

**[Transcript] The Diary Of A CEO with Steven Bartlett / CMO Of Netflix, Uber & Apple! Work Life Balance Is BAD Advice! "I Lost My Baby & My Husband!" - Bozoma Saint John**

If there's anything to know, it is that my world has burned a few times and that I have risen every time.

Bozema St. John Forbes' number one most influential marketing chief is an international phenomenon.

Has led marketing and branding at some of the biggest companies in the world.

Who have you worked for?

Apple, Netflix, Pepsi, Spike Lee, he was walking by with a script under his arm and I took a red pen to it.

I was a receptionist.

I really did think I was getting fired that day, but intuition and creativity and following your gut made me be successful.

Oftentimes, we're in these situations that aren't serving us and we're thinking about how the other person's going to feel.

You are going to be unsatisfied with your life.

That is the scariest thing.

Be selfish in your life, in your career.

I didn't want anything to stop me.

But I was about five months pregnant when very quickly things descended into hell.

I had a condition for the pregnancy, it's like attacking you.

And the doctor says to my husband, Peter, you saved her or you saved the baby.

Which one is it?

She didn't survive.

It was the beginning of the big fractures in our relationship.

We were no longer a team.

The few years later, he gets diagnosed with cancer after you've separated.

We had to make a choice to have the conversations which were about forgiveness.

Anger and misunderstanding really did not matter.

We're going to be together.

To the last heartbeat.

Bose.

Yes.

You've overcome so much.

You refer to yourself often as a phoenix.

Yes.

How do you describe yourself as that?

So take me back.

Because there's a certain distinctive brilliance and character to you that I know isn't common.

And that uniqueness is what makes you brilliant.

So take me right back to the beginning.

What do I need to know about you to understand the person that's in front of me going right back to the start?

Oh gosh.

Well, as a phoenix, there isn't just one rising for me.

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So if there's anything to know, it is that my world has burned a few times and that I have risen every time.

Now, I wouldn't say that I rise right away.

It's not that kind of miracle.

It's the dusting off.

It's the letting the feathers grow back.

It is the can I fly again?

Let me try.

Oh, this really hurts.

Let me sit down.

One more time and then I'm off.

So that means that it's everything from being five years old and living in Ghana and my father being in politics and the government being overthrown in political coup and having to uproot ourselves out of Ghana.

I mean, my whole world burned at that point.

Where it is when I was 12 and we had lived in numerous places in Africa and then moved to Colorado Springs, Colorado.

And again, the world shifted and burned and I'd have to recreate myself.

Those first 12 years, when you look back on the most significant fingerprints they left on you and your character, what are those?

Probably my ability to survive, get to know people quickly, understand who is a friend and who's a foe quickly.

Being able to read people, I would say almost immediately.

I don't need a lot of proof.

I can tell on the first question whether or not you have good intentions for me.

Do I have good intentions for you?

Yes.

I take it.

Your desire to be able to relate to the person in front of you, is that also linked to...

Because it was clear when I was reading about your story that you had a very early love of culture and just like what's going on in the world.

Yeah.

But that was survival.

This battle of nature versus nurture, I think I have some of it naturally, my curiosity about people and the things that surround me in pop culture.

But it was certainly nurtured, this idea of like, well, I have to understand everything that's happening in the society so I can talk to you.

So I can seem normal to you.

So that meant that like, okay, I have to understand American football inside and out.

Friday night lights were a big deal in Colorado, so I need to understand what's happening in the fields.

I don't annoy people with sharing at the wrong time or music, understanding what was happening at the time and being able to sing along to lyrics or argue with somebody in the hallway

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about my favorite pop star or fashion.

Make sure that the crease on my jeans was perfect or the way I folded it over and doubled it up was right.

All of those things are nurtured.

And so it created a lifelong student of pop culture.

So it means that every time that something new would happen, oh, I'd be the first on it.

I'd be the one who'd be like, oh, let me figure out what that is.

I need to understand all of it because should I be in a situation where I'm in front of somebody who really likes that thing, I want to be able to talk to them.

I want to be able for them to understand that I understand what they're talking about.

I'm not so strange.

And that explains in large part why you pursued creativity and marketing or at least why you ended up there.

But do you think it's hard to be yourself when you're trying to survive?

Yeah, I think so.

Were you being yourself as you reflect on that chapter of your life, the pre-18?

Left to my own devices I probably wouldn't have.

I probably would have turned out to be too much of a people pleaser.

But thankfully I had a mother who was, well, both my parents, but my mother in particular was very focused on making sure that all of us girls, I have three younger sisters, understood our worth and the way that we contribute.

So in the process, so imagine I'm 12 and I'm here trying to understand all the American things.

And I come home and I finally broken through the inner circle of the cool girls.

And they've now said they want to come over to my house.

And here I am in front of my mother, my very Ghanaian, very proud mother.

And I'm saying, I'm going to need you to buy some pizza, get some Fanta up in here, okay?

Like French fries, I don't know what it is, get all the American foods, chicken nuggets, the things they like.

And she's like, absolutely not.

They're going to eat Fufu, they're going to have some pepper soup, they're going to eat with their hands because that's what we do in this house.

And I'm sitting there like, oh, you've got to be kidding my whole, like, are you, like you want to destroy me?

Like I'm just learning how to get along with these people, you know?

And the lesson there, and by the way, she didn't, she wasn't like cryptic about it.

She was very direct, very straightforward.

And she was like, when you go to their house, you do the things they want to do.

When they come to your house, they do the things you want to do.

She was, did not mince words and at 12, she said that.

Maybe I couldn't have articulated it then, but I certainly understand it very clearly now, which is that I had to understand my own worth, like what am I bringing to the table?

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Not just about what they have and what they're trying to do and they're trying to communicate, but what is it that I'm bringing?

So that the pride I have in my own culture, in my own skin, in my own uniqueness is as important as the things that they like.

Regardless of apparent consequence.

Oh, yeah.

Yeah.

Yeah.

Because throughout the, whether it's the corporate world or our professional lives, there's always an apparent consequence which holds us back from.

Oh, absolutely.

Do you think being the oldest of four sisters, right?

Yeah.

So do you think being the oldest of four sisters shaped your personality?

Oh, absolutely.

Yes.

No question about it, but also that was how our household ran, you know, it's like my dad made no small, no small beings of saying, like, you know, reminding me constantly that you're the oldest, you have to set the tone, you leave the example, you know, your sisters will follow you.

He says that today.

I think he said that to me last week.

What's he like?

Oh, my dad.

Oh, my God.

He's the type of person who absorbs information and holds it and then can spit it back at you.

He doesn't need a lot of time to understand concepts or things.

I mean, he's a self-taught musician.

He didn't go to high school.

He didn't go to middle school or high school, but has two PhDs.

And my dad has very, very high standards.

So that is the person that I grew up with.

What impression did he give you about what success was and look like?

And also in doing so, what failure was?

Success meant financial independence and financial success.

You needed to make a certain amount of money in order to have the nice things, you know, the nice house, the nice car, the vacations, all the things.

Success also meant big titles.

So early on in my career, I remember wanting to take a job that had a lesser title than the one I was leaving.

And my dad hated that.

You know, he was just like, but you're taking steps backwards.

And my thought was like, well, it's not really because the responsibilities are different

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and better and they're going to get me closer to the place I want to go.

You don't understand that, but I understand that.

But to him, that was failure.

And so that certainly changed the way that I think about, you know, my own upward mobility, that for some time I did chase titles, you know, but the truth of matter is that a title isn't going to give you power.

You know, a title doesn't actually give you anything.

And it's like, what I've learned about leadership is that you have to convince the people who are around you that you are right, that you have a good idea and that they should input into that thing and then they will follow you.

You think just because you have a chief title that somebody is going to follow you or not think you're stupid, there are plenty of people out there who have, you know, that title and teams who don't respect them.

And so for me, I think those early lessons were, they have their good things and their bad things, you know, and the good things were that me understanding that my dad's understanding of what success looked like in terms of titles was not necessarily the only way.

What does give you power then?

So if the title doesn't give you power, what does give you power?

Influence.

Influence.

You know, being, well, there's a couple of things because that's a really complicated question.

It's like talent alone doesn't do it.

Again, many talented people who couldn't lead anybody, you know, and you have many leaders who have no talent.

So it's like, it's an interesting combination of those two things.

Like you have to be able to be on the ground and do the work.

You also have to convince other people, so that's where the influence comes in, that the idea that you have or the way that you're saying we should go is the right thing and then get them to follow you and then you must execute.

You actually have to be right.

Yeah.

You know, and then if you do that enough times, oh, then it becomes unquestionable.

