TRANSCRIPT FOR PODCAST EPISODE 203-PUT YOURSELF IN THE PATH OF LAUGHTER

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

This is Episode 203.

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.

The Tennessee Vacation industry website has reported, in my opinion, a brilliant remarkable idea. Here it is: (I think you'll love it!)

Tennessee faces its toughest critics yet with a new "Kid Reviewed" campaign. The Tennessee Department of Tourist Development partnered with attractions across the state to find out whether joy can actually be measured. And if so, is it possible to identify the places and activities that generate the greatest joy among school-aged children? To answer these questions, the state introduced a special, wearable technology called the Laugh Tracker to scientifically prove where kids have the most fun.

Laugh Trackers were deployed statewide in May of 2019, and Tennessee ambassador Dolly Parton got in on the fun when she invited a pint-sized panel of experts to experience Dollywood's newest attraction, Wildwood Grove.

"When I hear a child laugh, that is the most joyful sound in the world to me, because it makes everything else kinda fly out the window," said Parton. "You think you got troubles, you think you got heartaches, and you forget to laugh yourself when you get a little older. Sometimes you let all your troubles and your worries get on you. But to hear a little kid laughing—just to hear that freedom, and that glee and that joy—it's like good medicine to me."

Here's how it works, turning laughs into data:

Kids wearing laugh trackers visit an attraction.

Laughter is recorded. Laugh trackers detect and record audio and heart rate.

Data is sent to a neural network.

Audio files are sent to the Cloud.

Is it a laugh? AI software uses machine learning to determine if the sound is laughter.
The data is then fed into a Fun Meter to provide a visual display of fun at a given attraction.

So far the Laugh Tracker has visited over 30 Tennessee attractions, and

Analyzed 2, 023, 723 data points,

Recorded over 53, 4333 moments of excitement detected above resting heart rate.

The resulting laugh stats (and this was in 2019): 1,634, 400 + moments of laughter—80 average laughs per hour per kid.

More than 200 children have worn the Laugh Tracker for over 450 hours at attractions across Tennessee. The device recorded more than 36,000 laughs.

"Tennessee is an incredible family destination. Rather than hear it from us, we wanted to hear straight from the kids," added Mark Ezell, Commissioner of the Tennessee Department of Tourist Development. "For the millions of families taking a trip this summer, we invite you to come and experience first-hand our state's soundtrack of laughter with scenic beauty, rich history, music and adventure."

And, in addition to the Laugh Tracker, Tennessee's state tourism office created a traveling "Kid Reviewed" booth, where children recorded their honest reviews of popular attractions across the state.

So far, the "Kid Reviewed" booth has appeared at popular family destinations across Tennessee including the Children's Museum of Memphis, Discovery Park of America in Union City, Nashville Zoo, Fall Creek Falls in Spencer, Tennessee Aquarium in Chattanooga, Hands On! Discovery Center in Gray and Dollywood in Pigeon Forge.

"Kid Reviewed" was developed based on research, which shows moms handle the often-stressful task of planning family vacations, relying heavily upon online reviews when choosing where to visit, where to eat and where to stay. None of the popular online review sites include reviews from the real authorities on what kids will enjoy—the kids themselves.

Just brilliant, I tell you.

Of course, we're not always kids on vacation…and you may loathe amusement parks, for instance, and would certainly not be laughing 80 times per hour if someone forced you to pound asphalt and stand in line for a whole day.

And granted, kids laugh at stuff we adults think isn't especially funny (like my grandsons, who go full-on hysterical when they hear a little tune called *The Poop Song*, which makes us adults want to poke our eyes out with a fork).

And true, tourist attractions aren't everyday life. However, they suggest that we could do the same as these families with kids, and ***intentionally put ourselves in the path of fun and laughter.***

How could you do this? Well, you might want to try out some of the 'humour habits' devised by the American psychologist Paul McGhee, one of the pioneers of humour research, in his book *Humor as Survival Training for a Stressed-Out World* (2010).

