

Not Your Mother's Library Transcript

Episode 5: Get Happy

(Brief intro music)

Melody: Hi, and welcome to Not Your Mother's Library! I'm Melody.

Rachel: And I'm Rachel.

Melody: And we are very excited to welcome two special guests. We have Sarah, who you met last month, and Jill. Welcome to the podcast! So, if you just want to give us a little background...Sarah, we did talk about you last month. I don't know if there's anything you wanted to add, maybe...?

Sarah: Nothing's changed, so be sure you listen to last month's as well as this month's. You'll know all about me.

Melody: You will get to know Sarah. And then, Jill, do you want to tell us a little bit about yourself?

Jill: Sure. So, I am the Library Director here at Oak Creek. I have been the Library Director for about eight years, and before that I was a children's librarian in a nearby community for about 10 years. I live here in Oak Creek, and I think the most interesting thing about me is that everyone in my family is a librarian. So, both my mom and my sister are librarians, so I have been growing up in libraries my whole life. In fact, my parents came up with my name as my mom was typing a library card. So, I was destined to be a librarian. I like going to the movies, I love listening to podcasts, so I'm excited to be on one!

Melody: Yay!

Jill: Right now, actually, my current favorite form of reading is listening to audiobooks, because when I read a book I tend to fall asleep.

Melody: (laughs) I've been there.

Rachel: We all have.

Melody: Yes, all right. Thank you, Jill. We're so excited to have you.

Rachel: Definitely.

Melody: Yes, so the theme for this month is books about happiness or joy, so I just wanted to start off by talking about what background you have with reading books like this. Do you normally read, like, self-help type books, is this a new genre for you? So, I wanted to get started. I kind of have a love-hate relationship with self-help. I used to absolutely hate it, and I always felt like I can improve better by reading a fictional fiction story about someone else and be inspired by them than someone being like, 'You need to do this and this and this'. I think as I've gotten older I've started liking self-help more. I read this book, "Girl, Wash Your Face" which I've talked about in a previous episode of this podcast.

Rachel: The very first episode!

Melody: Yes, and that was a big turnaround for me. And I think it just came at the right time in my life where a lot of things were changing, and I needed that encouragement to make changes. So, what about you guys? Anybody want to share?

Rachel: Well, I am definitely not a self-help or feel-good fiction reader. I mean, I do read fiction. I think—like you said—that can improve your life, but I don't seek it out and try to improve myself. I'm more for the story and the characters, so anything that happens is just kind of an aftereffect. Usually a happy one. But it's probably why I went with a Netflix series for this episode rather than an actual book.

Melody: Yeah, it would have been, like, a nightmare to have read a self-help book?

Rachel: I think so, yeah. One day I might get there, when I'm more mature.

Sarah: It seems like they're more conversational now. It seems like because there's a younger group of people writing them they're much more...they're written more for people who are younger people. So, they feel a lot less teacher-y or advisory and much more...the hit...the, like, trendy, hip ones that are out right now.

Melody: Yeah, and that's probably the one that I chose for today. It's definitely along that vein. It's more casual, easier to read...yeah.

Jill: I would say the same thing, like the one that I chose...I'm with Rachel. I try to stay away from self-help books, but the one that I chose is very much a memoir. So, it's more about someone else's journey to improving their life or turning their life around as opposed to how you should go about and fix it, because I personally think that's asking a lot for someone to tell you how to fix your own life.

Everyone: (laughs)

Rachel: If they lead by example it's a lot easier to follow.

Melody: That's very true. All right, so I'm going to get started with the first book. It's called "You Are a Badass" by Jen Sincero, and this—honestly—I did not get through this whole thing. So, that tells you how I feel about self-help.

Everyone: (laughs)

Melody: But this is a definitely much more casual take on a self-help kind of a book, and it's just encouraging you to recognize who you are as a person and understand what things like your background and upbringing and family and friends that has...how that has kind of colored your life and the way you make decisions. And to just be bold and brave and love yourself. So, it is a good read. I would recommend it. Honestly, I didn't get through it, but the first...you know, the first half was good. I really liked...in the beginning, she starts off by asking you to realize that there are a lot of, I guess, subconscious factors that are affecting the way you make decisions, your habits, how you think. So, things like how your...your parents raised you, and what your...your upbringing was like, and school, and how that all kind of affects who you are and you don't really realize it. So, she kind of encourages you to think of that and consider what you want to change about that, because that kind of just plays a role in your life without you realizing it. I thought that was interesting. She also is very much...encourages you to do things yourself. So, she says you're the only person who can make yourself happy. So, she says 'love yourself' like, at the end of every chapter. It's the last point she always has.

