

PODCAST TRANSCRIPT

Episode 181:

How to Stop Self Sabotage with Dr. Judy Ho

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JR: You're listening to the Vibrant Happy Women podcast episode number 181. We're talking all about stopping self-sabotage, those behaviors that prevent us from achieving the outcomes we want; stay tuned.

Hey, friends, welcome back to Vibrant Happy Women, I'm Jen Riday, your friend, your host, and this is the place to be if you want to truly become the happiest, juiciest, best version of yourself, a person who others like to be around, a person who is more patient, a person who is more vibrant; that's where we're at, so glad you're here. Well, today we have an amazing guest for you who's going to be talking about self-sabotage. You know, we all have these things we want to achieve, whether that's a healthier lifestyle, healthier body or being more patient with our kids or renovating that one space in the house that's, you know, or decluttering that one space that's really driving us crazy, there are all of these outcomes we're looking for. But often, just when we're about to succeed or finally accomplish the task, we will self-sabotage. Why do we do that? Well, our guest today, Dr. Judy Ho, is going to talk about that; why we self-sabotage and what we can do to change it. She has a formula of 6 steps that will help us stop self-sabotage, and these match up with her book, 'Stop Self-sabotage'. And as you can tell, I got to practice my alliteration skills, stop self-sabotage, and now, you're never going to forget the title of that book, which is great because it's really, really juicy stuff that will help us be more successful in everything we want to do. The fact is, we don't have to stay stuck, we can be whoever we want to be. And it starts often at that identity level and knowing where our thoughts, it really starts with identifying what we're thinking, and you'll learn more about that in this episode. So I won't keep you waiting any longer, let's go ahead and dive in and hear what Dr. Judy has to share.

Hi, everyone, I'm here with Dr. Judy Ho who is a triple board-certified clinical forensic and neuropsychologist with a PhD in clinical psychology and extensive experience working with clients of all ages who are struggling with a variety of challenges and issues. Dr. Judy serves as a forensic expert witness in both civil and criminal matters, and as a TV media consultant for various television, radio and media outlets. She's most well known as the co-host of the syndicated daytime talk show Face the Truth, guest co-host on The Doctors and recurring expert panelist on Dr. Drew. Hey, welcome to the show, Dr. Judy.

JH: Hi, Jen, thank you so much for having me on your show.

JR: Yeah, I'm super excited. You just released your book, 'Stop Self-sabotage', and so tell us a little bit about your book before we launch in with some other favorite quotes and things.

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JH: Perfect. Well, I was inspired to write this book because I just saw so many people doing these things that seem like self-sabotage and then they kind of beat themselves up about it, but it is so common and it's so universal to all of us. Even if it's not a sabotage problem that keeps you from your goals and getting the life that you truly want, there's always... you know, all of us can kind of think of that one time where, ah, we messed up on something, you know, we were doing so good on our exercise plan and we fell off or, you know, we say we wanted a really good relationship and then we chose this guy again who obviously just isn't an interesting person who satisfies me, you know? And I think all of us have been through that to some degree, but some people just do it over and over again and can't really get a handle on why they do it. And so I was inspired to write this book because I wanted to let everybody know that this is a universal problem, that there's no shame about it and that there's a way that we can solve that problem once and for all. And so my program is a 6-step program that is based in research principles that will help you to eradicate self-sabotage from any aspect of your life that you feel like it's impeding you on.

JR: Hmm. So self-sabotage could be anything from, you know, sabotaging yourself when you're trying to get healthy or lose weight or trying to be more patient as a mom or maybe think about changing careers but you're too afraid. Does it encompass all of those areas or is it more specific, yeah?

JH: Yeah, all of those were great examples, Jen, and I think that they hide in very everyday sort of activities and events. Like, procrastination, that is a good example of self-sabotage that most people can understand that they procrastinate at some point in their life. You know, even when they planned ahead and somehow when it comes down to it, they still waited till the last minute to actually do whatever it is they needed to do. And there's other activities and events as well that I think can happen, but those examples that you gave were perfect.

JR: So what are the 6 steps? We're all... you know, if you can solve this dilemma, the world will have world peace and everything will be better.

