

## 277. Fighting for Happiness with Meg Johnson



### Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

**Jody Moore**

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I'm Jody Moore and this is *Better Than Happy* episode 277: Fighting for Happiness with Meg Johnson.

Welcome to *Better Than Happy*. I'm your host, Jody Moore. I'm a mother to four children. I'm a huge Taylor Swift fan, and I'm a master certified life coach. I'm here to teach you how to manage your brain and manage your emotions so that you can create a life that's even better than happy. Are you ready? Let's go.

Hey everybody, welcome to the podcast. I am so glad that you're here. I'm so excited to hang out with you for a little bit here, me and you and Meg. We are going to have a good time.

So listen, a lot of podcasts are interview style. Some podcast hosts have to find a guest to interview every week, which I can only imagine would be challenging and overwhelming because you don't just want any guest, you want a good guest that will help your audience. My podcast is not interview style in that most of my episodes are just me talking to you, teaching you. And I purposely do that because of just the nature of what I'm trying to do here. So when I do bring a guest on I'm very selective about who I bring on.

And I get lots of emails, and DMs, and messages from people telling me that they know someone I should bring on, or they would like to come on, which I think is wonderful and amazing. But often I say no because it's mostly just me, unless I find someone who I think will blow your mind and Meg Johnson is that person. So I first learned about Meg Johnson, I was going to say met but I didn't meet her, it felt like I did.

But I was at a Time Out for Women, so for those of you who may not be members of my church, Time Out for Women is a big event that our church puts on. We just get to hear from amazing speakers, and authors, and artists who will maybe sing or perform and it's a very awesome uplifting, motivating couple of days usually. And I love Time Out for Women. So I was at Time Out for Women and Meg Johnson was the speaker there.

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And sometimes when they do Time Out for Women they also simultaneously do Time Out for Girls so that you can bring your daughters who might want to hear some speakers. So Meg had spoken the day before at Time Out for Girls at the event I was at and some of the girls that were there were like, "Meg Johnson was the best, she was my favorite speaker. You guys get to hear from her tomorrow, you're going to love her." So I was super excited because to impress teenage girls, not easy to do.

And I was not disappointed, Meg came rolling onto stage in her wheelchair and this woman is not only a phenomenal speaker but such an inspiration. She is genuinely happy. She is down to earth as you could possibly get, not a drop of pride in this woman. And I'm just excited for you guys to hear from her. So let's go ahead and cut to my conversation now because she is going to tell you her story. And I just can't wait for you to hear from the lovely Meg Johnson.

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Okay, Meg Johnson, thanks for being here today. So to begin with would you mind just telling my listeners a little bit about who you are, where you live, your family, your social security number, all the important things.

**Meg Johnson:** Well, let's start with the important things and that would of course be my social security number.

**Jody Moore:** That's right.

**Meg Johnson:** And my full name, Meg is short for Margaret, which Margaret actually means a pearl. That touched my heart. I mean of course that's always been like cool, I'm like, "Oh, I love pearls." But then I got paralyzed when I was 22 years old. And then my name really sparked an increasing interest in my heart because a pearl is created with an irritant. And so if you work with the irritant then you can create something of value. So anyway I feel like that's what I have. I have a valuable life because I was working with an irritant.

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And so I was paralyzed when I was 22 years old, so I'm a C7 quadriplegic. And what that means is I'm paralyzed from my chest down and my hands don't work. And so my back muscles don't work, my tummy muscles don't work, but my body works just fine. But when I say that I mean my body just works just fine, I just can't move it, I guess I should say, it doesn't obey me.

**Jody Moore:** Okay. So when you say your body works just fine you mean your digestive system and things like that internally, it just doesn't move the way you wish it would?

**Meg Johnson:** Exactly. And so I have two girls now. So I got married when I was 26, so four years after I was paralyzed. And then I had two little girls. And people ask me all the time, "Did you have them? Did you carry them?" I'm like, "Yeah, I did. My body works just fine."

**Jody Moore:** It's amazing.

**Meg Johnson:** So it's kind of like I had an epidural the whole pregnancy.

**Jody Moore:** Not all bad then, huh?

**Meg Johnson:** Anyway, and then I actually got an epidural when I delivered and I was waiting and I was, "Oh my gosh, I wonder what it feels like to be more paralyzed." But I didn't feel anything, I mean go figure. And then I delivered, I don't know if this is too much information for your listeners, they can mute it out. You can edit this out if it's a little bit racy. When I delivered my babies, really my first baby took 45 minutes and my next baby took – no, it was even less than that, I think it was 30 and then 15 just to push them out.