Rachel: Really driving it home.

Sarah: (laughs)

Melody: Right, love yourself! And she encourages you to forgive yourself because it's hurting you more than anybody else. To stop comparing which, for me, was a good one to hear. And control your own thoughts. She also says stop caring about what other people think. I wrote this down because I thought it was good: 'You're only responsible for your own behavior, not how people feel about or react to you'. Thought that was a very good point.

Jill: That is a good point.

Sarah: That's a great point.

Melody: As a natural people pleaser, I feel like I need to keep remembering that. She also talks about the concept of finding your purpose, this vague idea that a lot of people have where they think, 'Oh, I don't know what my purpose is yet', and you see people who are like, 'Oh I know I was going to be a librarian one day', and someone else might be like, 'I have no clue'. And she says don't worry about it. It's...that's...you don't need to have the answer right now. Just try something. Just, you know, do something, work hard, and you'll find something. You know, you'll look back and realize, 'Oh, this is what led me here'. So, yeah. I thought it was a good read.

Rachel: Sounds like good advice.

Melody: Yeah, there was some very good advice in there.

Sarah: Do you know what her background is?

Melody: She—I believe—is a self-help coach. What do you call that?

Sarah: Like a life coach?

Melody: Yes, she's a life coach!

Rachel: I would have gone with 'guru', but okay. (laughs)

Sarah: (laughs) That's another flavor, I think, of life coach.

Melody: She does have that life coach-y kind of a flair to her writing which can be a little bit like, ugh, okay.

Rachel and Sarah: (laughs)

Melody: But yeah, it was a good read. And then, my readalike that I recommend, which I haven't read but I've read about, it's called "The Life-Changing Magic of Not Giving a F*ck" by Sarah Knight, and this actually is kind of a parody of this kind of a book. It's actually a parody of "The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up" by Marie Kondo, and it's...but it's very similar to "You Are a Badass" in that they're both kind of, like, stop caring about what other people think. Do what you need to do for yourself. So, it's about combating your people-pleasing nature and, kind of, mental decluttering, and dealing with unwanted shame and obligations and guilt. So, that's a recommended read.

Sarah: It's very funny working at any public service desk where people are trying to request this, because the first book people feel pretty confident and they'll just say it. 'I'm looking for, you know, "You Are a Badass!"' And other people just show me their phone. 'Do you have this book?'

Everyone: (laughs)

Sarah: I'll check that for you. (laughs)

Melody: Yeah, sometimes I have trouble finding that when I'm searching, because if you don't type it the right way it doesn't come up! So, Sarah, what have you been reading?

Sarah: Yes! I—not recently but a little while ago—read "The Book of Joy," which is a conversation between the Dalai Lama and reverend Desmond Tutu. And there is another man named Douglas Abrams—I believe is how you pronounce his name—who followed them to a...the Dalai Lama's residence in Dharamsala, India, where he's in exile, because the Dalai Lama and Desmond Tutu wanted to get together for the Dalai Lama's 80th birthday, but South Africa wouldn't let the Dalai Lama into South Africa for political reasons. It's a really...I mean, that's just, like, the intro to this book!

Everyone: (laughs)

Sarah: It's just such an intense book to listen to when you really take...before you were to read it...or, I actually listened to it. And while it was actors playing the Dalai Lama and Desmond Tutu, it was convincing enough. Like, their accents are good enough that you're like, 'This is the Dalai Lama and Desmond Tutu', so.

Melody: Nice, so you would recommend the audio.

Sarah: Oh, I would definitely recommend the audio, yeah. Because once you get into it, it's good. But when you think about the context for both of these men's lives and the horrors that they both went through—political asylum, Apartheid, country reunification—I mean, it goes on and on and on. They're just happy dudes. They're like, 'Eh! You know, that happened, and this is why I'm actually a happier person because of it. I'm stronger because of it'. Taking the context of your life and being able to turn it around and, kind of like I think you were saying—Jen Sincero was saying—about, like, you're in charge of how you feel about your life. That if you turn around and look at all of the beauty and benefits of life, that it's just going to make you feel better, and then, actually, it's like a ripple effect. Everybody else will feel better, really, around you. And just about compassion. There's so much about compassion and recognizing the circumstances of everyone else's life. It just is such an interesting conversation. And they actually offer very solid—they call it the...let's see. There's these pillars. Eight pillars of joy. And so, they talk about the first pillars being perspective, humility, humor, and acceptance, and the last four being qualities of the heart, which are forgiveness, gratitude, compassion, generosity. And they just keep coming back to the ways to connect with those pillars and actual exercises to do. I mean, obviously the Dalai Lama practices meditation, being Buddhist, and so it's not really like a...it's more their conversation, though. If you're not interested in a book that's teaching you how to meditate, that's okay, because this is more about talking about life and the realities of life, so, super interesting.