[Laughter]

JH: Well, the 6 steps are, well, you know, knowledge is always the first step, and so the 6 steps that I have is to first, you've got to understand why you get your own way. And this is sort of like a pre-step, it's really just understanding where the self-sabotage comes from. And I talked a little bit about evolutionary theory and our biology and just the way that we're built as human beings and how that actually sets the stage for self-sabotage, but then your life experiences and who you believe you are and your self-concept and, you know, the types of things that you've encountered as you were growing up and starting to interface the world kind of really work their way in there to create these more stabilizing patterns that become self-sabotage. So after you kind of understand the principles of why that happens, then the 6 steps are, step 1, to identify your specific self-sabotage triggers (everybody is different, depending on what we've been through and what goal we were trying to reach) and step 2 is to deactivate these triggers and reset the thermostat. And I talked about resetting the thermostat because, you know, you're used to a certain way of operating and we have to sort of change behaviors at the root and just do a full reset, kind of like when you reset your computer when it's not working,

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you're going to have to reset the whole thing and start over. And then step 3 it's all about releasing this rut that you've been in. So I call this the rinse and repeat kind of cycle that you get yourself into once you start self-sabotaging. And step 4 is about replacing that self-sabotage behavior with a more helpful one. Step 5 is to really build your goals on values. And so we don't talk about values enough, I think that we're starting to talk about them more, but we're always talking about goals that you can check off, but what about the values that you want your life to stand for? And if you can base your goals on the most important values to you and the things that you want to be remembered for, I think that can really give you a lot more fodder for motivation and perseverance when you're trying to reach a goal. And then the last step is to create a blueprint for change. So this is a step that you pull everything that you've learned in the previous steps together. I know a lot of people like vision boards and I know that that's helpful, that's been helpful to a lot of people, but I also think that vision boards are lacking sort of the practical steps to get to where you are now and from here to the place that you want to be. And so I think creating a blueprint for change, this is my version of making something visual but very tactical and tangible that actually shows you a direct route from going from where you are now to going to where you want to be. So this is my version of a visual plan so that they can tackle self-sabotage once and for all.

JR: I love it, it's really great. Okay, I'm going to go with the toughest example and see how we would do this.

JH: Okay.

JR: So being on so many doctor shows, let's go with the health example. So I'm going to use an example of my friend, Lisa, and I were talking about this. And so often when women want to lose weight, there's a very tricky trigger which is, you know, they are missing out on a dopamine hit that has sustained their happiness for so long with all of that sugar. So how would you go through this process with that information in mind?

JH: That's a great example, and I actually talked about that dopamine hit a lot in my book. And so it's interesting because sometimes when we become habitually inclined to a certain thing that gives us dopamine, whether that's food or, you know, some other kind of behavioral... you know, I'll call it addiction but somebody doesn't even have to get to that state, your brain becomes desensitized over time so that you need more and more of it to get that dopamine hit.

JR: Mm.

JH: And so over time, it becomes harder and harder to eradicate that bad habit. So I think the first step is really understanding how sort of this dopamine cycle even works and understanding that there's a lot of different routes to that dopamine hit, but if you are used to a certain one because it provides that dopamine hit so quickly, you have to sort of at least expect and understand that some of these other replacement behaviors might also provide that dopamine hit, but it might feel more gradual at first until you become a little bit more cemented in this sort of as your new go-to. And so when somebody gets really addicted to that dopamine hit, I think the most important thing is that they really feel like there won't be anything else that provides them with that sense of happiness. And so, you know, there's a

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step in my book that really talks about reorienting your dopamine hits or like what feels rewarding to you to things that are going to give you a more long lasting satisfaction rather than that like very quick hit and then it goes right back down to baseline.

JR: Mm.

JH: And so things, like these are things that are tied to your values so, you know, things that, you know, you feel like you want to stand for. And so there's an activity that I do in the book called the values card store where we really get clear on what types of things are really important to us, you know, the things that are not just checking it off like, "I ran a marathon," or, "I lost 5 pounds," but, you know, what is it that's like really leaving you to even make those goals in the first place? And once you reorient yourself to those values, then you start thinking about the behaviors that would give you a sense of mastery that you're actually, you know, sort of being in touch with your values that you're sort of doing something to actually nurture those values, and then you kind of reorient yourself using those types of behavior. So these could be things like, "Okay, if the dopamine hit was giving me sort of this like level of excitement, but then 10 minutes later, I start to feel bad about myself because I hate huge brownie, you know, what's going to give me that sort of sense of satisfaction but not give me that horrible feeling 10 minutes later?" And so for a lot of people, it could be things like connecting with somebody, it could be like getting something done in the house, it could be, you know, something else that's pleasurable that doesn't make them feel horrible after the fact, like a hobby. And so I think it's really about sort of finding these other routes, but also expecting that there will be a period where you're not going to feel that hit so fast, but that if you're patient with it, even though over the course of a few days, your brain will easily acclimate itself to a new behavior.

