

PODCAST TRANSCRIPT

Episode 184:

Identity and Motherhood with Sarah Dobson

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Jen

You're listening to the Vibrant Happy Women podcast episode number 184. I'm talking with my friend Sarah Dobson all about identity and motherhood. And this is extra interesting because Sarah is not technically a mother. Stay tuned.

Hi, I'm Dr. Jen Riday, a former burned out mom of six turned happiness whisper and I'm here to help you get off that hamster wheel and make time for yourself without the guilt so you can live a balanced, calm, heart-centered life. With over 2.5 million downloads, this is the Vibrant Happy Women podcast.

Hey, my friends. It's Jen. Glad you're here because I am bringing back a former guest Sarah Dobson from Episode 15, where she talked about choosing to find clarity and be creative despite living with a chronic disease. Well, Sarah has taken all of that wisdom she shared on that episode, Episode 15, to heart and she has been very creative. In fact, she has started a podcast called Maybe Someday. And in that podcast she has explored what it means to be a mother. And then in season two what it means to choose to be child-free and handling the skepticism and the setbacks of that, along with her option to be a bonus parent to her partner's daughter. Super fascinating. I love how Sarah really gets in there and explores the concept. She's a deep woman, someone I would love to have dinner with some day in person. Before we dive into the interview, I want to share our review of the week and that review is from Kate sings. She wrote: "I love listening to this podcast. Jen is a great host and has amazing guests and inspires me to live my best life." Kate, thank you so much. That is the goal. We all want to live our best life and I think we do that learning from each other. I am so grateful for the chance to talk to so many amazing women, and I really try to put my heart into these conversations so the guests feels heard. They feel my love and respect and my compassion toward them. And I hope you as listeners energetically are sending the guests some of that love and compassion as well. I'm sending you that love and compassion. We are a circle of sisterhood, whether we know it or not, because we are in each other's sphere of influence, in each other's orbits. So we thank you all so much for listening. And I want to help you take a moment now to pat yourself on the back for being on a journey of growth and trying to add inspiration to your daily life. Way to go! It does bring more joy and it makes the world a better place. Well, thank you so much, Kate again for leaving that review. And everyone else, I want to hear from you. What are your thoughts about the podcast? What are your thoughts about last week's episode? What are your thoughts about today's episode? After you listen, why don't you go leave a review? You can do it at jenriday.com/review. You can leave one right now. It would make me so happy and I would feel so grateful. I appreciate every time someone leaves review because it lets me know you're out there, lets

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me know your thoughts. If it's helping you in your life, that means the world.

Well, today's guest, Sarah Dobson, is amazing. She is a go-getter. And yeah, she's living with a chronic disease, but we barely even touched upon that in this interview because it's kind of the background of her life. Yes, there's some uncertainty with her life with that, but she's choosing to relish every day and form these relationships and make a difference through her podcast, Maybe Someday, through her family life with her partner and her bonus daughter, she calls her. I love this interview because it gives us the opportunity to talk a little bit about motherhood and what that means and how it can look different for various people. Maybe you don't have biological children, but there are ways that you can nurture and mother other people in a way that feels authentic for you. And I kind of love how Sarah kind of gets rid of those titles of mom and not a mom, because really we're all nurturers, we can all nurture -- men and women alike. So anyway, you're going to love this conversation. I won't say anything else about it. I want you to hear it for yourself. Let's dive in.

Welcome to the show, everyone! I'm talking with Sarah Dobson. And she was on Vibrant Happy Women long, long, long ago, way back in Episode 15. And if you haven't listened to that, go back and do so. But today, we're going to be talking more about the topic of motherhood and our varied definitions of what that really means. And Sarah has really thought a lot about this topic and has even started a podcast called Maybe Someday and we're going to learn why she started that. And that podcast Maybe Someday is all about exploring the choices women make about whether to have children and how that choice impacts their lives. She lives in beautiful Vancouver, British Columbia with her partner, Philip, her bonus daughter and their rescue dog Gracie. Welcome back to Vibrant Happy Women, Sarah.

Sarah

Thanks for having me, Jen. It's great to be back. I'm excited.

Jen

So just recap what you might have shared on the first time you were on Vibrant Happy Women so we can have our memories jogged. Oh, yeah, that's Sarah. And then we'll dive into how life has changed for you since the last time we talked.