And my doctor's like, "Man, you are good at having babies." And I was like, "You know what, I really should give lessons on how to have an epidural and push a baby out, because I've been paralyzed a long time."

**Jody Moore:** Good to know.

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**Meg Johnson:** And this is how you do it ladies when you're paralyzed.

**Jody Moore:** This is how you still get done what you need to get done.

**Meg Johnson:** Right. But I think the nurses really were surprised that I could make my tummy muscles tighten when I turned a certain way. I can't do sit-ups or anything.

**Jody Moore:** But in some ways you probably have some core strength that those of us not in your situation don't have.

**Meg Johnson:** Right, yeah. So I don't know, but it's different. My body still works just fine, just different. My hands are paralyzed but I can still type and do my hair, and I can braid my daughters' hair even though both my hands are paralyzed. I just use my teeth too. And my six year old would freak out, she's like, "Don't lick my hair." I'm like, "You lick it all the time. I'm licking your hair." I'm like, "You can wash it."

**Jody Moore:** That's right, you'll be fine. So would you mind – I know a lot of my listeners know of you and have probably heard you speak. But then there are some probably who haven't. So would you mind just telling us the story of how you became paralyzed?

**Meg Johnson:** Yes. So I went down to Southern Utah, and Southern Utah, you've probably seen it in pictures and stuff with the red rock desert and the red rock arches and things like that. So I went down there for the first time when I was 22 in March. Well, I actually went down on March 5<sup>th</sup>, but that's irrelevant. And so on March 6<sup>th</sup> I was on this little red rock trail with my boyfriend at the time, we went down to watch his little sister get baptized. And then he went one way and then I went the other way, because there were all these boulders all in a row.

And my boyfriend went to go watch some rock climbers and I went to go jump on the boulders because that's safe. And so I was jumping on all

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these boulders and they were just in this small area, tight, kind of like the tops of candied yams, that kind of a look to me.

And so I was jumping on all these boulders and then I saw this one last boulder and I jumped for it. And an accident, I just jumped off a cliff. And I fell about, well if you've heard me speak before you've heard me say 35 feet, but I've since learned that it was 45 feet to the ground where they think I landed, on hands and knees, because I broke both my arms and both my legs, my collarbone and four bones in my neck. And they life-flighted me up to LDS Hospital in Salt Lake City where I was pronounced a quadriplegic, paralyzed from my chest down without the use of my hands. So that's what happened.

**Jody Moore:** Wow. And the first time I heard you tell this story was at a Time Out for Women and you were speaking, if I recall correctly, I feel like you said that you couldn't see that it was a cliff because of all the red rock and just the terrain. And it sort of plays tricks on your eyes and on your depth perception, right?

**Meg Johnson:** Yeah. But I didn't know that because I'd never been there before.

**Jody Moore:** Yeah. I always think about you when I'm anywhere that has that kind of terrain. I just think about you and that whole experience which I can't even imagine. So what was it like for you after that?

**Meg Johnson:** Well, do you mean immediately after that or when they found out I was paralyzed? And there's so much to say.

**Jody Moore:** Yeah. When you were so young, I can imagine you had to have gone through some sort of depression, did you go through a depression? Did you go through a grieving process?

**Meg Johnson:** I'm sure I did. I'm sure there's the steps that the professionals and probably you know about, where I was like – at first,

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when they first told me I was paralyzed, my immediate response was I don't believe in being paralyzed. And now I'm in a wheelchair and there's nothing I can – I can't pretend I'm not. So I am paralyzed, that's true as far as my body goes. But as far as my life goes, I don't have to stay still. I can still keep on moving forward and keep on doing what I have to do, even if it's not the same way that other people do it.

But yeah, I did go through a grieving process. And I remember I had a lot of Tender Mercies along the way, a lot of individualized miracles, a lot of – and when I say miracles I don't mean healing miracles, I don't mean that. Because people, when they see me now and they knew me when I first got paralyzed they say, "Meg, you have regained so much more. You have gotten so much more function in your body back." And I'm like, "No, I am the exact same amount of paralyzed I am now as I was when I first rolled into the hospital."

There's nothing that I've gotten back that's different, or added, or anything. I think I just use it better. And I'm happy. I'm a happy person and I think that throws people sometimes. But I think I along the way learned how to fight for happiness and learn the skills, and the tricks that it takes to be happy, no matter what's going on. And I think I'm a fighter is what drives me because I'm not okay being not okay. And so I need to do what I need to do to feel happy. And the very first time I learned what to do, or at least one of the things that I could do was when I was in the respiratory ICU.