JR: So what's happening in the brain, you know, when we're trying to stop a sugar addiction for example? You're saying, even though we have less dopamine there maybe, what's our brain going to do to make up for that so we don't feel lousy for too long?

JH: Right. So I think that's why you want to have a plan in advance and then you also need to know that that sort of dip in dopamine might be coming as you're trying to eradicate a bad behavior.

JR: Mm-hmm.

JH: And so what's happening in the brain is, you know, you're going to very temporarily have a lower level of dopamine, you are, you know, because you're... again, you're used to kind of juicing it up, or what's sort of provoking it, but your brain does actually reset. So once it realizes that the dopamine levels have dropped, your brain is amazing, it actually will recalibrate itself and you just have to give it time. And I think part of the thing that we talked about too in the book is that, you know, we get so inclined to go after this concept called... what I call hedonic happiness, you know, basically that like momentary fleeting happiness, we feel great, there's an absence of negative emotion and this is what it means to feel good all the time. But true satisfaction, true joy, true happiness actually comes, you know, when you're actually in the pursuit of things that might feel challenging to you, they're not always positive. So for example, when you're trying to reach a goal, when you're moving and taking a chance, you know, on

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a new job, there's going to be feelings of anxiety and nervousness, but it's all in a circle... I think it's also reorienting your mind to knowing that, you know, it's not always about the dopamine hit, it's also about, you know, what truly provides you meaning. And sometimes those things bring up negative emotions, and being able to sit with that, you know, having some tools to be able to tolerate those periods so that you can get to that next level. And so I think a lot of it is really helping people to understand how the brain works, having the confidence that your brain is going to recalibrate yourself because that's biology and that's how our brain works, and in the meantime, just making sure that you're engaging in things that are truly important to you and are things that, you know, really you are going to be proud to say that you engaged in as opposed to a habit that, you know, you're going to feel bad for later.

JR: Yeah, I like that. So maybe we just replace that one dopamine hit with another that more closely aligns with our values. Like, maybe running aligns better with our value of being a healthy person more than that brownie. So I hope that we can replace that dopamine hit because it does seem to be a challenge when you're first trying to make those transitions, you know?

JH: Absolutely. And, you know, the dopamine hits are not, you know, I mean, you can over saturate your brain. And I think this is probably what happens in the darker side of addiction, you know, where you see that the person has been seeking that dopamine hit and they actually end up, you know, severely damaging sort of this natural calibration system that your neurotransmitters have.

JR: Mm.

JH: And I think that we just became maybe accustomed to looking for it, and I think that's some of its culture, some of it is the advertising that we see, like this is supposed to be, you know, the semblance of what a good life is, we look at people's social media and we think that that's supposed to be how you live your life all the time. Well, most people I know are not posting about just, you know, them randomly sitting at a table organizing their mail, you know, people don't post that...

JR: (Laughs)

JH: ... on social media, but that's part of our lives too and we still have to do it, you know?

JR: Yeah.

JH: Yeah.

JR: Well, so we identified 1 big trigger for self-sabotage, but what are some others you talk about in your book?

JH: So there's a lot of other triggers related to why we self-sabotage, and I came up with this acronym called LIFE to kind of separate it into different categories. So LIFE stands for 4 different major categories in which we have triggers for self-sabotage. The first one is Low or shaky self-esteem. Oftentimes when we don't really believe in ourselves and we don't believe that we deserve good things, we're going to

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self-sabotage. And so whenever something good happens to us, even if it's unconscious, you might do something to get in your own way. And so that's really the first category of things. And this type of low self-concept can really creep in, in all kinds of stuff. So, you know, maybe for example you're about to make a breakthrough, you're finally going to reach your fitness goal, and a small thought flashes in your mind like, "Well, what's the point of all this? I'm just going to gain all the weight back."

