

[Transcript] Mamamia Out Loud / Introducing But Are You Happy: Clare Stephens On Being Jealous Of Her Best Friend

Hello, it is Jesse Stevens here dropping into your feed to introduce you to a new podcast that someone very special to me has been working on for a very long time at Mamma Mia. It's called But Are You Happy? and it is hosted by Claire Stevens, who you might know from our podcast Canceled. She's a former editor of Mamma Mia. She is now an executive editor and she is also my twin sister. Basically, But Are You Happy is a podcast where Claire gets to sit down with eight high-profile guests who seem to have it all and ask them the questions you're not supposed to. Like, all right, but are you happy? Claire was actually interviewed about her own happiness. If she was going to ask these people about their vulnerability and their stories, then her producer said, well, you have to sit down and do it yourself. So, Claire Murphy, host of The Quickie, sat down with Claire Stevens and they had a fascinating conversation about insecurity, career ambition, jealousy and happiness more broadly and how it's often not found where you expect it to be. This episode of But Are You Happy is brought to you by Swinburne Online. Study business, education

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I remember being out at a bar one night and a guy sat down next to Jesse and said, how does it feel to be the hotter twin? And I cried and left. And I still have it when I'm in meltdown mode. I'm like, by every measurable attribute, she wins. Welcome to But Are You Happy, a new podcast from Mamma Mia, hosted by me, Claire Stevens. But Are You Happy is an eight-part series where I ask people like Flex Mommy. When I do my personality tests, I like oscillate right in the center of being an introvert and extrovert because I feel like being extrovert is the skill I learned. And Zara McDonald and Michelle Andrews. I am very happy. And truthfully, coming on this show, I did feel a little bit of guilt about saying that. And things get very candid, where I get to ask the questions you've always wanted to ask the people who seem to have it all. There's this meme that's being shared in a lot of my group chats at the moment, and it's a quote from the late actor Heath Ledger. It says, everyone you meet always asks if you have a career, are married or own a house, as if life was some kind of grocery list. But no one asks if you are happy. Through my work as a journalist, I've been lucky enough to meet a lot of people who are at the top of their game. They might be well-known actors, media personalities, musicians, athletes. And they have achieved, in a measurable sense, more than I can hope to achieve in my lifetime. But it's that question, the one Ledger said he never got asked, that's always resting at the tip of my tongue. When I meet the people whose lives look glossy and fulfilled and endlessly exciting, the people who the rest of us might look at and really want what they have, I honestly want to know one thing. But are you happy?

But before we hear from my guests, I thought I'd share my story. Because if I'm asking eight high-profile people to be really vulnerable, I thought it was only fair that I do it too. Just a note, this episode was recorded earlier this year. I was the editor-in-chief here at Mumma Mia, which is Australia's largest independent women's network. And I'm now an executive editor, working on some other projects too. I'm writing a book, I'm writing a TV show, some exciting stuff. In this episode, Clare Murphy, the host of Mumma Mia's podcast, The Quickie, asks me the questions I will be asking the likes of Flex Mommy,

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Zara McDonald, Michelle Andrews, Toni Lodge and Alex Dyson. We talk about my mental health, jealousy, ambition, stepping back, and whether or not I'm actually happy.

Hi, Clare Stevens. Hi, Clare. How are you feeling? Do you look a little nervous?

I'm terrified. Why are you terrified? This was your idea. Why are you terrified?

Okay, the podcast was my idea, but I wanted to ask other people the questions. And then our evil producer, who was listening to this, was like, maybe you should show some vulnerability before you ask that of other people. And I was like, well, that sounds really justified, but it's very scary. But why is it scary? What's the worst thing that could happen right now?

My biggest thing is I'm fairly searched and I'm very boring. So I'm like, how embarrassing to just speak for a very long time. Let me just like check in though. Were you not the editor-in-chief at Mumma Mia, like the country, if not the world's biggest women's media network in existence? Yeah. Like, how is that not a good story? I don't know. It just didn't stop that exciting.

In whose eyes? Mine, clearly, clearly. Okay, well, let's talk about that because this is what you'll generally ask the people who are the guests on your show, which I'm just quietly hoping is never me because this is very confronting conversation. Let's just set the groundwork.

Sitting here right now today in your life, Claire Stevens, would you say you're happy?

At the moment, not completely. I had a bit of a rough December in terms of mental health stuff.