So I broke my arms, and my legs, and my neck in four places, I have a donor's bone. [inaudible] are going to be awesome. But when they did the surgeries on my legs and my arms, my lungs collapsed. So I was in this hospital for a really long time because of my collapsed lungs, because they couldn't breathe by themselves. And so I was on a ventilator which I know is kind of a buzzword now, everybody knows what a ventilator is. Everybody knows what it means to be intubated.



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I was in the respiratory ICU intubated on a ventilator with the beeping telling you, okay, breath in. And then it breathes for you. And if you try to breathe by yourself then it would, you know, alarms will sound. And nurses will come rushing in and chastise you, “Don’t breathe by yourself.” And it was scary. And so my – let’s see, my legs of course were paralyzed, but they were also broken, so they’d had surgery on them. And then my arms had had surgery on one of them but the other one was also in a cast.

And then of course I had the metal halo screwed into my head. And so it was still lucid, I was still awake, and so to stop me from pulling out the tubes, because back to the fighter.

**Jody Moore:** You wanted to just do it on your own?

**Meg Johnson:** Yeah. And at one time in the hospital I had actually bit through the intubation tube, trying to bite through it. They said it’s because I had brain damage. I say it’s because I’m completely sane and I was trying to escape. And of course that makes sense. So they tied my arms to the bed. And so the only thing that I could have moved at all was tied up, I was tied up, not just paralyzed but tied. And I actually thought my legs were tied up too. I didn’t realize at this point that I actually couldn’t move them, I just was tied up.

And so anyway I woke up, I don’t even know if it was morning or night or anything. But no one was in my hospital room. And of course my mom was always there. But she must have just stepped out. I’m just going to pause for a second and say at one time at the same time in the respiratory ICU I remember I was looking past my body as I was laying on the bed, past all the tubes and stuff.

I could see my mom at the end of the room on a laptop with the light shining up her face and she was drinking a Jamba juice, like a Zooka. I knew that this trial of mine was so much harder for her. It was really clear to me that that was the reality of the situation, that yes, it was hard for me, but



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I had a lot more control over how it was going to turn out than she did. And now that I'm a mom, I have got a three year old and a six year old. My three year old has had some pain that we couldn't figure out for a long time.

And I've been paralyzed, I've been dumped, I've been single, I've been, you know, not that I have had, you know, run the gamut of trials. But just for my own life I've had a lot of trials. But I've never ever, ever in my whole life screamed at God in a prayer until now when it had to do with my own daughter and I didn't have any control over what was going to happen. So now I really know that the trials in this life that are the hardest for us don't even happen to us.

**Jody Moore:** That's true.

**Meg Johnson:** So goodness. And so anyway, but at this time when I was all tied up in the bed, my legs were paralyzed. And just to correct that, I might have known that my legs are paralyzed at this point in time. But there was a time when I wasn't sure if they were tied up or paralyzed. So it doesn't really matter. But I was tied up, and paralyzed, and intubated, and tubes were everywhere, in my nose, and in my mouth, and in my arms, and in my chest. And I started to cry. And I tried to shake my head and shake off the tears and stuff but they just kept coming.

And I was like I just can't, I can't do this, I can't start my day like this, it's just going to get worse. And so out of desperation I opened my eyes and I'm looking at the ceiling and so I prayed. And I'm like, "Heavenly Father, bless me with love for that ceiling." And I felt a little better. And then I looked at the window and I'm like, "And bless me with love for that window, and that car, and that chair, and that TV, and the light switch, and this bed, and these blankets, and these tubes." And I prayed for love for everything that I saw.

And by the time I had done that I was crying again, only I was crying because I was so happy. And that was my first step to recognizing that

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there were skills. There was something legit and real that you could do that would bring happiness. And it didn't come – I mean it came from the inside but it came with a fight to bring it on the inside, because lots of times our circumstances are not happy.

**Jody Moore:** That's right. That's right. So what are some of these other skills and tricks? We all want to know because you are a genuinely happy person from what I have seen.

**Meg Johnson:** Truly, I am. I am a genuinely happy person. But I genuinely fight for happiness. I do get depressed. And I do get even suicidal, because I'm – like I say, I'm a doer. And so when I get really, really depressed I think, I'm like, "Well, how can we fix this?" And so it's kind of scary. And so I fight for happiness so that I can be happy. And there are skills, so gratitude for sure. And that's the most basic first step that no walking necessary, that's going to help you. And that's going to help you very quickly.