You know, that's when the reputation precedes you.

That's when, you know, at least for me, it's like I get into a new job and people expect a certain thing.

It's like, oh, I've seen you do that over there or I had a friend who worked for you at this place and they said you did, you know?

Your first sort of real significant career move seemed to be this encounter with Spike Lee's agency.

Yeah.

Yeah.

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So for people that don't know who is Spike Lee.

Okay.

And how did that happen?

Spike Lee is blackity, blackity, black, first of all.

All the blackness.

No, but he is a film director, really, at his core, filmmaker, let's call it that, because he certainly produces and does other things and writes.

But he has an advertising agency in New York.

When I was there, it was on Madison Avenue.

So Madison Avenue is like the place for advertising in the world, right?

It's the place where the show Mad Men was made from.

So DDB is one of the biggest agencies and Spike had a JV with them.

What brought you to New York in the first place?

Curiosity.

I graduated from Wesley University, which was in Midtown, Connecticut, and it was just time to apply to med school, and I really didn't want to.

And New York was right there.

It was like an hour and a half from school, and I really didn't have a plan.

Yeah, I just went trying to escape what I thought was my destiny.

And like many people say, I think sometimes in this business, I kind of fell into this.

But I think my destiny actually came to find me.

That's what it was.

I opened up and allowed for something greater that I didn't even know was possible to find me instead.

So many people are in that chapter of their life where they're trying to find their destiny or trying to help, trying to figure out a way to let their destiny find them.

Yeah.

When you look back and connect the dots as to how your career came to be and you think about that first moment where you went to New York and then you're on Madison Avenue, you're working for Spike Lee, and you find your destiny where it finds you.

If your daughter comes to you and says, Mom, what advice have you got for me on finding my destiny?

What have I got to do to actively bring you in and out?

Oh, man.

Have you ever heard that statement, like, let go and let God?

No.

Have you heard that before?

No.

It's a very Christian thing.

I feel like in the Black Church, there's a lot of that let go and let God.

You know, as if God is just going to just sprinkle magic dust over you, you know?

And I'm like, no, I don't, I don't necessarily believe that just as a plain statement.

I think the letting go is an action, you know?

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It's not surrender.

It's not like you just lay down and it's going to find you.

You're not going to find your destiny sitting on the couch.

You know, the letting go, for me, is like the letting go of preconceived ideas about what it is that you are going to do.

The letting go of, hmm, sometimes you're like trying to do something and keep hitting a wall.

You're just like, oh, if I just hit it one more time, it's going to break.

Sometimes it's like, you know, that's a cement wall, right?

If you just move five feet to the right, it's actually plaster and you're going to go right through it.

You know, it's like, sometimes it's the letting go of this thought that you had, which is like, oh, I'm going to do this thing right here is the magic.

And I'll tell you this, look, it didn't just happen at that stage in my life.

It's happening right now where, you know, I'm like, okay, well, I think I am done with my corporate CMO work.

I believe I'm finished.

So I'm going to let go, let go of it.

I'm not going to be actively looking for the next CMO job.

I want whatever is coming for me to come, going to allow space for it.

Now it doesn't mean I'm just sitting around.

I'm also, you know, trying to polish other skills.

I'm trying to create, you know, because perhaps the next thing that's coming is somewhere more in that space.

I can feel it, like in my spirit.

And that understanding of like your intuition, and if you're listening to it, it's like a magnet's going to just draw you closer to the thing that you're supposed to do.

And it has happened every single time, like every time without fail, like every job, every move I've made hasn't been because somebody said, oh, you know what, this makes logical sense.

One plus one equals two.

And I'm just like, hmm, but it's not math though.

You know, it's physics because it's not, it's not the addition of the subtraction.

I'm just going to sit here and I'm going to get up and I'm going to go talk to this person and I'm going to talk to that person.

I'm going to sit back down again and I'm going to write this thing out and then like magic.

I don't know how else to describe it is like the destiny appears.

I'm telling you, every time it has happened, every single time, even when people were like, oh, that is never going to happen.

Like you're wasting your time.

I don't know why you'd go over there and do that.

I'm like, hmm, I don't know.

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Something, something inside.  
I'm telling you, telling me that this is the way to go.  
I'm going to go over there.  
Every time it's worked.  
But, but do you believe, so there's a lot there for me.  
There's a lot that I'm interested in there.  
Do you believe, because I want to be clear, are you, because some people hear that and go, ha, love that.  
Everything happens for a reason.  
I'm going to chill.  
And my fate is prewritten and it's coming for me.  
All I got to do is wait and it's going to, because everything happens for a reason.  
It's prewritten.  
So I just got these tarot cards and I'm going to, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no.  
This is when I start banging on the table.  
No, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, chilling here.  
Okay.  
I think you're probably talking my energy.  
I'm not one of those chilling here type people anyway, you know?  
And I don't believe things are prewritten.  
Actually, like for me, the idea of destiny isn't that something is already predetermined for you.  
I think you create your destiny also, you know, meaning that like, look, there was a movie in the, in the late nineties called sliding doors, starred Gwyneth Paltrow.  
Um, the concept is basically like, you know, if you're running for the train and you catch it, you know, you jump inside.  
You have one destiny.  
If the doors close and you still stand on platform, then you have to catch the next train, it takes you to a different destiny.  
That's the concept, right?  
It is what I also believe, which is that like my destiny is not prewritten, but the movements that I make are what lead me to the thing that's actually for me.  
You know, and so it's a constant evolution.  
So I don't believe that you have to sit and wait for it.  
I think your constant movement, your constant discovery is actually what then brings the destiny to you.  
So this isn't about predetermined anything or just like, let me just chill out on, like I said, you can't sit on the couch and expect your destiny to come for you.  
So it's not reading my horoscope, no cards and no disrespect to the tarot card readers.  
But I do believe that we are constantly creating our destiny.  
You know, that this life that we're living these experiences, the people we're meeting, the people you're in relationships with, it happens because



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there's a certain action that you take that leads you to that thing.

Now it's your choice, whether or not you take it.

And then that's when the whole intuition thing comes up for me, right?

Because I'm like, now you may have caused a lot of action and then you have a couple of choices in front of you.

Where are you going?

Which one is calling you?

And then you know what people like to do.

They want to write pro and con less.

They want to ask people for advice.

Do you think I should do this or should I do that?

Both of these are good.

Why are you asking other people?

They don't know.

They're not, they're not living your life.

They don't have the, the whole desk.

They have their own thing.

But why are you asking them?

And if you got quiet for a second and heard your intuition, but then again, sometimes people are scared, right?

Because it's telling you do something that you probably don't want to do.

You're a little scared of it.

And then you're going to choose the wrong thing.

It's hard to hear your intuition when George is very loudly telling you.

Yes.

George being your father.

Yes.

And everyone can relate.

There's, there's always an external voice, which is very loud, whether it's social expectation or Instagram or George saying that this is the right thing to do.

So like, how do you tune into your intuition and out of George?

It's like any muscle.

You know, it's like, look, we all have biceps, but some people's biceps are enormous.

Thank you.

That was good.

That was super smooth.

I sleep that.

But it is like any muscle, you know, you got to work it.

You've got to listen to it.

You have to make it brave to talk to you.

You know, I kind of feel like, um, it's like that friend.

Now, that's not about multiple personalities, but you know, it's like

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that friend who's talking to you inside your head.

You know, and like, if you keep dissing it and keep being like, shut up.

No, that's a bad idea.

If you keep doing that, that voice can get quieter and quieter.

What makes you think it's going to ever be like, listen, Bose, I told you.

No, look, my intuition is so loud.

Oh, there's no way.

Oh, I meet people and we'll be like, that person's not for me.

And no, by the way, somebody else will be like, Oh, that is a very powerful person.

You know, they'll introduce you to this other person or, oh, they're so smart.

They've done this and that and that and that and that.

Not for me.

No.

So I'm not, I'm not even going to engage.

Like my intuition is that strong.

I trust it a hundred percent because you've had to train it, right?

Yes.

Yes.

I've had to, I've had to allow it to lead me.

Is that because of what you said earlier about the survival and the pattern recognition is developed now where you can kind of, you see a couple of queues, your intuition goes, Oh, we met this person a couple of times.

Yes, yes, yes, that's part of it for sure.

Like throughout my life, I've had to listen to my intuition, allow it to lead me, even when other people were like, no, whether it was my dad or a friend or a mentor, a boss, you know, when they've been like, no, that's not the thing you want to do.

You should do this.

This is, this will be more successful for you.

And then my intuition was like, actually, I don't think so.

I think you need to go this way.

