TRANSCRIPT/NEW INTRO. FOR PODCAST EPISODE 68-BREAK THE RULES

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

This is Episode 68.

Hey friend,

Ever feel like you need a little joy shot first thing in the morning while you get ready for your day? You can absolutely get one now as you listen to the audio version of my new book, *No Matter What: 90 Devotions for Experiencing Unexpected Joy in Tough Times.*

In the time it takes to brush your teeth, you can listen to a devotion that just might lift your spirits and propel you into the shower with a smile on your face. Even if you're not a morning person!

You can find it on most audiobook platforms, like Audible, Spotify, Amazon and more.

I had so much fun recording this book for you because, as you've heard me say before, I just love being in your ears. And I treasure our time together because…

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 may 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.

When I was teaching English at Virginia Commonwealth University, I'd always have students write me a letter at the end of the semester—about anything they wanted. I promised that I wouldn't read the letters until after I posted their grades, just in case they had something hostile or critical they needed to vent.

You can only imagine the kind of stuff they wrote—funny, sad, angry, grateful, you name it, they said it. Their commentary on the semester was all over the place. But the most memorable letter came from a sweet girl whose second language was English. It was the ultimate good news/bad news communique. She said this:

"…Honestly, when I first saw you, I thought you are very easy and smooth teacher. That means you not really care about what students doing…

(NOT the first impression any instructor wants to give; I'm not exactly sure what I did or said to make her think I was easy. Maybe I smiled just a little too much.)

"But," she continued, "you are totally different than I expected. You are very detailed and planned everything what we need to cover every single day. When I got essays back, I got the exact point from you and good advice, too."

(Well, THAT was a relief. Maybe I wasn't the slacker she imagined from her first impression.)

Then she continued, "However," (uh oh. Something's coming up to negate the happiness of the previous sentence.) "I really wanted to see your face with makeup."

(I WAS WEARING makeup. Every day. All day.)

"Honestly," the letter continued, "when I see you I always thought she is very attractive woman, but she seems like she don't care. I never saw you color on your lips (But I did! I did!) and I always saw you in a long black jacket with red book bag.

(That was my winter coat! And my backpack. Do people really coordinate their backpack colors with their outfit du jour?)

And just when, at this point, I went on high defense, she said this: "I hope I can see you next course. Your impression was totally different than I expected. You make me feel shock and love (aww) and taught me what is real happiness." (Again, I have no idea how I did this, but I'm ecstatic that she learned that in a humble English class.)

But here's the clincher, the comment that made my semester, probably my year, and possibly even my life. She said, "Also, I learned from you some special things, which is even though I get old, I always try to act like sixteen."

That's just about the nicest thing anyone has ever said to me. I must have done something that a teenager would have attempted (could have been when I stood up on the desk and did an imitation of an egg beater. Or something else.)

I always bucked the stereotype of the stuffy, pipe-smoking English instructor, and I will say that part of me gets great enjoyment out of breaking the "rules."

And I'll just bet you know what I mean.

Because some rules are meant to be broken.

Especially when you reach (ahem) a certain age.

If the words "I really shouldn't be doing this at my age," have *ever* crossed your mind, I would love for you to join me in a manhunt for whoever made "the rules" about age-appropriate behavior.

I think we learned these rules when we were very young, watching other people in our families and communities and on years-ago TV. Here are a few I "caught":

The older you get, the more conservative your clothes should be. My grandmothers' dresses were generally dark or muted colors, below the knee, and always sleeved. Sometimes they had prints or polka dots, but that's about as wild as they got. Sometimes I try to picture my grandmothers in jeans and tank tops, and it just doesn't work in my mind…

I look at my grandparents when they were younger than I am now, and they looked so…old. So very much older than my perception of myself. Yikes!

Another "rule": The older you get, the more conservative your behavior must be. I don't remember any old ladies riding roller coasters at our town's street fair, or running off to join the circus or starting new careers. (My mom, however broke these rules. Not riding roller coasters, but she had been a home economics teacher for about 25 years, went back to school, and got a master's degree in counseling at 50. Definitely a rule-breaker.)