Melody: That's interesting. So, while you were talking, I just had a thought pop up which I think we should address because this podcast is about happiness and joy and choosing to live that way, but there

is...you know, there are people who are depressed, and that is a clinical diagnosis. And you can't change that. You know, we're not as all saying if you're depressed, well, choose to be happy.

Rachel: Right.

Sarah: Definitely.

Melody: So, just want to address that, as well.

Sarah: Also, seek help. (laughs) Practice these things and also look for a provider, and come to the library and maybe we can help you find a provider. It's a plug!

Melody: Yes, find some research.

Sarah: Yeah, and so I also read...I had a couple of readalikes. "The Art of Happiness" by the Dalai Lama was written probably, I don't know, 20 some-odd years ago now, and he wrote that with a psychiatrist names Howard Cutler, and they were looking at a lot of the same things. So this..."The Book of Joy" is sort of a follow-up, you could say, to "The Art of Happiness." They wrote others, like: "The Art of Happiness as Work" and different...it's like a...a brand. And then really recently I read a great book called "How to Change Your Mind: What the New Science of Psychedelics Teaches Us about Consciousness, Dying, Addiction, Depression, and Transcendence" by Michael Pollan, and a lot of people might be familiar with Michael Pollan because he wrote "The Urban Wars Dilemma," which was a very well-known book. And this book was very interesting because it talked a lot about LSD and psilocybin—which is the component in magic mushrooms that makes you feel effects—and how it's being used now in medical settings and for therapeutic sessions. Actually, talking about depression and anxiety...people who are cancer patients, they're finding if they are given various doses of psilocybin under the care of a professional, that they're able to come to terms about their mortality, and just the quality of the rest of their lives that no other pharmaceutical or no other therapy can give them. It just really was super interesting.

Melody: That's fascinating, wow!

Sarah: It's really interesting, and he wrote—if anybody's ever listened to or read "The Omnivore's Dilemma" which is about our food system, it's very historical but also a memoir. So, like, he—in this book—takes an acid trip, and he takes a psilocybin trip, so that he can report out how he felt and, you know, he's not suffering from any of these maladies, but he felt like it would be an interesting, you know, experiment. But it's really interesting. And that's what I listened to. (strained) He reads it...

Melody and Rachel: (laughs)

Sarah: Which, you know, not every author should be a voice actor.

Rachel: No, no.

Sarah: But it still...I mean, it was just still an interesting enough story that, however you consume it, it would be interesting.

Melody: Do you know where those therapies are taking place? Is it in the U.S.?

Sarah: It is in the U.S.—it sounds like it's super controlled.

Melody: I would imagine.

Sarah: Right, as one would hope. Also, there's an interesting mixture of dealing with the drug laws as they exist. When—and he digs into a lot of this—when they were written, why they were written, the political issues that are still causing problems with researchers now being able to get access to these things and have open experiments. I mean, I think a lot of people are familiar with, like, the Timothy Leary, you know, '60s, '70s LSD illicit end of things, which he digs a lot into and about the realities of what that story was really about, and it's just so interesting. But yeah, I...based on what he has written, there's progress in research facilities being able to do experiments to help people, so it's really interesting.

Rachel: Good to hear.

Melody: That's fascinating. Wow.

Sarah: It is.

Melody: So, Jill, what have you been reading?

Rachel: Top that, Jill! (laughs)

Sarah: (laughs) Right? Sorry!

Jill: I don't know that I can! (laughs) So, I actually...to go back to the meditation thing that Sarah was talking about before, I read the book—well, actually, I listened to the book—“10% Happier” by Dan Harris. The subtitle of this book is “How I Tamed the Voice in My Head, Reduced Stress Without Losing My Edge, and Found Self-Help That Actually Works—A True Story.”

Rachel: These long titles are the best!

Sarah: (laughs)

Melody: (laughs) It tells you what you're going to get.

Jill: Well, yeah, and at the beginning of the book he actually starts it by saying what he wanted to title the book, which his publisher said 'no' to. That's another one of those titles that we would have a hard time finding in the catalog.