I had probably the closest thing to a bit of a breakdown that I've had in quite a while.

So December wasn't good. And then coming into January, I was a bit better. But I'm particularly anxious at the moment. Is there a reason for that?

I am getting married in four weeks, which is a big source of anxiety. But I feel like there's a few things going on in my life. I've got a book that I'm writing and that's due later this year. I've got a few big projects I'm working on. And I think I'm not filled with confidence that I'll do them well. And maybe I've got to prove a few things to myself before I feel comfortable in taking all these risks and putting myself out there creatively. So this podcast, for example, there's a lot to do. And I thrive in that kind of moment. I'm in a state of flow when I'm busy and coming up with ideas and making decisions. And I need panic and adrenaline in order to act. So I think that's what scares me a little bit about those longer term goals.

But I also think that it's a bit dangerous to sit back for me anyway, to sit back on the idea that the adrenaline will get me through. Because some of the biggest things in life are long term projects. Instead of writing a million little articles, I want to be able to write something big that sits on a bookshelf for the rest of time. Potentially to be out of date very quickly,

I'm sure. But that, you know, is a bit more immortal than a recap of something Prince Harry did. Which you are quite famous for here. That and maths, I think, have been some of your sort of stand out moments here at Mamma Mia. But of course, you started from the bottom, right?

So you arrived here what, five, six years ago? Yes. But maybe close to seven at this point.

It's been a while. Right. So you start as an intern, work your way up, become the editor-in-chief, which just quietly many of your colleagues would give their left arm to hold down that position. But for you, you've climbed to the top and you realise you're not happy. Yeah. Why?

So I started as an intern and when I walked into Mamma Mia, I realised this is kind of where I was meant to be. I was at university, I was kind of thinking of pursuing academia or something like that. And I realised that was incredibly stressful and not conducive to a whole lot of joy.

And so I walked into Mamma Mia and could not believe that work was allowed to be fun.

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I had seen both my parents are teachers and they work incredibly hard. And probably when they get home, you don't see a lot of the joy, even though there is a lot of joy in teaching. So I didn't know you were allowed to go to work and be excited every single day to go to work and feel like you'd found your people and feel like you belonged. So I kind of just kept throwing myself into it, saying yes to opportunities, doing all the things. I'm incredibly competitive. So it was always about trying to beat the person beside me, like in a healthy way. And I'm sure they thought of me the same way. So when the editor-in-chief opportunity came up, I put my hand up for it, realised I would love that, had never thought of that as a possibility. But somebody at Mamma Mia took me aside and said, you know, there's its vacancy, you haven't put your hand up. And I was like, because I didn't think anybody would consider me for it in a million years. So went for the job and got it. And it was amazing for the first little bit. I loved making all the decisions. I was obsessed with fairness. I've always been really big on platforming those people who might be a bit quieter, like the quiet achievers. And I think there are a lot of bosses who, because they're extroverted, seek out the extroverts in the team, I made a conscious effort to look at the people who might have been quiet out that were absolutely brilliant at what they did. So I was making a good impact in that way and taking a lot of risks, making a lot of changes to the site and to editorial. But after a while, I was managing the team and I don't feel like management is my strong suit. Have you managed people before? Yes. And I hated every moment of it. I didn't realise how hard I found it until I was constantly exhausted. And I realised that not only is it a bit thankless, because you feel like you're bending over backwards for people who at the end of the day hate you because you're their boss. But it was also that I don't think it's my strength. I'm not particularly direct with people. I hate being direct with people. I hate letting people down. I hate the idea of people not liking me. And they are just recipes for a terrible life as a people manager, because you've got to be comfortable with making unpopular decisions and doing the best thing for a business rather than the best thing for an individual. And I didn't realise, I don't think, that I am quite an empathetic. I never thought of myself like that. I studied psychology and I always thought, I don't know if I could be a psychologist, because what if you're sitting in front of someone and you think they're full of shit? Or you don't have a lot of empathy for what they're talking about. But when I was managing people, I realised, no matter who I talked to, I could always completely see their side and would end up just agreeing with them and then creating a whole lot more work for myself, bending over to try and make what they wanted happen. So I realised it probably wasn't where my skills were. So I decided to step back. And it was that weird thing where probably some people here and maybe some people in media, I don't know, would have looked at it and thought that's a dream job. That's incredible. The world kind of tells you that when you get a job like that, especially, I think I was, I wasn't 30 when I got it. And that's kind of all the ingredients for something that should make you really happy and proud. And after a while, it really didn't. Did stepping away from it make you happy? Yeah, I think there are different things that come up and different challenges. But ultimately, I think the idea of having the agency that I was able to say, I'm exhausted. This isn't the path I want to take. I'm going to go a different way. I think that was the thing that brought a lot of meaning to me. Because it would have been