It is so hard.

I'm not pretending as if like, this is the easy thing.

We're just listening to your intuition.

Be fine.

I think it's dumb hard.

You know, it's like, look, because sometimes the logic makes a lot more sense than your intuition.

And so I'm not saying that it's easy, but it is the only choice.

If you want to be successful and successful to me these days means that I am happy and at peace and enjoying the thing I'm doing.

It's no longer about the title or the house or the thing.

Like, do I have freedom?

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Oh man.

Like, and freedom isn't just like, I can do whatever the hell I want.

Freedom is that like, I can be working on a campaign and not sleep for three days because I'm so excited about it.

That's the kind of freedom I'm talking about.

Like really enjoying the things that I'm doing.

And if I am listening to my intuition, it's going to lead me to those opportunities that allow me to have that kind of experience with people or with jobs or whoever.

It's such an important question that I don't think people ask themselves there, which is, what is your definition of success?

And I know it's kind of, it's kind of like a fluffy question or whatever else, but once you have that as your North Star, it completely changes your, your like direction of travel.

So like that's central question.

I think everyone listening to this now, like, what is your, what is your truly definition of success?

Cause if you don't, if you're not clear on it, someone else is going to write that definition for you and it might be George, you know what I mean?

Or, or anybody else or Instagram might write it for you or your partner.

And you're going to, you're going to go down that path and find yourself lost and it will just be a feeling inside your chest that says, we made a wrong turning every time.

You know, sometimes that shows up in the Sunday scaries.

Oh my God.

Yeah, it shows up there.

We're having a conversation about this just on Sunday.

We're like, yeah, isn't it strange that it's Monday tomorrow?

None of us have, it's not crossed any of our minds.

Exactly.

Or freaked out about it.

God.

It's like, man, when I, when I started recognizing that Sunday scaries were tied to my wrong turns, guess who jumped into the driver's seat real quick.

Me.

It looks like, look, and again, we're not saying, we're not making light of the meal like, Oh, this is so easy.

Just change direction.

You know, but it's so helpful when you recognize it.

And then you're like, Oh, okay.

Now I can do something about this.

You know, it's like, right?

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Isn't that the first step of like any problem solving is to recognize the problem?

As, did anything in life, like Sunday scaries is a signal and it's a signal and it's a very important signal and it's screaming at you.

So loud.

So loud.

And the thing is that thing about Sunday scaries in relationship to anything in your life, um, when you are in a relationship, let's say romantic, and you have to go hang out with that person.

And you're not feeling so cute about it.

Might be time for you to reevaluate whether or not this relationship is good for you.

You know, it's like, you should be feeling the like, Oh, I really want to go do this thing with this person.

You know, and for me, it's not even about length of time because you know, marriage is not something where it's like, people tell you all the time is so hard and it's like, you know, you'll fall out of love with this person and then fall back in love with them and it's like, I'm not talking about like the fickleness of your everyday feelings.

I'm talking about like the consistency of a mood that you are in when you are in the presence of that person.

Like, do you feel great?

Do you have ickiness?

When you're with them like that.

Ooh, ooh, that's a, that's a Sunday scary that you need to watch out for.

So it's not just about like, am I going to wake up and go to work tomorrow at a job I hate?

I applied that to everything in my life.

And that's the kind of freedom that I want in my life that like, I don't engage with people that I feel the ickiness with.

There's so many throughout your experience of arriving in New York and then working with Spike Lee and there's so many really interesting moments that sort of categorize and provide clues as to how you got here today. One of those early moments was when you're in New York and Spike Lee puts the script on your desk.

Yes.

Because that is for me, that is for me.

I've really clear, it was like a, like a fork in the road.

You could have done one thing or another thing and the choice you made in that seems to be quite pivotal.

Can you tell me about that?

Yes.

So interesting, it wasn't just that he put the script on the desk.

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He was walking by with the script under his arm.

And as I shared, I'm, you know, I love to read and I know that Spike writes with a very black point of view about the African-American experience.

And I was fascinated by that.

And so as soon as I saw it, I was like, oh, I mean, this must be something interesting that he's either writing or reading.

I don't want to, I want to be part of it.

What was your job there at the time?

I was the assistant.

Actually, not even the assistant.

I was, I was answering the phone and I was a receptionist at his agency, a temporary receptionist.

I didn't even have the job yet.

I was only filling in.

And, um, but it felt, there was a little bit of naivete in it, you know, and that like, I don't know if 15 years ago, even if I saw Spike walking past my desk, I would have been like, Hey, what are you reading?

Can I read that?

Cause I would have used all my logic to say, Oh, he's so important.

Whatever he's holding there, he needs, he's not going to give it to you.

So why even ask?

I probably would have explained it to myself that way.

By the time there was a little bit of that naivete, brashness, arrogance, even, you know, where I was just like, Oh, whatever he's reading, I want to read.

And so that's what I asked him, just said, what do you have?

You know, and he said, his script for bamboozled.

And I was like, okay, well, can I read it?

And he looked at me incredulously and he was like, sure, here you go.

Have it back to me in three days and let me know what you think.

And of course he had a smirk on his face.

And so did the office, everybody who overheard the conversation.

And I really didn't understand what that meant, but of course in hindsight, I understood that it was such a complicated piece of writing that he probably didn't think I would finish it one or have anything to add.

And I took a red pen to it, a literal red pen.

He likes to tell the story now that like, you know, he gave this receptionist his script and I came back three days later with markups and notes in the margins.

So, you know, I think that this dialogue here could be flushed out a little bit.

I didn't understand what happened between these two characters.

You know, and he was just like, what?

You marked up my script.

And I was just like, Oh God, I didn't know.

Man, I thought I really did think I was getting fired that day.

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And, uh, he went into his office, slammed the door, I sat there.  
Man, I'm telling you, I had my purse with me and I was just sitting there waiting for him to open up the office so that he could tell me I was fired.  
And meanwhile I'm thinking in the back of my head, my dad's going to kill me because I'm not even supposed to be in this job.  
I have a college degree.  
Why am I a receptionist at this office anyway?  
And then he opened the door after what felt like 17 hours.  
It was probably just, you know, 30 minutes.  
And that's when I got the job.  
He was like, you made some good notes, you should stay.  
How old are you?  
22.  
So you're 22 and you, um, take a red pen to one of the most famous film directors work.  
Yeah.  
And that gets you the job.  
Yes.  
What, what's the lesson there?  
Oh, it changed my entire life.  
Oh, that changed my entire life.  
I've had a few inflection points in my life.  
That is absolutely one of them.  
Without that moment, I don't know.  
And maybe at some other point, I would have learned it.  
Maybe it would have come to me anyway.  
Um, but I'm so glad it came to me then that there is no one who knows more about anything than you do.  
It just doesn't exist.  
Like, look, I'm not saying you should go ahead and try to do like open heart surgery.  
Maybe don't do that, you know, but if you are the patient getting counseled by your doctor and they say, you know what?  
I think we're going to have to do open heart surgery, but you feel like, Hey, look, I don't know that you understand all the symptoms that I'm trying to discuss with you and that, uh, you seem to just get by a bunch of these things that I've just said, I'm going to have to go for a second opinion.  
That's the kind of belief I have in myself, you know, where I'm just like, I'm going to question you, even though you're the expert and say, I don't know, because you really didn't pay attention to what I was saying.  
So let me just go and try and talk to somebody else that that moment when Spike said, sure, go for it.  
And I went for it.

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And then he said, I have some good ideas.

Oh, come on.

Like you just said, he's one of the most brilliant filmmakers of all time.

He will be in the annals of history.

And he thought as a 22 year old, I made some good points on a script that is one of his most difficult to read.

You can't tell me shit.

It's hard to for anything where anyone's when do that, that conviction in evidence, right?

That he gave me that moment.

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

But I feel like also I learned something as a leader from him in that moment that there aren't people on my team that I dismiss for lack of tenure or understanding.

You know, that there are so many people who can contribute to an idea or to a campaign who can challenge your strategy without having more knowledge than you do of the thing.

You know what I'm saying?

That like there are junior people on the team that you should ask their opinion because they're probably going to look at it from a different perspective than you ever would and they might say something that changes the entire direction of the thing you're doing, and you should listen to them.

And you should listen to them.

Sometimes it's hard for those people to speak up, right?

Because, because of that.

Yes.

But that's why, again, the lesson from that moment is that like when he says sure, it's like as a leader, why would I not say sure to somebody or make the room for them to be able to speak up?

You know, I've been, I've been known in my teams to, I'm like a teacher.

I'll call on people.