Everyone: (laughs)

Jill: So, I'll let you listen to the book or read the book to find out what he wanted to title the book, but...so, Dan Harris is a correspondent for ABC News, and it works...it's actually kind of a memoir of...again, at the start of the book he actually was filling in as a newsreader on Good Morning America, and he had a panic attack on live air.

Rachel: Oof.

Jill: And so it talks...it starts there, and then it gives a little bit of backstory about how he got to the point where he had a panic attack. So, it follows his career as a journalist. So, when he got to ABC News, he was actually a war correspondent, so he spent a lot of time in Afghanistan and Iraq and then, when he came back home, he didn't know how to deal with that adrenaline rush he was getting in war zones, and

so he turned to drugs and alcohol. And then he had this panic attack and decided that drugs and alcohol probably weren't the right solution. And so, he was actually working for Peter Jennings at the time, and Peter Jennings made him the religion correspondent for ABC World News. And he is an atheist. So, he spent a lot of time going in, interviewing religious leaders of all different religions across the country, and every time they were talking about this peace and this inner joy that they came from, and he wanted to know how he would get that. So, eventually he came to meditation. And so like I said, this tracks his progress not only in coming to meditation but also his progress as an ABC correspondent. So, I thought that was really interesting. He talks about how the voice in his head will do a play-by-play analysis of the world, but it's with a really unkind, colored commentary, and so even...so, with meditation, it helps him learn how to turn off that color commentary. At one point in the book, he goes to—I think it was a 10-day retreat—meditation retreat where they meditated for, like, 10-12 hours a day. And, I'm getting to this retreat thing, and I'm listening like, 'This is crazy'. And he agreed! (laughs) In the book, he talks about how he thought it was crazy, but as he went through he found that it really helped him learn to meditate. And the thing that I took away from it the most was at the end of the meditation they were allowed to ask the...ask questions, and the person who was leading the retreat said, you know, as you get back, as you get ready to go on the airplane, you know, you might end up thinking about, you know...over and over again, well, how am I going to get to the airport? What if my...what if the car is late? What if my flight is delayed? What if my luggage gets lost? And, so Dan Harris asked the question, but those are really important questions! Those are questions that you need to ask so that you can have a plan in case those things happen. And the man agreed that those were important questions to ask once, but what he said is after the 17th time what...how useful is it? And so, that really resonated with me because I'm the person that will plan for every contingency and plan over and over and over again. So, I find myself stepping back and being like, okay, I've planned it once, I don't need to rethink this.

Melody: Yeah, I think that's hard to do, though. Because I have a similar mindset, and I think part of it is you want the best plan, so I'm going to ask myself this question again and again and again and keep improving the plan, but I...that's really good advice. Just once you're...you've answered the question. It's okay. I'm going to move on.

Rachel: There's that very famous saying: If you worry, you suffer twice. Or, in my case, you worry, like, 20 times over and over and eventually have an anxiety attack. Yeah.

Everyone: (laughs)

Melody: That's...wow. That's really interesting.

Jill: So, the way...the other thing that I thought was interesting is how...why the book is called "10% Happier." Because then when he got back from the meditation retreat, because of the field that he works in, he...there were a lot of skeptics. And so, they would ask him, 'Does meditation really work?' and the catchphrase he came up with was, 'Well, I would say it made me about 10% happier'. So, it doesn't change your life, but it makes you about 10% happier. So that's my readalike, which is "Mediation for Fidgety Sceptics."

Everyone: (laughs)

Jill: So, this is another Dan Harris book. Again, I listened to it. It's actually written...it's he and another man whose name escapes me at the moment, but who's also...is real big into meditation. Once again it's a memoir, but the memoir is interspersed with these meditations that you can try. So, it's the memoir of...Dan Harris created a company called 10% happier—there's an app—and so he's kind of become this...the voice of meditation—mainstream meditation—in the U.S. And so, this is about how they tried to launch this company. So, they actually rented a bus—it had been George Clinton and Parliament Funkadelic's orange tour bus. So, they rented this bus, and they drove across the United States in 10 days and spread meditation across the U.S.

Melody: Wow.

Jill: But, like I said, it has these different meditations filtered in. I have not been successful at trying meditation.

Melody: I was going to ask you that. (laughs)

Jill: (laughs) I tried. I keep falling asleep. (laughs) But the one meditation that they talk about that I thought was really useful and I have been successful at is 10 deep breaths. And so, before you go into any situation, you just sit and look kind of straight ahead and just focus on breathing in and out for 10 times. And it's amazing how much...how that will calm you and just prepare you for whatever you're about to tackle.

Sarah: I read both of these books, too, actually on Jill's suggestion. Listened to both of those books. I think the guy's name is Jeff Warrens.