Sarah

Right. So when I was last on the show, I shared my lowest moment, which was having emergency life saving brain surgery when I was on vacation in New York City, and then moving back to Montreal, where I lived at the time and having more brain surgery, and just how all of that impacted my life. And it ended up sort of destroying a romantic relationship that I was in and just kind of turned everything upside down. And I really learned through that experience, how important it was to reach out for help and to let myself be vulnerable and really let people into my life. Because I thought if I really truly let them know what was going on for me that people would disappear, and I would be really on my own. But of course, I discovered that by talking about what was going on with me and sharing how scared I was and how much help I needed, that people really rallied around me, and I ended up deepening a lot of really important friendships.

Jen



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And then you moved to Vancouver where you formed a lot of these friendships. Is that right?

Sarah

That's exactly right. Yeah. So I moved from Montreal to Vancouver, pretty much right after I finished my master's degree in Montreal, which I had put on hold when I was having all of this surgery, and I moved out to Vancouver and really built my life here. And I've been here for about 12 years now. And I have a great community around me, in large part because I've continued to, you know, be vulnerable and reach out to people and really focus on developing those strong friendships and that strong community.

Jen

Cool, and remind us again, of the name of your condition, and how it's going with that now.

Sarah

Yeah, it's called Camurati Engelmann disease and it's an extremely rare genetic disorder. And so for me it affects my skull. So my skull is basically squishing my brain. And that's why I've needed all of these surgeries. And so I'm currently at number five and counting. And I have been having some symptoms lately that are a little bit scary. And so I'm seeing my neurosurgeon and a bunch of other specialists to figure out if I might be looking at brain surgery number six sometime in the next few months.

Jen

Oh, my goodness, oh, my goodness. Yeah. So you have this condition. And you had the fears that because of this condition, you couldn't really have authentic, vulnerable relationships because people would just leave, but you made this choice in Vancouver to put yourself out there and form the friendships. Now, tell us more about where that decision has led you in your relationships.

Sarah

Well, it's affected not only my friendships and the community that I've built around me, but of course it's impacted my romantic relationships as well. I, so, for most of my adult life, I have been single, you know, things just kind of haven't worked out for me in the romance department until fairly recently, I would say I've had some shorter term romantic relationships. But a few years ago, I met my current partner Philip, and fell in love and have become a part of his life with his daughter from a previous marriage.

Jen

And how old is she?

Sarah

She's 12.

Jen

So that's where the phrase bonus daughter comes in.

Sarah

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Yeah, exactly. Yeah, I'm not sure how I feel about the term stepdaughter. And so I've kind of landed on bonus kid, bonus daughter, which is a nice alternative, I think.

Jen

I like that. It's light! There's so much negative baggage with the term stepdaughter, like you're the evil stepmother, you know?

Sarah

Exactly. So I much prefer to focus on...yeah, being a bonus, being kind of an extra.

Jen

So when you were in Montreal, that relationship ended because the guy wasn't all in with your, your condition. How is Philip different in that regard?

Sarah

Yeah, well, so the one thing I'll say about my relationship when I was in Montreal and my partner is that we were so young, I mean, we were in our mid 20s. And we were living together, but it is a lot when you're in your mid 20s to sort of face a future of real uncertainty and real, you know, potential for illness and death. And it was really hard for me personally when that relationship ended, because I felt like I was surviving everything all by myself. But you know, with a lot of distance and perspective, I can say, you know, it's really hard when you're so young to grasp all of that. And so Phillip is is different and one of the things that I've really felt in our relationship is that he truly sees me for who I am and part of the reason for that is that I am a lot more comfortable and open with expressing who I am. And that's all kind of part and parcel of this transformation that I went through from my previous experience. That low moment that we talked about was just realizing that, you know, if you do express who you truly are the people who matter will really rally around you and will love you for that. And that has been a huge learning experience for me and a really important one in my life. And I feel like the partner that I've chosen really understands that.

Jen

Mm hmm. So that question. So you mentioned that Philip knows who you are. So tell us if you can, it's a hard question. Who are you now, Sarah?