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really easy. I'm also just such a, I love positive reinforcement. If someone says, you're really good at that, I'm like, give me more, give me more. I just love it. So if people were telling me I was good at it, I thought, how can you possibly stop doing something that people are telling you that you're good at? But I noticed that I was looking around and feeling jealous of people all around me. So I'd look at people like you, like I was doing a podcast, I'd look at my sister, I'd look at all these people who were doing the creative route rather than the climbing the ladder route. And I was jealous. And I did not want that to turn into resentment and bitterness. And I thought, if I want that, I am actually allowed to say that I want that and take a risk. And maybe it doesn't work, but I can have a go.

Do you think that you're good at your job? When you're in the midst of it, do you think you're good at it? Which one? I've got a few. Well, let's talk about where you're at now, what you're doing in this moment. Do you think you're good at what you do? I think that's so hard because I don't think I'm naturally good at anything. I don't think I'm naturally good at my job. I think I've been doing it for a long time and I've leaned into it really hard. So I've learned a lot. And I do feel like there's parts of my job I'm good at, but there are certain bits that I'm hopeless at and I'm always going to be.

But is that people around you telling you that you've fallen down before the finish line? Or is that you telling you that you have not achieved enough? At the moment is definitely me. It's definitely everybody else's incredibly supportive and encouraging. And I don't have, especially because I'm doing a few different things at the moment. I'm doing the mummia stuff. I'm also doing some TV writing. I'm also writing a book. Also developing a TV show. I'm doing all these different things and I don't have a boss for that. So there's nobody saying you're not working on this enough or this isn't that great. And so it's me telling myself I could always be doing better. I could always be trying something different. I could be doing more at the end of every day. I feel like I haven't done enough. Another supposed to feel happy but didn't moment. Was that a red carpet event? Can you talk me through where you're at, why you were there, what you were doing and why you were disappointed at the end of it? Yeah. So my sister and I did a lot of recaps and we did recaps of things like the loggies and the Arias. So for a while we'd go to those award shows, do the red carpet and then write a funny recap that was basically all the gossip. Because nobody really wants to know like, oh, this person was wearing this and had this handbag. People like, what were they like? What was the vibe? So that's what we were trying to do and trying to tell people who was funny, who was interesting, who completely ignored us, which was 90% of the people. But there was one year where we were doing the loggies and we got flown up to the Gold Coast to do it. So we were staying in this really fancy hotel on the Gold Coast and we got our hair and makeup done for it. I think this was all through like Queensland tourism or something. So they really supported us going to do this. And we got on the red carpet and I love TV. I'm obsessed with it. I've been obsessed with it since I was a kid. So I knew who everyone was and even more so than the Arias. I'm not that across music. But these are people from my favorite shows. These are the people from, you know, the project and the news. And I knew everyone's faces and my favorite comedians and personalities. The one thing I noticed about red carpets was that no matter if you get your hair and makeup done or whatever, you always feel, well, I always felt like a different species to

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everybody else there. I'm like, I don't know if there is something wrong with me, but I do not look like that. And it does not matter how much time I spent in a chair. It doesn't matter if it's my wedding day. I'm never going to look like that. So I noticed that several times on red carpets that you'd walk away feeling a bit icky because you do see that people are thinner than you notice on television. People are far more flawless. Their skin, they've had all sorts of stuff done. And I know that. But seeing it in person is a bit more confronting. And I also felt like I was standing there being the witness to what I wanted to do rather than doing it. So interviewing people like Hamish and Andy, who I absolutely love and they were lovely and so encouraging. And there was a pang of I'd love to be doing what they're doing instead of interviewing them about what they're doing. And so I kind of had this moment of just feeling quite inadequate as well because I realised you'd see these people who are so successful and their faces are so well known and realising they're your age and that you're on the other side of the rope kind of shouting out to get an interview. So for some reason, even though it would have looked so glamorous, we put all sorts of photos up on Instagram and Facebook and we wrote our recap and talked about it in the office and all of that. It would have looked great, but I felt like absolute crap the whole time I was doing it. So I'm getting a sense that you quite often compare yourself to others. Yes, just a little bit. Where do you think that comes from? I think it probably comes from being born a twin and having an instant comparison from the moment I was conceived, not even, you know, once I entered the world, even before that. Well, this is obviously the elephant in the room, right? Because here at Mamma Mia, the twins, as it is often referred to, not even named, are synonymous with this brand. You've worked here for a long time, you both, you know, have made an impact on this company. But it must be difficult to be in this situation where people, whether they are consciously doing it or not, are always going to compare you