Jill: Thank you, yes.

Sarah: I say that because there's a really scary cult leader named Warren Jeffs, and when I first saw the cover of the book I was like, 'What did Jill...'

Everyone: (laughs)

Sarah: 'What is Jill having me read! This does not seem right!' But no, it's a different person named Jeff Warrens. And yeah, I think that their whole thing was relax. Everybody's kind of uptight about meditation, and you have to do it this way, you have to wear these clothes, you have to sit here. And their whole thing is, 'Are your eyes open or closed? Okay'. Whatever's comfortable for you is...the point is for you to feel better and practice these things and relax!

Jill: Well, one of the things...one of the things he talks about is that if every time you try to meditate you fall asleep, you probably just needed to fall asleep!

Everyone: (laughs)

Sarah: And don't give yourself such a hard time about it.

Melody: Well, and they also call it 'mindfulness', too, and I think you can do that to varying degrees. So, you can start to become more mindful about your thinking without technically meditating. And I think that's kind of going towards that—that vein, anyway.

Sarah: They sound like they're very compatible practices. They are practices, though, and that's actually something that the...the Dalai Lama kept coming back to, and the "10% Happier" guys, that it is...like

anything, if you're going to get good at it, you do have to figure out how to practice. Even in little ways, like the 10 breaths a day or whatever it is. I'm in the same boat. I can do the 10 breaths, but beyond that I'm not very successful.

Melody: There's a little bit of discussion about meditation in the Jen Sincero book, too. Yeah, and she gives some very...she does not say, 'Oh you need to meditate 12 hours a day'. She gives very practical, easy, like, 'Try just for five minutes at a time, or sit down and see if you can kind of push away all those extra thoughts'.

Sarah: They call it 'wins'. You got a minute? You've won. You've won meditation for the day!

Jill: And then the other book that I have as my readalike is a book that I read years ago. I bet I read this book 10 years ago now. It's called "A Simple Act of Gratitude" by John Kralik, and it's actually about a man who's just in a really bad place in his life. He was a lawyer and his law firm was...was going to go bankrupt, his girlfriend has left him, he lost his apartment. I mean, like, if everything that could have gone wrong in this man's life went wrong, and it was, like...and so, as he's cleaning out his office because his law firm went bankrupt, he found this really nice stationary that he had bought when he had started his firm, and he had this idea that he was going to handwrite thank you notes on this really fancy stationary to everyone—all of his clients. And so he decided that he was just going to use this fancy stationary, and every day for a year he was going to write a thank you note to someone. And so, what he found is...he starts off with really easy thank you notes to write, and then they got harder and harder as he was searching for...for new people to thank. And basically, what he found is that just for being grateful...having one thing to be grateful for every day, he was able to pull himself out of his funk and realize that, even though things were really bad, that there are still good things in his life. Yeah, so I just really liked that book. It made me very happy to read.

Melody: I imagine that must be...once you've gotten through all of your family and friends, it must be tricky. Like, how do I...I'm not going to write my grocery store clerk a thank you for checking...you know. Yeah.

Sarah: Gratitude is hard, but I think it's really a key component of happiness. I think it's figuring out, again, that idea that, like, 'Ugh, my life's in the crapper, but I...I woke up!'

Everyone: (laughs)

Sarah: Got to be thankful for some things!

Melody: A matter of perspective. All right, Rachel.

Rachel: Well, compared to the media you guys have consumed, I feel...

Everyone: (laughs)

Rachel: Like mine is much lighter fare!

Sarah: Nice!

Melody: We're probably ready for that.

Rachel: It does have some hidden depths, though, so. Like I said, I watched a Netflix show. It's called "Rilakkuma and Kaoru." It's actually Japanese and it released in April of this year. A few months ago we

had just landed on happiness as a topic for this podcast, and I was thinking, ‘Ugh. What am I going to do!’ (laughs)

Melody: ‘I hate self-help.’

Everyone: (laughs)

Rachel: Hate’s a strong word, but yes.

Everyone: (laughs)

Rachel: And then bam! I saw it on the newly released list, and I gave it a go because it looked endearing, and I binged it in one day. Although, the episodes are short at 12 minutes each, so it’s easy to binge. “Rilakkuma and Kaoru” presents the realities of adulthood to children in a non-terrifying way. That’s the best way I can nutshell it.

Melody: So, is it, like, “Sesame Street” in anime form?

Rachel: No. I can definitely...it’s, like I said, it presents it to children, but it’s also a show for young adults, adult-adults, old adults, living-dead adults—you get the idea, okay?