Sarah

Hmm. Wow, that's a really good question. I am someone who feels things really deeply and who really values introspection and thinking a lot about my life and what matters to me and how to be better. And I think that Philip really gets that and appreciates it and that doesn't mean that I'm always kind of a downer and someone who just focuses on this really intense stuff. I do really like the intense stuff. And I get a lot out of deep conversations with friends and other folks. But I, you know, I also have a real light-hearted side, and we have a lot of, you know, joking in our relationship and a lot of fun too. So I think he appreciates both sides of that.

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That's awesome. And my mind is kind of going to the word identity. Well, you tell me, I noticed when you talk about who you are, you don't mention your disease at all. How do you keep your disease away from your statements of identity? Were you able to separate that at the beginning when you were diagnosed? Or you know, because we all have things and some people wrap their identities around the hard things more than that you do. So what has made that maybe easier for you?

Sarah

Oh, that is such a great question. I think for me, what helped me get through that really rocky period in my life was realizing that the genetic disease is not my fault. And I am someone who used to be extraordinarily hard on myself and I, you know, I could find a way to blame myself for just about anything that happened. But this incident this, you know, all of the surgeries and all of the chaos that ensued, I just realized that none of it was my fault. And so I didn't, I didn't absorb it as part of my identity. But I also don't, I don't consider myself a survivor of the disease either, because I'm still very much in it and living with it, and it's progressive. So yeah, I just, it's one of those things that is with me all the time. But I'm fortunate enough in the way that the disease presents itself for me that I can live a fairly normal life. So I choose not to incorporate it as part of my identity because I think it would make me feel like more of a victim than I consider myself to be.

Jen

Yeah, exactly. And you went right to the word I was thinking in my mind: victim. So one of the struggles I've been through since we last spoke was my two oldest, maybe just going down the path of what you would call being "troubled teens". And I think during the thick of that, that very much was a part of my identity because it was completely becoming a lens through which I viewed the world. And I viewed my life as hard at that time, but I couldn't stay there because it doesn't feel very good to think victim-y thoughts.

Sarah

Yeah.

Jen

Any thoughts on victim-thinking and disease or struggle? You know?

Sarah

Yeah, I mean for me, so lately, as I said, I am having some really scary symptoms that I haven't had since that first emergency brain surgery in New York City 12 years ago, and I will fully admit that I freaked out. It was really scary for me to think, you know, oh my gosh, this is happening again. And the last time I almost died. So maybe that means that this is it, maybe I only get 12 years, right. And so, you know, I do feel the fear and anxiety but somehow I still don't place myself in victim mode around the disease. It's just, it just feels like something that needs to be dealt with. And I think one of the, I guess, the advantages of having such an extremely rare disease, like nobody could ever have imagined all of the things that happened, it just it's so unusual. I think one of the advantages of that is you can't really anticipate it and so you just have to kind of roll with the punches, just like, well, okay, this is what's happening now. So I guess that's what we're going to do. And it's hard to live with the uncertainty, the not knowing, but

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that's just part of rolling with it, too, is like okay, well, now we take the next step to investigate and that didn't turn up anything and so what's the next thing we do. So it's...yeah, it's kind of like troubleshooting, I guess.

Jen

Yeah. It's a unique path. Like you said, it's a rare condition. And I'm sure at times a lonely path. But I think we all, whether we want to admit it or not, we like to think no one else has a path like ours, but in their own way, they have the same path of struggle, and a path that's unique, and that's lonely. So tell us more about how you think your path is maybe part of your growth journey, if you believe in such a thing.

Sarah

Well, yeah, I really do. I think for me, definitely the biggest transformation has been around being vulnerable and really deepening friendships and all types of relationships. I think it has helped me be more empathetic. And, I don't know, actually, Jen, you may have seen recently, Anderson Cooper interviewed Stephen Colbert. I saw his show. Did you see that?

Jen

Yeah, beautiful, yeah.

Sarah

Oh, my gosh. I just... and that -- I watched it probably a dozen times and just cried every time I watched it, because I could really relate to what Stephen said about my suffering, helping to understand the suffering of others. And I really do believe that that's been part of my growth journey is developing that empathy and just understanding that everybody is suffering in their own way, and seeing them and holding space for that. So I think those are two ways that this disease has really impacted my growth. And the third way is, I think, just knowing how much I've been through and knowing that I can survive it and how resilient I am, has helped me take more risks. It's kind of like that idea of, well, how bad can it be? I mean, I almost died. So what is it to quit a job and start a business or you know, what is it to, you know, release a really personal episode of my podcast? It's helpful to have that perspective of well, how bad can it be? I've been through a lot worse than this.

