



How to remain happy even during difficult challenging times – Laura Lane’s interview with Marci Shimoff Part 1 – Full Transcript

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[Music – Sending a Line by Fiz Anthony]

Thank you for tuning into the Hope Strength Courage Podcast. Love and support for parents whose kids are fighting for their lives! A weekly podcast created to support parents and caregivers of children diagnosed with cancer. Where you will find resources collected to help you face each day with Hope, Strength and Courage. From interviews with the top experts in their fields: doctors, psychologists, chaplains and inspiring frontline workers in pediatric oncology as they share their best advice, as well as day to day advice collected from other cancer moms and leaders in personal growth and development. From individuals who understand how hard it can be, I hope you will feel better prepared to cope with the day-to-day challenges of caring for your child.

Hi, I am Laura Lane, and I am your host. My own daughter Celeste was diagnosed with cancer at the age of 12. In 2015, I wrote about our experiences in the book “Two Mothers One Prayer: Facing your child’s cancer with Hope Strength and Courage”. Since that time, I have dedicated thousands of hours to share with other parents and caregivers the resources, tools, tips, skills and strategies I learned that helped our family to stay happier, healthier and more hopeful. My goal is to share with you my interviews with experts to support you as you care for a child with cancer.

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Today’s episode features part 1 of my interview with Marci Shimoff #1 New York Times bestselling author, a world-renowned transformational leader and an expert on happiness, success and unconditional love.

I love Marci. I was personally mentored by Marci as I was writing and publishing my book. She is amazing. I asked her if she would share with my audience the keys to remaining happy even during difficult challenging times. During part one of this interview Marci shares the 7 steps she learned about being happy and the first of 3 pieces of advice for cancer moms. I hope you love Marci as much as I do!

I am pleased to formally introduce you to Marci Shimoff. Marci is the number one New York Times bestselling author, a world-renowned transformational leader and an expert on happiness, success and unconditional love. Marci’s books include the runaway best sellers, Happiness For no Reason, Love For no Reason, and six titles in the phenomenally successful Chicken Soup for the Woman’s Soul series. Her books have sold more than fifteen million copies worldwide in thirty-three languages, have topped all of the major bestseller lists and



have been on the New York Times bestseller list for a total of 118 weeks. Marci is one of the bestselling female non-fiction authors of all time. Marci is also the host of the national PBS television special called Happy for No Reason, is a featured teacher in The Secret, and is the narrator of the award-winning film Happy. Marci currently co-leads a worldwide program called Your Year of Miracles with thousands of participants from forty-two countries for living a life of miracles. Marci has inspired millions of people around the world and is dedicated to helping people live more empowered and joy filled lives.

Laura Lane: Please join me in welcoming to our show today, Marci Shimoff. Thank you, Marci, it's so wonderful to have you here.

Marci Shimoff: It's so great to be here with you Laura and I want to thank you for what you're doing with this summit with this series. It's really beautiful and may this really touch many, many, many lives as I know it will.

Laura Lane: Thank you, Thank you so much. So, the first question that I have for you today is how did Happiness become your heart's quest in life?

Marci Shimoff: So, there's an old saying, we teach what we most want to learn, and I was born to depressed. I came out of the womb with what I call existential angst. I just I had a really great family, great upbringing, but just had this dark cloud around me and no matter what I couldn't get happy. And when I was in my early twenty's I did what lots of people do, I set goals for myself and I figured that once I got those goals, I would be happy. And I'll just share with you the five main goals that I set for myself because I think people will be able to relate. One, was that I have a successful career in helping people. Two, was that I have great husband or life partner. Three, wonderful friends, four a comfortable home, and five the equivalent that I have the equivalent of Halle Berry's body. Well I got four out of the five, I don't have Halle Berry's body, but I have a healthy body, and so I worked really hard to get all those things to happen in my life and then I had a turning point moment. It was June of 1998 and I had at that time three books in the top five on the New York Times bestseller list, and I had all those other things checked off on my list, when I was giving a speech to 8 thousand woman an- it was in Chicago, and after the speech I sold and autographed 5,432 books.

Laura Lane: Wow.

Marci Shimoff: The client had hired a massage therapist to massage my hand every few minutes so I could keep autographing. I felt like an author rock star it was like oh my god this is like the top of the game. And I remembered after autographing that very last book, I went up to my hotel room which was the penthouse suite that my client had gotten for me, and I walked over to the beautiful windows, you know panoramic views of lake Michigan and I turned around and fell on to the bed and burst into tears. And I burst into tears because I realized I had everything that I thought I needed to be happy, and I still wasn't. And at that moment I realized that I couldn't continue to think that just the next thing was going to make me happy, and I decided that I was going to drop everything and study