You know, and not to make them feel badly, but just allow space, you know, see somebody who looks like they're, and again, this comes down to like some of those lessons from when I was 12, reading people, body language, seeing somebody's itching to jump in the conversation, but they can't find a space because that knucklehead over there talks too much.

We've all been in those meetings, you know, and then just being like, Hey, did you, did you have something to say?

You know, did you, did you want to contribute to this?

You ever thought about this?

And then sometimes you'd be like, Oh, no, no, no, I know they'll get shy.

You know, we're like, though, I can start to see them like panic.

And I'm like, okay, no problem.

But if you do, just let me know, you know, and just give them a second to be

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able to gather themselves.

Or sometimes it, you know, they'll be like, yes, actually, I just, I just wanted to say, and they'll contribute.

And you know, sometimes the contribution is great.

And sometimes it's a bunch of crap, which you'll never know unless you ask.

The counterintimacy to that is do you think I was playing around with this idea that I think in teams, people end up having what I call like a contribution score.

And it's kind of like a credit score, but it's like the historical value of when you speak, whether it's valuable or not.

And so like your credit, when you go for, um, you want to like lease a car or you want to get a house or whatever, if you've got a bad credit score, you're probably going to get shut down upon, you know, upon an application.

And if you've got a bad contribution score, if you tend to just contribute without thinking, or you're just speaking for the sake of speaking, then when you speak, the first word starts at a lower level of appreciation.

That is so true.

God, I've never thought of it that way.

I love that though.

And you got to, so there's the converse, this is a converse point, because it means you do want to protect your contribution score.

You don't want to just speak for the sake of speaking.

You know, if your brain's storming a campaign and I go, what about a billboard?

Right.

And you look over and you go, that was a fucking.

Stupid, we've already done no more, you know what I mean?

Yeah.

But that's the thing is that, um, you know, it's, it's kind of also the same way that I look at failure of ideas, you know, oh man, that can kill a, I can kill your creativity faster than anything else.

You know, it's not, it's not just your contribution score, but it's like, you know, it's like, if we're like, we're in the meeting, okay.

And here you are.

Maybe you spoke up by yourself, maybe I called on you.

And you said the thing and everybody in the room is like, oh my God, that's actually, that's really smart.

Yes, it is.

We should do that.

And then we do the thing and it bombs.

Oh man.

You know, this, this is when again, as a leader, it's like, you got to come in and protect the people's spirit and their confidence.

You know, it's like that idea of failing fast, like that's when it really comes



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into play.

It's like, oh no, no, no, dust yourself off.

Everybody get up.

We're going to try this again.

I'm going to try a different way.

Thank you for contributing.

Sit your ass down.

Okay.

Who else has another idea?

You know what I mean?

But making sure that they're no longer a pariah also.

You know, but that's your job as the leader to do that.

You know, it's like, look, we each have a value and a role to play in that context.

Right.

So as the person who came up with the bad idea or the stupid contribution, your job isn't to then dust yourself off and try to come again.

You know, you can do that, but it's really hard to do if you don't have somebody on the other end who's pulling you to do that.

You know, and so my job in that role is to make sure that you come back.

That is my job.

You know, it's not just to pick the good ideas.

It's to protect the people, protect the good ideas, protect the bad ideas, like make sure they, they keep rising every time something bombs, because it's going to bomb.

Like you're not going to get a perfect score all the time.

And it's funny because as you were saying, I was thinking, it was only a bad idea when it hit the market.

Yeah.

It was a good idea up until then.

And that's an uncontrollable, right?

No one can so celebrate, probably should be celebrating the, the running the experiment itself versus the outcome of the experiment.

Yes.

That's right.

That's right.

That's right.

And always, you know, I, I love Monday morning quarterbacking.

I love it.

You know, some people think it's like a punishment.

I really try not to make it feel like punishment where you review the thing that happened that went bad, you know, and everybody wants to pile on.

Now, now all of a sudden this person who didn't say one word in the meeting was like, well, I knew it was a bad idea from the start.

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Oh, I cannot stand those type of people.

That, look, in a meeting with me, you all understand that's a, that's a wrong thing to say.

If you're going to be the one who says, well, I knew it was going to be bad from the start, well, then you should have said that before we went and executed it.

Otherwise, don't tell me now.

Yeah.

So it's like the picking a part of the thing, like, okay, what was the thing that went right?

What was the thing that went wrong?

What could we, what could we have done differently to get a different outcome?

And sometimes it's nothing.

The conditions were right.

The idea was right.

It was executed right.

It just didn't hit.

And then sometimes you're just going to be like, just chalk it up like that.

It sucks.

You know, or you do learn something or just like it was such a great idea in the room.

But then we went outside and we were all in love with it.

That we missed the huge red flag.

Everybody missed it.

Nobody saw it.

Nobody saw that like, actually, it wasn't that funny.

We laughed in the room, but it wasn't that funny, you know?

It's like, and that has happened to me so many times, so many times where it's like, you just fall in love with the thing and then you go outside and nobody thinks it's good except for the people who are in the room with you.

It's like putting on a really great outfit at home.

You know, you just look at yourself and you marry.

You're like, I am.

I am just too cute.

I'm fine.

I'm about to pull one tonight.

You go outside and ain't not one person talk to you.

You see pictures later.

You're like, I did not look like that.

I know I did it.

I swear to you, I looked better when I saw myself in the mirror.

Can't relate.

And I'm joking.

I'm joking.

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Of course you can't.

I'm joking, I'm joking.

So that time when you're working in New York, what you're working with Spike at his agency, I read you took a phone call from an ex-boyfriend at college who was in a difficult moment in his life.

What did he say on the phone?

What can you share?

You know, I think this is the part about when you think about things that you would do over. Yeah.

You know, the ways that you would have reacted differently.

And torture yourself about it.

I do that now.

Still, even though I've been through a lot of therapy, even though I know that the outcome probably would have been the same at a different time.

You know, he suffered from a mental illness that I obviously couldn't diagnose.

We were in a romantic relationship that now, of course, looking back was toxic.

I didn't know how to help him and eventually he decided to end his life by suicide.

And I blamed myself for a long time to some degree.

I still do, you know, wishing that I had said something different, wishing that I had known better to ask for help.

Wishing I'd just been a better friend or girlfriend.

You know, and even now, I remember writing a post on Instagram when someone famous died by suicide.

And, you know, there were all of the things that people say.

They're like, oh, you never know what somebody's dealing with or like,

you know, or like, call this line if, you know, you're thinking these thoughts.

And all I could, like, the only way I could react to it was just like,

but the people who are around that person feels like the guilt you feel, the terrible burden you carry for the rest of your life.

Like, what do those people do?

You know, it's like, what hotline exists for them?

You know, how do you manage that feeling?

It is a sort of survivor's guilt to some degree.

You know, I feel the same about people who are survivors of a loved one's terminal illness.

You could never talk about those people.

You always talk about the person who's suffering.

And I'm not saying we shouldn't.

I'm just saying that we have to consider the entire circle of people.

You know, and how do you give advice, help relieve the guilt, the sadness, the grief, the regret, all of those things.

And it is still something that I deal with in terms of many different types of grief I've had in my life.

Mental health and mental illness has become increasingly discussed in society in the last five, 10 years.

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When I was a kid, I didn't know what it was.

I didn't know it was a thing.

Now it's very popular in conversation.

Had he made any indications that he was suffering?

And could he articulate that he had mental health challenges?

Yes.

I mean, he was on medication.

So he knew he had challenges.

But look, I was clinically depressed as well.

I was on medication.

We were both on medication, you know?

And the challenge with having any mental illness is that sometimes you know how you're diagnosed and you know that you have to take medication for it, but maybe you don't feel like you're ill.

And he was an artist, a musician.

And so sometimes as a creative, that gets confused, right?

Because you're just like, oh, but I need my angst in order to create.

And you know, I pull from this deep dark well, and that's where my artistry comes from.

And he would say stuff all the time, you know?

He would be impassioned about, you know, it's like, well, none of it is worth it.

You know, if this, if this doesn't work, I don't know what I'm going to do.

You know, or like would be so dependent on me for his own happiness.

You know, the things I did would set him off or not.

You know, and so then you are tied to that person's ups and downs, even though it has nothing to do with you, right?

And again, like, look, I've had a lot of therapy to talk about this and so I can articulate it, but it doesn't change the way that you really feel about it.

You know, I can academically talk about it and say, oh, well, you know,

he behaved this way and therefore I behaved this way, right?

We were like a tip for tap type situation.

But when you're in it, all you want to do is to protect that person.

You know, all I want to do was keep Ben up.

That's all.

By any means necessary, you know?