to your sister, Jesse. Yeah. How do you feel about that? Honestly? Like, I know that she's your sister and you love her and some of your, probably your best memories in life are tied up with her too. But you've chosen very similar careers, same business, so you're going to be compared always. How do you honestly feel about that? In a way, I'm less concerned about how other people compare us and more concerned with my own comparisons. There have been a few times

at work where, you know, you'll have a performance review or whatever and she'll do better and I'll be like, God damn it, I'll be competitive in that sense. And actually, there were a few years there where a lot was happening for Jesse in terms of success and, you know, doing my Mia out loud and all of that stuff. And I did feel like I was a bit invisible. And it is hard being in the same industry, the same workplace. I've had psychologists be like, why the hell did you do this recipe? It's a good question. What did you tell them? I was like, I don't know. But I think the fact is we do have similar interests and skills and even going back to school, I remember, when you're a twin, you really try to carve out your own thing. Each twin should have a thing. And I remember trying so many different things. I tried to do the musical. I was appalling. I cannot sing. I cannot dance. I cannot act. It was so embarrassing. I tried to play musical instruments. I couldn't do that. So I was constantly trying to carve out this identity, but the fact was that we did have very similar skills, which was writing.

So coming into the same workplace, we started at the same time, kind of built up at the same time,

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but there were different decisions that we made at different times and different opportunities that came up for whatever reason. And we would chat about them and decide who was best place to take a particular opportunity at a certain time. Probably my biggest hang when I was editor-in-chief was seeing what Jessie was doing and seeing what she was doing without loud, how she was able to express her creativity. And the fact that this time I was spending on things that weren't bringing me joy was taking me away from the creative stuff I came into this industry to do in the first place. So there are all sorts of moments, and Jess and I talk about it, that often when there's success for one of us, it can be a bit, bittersweet that you're kind of standing in the room feeling so much pride, like the type of pride that you do not feel for anyone else in your life.

And at the same time, maybe just this really soft pang that's like, oh, I wish I had done that, or I wish people liked what I did as much or something like that. So there have been a few moments like that over the years. Whether you're thinking about advancing your career or changing it, Swinburne Online has your back. With the ability to study online when and where you want to, you'll have the support and flexibility you need to succeed. Set realistic goals and develop positive study habits with the help of student coaches. Learn from experienced industry professionals dedicated to making your online study experience simple and rewarding. And enroll confidently knowing you'll be supported every step of the way. Ready for more? Search Swinburne Online

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But you have taken parts away from Jesse in the past too, like you lived overseas with your partner for some time. Do you think that gave you the ability to establish Claire Stevens as a single entity aside from the twin factor? Yeah. So living overseas was great because people weren't even particularly interested that I was a twin. Everyone's like, yeah, I don't give a shit. Like she's not here. I can't say yeah. So it was a big deal being able to make friends and be in a workplace and really have a go at just being me. And I think that also, you know, when you write, you put your byline on it. So a lot of my stuff, we write together as well. But putting your byline on something, if it does well, and if you get good feedback, you do feel like that's, you know, an individual thing. Just helping establish yourself as a single identity while you're overseas. Do you feel like that achieved that? I feel like it did. And that was interestingly, when I came back, that was when we started a blog together, which led to all the mummies stuff. So I think maybe I was in a more comfortable position where I thought, no, I've got something to offer. And this is also really what I want to do. Because when I was in the US, I was working as a waitress for a bit. I worked in an eating disorders clinic for a bit because I studied psychology. I tried all these different things and realized it wasn't where I wanted to be. And I felt more drawn to writing. So I think that was when I was like, I don't care if we're doing it together, because I feel like I've got something to offer here. Now, you've already brought up that you've been watching what Jesse's been doing and seeing how successful she's been at it. She has a published book, which has gone incredibly well. It's been sold overseas. She's also on one of the top podcasts in Australia right now. Do you ever feel like you get lost in that relationship? I mean, you are quieter than Jesse. She's a bit more extroverted. She's a little bit more sort of dominant, a personality than what you are. Do you ever feel like your happiness gets a bit lost in all of that because you are busy celebrating the success of your twin? Definitely. And people probably have