happiness. I wanted to know what was going to make me happy. What was it that could make you, could make anybody happy? And it's through that that I researched thousands of people really, I researched the happiness researches, the scientists, but also the people who are living in this state of what I call happy for no reason which is unconditional happiness. Happiness not based on our circumstances, and the news is good Laura, the news is that science has cracked the happiness code, we know what it takes for people to be happier, I would say I went from about a D+ in happiness if you were grading me, I was failing, to an A. Now I that doesn't mean that life works perfectly, it doesn't mean that everything happens the way I want it to happen. that's not what it's about, what it means as I have this inner state of peace and wellbeing that is with me regardless of circumstances. And I'm a work in progress I'm still working on but it should get everyone hope that no matter what is going on and I know that people listening today I don't want to in any way minimize what challenges you are going through because I deeply have compassion and real care for what challenges you're going through, but no matter what we're going through we can raise our happiness level and it doesn't mean that you're ignoring or in denial about what's going on in your life. So, I want to be able to share some practical things with you today.

Laura Lane: That would be great.

Marci Shimoff: That I can help.

Laura Lane: Can you share what share some of what the experts, that you interviewed in studying happiness. Who did you get to interview?

Marci Shimoff: Well I interviewed a whole wide range of people. I interviewed Rick Hanson, who's a neurologic neuro- what's he calls himself, he's a psychologist that deals in the brain and he wrote a book called *Hardwiring Happiness*, fabulous book. I interviewed Bernie Siegel whose one of the people that you interviewed there just an exquisite doctor. I interviewed doctors, I interview scientists and then I interviewed as I said regular people who had figured out how to change their happiness well it's called your happiness set point. let me just can I for a moment.

Laura Lane: Yep. Of course, yep.

Marci Shimoff: Out of all of the research out there on happiness, to me the most important research is that we all have what's called a happiness set point and it's like a thermostat setting. So no matter what happens to us whether it's really great or really horrible we in general will tend to return back to our original happiness set point within a certain period of time. So, for example people who win the lottery they're really happier. it's true they get happier for a few months, but within about a year they return to their original happiness set point, same is true with people who have tragedies in their lives, within a year or two they tend to return to their original happiness set point. And so the happiness set point is the key for all of us. And here's how the happiness set point is determined, it's 50% genetic! You're born with it. Now I happen to not be born with the great genetic happiness set point, but here's the good news. 10% of it is circumstantial, that's a very small piece of the pie. So



don't focus all your attention on changing the circumstances because as I found that doesn't change your set point. The biggest thing that changes your set point is... 40% of the set point is our habits. Our habits of thoughts, our habits of behavior, and that's the biggest piece that we can control. Now I'm going to take this a step further and say that the researchers have found that of that 50%, that's the genetic piece can be strongly influenced by our habits and thoughts and behavior. Well that says that up to 90% of our happiness set point is influenced by these habits so, that's great news. That means that we can all shift our happiness habits to create a higher happiness set point.

Laura Lane: Well that's awesome. So, my next question is... and you mention it in your book, and I love your book. You talk about the seven steps that you learned about being happy. So, will you share those with us?

Marci Shimoff: Absolutely! So, some people just say, "oh make up your mind to be happy and that's it." If it were that easy, we would all be doing it. I found that there were what I, in all these interviews I've had, that there are twenty-one main happiness habits and they kind of fell into seven main categories. And I want to go over these seven categories, and I want you to think as you're listening to these, which of these am I really good at? And which of them am I really not so good at? And when I tell this to people to start where they're not as good, so start where you're weakest. Now these seven areas, it's hard for people to remember seven of anything, so I created a model some kind of like an analogy so you can remember all seven of these, and the model or the analogy is called "Building Your Inner Home For Happiness." Now a home has seven main components, it's got a foundation, it's got four corner pillars that the walls are built around, it's got a roof, and it's got a garden, and here's how that relates to these seven happiness main happiness areas or habits. The first is the foundation and that's about taking responsibility for your happiness, not showing up as a victim in life. Now there are awful things that happen to people, and I know that if you're listening to this you're probably in the midst of a or have been through a very, very challenging situation and as I said I don't mean to be denying that in any way and what I've found is people who come to their challenges with a feeling of this is somehow a friendly universe. Einstein said, "That the most important thing we can ask ourselves is this a friendly universe?" And what I found is people were happy even though things don't go the way they want, they have a fundamental belief that they universe is on their side, and so something deeply challenging is your facing, to ask the question if this were happening for a higher purpose, if this were if the universe was loving and supporting me what might the higher purpose in this be? How could I look at this in ... and I'm certainly not saying to not have. I want to clarify something when I talk about being happy for no reason. I don't mean walking around 24/7 with this silly grin on your face. I don't mean being in Pollyanna state of denial. I mean that even in the midst of tragedy, or grief or challenge that we have an inner peace and well-being inside that allows us to carry up through this kind of situation. And so, the first step is that foundation piece which is saying I am not a victim, and I will find what is the lesson of gift in this for me, that's the first step. Then you've got the four corner pillars, and the four corner pillars are the pillar of the body, the mind, the body, the heart and the