Everyone: (laughs)

Rachel: Not only is it one of the cutest things in all of creation, but it is funny and touching, and it emphasizes the idea of finding yourself to find happiness. So, Rilakkuma is a bear who lives in an apartment with a smaller bear named Korilakkuma and a chick named Kiiroitori, and Kaoru herself who is an average young woman with an office job. It’s stop-motion animation, and you can tell that a lot of love went into the series. As I mentioned before, it touches on coming of age, and every episode touches on something new, from friends who find success before you do to facing anxiety and bad luck. Kaoru deals with office gossip, going underappreciated, and feeling insignificant, being indecisive—you name it. The surreal aspects of the series are awesome, too. There’s an episode where it’s a gloomy, rainy day and Rilakkuma starts sprouting mushrooms on his body.

Melody: (laughs)

Rachel: Which I took as a reflection of Kaoru’s loneliness and depression. It’s kind of offset by the weather, so it becomes a physical manifestation of that.

Sarah: Oh, wow.

Rachel: In another episode, due to mounting debt, the three animals end up having to get jobs or risk going homeless, and that sounds stressful, but the way it’s presented is so charming, and the characters’ reactions are so wholesome that you feel relaxed as you watch.

Melody: Aw, that sounds so sweet already.

Rachel: It really is. ‘Sweet’ is a good descriptor for the show. So, if you’re interested in a series for yourself or your kids where things like body image, facing change, growing older and losing belief in the more magical aspects of life are commonplace problems faced by a couple of bears and two neurotic chicks...

Everyone: (laughs)

Rachel: You like that? I worked hard on that one. (laughs)

Sarah: Very good.

Rachel: I would say give “Rilakkuma and Kaoru” a go. It might even improve your own sense of self-worth. It did for me. Each episode covers one month in the characters’ lives, so you can see the story unfold over a year, and that’s how it’s set up—it’s one month. And, again, it is so adorable I want to explode!

Everyone: (laughs)

Melody: It sounds...I think I’m going to add it to my queue—my Netflix queue. It sound so sweet.

Rachel: Yeah, and it’s...because it’s so short it’s easy to watch. If you just do one episode or if you were like me and you do it all at once. (laughs)

Jill: That seems like a show that would be good to watch with my kids.

Rachel: Yes! Definitely, yes.

Jill: Because I have two boys, and we’re getting to the point where it’s real hard to find things that mom and they are both interested in. We’re at that age, and so that seems like something they would be very...that we could all enjoy together.

Rachel: Well, and Rilakkuma actually started out as a picture book character, but those books are really difficult to find in the U.S. I do recommend a series of board books called “Cozy Classics” by Jack and Holman Wang. Titles include “War & Peace,” “Moby Dick,” “Pride & Prejudice,” and so on. They are all featuring needle-felted characters and scenes, much like the Netflix show.

Jill: My kids have “Moby Dick”—someone gave it to them. (laughs)

Rachel: Oh, there you go!

Sarah: I think we have it here. I think we have a couple of episodes—or, the board books—I think we have here at the library.

Rachel: I was going to say, they are available at a handful of libraries in the Milwaukee County System, so place a hold on one today.

Melody: Nice! All right, so I have an extra title to throw on there. Since Rachel told me she was talking about a Netflix show, I thought I would talk about one that I enjoyed, as well. It’s called “Tidying Up with Marie Kondo,” and this is based on the book that I mentioned earlier in the podcast: “The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up” by Marie Kondo. I have not read the book, I just went straight into the TV show, so I’m a bad librarian.

Everyone: (laughs)

Melody: But...so, I like organizing things. This is all about how to organize and declutter your life and find joy by doing that. So, I’m the kind of person...when I was in college, I would have to...you know, I had a big paper I had to write, and I would clean first.

Jill: I go to the office supplies store when I get overwhelmed. Seeing all the ways that I could organize my life calms me down. It's my happy place. (laughs)

Melody: Right! So, something about just things being in their place and organized and cleaned up calmed me down, too. So this...this show...I was very excited to try it out. So, Marie Kondo goes and visits several families in their homes and helps them declutter their lives. So...and her method...so, say for example we're taking your closet—all of your clothes. She has you take everything and pile it in a massive pile. So, number one, actually see what you have and how much you have. Which, some of those...like, the pile was on the bed and it would just reach the ceiling. It was insane. I'm kind of scared about if I did that. So, you see what you have, and then she makes...she doesn't 'make you', she recommends that you pick up each individual item, hold it in your hands, and does it spark joy for you? And, when she describes...so, this woman is a tiny—I think—Japanese woman. She's super cute, and the way that she describes joy, it's like ting!