JR: Oh yes. (Laughs)

JH: Yes. So if you had that thought, then what's the point, right? I mean, why not then just have those 3 brownies and not care? And then you start to feel bad about yourself then you say, "Oh, forget it, I've already messed up so I'll just eat like this for the rest of the week," and then you can see how that spirals. The second category is under Internalized belief, so this is the 'I' in LIFE. Internalized beliefs are things that happen when you were probably a child and you were just learning how the world works. You know, as children, we oftentimes remember our childhood, certain things that happened in our childhood very vividly, and that's because it's the first time that you've actually learned how somebody sees you or, you know, how peers like or don't like you or what your parents opinions are, what their approach to life is. And, you know, I talked about these internalized beliefs because, you know, as a child, you get exposed to them, but then as an adult, you might have then internalized it for the way you operate in your life. So an example of this might be if you saw your parents being very overly cautious, they tend to kind of be very hyper vigilant people, the world is a dangerous place, well, when you become an adult, you might adopt that for yourself and you might tread extremely carefully. That leads you to not take risks when maybe you should and that leads you to think, "I need to step away from anything that might overly challenge me because what if something bad happens?" And so this can stop people in their tracks also and lead them to live a very maybe comfortable life, but it's a life where they're not really reaching some of the goals that they want and they look at other people's lives and they think, "Wow, it'd be really great to have that, but I just can't do it."

JR: Mm-hmm, that makes sense, yeah. So L, I, and then what are F and E or should we find out in your book?

[Laughter]

JH: So F is Fear of the unknown. All human beings don't really like change that much, and we all fear the unknown to some degree. But, you know, personality-wise, there's sort of a spectrum. Some individuals, they thrive on change a bit more, and some other individuals, change just really wrecks them, they don't like it, it's not comfortable, and so they kind of stay in one spot and they get kind of into a rut. But to them, that still feels a little safer than actually going out of the box. And so this fear of the unknown can keep somebody in sort of a perpetual pattern where they're not getting satisfaction but they just don't know how to get out of it. So a good example of this might be somebody who stays in a dead-end job even though they know they don't love their job. And they look at other people and they say, "Wow, so-and-so really seems like they actually get a lot of satisfaction out of their work, but I guess that's not... just not for me." Another good example that I've seen with a lot of people is fear of getting out of a relationship.

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JR: Oh yeah, because they worry they won't get anything better, yeah. (Laughs)

JH: Yeah, it's sort of like, "Oh my gosh, what's the alternative?" you know? So that fear of the unknown and going out there and branching out can really stop people as well. And the last one, E, is Excessive need for control.

JR: Mm.

JH: So this for the people who might be, you know, a little bit of a self-professed type-A personality out there, you know, they might find that they're held back just because if they can't see the end and they don't know how it's going to turn out and they don't feel like they're going to have control over the process, then they're just not going to go for it at all. So like they'll only do it if they really feel like they can see every step and how they're going to be in action at every step. And obviously with life, sometimes we just don't have those answers, and I think the best example really is when you get into a romantic relationship with somebody because you just don't have control over what... how they feel, how this relationship is going to progress; there's 2 people in this relationship. And I find that a lot of people who have that excessive need for control will shut themselves away from certain relationships, especially with people who might be, you know, challenging to them, which to me actually it's part of the definition of a good partner, is like that they challenge you and that they make you better, right?

JR: Mm-hmm.

JH: But when you have an excessive need for control holding you back, you're not likely to do anything where you can't feel like you're going to be in full control of the process. So oftentimes with clients I've worked with, these are individuals who for example are extremely competent in their careers and they're the boss, but when it comes to relationships, I mean, they make excuse after excuse about why they don't have time to date or why somebody isn't proper or appropriate partner, but it's really because they can't control that process and that makes them nervous.

JR: Mm. Well, so these things you just mentioned, all these, the low self-esteem, internalized beliefs, fear of the unknown, and excessive need for control, they seem like they're there for good, how do we deactivate and replace those? It seems nearly impossible, but that's why I love the idea of your book because if we can do this, we can save the planet and do all (Laughs)... all the good things we want to do, you know?

JH: Yeah. Well, you know, I think one thing that I tell people too is it's all about expectations. Like once they find this out, they're like, "Man, like this sucks," and like you said, "This is forever." Well, the thing about this is that it's probably going to be something that might be humming along in the background at various times in your life, and they might poke their ugly head out more when you're stressed because when our defenses are down, like sort of old patterns will come back up, but it's really about understanding that it's not so much that you have to completely eradicate these beliefs or these ideas or these personality traits once and for all, it's really knowing that they're there and knowing how to deal with them when they get in their way. So all of these different things, even though they all sounded so

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negative, and obviously there's a reason that they might be contributing to your self-sabotage, there are also positive things that are associated with each, you know? So it's not like we're saying you have to get rid of this completely and forever, but it's more, "Now that you recognize it, let's learn some coping strategies so that you can manage them." And so don't be upset if a year or 2 years down the line, you think, "Hey, I've worked through this whole program, I'm all good now," and then all of a sudden, you have a thought that you know is a self-sabotage trigger. The whole point is to not be afraid of them and to know how to deal with them. And so once you see it, you say, "Okay, no problem, I know how to deal with this. Here's a technique I'm going to apply it," and then we can move on, right?