So if it meant that I had to stay on the phone for six hours, that's what I had to do.

If I had to miss my own meetings and calls and friends and dinners and all, that's what I had to do.

Did he call you?

Yes.

Around the time.

Yes, yes.

He called me.

Well, that day he called.

He was having one of his episodes, you know, and was accusing me of cheating on him or,

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you know, whatever the thing was.

And I was just so exhausted.

It had been a number of days of this constant battery.

He was living in Geneva and I was in New York.

And so he was, you know, we were on different time zones.

He couldn't see anything I was doing, but was accusing me of all kinds of things.

I was just tired.

And so I said, I needed to go out with my friends, going to go to dinner.

Of course, you can imagine the battery of insults, you know, that he hit me with.

And I hung up the phone and just went and I could hear the phone ringing when I left my apartment, you know, but I thought like, he's just going to have to cool off.

And I'll get back to my get back.

And when I did, he had left me a series of increasingly panicked voicemails.

And the last one was the one where he said he was going to jump from a bridge.

And that was it.

And he jumped from a bridge.

Where are you at with, because I know you said you can kind of look at it objectively, but it doesn't change how you feel about it.

Where are you at today?

I mean, you're what, two decades on from that?

Yeah.

He was such a brilliant person, you know, a brilliant creative.

I wish I could have saved him and myself.

I wish I could have saved him and myself.

You know, meaning that, um, I wish I had known to ask for help in that situation.

I didn't know what to say.

I didn't know how to, I didn't know how to articulate what he was doing or how I was reacting to it.

I thought it was my fault.

You know, that if I just like loved him harder or better, whatever better meant, you know, that he wouldn't have jumped.

I think about all the time what would have happened if I had answered the phone when I heard it ringing when I was leaving.

Was that the moment he decided?

You know, maybe if, maybe if I had picked up the phone, he wouldn't have felt desolate and alone.

I think about that all the time.

All the time.

All the time, all the time.

I mean, I, so much so that I apply that, and many other things that have happened in my life, in current situations, you know, meaning that like if there is a situation with a friend who's going through something or is, you know, telling me about some challenge that they're having and I feel powerless or I feel like I don't have the answer.

I consider whether or not I am their last call.

And I consider they're like, okay, well, what else?

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Who else can I pull into this to help?

Because I don't know what to do.

And by the way, the trauma response that is that sometimes it's not even like that.

You know what I'm saying?

It's like, it's not like I'm jumping to a conclusion that they're not even anywhere near, but that's where I'm going because that's my experience.

You know, and so I'm always considerate that it's like if somebody is going through something tough or there's a friend, you know, they tell you to check in on your strong friends.

And again, I don't even know what that means.

But you know, it's like if I have a friend who I haven't heard from, or I know they're going through something tough and I call them and they're not answering or they, I call me sound funny to me.

Oh, I'll be the first one drive over there.

And be like, I just had to lay eyes on you.

I had to see that you're all right.

Okay, you good?

Okay, okay, you just need some ice cream.

All right, I got you.

You know, but I'm, I'm, I'm very conscious of the fact that people are delicate.

Our lives are delicate.

And even when somebody looks like they got everything together, there might be something really unsettled right underneath the surface.

And so how can I be more conscious as a friend?

Now the difference what I've learned in 20 years though is that, although I consider like, could I have changed the outcome of that night?

Maybe I could have changed the outcome of that night, but doesn't mean that he would not have decided to end his life.

And I have also grown in understanding that it was his choice.

It was his choice.

It really didn't have anything to do with me.

How a person decides to live their life or leave their life is their choice and have to respect it.

That's what has changed in 20 years.

It's really interesting because, you know, we spend so much of our lives fighting the choices that other people make, especially people we love.

Yes, because you think, you think, you know better for them or you can change it.

You know, you know better for them.

Yes, but that's why I think the same thing we've been talking about with intuition that it applies to you too.

It's like, you think you know better how somebody else should live their life and they think they know better how you should live yours.

And they're going to advise you that way.

And they're going to advise you that way.

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That's why it's like, you know, when we talk about like listening to your intuition or whether or not you're going to, you know, march the beat of your own drum.

And it's like, look, there are going to be people in your life who love you desperately, who want the best for you and are going to advise you horribly.

This is not their life.

They can't help you because they don't even know where you are.

They've never been there before.

It might look familiar to them, but they've never been there.

They're not in your shoes.

They don't have your context.

So who can advise you?

Yourself.

That's the only person, the only one, not your mama, not your best friend that you know since you were three, not your mentor, who you admire and who has reached the place you want to go.

Even they can't do it.

You can't do it.

They don't know.

You found love in Peter at work.

Yes.

You weren't interested in him at first?

No.

What changed?

Oh, what changed?

Why were you interested in him?

I mean, if I had that answer, like we could solve all of love's riddles, right?

Like,

It's really interesting.

Earlier on when you talked about let go and let God, it really struck me as a relationship metaphor as well because we go through life thinking, I want Brunette with this size, this and that and da, da, da.

And we got our blinkers on when we're too narrow for all the great people that might come along.

Like, you might have met your husband or wife already, but you were just so caught up in how they were supposed to look and how much money they were supposed to have.

Come on, preach.

No, but it's true.

But that is, you know, part of it is that, you know, when you say let go and let God, it's like, yes, the letting go of these, you know, preconceptions, whether it's for job or love or friends or whatever.

But it's also the action of being like, okay, let me just, all right, let's go and see what this is.

You know, and for me, it's like when I met him, yeah, he was not my type.

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You know, there's my white man who was a ginger for God's sake.  
And what the hell was I going to do with that?  
You know, it's like, and he was wearing this big fat gold chain,  
two buttons open in his, I mean, God, even thinking about it now, I'm just like,  
oh, how embarrassing, like really, seriously.  
You know, but he, um, he surprised me.  
We like, basically the story is that he said he wanted to get to know me.  
He want to take me to dinner.  
And I was like, absolutely not.  
I'm way too fine for you.  
Okay.  
Yes.  
Because that is what I also think.  
And, um, I was like, look, if you want to get to know me, Mr. White Man,  
you're going to read Song of Solomon by Toni Morrison.  
And he was literally like, I don't even know what that, he was like,  
I, no one has ever even said that to me.  
And I'm like, yeah, exactly.  
Go read Song of Solomon by Toni Morrison.  
And then we can have dinner and talk about it.  
Why that book?  
It was my favorite book.  
It is still my favorite book.  
And it's just so, you know, it's like, look, Toni Morrison is an author.  
Does not come down to your level.  
Toni Morrison is up here.  
She's not going to mince words or like change metaphors or not let you stare  
at the uncomfortable realness of being black.  
Gonna hit you in the face with it.  
And I was like, oh, I want to see this very privileged white boy read this work.  
And then come talk to me about it.  
That was my trick.  
So he came back very quickly, by the way.  
And I was like, oh, I'm going to call his bluff.  
Because first of all, he didn't read it.  
Okay.  
And even if he did read it, there's no way he has a great understanding  
of that story or that work than I do.  
I mean, I was like, I'm an African American and English lit major for God's sake.  
So I'm Wesleyan, like, and I'm black.  
There's no way he knows more.  
And he surprised me.  
We went to dinner and he had such interesting insights.



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And, um, you know, I mean, like love does.

I was struck by Cupid's arrow sitting there at that dinner.

I swear it was like first night.

Fell in love instantly.

You moved quickly, right?

Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah.

Oh, yeah.

Oh, yeah.

That was November 9th, 2000.

And by January, I told him I loved him also because he had painted me a, uh, his interpretation of song of Solomon oil on canvas.

He had never picked up a paintbrush before.

Um, the painting now hangs in our daughter's room, by the way.

Um, and he gave it to me for my birthday.

And I, man, I was like, yep, he's the one I want to marry him.

That's it.

And my very Ghanaian father was not into it at all.

Did not approve.

Um, especially when I said, oh, we're going to move in together.

Like we moved in together.

We'd known each other for eight months and we'd already decided we're going to get married.

And we'd already decided we're going to get married.

And at a year he proposed.

I said, yes.

And I was like, we're off to the races.

This is it.

What did George have to say about it?

Oh, he hated it.

Hated it.

When did he meet him?

In fact, oh gosh, it was a terrible situation.

Um, well, my parents came to visit in like February.

So my mom knew I was very much in love.

My dad was not aware and they came to visit me just as, you know, come to visit me in New York, see how I'm doing.

And, um, I orchestrated for Peter to come by for dinner.

And also just to set context, it wasn't like I introduced my dad to boyfriends.

My dad had never met anyone.

And so for him to meet somebody was like, well, who is this and what does this mean?