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all sorts of relationships in their lives like this. It might be a sibling or even a partner. I can imagine there'd be lots of partnerships where the dynamic can be that it's always about one person. And I have found it really, really fascinating over the last few years as Jesse's had so much success with her book and the podcast and she's on TV at the moment. And she has just done so much and really, really established this profile and this identity. And so we'll be out and people come up to her and say hello. And often they know who I am solely because we look exactly the same. So they're like, you must be Jesse's twin. And every now and then someone will come up to me in public and think I'm Jesse. That's also very funny. But I do get a sense of what it's like to be the person who's not as interesting. Like obviously, when you go to family events or you go to dinners with friends or whatever, a lot of the questioning is initially to Jesse about what she's been doing. And there is always incredibly exciting news. And so Jesse's book, for example, it wasn't just like I've written a book and it's a bestseller. It's like, it's getting sold in the UK and the US and there's film rights and all of that. And it's genuinely very, very exciting. But I think I've become aware that it can feel a bit for me that people will then be like, oh, what's going on for you, Claire? And I'll be like, oh, I just, my dog's being really cute at the moment. Do you want to take a picture? But at the same time, I think that might be a blessing because I become more aware of what it's like for other people. So you go to dinner and I'll notice that a lot of the conversation has been about Jesse. And I'm like, well, it's not just should the conversation be about me or Jesse. It's also this person over here who's probably got fascinating stuff to talk about. So it feels you can tune into those people who might be in a similar situation. Yeah. And I think it's an interesting thing that comes up when we spend so much of our lives online, that the people who have profiles online, we think they're more interesting. And they're not like somebody who's a nurse or a teacher or like they have much more interesting stories than somebody who happens to be on TV or, you know, happens to have some kind of profile. So I think it's a bit of a blessing in that it teaches you that conversations shouldn't be dominated by the people who we think are more interesting. I have thought back even on interviews I've done or interactions I've had with high profile people where I did that. So I remember I interviewed Ryan Shelton. He works a lot with Hamish Nandi. I interviewed him once. I had a joke question about Hamish's kid because he was really cute on Instagram. And I remember I asked this question and the moment I said it, I could feel that Ryan Shelton's demeanor changed. And I didn't get it at the time. And then he has spoken openly about his friendship with Hamish Blake and that kind of jealousy and competitiveness and realizing he has a lot of what Ryan Shelton has wanted for himself. And I felt so sick that I had done that. I thought it was a funny joke. I thought it was, haha, I know that you're friends with him. I know you work with him. But I had just kind of reduced his own work in light of what his friend was doing. So I hope that even though I do experience that a little bit with Jesse, I hope it makes you a more empathetic person. What actually makes you happy? That's a good question. There's been a time where you've felt happiest. And that is actually a moment with your twin. Yeah, yeah. So it was when we were traveling in our 20s, we went to Europe, just the two of us. I think it was like four weeks. And I remember explicitly feeling so calm. I remember boarding a plane and thinking, I think this is the happiest ever been. I think I was, you know, going from like Greece to Italy or something. Traveling makes me happy. I like being out of my comfort zone. I don't mind

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my schedule being disrupted. I quite like that. I loved even we did a Northern Territory trip last year. And I love just being up at four in the morning to go on a hike or doing whatever I'm told to do when I'm traveling. I absolutely love that. But I think my idea of happiness is less about like hedonism and ecstatic joy and more about meaning. And I think I kind of want, as I get older, I want my life to be more navigated towards that. So relationships with people and being kind to people and creating work that is thoughtful and considered and makes a difference. If I can look back on my life and see that it has been meaningful, that will make me happy. Those relationships, obviously you have a partner. You're about to get married. Does he bring you happiness? Definitely. And he is so happy. He's the least anxious, least worried person on the planet. So you balance each other out well then?