JR: Mm-hmm.

JH: And so that's really the spirit of it at... rather than, "Let's just eradicate this once and for all," you know? Because we still need those type-A people in our lives, and somebody who's a little bit more cautious, it's not necessarily a bad thing. You know, that's good because maybe that balances out the people who are super risky and aren't even looking back and they're taking too many chances.

JR: Yes, for sure.

JH: Yes.

JR: That's great. Well, let's take a quick break for our sponsor and then talk a little more about how you've seen others applying this in their lives.

Okay, welcome back. Dr. Judy, how have you seen this process work and change lives? Maybe even your own life, maybe you could walk us through how you've applied it through a low point or a struggle you've faced with self-sabotage.

JH: Well, you know, I think for me when I looked back at things that have happened to me and the way that I've worked through self-sabotage, you know, I think when I was... definitely when I was younger, procrastination was a big issue. You know, I actually came to believe that I needed that last minute stress, so like I kind of mistakenly put this idea in my head that I should wait till the last minute because that's when I'm at my best, and I think it probably started in college.

JR: Mm-hmm.

JH: And, you know, for a while, I think you kind of get away with it, right? I mean, it's like it kind of works, you know, especially when you're younger, all-nighters are no big deal. I mean, it's crazy, I'm thinking about back in college, I would pull 3 all-nighters in a row.

JR: (Gasps) Wow!

JH: Yeah, I can't do that now. But, again, when you do that and then you get rewarded for it (because I actually still got good grades), I was like, "Oh, this is the way that life is supposed to go." And it was almost like a point of pride, you know, like, "I can wait till the last minute and just cram really hard and I

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can still get an A," right? And so this worked for me for a while, but then in grad school, I did this once for one of my first papers in my doctoral program and it was awful, I actually didn't finish by the deadline. And I had to turn it in still because if you don't turn it in, you get a 0, so I turned in the paper. And a week later, the professor calls me, and this is back when I think people still picked up their phones I guess, but she called me and she said, "You need to come to my office," and I said, "Okay." So I show up and she was a very kind professor, but she was like, "What you wrote is garbage. I'm extremely disappointed in you. After seeing your first paper, I was considering you for the teaching assistant job for this class next semester, but I no longer think you're a candidate."

JR: Wow. (Laughs)

JH: "This is the doctoral program and I want an explanation for why this paper is so horrible." And so, well, you know, I had to be honest. I mean, I was very shocked that she would be so honest but, you know, I had to be honest with myself. And I said listen, "I didn't start the paper until last night at 6:00 PM," and she said, "Okay, and you knew that it was due today at 8:00 AM?" and I said, "Yep," she's like, "So you were thinking you were going to write this entire 30 page single-spaced paper in 14 hours?"

JR: (Laughs)

JH: And she's like, "I want to have compassion for you, but I do also want to let you know that you can't keep doing this, you know? This is a doctoral program and you have to take your role seriously. And you had this assignment for a month and there's no excuse whatsoever why you wouldn't start writing this paper until last night."

JR: Mm-hmm.

JH: And I think I really needed sort of that kind of talking to and to be told that I really couldn't do this if I wanted to continue to have any success professionally, and whatever belief that like kind of led me to think that that was the way I should run my life, I shouldn't do that anymore. And to be honest, it wasn't an overnight change, you know, it really was like, "Okay, that was awful," and then I sort of did it a few more times, you know? And then it's like, "You know what? I really don't want to do this anymore," because it would give me so much nervousness about whether or not I was actually going to finish. And I actually started to realize that, "This is not actually a good feeling. I don't want this feeling," and also, it makes me feel bad when I get the assignment back and I didn't do a good job and I know that like it was my fault, you know, as opposed to it was being unfair; like, you can't pin it on anybody else, you know? So I think that that's really where I started to think about this, I'm like, "Where does this come from and why do you think that this is a good idea?" (Laughs) And I used to like laugh at people who would start their assignments super early, I'm like, "Why would they do that? This is so silly, you know, they're just overachieving people." So I had to kind of change my own thoughts about all of this and sort of reconfigure the idea of like what it means to be like a hardworking person, and it doesn't mean that you work hard like you pull all-nighters. Like, that's not a point of pride, you should be doing it days ahead of time when you know that you have this deadline coming up. And so honestly, it took me a while to reorient, but once I realized that, you know, for me, it was probably certain internalized beliefs of mine, you know,