Jen

Yeah, strength. So much strength there. So tell us more about your podcast and how you chose to say, "How bad can it be? I'm gonna start a podcast!" or even getting into a relationship. "How bad can it be? I'm gonna have a bonus kid", you know?

Sarah

Yeah!

Jen

Tell us about that journey.

Sarah



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Yeah. So, and I guess this, I wouldn't call it a low moment exactly. But I think this is another transformational moment for me. And so when I met Philip, fairly early on in our relationship, he said to me, "You know, I already have a kid", and he's 10 years older than me. And so he was in his mid 40s, when we met and he just said, "You know, I don't want to be starting all of this over again when I'm 50. I'm just, I have one child, and I really want to focus on her and that's it for me, but I understand if that's something that you really want. And so I just, I just want you to know that that's not something that I can do in this relationship." And after everything that had happened to me, health wise, and after having been single for so long, I had already spent quite a bit of time thinking about what I wanted my life to look like, and just the reality of how dangerous it would be for me to have kids. So I said to him, "Look, I'm about 85% sure that I don't want kids. But I still need some time to really think about this." And so a few months later, we were sitting up in bed, having our morning cup of coffee, and it just hit me that I will never be somebody's mother. And it was a really bittersweet moment, I think, because on the one hand, it was me realizing that this is the life that I want, the life with this person and with his daughter and the dog, and you know, that's what I'm choosing. But then on the other hand, I had all of these feelings about, well, who am I, if I'm not a mother? And what sort of fulfillment will I find in my life? And am I going to be missing out on the greatest love of all? All of these stories that I had in my head that no one had ever actually sat down and said to me, "You know, this is the most meaningful, important thing that you will ever do." But I also knew that I wasn't inventing these stories out of thin air, that they came from somewhere. And so that's really where the podcast started with me wanting to explore these really personal questions around, what am I going to be missing if I don't become a mother? And then as part of that conversation, you know, talking to a lot of mothers about their experience and what motherhood means to them, you sort of naturally start talking about cultural expectations around motherhood and cultural expectations for women about becoming mothers. So the first season of the podcast, which was last year, was a really interesting exploration on the personal side for me, but also that sort of cultural societal piece around, you know, what is it that we, that we expect of mothers, that we expect of women?

Jen
Mmm hmm. Juicy! Love it.

Sarah
Well, I'll mention to your listeners, that you were one of my very first guests on the show. So I will definitely point out where they can hear that episode.

Jen
Yes, we will put a link in the show notes along with the link to that Anderson Cooper and the Stephen Colbert interview. That'll be at jenriday.com/184. So, um, Sarah, I'm actually racking my brain. I wonder what we talked about. I mean, I'm sure it was about motherhood. But now I'm going to go back and relisten, because ya gotta know what I said to you.

Sarah
Well, you just had a lot of insights about, you know, figuring out what's really important. You know, having six kids means that you really have to figure out what's important. And that's really what I took away

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from our conversation, Jen was just about figuring out what matters.

Jen

Hmm, good. I might need that advice again. So yeah, right now. Oh, well, so who else have you interviewed on the podcast? And what have you learned about, you know, your role as a bonus mom, I guess you could say?

Sarah

Yeah, so the first season of the show was really talking to a lot of moms to really try to figure out what I was missing out on. And I think I knew at some level, that there's no way that I would ever know unless I experienced it for myself, but it was so valuable for me to hear from moms about, you know, what it's really like, and how they see their role. And you know, where they placed motherhood in their identity, like we were talking about earlier, identity-wise. And then this season of the show has been, again, sort of a blend of the really personal exploration for me, but also some of the bigger questions around, you know, how women handle questions about choosing to be child free, and how they handle, you know, the skeptics or the pushback. And so the personal side of the show, this season, for me has really been about step-parenting, bonus-parenting, and you know, what my role is, and what I'm supposed to take from that. And I had a really interesting conversation with someone a few months ago about the concept of going all in with your bonus kids. She really talks about her bonus kids as her own kids. And I immediately sort of bristled at that and thought, Oh, you know, I don't know if I, if I could do that with my bonus kid. And I wondered why that was. And I think part of it is just really wanting to respect the relationship that she has with her own mother and recognizing that, you know, I have no interest in replacing anyone or, you know, trying to compete for that kind of role or attention. But I think what I came to was realizing that for me, feeling like a kid is mine really depends on first how the kid sees me, and whether she would feel that way, but also just having a sense of responsibility for her in her day to day life. And I think right now, in part because she's, you know, she's 12, and she can start being really independent. But also because she has two parents who love her a lot and take great care of her, I don't really feel responsible, I guess, for her in the way that I would expect parents would. So that's been a really, really interesting realization for me is that, that I'm really struggling to go all in. And you know, and we have a great relationship, we've really found a way to bond over the last few years that we've known each other. But I think there's still a little bit of reluctance for me around, you know, who I'm supposed to be to her and what that looks like.