And your circumstances do not have to be worthy of love for you to absolutely love them. And when you do that it transforms whatever you have into a happy scenario. And of course we shouldn't be in an abusive scenario. And of course we shouldn't be, you know, we should have boundaries and stuff. I don't surround myself with people who hurt me.

**Jody Moore:** Right. To be grateful and you chose in that moment to just be grateful for the ceiling, and the windows, and all the things around you there in the hospital. I think it's such a valid point that first of all when we choose gratitude or love, we feel that, we feel that emotion. I had this experience today where it's my daughter's birthday, she's turning 13. She's a teenager but I asked her this morning, she said she still likes me. So we're good. But I was like, "You still like me, right?" She said, "Yes."

But her little girl friends wanted to come over early and surprise her and get her out of bed and take her to one of their houses for breakfast, because

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they're sweet little girls. And so they did and then they brought her back. And one of them sent me this text message that said, "Thanks for letting us come and get Macy, I hope we didn't take her too long. I think she had a great time." And this is remember, a 13 year old girl, she says to me, "Thanks for being such a great example in her life to become the way she is. She's the best girl I have ever met."

**Meg Johnson:** Are you kidding?

**Jody Moore:** So I was so emotional for a moment, just being so grateful that my daughter has these girls that love her. But I was also thinking about this young girl and how she's doing this service for her friend and she's feeling all this love now. She's feeling this love for my daughter. And she's feeling love for me. And just love is something we get to feel. And the object of our love is irrelevant. It could be the ceiling in the hospital, and you still get to feel it. It's amazing.

**Meg Johnson:** That's poignant. The object of our love is irrelevant, that's true.

**Jody Moore:** And then back to what you were saying too about not – it doesn't mean we allow people to mistreat us, we have to be loving ourselves as well. And so it's like when you're loving and you're grateful for the people or things around you, it's easier to be loving and grateful for yourself as well. It kind of goes hand-in-hand, when we allow people to mistreat us, it's not coming from love, it's coming from fear or something else. So I just think that's such an important point that you're making.

**Meg Johnson:** Yeah, I wholeheartedly agree with you.

**Jody Moore:** Yeah. So you mentioned though that you do get down at times, as we all do, of course.

**Meg Johnson:** Yes.

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**Jody Moore:** I don't know about you, but I feel like right now it's hard times, this year has been rough. And I sort of feel like we've hit this point, things feel like they're dragging on, like okay, enough of this coronavirus thing. And now the kids aren't even able to go back to school in a lot of cases. And now we've got this crazy emotional election coming up. And I feel like people are struggling right now. What are some things? So gratitude you said was one of the things you do. What else do you do to help yourself through that process?

**Meg Johnson:** Let's see. There is a list of things that I do, everywhere from journaling to accepting your trials, to loving yourself. I write a lot of letters to my body and stuff, and I talk to my body. And I heard about a guy who got paralyzed, who got angry at his legs and then he hurt them, he beat them with a bar. And so he disfigured his legs that were immobile anyway. And when I heard that story early on in my paralysis, and this experience of mine, I made a commitment then, I'm never going to hurt myself.

I'm going to try to love myself even though I'm not going to be able to do a lot of things that I can do. And I think hope gets us through a lot of stuff. I have hope in God, and I've read the Bible and I know that Jesus can heal people, so waiting on that date. But until then I don't want to wait for this trial to be over to be happy because that's not fun. And so a lot of times when I get really down I'll remind myself that there is hope for later and it's going to be okay.

So I'll say, "You're going to play kickball, it's going to be okay, you're going to play. You're going to dance again, it's going to be okay." But then when I'm feeling a little bit stronger then I can do other things, like express myself in my journal, so that I can think it through and be like, alright, I understand this better. And I do basic things like say prayers, and read scriptures, and do all of these things that help me to express myself and then feed myself at the same time. But then I think something very active that I do is I take time to serve people.

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And I learned that early on when I was home from the hospital, and that was so hard to come home, because I've always been paralyzed at the hospital. But I've never been paralyzed at my house. So it was like being paralyzed all over again. It was terrible. And I remembered as I was sitting there on the back porch day after day watching the grass grow, because I'm a believer that God doesn't give you a Goliath without giving you...

Okay, so this is like a story all in itself. In the Bible, David's smack talking Goliath and he's like, "I'm going to kill you." And he's super confident. But why is he so confident? Because he was a shepherd, and when he was a shepherd his flock got attacked by a bear and a lion, and he killed them. And so when he sees Goliath he's like, "I'm going to kill you." Super confident, and I feel like that's the same way in our lives. God gives us these really big trials but he doesn't do it without first giving us the bear and a lion.