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that watching people that I really respected pull this kind of stuff off and thinking that they were heroes, like, "Wow, these people they procrastinated until the last minute and then they're like the best in the class, like that's who I want to be." It's like, "Well, why? Why is that a goal? You know, where does that even come from? Are you trying to prove something? Do you want to prove that you're smarter than everybody else so that you don't have to start early?" And so I had to work with my own internalized beliefs about that. And I think once I kind of worked that out, I was able to say, "You know what? If this ever comes up again, there's other ways to prove that you might be more competent than other people or that you are a competent person. You don't have to prove it by turning things in last minute and then feeling bad about yourself when you know that the outcome is just not what you wanted."

JR: Hmm, that's cool. It sounds like you just had to get a little bit internally focused and realize what thoughts were preceding your procrastination habit and why you were doing it. And then you tied it to the fact that you'd seen other people be successful at it, and I guess just changing all of that. Like, you talked about your steps that you mentioned from your book, so it's really cool, it's really cool. Well, tell us a little bit about your morning routine and, you know, if someone out there is inconsistent with a morning routine, sabotaging themselves there...

JH: Yeah.

JR: ... what you might recommend.

JH: Well, morning routines are extremely important, it sets you up through your whole day and I really think that the morning routine should be done with mindfulness, which of course many of us don't. So I think a lot of people have morning routines, but they kind of just go about it sort of on autopilot, and that's actually taking away from the experience and taking away from a great opportunity for you to reflect on what you want to do for the day and also to try to avoid self-sabotage. And so, you know, my morning routine, you know, I have a pretty long morning routine. I like to get up probably at least 2 hours before I have to be anywhere, and it's because that first hour is really just about slowly getting up, making my coffee, which is a very big mindfulness routine for me just in and of itself, and writing my to-do list, reflecting on what I have to do for the day, I make time for prayer and contemplation. And for the first hour, I don't really move all that fast, I want to kind of take my time to kind of think about what I want to do with my day and to kind of have more intention about it. And then, you know, if I have a little bit of extra time that day, if I have like 2 and a half hours before I have to be anywhere, I always make sure I have time for exercise, whether it's a shorter exercise routine or a longer one, I make sure I have time for that. And after that, even my shower has to be done sort of in a way that is mindful, dressing in a way that's mindful. So I have like kind of honed it down to how many minutes it takes me to take a shower, how many minutes it will take me to get dressed, so I make sure that I have all of that time back calculated, and that's when I decide when I need to wake up on a given day.

JR: Mm.

JH: And so... yeah, because I don't want to rush. And I think when I rush, this is when you start to forget things, you know, you fall, you like get into accidents, like so you want to take your time. And I think

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that the morning routine being a mindful time is helpful because then once the day really starts and you have less control over your day, you're meeting with people, you have multiple responsibilities, you know, sometimes you're just kind of putting out fires as opposed to being able to sort of have this sort of contemplative time. And I think that in the morning time is way more contemplative for me than even a nighttime routine, because by night, I'm just so tired that I just, you know, I'd like fall asleep in 2 minutes of hitting the pillow.

JR: For sure.

JH: So I think that's really the only time that's a built-in time that is all yours and in which you can practice mindfulness every day.

JR: Mm-hmm, for sure. And I love how you say you always make time for exercise, I see that over and over again. Are there ever days you just don't want to do it? And how do you stop yourself from sabotaging?

JH: Oh, absolutely, there are so many days where, ugh, I just... I'm so tired, you know, you kind of make all these things, "I don't have time. I only have half an hour before I have to get in the shower, that's not enough time to get a good exercise routine in," of course that's... none of those things actually are true. And so I really have to try to think about... and this is an idea I talked about in the book, it's called... the concept is called mental contrasting and implementation intention. It's a big mouthful, but basically what it means is that you're trying to contract where you are right now to where you want to be and seeing what the barriers in the way are. So like if I'm thinking, "Why am I not exercising even though I know it's good for me?" I really try to fast forward to how I feel right after an exercise routine. I never regret exercising, that's never happened to me in the course of my life.

JR: Mm-hmm.