You know, but, you know, he tells it now that he just thought it was, you know, me finally coming into some, you know, early love and he just thought it would be, you know, something he could dismiss.

Um, but by August, when I called him and said, Hey, I'm going to move in with my boyfriend.

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And he was like, absolutely not.  
Like, first of all, this is shameful.  
Okay, you're not going to marry this white person.  
Like that this is not going to work for us.  
You're the eldest.  
What are your sisters going to think?  
You can't live in sin.  
And he was on a business trip to in China.  
And without telling me, he flew to New York straight away.  
Uh, and did not come to my office to talk to me about it.  
He went to Peter's showed up in his office and Peter like calls me and his voice sounded all funny and crazy.  
And he was like, um, your dad is here.  
And I was like, there's no way.  
I just talked to him yesterday.  
He's in Beijing.  
And he's like, no, he's sitting in my office.  
And I was like, I'm on my way.  
And then I hear my dad in the background, like you will do no such thing.  
This is a conversation for men.  
I'm like, what?  
It's like, okay, I'll give you 15 minutes and then I'm there.  
Yeah.  
And to this day, I don't know what they talked about while I was not in the room.  
But I know that when I got there, there was some,  
they brokered some understanding between each other.  
And even though my father was still unhappy with the decision made to move in with him,  
he did not stand in the way.  
And when I eventually married Peter, he walked me down the aisle.  
What year was it that you married pizza?  
Was it 2001?  
2003.  
2003.  
So you got engaged in 2001.  
Yeah.  
You met in 2000.  
Yes.  
Okay.  
Yeah, quickly, very quick.  
Yeah, yeah.  
And you feel pregnant in 2000 and...  
2008 for the first time.  
2008.

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Were you ready, whatever that means, to be a mother at that point?

No.

No, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no.

I didn't even think I wanted to be a mother.

Ever.

No.

I wasn't sure that I did.

When I was in, my career had just begun to climb in a way that was very visible to me.

You were working at Pepsi at this point?

Yes, I was working at Pepsi and having really good success.

And I was, I mean, influenced by all of the societal pressures that women have in the workplace, you know, that's like, look, if you have a baby, it's going to slow down your career.

Um, people will look at you differently.

You know, maybe your attentions are going to shift.

And so you thought you were ambitious about your career,

but let a baby come along and now all of a sudden you want the baby, you don't want the career.

I, I didn't, I didn't want anything to stop me from the ambition of getting to the top.

You know, and also I was just like, I'm having a good time.

I just don't want to be responsible for anybody else.

And I found out I was pregnant and I cried.

You cried.

What kind of tears?

No, like the fugly tears, like the tears that make you vomit type tears,

the tears that when I called my mom to tell her, she was like, stop crying.

You know, the tears that Peter didn't know how to react to because he was so excited.

He was, he was elated.

And, you know, I was thinking, this is awful.

You know, it's like, I don't want to be pregnant.

And how do you actually say that when, you know, at that point we'd been married for almost five years.

We were like coming up on our fifth anniversary at a great job.

He had a great job.

We had a beautiful apartment in Manhattan.

It's like, why wouldn't you, you know, it's like everything seems perfect, right?

It's like, no one could look at me and say, oh, you're in a tough situation.

You shouldn't have a baby.

You know, it felt selfish to say I didn't want to be pregnant, to become a mother.

And I, I went into it under duress.

You know, I actually don't think that, um, women especially, I don't think women talk about that enough.

You know, it's like the society's pressure of like becoming a mother at a certain stage in life, or that if you become a mother and you don't want to be, even when things are perfect, uh, that that can also feel like failure, or feel like a trap.

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It's like, somehow you're supposed to get pregnant and then start glowing immediately.

You know, start feeling like all the motherly feels.

I didn't feel any of that.

I didn't want it.

And to be totally candid and transparent, it wasn't until I was about five months pregnant when there was the first sign that something might be wrong with my pregnancy, that all of a sudden it was like, whatever that instinct was I was supposed to kick in when I found out I was pregnant.

It kicked, it kicked in at that point.

You know, it's like, I went from being someone who was very cavalier about the pregnancy and trying to think about like, oh, I got to get my snap back.

Like, how am I going to get my six back back after this is done?

You know, I went from that person to the like, well, what do you mean that there's like low amniotic fluid?

What does that mean exactly?

Is baby okay?

Like, is this a little homie growing or like, let me hear the heartbeat again.

You know, it's like, it was, it was really that moment that did it.

And very quickly things descended into hell.

I discovered that I had a condition called preeclampsia.

It's essentially when your blood pressure rises in your body because your body acts like the pregnancy is like attacking you.

And so every cell begins to fight against the pregnancy.

I was forced to deliver the baby early and she didn't survive.

And it was, you know, for someone who had not wanted to be pregnant, it was extraordinarily devastating.

I think it was a combination of things.

You know, it's like, I had been pregnant for a long time.

I think it was a combination of things.

You know, it's like, I had begun to develop all the protectiveness of motherhood.

You know, very much like I felt in Ben's death, I thought, how could I have been a better mother to this unborn person?

You know, what was my failure in taking care of myself?

So that I could have a healthy child.

And again, the similarities are parallel where it's like, look, there's nothing I could have done better.

The aftermath of that, of losing Eve?

Yes.

Take me into that moment.

What was that, what was your life like in that moment?

I don't, gosh, how do I even articulate it?

I don't know that there is a word to describe the combination of like grief over something or someone lost that you really never had, you know, with a combination of anger,

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raw, fierce anger at God for this situation at Peter, for having made the choice in the moment of crisis when I'm sitting there and in the bed and the blood pressure is going up and I'm delirious and the doctor says, you know, there's only one choice here.

You save her or you save the baby.

Which one is it?

And Peter says, we'll save my wife and I was pissed because again, whatever that thing is that clicked in my head that said, protect the life that is coming first.

I was like, no, you should have chosen that one.

I've already lived.

I've already lived.

You should have chosen her.

You said that to me.

Yes.

Yes, it was the beginning of the some of the big fractures in our relationship that moment.

You know, and then also feeling like an utter failure.

This is like, I mean, women since the beginning of time have had babies apparently easily.

My mom had four, you know, it's like stolen Africans.

We're having freaking babies in fields with no epidurals or childcare.

And here I was living a very lavish lifestyle having an OBGYN that worked out of the upper east side of Manhattan.

And I couldn't even do that.

Oh, all of those feelings were so raw and combined.

And then on top of it, my almost debilitating drive to be successful at it.

You know, it's like, again, we just go back to some childhood things that said, well, look, I've got to, I've got to do the thing.

I've got to be the best at the thing, right?

It's like, so now, okay, this has happened.

I have all of these terrible, scary emotions that are going on, but I'm going to be a mom.

Clearly that's what I set out to do.

So now I've got to do it.

And so three months after Eve died, I got pregnant.

And by the way, my doctor, Pete, everybody was like, absolutely not, like, this is not a good idea.

Not my therapist, everybody.

I was like, I don't care.

I'm going to do it.

Not necessarily because, and this is a difficult thing to say, it's not because I necessarily want to be a mother.

I want to do it successfully.

I wanted to prove to myself, to my body that I could do it, you know, that like, and I wanted to like, yell at God and be like,

like, did you take this away because I said I didn't want it?

Well, okay, now, now I want it.

So let's do it.

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Oh, and even when I got sick again,  
with my second pregnancy, I was like, look, I'm going to do everything.  
Man, I consumed so many prenatal vitamins.  
Boy, look, I would take him by like the palm fall and be like, you know, and there wasn't.  
I got a specialist.  
I had, I was taking lovin ox or anybody knows, it's like, you know, this blood thinner that  
I would have to inject into my belly every single day.  
Man, I'm going to do it.  
Man, I was the most obedient pregnant woman you've ever seen in your life.  
And I still got sick seven months into my pregnancy, still with all of that.  
And so again, it's like, look, sometimes there are  
situations that you cannot control.  
Like very much like Ben, like he would have chosen to end his life at some point,  
with or without my love, with or without me answering the phone.  
I was going to get ill with or without the prenats, with or without a specialist.  
Those are not controllable by me, but I was still trying my best to be successful, to do it well.  
And when Lael was born, she came out screaming, and I took one look at that girl and I was like,  
yeah, you and I were going to make it.  
Like you, who, you came here by any means necessary, and I am going to love you like fiercely,  
deeply, because it just took too much to get her here.  
A year after Lael's birth, I believe, Peter and you separated?  
Yeah.  
Connected to all of that?  
Yes, yes, yes, yes, connected to all of that.  
I mean, I think that, you know, traumas in our life, of course, and especially,  
I think it for a married couple.  
And again, for us, you know, it's like Peter really wants to be a father.  
I wasn't sure I wanted to be a mother.  
We get pregnant.  
Terrible things happen in the pregnancy.  
We lose Eve.  
I blame him entirely, and God, you know?  
He becomes obsessed with my health in my next pregnancy.  
He does not want me to get pregnant.  
I'm like, I'm going to, with or without your consent.  
No, I'm kidding.  
But it became a battlefield in our home, in our relationship.  
We were no longer a team.  
What was missing?  
Probably empathy.  
I can probably just narrow it down to that.  
Like a very shallow understanding of what the other person was going through.  
It's remarkable to me now to think about it.

