAST EPISODE 62: LOOK FEAR IN THE FACE

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

This is Episode 62.

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. (Music fades)

Eleanor Roosevelt once wrote, "You gain strength, courage, and confidence by every experience in which you really stop to look fear in the face. You must do the thing you think you cannot do."

Powerful, profound words that lead me to ask you: What are you afraid to do?

It might be something you MUST do…

Like surgery. I've had five, and for each of them, right before, during the time in what I call the "holding tank," waiting for my turn under the knife, my mind goes to some dark, panicky places. All I can think is, "I don't wanna do this, I don't wanna do this, I don't wanna do this, I have to do this, I have to do this, I don't wanna do this…."

I'll be honest, lying on a gurney, being pushed through those swinging double doors into the operating is an experience of profound loneliness for me. It's one of those things that nobody can do for you, or even help you through.

I am certain that you, too, have felt this, even if you've never had surgery.

Sometimes you're afraid to do something that you SHOULD do…
Maybe you need to apologize or confess something, and you fear the consequences of your own actions.

Maybe you need to have a difficult conversation. Many people will do anything to avoid making waves by, for instance, speaking the truth when it needs to be spoken…in love, of course.

Maybe you need to make a difficult visit—to someone who's dying, if you're afraid of facing death yourself, or to someone who's going through a crisis, and you're afraid of not knowing what to say.

Maybe you're afraid of having a colonoscopy, for crying out loud,

Or going to the doctor for something that's not quite right, but you're afraid of wasting time, or at the other end of the spectrum, finding out something is horribly wrong.

And then sometimes fears fall under the realm of something you actually WANT to do…

When I asked my husband what he was afraid to do—not counting life-threatening physical activities like jumping out of airplanes--he couldn't think of anything. However, I could. Way back when we were "just friends," he was afraid to ask me out. It took me thirty years to get him to tell me why: that he feared that I would spurn his affections and run back to a previous boyfriend. Those weren't his exact words, but close.

Or maybe you' have a story you feel the world needs to hear, but you're afraid of public speaking or putting your writing out there.

Or maybe you're resistant to trying to learn something new, for fear of failing.

Like I was when I saw a women's rock climbing and rappelling trip advertised in a local university's newspaper. I knew I wanted to sign up, but I was afraid I wouldn't be able to do any of it, and that I would be wayyyy older than everyone else on the trip…However, eventually, my desire to do something adventurous as I approached 40 won out over my hesitation.

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I was proud of myself for signing up, but as the time for our first preparatory meeting neared, my apprehension mounted. I had seen pictures in travel brochures of people rock climbing: long, lean bodies in spandex, dangling from rocky heights. What if this group was full of 19-year-old cheerleaders/contortionists? What if I just wasn't fit enough to do this? What if I made the trip, but was too scared to try? And what was the name of the place where we were supposed to climb? Great *Falls*, Virginia? An ominous title, if you asked me.

But I didn't let myself back out, and on the designated Friday , our group piled into a van, drove to our campground, and set up. That night it rained—hard. We got wet—real wet. As I lay in my soggy sleeping bag, I thought about my husband and daughter at home. They were dry…in a bed…and looking forward to horseback riding the next day on terra firma. This was beginning to seem like a terrible idea.

Saturday morning we hauled ourselves and our gear to the climbing site, and I found myself getting ready to rappel down the face of a small cliff for the first time. Visibly shaking, I tried to understand the leader's directions, but all I could see was the expanse of air in front of me.

"Okay," she said after she hooked me up, "grab the rope in your right hand, lean back and let go."

She had to be kidding.

"I just want to show you that I can save you even if you pass out."

That was reassuring. What if *she* passed out?

But she was right. And the extra measure of safety gave me the courage to lean way back into a sitting position in midair. I released the rope a little, then backed down; released, back down. It was actually fun. I felt like Batman descending a skyscraper wall in Gotham City—only this wasn't a camera trick.

"Holy rappel ropes," I thought. "I'm actually doing this at my advanced age. Not bad."

Climbing up, however, turned out to be more work than bouncing downward. Especially since, as we were gathered for instruction, our leader said, "Okay, take out your bandannas."

Probably to tie around our foreheads to catch sweat, I thought. But no.

"Now," she smiled, "you don't have to do this if you don't want to"—I could feel dread wash over me, knowing that an enormous wave of peer pressure was approaching—"but I'd like you to make this climb blindfolded."

Ha-ha. I thought she said *blindfolded*. As in *blind,* unable to see. She couldn't have meant that…but she did.

"By eliminating your sight," she explained, "you'll be more attuned to your other senses, mainly the touch in your hands and feet."

Personally, I would rather have been able to *see* my hands and feet, but as I said, the other eternally enthusiastic *young* climbers all agreed that yes, it would be *a wonderful* thing, being attuned to your other senses, so I acquiesced.

I watched several others go first, until there was no more stalling. With a positively pounding heart and a bandanna over my eyes, I started feeling my way up. Inch by inch and oh so slowly, I ran my hands over the rock. Lifting my feet, putting a toe on what felt like nothing bigger than a pebble, I was doing a vertical crawl. My arms pulled, my feet pushed, and my body balanced until I was halfway up. Then suddenly, I could feel nothing but smooth rock. I thought I had a toehold on something, but…Oops!

"I'M FALL…" I started to yell.

But before I could even finish my SOS, my leader pulled on the rope and held me. Gee, now I was one of those people suspended in midair. Too bad I couldn't stay there.

"There's nothing to hold on to!" I yelled at no one in particular, thinking that I must look ridiculous, that I was too old for this, that I was no good at sports, and that I should be doing something more productive with my time, like cleaning the house.

But in response came directions from my new friends below.

"Jam that foot in!"

"Move to your left!"

"Good job!"

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"You're almost there!"

Their encouragement kept me going, and finally came the blessed news. "You're at the top! Stop climbing and take your blindfold off!"

First I looked **down**—and I do mean down—at all my encouragers, then **out** (because looking down for too long would have been frightening in itself) at the Great Falls of the Potomac, and then **up** at the magnificent sky.

And I thought I heard the theme from *Rocky* playing in my head.

Which was enough, because I totally bombed every other climb we tried to do that weekend.. But no matter. I had looked fear in the face. And fear didn't win.

All these years later, that memory has followed me, and to this day, when I push past some fear, I remember what it felt like to rip off that blindfold and feel the expansiveness of the sky…and my soul.

(*Expressive Piano eases in.*)

So what are you afraid to do? What have you been putting off because of fear? A physical challenge? A hard conversation? A creative endeavor? A visit to the doctor? Learning to swim? Public speaking? Throwing a party? Visiting a friend who's in a hard place?

My guess is, you've already sucked it up and done your fair share of hard things in your life. So just let me remind you that when you **confront your fear**, it often turns out to be less scary than you thought.

And even if it's every bit as scary as you thought, I believe God smiles when you follow that magnificent, pounding heart He created in you.

And so, my friend,

May you gain strength, courage, and confidence by every experience in which you really stop to look fear in the face,

And may you do the thing you think you cannot do,

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And when you do, may you, too, hear the theme from *Rocky* playing in your head.

Thanks so much for joining me.

If you know people who need a little encouragement to go on and push past some trepidation, 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, 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.

Look fear in the face, my friend. And always, always remember, if you go looking for joy, you'll most likely find it.

Till next time...