Jen

And of course, it's unique for every single parent, child, family dynamic, right?

Sarah

Mm hmm.

Jen

I have a friend to married someone with four daughters. And I think she's all in because their mother is mostly all out. And she calls them her kids. And, you know, maybe that's okay, that you're there as more of a support role or the friend and you don't have to be the the parent who has rules and all the less fun

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stuff. I mean, how do you determine the way you've chosen to be in your role?

Sarah

Well, so one of the things that was really important to Philip, when we decided it was the right time for me to meet his daughter was that she associate me with having fun. So the first time we met, we all went bowling together, because that's something that he and his daughter used to do just the two of them and really enjoyed. And so he thought, you know, this would be a fun thing that the three of us do together. So that was my first introduction to her. And then for a long time, when I would, you know, come over and have dinner with them, it was really about having fun. He recommended that I didn't help with homework, or any of the sort of, you know, bummer stuff that she didn't enjoy, and that it was really about, you know, board games, and just fun times the three of us. And I think that that really set a strong foundation. But after a while, what I felt was really important if I was, you know, if this was going to be a long term relationship, and I was really going to become part of their lives, it was really important for me to establish a relationship with her, just the two of us, sort of independent of Philip. You know?

Jen

Mm hmm.

Sarah

And so we'd been hanging out, the three of us, for probably a year and I said, "You know, I think it's time for the two of us to start doing something together so that, that we can really establish a bond." And so what we landed on was that the week that she was with us, so the co-parenting arrangement is, you know, one week with me and Philip and one week with her mom. And so the week that his daughter is with us, I would pick her up from school every Thursday. And we would go to the grocery store and pick up some supplies to make dinner and we'd find a recipe in a cookbook, and we would cooked dinner together. And that was, you know, we've been doing that ever since. And it's been a real touchstone for us in our relationship. I think in all the time we've been doing this, we've missed maybe once...

Jen

Wow! That's impressive.

...having dinner together or making dinner together every Thursday, and it's really helped us bond, I think it's been really important.

Jen

That's beautiful. And, you know, she has that extra person just to love her. But I don't think most quote unquote, real parents, (I don't want to use that word at all, but you seem to be kind of hinting you were having a hard time taking responsibility), but I don't think those of us who are quote unquote, responsible can say we would be that committed to doing the relationship building activities every single week like that. So kudos to you. I mean, she's so lucky.

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Sarah
Thanks, yet, I don't think it's that I have trouble taking responsibility. It's that I don't feel that I need to, I guess.

Jen
Yeah, yeah.

Sarah
I really do see my role as bonus, as extra. And I, I'm fortunate enough that I run my own business. So I have a flexible schedule. So I can, you know, pick her up after school and spend time with her in the afternoon. And it was really important to me to build that bond with her, but also to demonstrate to my partner that I'm really investing in this relationship.

Jen
Mm hmm.

Sarah
Yeah.

Jen
That makes sense. I like how you clarified the word responsibility and choosing that role of fun rather than...

Sarah
Yeah.

Jen
...the role of responsible just has a more of a heaviness to it, as well.

Sarah
Exactly.

Jen
Yeah, gothca.

Sarah
Well, I will say that now I do help her with homework. So we're in Canada, and she is in a French immersion school, and I am fluent in French. And so I am the one who gets tasked with helping with French homework, because that's just not something that anyone else in the household can help with. So I have taken on some of the more, I guess, bummer activities, but I think there's a good balance.