JH: So I remember that feeling of, "Okay, it's always painful maybe in the first 10, 15 minutes, it always is." I'm a big runner and the first 15 minutes are awful for me almost every day.

JR: Mm-hmm.

JH: It makes me want to stop and turn around. But if... I know if I get past that 15 minutes and I kind of get on that runner's high, you get really excited about it. And then I also try to remember the feeling I have after I exercise, that feeling of accomplishment, I've already done something good for myself, now I can feel like I can go out there and help other people without being somebody who's a total hypocrite, you know, like I need to live the life that I'm telling people to live. And I also know I just never ever have regretted spending that time exercising. And so if I can remember those things, it'll get me out the door. And the other part of it is also not thinking too far into the future. So on the one hand, you think about the outcome, but you don't want to think about, you know, 15 minutes in how painful it still might feel because otherwise, you'll never leave. So it's really about being mindful like, "Put on your shoes, get your clothes on and get out the door," right, and not thinking about then what's going to come after that,

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right? And that helps you get out the door to start your exercise routine as well, it's just staying mindful about the moment-to-moment activity and steps that you have to do to get going.

JR: Mm-hmm, that's really good, I've never thought of that. Thinking about how you're going to feel maybe during or after the parts that feel good and just focus on that and then you'll get motivated; that's good.

JH: Yeah.

JR: Well, what is your favorite book?

JH: Well, I have several favorite books, but I think my favorite book of all time is 'The Lord of the Rings' trilogy. (Laughs)

JR: Me too, I love that.

JH: I love that, Jen. Yeah, I don't know how many times I've read it, to be honest with you, you know, I think I just kind of pick it up. It's like a comforting thing, I know that I've read it many times, but it's just so nice to go back and reread your favorite chapters or reread your favorite parts of a book. So I just really like books that take me away from my day. And I think that's why I tend to like sci-fi fantasy books because, you know, they live in this crazy whimsical world where anything can happen, and I just really enjoy books like that that can sort of, you know, I guess stir up the kind of imagination that I thought I used to have more of as a child, but as you get to be more of an adult, you sometimes lose a little bit of that in your everyday process, you know, you're just become a lot more practical and pragmatic. And I don't want to lose that part of myself. And I really enjoy reading books because you can imagine what something looks like. I mean, I loved the Lord of the Rings movies too, but in some ways, I was sometimes a little irritated because there would be a scene that would come up and I'm like, "Man, that is so not how I imagined it in my head."

JR: Mm-hmm.

JH: And sometimes, I think the imagination is what makes the book so fun because you can talk to another person who read it and they'll think of that particular scene or that particular character totally differently and it becomes like a good place of conversation.

JR: Oh, yeah, that's true. Do you also like 'Harry Potter'?

JH: You know, I actually never... unbelievably, never really got into the 'Harry Potter' books.

JR: Hmm.

JH: I don't know why. I think it's because I never read them before the movies came out and then I saw the movies, and I don't know, for some reason, I got a bad taste in my mouth about it, I just felt like... I

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think it was because I was so staunchly like, "Lord of the Rings' is the best thing ever,"...

JR: Yes. (Laughs)

JH: It's like a teenager version of 'Lord of the Rings' and I was like, "Well, why do I want to read a watered-down version of 'Lord of the Rings'? That's probably not fair.

JR: (Laughs)

JH: I might try to give...

JR: That's funny.

[Laughter]

JR: I have a friend who wouldn't read them because everyone else liked them and that was enough, she had to be counterculture. (Laughs)

JH: Oh my god, you know what? I've heard that too, I have heard that too. I know some people who are very countercultural to 'Game of Thrones' actually.

JR: Ah!

JH: You know?

JR: Yeah.

JH: Getting on that bandwagon. But, yeah, that's another series of books that I really liked that I actually started picking up. So I started watching the HBO Game of Thrones first, but I am starting to read the books now and starting with, you know, the very first one and kind of working my way through it. And I like his writing style a lot, I think... I mean, his hero was Tolkien so it makes sense that...

JR: Mm-hmm.

JH: ... you know, that would be a series of books that I might enjoy, but, you know, I love the POVs. I like books in general that switch up the point of views of characters in the storytelling. Because, you know, again, there's no objective reality, right, it's sort of like everybody sees the same event in a totally different way.

JR: Yeah, yeah.

JH: And I enjoy that, I do.

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JR: Hmm, that's cool. My husband read those books, but he said (I'm not sure if you know about this) the author hasn't finished the final book.

