

TRANSCRIPT FOR PODCAST EPISODE 124-ENJOY THE AGE YOU ARE

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

This is Episode 124.

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.

Then 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.

A couple years ago, my daughter posted on Facebook a picture of my then 3-year-old grandson. He was standing in their driveway, partially clothed, holding a drippy ice cream cone and smiling for all he was worth. And I had to laugh when I read her caption: "This guy is living his best life. Live it up, kid. The day is coming when the world will judge you for eating ice cream in your underwear in front of the neighbors."

Indeed.

I don't think he really felt the sting of growing older, though, until he was five, and graduating from preschool. It was pandemic time, so instead of a ceremony, his classmates had a parade, each child in a different decorated car. I loved watching him in a little red cap and gown, hanging out the window, yelling to his friends. But his exuberance disappeared on the drive home, after all the hoopla was over. He was uncharacteristically quiet, so I asked him, "Hey what's the matter, buddy?"

His reply: "I wanna be five forever." (I'm right there with ya, pal.)

And then, the next year, at the end of his last day of kindergarten, the minute he got off the bus, he trotted over to his mom in tears, saying, "I don't want it to be over!"

Oh yes. The challenges of moving from one stage of life to another start early...and the transitions don't get any easier as time goes on.

See, I believe that we begin our existence with an unlimited capacity for joy. Then life starts to happen: we are distracted from our good times because people are always urging us to move from one grade to the next, accept more responsibility, to exercise self-discipline. There's a lot of work to do, you know.

And then after we've lived and worked a while, we get our first taste of soul sadness. We lose something--our innocence, or a dream falls by the wayside--or we lose someone very dear through relocation or death or desertion. We start growing up and accumulating a lot of responsibility, like jobs and complicated relationships and mortgages on houses that we have to clean. In the midst of it all, we realize one day it's been a while since we relished life in the right now.

Maybe you're at an age at which you find yourself doing a fair amount of reflecting on your life--looking back at your past, taking stock of your present, and wondering about your future--and maybe that future scares you some, and you start to long for simpler or healthier times.

A while back I took an informal survey of people's satisfaction at their present ages, and heard responses such as

"I wish I were in school again."

"I'd give my right arm to be in college again."

"The happiest times in your life are when your children are little." (Maybe got a little amnesia going on there...)

"These are NOT the golden years."

And a number of people said, "Oh, to be 20, 30, 40, 50, 60, 70..." (Whatever is 10 years younger than you are).

In her nineties, my mom even said, "Oh, to be 85 again."

Many people mourned the bodies they had in a previous stage of life and, of course that's understandable. Author Kate Bowler, having been diagnosed with colon cancer in her thirties, knows this face-on-the-ground position well. She knows what it's like to feel at war and in complete dismay with your own body, so much so that she wrote hers a letter that said,

Dear Body,

Sometimes, I hate you. You ache. You get tired sooner than I'd like to admit. You wake me in the night for no good reason. Your cells duplicate at unpredictable rates. New gray hairs and fine line and silver stretch marks show up out of nowhere. You let me down just when I need you the most.

Sometimes, I look in the mirror and don't recognize the person staring back at me. I look exhausted. Worn. Aged.

Sometimes, I want a break from living with you. I'd prefer to trade you in for a newer model. A model that isn't in constant pain, that fits better in that pair of jeans, that has more energy. With you, I am limited--bound by skin and bone and thinning hair.

With you, I am fragile.

It wasn't always this way. I remember when you had invisible springs. You didn't need coaxing, tending, or fixing. You had endless courage and resilience. You could stay up all night with a friend or chase littles around in the yard. You seemed invincible, your memory, infallible.

Yet here we are. This flesh and bone. These cages. These places of freedom and constraint. I want my body to be perfect, but instead I'm reminded of what I can't master, what I cannot perfect.

Sometimes, though, we think that, as we travel from one stage of life to the next, what's done is done, there's no going back, and no use looking back, longing for what used to be. But if you've been living under that spell, I have some good news. Anne Lamott offers us some hope from this perspective:

Here is my theory, she says. I am all the ages I've ever been. You realize this at some point about your child—even when your kid is sixteen, you can see all the ages in him, the baby wrapped up like a burrito, the one-year-old about to walk, the four-year-old napping, the ten-year-old on a trampoline...every age we've ever been is who we are.

So how can I be represented by a snapshot, or any one specific aging age? Isn't the truth that this me is subsumed into all the me's I already have been, and will be?

Indeed. And I believe, every age we've ever been, can help us find joy in whatever age we are.

You might start by taking a little journey back through your life, thinking about each stage, and asking, "What did I love about that stage of life?" then finding ways to revisit the heart of it. For instance, in childhood, maybe you loved to climb trees. That doesn't necessarily mean you're dying to swing through the forest now, but it might be an indicator of your love of the outdoors...and you can certainly tap into that source of wonder and energy.