Jen
That's great.

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Sarah
Yeah.

Jen
So Sarah, wanted to ask you, in the midst of having a new family, so to speak, how are you still managing to make time for yourself, or the things that are important to you independent of other people?

Sarah
Yeah, I think this is a season in my life, where I have really focused on family life, and really establishing that family life. And it also is a season where I've been building a business. And so those have definitely been the two priorities. But my friendships are also a really important component of the life that I live here. And so I really do try to make time to, you know, see girlfriends and spend time with them. And we find ways, I think we're at about once a month now, where we'll get together and just, you know, share what's going on in our lives. And there's a group of six or seven of us who do that kind of once every month, or once every six weeks. So that's a really important piece of staying grounded and feeling like I'm really nourishing myself is making sure that I connect with those other people who love me outside of my family.

Jen
Would you say you're an extrovert?

Sarah
No!

Jen
No? Interesting, interesting.

Sarah
No, definitely, definitely not. I think, I don't know if I would be an ambivert? But I definitely feel recharged when I am by myself. But I would say that I get a lot out of having conversations with people who know me very well. So if you put me in a crowd of people that I don't know, it's torture. But if you put me in a small group of people who've known me for years, I really do feel replenished.

Jen
Mm hmm, mm hmm. Let's shift a little. What are your thoughts about life after death? And how do you have that conversation with Philip? And what's your bonus daughter's name?

Sarah
Her name is Naomi.

Jen
Okay, how do you have that conversation with Philip and Naomi? Does it happen? Or do you just kind of try to keep it lighter?

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Sarah

I would say up until this point, we've kept it lighter. I mean, Naomi definitely knows what's going on. She, you know, I...in May been almost a full day in the emergency room having tests and she knew that. And I told her why. And she had lots of questions. So I made sure I answered them, honestly. And, you know, Philip has really helped support wise, just, you know, checking in and making sure that I'm okay, but I'll admit that we haven't really talked about death. And this actually just came up for us a couple of days ago is how do we start those conversations? How do we? How do we talk about the feelings that are underneath them? Because I would say up until this point, it's been more sort of pragmatic, like, you know, what, like wills and stuff, like what happens when we die sort of logistically, but the deep emotion underneath that is not something that we've really spent a lot of time on yet. And it's it's important that we do that.

Jen

Do you feel like you think more about death than the average person because of your condition? Or? Not necessarily? Because really, none of us are getting out of here alive, right? So I just was curious about that.

Sarah

Yeah, I you know, I'm not sure that I think about it more, I would say probably in the last few months, I have just because you know, the symptoms are always there. And it's hard to escape that. But I think the difference between someone who's been through a life threatening situation is just, yeah, recognizing that it is also fragile.

Jen

Mm hmm.

Sarah

And I do remember back in May, when the symptoms started, that everything just felt a little bit sweeter. Yeah, it was really painful to think like, maybe this is it, maybe this is all I get. Maybe 12 years is all that's in the cards for me. But when I was thinking about that, I was thinking like, well, you know, I've been through a lot in these last 12 years, it's been a pretty wild ride, but I wouldn't trade it for anything. And just, you know, the being in Vancouver and wandering around, and the moments with my family, just they all just felt a little bit sweeter. Because I was thinking like, maybe is it. Maybe this, maybe this moment will be the last time that we do this.

Jen

Right, right. That's beautiful, seeing it, you know, as a gift. Sweetens it a little bit. Well, hopefully you'll be around for very, very long time. And...

Sarah

Yeah! I hope so too. I've got big plans.

Jen

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Yeah!

Sarah
Yeah.

Jen
Well, so tell us about your business. You told us about your podcast, Maybe Someday. What's your business associated with that?

Sarah
Well, it's actually not associated with the podcast.

Jen
Oh! Oh, I didn't know that.

Sarah
I run a business helping scientists get grant funding by improving their written grant applications. So I work mostly with researchers in health related fields applying to, you know, the National Institutes of Health, or here in Canada, the Canadian Institutes of Health Research. And so I think I have a really interesting mix in my week, where on the one hand, I'm doing this podcast that's really sort of introspective and creative and soulful. And then I have this business that's very sort of like logical and technical, and, you know, scientific. So it's, I find it's a good balance for me, because I really do need that creative side. But I really love working with scientists and sort of bringing the art into their science through writing.

