

## TRANSCRIPT FOR PODCAST EPISODE 191: BE FUNNER

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

This is Episode 191.

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.

*Fun is dead*, writes Karen Heller in The Washington Post: *Sometime in recent history, possibly around 2004, Americans forgot to have fun, true fun, as though they'd misplaced it like a sock.*

*Instead, fun evolved into work, sometimes more than true work, which is where we find ourselves now.*

*When there are podcasts on happiness; a global study on joy ([The Big Joy Project](#)); workshops on staging a "funtervention"; fun coaches; and various [apps to track happiness](#), two things are abundantly clear: Fun is in serious trouble, and we are desperately in need of joy.*

*Consider what we've done to fun. Things that were long big fun now overwhelm, exhaust and annoy. The holiday season is an extended exercise in excess...*

*Weddings have morphed into multistage stress extravaganzas while doubling as express paths to insolvency.*

*[Even] Impending parenthood is overthought and [over-apped](#), incorporating more savings-draining events that didn't exist a few decades ago: [babymoons](#) and [lethal, fire-inducing, gender-reveal gatherings](#) and baby showers so over-the-top as to shame weddings.*

*Vacations are overscheduled with too many activities.*

*The beach is no longer a day at one, an oasis of rest and relaxation. Vacationers feel the need to plant a chair — make that eight — at sunrise before transporting 220 pounds of stuff in a Buick-sized **beach wagon**, which is also a thing that used not to exist when a bucket, a book and a towel were enough. And still most people stare at their phones instead of the water.*

*How did this happen?*

Well, Heller says, *Blame it on an American culture that values work and productivity over leisure.*

*Blame it on technological advances that tether us to work without cessation.*

*Blame it on 2004 and the introduction of FOMO, our dread of missing out, broadcast through multiple social media spigots, allowing us to follow/stalk prettier, richer people having oodles of fun in fabulous places (“Look at me having so much FUN!”) while doing irreparable damage to our free time, self-esteem and ability to experience joy.*

You may agree or disagree, but let me just offer this thought: if any of this resonates even a little bit with you, or for a number of reasons, you just haven’t been having enough jollity lately, maybe you would like a little help with your sense of fun. Catherine Price, in her book, *The Power of Fun: How to Feel Alive Again*, introduces us to a great tool to get your fun-motor going if it’s threatening to stall these days.

She suggests this simple exercise--I think you’ll really like it: write down 3-5 experiences in the past that have been fun for you. You can reach back into your childhood or into your more recent adulthood or, maybe best of all, try a combination of the two. Pause the podcast for a minute to think back, and list those experiences on paper or in your mind. Then, answer these three questions about each of those experiences:

**First, what environment you were in?** (Were you indoors? Outdoors? Someone’s home? In an amusement park? At a big fancy gala?)

**Next, consider this: Who were you with?** Old friends? New friends? Family? Strangers? Or were you alone?

**Third, what was the activity?** What were you actually doing? Hiking? Dancing? Making art? Making or listening to music? Something physical? Something sedentary? Something intellectual? Something ridiculous?

You may well see a pattern here, and be able to discern the nature of fun—for YOU.

For instance, my list includes the time a group of us toilet papered the inside of our pastor's house; a staff Christmas party where we played competitive charades; playing keyboards on TransSiberian Orchestra music with a band one Christmas; and dancing at a wedding and playing a volleyball game with no rules.

This tells me that fun for me is often out and about, with other people, involving creative community; includes music, some free movement and maybe a little mischief. Which might explain why Scrabble is generally not fun for me. Too much silence and thinking.

This little inventory can encourage you to feed yourself—on the regular—activities that will actually make you a funner human.

Also helpful is another tool Catherine Price suggests, to make deep fun an actual lifestyle for you. She describes it by the acronym SPARK: make space, pursue passions, attract fun, rebel and keep at it.

**1. Make space:** *Making space means clearing mental and physical clutter. It means building stillness and openness into your schedule so that you have room for more moments of playfulness.*

For instance, you can create mental space by making a not-to-do list of whatever gets in the way of your fun. What would be on yours? Mine would include NOT being pressured into having someone else's idea of fun, like jumping out of an airplane. Or playing Scrabble. Did I mention that already?

**2. Pursue passions.** What rings your bell? If you've lost track of your passions, try finishing these sentences.

*I'm interested in learning to...*

*I'm interested in learning about...*

*I'm curious about...*

*I'd like to get better at...*

*Things I used to do with my free time but don't any more...*

*Things I always say I want to do or learn, but supposedly don't have time for...*

*It might sound silly, but I'd love to...*

*I feel alive when...*

And one of my favorites: *When I was a child, I enjoyed...* When I was a kid, I loved to go to drive-ins for a hot dog and a frosty mug of root beer. There was just something about eating in the car that made me feel like we were having a picnic on wheels. Once, on a visit to my home town as an adult, I suggested going to Bummie's—a local drive in—with my mom, who said, "We have hot dogs at home. Why would you want to go get one in the car?" and I said, "Just for fun, mom." To which she replied, slightly bewildered, "You do a lot of stuff just for fun." Indeed. We went to Bummie's that day. And it was fun.