spirit. The mind, what are you saying to yourself? What are your thoughts? The body, do you have the biochemistry for happiness? Or do you have the are you eating the right foods for happiness? Are you sleeping the proper way for happiness? Are you exercising? There are some simple little things that people can do to shift for greater happiness. The pillar of the heart, are you living with an open heart? Do you have Gratitude? Do you have forgiveness? Are you holding onto resentment? Are you letting go? Then there's the pillar of the soul, do you feel a soulful, spiritual connection to something bigger than yourself in life? Then there's the roof of your home for happiness, that has to do with living an inspired life, are you living a passionate life? I believe truly that we're all here on the planet for a particular reason, are you doing what it is you're here to be doing? You know, Laura, you... I know you've been in my program, in my bestseller program working on your book, you have a passion for what you're here for. You know you're here for mission. That's really a key component to happiness. And then finally the garden of your home for happiness, has to do with who are you surrounded with? Are you surrounded with people who believe in you? People who will support you? They what I call the roses and the gardenias in life. Or are you surrounded by the weeds in life? The toxic people who are dragging you down, who are telling you that you can't be happy, you can't go for your dreams. Who you surround yourself, with is a key component to your happiness. So, look at all of those seven areas and ask yourself, where am I strong? And where am I weak? And go for the strong, go for strengthening your weakest areas.

Laura Lane: Oh, that's awesome, that's just such a good visual and oh that's wonderful, thank you Marci. What advice would you give to parents whose children have cancer? That they can be specifically doing for themselves and to set an example for their children, and things that they can do for their children?

Marci Shimoff: Gosh, there's so many things. But let me start, let me give you three.

Laura Lane: Okay.

Marci Shimoff: Is that alright? Number one, is take care of yourself as best you can, I know you're in a situation where it's very hard but to do some self-care, so I would have you ask yourself this question twice a day, what's the most loving thing for myself right now? It's a simple question, what is the most loving thing that I could do for myself right now, and your answer might be I can go drink a glass of water, or I can go outside and get some fresh air, or I can call a friend right now because I need to be fed a little bit, I need some support. Or I could be I can take three minutes out right now and just close my eyes and do a little bit of meditation and centering because when I come back, I'm going to be better. So, self-care is really, really critical. I'm big on that.

Laura Lane: I know-

Marci Shimoff: And yet I – go ahead.



Laura Lane: I used to say one of the things that I would do sometimes is just say you know what I'm just going to climb into bed with my daughter and have a nap with her.

Marci Shimoff: I think that you know just what I want you to do what feeds you because you're spending all the time giving and giving and giving and as you know, you can't run on empty. And so, to take some time every day to self-nurture, self-feed, whatever that is just for you even though you may think oh that sounds terribly selfish, it's so not. Because when you feed yourself, you feed everybody around you.

Laura Lane: Yep.

Isn't she awesome? Next week, we'll continue this interview and hear the other 2 pieces of advice from Marci. In that episode, the tables are turned a bit as Marci begins to ask me to share some of my daughter Celeste's story and how we remained positive especially as her cancer became terminal.

Before we end our show today, we have one last segment. Over the last few years, I have asked other cancer moms what advice they wish they had known when their child was first diagnosed. I have compiled that information and will be sharing their advice each week. You can download the top 101 pieces of advice that I put together as a mini E-book at www.twomothersoneprayer.com/advice.

Today's advice comes from Michelle:

She said, "It's ok to laugh. In Kaitlyn's final month my house was always full of family and friends. On one occasion a close friend brought her husband to the house. Later on, he made the comment somewhere along the lines of "how can you be laughing and smiling. Isn't this a sad time?" Well yes, of course, it was a sad time, a very tiring time, but my family got through by telling stories and joking around. In the midst of the hardest time of my life, I was able to laugh and smile with friends and family, and that's the way Kaitlyn wanted it, because even at 8-9 months old and on her final night she made us all laugh... With a simple burp. So yes, my advice. It's OK to laugh!"

Thank you, Michelle for sharing that. Both Marci and I would agree with you. It's such good advice.

If you have advice you have learned along the way that you wish someone had told you weeks, months or years earlier, I invite you to fill out the contact form on our website www.twomothersoneprayer.com/contact and I will be sharing your advice with our listeners on future shows.

[Faded Music in background]

Thank you for taking time out of your busy schedule today to listen to the Hope Strength Courage Podcast. I look forward to sharing more experts and advice with you again next Wednesday. Please remember to take a minute to subscribe to the show. Thanks also need to go out to our Hope Strength Courage Production Team which consists of Kyle Outridge



Productions and music by Fiz Anthony. To learn more about myself, Laura Lane and to order my book please visit www.twomothersoneprayer.com.

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