Everyone: (laughs)

Sarah: Literally.

Melody: Yeah, she literally does that.

Sarah: Makes that noise!

Melody: She doesn't say what it means, but it gives you that feeling. So...and if it sparks joy, you keep it, and if it doesn't, you let it go. And there...there can be some things that become more complicated, like nostalgic items or things you think have practical purpose but you don't really like them, and I really like her concept for dealing with things you have nostalgia about but you do not need anymore. She...she has you thank the item. So, if you have, like, a teddy bear when you were four, or you got your tooth broken, or something. You don't want it anymore, but you feel bad getting rid of it. She says, well, thank the item, thank it for what it's done for you in your life, and then you can let it go and move on. Which I think is a really good strategy when you're struggling with knowing you should get...get rid of something but feeling obligated to keep it. So, I really enjoyed this show. She also recommends that you organize things in a way that you can see everything you have. So, like, get clear containers so you can see...so you don't go out and buy the same thing four times, which I think is very practical advice. Yeah, so I recommend this show. I...I got through it in a week or so. It was...it was a good...a good watch for sure.

Sarah: And the way she folds things in drawers was, like, holy cow!

Everyone: (laughs)

Sarah: So, everything is...everything's facing upward, so at a glance you can see everything you have in the drawer. I've just never even thought that way. Or, like, even if something's stacked in a closet...like, I have to lift shirts to figure out what's the next shirt, but if they all were basically, like, spine-up like our books...it's so great!

Melody: Yeah, you could see everything! It's...it's just taking the time to do that. It's difficult.

Sarah: Right, yes it is. (laughs)

Melody: So, I have a couple readalikes if you've seen this show and you wanted to dig deeper. There's a book called "Spark Joy" also by Marie Kondo. Subtitle is "An Illustrated Master Class on the Art of

Organizing and Tidying Up,” and this is actually a follow-up to her first book, and—kind of like you were saying, Sarah—this is the illustrated guide to...here’s how you fold, organize, and put things together. So, it’s just more of a step-by-step instructional guide. And then my other readalike is called “The Life-Changing Manga of Tidying Up: A Magical Story,” which actually sounds similar to what you...your show, Rachel, that you were talking about. It’s a fictional story about this...this young woman who’s feeling like her life is cluttered and she’s lacking direction, and she hires this woman named Marie Kondo...

Everyone: (laughs)

Melody: To help her organize her life! So, yeah. Those...those both sound really fun. Yeah.

Rachel: Very cool.

Sarah: Netflix is really bringing it with the self-help right now, because also—I didn’t even think about this until you were talking about it—but I don’t know if any of you have watched any “Queer Eye” episodes? Oh, man. You want to feel good? These guys come into your life and they just...they’ve made everybody feel good. These people are down in the dumps...that’s the whole point! It’s different from the old one, the old one was...

Jill: And that’s...and that’s the remake of “Queer Eye for the Straight Guy,” right?

Sarah: Correct. Now it’s just “Queer Eye,” and they have different gendered people they help. But they just will look you right in the face and be like, ‘You are gorgeous! You are...you have got this!’ You know? It’s really...but Netflix has a bunch...several shows I feel like, now, that are really promoting that idea of, like, you know, that we deserve to feel good. There’s nothing wrong with feeling good and saying you’re a good person and trying to make your life better. I’ll finish that season.

Melody: So, what’s the key to happiness, guys? Now that we’ve discussed and read.

Rachel: I think, obviously, teddy bears and chicks.

Everyone: (laughs)

Rachel: That’s what I learned. Again, I need to mature at some point.

Everyone: (laughs)

Rachel: But that is not today!

Sarah: Not giving yourself such a hard time. I think that really...from everything that I’ve seen and just, like, listening to what you guys are saying, like...even if you have a method where, like, okay, you need to tame your closet, or whatever. She approaches it, or these gurus are approaching it in a way that’s, like, it’s okay. Whatever you...whatever progress you make is okay. You are okay. That, to me, is what happiness feels like. That’s what I would like any kids we interact with or people who come into the library to feel like, all right, you’re doing all right.

Melody: Yeah. I feel similarly. I think for me it’s learning to find satisfaction and peace within yourself regardless of what other people think of you. Especially, as I mentioned, as a people pleaser...learning to just be content with who I am and if, you know, someone’s not happy about it, that’s fine. It doesn’t...it’s not important.

Rachel: Be accepting of yourself.