Jen
Mm hmm. My husband is a scientist, he could use you. I sometimes proofread for him, and it's fantastically dry.

Sarah
Yeah, but so I feel like my job is to make it as exciting and compelling as possible.

Jen
Right, right.

Sarah
I have a lot of fun doing that. Yeah.

Jen
Yeah, that's great. Well, what is your favorite book right now, Sarah?

Sarah
Oh, right now? So I read a lot of fiction. And so I will always have a great fiction recommendation. But the one I think that has impacted me most lately is Kate Northrop's book, Do Less. I don't know if you've



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read that one. I know, I think you've had her on the show before.

Jen
Yes, it's a great book.

Sarah
Yeah! But her book is really interesting way of looking at how we cycle through our time and prioritize our work and how we can do that to line up with sort of the natural rhythms of our life. And I found that that has been really helpful for me, just in terms of not giving myself such a hard time when I feel like I don't have the energy for something. It's just, you know, it's just not the right season for it. So yeah, that one has been really impactful for me lately.

Jen
Do you mind just getting a little personal and sharing how you see cycles playing out in your life with your energy?

Sarah
Yeah, not at all. I think the first thing I'll say I always hesitate just from a diversity perspective not to leave out people who don't have uteruses or people who do have uteruses, but who don't identify as women. So I just want to say that, that that's always kind of in the back of my mind, but for me, I really have found that you know, that when I am in the winter of my cycle, which is when I'm bleeding, I really need to turn inward. And that's when my intuition, I would say, is at its highest. And so I do really feel like I need to hibernate a bit and just kind of close off. And I think the biggest realization for me, and reading Kate's book, is that I would just kind of power through that before and get really mad at myself for not being able to, you know, check all these things off my list. When what I really needed to do was just, you know, relax and recharge. Hmm,

Jen
Yeah, the permission to hibernate and to see it as normal.

Sarah
Yeah!

Jen
Yeah. That's amazing. And when is your highest energy time of your cycle? Is it exactly like she says in the book? Does it kind of mirror when she writes about?

Sarah
Oh, yeah, yeah, right when I'm ovulating. It's like, let's go!

Jen
Yeah!

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Sarah

Yeah. And I think, so I've been tracking my cycle for years, like long before I ever came across this book, because I couldn't be on any sort of hormonal birth control because of my brain condition. It was too dangerous for me. So I was having to use a more sort of basal body temperature birth control method. So I've been tracking my cycle for a very long time. And this has been a really interesting complement to that. You know, what I was already learning about my cycle through tracking it very closely. And now just sort of adding this extra layer of, "Oh, yeah, my energy plays into this, too. It's not just body temperature."

Jen

I love that. And what about the seasons of the actual year? Do you notice your energy? You know, you have the 28 day cycle. How about the seasonal cycle of the actual year? Do you notice anything with those?

Sarah

Yeah, well, so I'm still mapping my cycle on to the seasons, because this is still a relatively new thing for me to notice. But I think, you know, the fall season of the cycle is really sort of about finishing up projects and kind of closing up shop before you go into hibernation. But for me, because I work with academics, and because I've always been oriented to, you know, the start of the school year, for me, it's a real ramp up time. So it'll be interesting to see how my energy, my energy plays out in this in this fall season. You know, now that I'm paying more attention to it, but it's typically the busiest season in my business as people are going back to school. And there's lots of grant deadlines and that kind of thing. So I think the difference this year will just be paying more attention to my energy levels, and finding ways to recharge in a way that I probably didn't notice or give myself permission to before.

Jen

Beautiful, I love it. The seasons and the cycles are real. And finally, as a culture, I feel like we're giving ourselves permission to notice how we feel and act accordingly. Beautiful.

Sarah

Yeah.

Jen

Well, I don't normally ask this question, but I'm going to give you the question, because this is your second time on the show. What else are you excited about? What else are you thinking about right now in your life? And anything random, you want to tell us about?

Sarah

Oh my gosh!

Jen

Free reign!