Once you've spent some time considering your childhood, adolescence, young adulthood, middle adulthood, and your elder years (even if you're not there yet!), really zero in on memories about when you were engaged in activities that brought you great delight.

Here are some ideas and some past podcast episodes to get you started; I'll also put a link in the show notes so you can click on easily.

In childhood, we often find it easy to be "in the moment." Try listening to Episode 6 (*Be Naked with Candy*) or Episode 51 (*Have Some Big, Dumb Fun*) or Episode 71 (*Throw Confetti*).

In adolescence, you may have been all about looking for fun, so listen to Episode 13 (*Get Into Mischief*), or Episode 88 (*Dance*) or Episode 25 (*Let Music Take You to Joy*).

In young adulthood, a lot of us were more inclined to take risks than we are now. To jumpstart your adrenaline, you could listen to Episode 27 (*Take a Playful Risk*) or Episode 31 (*Have Yourself an Adventure*).

Middle adulthood? It's often a time for new starts and new opportunities. Try listening to Episode 120 (*Say Yes*). To more than a dress.

And old age? If you're not there yet, you might be inspired by Episode 47 (*Find a Hero, Then Be One*) or Episode 103 (*Find a Guide*).

And as far as those pesky "aging body" issues go? Even if our spirits can access all the me's we've ever been, but our bodies seem unable to go there, I invite you to give your personal jar of clay a break. And so does Kate Bowler when she continues her letter: *Dear, dear body, I get it. Or at least I am starting to. You do not have an unlimited supply. You run out, and I need to listen. Maybe I really should go to bed a little earlier or let you off the hook for craving those extra salty chips. I need to sense when you are struggling, and gently acknowledge that you are actually changing. That time and love and grief and life have worn themselves into my skin. Day by day. This is the beautiful, terrible evidence that we have lived.*

So, let's give up the myth of perfection, shall we? Perfection in what we eat. Perfection in what we assume bodies should look like or feel like. Perfection in imagining we'd be over this weird body stuff by now.

So, I want to say I am sorry. You couldn't help aging, changing, being human. I love you. I will try to be gentle and patient with your ways.

So, dear body, let us quiet ourselves and look to God who made us in all our imperfections and in our total dependence. Through God, in God, we live and move and find our being (Acts 17:28). Let us be more awake, more alive, more drawn together body and soul into that single purpose--to love and be loved by a God who calls us God's own.

And so, my friend, when you find yourself longing for the body you used to inhabit, the "person" you used to be, or a stage of life you used to enjoy,

May you remember that you are really all the you's you've ever been, all running around in one soul,

And may you, all of your days, dig deep into every experience that's woven into the amazing tapestry that is you today,

And may you find joy in being exactly where you are.

Thanks so much for joining me.

If you know someone who longing for another time and place in life, I invite you to share this podcast with them, and subscribe yourself on iTunes, 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 an episode, because I so look forward to being with you again soon.

Enjoy your age and stage, right this minute, friend. And always, always remember, if you go looking for joy, you'll most likely find it.

Till next time...

NOTES:

Podcast Episodes:

6 - *Be Naked with Candy*

<https://jillbaughan.com/2020/04/13/podcast-episode-6-be-naked-with-candy/>

51 - *Have Some Big Dumb Fun*

<https://jillbaughan.com/2021/02/22/podcast-episode-51-have-some-big-dumb-fun/>

71 - *Throw Confetti*

<https://jillbaughan.com/2021/07/12/podcast-episode-71-throw-confetti/>

13 - *Make Some Mischief*

<https://jillbaughan.com/2020/06/01/podcast-episode-13-make-some-mischief/>

88 - *Dance*

<https://jillbaughan.com/2021/11/08/podcast-episode-88-dance/>

25 - *Let Music Take You to Joy*

<https://jillbaughan.com/2020/08/24/podcast-episode-25-let-music-take-you-to-joy/>

27 - *Take a Playful Risk*

<https://jillbaughan.com/2020/09/07/podcast-episode-27-take-a-playful-risk/>

31 - *Have Yourself an Adventure*

<https://jillbaughan.com/2020/10/05/podcast-episode-31-have-yourself-an-adventure/>

120 - *Say Yes*

47 - *Find a Hero, Then Be One*

<https://jillbaughan.com/2021/01/25/podcast-episode-47-find-a-hero-then-be-one/>

103 - *Find a Guide*

<https://jillbaughan.com/2022/02/21/podcast-episode-103-find-a-guide/>

Bowler, Kate, and Jessica Richie. *Good Enough: 40ish Devotionals for a Life of Imperfection*. Convergent Books, 2022.

Lamott, Anne. *Grace (Eventually): Thoughts on Faith*. Riverhead Books, 2008.