And so I think a skill is to think back on your life and think when was my bear? When was my lion? What have I done in my life that has qualified me to fight this Goliath? Because I can fight this and I can win. After I graduated from high school I wanted to go to Germany, so I did, as a nanny. And some people make really great nannies, but that's not me. And so they kicked me out five days later.

I came home and my boyfriend and I had had a plan, I was going to go to Germany and then he was going to go on a mission and we'd meet back and get married, and make babies, and they were going to be trilingual, this was our plan.

**Jody Moore:** Perfect. I like it.

**Meg Johnson:** That sounds like so possible.

**Jody Moore:** It's like a dream.

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**Meg Johnson:** And so I came back from being five days away in Germany and he had a different girlfriend. And I prayed and I was sobbing and smelling like vomit because I had cried so hard I made myself throw up. And I prayed and I'm like, "Don't let me blame this on the church. Don't let me blame this on the church." Because I had a friend at the time who had been dumped by her boyfriend and so she's like, "Well, if God is going to let my boyfriend dump me then God doesn't exist."

And in a clearer mind to me that didn't make sense. But now that I was smelling like vomit and soaked in my own tears, that made tons of sense. But I knew that in a clearer mind that didn't make sense to me. And so I prayed and I was like, "Don't let me blame this on the church. Help me not to blame this on the church." And I made myself go to church and then, you know, this is a long time ago, so three hours long. And I went to the first class and they're like, "Meg since you're still here. We want you to be the chorister for the Relief Society."

And then I went to Sunday School and the bishop's like, "Hey, Meg, since you're still here, we're not going to release you from [inaudible]." I was like, "Alright." And then after the sacrament meeting of the third hour, the state president sees me, he's like, "Hey, Meg, since you're still here, we're going to ask you to be the young single adult president for the state." And I was like, "Alright." And then I was almost on my way out but the bishop's like, "Hey Meg, since you're still here, we're going to ask you to direct the word roadshow."

And so I went along that day with four colleagues and a testimony that when you're sad, Heavenly Father wants you to serve. And it was through those four callings, even though they were callings, my service in them was what got me through being dumped, which is a horrific trial for anybody, being single is the worst, because you know that that's not right from the get go. You know that you're supposed to have that other person with you, because you go through everything everyone else does, you're just alone. And that's so terrible.

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And in my opinion it's like one of the worst trials that there even is. And so anyway, so I was dumped, and I was only 19 at the time – well, except if you're 19. So anyway got me through all of that, and then after I got paralyzed I remembered that experience. And I'm like, "I know what to do." I have fought a bear, and I have fought a lion. And I have prevailed and I'm going to prevail again." And I asked my mom to push me down to this elementary school and I went to the principal and I'm like, "Is there anywhere that I can volunteer?"

And so she put me with this second grade class, Mrs. Smith, and I sat outside the door and kids would come out with their library book and I would listen to them read. And who was it? I think it was Albert Einstein said, "A person starts to live when he can live outside himself." And from that tiny little active service, I couldn't check their name off a list, I didn't know how. I couldn't call for the next student, I wasn't strong enough. I just sat there and listened. And I was like, "You're doing a good job." That's all I was doing.

And then I started to live, I joined the Utah wheelchair rugby team which if you've ever seen that before it looks a lot like bumper car, keep away. And I was covered in blood and honey after the end of the practices and stuff. I heard about the Miss Wheelchair America Pageant in New York. And I called them up, I was like, "I'm Meg, I'm from Utah, what do I have to do to come participate?" And they're like, "Sorry, Utah, doesn't have a pageant, you have to be a state winner to come."

So I hung up the phone and then I got on the computer, eBay and I bought myself a crown.

**Jody Moore:** I love it.

**Meg Johnson:** So I called back the Miss Wheelchair America and I was like, "I am Miss Wheelchair Utah." So they let me come and I went with like



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a platform, kind of a one sentence description of who I was and what I was all about. And it was creating a new reality through service.

And I really feel like we get new realities all the time, things that we didn't want to have happen, circumstances that we wouldn't choose normally. But no matter where we are and no matter what's going on in our life, if we can take our strengths and our abilities, and the positive things about us. Combined with our trials and our challenges, and if we can put those two things together and find somebody to serve then we have discovered purpose in our life.

And that's the number one question that I get asked personally from women is, "I feel like there's something more for me to do, but I feel like these trials are holding me back." When in actuality it's the trials that are the door openers, those are the keys. That's what opens the door of opportunity, because how else would you – why would you be serving the people in the hospital if you didn't have a reason to be there? And then how could you be serving them if you didn't actually have talents to share in that capacity?