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Sarah

Or where do I even start? I mean, yeah, I think one of the most exciting parts for me is just where I'm at in my business. And just feeling like I'm beyond that sort of throwing spaghetti against the wall stage. And I have found a real, a real set point with how things are going and just building my confidence there. And I've had enough time and enough successes under my belt, that I have a lot more confidence in my work. And I think that is shining through in, in what I do. So definitely on the business front, I'm really excited about all of the potential that I have there. And then of course, the podcast, I just get so much out of having these really deep, interesting conversations with women about their lives. And I mean, I'm sure you feel the same way with your show, Jen, but it's just, it feels like such a privilege to have this container for women's stories. And it's something that really matters to me a lot.

Jen

I feel exactly the same. So if people want to learn more about your business, or listen to your podcast, which I recommend, where should they go?

Sarah

Alright, so for the podcast, you can go to maybesomedaypodcast.com. And actually, if your listeners go to maybesomedaypodcast.com/vibrant, there's a curated list of episodes that kind of cover, you know, that run the gamut of these conversations that I've been having around motherhood, around being child-free by choice, around adoption, around bonus parenting, and you know, and all of those sort of societal expectations and how we handle them. So they can go there and get a curated list of the episodes or they can just, you know, start from the beginning and listen to all of them. So that's the podcast. And then for my business, if you do have any listeners who are health researchers who need help with their grant proposals, they can always find me at sarahdobson.ca. That's s-a-r-a-h-d-o-b-s-o-n.ca.

Jen

Okay, maybe somedaypodcast.com/vibrant. And sarahdobson.ca. Cool. All right, Sarah, I would love for you to leave our listeners with a challenge.

Sarah

Great. So the challenge that I have for your listeners, and something that I have been thinking about in the podcast, is to think about something that they believe that they're supposed to do, and to take a minute to think about where that belief comes from, and whether it resonates with you. And to think about whether you're doing something because you want to or whether you think that you're supposed to. And that's something that we talked about a lot on the show is these cultural expectations and societal expectations and just you know, finding a way to live a life that's meaningful to you

Jen

Mm hmm. Want to or supposed to? That could be a really amazing lens to ask or a question to ask yourself continuously.

Sarah

Yeah.

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Jen
Do I want to or am I supposed to?

Sarah
Yeah. And where does that come from?

Jen
Yeah, well, do you ever do things you're supposed to but don't want to, Sarah?

Sarah
Oh sure! But I think, you know, I think the older I get the less interested in doing things...I'm less interested in doing things I'm supposed to do. I just had lots of creative ways to say no.

Jen
So Sarah, what's one thing you want to do, going forward? Not supposed to do?

Sarah
Want to do going forward? I want to have more people in my home, more dinner parties, more celebrations. That's something, that is something that I haven't been doing a lot of lately, and just bringing community together. Yeah.

Jen
Beautiful. Me too! Ditto on that one.

Sarah
Yeah!

Jen
Well, this has been so fun to catch up. I love what you're doing in the world. It's beautiful. Everyone, definitely go check out Sarah's podcast, Maybe Someday. She's such a good conversationalist. That's what I love about your podcast. So good.

Sarah
Well, thanks, Jen. It's always such a delight to talk to you.

Jen
Thank you. We'll have to catch up again in three more years. That seems to be our schedule!

Sarah
I hope we don't wait that long!

Jen
Alright! Thanks for being on the show, Sarah.

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Sarah
Take care.

Jen
Thanks for listening, friends. I hope that gave you some inspiration, some positivity, some feelings of being uplifted. And I hope you will go out and spread some of that goodness in your world today. I would love if you would tell a friend about the Vibrant Happy Women podcast. Show her how to find it on her podcast app. Did you know only 30% of Americans listen to podcasts. And most of those are millennials. So tell your friends how to listen, they deserve some of this positivity and goodness in their worlds as well. Well, I appreciate you. I will be back later this week with a Happy Bit talking about how to choose a new identity and why that's important. We all have thoughts about who we are. And sometimes we believe that that is set in stone. But did you know it's possible to start to shift your identity and there are some tools that will help you do that. And when you do that your brain will support actions that enhance that identity. In other words, you have to be the person who can achieve the goals you're trying to get to before you can actually achieve those goals. If your identity and your goals don't line up, nothing's going to work. I'll tell you how to shift that in the Happy Bit later this week. Well, thank you for listening. I hope that you have a vibrant and happy week, and I will see you next time. Take care.

Thanks for listening to the Vibrant Happy Women podcast at www.jenriday.com.



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