Yeah. Yeah. I am just constantly, my brain is going and he's like, how did you even get to that place? But he definitely makes me happy. He is ridiculously supportive and encouraging. And when we first got together, actually like 14 years ago, when I was 17, he saw the Jesse thing. Like he kind of saw that there was a lot of comparison going on and that I might be feeling a bit overshadowed or whatever. He tuned into that. And that's been throughout our relationship, having somebody who gets that and is able to build me up and see me as just me and not one half of an entity has been like so incredibly special about him and his family and his friends and just his entire being brings me a lot of happiness. Is this something for you also bringing you happiness because you don't have to share it? Yeah. Yeah. I think there's something really unique about that relationship because even we share a lot of friendships and obviously you've got your own bond with the friends that you have. But we share siblings. We share parents. We share cousins. Like all of that is shared. And so having somebody who loves me and obviously loves Jesse as well as a soon to be sister in law. But that's probably one of the things that brings the most meaning to my life is my relationship with Rory and all the relationships I have with the people around him. And it also brings me like a sense of identity and a different sense that you're, you know, Claire and Rory. It's a different set rather than the Claire and Jesse set. So you are getting married and you got engaged and then your sister gets engaged. Yes. And you're getting married and then your sister get married not long after that. Yes. So again, you don't really have the opportunity for it just to be you in that moment. Yeah. In that spotlight. How do you feel about that? So Rory and I got engaged in May of last year and it was a complete surprise, which sounds stupid when you've been together so long, but I did not see it coming. I was like, what? This is crazy. After 14 years, you're probably a sort of half given up anyway. I know. I was like, oh, are we going to do this? Amazing. But it was really, really exciting. And then we were overseas and I was there when Luca proposed to Jesse and I had absolutely no idea. And so, so, so exciting. And genuinely, when it happened, I think I had the same physiological reaction as Jesse because I happened to be holding like a flower or something in my hand because we had been walking. And by the

time he had proposed and she had said, yes, the flower had just wilted because I had sweated through the flower. I was just so excited and shocked and happy. And you know, mom and dad were just absolutely stoked. A few people have asked like, did it feel like your moment got taken or anything like that? I didn't feel like that because we had already seen all our family and that kind of thing since we had gotten engaged and we had been to a wedding overseas. So we had

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seen a lot of our friends and I didn't feel like that was affected at all. With the wedding, the only thing that has come up a few times is that Jesse and I will have, well, we can't tell whether we have the same ideas or whether one of us says something and the other unconsciously. Yes. So Jesse will say, oh, we're thinking this for our first dance. I don't like that's my first dance song, you bitch. So we've had quite a few arguments, but that didn't bother me. And the fact that our relationships are so different, our partners are so different, the weddings are going to be completely different. I kind of feel like there'll be enough identity in both of them. You've mentioned that December was a bit of a rough month for you, due to your mental health. Do you mind talking about how that impacts you and does mental health get in the way of happiness for you? Definitely. So December was weird. Probably a lot of people have experienced this in the last few years, but I think I had COVID, although it never ended up showing up on a bloody test, but I had all the symptoms. And it's that weird thing where kind of your mental and physical health start blending into one. So I ended up pretty much being in bed for like all of December. And the weather would be beautiful and it was my birthday and I couldn't go out and Jesse's like, see you're going out for our birthday. And I'm like, God damn it. But I do, ever since I was probably 16 or 17, I've kind of had bouts of depression and anxiety. And often I can't see it. And then that's exactly what happened in December as well. I went to the doctor saying, I've been sick for weeks and I can't get out of bed and I'm not eating and I'm, and I can't move and I can't do anything and I can't concentrate. And she said, you're depressed. And so I'm on medication for depression. And she increased the dose, which I thought was a crazy thing to do. And it ended up really helping. So she knew what she was doing. But yeah, it's one of those things that I can kind of tell when it's coming on. I can tell when I've burnt myself out. And it's not so much through what I'm doing, like I'm working too hard. And therefore, I hit a bit of a wall. It's self-talk stuff. It's more to do with what I'm telling myself than what's happening. And I could tell that by the end of last year, I'd sort of spent 12 months beating myself up that I wasn't doing enough. I could be doing more. There's more potential. There's more creativity. I like, when I ended up signing a book deal and I was like, yeah, yeah, I'll get it done early. Who like what? No one's ever going to submit a book early. Why would I put that pressure on myself? I have never seen a movie or a TV show that features an author where they've delivered before the deadline. Being like, actually, here you go. I'm just done three months. I don't know why I thought I could do that. So I sort of have to be conscious of the things I'm telling myself and the constant talk of inadequacy. And kind of every night when I get into bed, my partner has to say like, you know, you did enough today. You're allowed to go to sleep. You're allowed. But even though it never kind of feels like that. I want to end that you often feel like what's the point of you when there's a more attractive, more successful, funnier version already in existence with your twin. Is that really how you feel sometimes? Yeah. So I've spoken to a psychologist about that. Interestingly, it's come up a few times and it does come up at times when we are being particularly compared. And I've had psychologists explain it really well and say, you're in this weird position where you're not comparing yourself to the average. You're not comparing yourself to the population in terms of anything. You are comparing yourself to one person who happens to be a really high fever. So you have this weird barometer for what your standards should be that's actually wrong. And you're not able to, you know, even