And I feel like we only want to serve with our talents, and we only want to serve where our talents take us. But if we allow our trials to play a part in our service, maybe we have a wandering child who is going all kinds of different ways that we don't want him to go or her to go. But if we treat that trial in our life as a service project, not to serve them, but serve with them in some capacity with our strengths combined with this particular challenge in our life, we've discovered purpose for our life. We have a fulfilling life.

**Jody Moore:** That's a beautiful way to think about it. I love that. One of the things that I teach is that our emotions are created by our thoughts. And our emotions serve as the fuel for everything that we do. So I'd be curious to get your opinion about this because a lot of times we talk about, and we're sort of talking about it here, what things can we do to feel better? And serving people helps us to feel better. And I totally agree with that.

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But I think that the reason why we feel better when we start serving isn't necessarily because of what we're doing. It's because we start thinking something different, which causes us to feel different. So there's, you know, I can think of times in my life when I've served with my arms folded and my face scowled. And just I guess I have to do this. And maybe my head starts to come around to it, but not always. And I think that it's just powerful to recognize that the power of our brains, and our thinking, and the stories that we're believing.

And I'm curious for you, Meg, first of all if you've found that to be true, but also what do you think it is that you start thinking about when you're serving that makes you feel differently?

**Meg Johnson:** I think that is so profound. And maybe you and me make a good team because you're all about the feelings and I'm all about the actions. Because together – well, I don't know if you're all about that.

**Jody Moore:** Well, yeah, and both are important. But we tend to focus on the action, I like to include both.

**Meg Johnson:** Yeah, that's so wise. I think a better person than me can maybe answer this question which is William Blake. But you're thinking about yourself and we want to figure this out. I've just got to figure this out. We've got a trial or a challenge or some kind of change that we're not ready for, or even if we are ready for it, we still need to figure it out. And I've just got to take some time and wish that we could push pause on life, but we can't, so we just have to block everyone out.

Or we're like, I've just got to figure this out for a second. I've just got to figure this out, and in my opinion that will never work. That will never work, to figure something out when you're only focusing on yourself. It won't work to take a vacation for yourself. It won't work to – well, actually that actually sometimes does work.

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**Jody Moore:** Except when you come home from the vacation to your old self again.

**Meg Johnson:** Right. But just to focus on yourself and try to figure it out doesn't work. But what does work so much better than trying to focus on your own self, and your own mind, and your own whatever, is to focus on other people. Because sometimes I think we feel like God is a little bit distant. And understanding ourselves, I mean that's so hard, it's just so hard to wrap our mind around what's going on.

But William Blake said it way more eloquently than I ever could. He said, "I sought my soul, and my soul I could not see. I sought my God and my God eluded me. I sought my brother and found all three." I feel like the scriptures are true in Matthew 25 in as much as you've done it unto one of the least of these my brother and you've done it unto me. Sometimes we're looking for God so much that we miss him because he's as close as someone to serve.

And sometimes I am feeling fun and I really, really need a closer connection with heaven, because trials are hard and life is hard. And I just need that closeness. And so I'll be at the grocery store or at the park or whatever, and I'll reach down and I'll pick up garbage off the ground. And I'm super not altruistic. But I just want to pick that garbage up off the ground because I'm like if I don't do it, there's a cleaning person who's going to come by and have to do it. And so I'm doing it for this cleaning person because really I'm doing it for Jesus.

And I really want to serve him so bad but this is the best I can do. This is all I have to offer is I can pick up this gum wrapper for him. That's all I've got.

**Jody Moore:** I love it. And I do think that if we think about the fact that we're created in God's image and we are his children, literally. And therefore when we are operating at our best, feeling our best, when we clear away all of our own insecurity and fear, which is normal, we all will

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always have some of that here in this life. But when we get to our, kind of our essence, if you will, it is like God. And God serves, and loves, and creates.

To just focus on trying to fix ourselves without all of those things doesn't work because it's not who we are, I am Jeff and Bonnie Lyman's daughter. And so I have some characteristics that are kind of like my dad. And I have some characteristics that are kind of like my mom that I sort of inherited from them. And in the same way we all inherited some of God's, I guess, characteristics you could say. And so I think that's why that serving, loving, giving, being connected to everyone around us, I think we just get in touch with that at a certain point and we feel that, right?

**Meg Johnson:** Yeah, absolutely. And I love what you said, God is always serving, and loving, and creating. And I think even if we're not a creative person we can create happiness in our life. We can actually, using the tools that are around us, put it in our life in a way that we can feel it.