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You know, it's like, how do two people who love each other so desperately go through the same event and cannot grieve together, can't see the other one's grief? How is that even possible? You know? Just a few years later, he gets diagnosed with cancer. After you've separated. Yeah. These moments in life can have an interesting influence on our perspective. How we feel about somebody in a situation. How did it influence your perspective, his diagnosis? Peter was the type of person who never got sick. You know, he'd walk around Manhattan in winter time with like a windbreaker. You know, he didn't get cold. He just didn't get sick. And even in our separation, and we had then agreed to get divorced, he was always very like valiant. You know, he just was not a person who fell. I don't know how else to describe it. You know, that he just wasn't, he was just tall and big and just just barreled through life. And for him to be diagnosed that way with Birkin's lymphoma, which is a cancer that is not curable, but at the time, you know, as oncologists, we're like, okay, you're going to do radiation. You're going to do chemo. You know, there's no surgery really, because it just attacks the lymph nodes everywhere. And there's no way to get rid of all of the tumors. So the best thing to do is try to shrink them and hopefully they go away. Okay. Let me, you know, we didn't know any better, but by the time his cancer was deemed terminal, all of the anger and misunderstanding and battles over the different events in our life really did not matter. It did not matter. And I realized that like, you know, that probably sounds so corny to say and maybe feels like a throwaway thing that like, oh, when you're faced with, you know, the finality of life, you just realize that, you know, you let go of, no, no, no, no, no, it's not, it's not automatic like that. You have to make a choice. We had to make a choice. He had to ask me the question for us to reconcile. I had to decide that that is what we're going to do. We had to make a choice to have the conversations, which were about forgiveness. We had to make the choice to look at every day and say, okay, well, what are we going to do

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today that is going to prepare us for the end?

You recount a kiss you had with him, a kiss of forgiveness.

Yeah.

I mean, it was, um,

it was unlike the first kiss.

And the first kiss where it's like the butterflies and you're not sure how much pressure to apply and you know, should I open my mouth a little bit?

Should I give him a little tongue or no, you know, it wasn't that kiss.

It was the kiss of knowing 13 years have gone by in a very complicated relationship, full of the challenges of being an interracial couple and him understanding my experience or not me understanding his experience and not the challenges of health and our parents getting sick and all of the things my ambition for my career, his, you know, lack of understanding of that.

It was just all of the things, you know, and to be in that moment and then to say, okay, we're, we're going to be together until the end because that's what we promised, you know, and to truly kiss and make up.

I think that's another like casual statement.

People say, you know, kiss and make up.

It's like, no, no, you like that covenant of like, we are in this again to the end and I won't leave and you didn't leave.

No, to the end, to the last heartbeat.

How'd you say goodbye to someone?

You know,

I don't know that you do.

I haven't, you know, there's,

there is the physical loss, of course.

Right.

And grief in that is complicated also, you know, because no, I can't pick up the phone and call him or he can't, I can't see his wide smile at something I did or his scowl if I do something wrong, you know, I have multiple griefs of that.

I have grief that Laelle will never know her dad in the way that I wish she knew him.

You know, he like so desperately wanted to be a father and he loved her so deeply that I agree for her in that not knowing.

But there is also, for me,

the understanding that he really is still around.

This is where it's like, everybody's like, oh, she sees dead people.

I'm like, sort of, you know, because I do believe in like the signs and wonders of things.

It's happened too many times for me not to, you know, and it's, it feels very much like my intuition, you know, where I'm just like, oh, you know, I know what he would have thought about X, Y and Z thing. I already know, you know, and so to some degree, it's like, I still feel his presence because I am aware of how he would be if he were here.

Ladies and gentlemen, I'm interrupting this broadcast with a very special announcement.

Two years ago, I started writing a book based on everything I've learned from doing this podcast



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and meeting all of the incredible people that I've had the privilege of meeting, but also from my career in business, from running my marketing businesses, my software business, my investment fund, and everything else that I've been doing in business and life. And from this, I've created a brand new book called The Diary of a CEO, The 33 Laws for Business and Life. If you want to build something great or become great yourself, like the guest that I've sat here and interviewed, I ask you, please, please, please read these 33 laws. The book I always should have written. If you like this podcast, this book is for you and it is available now in the description of this podcast below. And every single day until it's out later this month, one person that pre-orders it, that takes a picture of their pre-order, uploads it to their story on Instagram or social media and tags me, will win a gold version of this book signed by me. And there's only 33 copies of those available. So pre-order it now, tag me on social media when you do. And 33 of you are going to win a very, very special book. It's funny, every year around this time of year, for whatever reason, I go on a little bit of a psychological shift. And that psychological shift, I think, is somewhat inspired by summer. But it's also inspired by the fact that I want to feel strong in the season of life. And as I age, strength training is my number one form of training. And the question becomes, how do you build muscle? And how do you become strong in terms of supplementation? And this is where Huell's nutritionally complete protein product is my best friend. For a couple of reasons. One, it tastes better than any protein product I've ever tried. Two, in terms of the nutritionally complete aspect, it has the vitamin and minerals you need. It's about 100 calories. So it's incredibly light. But it also packs over 20 grams of protein into every serving. Try the salted caramel flavor. It is the bomb. And let me know how you get on. Despite all of this, despite rising over and over again, your career continued on. Yeah, you worked at Endeavour, big company that owned like the UFC and WWE, etc. Beats, Uber, Netflix, Apple, Apple. Oh yeah, all the things.

It doesn't seem like there was a huge time for pause. And for, you know, because you just seem to get right back at it all the time. I mean, that's what it appears when you look at the chronological nature of these events. How have all of these personal tragedies fed into your career? And what role has your career continued to play in dealing with these personal tragedies? Yeah. Well, I think especially Peter's death made me impatient. Impatient is the wrong word, but it kind of feels like impatience with life. Yes, urgent, for sure. The urgent life. Because I just have a much better understanding of not wasting my time or my energy. Well, I look at your story and I see someone who doesn't hang around if they don't like something. Yeah. And this kind of brings on another point, because there's contradictory career advice often we get. It says, you know, you should stay somewhere

long enough because if you leave too quickly, then people are gonna look at your resume and think, why were you only there for two years? Or why were you only there for a little while? But then if, you know, so like, where'd you sit on this, on when to know to quit? And also there's this overarching phrase, which is like quitting as for losers. Yes, yes, yes, yes. Oh, gosh. Well, look, I get criticism of that all the time, where people are just like, oh, well, she can't handle adversity. And I'm like, me? Are you out of your mind? It's like, if there was a poster child, it would be me. It would be me. You know, no, it's not that I can't handle adversity. I just put myself first. Are you selfish? Yes, very much so. But that is not a bad thing. I am at the center