But I wish I could talk to the people from my past now and find out if they ever dreamed of doing anything even slightly outrageous, like learning how to tap dance, but never did because they felt that it would not be socially acceptable.

The older you get, the less physically active you should be. I must say, I didn't learn this from my grandmothers, but the stereotype of the old person in the rocking chair is alive and well. Yes, I realize that we don't have the same bodies at 40,. 50, 60 or 70 that we had at 20, and I'm not advocating doing stupid things, like sliding in to home base on the regular. But often I think we expect to get weaker and creakier, and it becomes a self-fulfilled prophecy more than an unavoidable destiny.

The older you get, the more comfortable you should be. And I don't mean comfortable in your skin or in your clothes. I mean comfortable in the "I don't want to learn anything new or step into an adventure now and then" mentality.

I want to be one of those people who break rules in every area of life—in work and in play—don't you? I hope as I age that people ask me with increasing frequency:

"Aren't you a little too old to be doing that?"
"When are you going to grow up?"
"Are you crazy?"
"What will people think?"

To which I will answer:

"No."
"Never."
"Yes."
"Who cares?"

So. I keep a file of rule-breakers handy for inspiration.

My Uncle Tub is in this file. One day Ben and I decided to surprise him and my Aunt Bea -- both in their eighties--with a visit. We knocked on the door, and waited quite a while for an answer. When one came, it was Uncle Tub in his undershirt…and we saw my Aunt Bea dash across the back hallway in her slip.

Ben and I shot each other an "oops" look.

"What are you guys doing today?" Ben asked.

And I'll never forget Uncle Tub's answer: "You'd be horrified if you knew what we were doing."

Well alrighty then. You go, you two.

And then there's Eloise, also in her eighties, who never really got around to retiring from her job at the International Mission Board in Richmond, Virginia. I first encountered her at my church--not in person, but on a video screen. She was wearing a basketball jersey and a baseball hat on backwards, tossing a basketball in her hands. Taking note of her white hair and sweet face, we expected her to offer up milk and cookies; instead, the first words out of her mouth were, "What up, Dawg?"

Huh? Everybody did a double take. She continued:

"We've got a situation, so I've got a challenge. Missionaries goin' overseas is wayyy up! But the Benjamins ain't comin' in! No mo'? No go! So here's the skinny: We need more Bennies!

So if I stuff the rock in the hole, you cough up the dough. If I put the biscuit in the basket, you put the scrilla in the plate! If I put the pill in the box, you put the cheddar in the bag. Capiche?"

Immediately, I wanted to be this lady.

Then she swung into action: "Get your transcripts out, homies! School's in session!"

And Eloise was off slam-dunking baskets and doing all manner of fancy footwork on the floor. Now, she wasn't really shooting hoops; she was slam-dunking from a lift they were using to get her up to the basket. But still…

And that's not her only performance. Other videos she's done for the IMB have required her to walk across the table in the executive dining room, get into a kayak in the middle of the James River, be strapped into parasailing gear, then pretend to jump off Jockey's Ridge, a giant pile of sand dunes in North Carolina.

They chose her—and she accepted the challenges—not for her superior athletic ability, but for her willingness to try something new, to break a rule (a LOT of rules) and not act her age.

Well.

A magnet on my refrigerator asks, "How old would you be if you didn't know how old you were?" So how old would YOU be? What might you do…if notions about being "your age" never entered your head?

Maybe now is the perfect time to shatter a few stereotypes.

And so, my friend,

May you find the courage to step out of others' expectations of your chronological age,

And may you find the heart to step into your truest spirit,

And may it be your joy—if it's who you really are—even if you are old—to "act like sixteen."

Thanks so much for joining me.

If you know people who need a little permission and encouragement to defy a few stereotypes, 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.

Break a few rules, my friend. And always, always remember, if you go looking for joy, you'll most likely find it.

Till next time...