**Jody Moore:** Yeah. And I work with individuals who want to understand their brains better, and manage their emotions better, and show up better in their lives in all these ways. One of the fears is, well, if I just accept myself, and love myself, then I am just going to lay on the couch and watch TV all day. Or like you're saying, initially sometimes people misunderstand my work as being a focus on just let me just fix myself. Let me pause and just fix myself. But it's not that at all, it's the opposite.

It's how do we get moving even if we don't feel good? I'm a believer in that, let's get moving because it's a lot easier to start feeling better when you're taking that action. Our natural state is like you said, growth, contribution, and that's why we all feel so called to that purpose. I love how you say that's when you find purpose, is because that's what we're all seeking, is like how do I find my purpose?

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**Meg Johnson:** Right. And what's what I think people like you as a coach do, is you're not helping somebody suck their attention into themselves. In fact it's the exact opposite. And I mentor people on a much, much, much smaller level too, but the goal is to actually help them to create that happiness, and create that purpose in their life, and to pull it out of them instead of think about it on the inside.

**Jody Moore:** Yes, that's right. That's right. So just out of curiosity too, I know you speak quite a bit. Do you call yourself a motivational speaker?

**Meg Johnson:** Other people do.

**Jody Moore:** You're a very motivating speaker, I've heard you speak. By the way, it's always been my secret dream to be a motivational speaker. So I'm very [inaudible] when I hear you and Hank and John.

**Meg Johnson:** Well, we got to speak together, you and me just recently and I thought you were phenomenal.

**Jody Moore:** Thank you. What other types of work are you up to these days, Meg?

**Meg Johnson:** Oh goodness, well, I'm a mom of course, and that's...

**Jody Moore:** That takes up a lot of time.

**Meg Johnson:** It's a wonderful experience to be a mom and it's so fulfilling, even though it's on such a small scale. So I really love that. But then also life and so there is different things involved in both. And yes, I am a speaker and I have some books that I've written. I've founded a non-profit called Miss Wheelchair Utah and we do the princess pageant to help little girls in wheelchairs feel beautiful, so we do that.

**Jody Moore:** I didn't know that. That's awesome.

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**Meg Johnson:** And so after I went to Miss Wheelchair America I came home and founded Miss Wheelchair Utah. And so we crowned older girls and sent them to nationals. And then teenagers wanted to do it so we opened up Miss Hot Wheels. And then little girls wanted to do it so we opened up the Little Wheels Princess Pageant. And that's the one that grew real big and that we continue today.

And then I also, I'm involved with the Jumping Turtle type stuff where we have live events that go out. And so I'm a speaker on that, but I'm also on the backend too, which gets to me a lot but it's worthwhile because you want to have a message but you also want people to hear it. I used to be a party planner and it really doesn't matter how great your party is if the invitations didn't get sent.

**Jody Moore:** That's right, that's the important part.

**Meg Johnson:** So it's really important to not just have a message but to get an audience. And even if your audience is one, or two, or three, I think it helps. And after sometimes when I speak I'll come backstage and I'll have – I'm an introvert, so I need to recharge by myself and I have to actually hide. After every single speech I just have to go and hide and just sort of recharge for a second and I pray. And sometimes I imagine Heavenly Father sitting with me and stuff and sometimes he high fives me and that's super fun.

But I feel so fulfilled, I feel so good after I give a speech that I feel went well, not because I want to be a great, you know, not like an orator or anything, which I'm not, I'm more of a storyteller. But because it makes me feel so good when someone gets some inspiration from me, it makes my life feel worthwhile. Sometimes after a speech I'm like if I had to be paralyzed for this speech, paralyzed for eight years for this speech then it would be worth it. I would be paralyzed for eight years for this audience, and that makes me feel good. That makes me feel like really good.

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**Jody Moore:** Well, it's an amazing way to think about it.

**Meg Johnson:** I had a psychotherapist, he didn't talk to me. He talked to somebody else who had just been through a trauma. And he was talking to her dad actually and he said, "The best thing you can do is actually take a vacation after a traumatic experience. And then go back to real life and the more she can speak about it and share her experience the better she'll manage it and deal with it." And so I feel like sharing what you've learned about it, and even now when something hard or terrible happens to me my first thought is oh my gosh, that's going in my next talk.

**Jody Moore:** It's going to be a big story one day.

**Meg Johnson:** And the worst stories that I even have make for the funniest talks.

**Jody Moore:** That's right. Well, and it's kind of back to what Viktor Frankl teaches in Man's Search for Meaning, which is like any trial, if you can find meaning and purpose behind it, and to your point, even if it helped one person. If it helped me be able to have a story to share in this talk then we can handle a lot of stuff if we can find meaning in it, so that's very powerful.