Jill: And along those lines, I think that to find one thing every day that's going well. No matter how bad it seems, to just find one thing every day that's going well I think is a good way to get you on that path of seeing what's...what's good in yourself, of seeing what's good in the world.

Melody: I think it's easy to get lost in your emotions of frustration or sadness or when you think about that—think about the good things—I think that will help a lot. Yeah.

Rachel: Well, my notepad is telling me that we have some other talking points to get through.

Everyone: (laughs)

Rachel: As we mentioned last episode, the summer reading challenge is coming up. This year's theme is 'A Universe of Stories', and we have loads of programs you can attend in the months to come. The challenge starts on June 10th, ends August 10th, and is open to all ages.

Melody: So sign up! If you haven't already.

Rachel: Yeah, please do.

Sarah: Anywhere and everywhere. Anybody can sign up—whenever is hearing this.

Jill: Anybody can sign up, you can get the from...you can get the sign-up sheet, you can download it from our website or you can stop into the library. We have a sign-up booth in the kid's department, but anybody can come in and sign up, or you can go to any of the other desks and sign up, as well.

Melody: There will be a link in the description.

Rachel: Definitely. And along with that there will also be a link to our self-discovery booklist, because I did not make a happiness booklist, and this was the closest I could find.

Everyone: (laughs)

Melody: I love that you made a self-discovery booklist. (laughs) How was that? Was that annoying to you?

Rachel: I mean, I have made many at this point. There was also erotica, and that was the toughest one to get through. So, if I could do that, I can do anything! (laughs)

Melody: All right, that's awesome. So, something else I just wanted to mention. One of our coworkers here at the library had...had mentioned this to me. It's called "The Science of Happily Ever After" by Ty Tashiro, and it just touches on this idea of mood congruence which basically says that the way that we consume music versus, like, stories is completely different depending on our mood and how we're feeling. So, when we listen to music, we usually play music to match our mood, you know? So, if you're in a happy mood, you will play upbeat, happy music. If you're feeling sad and you want a good cry or something, you'll play something sad. But, when we read books or consume stories it's the opposite experience. So, when you're feeling like you're in a good place emotionally, that's the time to read more heavy material because you feel like you're emotionally capable of going into that kind of a world, and if you're in a rough time and, you know, you're dealing with something, usually reading a happier, light-

hearted book is what you go to to kind of put yourself in a new world that you're not experiencing in your real world. Thought it was just a really interesting concept which—for me—looking back rings true.

Rachel: Makes a lot of sense.

Melody: Also, speaking of joy, I just wanted to talk about our Serenity Garden.

Sarah: Yay!

Melody: So, I'm...I totally forgot to ask you, Jill, if you wanted to just talk about the Serenity Garden.

Jull: Sure. If you want to come and find a place to practice your meditation techniques, we had two residents take the lead in creating a Serenity Garden which is just on the southeast corner of the library outside. It's right when you're walking from the parking lot into the building. These two residents raised the money and created this garden in memory of their late wives—Connie Bauer and Darlene Marciniak. Darlene actually worked at the library for about 25 years before she retired and then passed away. And so, it's a babbling brook—I think is the best way to describe it—that travels, I would say, 25 feet or so. I'm terrible at measuring. And then there's a picnic...there's some picnic tables and some benches and some flowers, and so it's just a really nice place to come and enjoy the outdoors. You can go inside, check out your library books, and come out and eat...eat your lunch and read a book.

Melody: Yeah, it's...it's really beautiful. I think it turned out so...so nice. Yeah.

Jill: Yeah, it really did. So, everything...we're waiting for a couple more planters to come in, and then everything's ready to go, so...

Melody: Come in and practice your meditation. (laughs)

Jill: Exactly. (laughs)

Melody: All right.

Rachel: Well, we want to thank everyone for listening. Be sure to check out the episode's show notes where we list everything we've talked about media-wise. And, as the kids say: rate, review, subscribe. Use #notyourmotherslibrary to spread the word on social media. If you enjoyed this episode on happiness, be sure to join us next month when we will be discussing the science! Of! Death!

Melody: Dun, dun, dun!

Jill: Talk about a 180.

Rachel: You stole my dun, dun, dun! (laughs)

Melody: I know! (laughs) Yeah, we just are going the complete opposite, because why not?

Rachel: Yes! Thank you, Sarah and Jill, for joining us today.

Sarah: Thank you!

Jill: Thank you for having us.

Melody: It's been really great. All right. Happy reading everybody.

Rachel and Melody: Bye!

(Brief outro music)