

## TRANSCRIPT FOR PODCAST EPISODE 129-GO TO PLAN B

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

This is Episode 129.

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.

Ever have a vision of the way you wanted something to work out...and it didn't?

Of course you have.

Personally, I have a dream of going dog sledding in the snow.

I can just picture my frosty breath crystallizing in the air before me, positioning myself on a sled, laughing with my friends, my cheeks pink with exhilaration and wind burn. We are all clad in toasty long johns and big down jackets, wearing huge mittens, and snuggled under mountains of furry blankets. A clear blue sky overhead elevates our spirits even more as we whiz along the snow-covered landscape for miles and miles at slightly alarming, speeds...

This has been on my life list for quite some time. Hasn't exactly happened yet. At least not the way I pictured it in my overactive imagination.

But a few years ago in the fall, we were in Vermont with friends, poking around the town of Stowe, when I saw a pamphlet that advertised four-season dog sledding. At first I dismissed the information because I thought "If I can't go dog sledding in the snow, I don't want to go. It won't be the stuff of my Iditarod dreams."

On second thought, though, with that life-list item always in the back of my mind, I *was* curious, so I called.

When there was no snow, the owner said, they used wheels instead of runners, and ran the sleds through the woods. It actually sounded like fun. No snow, it was true, but I was quickly emerging into a Plan B mindset--as in, Plan B could quite possibly be as much fun as--albeit different than--the Plan A of my dreams.

So we got directions and drove. And drove. Further and further out in the country we drove until we reached the middle of nowhere (cue the banjo music) where we saw a crude looking little wooden sign that said, "Dog Sledding," with an arrow pointing thataway. "Thataway," however, was blocked by some slightly scary-looking guys doing some road work that was blocking the way to our destination. They said it was no problem for us to park our car on the side of the road and hoof it up to the farm, so reluctantly we did, with a teensy bit of growing intrepidation.

What if all this was just a cover for some illegal operation and we were walking into a terrible trap, about to be kidnapped and held hostage for--oh who knew what?

When we got to the property, however, we saw that the "office" was a house, where we were greeted by a friendly man who introduced himself. So far so good; he seemed safe.

"Come on in and get to know the dogs," he said, as he ushered us into a living room like none we had ever seen—mainly because it was the obviously the *dogs'* living room—where there was a TV, a wood stove, and a bunch of couches with about a dozen dogs in various stages of repose and enthusiasm. The minute they caught sight of us, they all sprang to life with great excitement; all we had to do was plop down on the floor, and we were totally covered up with canines.

After we had bonded with them a little while, it was time to harness up. We were not prepared for what happened next. When the guy gave the cue (something like "Time to go!") all the dogs shot off toward the door, barking and yelping and jumping like there was a side of beef waiting for them outdoors. (It reminded me of the Bumpass dogs from the movie *A Christmas Story*). It was "AR! AR! AR!" times ten. He opened the door, and they raced off, wild with anticipation.

"These animals LOVE to mush," he said, and we learned that as he hitched them up as a team, still bouncing up and down, ar ar ar-ing, as we hopped onto the sled and assumed the position. "Hold on!" he yelled, and then gave the dogs one last check to make sure they were ready. Then he yelled the magic word "Heeyah!" that sent us tearing through the woods to the tune of a lot of "Gee!" and "Haw!" careening left and then right, sometimes emerging into a clearing with a magnificent view of--not snow, but a New England countryside, dripping with vibrant fall foliage.

It was a wild, beautiful ride. Not the one of my dreams, but sometimes, it's true, that Plan B can be just as amazing as Plan A.

Maybe you've been forced into a Plan B on a deeper level these days: Your circumstances aren't the stuff your dreams are made of, you've been forced onto an alternate path because of health challenges or your plans have been derailed by someone else's decisions or circumstances beyond your control. Maybe it's something as simple as a day at the beach being plagued by bad weather, or as complex as losing a job or an opportunity because of a health crisis—or any kind of crisis.

If so, it's easy just to give up on your little (or big) vision. But think about this:

But Plan B can create opportunity; it can redirect your skills, and it can offer surprises that bring the kind of joy you never imagined.

Like writer Deana Kohl's experience, when she decided one year, three days before Christmas, to invite fifty neighborhood families to her home for a cookie party. She called them all on the phone (imagine that) and almost everyone responded with "Sounds like a lot of fun—we'll do our best to be there."

I could have told her right then and there that this response is the death knell of a holiday party, but she didn't ask me.

Anyway, she excitedly described her vision to her family: *We could put some Christmas lights on the two evergreens by the front door, weave some ribbon and garlands through the stair rails, hang a mistletoe ball over the hall doorway and band red poinsettias in the bay window.*"

And by three o'clock on December 22<sup>nd</sup>, they were ready. She says, *our dining room table was a tantalizing mosaic of homemade Christmas cookies of almost every kind and shape imaginable. I was poised by the cranberry-red punch bowl. My husband and sons were stationed at the front door. Our springer spaniel, sporting a red velvet bow for the occasion, lay by the hearth. It was picture perfect—almost. All we lacked was the house full of mirthful guests!*

Who actually never appeared. Only a couple people showed up, and she—to be honest—was not only disappointed, but fairly ticked off. Also, she was left with a gazillion cookies and no one to eat them. So she and her family boxed them up and started taking cookies to people who were having a hard time: a sightless friend, inmates in a nearby prison, a new family in the neighborhood, a woman who had lost her husband in a tragic accident.

And later she said she realized, *we gave a second Christmas party. It was a huge success. All the right people came...*

Author Doug Dickerson says that *The blessing of Plan B is not always easy to see in the beginning. The blessing of Plan B is realized when we embrace it and begin the journey it takes you on.*

And so, my friend, when it looks like a dream or desire or a plan isn't going to happen, and you're faced with a choice to do nothing or take a different path,

May you shake hands and call a truce with circumstances beyond your control.

And may you stay alert for different ways to experience the delight you had in mind,

And when you land on a possibility, may you tune your ear in, and be fully present to the possibilities around you beautiful alternative music of the "Ar! Ar! Ar!" right in front of you.

Thanks so much for joining me.

If you know people whose Plan A has fallen into a heap at their feet, 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](http://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.

Go to Plan B, friend. And always, always remember, if you go looking for joy, you'll most likely find it.

Till next time...

#### NOTES:

Dickerson, Doug. "The Blessing of Plan B." *Leader's Beacon*, July 21, 2012.

<https://www.leadershipbeacon.com/the-blessing-of-plan-b>

Kohl, Deana. "Mother's Colossal Cookie Caper." *The New Guideposts Christmas Treasury*, 1988.