**Meg Johnson:** Absolutely. I wholeheartedly agree with that. And it's okay, and there is happiness in the middle of a trial. And it doesn't have to be over. And it brings purpose. And it's kind of fun, it's kind of fun, if you have the hope that pushes your mind to the end and you've got like, okay, there is more later, so I can enjoy now. It's alright. And sometimes I get really like hurting so bad that I'd want to dance. So I don't know how much time we have on this podcast, but I'm just going to tell this story really quick.

**Jody Moore:** Yeah, do it.

**Meg Johnson:** Because I used to dance, I was on the Utah State Ballroom Dance team. I just love to dance and ballroom is – Latin actually, it's so awesome. It's totally my favorite. But sometimes when I see dancers or



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hear that kind of music I want it so bad that it hurts. And I've never felt that until I was paralyzed that I wanted something so bad. And I'm sure other people know exactly what that means, even who are listening now, they want something so bad they ache for it.

One time I was driving in my car, I drive with little hand controls and stuff. And so I was driving in my car and I was talking to my legs. And I was telling them and I was like, "Are you done?" So I kind of feel like I heard my legs respond as they said back to me kind of abruptly, abrasively even. They said, "We are doing this for you. You think you want to dance, think of how we feel. You think you want to get up and walk, think about us. We are sacrificing all of that so you can accomplish something in this life, so don't let us down."

**Jody Moore:** Oh my gosh. That's awesome, Meg.

**Meg Johnson:** I really feel like these trials in our life don't have to be so terrible, even if they are so terrible. We can enjoy this life and be grateful for the circumstances no matter what they are, and transform those trials into triumph, to be poetic, but also purpose and awesome experiences. Because we can really make our mark on the world if we allow ourselves to be a part of the world how we are. Just show up as you are, you don't have to wait for trials to be done, because news flash...

**Jody Moore:** They might not wrap up as soon as we would like.

**Meg Johnson:** Exactly. And we can have a happy life even if it's different than what we were planning.

**Jody Moore:** Oh my gosh, well, Meg you are such an inspiration and just an amazing example. I always love examples that we might say are more extreme, most of us aren't going to go through a paralysis in this life. But it allows us to take the lessons and apply them. And sometimes I feel like they're easier to see in a more extreme example. And I just really

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appreciate just your positivity, and your energy, and your generosity. And you're an amazing woman, Meg Johnson.

**Meg Johnson:** You make me feel so good I'm just soaking it up. I should probably respond with you're amazing too. But I'm like, yeah, keep going.

**Jody Moore:** No, that's when you just say stop it some more, stop it some more.

**Meg Johnson:** Stop it some more.

**Jody Moore:** Where can people find you if they want to learn more from you and hear more from you?

**Meg Johnson:** I would love if people would find me, because then it would feel fulfilled.

**Jody Moore:** Get your party full.

**Meg Johnson:** Right. And so they can find me on my website, it's megjohnsonspeaks.com. And that will have links to of course my Facebook, and my Instagram if they want to hear – I don't know. I do a little message every day and stuff. And then it will have links to my monthly message which is a newsletter. And it will just have where they can listen to my talks, even right away, I've got three talks that are full link, that's on there. And so it'll kind of be like a little hub if they are interested in anything.

**Jody Moore:** Okay, great, megjohnsonspeaks.com and we'll link to that in the show notes. And then also they can find you and the work you do with Hank Smith and John, by the way Our Turtle House, is that correct?

**Meg Johnson:** Yes, absolutely. And there's so much on that particular app, so ourturtlehouse.com.

**Jody Moore:** You guys have your own app, I just learned this.

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**Meg Johnson:** Yes, I know, it's so...

**Jody Moore:** It's fancy.

**Meg Johnson:** Right. It has been amazing. I don't know anything about stuff like this. We decided to go. And I wrote a course called Happiness 101 with tricks and skills that I think are the most important for utilizing right away and implementing right away. And that's on the Our Turtle House app also. So Happiness 101 is just right there. And it's kind of a short easy course.

**Jody Moore:** I love it, okay good. Meg, thank you so much again, I can't thank you enough for your time.

**Meg Johnson:** Oh my heavens, this was so enjoyable for me. Thank you for letting me share and you're so amazing.

**Jody Moore:** You're welcome.

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Who is your life coach? If you don't have one I would be so honored to be your coach. I created a virtual coaching program called Be Bold that I want to invite you to join me in. We can address challenges, we can work on goals, and we can do it in so many different ways.

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