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acknowledge success when it happens if it's not as much as this other person. For example, year 12 results. Yes. So you got 98%, which for every other human in the universe is like amazing celebratory. But you got 98.3. And what did Jesse get? 98.5. And it was a bit of an allegory for how I feel like quite a bit of our relationship can be in that had I told myself that's what I was going to get. I would have laughed. Like I didn't even know I'd get above 90. Like I had no idea. And so I should have been incredibly proud. But instead, the focus was obviously that Jesse was ducks and she had done so incredibly well. And she also topped the state in a subject that I did as well. And I came fifth, which I was like, who wants to come fifth? Which is ridiculous. But anyway, but also like, she did what point? Oh, something better than you. Yeah. Like in an Olympic medal race, like it's crazy how small a point that was. But did you feel like you got none of the praise for that point three or whatever it was difference? I'm sure that people at the time and people did group us together and say, you know, you both did so well. That's amazing. But I don't think I was hearing it because I think I was only comparing myself to one other person who had beaten me. And it was a little bit funny in hindsight. Like I can see the humor in it that Jesse got ducks. There was like an award thing the next year that had all these academic awards. There were like 20 and I didn't get one at all. And so Jesse got the big ducks one and all these other people got academic awards. And I was like, I got second. How is it not a second prize? It was this kind of funny thing where it was such a small difference yet that difference seemed incredibly pronounced. And I did feel that was probably a really a time where it was really salient. And it sort of came into my head a lot that, wait a second, I have a version of me who has done better academically. I remember being out at a bar one night. God, I haven't thought of this in ages. And a guy sat down next to Jesse and said, how does it feel to be the hotter twin? And I cried and left. Like I was so sensitive to any comparison. And I remember Rory came over and was lovely. So thank God I had him at that time where I would have been a total mess. But any kind of comparison like that. And I still have it when I'm in meltdown mode. I'm like, by every measurable attribute, she wins. Is that why when you had that conversation on cancelled recently about the air and the spare? Who between us is the air? And who? I've been thinking about this because I'm the spare. What? You are not. In terms of birth order, you're the spare. You're the spare. But in terms of energy. Oh, I've got air energy. And attitude. It's not what it's based on. You're the air. That's not what it's based on. This is what I think is interesting. It's not always just about birth order. Who the air and the spare is. Absolutely always about birth order. I'm the spare. No, you're just trying to have a victim complex.

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Hurry.

I was like, I'm the spare.

When Jesse was trying to claim the spare title just for coming second out of the womb.

Yeah.

But you do feel realistically, she's got all the air energy.

She's got all the air energy.

She does.

And I was trying to say, no, I get to be the spare.

I get to be the spare.

And I'm very interested in whether any other twins have that because it is not unnatural, but it's weird to have a genetic identical person to you who in some ways can feel like a representation of your potential.

And so sometimes, especially when we found out we were identical actually, because we thought we were fraternal our whole lives, when we found out- Which is just quietly ridiculous.

Everyone's like, yeah, no shit, this is not exciting.

But I was like, what? That's crazy.

But I had sort of told myself that certain differences were genetic, that I was quieter because that was just my genes.

And that maybe I was more risk averse because that was also genetic.

And I'm smaller and I was crapper at sport and that kind of thing.

And I'd always thought that that was a genetic thing.

I mean, and it could be.

But I realized a lot of that stuff was probably socialized.

Maybe it was because I was smaller, that I felt like the weaker one, I felt like I should let her do the talking.

And my brothers, I've got identical twin brothers as well.