JH: Yes! Ugh.

JR: And so he said... I don't know how the series ended up ending, you know, with that fact in mind, I don't know how they're going to integrate it (Laughs) or if they don't; I don't know.

JH: Yeah, I don't even know, it's so crazy. I mean, in fact, he hasn't published since 2011, which is amazing in this particular series. And it's like, "How long does it take for you to finish the book?" And in fact, there's 2 more books; he has to finish this one book and then there's a final one. So my goodness, I don't know how long we'll be waiting if this is how long he's keeping us on the hook. But, yeah, people have been really upset even about the TV ending and, "Well, what's it going to look like? And is R.R. Martin's going to clean this up when he finally finishes writing it?" so it'll be interesting to see how they kind of, you know, merge the differences.

JR: Oh. So you think there will be more of the series once he actually writes the books?

JH: Yeah, yeah.

JR: Okay, okay. I haven't watched it yet, but I think I might. (Laughs)

JH: I tell you, yeah, but it's... you know, there's ups and downs for sure over the series. I think overall, people were really up in arms about the way it ended, but I think it's really just because when something... you dedicate your life to something for so long, like something like 'Game of Thrones', you know, it's going to be polarizing, no... you're not going to make everybody happy. And I remember this with the 'Lord of the Rings' movies too. Some hardcore fans were just so upset about like the treatment of certain characters or certain themes, and you're just not going to please everyone.

JR: Mm-hmm, for sure, for sure. Well, what does it mean or what is your formula for being a vibrant happy woman?

JH: You know, I think it really means to be... I really think to be a vibrant happy woman, you have to be true to yourself. And I think that's something that's hard in our culture and society because there's so much of an onslaught of media and what other people are doing, and people have become more opinionated across time, you know, and they do it in very many ways. They don't necessarily do it to your face, but they might do it to you on social media. But either way, you're constantly thinking about what other people's ideas are of what you should be doing. And there's much more fodder for that social comparison that's right at your fingertips, you know? As human beings, we of course are going to compare ourselves to other people because we're social beings, but, you know, I think that right now, there's too much of that. And we sometimes get lost and forget what it is that we want for ourselves, and sometimes it can be hard to hear that voice. And so before I make a major decision or if I'm feeling conflicted about something, I really try very hard to tune out the voices, tune out what other people

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might be thinking and think about, "What do I want? What would be genuine to me? Like what would be something that if I did it, I could look at myself in the mirror at night and just still feel good about who I am?" right?

JR: Mm-hmm.

JH: And I think I kind of approach life that way. And so if something feels disingenuous to me or I know is actually hitting on a value that would maybe corrupt that value or might not be nurturing the value that's important to me, I try to steer away from it as much as possible. And in general, I think that that keeps me a vibrant happy woman.

JR: Perfect, I love that. And let's have a challenge from...

JH: Okay.

JR: ... you to everyone listening.

JH: So I think my challenge to everyone listening today is to identify a value that's important to you. And for the next 7 days, I want you to do something in service of that value, no matter how small it is. It can be something that you can do in 1 minute, it can be something you can do in 5 or 10 minutes. But if you identify an important value and every single day in the morning, you make an intention to do something to nurture that value, I would love to see how they felt at the end of that week in terms of how that week went and whether or not that brought them more social connection, more satisfaction, more of a sense of peace, and I would love to hear how that went for everybody.

JR: Cool. And if people want to reach out to you and share that or know more about you in general, how can they connect with you?

JH: Well, they can connect with me on my social media handles, it's Dr Judy Ho, D r J u d y H o, or they can visit me on my website to see what I'm up to, drjudyho.com.

JR: drjudyho.com, I'm just going to get these. And what was the first one, Dr Judy Ho.

JH: Yeah @Dr Judy Ho is my social media handle.

JR: Great. We'll put those in our show notes page at jenriday.com/181. And, yeah, everyone, definitely, if you want to end the self-sabotage, you've got to grab Dr. Judy's book, and I'm going to say the whole thing again because I'm practicing my S sound, 'Stop Self-Sabotage: Six Steps to Unlock Your True Motivation, Harness Your Willpower, and Get Out of Your Own Way'; I love it. Thank you so much for being on Vibrant Happy Women.

JH: Oh, thank you so much, Jen, I really appreciate it being on, and thanks for the great questions.

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JR: Have a good day. Take care.

JH: Okay, you too. Bye.

JR: Bye.

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