### 3. Attract fun

*Being perceived as a fun person doesn't depend on genetics or an extroverted personality. It means that...many of the traits that make people seem fun are the result of choices, attitudes, and habits practiced over days and years.*

One of those is making the choice to **be present** and ask, "How can I **add a little playfulness** to what I'm doing or experiencing right now?" I have a disco light in the kitchen that I sometimes turn on while I'm cooking. It does turn meal prep into a party. Or be like my husband, Ben, on a church choir retreat at a hotel years ago. A little marquee outside our rehearsal space indicated that this room was reserved for Cool Spring Baptist Church. Ben decided, however, to spice things up a little bit by taking some letters off and rearranging the others to read: *Girls: Go to Ben's room*. A little debauchery can certainly light up a choir practice, all right. Which leads us to the R in SPARK:

### 4. Rebel

*If you're a rule-following adult, the idea of being more rebellious might make you clench up. But here's the thing: In the proper doses, irresponsibility and indulgence are very good for us.*

*How?*

Identify what type of rebellion you enjoy—not types that make you truly uncomfortable or go against your value system.

You can rebel against **habit**. *Take note of the things you do regularly out of habit. Then you ask yourself a few times each day how you could mix things up.*

Or you can rebel against **convention** (I applied to dress up like the Chick-Fil-A cow and do a few gigs, a career opportunity clearly intended for someone much younger)

Maybe rebelling against **formality** sounds fun to you. Remember pandemic zooming: business clothes on top, pj's on bottom?

Or perfectionism? Or—my favorite—rebellious against adulthood. Join kids in playing hide and seek, climbing on playground equipment, or wearing pirate hats, splashing around in a pool. Or ditch the kids, grab a bunch of adults and act like children without the children.

Finally, **Keep at it.** Catherine Price suggests that you plan for fun. Sounds counterintuitive, but if you don't plan for it, the rest of your life will take over...*One of the main goals of "keeping at it" is to always have something on your calendar that you're looking forward to, definitely every week and ideally every day.*

Right now. What's something fun you can put on your calendar for tomorrow—no matter what tomorrow is looking like from your view today?

And then, my friend, be encouraged by the words of Kate Bowler pronouncing a blessing over you when she says:

*Life is hard; it's hard almost all the time. We might feel like our little pilot light is dimming. And maybe we wonder if it might be snuffed out altogether. But it's there, my dears, I swear it is. Our little pilot lights just might need a little more oxygen. So*

*Let's bless that part of us that doesn't need to just survive. We need to laugh. And do something dumb. And maybe push somebody else into the pool. So let's bless that part of ourselves.*

*Blessed are you for feeling that pull, that tug back toward a part of yourself so easily ignored—yourself at ease, yourself in the flow, yourself at play. Pain or boredom or business has sucked up all the energy. But wait—aren't you more than a crisis fire fighter?*

*Blessed are you when you relax, when you feel young again, when you lay the stress down. Blessed are you when you remember you used to be pretty good at guitar, or piano, or actually you're a terrible singer, but wait. You're going to reach for the show tunes.*

*Blessed are you who put the word "fun" in the calendar even when you have no idea what you might actually do. You are more than a list of things to do, people to love, problems to survive.*

*You are a big loud laugh, or a quiet study of wonder. Extroverted or introverted, splashy or contained, may the joy of fun be poured back into your roots. And may you watch yourself come back to life.*

Thanks so much for joining me.

If you know people who might benefit from more merrymaking in this 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](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. And just so you know, the podcast celebrates its 4<sup>th</sup> birthday this month! Yes, it was born in 2020, just in time to help save your sanity. And mine. And it's about time for a little evolution. So! I'll be comin' atcha twice a month from here on out—to give you time to stay up to date, and to give me the head and the heart space to work on some additional ways to help you find joy...no matter what.

In the meantime, be funner than you've ever been. And always, always remember: if you go looking for joy, you'll most likely find it.

I'm here with you, my friend! And we'll go lookin' together. Till next time...

**(Feeling Happiness fades out.)**

NOTES:

Bowler, Kate. *Have a Beautiful, Terrible Day*. Convergent Books, 2024.

*Everything Happens Podcast*. "Catherine Price: Serious About Fun," 11/07/23.  
<https://katebowler.com/podcasts/serious-about-fun/>

Heller, Karen. "Fun Is Dead." *The Washington Post*, December 23, 2023.

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The Fun Girls from *The Andy Griffith Show*.  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Fun\\_Girls](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Fun_Girls)