And there is a similar dynamic there, that one does the talking and one sits back a little bit.

And one is a bit more confident about what he wants to do.

And one is not as kind of outspoken.

So I feel like there is something socialized in the twin dynamic.

But that thing about feeling redundant, it comes out when I am my worst self in terms of mental health.

We know someone who doesn't think of you as a spare.

Who?

Oh, Megan.

Megan said that Harry wasn't a spare.

Megan and her own daughter, Lillibet.

But we have a message that we want to play to you from somebody who definitely would not consider you the spare.

Oh my God, I'm terrified.

Who definitely feels like you are your own person.

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Oh no, who is it?
And she thinks that you make her very, very happy.
Oh, who is it?
Hi Claire.
One day you'll know what it's like to have a daughter
and to understand how much you see in them
and how much you love them and how much you want for them.
You are one of the most emotionally intelligent
as well as academically intelligent people that I know.
My first born daughter, who I don't even see you as a twin.
I see you as a person, an independent person who just is so capable.
When I think about you, I think about Boston
and how you went away to America as one person.
And you just came back as this independent, capable, young,
young woman.
You've been underestimated.
There's no doubt about that.
I think when you're blonde and you're little,
you get underestimated, perhaps in a family
with other, louder people, you get underestimated.
In my mind and in your father's mind,
we have never underestimated what you are capable of.
Your future is bright.
You have already achieved so much.
I could not be more proud of the young woman that you are.
I could not love you anymore if I tried.
Guys, who did that?
So, Mum and Steven's legend just wants you to know
that even though sometimes you feel redundant.
Oh my gosh.
You certainly are not.
That's actually incredibly sweet because that doesn't necessarily happen a lot
where it's like just to one of us.
So, thank you, whoever organized that.
You're ridiculous.
You're ridiculous.
Thank you so much.
That was lovely.
Well, let's go full circle.
So, after all of that introspective looking at your soul and your life,
are you happy?
I think looking forward at my life, I feel like
I almost feel like saying I will be,

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which is probably a really dangerous way to think.
But I do think that there's a lot of happiness to be had.
And that if I can kind of get some of my mental health stuff in check
and be a bit braver and take a few more risks,
then I think I can be very happy.
I can't believe my Mum got a cameo on this podcast because of course she did.
That was very emotional to hear back.
And I was incredibly grateful and touched by everybody working on this podcast.
They did that for me.
I had no idea that it was coming.
After my chat with Claire, I felt very, very exposed.
I kind of had flashbacks in the next few days afterwards,
cringing about things I had said and how it came across.
But I think it's really important to have those honest, vulnerable conversations
because often here at Mumma Mia, we talk about there being
another woman who has a wound, the shape of your words,
and that there might be somebody else out there who needed to hear
what it was that you had to say.
And there might be people who listen to what I say and say,
shut up, in which case, that's absolutely fine.
But I really enjoyed talking to Claire and it made me realise how excited I am
to speak to the rest of the people on this podcast.
And it made me hope that I can be half the interviewer that Claire Murphy is.
And that brings us to the end of Episode Zero.
Over the next eight weeks on But Are You Happy,
we'll be covering themes like jealousy, envy, regret, happiness,
and lots more with guests like Flex Mami, Steph Clair Smith, Tony Lodge,
and next week, we're joined by Michelle Andrews and Zara MacDonald.
You might know them as the co-hosts and founders of their media company,
Shameless Media, and perhaps the co-founder of the company,
the very successful podcast, Shameless.
But I know them from when they worked here at Mamma Mia
before starting their own podcast.
And number one, there is no shortage of feedback.
I think some people think that if you don't read your Apple podcast reviews,
you have no idea what people think the show's weaknesses are
or what they want from you and you can't possibly improve the show.
If you don't like the show, don't listen.
But also number two, there is an abundance of feedback in an abundance of forums.
We get email feedback, Instagram DM feedback,
feedback from our friends and family and co-workers and peers in the industry.
Like, we get feedback from such valuable avenues.
I find it really frustrating that there's this belief that to be good at your job,

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you need to read anonymously written feedback about you.

I will give Apple podcast reviews the time of day when Apple podcast makes it a necessity for reviewers to leave their email address or their name.

If you are willing to put your feedback to your name and face, then let's have a conversation.

But I'm not going to validate anonymous feedback online.

More on that next week.

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To find out more, check out the show notes.

See you next week.

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