First, he suggests surrounding yourself with humour. This involves figuring out exactly what your sense of humour is, and thinking about how you might include more of it in your life.

1. For example, he recommends watching funny movies. Download films that make you really laugh and re-watch them: the good ones will make you laugh again and again.

2. You can watch YouTube clips that give a quick joy shot. Our family loves the Ultimate Dog Tease (I put a link in the show notes), where the dog's owner says things like, "I went to the fridge, took out some bacon—you know, flavored with maple," and the dog says, "The maple kind?" and the owner says, "Yeah so I took it out " "Yeah?" and thought, "I know who would like that—me! So I ate it!" and the poor salivating dog goes, "Ahhhhh!" and on and on. We have watched this thing at least twenty times. Ridiculous, but we laugh as much now as we did when we first saw it four years ago.

McGee himself loves The Three Stooges' pie-throwing sketch from 1930, which is a total mystery to me, but then I've noticed that a lot of guys love to laugh at The Three Stooges, and a lot of women, not so much. Why is this?

Tom Reilly, news editor for *The Sun Chronicle*, offers up a possible explanation: *It's a given that men love the Stooges as much as women hate them. Actually it's more that women are just mystified by them.*

The Stooges act just the way women fear their worst nightmare blind date would act. For some reason women don't find this funny. Possibly because they feel that they have, in fact, dated one or more stooges in their lives.

Guys like the Stooges for the same reason kids do. The Stooges act the way that kids want to, or that we would have done if we had been able to lock our parents in the basement and extort school excuse notes from them as the price of food and water.

I don't know. Could be. The point is, you just have to find what's funny to you, and give yourself the gift of laughter.

McGhee's second suggestion is *to try to cultivate a playful attitude at work and at home. Try to find the fun in things, and to get more enjoyment from what you're doing in the moment. I find this helps move me into a favourable frame of mind. Think of this like warming up before any physical exercise – here, you're getting your body and your emotions ready to laugh.*

To help with this, he recommends looking for humour in everyday life – for example, by putting up 'What's funny about this?' reminders around the house. You just need to be open to seeing the humour in the everyday things around you.

Third, try to spend time around those who make you laugh**.**

Friends: You know who they are. The people who leave you feeling better than they found you.

Or kids: Be intentional about spending time with them.

Or animals: play with your pets or go visit animals on a farm or a rescue ranch. Or do what I did, and rent a chimpanzee for a couple hours (probably the most I've laughed in my life. Go listen to podcast episode 11 for that epic event.)

Fourth, tell stories. I do that a lot on this podcast—just to bring you a little joy. For instance, you may recall the time that Ben and I were on a road trip out in the country, and I had an urgent need for a bathroom. There were no facilities anywhere near us, so he pulled over on the side of the road, and I hopped out to take care of business. But when I was right in the middle of business, he decided that it would be amusing to slowly pull the car away and leave me exposed to passing motorists.

Come to think of it, only one of us was laughing at that one.

But whatever.

And lastly, don't forget to ingest some reading material that makes you feel happy. Send yourself to bed at night with a smile on your heart. Personally, I love *Dave Barry's Book of Bad Songs*—a totally subjective list based on a popular column he once wrote. One of the categories consists of songs with lyrics that are easy to misinterpret. For the longest

time, he thought the first line of the Beach Boys' song "Help Me Rhonda" said, "Since you put me down there've been owls pukin' in my bed." Yep.

Again, there's no accounting for taste when it comes to laughter. It's all good.

And so, my friend,

May you congratulate yourself on a fitness routine that involves the aerobic benefits of a good haha,

May you search out and find ways to let that kind of joy leak out of your lungs,

And may you spend your days grateful to God, the Author and Source of everything good, for the gift of reasons to laugh…

Thanks so much for joining me.

If you know people who need a little boost of jollity these days, 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 a single one, because I so look forward to being with you again soon.

Put yourself in the path of laughter, my friend. And always, always remember: if you go looking for joy, you'll most likely find it.

Till next time...

NOTES:

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