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of my life. No one is above me in my life. No one, not even my kid. And she knows that. And I try to instill the same in her. No one should be above her in her life. Because the thing is that like, look, the life that you're living is yours. And I cannot be a great contributor to society. And this sounds a little counterintuitive, but I can't be a great contributor to society. I can't be a good friend. I can't even be a good mom if I am not living the life that I want to live. If I'm not wholly happy in it. So absolutely, I'm selfish. When you left Ubi, you're quoted as saying you don't need to be the savior. I think when referencing the state of the company, because it was going through a very tumultuous time, you can save yourself too. Yes. And save yourself first is what I should have said. You know, it's like, it's all of the ways in which we think about it now, right? You get on a plane, they're going through the safety demonstration, they tell you to put your mask on first before you help anybody else. Yes. And in your life too. Yes, save yourself first. What was the career advice that you wish someone had given you? You know, like that young Spike Lee receptionist? Be selfish in your life, in your career. Think about yourself all of the time. What does being selfish mean? Meaning that when you're in a situation that doesn't serve you, you think of yourself first. Oftentimes we're in these situations that aren't serving us and we're thinking about how the other person's going to feel. But that means that I have to be, it's the uncertainty that that creates that scares people, right? Like, well, I can, I've got this job and I quit it. Where am I going to go? And like, what am I going to do if I leave this relationship? Where am I going to go? Well, but you should answer that. I'm not saying that you quit without the answer. I'm saying you quit. You know, it's like, if you keep putting it off, if you keep saying, well, I don't know what I'm going to do. So I'm just going to, then you're going to waste your life away. You're going to be so unhappy. You're going to have the Sunday scaries all the time. You're going to feel the ick when you're with that person. You were going to be unsatisfied with your life. And that is the scariest thing. I do not want to be on my deathbed being unsatisfied with the life that I lived. I could go tomorrow and I would be so satisfied with this life. Why? Oh, because I've done the things I've wanted to do. Now, look, I have goals. It doesn't mean I don't have ambition. It's not like I don't want to do the next thing. I do want to go to Antarctica at some point. I have not been yet, you know, but if I went now, oh, I've lived this life on my own terms. Like there's nothing that I did where I feel like, oh man, I should have made a different choice. What are you good at? Like when you do the diagnosis of your skill set and what brought you here? Because you've had these incredible, incredible, incredible career. But you know, we're all bad at loads of stuff. And I think typically people are good at like a couple of things, but that's enough. What are you good at? I'm good at seeing the forest. The whole picture. And sometimes in a forest, you know that like, oh, you have to clear this area in order to make space for the little village. Because then those villagers can take care of the rest of this part of the forest that is like burning. But sometimes people are only down at the trees and then they can't see the burning part and they can't see that they should clear over the fire. I can see the forest. I can see the whole thing. And I can see like, okay, this needs to move there. It's helped me so much in my career for sure. It's like the change maker. And how does that make you a great market here? Because I never look at a problem just as the problem. You know, it's like when I got to Uber, the problem was that there was a huge campaign

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that was like, delete Uber, right? People are like, oh, they're mad at the company because of lack of diversity in the C-suite and they treat women horribly and they're not paying the drivers and oh, it's unsafe even to get in the car. And I went in and it's like, if I had just tried to like go after one thing, it would have been whack-a-mole. You know, everywhere I go, okay, pop this one down and this one pops up. You hit that one and that one pops up. But I can see the forest. I could say, ah, this is not an issue about whether or not Travis Kalanick hates women or hates black people. This is not about whether or not your driver is going to kidnap you. This is about trust. Do you trust the CEO of the company? Do you trust the driver when you get in the car? Do you trust anything about this whole situation, self-driving cars? Do you trust any of it? If you don't trust it, nothing I do is going to make you like the company. I could fix the issue of like, hell, make half of the C-suite people of color and women and you would still be like, yeah, but they're going to kidnap me. But the best people you've encountered in marketing, what do they have in common? They're great storytellers. They can make you believe anything. Those are great marketers. The ones who make you believe that you put on a pair of Nikes and somehow you're now the Braun James. And what constitutes what makes a great story? It's close enough to the truth. For you to believe it. Yes. Well, when I put on any parachutes, I'm no LeBron James. But you probably walk more confidently. It's true. So maybe you weren't LeBron, but you're a better version of yourself. If I want to be a great marketer and I'm currently not, what would you, you know, if Liel comes to you and she goes, Mama, I want to work in marketing. What's the best? What do I need to do to become a great marketer? What would you say to Liel? Be more curious about people. Ask a lot of questions about people. Why do they do the things they do? Why do they like the things? And ask, keep asking the questions. Like you've got to be really curious about people in order to be a great marketer. Because you can't just rely on what you know in your experiences, even though I do say that you should be a focus group of one. It's like, if you like the thing, maybe somebody else will like the thing. If you makes you laugh, maybe somebody else will laugh. If it makes you scared, somebody else is going to get scared. If somebody's inspired, somebody else will be inspired. I believe that. But you also have to like be really curious about why people choose the things that they choose. Why they like the things that they like. If you're not curious about people, you're going to suck at this job. What's the most important thing we've not talked about? And I really want to focus this a little bit more. There's going to be so many young people, not so young people, that are listening to this conversation now. They look at your career and they go, I want to walk that path. You know, I want to get to, I want to be the CMO of the biggest companies in the world.

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CEO of this company. What's your parting words to those people?  
Oh gosh, that's such a hard one. Because the thing is that there is no, there is no path. You know, if somebody tells you like, do these steps in order to get to where I've got, they're lying to you. You're not going to get there based on the things I've done. The only way you're going to get there is by listening to yourself, is by following your intuition, is by doing the things that you're really good at. And leave the rest of that stuff that you're not good at, that other people are trying to advise you, leave that alone. So there's any advice, get to know yourself better. That's it. We often confuse aspiration with admiration. We can admire someone without aspiring to walk their path. And I think, I think, yeah, I remember reading a poem one day about like, the only great person you can be is the greatest version of yourself. It's super cliché, but it's so unbelievably true. Because I could not be Steve Jobs or Thomas Edison or Martin Luther King. No, no, no. It's not my greatness. No, exactly. Don't try to be me. Ever. I'm sure people are still going to try. There's a closing tradition we have on this podcast, where the last guest leaves a question for the next guest, not knowing who they're leaving the question for. Yes. And the question left for you is, what moment in your journey made you fight even harder to get to where you are right now? I mean, we talked about it. It is Peter's last heartbeat. You know, that moment, that moment. It just changed the way I look at life. I just don't want to get there not having lived exactly the life that I want. It changed everything for me. And so I refuse to succumb to anything that is not in my destiny for my greatness and my happiness. That's it. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you so much. Your book is incredible. It's been an incredible journey of truth and vulnerability and humanity. And so many, so many of the things that you're clearly, I mean, now it makes sense as to why the writing is so good and the storytelling is so great because you clearly have a love for words and reading and storytelling and that comes through in your work.

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But you've, you've, you've walked an incredible, incredible career path that is just inspiring just on the grounds that it happened.

But you have a remarkable ability to draw out wisdom from that career, which makes it even more powerful.

So that's exactly what you've done today.

Thank you so much.

It's been an honor to meet you and your, your energy is quite infectious.

Oh.

So thank you.

Thank you for the listeners.

Thank you.

Thank you for having me.

I appreciate it.

As you know, Zoe response for this podcast and I'm a big investor in the company.

You guys know I'm really sitting still because that's just the nature of my life.

So whether I'm in a business meeting with my investments

or I'm recording this podcast,

I'm always running from A to B.

But the one promise that I made to myself is to fuel my body sufficiently.

And Zoe has been really the key part of me succeeding in that mission.

For those of you that don't know, I've been a Zoe member for about a few months now,

ever since I had Zoe scientific co-founder, Professor Tim Spector on this podcast.

Zoe helps me to understand how to make better food choices for my long-term health.

And it's all personalized to me.

Eating the right food is essential for me to keep me going

because some of my meetings are often later in the day.

And so I need to ensure that I keep my energy levels up.

And Zoe allows me to understand which foods work for me and which foods don't.

Eating the Zoe way, I don't get that dreaded afternoon crash and I feel great.

So to get started with Zoe, go to [zoe.com](https://zoe.com) slash Steven and use my exclusive code

ceo10 for 10% off.

So many of you have been asking me for a discount code.

Here it is, ceo10.

Go to [zoe.com](https://zoe.com) slash Steven and use my exclusive code ceo10 for 10% off.

And if you already use Zoe, send me a DM and let me know how you're getting on.

Quick one.

You guys know that for years now, my office has quite literally been everywhere,

on a plane, in the back of my car, in a terminal, in an airport, or on a train.

You name it, I've probably worked there.

Ever since I started my first business at 19 years old, I've been working on the move.

All I need is Wi-Fi, a desk, and my headphones.

And I'm set.

And one of the places that has always had my back when I'm struggling to find an office is WeWork.

**[Transcript] The Diary Of A CEO with Steven Bartlett / CMO Of Netflix, Uber & Apple! Work Life Balance Is BAD Advice! "I Lost My Baby & My Husband!" - Bozoma Saint John**

I've been using WeWork for years now, whether it's in Manchester, London, Manhattan, or LA, WeWork is easy.

It literally requires no thinking.

There's no stress of finding the perfect working location.

WeWork does it all for you.

Plenty of desk space, meeting rooms, collaboration spaces, drinks, snacks, it's all there.

So for your next remote working trip away from the office, or if you want a new fresh space to work in,

then don't just work anywhere.

WeWork might just be your answer.

And you can get 25% off your first six months of WeWork, all access by using code CEOWorks.

That's one word, CEOWorks.

And to redeem this offer, visit [we.co.co-ceoworks](https://we.co.co-ceoworks).

You